

# YOUTH APPROACH

A Human Rights-Based Approach: diversity and  
Development of Adolescents and Young People

## SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES LAAM



SOS CHILDREN'S  
VILLAGES  
INTERNATIONAL

October, 2017 – Fascicle I

A close-up photograph of a young man with dark, wavy hair, looking slightly to the side with a gentle smile. In the background, other young people are visible but out of focus.

REGIONAL STRATEGY  
ON ADOLESCENTS  
AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
DEVELOPMENT

## KEY USERS

Mandatory for:	Member Associations and General Secretariat of Latin America & the Caribbean (LAAM)
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## RELATED POLICIES

Basic policy:	Programme Policy
Core policy:	Child Protection Policy Gender Equality Policy Formal Education Policy Policy on the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities
Quality standards:	Manual for the SOS Children's Village Organisation Family Strengthening Programmes Manual

## RELATED DOCUMENTS, TOOLS, SYSTEMS

Fascicle I: Adolescents and Young People in LAAM
Support Document to Achieve Gender Equality
Causes and Risks of Losing Family Care in Latin America & the Caribbean
Code of Conduct
Human Resources Manual

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## 1 Introduction

This Fascicle discusses and reviews different perceptions of adolescence and youth to determine how adults, organisations, institutions and public policies in general relate to adolescents and young people when running programmes and services for this group.

It is, therefore, based on reviews and discussions of the complex nature of the definition and dimension of adolescents and young people to develop an approach –with the understanding of such complexity– to more effectively respond to the multiple diversities, characteristics, needs and vulnerabilities of this group, within a framework of human rights and considering their capacities and potential to lead their development towards a fairer and more equal society.

This Fascicle advocates the "Youth Approach" as a necessary change to how we see, understand, approach, treat and relate to adolescents and young people. For this reason, the Approach is not only a description of characteristics and implications but an attempt to reflect on considerations on the work of SOS Children's Villages in the region.

## 2 Adolescence and Youth as a vital stage and cultural reference

Adolescence and youth, as a vital developmental stage, are part of the lifetime. In this regard, despite some dynamics and characteristics are inherent to this stage –that is, despite those who go through this time of life are expected to experience similar biological and psycho-social changes–, as this development takes place in a given social, cultural, economic, political and historical context, there will be differences in the pace, intensity and depth of these changes, in their meaning and social representation, as well as in how people succeed in facing changes and overcoming challenges in this stage.

Therefore, it is not right or possible to talk about "adolescence" and "youth" as if they were universal and static definitions describing what everyone is living, thinking, acting, becoming and needing at a certain age.

### 2.1 Age: Insufficient to define Adolescence and Youth

Life stages have been traditionally defined from a social consensus that establishes age as a benchmark, even judicial, for when a certain stage starts and ends.

From this perspective, although the Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989) provides that a child means "every human being below the age of eighteen years" (Article 1)<sup>1</sup>, the United Nations defines adolescents as persons between the ages of 10 and 19 and young persons as those between the ages of 15 and 24. Nevertheless, national laws in each country have different age limits for adolescence and youth, as shown in Table 1 with age ranges for adolescents and young persons in Latin American countries where SOS Children's Villages is present.

**TABLE 1. Age ranges for adolescents and young persons per country in Latin America & the Caribbean where SOS Children's Villages is present**

COUNTRY	AGE RANGES FOR ADOLESCENCE*	AGE RANGES FOR YOUTH**
Argentina	13-18 years	15-29 years
Bolivia	12-18 years	15-29 years
Brazil	12-18 years	15-29 years
Chile	12-18 years	15-29 years

Colombia	12-18 years	14-26 years
Costa Rica	12-18 years	12-35 years
Ecuador	12-18 years	18-29 years
El Salvador	12-18 years	14-26 years
Guatemala	13-18 years	14-30 years
Haiti	12-18 years	15-24 years
Honduras	Male: 12-18 years - Female: 14-18 years	12-30 years
Jamaica	Unknown	14-24 years
Mexico	12-18 years	12-29 years
Nicaragua	13-18 years	18-30 years
Panama	14-18 years	15-29 years
Paraguay	14-18 years	15-29 years
Peru	12-18 years	15-29 years
Dominican Republic	13-18 years	15-35 years
Uruguay	13-18 years	14-25 years
Venezuela	12-18 years	18-28 years

\* Data in connection with age range in adolescents were extracted from national laws in each country. Other countries may use age ranges similar to 12-18 years.

\*\*Source: UNFPA, ECLAC. (2011). Regional population report in Latin America and the Caribbean 2011: Investing in youth. UNFPA.

In addition, from a developmental perspective, it is clear that adolescence starts with changes in puberty but does not end with sexual maturity, but with psychological and economic autonomy, tasks and key challenges in adolescence and youth.

Nevertheless, with the many social and economic changes affecting our countries, economic autonomy is particularly becoming harder to sustain due to situations such as: higher training demands and competencies to enter a more saturated and competitive labour market, high rates of unemployment affecting especially young persons, poor job conditions, among others.

It is also important to understand that –although adolescence and youth involve (biological and psychological) changes and (family, social, economic and cultural) challenges that may be similar for everyone– people may have experienced and faced those challenges differently due to personal development pace, conditions, possibilities, opportunities and limitations imposed by family, community and social environments where people grow up. Accordingly, age as the only benchmark to define adolescence and youth as a part of lifetime is insufficient and arbitrary.

This poses a major challenge to development support and protection systems for adolescents and young persons, showing the need to review more openly and on a case-by-case basis actions to be implemented to face the challenges during this stage, ensuring actual exercise of rights and promoting full and integrated development for all, including empowerment for active involvement as leaders in their own development and their environment.

## 2.2 Adolescence and Youth as social and cultural constructs

While the notion of youth (including adolescence) is rooted in the social imagery as a category mainly associated with age and biology in reference to bodily capacities, the truth is that it also refers to historical concepts and social meanings<sup>2</sup>.

This way, adolescence and youth should be understood as social constructs that vary depending on the social meanings and processes that take place in a specific historical context.

Along these lines, despite using working and age-related concepts to describe adolescence and youth, it is incorrect to speak of "a single static, universal and consistent adolescence or youth."<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, it is necessary to understand that "adolescence" and "youth" are dynamic social constructs – rather than fixed categories– that stress the need to no longer see these groups as consistent population blocks with the same interests, needs, thoughts and behaviours, under the same premises.

It is safe to say there are different adolescences and youths just as different experiences in the same developmental stage and different population groups that –although identified themselves as being adolescents and young people– differ in role models, languages, behaviours, preferences, interests, forms of sociability, among other aspects.

Such variety depends on many elements involved not only in the set-up of this developmental stage (in terms of boundaries, opportunities and limitations) but also in the social, historical and cultural meanings attached. These elements include culture, historical context for the developmental stage, socio-economic status, geographical environment (country/city), generation, sex, among other multiple variables and conditioning elements.

For this reason, reference to "adolescence" and "youth" has to change to "adolescences" and "youths" (in plural) or rather to adolescents and young persons, showing that their development and interaction in this stage with other generations, institutions and adults is individual and unique.

### 3 Legal Considerations on Adolescence and Youth: Human Rights Framework

From a wider legal and equal perspective, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) provides and protects the rights of adolescents and young persons, although not recognised as such in this instrument. As stated in the preamble, "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" (General Assembly of the United Nations, 1948; paragraph 1); the rights protected by this Declaration are universal and, therefore, are the rights of adolescents and young persons.<sup>4</sup>

This situation applies to other instruments, declarations and conventions, including:

<b>American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man</b> (Organization of American States, 1948) <sup>5</sup>	
<b>American Convention on Human Rights or "Pact of San José"</b> (Organization of American States, 1978) <sup>6</sup>	
<b>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</b> (General Assembly of the United Nations, 1979) <sup>7</sup>	
<b>Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women</b> (Organization of American States, 1994) <sup>8</sup>	
<b>Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action</b> (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995) <sup>9</sup> .	



In addition to recognising the specificities of adolescents and young people in a developmental stage, the international community has made progress in defining specific instruments that protect the human rights of those at this developmental stage.

### 3.1 International Frameworks to Protect the Rights of Adolescents and Young People

The two international human rights instruments that expressly protect minors (including adolescents) and young persons are: the Convention on the Rights of the Child (General Assembly of the United Nations, 1989) and the Ibero-American Convention on Rights of Youth (International Youth Organisation for Ibero-America, 2005).

Both instruments recognise the substantive and integrated citizenship of children, adolescents and young persons and serve as the international legal framework that establishes rights for both population groups and the mechanisms for their enforceability and protection.

#### 3.1.1 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)<sup>10</sup>

The CRC is the first international law that incorporates the rights of children and adolescents –binding for States Parties (192 countries), It was developed in 10 years with the participation of representatives from different societies, cultures and religions and classed as an international human rights treaty on 20 November 1989.

It has 54 articles that children and adolescents (below the age of 18 years) are right holders before the State, family and society and, therefore, have substantive citizenship –"this means recognising them as right holders with progressive personal, social and legal autonomy to exercise these rights and demand their realisation. Recognising them as right holders means not to consider them as "recipients" on which adults exercise rights.<sup>11"</sup>

The CRC is, therefore, the legal framework that **protect children and adolescents in the exercise of their rights to full physical, mental and social development, and to free expression of ideas and opinions**. Given the binding nature of the Convention, State Parties must inform the Committee on the Rights of the Child of any actions taken to effectively enforce the Convention.

In addition to proving for the rights of children, the CRC introduced major changes to how to see and relate to children, as well as how to address those issues that affect them. Below is a brief explanation of some of main approaches, principles, assumptions and aspects contained in the CRC that depart from old models associated with children and adolescents.

- ✓ **Integrated Protection:** This new model shifted from the old doctrine of "irregular situation" where generally welfare-based or repressive policies, plans and programmes were focused on "unaccompanied" or deprived children and adolescents as the target (no participation). Unlike the doctrine of "irregular situation," policies, plans and programmes based on the doctrine of integrated protection defend and protect the human rights of all children.
- ✓ **Best Interests of the Child:** Coined in the CRC, the principle of best interests of the child states that all measures, actions and decisions under any situation involving children (including adolescents) are to fully and effectively ensure their rights and integrated development.
- ✓ **Progressive Autonomy:** This principle states that children and adolescents are at a developmental stage, preparing for independent living. Therefore, their right to participation and decision-making is to be gradually promoted in line with progressive capacities according to the developmental stage, ensuring the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, participation and optimal development of children.

- ⑦ **Adolescents with Lead Participation Rights and Capacities:** The CRC recognises the right of children and adolescents to participation based on a progressive development of their capacities and their own autonomy. In this regard, the CRC provides for the right to form and express own views in all matters affecting the child and the views being given due weight (Article 12); freedom to receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds (Article 13); freedom of thought, conscience and religion with such limitations to protect the rights of others (Article 14); freedom of association and peaceful assembly (Article 15); access to information and material, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being<sup>i</sup> and physical and mental health of children and adolescents (Article 17)<sup>12</sup>.

### 3.1.2 Ibero-American Convention on Rights of Youth (CIDJ)<sup>13</sup>

The CIDJ is the first and only international legal instrument that provides for the rights of youth –defined as those aged 15 to 25 years.

The CIDJ was effective on March 2008 upon ratification of 5 countries. The CIDJ has now been ratified by 7 countries, becoming a legally binding national instrument for the State:

Countries that ratified the CIDJ		Countries that have signed the CIDJ and are in the process of ratification	
- Dominican Republic	- Spain	- Cuba	- Paraguay
- Ecuador	- Costa Rica	- Guatemala	- Peru
- Honduras	- Uruguay	- Mexico	- Portugal
	- Bolivia	- Nicaragua	- Venezuela
		- Panama	

With 5 chapters and 44 articles, the CIDJ urges States in the region to commit to necessary actions to ensure the promotion, respect, protection and full exercise of the rights of youth. It expressly states the civil, political, cultural, economic and social rights of young persons, as well as the provision of mechanisms or national policy-makers in line with the cultural context and existing participation structures to respond to their rights.

Like the CRC, the CIDJ recognises integrated citizenship of young persons from 15 years of age, based on their **recognition as right holders with capacity to lead the development and well-being of their own, their families, communities, countries and the region.**

To advance the promotion and ratification of the CIDJ and build cross-sector and intergovernmental partnerships to allow for and direct investment and ensure integrated development and protection of the rights of young persons, Heads of State and Government from the twenty-two Ibero-American countries signed the Ibero-American Youth Pact on October 2016. The Pact is considered a useful tool that may realise the provisions in the CIDJ, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals with a strategic positioning of young people and the Youth Approach in public policies<sup>14</sup>.

## 4 Adolescents and Young People - A Diverse Population Group

As stated above, different adolescences and youths take different shapes from the conditions and situations faced by adolescents and young people. Such diverse conditions and situations somehow

<sup>i</sup> The Organisation promotes the concept of *ethics* as a conscious and rational activity over morality, which, in turn, refers to prevailing customs, norms or values in a given socio-historical context.



determine differing opportunities and limitations in the development, exercise of rights and actual participation of adolescents and young people in public policy management processes.

These unequal situations and conditions result in inequality, discrimination and social exclusion processes with differing impact on the different groups of adolescents and young persons, worsened by the lack of visibility and recognition of the characteristics and needs of these specific groups, as well as of their potential and capacities<sup>15</sup>.

These invisibility processes in public policies prevent a significant number of adolescents and young people from fully exercising their fundamental rights and freedoms, benefits from progress in the development, making them particularly vulnerable to threats in multiple developmental areas and forcing them to make decisions with a negative impact on their opportunities and the exercise of their rights<sup>16</sup>.

Although there is no precise and internationally agreed definition on the groups in situations of vulnerability<sup>17</sup>, different international organisations agree on the fact that certain groups of adolescents and young persons live in situations of vulnerability and should be given priority and focus, including<sup>18</sup>

19 20 21 22 23 24 25.



In view of the interests of SOS Children's Villages International and the purpose of this Fascicle, below is a detailed set of elements for analysis and differing intervention in some of these vulnerable groups.

## 4.1 Adolescents and Young People without Family Care

As stated by SOS Children's Villages International<sup>26</sup>, there are major gaps in data and statistics in Latin America to have an accurate view of the regional dimensions of the situation of children and adolescents (let alone young persons) deprived of family care or at risk of losing it<sup>ii</sup>. This makes it difficult to develop public policies for this population segment.

In spite of this, existing data in some countries in the region allow for an approach to the relevance of this phenomenon affecting thousands of people. Then, for example, SOS Children's Villages International and the Network of Latin-American Fostering Families collected relevant data: while in Colombia more than 1,100,000 children are not permanently living with either parent, in Ecuador and Mexico this group amounts to 490,383 and 412,456 children respectively (accounting for 8.65% and 1.09% of that population group in each country). In addition, Dominican Republic has reported a total of

<sup>ii</sup> SOS Children's Villages International (2010) states that the group of children and adolescents deprived of family care or at risk of losing it "covers an infinite number of situations where children completely or partially lack an adult who is their main point of reference and whom they see as their carer and support for a sustained period of time" (p. 14).

580,781 children below the age of 15 deprived of parental care by 2007 (18.8% of children in the country). In lower but equally significant portions, Nicaragua and Paraguay have reported that approximately 10% of children living in urban areas and 12.2% of total children, respectively, live with none of their parents<sup>27</sup>.

It is important to highlight that "Children and adolescents who live without or are at risk of losing parental care for different reasons are **more at risk of being exposed to poverty, discrimination and exclusion, which in turn make them more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and abandonment.**"<sup>28</sup> Even living without family care comes from **situations of former exclusion, risks and rights violations** (such as poverty and socio-economic inequality, international migrations and internal displacements, orphanhood due to mortality, natural disasters, armed conflicts or social violence, domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, among others).

Main common characteristics of children and adolescents at risk of losing or who have lost parental care in the 13 countries analysed and systematised by SOS Children's Villages International and the Network of Latin-American Fostering Families include<sup>29</sup>:

- ⑦ Families with unemployed adults
- ⑦ Single-parent families
- ⑦ Families with situations of domestic violence, mistreatment, sexual abuse, gender inequality and/or irresponsible parenthood
- ⑦ Families with drug addict or alcoholic adults
- ⑦ Families with adults in conflict with the criminal law
- ⑦ Families who live in adverse environmental conditions prone to natural disasters
- ⑦ Families with limited access to child and adult education; homeless or crowded families
- ⑦ Migrant or indigenous families, among others

These situations and risks faced by thousands of children who live or have lived without family care have also an impact on potential life choices during youth by increasing their vulnerability and risk situations without any support or main point of reference when building resilience.

Nevertheless, the concept of "parental care" needs to be expanded to "family care" for the situation of vulnerability –from a wider perspective– is reduced to children, adolescents and young persons who –despite having lost care of one or both parents– receive care and support from other family members, who can successfully become secondary points of reference and successful support to integrated development and growth.

## 4.2 Adolescents and Young People with a Disability

Prevalence rates for adolescents and young people with disabilities in Latin American and the Caribbean are rather dissimilar among the countries. For example, while Haiti and Paraguay have the lowest prevalence in the region (6 and 9 per thousand inhabitants respectively, ages 13-19), Brazil, Uruguay and Peru show the highest rates (103, 72 and 70 per thousand inhabitants in that age group, respectively). For the other countries, prevalence variability is high, with a rate of 19 per thousand inhabitants and 48 per one thousand inhabitants.<sup>30</sup>

It is important to state that disability is a condition that –without the necessary support resources– increases vulnerability and exclusion and discrimination processes that may cause a lot of damage to the development of people. Even more, as stated by the WHO, vulnerabilities are likely to be mutually determined so that higher prevalence of disability is usually found in vulnerable groups.<sup>31</sup>

Based on a significant number of vulnerable adolescents and young people in the region, it is necessary to increase support measures for adolescents and young people with disabilities, with the **mechanisms, structure and staff needed to provide relevant support and ensure that legally recognised rights and measures are effectively enforceable** for people with disabilities.<sup>32</sup>

### 4.3 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (LGBTI) Adolescents and Young People

Although the world and Latin America and the Caribbean are more aware of the need to ensure that LGBTI groups fully exercise their human rights on equal footing and free of stigma, discrimination and violence and despite some countries have recently passed and implemented laws that expressly recognise some human rights that had been denied to them, information on the size of these groups and their situations of exclusion and vulnerability is still unclear and few research studies suggest that these population groups are still suffering from stigma, discrimination and social exclusion in violation of their human rights.

In this way, the IACHR reported having received increased information on the situation of human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people in America. This information suggests that LGBTI people or those perceived as such are victims of different forms of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or because their bodies differ from socio-cultural standards of male and female. These situations of violence and discrimination are in clear violation of their human rights as recognised in Inter-American and international human rights instruments.<sup>33</sup>

Along these lines, the Pan American Health Organization, together with other organisations that concern themselves with the rights and health of these groups, states that stigma and discrimination are health determinants such as:

- ⑦ social isolation, power in family and couple relationships
- ⑦ shame and internalised discrimination
- ⑦ unsafe sexual practices
- ⑦ Limited access to work –most often leading to sex work and drug abuse
- ⑦ socio-cultural and structural barriers such as identity documents, lack of social security coverage, etc.<sup>34</sup>

In this regard, these people are clearly exposed to a number of situations (resulting from prejudices) that compromise their physical and emotional integrity, and even their own lives. That is, added to the vulnerability of children and adolescents "is the extreme vulnerability of belonging to a historically discriminated, persecuted and humiliated group."<sup>35</sup>

In view of this, it should be remembered that –when building an identity– people may build self-esteem and confidence recognising themselves as LGBTI, but such recognition within a socio-cultural framework that discriminates against sexual diversity will result in them facing possible conflicts and discriminatory and violent acts (implicit or explicit) against their peers, family and social environment in general<sup>36</sup>.

For this reason, many of those who embrace their sexual orientation or diverse gender identity are usually forced to hide it from the rest to not be labelled and avoid the fear of eventual rejection by those closest to them. This could lead them to feel "constantly and disproportionately afraid of 'being caught,' which in turn could make children and adolescents to withdraw from their social and family lives and develop deep feelings of loneliness and depression."<sup>37</sup>

#### 4.4 Indigenous Adolescents and Young People

As stated by the OECD, ECLAC and CAF, on the basis of population censuses in the different countries of the region, indigenous groups were estimated to number about 45 million people in 2010, with a high degree of heterogeneity among countries. While Mexico and Peru have the largest populations with nearly 17 million and 7 million respectively, countries such as Costa Rica and Paraguay have just over 100,000 indigenous peoples and Uruguay, 80,000 approximately.<sup>38</sup>

It is estimated that these indigenous peoples belong to approximately 826 indigenous groups in countries of the region, of which at least 200 are in voluntary isolation in countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela, which puts them in an extremely vulnerable position due to existing pressure on natural resources in their lands or neighbouring areas: "the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights states that intrusion of non-indigenous peoples causes serious incidents of violence, spread of epidemics, food shortage and loss of their culture."<sup>39</sup>

Although obtaining accurate information on the number of young indigenous peoples in Latin America is still a challenge, especially because of the issues in the process of ethnic identification with the source of data<sup>40</sup>—either ECLAC, IMJUVE and OIJ—, young indigenous peoples in the region can amount to nearly 10 million, and despite a tendency to be settled in rural areas, they also migrate to big cities in the region, where they face stigma and discrimination.<sup>41</sup>

In this way, young and adolescent indigenous peoples are facing their own challenges against the need of economic and cultural production and reproduction so that community is preserved in a political, social, economic, cultural, global and organisational context that influences their cultures and views. This results in new ways of interpretation of community life in the city where indigenous peoples have been forced to move to looking for a job to support their families, being physically and emotionally displaced from their land and culture, for they have to replace ancestral knowledge and unique working methods with universal standards of educational and labour skills.<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, referring to adolescents and young people as a diverse group means looking into the different conditions they face—as a source of discrimination and vulnerability—and understand that these conditions build up, overlap and intersect with each other, increasing vulnerability—general or specific—, with possible damages to their health, life or development, limited opportunities and difficulty in social integration. Analysing and addressing such diverse vulnerabilities is, therefore, necessary to allow for life projects oriented towards optimal development and well-being.

### 5 Youth Approach: Changes in the concept of Adolescents and Young People and intervention mechanisms

Throughout history, our ideas about adolescents and young people have determined:

- ⑦ the relationship with adults and institutions
- ⑦ the place in the social structure
- ⑦ the actions and policies developed to meet the needs of this population group that, again, is more heterogeneous and diverse than commonly depicted

Throughout the history of humanity, the concepts of adolescence and youth have changed in different socio-cultural contexts just as public policies have, with adults and institutions taking actions and measures for these groups.

Following the International Youth Organisation for Ibero-America it is safe to say that "public policies on youth concerted most actions in providing services (on education, health, labour insertion, etc.) without a clear priority of youth participation as an empowerment and energy-channelling tool that makes a

contribution to the development. Nevertheless, significant efforts in promoting these aspects have been made in the last decades<sup>43</sup>

## 5.1 Traditional concepts and models of Adolescence and Youth

As stated by a number of organisations and researchers on adolescence and youth, adolescence used to be conceived as a mere transitional stage to prepare for adulthood and youth, as an extension.<sup>44 45</sup>  
46 47 48 49 50 51

From this perspective, the juvenile stage (adolescence and youth) was considered as a period characterised by crisis, immaturity, reorganisation of personality and social relationships, lack of identity, sense of self and a clear life project. For this reason, they were considered naive, inexpert, incomplete and incapable –a target population and recipients of actions to prepare for the future, rather than right holders with potential and capacities to play an active role in the solutions to the challenges faced by the societies where they grow up.

Along these lines, Krauskopf states that policies and programmes for adolescents and young people in Latin America have been mainly based on traditional or reactive models conceiving adolescence and youth as a period to prepare for adulthood and the future or as a social problem that must be prevented, controlled and reduced.<sup>52</sup>

These traditional or reactive concepts and models have led to mistakes in the concept, relationship and management of policies for these groups.

### Some of the main mistakes derived from these concepts and models are:

- ⊗ Conceiving adolescents and young people as a consistent group with the same characteristics, identities, opportunities, difficulties and needs in all contexts, circumstances and times.
- ⊗ Developing and imposing adult-centred and institutional policies, plans or programmes based on the conditions and characteristics of targeted adolescents and young people (westerner, city, medium-to-high class, schooled, etc.) as universal measures, that fail to make visible and respond to a variety of contexts and community arrangements in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- ⊗ Conceiving adolescents and young people only in terms of what they can be in the future rather than of what they are, need, want and are entitled to at present.
- ⊗ Labelling adolescents and young people –from an adult-centred<sup>iii</sup> and biased perspective– as incomplete, immature, selfless, lazy, dangerous, ignorant, incapable people without any values, among other characteristics and false generalisations far beyond the diverse reality of this population group.
- ⊗ Developing and imposing adult-centred and institutional responses in the different environments where adolescents and young people (family, community, educational centres, organisations, etc.) develop, based on rigid categories (for example, age) or prejudices, ignoring the opinion of young persons on what they think, feel, need or want and ignoring their leading role as a successful measure to promote development and bring forward actions together with adolescents and young people.

<sup>iii</sup> The adult-centred approach is a patriarchy-based category that refers to a social and symbolic organisation with asymmetric relationships of tension and power between adults and young persons, where the adults are superior references and role models (in hierarchy, value and reason) for youngsters. Such organisation is translated into social adult-centred practices that fail to recognise the value, opinion, rights and capacities of adolescents and young people.



- ⊗ Ignoring the status of young persons as "right holders," providing responses that "trade" rights for performance of responsibilities or focus only on "education for the future," imposing adult expectations and life projects centred on work and success linked to income level and social recognition.
- ⊗ Developing and implementing fragmented policies, plans and programmes that consider adolescents and young people as "recipients of intervention and protection" rather than as individuals in need of measures to promote their full and integrated development of their potential and capacities.

## 5.2 Youth Approach: Adolescents and Young People as right holders and their ability to lead their own development and that of the community

According to UNICEF, these traditional approaches have been outdated and replaced by a concept of adolescents and young people "centred on their potential as individuals... as a vital resource to their families, community and society in general."<sup>53</sup>

These new concepts have been defined by Krauskopf as advanced models "that recognise individuals at the juvenile stage as citizens, culture makers and strategic development actors. Nevertheless, it is not about evolution"<sup>54</sup> and although coexisting with traditional and reactive models, they have been gaining ground in the development of policies, plans and programmes for the different adolescences and youths in the region.

<p><b>Youth Approach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It involves driving and consolidating significant changes in the concept of adolescents and young people, in the relationship between adults / institutions and youths and in how to manage<sup>iv</sup> policies, plans and programmes for adolescents and young persons.</li> <li>- It considers a way to work with, understand and approach young persons in order to take effective and efficient actions. It is a work proposal but also an ideological position that aims to transcend the discourse of a society that reproduces stigma, prejudice and abuse of power.<sup>55</sup></li> </ul>
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### Main characteristics and implications of the new approach to adolescence and youth include:

- ✓ It recognises adolescents and young people from their condition as right holders and from their potential and capacities to play an active and leading role in their own development and that of their families, communities and their country. In this respect, it is a positive approach that aims to set aside prejudices and stereotypes from traditional and reactive approaches to adolescence and youth, to respectfully discover and re-discover not only the rights of adolescents and young persons but also their thoughts, ideas, needs, aspirations, concerns, possibilities, talents, skills, situations and wishes when managing policies, plans and programmes.
- ✓ It makes visible capacities, values, competencies and contributions of adolescents and young people to the social development in different activities.
- ✓ It is instrumental in the knowledge, promotion and enforcement of the national and international legal framework that protects the rights and adolescents and young people.

<sup>iv</sup> Managing policies, plans and programmes also includes developing, planning, implementing, tracking and assessing them.



- ⑦ It recognises adolescents and young persons from their diverse and heterogeneous condition, considering their developmental stage, their identities and socio-cultural expressions, as well as their living conditions and vulnerable situations, shifting from rigid and out-of-context actions with a consistent view of the group.
- ⑦ It promotes analysing diverse situations, conditions, challenges and positions of adolescents and young people in order to make decisions and further refine policies, plans, programmes and services adapted to the realities of the different groups of adolescents and young people.
- ⑦ It focuses on the participation of adolescents and young persons throughout the management cycle of policies, plans and programmes to promote their development, ensure the full development of their rights and address their difficulties and limitations. For this, opportunities and mechanisms need to be established to contribute to expressing their identities and autonomy, building reflective and creative thinking and a positive opinion of oneself and others to ensure active, free and informed participation.<sup>56</sup>
- ⑦ From an integrated perspective, it aims to empower adolescents and young people to reach their full potential and capacities, as well as to ensure the full exercise and enforceability of all their rights.
- ⑦ From a gender equality perspective, it promotes equal access for adolescents and young people (male and female) to opportunities and the exercise of rights, contributing to building respectful and equal relationships between the genders.
- ⑦ It promotes intergenerational relationships based on inclusion, respect, equality<sup>v</sup>, mutual care, learning, solidarity and harmonious coexistence, setting aside intergenerational relationships of domination and subordination and facilitating room for mutual knowledge and exchange of ideas, values, experiences, knowledge and competencies for personal and group growth, as well as building a common good society from everyone's potential.<sup>57 58</sup>
- ⑦ It promotes dialogue between adolescents and young persons from different sub-cultures or population segments and adults in charge of their development and institutions/organisations whose mission is to protect their rights.

Looking into the Youth Approach, it is necessary to critically re-view, re-think and re-build our concepts and work practices so that we can properly target the adolescents and young people we work with and develop interventions tailored to their characteristics, needs and capacities to make a positive contribution to their empowerment, development and optimal well-being.

## 6 Considerations to work with Adolescents and Young People

SOS Children's Villages LAAM firmly believes in ensuring the exercise of the rights of adolescents and young people who have lost family care or are at risk of losing it, stressing the responsibility for concerting their quality actions and efforts into promoting their integrated development, well-being and social inclusion.

In this way, Region LAAM has developed a collaborative strategy among the Regional Office, Member Associations and adolescent and young participants in SOS Programmes in order to promote discussion and analysis of reality, theory and concepts on Youth Development, together designing a regional practical proposal to guide interventions, strategies, plans, projects and actions for adolescents and young people in the region.

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<sup>v</sup> Generational equality is defined by the Generational Council for Intergenerational Equality (2015) as "the equal exercise of rights for all generational groups throughout their lives, considering their diversity, specificity and own needs, regardless of their condition or situation, as well as of their recognition, appreciation and equal treatment" (p. 37).

As basic guidance, this Fascicle recognises the organisational commitment to:



**Mainstreaming the Youth Approach** in organisational work with adolescents and young people, including political and economic will, identification as right holders (ensuring full exercise and enforceability of rights), recognition of their diversity, and mainstreaming of positive empowerment and integrated development when working with these groups.

### USEFUL HANDS-ON PRACTICES

#### Mainstreaming the Youth Approach, SOS Children's Villages Mexico

##### Description:

Focusing the national youth development strategy on a Youth Approach has contributed to re-thinking and reviewing former practices, assumptions, value judgements and myths, and replacing them by practices based on recognition of adolescents and young persons as right holders, that is, a recognition –from the Youth Approach– to transcend discourses by societies that reproduce stigma, prejudice and abuse of power. In case of youths, it is usually in the form of adult-centred approach and adulthood<sup>59</sup>.

##### Methodology:

The national strategy is based on a Youth Approach through the implementation of **participatory methodologies**, for these allow to adapt development strategies to the reality of youths. With the support of sponsors, facilitators and technical staff, objectives are met, quality of life is improved, in addition to empowerment and full exercise of their rights.

The advantage of these methodologies lies in the resulting awareness, responsibility and autonomy. These processes make a difference by avoiding dependency. People lead their own development. These methodologies promote a supportive relationship between facilitators and programme or project participants, with mutual growth and recognition. It has meant overcoming prevailing models: assistance-based and adult-centred approach.

Through these participatory methodologies, gradually gaining autonomy by adolescents and young persons is more sustainable, for it promotes awareness, responsibility, empowerment, as well as ownership of processes in each programme.

Some strategies developed are:

##### 🔗 Building Life Skills and Youth Participation:

- ✔ National Forum for Youth and Independent Living 2013
- ✔ National Forum for Youth and Independent Living 2014
- ✔ National Forum for Adolescents and Young People: Challenges of Youths in SOS Mexico
- ✔ Partnerships with different civil society organisations

##### 🔗 Social Circus Project

- ✔ Partnership between *Circo del Mundo* Cirque Du Soleil and SOS Children's Villages Canada
- ✔ Machincuepa Circo Social Civil Association and SOS Children's Villages Mexico

##### 🔗 Youth Leadership

- ✔ Generation Next Programme
- ✔ Partnership between Dale Carnegie Mexico and SOS Children's Villages Mexico.



Mainstreaming theoretical proposal of the Youth Approach into the organisational hands-on work of SOS Children's Villages LAAM led to the following guidelines and considerations to guide, support and review concepts and practices on the work with adolescents and young persons:



**Ensuring access to information on the rights of young people from international, national and local frameworks through learning processes at all organisational levels**

To meet this premise, the following considerations are recommended:

- ✔ Recognise adolescents and young people as right holders so that their rights are not violated or conditioned by whether or not performing certain responsibilities (school, work, behaviour, etc.)
- ✔ Train and raise awareness in adolescents and young persons (with education, communications, intercultural and gender-based approach) on their rights and enforcement mechanisms as well as on youth issues.
- ✔ Train and raise awareness in co-workers and families of origin on the rights of adolescents and young persons for shared protection of rights.
- ✔ Design and implement activities and campaigns led together with adolescents and young people –with priority ICT use– on rights (especially the right to live in a family) and on what it means to

be an adolescent or a young person (consider including proposed premises in [paradoxes of youth](#)).

- ④ Drive organisational processes for adolescents and young people to gradually gain autonomy as a key element in mainstreaming the Youth Approach.



### **Making visible the positive side to adolescent and young participants in SOS Children's Villages Programmes**

To meet this premise, the following considerations are recommended:

- ④ Have room to assess, reflect on, demystify and give a new meaning to the negative stigmatising social concepts of "adolescence" or "youth," with both co-workers and families of origin.
- ④ Design and implement activities and campaigns led together with adolescents and young people –with priority ICT use– on positive view of adolescences and youths.



### **Ensuring diversified interventions in SOS Children's Villages Programmes for adolescents and young people so that these interventions are tailored to each situation**

To meet this premise, the following considerations are recommended:

- ④ Review alternative care interventions to adolescents and young persons (especially including youth facilities) in SOS Programmes under the framework of UN guidelines, the youth approach and the principle of de-institutionalisation.
- ④ Ensure case-by-case analysis of each adolescent and young participant in SOS Programmes, especially when interventions are targeted at these groups.
- ④ Provide tailored interventions and responses to each adolescent and young person based on their characteristics, potential, resources, persona development processes and legal status, avoiding standard and rigid responses to assist adolescents and young people.



### **Ensure quality of interventions and responses to adolescents and young people in SOS Programmes**

To meet this premise, the following considerations are recommended:

- ④ Attempt regular and interdisciplinary review of local, national and regional work strategies and processes for the integrated development of adolescents and young people, through a participatory methodology that includes these groups.
- ④ Promote emotional, inclusive, unique and updated processes and mechanisms for care of, support to and follow-up on each adolescent and young person through Individual Development Plans (IDP), Life Projects –in plural–, follow-up and frequent visits to care settings, among others.
- ④ Train co-workers and families of origin on care and empowerment of adolescents and young people, paying special attention to special training needs depending on each participant profile (for example: psychoactive drugs, differing capacities, mental illnesses, among others).



### **Mainstreaming intergenerational approach at different organisational levels and when working with families of origin, promoting democratic, equal and respectful interpersonal relationships between adults and adolescents and young people**

To meet this premise, the following considerations are recommended:

- ⑦ Promote processes to recognise the condition of being adult and being a young person (with education, communications, intercultural and gender-based approach) from the meaning of adult-centred approach and what diverse youths mean.
- ⑦ Raise awareness on power, power-based relationships and how horizontal relationships are the way to exercise powers in a democratic, consensual and respectful manner, promoting true autonomy and the exercise of citizenship.
- ⑦ Facilitate playful-learning processes of identification, recognition and emotional significance between adolescents and adults (core care co-workers and families of origin).
- ⑦ Recognise adults as partners, supporters and co-facilitators in the integrated development of adolescents and young people.
- ⑦ Review the roles and responsibilities of core care co-workers with adolescents and young people (in residential care and youth facilities) under an intergenerational approach.
- ⑦ Strengthen educational mediation competencies in core care co-workers and families of origin with adolescents and young people.
- ⑦ Build inclusive, assertive and positive communication capacities as a tool for those who support the development process of adolescents and young people (co-workers and families of origin).



**Recognising the capacities of adolescents and young people to participate, negotiate, make decisions and reach agreements, assuming responsibility for such decisions and leading personal, family, community and organisational development**

To meet this premise, the following considerations are recommended:

- ⑦ Raise awareness in and train co-workers and families of origin on the importance of involving adolescents and young people in participation, negotiation and conflict resolution processes for making decisions in the organisation, in care settings and in families of origin.
- ⑦ Build negotiation and conflict resolution skills in adolescents and young people.
- ⑦ Facilitate room and mechanisms for negotiation and decision making among adults, adolescents and young people.

### USEFUL HANDS-ON PRACTICES

#### Educational Mediation, SOS Children's Villages Ecuador

##### Description:

For SOS Ecuador, **Educational Mediation** is a humanised and cross-cutting way of supporting adolescents and young persons in communication processes. Educational mediation aims to build the necessary competencies for social and economic inclusion of this group. Educational mediation recognises and boosts learning possibilities of those receiving support through participation, creativity, expression and relationships, using tools such as videos, radio, music, theatre, etc.



##### Methodology:

Educational Mediation is implemented in organisational activities, considering:

- ⑦ Engage in ongoing pre-feeding processes (positioning oneself from the other), including recognition of the language used by adolescents and young people to define together their thematic universes.
- ⑦ Promote exchange of knowledge with adolescents and young persons by embracing the concept of dialogue as a possibility and room for expression.
- ⑦ Work on message transmission.
- ⑦ Create ecosystems of relationships, learning and communication communities.
- ⑦ Work with new aesthetics, transmedia storytelling and new ways of citizen mobility.
- ⑦ Include intention, meaning and relevance in the work of educational mediators.
- ⑦ Define support areas and indicators for emotional mediators and mediation as such.
- ⑦ Build emotional mediation competencies on a permanent basis.



**Raising awareness in, sharing and positioning the right to participation with co-workers and families of origin**



**Facilitating a strategic and everyday leading participation (at home, in the community and alternative care), recognising skills, abilities, potential and characteristics of each adolescent and young person**

To meet this premise, the following considerations are recommended:

- ④ Ensure democratic participation of adolescents and young people in participation events both at the organisation and in families of origin and communities.
- ④ Promote mechanisms, processes and activities to exchange experiences and mentorship among peer adolescents and young people.
- ④ Build within the organisation (IOR, NO, Programmes) a youth participation structure with adolescents and young people, with a special focus on protection and enforceability of their rights.
- ④ Facilitate involvement of young persons in national or regional youth participation networks (NGOs, CSO, community, education, among others).



**Establishing communication and action channels that validate and integrate different views and perspectives of adolescents and young people to change their environment (care setting, family, community, organisation)**

To meet this premise, the following considerations are recommended:

- ④ Establish communication mechanisms to help realise the right of adolescents and young people to participate in everyday life.
- ④ Promote participatory assessments from the perspective of adolescents and young people – complemented by the view of co-workers and families of origin– on issues relating to the Youth Approach.
- ④ Promote participation of adolescents and young people and make their diversity visible when planning, implementing and assessing any activity, plan and/or project developed by SOS Programmes.



**Strengthening political and community advocacy strategies towards social inclusion, empowerment and integrated development of adolescents and young people under the Youth Approach**

To meet this premise, the following considerations are recommended:

- ④ Take advocacy actions inside and outside the organisation on the rights of young persons and the Youth Approach, including advocacy by adolescents and young people in the community and society.
- ④ Promote regional, national and local research of the situation, condition, challenges and status of rights of adolescents and young people in our target group.
- ④ Ensure the use of research studies on our target group to make informed decisions for coordination and exchange in international, national and local youth networks (especially on young

people leaving alternative care) and advocacy (review of laws, campaigns, venues, meetings) to protect the rights of our target group.





















## 7 Appendixes

### 7.1 Initials used in the document

CAF	Andean Development Corporation
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.
CIDJ	Ibero-American Convention on Rights of Youth
IMJUVE	Mexican Institute of Youth
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIJ	International Youth Organisation for Ibero-America
WHO	World Health Organisation

### 7.2 Recommended materials

MATERIAL	REFERENCE	LINK
<b>Baseline document</b> Convention on the Rights of the Child	Media, R. (2006). Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF: Madrid.	
<b>Baseline document</b> Ibero-American Convention on Rights of Youth	International Youth Organisation for Ibero-America. (2008). Ibero-American Convention on Rights of Youth.	
<b>Baseline document</b> Ibero-American Youth Pact [Spanish]	Ibero-American Youth Pact. (2016). OIJ: Colombia.	
<b>Reference document</b> <i>El Enfoque de Juventudes. Hacia una visibilización positiva de las personas jóvenes.</i>	National Council of Young People. (2009). <i>El Enfoque de Juventudes. Hacia una visibilización positiva de las personas jóvenes.</i> San José: CPJ.	
<b>Article</b> Unfit and negative youth [Spanish]	Chaves, M. (2005). Unfit and negative youth. Current discursive formations and representations.	
<b>Discussion guide</b> ¿Qué es la perspectiva de Juventud?	Vásquez, S. (2012). Discussion guide. ¿Qué es la perspectiva de Juventud? Mexico City: ESPOLEA, A. C.	
<b>Reference document</b> <i>Invertir para transformar: La juventud como protagonista del desarrollo.</i>	ECLAC, IMJUVE and OIJ (2014). <i>Invertir para transformar: La juventud como protagonista del desarrollo.</i>	
<b>Reference document</b>	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. (2007). Youth in Ibero-America: Trends and Urgencies Educiac: Buenos Aires.	

Youth in Ibero-America: Trends and Urgencies [Spanish]		
<b>Infographics</b> Youth in Ibero-America: Trends and Urgencies [Spanish]	Educación y Ciudadanía A.C. Infographics on Youth in Ibero-America: Trends and Urgencies.	
<b>Reference document</b> Regional Guide for Child and Youth Participation [Spanish]	SOS Children's Villages LAAM. (2016). <i>Hacia el protagonismo infantil y juvenil en los Programas de Aldeas Infantiles SOS LAAM.</i>	
<b>Reference document</b> A new approach to adolescent participation [Spanish].	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. (2013). A new approach to adolescent participation [Spanish].	
<b>Reference document</b> Social Participation and Development in Adolescents	Krauskopf, D. (2003). Social Participation and Development in Adolescents [Spanish] (3rd. Ed.). San José: UNFPA.	
<b>Reference document</b> <i>Adolescencias y políticas públicas. De la Invisibilidad a la Necesaria Centralidad</i>	Duro, E. (s.f.). <i>Adolescencias y políticas públicas. De la Invisibilidad a la Necesaria Centralidad</i> UNICEF.	
<b>Reference document</b> <i>Juventudes latinoamericanas: Prácticas socioculturales, políticas y políticas públicas.</i>	Cubides, H; Borelli, S; Unda, R. and Vázquez, M. (2015). <i>Juventudes latinoamericanas: Prácticas socioculturales, políticas y políticas públicas.</i> Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO): Argentina.	
<b>Reference document</b> Generational and intergenerational equality approach	Generational Council for Intergenerational Equality. (2015). <i>Documento conceptual sobre el Enfoque de Igualdad Generacional e Intergeneracional.</i>	
<b>Practical guide</b> Gender, generations and rights: New approaches to work with the youth [Spanish].	Duarte, K. (2006). Gender, generations and rights: New approaches to work with the youth [Spanish]. A toolkit. Family Care International and UNFPA.	
<b>Practical guide</b> <i>Hacia una sociedad intergeneracional ¿Cómo impulsar programas para todas las edades?</i>	Centro del Conocimiento de Fundación EDE. (s.f.). <i>Hacia una sociedad intergeneracional ¿Cómo impulsar programas para todas las edades?</i> Practical guide. Bizkaia: Provincial Council of Bizkaia – Department of Social Action.	
<b>Article</b> <i>Enfoques y dimensiones para el desarrollo de indicadores de juventud orientados a su inclusión social y calidad de vida.</i>	Krauskopf, D. (2011). <i>Enfoques y dimensiones para el desarrollo de indicadores de juventud orientados a su inclusión social y calidad de vida.</i> ULTIMA DÉCADA, 34(1), 51- 70.	

## 7.3 Information Brief No. 1

### A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE CONCEPTS OF ADOLESCENCE AND YOUTH

The concepts of adolescence and youth have been significantly changed throughout history, depending on the situation and role of young people in society, the development of organised youth movements and clearly, the predominance of social science models and theories.

Most cultures, including the so-called primitive cultures, have included a moment, phase, stage or period of life where people were neither children nor adults. Duration, content and experience in this stage or period vary depending on the sociocultural context and timeframe.

This way, knowing how adolescence and youth have been conceived and understood throughout history provides useful insights into understanding that how we see, understand and relate to adolescents and young people is not and has not been "normal." Below is a historical review of the different concepts and meanings of adolescence and youth. <sup>60 61 62 63 64 65</sup>

The idea of adolescence as a concept and stage of life comes from western cultures and is relatively new. Therefore, this historical review refers to a juvenile stage. In the past, "youth" (or "young people") was conceived as a stage different stage from childhood and adulthood, but adolescence was not part of the juvenile stage as such.

#### Concept of adolescence and youth in ancient times

In ancient Greece, the juvenile stage was conceived as the third stage of life, after childhood. Thinkers at the time agreed that the ability to reason was developed in this stage of life. It was, therefore, the perfect time to start education. Clearly, only "men" and, therefore, "citizens" received that education.

#### Concept of adolescence and youth from Early Christianity to the Middle Age

Christianity shared a similar approach to that of the western culture, considering a fight between reason and passion during adolescence. It considered youth as "foolish" persons living on impulse in search of pleasure.

#### Adolescence and youth from 1500 to 1890

Around the 1500s, some European societies engaged in what historians called life-cycle service –young persons from 18 to 25 years of age engaged in household chores, agricultural work or were accepted by a master as apprentices from multiple trades and crafts. During the life-cycle service –taking approximately 7 years–, the young person left the family house and moved to the house of the master to serve. Women were not likely to engage in the life-cycle service, for this was considered a trade for men.

#### Adolescence and youth during the Industrial Revolution

With the rise of the Industrial Revolution in America and other western countries, workforce demand increased to staff mines, trades and factories. Such demand included staffing adolescent as cheap labour force so that as the Industrial Revolution developed, more young persons were exploited. This resulted in a growing concern of adults, urban reformers, social workers and teachers, who considered these labour conditions caused physical and emotional damage to adolescents. This growing awareness led to enacting laws to regulate the living conditions of adolescents, prohibiting staff under 12 years of age and limiting the number of working hours for those who worked.

#### Adolescence and youth in western counties from 1890 to 1920

This was a decisive period to define the modern concept of adolescence. In fact, this was the first time "adolescence" was introduced as a concept. Major changes during those years included enactment of laws to restrict child labour, new requirements to recognise education as a right –including secondary school–, and development in the field of adolescence as academic research.

Thus, adolescence started to be considered by western societies as a specific period in life –between childhood and adulthood– with unique characteristics and processes. Besides, for a relatively privileged class of adolescents,

the concept of "social moratorium" started to be developed, considering the need for adolescents to have the time to study, explore, and spend time with their peers before taking responsibilities of adults.

During this time, the study of adolescence as a field of research started with the works of American psychologist and teacher G. Stanley Hall, who developed a theory of adolescence as a period of storm and stress, highlighting a period of crisis in this developmental stage.

**Beyond modern studies on adolescence and youth, portrayals of those who have experienced this stage have changed over time.**

The different social discourses prevailing in our western countries have conceived and portrayed adolescence and adolescents in multiple ways. Most of these portrayals have not only been based on the realities of adolescents, hindering the possibilities of social inclusion and visibility of their contributions, needs and aspirations, conditions and opportunities for their full development.

Thus, adolescents and young people have been portrayed as:

- a. Immature
- b. Incomplete
- c. In transition
- d. In crisis, insecure, troubled, rebellious, trouble-maker, uninterested-irresponsible, dependent-unproductive, irrational, immoral, dangerous
- e. In preparation of the future

Given these portrayals with different socio-cultural discourses and explanations on human development and individuals, characteristics and stereotypes are accepted and generalised to give a social status to adolescents and young people, a type of relationship between them and adults/institutions and, therefore, an approach and model to address and manage programmes and policies for adolescents and young people.

This social status –a relationship of adults/institutions with adolescents/young people and public/institutional programmes and policies "for" them– somehow determines their limitations and opportunities to grow, to make decisions, experience, play an active role and lead their own development and that of their family and community.

Therefore, adolescents have been visible or invisible, "included" in or excluded from public, institutional or social policies, programmes and projects, with derogatory, limited, reductionist, reactive representations and discourses, among others.

## 7.4 Information Brief No. 2

### YOUTH RELATED APPROACHES

While working with adolescents and young people requires, as suggested, implementing a Youth Approach, other approaches are also useful and necessary to address the full and integrated development of this group, considering that adolescence and youth are part of the continuous development of individuals in a specific social, economic and cultural context, coexisting with other generations and other cross-cutting and vulnerable conditions.

Most relevant approaches include:

**Human Rights-Based Approach:** It is about how to understand, analyse and run any intervention or programme, recognising that all individuals –without discrimination, including adolescents and young people– are right holders and ensuring that all their rights are respected and protected. The rights-based approach promotes and ensures participation; that is, it recognises adolescents and young people as right holders leading their lives and development (they are not passive recipients of actions from adults and institutions). It is based on the principle of the Best Interests of the Child and progressive autonomy, which in turn is based on understanding that as children, adolescents and young people grow, they are entitled to different levels of provision, protection and participation.

**Life Course Approach:** It states that human development is a continuum of successive and gradually incorporated stages and that challenges and achievements in a developmental stage are subject to the resources acquired by individuals in the previous stage. For this reason, the development, health and well-being of individuals result from the interaction of different protection and risk factors along the course of life. These factors are associated with psychological, behavioural, biological, environmental, cultural and social influences on individuals, as well as their access to social services aimed to support their integrated development.<sup>66</sup> Accordingly, this approach intends to address the potential and needs in the lives of individuals in their development conditions, considering the specifics of each stage along the course of life.

**Generational and Intergenerational Approach:** This approach intends to analyse intra- and intergenerational relationships in time and space within certain historical, social, economic, political and cultural contexts, considering the course of life, social statuses, roles, actions and social representations affecting individuals. The term "intragenerational" refers to connections or relationships of members of similar age sharing a common socio-cultural experience, while the term "intergenerational" refers to connections or relationships of members from different generations.<sup>67 68</sup>

**Gender-based Approach:** It is about a specific way of analysing and acting in reality, based on the recognition that genders are social and cultural constructs that transcend the biological and anatomical basis of sex. In other words, it recognises gender as a social and cultural construct that sets the differences between men and women –those differences becoming inequalities and inequities. Nevertheless, this approach is not only about recognising but also attempting to break and overcome inequalities by transforming the socio-cultural order, beliefs, ideas, practices and other elements contained in such inequalities.

**Diversity Approach:** It recognises that all individuals are diverse and live in diverse human (social, cultural, economic, family, personal, etc.) conditions, influencing how they experience adolescence and youth, build their potential and capacities, and build their identities and life projects. Conditions that may influence development in adolescence include: age, gender (different manifestations/expressions of gender), race, socio-economic status, identity, sexual orientation, nationality, among many others.

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