

CHILDREN IN FOCUS 2

Reflections from the State and Faith-Based Organizations



Foreword

In the evolution of humanity, two dimensions are essential in constructing the narrative of any development: the historical dimension and the social dimension. Through these, time and place record the advances and setbacks in human affairs. It is in this context that we must acknowledge two agreements that have marked a turning point in our region—particularly in multilateralism and the protection of the human seed. The Inter-American Democratic Charter and the Convention on the Rights of the Child are instruments that guide us in building societies where human beings are recognized, from their earliest days through adulthood, as subjects of rights. This is not a mere statement of principle; both the Organization of American States (OAS) and civil society organisations have taken on the task of promoting and safeguarding these rights.

Accordingly, the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN), as a specialized entity of the OAS, and Arigatou International, as a civil society organisation, have come together to publish this second issue of *Childhood in Perspective: Reflections from the State and Faith-Based Civil Society*.

One might ask why an international body would partner with faith-based organisations to promote and protect the human rights of children and adolescents. Religious values are deeply connected to the rights-based approach to childhood and adolescence. It was for this reason that leaders of various religions contributed to the analysis and drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which remains the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. This collaboration highlights a value shared by the world's seven most widely practiced religions—Buddhism, Christianity, the Bahá'í Faith, Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism—namely, the commitment to placing the dignity of children and adolescents at the center, in pursuit of more caring, just, peaceful, and fraternal societies.

In this regard, the convergence of social, political, civic, and religious values becomes even more significant in today's context, where we are unfortunately witnessing the rise of movements that challenge the progress of human rights—especially in matters concerning the protection



of children and adolescents. This reality calls us to promote and reinforce collaboration between faith-based civil society organisations (FBOs) and the formulation and implementation of public policies. At IIN-OAS and Arigatou International, we believe that strengthening the capacities of those actors responsible for guaranteeing rights—whether from the State, civil society, or the community—is a shared responsibility. In this sense, we are committed to generating all possible synergies to extend our reach and ensure that this message touches as many lives as possible.

The articles compiled in this edition of *Childhood in Perspective* focus on the value of joint efforts between faith-based organisations (FBOs) and the State—on shared responsibilities and on the spaces where public protection policies converge with civil society initiatives, programs, and projects. They also underscore the importance of recognizing and appreciating the contributions of both sectors, as a means of opening pathways for dialogue and collaboration.

Before closing, we would like to share the content of the table of rights bequeathed to us in 1927 by Dr. Luis Morquio, founder of the Inter-American Children's Institute: "10. The sum of these rights of the child forms the integral right: the right to life. The greatness of nations depends on their recognition and observance. The values of man's destiny in a new stage of history lie in the health, joy, and unhindered education of children for culture, work, freedom, and cooperation."

May this serve as a source of inspiration throughout the reading of these articles, which bring us closer to the visions and proposals of those of us who have made our professional work a life mission—and who walk the path from a rights-based perspective in the pursuit of societies that fully embrace the value of children and adolescents—past, present, and future.

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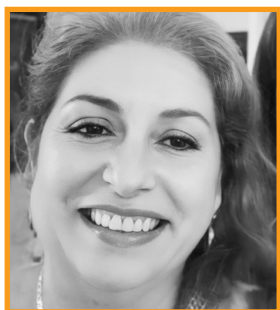
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01

Violence Against Children and Adolescents in the **Digital World**: How to Protect Them



Violence against children and adolescents, in its many forms, is an issue that should concern all of us—whether as parents, children, aunts, uncles, grandparents, siblings, or simply individuals who at some point interact with this vulnerable population. It is our shared responsibility to prevent and report it.

From my work over many years in a Peruvian state institution, I have seen firsthand the reality of violence against children and adolescents—an issue that has grown more severe with the rise of social media and the digital world. Today, the Directorate of





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• The CRC is the world's most ratified treaty.

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Special Protection of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP)—a technical, regulatory, and administrative body—proposes norms, guidelines, programs, and strategies to improve the quality of services provided by the Special Protection Units (UPEs)¹ in defence of children's and adolescents' fundamental rights. These units receive complaints from any person, institution, or authority where a violation of rights is suspected.

Globally, we have the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history—the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC). Yet violence against children has not ceased—not in our continent nor elsewhere. While technology has made this violence more visible (a benefit in terms of awareness),

1 The UPEs are the administrative instance of the MIMP that act in the procedure for the lack of family protection of children and adolescents without parental care or at risk of losing it; currently in Peru there are 25 at national level.



*Adults often confuse parental **love**
and care with **authoritarianism,**
control, and **ownership***



it has also revealed deeply ingrained and historically normalized violent behaviours that many children, adolescents, and adults have come to accept as part of daily life, without realizing their complexity and long-term consequences.

Adults often confuse parental love and care with authoritarianism, control, and ownership—forms of power that can manifest as violence. Meanwhile, children and adolescents may interpret this behaviour as love, loyalty, or submission. Latin America and the Caribbean are among the world’s most violent regions, where violence is often mistaken for tradition or habit.²

Article 19 of the CRC obliges States to take comprehensive measures in all settings to protect children from all forms of violence.³

- 2 Course ‘Strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration for children’s rights - States and faith-based civil society organisations’, Arigatou International and the Inter-American Children’s Institute (INN), video by Marta Santos Pais ‘Violence against Children: a silent emergency’.
- 3 CRC Art. 9: States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child (...).





2006

fue el **primer estudio mundial** completo sobre todas las formas de violencia contra las niñas y niños.



2016

Revisión por la ONU

The 2006 report by Paulo Sergio Pinheiro⁴ to the United Nations (UN) marked the first comprehensive global study on violence against children. A decade later, the UN released a follow-up report evaluating global progress.

Since Peru ratified the CRC in 1990, it has been legally obligated to comply with its provisions. In the years since, Peru has gradually adapted its legal framework to uphold the rights of children and adolescents, who are now legally recognized as rights holders with equal opportunities, without discrimination based on sex or other distinctions. Their integrity is protected, and they are legally shielded from crimes such as torture, cruel or degrading treatment, forced labour, human trafficking, prostitution, the sale and trafficking of children, and all other forms of exploitation that violate their dignity.

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Since Peru ratified the CRC in 1990, it has been legally obligated to comply with its provisions.

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4 'World Report on Violence against Children', was published in February 2009. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, independent expert, for the UN Secretary-General's study on violence against children.





In 2014, Peru passed the Law on the Promotion of the Safe and Responsible Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by Children and Adolescents.⁵ Although the law encouraged responsible ICT use,⁶ and sought to protect young users from the risks of unrestricted internet access, it only came into force in 2019 with the approval of its regulation.⁷ This regulation established responsible ICT use as a national priority in alignment with the best interests of the child. It called for the involvement of the private sector, civil society and regulated internet service providers to enable the blocking of websites containing pornographic or violent content. However, it was left to users to activate these filters. The rapid advance of

5 Law N°30254, 'Law for the Promotion of the Safe and Responsible Use of Information and Communication Technologies by Children and Adolescents'.

6 Information and Communication Technology.

7 Supreme Decree N°093-2019-PCM, 13.05.2019, approved the Regulation of Law N°30254.

The initiative *Prevent to Protect* was introduced to combat sexual violence against children and adolescents.

- technology outpaced regulatory efforts. Private companies and public entities were largely unable to monitor or enforce content-filtering compliance, and penalties for non-compliance remained unclear or ineffective.

Meanwhile, the removal of religion from Peru's school curriculum has contributed to a disconnection from spirituality and values among children and adolescents, leaving them vulnerable to adult content in an environment with little oversight from the state, society, or religious institutions.

The widespread belief in the use of violence as a necessary part of child-rearing has exacerbated harm—especially among girls and adolescent women, who are disproportionately affected by sexual violence. In response, the Peruvian state adopted a multisectoral approach to address the problem. A national strategy was developed to prevent and respond to violence, strengthening the child protection system through an intersectoral approach and the collaboration of multiple stakeholders, accompanied by continuous monitoring. The initiative *Prevent to Protect* was introduced to combat sexual violence against children and adolescents.⁸

The CRC's *General Comment No. 25* acknowledges the importance of children's perspectives and best interest, particularly in the digital world—a space not originally designed for children.

While the digital world has shortened cultural distances and expanded opportunities for children and adolescents, it has also facilitated online exploitation and abuse—particularly targeting the most vulnerable. This

8 Ministerial Resolution N°225-2024-MIMP, Lima 01.07.2024.





A space not originally designed for children.



type of violence often extends beyond the victim to their entire environment, as perpetrators are frequently found within the child's family or social circle. Technology has replaced in-person interactions between children and their families, isolating them in a digital realm that disconnects them from real-world support.

Both society and faith-based actors must reflect on their historical roles and scriptural interpretations. It is essential to highlight and promote religious texts that affirm children's rights—especially their right to express opinions. A concerted effort is needed across all religious traditions to reemphasize values that uphold the dignity and protection of children and adolescents.





Violence against children as a 'silent emergency.'



Reverend Harold Segura⁹ has underscored the critical role of religions and faith communities in protecting children from violence.

Martha Santos Pais¹⁰ has described violence against children as a “silent emergency.” During her tenure, she helped achieve child protection legislation in more than 60 countries and spearheaded research across Asia, Africa, and Latin America—documenting that over half of the world’s children experience some form of violence.

The Catholic Church offers hope that technology can serve as a tool for faith. One example is *Carlo Acutis*, a 15-year-old Italian student and computer enthusiast who documented Eucharistic miracles and Marian apparitions online. Known as “God’s influencer,”¹¹ he is credited with miracles and is on the path to becoming a saint of the digital age.

In Peru, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations provides protection to children who enter the care system under Legislative Decree No. 1297 and its regulations.¹² The ministry offers family counseling,

9 Director of Faith and Development, Word Vision, Latin America and the Caribbean.

10 Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children (May 2009-June 2019)

11 Special Protection Unit are in charge of the administrative procedure..

12 Legislative Decree N°1297 Legislative Decree for the protection of children and adolescents without parental care or at risk of losing parental care, which entered into force with Supreme Decree N°001-2018-MIMP.



parenting guidelines, psychological care, and psychotherapy, and coordinates with external healthcare institutions as needed. It also partners with other agencies to address the absence of family protection for children and adolescents, particularly in cases of neglect or abandonment. Regional and local governments are engaged in coordinated efforts to raise awareness and provide information about available protection services.

Crimes such as *human trafficking*, particularly involving children and adolescents, are increasingly prevalent in Peru, exacerbated by irregular migration and the presence of unaccompanied minors or asylum seekers. In 2023, 111 cases of trafficking were addressed. In 2024, 51 cases were recorded—90% of the victims were female adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17.

Violence against children and adolescents continues to destroy dreams and lives. Let us ensure that technology becomes a tool for life and protection—not another instrument of harm—wherever we stand.

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Law No. 27337, which approved the New Code of Children and Adolescents; Platform of the Peruvian State: <https://lpderecho.pe> .





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02

Promoting children's rights in Peru, from an inter-religious approach



"A compatriot of mine, José María Arguedas, called Peru the country of 'every blood'. I don't think there is a formula that defines it better... If we dig a little, we discover that Peru, like Borges' Aleph, is in small format the whole world. What an extraordinary privilege of a country that has no identity because it has all of them!"

Mario Vargas Llosa,
In praise of reading and fiction
Speech on receiving the 2010 Nobel Prize in Literature¹

¹ Ministerio de Cultura, 2025, p. 6



This quote by Mario Vargas Llosa masterfully highlights Peru's rich cultural diversity. As he suggests, the country is a melting pot of identities, which—far from being reduced to a single one—harbours a multiplicity that reflects, on a small scale, the complexity of the entire world. This vision aligns well with José María Arguedas' notion of Peru as "the country of every blood," where multiple cultures², languages, traditions and expressions of faith converge and intertwine, creating a plural and dynamic identity.

However, the protection of children's rights in contemporary Peru remains a significant challenge. Despite legal progress and public policies aimed at guaranteeing children's well-being, many still face vulnerability due to poverty, violence, and unequal access to education and health care. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these issues, putting children's holistic development at risk.

In this context, religious communities hold enormous potential to promote and defend children's rights. Beyond doctrinal differences, diverse faith traditions share fundamental principles such as human dignity, social justice, and the duty to protect the most vulnerable. Nevertheless, a lack of coordination and strategic planning has limited their impact. This article proposes an interfaith approach to enhance collaboration among these actors and to translate shared values into concrete actions that secure a safe and inclusive future for all children in Peru.

2 Ministerio de Cultura del Perú. (2018). Informe sobre la diversidad cultural y los derechos de los pueblos indígenas en el Perú. Ministerio de Cultura. <https://www.gob.pe/cultura>



The Potential of an Interfaith Approach to Child Protection



- **Context of Child Rights in Peru**

Despite international commitments and national policies, children in Peru continue to face multiple forms of violence and exclusion. The main challenges include:

- **Impact of the pandemic**

Cinco años después del inicio de la crisis sanitaria, el Perú sigue experimentando los efectos de la pandemia en el desarrollo de la niñez. Las brechas educativas se han



ampliado significativamente, la interrupción de procesos escolares ha dejado secuelas en el aprendizaje, y los sistemas de protección infantil, ya debilitados, aún no han logrado una recuperación plena. Esto ha generado un entorno de mayor vulnerabilidad para los niños y niñas, especialmente en los sectores más desfavorecidos.

● Social inequalities:

Despite efforts, poverty and social exclusion still restrict many children's access to essential services like education, health care, and nutrition. The pandemic deepened these inequalities, with persistent development gaps most visible in rural and marginalized urban areas.





● Violence and abuse:

Domestic violence, child abuse, and labour exploitation remain serious issues affecting children in Peru. Although some preventive measures have been introduced, inequitable access to protection services and psychological support limits their effectiveness.

● The role of religious communities

Peru is a country of rich spiritual diversity³. This plurality offers a strong ethical and communal foundation to advance children's rights.

3 Romero, C. (2016). Diversidad religiosa en el Perú: Miradas múltiples, p. 13 <https://www.gob.pe/cultura>





Through support networks, aid programs, and community initiatives, faith actors strengthen child protection systems.



Religious communities have historically played a role in supporting and protecting children. Their widespread presence and influence in the daily lives of families make them key allies in defending children's rights.

All religious traditions share core values like respect for human dignity, social justice, and the protection of the vulnerable—offering fertile ground for strategic alliances.

Furthermore, these communities are deeply embedded in diverse social contexts, giving them a unique capacity for crisis response—whether during health emergencies, natural disasters, or episodes of violence. Through support networks, aid programs, and community initiatives, faith actors strengthen child protection systems by creating safe spaces and providing support where it is most needed.



Toward Coordinated Action

Multiple child-focused organizations and global initiatives are actively supporting the child rights agenda in Peru. Among them is the **Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC)**,⁴ an international interfaith network that brings together organizations and individuals from diverse faith traditions, united by a shared commitment to promote and protect children's rights worldwide. **Action for Children**⁵ is a leading organization known for developing innovative and sustainable initiatives. It focuses on advancing a social justice agenda, strengthening programs and public policies to guarantee the rights of children and adolescents, protecting them from gender-based violence, and promoting their holistic development. **Aldeas Infantiles SOS Peru**,⁶ works to promote and defend the rights of children, adolescents, and young people, particularly those who have lost parental care or are at risk of losing it. **World Vision Peru**,⁷ an international NGO with more than 40 years of presence in the country, is dedicated to transforming the lives of children and adolescents, ensuring that they grow up in safe and protective environments.

The **Interreligious Council of Peru – Religions for Peace**, which unites 16 religious entities to promote peace and justice, and the **Child in the Centre Program (Programa Centralidad de la Niñez - PCN)**, under the motto "Let's change history: 0 violence, 100% kindness," have made strides. However, broader collaboration is still lacking.

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A lack of coordination... has limited their impact.

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4 <https://gnrc.net/>

5 <https://www.accionporlosninos.org.pe/>

6 www.aldeasinfantiles.org.pe

7 <https://worldvision.pe/>



- Despite the enormous potential of religious communities, several barriers persist that limit their impact on child protection at the national level. One of the primary challenges is the lack of interreligious collaboration. Currently, there is no consolidated platform to facilitate joint action across religious traditions, leading to fragmented efforts and diminished reach and impact.

Another significant limitation is the shortage of resources. Inadequate funding and a lack of specialized technical support hinder the implementation of sustainable, long-term projects. This issue is further compounded by the absence of clear strategies: without common guidelines to align and coordinate the actions of religious communities, civil society, and the state, initiatives often remain isolated and less effective.

Building Synergies to Strengthen Child Protection

Addressing these limitations requires building synergies between religious communities, the state, and civil society to reinforce existing child protection programs and policies. Rather than creating new structures, more effective articulation is needed to leverage the ethical, organizational, and community strength of faith-based actors.

A first step is to create **spaces for interreligious dialogue**, where leaders and civil society representatives can share experiences and commit to collaborative action. These dialogues would foster a culture of respect for children's rights and generate tangible commitments—such as supporting the National Strategy to Eradicate Violence Against Chil-

*...without
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dren and Adolescents and the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations' protection policies.

The development of **ethical guidelines**—based on shared values across faiths—would also help guide collaboration with existing protection programs. These could enhance faith-based advocacy within Women's Emergency Centers, Municipal Ombudspersons for Children and Adolescents (DEMUNA), and violence prevention efforts at local level.





Further, **collaborative social action projects** should serve as strategic complements to national efforts to combat abuse, malnutrition, and school exclusion. Partnerships among religious communities, development organizations, local governments, and child protection agencies are crucial for this purpose.

Key stakeholders in promoting such synergy include the Methodist Church of Peru, the GNRC, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, UNICEF Peru, and various ecumenical and interreligious human rights organizations. Integrating their efforts under shared objectives is vital to build a safe, dignified environment for all children.

Conclusions

Promoting children's rights in Peru requires a holistic and collaborative approach involving the state, civil society, and religious communities. A structured inter-faith approach will not only reinforce child protection but also foster a more just and inclusive society. Translating faith into action is a moral imperative to ensure the well-being and future of children.

Initiatives like GNRC, the Interreligious Council of Peru, Religions for Peace and PCN, as well as organizations like Action for Children, AISOS, SOS Peru, and World Vision Peru, are examples of how faith communities can come together to work for children, with actions to prevent violence and promote children's rights and dignity. It demonstrates how cross-sector collaboration can yield sustainable, positive change for the most vulnerable.

However, to fully realize their potential, ongoing barriers—such as lack of coordination, insufficient training, and limited funding—must be overcome. Only through committed, unified action can we ensure that all children in Peru, regardless of their background, grow up in environments of tenderness, justice, and hope.

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03

Parental Rights: New times, new approach



This article explores the critical intersection between parental rights and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*—the international legal framework that establishes minimum standards for the well-being and comprehensive development of children and adolescents.

The CRC not only recognizes children and adolescents as subjects of rights, but also explicitly outlines the fundamental requirements necessary to ensure their effective participation in all matters that affect them.





These requirements go beyond merely allowing children to be physically present in discussions. They demand the creation of environments in which children's voices are heard, valued, and considered in a meaningful way—recognizing their capacity and right to influence the decisions that shape their lives.

Therefore, parents and caregivers must ensure that the information shared with children is truthful and presented in a way that is understandable to both parties. Participation must be voluntary—children should feel safe to express themselves, without coercion or threats. The perspectives of children and adults should be regarded as equally important. Information should be relevant to the topic and appropriate to the moment of discussion. Topics must be presented in ways that align with children’s evolving capacities, considering their age and maturity, and using familiar tools and resources. All individuals should be included, and all viewpoints should be considered.

In short, communication should be transparent, informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, accessible, inclusive, safe, accountable, and supported by adult training. The choice of topics, methods of communication, and resulting decisions must be monitored, evaluated, and backed by accountability mechanisms.

General Comment 12¹ breaks down the right to be heard. Listening is as important as expression. Children must feel safe and secure when sharing their views, and adults are responsible for creating an active listening environment. Children should be able to form their judgments and express their opinions freely, while adults must respect and value these opinions, taking into account the child’s age and maturity.

1 Recuperado de <https://www.upla.cl>





When designing spaces for child participation, the frameworks developed by Roger Hart and Laura Lundy provide useful guidance. Their approaches align with the nine basic requirements for ethical and effective participation set out by General Comment 12, emphasizing the essential role of adults in facilitating effective participation.

Hart² defines participation as the capacity to express socially recognized decisions that impact one's life or community. He emphasizes the need for access to information and meaningful experiences. He views child participation as a collaborative process that fosters trust, initiative, and mutual learning between adults and children, and sees it as a fundamental human right in a democratic society.

2 Recuperado de https://www.sename.cl/wsename/otros/participacion_2013/Ciudades_amigas_infancia/participacion_infantil.pdf

Laundy³ identifies four essential elements for effective participation: first, children must have access to a safe and inclusive space where they feel free to express their views; second, they should be provided with adequate information to help them form and articulate their opinions; third, there must be a receptive audience—individuals with the responsibility to listen to what children have to say; and finally, children's views must carry influence, meaning their opinions should be taken seriously and acted upon where appropriate.

Contribution of the Bahá'í Faith⁴

From the Bahá'í perspective, *consultation* is a tool whose primary purpose is to achieve consensus in the search for truth, decision-making, and conflict resolution, while promoting participation among all involved. Consultation can be applied in a variety of settings: family, school, neighbourhood, community organizations, clubs, and associations.

To achieve these objectives, participants must cultivate certain spiritual qualities during the process, such as active listening, empathy, openness to new ideas, a learning attitude, the elimination of prejudice, and respect for time and turn-taking. Certain essential conditions must also be met, including adherence to procedural norms that underscore the importance of freedom of expression in reaching consensual decisions and taking effective action.

3 Recuperado de https://www.sename.cl/wsename/otros/participacion_2013/Ciudades_amigas_infancia/participacion_infantil.pdf

4 Recuperado de <https://www.immerse-h2020.eu>

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Children must feel safe and secure when sharing their views, and adults are responsible for creating an active listening environment.

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Because consultation enables universal participation in decision-making processes that affect all involved, children must be educated in its use from an early age. This not only supports their personal development but also strengthens their families and communities.

Consultation is a powerful method that fosters participation among all social actors. Key elements include spiritual qualities that participants must develop—such as purity of intention, spiritual insight, detachment, attraction to the divine, humility, patience, and a spirit of service.



Consultation is a powerful method that fosters participation among all social actors..



Consultation also requires essential conditions such as harmony, love, and the pursuit of spiritual guidance. These are framed by procedural norms grounded in devotion, courtesy, dignity, care, and moderation.

Encouraging the free expression of diverse viewpoints is essential for discovering truth, understanding situations, and developing viable solutions. In this context, spiritual qualities, essential conditions, and procedural norms take on significant value, as freedom of expression depends on them for consensual decisions and effective action.

Since human beings must be educated in all areas that enable their spiritual development, the importance of instilling the practice of consultation in children from a young age cannot be overstated. Doing so will enrich their lives and, by extension, their communities.

In a spiritual environment, procedural norms flourish—devotion nurtures courtesy, dignity, care, and moderation.

Another principle of consultation is the collective obligation to accept and support decisions made by the majority. The degree to which the necessary conditions and spiritual qualities are met determines the effectiveness of the consultation process.

Educating children and adolescents in consultation from an early age equips them with a powerful tool for improving their lives and communities through truth-seeking, conflict resolution, and participatory decision-making.





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04

Public Policies and Parental Rights: Ensuring Children's Well-being Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child



"The way children are treated is the way they will treat society".

Karl Menninger

Violence is understood as the use of force involving an abuse of power; it manifests itself on multiple levels. However, it is often within close relationships that violence is conceived, perpetuated, and normalized.¹ The World Health Organization defines violence as "the deliberate use of force or power that can cause physical, psychological, or social harm."²

1 Heritier, Françoise, cited by Alberto Vásquez in "Resiliencias y sentido del humor. Herramientas posibles para el trabajo del psicólogo con adolescentes en situaciones de pobreza" dissertation, Faculty of Psychology, Catholic University of Uruguay, Montevideo, December 2015

2 "informe mundial sobre la violencia y la salud, Organización Mundial de la Salud, Ginebra 2002





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Physical punishment... perpetuates control and subjugation, dehumanizing children

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Johan Galtung³, distinguishes three interrelated forms of violence: **direct violence**, expressed in visible acts and specific behaviours; **cultural violence**, rooted in social norms and values that legitimize direct violence and are reflected in attitudes; and **structural violence**, which is indirect and generates inequality and injustice by denying people's basic needs.⁴

3 Johan Galtung was a Norwegian sociologist and mathematician, known as the father of peace studies, who developed an academic understanding of peacebuilding, researching peace and social conflict.

4 Hueso García, V. "Johan Galtung, La transformación de los conflictos por medio pacíficos" in Cuadernos de estrategia No. 111, ISSN 1697-6924.2000 pp 125-159 <http://dianet.unirioja.es/articulo?> (García)(21.12.2018)

During the 2019 health emergency, domestic violence intensified, highlighting the troubling perception that violence and abuse are common methods of interaction with children and adolescents. Physical punishment, often wrongly perceived as a form of discipline, perpetuates control and subjugation, dehumanizing children and reducing them to objects by exploiting the adult's position of power.

Honduras presents alarming figures related to child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, with an average of 4.6 daily reports of child victims of sexual violence between 2016 and 2020.⁵ Official data from the first half of 2025 reported 260 cases of child rights violations, including physical, sexual, and emotional violence, neglect, and exploitation.⁶

Child mistreatment causes trauma⁷ with biochemical effects on the brain, disrupting emotional regulation and leading to stress, irritability, aggression, and poor ethical development. Recent studies in the United States have analyzed the impact **of post-traumatic stress and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**,⁸ demonstrating long-term negative consequences on mental health, academic performance, and emotional stability. Family violence disproportionately affects low-income and less-educated communities but can be prevented and mitigated with appropriate interventions.

Harold Segura⁹ advocates for a **non-violent** approach grounded in solidarity, equality, and compassionate treatment of children. This approach requires education and **awareness-building through parenting schools, workshops, positive discipline initiatives, and tender parenting campaigns.**

5 <https://www.worldvision.hn/es/hn-v2-blog/lucha-contra-el-maltrato-infantil-protege-la-ni%C3%B1ez-de-honduras>

6 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/mas-17-ninos-maltratados-diario-honduras-segun-datos-senaf-EH23607102>

7 Comentario del Dr. Horacio Barrios Solano, La violencia no solo deja secuelas psicológicas, sino también huellas moleculares que afectan desde la expresión génica hasta el equilibrio metabólico. La bioquímica ofrece herramientas para reparar estos daños y entender cómo el ambiente moldea nuestra biología.

8 <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/abo> (Vincentt Felitti, 1998)ut.html

9 <https://www.elheraldo.hn/honduras/mas-17-ninos-maltratados-diario-honduras-segun-datos-senaf-EH23607102>





Promoting shared responsibility in parenting fosters more equitable family dynamics and healthier, more respectful relationships between adults and children, ensuring their holistic development in a violence-free environment.



Parenting must be grounded in the understanding that children and adolescents are human beings with full dignity and equal value. Violence is never acceptable—love never hurts.



To achieve this, it is essential to form **alliances** with state and civil society organizations to train parents and professionals in **co-parenting**, aligned with the rights of children outlined in the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**. Additionally, **public policies** must promote gender equality and shared parental responsibility.

Community mobilization—including that of **faith communities**—plays a crucial role in raising awareness and pressuring the state to enact legislative and policy changes that protect children. **Public policies** should guarantee parenting time without compromising job security, implement accessible childcare centres, and strengthen laws that criminalize violence against children. **Prevention** is key to reducing risky behaviours, improving mental health, and breaking the intergenerational cycle of trauma.

Child-rearing must be grounded in the understanding that children and adolescents are human beings with full dignity and equal value. Violence is never acceptable—love never hurts. For healthy growth and full development, it is essential to respect and protect children's fundamental rights, shielding them from neglect, abuse, exploitation, armed conflict, child labour, and discrimination. Their development is nurtured by affection, play, education, and information in environments of trust where they can express their views—encouraging autonomy and participation.





The worlds of children and adults are different but equally valuable. The normalization of child abuse in the family setting is a serious concern, as violence has significant physical, neurological, psychological, and social impacts on development. To combat this, we must take a holistic approach—promoting non-violence, engaging both faith communities and the state, advancing education, and strengthening public policies that support child protection and shared parental responsibility. The family, school, church, and neighbourhood must become spaces where children and adolescents are recognized as individuals of full dignity and empowered to contribute to society.

In conclusion, this analysis emphasizes the relational and multifactorial nature of violence affecting children and adolescents. The pandemic exposed a dangerous normalization of abuse within family settings, with far-reaching consequences. Addressing this reality requires a comprehensive approach that promotes non-violence through partnerships between the state, civil society organizations, and families—raising awareness and reinforcing child protection systems through strong public policies and co-responsible parenting.



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Implementation of the best interest of the child and the non-discrimination principle



The Best Interests of the Child, as a principle of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is enshrined in both international norms and Peruvian national legislation. The Political Constitution of Peru, in Chapter II on Social and Economic Rights, Article 4, states that the community and the State must provide special protection, above all, to children and adolescents in situations of abandonment, as well as to the family.

In particular, Article 2 affirms that everyone has the right to life, identity, moral, psychological, and physical integrity, as well as to free development and well-being. In other words, it recognises individuals as subjects of rights. The same article also





Addressing these limitations requires building synergies between religious communities, the state, and civil society to reinforce existing child protection programs and policies.



guarantees equality before the law, offering protection against discrimination based on origin, race, sex, language, religion, opinion, economic status, or any other grounds. It further protects freedom of conscience and religion—both individually and collectively—and the freedom of information, opinion, expression, and dissemination of thought through speech, writing, or images, by any means of social communication, without prior authorization or censorship, subject to legal responsibilities.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has made several recommendations to the Peruvian State, one of which pertains to the family environment and alternative care arrangements. These aim to align practices with the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, ensuring that States, including Peru, support efforts to keep children and adolescents within the care and protection of their families whenever possible.

It must also be noted that States are obligated to provide support to mothers, fathers, guardians, or other individuals responsible for a child or adolescent, to ensure that children remain in their care and that their rights are not violated.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, hereinafter “the Convention,” outlines four fundamental principles in favour of the rights of children and adolescents.





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The development of ethical guidelines—based on shared values across faiths—would also help guide collaboration with existing protection programs.

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Article 2, paragraph 2, of the Convention, states that States must take all appropriate measures to ensure that children and adolescents are protected from all forms of discrimination based on their own or their parents' status, activities, opinions, or beliefs.

It is worth noting that gender-based discrimination has been acknowledged by religious leaders and faith communities. As the study Faith and Children's Rights revealed, gender-based discriminatory practices persist in some religious contexts, contradicting the values in their sacred texts.



Christianity

Reverend Julio Murray, reflecting on the principle of non-discrimination from a **Christian perspective**, emphasized that the church, from the standpoint of universal law, affirms that all human beings—regardless of origin, race, or gender—are created in the image of God. He further asserted that failing to treat others with respect is an insult to God and that discrimination and racism constitute sin.

Christianity teaches that God does not show favouritism or discriminate among human beings, **having created both man and woman in His image and likeness, according to the Holy Scriptures**. Therefore, significant challenges remain within Christianity to confront and eliminate discrimination and racism.

Judaism

Judaism also emphasizes the equality of men and women, as both are created in the divine image—a perspective similar to that of Christianity. This equality is reinforced through the covenant between God and humanity, according to Noah's covenant. However, it must be acknowledged that certain behaviours and attitudes persist that do not fully reflect the sacred teachings of Judaism.

Rabbi Pablo Berman highlighted **the importance of educating children about non-discrimination**. He noted that while a person may possess inner wisdom, it must be reflected outwardly. For some, beauty may be defined by superficial or irrelevant traits, while for others, it represents a particular worldview.



Bahá'í

God's word is divine and holy, and our inner selves should be reflected in our outward behaviour. It is not enough to simply think about protecting and caring for children and adolescents—there must be active efforts to eradicate discriminatory practices, including those sometimes embedded in the cultural norms of faith communities.

The Bahá'í Faith has condemned all acts and forms of prejudice. It promotes gender equality and **the abolition of all forms of slavery, firmly advocating for girls' equal access to education.** Notably, it also emphasizes educating boys to foster gender equality within society.

Sikh

From the Sikh perspective, there is a clear need to maintain a **holistic understanding of the Best Interests of the Child**—one that is broad, profound, and spiritually grounded, addressing all dimensions of children's and adolescents' needs.

Islam

Islam, similarly, calls for the elimination of practices that violate rights, especially those affecting girls, **as such practices contradict the core teachings of Islam, which forbids inflicting harm on any person.**





Discriminatory practices against children and adolescents—particularly against girls—remain real and visible in some faith communities... it is essential... to prioritise education and awareness to avoid repeating past mistakes.



Discriminatory practices against children and adolescents—particularly against girls—remain real and visible in some faith communities, even when such practices contradict their religious principles. It is essential, as has been noted, to prioritize education and awareness to avoid repeating past mistakes and to ensure that the rights of children are upheld. The Convention regards children as subjects of rights and holders of their legal entitlements.



The major challenge for faith communities is to align their actions with the value and sanctity of children's lives. Beyond religious identity, sacred texts already affirm the principles of best interests and non-discrimination as rights central to community life, and they even promote a culture of inclusion. Nevertheless, ongoing dialogue between religious life and secular legal frameworks is crucial to guaranteeing the full respect and realization of all children's and adolescents' rights—especially the right to live, grow, and develop within their families.

Holistic development must always be guided by the Best Interests of the Child. As noted in General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the child's right to have their best interests taken as a primary consideration, this principle seeks to ensure that every child and adolescent fully enjoys all the rights recognized by the Convention. Thus, when referring to development as "holistic," it must encompass physical, moral, mental, psychological, social, educational, health, recreational, and spiritual dimensions.

I believe that the collective challenge we face—as a society, as a State, and as individuals—is to educate and raise awareness at local, regional, national, and international levels that children and adolescents hold the same rights as adults. The right to express an opinion is a cornerstone for shaping decisions and actions that must always take into account their best interests. In this regard, the Peruvian State has been a pioneer in designing and implementing public policies and was among the first to establish a Consultative Council for Children and Adolescents—laying the foundation for more participatory public processes. It is necessary to strengthen these efforts through open dialogue with civil society and faith-based organizations, in alignment with the teachings and values of each faith community.



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