

Understanding Children's Rights to bring about Change in Educational Settings in Colombia

By

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Introduction

As we - the Colombian team comprised of Marcela Falla Barragán, Claudia Torres and Sanjay Nanwani – polish our report regarding our project on Children's Rights, School and Classroom Management sponsored by the Swedish International Development Agency, we face a context that is both daunting and hopeful: daunting because we are aware of the magnitude of challenges that the Colombian context presents in terms of human rights, and for our concrete purposes, in terms of children's rights. As we read today's Sunday's El Tiempo (one of the National newspapers), we are faced with front page headlines such as "26,000 embarazadas en mujeres violadas en el conflicto", which translated is: "26,000 pregnant women raped in the conflict". (The "conflict" refers to the war waged between insurgent groups such as the FARC and the government, over the past 50 or so years). Among our immediate concerns, we question the fate of the children born as a result of these circumstances. How do they survive if they do indeed survive? What contexts do they grow up in? Do they have a "normal" (for lack of a better word) childhood? Do they receive appropriate nutrition? Do they grow up in a family with a father and a mother, or one of the two at least? Or are they the caretakers of their families, having to engage in child labour? Do they have access to a "quality" education? (We are aware, as teachers and professors, of the difficulty of coming to grips with an understanding of what "quality" education actually is). Does the country at large have the resources to guarantee, first education for all, and second, an education based on quality? Supposing that the economic requirements needed to provide quality education exist, or at least can be generated, does Colombia have the human capital to adequately, strategically, and in essence, in a result-oriented manner, manage these resources? A number of questions confront us – and in due honesty, we do not have all the answers, as we would like.

Despite the circumstances, we are, as we mention above, hopeful of the future of our Colombian children. Our hope arises from multiple factors: first, we have a new president since August 2010, one who as we write, is backed with 90% support from the Colombian society (El Tiempo, 12th December 2010). It appears that the overall philosophy of the current government is one that emphasizes human rights in diverse ways. Perhaps the most apparent way, for our concrete purposes and interests, is the fact that 116 mayors recently signed the "Acuerdo por la Niñez", or the "Agreement for Childhood". In essence, there is greater political commitment, at least in theory, towards strengthening health, education and nutrition programmes at the national level.

Secondly, our hope arises from the trust of all those who comprise the Colombian society, made up of men and women who in local lingo are regarded as

“verracos”. Though we have consulted not only the Oxford and Cambridge dictionaries, but others as well, we have not come up with a word, or a phrase, that translates the term “verraco”. In our humble attempt to translate it, we will say that it is a term typically used to describe the Colombian spirit, belonging to a nation of people who have endured repeated acts of violence, murders, assassinations, on the part of drug cartels and other illegal groups – and yet, more than ever, remain strong and optimistic of a better future. It would seem that Colombians grow stronger in the wake of increasing adversity.

After introducing the Colombian context to set the scene for our readers, we acknowledge the fact that two decades have gone by since the groundbreaking UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) came into force, leading to an exponential growth in child-related legislation and policy worldwide. However, despite this encouraging state of affairs, the fact remains that children’s rights continue to be neglected in multiple spheres across the five continents, and Colombia is no exception. It is in the light of these circumstances that we decide, as a team, and upon the advice of our mentor, Ulf Leo, to design a course on “Understanding Children’s Rights to bring about Change in Educational Settings”. Despite our limited knowledge - particularly prior to the Advanced International Training Programme we attended at Lund University and in Ethiopia – of how to enact change in educational settings in terms of child rights, we have made use of our collective assets. Given that we are teachers of both, children and adults in primary school, and public and private university settings in Bogota, our team project is based on a course targeted to educators to sensitize them of the importance of implementing child rights based pedagogies.

The fact that we focus on teacher development contrasts with our initial intention of training child leaders to in turn convey knowledge on child rights in their respective schools. In Ethiopia we were advised that training teachers in some form would guarantee greater sustainability in fostering a culture based on child rights in Colombian schools

Our course, therefore, is designed taking into account the principles of *Inquiry Based Learning* and *Teacher Research*. The former because it involves theoretical and practical shifts in how educators view teaching and learning within the school and university contexts, since learners are provided with the time and space to ask questions that are significant in their lives. It invites educators to reflect upon their beliefs about what counts as knowledge, what is worth learning and the kind of practices that promote meaningful learning. This approach is based on the idea that human beings are natural thinkers and inquirers and advocates for this condition to be present in every learning situation (Short & Burke, 2001). Teacher Research, on the other hand, has emerged not only as a significant contributor to research on teaching but also as source of systematic reform within individual schools and districts. It is a type of research that is initiated and carried out by teachers and it uses their inquiries to study their classroom setting and their pedagogical practices (Hubbard & Power, 1999).

In essence, our course has both a theoretical and practical dimension. Its **theoretical** dimension is intended, though not limited, to provide a definition of the “child”; an understanding of children’s rights within the larger framework of human rights; the complexities and implications surrounding children’s rights and its relation to

the field of education. Its **practical** dimension on the other hand allows for participants to gain exposure on how children's rights are being promoted, as well as hindered, not only in Colombia but also in countries across the world, with a particular emphasis on developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. As educators, we believe that participants should ideally be exposed to both successful and unsuccessful practices regarding the promotion of child rights, as a way of gaining the "broad picture", and understanding what constitutes "good" practices and what does not constitute "good" practices. The former (i.e. "good" practices) should encourage educators to critically emulate such practices, evidently taking into account the contextual and cultural specificities of their respective educational setting; the latter (i.e. not "good" practices) may lead educators to identify themselves with such practices in their own teaching practice, and hence, avoid them, after realizing how they can affect the child in an adverse manner.

Also noteworthy to explain is that our course is indeed based on a glocal approach (a blend of the "global" and the "local"). We are firm believers in the idea that going beyond borders (in this case of Colombian borders) to understand what others in other parts of the world are doing to promote child rights, will not only potentially bring us closer as a brother and sisterhood working towards a common goal (that of ensuring that child rights is not only a theoretical discussion but actually becomes a reality) but also may render great results in terms of adopting and adapting behaviours and concrete actions within our Colombian context. The ultimate idea is of course to benefit the Colombian child, and any child in the Colombian context and beyond. In the process we trust that this will also benefit teachers in their daily practice. Having said this, we do not advocate by any means blindly reproducing courses of action from other parts of the world in the Colombian context without first critically examining them, and evaluating their feasibility in our local contexts – adapting them when contextual and cultural specificities require it.

Aim:

To provide a course titled *Understanding Children's Rights to bring about Change in Educational Settings in Colombia*, and offer spaces of reflection among educators in the Colombian context to generate courses of actions that are innovative to ensure child rights based pedagogies, whilst capitalizing on knowledge and practices from the **local** context and the **global** context, thereby addressing the **glocal** context.

Objectives:

1. To develop an understanding on children's rights within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
2. To gain awareness of critical issues regarding violation of children's rights in Colombia and other countries
3. To learn about successful initiatives promoting children's rights worldwide through interaction with educational professionals and Human Rights experts.
4. To engage in self-reflection on own teaching practices through the sharing of videos of participants teaching in their respective educational setting.

5. To reflect on ways of integrating children's rights in teaching and learning processes in both the classroom and the educational institutions at large that participants belong to.
6. To carry out a research project on a mini scale aimed at integrating child rights in an educational setting, and submit a report presenting the results of such project.

Target Audience:

1. Primary and secondary school teachers
2. Teacher trainers
3. Headmasters, supervisors, level coordinators
4. Human Rights' Activists
5. Parents
6. Government workers/personnel working in the area of Children's rights and Human Rights
7. Members of NGOs and Social Organizations

Dimensions of Course:

Theoretical:

- Child Rights Convention (CRC)
- PPP –Provision, Protection and Participation
- Critical issues relating to child rights (e.g. prostitution, drugs abuse, child labour and gender discrimination)
- Becoming Leaders and Change Agents
- Projects Carried Out Around the World in Favour of Children's Rights
- Action Research Applied to Educational Settings
 - Reflecting upon and 'Reading' One's Own Educational Setting
 - Cycles: Design, Implementation, Evaluation and Adjustment

Practical:

- Identifying a problematic situation or an aspect that can be improved within the participant(s)' educational setting.
- Designing and implementing of a project based on child rights.
- Evaluating the project's impact.
- Possible adjustments in a future larger scale project at the classroom and/or institutional level.

Methodology:

- Selected readings to acquaint participants of Child rights' issues both at the local, national, and international levels.
- Reflection "hours" based on critically examining how transformation of educational settings can be effectively enacted.
- School visits to acquaint participants with diverse educational settings.

- Team/individual presentations focused on specific themes pertaining to child rights, based on conceptual understanding of respective theme, and how it can be used to enact effective and sustainable change within an educational setting.
- Interacting with other participants in the Advanced International Training sponsored by Sida (through Skype, video conferences, among others), teams professionals and educators working in the area of children`s rights both in the local and international contexts.
- Movie forums and documentaries to gain exposure to critical issues pertaining to child right and as a medium for reflection
- Storytelling and story reading based on child rights
- Assessing the process by means of written reports and oral presentations

Note on Bibliography (Material for pedagogical use)

Our bibliography is divided among written documents published by transnational organizations, and selected authors who are experts in the field of Child Rights. These writers are both Colombian and foreign, in line with our glocal pedagogical approach. We have also included a section based on concrete thematic units, which we will continue developing after careful scrutiny of the quality of the selected material. Finally, we have included a section of audiovisual material which includes both movies and documentaries, which we believe lend themselves quite naturally to discussion of critical issues relating to Child Rights. As relative novices in the field of Child Rights – but dedicated and passionate teachers and teacher-researchers – we must admit that compiling something we could actually call a “bibliography” for a course on Child Rights was a rather daunting task. But we are relatively satisfied with where we stand today in terms of our acquired knowledge and future plans. This initial bibliography then, is by no means definite and complete, but rather a “work in progress”, much like the “work in progress” which defines Child Rights, with new challenges emerging on a daily basis.

Bibliography

1. Do you know what Human Rights are? (Word document) (Note: Integrates lesson plan to explain to youth what rights are over a period of a week or more, depending on hours/day)
2. Children´s Rights: Conventions and their Limits – Michael Freeman, UniversityCollege, London. (From *Taking Child Rights Seriously*, SIDA)
3. Institutionalizing Child Rights: Contending Cultural Perspectives, GöranHyden. (From *Taking Child Rights Seriously*, SIDA)
4. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, EugeenVerhellen
5. Informe Anual dela Alta Comisionada de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos sobre la situación de los Derechos Humanos en Colombia. 4 de Marzo de 2010 (Original: Español e Inglés).

6. Education, Democracy and Human Rights, Position Paper, SIDA, June 2005
7. ¿Por qué y para qué educar? (Why and for what is Education?) Capítulo 1 de Educación, La Agenda del Siglo XXI: Hacia un Desarrollo Humano. (Education, the Agenda of the 21st Century: Towards a Human Development). Hernando Gomez Buendía. TM Editores.
8. ¿Donde Estamos? (Where are we?) Capítulo 2 de Educación, La Agenda del Siglo XXI: Hacia un Desarrollo Humano. (Education, the Agenda of the 21st Century: Towards a Human Development). Hernando Gomez Buendía. TM Editores.
9. La debilidad del proyecto público. (The Weakness of the Public Project). Capítulo 3 de Educación, La Agenda del Siglo XXI: Hacia un Desarrollo Humano. (Education, the Agenda of the 21st Century: Towards a Human Development). Hernando Gomez Buendía. TM Editores.
10. Concepciones de estado y educación.(Conceptions of State and Education). Capitulo 4 de Educación, La Agenda del Siglo XXI: Hacia un Desarrollo Humano. (Education, the Agenda of the 21st Century: Towards a Human Development). Hernando Gomez Buendía. TM Editores.
11. Hacia una nueva política educativa. Capítulo 5 de Educación, La Agenda del Siglo XXI: Hacia un Desarrollo Humano. (Education, the Agenda of the 21st Century: Towards a Human Development). Hernando Gomez Buendía. TM Editores.
12. Escuela de Puertas Abiertas
13. Hubbard and Power (1999) Living the Questions
14. Freeman (1998) Teacher Research
15. Burns (2003) Action Research

Possible material to be employed by themes:

Children and armed conflict in Colombia:

1. Caracterización de las niñas, niños y adolescentes desvinculados de los grupos armados ilegales: Inserción social y productiva desde un enfoque de derechos humanos. (Published by the Defensoría de l Pueblo, Defensoría Delegada para los Derechos de la Niñez, la Juventud y la Mujer, jointly with UNICEF)
2. Reclutamiento forzoso de Niños (Artículo publicado por el Min. Defensa, Colombia – PDF)
3. Notas sobre niños y conflicto armado (Ponencia del señor Michael Frühling,

Director de la Oficina en Colombia del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos En la presentación del libro: *Niños, niñas, jóvenes y conflicto armado*, 12 de junio de 2003)

Articles from the press and other sources:

1. 116 alcaldes firman acuerdo por la niñez. (116 Mayors sign the Agreement for Childhood). El Tiempo, Jueves 9 de diciembre de 2010.
2. 26,000 embarazadas en mujeres violadas en el conflicto.(26,000 Pregnant Among Raped Women in the Conflict.El Tiempo, Domingo 12 de diciembre de 2010.
3. Solo 22% de los colegios educan en sexualidad (Only 22% of schools offer sexual education). El Tiempo, Jueves 2 de diciembre de 2010
4. Celebrating the Spirit of India's Disadvantaged Child. First City, January 2004

Short Stories about Children's Rights written and edited by Marcela Falla

- The day that Tini got to know about his rights
- The squeeze of the buzzard

Visual Material:

1. PhotosEthiopia (Marcela collection)
2. PhotosEthiopia (Sanjay collection)
3. Niños Soldados en Uganda (Child Soldiers in Uganda, produced by Médicos sin Fronteras or Doctors Without Borders).
4. Who Wants to be a Millionaire. Movie nominated for Academy Award in various categories. Depicts lives of orphans in Mumbai (Bombay, India).
5. Voice of Girls and Boys on Discrimination (Indian context). Directed and produced by Siddhartha Sharma. Sponsored by Save the Children Sweden.
5. Interview conducted to ex-member of FARC at the Museum of Modern Arts, Bogota, during an exposition depicting the Horrors of War. The paintings were the work of the very people who have been part of this war, as combatants.
6. Chomsky on Education and Democracy
7. Children of Heaven (Directed by Majid Majidi, nominated for Best Foreign Language Film in Academy Awards).
8. Las Tortugas Tambien Vuelan (Turtles also Fly, directed by Bahman Ghobadi). Depicts lives of children in the midst of war who are forced to grow up before time. Set in the Kurdistan context, between Iran and Turkey).
9. La Mala Educacion (Bad Education, Directed by Pedro Almodovar). Sexual abuse by Catholic priests, transexuality, and drug abuse are central themes the movie presents.
10. Mujeres Lideres Actoras Politicas (Women Leaders, Political Actors). Produced by Colombian Initiative of Women for Peace, sponsored by the Swedish International Development Agency and by ST (Swedish Federation of Public Workers)
11. Water (Directed by Deepa Mehta). Depicts the fate of widowed women and young girls in an ashram in Varanasi, India.
12. Salaam Bombay (Directed by Mira Nair). The film chronicles the day-to-day life of children living on the streets of Mumbai (formerly known as Bombay). It won

the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Hindi, the National Board of Review Award for Top Foreign Film, the Golden Camera and Audience Awards at the Cannes Film Festival, and three awards at the Montreal World Film Festival. The film was India's second film submission to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film (Wikipedia).

Websites of Interest:

1. <http://www.crin.org/themes/ViewTheme.asp?id=9>. Child Rights Information Network

Organizations of Interest:

1. Organizations in Colombia and abroad listed in CRIN (Child Rights Information Network)

Conclusions

As a way of evaluating our future path, we conducted a SWOT analysis (i.e. **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats**). These are presented below:

SWOT
<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>type of design</i> of the program which includes the following components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A theoretical and practical dimension ○ The principles of <i>Inquiry Based Learning</i> and <i>Teacher Research</i> ○ The <i>Glocal Approach</i> (a blend of the “global” and the “local” based on the Japanese term “Dochakuka” where international farming techniques were adopted and adapted to local contexts to respect cultural specificities of the latter). ○ The <i>Reflective Component</i> where educators can think about the problems affecting Colombian children and the teaching practices held at school • The <i>target population</i> who can benefit from taking the course (Teachers, Teacher trainers, Principals, Headmasters, Supervisors, Level coordinators, Human rights’ activists, Parents, Government workers/personnel working in the area of Children’s rights and Human Rights, Members of NGOs and Social Organizations). • The <i>language</i> that will be used to develop the workshops. Depending on the target population taking the course, either Spanish or English will be used as a means of instruction. This aspect will give more people the opportunity to take the course, thus having a wider coverage. • <i>Children</i>, ultimately the final benefactors of this project, <i>will benefit</i> from the fact that their educators will be trained on the issue of Children’s Rights.

- The fact that *our team is comprised of three educators* who work at different levels with distinct populations: children, undergraduate students in private universities, and Masters students in a public university. This brings fresh perspectives and approaches in our discussions and ultimately in our courses of action.
- The fact that *subsequent Colombian teams* have decided to base their projects on the work that we have initiated, thereby giving it continuity, and thus an opportunity to sustain itself over time.
- The fact that *we have engaged in talks* with the Minister of Education and other government bodies regarding our project.

Weaknesses

- The *time* factor.
The time the target population will need to take the course considering that many of them have a full schedule where they work.

Opportunities

- *People interested in educating children* will have a chance to expand their understanding and awareness of CRC.
- *Teachers will be able to reflect upon their teaching practices* in order to include CRC principles in their teaching, thereby strengthening their theoretical knowledge.
- *Teachers will be able to carry out action research projects* which will help qualify their practices whilst taking informed decisions. This will essentially grant them the opportunity to act as change agents, grappling with the complexities of enacting change in their respective educational settings.
- The team *members will be able to constantly interact with the government bodies* regarding our project and inform them about the type of professional development that is taking place at the local context.
- *The web that is getting started with the other Colombian Batches* that have taken the course at Lund University and who are interested in promoting Children's Rights in the different institutions where they work. This will help establish alliances that can favour Colombian children.

Threats

- *Teachers' lack of time and willingness* to become updated on the CRC.
- *The lack of support teachers can get* from their principals and coordinators to enrol in the course.

Way Forward

After having designed the course ‘**Understanding Children’s Rights to bring about Change in Educational Settings in Colombia**’, we need to make alliances with the different government bodies and private organizations interested in promoting children rights in Colombia. Besides, we also need to find ways to implement the course at the local and national level and some of the ideas for doing so are as follows:

- To join efforts and support the other Colombian Batches involved in Teacher Education.
- To build alliances between the public and the private sectors in order to promote the course contributing to raise awareness on Children’s Rights in Colombia.
- To contact the director of *ASOCOLDEP (Asociación Colombiana de Educación Privada)*, and offer the course so that the teachers belonging to this association (at the private sector), can take the course.
- To contact the director of la *Oficina de Extensión*, at Distrital University, to find ways to offer the course to teachers who work at the public sector.
- To contact the Ministry of Education and the Secretary of Education in order to find ways to offer the course to teachers who work at the public sector.

APPENDIX 1

Though this final report is a collective team effort, the individual members of the Colombian Team (batch 11) have decided to also assert their individuality and write a few lines of their experience of the profoundly enriching Advanced International Training Program in Sweden and Ethiopia.

Sanjay's concluding remarks:

Here we are, submitting our final project, but well aware that this is also the beginning of practical courses of action, which will be the real indicators of our impact to foster Child Rights in Colombia. I wish to thank our mentor Ulf Leo, who was decisive in making us aware in a meeting in Ethiopia of the necessity of taking a detour from our initial plans, to ensure a greater impact and sustainability in our project. Though that suggestion was initially one that confused us, not knowing what direction to take, I thank you Ulf, for your effective foresight, non-intrusive guidance and friendly disposition.

To my team members, Claudia Torres and Marcela Falla Barragan... Thank you, thank you, thank you! I couldn't have had a better team! In Sweden my relation to Claudia changed from "professor Claudia" to simply "Claudia". If my initial respect for professor Claudia, who taught me various courses in the Masters in Applied Linguistics, was high, my admiration for her grew exponentially during the SIDA project. She is a natural team leader, who has a flair for relating to people, irrespective of where these people stand in terms of their social condition or professional status. And I learnt in Paris, where we had a stopover on our way to Sweden, that she not only wears a constant smile, but also has fits of laughter, particularly after midnight, when sharing rooms with Marcela! Her synchronization of events during Ulf's visit to Colombia was particularly commendable, speaking of her excellent organization skills and hard work.

Marcela - who was initially a student of mine in a graduate program in Bilingual Education, which was actually directed by Claudia - was my "quieter" teammate... but her voice was heard "loud and clear" through her stories on Child Rights. We are fortunate as a team, and very privileged, to have stories written by Marcela as part of our bibliography. Not only that, but we have in Marcela a superb photographer, who has already organized photo expositions of Ethiopia in Colombia with the view of sensitizing the larger community of Child Rights through a visual medium. As we witnessed in Ethiopia, Marcela is not only our Colombian Astrid Lindgren, but a superb story-teller. I cannot help but remember how the participants from different countries sat on the floor in our conference room in Ethiopia while she delighted us reading the story of Tini, a monkey who learns about child rights. Her presence and insightful questions in our various work sessions, while she served us hot chocolate, kept us on our toes as a team, constantly questioning how best to address our concerns and achieve our goals.

Additionally, we were an unusual team given that we were not really three but four in our team... Marcela travelled to Sweden being pregnant, and travelled to Ethiopia after giving birth to a beautiful baby boy. Knowing that she was carrying a child in Sweden,

while we were on a course on Child Rights, had an effect that is difficult to put into words... it was a blessing.

As far as where I stand today, I am applying to a Masters in International Education Policy, and I must admit that after taking the GRE exam, I do not know if I will be accepted to the program of my choice. What I do know, however, is that irrespective of the outcome regarding my acceptance, I wish to continue democratizing education. As I wrote regarding a paradigm shift in instructional practices that is also applicable to transformations regarding Child Rights, what is required is “*sheer hard work, a solid theoretical and practical knowledge base, and a burning desire to embrace democratic principles*” (Nanwani, Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal, No.11, September 2009; also retrievable from <http://www.asocopi.org/files/NewsletterAbril2009.pdf>).

To conclude, thank you to Per Wickenberg, Agnetta Flinck, Bodil Rasmusson, Richard Stenelo, and Emma Alfredsson, for your knowledge and friendly disposition.

Marcela's Concluding remarks:

After working as a team with compromise and effort, I am excited to see the results obtained of time spent together sharing lots of adventures and experiences. I expect our project to be a contribution to those grownups that are part of our society which is so affected by violence (where the statistics of immoral acts against children do not seem to decrease), so that they will help promote children's rights and be doing so, we can build towards the future a happier society.

Once again I would like to thank the Lord for having the opportunity of being part of this program which benefits the children of the world. A program which allowed me to know different cultures, languages and where I had the chance of exchanging experiences and knowledge which helped me grow as a person and as a professional.

I want to express my gratitude to Ulf Leo, our mentor, for sharing his knowledge and experience, for his warmth, kindness and encouragement during our project. Thanks to my co-workers Sanjay Nanwani and Claudia Torres for being my guides and my inspiration to be better every day. During the program, we lived unforgettable moments which made us closer and made us an awesome working team. Claudia, from you I learnt that I must work hard in each thing I start; thanks for your joy, for being my friend and for teaching me to be strong when facing problems. Sanjay, thanks for teaching me that I am able to get it, to trust myself and for teaching me to have high goals and to strive to reach them. Also I thank my lovely sons, Santiago and Juan Felipe, for their patience and to my husband, Alexander, for his unconditional support and for his valuable help in our project.

Claudia's Concluding remarks:

Reflecting upon the magnificent opportunity I had of having been chosen as part of the Colombian team, Batch 11, to represent Colombia in the advanced international training program on *Child Rights, Classroom and School Management*, I want to share the following: I was able to grow personally and professionally in many ways since I had the chance of interacting and getting to know wonderful people from Sweden, Africa, China, India, Indonesia and Jordan, who are committed in making a difference in the lives of many children throughout the world. In this encounter, I was able to evidence

that it does not matter if we come from different backgrounds or cultures, or if we speak various languages, the fact is that we were able to communicate and to understand each other. This, for me, is a vivid example that shows that through dialogue it is possible to live in peace in this world. This allowed me to value more than ever the worth of diversity.

Moreover, I was able to learn greatly from our mentors, especially from Ulf Leo, who guided and supported us all along the process and who had the insight of suggesting us to focus on Teacher Development. I also learned from my colleagues, from their experience and generous sharing, from the various contexts where they work and from the type of projects they are implementing.

Besides, we were able to consolidate the Colombian team. We worked and shared wonderful moments together which are unforgettable. Today I can say with pride that I gained two great friends; thank you Sanjay for your insights, your opened attitude and generosity. Marcela, the child you have inside will always make you a unique human being; your caring and warm personality allowed us to become very close. Thank you both for making this possible.

I feel honored and lucky to belong to this community of committed change agents who are helping respect children's rights across the world. Through this program one evidences the importance of working towards this aim and how through Education this can be achieved.