



Graduate School of Development Studies

**CHANGING THEIR LIVES:
The Working Children's Movement in Bolivia**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CONATsDEA	Consejo de Niños, Niñas Trabajadores del Alto
CONNAT'SPO	Organize Council of Children and Adolescents Workers Potosí
ILO	International Labour Organization
INFEJANT	Instituto de Formación para Educadores de Jóvenes, Adolescentes y Niños Trabajadores
IPEC	International Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour
MANTHOC	Movimiento de Adolescentes y Niños Trabajadores Hijos de Obreros Cristianos
MODENAT's	Departmental Movement of Children and Adolescents Workers of La Paz
MOLACNAT's	Movimiento Latinoamericano y del Caribe de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Trabajadores
MOLDNAT's	Local Movement of Children and Adolescents Workers Llalagua
MONAT'sSCRUZ	Movement of Children and Adolescents Workers Santa Cruz
NAT	Niño, niña y Adolescente Trabajador. Working Children
NAYJT's	Children, Adolescent and Youth Workers Sucre
OINAT's	Independent Organization of Children and Adolescents Workers Tarija
ORNAT's	Regional Organization of Children and Adolescents Workers of Oruro
SIMPOC	Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour
UNAT'sCO	Union of Children and Adolescents Workers Cochabamba
UNATsBO	Unión de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Trabajadores de Bolivia
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Chapter 1

INTRODUCING WORKING CHILDREN'S MOVEMENT

The study is based on two reflections that merge in the scenario of Working Children's Movements. The first one is the participation of children as an strategy to help them become active citizens by providing experience in scenarios of political decision making, as well as giving them the opportunity to come together to share their experiences of life, have access to information and analyse issues and power relations that affect them. The second one it is related with children as workers from whom questions about poverty and inequalities in the international and national socio-economical order raise as well as questions on social and political value assigned to different social actors which stress relations of age, identity and dignity.

Therefore, as a result of the reflexion, the aim of this study is to explore the participation of working children in their organizations, looking at their experiences in their organization in a context of social and economic inequalities and open debates about child labour. Specifically the research attempts outcomes related with their views about themselves, skills gain and decision making process that confronts power relation.

The position of the Working Children's Movement is to strive for better living conditions; they look for a decent work, work without exploitation, but instead of being just objects in the process they claim for their participation and take the main role in this process of change. From this approach, polarization has raised resulting in taking extreme position about the movement's impacts and achievements. Van den Berge(2007), in Working Children's Movements, studied the impact of the Movements and its member organisations on the working and living conditions of the children and adolescents. He paid more attention on the ability of the children to self-organise and to the achievements in the children's working conditions. In its conclusion he remarked that the movements do not reach the children who are involved in hazardous labour and they have no effect in changing their working conditions. In Liebel (2003) he asked what possible effects these organizations have on the children themselves or on the society around them. He points that children's organizations have been demonstrating through their own 'economic' praxis that work does not have to be understood as exploitation, that it does not inevitably stand in opposition to the needs of children to play and learn. He also stated that children can also stimulate social transformation and be capable to draw alternatives to an economic and social system essentially based on the exploitation of human work power.

In order to analyze the effects of participation in the Working Children Organization, the study presents the case of Bolivian Working Children Movement, and takes a closely look at the organization of El Alto city.

The research is divided into five chapters. This chapter aims to give an overview of the debate around child labour. It also contains on one hand, the

research questions, the methodology and limitations of the study. The second chapter introduces the analytical framework that is embedded in the children participation and children as social actors and aims to guide the analysis. Chapter three presents an overview Working Children Movement in Bolivia and the political context that surround it. Chapter four seeks to analyze the outcomes from working children participation in their lives. Finally, chapter five presents the conclusions of this research paper.

1.1 Working Children's Movements: Background and Debates

In Latin America the first Working Children Movement appeared in Peru in 1976 as an organization of Young Christian Workers (YCW), from whom the Movement of Working Children and Adolescents of Christian Working Class Families (MANTHOC) emerged. The main idea have been based on political feature; to assume questions of childhood as political, as visible actors who face up the reality looking for social justice and the dignity recognition of the working children as social actors, discourse that will lead to 'participación protagónica' (protagonist participation) (Cussianovich, 2008:7; Liebel, 2003). It was not until the 90s that the vision about children work as a human right takes more power through the 'critical valorisation of work'¹; child work, in an adequate environment led the development of children capacities, socialization and learning process as well as personal achievements (Cussianovich, 2008: 24-26). In current times, there are Working Children Movements in Latin America, Asia and Africa who have been organized under this approach and contextualize it to their realities².

The working children's organizations in general consist mainly of children between the ages of 8 and 18 years, who generally work in informal sector of large cities, on the streets and in open places. The majority confront situations that violate their human dignity and jeopardize their personal development. Two main tensions arise from the vision and approach of the movements in academic and political spaces, the demand of children for the right to work, and the 'protagonism' as a mean to recognize children participation like social subjects in the society.

Although at international level the International Labour Organization (ILO) is the guide line to define child labour and minimum aged through the Conventions 138 and 182³, there is no agreement position in either both regulations. For some organizations this is consider a soft opinion, since they consider child labour, all forms of work done by children or any child who is not in school to be child labourer. On the other hand, organizations that are against child labour and in favour of universal education, have been intervening in such a way that the children can continue working while getting some measure of education and protection. (Lieten, 2008)

From the working children movements' perspective, to follow the guide line of ILO represent the abolitionist side in the debate since; "ILO is deaf to concrete interests of working children and should be recommended to ask exactly what could help to improve the situation of working children – while

actually listening to working children and their organizations, and beginning a serious dialogue market by mutual respect” (Liebel cited by Lieten, 2008:19). The ILO view it is considered a Western reality for working children’s movements, therefore, it does not correspond to the developing countries reality. Since 1996, the Working Children’s Movements from all over the world have been organizing international meetings where they reinforce their demands about child work and their participation in the search of better solutions⁴. Participation of working children movements’ in the debate has not had deep attention yet, and the debate seem to take extreme positions; the ones that search for the abolishment of child labour do not paid attention to the position of working children movements and the movements tenet to stigmatized the institutions that follow that premises as their enemies. What means, that more attention has to be taken in the participation of children and the debates around child labour.

1.2 Research questions

Main question:

How has participation in working children’s movements changed working children’s lives?

Sub- questions:

Why do working children join the organization and how are they organized?

What activities do they organize, and what situations do they confront in the organization?

What have they learnt from their participation and how are they benefitted by participating?

1.3 The case Study

The research is based on the Bolivian Union of Working Children (UNATsBO) participation practice. More concrete it looks at the experience of the Council of Children and Adolescents Workers - El Alto (CONATsDEA). There are four main reasons why I made such decision:

Firstly, at national level, 38.3% of the population between 6 and 13 years old contribute with additional income to their houses. The proportion is higher in La Paz with 40.2 % than other regions of Bolivia (UDAPE, UNICEF, 2005). It is consider that about 90% of the working children of La Paz city come from El Alto.

Secondly, although the chosen organization is the youngest one in the UNATsBO, it has had an important participation in the decision and the campaign to change the Art. 61 second paragraph in the project of Bolivian Political Constitution, which is an example of the working children organizations participation

Thirdly, they manifested their interest for the investigation and were willing to share their experience with me.

Fourthly, both the coordinator of the UNATsBO and the coordinator of the collaborators at national level work in the organization and they could give me an overview of the UNATsBO past and current situation.

1.4 The Methodology

My first approach with the topic was through the Alliance for Childhood and Adolescence (UNICEF) in 2001, which organized diverse workshops in all the department capitals of Bolivia and El Alto city. There, children participants elaborated Children and the Adolescents Departmental Rights Decalogue's, giving priority to the rights that they considered more important for their development. During the debates I heard for the first time the demand of child workers for a dignify work instead demanding not to work. After that, I heard about working children organization but it was not until I came to ISS that I get close to child labour and participation debates where Working Children Movements have a say.

The field work was conducted in August- September 2008, in El Alto, Bolivia. In order to choose the case for study, I contacted the director of Foundation La Paz. He contacted me with the coordinator of the net of collaborators of UNATsBO movement. As soon as I could make the contact with her, she explained me the process of what the organizations have passed through in last years. Since the CONATsDEA is still part of the UNATsBO and there was a willing in sharing information, as well as the reason explained before, I chose it as a case study.

I also made contact with other NGO's and institutions that work with working children. Some of them are now focusing on other programs and are not working with working children anymore; and others work with the vision of child labour elimination, therefore the children that belong to those organizations do not participate in the UNATsBO movement.

For having the contact with the children I visited Wiphala house that it is located in Zona Ballivian of El Alto city. I ask permission to be around and spend time with the children, they kindly accept my petition. Wiphala as many other houses offer working children and children space for spending time, making their home works, workshops and cheapest meals. Not all the children that go to this house are part of the organization, but in the last years, national and local meetings have been taken place there.

Primary Data

Semi-structured Interviews: I conducted semi-structured interviews with seven working children between 13 and 18 years old; four members of CONATsDEA and three working children who are not involved in the Organization. I also interviewed two collaborators. Besides, I had several informal talks with the children and personal of Whipala house. The number of interviews was defined by the time and availability of the children. From the members of working children's organization, I collected information about their participation in the organization; how and why they chose to be involved

in the organization, what it means to them and also what they have learned by participating in it. The places and time for the interviews was chosen by children. Collaborator's interviews were useful to have an overview of the history and structure of UNATsBO as well as their work and their aim in the Organization as collaborators. The interviews of working children who are not in the Organization were specifically to understand their reasons of not joining the organization.

Life History: Since the research is focus on the outcomes or effects of working children participation in the organization, I chose the life history method to go in deep in the experiences of children. I made two life histories from the members of the organization, based on the roles they develop in the Organization and the situations they confront. Life history helped me to understand the relation between the member of the Organization, and their context surrounding them. For ethical reasons, I have changed the names of children and adolescents.

Secondary Data

I got access to some official documents: UNATsBO Statutes, several meeting reports and a short video that shows the meeting, the demonstration and an interview that working children has with the Chancellor of the Republic. I used this data to complete missing information.

1.5 Limitations

The paper has several limitations; here I mention the most important ones.

Firstly, we must consider that as the CONATsDEA was formed in 2006; it has only two years of existence. Therefore only initial changes may be identified.

Secondly, I did not have the opportunity to travel to other departments of Bolivia where there are working children organizations. One reason was the short time but the other one was political crisis in Bolivia, the continuous demonstration and close roads. Therefore, I could just be able to observe one Organization experience.

Thirdly, limitations of time for fieldwork did not allow a deeper exploration of possible changes or effects, and interview more children. I couldn't participate in their meeting, because no planning meeting was held during the field work, and in the meeting with the Vice-Ministry of Coordination with Social Movements and Civil Society. I was not allowed to enter because the representatives of the government didn't like the present of external people.

Finally, this research is based on participatory experiences of children. Since, the research is using life history inquiry and ethnographic information; it lacks the statistical generalization feature, allowing only a theoretical generalization.

Chapter 2

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter presents the concepts and the framework that will guide the research to explain the effects of participation in working children's organizations. As this study is an investigation of the participation of a specific working children's organization, concepts related to childhood, child labour/child work, agency, citizenship and social movement are included in the analysis.

2.1 Childhood

The concept of childhood is not the same among societies, social class, and ethnic groups or even in terms of gender. "However, the Western construction of childhood and youth has been spread all over the world"(Ansell, 2005).

The ILO and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) give a standard definition of childhood. For the CRC, a child is anyone who is 18 years old, based on the chronological age. Although the CRC has a standard definition about child, it has also an open space where countries can define who is a child from their own perspective. From ILO definition considers a child any people who are below the age of fifteen and adolescent until eighteen (in Convention 138) and eighteen in the Convention 182⁵.

However in contrast to also as a complement of the standard view of childhood, one approach has also been accepted takes definition of child as a social construction. According to this approach, childhood is not a natural, universal stage of human development but a product of the society, culture and history (Oudenhoven and Wazir, 2006: 129) However, the definition of childhood as a generalization from a Western perspective tends to dominate. The global model of childhood sees children as passive actors, vulnerable and the responsibility of their families and the state (Ansell, 2005). It seems that a child, maybe because of "lack of experience", has nothing important to say or contribute in a society. The model looks at children as becoming instead of being. They remark the learning process of children and the limits in their participation.

According to the Ansell article, the model has had three principal problematic effects. "First, problems affecting children in the Third World are attributed to individual pathology. Children who do not fit the global model are defined as abnormal, and the significance of the broad social and economic context in which they live is neglected". For example being a child means time to play, go to school, but in reality there are children's that are already working and the concept generated social pressure that can be translated in lack of self-esteem in children and also social exclusion. Second the global model places responsibilities for children's upbringing firmly within the family. Children are not held individually responsible for their own problems, as they are conceived of as having agency. Although the notion that children's needs are best served

within a family context is not based on empirical research, families are expected to fulfil a range of functions, and failure to do so attracts blame. Children are expected to grow up within home- those on the street represent a problem. Third, because the global model individualizes the difficulties children face and places responsibility with families, are seen as apolitical. The problem of children belongs to the family. Again the agency of children is not taking into account, and children are considered as passive actors, this can be translated in lack of policies that face children issues” (ibid: 34, 35). The global model of childhood does not take into account different context where a child is living. The problem with this view is the social exclusion and invisibility that this concept has itself. There are not recognitions of other realities, cultures and societies, instead of address the differences it just sees differences as social problems.

2.2 Child Labour – Child Work

Definition about child labour has also different approaches. For ILO child labour is consider if the work is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children and interferes with their schooling: by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; by obliging them to leave school prematurely; or by requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. In these perspective there is a difference between child work and child labour. The definition that in general international organizations have adopted is ILO definition. Where child work, it is considered light work (e.g., seasonal or part-time employment) in specific activities that are developmentally appropriate and that promote or enhance a child’s full development; that do not compromise his or her physical, mental, social, moral or spiritual development; and that do not interfere, impede or restrict a his or her right to a quality education. And child labour is any form of work that is detrimental to the physical, mental, social, moral or spiritual development of a child and that exclude or interfere with the possibility of regular school attendance at the normal pace for a child’s age and/or development status; i.e. hazardous labour.(CARE, 2006)

Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005: 200) stress the definition of child labour as only consider it been harmful. “..[S]ome policymakers have until recently defined child labour as economic activities that are deleterious to the well-being of children... Most working children participate in activities that can be harmful or beneficial for the child, depending on the circumstances of the activity, and ultimately, the impact of child labour on the well-being of the child depends on the counterfactual of what the child would be doing in the absence of work. Thus, rather than assuming that all child labour is by definition harmful to children, it is more useful to define child labour as including all aspects of child work and then study the effects of that work.”

There are different types of work: range from help with domestic work, to work in the household enterprise or farm, to wage work (Grootaert C. and R. Kanbur, 1995: 188). Types of work can be: domestic, economic, intra-household, extra-household, and it can be under supervision or not; economic

work and domestic work (that are generally remunerated or paid in kind) when is extra-household it is under supervision, in the case intra-household it is under supervision only if it is economic work (work on the family farm or enterprise). ILO formulation then is considered a narrow definition. Some aspect of characteristics about child labour can be missed in the analysis if it is not taken into account child labour as any activity. For example those who do not agree with the idea of taking poverty as the only explanation for child labour, will have a broader explanation and consider also that household's chores can interfere with the development of children, when they are not able to go to school. "It is argued that some forms of work could even be beneficial as they are an integral part of the child's socialisation into adult trades and they empower children by allowing them to contribute to the survival of their families. The poor quality of education in the mainstream government system is frequently invoked as a further reason for preferring work over school" (Rekha Wazir: 2002, 4).

Besides the poverty explanation, there are other authors that stress that child labour it is a cultural phenomenon. As Jorge Domic (1999) remarks, work is part of the socialization of children in the Andean zone, and also represents proud of the duties fulfilment; work is a natural process of socialization, the child is a vital person for the family, is an active member of the family. David Llanos (2004) he concluded that the eradication of the child labour will represent the eradication of the traditional rural economy.

The CRC defined the problem of child labour in terms of harm rather the work as such. It also gives the responsibility to States and Parties to define a minimum age or ages for admission to employment as well as provide a good condition of child work⁶.

2.3 Children Participation- Agency-Citizenship

Children participation debate has increased in the last decade since the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention can be seen as a bridging together under the umbrella of one document a range of commitments to the human rights of children; it can be seen as signalling recognition that children have civil, political and social rights (Roche, 1999).

The Convention covers three areas that are protection, provision and participation⁷. The interpretation of some articles has caused some difficulties and opened a debate. From the limits of participation, power relations between adults and children, to the lack of explicitly of the articles about participation (Liebel; 2006)

To call upon the children to participate means considering children as a social category and not merely as a transition phase towards adult life; this implies a process of analysis and interpretation of the relationships between the structure of life in society and the roles that the child plays in it as a producer of meanings and culture. (Alparone and Rissotto, 2001: 422)

Usually, the Western idea of childhood does not take into consideration the capability of children to participate at political level. When children claim a

more active involvement in the political sphere, this is generally considered as an outcome of adults' manipulation (Invernizzi, 2002, cited by Da Rodda).

De Winter, having referred to the importance of recognizing the potential capacities of children and the contributions they make to society, makes explicit the linkage between participation and citizenship in the following terms: "In practice this comes down to regarding children and youngest as fellow citizen, people whose share in society is appreciated and stimulated because of the contribution they are able to make. Participation, which we may provisionally define as opportunities for children and young people to be actively involved in the decision making on their own living environment, is a major condition" (cited by Roche, 1999) "It is in citizen participation spaces, where citizens take part in public decision making, that participation may transform development practice, social relations, institutional practices and capacity gaps". (Hickey and Mohan, 2004:13).

"...Citizenship links participation in the political, community and social spheres, where citizens are engaged in the decisions and processes that affect their life" (Gaventa and Valderrama, cited by Salinas, 2006:10). This approach it is linked with the concept of protagonist participation, where children's are seen as citizens with the right to participate, claims their rights and act like agents of change. This concept is one of the major pillars of the working children movements. The concept of protagonism of the children is intimately related with a new culture of infancy that wants to reconstruct the vision that historically has dominated; with a new way vision of Children as subject (actor) and even more as citizens. This new vision does not include only a private area, but a political, social, economic and cultural dimension (IFEJANT, 1998). "Children's protagonism is something that is always in the development process. There are different levels of children's protagonism: participation, representativeness, projection, solidarity, identity, autonomy and continuity". (Liebel, 2007: 69-71).

The space for the participation that working children movements look for stress the dynamism of organizational process and the transformative action in political spheres (Cussanovich and Mendez, 2008). It sees children as citizens.

Bhabha (2003:53-58) suggests that "citizenship is a neglected, undervalued status for children, because the attributes of citizenship are routinely evaluated from an adult-centres viewpoint". If we see a child as an adult in process, then participatory practices are reduce "to simply juridical status which is learned by watching from a distance entitled to a moral minimum' in order to be apprenticed into future effective participation in the citizenry", or as Jans (2004) points out that children participation, do not necessarily means a completed and truly participation of children since their lack of political rights. Citizenship, to be meaningful, should be consider a children "civic practice" to be lived and experienced, which requires participation and engagement, therefore as matter of equity and sensible public policy, "children's citizenship needs to be given a different weight" (Bhabha, 2003:53-58)

Lister (cited by Cornwall A. and Gaventa J, 2001:6) refers to citizenship as participation as a representation of human agency in the political arena, where citizenship as rights "enables people to act as agents involve in decisions that

affect their lives by creating their own models and approaches of self-organisation and provisioning from their own identities”.

However, children’s agency is taken for granted in children’s participation spaces. Children’s agency is in constant tension since for one side parents and society are responsible to protection of children and for the other side children are stimulated to present themselves as autonomous individuals, what can lead to confusion and tend to take extreme positions between excessive protection and autonomy. In order to avoid this ambivalence, Jans (2004) suggests understanding it as a social phenomenon where children and adults can learn in the process.

2.4 Defining Social Movement

Social movements are defined as a “distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action: are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents, are linked by dense informal networks, share a distinctive collective identity” (Della Porta y Diani, 2006: 20). “A social movement process is occurring to the extent that long-term bonds and shared identities translate into sustained networks between independent actors (individual activists and most frequently organizations) in pursuit of shared goals. Networks and organizations are either the precondition or the outcome of a movement - or both” (Diani and Bison, 2004 303). The difference between social movements with organizations does not consist primarily of differences in organizational characteristics; social movements are networks which may either include formal organizations or not, they are characterised by being a fluid phenomena, which tends to burn out when organizational identities come to dominate once more, or when feeling part of it refers primarily to one’s organization and its components rather than to a broader collective with blurred boundaries. As a consequence a single organization is not a social movement. (Della Porta y Diani, 2006: 20-26).

The literature about the definition of Working Children’s Movements as a social movement is quite few. The organization, at least in the Peruvian case, raises from the reflection about possible future scenarios for popular sector specifically for children and adolescents of that sector. Reflection, which was taken in Bolivia as well as other countries which led to consider them as potential social movement in the future (Linera cited by INFEJANT, 2008). Other authors define them as a union (Van der Berge, 2005; Invernizzi and Milne, cited by DaRodda 2007), and finally some mention the possibility of consider them a social movement if we placed them in the social sphere where the search of a new way of life arises, “a consistent answer to the status quo and of operating as engine of social change” (Zermeño cited by INFEJANT, 2008). However, working children’s movements recognize themselves as social movements; movements who represent every working child although this is not entirely evident.

2.5 Child-Centered Approach to Child Labour

The framework of this analysis is based on the child-centered approach to Child Labour. The approach is based on the Children Rights Convention, and looks for to restore the centrality of the child in the discourse of child labour, what calls for action and progress towards the realization of all right of the child stressing that best interest of the child should always be a guideline reference (Karunan, 2005: 301-302). Three key elements characterize the child-centered approach to working children:

A shift in our view of children and childhood, which stresses the main stream definition of childhood based on Western society, since it is based on right-based approach it take into account the context of the children. As a result, it also stresses “the constantly change in the view of society about childhood and the concept should be change in accordance to keep pace with a rapid development of societies”. Also the approach seeks to view working children as change makers, as social actors who can make a positive contribution (ibid, 2005: 302-303).

The resilience of working children refers to the capacity of persons or groups to continue projecting themselves into the future in spite of destabilizing events, difficult life conditions and traumas that may be serious in a context of child worker (Poseck et al, 2006: 43, Cussianovich, 2006)

Working children participation is based on the principle of respecting children’s views and opinions and involving them as active partners in seeking solutions to their problems. It supports the concept of participation as an expression on capabilities¹ of children’s capacity to stand up for what they believe in and accomplish what they intend to do, see children as social agents with rights where their agency is in continuously challenge. (Karunan, 2005)

¹ Capability Approach drawn by Sen focuses on the “agency role of the individual as a member of the public and as a participant in economic, social and political actions” (Sen, 1999:19). For Sen, a person’s capability “refers to the alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for him/her to achieve” (ibid:75). For the proposed of the study I incorporate the concept of capability from a political perception it is defined as “the institutional and social resources as well as the collective ideas available for effective political action” (Whitehead and Gray-Molina, 1999:32)

Chapter 3

THE WORKING CHILDREN'S MOVEMENT IN BOLIVIA

This chapter aims to give an overview of the Bolivian Working Children Movement. The first section explains the context of working children in Bolivia and the policy of Bolivian Government until current times about child labour. The second section describes shortly the UNATsBO, i.e. history, structure and activities. The third section explains the participation of the children in the organization; who are the ones involve in the organization and the types of organization they have. Finally, the last section attempts to briefly show their participation about the Article 61 of the Project of Bolivian Political Constitution.

3.1 Bolivia child labour policies

The number of child workers in Bolivia has been estimated at 800,000 working children, representing 21% of the total economically population. Approximately 30% of working children and adolescents live in urban areas (CRC Bolivian Report, 2002)

In 1990 Bolivia was the eighth government to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This was followed with the adoption of the Minor's Code in 1992, which was replaced by the Children and Adolescents Code in 1999.

The Code of the Child and Youth of Bolivia, promulgated by means of Law N ° 2026 specifies the minimum age to be admitted in the labour market, 14 years old. In spite of this legal frame, in Bolivia about 116 thousand children between 7 and 13 years old are working, which represent 8 % of the whole of the population in this age cohort. This figure rises up to 198 thousand² in the population from 14 to 17, which represents 27 % of the population between those ages (INE and UNICEF, 2004)

The Article 129 of the Code Child and Youth of Bolivia (1999), about the wage of working youth establish the following thing: "The wage for adolescents will be established in agreement with effective norms, in no case will be less than the national minimum wage. In order to fix the amount and to proceed with the payment of the wage, the process will have the same conditions as when an adult performs the same work". However, in practice there are children under 14 years old who are part of the working population

² The gap between the CRC Bolivian Report and the INE/UNICEF estimates shows the difficulties in obtaining reliable estimates in numbers of working children.

earning a wage less than the national minimum wage. The situations of child worker about wages it is not different from adults' workers.

The Bolivian government also signed the ILO Minimum Age Convention in 1997 and the ILO Worst Forms Convention in 2003. Their political about child labour it is based on the Progressive Child Labour Eradication Plan.

The Progressive Eradication of Child Labour 2000-2010 Plan, specifically targets child workers in the sugar, chestnut-picking and mining industries, children in domestic employment and those being sexually exploited. The Program receives ILO support pursuant to ILO Convention No182 and No 138. A 3-year sub-plan (2006-2008) to combat child labour prioritizes the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, the development of national policy against child labour, the participation of child and adolescent workers, and inter-institutional and inter-ministerial coordination. (CRC Bolivian Report, 2002).

Besides preparing the legislative framework to combat child labour, the Bolivian government also committed itself to take the administrative, social and educational measures necessary to ensure the implementation of the Child and Youth Code of Bolivia. To monitor the implementation of the National Plan on the Eradication of the Worst Forms of Child Labour the Inter-Institutional Committee for the Progressive Eradication of Child Labour was set up.

This committee consists of various representatives of ministries, NGOs and the Catholic Church. Articles 194, 195 and 196 of the Children and Adolescent Code give the Defensorías Municipales de la Niñez y Adolescencias (Ombudsman for Children and Adolescents) the responsibility to safeguard the rights and essential protection of children. "These 'defensorías' are public institutions composed of interdisciplinary groups of lawyers, social workers, psychologists and other social science professionals. These interdisciplinary groups offer their services in cases of child rights violations; anyone can report violations, which include incidences of child labour. The 'defensorías' function, is to be mediators and try to solve the conflicts by involving all the parties concerned. When criminal cases are involved, such as the sexual exploitation of children, mediator is not an option and the 'defensorías' are obliged to report these violations to the judicial system. The 'defensorías' monitor these cases until they are resolved" (Van den Berge, M. 2007)

The Working Children's Movement do not take part in negotiations which the Ministry of Labour and the 'defensorías' since they follow an abolitionist ideology. Although in current times they have been consolidating an Agenda with the Viceministerio de Coordinación con los Movimientos Sociales y la Sociedad Civil (Vice-Ministry of Coordination with Social Movements and Civil Society).

3.2 Looking at the inside of UNATsBO

The Working Children's Movement in Bolivia started to be organized in the 1990's. The UNATsBO is a member of MOLACNATs (Movement of Organised Working Children and Adolescents of Latin America and the

Caribbean). At a global level UNATsBO participated in the World Summit of Movements of Working Children in Kundapur (1996) and Berlin (2003). Its members have participated in many workshops in INFEJANT Peru⁸.

It is in 2003 at a National Meeting in Sucre, that children consolidated the Movement by adapting in their statutes. They defined UNATsBO as a Movement named Union of Children and Adolescents Workers of Bolivia. They also established the integral protagonism and the active participation in the defence of their rights. For them, work is a right and it helps them to be better persons in life, in the school and their families. Therefore work is a responsibility and it should help them and not prejudice those. As an independent organization they are not part of any institution or politic parties (UNATsBO Statutes).

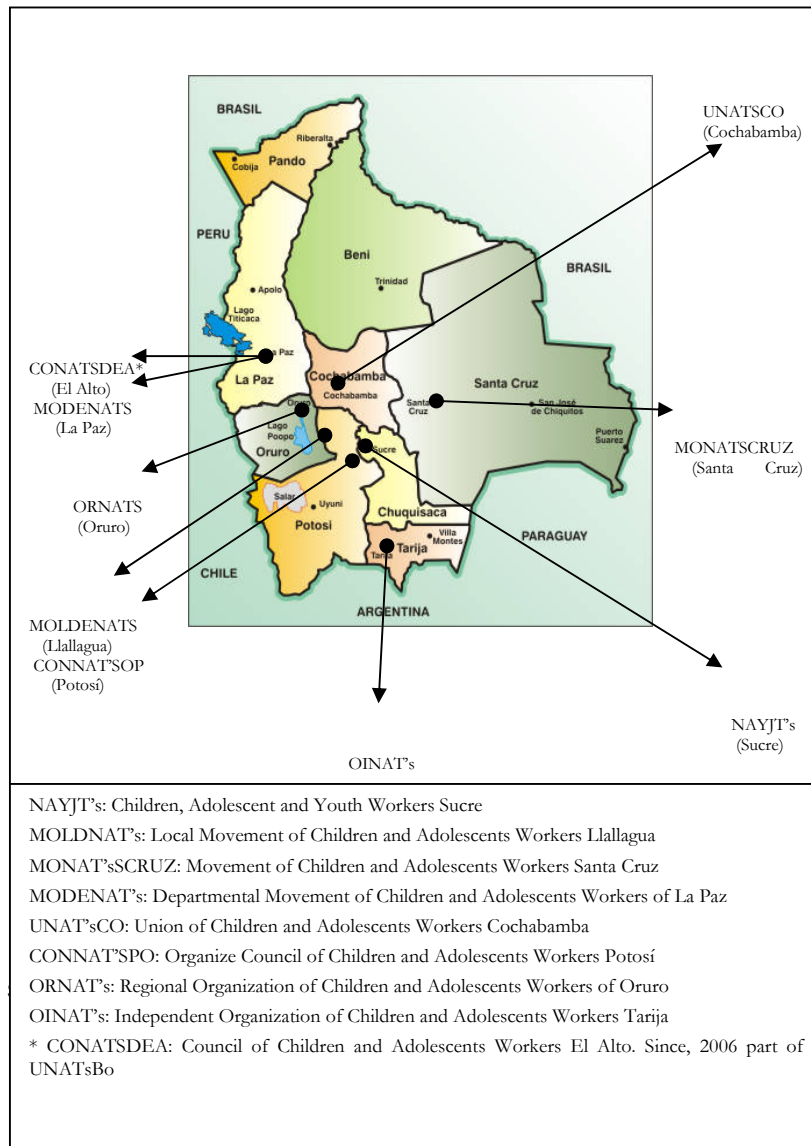
UNATsBO is form by different worker children-organizations, which at national level represents the Working Children's Movement. At the present UNATsBO has a dual identity. It has organisational features where it Statutes is the guide line, as a strategy to achieve adults institutions and be recognised as serious entity with clear objectives and representation. And for the other side they see themselves as a movement who challenge western models of development and childhood looking for an inclusive participation in the society. Their network is composed by several movements around the world who in partnership with institutions like NGOs represent the NATs Movement. Although a social movement is not just a group of organizations, as it was defined earlier, it is possible to consider them a movement since they identify themselves and are recognised in political spheres as a movement for example their participation and discussions about their proposal with the Vice-Ministry of Coordination with Social Movements and Civil Society. For now I am going to take their own definition, however I consider necessarily more research about the topic and also to see the UNATsBO relation with other Movements in Bolivia, since they declare their opposition of neoliberal model, and their participation in past protests.

According to the Organic Statute of UNATsBO, its aim is: "To achieve protagonism of the organised NATs (Working Children) and those who are in process of organization in the society; leading to social, political and ideological transformations with equality of opportunities without discrimination of gender, age, sex, race, religion and social conditions looking for a quality future"

UNATsBO is defined as a '*regulacionista*' organization, because as well as other working children organizations they base their work in the three pillars; children as social actors, critical valorisation of work and organized protagonism (see endnote 1)

At the time of their foundation 8 Regional Working Children Organisation were part of it. Almost all the capital cities of Bolivia have a Working Children Organization; Pando and Beni are the exceptions. There is just one group functioning in the countryside, Llallagua Potosí. However, there is an intention to expand the organisation to rural areas; some of the members of the UNATsBO are working on that.

Map 1
Bolivia: Location of Working Children's Organization



Today after several difficulties (from ideological to communicational) that lead to restructuring there are 6 Regional Working Children Organisation active in the UNAT'sBO³

³ MOLDNAT's, MONAT'sSCRUZ, UNAT'sCO, CONNAT'SPO, ORNAT's, CONAT'SDEA

At national level the UNATsBO is represented by a directorate whose members occupied different responsibilities (Coordination Secretary, Finance Secretary, Communication Secretary, Systematization Secretary, National and International Relationships Secretary, Recreation and Culture Secretary and Organization Building-Secretary)

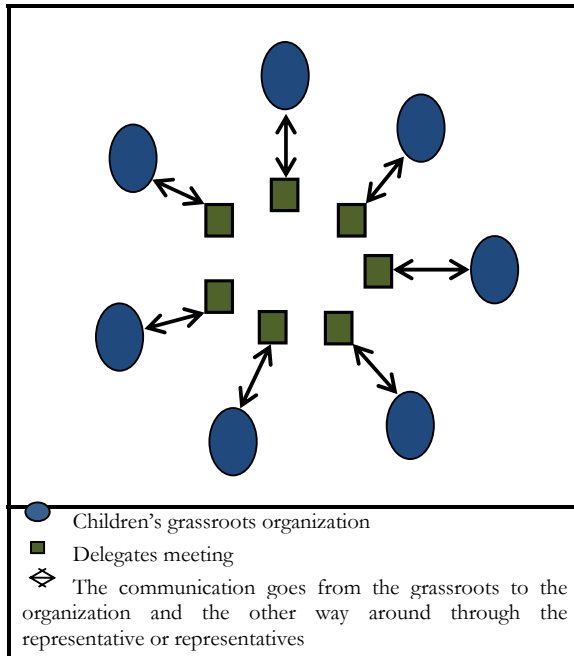
Two types of grassroots organisations are represented by the UNATsBO: autonomous groups that have been created and operate without official institutional links and groups that are affiliated to official institutions such as NGOs or Foundations. Since there is not a unique structure among the organizations that are part of the UNATsBO and every organization has its own activities and projects besides the national one, the organisational structure is characterised by a high level of decentralisation. For example Potosí, working children organization CONNATsOP is form by 9 districts organizations; from each district, four children are chosen to participate to the CONNATsOP's meetings. In the meeting, children choose the delegates who will be in charge of the portfolio; 4 children are responsible for one portfolio (for example: UNATsBO portfolio, honour court, CONNATsOP presidency). In this case they have created a replacement mechanism; if one of the delegates does not obey the mandate of the grassroots, he or she is replaced by one of the other children that are responsible of the portfolio. In the case of El Alto, CONATsDEA each grassroots organization is represented by one child who takes part of the Working Children Council of El Alto, thus if there is any disagreement with their representatives there is no one who can take the place immediately. The reason why not all children participated in the local or national meeting are because of monetary concerns and children time availability, since they work and study.

Besides children, adults also take part of the movement but not directly. They are called 'collaborators' and their responsibility is to accompany the child representatives in their activities.

"...they are not the representatives, leaders, tutors, owners of the movement. To collaborate means: to co-assume, to co-promote, to co-accompany, to co-make decision, to co-participate, without substituting or supplanting the NATs..." (INFEJANT, 2006: 165)

They are there to help, but not to make decisions for the children. Their aim is to promote the protagonism of working children. They look for a horizontal relationship between the collaborators and the children challenging the power relation between adults and children from a pedagogic approach based on confidence and mutual respect (ibid, 2006). In the case of UNATsBO there is at least one collaborator for regional organization. Collaborators in are facilitators or educators that work with different organization, and beside their work in the NGOs or Foundations, they choose to be part of the UNATsBO.

Figure 1
Communication diagram



Source: Diagram obtained from a collaborator interview

Communication among the organizations is through their delegates. They have the responsibility of maintaining the bases informed and transmit their opinions, decisions and concern to the rest of the organization; both at local and national level.

In the case of the collaborators they do the same, in the sense of keep the communication among the collaborators net and the children. At International level UNATsBO is part of the Latin America net through internet. The ones who have access to this

communication are again the delegates and the collaborators.

The working children organization organises different activities like: meetings at regional and national level, in which the different delegates and their collaborators come together and discuss various organisational matters and the future activities. Collaborators do not participate in every grassroots organization meetings. Generally they participated in the local and national meetings. Training workshops on children's rights and organisational skills, given by the collaborator and sometimes invitation of experts related to a specific matter. Meetings with local and national authorities; recreational and sports activities, generally at local level; mobilisation and awareness raising activities.

3.3 Children and their Organizations

UNATsBO as it was mention before is the union of several organizations of working children; children of 6 to 18 years old represented by their characteristics, skills and limitations of their members (UNATBO Statutes). The majority of the children, who belong to the movement, are between 11 and 18 years old. The children who belong to the organization all are workers; they work usually to help their families and to have money for the school. The majority of the children that join the organization are those who do not work with their parents or are street children. To be part of UNATsBO one has to belong to either a natural organization or a formal one which follow the line of the movement. The first step for joining the UNATsBO is through an

invitation to a group meeting given by a collaborator or a child; where children are inform about the mission and vision of the movement. If the child likes the idea they become part of a group of working children that already exists or start his/her own one. In the case of children who already belong to an autonomous group they will discuss about the idea first and if everybody agrees they will become part of it. The second step is the search for an institutional support; children go to NGOs or Foundation with the proposal in order to look for financial support and partnership. The institutions that agree become also part of the movement as a supportive institution or as collaborators. The invitations generally are extended by children because working children usually feel suspicious about institutions or adults since they feel to be used by them as a means to look for institutional financial donation; just a number in a list of an organization as they explain me, therefore, an approximation through children seems to be more effective because working children feel identify with each other; a communication between peers. This activity or work is named by some of the children as *'trabajo hormiga'* (ant work) where children talk about the organization and invite other children to join it. The *'trabajo hormiga'* could also be in other spaces as soccer games.

Autonomous organizations

The autonomous groups that belong to CONATsDEA usually are groups that were already organised; they follow a similar structure of unions. The decision to form the group is an instrumental one. In some of these groups they can be capable of bargaining for better conditions of work or confront situations of abuse. However, their main propose is to defend the ones who belong to the group.

...we have joined for need more than anything you understand right?, for protection. In this group one meet each other because for example me and some else work in the same buses and we meet since we were children, then another child came and so on we started to form a group. When an adult comes and try to bother us then we protect ourselves. For example if someone comes and wants to take your money the one in the group that is the oldest and biggest says: why are you bothering 'mi chango' (my boy)? So, that ways leadership rise in the organization, it is natural...we choose the leader more because he is the oldest and the strongest.

(Daniel, exNAT)

An exclusionary feature appeared form this; it is not easy to join the group, usually the new ones are brother, relatives or friends of the members, this is organise like that to avoid competition, as children explain it to me. This exclusionary practice is not an exclusive feature from working children groups who work in the street; adults groups also have the same characteristic.

The leader has the duty to look after the ones who are in the group. The rest will follow and respect him. In this group a leader is an example for the rest of the children, so as they said *"if a leader is good then the group will be good, but*

if you have a bad leader then he can lead the group to drink or to 'clefa' (glue common drug for street children)" (Luis, NAT).

However, this does not mean that the leader is the one who have the final decision. One of leader's responsibilities is to maintain the bases inform about the activities of the UNATsBO and be the voice and transmit the opinion of the group in the regional or national meetings, when it is not possible that everyone attend.

One aspect that it is important to point out is that their meeting are not only to raise issues about their work conditions; they are children at the end. Their meeting or gatherings don't follow a strict agenda; they can decide to talk about what is going on in their life, what issues are bothering them in that moment or just have a friendly chatting among friends. Usually, the meeting takes place after a soccer game. This kind of natural organizations are generally for children who work on the street and are already organized in a specific work and zone, like shoe shiners or 'voceadores' (children who announce the trajectory of the public transportation), and they feel that they share the same problems and socioeconomic background.

Organizations related to Institutions

In the case of the ones who are related to Institutions, the group is form through a facilitator or educator and the working children. They receive a guide of how to organise themselves as well as talks about their rights. It should also be noted that organizing children is not the aim of every institutions as is the case of Whipala. It is a choice that children make. Therefore, not all the children who participated in the activities of an institution are necessarily part of the organization.

P: Who are in your organization?

L: In my group are...mmm we are a group of 12 that work in different jobs.

P: How you became a group?

L: First we stared with two people who knew what to do, and then we have started to be more and to strengthen as a group. And also we received the help of an educator.

P: How do you become a delegate?

M: It was through vote and to choose two people who attend the meetings

(Laura, 13 years old)

In this case the children who form their organization can belong to different occupations. The way they choose their delegate is through vote. The activities they realise in the Institution include, making homework, technical workshop, recreation spaces like watching a movie or excursions.

Children who belong to UNATsBO usually are working children, employed in the informal sector and working on their own, in the household or for a third person. For example, they are sellers, shoe shiners, they clean tombs in the cemetery, and in the case of Potosí organization there are children who work in mines. Their work environment is not a secure one since they work in marginalized and unsafe areas, some of them told me that were robbed and even got hurt by a knife (Luis, 17 years old)

The majority of the children attend to school; however a phenomenon that it is repeated by several working children is left the school for one year and then come back again to it. Most of them feel that the school do not prepare themselves for the future because there is no quality in the education and they also mention the fact that teachers do not understand their reality.

The participation of boys is more than the girls. The explanation for this is that girls usually work under the protection of their parents or they work as maids, what makes difficult to reach them (Daniel, collaborator). Also, two problems rise about girls' participation; for one side the rejection about the participation in the organisations from girls' parent is more evident and pregnancy is also a problem among girls, what force them to leave the organization. (Betzabel, collaborator)

In summary, the organizations do not follow a strictest organizational structure, leaving space to build it according to the necessities of the member, and situations they confront; the only requisite is to follow the vision of the movement; As I was told they try to work with other organisation that follows a different vision but as they said it was a waste of time and it caused them a lot of problems. Participation in the working children organization has some exclusionary features in terms of gender, age and working places protection that should be paid attention and not leave it a side as a consequence of circumstances.

3.4 Promoting their interest: New Political Constitution

Bolivia nowadays is undergoing “a period of crisis and inflexion that is configured as a process of irregular political and economical changes. The emergency of new State order is the hallmark of this long situation of crisis and change” (PNUD, 2007: 29 translated by the author). “The demand for a Constitution Assembly was become part of the public demand since the indigenous people of low lands related this with an explicit form of citizenship demand in the first indigenous demonstration in 1990. In 1995, the Assembly of Guarani Community published a manifesto claiming for an immediate call of a National Constitutional Assembly. The demand took more power as a claim in the general elections of 2002 and its inclusion in the social movements' agenda. In was not until October 2003 that the claim raises a political agenda. Finally, after the approval of the Law of Calling for the Constitution Assembly in March 2006 the claim is in scenario of political and social struggles of Bolivia, and it achieved to be a reality in August 6th 2006”. (ibid: 152)

The Constitutional Assembly aimed to constitute a deep state reform with a broad participation of Bolivian people in a democratic context (ibid: 30). In this scenario the Bolivian Working Children Movement decided to prepare a proposal to include their claims. At the beginning the Organization that it is situated in Sucre was responsible for the task, since the Assembly was taking place in the capital of Bolivia.

In September 2007, the Articles related to child labour were started to be known by the population. The delegate of Organization Building-Secretary of UNATsBO announced that if the proposal of banning child work remains the working children organizations will declare their opposition to such intention (La Razon, 21th September). It was in November 2007, when working children decided to take action since there was no intent to change the proposal. The situation in the UNATsBO was not ideal in that moment, they were passing through one of their crisis when the organizations were having communicational problems and some of them were not taking part in the Movement. However, they could put aside their differences in order to achieve changes in the Constitution.

The UNATsBO decided to have an emergency meeting; where they chose the children who would be responsible for bringing their proposal to the Assembly. The children in charge were part of El Alto organization. They contacted with people who can have access to political arenas like Elizabeth Patiño, coordinator in Bolivia of the NGO Terre des Hommes/TD Germany and ex Vice Ministry of Family and Youth in 2004. They had several meeting with Assemblies of different parties; they also received an invitation from the Commission in charge of the systematization of the Assembly to expose their ideas and concerns. One of the meetings where they received a lot of support was the one with the Republic Chancellor, where he expressed his vision about child work from a cultural perspective, approach that follows the line of UNATsBO.

The preparation of their proposal was through workshop with the Collaborator for one side and with experts who explain them what it is the constitution and how the Assembly works. Together with the collaborator they work on a Manifesto to explain working children realities, concerns and claims.

Figure 2
Sing of Children: UNATsBO demonstration



Source: Obtained in UNATsBO video

They decided to make a demonstration at national level in order to be known by the population and stand their position about child work. Children from the different UNATsBO organizations travelled to La Paz and in the afternoon of 10th of December 2007, representatives of UNATsBO made a protest demonstration near Murillo Square in La Paz city. They were claiming and asking for the elimination of the Art.61 of the Constitution Project.

“Without the presence of the UNATsBO we could not have obtained the change of the ART61” (Daniel, exNAT)

The Project of the New Bolivian Political Constitution now specifies the prohibition of forced work and exploitation of children and it does not forbid that children workers can voluntarily develop labour activities. Also the same art.61 guarantees children rights and constitutional mechanism of protection. Art.61 used to ban any kind of child work, but after the analysis and systematization by the Comity of Agreement and Style, the scope of the Article was more specific:

“It is prohibits the force work and child exploitation. The activities that children realize in the family and social space should be oriented to their integral formation as citizens. Their rights, guarantees and institutional mechanisms of protection should be object of specific regulation” ABI (Bolivian Political Constitution Project)

A new challenge emerges from this process; UNATsBO will take part in the regularization of children rights about working children as it was express by the Vice President of the Bolivian Republic, Alvaro Garcia Linera. Now, Bolivia it is expecting the Referendum that will take place in January to see if the New Constitution will be the guide line for change.

Chapter 4

FROM CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES

The objective of this chapter is to illustrate and analyze the experience of working children in the organization, what makes them choose to be involved in the organization, why they stay and the capacities they acquired, and how it has influenced in their lives. The first section presents two life histories as the way to understand and picture the experiences that children have in the organization as well as the environment and situations they confront. The second section analyzes the reason for participate in the organization by working children of El Alto. The third part explains the consequences of the participation.

4.1 From Life histories

Even though become part of an organization is generally and rightly linked to a specific social class, indigenous group or other discriminated social category in the case of Bolivia. I think the best way to understand working children organization and its effects is to comprehend the motivation of working children to join participate in the organization. This process varies and depends on their personal experiences which at the same time are influenced or even determined by the socio- economic, political and cultural context. In order to understand how this inter-relation between individual and context take place, I consider necessary to look at working children stories. The life stories of José and Daniel exemplified different experiences in the organization as well as different motivations to join it.

Image 1: Shoe-shiner



Source: Rodrigo Bruzoni.
Obtained in internet

José is a seventeen years old child worker who used to belong to the CONATsDEA organization. Like many other 'luztra calzados' (shoe-shiners), he was part also of a natural organization, where he becomes one of the representatives. He received an invitation to join the UNATsBO in 2007, and become National Coordinator of UNATsBO.

José has five siblings; however he lives only with his mother and youngest brother. His mother comes from Bolpebra a community located in Pando department. There she met Jose's father a rural teacher, who was working there at that time. After knowing that his father was already married with other woman and receiving no support of his mother family, they decided to migrate to El Alto to look for better opportunities. Her mother works the whole day as a 'lavandera' (washing clothes for other people) and other part time jobs, but her work was and still is

not enough to satisfy their needs. Therefore, José decided to help her by working. He started working since he was seven years old, selling ice cream, candies or food. Then, he joined the group of shoe shiner located in the 6 de Marzo Street and become part of that union. *“It was tough at the beginning”* he said, *“I did not know how to do my work well, and sometimes people don’t pay you and yell at you things, and because I was a child and I couldn’t express myself good, I felt very bad”*.

For him working is the main factor of his life experience and learning; by talking to people on the street and child worker of his group, sharing experiences of discrimination and abuse. This situation pushes him to join the UNATsBO.

He always admired the national leaders of the social organizations and movements, who fight for the recognition of the ‘people’. At the age of fourteen, he had to go back to Bolpebra and was responsible of the Secretary of Relations of the community. In Bolivia, in the some communities the positions related to land, are passed by turns among families⁴, and since her mother was not able to go, Jose took the responsibility. When he came back to El Alto, he also was elected president of his school student-center to be his classroom representative and was part of his neighbourhood assemblies.

At that time he already knew about the existence of UNATsBO, however to join the group involved to take off his face cover, to make public that he was a shoe-shiner⁵. José explains:

“...I never wanted to take off my face cover, because I was a shoe shiner, I always think about what my classmates could say about it. I was ashamed. Because shoe shiners are seen as pickpockets and delinquents, for some we all have to pay!”

When he received the invitation, José decided to give it an opportunity and see what exactly what it was about. After he attended to one reunion of CONATsDEA, UNATsBO calls for an emergency meeting, to discuss about Constitution Assembly. There, José was elected as National Coordinator.

During the time he was participating in the Organization, he attended workshops about protagonism and critical valorisation of work. José had to deal with many difficult situations, since UNATsBO was having problems with the collaborators; some of them had divided the organization in two looking for representation and power that led to aggressions towards José. This situation generated suspicious about him from his grassroots group what ended up asking José to leave the group and lost his job.

José resigned for the second time in January, 2008 in Cochabamba congress of departmental leaders. UNATsBO rejected his resignation, both times and asked him to stay. Although José does not belong to a natural

⁴ This practice is not recognized in formal institution although is very common among indigenous people. It is way to administrated land.

⁵ Shoe-shiner workers commonly cover their faces with woollen hats (see image 1 on the previous page)

organization or CONATsDEA he is still the National Coordinator. Now he is about to finish his mandate, as he will be eighteen years old next year. Before leaving the organization, he wants to reach the communities in the country side, so UNATsBO can become a more representative organization.

He explains his experience in the Organization:

“Day after day I have learned a lot. But what it helps me is to be aware of other children lives, what they suffer, some has suffer more than me, that pushed me to think about the organization and to develop projects that can benefit them. For me this is a life experience that also helps me to the future and my own preparation”

The second life history presented is Daniel’s, a nineteen years old exNAT who become a collaborator. Like José, he was part of CONATsDEA and participated in the Constitution Assembly action.

Daniel worked as a ‘voceador’, who also had faced situations of abuse. *“Some scars that you see in my face are because the drivers of the buses made us fight between us, and the one who won is the one who got the job, that’s why I had to fight with them”*

Image 2: Voceador

He also received an invitation to join the organization, where he was elected as delegate. In 2006, in the national meeting, Daniel, raise the demand of separation between El Alto organizations from La Paz. Daniel explains: *“the ones of La Paz organization said that they represent us because the organization represents all the working children of La Paz department and that we were part of it. In that moment I got angry because in spite that El Alto and La Paz city seems to be one, we are*



Source: Peter Paucara. Obtained in internet

very different, our reality is different so they were not telling what is going on with us”. From that moment he started to promote El Alto working children organization. He was seventeen years old, so the reason to accomplish this project was for one side the compromise that he made in the meeting and for next generations of working children from El Alto. The task was not an easy one, Daniel and his ‘voceadores’ union started to contact other children unions and arranged soccer games so they could talk about the UNATsBO and the need of having El Alto representation. It was through ‘ant work’ that they succeed in forming CONATsDEA.

At the time he was about to finish his time in UNATsBO, he was asked to stay as Collaborator and help with the action about Assembly Constitution. Working Children chose him as the one in charge of financial concerns. He did not join the demonstration of UNATsBO, since he was already eighteen years old, and as he comments, *“in the demonstration, there were just children, so I couldn’t be part of it and it was significant that just children participate on it, one cannot make protagonism all the time”*

Daniel has three sisters and one brother. His family makes shoes and sells them in Cochabamba. Besides helping the family with the business, Daniel now is working as a carpenter on the weekend and studying to become an educator.

“This process has been a great experience that I have acquired skills to analyze the difference between natural (autonomous) organization and formal (institutions) organization. In an academic level this made me decide to study to be an educator, since I am very disappointed with our educational system. From my natural organization I have learned many values, like protection to others, to share and solidarity. I have learn how important is the participation and how to make an organization. And also I had the opportunity to know other Departments of Bolivia and get out of my structure.”

The working experience that both children went through was context-driven and happened under circumstances closely related with social and economic inequalities that resulted in the need of taking action. This is important to take into consideration when trying to understand and analyze the reason to stay in the organization and circumstances which they experience.

4.2 Identifying with UNATsBO: Working Children from El Alto

As a starting point one should bear in mind that childhood is a social construction, and children’s knowledge and perspectives are determined by the socio-economic, historical and cultural conditions of their families and community (Karunan, 2005; p.302), then one may understand why working children in the case of El Alto feel the need to be involved in an organization and fight for their rights. El Alto is one of the important cities with aymara-indigenous characteristics in the country, is a highly organized city, something that has been crucial in its participation in the recent political and social changes in Bolivia (Mamani, 2003; Sian, 2008). It is a city of migrants from the country sides of Bolivia, and as Daniel (exNAT) points out:

“In El Alto children suffer double discrimination, for one side our parents are discriminated by the society so children suffer parent’s discrimination plus the children one”.

Rodriguez (2000) points out that young people in El Alto suffer triple discrimination: socioeconomic because they live in a poor marginalized city; cultural because they are primordially indigenous; and generational because they are young, situation that it is not different in the case of children.

The second point refers to children and their perception about work. For the majority of the children interviewed (children who belong to the organization and those who does not), work is a means to obtain what they need; is necessary to get out of poverty and social exclusion. Daniel (exNAT) explains “while poverty exists, there will be child labour”. Domic points in his study of working children in La Paz and El Alto:

“When children emphasize that their work is important to them to earn their living, they have in mind primarily the fact that they have to look after themselves, and are forced or able to make decisions of their own i.e. to act autonomously...children connect the negative aspect of their work with their living conditions in poverty, their situation as ‘minors’, their ethnical-cultural origin, social prejudices and the specific working conditions that are imposed upon them or are available to them as children.” (Domic, 1999 cited by Liebel, 2004: 61,62).

Also from the Andean vision work is part of the socialization, the interaction with others in the community, it means to be part of the community (Domic, 1999). Child work plays an important factor in a context like El Alto where children come from generations of migrants or are themselves migrants. Consequently, for children work is not bad by itself, as it helps them to fulfil their needs and it is considered as learning process “Work experience can become an important element in children’s participative autonomy... it can potentially encourage girls and boys to play an active role in society” (Liebel, 2007), as is exemplified in the two life histories. However I have to admit that while talking to the children and acknowledging the situation they confront at one point it was difficult to differentiate labour from work, if we think about labour as equal exploitation then the difference become very smooth. Boyden et al. (cited by Hungerland et al., 2007: 259) suggest using the concept ‘child labour’ only to describe clearly problematic forms of child work and otherwise to use ‘child work’ or ‘children’s work’. But this also raises the problem of how to define ‘problematic’ and – using the concept child labour in an extensive way – completely ignores ‘non-problematic’ forms of child work. However, to see work as problematic is indeed where the problem is; work per se is not by definition harmful or exploitative, it is an activity, and what makes it problematic is the condition in which work is carried on. This issue is also raise in adults work and the claim for a ‘decent work’, where there is an emphasis in the promotion of the right of workers as well as the social protection for vulnerable situations (ILO definition of decent work). From this perspective, asked for better condition in children work does not seem a crazy idea. In the case of children work is also related to the recognition of children as value actor in the economy and social spaces.

In this context, the reason of El Alto working children to join the organization since they feel identify with the critical valorisation of work, and the claim of better conditions, is understandable. The second reason is related to the autonomy and the idea of having an organization for and by children, being protagonist and the sense of ownership that the organization can give them. And third, the continuous participation of El Alto population in the demonstrations, which also include the adolescents, looking for social change. Working children tensions: environment of violence that can lead them to worst situations or being themselves the change.

However, not all the children are interested in join the organization, because they are not interested in policy discussions, and the result of the Organization could be very disappointing for them. They can have the feeling

that the Organization does not go anywhere since they do not experience any change in their working conditions or any kind of reward for their participation.

I have to be sincere, I think they don't go anywhere, nothing has change. I remember one meeting where they were talking about some law or something and a bond that is not enough to us for stop working that is what I understood but the rest for me it was not relevant. So I decided not to participate. I don't know what happen after. But I have met good people there. (Javier, 14 years old child worker)

This issue is not only a feature of working children who do not belong to the organization; children who are not active participants, in the sense that they do not attend to the meetings or activities, feel also that disappointment. Delegates usually confront this issue and explain to me that create a lot of tension between delegates and members of the group which lead to believe that the delegate is not making a good job or that the organization is useful. The children's organizations until now could not change the living conditions of the children. "Nor can they bring to a close the structural causes of exploitation and poverty which are forged by the capitalist economy" (Liebel, 2003). Children who stay in the organization are aware that change is a long term task, and they might have no direct material benefit from their participation in the Organization as such.

Another aspect that they raised is used of the phrase 'elimination of child labour' from the NGOs or institutions that seems to provoke a rejection from children since it makes them look as the problem.

The identification with the movement then has different reasons: look for material benefit, the activism to look for better conditions and the identification with the premise to see work as dignifying.

4.3 Children's Participation - effect

Children participation in the organization is perceived as a learning process as well as a means that let children to be heard. Children awareness to be organized can be raised as a natural demand from their socio economic realities or can be led by institutions. Through their participation, they acquired knowledge about their rights as well as the relevance of their participation, the importance of their opinions and the responsibilities that represent being participants in an organization.

P: What have you learned in the organization?

L: I have learned many things, my rights and also to change the Political Constitution and how it works and what does it means. I am proud, well because they have listened to us and we have had them respect our rights.

P: And why is it important to be part of the organization?

L: Because this way we can ensure that other people notice us, and pay attention to us. When someone told us you don't have any power because you are not organize, and they yell to us, a union is already organize and when someone comes, they tell you that you don't belong to that place. But in our group we accept the children who want to work and be independent from those. We learn how to be independent.

(Laura, 13 years old NAT)

Being organized for them is a way to gain power in the society as they gain confidence to stand up front unfair situations in working spaces, from adults to children and among children themselves; they do not feel alone to confront them. At the same time, it is important for the child's self-esteem; to recognize themselves as a working children and the value of their contributions, represent a huge achievement given the stigma of the society about working children. A clear example of this is the story of José. They feel confidence when their work is recognized by others which make them feel more compromise with the Organization and their relation in other spaces, like school or their homes. Their interest in the organization is that is focused on their strengths rather that see them as a consequence of poverty, undefended creatures that need to be rescue.

P: How are you independent?

L: Because I work and with the money I buy my own materials and I know how to administrate my money. I have some savings that I use when I need them. For example last year, some of the children have bought different things; I bought a bed with the money I earn by working. That's how I become independent, I don't depend on adults.

(Laura, 13 years old NAT)

Some children said that they learn how to be independent from adults through the organization as they can be able to decide what to do with the money that they earn. As I have explained earlier that to be independent is a result of being a child worker, although the awareness of being independent and having the capacity to decide what to do with the money might be learned in the Organization.

But this sense of independence and acknowledgment of their rights can also generate problems in other spaces like their homes. Susana a working child of 13 years old has received an ultimatum of her mother about participating in the organization. She was told to choose between the organization and her family since her mother perceives Susana's changes and responses as bad behaviour. As Betzabe a collaborator explain: "this situation happens more in the case of girls than of boys. This situation happens because parents are not prepared to see their children as social subjects and since they have knowledge about their right, there is confrontation between old forms and new forms. In general the children who work do that for necessity. Both parent works all day and the children are alone at home. When they go to work there is rupture in the sense that children gain power when they started to gain money, but they claim also about their right of participation in their homes". In the case of

CONATsDEA, parents are not seem to be involved in the process of participation of their children, therefore tensions in agency are clear raised between children and parents, where the autonomy is related to misbehaviour.

One of the effects that is very evident in children with more participation in the organization is their capacity of analyse their situations and look for solutions. Children have the knowledge of what it is missing in the organization and which improvements should be done. For example participation of the youngest ones is a concern since they recognised that they do not participate as the same level of adolescents; children feel the necessity of looking for dynamics forms to include the youngest ones. They argue that in many meeting children sometimes fall asleep since they seem not to understand what the discussion is about or because just talking is bored for them. Children are aware that the level of participation has some limitations and as they said “we are working to improved it is not easy but we are working, to built the organization with we want” (phrase that I heard for more than one children); a Movement with more participation of working children for rural and urban areas, and changes in policies which includes their opinion and demands.

Limiting participation: children to youth

Working children participation in the organization has an end point when children become youth. This is based on the definition of childhood in Bolivia, and it is recognized by the Statutes of UNATsBO. Therefore, children who soon will be eighteen years old have to start thinking of leaving the organization and move into adulthood.

The process of leaving the Organization it is not from one day to another as children explained to me. The ones who are already youth started to take distance slowly, they can still be present in the meeting but he or she will not be involved in the decision making. Their presence will be every time less until they stop coming to the activities or become part of the collaborator group. Some of the young people take this event as a natural process, when they had to look for other spaces in accordance to their new reality. Although, for others it is a difficult task since the organization also is perceived as a safe environment.

Two problems emerge from this: on one side the permanence or refuse of some young people to leave the organization, and from the other side it is important to continuously involve younger children's in the organization in order to preserve the life of the organization.

NAYJT's, one of the organizations of UNATsBO, is composed of both children and youth. Although, the organization is recognized as part of the UNATsBO, the situation generates disappointment and continuous discussion about it, from the working children. These stress the feeling of ownership, and identity of the Organization as a working children organization, which leads to continue separation of NAYJT's from the UNATsBO.

In the case of becoming a collaborator, there have been positive and negative experiences. Leaving the protagonism and become a collaborator stresses the relation of power and the influence that some young collaborator could have in the organization. Children explained to me that since this situation happens, there is now confusion about the existence of two UNATsBOs. One that it is lead by exNATs, that followed an abolitionist approach since they have relation with the Ombudsman and the other one following a 'regulacionista' approach. This situation increases the tension in a scenario of continuous debates about child work and participation of children.

The second problem is related to the continue renewal of working children in the Organization. There is an obviously danger of disappearance of the organization since it is statutory that the limit of their participation is until they are 18 years old transforming them from child to adulthood. The commitment to leadership by the children is a real one; when they have to decide assume it. The new protagonists make an option of change, they make a commitment like Daniel and José, and this is an option not just for themselves as individuals, or even as an organization, but for all those children like themselves or even in worst situations. Here collaborators also have a great importance to promote children participation and to encourage the continuity of working children organizations. It is also important the participation of children who can gain more experience before become a delegate; which does not mean that delegates are only adolescent. However, the main pillar in from the continuity of the organization is the attachment that children feel with the cause and engagement with the Organisation.

Decision making and levels of participation

Before the statutes UNATsBO was headed by a president elected by the children among themselves. They change name to secretary of coordination as a strategy to avoid excess sense of power of the national delegate and to avoid one person decision over the rest of the organizations. Decision that made children feels more confident as they explained to me. The levels of participation between children are different. For one side as it was explain before, communication among NATs organizations and grassroots is usually by their delegates, so process of communication is slow since the delegates have to ask their grassroots before make any decision. Delegates have to be very careful as they explained to me since members of grassroots are very sensitive to feeling that they are not fully consulted or they have not receiving the same benefits. Delegates are the ones in charge to spread the knowledge gain in the workshops or the decisions that need to be taken. This is more evident in the case of autonomous groups, where there is no facilitator or collaborator involved. Children explained to me that there is a control mechanism or social control as they named among the members of the groups particularly to the delegates. If members feel that they are not fulfilling their expectations and taking decision without consultation the members of the group can decided to change delegate. Here it is important the honesty of delegates in communicating the grassroots the problems and activities and concerns at local and national level to avoid any kind of suspicious. Delegates

seem to be very precaution about this, so as they told me, they will not always accept the participation in every workshop and they are very careful when an opportunity to travel to other departments or countries appear. By doing this, they also give other children the opportunity to participate and be a more active participant. This tension it is also evident between delegates.

Among children, adolescents have more participation, since they have more experience and training; however the children participation increases as much as they participate in the activities of the organization. Adolescents are sensitive with children opinion and although sometimes is not the case, they try to balance the participation, since they had also the same difficulty as children. This feature is described as a characteristic among children who are organised. (Betzabe collaborator)

We see what activities we want to do, each of them are protagonists. Everybody says what they want and don't want, and that is how we start to debate. The collaborators not are always in our meetings.

(Luis 17 years old)

The relation between children and collaborators seems to be in constant challenge. CONATsDEA has pass through problems between collaborators who did not respect the protagonism of children (as they told me); that led to some groups to take distance of the movement, since they felt they were manipulated by collaborators. Situations that led to the separations of the movement.

J: Manipulation let's say is an imposition, for example someone makes some proposal that is not according to NATs propositions. If someone has the title of collaborator, they should be a collaborator and not make decisions for the NATs. We are working on that it is difficult but we are working on that. I have had many disagreements, we have to ask all the time to the bases and not take individual decisions. People always say that children are the present and the future but if they do not give us the opportunity and space, how come then we can be present and future?.

(José, 17 years old)

This situation has still implication between the interaction of collaborators and working children. In the case of CONATsDEA not all the groups have return to the organization and in the case of La Paz organization it has almost any kind of relation with the UNATsBO. The children, who decided to be remained in the organizations, took the determination of put aside the problems of collaborators since it did not involved children concerns and continue with their work. However, in the last three years it has been a continuous issue among children and adults.

Nevertheless, children and collaborators have also find spaces to work as partners. In the process of Constitutional Assembly as it was described before

children and collaborators work together by making a proposal. In this case collaborators participation was more evident since they had to deal with specific terminology. The information during the action against Art.61 was not homogeneous since they were acting against time, they could not wait for the grassroots answers. On some occasions collaborators tried to convince children about their position but without success. When the children were planning the demonstration and the hunger strike, collaborators explained to them the implications and risk that those action could cause. However, children were decided to continue with those activities. As a result some NGOs that support the children with their organization expressed their unconformity with the action and decided to not take part of the movement. (Betzabe collaborator)

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

Participation of working children is placed in a scenario where concepts of childhood, labour, work and participation as such are in continuous stress; scenario that is reflected in the practice of working children's participation.

The identification with the movement has many reasons as was explained; from the look of material rewards to the consciousness and commitment searching for changes in the society. It was also pointed that working children from El Alto city seems to be identify with the critical valorisation of work from a cultural perspective and practice. The membership in the movement seems to have some exclusionary features; that are related to protection of possible competition, the kind of work the realised in the case of autonomous groups. However the main exclusionary issue is the agreement with the vision of the UNATsBO. The organizations have been influenced by context and experience of their members.

From the life stories we could observed the situations that children confront as well as dilemmas outside the organization and by participating in the organization. The stories also showed how children decided to be commitment and the influence of the organization in their future decisions.

There is no doubt that the commitment of the collaborator plays an important factor in building the organization in training rather than lecturing the children. Since there have been tension between the practice of participation between children and collaborators, they are in continues building of trust. However, tension of power relations is not just between adults and children, but among children themselves; which challenge the horizontal participation among the members. The participation is time consuming which it is related to the time availability of working children.

Children participation in the organization is perceived by them as a learning process as well as a means for being active actor in the society. Children develop the capacity to analyse their situations and look for solutions, as well as the awareness that their goals are not easy to obtain but that through their participation in a collectively they feel the sense of power. Through their participation, they acquired knowledge about their rights as well as the relevance of their participation, the importance of their opinions and the responsibilities that represent being participants in an organization. However, capacity and skills gain have different levels among the members.

The participation in working children's movements has given children instrument to defended their rights as a collectively, the space for express themselves. Although, changes in their socio-economic situation are not a reality yet, children seem to be very optimistic about the participation in the movement, and they said that the movement have been a great influence for making some decisions in their future lives. And from the interviews, observation during the field work and the analysis it seems that the major change in their lives is the recognition of 'working children as social actor' with

a value, by the society and themselves. Even though, this affirmation practice seems to be true just among the members of the Working Children's Movement of Bolivia.

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NOTES

¹ Working Children's Movements approach are based on three main pillar (see, Cussianovich, 2008, 2006):

Views of Childhood: children are subjects of rights and social actors of their own develop both individual and collective

Critical Valorisation of Work: refers to the self-esteem and identity of being a worker; to see work as a human right with value which need regulation to prevent experiences of exploitation.

Organized protagonism: expresses the autonomy, initiative and organized features of the working children organizations. Presence of the NATs as a collectively in the society, like social subjects with rights and capacities to make decisions, to act, and to elaborated proposals to face up working children problematic.

² See Liebel M. (2003) 'Working Children as Social Subjects: The Contribution of Working Children's Organizations' Childhood.

³ The purposes of Convention No 182 was the term the worst forms of child labour comprises: all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery; the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children (ILO Convention No 182, Art. 3). The objective of these convention was focus the international spotlight on the importance of taking action to eliminate as a priority, the worst forms of child labour without losing the long term goal of the effective elimination of all child labour. The Convention No. 138 refers to the necessity on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Work. According to ILO, one of the most effective methods of ensuring that children do not start working too young is to set the age at which children can legally be employed. According to ILO Convention 138, the basic minimum age for work should not be below the age for finishing compulsory schooling, which is generally between 14 and 15 years old.

⁴ see ITALIANATS <http://www.italianats.org/dichiarazioni.php>

⁵ See ILO Convention

<http://www.ilo.org/ippec/Action/Legal/Conventions/index.htm> and CRC in Appendix of Weston, B.H. (ed) Child Labour and Human Rights: Making Children Matter. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

⁶ See CRC Art. 32 in Appendix of Weston, B.H. (ed) Child Labour and Human Rights: Making Children Matter. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers

⁷ The articles related to participation are: Article 12 the child is capable to of forming his, her own views and to express them in accordance with the age and maturity of the child; Article 13 the child shall have the right to freedom of expression; Article 14 the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; Article 15 the right to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly; Article 17 the right to access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.

⁸ INFEJANT is an institution for the education and formation of youth, adolescents and children workers.