



DYNAMO AMERICAS NETWORK



Americas Network Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, United States, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Venezuela





















ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIAL STRUGGLES OF STREET OUTREACH WORKERS IN THE AMERICAS

Claudio Magnifico, MS Guatemala City, May 2021



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Claudio Magnífico, MS Consultant

José Bámaca, BS Technical Assistant

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Verónica Muller

Associação de Educadores Sociais de Maringa Brasil (President of Red Américas)

Gabriela Altman

Asociación Coalición Sembradores de Vida Guatemala (Study Coordinator)

Claudia González / Karina Ribera

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Francis Lacharite

l'Association des Travailleurs et Travailleuses de rue du Québec Canada

Gloria Henao Medina

Corporación Educativa Combos Colombia

Paúl Túquerres Romero

Fundación Somos Calle Ecuador Ecuador

Diana Matteson

Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. United States

Benito Cignac

Plateforme des travailleurs de rue et communautaire
Haití

Luis Hernández Aguilar

El Caracol A.C. México

Mariangel Monterey Villarroel

Fundación Cultural Independiente Venezuela

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01 INTRODUCTION

As part of the actions promoted by Dynamo International and the Americas Network comprised of ten countries in the region -Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, the United States, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico and Venezuela - this study was developed to create the "Assessment of the Social Struggles of Street Outreach Workers of the Americas" which delves into the structures, regulations, policies, techniques and good practices regarding the care of people who lead their daily lives on the streets of different cities. This study presents a description of the contributions that the various member organizations have made to dignify the lives of children, adolescents, and adults in North, Central and South America.

The purpose of developing the assessment is to establish the dimensions of the responses that are offered to guarantee the fulfillment of the fundamental human rights of each population



with an emphasis on the people served by the organizations of the Americas Network. It seeks the clarification of concepts in relation to national definitions and particularities in the countries themselves, as well as the relationship between the causes and effects of the phenomenon of living on the street. The study also identifies the characterization that the countries themselves make of their environments, inclusion policies and institutional structures.

Second, a description is made of the Americas Network as a whole and of the contexts in which the populations served face the daily struggle for survival. The factors that are addressed allow the identification of the large existing gaps within societies because of the precarious situation of the government institutions in terms of those capacities necessary to transform the structural dynamics of poverty and socioeconomic inequality and of those elements that significantly fragment social cohesion.

Thirdly, a snapshot of the members of the Americas Network is offered from their own institutional frameworks. This includes their experience in addressing the problems related to the populations who are in street situations and the legal parameters that each organization must operate under in its individual country. In addition, reference is made to the challenges of resources, strengths and needs related to the activities. Mention is made of aspects such as specific public policies, systems for the recognition and validation of studies related to social street work, and the mechanisms for monitoring results.

Finally, a set of recommendations is made to facilitate the development of strategies and the definition of roadmaps applicable to improving and increasing the impact of actions.

In methodological terms, the development of the assessment was carried out by documentary





analysis that allowed the collection of information through virtual consultations. In addition, four instruments were developed in coordination with high-level representatives of the member organizations of the Americas Network who provided relevant input for the study. Additionally, participation of street social educators from the ten countries involved contributed and, in some cases, facilitated focus groups with beneficiaries. Likewise, opinions from governmental organizations were gathered about the problems addressed. To further fortify the contributions generated by the country representatives and street social educators, individual interviews were conducted which allowed greater clarity in the understanding of the processes, actions, and results of the street outreach work. Without the committed participation of national representatives, field personnel, key actors and, particularly, young people and adults with experience of living on the street, it would not have been possible to prepare this assessment.



02 ABOUT THE STUDY

The study aims to offer an assessment of the social struggles that street educators face and the interventions they have been developing in the Americas as well as the direct and indirect impact of their work with street populations. This assessment gathers data about the work of the Americas Network and then uses that information to form a basis for recommendations for future projects, programs, plans and policies. Likewise, it has the potential to improve educational practice with the street population and influence better decision-making on the part of the governments of each country. For this purpose, an analysis of the training and political advocacy strategies implemented by the organizations that make up the Americas Network has been carried out to inform the assessment.

The methodology used for the development of this assessment is a mixed research design that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques. From that premise, a set of key actors was approached to contribute to the construction of a broad, realistic, and critical vision about the situational state of the actions promoted by Dynamo Americas, their direct and indirect impact, and thus inform the formulation and design of new projects, programs, plans and policies for the future. The key actors consulted to understand the different components of the study corresponded to four areas, namely:

Relevant Partners and Institutions

High Level Officials of the Dynamo Americas Network

Street Educators Front Line Workers

Youth Living in Street Situations

GRAPH 01: ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY

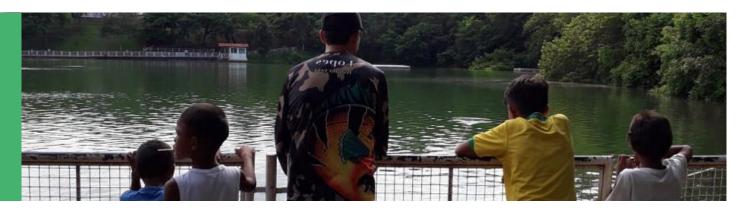


- Country representatives who constitute high level leadership of the individual organizations as they represent the Dynamo Americas Network: Institutional actors involved in the articulation, design, implementation, and evaluation of the different local advocacy strategies whose participation is vital for understanding the challenges and opportunities as well as the strategic objectives that support the work. Likewise, they provided an institutional vision on the aspirations of the Americas Network for the future.
- Relevant Partners and Institutions: Representatives of organizations linked to the Dynamo Americas Network who help define a vision of the aspirations and goals of the network and their potential role in sustainable strategies that for the short and long term.
- Street Educators/Front Line Workers: People with extensive experience derived from their direct work with people living in street situations.
- Youth Living in Street Situations: The fundamental subjects in the actions undertaken by the members of the Americas Network and the strategies carried out are based on the needs, priorities and strengths as defined by these young people.

It is worth mentioning that instruments were designed for the collection of qualitative and quantitative information to accurately describe the conditions that characterize field work and to identify basic elements for the design of future projects, programs, plans and policies. Among the main sources of information used in the framework of this study are:

- Documentary analysis: review of strategic plans, organizational reports, research and evaluation reports, statistics and other inputs that contribute to the description of the current state of the Americas Network.
- Research instruments: questionnaires addressed to representatives of national platforms, street outreach workers and key actors to gain data on the real experience of living in street situations, the actions and strategies of the Americas Network, the impact of street outreach work, the challenges and needs of the target population and future projections in terms of the design and paradigms of the new projects and programs to be implemented.
- In-depth interviews: virtual sessions to clarify and expand upon the information collected in the administered research instruments.





Focus groups developed online: the methodological proposal of this diagnosis considered the meetings of focus groups with beneficiaries from the different organizations of the Americas Network. Despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic and the paucity of resources a focus group was established with eight youth from the City of La Paz in Bolivia. Thanks to this activity, it was possible to know their firsthand experiences, aspirations and dreams as human beings who seek to survive every day in the midst of adverse conditions.

The inserted table describes the relationship between the subjects who were part of the study and the corresponding analysis components.

TABLE 01: PARTICIPANTS IN THE AMERICAS NETWORK ASSESSMENT.

	RESEARCH		STUDY COMPONENTS						
SUBJECTS OF STUDY	TECHNICIAN (VIRTUAL)	Population in Street Work	Actions and strategies Americas Network	Impact of Street Work	Challenges and needs pop. goal	Future projection			
High Level Officials Red Dynamo Americas	Interview Survey	Х	X	Х	Х	Х			
Relevant Partners and Institutions	Interview	Х	Х		Х				
Street Educators Front Line Workers	Interview Survey	Х	Х	Х	Х				
Youth Living in Street Situations	Interviews Focus group	Х		Х	X				

GRAPH 02: MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE DYNAMO NETWORK



03 THE DYNAMO INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

3.1 Story

The Dynamo International Network began its activities in 1984 in Brussels, Belgium as "Dynamo" with a focus on supporting people living in street situations because of State reforms of the 1980s. Later, in 2001, the Dynamo International Network was created as a response to young people living in street situations and their need for socio-educational support and assistance in meeting basic social needs. In addition, the importance of generating a platform for street outreach workers was considered.

However, only in 2004 was the Network legally recognized as an international non-governmental organization. By 2015 Dynamo International was recognized by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation which is an institution that incorporates among its fundamental pillars the understanding of training as a space for permanent education that must be developed based on the existence and social relationship of the individual. Namely, the interest of collective training action is emphasized as the driving force that reinforces the competences, capacities, and personality of individuals within the framework of life in society.

Currently, the Dynamo International Street Workers Network is positioned as an organization that is a leader in social work with people living in street situations. It is important to note that it has a presence on four continents: Africa, Asia, Europe, America/Caribbean and includes more than 50 nations.

America Network Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, United States, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Venezuela



3.2 Goals

Among the main objectives of the Dynamo International Street Workers Network is the strategy of constantly providing feedback on advocacy actions by speaking directly to the people living in street situations with whom the Dynamo members work. With that input, it is then possible promote to social educational street work in a pertinent and comprehensive way. In other words, Dynamo International incorporates as part of its fundamental principles the need to interpret and understand the street situation as a phenomenon whose structural causes have not been resolved; on the contrary, in many cases they have been accentuated and deepened. However, Dynamo asks national platforms to generate plans and strategies to increase the efficiency and quality of practices in that region and encourages frequent training for street outreach workers based on the regional realities, needs and available resources. Thus, proposed trainings are designed with a national context in mind and the most appropriate educational tools are generated.

On the other hand, it is observed that Dynamo International also understands that care and work in terms of a phenomenon as complex as living on the street is required at every turn. It recognizes the need to strengthen cooperation, not only at the organizational level but also in collaboration with government entities, the business sector, international organizations, and civil society. To this end, it identifies the need to articulate and build, in an inter-institutional way, structural and lasting responses for the benefit of people living in street situations around the world.



Finally, Dynamo International works to include and uplift the voices of those living in street situations so that they are part of the development of public policies in Dynamo member countries. The goal of this strategy is to make this sector of the population visible as a mechanism to fight exclusions and inequalities.

While the objectives of Dynamo International from its inception manifested a particular clarity and depth with broad global goals, its individualized approach according to region presents a challenge to centralized goals. To support the autonomy of each region and its particular strengths, needs and challenges, a regional body that contextualizes and deeply understands the social and political dynamics that characterize the American countries was agreed. Thus, the Americas Network has become a convergence space for the member countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, the United States, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, and Venezuela. This Americas Network is intended to collaborate to identify and develop best practices that establish effective ways of working with people living in street situations.



DYNAMO MEMBER COUNTRIES IN THE AMERICAS NETWORK

4.1 Demographics

The experience of living in street situations in the member countries of the Americas Network is diverse. Not only in the physical environment where it occurs, the situation varies according to regard for fundamental human rights, social assistance available to those living in street situations and public policies linked to the development of socio-economically disadvantaged populations. As a result, for this report, the organizations that make up the Americas Network first identified their organizational goals and their methodology for working with people living in street situations.

The structural complexity of the member countries of the Americas Network is first seen in the demographic makeup. When analyzing the different population structures according to official sources, which to date are presented as female and male, 9 of the 10 countries that are part of the study are characterized by having a considerable majority of women in relation to men. In this regard, among the countries with the highest percentage of females is Guatemala. It is noted that the accuracy of the last population census published in 2019 was questioned by various sectors of civil society, the international community, as well as government entities. The Guatemala census reports a total of 14,901,286 inhabitants which is 51.5% or 7,678,190 women¹, the United States 50.9%², Brazil 50.8%³, Ecuador 50.5% ⁴, Venezuela 50.8%⁵, Haiti 50.7%⁶ and Canada 50.3%⁷. In contrast, the only country that reported a majority of males was Bolivia. In Bolivia, according to the data presented by the National Institute of Statistics, of 11,677,406 inhabitants in Bolivia in 2019, about 49.8% were women and 50.2% were men.8



- National Institute of Statistics (2019) Population Census 2018, Guatemala
- United States Census Bureau (2021) Annual Estimates of the Resident Population, Washington
- Latin American and Caribbean Economic System -SELA- (2021) Member States
- National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (2010) Population Projections 2010 2020, Colombia
- World Bank (2019) Country microdata, Venezuela

- European Union (2020) Country File Haifi, Diplomatic Information Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Statics Canada (2019) Population and demography statistics, Ottawa
- National Institute of Statistics (2010) Population Projections, Revision 2020, Bolivia



TABLE 02: AMERICAS NETWORK COUNTRIES, TOTAL POPULATION BY SEX, 2019.

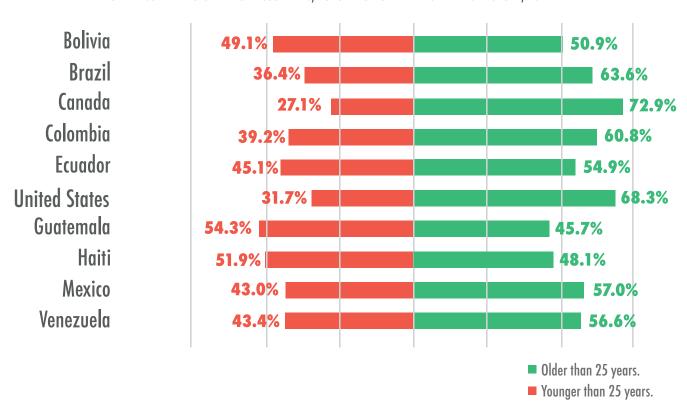
COUNTRY	POPULATION	MEN	WOMEN
Bolivia	11,677,406	5,862,058	5,815,348
Brasil	212,882,642	104,525,377	108,357,265
Canadá	38,005,238	18,888,603	19,116,635
Colombia	48,258,494	23,550,145	24,708,349
Ecuador	17,267,986	8,547,653	8,720,333
United State	328,461,000	161,274,351	167,186,649
Guatemala	14,901,286	7,227,124	7,674,162
Haití	11,067,777	5,456,414	5,611,363
México	126,014,024	61,494,844	64,519,180
Venezuela	28,515,829	14,486,041	14,029,788

As part of the study, an effort was made to establish a comparison between the study countries in terms of the population by age. Information provided by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean -CEPAL-, helps to identify that in most of the countries that make up the Americas Network people over 25 years of age form the majority of the population. It is important to mention that a population structure with a high demographic bonus represents the opportunity of greater economic possibilities for countries by strengthening capacities and opening spaces for the workingage population (PET) or promoting the economically active population (EAP). This assumption is strictly governed by the existence of viable structural conditions and the availability of relevant public policies within the framework of investment, sustainability, and transparency of the government.

Analyzing the concentration of the adult population in the study countries in order from highest to lowest, 73% of the population is over 25 years old in Canada. In the United States, those over 25 years old make up 68% of the total population. In Brazil, the percentage is very close to 64%. Countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Venezuela present percentages that range between 50.9% and 60.8%. In contrast, Haiti, and Guatemala the majority of the population is under 25 years old. In Haiti, 51.8% of its total population is under 25 years old, while in Guatemala it is 54.3%.

Source: Own elaboration with official data. Americas Network countries.





GRAPH 03: AMERICAS NETWORK COUNTRIES, POPULATION OVER AND UNDER 25 YRS. OLD, 2019. 10

The countries of the Americas Network can be classified as places where youth represent an important segment of the population. Although it is predicted that 8 of the 10 countries in the region will experience a demographic bonus and potential economic growth because of changes in the age distribution of the population¹¹, it is also evident that the transition periods vary and that each country will need to define their own needs.

For example, 65.2% of the population in Canada is economically active 12. This is related to the fact that the majority of its inhabitants are over 25 years old. This northern country not only has a high segment of adults, 40% of the population is between 25 and 54 years old and contribute to the economic and social sustainability of the nation. Meanwhile, countries such as Bolivia, Haiti and Guatemala have high percentages of the population between zero and fourteen years old, with corresponding percentages of: 30.2%, 32.5% and 33.3%. In the case of Guatemala, which has the highest percentage of youth of the study countries, according to data from the Central American Integration System -SICA-, the EAP is 50.5%13. This represents a difficulty for the Guatemalan government in terms of economic support for the maintenance of social security and developing public policies linked to the economic development of vulnerable populations. Table 03 shows the population of the study countries by age group from 0 to 14 years of age, 15 to 24, 25 to 54, 55 to 64 and over 65.

¹⁰ Source: Own elaboration with data: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean -CEPAL- (2019), Population Division of ECLAC; United Nations Development Programs -UNDP (2019), World Population Outlook, Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; World Bank (2021) Microdata North America Region.

Aguirre, Guido (2015) The Demographic Dividend in Latin America: The Economic Effect of Changes in the Age Structure of Populations. Central American Center Population. Costa Rica.

Populations, Central American Center Population, Costa Kica.

Canada Participation Rate (2021) Statistics Canada, Montreal.

¹³ Central American Integration System (2019) PEA in Guatemala



TABLE OF AL	MEDICAC METMADIA	COUNTRIFC DODIES	LATION BY AGE GROUPS.	0010 1/1
IVELE II 4. VI	WERLLVZNELWLIKK	I IIIIMIKIEZ PIIPIII	VIIIIM KA VIZE IZKITIKA	/11/9 17
IAULL UJ. AI	MILNICAS MLI WUNN	COUNTRILS. FOLUL	LATION DI AUL UNUULJ.	LUI/.

	0 -	14	15 -	- 24	25 -	- 54	55 -	- 64	65 AND	MORE	
	ABS.	REL.	ABS.	REL.	ABS.	REL.	ABS.	REL.	ABS.	REL.	TOTAL
Bolivia	3,525	30.2%	2,202	18.9%	4,332	37.1%	739	6.3%	874	7.5%	11,673
Brasil	44,019	20.7%	33,370	15.7%	93,715	44.1%	21,066	9.9%	20,389	9.6%	212,559
Canadá	5,538	15.4%	4,169	11.6%	14,218	39.6%	5,110	14.2%	6,848	19.1%	35,882
Colombia	11,287	22.2%	8,667	17.0%	21,595	42.4%	4,722	9.3%	4,611	9.1%	50,883
Ecuador	4,833	27.4%	3,128	17.7%	7,015	39.8%	1,329	7.5%	1,339	7.6%	17,643
USA	61,314	18.6%	43,202	13.1%	129,356	39.3%	42,619	12.9%	52,766	16.0%	329,256
Guatemala	5,973	33.3%	3,748	20.9%	6,429	35.9%	862	4.8%	903	5.0%	17,916
Haití	3,703	32.5%	2,209	19.4%	4,241	37.2%	659	5.8%	590	5.2%	11,403
México	33,311	25.8%	22,150	17.2%	53,149	41.2%	10,502	8.1%	9,822	7.6%	128,933
Venezuela	7,752	27.3%	4,603	16.2%	11,222	39.5%	2,592	9.1%	2,268	8.0%	28,436

4.2 Socio-Economic Aspects

In terms of the socio-economic aspects that characterize the countries of the Americas Network, analyzing poverty and extreme poverty is a starting point to identify the probability of social vulnerability that can lead to unsustainable economies, exclusion, marginality, human mobility, and violence. As stated by the United Nations Program: "The levels of poverty and inequality will trigger factors that prevent millions of inhabitants of the region from enjoying a decent life." 15

For the purposes of this study, the definition of poverty formulated by the United Nations Program as a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs is used. In concrete terms, conditions such as "difficulty in accessing food, drinking water, sanitary facilities, health, housing, education, as well as limitations in information" are included. In other words, "anyone who does not have free access to the minimum conditions that allow the development of a basic but dignified life is considered poor." For its part, extreme poverty is defined as a condition of critical precariousness translated into the struggle to survive with an income below USD \$ 1.25, aggravated by the "total lack of basic services". ¹⁶

¹⁴ Source: Own elaboration with data:

¹⁵ United Nations Development Program –UNDP- (2021) Inequality and poverty in Latin America.



The countries with the lowest poverty rate in the framework of the Americas Network are Canada and the United States. In the case of Canada, 9% of its population live in poverty, of which 5.4% live in conditions of extreme poverty. In the United States, 15% of the population meets the definition of living in poverty, within which approximately 6.7% live in extreme poverty. In contrast, Guatemala, Haiti, and Venezuela have the highest poverty levels in the region. In Guatemala, 59% of the population lives in poverty with approximately 23% living in extreme poverty. In Haiti, 75% of the population lives in poverty and more than half of them live in extreme poverty. The socio-economic conditions in Venezuela show a panorama of economic difficulties for 9 out of 10 inhabitants, which in percentage terms translates into 96% of the total population where extreme poverty affects 79%.

TABLE 04: AMERICAS NETWORK COUNTRIES, POVERTY AND EXTREME POVERTY DATA.

	POVERTY				
PAÍS	POVERTY	EXTREME POVERTY			
Bolivia ¹⁷	34.60%	15.20%			
Brasil ¹⁸	24,71%	6,53%			
Canadá ¹⁹	9.50%	5.4%			
Colombia ²⁰	35,7%	9,61%			
Ecuador ²¹	23.90%	8.73%			
United States ²²	15.30%	6.70%			
Guatemala ²³	59.30%	23.46%			
Haití ²⁴	74.60%	54.07%			
México ²⁵	48.80%	16.82%			
Venezuela ²⁶	96.20%	79.32%			

The analysis of the socio-economic conditions of the countries that make up the Americas Network allows projecting a development horizon in which the member countries require deep commitments and articulation of efforts to address social problems and poverty. In this regard, societies play a fundamental role that positions the new generations in the framework of challenging scenarios where critical reflection, the formulation and implementation of public policies, as well as the exchange of experiences are required based on economic and social development. Furthermore, it is necessary to emphasize the promotion of actions aimed at reducing inequality in all its manifestations, improving cohesion, and promoting coexistence within the framework of human rights.

¹⁷ National Institute of Statistics (2020) Economic Statistics, Bolivia

Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (2019) Synthesis of Sociais Indicators: em 2019, Brazil

¹⁹ Statics Canada (2019) Dimensions of Poverty Hub, Ottawa

National Administrative Department of Statistics (2019) National monetary and multidimensional poverty, Colombia
 National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (2019) National Survey of Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment, Ecuador

²² United States Census Bureau (2021) Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States

²³ Ministry of Social Development (2019) Multidimensional Poverty Index, Guatemala

European Union (2020) Country File Haiti, Diplomatic Information Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (2018) Measurement of poverty, Mexico

²⁶ Andrés Bello Catholic University (2019) National Survey of Living Conditions, Venezuela



4.3 Characterization of the Target Populations

Throughout the developments of various organizations focused on strengthening human rights and supporting vulnerable populations, efforts are being made to specify and clarify the population sectors to which it is intended to support through its different programs and projects. This situation is not alien to the organizations that are part of the Americas Network, which, for the most part, have definitions, concepts and characterizations that allow the identification of the target groups to whom street outreach workers provide assistance and support in terms of their emotional development, addiction management, socio-affective skills, resilience, and social protection, among others.

In the case of **Bolivia**, the legislation itself offers a definition for people living in street situations, particularly boys, girls, and adolescents -NNASC-. Law 548, Article 166 offers "those who have totally or partially separated themselves from their families, adopting the street as a space for habitat, housing and overnight, or for socialization, structuring of social relationships and survival". This definition has a situational background that characterizes this population group as finding themselves in search of "survival with existential desire". In this sense, in Bolivia the distinction between people totally on the

street and workers on the street is made. From this definition, a person living on the street becomes - without detriment to the institutional actions that may be carried out in their favor - "responsible for their own survival." In the words of a street outreach worker, people living in street situations are "dependent on the consumption of psychoactive substances and inhalants. They have totally or partially broken their family bond and adopt as a living space and spend the night on the street, under the bridges, the streams." They are "selling sweets, polishes, footwear, car windshield wipers, etc." They tend to be "victims of commercial sexual violence and trafficking."



In Brazil, the Resolution of the Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Crianca e do Adolescente - CONANDA - 187/2017, offers a definition that refers to a causality derived from the violation of rights to the point that "children and adolescents living on the street are subjects in development with violated rights, who use public places, degraded areas such as housing or survival space, permanently and / or intermittently, in a situation of vulnerability and / or personal and social risk due to the disruption or fragility of care and services, family and community ties, mainly in situations of poverty and / or extreme poverty, difficulty of access and / or permanence in public policies." Further, the characterization of these population groups is noted in terms of "their heterogeneity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnic-racial, religious, generational, territorial diversity, nationality,



political position, disability, among others." In the opinion of a Brazilian street outreach worker, these people are characterized by having "few healthy considerations. They are living on the street due to various problems in the family or because they have no other place to be. They are mostly Black people, some with a low level of education who when they turn 10 or 12 start working to help with family expenses."

In Canada, the target populations are defined as people who, for reasons of migration or human mobility, dysfunction or social exclusion, precarious economic situations, or health problems, including drug addiction, are "in a situation of social exclusion or at risk of being so. Among the main realities we have found: homelessness, drug use, mental health problems, poverty, social isolation." Street outreach workers in Quebec, Canada describe "people who are mostly outside the traditional social networks of family, school or work. Often these disruptions are the result of the community's lack of response to particular needs. Dysfunctional families cause learning difficulties."

The organizations that carry out educational or socio-educational work on the streets Colombia describe a multi-causal interpretation of the people living in street situations with those at highest risk being "migrant communities, children (child labor, begging), indigenous people, people who suffer forced displacement by armed conflict and people with a high degree of substance use." Therefore, they consider it necessary to adopt an approach that must first understands the needs of this population. Street outreach workers in Colombia reported "impoverished... populations do not have the opportunity to access or remain in the school system. In addition, they do not have stable jobs that provide guarantees to live with dignity. Many of these people within their homes have family problems, violence, mistreatment, ruptures, grief or uprooting that are very difficult to deal with because they do not have support networks or coping strategies to help them overcome these circumstances. Some as to evade these realities have used hallucinogens and alcoholic beverages which produce extreme and drastic changes in the way of assuming and leading life and transform their reality. Some people who are street dwellers have dedicated themselves to working in the separation of recycling material, while the others search, beg or steal."

In **Ecuador**, the definition by street outreach workers includes concepts such as "alleyway" and "street livability" that correspond to people with experience of living on the street who are subjected "to a long-term process of breaking relationships with their immediate environment (family, friends, colleagues), and inaccessibility to existing social services". They view the causes of living in street situations as related to "poverty, lack of education, violence, family dysfunction, migration, etc.", as well as emotional elements such as "low self-esteem, and substance use, etc."

In the **United States**, to define unhoused populations, a concept linked to the social or family expulsion to which people have been subjected is used. In this sense, the target groups are people, particularly young people, who manifest "substance use problems, young people who are leaving an abusive home or congregate care environments." The definition of the groups served incorporates notions related to the discrimination based on gender identification and sexual orientation, as well as those who have suffered violations of their human rights. This includes youth who "identify as LGBTQI + and are no longer welcome in their home are included. In addition to





young people who have been trafficked and escaped" according to American street outreach workers. Economic subsistence and substance also play a role as there are "families who cannot pay for housing, food and medical care, the parents/caregivers are underemployed or unemployed or leave a violent home or there is a problem of substance use."

In Guatemala, a definition is derived from the perspective of the "social phenomenon of indigence", where the affected people are "boys, girls, adolescents and young people, marginalized in psychological terms, since they are 'left over' in the dynamics of their families." Likewise, a differentiation is made between youth "on the street" and those who consider themselves "from the street". According to the director of the Dynamo

member organization in Guatemala, those who "stay in these spaces during the day are considered on the street. They have to work because their families need money to survive. In contrast, "street children" are those who "live on the streets and move from hostels and solidarity residences to the street and vice versa; they are people who make life on the street a vital space for the development of their identity." For street outreach workers in Guatemala, homeless populations are people "who depend on some type of drugs, who have migrated from the interior of the country or from peripheral areas ... for multiple socioeconomic reasons are forced to depend on the street. To survive, they partially or totally break the family bond and are mostly from one-parent families. In the case of adolescents, "they have been in judicialized processes for protection and shelter or for being in conflict with the law."

The definition used in Mexico corresponds to "street" populations and is defined as "human groups that have found an alternative for survival on the streets." It is used to refer to "girls, boys, youth, women, families, adults and the elderly", who suffer from "historical exclusion". Mexican street outreach workers recognize the diverse "social and cultural" origins of those who are surviving on the streets and that "several generations learn to live in groups, share knowledge, social networks and public space." In keeping with the institutional perspective, a street outreach worker reports that street populations are made up "of women, men, children, people with disabilities, the elderly and entire families that survive in public space, constantly experience violent events by the same street population, the community, and the government, placing them at greater risk of losing their lives. "He adds that they are people who experience "events of discrimination and serious violations of their human rights, and their support networks are limited, making it difficult for them to stop living on the streets and start



independent living processes in safe and dignified spaces. In the case of women, social stigma, discrimination, and violence increase. They are victims of gender violence in all its manifestations. Criminalization for being mothers and living on the streets constantly exposes them to events of family separation and re-victimization by authorities."

As related by the director of the Dynamo member organization in **Venezuela** who specializes in work with minors, the most

relevant concept is economic subsistence. The definition used in Venezuela refers to "any person under eighteen years of age who performs an economic practice such as begging, traffic, sale or recycling, and who spends the night on the street or has a long stay on the street." A Venezuelan street outreach worker adds that those living in street situations are "all those who live in crowded places and who carry out legal or illegal economic activities."

As can be seen, each of the countries has different definitions of the population that constitute the main reason for being of the Americas Network. They adapt to economic, social, structural, and climatic changes and respond almost immediately to emergent challenges. From this perspective, because of the interventions and the work carried out to date, a collective vision emerges from these groups of "humanities that survive social and economic inequalities." Paramount is a sense of commitment to improvement of the lives of "young people with dreams and goals", coming to express their deep desires to "get ahead and return to the life they had … but better." It is undeniable that developing a life "on the edge of risk" in the framework of violent environments requires real efforts to survive day to day and regardless of the condition of economic precariousness, social vulnerability, and exposure to risk.







05 ABOUT THE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS OF THE AMERICAS NETWORK

5.1 Constitutional Frameworks Linked to the Work of the Americas Network

The goal of achieving well-being and harmony of human beings in societies comes from indigenous peoples who considered that "living well" not only incorporated meeting economic needs but also linking moral parameters and values to the relationships of individuals with each other and even with nature.²⁷ From the conception of the Aymara people through the "suma qamaña" (to live well) or from the Quechua perspective of "sumak kawsay" (good living), to the vision of the Mayan people of "raxalaj mayab ' k'aslemalil" (fullness of life) and "lekil kuxlejal" (life good) of the Tzotzil, there is an interest in respect for human dignity as the foundation of social relations.²⁸

More recently, modern concepts such as "dignified life" in Colombia are even integrated into legal precepts, encompassing not only the self-determination of a life plan for people but also access to material conditions appropriate for their existence.²⁹ In this sense, a large part of the institutional philosophical foundations reflected in the mission, vision and objectives of the organizations that make up the Americas Network are invested in collaborating with governments to create alternative solutions to the adverse socio-economic dynamics that the populations that survive in conditions of poverty, inequity, discrimination, or social exclusion face. These aspirations harmonize to promote the well-being of the population as part of its fundamental purposes. In this regard, when analyzing the constitutional provisions as the highest legal order in the countries that are part of the study, the incorporation of essential guarantees such as life, liberty, equality, justice, security, peace, and freedom is identified as integral to the development of individuals.

The Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of **Bolivia** commits to provide social and economic conditions that favor the development of all its inhabitants without discrimination. In this regard, Article 8 of this document establishes that "The government is based on the values of unity, equality, freedom, solidarity, inclusion, dignity, complementarity, reciprocity, respect, harmony, transparency, balance, opportunities, fairness. social and gender in participation, common welfare, responsibility, social justice, distribution and redistribution of products and social goods, to live well." These principles, in addition to constituting the basis of the government, incorporate a direct approach to the rights that people shall enjoy, which according to Constitutional Article 13

"are inviolable, universal, interdependent, indivisible and progressive."

The Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil refers in Article 1 that "The Federative Republic of Brazil ... is based on: (...) III the dignity of the human person." It considers the provision of services and the coverage of various needs of the population as the main objectives of its organization. Accordingly, Article 3 states that "The following are fundamental objectives of the Federative Republic of Brazil: (...) III - eradicate poverty and marginalization and reduce social and regional inequalities; IV - promote a common good, without prejudice of origin, race, sex, color, age or any other form of discrimination."

²⁷ Cf.: Ivonne Farah and Luciano Vasapollo (2011) Living well: a non-capitalist paradigm? CIDES - UMSA, Bolivia.

²⁸ See: Altmon, Philipp (2013) The sumak away in the discourse of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, Indiana 30, Quito; Mamani, Pablo (2011) Qamir qamaña: hardness of "being" and sweetness of "being", Bolivia; Domingo, Daniel, et., Al (2009)

Raxalaj Mayab ´K´ aslemalil. Mayan Cosmovision, fullness of life, United Nations Development Program, Guatemala; Paoli, Antonio (2003) Education, autonomy and lekil kuxlejal: sociolinguistic approaches to thwisdoof the Tzeltales, UAM, Mexico.

Constitutional Court, Sentence T-881/02, Bogotá



In line with the constitutions of other member countries of the Americas Network, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of Canada emphasizes the equality of human beings and the responsibility of the government to provide access to a dignified life: "15. Equal Rights: Everyone is equal before the law and it applies equally to everyone, and everyone has the right to the same protection and to the same benefit of the law, independent of any discrimination, especially discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age or mental or physical deficiencies."



The Political Constitution of the Republic of Colombia places makes the government responsible for organizing a system to achieve prosperity for the population and protection of the fundamental rights of its citizens. Article 2 establishes as essential roles of the government: "To serve the community, promote general prosperity and guarantee the effectiveness of the principles, rights and duties enshrined in the Constitution (...); maintain territorial integrity and ensure peaceful coexistence and the enforcement of a just order." Colombian government aspirations apply to all and even emphasize the care of people in vulnerable conditions.

The Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia promises to provide social and economic fairness as: "All people are born free and equal before the law, they will receive the same protection and treatment from the authorities and they will enjoy the same rights, freedoms and opportunities without any discrimination for reasons of sex, race, national or family origin, language, religion, political or philosophical opinion. The government will promote the conditions for equality to be real and effective and will adopt measures in favor of discriminated or marginalized groups. The government will especially protect those people who, due to their economic, physical or mental condition, are in circumstances of manifest weakness and will punish the abuses or mistreatments that are committed against them."

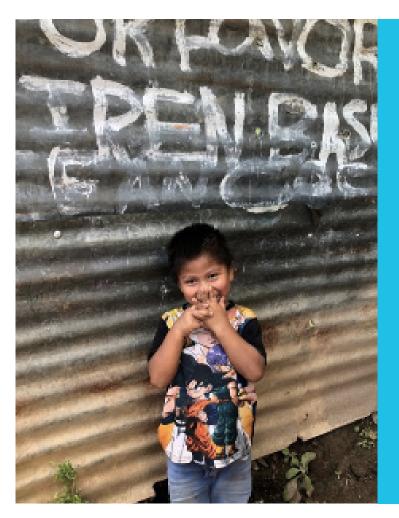
The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador establishes respect for and promotion of fundamental human rights. Article 3 defines the primary responsibilities of the government to "Guarantee without any discrimination, the effective enjoyment of the rights established in the Constitution and in international instruments, in particular education, health, food, social security and water for its inhabitants." This guarantee of effective fulfillment of constitutional rights extends to



all citizens regardless of social, ethnic, sex or any other conditions, as established in constitutional Article 11.

The Constitution of the United States of America that regulates the US federal system contains the subscribed amendments as the set of individual, political and administrative rights that regulate the national organization. The XIV Amendment. Section 1 establishes that: "No State may enact or impose any law that limits the privileges or immunities of the citizens of the United States; nor can any State deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due legal process; nor deny any person under its jurisdiction equal protection of the laws."

The Political Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala contains basic elements that contribute to the consolidation of what is known as the "Rule of Law", by virtue of which rights are guaranteed and duties that regulate life in society are established. In terms of the duties that the government determines as fundamental towards its inhabitants, Article 2 states that: "It is the duty of the government to guarantee life, liberty, justice, security, peace and integral development to the inhabitants of the Republic." As in the legal systems of other countries in the region, Guatemala aspires to achieve equity, equality and freedom in the enjoyment and exercise of rights and on this point, Article 4 of the Constitution determines that: "In Guatemala all human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights. The men and women, whatever their marital status, have equal opportunities and responsibilities. No person may be subjected to servitude or to any other condition that undermines his dignity. Human beings must keep fraternal behavior among themselves."



The Constitution of the Republic of Haiti defines in Article 4 a national motto that ensures a life within the framework of Freedom, Equality, Fraternity. These principles are specified in such a way that the obligation to comply with them reaches any person without any possibility of distinction or exclusion. Article 19 of the Haitian Constitution states that: "The State has the absolute obligation to guarantee the right to life, health and respect for the human person to all citizens without distinction, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

The Constitution of the **United Mexican States** constitutes a precise guiding framework regarding the rights that are intended to be guaranteed and the determination of their compliance. The Mexican population, in



accordance with Article 1, must enjoy "The human rights recognized in this Constitution and in the international treaties to which the Mexican State is a party, as well as the guarantees for their protection, the exercise of which may not be restricted nor be suspended." In an effort to suppress the violation of people's dignity, as well as their constitutional rights and freedoms, the aforementioned article emphasizes that "all discrimination motivated by ethnic or national origin, social status, gender, age, disabilities is prohibited."

The **Venezuelan** State determined as democratic and social by law, is organized on the basis of a set of values classified as being of a higher order. In this regard, Article 2 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela states that: "It advocates as

superior values of its legal system and its actions, life, freedom, justice, equality, solidarity, democracy, social responsibility and in general, the pre-eminence of human rights, ethics and political pluralism." It is important to mention that the Venezuelan Constitution recognizes that human and social rights need to be materialized in the enjoyment and exercise by every one of the inhabitants of the nation. Article 21 says that: "All persons are equal before the law, consequently: Discriminations based on race, sex, creed, social condition or those that, in general, have as their object or result the nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise under conditions of equality, of the rights and freedoms of every person are not permitted."

While the countries of the Americas Network have legal systems which incorporate the principles necessary for the notion of human dignity as the guiding foundation of the actions of government, it must be understood that their unsustainability and illegitimacy in fulfilling these obligations require a critical rethinking of alternative mechanisms that can be implemented to satisfy social demands. In other words, considering that constitutional norms "are not a declaration of ideals and good intentions, but rather the establishment of principles that are mandatory for the entire legal system" 30, it is essential that officials, institutions, and other elements of governments recognize, respect, and apply the constitutional principles as foundations of the legal, administrative, and social establishment. In this regard, it is important to promote research and critical analysis of national legislation, identifying the sequence that exists within the normative hierarchy for effective compliance with said precepts, as well as the corresponding administrative delegation. This includes identifying opportunities for creating viable and contextualized public policies as part of the contribution to the development of societies as well as the corresponding administrative delegation.

Constitutional protection, beyond any ordinary, regulatory, or individualized norm³¹, today represents an invaluable space for defining the roadmaps of the Americas Network in terms of formulating actions in favor of vulnerable populations, particularly of those who are on the street and continue to be on the fringes of national priorities. Although at the constitutional level coverage and support for these groups of people is not expressly guaranteed, it effectively ensures that all persons will enjoy the same rights and opportunities. Therefore, the exclusion of those living in street situations from national agendas puts at stake the very nature and legitimacy of the governments in their role as guarantor of fundamental human rights.

³⁰ Instituto Res-publica, Primacy of the Human Person and Service to the State, Constitutional Debate, Santiago, Chile, page 4.

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5.2 Institutional Experience and Purpose

The present study involved ten national platforms from Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, the United States, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, and Venezuela. These organizations have extensive experience in working with people living in street situations. It is evident that during their broad experience has included creating methodological frameworks that are informed by a local context. Work processes, collaboration with governments and civil society and the implementation of a monitoring and evaluation of the work have elevated the work.



In terms of the length of time working with people living in street situations, the organizations that are part of the Americas Network have an average of 16 years of experience. In the United States, Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP) has been developing its activities for more than 45 years and is the Americas Network member with the longest history. The Quebec organizations in Canada l'Association des Travailleurs et Travailleuses de rue du Québec -ATTRueQ- and Colombia (Corporación Educativa Combos), have 28 years of experience respectively. In Mexico, El Caracol AC has a 27-year history championing work with those living in street situations. The Fundación Hogar de Niños Alalay in Bolivia has worked for more than 11 years to benefit these vulnerable sectors of the population.



In Brazil, the organization AESMAR (Associação de Educadores Sociais de Maringá) has been advocating for more than 8 years for those living in street situations. In Guatemala, Siembra Bien has been in existence for 7 years. The organization that works for street populations in Haiti is called PLANATRUCH (Plateforme des travailleurs de rue et communautaire d'Haiti) and has been supporting and developing its actions for the last 7 years. In Venezuela there is the Independent Cultural Foundation that for 4 years has worked to offer better living conditions to vulnerable populations, while the Fundación Somos Calle Ecuador began to function in 2019 developing a social support work for the benefit of vulnerable populations.

The accumulated experience and the exchange of strategies among the organizations of the Americas Network is made possible to the extent that the fundamentals and objectives of each denote a certain level of compatibility. That is, although it is true that each organization has formulated its strategic lines according to the target population, local needs, situational priorities and the context of opportunities, a set of common aspirations is evident. This must be considered as a strength of the Network and promoted as a potential for development.

In the framework of this study, high-level officials from the different organizations that make up the Americas Network were consulted to identify the design, implementation, and evaluation of the different local advocacy strategies. It was vital to obtain an overview of the efforts, challenges and opportunities, and the strategic objectives that underpin the actions that are being carried out today. From this account, when carrying out the analysis of the mission and vision or institutional objectives of the members of the Americas Network, aspects related to human rights, public policies, local interinstitutional networks, and the strengthening of its workers were considered.

- Human Rights: The organizations that make up the Americas Network recognize the fight for human rights as one of the most essential priorities to champion for those living in street situations. Guidelines based on the reestablishment of human rights that have been violated and the prevention of violations are integral. In a broad sense, it is about responding to the need for democratization of local development spaces focused on providing social security and protection for this segment of the population. Furthermore, there is an awareness of influencing the visibility of this population whose voice is not heard in state settings. For this reason, organizations incorporate elements such as respect for their fundamental human rights, the development of a culture of peace, the promotion of equity and the provision of basic health, education, and social security. In addition, it aims to protect this population in terms of the different forms of discrimination and violence present in each country.
- Public Policies: The philosophical and institutional foundations of the organizations reflect an aspiration to create strategies and practices that directly serve people living in street situations while incorporating local and national governments' plans and policies. Understanding that government must be sought as a partner for purposeful planning and specific objectives, it is also a chance to advocate for the inclusion of and protective policies for people living in street situations. Reference is also made to the promotion of art, sport, technology, job training and human development as part of priority activities of the organizations.



- Local Partnerships: Sectoral and inter-institutional efforts is presented to increase efficacy of work of the member organizations. Uniting efforts of different sectors results in prioritization and best use of financial resources, developing sound policies and collaborative strategies most effectively meet the needs of people living in street situations.
- **Human Resources**: One of the most innovative aspects that the different national platforms present is the prioritizing training for working with people living in street situations. In this sense, the organizations of the Americas Network recognize scientific and technical exchange, pedagogical training, and recognition of academic specialties and research, as necessary for the professionalization of street work. In other words, the network aspires to create a library of methodological, didactic, and pedagogical tools that street workers can access through specialized trainings.





5.3 Who are street outreach workers?

Working with individuals living in street situations whose family relationships, physical and mental health have suffered traumas and connections loss as well as a separation from the very social fabric of their communities is challenging on organizational, individual, and pedagogical levels. This is further exacerbated by social problems particular to each country and a lack of specialized training in most countries. That is why efforts to develop methodological intervention tools need to be holistic and flexible.

Street outreach workers use their unique knowledge of the local community to integrates the strengths, needs, interest and potential of the people living in street situations to work in a holistic way. Activities are carried out within the framework of local partnerships, local governmental policies, and human rights to provide a comprehensive support that addresses not only basic needs but the development of resilience.

For Dynamo International "social street education is a methodology implemented by actors on the ground with an approach endowed with strong ethics, respect and tolerance towards the most excluded populations who live in precarious conditions and suffer multiple forms of exclusion." Therefore, "the street worker constitutes the first and last link in the chain of educational and social assistance, when all other organizations have failed." To complement this institutional definition, the representatives of the national platforms, the street outreach workers themselves and the people who receive the services were consulted about the main features that define the street outreach worker today.

In most of the countries of the Americas Network, those responsible for direct contact with the populations served are called street social educators or street outreach workers. In some cases, they are also known as public servants or advocates. However, beyond the name, the purpose is uniform in all organizations. It is thanks to their interpersonal skills and ability to establish relationships that communication ties can be established with children, adolescents and adults of different sexes, ages, and situations. Through the analysis and systematization of the information collected, the following profile of the street outreach worker has been constructed:

- Primarily she/he manifests a great sense of humanity and social responsibility that makes her/him dedicate her/himself with deep commitment to the improvement and development of the most disadvantaged people.
- They are students or professionals in the areas of the social sciences, particularly in social work, psychology, pedagogy, or legal sciences.
- They have enough base training, knowledge, and experience that they can skillfully add additional methodologies based on the use of art, culture, and sport effectively to work with people living in street situations.
- She/he is perceptive and can successfully identify and weigh risks of potential interventions in the course of her/his work.
- She/he has outstanding skills in collaborating with local partners.





- She/he shows excellent interpersonal skills and adaptability since the work requires dialogue with public authorities in a formal way and to engage respectfully and in a way that engenders trust with people living in street situations.
- She/he advocates for public policies that support people living in street situations and proactively incorporates evaluation of the street outreach work to ensure it is effective with an eye on continuous quality improvement.
- She/he consistently seeks out training and new knowledge to inform and improve the work.

In conclusion, the role of street outreach workers requires an understanding of human needs and a sensitivity and social conscience. The support of this group of specialists provides the organizations of the Americas Network with support for the development and implementation of programs and projects as well as a direct link with the target population. In the words of a teenager with a history of living in a street situation, street outreach workers can be considered:

"Like my family... He is like my dad, because he has helped me a lot.... They continue to support me even though I have exploded with them at times. I know that they not only work on the streets but also help children and orphans. It is not to exaggerate but if I had not met them, many things would have happened to me and for me it is very good that they continue to exist. May God bless them and continue helping them in the work they have because sometimes we fail them, we yell at them, but they keep working and that is why I think their work is very important."



5.4 Relationship between Member Organizations and People Living in Street Situations

The organizations of the Americas Network have generated a set of actions or strategies that operationalize and give real meaning to the objectives set out as part of their institutional frameworks. The work requires both an institutional coordination and the application of the methodologies in the day-to-day work with people living in street situations. Within the network there are member organizations that work directly with people living in street situations and others that carry out management and support tasks indirectly.

Through the information provided by the representatives of the national platforms, in three member countries of the Americas Network actions are carried out that directly and indirectly affect the development, care and protection of the populations in street situation: **Brazil**, **Ecuador** and **Guatemala**.

In the case of the AESMAR organization in **Brazil**, work is carried out "systematically together with the Program for the Defense of the Rights of Girls and Boys of the State University of Maringá, with the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul and with the Movimento Nacional de Meninos e Meninas de Rua...and coordinates with the local governmental and non-governmental network and institutions at the regional and national levels." "The Somos Calle Ecuador Foundation manifests a direct relationship" through social advocacy projects, "among which reference is made to strategies associated with government entities such as

the Ministry of Social Inclusion." Additionally, indirect actions are carried out through a local network made up of "8 governmental and non-governmental institutions that attend to different social problems such as: human mobility, child labor, non-regularized street vending, begging and street dwellers." For its part, the organization Siembra Bien in Guatemala works directly in "prevention through practical methodologies training processes that contribute to integral development... focused on the empowerment of adolescents and young people who live in marginal urban areas of Guatemala City". These actions constitute strategies for the prevention of what they call "alley", which is defined as the condition of living in a "street situation." In terms of the indirect relationship that Siembra Bien has with those living in street situations, it is part of the "Dynamic Network for Change (REDIC)" consisting of 88 organizations. Members include: Unit for Community Violence Prevention - UPCV-, the Executive Secretariat of the Commission Against Addictions and Illicit Drug Trafficking -SECCATID-, the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Guatemalan Olympic Committee. Through these partnerships, trainings are produced."



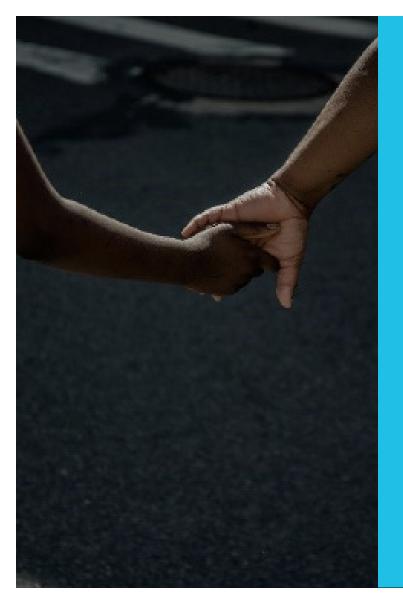
The national platforms of Bolivia, Colombia, The United States, Haiti, Mexico, and Venezuela work directly with people living



in street situations. The Alalay Foundation in Bolivia's focus is "promoting the defense of the rights of Children and Adolescents and families living on the street, through advocacy on a national, societal and governmental level." Additionally, they are committed to "sustained and systematic manner in the professionalization of the approach and intervention with homeless populations and promoting public policies within the framework of strengthening the protection system." This approach is closely related to the work of Combos in Colombia where they are "committed to meritorious social development activities in the areas of education, human development, health, culture, science and care of the environment". A focus of Combos is "the defense of equitable conditions for girls, boys, young people and women from impoverished sectors", through "processes of education, organization and comprehensive protection."

Another organization that works directly in the community setting is YAP in the United States which builds "bridges between families and communities, opening access to critical tools such as mentoring, social connections, medical services and of mental health, education, professional services and other resources that people need for positive development." According to YAP representatives, recognizing and helping maximize people's potential and showing that "they do better throughout life when they have support where they live, work, learn and play." Similarly, the PLANATRUCH organization in Haiti is dedicated to "social assistance... for girls, boys, youth, and adults of different sexes", through work on "sustainable development together with national and international organizations, public and private organizations to respond to problems related to people in difficult situations."

El Caracol in Mexico strives to achieve the "visibility and social inclusion of street populations and those at social risk" and works from a human rights and equity



perspective "independent life processes and the full exercise of rights." El Caracol supports a diverse population that lives on the street "women, men, girls, boys, people with disabilities, the elderly and entire families; from a human rights and gender perspective." This focus on inclusion and care bears a certain similarity to the Venezuelan Cultural Foundation which provides "pedagogical assistance to people in vulnerable situations such as boys, girls, youth and women." The front-line workers develop "training spaces... in order to mitigate risk situations, as well as situations of sexual and gender violence in



the territories, from a preventive approach, seeing education as transformative", and provides "pedagogical assistance to people in vulnerable situations such as boys, girls, youth and women."

In Quebec, ATTRueQ works indirectly with people living in street situations. ATTRueQ promotes "the meeting, exchange and training of street workers" and coordinates "50 or 60 independent organizations that do this work...to strengthen their actions, we created this organization that is not recognized by the government but has a common code of ethics that we all respect." It seeks to position

itself as a leading institution in training for the "defense of the rights and interests of people in street situations." The ATTRueQ strategy has been successful as a result of identifying opportunities with government entities that have resulted in positive collaborations with a more organized and efficient system in place in Quebec than reported in other Americas Network countries. With the support of the government, according to the ATTRueQ representative, it acts in "collaboration with other organizations dedicated to the development of the well-being of citizens and works to promote social justice."

5.5 Challenges to Implementing Programs in the Americas Network

The analysis of the main challenges that affect the work of the member countries of the Americas Network is done through the perspectives of three groups:

- National platforms: as responsible for the design, implementation, and evaluation of actions, as well as inter-institutional coordination and resource management.
- Front line workers: people whose direct link with the communities and people living in street situations provide an operational and clear description of the dynamics of the work and the challenges to its success.
- **Populations living in street situations**: people who survive on the street; they share the difficulties of their daily lives.

In general, a significant challenge for all the Americas Network organization is a lack of sufficient programs and policies to address the complex needs of people living in street situations. Likewise, there is a lack of basic services such as health care, education, food and drinking water, employment and, of course, housing.

Other negative factors correspond to the violence specific to life in a street environment and the consumption and distribution of substances. Problems related to separation from families and disconnection from community are factors for people living in street situations. A lack of recognition of street outreach work itself by the authorities or government institutions is also mentioned. Below are the main contributions of the participants regarding the description of factors considered to be the main challenges that the member countries of the Americas Network report regarding the work with people living in street situations.



In terms of the lack of state programs, the members of the Americas Network are aware that although it is true that government efforts are being made to contribute to the development of programs for people living in street situations, there is still a long way to go.

In this regard, a representative of the national platform in Bolivia points out that government entities must not only make a commitment but exercise decisive leadership to achieve real impact to address an absence of leadership and a lack of coordination of public policies between the different parties. involved and clarity about their roles, responsibilities and specific competences."

These representative further asserts that around the legal framework and existing public policies, it is necessary to give "priority and continuity to the theme" of work with people living in street situations. This perspective aligns with that of a front-line worker in Ecuador who expresses his concern about the lack of "public policies grounded in the reality of the street population. There is a weakness in the reality of social policies for this at-risk population." In this same sense, the representative of Haiti points out that the government structures demand the consolidation of "social assistance".

It seems that "we do not exist.".

- According to a teenager with street life experience in the City of La Paz, Bolivia.

Regarding the lack of basic services and administrative and operational strategies that are needed to address the socio-economically disadvantages of those living in street situations, the following was reported.

The lack of services is due to "structural problems such as poverty" affecting "the lack of access to education, health, housing and employment."

- According to the representative from the member organization in Ecuador.

This is mirrored in the comments from Guatemala where "comprehensive development and health care is necessary," which directly affects the "mental health" of people living in street situations. These conditions of inequality lead to the fact, according to a front-line worker in Colombia, that people living in street situations "cease to be visible and become invisible in the eyes of the passerby, for those who are part of the landscape, normalizing the situation and no longer seeing it as problematic."

A participant in the group of people with street life experience points out that if it weren't for the support of the organizations that work directly with them, they would not have access to health services, even in emergencies:

"A few years ago I was stabbed and thanks to the Foundation I am alive. They have supported me; they have helped me in my health. Street Outreach Workers have a lot of patience and even though we misbehave, they are always there."



The inability of the government to meet the basic needs of those living in street situations has generated a series of reactions within the Americas Network. As expressed by the representative of the national platform in Venezuela, due to:

"the economic situation in which our nation finds itself for a couple of years, an increase in children and adolescents living on the streets has been generated... trying to solve their material difficulties on their own."

A similar opinion was expressed by a front-line worker in Brazil, who referred to the "growing number of working children and adolescents that has clearly increased." However, the main concerns regarding the lack of services and the "searching" that those living in street situations must carry out every day to meet their basic needs has been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among the most worrying activities pointed out by a field worker in Colombia is "the exercise of prostitution without safe measures... we see sexual and commercial exploitation of children, adolescents and young people."







According to the representative of the national platform of Mexico, the "street" population, in addition to lacking personal documentation, social security and any other form of protection:

In many cases has a "health condition that is often not good ... In March 2020, as an effect of the pandemic, the street population has had greater difficulty in generating economic income, the closure of spaces has made it difficult for them to work, and minors cannot go to school, organizations and other spaces for coexistence and recreation, which causes anxiety, stress, sadness...and anger increases."

Similarly, a front-line worker in Quito remarked that :

"There is a lack of inclusive educational spaces (of non-formal education) that consider the educational needs of boys, girls, adolescents, youth and adults with school avoidance or special needs. The lack of preparation and opportunities generates an employment crisis, which places people in precarious situations to obtain resources that cover their basic needs, generating situations of fragility."

As a young woman who lives on the streets of La Paz points out, the difficulties in meeting their basic needs are enormous, however her speech also reflects her high sense of humanity:

"Those of us who are on the street are a family and we take care of ourselves. Sometimes we have problems, but we always love each other. We live under a 5-star hotel, but they never open to us, we are always outside. We eat in a market and when we finish eating, we go to work to clean the windshield and the women sell sweets."



In a discouraging scenario, people living in street situations not only face a lack of basic services but also various forms of violence as part of their daily lives. The representatives of the various organizations of the Americas Network report situations in which not only do these individuals suffer physical and emotional abuse, but their social rights are also violated through exclusion, marginalization, humiliation, and inequity. Among the main manifestations of violence, most countries refer to the violation of fundamental human rights, exploitation, and child labor, as well as violence at the hands of gangs, police and other groups dedicated to "social cleansing" that implies the forced disappearance of these people. Referring to the most recurrent forms of violence in the streets, the focus group participants point out that "There are gangs that want to kill us, they want to shoot us. The police are worse, they don't solve anything."

Emotional, psychological, and sexual violence is reported by people living in street situations in member countries suffering human trafficking, prostitution, and rape. In addition, violent events related to sexual self-determination or gender are reported as a result of endemic racism, misogyny, and sexism. It was commonly reported that women are victims of power dynamics where they are forced to "obtain by any means the necessary resources to satisfy the needs of their partner." In countries like Colombia, "involvement, use and recruitment of boys and girls for the armed conflict and all kinds of armed violence or criminal activities are manifested" is reported. Similarly, in Mexico and Guatemala children and adolescents are recruited for criminal activities in gangs or maras. Regarding emotional or psychological violence from the experience of some young people interviewed:

The worst thing is discrimination, people look at us who live on the street very badly, society treats us bad, insult us and they don't like us to be on the street, but we have nowhere to be."

As observed by organizations within this study, people living in street situations and especially women are voices silenced by the system itself. Even though women living in street situations want to report these abuses to the authorities, ombudsmen, secretariats, or local judicial entities, "access to justice is complicated because there is a stigma towards them for the simple fact of being women and living on the streets." Throughout the interviews with member organizations, the need to close these gaps between "the general public and the people who are in these spaces" was expressed as well as a key being to create "environments free of discrimination and exclusion, generated in their majority due to prejudice."

An interviewed adolescent mother points out that

"In the streets we women suffer a lot, and outside as well but I prefer to be with the boys instead of being with a man who is not worth it... he beat me, he abused me... that's why I separated from him. Now I am a single mother, I have children that for now I cannot see ... The judge will not let me because of my condition."



Another way of making the needs of street populations invisible is that manifested in the United States, where some prisons have become spaces to confine people who live on the streets for minor offenses as a mechanism to generate income since many prisons in the United States are privately owned thus handing over the responsibility for this segment of the population over to a company.

Among the risk factors for people living in street situations in the member countries of the Americas Network is the availability and access to substances that alter people's mood, capacity for violence and behavior. Paradoxically, people living in street situations are reported to many times prioritize the consumption of these substances, even over food. There is evidence of adults giving substances to children and adolescents to engender an addiction and thus control the youth through the dependency on the substances. Additionally, various studies indicate that many "try drugs for the first time while on the street, to avoid fear, hunger, cold, sadness and to strengthen ties with the other members of



their street group." ³² In the countries that make up the present study "consumption and intoxication by psychotropic substances in the street are reported." Among them, reference is made to "alcoholic beverages and other psychoactive substances."

However, there is also a high probability that people living in street situations will be recruited to "sell" and "micro-traffic" drugs, putting their lives at risk. It is worth mentioning a recurring narrative around the consumption and / or distribution of substances: the need that people themselves express to "stop using" as a constant struggle to get rid of "marginalization" and return to their "home and family free from prejudice."

Both the young people and adults interviewed share that the harsh reality is that:

"it is cold at night, and we are sleeping in cardboard boxes on the street. Sometimes that's why we go to alcoholism or drugs so as not to feel the cold. It is dangerous and many bad things happen, we want to get ahead and sometimes we relapse again because we have this vice."

Another young man shares that since he was eleven years old, he has lived:

"On the street, I lived like my grandparents. I only studied until fifth year and after my 19 years I have gotten together with my ex-wife. I had children but they are with their mother, and I can't get close because I'm ashamed, I'm a drunk and I can't stop drinking. I know that I can change because nothing is impossible."

³² Mexico City Electoral Institute (2019) Homeless people, Series of inclusion, human rights and construction of citizenship, United Nations Development Program, Mexico



Lack of family connections is reported across the board with people living in street situations citing abandonment by a "parent...or both parents." Some of the identified reasons are "imprisonment of the parents", due to conflict with the law or "due to the economic situation, some have left the children abandoned." Cases are also reported where minors are physically or sexually abused by relatives or acquaintances which causes them to flee the home. In terms of family dynamics and emotional support, "apathy and lack of love from or towards parents" has generated the breakdown of family relationships. In addition, front line workers report a lack of communication, tolerance and respect within families and communities is a decisive factor in the weakening of protective environments. More recently, "social or family expulsions" have been evidenced due to gender identity and sexual orientation, religious beliefs, addictions or "unwanted pregnancies". Disintegrated family ties and lack of family support is expressed by a young woman who shares that:

"My dream is to recover the lost years that I have not been able to be with my son. If I'm not with anyone, I want him to be my motivation. I have felt more accepted by my street family than by my biological family, it is preferable to be with my friends."

Looking at the key risks affecting those living in street situations, it is worrying that a characteristic present in most of the countries of the Americas Network is the absence of recognition of street outreach work by the authorities or government institutions as a strategy to build resilience in people living in street situations. It is "alarming that it is preferable to make these people invisible instead of supporting the work." One of the immediate needs in this regard consists of the follow-up of cases referred by educational institutions (educational gratuity, care for people in excess, out-of-school education) or health (pathologies, pregnancies, skin diseases, respiratory or digestive conditions, mental health, etc.), as well as in the provision of specialized training spaces. For example, in Brazil, there is a "lack of professionals to work in social street education, where it is not regulated as a profession and there is no specific training for the area. Educational institutions do not go beyond their walls, communities lack public policies and educational projects and amid finite problems the person on the street is not seen as a citizen, as someone who also has rights."

While we observed a form of recognition, gratitude, and appreciation that young people feel about the work done by street outreach workers, there are challenges. Since they are considered "non-professional" jobs in some of the Americas Network countries, some of the front-line workers do so as volunteers or interns which can translate into a weaker relationship, lesser trust and decreased support of people living in street situations.

A representative of the Canadian national platform shares that:

"many times these links, which take a long time to build, depend on people and everything has to be rebuilt when a worker from this organization leaves their position."



Similarly in Bolivia, street outreach workers share their concern regarding the "absence of control over offers, actions, non-professional approaches, from groups of volunteers, private individuals, unincorporated institutions, etc." The lack of accreditation and academic training of the "educators / operators" by the national higher education systems constitutes a limitation in the sense of the lack of relevant research and best practice. Additionally, with clear exceptions, the involvement of "non-professional" entities or groups affects the systematic and planned work of the organizations of the Americas Network, considering that many of the actions are "coercive and assistance strategies... that do not point to structural responses." Although it is true that these types of activities can meet short-term needs of people living in street situations, the "individualistic and itinerant" nature makes it difficult to carry out preventive and informative strategies for long-term sustainable public policies.





5.6 Strengths and Needs of the Organizations that Comprise the Americas Network

The organizations that make up the Americas Network have a diversity of strengths and needs that range from work experience, human and financial resources, and infrastructure to those related to monitoring, evaluation, and training and even system aspects such as the existence of local and / or national public policies linked to people living in street situations.

5.6.1 STRENGTHS

In all the organizations of the Network, the formation of work teams with personnel who have a deep commitment to the populations served is identified as the main strength. In addition, the members of each organization have developed a set of skills that allow them to build strong relationships. Their presence in the community, on the streets themselves, is vital for the establishment of trust, respect and being accepted by people living in street situations. In some cases, specific academic background and training make for even more effective strategies and methodologies which result in positive results for the organization and street outreach work itself.

From the interviews, questionnaires and other contributions of the Bolivian team, street outreach workers can be seen as "committed and highly adaptable, with knowledge and studies related to the work area." Prior academic training is emphasized as a decisive factor for success in the implementation of intervention strategies. It is noted that the team is made up of "professionals from the social area" who have contributed to the design and implementation of the Comprehensive Care Model and specific outpatient approach methodology for people living in street situations. The general profiles correspond to "social workers, psychologists, educators and others, as part of prevention and direct care programs."

In **Brazil**, a team with great organizational capacity and skills in collaborative work is noted. According to a representative of the Brazilian national platform, there are approximately 36 people who support work processes and street outreach work. Among these 36 are university professors and medical professionals with the majority being university students of: history, education, physical education, law, performing arts, psychology, social work, and social sciences.

The Quebec team is comprised of professionals with postgraduate degrees in the fields of "social work, specialized education, psychoeducation, criminal justice". Beyond this educational requirement, staff must possess "interpersonal and ethical skills as a priority over academic knowledge." A Canadian street outreach worker reports that to support workers, the organization provides "moral and psychological support through weekly team meetings, thus we learn to help others."

As part of the human strengths in Colombia, the integration of a team of between 46 to 200 professionals in the field of "social sciences" and artists" is reported. The number of people involved varies depending on the "projects you have." Among the main contributions of this team is the planning, execution, and evaluation of "pedagogical meetings, keep a record of attendees, fill out the field diary, systematize educational practice, among many others." According to the contributions of the street outreach workers involved, one of the main strengths that can be seen in the staff is the "suitability, professionalism, disposition and ethics", as well as the interpersonal skills of "the ability to listen, to observe and to be interested in understanding what is happening." Elements related to pedagogical



practices "that nurture doing in the field" are also shared including the "recovery of one's own word (conversations, family meetings, recreations and cultural issues) stands out; know and deliver the care routes to guarantee rights that exist in the city; activate routes for the restoration of rights and protection."

Ecuador reports the integration of a team that has high "knowledge, experience and good spirits." The distribution of work is carried by two groups. One of the groups called "base" is comprised of "2 street educators, 1 pedagogue, 2 psychologists", who are people who have a profile referred to in a professional title, have experience of community work in social problems such as "child labor, begging, street work, substance use, work with families, etc." Additionally, they have exceptional management of "playful and participatory methodologies, project management, group facilitation, interinstitutional management skills, knowledge of human rights, gender, diversities, among others." This allows "activities of approach, reference, participation in network meetings, inter-institutional management and training." The second group's role is "support for the execution of agreements with public or private institutions." This team is made up of "1 social worker, 2 educators, 1 communicator, who have the profiles according to their positions. In addition to the community component, their functions are like the first one described, and their work hours vary according to the weekly activities to be carried out, including nights and weekends."

Within the approach strategies in the **United States**, the personnel who carry out activities and actions in the field are called "Advocates". Advocates are individuals between 20 and 75 years of age, with anywhere from 6 months to 25 years in the field. Advocates have backgrounds in human services and education. However, real lived experience is valued just as highly as "Advocates live in the neighborhoods where they work with youth and families." Advocates are valued as

strongly committed to the communities they work in and the people who live there and are people with "courage, determination and compassion."





Guatemala, the demands and complexity of field work have required the implementation of a "multidisciplinary team for children, adolescents and young people who live in situations of poverty and marginalization." This team is made up of the Executive Director, whose functions refer to the general administration of Siembra Bien, a Coordinator of Programs focused on the integral development of children and youth, a Methodological Coordinator responsible for the implementation of programs and projects. Additionally, there are 2 territorial technicians who oversee "executing projects in the field", and a psychologist supported by specialists on issues related to "violence, drug addiction."

The work team in Haiti is made up of "people of both sexes" who to date have demonstrated "versatile" skills to support the development of vulnerable populations. Currently the institutional efforts in Haiti are supported by a group of "sixty workers - street educators ... who work six hours a week." In the opinion of the representative of the Haitian national platform, they are people "dedicated and concerned about the subhuman situation faced by the vulnerable population." A human commitment and deep social responsibility are evident since "everyone is a volunteer."

The El Caracol organization that works in Mexico is made up of academics and educators with extensive experience in their corresponding areas. In its more than 25 years of existence, it has consolidated a group of experts "in the areas of psychology, educational psychology, social communication and design." All team members "have direct contact with the population and facilitate educational processes through workshops and psycho-social support for access to public service spaces and the recognition of their human rights." At present, the human resources allocated to the care of those living in street situations are a total of 17 people: "Director, Director of Institutional Development, Coordinator, 5 Educators and Educators."

Likewise in Venezuela, the team is "Inter-disciplinary". Work is structured from the lens of "a comprehensive view of the problem." The Venezuelan team includes "3 Social Workers" whose activities include "home visits and community environment, social support, channeling of cases and competent institutions and follow-up and preparation of management plans." There is also a "Street Educator" who does front line work with "boys, girls and adolescents", a social psychologist who does "psychological evaluation, psychosocial diagnosis and psychotherapy, and a sociologist dedicated to the control and monitoring of the work."

Another strength that the institutions of the Americas Network has corresponds to the ability to create and maintain partnerships at the inter-institutional level as a foundation for carrying out work in the communities. This is because in terms of financial resources, national platforms in general are subsidized by: multinational entities focused on human rights; local and national governments; and civil society and international cooperation organizations. Even though care for people living in street situations involves high costs, the only source of funding the member organizations have covers a bare infrastructure cost with the additional cooperative agreements and support needed to do the actual work.

A representative of the Bolivian national platform shared that the autonomy achieved from this funding structure implies a strengthening of "rights approaches" without exempting that "each institution works under its own much more specific lines of intervention." This situation spreads to other organizations



of the Americas Network, where, regardless of the nature of the donor institution(s), agreements have been reached to carry out work without delegitimizing the objectives of supporting people living in street situations.



Management capacity as an evident strength encompasses different areas where donor organizations can contribute not only financial resources but also training and even human resources to support actions in different countries. The representative of the national platform in Brazil states that a university provides "a certification of hours in the project" to encourage the work of street outreach workers. The recently formed Somos Calle Ecuador Foundation has managed to obtain a donation of office space for its administrative operation. A representative of Somos Calle Ecuador Foundation shares that "the foundation has a loaned office (no rent is paid), where administrative work is done. The office is



equipped with the basic furniture and equipment." In contrast, organizations in Colombia, the United States, Canada, and Mexico, with more than 20 years in operation have managed to consolidate the necessary resources for the sustainability of their organizational structures even expanding their programs and projects nationwide. The strengthening of institutional alliances and effective work over time has allowed these organizations to become benchmarks for the care of people living in street situations. As related by a Canadian representative "trust has been created over the years."



Another of the strengths that stands out in the organizations of the Americas Network is the generation of monitoring and evaluation systems and the implementation of training for street outreach workers. While some member organizations have not yet developed monitoring systems, it is viewed as valuable to "monitor the progress of a program towards the achievement of its objectives, and to guide management decisions". Likewise, the evaluation of programs and projects allows examination of "the chain of results (inputs, activities, products, achievements, and impacts), processes, contextual factors, and causality, to understand the scope or the absence of them." From this perspective, the evaluation contributes to "determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions and their contribution to the achievement of results." ³³ Among the main tools

³³ See: Monitoring and Evaluation Why is monitoring and evaluation important? (2010) Virtual Knowledge Center to End Violence Against Women and Girls, UN Women, New York.



for monitoring and evaluating actions in the Americas Network are weekly or monthly reports, field investigations with the support of experts, compliance arms, attendance lists, activity reports and systematization of experiences. Regarding this last tool, the Combos Corporation in Colombia points out its importance to frame the "political commitment of the Corporation to consolidate its training and organizational processes. Our purpose through the systematization is: To produce knowledge that is derived from the understanding, reflection and consolidation of institutional practices, from the people who interact in them." ³⁴

Finally, another strength of the organizations is their presence in spaces of political dialogue as key actors in the construction of local and national development agendas and recognition of their work as an advocacy tool. Although it is true that only some organizations have achieved an impact in this area, the institutional orientation of the Network in general is expressly oriented towards that end. Thus, in cases such as Bolivia, active participation is observed in a set of significant processes at the national level regarding the proposal and development of public policies related to vulnerable populations. In the words of a representative of the Bolivian Alalay, it has been possible to participate in the "development of the National Model of Prevention and Comprehensive and Intersectoral Attention to Street Children and Adolescents – NNASC - with the Vice Ministry of Citizen Security (2012), National Census of homeless people, in coordination with the Vice Ministry of Social Defense and Controlled Substances, preparation of the National Protocol for prevention and comprehensive care for NNASC (2016)." One of the most relevant results has been the writing of the "draft National Law for the prevention and care of homeless people (2018)." A similar case is observed in Brazil where actions have also been carried out in the field of public policies including the recent representation in the "Municipal Council of in coordination with the Vice Ministry of Social Defense and Controlled Substances, preparation of the National Protocol for prevention and comprehensive care for NNASC (2016)." Regarding the rights of children and education, local councils are responsible for public policies for children and adolescents in the city. "Additionally, proposals have been made for the "regulation of the profession of social educator in the Brazilian Senate (this proposal is underway)" and as a recent achievement during the COVID-19 pandemic, AESMAR has managed to carry out a campaign for free internet access in some strategic places in the City of Maringá.

In the case of Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, the United States and Mexico, valuable progress has been reported in terms of participation in political spaces such as round tables, specific national councils, ministerial representations, and close relationships with government agencies in order to generate contributions for cultural change and impact on public policies. The representative of Combos in Colombia expresses that a significant achievement was "to strengthen the Pro-Inhabitants of the Street network a few years ago, we became directly and forcefully involved, we reached an agreement in the Medellín Council, and it was the agreement that achieved the realization of the Public Policy for Attention to Street Children."

5.6.2 DIFFICULTIES

In contrast to the set of strengths observed, although these are not the only ones possessed by the organization of the Americas Network, there are also certain difficulties that limit the agility of the processes and affect the execution of programs or projects and reduce their impact. These limitations are mainly linked to the areas of economic resources, the absence of specialized academic training, the invisibility of the problem as a social responsibility and the inability and ineffectiveness of public institutions in the follow-up and care of cases.

³⁴ Corporación Educativa Combos (2008) Ha-Beings of resistance with you and with a voice, Pregón Ltda. Medellín.



In terms of economic resources, this study has been able to identify that despite the constant efforts that are carried out, some organizations face serious difficulties in implementing their strategies and achieving their objectives. However, the determination and commitment of the local teams to support the most affected populations transcends the existing difficulties and barriers. Such is the case in Haiti, where "volunteers in most cases use their own means to help the homeless to have certain services." This situation, although with different intensities, is repeated in most of the countries of the Americas Network, showing a directly proportional relationship between the available resources with the coverage and actions to be carried out. "The needs are so many with the boys, girls and families I work with. We could work with more children and more families if we had the money." It is worth mentioning that organizations try to prioritize and manage the resources obtained in the most efficient way. However, there are limitations for items such as furniture and equipment, technological and logistical resources, food, and operating expenses, among others.

However, the needs are not only presented in economic terms since there are organizations who manage to do the work despite these challenges. They instead are manifested in the lack of training offered in the national educational systems that allows professionalization of advocacy staff in the field. The ATTRueQ representative in Quebec makes a reflection that applies not only to them but to the Network as a whole "there is no specific academic training for street workers. The vast majority have postgraduate training in aid relations (social work, specialized education, psycho-educator, crime worker ...) but it is at the discretion of the employing organization to establish its criteria for action." Likewise, the members of the Brazilian team, who work as university academics, advocate to incorporate specific training under the principles of "education for social transformation". As long as there are no academic accreditations for the specific scientific studies or development of a "training of the social educator career" there will be profound difficulties due to the lack of recognition of this specialty and that the organizations themselves will be the ones that will have to continue to allocate economic and methodological efforts. There is a need for academic training of street outreach workers that incorporates fundamentals like the treatment of addictions, mental health, recreational methodologies, human capital formation, legislation, and public policies, among others.

Another of the most sensitive difficulties for the Americas Network and its organizations consists of the structure of the intellectual and socio-political environment of the State where the discussions of public policy, beyond making an explicit declaration of interest in the people or groups that they require the coverage of their minimum social needs, they are particularly concentrated in globalizing processes established by the elites, excluding from the collective reality the tensions and conflicts of the demands that are not common to them, deriving the making invisible of the problems as a social responsibility. ³⁵ The contributions of the organizations allow us to appreciate this need when they refer to the lack of relevant public policies related to people living in street situations as reflected by an Ecuadorian representative who points out the importance of "learning to work with politics, either you learn, or you are left out. You can't be without it. We have seen many administrations pass, some tougher than others, some with ideas of even social cleansing. It is hard to see that this problem is not understood." From this account, the intention of the organizations to make specific contributions around the national and local action plans is noted.

Organizations of the Americas Network consistently report a lack of effective follow-up by public institutions regarding social security, public safety, justice, and human rights as related to the people they work with. Apart from the United States and Canada who reference government institutions

³⁵ Latin American Council of Social Sciences (2012) Criticism and Emancipation, The voices of the tempest, Argentina.



that cooperate in an efficient and committed way in the care and treatment of people living in street situations, the rest of the countries show serious difficulties in obtaining the necessary support. This situation is reflected, for example, in the refusal of health center personnel to provide medical assistance to "some homeless person or person on the street that we take ... or the police when some type of crime is reported against these people because they see them dirty, they do not have conditions of hygiene or are under the influence of any drug or liquor." On the other hand, there are also cases where the capacity of the government institutions is not sufficient to meet the numbers of people seeking services.

At the discretion of the national representatives of the Americas Network, the government services and programs to which people living in street situations have less access are those related to the fight against poverty and marginalization. Other areas include mental health, the prevention of violence, pregnancies in minors, psychosocial education, and social reintegration. More effective responses by governments are noted in the areas of: attention to disease, food programs, sports, art, and recreation, as well as school education. Below is a summary table about the care that governments provide to the those living in street situations according to those representatives of the different countries that make up the Americas Network.

TABLE 05: GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS

PROGRAM AREA	ВО	BR	AC	CO	EC	НТ	GT	МХ	US	GO
Mental / psychological health	Р	Р	В	Р	М	Р	М	Р	М	М
Prevention of violence	Р	Р	В	М	М	Р	Р	Р	М	В
Pregnancies in minors	Р	Р	AND	М	М	Р	Р	Р	М	М
Sports, recreation, art	Р	Р	В	М	М	М	М	Р	В	В
School education	Р	Р	AND	М	В	М	Р	Р	В	М
Psychosocial education	Р	Р	В	М	Р	М	Р	Р	В	М
Social reintegration	Р	Р	В	М	М	Р	Р	Р	М	В
Alcoholism and drug addiction	Р	Р	В	М	М	Р	Р	М	М	В
Poverty / marginality	Р	Р	В	М	М	Р	Р	Р	М	Р
Attention to diseases	Р	Р	AND	М	В	Р	Р	М	В	М
Labor insertion / employment	Р	Р	В	М	М	Р	М	Р	М	В
Food programs	Р	Р	В	М	М	М	М	М	В	В

E: Excellent; B: Good; M: Bad; P: Terrible



06 ADVOCACY EFFORTS AND STRATEGIES

Below is a summary of the most relevant actions that the different organizations carry out to advocate for people living in street situations. In general, members of the Americas Network carry out work based on inter-institutional management and coordination for the attention of specific cases. That is, they maintain close relationships with government entities, private initiatives, and civil society to provide necessary services to people. Likewise, there are efforts to influence national and local public policies relevant to people living in street situations and advocacy efforts even where the member organizations do not provide services themselves.

In **Bolivia**, Alalay is involved in the design and implementation of care models that incorporate person-centered methodologies that advocate for human rights such as the "protocol for the prevention and care of children and street girls" prepared by government institutions and civil society with the support of UNICEF. Participation in a variety of spaces for political dialogue and local networks is reported. However, in concrete terms of programs for people living in street situations, there are methodologies "of individualized attention with quality and warmth." For this, the individual needs of people are analyzed in service of achieving "adaptability in care." Street outreach workers and the people living in street situations they work with cocreate as they are "preparing a life plan, with goals and future projections." Some of the most important activities corresponds to "management and support in obtaining identity documents such as birth certificates and identity cards." In addition, Alalay has helped young people to access medical care, food, legal advice, addiction treatment and in the mediation of family conflicts to reestablish ties. Personalized activities address goals such as improved reading skills, developing leadership skills, attention is also provided to work on academic, vocational, leadership and self-advocacy skills.

A street outreach worker from the Alalay Foundation shares that "the actions that are carried out respond to comprehensive care, based on the establishment of a relationship of trust and friendship, through group dynamics, artistic activities, sports activities, with the aim of initiating an individual and voluntary process for each child and adolescent." The work sequence described by the street outreach worker begins with the establishment of "first contact with children and adolescents through daily daytime and evening meetings in different places where they sleep or concentrate to seek daily sustenance." Then, if possible, assistance is sought in "day centers for families at high risk to provide a physical space for protection, referral and support." Some of the services included in comprehensive care in Bolivia are "therapeutic support, health, nutrition, education, child leadership, early childhood care and training workshops."

For street outreach workers in Bolivia, there is a deep satisfaction in having contributed to the improvement of many people through a long history of encouraging independence through "seed funds" that support projects that "achieve the holistic integration of the person into society, with a technical career, productive entrepreneurship and / or permanent job." A street outreach worker shares that: "In these almost 30 years of working with the homeless population, we have several stories of transformed livescases of boys and girls who have managed to finish their formal education, have accessed a university education, have stable jobs and families."

In **Brazil**, AESMAR has had the support of scientific and academic processes to create a



model, implement it and then monitor it. For years, work has been done on the development of a method called the "playful-political-pedagogical method" which, based on a game, introduces elements for the thoughtful and meaningful development of children and adolescents to be critical thinkers. It seeks to develop a critical consciousness about the actions of people "in the world and of the world."

The Brazilian national platform AESMAR seeks the consolidation of training processes and activities both for the street outreach workers and the people living in street situations with whom they work. AESMAR focuses its efforts on strengthening relationship building skills and understanding the contexts of the interventions the workers carry out. For this reason, AESMAR conducts weekly "training sessions with the group of educators who work in the field". Additionally, work is being done on the development of the "Childhood and Social Education subject in the Postgraduate Education at the State University of Maringá semester hours)". Other activities correspond to "eventual courses with different themes and audiences, extension projects at universities, organization of international or national summits and presentations at local levels of recent findings." One of the most interesting contributions of the organizations responsible for street outreach work in Brazil is the development of articles, books and research that aspire to improve field practice and, therefore, the real conditions of children, girls, adolescents, and adults who are marginalized. Although there is a wide collection of scientific and academic texts, among the most relevant are: "Social educator no Brazil: normatização e profissionalização", "Evolution and perspectives of normatização da profissão de educador social no Brasil."36 These texts contribute to clarify the main trends and opportunities of street outreach work as a type of training that should be incorporated into public policies in addition to



offering a perspective on the evolution of the process of standardization of the profession and its status within the framework of the legislation. AESMAR's research is aimed at generating recognition of the street outreach work and determining the needed skills areas and education needed to effectively do the work. These works have helped develop a set of practical activities, including political advocacy actions in international, national, and local institutions that incorporate the "thoughts and suggestions" that have resulted from dialogue and evaluation. Consequently, a space has been earned at places such as the Municipal Council of Children's Rights and / or Education.

Another action that the Brazilian organization promotes in the field is legal assistance through a Municipal Network of Adolescents in Conflict with the Law, made up of a "group of judges, advocates, coordinators of the adolescent prison, social workers, psychologists and social educators. The counseling is biweekly throughout the year. It is a free service." In the opinion of the national representatives in Brazil, among the most relevant good practices to date are: "The struggle for the regulation of the profession of the social

³⁵ See: Bauli, Régis Alan; Müller, Verônica Regina. Social educator no Brazil: normatização e profissionalização. Chapecó / SC; Editora Livrologia, 2020; Marchi, João A. Müller, Verônica R. "Faz Assim Ó" - Ways of Ensinar das Crianças as Subsidy for Education. Curitiba, Appris, 2018; Bauli, Régis Alan; Müller, Verônica Regina. Evolution and perspectives of normatization of the profession of social educator in Brazil. Convergences. Education magazine, v. 2, n. 4, p. 153-171, 2019.



educator. Added to which is the struggle for the supply in public universities of the higher degree in social education; the relationship of the principles pedagogical and political with the conceptual and ideological rigor of the practice in its most specific form."

AESMAR street outreach workers in Brazil point out that the work in the field is carried out based on the ludic-political-pedagogical proposal "Playing while working to identify rights violations in order to contact the institutions responsible for guaranteeing them." The strategy is based on learning, defending, and advocating for the rights of children and adolescents through play as a basic tool. In addition, "conversation circles" are held, which consist of spaces for reflection, debate, and feedback about the concerns of youth as well as other topics of importance for their development. As a street social educator puts it, "The Project Play with Boys and Girls on the Street and within the Street has existed since 1997. The execution is carried out weekly through games with the aim of training and expanding the political participation of children and youth."

Some of the life stories that street outreach workers relay include experiences where attention to mental health and emotional support have been required. A street outreach



worker shares that "once we got to the neighborhood to play, the children asked not to play in the usual place because that week a relative had been murdered there and it was a tense atmosphere... A teenager had a panic attack and with a lot of patience, attention and collectivity we were able to support." However, experiences are also shared where difficulties and obstacles have been overcome generating satisfaction and encouragement to continue their work as in the case of "a 19-yearold girl who suffered abuse by her brother during childhood and entered in a depressive process with suicide attempts. During the pandemic she continued to work, but one of those jobs was actually a scam. A court case was opened, and the boyfriend was arrested. Despite all this, she graduated from school, took her university entrance exam and now she really wants to continue her studies."

The organizations that carry out street outreach work in Quebec, Canada report a recognition of street outreach work and financial support of the activities. The representative of the national platform in Quebec points out that "ATTRueQ members participate in representations before certain ministries so that our methodological approach is recognized and reasonably financed." The central point of the Canadian organizations is the search for decent working conditions that guarantee the "retention of workers" and that "better financing of street work would have direct long-term benefits for people living on the street."

Among the main activities carried out at the institutional level in Quebec are activities that call for recognition of the social needs of people living in street situations, especially youth. That is why there is a high level of involvement in "national consultations with other non-governmental organizations. It is done to unite our voices and demand greater respect for people who use substances so that they can access public services, better development of social housing or low-cost



housing." An ATTRueQ street outreach worker emphasizes the importance of these actions given that some of "those whom we work with have a place to sleep but are socially excluded, have no family, have not studied, many are orphans, use drugs or have mental health problems."

The mechanism of participation of Canadian organizations in the political and social assistance arenas has been the specialization in identifying and referring specific cases to the government. As a result of the efforts and coordination carried out today, the consolidation of a "rich experience in interdisciplinary work is considered... Our efforts and our open approach to establish relationships with public service professionals are paying off. Street workers are essential and complementary to provide adequate responses to people on the street."

The contributions of Canadian organizations to local governance assist with overcoming institutional dissonances or differences. This allows a better fluidity and articulation of models and experiences to achieve the protection, respect and dignity of the people who live in street situations. ATTRueQ's work allows knowledge to be shared, government to be informed based on exchange, and a meeting of minds to occur.

A street social worker in Quebec shares that among the "good practices that we have in street work are the values that we carry. We seek the unconditional and non-judgmental reception of people, giving importance and consideration to the experiences of each one, recognizing who the experts are in each situation, and seeking their support." As a result of this co-production, it can be seen that "people are empowered from their own strengths." The determination to support vulnerable populations in Canada can be seen, among others, in the following intervention: "If there are children on the street, we take them to a center. We work mainly with adults and

with boys who are in the street all day using substances and doing few good things. If we see someone on the street, we greet them, we offer help, but if they are not ready to accept us until later, we are insistent, we wait a week, a month, two or three years until the person is ready, we never close the door to them. If we get a doctor's appointment and he doesn't come, we get another, and another, and another until he comes, we never close the door."

The representative of the national platform ATTRueQ relays an anecdote that occurred when he was a street outreach worker: "Every year I used to bring a punk a birthday cake. He never received a cake in his life. Usually, we do not give food, so they do not become dependent, I buy you a coffee to chat, coordinate things and reach agreements. But we always want to be with them, share, help them, not just give them food because the day we don't give it to them they don't like it anymore... Here people don't know their neighbors, it's an individualistic society, the level of suicide is very high, because social relations are weak."

On the other hand, work experiences in Colombia are supported by a solid institutional profile based on the values of solidarity, equality, equity, affection, participation, and community which allow the development of activities linked to education, research, human rights, and public policy. The fundamental purposes of the organization are aimed at helping in the areas of education, substance use, physical and mental health, prevention of social risk factors, human rights and to advocate to inform local and national public policy agendas.

The cohesion observed between the institutional principles and purposes of the Combos Educational Corporation in Colombia is linked to "compliance with the rights of children and women." In this regard, one of the fundamental activities is the development of a "pertinent"



and relevant educational experience in response to the needs of accessing the right to education of boys, girls, young people and women at high social risk." This organization has a sharp awareness of the need to produce "pedagogical devices from the perspectives of rights, gender, differential approach (ages and territories)", which incorporate the component of the regeneration of the social fabric through practices of "pedagogical-policies of forgiveness, peacebuilding, and reconciliation." Additionally, within the framework of the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Combos seeks to adapt its "educational proposals to the new realities".

Among the actions related to health, the Colombian national platform makes efforts to provide "emotional and educational support for children affected by the armed conflict and other social problems." Additionally, the mission of Combos aims to positively influence the prevention and overcoming of various types of violence, including self-inflicted violence.³⁷ It seeks to reinforce and internalize in the people it works with the basic principles for valuing themselves and others as part of a principle of coexistence and reduce the risk of "suicidal behaviors, harmful consumption, mental health difficulties, cyberbullying, among other problems that affect boys, girls, young people and women. "

With regards to public policy, Combos seeks to promote the "de-stimulation of child labor" as one of the scourges that affects children and adolescents in Colombia. In addition, it works to "influence the development of public policies for comprehensive care for this population ... gender equity and comprehensive protection for women of different ages." Combos works to coordinate with other institutions to refer cases that involve additional issues such as immigration status, gender and age discrimination and social exclusion.

Some of the good practices pointed out by directors of the national platform in Colombia refer to scientific developments as contributions to understanding and addressing different problems that affect people living in street situations not only Colombia but other nations as well. These efforts represent the organization's commitment to offering better development opportunities to vulnerable populations through "rigorous knowledge management processes, systematization of educational practices, investigation of the realities of children and women, incidence in public policies and creation of preventative services."

A Colombian street outreach worker describes a part of good practice as being vulnerable populations who are in "hotels, residences or tenancies" are also served. Some of the most relevant actions are linked to the prevention of risk situations such as "the consumption of psychoactive substances, exploitation and child labor, use and instrumentalization of armed groups, and sexual and commercial exploitation; all of the above situations can lead to boys and girls dropping out their homes to inhabit the streets of the city."

Efforts are focused on turning these places of overcrowding and social risk into "protective environments for boys and girls in Medellín", through "individual and collective psychosocial support". For this purpose, a set of pedagogical strategies and trainings have been developed for the promotion of "rights and the demand for them", including children and Colombian families or migrants from neighboring countries. Work at the local level is carried out through "community assemblies with the inhabitants of tenants, families and passers-by in the sector" as well as the "school accompaniment to children, adolescents who are active in the system and those who are outside the system the initiation of the

³⁷ Self-inflited violence, considered as any self-directed behavior, the deliberate result of which is injury or the potential to cause injury. See: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (2017) Suicide Prevention: Technical Package of Policies, Programs and Practices, Violence Prevention Division. Atlanta.



written code is supported." The strategies implemented by Combos in Colombia also include artistic and recreational development through "activities in public spaces. These activities are carried out in places where people are living on the street."

Combos has three decades of experience with a volume of significant contributions, noted creativity and an ability to adapt to technological and cultural changes. What stands out is the use of technology and media as a "creative-cultural" strategy for the prevention of risk factors for populations. Another innovative approach is assisting youth in job training through PANT - Non-Traditional Academic Processes, such as "robotics and theater."

When asked for life history or a significant anecdote, a Colombian street outreach worker shared that his motivation to work with people living in street situations is linked not only to his personal commitment but to the profound impact caused by the brief but heartbreaking words of a young man in Medellín: "Hunger hurts more than pain."

In Ecuador, the main actions to address the phenomenon of "street living" are linked to three main areas: a) direct attention; b) reference of cases and; c) incidence in public policies. In terms of the direct care provided by the Ecuadorian organization to populations with experience of living on the street, there is a monitoring of substance use. The representative of the national platform in Ecuador reported that "there are chronic pathologies due to drug use where people do not even remember who the street worker who approached them is." It is important to mention that the intention of offering support is the following. The goal is not the institutionalization of people living in street situations but the provision of a basic service that encourages their resilience. That is, there is a clear awareness of the needs of the population, but at the same time a

critical capacity to determine the scope of the intervention that the organization can provide. In the words of a manager, the objective of serving the population without generating direct dependence is to "break the bubble where they end up asking for and even demanding services." This concept of non-dependence is based on getting people to generate processes of reflection and change based on the conviction and awareness of their own situation, as well as the impossibility to satisfy their most immediate needs as a starting point for the construction of their life plans. As shared by a street outreach worker, "it is about generating an interlocution where street people can achieve a certain independence and sustainability."



The role of Fundación Somos Calle Ecuador to make referrals of cases that require specialized treatment is fundamental in a context where state and civil institutions show an inability to carry out direct actions in neighborhoods or areas where these populations live. For this purpose, "specific agreements have been made with the State, including the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Health."



Additionally, coordination is carried out with the "Network of Attention to People with Street Life Experience" made up of 8 governmental and non-governmental institutions of the city of Quito including the Ecuadorian Red Cross.

In terms of the impact on public policies and local work agendas, efforts are identified to achieve sustainable change and improvements. However, because of government transitions, the strategies are not effective. In other words, as is the case in many Latin American countries, there is a recurring practice of establishing government policies that only represent a proposal to exercise public administration for the time determined by the legislation. However, it is necessary to formulate State policies whose temporary permanence requires compliance and monitoring by whatever government party is in power. Despite these difficulties, the national platform in Ecuador continues to direct part of its efforts to achieve an impact in this area. "It is complicated, but it is the highest objective. Some organizations work depending on the time of political action. For example, the Mayor's Office lasts a few years and at the end of that period everything ends, and the system leaves the processes and, mainly, the street people abandoned." This



situation is affected by the absence of "laws or regulations. Furthermore, for the concept of people living in street situations, there are no specific protections beyond a general reference to vulnerable populations."

At the local level, Somos Calle Ecuador organized a group of volunteers with extensive experience in "mapping, sectorization of places of greater concentration, approach, awareness raising and reference to services." Through these actions, the "incidence in communities of people with experience of living on the street and the awareness for the voluntary nature of being treated in diseases and risks is sought." Another activity is "identifying and making visible the possibilities for improving living conditions on the street, holding mini-information and prevention workshops on various topics."

Some of the methods employed in Ecuador incorporate pedagogical, recreational, and artistic elements which constitutes a "continuous learning and participation in various spaces, which may seem that they are not linked to the street but that are useful to know and connect better with people (music, digital media, entrepreneurship, etc.)." Furthermore, the humanity and emotional support that the actions involve is seen in activities where participants can "share their feelings with a group of peers to better channel their learning and vent their emotions."

According to a member of the Ecuadorian team "There are no stories more or less relevant than others. But I remember one that was in the last months of 2020 when we had the opportunity to serve families in situations of begging and child labor. A boy of about 10 years old shared with me his travel experience from Venezuela to Ecuador; that far from being a sad story, from his own words, it was an adventure. In addition, he told me that in his city it is customary to wear new clothes at Christmas and that this year his father gave



him the jacket he was wearing so that he could at least feel something familiar that night; the food was not the same, but they managed to make it as similar as possible. At that same moment I was surprised by a girl who was trying to hide under the table because the policemen came on horseback and her mother was a street vendor. She thought they were going to chase her."

Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) in the **United States** advocates for the strengthening of communities and sustainable individual biography change. Besides its direct services, YAP promotes the social, emotional, financial, and physical well-being of those who are in vulnerable conditions. To this end, the organization is actively involved in different actions designed to create the best opportunities so that "all people can prosper as healthy, complete and fully committed members with their families and their communities."

According to the national platform in the United States, to address the problem of living on the street, it is necessary to identify and "confront the barriers within the communities" that constitute risk factors and limit the obtaining of positive results. Therefore, becoming aware of the existence of social phenomena such as race inequity and, consequently, exclusion or discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, socio-economic status or disabilities is a primary need for any organization in any context. Another situation that is incorporated into action plans and work strategies is psychological and emotional care for young people who have complex needs and a history of trauma.

Some of the actions that YAP takes to develop people's potential include providing mental health, addiction management and educational support services. Strategies for family reunification are employed. As expressed by the representative of the national platform, it seeks to "identify and support people to

return to their homes and communities." In addition, another relevant line of work is the impact on public policies for the attention of people living in street situations. According to front line workers called YAP Advocates, there are cities where "high levels of violence and other vulnerable conditions cause youth to become victims of violence or get involved addictions." Therefore, an innovative approach in the United States consists of trying to first meet the most immediate needs of people based on close collaboration with local, private, or public organizations to connect youth and families to the available resources and the use of funds for YAPWORX training, occupational learning, and supported work. That is, they not only offer training but work for the provision of practical support to achieve the independence of the person and future economic opportunities. That is why evaluations are done to identify the strengths, interests, and potential skills of the youth as part of the individualized approach to working with youth and also engaging young people with creative arts and sports aspects as part of the process for social reintegration. For example, a youth is part of a YAP Street Soccer Team because he may not be able to participate in a school or community team because of inability to pay for fees, equipment or barred because of attendance or academic requirements "Street soccer team ... because sometimes in schools it is complicated by the issue of grades and academic performance."

To broaden the understanding of street work actions in the United States, a YAP Advocate shares that "young people living on the street in Las Vegas are served. We have a program focused solely on young people who have been trafficked." YAP works from the orientation of "to reach people in the community where they live and works...from a holistic perspective. We understand that they need support for coping with past trauma or health problems. First, basic needs must be met, so we try to help them and address problems related to that



first." One of the life stories that he remembers with great satisfaction is that of a young man whom he helped in the past to treat his father's addictions. But recently "this young man had hard time during the pandemic and began to use drugs as well, especially because he found out that he was going to be a father. Now he is 17 years old and finished working with me. He is doing well; he is being a good father to his baby since he stopped drugs and has a stable home and job."

In Guatemala, Siembra Bien works on risk prevention, targeted intervention, and community collaboration to affect policy change. It is important to mention the commitment of Siembra Bien to both primary (prevention) and secondary (treatment) care for people living in vulnerable areas called "reds". The main characteristics of "reds" are: prevalence of criminal groups, consumption and sale of drugs and alcohol, an economy affected by extortion or "taxes" by youth gangs, recruitment of youth for criminal activities such as arms transfer or extortion fee collections.

The work experience of the national platform in Guatemala considers that the dynamics that are experienced in everyday environments require comprehensive approach strategies that motivate children and youth to not see "joining or being co-opted by youth gangs, criminal groups and extortion networks as an option." In addition to the risk of being involved with organized crime, youth have complex personal problems and family dysfunction or disconnection to cope with. A street outreach worker in Guatemala laments the "death of a teenage girl who inhaled so much solvent out of sadness and no one was by her side to listen to her ... she took so many drugs that she ended up dying by suicide."

It is because of situations like this that Siembra Bien commits to youth leadership training and development projects linked to emotional empowerment, the fight against violence, inequalities, gender identity, human rights, and life in society in a fair and peaceful way.

Siembra Bien street outreach workers share the importance of carrying out "technical and employability training programs, drug addiction and sexuality talks, information on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), self-esteem, conflict resolution, peaceful coexistence and sharing the love of God." Siembra Bien "reinforces consistent attendance" and conducts "workshops for parents as good parenting practices for clear communication and loving parenting." Likewise, Siembra Bien coordinates with government institutions and civil society for the "Referral of homeless people to rehabilitation centers and emergency care or transfers to hospitals and health centers."

Other strategies correspond to "programs for the constructive use of free time through sports, recreation, arts and training." One of the programs is "street soccer" where they use sport to strengthen people's social skills. This is the case of Brandon, who at 19 has seen his friends die, but rather than leaving that violent environment, the young man aspired to be useful to his community. "I don't want to see my community in this way and if I can do something to change it, I will." Along with 7 other young people, Brandon is a member of the Guatemalan team "Fútbol Calle, Guatemala, Take the Street. The block is our field." According to street outreach worker Olga, street soccer promotes sport as an alternative so that young people do not get involved in illicit activities. They affirm that "one can get involved in other movements where people see that young people are not criminals", Olga and Brandon do not see themselves in the future working in an office or a factory, they envision themselves involving more young people in the movement to give them a different alternative to violence.³⁸ Recently, thanks to Siembra Bien, a group of Guatemalan youth had the opportunity to represent the country in the Street Soccer World Cup or Homeless World Cup in Mexico in 2018. At

se Soy 502 (2014) Young people travel to Brazil for the World Street Soccer World Cup. Available soy502.com/articulo/seleccion-guatemalteca-viaja-brasil-mundial-futbol-callejero



this event, the teams are made up of people who live in street situations, who face social exclusion, poverty, and marginality on a daily basis. This activity, in contrast, highlights their talents and life aspirations.

Of note is Siembra Bien's advocacy for "protagonism and leadership of the young people in the activities" in Guatemala.* As part of this advocacy, the "Social Mediators" strategy empowers young people from the intervention communities to be positive leaders at the community level modeling good practices for their peers. This model allows recognition at the local level by the population as they contribute good actions in different areas. An example of this project is "a girl who was motivated to continue her studies, to return to her family a few months after finding out about her pregnancy. She became a very intelligent and participative leader; she has already finished elementary school and currently lives with her partner and her baby. She continues her studies and is a representative of her collective within the local youth movement."

Meanwhile, in **Haiti**, PLANATRUCH shared their vision. First, it is worth mentioning that the Haitian contexts are permeated by structural phenomena such as poverty, exploitation, human trafficking, sexually transmitted diseases, and the absence of local governance to address these situations. It is reported that young women living on the streets suffer from violation of their rights through physical, emotional and sexual violence. ³⁹

As a mechanism to cope with the difficulties of life on the street, it is common for people to take refuge in drugs and alcohol. An experience linked to the harsh street experience is that of a young woman who expresses: "I drink a lot of alcohol, sometimes I cling to my marijuana joint believing that it can help me overcome despair", in addition to sharing that



she has "been a victim of violence by some police officers for consuming marijuana on the street." It is because of these situations that PLANATRUC is committed to providing "psycho-social and referral support, as well as assistance legal" to populations with street life experience.

People living in street situations in Haiti are referred by PLANATRUCH to government entities, civil society and private initiatives with a clear awareness that "we cannot talk about taking charge if we are not able to cover or satisfy the needs of these people. The will is always present in us, we are there as guides, facilitators to support some of them in very difficult conditions to find certain services, most of the time in the private sector." In the case of government entities, in the past they have made efforts to implement "reception centers" such as "Delmas 3", where a space was created that can house up to 400 minors. Further, 40 in terms of direct work practices, PLANATRUCH Haitian street outreach workers report that they help people "with food, hygiene products and seeds for horticulture."

^{3°} According to the Equal Times, in the note "The harsh reality of the street for Haitian adolescents" of the year 2019, young women are abandoned to their fate and 75% of them are sexually exploited, they are among the most prone to infections from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including AIDS. Available at: https://is.gd/vgpwMb their homes and inhabit the streets of the city.

Soy 502 (2014) Young people travel to Brazil for the World Street Soccer World Cup. Available soy502.com/articulo/seleccion-guatemalteca-viaja-brasil-mundial-futbol-callejero



In addition, "collective, individual or small group talks" are held to identify needs, concerns, aspirations, or success stories. Another innovative care modality is the use of sport, art, and recreation as a vehicle to achieve the consolidation of bonds of trust and effective communication with the groups served. A street outreach worker points out "when we play soccer with people it decreases the complexities and creates certain connections, making music, dining together shows that we have the same blood running through our veins. We may not have the same opportunities."

In the opinion of the Haitian work team, it is very likely that "we do not have the best practices in the world to be closer to people. However, we can say that we have some that are very effective in getting a person to listen and share their point of view." As a result of this noble work, there are stories of lives transformed through these playful and reflective methodologies that have a fundamental role in the process of change of people who "begin to walk again and open the way to new life possibilities". In the words of one team member, being part of these activities represents the opportunity to "witness the miracle of transformation."



In Mexico, with over 25 years of advocating for people living in street situations, El Caracol AC has developed an understanding of these vulnerable groups as "groups that share the axis of street culture and have as form of relating substance use, an economy linked to begging and precariousness. They relate and define themselves as people who live on the street. They say – I am from the street; I am a street person." This notion reflects the existence of a principle of recognition of the street as a space differentiated by its own identity. But more than being a set of adjectives, they have been interpreted as a "category of analysis that allows us to identify that there are no public policies that recognize these groups."

El Caracol AC works to identify areas of opportunity within the framework of the proposal, design, implementation, and analysis of public policies as spaces for the articulation of actions and to meet the needs of the population under a rights approach. This organization shows the full awareness that "people reach that condition through a physical and mental deterioration in their family and social networks, but above all the failure of government policies is reflected." Even though in the Mexican and international sphere various ideological or scientific currents around the phenomenon of street populations concentrate the "blame for this condition on the family", others blame "the people themselves in street conditions", and there is even talk of "expelling communities". However, the analysis that El Caracol has constructed over decades of experience identifies the cause as "a complex structure that includes the person and the family as the basis of public organization. Therefore, government efforts should focus and be linked to the care of people from their most basic expression... the individual". Therefore, the panorama of inaction or incapacity shown by the government constitutes what the representative of the national platform indicates as "a defeated State."



El Caracol AC focuses its work on generating strategies related to addressing the needs of people living in street situations. El Caracol AC defines "Circles of Protection that involve the family, the community, and government institutions." This concentric dynamic of care allows, for example, that a person "who is a substance user or trans, who does not have support from his family, finds it in the community (community centers, collectives, churches, etc.), or in institutions of government, and even if these failed, the human rights organizations would still be there."

Considering the principle that "anyone can reach the street regardless of economic, social or academic condition", the El Caracol AC platform seeks to promote actions to "recover the conditions of people's social identity." That is why "informative workshops and counseling on issues related to human rights, a life free from violence, labor inclusion, reproductive and sexual health, harm reduction and independent living are continually being held." "Spaces for emotional containment (individual and group) and care in crisis" are created as well as peer support for people with the experience of living on the streets that include advice and support for "the process of identity documents and health care, inclusion in formal workspaces and access to safe housing spaces and formal and non-formal educational inclusion." Likewise, are being made to design and implement strategies related to education, such is the case of the "School of Butterflies ... a place to dream, know my human rights and promote equality", which arises as an alternative that facilitates the involvement of "girls, boys, and their families directly on the street, reducina educational regression and allowing reflection on various issues such as gender violence, labor inclusion and human rights."

Other good practices that are carried out in Mexico by El Caracol AC and that are considered useful for their application in various context include the constant monitoring and adjustment of strategies through "remote and face-to-face monitoring of families to provide support to the processes". In addition, scientific research and contributions are carried out to help improve the approach to the phenomenon of living on the street. Some of these developments are the "Protocol of Inclusive Care for Street Populations in the Framework of the COVID-19 Pandemic", the Code of Best Practices of Care for People Living in Street Situations and a proposal for face-to-face and distanced emotional support for girls.

The Mexican work team shares the emotional story of a 38-year-old woman "who is currently employed in a construction and maintenance company. She is also a storyteller and for a long time this activity allowed her to obtain the money to support her family. From the age of eight, storytelling was a way out of her problems, and it was her father who instilled in her a taste for reading and writing, he was the one who gave her the emotional attention she required to survive a hostile environment. However, at the age of 15, she took to the streets fleeing the physical and sexual violence of her brother. She found in that space something more than an alternative of life; found a family, which she calls "my family of Street".

Her first night on the street was spent on a park bench near a sewage canal. They remember that at some point she told them: "The first story I told in the streets was in the subway, about a girl and how she went out, she wanted a 15th birthday party, which she never had, and her family made her feel guilty and foolish." Social educators add that today, after many efforts "now she is a feminist human rights defender and recognizes that getting off the street was not easy. But for her, having a roof, a blanket for her daughter and son and a place to cook is a great satisfaction." She considers that "a home is not the house, the car and the fireplace, a home is made up of people and what is emotionally generated to



protect themselves." Finally, they describe with admiration and satisfaction the participation of people with this life experience in the social educational work processes of the streets, who "face life as it comes and have emotional and creative resources to overcome and get ahead."

In Venezuela, the Independent Cultural Foundation is dedicated to working on "the approach and pedagogical assistance of people in vulnerable situations such as boys, girls, youth and women." The understanding that this organization has about the phenomenon of living on the street is framed in the investigation and integration of various scientific developments of great relevance as well as in the valuation of the sense of humanity and social well-being outside of individualistic logics. In this regard, it identifies, among others, fundamental elements of the social psychological current of Manuel Llorens 41 who asserts that this is a determining point for the assistance of street populations. The formation of human capital to achieve recognition of the fundamental rights of those who are most disadvantaged as a basic principle to achieve justice and social equity is integral to the foundation of the work of the Independent Cultural Foundation in Venezuela. Both in the speeches of the representatives of the national platform and in the contributions of street outreach workers, there is a deep concern about the state and social weakening in terms of the fight to reduce inequities and lack of protection putting on the table a debate that involves the public administration and the bodies responsible for social assistance, to the point of questioning whether the mandates on which they must be organized are effectively fulfilled or are constituted as "ideals that do not reach practice."

The Independent Cultural Foundation aspires to help reduce the impact of the phenomena of life on the street with the understanding that they must rely on "identification and prioritization of the care of children and

adolescents in situations of violation of rights and of high permanence in the street through psycho-social accompaniment to them and their families". It is based on this analysis that interventions are constantly evaluated and constantly evolve in service to the goal of achieving "the empowerment of populations in different sectors and with different levels of social vulnerability". A dynamic vision has been created that can adapt to changes in social structures.

Street outreach workers of the Independent Cultural Foundation share the development of "educational and recreational spaces" which involve sport, art, and culture as tools to "generate empowerment processes in members of the communities across the lifetime." In addition, these projects work to reduce and raise awareness of risk factors such as "sexual and gender violence". For children and youth, in addition to recreational and sports methodologies, comprehensive care is also provided that addresses legal, psychological, and social needs as well as literacy and vocational training.

The Venezuelan national platform seeks to influence community development through "experiential learning techniques, based on the principles of popular education and that are committed to the transformation of the individual and their social bonding." That is why the Independent Cultural Foundation is permanently managing and coordinating inter-institutional support with government organizations, civil society, and private initiatives. Some of the institutions with whom they currently partner are "the National Institute for Children and Adolescents, the Protection and Advocacy Councils at local alliances with nongovernmental organizations such as Another Approach, Don Bosco, Luz y Vida and Fundana. " This systemic approach provides better care to families and to "serve people whose children are part of other projects."

⁴¹ Manuel Llorens is a Venezuelan academic and psychologist recognized with the Fernando Paz Castillo award and author of a diversity of texts, particularly "Children with experience of life on the street: a psychological approach" from 2005.





A story of resilience by the Venezuelan team is the case of "a 13-year-old boy with damage to his body, with nutritional problems due to drug use, the son of a female user. He is a teenager who developed criminal practices, belonging to an organized gang that stole batteries from cars in shopping centers. He began to be linked to some spaces and

activities such as martial arts, walks and food programs. In addition, thanks to the work of the organization, he has received psychological support and has been in various care institutions. Currently, he is still on the street, but the process of successive rapprochement has been effective because he is more open to spaces of containment and to re-bonding with his family."



07 FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

At present, there are different ideas about strategies to strengthen the organizations that make up the Americas Network. However, throughout the process of gathering information for this assessment, among both organizational leaders and front-line workers, there is an interest in a dialogue to improve their front-line work. In the words of one organizational leader, we need to "collect the contributions and experiences of member organizations and use those to inform the actions and work of the national networks and the Americas Network."

The study participants consider the training of street outreach workers to be an essential component of the future collaborative work of the Americas Network. Specifically, the areas of substance use and abuse, mental health, and physical health are of vital concern. Human rights, project design, innovative methodologies for community collaboration and advocacy efforts to affect public policy are seen as imperative to address to optimize care for people living in street situations, especially considering new realities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. One idea to strengthen the collaboration and sharing of best practices is to establish training models as a way of strengthening the links between the members of the Americas Network. To this end, from the North, Central and South America there is the possibility of generating exchanges and technical assistance to train street outreach workers and elevate this type of work as a profession. The central point of this modality of exchange lies in guaranteeing that the contents of the training processes are developed by and for street outreach workers in accordance with the strengths, needs and interest of each one, using reflective and critical methods, as well as a global language that allows for contextualization and applicability in all member countries.

The commitment to receiving and providing training by the member organizations and their street outreach workers is required for this idea to be successful. The underlying concept is that each country will provide a training based on their expertise and experience. In addition, it is expected that the training exchanges will allow the consolidation of the Americas Network as a policy figure capable of promoting the recognition of the profession and training at the university level of street outreach workers in the countries of the region. The following describes the areas in which the organizations that make up the Americas Network expect to receive support from their international colleagues and can contribute by providing training or workshops.





TABLE 06: TRAINING THE AMERICAS NETWORK MEMBERS WISH TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER BEING ABLE TO PROVIDE.

	TRAINING						
COUNTRY	RECEIVE	OFFER					
	• Design and management of projects focused on	Street intervention methodology					
	micro-enterprises for the homeless population.	Low Threshold Approach in working with NNASC					
	 Emotional support in crisis situations (deaths, natural disasters, social conflicts, COVID-19) 	 Comprehensive, intersectoral intervention model for NNASC in Bolivia 					
	 Awareness processes on the dynamics and population living on the street to external social groups 	National Protocol for the prevention and care of NNASC					
		 Artistic and recreational techniques guide for Street Outreach Workers 					
		 Psycho-affective backpack in intervention with NNAS 					
Brazil	Aspects of gender, sexuality, race, and social class	 Development of theoretical concepts and their relationship with practice 					
	Health	Playful-political-pedagogical method					
	 Issues of the false war on drugs and their criminalization 						
	• Exchanges of experiences, methods, and work	Coordination with government agencies					
	Learn about the commitment, acts of resistance and solidarity of colleagues in other countries	 General association regulations and guides the use of new technologies in the context street work, reflection on work with partners supervision clinic 					
	Work with communities	·					
Colombia	Prevention of homelessness	Experiential pedagogy models					
	 Managing emotions of people addicted to psychoactive substances First aid for people with psychoactive substance 	Gender issues					
		Pedagogy					
	overdose	Systematization, research-creation of care models					
	Non-violent resolution of conflicts with street	Sociology of emotions					
dwellers • Advocacy for rights of people living in street situations	 Equitable gender practices in parenting and family support 						
	Deep ecology for good living						
Ecuador	Chronic substance use Education in democracy and participation for	 Intervention in the street within the framework of the harm reduction methodology. 					
people living in street situations	Tools for street intervention						
		 Community participation of people with street life experience 					
		Work with teenagers on the street (gangs)					
USA	Advocacy for rights of people living in street	Monitoring and evaluation					
	situations and best practices	VOICE initiatives and advocacy practices					



Guatemala Haití	 Management of social projects with international cooperation Generation of proposals and strategies for community and group work Formulation of projects with a gender and human rights approach Values and their promotion in marginal areas Topics on psychology Group management First aid 	 Mediation and social communication Methodologies and strategies in work with vulnerable Art, sports and play as a tool for social transformation Culture of Peace, Citizenship and Social Development Experiences for the support and reintegration of people
Mexico	 Update on the "International Guide to Street Work" Protocols of attention to street populations in times of pandemic Models of care for addictions in girls, boys, and adolescents 	 Evolution of the street phenomenon in Mexico Psycho-social support for street populations Containment code and good treatment Human rights and non-discrimination Substance use and care models Street work and COVID-19
Venezuela	 Systematization, planning, and exchange of experiences. 	 Approach methodologies and rights of NNA from the socialization of the experience

"During the time that I have to work with the homeless population, I have learned that not all people have the illusion of changing their lifestyle. That does not mean that they cease to be important and less that organizations should exclude them from the processes. On the contrary, it has taught me to be patient because I will not be able to help everyone with the same ideas and I will not be able to cover all their needs at once. I also learned not to feel frustrated when a homeless person relapses or abandons their process, not to feel guilty or emotionally charged; but I always try to look for other options, be encouraged and insist. I take advantage of every moment because I do not know when the day will come when I will no longer be able to be of use to this vulnerable and needy population."

-Street outreach worker



08 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusions

The member organizations of the Americas Network are pillars for strengthening care for people living in street situations in the countries of the region. It is evident that their programs and projects seek to supplement government programs and broaden awareness of the importance of offering immediate solutions in the short term as well as the definition of sustainable public policies around the populations that have reached the streets due to the dynamics of poverty, ethnicity, marginalization, gender, sexual orientation, discrimination or social / family expulsion, addictions or substance use, family dysfunction and violence, among others. Beyond leading roles, the members of the Americas Network partake in inter-institutional dialogues and synergies that seek the discussion of thematic axes based on national problems as well as the articulation of cooperative proposals with a social-humanist ideology. They promote the identification of issues and partner with international organizations, civil society, and local government to collaboratively come up with interventions that show a respect for human rights in service to an historically marginalized and excluded population. A person living on the street is exposed to many elements that pose a risk to their physical, emotional, and social well-being, including: malnutrition, lack of access to basic services, discrimination, drug and alcohol consumption, sexual abuse and physical violence. Unequivocally, the members of the Americas Network engage with people living in street situations as people who, despite adverse circumstances, are view in a strength-based way who maintain a hope of improving their lives, gaining or returning to a home, regaining dignified leadership in their families and living free from the stigmas or prejudices that societies irrationally impose.

Street outreach work constitutes a humanistic support and encouragement of resilience while it also incorporates the daily struggle to overcome nuances and community contexts. Recognizing that the action of the street outreach worker is subject to a large extent to the exercise of one of the main fundamental rights of humanity, such as education, forces us to rethink the need to guarantee spaces worthy of economic, labor, and professional development for those dedicated to this field. Regardless of whether it is volunteering or paid work, the generation of security conditions is expected in the scenario of the pandemic, in addition to having authentic and up-to-date training and ongoing training processes.

Today more than ever it is necessary to ensure that the proposals of our educational systems and national communication platforms give priority to the dissemination of social learning related to dignity, freedom, inclusion, the rights of peoples and overcoming inequality in all areas. In the same way, it essential to incorporate into the contexts of public policies the fulfillment of the human rights of all inhabitants without any type of discrimination, demanding a balance based on values and compliance with the legal systems that demand the dignity of each human being as the primary purpose of social organization.



8.2 Recommendations

- Identify and engage local stakeholders to strengthen the treatment of addictions, health services, shelter, and protection as a resource to provide assistance or cover the most immediate needs of the population. This is considering that there is no organization in the Americas Network that has the installed capacity to institutionalize street or street populations whom it is expected to serve.
- Promote critical reflection on the usefulness of care practices both inside and outside the Americas Network and consider their effect on the autonomy of the person served and that work must be co-productive and guided by the person benefitting from the intervention. It is necessary to coordinate efforts to establish intensive training processes in work or technical areas that promote people's emotional and social resilience and their economic sustainability.
- Profiling the Americas Network not only as a convergence center for exchange, critical analysis, debate, and systematization of practices implemented in different areas and contexts of each country but also in a strategic space for the cooperative construction of projects and advocacy programs that align with the social, political, and historical contexts of the countries involved and be an agent for the management and coordination of resources.
- Improve the dissemination and visibility of the objectives and programs with a focus on the results of the work carried out in the different countries as a mechanism to stimulate the involvement of donors and financial cooperation from civil society, private initiatives, local and national governments, and international organizations. For this purpose, digital media such as web pages and social networks, presence in national media, as well as seminars and conferences (virtual or face-to-face) can be used.
- Define mechanisms for the registration and control of people served through official databases that include information that includes age, sex, geographic area, etc. Considering that the organizations of the Network have interinstitutional links for the referral of cases, the management of financial resources and other types of support, it is necessary that the rendering of accounts and the proposals of programs or projects are accompanied by recent, real, and concrete data that demonstrate the efforts made in the care and work with the populations in question.
- Generate monitoring and evaluation systems for the actions carried out to make adjustments or changes in a timely manner in the methodological strategies and identify their cost-benefit. This, in addition to being very useful for the assessment of personal evolution or progress in individual cases, would serve to determine or quantify the economic investment necessary to care for cases and thereby generate an estimated base for obtaining resources financial, human and / or technical.



- Manage before the Ministries, Secretaries or Offices of Education and autonomous higher education centers the recognition of street outreach education as an area that requires specialized academic training, appealing to the importance of government interventions in its role as guarantor of human rights and the very nature of higher education as a means for the development and dignity of the person.
- Design and execute training plans for the population served, particularly children and adolescents, that incorporates-production in the design of short, medium, and long-term goals in order to build life projects based on critical reflection of their potentialities and personal interests as a model for changing their individual behaviors.
- Due to the breadth of the problems addressed, the difference in methodologies, terminologies, and the lack of global strategies, it is suggested that a seminar or face-to-face workshop of at least three days be held with representatives of all member countries to reach agreements on the following aspects:
 - Definition of a strategic plan or institutional model that prioritizes and clarifies the topics to be addressed by the Americas Network. Although it is true that there is a diversity of problems in each of the countries that make up the Americas Network, it is necessary to have a design focused on the effective treatment of specific conditions or phenomena, thus enhancing the possibilities for the realization and use of the exchange of experiences within the framework of inter-institutional cooperation.
 - Establishment of a matrix of research and studies available in all the official languages of the countries represented for the technical advice of its members particularly regarding their involvement in the processes of formulation and implementation of national public policies.
 - Adoption of a terminology or set of concepts for general use within the framework of the Americas Network. In this regard, using specific accounts of people receiving the interventions in the different countries can identify the conditions, motives, or levels of involvement of a person who is on the street. However, this conceptual complexity, although it does not restrict the communicative activity of the members of the Network, is a factor that weakens the systematization of experiences or methodological tools and negatively affects the formulation of global strategies because of its specificity.
 - Generation of an annual work agenda that incorporates goals and indicators and a calendar of regular planned meetings.



- Formulation of a strategy to establish training processes and ongoing education of street outreach workers in specific areas that may include certificates, seminars, workshops, exchanges, and internships. For such purposes, in addition to the support of higher education centers or specialized national and international organizations, it is necessary to value the expertise of each organization in the region and exchange these experiences as part of the internal strengthening of the Americas Network.
- Design a joint strategy at the regional level to achieve the visibility and incorporation of the need to care for people living in street situations as part of global policies related to human rights. In this way, the governments participating in international conventions would acquire a direct commitment based on the fulfillment of the goals and objectives of said mandates. It is about taking advantage of the political space of an organization, in this case a Network made up of 10 countries in the Americas or 54 worldwide, to influence national and international agendas.
- Consider the creation of an international committee on policies, actions and law initiatives that favor those living in street situations in the different areas of development and human rights and best practices implemented in these fields.