



## STRENGTHENING THE ADVANCES

*Creating tools for the accomplishment of the Rights to live in a family and in a community.*

**3&4**  
**OCTOBER**  
**GUANAJUATO**  
**MEXICO**

### Relaf Seminar 2013

**“Strengthening the advances. Creating tools for the accomplishment of the Right to live in a family and in a community”**

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**Place:** Guanajuato, Mexico.

**Date:** 3 and 4 of October 2013

**Hosting by:** Red Latinoamericana de Acogimiento Familiar - Relaf.

**Main partner:** Round table on Childhood of the Human Rights' Ombudsman, State of Guanajuato, MX.



**Supported by:** UNICEF 

**Allies:** National and local governments, enterprises, international cooperation agencies, universities, donors.

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## BACKGROUND

The antecedents are the Relaf Seminars of 2007 in Mar del Plata, Argentina, 2009 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and 2010 in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, which were attended by a total of about 2,000 people, and received the support and had the participation of political and social key actors. The events were sponsored by international organizations and bodies, such as Unicef, The Hague Conference on Private International Law, UNESCO and the University of Buenos Aires, among others.

**In the 2009 Seminar**, near 50 exhibitors from Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Colombia, USA, Canada and the UK presented theoretical pieces of research, as well as their practices and experiences, all of which were collected in the book "A Latin American view on foster care", published by the publishing house Lumen Humanitas. The Seminar was funded by the Foundation Kinderpostzegels, and was supported by the Argentine National government (particularly, the Ministry of Human Rights and the Secretary of Childhood, Adolescence and the Family), and by the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires, that also provided the physical space and other resources.

**The 2010 Seminar**, which was funded by ITAIPU Brazil, the Brazilian National Government, UNICEF, and the Foundation Kinderpostzegels, focused on the presentation of Latin American experiences. There were exhibitions from Latin America, Europe and North America. It also had the participation of children from countries of the MERCOSUR, who helped Relaf draft a friendly version of the UN Guidelines; besides, a workshop to discuss on the elaboration of the Friendly version for the personnel of children's homes was carried out, with the participation of representatives from the 14 attending Latin American. The President of Brazil Luiz Ignacio Lula Da Silva gave a speech during the opening of the event (accompanied by 8 of his ministers), in which he highlighted the importance of the guarantee of the Right to live in a family and a community against other societal matters and matters of public policy. The findings of the event, as well as the interviews with various members of the network were broadcasted on the local and worldwide media.

## BASIS

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Latin American countries have ratified international Human Rights tools that oblige them to take the necessary actions to defend the Right of children and adolescents to live in a family and a community. What was stipulated on the Convention on the Rights of the Child was complemented by other Human Rights tools, such as the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.

The governments and the civil society organizations in the region have understood the necessity to guarantee this basic Right to a greater or lesser extent. Thus, they have started to change their practices aimed at protecting the Rights of children and adolescents deprived of parental care.

Relaf works with the purpose of promoting the dialogue that leads to the

search for forms of alternative care based in family life in Latin America in the framework of the implementation of all the Rights of the child. We believe that the practice of foster care under certain parameters is a way to guarantee the Right to live in a family and a community.

Relaf Seminar 2013 is an opportunity to meet, learn and exchange. The Seminars of 2007 and 2009 laid the conceptual foundations for the work with children and their families. During the previous Relaf event (the Seminar 2010 in Brazil) the presentation of the "Latin American Report: Situation of children without parental care or at risk of homelessness in Latin America", and the elaboration of the two friendly versions of the UN Guidelines for the alternative care of children were made. This event allowed to deepen in the knowledge on the situation of children and adolescents deprived of parental care in the region.

Based on the advances achieved thanks to the previous seminars, the coming meeting is expected to give continuity to the work that governments and social organizations have been carrying out in order to make the necessary changes to policies and practices to adjust them to the Human Rights' standards. Besides this, the knowledge of current issues will be deepened after the presentation of the reports on "Discrimination against children in institutions", the publications "Children's voices on their Right to Live in a family and in a community" and the report "Children deprived of parental care in the systems of integral protection of Rights", which are currently being produced by Relaf with the cooperation of UNICEF. These materials are aimed to enrich regional diagnosis and promote further action.

Among the serious social issues identified in our region, the institutionalization of children under the age of three is one of the priorities. During 2012, Relaf worked hard for the development of the pilot test in Chile in parallel with the Regional Initiative "Putting an end to the internment of babies", which has resulted in the elaboration of a "Guide for the Experience". The Regional initiative will be launched during the Ibero-American Summit, to be held in late October in Panama. As part of the preparatory steps of the Regional Initiative, a group of experts, decision makers and key

actors have met in Montevideo in order to create a general strategy for the Regional Initiative. Thus, both the results of the pilot test in Chile and the documents elaborated during the April meeting will be presented in the 2013 Relaf Seminar. During the Seminar, a "Commitment document" to be presented at the Ibero-American Summit will be prepared with the collaboration of a plurality of stakeholders.

Given that much remains to be done, it is necessary to create and disseminate technical guidelines in order to take concrete action, which have to be based on the Human Rights' ethics and approach. This exchange of experiences between stakeholders and strategic actors, as well as the presentation of results and guides, will enhance the replication and multiplication of experiences that protect and restore the Right of every child and adolescent to live in a family and in a community.

## OBJETIVES

### General objective:

This Seminar has the purpose of favoring a sphere of regional reflection and exchange on the efforts, learnt lessons, progress and challenges, as well as influencing in the advance of the implementation of the Right to live in a Family and a Community in the countries of the region.

#### *Specific objectives for Relaf Seminar 2013:*

- »To increase knowledge on the situation of children and adolescents deprived of parental care in Latin America, identifying progress in adapting public policies to a human rights approach and detecting the obstacles and the challenges for the future in this adaptation process.
  - »To create and consolidate practical standards of conduct aimed at those involved in the provision of alternative care at all levels of public policy with a focus on human rights, in the light of the guidelines emanating from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care for Children.
  - »To promote a specific exchange on the development of the Regional Initiative "Stop the internment of babies". This intends to encourage the multiplication of the experiences of de-institutionalization of children under the age of three in the countries of Latin America.
  - »To strengthen the regional thematic network, recognizing the progress in meeting the commitments and targets established in previous meetings. This means to provide an opportunity for meeting, exchanging, and projecting of new joint initiatives. This is expected to continue the collective impact in shaping public policies in the region.
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## MAIN THEMES

- » The process of adapting policies, programs and practices of the sub-system that addresses children deprived of parental care in the context of the Latin American governments' "systems of integral protection of Rights", against the implementation of the standards the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care for Children.
- »The prevention of the deprivation of parental care: Achieving the improvement of the quality and the decrease of the number of children in alternative care.

- » The strengthening of families and communities: promoting the care in the family of origin as the first resource.
  - » The challenge of dealing with situations of violation of Rights and discrimination against institutionalized children and adolescents.
  - » The challenge of improving the “systems of integral protection of Rights” and deconstruct the systems based on residential care institutions: de-institutionalization.
  - » The de-institutionalization of babies in Latin America: the development of the Regional Initiative “Stop the interment of babies”.
  - » The identification of barriers and facilitators to the practice of foster care under the guarantee of the Right to family life in the light of the experience.
  - » The participation and empowerment of children and youth.
  - » The provision of alternative care in special situations: children outside of their countries of origin and children living in contexts of natural disasters.
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## **EXPECTED RESULTS**

Previously and during the Seminar, there will be the development of:

- » A training seminar.
- » A Meeting between the members of Relaf’s Latin American Consultative Council and Advisory Commission.
- » The Presentation of the document “Report on Discrimination of Children in Institutions”, “Alternative Care in the Systems of integral protection of Rights” and the publication “Children’s voices for their Right to live in a family and in a community”, all of them which were produced by Relaf in cooperation with UNICEF.
- » Dissemination and training for the implementation of the friendly versions of the UN

Guidelines and the Implementation and Monitoring Handbook of the UN Guidelines.

- »Presentation of the “Guide to Baby de-institutionalization experience” arising from the development of the pilot project for the Regional Initiative “Putting an end on the institutionalization of babies”.

## PARTICIPANTS

Just like in the previous events, Relaf Seminar 2013 will call for the participation of diverse entities that have committed themselves to advocate to advance in the development of a regional agenda for the accomplishment of the Right to live in a family and a community in the medium and long term. We invite:

- »Governmental representatives. Representatives of different levels of decision and execution of public policies of protection of the Rights of children are invited to attend the Seminar.
- »Non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations that work in the provision of alternative care in the region. Relaf will call its current members, and expects to broaden the participation to those who work in the field as part of the civil society.
- »Carers: foster families, residential care institutions’ employees.
- »Researchers, scholars, representatives of Universities of the region, and the media.
- »International organisms and alliances, such as the Inter-American Children’s Institute-OAS, Niñ@Sur, UNICEF, the Hague Conference on Private International Law, etc.
- »International organizations, such as International Social Service , Buckner International, Save the Children, etc.

