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HUMAN
RIGHTS
CENTRE

EUROPEAN MASTER'S DEGREE
IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATISATION

An Educommunication-based approach for the rights of the child

*Responding to the challenge of implementing
article 12 of the CRC in Guinea-Bissau*



Supervisor: Prof. Paolo De Stefani

Candidate:
Maria Célia Giudicissi Rehder

A.Y. 2012/2013

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Abstract

Can *Educommunication* be a good approach to address the challenges of the fulfillment of the rights of the child in Guinea-Bissau, namely Article 12 of the CRC, “participation” and right to be heard? The reflection around this question is presented in this Thesis based on information collected with different stakeholders that are dealing directly with the matters of the child in this African country as members of national NGO’s, State officials, International Organizations as UNICEF and, mainly, the children. The theoretical framework of this research is founded on *Educommunication* theories from Paulo Freire’s bibliography of the time he went to a post independent Guinea-Bissau in the Seventies to recent *Educommunication* studies and also experiences developed nowadays by children in Brazil and Africa, especially “*Rede de Crianças e Jovens Jornalistas da Guiné-Bissau*”. The voice of the child is the starting point and main lead of this research that concludes by recommending a nation-wide *Educommunication*-based approach for human rights to respond the challenges of the implementation of Article 12 of the CRC in that country. Since its independence no president has managed to conclude his mandate and in Guinea-Bissau: the 10th lowest HDI of the world. The recommendations provided in this Thesis are aligned to the most updated concluding observations on Guinea-Bissau provided by the Committee on the Rights in June 2013.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The voice of the child leading this research

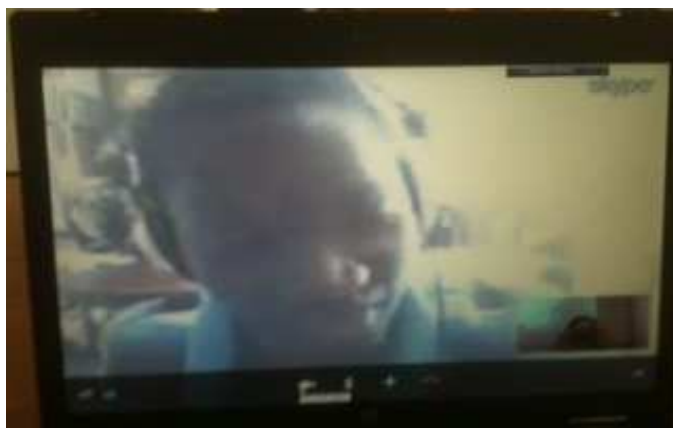


Photo 1: Ró Gilberto Gomes Cá during interview conceed through Skype for this thesis purpose. (Bissau-Padova. 13 May 2013)¹

“It was the radio produced by children that made me wish to be member of the Children and Young Journalists Network of Guinea-Bissau (RCJJ). At that time, RCJJ had a radio program, the same program we still produce and transmit every Saturday. I liked it a lot. I really liked to listen to a friend of mine and many other children talking about children’s rights on the radio. That is why one day I told him (*the friend*) that I really liked it and he invited me to attend one meeting of RCJJ and to make a submission test. I was approved and I am a member until today. (...) In 2008, I became a member and in 2010 I assumed a position in the coordination. In that year, I candidate myself for a Secretary-general position and I was elected by the General Assembly. This year we will have another General Assembly. At that time, I did not know anything about it. I have learned a lot with RCJJ. The way those children speak on the radio. I learned a lot about this topic (*the right of the child*) because every week we talk in the radio about subjects related to the life of children. I can say that I have learned a lot with RCJJ and I am a communicator of this organization and I keep working for the welfare of the children in Guinea-Bissau.(...) I would like to say that we will continue to do our job with or without support of international or national organizations”²

¹ All the pictures published in this thesis were taken by me, with the exception of Photo 13 that was taken by *Grupo Artes Simples de Teatro* with permission for being published in this Thesis.

² Interview (in Portuguese) done through Skype with Ró Gilberto Gomes Cá, General-secretary of RCJJ, Bissau-Padua, 13 May 2013. (Transcription in Annex).

Those words were said by Ró Gilberto Gomes Cá on a Monday morning in Bissau, capital of Guinea-Bissau. He is a seventeen years-old Guinean-Bissau citizen, who is still considered a Child under the definition of the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC)³. On 13 May 2013, he went to The United Nations System in Bissau to concede an interview for the purposes of this Thesis. I was based in the Human Rights Center of University of Padua, Italy and talked to the boy through Skype, thanks to the support of the UN Documentation and Information Center, namely the librarian Mr. Iaguba Djalo, who did not measure efforts to provide the internet connection. During the interview, Ró Gilberto was able to be heard and shared for around one hour his views about the challenges of the implementation of the CRC in his country, focusing on article 12⁴, “participation of the child”, the main thematic approached by this Thesis.

Internet access is really restrict to the citizens from that Portuguese speaking country, ex-colony of Portugal located in West Africa, at the border with the francophone Senegal and Guinea-Conakry. The population is around 1.6 million inhabitants. Only 40% of those who live in the capital of Bissau have access to electric energy, against 20% of those who live in rural areas⁵. The boy Ró Gilberto can consider himself lucky. He was able to conclude the basic education in a country where only 1 in 10 children go to school⁶. Although under-five child mortality declined from 210 to 161 child deaths per 1,000 live births between 1990 and 2010, this remains one of the highest rates in the world. Guinea-Bissau has the 7th highest under-five mortality in the world: one in every six children dies before his or her 5th birth.⁷

For the last 15 years the country has been suffering with political instability. Since 12 April of 2012, day of the last military coup, Guinea-Bissau is under a transitory government. Public schools are constantly under strike, but according to Ró Gilberto , it

³ CRC (Article 1) For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

⁴ CRC (Article 12) 1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. 2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

⁵ Government of Guinea-Bissau, 2012, p.12.

⁶ Group of NGOs working on Child Matters (Republic of Guinea-Bissau), 2011, p.15.

⁷ UNICEF Guinea-Bissau, 2012, p.11.

does not matter because the majority of the children at this period go to the field to work with their parents in the cashew harvest. This information is confirmed by UNICEF Guinea-Bissau⁸: according to a 2010 study, the school dropout rate reached as high as 30% during the cashew harvesting season in the region of Biombo, as children are also mobilized as part of the labor force. Only to provide an overview, cashew represents 98% of the exportations of the country and Guinea-Bissau's cashew production represents 12% of the production of the whole world⁹.

One curiosity can better illustrate the difficulties faced daily by Guinea-Bissau's population. A foreigner that has the opportunity to spend few months in the country (especially those who are from the developed countries) can very often be shocked with the situation of a colleague or even a close person around forties who seemed to be really healthy the day before, but suddenly died next day. A teacher, a doctor, a neighbor, the taxi driver and so on. Was the reason of those deaths is an armed conflict? No, they are the consequences of being a citizen of one of the least developed countries in the world where the life expectancy rate is around 47 years¹⁰. This is only one aspect that evidences the size of the challenges regarding development and human rights fulfillment faced by Guinea-Bissau today. Those characteristics of the country, described above, are very important to be presented in the introduction of this work in order to make the readers already familiar with a reality that presents extreme human rights deficiencies.

Coming back to the child's interview, besides providing detailed information about the life of children in his country and the challenges for the fulfillment of their rights, Ró Gilberto told me why since he was 12 years-old he has been engaged in communication and mobilization activities for the promotion of children's rights, even without having any material motivation as money. Indeed, during the interview he also shared the reasons why more than 50 children who currently live in Bissau, the capital of the 10th lowest Human Development Index¹¹ country, are, like him, strongly committed to the

⁸ Ibidem, p.58.

⁹ Government of Guinea-Bissau, 2012, p.9.

¹⁰ UNICEF Guinea-Bissau, 2013, p.15.

¹¹ UNDP, 2013, p.154.

promotion of children's rights, including weekly participating on Sunday in meetings and mobilization activities held "by children for children", without any particular financial support for transportation to attend the events, food and water, but with a guaranteed fun.

2. Scope and aim of the research

Ró Gilberto's words are the starting point of this Thesis. His views can be found reflected in the majority of the pages of this work, and they also guided research and collection of information regarding Guinea-Bissau in the Universal Periodic Review reports, the state reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, African Human Rights regional documents and documents related to the Child Participation's theoretical framework. Ró Gilberto's words also resonated in every single conversation held in the framework of the elaboration of this Thesis, including the dialogue with national and international partners' offices in Guinea-Bissau, namely UNICEF and Association of Child-Friendly People (*Associação Amigos da Criança* – AMIC), and with children's rights experts at the Committee on the Rights of the Child and at Geneva based NGO officers, at Plan International, SOS Children's village and Child Rights Connect.

All these efforts were made with the aim at addressing the main hypothesis of this work: Can *Educommunication* provide a useful approach to address the challenges of the fulfillment of the rights of the children in Guinea-Bissau, especially having regard to Article 12 of the CRC, "participation and right to be heard"?

*Educommunication*¹² is a new field of social intervention and professional work that has been emerging in the interface of communication and education areas during the last century. It can be defined as every communication action developed in an educative space with the aim of producing what the Spanish semiotician, philosopher and anthropologist, naturalized Colombian, Jesus Martín-Barbero defines as a "Communicational Ecosystem". This consists in the promotion of a dialogical and creative atmosphere in educative spaces with the aim of breaking the hierarchy of

¹² Soares, 1999, p.41.

knowledge distribution, precisely by the recognition that all people involved in the flow of information are cultural producers, regardless of their operational function in the educational environment. The core of *Educommunication* emerged in the fight for human rights in different scenarios of violations, especially in the context the violations of the right to communication and freedom of expression occurred during the dictatorships in Latin America in the Sixties and in the Seventies.

Nowadays, *Educommunication* has been used by different international organizations as UNESCO and UNICEF in Brazil¹³ and also by the Brazilian Government, with the aim of promoting the fulfillment of children's rights in different fields, such as urban areas, public schools, HIV prevention and environment education programs. *Educommunication* through its participatory and dialogical process, when applied to children, allow them to access their rights by directly participating in dialogical processes that not only allow them to be heard, but also empower them to actively participate in the elaboration of communication products and to lead mobilization initiatives for the promotion of their own rights. *Educommunication* has also been presenting good outcomes outside Brazil: in the field of health in Africa, and in India for freedom of expression of minority groups and gender equality.

3. Motivation

The theoretical framework of *Educommunication* is presented in more detail in Chapter 3. However, it is important to highlight here what are the reasons that led me to analyze the possibilities of *Educommunication* and to address the challenges of CRC implementation in Guinea-Bissau. I have accumulated more than 10 years of research and work experience in the field of *Educommunication* in Brazil; during 18 months, from 2010 to 2012, I had the opportunity to live in Guinea-Bissau working as the Communication and Advocacy Officer of the UN Resident Coordinator in the country. During this period, even not being a priority in my tasks, I had worked in close collaboration with Ró Gilberto and the other 50 children that compose the Children and Young Journalists Network of Guinea-Bissau (RCJJ) in order to promote capacity-

¹³ Information about those projects is presented in more detail in Chapter 3.

building on *Educommunication* to enable them to actively participate in the implementation of the UN official agenda in the country.



Photo 2: RCJJ in a meeting with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (at that time) for the dialogue about the children and youth participation in the peacebuilding process in the country. (Bissau. 20 September 2011).

In 2011, in Bissau, I trained the members of RCJJ on *Educommunication* methodologies, as they were created by the Brazilian youth and transmitted to me. The same methodologies used by the NGO “Viração Educomunicação” and by UNESCO in an UN Joint Program called “Human Security”¹⁴ developed in São Paulo, Brazil, were quickly learned by the Guinean-Bissau children. During three consecutive days, they participated in a capacity building session on *Educommunication* held in the UN System in Guinea-Bissau. Some big collective posters - which were produced by the children through a participatory process - were formally presented to the United Nations authorities in the country and also exposed in a wall at the UN building. In the framework of the International Peace Day children also had the opportunity to have a meeting with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Guinea-Bissau to discuss with him about the participation of the children and youth in the national peacebuilding process.

¹⁴Information about this UN Joint Program available (in Portuguese) at <http://www.projetosegurancahumana.org/> (Consulted on May 2013).

This capacity building exercise had a broader goal than just making children jointly producing big posters or meeting UN officers. The main goal of these activities, which are presented in Chapter 4, was to allow children to be part of a dialogical process that could make them able not only to be heard, but to freely express themselves.

Surprisingly, the main outcome of this *Educommunication* experience held with the children of RCJJ was that the members of this network were already doing *Educommunication* since the creation of RCJJ in 2006 in Bissau, with the support of UNICEF. Those children manage by themselves their live network of children, without the participation of any adult. They are strongly committed to the values of the CRC and contribute to its promotion in the country by weekly producing a radio program and jointly planning their activities and actions through a real “Communicational Ecosystem”. From this experience it is possible to say that Article 12 of the CRC has been implemented or has been accessed by the members of RCJJ through an effective *Educommunication* process, managed “by children for children”. However, according to Ró Gilberto’s interview, this is not the case for the majority of children, whose right to participate and to be heard is denied, because of many factors that will be addressed in the next chapters. It is in connection with this context that the main hypothesis of this Thesis emerged.

4. Methodology

This Thesis seeks to answer or at least promote a reflection around *Educommunication* for children rights by collecting updated information from different stakeholders that are dealing directly with child rights policies in the country such as members of national NGO’s, State officials, International funds, actors like UNICEF and, mainly, the children. The voice of the child is the starting point and main lead of the research. Ró Gilberto’s interview and also the practical experience with the children of RCJJ are the main basis of this study. The academic research, collection and analysis of information were done through six main steps:

1. Records, notes and outcomes from the practical work developed with RCJJ by the author of this Thesis in Guinea-Bissau in 2011-2012;

2. An interview with a child from RCJJ in Bissau conceded face to face through Skype;
3. An interview I had face to face in Geneva with the secretary-executive of the Association of Child-Friendly People (*Associação Amigos da Criança – AMIC*) who is also the secretary-executive of the Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters (*Coligação das Organizações de Defesa dos Direitos da Criança na Guiné-Bissau CODEDIC-GB*);
4. An interview done through Skype and also by e-mail to the main international partners of the Guinea-Bissau program of implementation of the CRC, namely UNICEF Guinea-Bissau;
5. Collection of information in Geneva at the Committee on the Rights of the Child during two trips: one held in the framework of E.MA second semester's curriculum at the Human Rights Center of Padua University, and the other for the purpose of attendance the meeting on Guinea-Bissau on the 63rd session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child;
6. Research on the theoretical framework of Educommunication concepts as applied to children's participation and peace education;
7. Analysis at documents regarding Guinea-Bissau produced on the occasion of the country's UPR assessment at state reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and at documents related to development and peacebuilding, namely the Guinea-Bissau National Report for the World Summit on Sustainable Development Rio+20, reports of the UN Security Council and of UNICEF.

This Thesis is structured in five Chapters. In Chapter 1, the reality of the life in Guinea-Bissau is showed in three parts: firstly, the context of poverty and development challenges is introduced; secondly, the political instability historical context is presented with a special focus on the current scenario after the last military coup of 12 April 2012 and thirdly, the Chapter draws some reflection around the root causes of this hard reality following the main structure of the UPR sources.

The human rights violations suffered by children are addressed in Chapter 2, which also presents the most updated information acquired during the 63rd Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, where the situation at Guinea-Bissau was discussed on 7 June 2013.

Chapters 3 and 4 are dedicated to the presentation of the *Educommunication* theoretical and practical framework, including the academic theories related to this field, the practical experiences developed in Latin America and Africa, specially some pilot *Educommunication* activities developed in Guinea-Bissau between 2011 and 2012. The concept of participation and the emphasis on the subjectivity of the child, its independence, its status as a citizen – on evolution, certainly, but a citizen *toto iure*¹⁵ – are the theoretical basis of this Chapter.

Finally, Chapter 5 presents in more details a reflection around the implementation of a nation-wide *Educommunication*-based approach to the rights of the Child, followed by recommendations to the Government of Guinea-Bissau, the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders.

Some difficulties faced by me during the elaboration of this research in the acquisition of information can help the reflection around the challenges for the implementation of the CRC in the country. First of all, the lack of gender equality in Guinea-Bissau which starts in early life among boys and girls which are addressed in Chapter 1. One boy and one girl of RCJJ were invited to concede an interview through Skype, but, unfortunately, only Ró Gilberto was able to participate.

The final consideration to wrap up this introduction is actually a special call to pay attention to the first sentences said by the child quoted at the very beginning of this Thesis. Ró Gilberto affirmed in his interview that it was the radio program what attracted him the most to become an active member of RCJJ. A possibility of real fun in an *Educommunication* process, “a radio program made by children for children” is responsible for making Ró Gilberto become an active human rights defender and a promoter of the CRC in the country, together with other 50 members of RCJJ. Access to his right to play, guaranteed by Article 31 of the CRC on the child's right to leisure,

¹⁵ De Stefani, 2012, p.164.

play, recreation, culture and the arts was also responsible for making him able to freely express himself and to be heard. Based on this experience, if the international organisations had started including *Educommunication* as a priority in the main projects they support or implement in the country in the framework of the promotion of the CRC, would more children be involved and motivated to fully participate to the promotion of their own rights? Could *Educommunication*, which combines education, communication, participation and play, be way for addressing some of the challenges of the implementation of the CRC in a country like Guinea-Bissau? Reflections around those questions are presented in the next chapters.

CHAPTER 1

The challenges faced by those who live in the 10th lowest HDI of the world



Photo 3: *Varela Beach in Guinea-Bissau, a country with huge quantity of natural resources. (Varela. 3 March 2012)*

1.1. Children's life in Guinea-Bissau

“My life is normal. Last year, I concluded the twelfth year [last year of Guinea-Bissau basic education system] and now I am looking for scholarships. My daily routine is to do nothing. Not only me but the majority of the children and youth face the same situation. You wake up in the morning and until the evening you do not have anything to do.”¹⁶

The first two sentences of the Economy Overview of Guinea-Bissau presented at the CIA World Factbook provide a picture of what means to be a citizen in Guinea-Bissau: one of the poorest countries in the world, Guinea-Bissau's legal economy depends mainly on farming and fishing, but trafficking in narcotics is probably the most lucrative trade. The combination of limited economic prospects, a weak and faction-ridden government, and favourable geography have made this West African country a way station for drugs bound for Europe¹⁷. This brief description can give an idea of the

¹⁶ Interview (in Portuguese) with Robert Gilberto Co, General-secretary of the Children and Young Journalists Network of Guinea-Bissau (RCJJ), Bissau, 13 May 2013. (Transcription in Annex)

¹⁷ Information available at CIA World Factbook website <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pu.html> (consulted on May 2013).

reality defined as normal by the boy Ró Gilberto in the introduction. He is only one of the almost 90% of the boys and girls or men and women between 15 and 24 years not officially employed in his country. According to an IMF report released in the end of 2011, the occupancy rate for the age group of 15-24 years was 10.6%. Considering underemployment and sub-employment among young people, the unemployment rate is probably about 30%.¹⁸

By the other hand, one article written by an English journalist for the tourism section of “The Guardian” newspaper provides an idea of the natural beauty of the country’s territory and its abundant natural resources and large touristic potential which contrasts with the high levels of poverty and instability. “The Bijagós archipelago, comprising 18 major islands and dozens of smaller ones, covers 2,500 sq km of ocean. It belongs to Guinea-Bissau, one of those African countries one rarely hears about, a tiny former Portuguese colony wedged between Senegal and Guinea. Life on the islands, which have UNESCO Biosphere Reserve status, seems to tick along much as it has done for hundreds of years. While the beaches are pristine and white, there’s rarely anyone on them except the old fisherman.(...) It’s worth spending a few days in Bissau, which is linked by direct flights to Lisbon, ideally for the February carnival, when dozens of ethnic groups come in from the villages and show off their unique cultures of music and dance and everyone drinks and dances till dawn. These ethnic groups – culturally unrelated, speaking different languages and worshipping different gods – live together peacefully day after day, but that is one of those African facts that never make the news. Then plan for a week on the islands to see birds and animals that have been all but chased into extinction elsewhere in west Africa”¹⁹.

1,6 million inhabitants; 50% are Muslin, 40% have indigenous beliefs and 10% are Christians. Regarding ethnic groups, 30% are Balanta, 20% are Fula, 14% are Manjaca, 13% are Mandinga, 7% are Papel and less than 1% are European and mulatto. They all live in peace among themselves. The main cause of the country’s instability is political. This issue is addressed in part 1.2 of this Chapter. This West Africa nation has

¹⁸ IMF 11/353, 2011, p.6.

¹⁹ Skelton, 2011, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2011/may/21/guinea-bissau-beach-holidays> (consulted on May 2013).

2 million hectares of forest, a bit more than 55% of the national territory. This great ecological potential is rich and with diverse rainforests, dry forests, gallery forests, savannahs, palms and mangroves. However, these resources face a rapid destruction estimated in 50.000 hectares per year.²⁰

The population is distributed unequally across the territory, with 25% concentrated in the Autonomous Sector of Bissau (the capital, most urbanized area of the country). Rural administrative sectors have the highest concentration of children under five and under 18 years-old. The sectors that have the highest concentration of children are also the ones with the highest levels of extreme poverty in the country.²¹ Between one-third and half of the population live on less than USD 1 per day in the seven poorest regions of the country. Even in the best performing region, Bolama/Bijagos, almost half of the population lives of less than USD 2 per day. In the region of Gabu (where is located the second biggest city of the country), absolute poverty is closest to universal, affecting 84% of the population. Infrastructure is particularly poor in rural areas. Children and women have to travel long distances to access social services.²²

The disparities between the urban and rural areas are also reflected in the access to Education. According to a recent UNICEF Guinea Bissau's report "*A Review of Equity and child rights in Guinea-Bissau*", about half of the population lives within 5 km of a health centre²³. Today, a child living in urban areas is 1.5 times more likely to be attending school than a child living in rural areas, where three out of five school-age children remain out of school²⁴. Another aspect of inequality to the access to the right to education is the fact there are still more boys than girls in classroom. Wider gender disparities can be also found in rural areas, with 89 girls for every 100 boys in primary school, compared with 97 girls for every 100 boys in urban areas. Only one in three girls who enter in primary school arrives to Grade 6, and finishing primary school does

²⁰ Government of Guinea-Bissau, 2012, p.9.

²¹ UNICEF Guinea-Bissau., 2012, p.17-20.

²² Ibidem, p.21.

²³ Ibidem, p.27.

²⁴ Ibidem, p.54.

not mean they will be able to write and read²⁵.

In practical daily life, this inequality among boys and girls in the access to education, according to Plan International, goes beyond rights: it must be concerned also with what they are able to do with those rights in the key areas of their lives: health, relationships, work and citizenship. In a recent research study in seven African countries, Plan examined the challenges adolescent girls face to get into and to stay in school. Among the findings of this study, Plan found that in Guinea-Bissau, girls work an average of eight hours a day on household chores compared to an average of three hours for boys. Tiredness and lack of time for schoolwork were listed as consequences of this burden. These affect directly the ability of the girls to learn²⁶. Plan concludes that when girls learn in a place that understands them, meets their needs and challenges them in a constructive way, results are positive. But finding the door into which that key will fit is a task that cannot be met by schools alone.

The education system has been particularly resilient in the face of rapid growth in school-aged population and continual political instability in the country. Improved access to education is reflected in substantial increases in enrolment and attendance rates in primary and secondary schools. The net attendance rate for primary and secondary schools increased from 54% to 67% of the primary school aged-population between 2006 and 2010²⁷. This is not an isolated situation. The access to education has improved worldwide, however, there are significant numbers of girls who, as they reach adolescence, for example, have little or no part in this progress²⁸. According to UNICEF Guinea-Bissau, the improved access to education in the country has benefited privileged children – rich, urban boys from the Sector Autonomous of Bissau – rather than the less privileged ones – poor, rural girls from the east, worsening inequality in education²⁹.

One of the main factors that prevents equitable access to Education are the late entry, child marriage and child labour. Children of Guinea-Bissau often go to school at a later

²⁵ Ibidem, p.52.

²⁶ Plan International, 2012, p.5.

²⁷ UNICEF Guinea-Bissau, 2012, p.54.

²⁸ Plan International, 2012, p.61.

²⁹ UNICEF Guinea-Bissau, 2012, p.54.

age than six. One of the reasons for this delayed access is that very few children are registered at birth, which means that parents do not know precisely the age of their children. Only 5% of the children have the opportunity to go to pre-school. The early marriage is also an issue that affects school attendance, particularly, of girls in rural areas. One of ten women in those areas gets married before 15 years-old. Many of them drop school to get married. Another dilemma faced by the children who entered late in school is the need of having to work to earn an income for their families. In 2010, 57% of the children aged between 5 and 14 were involved in child labour.³⁰

Right to health is another huge challenge in the country. And the inequality between the urban areas and rural zones is still a reality. Over half of the health workers are concentrated in the capital. Nurses and midwives remain in short supply in rural areas and those who are there face difficult living conditions and are unlike to remain long³¹. Between 1994 and 2008 there were at least eight cholera outbreaks. Access to adequate sanitation is only for few: more than 80% of the population is in need. Even in the district of Bissau, only 20% of the population benefits from a functioning sanitation system they do not have to share with other people. HIV prevalence is of 5.3% in the population from 15 to 49 years-old, more than twice the average HIV prevalence of West and Central Africa (2%). More than one in ten children treated at nutrition recuperation centres are HIV positive. However, malnutrition is the cause of 35% of under-five child mortality and still a major health concern in the country.

Not only the inequality between boys and girls is high, but also the women deserve a special attention. From the girls age as addressed before, as mothers, wives, workers, citizens of a very patriarchal society where violence against them is a reality since the early age, women are victims of widespread violations of their human rights. The country has made some steps forward in the fight against gender inequality in the last two years. On February 2012, Guinea-Bissau has adopted the National Policy for Gender Equality and Gender Equity (PNIEG) and, in 2011, a law that forbidden the Female Genital Mutilation was approved. However, many women are still unprotected.

³⁰ Ibidem, p.58.

³¹ Ibidem, p. 35-44.

One report launched by the Government in 2012³² presents an overview of the violence against women in the country. The most cases identified, related to physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence had occurred in the family, in the original or in the family of the matrimony. The main direct aggressors are the husbands, boyfriends or partners or even the father or the husband's family. Between 2006 and 2010, 23.193 denounces were registered in the whole country. That it was an average of 15 reported cases of violence against women per day in the last five years. But the scenario is even worse in reality because according to a survey presented in the report, 71% victim of violence did not denounce the aggressor, and 85% affirmed have suffered home violence, 48% reported aggressions in the street, 14% at school and 12% in a health centre. Around 50% of the women in the country has suffered Female Genital Mutilation.

1.2. Political instability impact on poverty

According to UNICEF Guinea-Bissau³³, the widespread poverty worsens the situation of vulnerability of the population: an extreme lack of financial resources constrains the ability of communities to provide their children with health care, education and a protective environment. In the specific case of Guinea-Bissau, a combination of factors has led to this increase of poverty, including the political instability due to the recent military rule. The country has become independent from Portugal in 1974 after a long-decade war of independence. Since then, Guinea Bissau has been facing instability. In the last decade, continued political instability has hindered reconstruction and economy recovery, with the latest presidential elections interrupted by a military coup on 12 April 2012. The coup came ahead of a presidential run-off election that was slated for 22 April, between Carlos Gomes Júnior and a former President, Kumba Yala, prompting calls from the international community for a return to civilian rule³⁴.

The fear of the population regarding the emergence of a civil war combined with the hopeless feeling of the international community that was engaged in so many

³² Government of Guinea-Bissau, 2012, p.1-14.

³³ UNICEF Guinea-Bissau, 2012, p.18.

³⁴ Information available at the UN News Centre website <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44866#.Uaxx0diK8wo>. (Consulted on May 2013).

development projects which had to be suddenly interrupted. That was the scenario of Guinea-Bissau on 12 April of 2012. After that military coup, many States started taking off their ambassadors from the country to avoid a Government under a military command. Development projects gave place to more humanitarian concerns as guaranteeing food and access to health services to the population. I was living in Guinea-Bissau when this last military coup occurred, working directly with development projects, following the implementation of the UN Development Assistance Framework UNDAF+ in the country.

In the evening of the coup, I was in a restaurant in Bissau, the capital, with friends around 7 p.m when suddenly people started running around screaming that the militaries were in the streets heading the house of the Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior, which was around three blocks away from there. The first thing done by the group was going straight home to turn on the United Nations radio in order to have some information. The fear was that the military could break down the electricity right away. On that night, the instability was felt in very realistic way. If you do not have water, food, a charged mobile, a radio with battery, you feel how easily and suddenly you can be put in a situation of extreme vulnerability. You, meaning a person from the international community. For the local population, the fear is mixed with the conformation with an instability scenario that is not recent. In that evening, part of the population started running away from Bissau with their families to the rural and poorer regions of the country.



Photo 4: Picture three days after the Military Coup of April 2012. This is the building of the National Popular Assembly in Bissau. The sentence in Portuguese means; “No Coup. Respect the people’s decision”. (Bissau. 15 April 2012)

Coming back to the evening of the military coup, thanks to the Guinean-Bissau journalist Antonio Aly Silva, who is the author of a blog called *Ditadura do Consenso* (Dictatorship of the Consensus)³⁵ he created in 2008, the information about what was going on was available to those who had access to the internet in almost real time. I was with three friends were all in a room with the windows closed, constantly checking the internet and the UN radio that was often informing the staff to not leave the houses, when suddenly a huge noise and an air pressure was felt near the door. That was the scarier, bigger and different than the noise of shoots heard before. After some minutes, the confirmation of what was that strong sound came through this human rights defender and journalist's blog at exactly 20h22: "*LAST MINUTE: There are shots of intimidation at the home of Carlos Gomes Jr, and the last mortar was fired from his residence. For the first time, one hears ambulance sirens*". At 20h33: "*LAST MINUTE: No radio operates in Bissau*". And then, at 20h40: "*LAST MINUTE: More a mortar fired from the residence of the candidate Carlos Gomes Jr, followed by shots of AK-47*".³⁶

Along the night of the military coup, Antonio Aly Silva published in the blog 41 updates posts of the situation in real time³⁷, including the report of the shots heard, the kidnapping of the interim president and at the Prime Minister by the militaries, the situation in the hospital and also his personal impressions: "*It pains me to see women and children running around aimlessly through the dark streets of Bissau. They cry, gesticulate, call the children. They are disconsolate. Who will help them?*". Antonio Aly had a very important role on reporting the situation in real time during that whole night, however, he paid the consequences. He was caught, threaten and beaten by the military after the coup. After few hours he was released, but in November he was forced to leave the country by the new government authorities, the leaders of the coup.

The case of this blogger is not isolated. Even before the military coup, the historical context of Guinea Bissau had shown the lack of freedom of expression. According to

³⁵ The blog *Ditadura do Consenso* is accessible at <http://ditaduradoconsenso.blogspot.it/> (consulted on May 2013).

³⁶ Post published by the blogger Antonio Aly Silva at the night of 12 April 2012 available at http://ditaduradoconsenso.blogspot.it/2012_04_01_archive.html (consulted on May 2013).

³⁷ Posts published by the blogger Antonio Aly Silva at the night of 12 April 2012 from 19h41 to 07h50 available at http://ditaduradoconsenso.blogspot.it/2012_04_01_archive.html (consulted on May 2013).

the report of the NGO Freedom House³⁸, although the constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, these freedoms are currently not respected. “Television and radio stations and newspapers were shut down during the coup; they were allowed to reopen days later but were warned not to criticize the coup or report on protests. Journalists regularly face harassment and intimidation, especially regarding the military's alleged involvement in drug trafficking and its role in the coup. Antonio Aly dos Santos, Guinea-Bissau's most popular blogger, was arrested and violently beaten in April 2012 and forced to leave the country under threat in November. In October 2012, Fernando Teixeira Gomes, *Rádio Televisão Portuguesa* reporter, was told to leave the country because of his critical reporting of the government. A few days later, the government revised its position, and he was allowed to stay”.³⁹

In summary, the night of the coup, the militaries detained the Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Jr. who was presidential candidate at that time and the interim President Raimundo Pereira. Since 1994 no elected president in Guinea-Bissau has finished his mandate⁴⁰. The leaders of the April 12 military coup have claimed they were forced to act in the perpetually unstable and impoverished nation by the alleged threat posed to the Guinea-Bissau military by an Angolan military mission. However, a closer examination of events reveals other motives, related to Guinea-Bissau's emergence as a prime transit point for the shipment of South American narcotics to European markets.⁴¹ According to the press statement released on May 18 of 2012 by the Security Council on the situation of Guinea-Bissau⁴², the Security Council condemned the military coup and expressed deep concern at reports of looting, human rights violations and abuses, including arbitrary detentions, ill-treatment during detention and violent repression of peaceful demonstrations, and recalled that those responsible for such violations must be held accountable. Concerns at a possible increase in drug trafficking as a result of a current instability was also expressed.

³⁸ Freedom House, 2013, p.1.

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ Information available at <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2012-09/guinea-bissau.php> (consulted on May 2013).

⁴¹ Jamestown Foundation, 2012.

⁴² SC/10640 AFR/2386, 30 April 2012.

On 21 July 2012, a transitional government in Guinea-Bissau set up on 23 May of that year as a result of a deal brokered by The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) four-point program of action focused on: 1) preparing for and conducting presidential and legislative elections in April 2013; 2) strengthening the rule of law, including combating impunity and reforming the justice sector; 3) combating organised crime, corruption and drug trafficking; and 4) embarking on security sector reform. That same month, the country experienced a crippling strike by health workers protesting unpaid salaries. The ECOWAS brokered deal which created the transitional government resulted in the military formally retreating to the barracks and the reinstatement of the elected Parliament, though there is no obvious role for it in the transition phase.⁴³

Another important fact to be reported is that on 2 January of 2013, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed former Timorese President and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ramos-Horta as the new United Nations envoy to Guinea-Bissau. According to UN information, Ramos-Horta took to Guinea-Bissau more than three decades of his experience on diplomatic and political career in the service of peace and stability in East Timor and beyond. Working closely with the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), he helped to bring about the peaceful elections of the country's Parliament and President in 2001 and 2002, respectively. In 2013, until the period of elaboration of this Thesis, the main focus of the international community on Guinea-Bissau's situation, led by Ramos-Horta, was the preparation for next elections. "All Bissau-Guineans must absorb a new political culture where elections would not lead to the division of the country and the winner takes it all. Bearing in mind the enormous challenges the Bissau-Guineans face, no single political group can alone manage the transition from the deep hole where Guinea-Bissau has sunk to lasting peace and prosperity. In this regard, it will be important for all major political parties to unite in a government of national unity following the next legislative elections", said Ramos-Horta on May 9 to the Security Council in New York while presenting a report with the developments of the situation in the country.⁴⁴

⁴³ Information available at <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2012-09/guinea-bissau.php>. (Consulted on June 2013).

⁴⁴ Information available at <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/unifeed/2013/05/un-guinea-bissau-10/> . (Consulted on May 2013).

The instability in Guinea-Bissau is related to the fact the country is a route for drug trafficking. In the same speech to the Security Council, Ramos-Horta also recognized this problem faced by the country. “The operation launched by the US Drug Enforcement Agency that led to the arrest of former Navy Chief of Staff Rear-Admiral Bubo Na Tchuto, and the announcement of the indictment of Guinea-Bissau's Armed Forces Chief of General Staff, General Antonio Indjai, is a turning point in the fight against drug trafficking in Guinea-Bissau. It is a strong signal to the Bissau-Guinean elite and those using the country as a transit route for drugs, that the international community will not accept Guinea-Bissau being turned into a drug trafficking platform”.⁴⁵

Following this speech of Ramos-Horta, the Security Council extended from 1 June 2013 through 31 May 2014 the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) for one year, deciding also to readjust its presence so it could help the West African nation restore constitutional order following the 2012 military coup and hold elections by the end of 2013. According to the Secretary-General's recommendations, the first phase of the restoration of constitutional order and stability would culminate in presidential and legislative elections, and focus on creating “a political environment built on confidence and non-interference in the electoral process. The second phase proposed by the Secretary-General, which would conclude at the end of the term of the next elected Government, should focus on post-election stability, on strengthening State and democratic governance institutions – notably security, justice and defence – and on the functioning of both central and local State structures.”⁴⁶

1.3. Human Rights violations

Everyone, everywhere has the right to live with dignity. That means that no-one should be denied her/his rights to, among others, adequate housing, food, water and sanitation, and to education and health care. “Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color,

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ Information available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=44866>. (Consulted on June 2013).

religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible⁴⁷. Recognizing that human rights violations are frequently the root causes of conflict and humanitarian crises, this last part of this Chapter 1 is presented as a complementary and fundamental content of the contextualization of the challenges of poverty and political instability that composes the basics characteristics of life in Guinea-Bissau.

As conceptualized by Manfred Nowak⁴⁸, “human rights cover all aspects of life. Their exercise enables women and men [in all ages, meaning children], to shape and determine their own lives in liberty, equality and respect for human dignity. Human rights comprise civil and political rights, social, economic and cultural rights and the collective rights of peoples to self-determination, equality, development, peace and a clean environment. All human rights are indivisible, whether they are civil and political rights, such as the right to life, equality before the law and freedom of expression; economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to work, social security and education, or collective rights, such as the rights to development and self-determination, are indivisible, interrelated and interdependent. The improvement of one right facilitates advancement of the others. Likewise, the deprivation of one right adversely affects the others”.⁴⁹

Although it has been — and sometimes still is — argued that civil and political rights, also known as “first generation rights”, are based on the concept of non-interference of the State in private affairs, whereas social, economic and cultural — or “second generation” — rights require the State to take positive action, it is today widely acknowledged that, for human rights to become a reality, States and the international community must take steps to create the conditions and legal frameworks necessary for the exercise of human rights as a whole. Nowak highlights that the “generation”

⁴⁷ See “What are human rights” at OCHRCH website. Available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx> (Consulted on May 2013).

⁴⁸ Nowak, 2005, p.3.

⁴⁹ See “What are human rights” at OCHRCH website. Available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx> (Consulted on May 2013).

terminology harks back to language used during the cold war; nowadays, the emphasis is placed on the principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights.

The United Nations recognizes the principle of universality of human rights as the cornerstone of international human rights law⁵⁰. This principle, as first emphasized in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948, has been reiterated in numerous international human rights conventions, declarations, and resolutions. The 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, in particular, noted that it is the duty of States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems. All States have ratified at least one and 80% of States have ratified four or more of the core human rights treaties, reflecting consent of States which creates legal obligations for them and giving concrete expression to universality. Some fundamental human rights norms enjoy universal protection by customary international law across all boundaries and civilizations. Human rights are inalienable. They should not be taken away, except in specific situations and according to due process. For example, one's right to liberty may be restricted if a person is found guilty of a crime by a court of law⁵¹.

Those two basic principles, universality and interdependency of human rights, are important to be taken into account while researching or analysing the situation of Guinea-Bissau. Poverty is one of the most serious violations of human rights, as it threatens the rights to life, dignity, privacy, security, food, health, housing, clothing and education.

Nowak also remarks that human rights can only be secured effectively in a peaceful environment. At the same time, peace can only prosper if human rights are respected and ensured⁵². Most armed conflicts have their root causes in serious human rights violations, such as racial and religious discrimination, neglect of minority rights, political suppression or economic deprivation. Human rights should, therefore, become strongly rooted in every policy of conflict prevention, peace-making and peace

⁵⁰ See "What are human rights" at OCHRCH website. Available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx> (Consulted on May).

⁵¹ Nowak, 2005, p.5.

⁵² Nowak 2003, p.5.

negotiations, military interventions to stop armed conflicts or serious human rights violations (humanitarian interventions) as well as in modern post-conflict peace-keeping and peace-building operations.

Much has been achieved during the last decade to integrate human rights in to the so-called “second generation” of complex peace-keeping and peace-building operations. Nevertheless, Nowak ⁵³ evaluates that “more needs to be done, however, in the field of conflict prevention, peace negotiation (a sustainable peace needs to be built on truth, reconciliation and a solid human rights framework) and humanitarian intervention.

In 2006, the United Nations created the Peacebuilding Fund: the Secretary General’s Fund to support activities, actions, programmes and organisations that seek to build a lasting peace in countries emerging from conflict. Ban Ki Moon declared Guinea-Bissau eligible to receive assistance from the Peacebuilding Fund in March 2008. The country came on the agenda of PBC on 19 December 2007. Since 2008, Guinea Bissau has received funding under two tranches: an initial allocation of \$ 6 million approved in April 2008 against a first Priority Plan and a second tranche under the second Priority Plan amounting to \$16.8 million, approved in June 2011. Both Peacebuilding Priority Plans focus on three priority areas: employment, national dialogue, and Security Sector Reform (SSR). An independent evaluation of the impact of the second tranche was conducted in October 2011⁵⁴.

However, following the last military coup d’état in April 2012, PBF’s Joint Steering Committee was dismantled and the situation on the ground has radically changed. PBF has therefore suspended its peacebuilding programs pending the return to constitutional order, in line with the wishes of international community. The PBF’s mandate is to work in post-conflict environments in which Governments and other stakeholders have demonstrated a commitment to peacebuilding. PBF’s programmes will resume when there will be enough evidence of a political consensus to a roadmap for restoration of constitutional order.

⁵³ Ibidem.

⁵⁴ Information available at the UN Peacebuilding Fund website at <http://www.unpbf.org/countries/guinea-bissau/>. (Consulted on May 2013).

1.4. Drug Trafficking

Before presenting an overview of the scenario of human rights violations, it is important to make a special remark about one of the main root causes of the problems faced by Guinea-Bissau nowadays. Having a weak state in such an important geographic location for the route of the drugs trafficked from Latin America to Europe is very interesting to the international leaders of the criminal organizations. To reach consumer markets in Europe can move cocaine through West Africa. According to UNODC⁵⁵, in 2011, about 30 tons of cocaine were trafficked in West Africa. However, during this period, only 2.7 kilos were seized in Guinea-Bissau. The cocaine trafficking in the region generates annually profits of 900 million dollars to the criminal networks. Lack of resources, which provides ideal conditions for illicit trafficking occurs on a large scale. This caught the attention of the international community.

On June 24, 2011, the Government of Guinea-Bissau adopted a Political Declaration to combat and prevent Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime. The Declaration reaffirms the commitment of Guinea-Bissau to promote an environment free of drugs and crime, driver development and socio-economic stability. To achieve this, the Declaration provides a series of principles and commitments to be translated into actions. Among the main challenges presented by the Government in that occasion are: breeding security agencies contribute to making Guinea-Bissau vulnerable to illicit transnational and putting an end to impunity and restore confidence in the judicial system are critical steps to prevent Guinea-Bissau becomes a safe haven for criminals. These steps are essential to restore stability and an effective criminal justice system based on the rule of law.⁵⁶

According to the most recent information disseminated by Amnesty International in the *Annual Report 2013: The state of the world's human rights*⁵⁷, the summary of the situation in Guinea-Bissau is presented as following: the political situation deteriorated sharply following the death in January 2012 of President Malam Bacai Sanhá,

⁵⁵Information available at <http://www.dw.de/aumento-do-tr%C3%A1fico-de-droga-na-guin%C3%A9-bissau-preocupa-onu/a-16093956>. (Consulted on June 2013).

⁵⁶Government of Guinea-Bissau, 2011, p. 3-4.

⁵⁷Amnesty International, 2013, p. 112.

culminating in a coup in April. It deteriorated further following a reported attack on a military barracks in October, which exacerbated the already fragile human rights and humanitarian situation. The armed forces committed numerous human rights violations with impunity, including arbitrary arrest and detention, beatings and extrajudicial executions. Freedoms of assembly, of expression and the of press were severely curbed. The killings of political and security figures since 2009 remained unpunished⁵⁸. And the drug trafficking is intrinsic in this scenario.

1.5. UPR

The country is not party of the following core treaties: ICERD (signature only, 2000); OP-ICESCR (signature only, 2009), ICCPR (signature only, 2000); ICCPR-OP 1(Signature only, 2000), ICCPR-OP 2 (signature only, 2000), CAT (signature only, 2000), OP-CAT, OP-CRC-AC (Signature only, 2000), OP-CRC-SC (signature only, 2000), ICRMW (signature only, 2000), CRPD, CRPD-OP, and CED⁵⁹. In this context, Amnesty International⁶⁰ recommended in the UPR the country to ratify all outstanding human rights treaties, in particular the ICCPR and its First and Second Protocols, and the CAT.

The first Universal Periodical Review (UPR) Guinea-Bissau was submitted to was held in 7 May 2010 and the next is scheduled for January/February 2015. Acknowledging the fact that UPR is a unique mechanism of the Human Rights Council (HRC), aiming at improving the human rights situation on the ground⁶¹, in order to better understand the scenario of Human Rights violations in Guinea-Bissau, this Chapter addresses the country's Human Rights performance following the structure adopted by the UPR based in the contents of the Summary prepared by the OHCHR of the 4 stakeholders submission to the UPR on Guinea-Bissau⁶². During the UPR process, Guinea-Bissau accepted 101 recommendations from the states and rejected 5 (listed below).⁶³

⁵⁸ Ibidem, p. 112.

⁵⁹ A/HRC/WG.6/8/GNB/2, 18 February 2010.

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

⁶¹ Description of UPR available at UPR Info website <http://www.upr-info.org> . (Consulted on May 2013)

⁶² A/HRC/WG.6/8/GNB/3, 29 January 2010.

⁶³ A/HRC/WG.6/8/GNB/1, 22 April 2010.

Guinea-Bissau rejected the recommendations to:

1. Review its legislative and administrative measures with the aim of eliminating gender discrimination (South Africa);
2. Have a programme of education and training in human rights as a prerequisite for anyone wishing to join the armed forces (Spain);
3. Repeal or amend legislation that discriminates against disabled person and children, with a focus on eradicating the practice of killing newborn children with disabilities, preventing violence at the hands of family members and society in general, and ensuring equal access to all public transportation and buildings (Israel);
4. Intensify efforts to improve the human rights of women, and take measures to combat harmful traditional practices under customary law, such as early and forced marriage, trafficking, polygamy and levirate marriage (Norway); and:
5. Send a clear signal that no human rights violations committed by members of the army will be tolerated, and take specific measures in order to bring to justice those responsible, without exceptions and regardless of their rank (Canada).

*1.5.1. Right to life, liberty and security of the person*⁶⁴

Among the main recommendations presented by the 4 stakeholders during the UPR in the framework of right to life, liberty and security of the person, the killings of presidents and politicians and also tortured and ill-treatment practiced by the Security Forces were highlighted. Regarding the political instability, issues of freedom of expression and assembly were also raised as the Security Forces of the country often arrest and detain people exercising those rights as already mentioned. The children deserved special attention with recommendations regarding the question of the *Talibé* children who are sent to live with teachers in order to receive a religious education in

⁶⁴ All the information in those items were extracted from the A/HRC/WG.6/8/GNB/3, 29 January 2010.

the country or abroad, but end up obliged to work and suffer ill-treatment. This question was also addressed in the 63rd Session of the Committee of the Right of the Child held on 7 June 2013 and in the interviews concede by the boy Ró Gilberto and by a representative from the civil society, presented in more detail in next Chapter. Only in 2007, 3.000 children were sent abroad for this purpose. The Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment of Children indicated that corporal punishment is lawful in the family, with a lack regarding this issue in the applicable legislation. Female Genital Mutilation was also a concern with 3.732 cases registered in 207, however after the UPR, FGM now is forbidden by law, but still a challenge as highlighted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child this year.

1.5.2. Administration of Justice, including impunity and rule of law

Amnesty International reported that no investigation has been carried out into the killings by the soldiers of political personnel, despite the promises made by the elected president in 2009. AI recommended the country to ensure effective investigation about those cases and also about the ill-treatment and torture committed by military officials. The Military intervention in political affairs and in the judiciary was also reported. In July 2008, according to the Amnesty International, the attorney-general and Minister of Justice received death threats to force their investigation into cocaine haul. And the Judiciary System was pointed out as corrupted by the stakeholders.

1.5.3. Freedom of religion or belief, expression, association and peaceful assembly and right to participate in public and political life

The report of the stakeholders to the CRC calls the attention for the suppression of the freedom of expression done by the military, which has also pointed here before with the impunity reality in the country. One specific case is mentioned. Radio Bombolom, the same commercial radio that broadcast the programs produced by RCJJ children on Saturdays, has been shut down on several occasions and its journalists have been arrested. The problem is not exclusive to journalists, human rights defenders and also

government officials were victims of those unlawful arrests. Regarding religious freedom: the Constitution provides for many fundamental freedoms and the Institute on Religion and Public Policy (IRPP) affirms that religious freedom is generally protected.

1.5.4. Right to social security and to an adequate standard of living

The stakeholders call the attention to the right to health. Although this right is laid down in the Constitution, there are serious shortcomings in its implementation, such as the illicit fees required of patients, the lack of professional ethics on the part of some doctors and nurses, and corruption. Access to Water and Sanitation, Child Mortality and Malaria were also addressed. More than 35% of the population does not have access to toilets. Around 80% of medicines available in the pharmacies are of poor quality.

1.5.5. Right to Education and to participate in the cultural life of the community

More updated data related to the challenges for the fulfilment of the right to education were presented in the first part of this Chapter. The stakeholders call the attention for the lack of information and guidance on schools, including the situation of the teachers: only 10% have teaching qualifications and many have chosen to work abroad.

CHAPTER 2

The right of the child: violations and main challenges



Photo 5: Poster for the dissemination of the CRC made by children at the Brazilian Embassy in Bissau on the celebration of the African Children's Day. The sentence in Portuguese means: "I have the right to give my opinion". (Bissau, 15 June 2011)

2.1. The implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in an African country

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989 and entered into force on 2 September 1990. It is the first international treaty dedicated to ensuring the rights and well-being of children. "Currently, it is the most ratified human rights treaty of the world, with 193 States parties. The convention was drafted to be a comprehensive statement on the rights of the child, encompassing both civil and political rights as well as economic, social, and cultural rights. It is aimed to protect children from a wide range of human rights abuses and to ensure that children can realize their individual rights, develop to their fullest potential, and contribute to their communities, both initially as children as ultimately as a child"⁶⁵.

The central obligation of States parties in relation to the CRC is to respect and ensure the rights recognized therein. According to Article 4, the Governments are required to

⁶⁵Todres; E.Wojcik; R.Revaz, 2006, p. 3.

undertake “all appropriate...measures to this end”⁶⁶. “The CRC adopts a broad and flexible approach which does not stipulate the specific means by which it is to be implemented in the national legal order. To what extent national courts, or other tribunals or administrative authorities, can play a part in this, depends mainly on the question of whether the provisions of the CRC are directly applicable in proceedings before those national courts. Similar to ICCPR and the ICESCR, the CRC does not contain a provision expressly obligating its comprehensive incorporation or requiring it to be accorded any specific type of status in national law”⁶⁷. In general, according to Sharon Detrick, the effect of international law within the national legal systems varies from one state to another. In general, he explains that two approaches can be adopted by the State, one is the transformation approach (dualistic view) and the incorporation approach (monistic view).

The States that follow the first approach, give effect to the conventional provisions by transforming them into national law via the required procedure, e.g. by supplementing or amending existing legislation. In the ones that follow the incorporation approach the Covenants’ themselves become part of the national law once the requirements for ratification or accession have been satisfied⁶⁸. The CRC has received considerable academic attention in its relatively short life and there is a spectrum of opinion as to its ability to transform the childhood experience. Commentators may have many divergent opinions in different aspects of the CRC, but most of them agree that the issues of enforcement and implementation are the key to maximize the Convention’s potential to improve the life of children and young people worldwide.⁶⁹

In the book *The UN Children’s Rights Convention: theory meets practice*, the authors affirm that “simply legislating in favour of children and educating people through awareness campaigns that they must abide by the principles of the Convention, because, their country is a signatory State, may not get very far in terms of the achievements of the implementation of the CRC. One must acknowledge that the challenges generally

⁶⁶ CRC, Article 4.

⁶⁷ Detrick, 1999, p. 27.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, p. 28-29.

⁶⁹ Kilkelly;Lundy, 2007, p. 57-58.

arise when attempting to put any principled policy into practice”.⁷⁰

The CRC has exerted pressure on nations to examine their current attitudes towards children, making an ideological shift in the perception of childhood, and reconceptualising the child from being a vulnerable object in need of protection to an active subject of rights, entitled to full respect and dignity.⁷¹ However, this universal image of the child has been seen as a threat to many societies holding deeply entrenched values and traditions. This is because the child is not perceived as an independent human being in many traditional societies. Many nations are thus to be standing at a critical crossroads; do they first invest in a young generation of rights claimers so that a future of culture of rights is created or do they focus on establishing an enabling macro-environment?⁷²

The United States is one of the three states that did not ratify the Convention, followed by Somalia (no official government) and the newest state South Sudan (became an independent state on 9 July 2011). The US non-ratification is even more surprising than the other two given that the United States actively participated in the drafting of the CRC and that a number of US proposals became part of the final version of the CRC. In a very summarized explanation, the reasons behind the US opposition to ratification of the CRC fall primarily into two categories: 1) fears that the CRC will undermine the family unit and the role of the parents in raising their children and 2) concerns that ratification of the CRC, or any other human rights international treaty for that matter, would weaken the US sovereignty.⁷³

Some opponents of the CRC, like the United States, have voiced that the CRC is an anti-parent and will undermine the role of parents in raising their children. However, a thorough examination of the language of the CRC at its legislative history reveals that the CRC places considerable emphasis on the importance of the family and the role of the parents (or other legal guardian if applicable) in the development of the child. The drafters of the CRC never intended the CRC to be an anti-parent or in any other way

⁷⁰ Hammad, 2007, p.5.

⁷¹ Ibidem, p.3-4.

⁷² Ibidem, p.3-4.

⁷³ Todres, 2006, p. 20.

undermine the family unit. In the Preamble, the CRC sets forth its view of the family, calling the family the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of the children. And the CRC support to the family is not limited to the Preamble but also numerous operative provisions of the Convention. Nineteen articles expressly acknowledge the importance of parents and the family in the lives of children.⁷⁴ However, the CRC does not allow parents to act without impunity towards their children. Article 19 obligates states to protect children from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse” by parents, by legal guardian, or any other person who takes care of the child⁷⁵.

On 11 July 1990, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was adopted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This regional human rights document highlights certain specific features of the situation of children on the African continent and thus gives greater strength to the rights set out in the CRC⁷⁶. The African Charter address the “welfare” of the child, to highlight the inextricable link that exists between respect for the rights of the child and his or her welfare. Four principles underpin the Charter: non-discrimination, participation, the best interest of the child and survival and development⁷⁷. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child established the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Children’s Rights Committee) composed by 11 members elected by the AU Assembly for a 5 years term. States parties are required to submit reports setting out measures they have adopted to implement the provisions of the Charter. The Committee first finding, in 2011, dealt with the failure of Kenya to register and provide nationality to children of Nubian descent in the country. The Committee held Kenya in violation of the Charter.⁷⁸ The African Charter is divided in two parts like the CRC: the first is dedicated to the rights and the duties of the child; the second provides for the creation and organisation

⁷⁴ Ibidem.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, p.27.

⁷⁶ Kienge-Kienge Intudi, 2007, p.24.

⁷⁷ Centre of Human Rights, Faculty of Law. University of Pretoria in collaboration with the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights, 2011, p.12.

⁷⁸ Ibidem.

of a committee on the rights and welfare of the child. One of the differences between the African Charter and the CRC is that the African defines duties and responsibilities that the children have in front of their community. But the set of rights are almost the same in both documents”⁷⁹.

Mubiala⁸⁰ points out the establishment of many non-democratic political systems in Africa after independence as one of the factors for the ineffectiveness of human rights provisions for the protection of the rights of the child in the continent. Among the elements that contribute to this ineffectiveness are: “1) African conception of the individual and his or her rights, which is generally tacitly superimposed onto the European conception that underlies the international convention on human rights in general; 2) the situation of decay of the African States which gives rise to the instrumentalization of the CRC by States and Non-Governmental organizations and finally; 3) the different point of view of the African actors involved, working in a context marked by the precariousness of everyday life, towards the situations legally classified as violations of the rights of the child”.⁸¹

The African Charter on Human and People’s Rights brings a sort of “African” conception of the individual and her/his rights. The same conception also governs the right of the child. This conception of individual rights, which could be described as communitarian, draws its philosophical foundations from community-based understanding of life, which deems that all individuals (children or adults) only reach complete fulfilment through and in their community, once centred in extended family, and nowadays increasingly centred on the town, nation or State. Outside the community, the very existence of the individual as a human being would be inconceivable because awareness of existence only occurs in the individual in the light of the social existence of her/his fellow men. The human person in Africa is seen as a whole indissoluble from the group.⁸²

Loyal to the communitarian African conception of individual rights, Article 31 of the

⁷⁹ Kienge-Kienge Intudi, 2007, p.24.

⁸⁰ Ibidem, p.26.

⁸¹ Ibidem, p.25.

⁸² Ibidem, p.27.

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child states “every child has responsibilities to his family, society, the State and any other international community..” It would be seen that by adopting this communitarism in African conception of individual rights, the African States may affirm and also deny those rights in the same instrument.⁸³

Despite the contradiction, which surely reflects the mimetic tendency of African leaders to copy Europe when adopting legal principles, one could ask whether this African conception, which tends to establish responsibilities on the part of a child towards his community, nonetheless contains a positive aspect of subjectivisation of the child (which is presented in more detailed in the next Chapter), as a subject of duties and responsibilities instead of conveying an image of him or her as a simple object of protection. Perhaps Europe could gain from this African conception of the child.⁸⁴

Within in the African context, coming back to the implementation of the CRC, it presents particularities. According to Laurencio E. Akohin⁸⁵, Africans are champions in endorsing the CRC, but they are reluctant when it comes to the political decision to implement the CRC. Its implementation is often approached as a charity action and it is strictly humanitarian. This is due to the lack of State administrative bodies that are necessary for its implementation. Thus, in countries of southern hemisphere, it is often the work of social partners, represented by NGOs and associations, that visibly provide services to children and their family.⁸⁶

Taking a closer look to the reality in Guinea-Bissau, the precept of the Constitution that “Every citizen has the right to freedom of expression and, consequently, the right to express her/his opinion, is oftentimes disrespected by the authorities, particularly the army and police forces as a whole⁸⁷. In this country, where the way to the guaranteeing of Freedom of Expression for adults citizens still long and hard as showed in the Chapter before, the fully implementation of the CRC can be challenging specifically in what concerns empowering the child to have voice in an horizontal dialogue in claiming

⁸³ Ibidem.

⁸⁴ E. Akohin, 2007, p.147-154.

⁸⁵ Ibidem, p. 153.

⁸⁶ Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters in Guinea-Bissau, 2011, p.20.

⁸⁷ Ibidem.

fighters for their rights with other adults, authorities, teachers in school, the violators or the protectors of their rights, especially including the family. It is also important to highlight that Guinea-Bissau's society is patriarchal: power and authority lie with men as the head of family, community and religion.⁸⁸

As the boy Ró Gilberto affirmed during his interview, "many adults think children do not have skills. I think other reasons that prevent children from participating are: the adults do not give any opportunity to children; they think they are not able to do things. That is why children do not have opportunity to participate. Not only in the Radio Program, but in their own family. The child does not participate in the decision making process in their homes, the opinion of the children is not heard in the family and, even, at school. This is hard. Children do not have opportunity". Those words expressed by the boy Ró Gilberto, who is member of a network of children that daily works with the engagement of other's children in their participation for their rights, evidences, by a child's perspective, that the challenges of participation can start even inside the house of the child and also in his or her community level.⁸⁹

According to the Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters in Guinea-Bissau, the adults are the ones who decide on behalf of the child since the latter is considered as being the property of their parents or guardians. However, still some positive signs were given with the setting up of the National Children's Parliament and NGOs sessions with children.⁹⁰ Those signs are mentioned in the State Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, where the State affirms that participation of children in the implementation of the CRC has been a reality in the country in many projects implemented by some NGOs.⁹¹ But, after reading all those reports and information regarding the CRC, some questions arise: is this participation effective? Do children actually have space to express themselves in the way they feel more suitable for them? If the family structure does not provide space for children participation at home as

⁸⁸ UNICEF Guinea-Bissau, 2012, p.24.

⁸⁹ Interview (in Portuguese) done through Skype with Ró Gilberto Gomes Cá, General-secretary of RCJJ, Bissau-Padua, 13 May 2013. (Transcription in Annex).

⁹⁰ Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters in Guinea-Bissau, 2011, p.20.

⁹¹ Ibidem.

witnessed by Ró Gilberto, how the same child can be able to participate when the space is given outside the house in an NGO or even in the Children's Parliament?

Laudolino Carlos Medina, the secretary-executive of Association of Child-Friendly People (*Associação Amigos da Criança – AMIC*) who is also secretary-executive of the Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters (*Coligação das Organizações de Defesa dos Direitos da Criança na Guiné-Bissau CODEDIC-GB*)⁹², acknowledges that participation of the child is the “Achilles' heel” of the implementation of the CRC in Guinea-Bissau. The biggest challenge, in his view, is exactly to learn how to properly work with the children in order to make them able to actively participate. He mentions the experience of AMIC, one of the pioneer organizations of the promotion of the children's rights in the country. AMIC, along the last 30 years (this NGO is mentioned by the State Report to the CRC as the first one to work on child matters) has mediate important programs aimed to create free space where children can express their opinions and also can be heard by the adults. He mentions the creation of the National Children's Parliament, which is institutionally supported by the state (Institute for Women and Children and National Assembly) and also the Movement of Working Children and Youth. In the same context, the boy Ró Gilberto⁹³ argues that the Children and Young Journalists Network is unique in the promotion of the real participation of the children because it gives the opportunity to the children to express their feelings through a communication channel as the radio. He mention other initiatives that invite the children to the radio only to dedicate music, tell a story and declaim a poem. According to him, in those programs they do not talk about their rights, do not debate. What Robert says here is that the children feel free to express themselves at RCJJ because all the activities are managed by the children. The idea of playing of being a communicator in a radio program, to have fun, to have new friends comes along with the effective participation, promotion of the CRC and promotion of human rights awareness. The access to the right to play is directly connected to the right to be heard, to freely express

⁹² Interview (in Portuguese) with Laudolino Carlos Medina, Secretary-executive of Association of Child-Friendly People (*Associação Amigos da Criança – AMIC*) and Secretary-executive of the Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters (*Coligação das Organizações de Defesa dos Direitos da Criança na Guiné-Bissau CODEDIC-GB*). Geneva on 7 June 2013. (Transcription in Annex).

⁹³ Interview (in Portuguese) done through Skype with Ró Gilberto Gomes Cá, General-secretary of RCJJ, Bissau-Padua, 13 May 2013. (Transcription in Annex).

themselves, to access information, and, more generally, to claim for all other rights guaranteed to them by the CRC.⁹⁴

According to Medina⁹⁵, participation and also the harmonization of the national legislation to the international standards of the CRC, far from being achieved. The persistence of harmful practices, according to him, is a big barrier to the implementation of the CRC in Guinea-Bissau. Regarding dissemination of the CRC, the State recognized that is very limited because successive Governments have not been able to translate the CRC into the traditional/national languages. The official language of the country is Portuguese and there are around 20 national languages, among them the most spoken is the Creole. A Survey conducted by the State showed that the radio was mentioned by the majority of the population as the main source for the knowledge of the CRC, in urban as well as in rural areas⁹⁶.

According to the NGO Report submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the official version of the CRC translated by Portugal is the one utilized by Guinea-Bissau. This lack of harmonization makes the implementation of the CRC very difficult in practice jeopardizing all the work on raising children's, their families' and communities' awareness. Every time there is a violation of a right of the child, it becomes extremely complicated to address the matter in Justice and obtain the punishment because the judicial process in the current legislation is largely inspired to the colonial legislation (The Criminal Code of Portugal Overseas Provinces), drafted when Portugal was under an authoritarian regime, known as one of the most backward legislations in the world. The conclusion, drawn by the NGO is that the population perceives the concerns involving child rights as being mere futile and meaningless propaganda.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Ibidem.

⁹⁵ Interview (in Portuguese) with Laudolino Carlos Medina, Secretary-executive of Association of Child-Friendly People (Associação Amigos da Criança – AMIC) and Secretary-executive of the Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters (Coligação das Organizações de Defesa dos Direitos da Criança na Guiné-Bissau CODEDIC-GB). Geneva on 7 June 2013. (Transcription in Annex).

⁹⁶ CRC/C/GNB/2-4, 7 December 2011.

⁹⁷ Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters in Guinea-Bissau, 2011, p.16.

2.2. Advocacy efforts and backstage of the 63rd Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child



Photo 6: 63rd Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: meeting on Guinea-Bissau. (Geneva. 7 June 2013)

I had the opportunity, thanks to the support of the Human Rights Centre of Padua University, to personally attend the meeting on Guinea-Bissau held at the OHCHR in Geneva, on 7 June 2013⁹⁸, in the framework of the 63rd Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Besides the most updated information on the CRC in Guinea-Bissau in the backstage of the 63rd. Session.

The opportunity to have a direct dialogue with Guinea-Bissau's delegation composed by Ambassador Octavio Inocêncio Alves, Maria Inácio Có Mendes Sanhá, President of the Institute Women (IMC) and Emanuel Ibraym Correia Gomes Fernandes, officer of the IMC. In a very informal way and off records they contextualized the current situation lived in the country that is under a transitory Government.

I had also the opportunity to meet one of the newest members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child for the term 2013-2017, Mr. Wanderlino Nogueira Neto⁹⁹, a

⁹⁸ Ibidem.

⁹⁹ In the occasion, the author of this Thesis delivered a photography dossier to Mr. Nogueira Neto with the information about the *Rede de Crianças e Jovens Jornalistas na Guiné-Bissau* on how they promote the dissemination of the CRC in the country through children participation, the structural challenges they face daily to develop their work as lack of resources and also the successful results of some pilot experiences on *Educommunication* developed with those children in partnership with Brazil. Mr. Nogueira Neto was very receptive and even before having the access to the content of the dossier, when

Brazilian expert whose candidature received the most votes, 161 from the 189 voters. Mr Nogueira Neto knows very well the situation of Guinea-Bissau because in the Nineties he was a Special Consultant of UNICEF Cape Verde, responsible for many of the activities developed by UNICEF in Guinea-Bissau.

Another important fact of the backstage scenario, I was introduced by the expert of the Child Rights Connect in Geneva to Mr. Laudolino Carlos Medina, the Secretary-executive of Association of the Friends of the Child (*Associação Amigos da Criança – AMIC*) who is also Secretary-executive of the Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters (*Coligação das Organizações de Defesa dos Direitos da Criança na Guiné-Bissau CODEDIC-GB*). Laudolino has been active for the implementation of the CRC in Guinea-Bissau for more than 20 years and he led the process of elaboration of the *Alternative Report on the Implementation of the UN Child Rights Convention in Guinea-Bissau*¹⁰⁰, presented to the Committee on 2011.

2.3. The meeting on Guinea-Bissau



Photo 7: Delegation of Guinea-Bissau during the meeting of the 63rd. Session. (Geneva. 7 June 2013).

he heard the information about the children who works in network for the promotion of the CRC in Guinea-Bissau, he recall for the positive experiences of many youth and children network that now are very sustainable in Brazil. He made accomplishments to the work developed by Magazine *Viração* which is one of the *Educommunication* experiences addressed here in Chapter 5.

¹⁰⁰ Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters in Guinea-Bissau, 2011.

The only international implementation mechanism provided for in the CRC is the system of periodic reporting by States parties to the relevant human rights treaty body is the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The CRC does not provide for inter-state or individual complaints. It holds normally three annual sessions of three weeks each in Geneva at the OHCHR. The initial report is submitted within two years of the CRC's entry into force; subsequent reports are submitted in every five years¹⁰¹.

Before the June meeting, the last participation of Guinea-Bissau in a session of the CRC was 11 years ago, and the last was submitted by the State three years ago. The experts of the Committee highlighted the importance of this meeting for the access to update information, specially, regarding the instability context and constant changed lived by Guinea-Bissau in the last years.

The Committee had included in the schedule of this 63rd Session a meeting on Guinea-Bissau for the 28th May of 2013, which had to be re-scheduled because of difficulties to ensure the participation of the delegation. During my accreditation process for the meeting, I received a call from the Committee informing that the participation of Guinea-Bissau would only be known in "the last minute". Backstage sources in Geneva shared that also UNICEF in Guinea-Bissau was doing great efforts to guarantee the participation of the country by financing their costs with the trip. And this information was confirmed later. The difficulties on Guinea-Bissau's participation in Human Rights mechanisms meetings are not new. The country also failed to appear on 22 September 2010 before the Human Rights Council (HRC) for the adoption of its Report of the Working Group on the UPR. The adoption was scheduled at 12pm under item 6 of the 15th session of the HRC and Guinea-Bissau was expected to present its final responses to recommendations. No reason was given officially by Guinea-Bissau to the HRC for its absence and the HRC meeting was thus suspended. It was the first time a State under Review is absent from the adoption of its own Report of the Working Group¹⁰².

Finally, the meeting on Guinea-Bissau of the 63rd Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child took place on 7 June. The main concerns presented by the experts of

¹⁰¹Detrick, 1999, p.41-42.

¹⁰² Information available at <http://www.upr-info.org/+Guinea-Bissau-absent-from-the+.html>. (Consulted on June 2013).

the Committee during the meeting were the harmonization of the national legislation with the CRC because there is no specific legislation regarding the protection of the child; children with disabilities who suffered discrimination and violence; girls deprived of their right to education; harmful practices, widespread physical and sexual violence against children; child labour and the protection of the two most vulnerable groups of children: talibé children and children sent abroad¹⁰³. From my personal impression before the attendance of the meeting, the issue of harmonization of the national legislation was among the main concerns presented by the experts of the Committee and interesting examples were provided by the State explaining how some rights of the Convention are guaranteed by the existing legislation. However, the delegation recognized the difficulties on having a national protection code for children regarding the political instability context faced in the country. The State provided interesting examples on how some articles of the CRC are implemented through the existing national legislation that enriched the discussion as a recent case of a sexual abuse of a child from her dad who was a known person in the society. The case was taken to the court and the violator was condemned.

“The Committee is concerned at the lack of progress of the State party in harmonizing its legislation with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and related international standards. The Committee is concerned that many aspects of customary law still constitute an obstacle to the implementation of the Convention. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that all existing domestic legislation relating to children is consistent and is brought into compliance with the Convention and that it accepts customary law only as long as it is compatible with the Convention. The State party should consider the adoption of a comprehensive Children’s Code in order to incorporate the provisions of the Convention. Furthermore, the State party should promote awareness of domestic legislation, in particular among communities which apply customary law that affects children”¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰³ Information acquired by me during the participation of the meeting and also in the summary of the day published by the Child Rights Connect available at <http://www.childrightsnet.org>. Consulted on June 2013).

¹⁰⁴ Information published on 14 June 2013 in the advanced unedited version of the concluding observations of the Committee of the Rights of the Child on Guinea-Bissau. (CRC/C/GNB/CO/2-4).

Another important point addressed by the Committee and also recognized by the State is the lack of a comprehensive child rights policy to guide the implementation of the Convention and also the existence of a government entity responsible for overall coordination of the policies “The Committee is further concerned that there is no plan to finalise and operationalize the National Social Protection Strategy for Vulnerable Children which makes important commitments in favour of children in the most vulnerable situations”¹⁰⁵. To address this issue the main recommendation to the State was to elaborate a: “a comprehensive child rights policy and, on the basis of the policy, develop a strategy for its implementation, which is provided with sufficient human, technical and financial resources. Such a strategy should be linked with the relevant sectorial plans of action on children’s rights, including the plans on FGM/C, human trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation, birth registration, and the National Social Protection Strategy for Vulnerable Children”¹⁰⁶.

It is important to mention that during the meeting, more specifically linked with the main topic of this academic research, the participation of the child and the challenges of the implementation of article 12 of the CRC in the country, the Committee asked the State about the policies and specific budget and programs for the promotion of children participation in the country. The delegation mentioned the creation of the Children Parliament, organisation that is now under the budget of the National Popular Assembly and also gave as a positive example the grassroots work done by NGOs in rural areas and also the dissemination work done through radio by the children of RCJJ. However, the State recognized the lack of budget and programs meant specifically for the promotion of children participation regarding the respect for the views of the child.

“30. The Committee appreciates the establishment of the Children’s Parliament. However, it remains concerned that traditional attitudes towards children in society limit, and often prevent, children from expressing their views on a wide range of issues that affect them within the family, schools, institutions, judicial system and in society at large .31. In light of General Comment No. 12 (2010) on the right of the child to be heard, the Committee recommends that the State party

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem, p-3.

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem, p-3.

ensure that children's views are given due consideration, in accordance with article 12 of the Convention, in the family, in schools and in all relevant administrative and other processes concerning them through, inter alia, the adoption of appropriate legislation, the training of professionals and the promotion of specific activities in schools and in communities".¹⁰⁷

The challenges of children participation in Guinea-Bissau will be addressed in the next chapter. Nevertheless, it is possible to analyse the consonance by the main concerns regarding effective child participation presented by the experts of the Committee with the challenges reported by people interviewed for this thesis purposes as UNICEF Guinea-Bissau's specialist on child participation, the child that is member of RCJJ and the representative of the civil society. At this point is that the need of an approach based on *Educommunication* for the implementation of the CRC emerges which is present in more detail in the next two chapters.

By analysing the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Guinea-Bissau, it is possible to presume that there is an urgent need of putting the child participation among the priorities of the public policies which also includes adopting appropriate legislation and the provision of training for professionals to hold activities in schools, in communities. Establishing a children's parliament is not enough. Having budget for this purpose neither. Understanding that the process of allowing and motivating children participation is the main key of guaranteeing the implementation of article 12 is that this thesis proposes the research of the possibilities of the implementation of *Educommunication* to address those issues recalled by the most update recommendation provided by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, but also by the results of the academic research on the theoretical framework on participation and *Educommunication* and by the voice of the people who are direct involved with the implementation of the CRC in the field heard for this thesis purposes as the main international partner in the country, UNICEF, the representative of civil society and also the child.

Educommunication can be also an important way to address also other issues raised by the Committee as its concern about discrimination against and social exclusion of

¹⁰⁷ Ibidem, p-7.

children with disabilities, who are faced with considerable difficulties within the family, the community and the social system. The following recommendation given by the Committee to the States evidences the importance of educative strategies on communication for raising awareness among the society. “(b) Expand and strengthen awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, for the community at large, aimed at combating prejudice, superstitious beliefs and discrimination against children with disabilities”.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem.

CHAPTER 3

Educommunication for human rights

3.1. Participation through Educommunication

“There appear to be two lives, one serious and respectable, the other indulgently tolerated, less valuable. We say: a future person, a future worker, a future citizen. That children will be, that they will really begin to be serious only in the future. We kindly let them plod along beside us but, in truth, it would be more convenient without them. No, not at all. They were and they will be. They did not appear suddenly by surprise, and not just for a brief period either. Children are not a casual encounter who can be passed by hurriedly or dismissed rapidly with a smile and a “Hello”. Children account for a large proportion of mankind, a sizeable portion of the population, of the nation, residents, citizens – constant companions. Children have been, are, and they will be. Is there a life that exists as some joke? No, childhood years are long and important ones in the life of man.”¹⁰⁹.

As addressed in the previous chapter by the boy Ró Gilberto, promoting access to the right to participation does not mean simply providing space to children, but it consists on making them able to fully express themselves. In an example regarding the media, it is not only about inviting children to be interviewed, or simply reading a poem, but it is about making them able to actively participate in a production of a radio program, to debate the topics, discuss and chose what will be addressed in a fun way, allowing for children’s interaction, in other words, by also accessing their right to play.

Talking about children’s rights, therefore, means not only to highlight the needs of children, but also to recognize their capacities; protection and provision are complementary to a third fundamental dimension of the right of the child, as well as to human rights in general, which is participation; participation to be meaningful involves subjectivity, autonomy, skills¹¹⁰. Children to participate must be motivated and comfortable to express their ideas in a horizontal way. A child or an adolescent is not

¹⁰⁹ Korczak, 2009, p.25.

¹¹⁰ De Stefani, 2012, p.164.

less entitled to have their rights, but is equal in entitlement, ownership and exercise of human rights, and, precisely, because of this equal dignity is entitled to enjoy the protection measures, nursing and representation that his or her condition as a person in evolutionary age requires.¹¹¹

The context where this subjectivity of the child is expressed through a motivated and horizontal process, if the words said by Ró Gilberto can be translated like that, could recall the approach adopted by the doctor and Polish educator Janusz Korczak, who was one of the pioneers on the valorisation of the children's rights and their capabilities¹¹². He is said to have once described himself as "a doctor by training, a pedagogue by chance, a writer by passion, and a psychologist by necessity"¹¹³. Korczak had an influence when the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was drafted in the 1980s . His approach for all children to live free and happy, which served as the backdrop and glue virtually all theoretical contributions and the evidence presented in the CRC, refers to a fundamental recognition: that of the right of children to be free, and to be autonomous and the right to his subjectivity, and to happiness, or well-being in its can be accessed in various ways through its individual, social, material, spiritual life and so on. Rights to be exercised and enjoyed "now and here"¹¹⁴. By recalling Korczak's approach, it must be shared the responsibility of the adults, the community, the institutions to uphold the processes of individual and social maturation of the rights and abilities that allow an individual to be "free and happy".¹¹⁵

In all countries, it is urgent to reaffirm the validity of an approach to the relations with children and in the elaboration and development of policies on childhood and adolescence based on the subjectivity and capabilities of the child. In this framework an important right recognized by the CRC Article 31 (leisure, play and culture) must be recalled: Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

¹¹¹ Ibidem, p.164.

¹¹² Ibidem, p.164.

¹¹³ Tshope-Scheffler, 2012, p.90-97.

¹¹⁴ De Stefani, 2012, p.164.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem.

Indeed, centuries of pedagogy, ethnography, psychology, anthropology, have taught us that associate the futility with children playing is a result of a distorted perception.¹¹⁶The game (especially that one of children) is actually something that should be taken into account very seriously. If you observe for one instant one or more children or young people while they play it is possible to notice a high dose of intensity, attention, emotion invested in their game. The same that requires the completion of a complex and creative task. But, without utilitarian or otherwise purposeful that adults normally associated with lots of effort.¹¹⁷

Playing, in particular, with language and art, creativity and culture is a fundamental right, an exercise that should be guaranteed and secured for the benefit of the youngest with the maximum effort on the part of society and institutions¹¹⁸. Inspired by the theoretical approach of Janusz Korczak, an assumption of this Thesis is that *Educommunication* may be a way to allow the children to express their subjectivities, their opinions, to maximize the use of their skills and more than all those, have fun and enjoy the rest of their fundamental rights.

Before introducing the concept of *Educommunication*, it is important to reflect about the concept of participation. According to Roger Hart, the term ‘participation’ can be used to refer generally to the process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and it is a standard against which democracies should be measured. Participation is the fundamental right of citizenship.¹¹⁹ Hart highlights that to be able to participate children need to be involved in meaningful projects with adults. It is unrealistic to expect them suddenly to become responsible, participating adult citizens at the age of 16, 18, or 21, without prior exposure to the skills and responsibilities involved.

Hart relates participation to the right to play and affirms that there are a multitude of examples of children who organize themselves successfully without adult help. One of those is the Children and Young Journalists Network of Guinea-Bissau (RCJJ), the one

¹¹⁶ Ibidem, p.166.

¹¹⁷ Ibidem, p.166.

¹¹⁸ Ibidem, p.173.

¹¹⁹ Hart, 1992, p.5.

Ró Gilberto belongs which work is presented in more detailed in the next Chapter. “You can probably remember building a play house with friends at seven or eight years of age, unknown to adults, or perhaps selling refreshments from a small stand in front of your home. Such examples from your own memory are the most powerful evidence of young people’s competence. The principle behind such involvement is motivation; young people can design and manage complex projects together if they feel some sense of ownership in them. If young people do not at least partially design the goals of the project themselves, they are unlikely to demonstrate the great competence they possess”.¹²⁰

By Hart’s perspective, “involvement fosters motivation, which fosters competence, which in turn fosters motivation for further projects”. However, he recognizes that participation of children is not an agreement among all. “Some child advocates speak of children as though they were potentially the saviours of society. But many will say that participation by children is a naive notion for children who simply do not have the decision-making power of adults. Others feel that children should be protected from undue involvement and responsibility in the problems of society; that they should be allowed to have a carefree childhood. The erosion of children’s free time and free play in the industrialized countries is a matter of too much protection, not too little”.

Communication tools can be a great ally in fostering motivation of children to play and also in their involvement in meaningful projects with adults. Games, sports can be a motivating fun. In Brazil, for example, many children are engaged in projects that consists in the production of a magazine, of a radio, of posters and even theatre. An experience of *Educommunication* implemented in Brazil from 2000 until nowadays proves that promoting a democratic space for teachers, members of the school community and children in order to produce radio programs together work really well as a motivator of children participation, and not only that, but it also fulfils their right to play, to leisure, to access culture and to be heard through the waves of the radio. This experience is called “Educom.radio” and is presented in the next part of this Chapter. Here, the added-value of involving adults in meaningful activities with children, the

¹²⁰ Ibidem.

importance which was highlighted by Hart, is that everybody, children and adults, must communicate, play, in a horizontal way where they feel free and motivated to express themselves. Children, in particular, experience their right to be heard, by other children, by the adults involved in the process, and also by those who listen to their voice through the radio.

This Brazilian experience is aligned with Hart statement that an understanding of “democratic participation and the confidence and competence to participate can only be acquired gradually through practice; it cannot be taught as an abstraction. According to him, many western nations think of themselves as having achieved democracy fully though they teach the principles of democracy in a pedantic way in classrooms which are themselves models of autocracy. This is not acceptable”.¹²¹

3.2. The emerging field of *Educommunication*

According to the results of an in-depth academic research developed in 1997 and 1998 by the Nucleus of Communication and Education of University of São Paulo (NCE-USP) in Brazil, a new field of social intervention and professional work has been emerging in the interface of communication and education areas during the last century. A field that bring as a pioneers of its theoretical basis the Polish educator and doctor Janusz Korczak, already presented here before, the French Celestin Freinet and the Brazilian Paulo Freire. This field is called *Educommunication*¹²².

Regarding the French libertarian educator Freinet’s¹²³ contribution to *Educommunication* it is important to mention, according to his conclusions, in must of schools and educational institutions the lack of genuine communication that effectively condemns working-class pupils to intellectual banishment from a universe of language that is totally alien to them. This results in under-achievement and dropping out, and in particular accounts for the anti-democratic manner in which schools operate. In this field, Freinet was a pioneer, to the extent that his ideas on language teaching called for

¹²¹ Ibidem.

¹²² Soares, 1999, p.41.

¹²³ UNESCO, 1993, p.418.

genuine communication, i.e. for personal expression and a sympathetic ear. Psycholinguistic studies also lay increasingly strong emphasis on ‘speech acts’ and contexts of utterance. Real language learning cannot be achieved simply by the formal imitation of the language of the written text, but must come from the functioning, in given situations, of authentic communication. Modern foreign-language programs concentrate on precise description of such situations and of the modes of language appropriate to them, and mother tongue learning should also be based thereon. With this in mind, effective teaching practice must create a variety of communication situations in the school environment and must attune and adapt the means of communication to these various situations. This is just what Freinet was saying, and the technical studies carried out today do no more than build upon his intuitions. The ideas now prevalent in science teaching also follow from those of Freinet¹²⁴.

Freinet in France and Freire in Brazil are considered the pioneers of *Educommunication*. Although they acted in very diverse contexts, worked with different audiences (Freinet on education from 0 to 14 years-old children, Freire on adult education) and pursued different goals – the French sought changes in the structure and pedagogy of schools, the Brazilian sought a socio-political reorganization of the society at large - there were many similarities between them. Both had a political conception of education, believed not supporting the neutrality of the pedagogical act, sustained dialogue and collaboration, warned for manipulation of individuals and especially of were convinced possibility of transformation of the individual and society¹²⁵. The approach was to free expression, dialogue and cooperation which composes the main basis of *Educommunication*. Paulo Freire, in his book “*Extensão e Comunicação*”, written in 1968/1969, reflected the importance of communication in the process of knowledge. Basic human relation presented as a social equal, dialogic, the co-participation of subjects in the act of knowing.

Educommunication can be defined as every communication action developed in an educative space with the aim at producing what the semiotician, philosopher and

¹²⁴ UNESCO, 1993, p.403.

¹²⁵ Prado Soares; Silveira Sartori, 2005, p.8.

anthropologist, naturalized Colombian, Jesus Martin-Barbero defines as “Communicational Ecosystem”. This consists in the promotion of a dialogical and creative atmosphere in educative spaces with the aim at breaking the hierarchy of knowledge distribution, precisely by the recognition that all people involved in the flow of information are cultural producers, regardless of their operational function in the school environment.¹²⁶

For Biology¹²⁷, the notion of ecosystem includes both: living: animals, plants, bacteria and others + physical environment, dynamically interrelated. It can be considered as the set of mutual relationships between living beings and the environment they live in. In an ecosystem, changes happen in continuous dynamism. In the communication perspective, this notion can be seen as:

“(…)speaking in Communicational Ecosystems, it implies seeking decentralization of voices, dialogicity, interaction. Relationships should seek balance and harmony in living environments where different actors. Not only is in the technological world that operates a Communicational Ecosystem, but in all spheres and communication”¹²⁸.

The educator and the communicator cannot be thought as independent and isolated actors within this ecosystem of an educative communication.¹²⁹ In summary, the Brazilian professor Ismar de Oliveira Soares, pioneer on the studies related to this field in Latin America and nowadays dean of the Communication and Education Department of the School of Arts and Communication of University of São Paulo, highlights that *Educommunication* aims at building citizenship, from the basic assumption of the right of everyone to communication and freedom of expression.¹³⁰

The core of the field of *Educommunication* emerged in the fight for human rights during different scenarios of violations, especially of the right to communication and freedom of expression during the dictatorships in Latin America in the sixties. However, the

¹²⁶ Soares, 1999, p.41.

¹²⁷ Prado Soares; Silveira Sartori, 2005, p.5.

¹²⁸ Ibidem, p.6.

¹²⁹ Ibidem, p.55.

¹³⁰ www.usp.br/nce consulted on 28 March of 2013.

relation between communication and education is not that recent. The research developed by NCE-USP at the end of the nineties also showed that through the attitude of many segments of the Brazilian society in the beginning of the 19th century it is possible to see that the educators already at that time were not only concerned about the issues related to the concepts to be taught, but also dealt with the pedagogical creative ways by using communication tools for educative purposes.

In 1922, year that celebrated the first centenary of the Independence of Brazil¹³¹, took place in Rio de Janeiro, being at the time, the federal capital of Brazil, a major international exhibition, which was visited by American businessmen bringing broadcasting technology to show at the fair. To test the new medium, the Americans installed an antenna at the peak of the Corcovado mountain (Rio de Janeiro). The first radio broadcast in Brazil was a speech by the President Epitácio Pessoa. For many people at that time was difficult to believe that it was possible for a person to speak on a point and be heard at the same time in other locations. The reaction of Roquette-Pinto to this technology was: “the radio could become the school for those who not have access to the school”. After the first transmission in Brazil, in 1922, Roquette Pinto tried to convince the Federal Government to buy the equipment presented at the International Fair and that is how in 20 April of 1923 was created PRA-2, Rio de Janeiro Radio Society, the first radio broadcaster of Brazil, implemented by Roquette Pinto.

In 1934, Roquette Pinto¹³² founded the first Brazilian School-Radio at the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro, a strictly educational broadcaster operating at various levels of education. He believed that culture and education would finally access the home of all Brazilians in a democratic way through the waves of the radio. Roquette-Pinto is considered the father of the radio transmission in Brazil and it is famous to be the pioneer to approach media with a educative intention.

Under a more universalist perspective, the researchers of NCE-USP¹³³ call attention to the educators’ concern related to the ideologies and concepts implicit in mass culture in the middle of the nineteenth century. The researchers refer to the Frankfurt School and its

¹³¹ Tavares, Renato; Suetu, Cláudio Yutaka, 2007, p.1-2.

¹³² Soares, 1999, p.20-21.

¹³³ Ibidem, p.21.

developments which were part of the critical reactions related to the communication system in power. The approximation between education and communication were seen as a threat by the centers of economic and political power that had a monopoly control over the most powerful communication channels, especially the radios.

In Brazil, in the 70's, the educator Paulo Freire¹³⁴ is the one who definitely linked communication and education while reviewing the theories of communication to launch the basis of a new pedagogy reaffirming the concept of "education for the communication channels" as one inherent activity of the adult literacy and popular education. Through Freire's perspective, communication is seen as a component of the educative process and the interaction between communication and education puts away the purely instrumental optical of the communicative and informative technologies.

"Be dialogical means not to invade, not to manipulate and not to sloganize."¹³⁵

The results of the researches of NCE-USP evidence that the field of Educommunication brings along some main concepts as "Educommunicative Management". This term emerged in a period the awareness about the universality of everyone's rights, including children, to access the resources of communication was gaining importance. According to Soares¹³⁶, the concept of management in the field of *Educommunication* is defined as, "under one specific educational intention, every articulated and organic process which intends to address the planning, execution and evaluation of all activities that aim at creating and keeping a Communicational Ecosystem based on the principle of communicational action and dialogue". The possible limitations for the application of an Educommunicative Management process can be hierarchical structures that do not allow the free, equal and open dialogue among of all actors involved in the process. That is why it is very important that a teacher, or a journalist, a representative of a NGO or whoever is mediating the processes and acting as Educommunicator to be careful to guarantee space and voice to all people involved in the process.

¹³⁴ Soares, 1999, p.40.

¹³⁵ Freire, 1992, p.43.

¹³⁶ Soares, 1999, p.40.

In practical terms, the concept of Educommunicative Management can be applied not only inside a classroom by a professor that motivates his students to be critical before the media and also actively participate in the production of media: educative radio programs, blogs and other creative communication channels that allow them to have their right to participation and access to information guaranteed. The Educommunicative Management can also be used in the context of a company, for example, that needs to interact with different stakeholders to promote sustainable development activities within the community where is located or among its employees. The most important thing is that all the activities (it does not matter in what field – education, culture, media and others) held through an Educommunicative Management process should guarantee the creation and maintenance of the Communicational Ecosystem based on the principle of communicational action and dialogue.

One pioneer *Educommunication* experience that put in place all these theories is the program Educom.radio, implemented by the Nucleus of Communication and Education, at São Paulo University in 2000¹³⁷. More than 11 thousand teachers of 455 public schools of the city of São Paulo and their students were trained to produce radio programs by mediating a process that allows the creation of a communicational ecosystem in the school. The success of “Educom.radio” program is that the trainers had a focus on *Educommunication* and not only in the technical aspects of the radio. The process was valorized and these trainers acted as Educommunicators, meaning that they were worried that every individual involved in the radio production has equally voice and opportunity to express himself/herself. For example, one teacher that could be very tough on their students during weekly classes, in this radio activity had the opportunity to have fun with students. At the other hand, those students start seeing that teachers with other eyes as a partner in an horizontal process of communication. This relation creates a more respectful environment which consequently made the relations stronger among students and teachers, reducing the violence in schools and also improving the improvement of the students in their curriculum activities¹³⁸.

¹³⁷ Soares, 2001, p.35.

¹³⁸ Ibidem.

In practice, the trainers from the University of São Paulo dislocated themselves every Saturday to the schools in all areas of the city. The teachers that participate get some points to increase their career level which was a motivation that could have impact in the salary in the future, as well as the prestigious of participating in a course promoted by the University of São Paulo. The students also attended the course on Saturdays, which had a practical activity with the teachers, students and members of the school community, jointly, producing radio in the school environment. The teachers also had a complementary lecture more focus on the pedagogical aspect of the theories of *Educommunication*. The kids were motivated by learning radio techniques, but behind all those advantages was the possibility of all actors of the school being part of what Martin-Barbero calls as a Communicational Ecosystem. *Educommunication* was also a huge public investment in the city of São Paulo. The municipality provided radio equipment for hundreds of public schools.

During four years, from 2000 to 2004, this program was continuously developed in the city of São Paulo and its main outcome was that the implementation of *Educommunication* in all public schools of São Paulo was guaranteed by the municipal law number 13.941, of 28 December 2004.¹³⁹ The investment in radio equipment and human resources, the high level knowledge and commitment of the trainer for University of São Paulo and the guarantee of implementation by law makes Educom.radio a very strong and pioneer *Educommunication* experience that should inspire other countries in the adaption of *Educommunication* for their reality.

It is important to clarify that the radio is only one communication tool of a great variety that can be used to put *Educommunication* in place. From an *Educommunication* perspective, the use of new technologies is hoped for but not absolutely necessary. The question about technology is how it can be properly accessed, and not merely how sophisticated it is. *Educommunication* is not exclusively about schools, but more accurately, about people. We can find *Educommunication* experiences at public and private media stations, at libraries and at cultural centers. Recently, a growing number

¹³⁹ Information about Educom Law available (in Portuguese) at the website of the Secretary of Education of the city of Sao Paulo <http://portalsme.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/anonimo/educom/nasondas.aspx> (Consulted on June 2013).

of school promoters have discovered that *Educommunication* is an indispensable subject in the modern education setting. Professionals from journalism and other communication fields are expected to be in touch with such new educational experiences involving communication and children. For this reason, many young communication professionals all over the world are looking at the chances *Educommunication* has opened up to them in their day-to-day teaching experiences¹⁴⁰.

3.3. Putting the theory into practice within a multidisciplinary context

Educommunication has been shaping itself and growing in the last decades, embedded in a multidisciplinary context that goes beyond academia and promotes human rights and awareness for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Non-Governmental (NGO) and governmental institutions, international organizations and bodies such as UNESCO and UNICEF¹⁴¹, for example, have studied and implemented a variety of Brazilian good examples of a successful *Educommunication* approaches for the promotion of human rights in different areas as education, health, culture and child protection. What do have those examples in common? They not only develop *Educommunication* in practice but also officially adopt this terminology in the directives of many different programs and projects.

In 2012, the Ministry of Health of the Brazilian Government, in the framework of the South-South Cooperation¹⁴², promoted two training seminars of technical cooperation on *Educommunication* in Botswana and in Kenya with the aim at sharing the Brazilian good practices on *Educommunication* that had achieved very good results at the community level for the behavior change on HIV¹⁴³. More than presenting the Educommunicative best practices, the Brazilian government used the Educommunicative Management as a basis for the methodology of the training which

¹⁴⁰ Feilitzen, 2004, p.24.

¹⁴¹Information available at: http://www.unicef.org/education/brazil_43538.html. (Consulted on May 2013)

¹⁴² Information about this activity held in the framework of South-South Cooperation is available at the website of the Government of Botswana <http://www.hiv.gov.bw/content/training-service-providers-communication-vulnerable-groups>. (Consulted on May 2013)

¹⁴³Ibidem.

allowed the African participants, through a horizontal approach, understand the *Educommunication* concepts and better adapt them to their reality. By mediating a Communicational Ecosystem, the technicians of the Brazilian Government allowed the African participants, by producing different kinds of activities and communication products, build together their *Educommunication* strategy for HIV prevention and stigma-breaking in the community level.

The Ministry of Education of Brazil also applies *Educommunication* as a public policy through an on-distance course called “Mídias na Educação”¹⁴⁴ which disseminates the concept of *Educommunication* for more than 1.000 teachers at public primary schools in the whole country. The main objective of this program is to provide continuing education to teachers of public schools for the pedagogical use of different technologies of information and communication - TV and video, computer, radio and print. By receiving this training, educators can be able to promote an Educommunicative Management process in their classrooms.

UNESCO Brazil¹⁴⁵ has adopted the methodology of *Educommunication* to promote awareness of the concepts related to Human Security, Millennium Development Goals and Peace Education among youth of areas of high social vulnerability of São Paulo. Nevertheless, the relation between UNICEF Brazil and *Educommunication* is not new in many programs and initiatives for the promotion of children and youth rights in Brazil. For almost one decade, UNICEF Brazil¹⁴⁶ has been supporting a Brazilian NGO called “Viração Educomunicação”. It contributes to the elaboration of a monthly magazine produced by youth from all states of Brazil through an Educommunicative Management process. This experience shows the importance of a good mediation for the success of *Educommunication*. Youth from very distant geographical areas - and also many of

¹⁴⁴ Information about this program is available in Portuguese at the website of the Minister of Education http://portal.mec.gov.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12333&Itemid=682. (Consulted on May 2013).

¹⁴⁵ Information about this UNESCO Brazil approach is available in Portuguese at the website of the Human Security, a joint UN project implemented by UNESCO, UNICEF, OPAS e UNFPA, in partnership with the municipality of Sao Paulo. <http://www.projetosegurancahumana.org>. (Consulted on May 2013).

¹⁴⁶ Information about this UNICEF approach to *Educommunication* with the implementation of NGO Viração available at the following websites: www.viracao.org and http://www.unicef.org/education/brazil_43538.html. (Both consulted on May 2013).

them in situation of social vulnerability - compose a network which constantly communicates through internet channels, without hierarchy, to produce together the articles, the pictures and concepts of the magazine. They also participate in a variety of public consultation held by the Brazilian Government for the construction of new public policies. Many of those boys and girls, by having access to their right to communication are empowered to fight for many other rights such as right to health, culture and education.

Outside Brazil, there are also good practices in *Educommunication* for human rights. In the United Nations System in Guinea-Bissau¹⁴⁷, in Africa, the UN Joint Programme on Child Nutrition has adopted in 2011 *Educommunication* methodologies on the training to journalists who work directly with spreading health and nutrition messages in the villages. In India, the cartoonist Sharad Sharma¹⁴⁸ who in the early nineties (while working as a political cartoonist) introduced cartoons in posters made for literacy campaign in Rajasthan, founded the organization World Comics India (WCI). Through a collective of grassroots activists, cartoonists, artists, development journalists, students, it uses comics as a communication tool as well as medium of self-expression.

These grassroots comics¹⁴⁹ are drawn by people that live in different villages reflecting their understanding of the social world (they are not done by artists). The right to communication and access to information is guaranteed to many people including those that are not able to read or live in really remote areas. Sharad Sharma acts as what professor Ismar de Oliveira Soares calls an Educommunicator because, like “Viração” NGO or the technicians from the Minister of Health in Brazil, he mediates an Educommunicative Management process in order to promote a Communicational Ecosystem through collective and participatory production of cartoons.

In the academics, *Educommunication*¹⁵⁰ has also been officially recognized in Brazil and since 2011 the University of São Paulo launched a graduation-degree on

¹⁴⁷I worked during 18 months in Guinea-Bissau as the Communication and Advocacy officer of the UN Resident Coordinator in that country. During this period, she held trainings on *Educommunication* for journalists of community radios in the framework of the UN Joint Programme on Child Nutrition.

¹⁴⁸Information about the work developed by Sharad Sharma available at <http://www.worldcomicsindia.com> (Consulted on May 2013).

¹⁴⁹Ibidem.

¹⁵⁰Information available at www.cca.eca.usp.br. (Consulted on May 2013).

Educommunication and in 2012 a post-graduation degree called Specialization Course on *Educommunication*. Recently, a handful of universities in South America are opening research centers and post-graduate departments to prepare these new media educators, or Educommunicators, to attend to the up-and-coming demand. We can find these new programs throughout Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico¹⁵¹.

These are just a few examples that show how the theoretical concept of *Educommunication* has been developed in a practical way in the field of human rights and development in the South Hemisphere. The essence of all of them is the same: mediation of a process in order to promote “Communicational Ecosystems” where all individuals involved have their right to communication guaranteed without hierarchy.

¹⁵¹ Soares, 2004, p.7.

CHAPTER 4

Educommunicators in Guinea-Bissau



Photo 8: *Big poster for peace produced by the children of RCJJ. (Bissau. 19 September 2011).*

4.1. *Educommunication* approach from Freire in the 70's to Ocaia today

Educommunication has been already put in practice in Guinea-Bissau in some initiatives, however, its adoption or existence as a field with this terminology is not yet recognized and supported by the Government, International organizations and civil society. The main reason of this factor is because the field is not studied yet in the country with this specific terminology.

Although not using the term *Educommunication*, during the Seventies, the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire had been engaged in the democratization of education with his literacy methodologies in Guinea-Bissau. His legacy is a book called “*Letters to Guinea-Bissau: records of an experience in process*”¹⁵², written in 1977. The author went to the country in the post-independence struggles, resistance and got in touch with militants involved in the transformation of the economic, social, political and cultural context.

¹⁵² Freire, 1977.

According to Moacir Gadotti¹⁵³, Freire's work in Africa was decisive for his career, not only reunited himself with his own history and undertook new challenges in the field of adult literacy, but mainly, by the encounter with the theory and practice of this extraordinary thinker and revolutionary who was Amílcar Cabral (1924-1973) who harbored great appreciation by Paulo Freire. In his works, he makes frequent references to the thought of Amílcar Cabral¹⁵⁴.

“The experiences of Paulo Freire in Africa reshaped his pedagogy. Inserted into national process of reconstruction he accomplished the symbiosis between education and labour productive forces, incorporating work as an educational principle. This evolution in his thinking he owes to his encounter with Africa which was very important in his later writings. Paulo Freire yes, radicalized, in Africa, his thought. He kept his humanist pedagogy, but now understanding better, in practice how the economic system could be dehumanizing”¹⁵⁵.

Despite the importance of this experience for Freire's legacy, Gadotti¹⁵⁶ mentions also the failure of the literacy campaigns in Guinea-Bissau at Freire's period. According to him, it was due to multiple factors: lack of technical support, lack of qualified personnel, lack of basic teaching materials such as paper and pencil, lack of appropriate furniture like desks and blackboard, lack of books, lack of training of teachers and monitors. Under these conditions any methodology would not yield the expected results. Gadotti emphasizes that the main failure is not the method. The same method of Paulo Freire, in another context and other conditions, was applied in São Tomé and Príncipe with excellent outcomes. The difference in São Tomé and Príncipe was that there, in a small country with slightly more than 100.000 inhabitants, the majority of the population lived in urban centers and in better conditions social and economic than in Guinea-Bissau.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Gadotti, 2010, p.1.

¹⁵⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵⁵ Ibidem, p.2. See original quotation in Portuguese: “As experiências de Paulo Freire na África, remodelaram sua pedagogia. Inserido em processos de reconstrução nacional realizou a simbiose entre educação e e forças produtivos, incorporando o trabalho como princípio educativo. Essa evolução no seu pensamento ele a deve ao seu encontro com a África e foi muito importante nas obras escritas posteriormente. Paulo Freire sim, radicalizou, na África, o seu pensamento. Sua pedagogia continuou humanista, mas agora entendendo melhor, na prática, como o sistema econômico era desumanizado”

¹⁵⁶ Ibidem, p.7.

¹⁵⁷ Ibidem.

What was the most remarkable in Paulo Freire's approach to Guinea-Bissau was that he did not prescribe any teaching methodology. He got really fascinated by the theories by Amílcar Cabral, the hero of resistance that fought for the independence of Guinea-Bissau, who Freire did not know personally¹⁵⁸.

The period in which Paulo Freire worked in Africa was a time of "Re-Africanization". The debate on alternative forms of education that could overcome the colonial burden made his presence in the debate about new education systems of former Portuguese colonies even more relevant.¹⁵⁹ The experience of Paulo Freire in rural and urban peripheries of these African countries, served as a source of inspiration for a new development of his theory of emancipatory education, understood as a political, productive and knowledge act.¹⁶⁰

All fundamental concepts of *Educommunication* were applied by Paulo Freire while he was in Guinea-Bissau in the Seventies and, even later, when he wrote the book. His sensitiveness to the Guinean-Bissau identity, the need of an education for liberation and his dialogical methods for literacy compose the fundamental concepts of *Educommunication*.

"Emancipation means "take your hands"; to emancipate means freeing yourself. There are several conceptions of education. It can be both liberating when domesticating. What we stand for as a conception of Education is an emancipatory conception of the human being. All human beings have the right to fully develop all their abilities. Everyone is entitled to an emancipatory education. This is one of the lessons we can draw from this memorable meeting between Freire's pedagogy and the political praxis of Amílcar Cabral, whatever the new contexts. The decolonization of minds and hearts is an ongoing task. No matter the place. Emancipation is a right continuously along the life. When talking about education there should be no discussion whether or not it is necessary. It seems obvious, for everyone and all, it is necessary for the achievement of freedom of each and citizenship, for job, to make people happier and more autonomous. Education is needed to human survival. So it does not need to invent anything new, it needs to take ownership of the culture, humanity has ever produced. If it was important in the past, today it is even more decisive, a knowledge-based society. The right to

¹⁵⁸ Gadotti, 2010, p.1.

¹⁵⁹ Ibidem, p.13.

¹⁶⁰ Ibidem.

education is recognized in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 as the right of everyone to the full development of the human personality and as a necessity to strengthen the respect for fundamental rights and freedoms. The achievement of this right depends on universal access to basic education, the right to education but not limited to access, permanence and completion of this level of education: it presupposes conditions to continue studies in other levels”¹⁶¹.



Photo 9: *Cabral's image remains until the new generation in Guinea-Bissau. A teenager who lives in the community Tchada wears a T-shirt with Amilcar Cabral photo. (Bissau. 21 January 2011).*

Bringing the reflection to the current days, the first author from Guinea-Bissau that published an article¹⁶² (“*The Radio is the school for those who do not have school*”) about *Educommunication*, with this specific terminology is Figuiño Ocaia, founder and first president of the Guinean Association of Teachers of Portuguese (AGUIPP) created May 25 1997 in Bissau. He was one of the ten teachers that participated at the pilot experience of a course on *Educommunication* “Media in Education”, especially designed for teachers in partnership between Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) and University of Sao Paulo, namely the Nucleus of Communication and Education (NCE-USP), with the support of the Embassy of Brazil in Bissau¹⁶³. The course introduced the

¹⁶¹ Ibidem, p.16-17.

¹⁶² Ocaia, 2012, p.12-13.

¹⁶³ The course was taught by me, in my volunteer hours, over six meetings on Saturdays at the Tele-Center in the Embassy in 2011, with the supervision of the professor Ismar de Oliveira Soares (USP) and Patrícia Horta (UFPE)¹⁶³.

teachers to the main concepts of *Educommunication*, with a special focus on the use of the radio in classrooms activities, taking into account that radio is the most used media in the country. The activities were partly conducted on a distance educational platform of the Ministry of Education of Brazil and, partly, composed by practical experiences on *Educommunication*, including collective radio production, meeting with youth, in order to make the teachers learn *Educommunication* in context.



Photo 10: Teachers attending a lecture through Skype provided a Brazilian teacher during the pilot course on *Educommunication* at the Brazilian Embassy in Bissau. (Bissau 21 November 2011).

After the course, Figuiño Ocaia¹⁶⁴ wrote an article that was published in the newspaper *Expresso Bissau* on 24 February 2012 also published in Brazil in the website of the Communication and Arts Department of University of São Paulo (CCA-ECA-USP). He defended the importance of the use of the radio in pedagogical activities in Guinea-Bissau and called the attention of the Government and international community, especially embassies of Portuguese speaking countries on the importance of *Educommunication* as ground for cooperation.¹⁶⁵

According to Figuiño Ocaia, *Educommunication* through the radio comes to fulfill the lack of books and didactical material and also the oral difficulties of the students. In his article, he proposes that a pedagogical radio program would attract the attention of the students on topics and concepts that are transversal to the curriculum such as HIV and

¹⁶⁴ Ocaia, 2012, p.12-13.

¹⁶⁵ Ibidem.

also they could jointly produce the radio programs in class. In his words: “In the case of Guinea-Bissau, a country that does not yet have a specific radio program, I would propose *Radio-Escola* where students can talk about education, global problems, methods of preventing dangerous diseases like malaria, problems of the school, about their dreams is through interviews, telephone calls or text messages”.¹⁶⁶

Figuinho evidences the need of implementing *Educommunication* in the educational reality of Guinea-Bissau. His proposal could very well address the problems presented by the boy Ró Gilberto when he challenges the international organizations “to talk” to the Minister of Education to guarantee the inclusion of human rights and the CRC in all *curricula*.

“Firstly, they should get in touch with the Ministry of Education in order to find a way that teachers could talk about the convention in the classrooms. This would bring many benefits and it would be very important. Because, all those events seminars that children or even teachers attend) if I am invited, I go but I do not share the information afterwards to my neighbor. (Here the boy does not refer about himself but gives an example about those who attend an isolated event). As a guest, I receive the information but I come back home with the information but I do not do anything with that. The best way of disseminating the convention, in my opinion, would be that those international organizations should contact the Ministry of Education in order to make the professors able to talk around 10 or 15 minutes per class about the CRC not only here in the capital Bissau but also in other regions of the country. They should organize *Djumbai* (word in creole language that means community meeting, a circle of talking), taking a topic and promoting a debate with children participation and also their parents. I believe this way the message will be well-disseminated in the neighborhoods, in the regions”.¹⁶⁷

Ró Gilberto´s proposal of a *Djumbai* goes in the same direction that Figuiho´s comment while proposing a radio program where students can participate, share their dreams and talk and access transversal issues to the *curriculum*. The teacher and the boy, in different contexts, act as what professor Ismar de Oliveira Soares call educommunicators, a concept already addressed in Chapter 3. They both mediate communication on learning processes in a communicational ecosystem; they guarantee the promotion of a horizontal process where everybody has a voice, where everybody teaches and learn at the same time.

¹⁶⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁷ Interview (in Portuguese) done through Skype with Ró Gilberto Gomes Cá, General-secretary of RCJJ, Bissau-Padua, 13 May 2013. (Transcription in Annex).

4.2. Article 12 incorporated and implemented by children to children: RCJJ



Photo 11: Two girls members of RCJJ producing their weekly radio program at Radio Bombolom about the rights of the child, focus on child nutrition. (Bissau. 16 October 2011).

At this point of the Thesis, some concepts of *Educommunication* were presented, the main challenges of the implementation of the CRC were addressed and the main results achieved with some Brazilian successful experiences on *Educommunication* were shared. Now, it is time to call attention for one experience developed in Guinea-Bissau: the Children and Young Journalists Network of Guinea-Bissau (RCJJ).

“Article 12 of the CRC personalized by the children active action”. “*Educommunication* concepts live application”. Those two sentences can be used to define RCJJ’s work, a success story as acknowledge the international partners such as UNICEF, national organizations of civil society as AMIC and also the Government. Those children, the members, know better than anyone else in the country all articles of the CRC.

RCJJ was created in 2006 in Bissau, supported by UNICEF, with the aim of promoting the CRC in the country through communication and mobilization initiatives made by children to children. Currently, more than 50 children are member. Those girls and boys manage by themselves their network of children, without the participation of any adult. They are strongly committed to the values of the CRC. They weekly produce a radio program and also weekly meet to jointly plan their activities and action in a real

“Communicational Ecosystem”¹⁶⁸. Since 2009, RCJJ does not have any fixed financial support. There is no budget for the water and snacks for the around 25 children that meet on Sundays afternoons in an old room of a public school without electric energy and part of the ceiling. There is no headquarter nor space to keep their material.¹⁶⁹



Photo 12: *The three children that coordinates RCJJ during their meeting held in a Sunday afternoon in a public school in Bissau. The conditions of the schools are precarious. (Bissau. 3 March 2012).*

“No, we do not have. The last support we received it was one in 2009, by UNICEF, for the T-shirts to all members and another in 2011 and for participation in events and celebration of national days, with your support, we were invited by the UN and UNIOGBIS to participate in events as the International Peace Day, The UN Day and the International Day of Volunteers and also the World Aids Day. We received capacity-building from you on how to produce the collective “Wall Journal” and we produced and exposed in those events. (In the same year they received the capacity-building mission on theater for development provided by Grupo Arte Simples de Teatro, financed by the Ministry of Culture of Brazil). And this year, only the 10th March (International children's day of broadcasting)”¹⁷⁰.

Recently, they received a training on audiovisual from Plan International. UNICEF Guinea-Bissau also recognizes the value of their work and supported the creation of this

¹⁶⁸ Communicational Ecosystem: concept presented in more detail in Chapter 3.

¹⁶⁹ Interview (in Portuguese) done through Skype with Ró Gilberto Gomes Cá, General-secretary of the Children and Young Journalists Network of Guinea-Bissau (RCJJ), Bissau-Padua, 13 May 2013. (Transcription in Annex).

¹⁷⁰ Ibidem.

network and nowadays supports some specific initiatives. The last funding provided was for the activities held on the framework of the African Child's Day. Reliable resources would be necessary for the sustainability of their work in order to increase their impact and reach a larger number of children, especially in rural areas.

“They are a much respected by his peers, they are very serious. Since the creation of RCJJ I never heard any problem related to them (...) I feel that RCJJ even without much support they do a very good job. (...) I can say that I see their work like a very strong voluntary approach to citizenship which is very positive. They're doing a great job, but they need to not just do one or another activity and then never being seen again, there is a need of continuity.”¹⁷¹

Laudolino Carlos Medina, the secretary-executive of Association of Child-Friendly People (*Associação Amigos da Criança – AMIC*) who is also secretary-executive of the Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters (*Coligação das Organizações de Defesa dos Direitos da Criança na Guiné-Bissau - CODEDIC-GB*)¹⁷² recognizes that sustainability of the activities of RCJJ is still a challenge in the context of Guinea-Bissau fundraising is not easy. He highlights that RCJJ should receive a training on how to do fundraising in order to work on a stable basis. He emphasizes that the physic space is not the main factor, but the idea of being able to have stable and progressive programs. “RCJJ is very well recognized; they made their voices, the voices of the children, to be heard through the radio”.

In the case of UNICEF Guinea-Bissau¹⁷³, the organization created RCJJ, but as Sonia Polonio explained in an interview, in the previous Five Years Country Program, UNICEF used to have a specific area of work dedicated for Children Participation with a special focus for this issue where she started working for UNICEF, however, after, in the new Five Years Country Program, the strategy was redefined and the issue of

¹⁷¹ Interview (in Portuguese) done through Skype with Sónia Polónio, Child Protection Specialist of UNICEF Guinea-Bissau. Bissau-Padua. 13 June 2013. (Transcription in Annex).

¹⁷² Interview (in Portuguese) Laudolino Carlos Medina, secretary-executive of Association of Child-Friendly People (*Associação Amigos da Criança – AMIC*) who is also secretary-executive of the Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters (*Coligação das Organizações de Defesa dos Direitos da Criança na Guiné-Bissau - CODEDIC-GB*), conceded in Geneva on 7 June 2013. (Transcription in Annex).

¹⁷³ Interview (in Portuguese) concede done through Skype with Sónia Polónio, Child Protection Specialist of UNICEF Guinea-Bissau. Bissau-Padua. 13 June 2013. (Transcription in Annex).

Participation is contemplated through a transversal approach in all main program areas that are: Education, Child Survival, Child Protection, HIV/Aids and Water and Sanitation. Participation become an area under the Communication and Advocacy which can support some activities with this purpose, but currently, there is no program or department with a specific budget in charge for Participation as it used to exist in the previous Five Year Country Program. In the context, the specialist of UNICEF provides an example of the Education department which involved children in all the process related to the last teachers strike in the country. For all initiatives, negotiations, the Education Department of UNICEF prioritized the participation of children, including the Children's Parliament. However, she recognizes that the reinforcement of the Participation component in all program areas must be continuously done. "Even that there is no specific budget for this issue, we make efforts to support and include the Participation component in all program areas. Children must participate in all areas that are concerned to them".

In 2012, RCJJ received a training of a Brazilian theater group called *Grupo Arte Simples de Teatro*¹⁷⁴, which travelled to Guinea-Bissau with a financial support of the Ministry of Culture of Brazil in order to transfer to RCJJ their methodology of promoting the right to culture and right to be heard among children through theater in the biggest slum of São Paulo city: Favela de Heliópolis. Based on Freire's concept of not prescribing a methodology, this theater group cooperated to RCJJ in order to make them able to adapt this theater methodology for their context of the mobilization for children rights in Bissau. This experience was extremely successful and allowed RCJJ goes beyond the radio program in their communication activities. They developed drama games, radio drama and also went, together with the Brazilian artists, for an action of community mobilization in a community called Quelelé in Bissau. With posters, costumes and interaction they walked in the whole community calling for the children and habitants of the area for the active participation in the local issues of environment.

¹⁷⁴ Information about *Grupo Arte Simples de Teatro* available (in Portuguese) at www.artesimples.com.br (Consulted on May 2013).



Photo 13: *This picture was taken by Grupo Arte Simples de Teatro during their cooperation mission in Bissau. The children of RCJJ jointly produced posters related to the environment and children's rights and after learning Brazilian community drama techniques they did an "art possession" for their rights in community of Quelelé in order to mobilize other children. (Bissau. 31 January 2012).*

Regarding *Educommunication* methodologies, RCJJ is very rich and organized in the way they committed work for the promotion of the participation of children, however, their work could have a higher penetration in the country with they have financial resources that allow them to have some material to work, to provide minimum conditions for the children involved in their projects. Many of them goes on Sunday meetings without a meal and water for the day. The same problem faced by Paulo Freire 40 years ago while implementing his literacy methods: lack of resources.

Nonetheless, the children, the members of RCJJ, are always there very motivated. To become a member the child is submitted to an oral and written test and also to some activities related to radio journalism. They manage their organization through a structure composed by a General-assembly, a Commission of Inquiry and a Directive-council. All composed by children. They manage the dialogue among themselves. All the children discuss the issues related to their lives and rights that will be addressed in their weekly radio program, transmitted on a private radio that concedes to them one hour and half on air for free. They elaborated an entering test for other children who want to be part of RCJJ. They constantly promote awareness about the CRC to many

other children through different communication channels. They receive denounces of violations of children's rights and submit the cases to the responsible authorities. They also take part to national events invited by the Government and International Organizations.

“Here we have the Minor's brigade, the Judiciary Police which deals specifically with the violations of the rights of the child. If one child suffers any kind of violation she can talk directly to us (RCJJ) or go to the members of the Children's Parliament or even to AMIC. Recently, we have followed one case of violation and we took it to the Minor's Brigade because they have the competence to analyze the case. After taking care of that child's case they sent the process to the Ministry of Justice and there is also the Magistrate where they send the case to the Ministry of Justice and there the people evaluates the case and send it to judgment”¹⁷⁵.

By accessing their right to participation, to be heard, those children access their other rights as right to culture, to education and also political and civil rights. This example given by Ro Gilberto illustrate how fundamental is the children participation in the whole Children's Rights Protection System in the country. Regarding the challenges faced daily by the network, the boy affirms that they have difficulties on disseminating their activities out of the capital Bissau and also on planning continuously actions because of the lack of resources.

“There are still many things to do in the field of child protection because our organization is well recognized because of the children participation but so far we do not have a headquarter, a room, a place to develop our activities (The weekly meetings are held in a room of a public school with bad structure without electric energy and place to them keep any material because the room has no lockers, cabinets and even door). There is a huge lack of working material. Many things are missing. The first challenge is the financial resource. All our activities are financed by us, the children. It is very hard because we have to contact the other children, without money is really complicated.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Interview (in Portuguese) done through Skype with Ró Gilberto Gomes Cá, General-secretary of the Children and Young Journalists Network of Guinea-Bissau (RCJJ), Bissau-Padua, 13 May 2013. (Transcription in Annex).

¹⁷⁶ Ibidem.

The most impressive of RCJJ experience is that *Educommunication* is materialized in every single action they do. They put in practice the theories of “Educommunicative Mannaged” already addressed in Chapter 3. How? By being concerned with the participation of single children that attend their meetings, in the way they motivate everybody to contribute in the discussion for choosing the topic for the radio program. Deciding who will participate in every week program. As raised also by the specialist of UNICEF Guinea-Bissau, it is impressive, even without the support as other juvenile organizations have as the Children’s Parliament, RCJJ is committed and active.

During the period of elaboration of this Thesis, I was informed that RCJJ was invited to attend the annual meeting of the *Rede de Adolescentes e Jovens Comunicadoras e Comunicadores RENAJO*¹⁷⁷, (The National Network of Adolescents and Young Communicators) in São Paulo, Brazil. This Brazilian network, which is supported by UNICEF Brazil, was created in April 2008 at the First Meeting of Adolescents and Young Communicators promoted by NGO *Viração Educommunication*. Since then, RENAJO participates in actions seeking to unite adolescents and young people from Brazil to draw attention to the Human Right to Communication, doing covers collaborative events relevant to adolescents and youth and integrating national debates about adolescence, youth and communication. That's why the RENAJO created the "C DAY" - National Youth Day Communicative celebrated on October 17 with the Day of Democratization of Communication¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷⁷ Information about RENAJO available (in Portuguese) at renajoc.org.br (Consulted on May 2013).

¹⁷⁸ Ibidem.

CHAPTER 5

Recommendations and current challenges for an Educommunication-based approach for the rights of Guinea-Bissau children

5.1. The challenges for the implementation of this new approach

This first part of the final Chapter is aimed at addressing the main challenges that could emerge from the adoption of an approach based on *Educommunication* for the implementation of the CRC in Guinea-Bissau, specially focusing on Article 12. As all those issues were already discussed during the pages of this academic work, the main goal of this conclusion is to present the challenges in a more simplified way before the presentation of the main recommendation that concludes this work.

5.1.1. Freedom of Expression

One proposal based on *Educommunication* that empowers the children to have their voice heard can face a series of limitations in a country where freedom of expression have been violated for decades. If journalists and also human rights defenders along all history of post-independent Guinea-Bissau had their freedom of expression violated, the chances of violations affect children should be taken into account in case of implementing *Educommunication* because it will make the children not only to lead process but to gain voice trough different media to claim for their rights.

5.1.2. Cultural aspects and family model

The model of Guinea-Bissau society is patriarchal with limited space for children participation, especially in rural areas. Maybe, even if the State or an NGO promotes an *Educommunication* activity in a village, for example, some taboo need to be broken in order to guarantee that, for example, the girls will have the same opportunities than the boys. Forced marriage, child labor, harmful practices are violations that need to end.

“I consider participation is still a big challenge, but we can say that (the implementation of Article 12) is better than ten years ago because we have been watching, which is very positive in recent years, the creation of many structures for children and young people which can bring their voice to be heard by local, national and administrative authorities, such as RCJJ. These are all very positive gains, but participation still a great challenge because the cultural aspect of society, because Guinea Bissau is small, but with many different cultures, differences when you go to the east, south, there are some ethnic groups that the child has a position within society freer to express themselves in front of adults than others where children do not have that space, even in the same age group, there are differences between the child female and the male child, the girl and the boy. (...) So there are restrictions and there are many rules to the main level country who continue to make the children can not express their opinions, their desires.”¹⁷⁹.

5.1.3. Lack of recognition and dissemination of the field of Educommunication

There is no academic research neither projects of *Educommunication* in place in the country. Only Figuiño Ocaia's article addressed this thematic in a way that presented it to the national society through a newspaper. In Brazil, the same phenomenon occurred 20 years ago. The Nucleus of Communication and Education of University of São Paulo made huge efforts not only to deepen the academic work related to topic but also to implement the theories in the practice through the project “Educom.radio” in the city of São Paulo. Many advocacy efforts to develop the concept and its implementation were made before achieving the recognition obtained today in Brazil.

5.1.4. Lack of resources to make Educommunication part of the “routine”

As *Educommunication* or even Human Rights is not part of the curriculum of public schools nor teachers receive training to develop this kind of approach in their classrooms, it is very difficult that the *Educommunication* approach could be consistently implemented. However, it is not impossible, as proves the concrete case of RCJJ. This network is committed and recognized, but unfortunately, because of the lack of resources it cannot reach the rural areas. Resources here means human resources: even in the village level, teachers, health community agents, children. And also basic material resource such as pencil and paper, the same difficulty faced by Paulo Freire in the 70's.

¹⁷⁹ Interview (in Portuguese) concede done through Skype with Sónia Polónio, Child Protection Specialist of UNICEF Guinea-Bissau. Bissau-Padua. 13 June 2013. (Transcription in Annex)

Those are few of the challenges that an approach of *Educommunication* could be confronted; however, they are not impossible to be faced. They should only be taken into consideration in a very careful risk assessment exercise. The political and institutional instability is not pointed out here as a challenge, because if the *Educommunication* is well-rooted among the population, it can be a great ally to combat political issues. UNICEF Guinea-Bissau reported that after 2012 military coup, it was harder to implement those programs that had as the main implementation partners bodies of the Government and also that some donors as the EU withdrew the aid in some programs, however, they changed their strategy, focusing on the reinforcement of the activities held in the community level where *Educommunication* can be implemented with great success for the promotion of human rights. RCJJ, for example, of course the members felt the impact of instability in their activities, but it did not represent a challenge that stops them to do what they better do: promote the implementation of the CRC through *Educommunication*.

5.2. Main conclusion and recommendations for further actions

The structure of this Thesis is coherent with the efforts that led the answer of the main hypothesis for this academic work presented in the beginning of this text, followed by my great motivation to go deep not only in the academic studies and analysis but also in not measuring efforts to provide voice to those who are directly involved in the implementation of the CRC in the country nowadays: the children, the biggest international partner such as UNICEF, the civil society leading organization on children's rights, the Government and also the experts of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. By attending its 63rd session, more specifically the meeting on Guinea-Bissau, I could access the most updated information regarding the main challenges of children's rights in this country in West Africa which suffers the consequences of decades of political instability that brings along high index of poverty and the effects of being a route for the international drug trafficking.

This Thesis not only provides a reflection around the main hypothesis of this academic work but it allows one possible answer for it. Can *Educommunication* be a good

approach to address the challenges of the fulfillments of the rights of the children in Guinea-Bissau, especially regarding Article 12 of the CRC, “participation and right to be heard”? Yes, but only if some very important human rights issues can be dealt by the State, International Community and also Civil Society in an urgent basis. Unfortunately, the answer for this question took a different shape than I thought it would get when I went deep in the elaboration of this academic research. Nevertheless, this is the most interesting and fascinating aspect of academically studying human rights.

I mean different because even living there for 18 months being deeply involved with development cooperation and also with the implementation of pilot initiatives on *Educommunication*, even accumulating more than 10 years of working and researching *Educommunication* on different contexts in Brazil, East Timor and other African countries as Botswana and Kenya, only with this academic research I was able to achieve a deep knowledge of the human rights framework of Guinea-Bissau, especially regarding the right of the child and some of the root causes of the current instability and poverty. The situation is critical and there is no easy and fast way to progress.

The answer for this hypothesis, which I thought surely would be yes when I started this research, became a very strong and laud yes but with reservations. I think this conclusion is aligned with the same feeling that Paulo Freire had while cooperating for literacy in a post-independent Guinea-Bissau. It was surely worthwhile; many achievements were made although the literacy goals were not achieved at the end. In the case of actuality, *Educommunication* field will get a huge contribution from Guinea-Bissau perspectives and way of shaping it in its reality. Many Guinean citizens may access many rights that would be denied to them rather an *Educommunication* approach would not have been adopted.

In the case of this hypothesis presented here. The answer is Yes, maybe *Educommunication* can be a good approach for the implementation of the CRC, especially Article 12. However, it cannot guarantee that this outcome will be achieved in its totality. Paulo Freire is brought here only to illustrate the way that this academic work ended up leading, however, the Guinea-Bissau of today is very much different than the one found by Paulo Freire in a context of hope, post-independence with the

inspiration of the considered by the population “national hero” Amilcar Cabral¹⁸⁰.

Today, Guinea-Bissau has no hero, meaning no leader. The country is under a transitory Government, the situation does not have much attention from the International Community which also impacts the amount of development aid and the transformation of the country in a non-man’s land for the traffic dealers. The state is very weak. The access of the drug trafficking in its territory gets bigger and bigger. Though, seeing from other sight, Guinea-Bissau of today has no one single “hero”, but have many potential “heroes” as the children that composed RCJJ that are strongly committed to the implementation of the CRC in their country, as the teacher Figuiho Ocaia who strongly believe that the radio can became the school of those who does not have a real school meaning the whole essence of the right to education as a basic structure school building, teachers trained, didactical material, healthy students with access to water and good sanitation, free of any kind of violence at home, in the society and even at school. In conclusion, to the answer of the question be a possible Yes, even not taking into account the full implementation of the CRC which would be unrealistic, some recommendations are presented here in order to support those who are interested and believe in the good results that an *Educommunication* based-approach for human rights, with special focus for children participation, can achieve in the country.

5.2.1. To the Government of Guinea-Bissau

The Government of Guinea-Bissau is encouraged to urgently work to realize the recommendations done by the Committee on the Rights of the Child after its 63rd. Session which include the harmonization of the national legislation to the CRC with the elaboration of an unique code of children. In this harmonization, article 12 would be contemplated and the implementation of Educommunication methodologies and interventions could be a good justification for the fulfillment of this specific right. And, the most important thing is that the Government should take action to fulfil children’s

¹⁸⁰ Amilcar Cabral is considered by the population of Guinea-Bissau the hero of the nation, who fought for its independence from Portugal. Four decades after independence the people still using t-shirts and symbols that evidences a sort of devotion to the figure of Cabral.

rights, therefore, which mean not only the needs of children, but it consists in also recognizing their capacities; protection and provision are complementary to a third fundamental dimension of the right of the child, as well as human rights in general, which is the participation; participation to be meaningful involves subjectivity, autonomy, skills. If this essence of a child is not reflected in the national legislation, the CRC will be never implemented in its full essence.

The Government, through the Institute of Women and Children, should provide a common space where the youth and children organizations could have a locker to keep their material and a key of a room that they could develop their activities including the weekends. This basic structural is a motivation for the work. The same should be one in other cities. One idea could be using the structures that already existing in the villages Health facilities of the Center to Access of Justice. There are experiences in Brazil that people manages a library in one single luggage full of books that are sent to one community to another. So, in this inspirit of recognizing the lack of resources, simple action that provide a minimum structure for the work of these children and youth association can motivate them to keep and increase their work.

The Government is also encouraged to enlarge the dialogue with the Brazilian Government in the field of *Educommunication*, including the request of the continuity of the adaptation of the on distance course for educators *Mídias na Educação* provided by the Ministry of Education of Brazil for the reality of Guinean-Bissau teachers based on the good results achieved by the pilot version of the course attended by Figuiño Ocaia. This virtual platform used by thousands of Brazilian teachers of public schools can be accessed also by other thousands of teachers in Guinea-Bissau. There is the facility of speaking the same language; only one important consideration regarding this issue is that some specialists on *Educommunication* and technical should follow the adaptation of this course to Guinea-Bissau context. The Tele-Centers of the Brazilian Embassy in Bissau could be the host of these courses regarding the goof technology available. And also journalists from radio could be invited to participate. The teachers would help them to reflect on how they could have a more educative approach in the radio and they could teach the educator on how manage the radio basic techniques to

motivate their students to produce collective radio programs. Even if there is no equipment, the simulation of the radio by students presenting the radio program to other students live is already one activity of *Educommunication*. Interviews, music, humor can be an stimulating and fun way of approaching one specific item of the curriculum or even human rights issues.

The Government, namely the Ministry of Education, should urgent support human rights education initiatives for children that used the *Educommunication*-based approach for human rights including the awareness of the conceptualization of the child as a citizen entitled of rights and especially of skills that allow the full participation in the society, in equality with adults, and without gender discrimination and bearing in mind the inclusion of children with disabilities. There is an urgent need of human rights education in the country.

5.2.2. To the United Nations in Guinea-Bissau

The United Nations in Guinea-Bissau, namely the current Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ramos-Horta, is encouraged to request to the Brazilian Government all possible kinds of cooperation in the field of *Educommunication* in the framework of South-South cooperation regarding the fact that the Brazilian Government adopt a demand driven system of international technical cooperation which consists that the country should request what kind of cooperation, in what field, it want to receive from the Brazilian experts. Why the United Nations? Because in this context of instability, a request from the United Nations would guarantee that the intervention would be properly done sooner even in the context of instability to address the main demands of human rights fulfillment in the country, specifically in the *spectrum* of the right of the child. Mr Ramos-Horta is the best person to lead this advocacy because in East-Timor, while he was president of the country, a very success Brazilian cooperation in this field between the Educative TV Channel Futura in Brazil and the TV in East Timor was done with great success in 2009.

The United Nations heads in Guinea-Bissau is invited to encourage all departments of the UN offices in the country to include children participation in the main actions. In the

framework of the UN Communication Group, the UN should invite not only the children of RCJJ, but all organizations that deal directly with children participation for a workshop with all UN staff in order to show them how children participation can be done in a very practical way. This is suggested with the aim of making possible children participation in a transversal way within the UNDAF implementation in the country. UNICEF is seen as the best organization to take the lead of this initiative in order to better coordinate the process, showing the care and procedures that need to be taken into account when children participation is involved.

5.2.3. To UNICEF Guinea-Bissau

UNICEF Guinea-Bissau is advised to study the possibility of including in the next Five Years Country Program a special attention to the implementation of the CRC through children participation with a specific budget for continuous actions. Even acknowledging the participation of the child has been supported in a transversal manner within all programs, a specific budget for the reinforcement of continuous actions of participation promotion would increase the impact of the children and youth associations that do the grassroots work in all country. A special investment in the rural area is also advised.

UNICEF Guinea-Bissau is also encouraged, through its Education Program Area, to advocate within the Government for the inclusion of human rights education in the formal curriculum of public schools and also for the inclusion of *Educommunication* activities that could be contemplated as new media meaning not internet and those who need equipment, but new media meaning creative joint work as posters, juvenile newspaper written by hand, cartoons in the streets, many *Educommunication* approaches that would promote a more horizontal pedagogy in the classrooms of the country that would allow children to be educated for human rights through participation.

UNICEF Guinea-Bissau is also invited to support the realization of the first Meeting on *Educommunication* as the teacher Figuiño Ocaia suggested in his article. The event would be directed to civil society organizations, teachers of public schools, members of the government and also journalists. The Indian cartoonist Sharad Sharma should be

invited to teach his methodology on making people producing easy cartoons for human rights mobilization in villages, with almost zero cost and efficiency by being disseminated disposed in the trees. Also the youth from RENAJOC should be invited to exchange experiences during the event. From the Academia, all members of the diplomatic corps in Guinea-Bissau would be invited to indicate people from their country that have been working in a field related in other to enlarge the contribution.

UNICEF Guinea-Bissau is advised to put pressure inside the UN System for the inclusion of child participation in areas of intervention in the country by capacity building the members of other departments to make them able to work with the children and promoting their fully participation in different actions by giving them voice and space to be heard.

5.2.4. To UNICEF Brazil

UNICEF Brazil is invited to increase its efforts on cooperation with African countries in the framework of South-South Cooperation for the exchanging of successful expertise on *Educommunication* they support in Brazil with civil societies organizations in Guinea-Bissau and other African countries. This recommendation is inspired in the experience of the called *The South-South Ties Network*, launched in 2004 by the Brazilian government with the aim at promoting solidarity between developing countries and a model of horizontal cooperation, the initiative provides information exchange and joint development of strategies and action plans for coping, treatment and care for HIV/AIDS. This model of South-South cooperation has an approach centered on human rights as a cross-cutting theme, focusing on the rights of each person to know how to protect yourself and others from HIV, to whether or not living with HIV, to have access to comprehensive and integrated treatment, including pediatric treatment, and the right of every child to be born and grow free of the virus, preventing vertical transmission - that which occurs from mother to baby during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding. In light of this experience, the South-South Ties should be expand for an exchange on *Educommunication* methodologies for human rights not restricted to HIV/AIDS related issues.

UNICEF Brazil is also encouraged to support Guinea-Bissau in the advocacy with Brazilian Government for the importance of providing technical cooperation on *Educommunication* to Guinea-Bissau, aligned with the advocacy efforts suggested here to be done by the UN in Guinea-Bissau.

5.2.5. To the Academia

The Brazilian universities as University of São Paulo - USP, namely the Nucleus of Communication and Education, Federal University of Pernambuco - UFPE and other that study the field of Educommunication in the country should encourage international academic exchange with the universities of Guinea-Bissau in order to start a field of research on *Educommunication* in the country and also promoting the research about *Educommunication* in Guinea-Bissau among Brazilian academic students and specialists on this field.

5.2.6. To UNILAB

The *Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira*¹⁸¹ was created by Law No. 12,289, of July 20, 2010, and installed in Brazil, in the State of Ceará, on May 25, 2011. According to the Brazilian legislation, UNILAB aims to provide higher education to develop research in the various areas of knowledge and promote the university extension, with the institutional mission specific training human resources to contribute to the integration between Brazil and other countries members of Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries - CPLP, especially African countries, as well as promoting regional development and cultural, scientific and educational. In this framework, UNILAB is recognized as a very important stakeholder in the dissemination of the field of *Educommunication* in the lusophone Africa and it is invited to dedicated special attention to the studies on *Educommunication* in Guinea-Bissau with also practical research intervention in the country as well as stimulating the students that come from Guinea-Bissau to study in Brazil to deepen and focus the research in this

¹⁸¹ Information about UNILAB available at www.unilab.edu.br. (Consulted on June 2013).

field of *Educommunication* for human rights, with special focus of the Right of the Child. A special focus should be given in the academic studies around the communicational ecosystem concept for the reality in Guinea-Bissau. In what ways a dialogical communication can take place through a communicational ecosystem for the promotion of right to participation and access of information and especially guaranteeing the right to be heard to many children.

5.2.7. To NCE-USP and UFPE

Namely, professor Ismar de Oliveira Soares from the University of São Paulo and Patrícia Horta from Federal University of Pernambuco, who are the pioneers of the academic studies on *Educommunication* in Brazil, are invited to create ways to motivate researches in Brazil to provide a special attention to the issues related to *Educommunication* in Guinea-Bissau. There is a huge field to deepening the academic publications and studies in this area.

5.2.8. To the Human Rights Centre of Padua University

As the main “house” of this Thesis, the Human Rights Centre is invited to promote a deepen approach in the researches of the field of *Educommunication* for human rights, specially the right of the Child. There is a huge field for exchanging initiatives among Italian students to other in Brazil and Guinea-Bissau. The students based in Italy would have the opportunity to go in the field to see the reality and challenges of human rights. By the other hand, some Guinean students or human rights defenders could have access to much fundamental knowledge about human rights education. The language would not be an issue because there are people from the Italian Cooperation in the country that can support with translation. Or even the Human Rights Center in Padua with its recognition could advocacy for the promotion of this exchange on human rights education also through Italian institutions specialized in this field or even potential donors for this kind of initiative.

5.2.9. To RCJJ

Keep playing. Do never forget the fun part of this amazing work for the promotion of the CRC by accessing their rights to participation and also their right to play. *Educommunication* through the radio program should be always done as an attractive activity as it was for the boy Ró Gilberto when he first join this network at the time he was 12. Now, the pioneers members that are becoming youth have the important responsibility to keep on the commitment of the members of RCJJ and also to take this work to the rural areas, mobilizing a larger number of children. RCJJ is challenged here to, by using the *Educommunication* techniques that make children learn how to communicate their rights in a fun and visible way in the streets, RCJJ should call the attention of the International Organizations and also on National authorities for the provision of the basic structure you need to develop your work. Look for new ways to acquire skills on fundraising and sustainability management to guide the younger in their work, but always bearing in mind they are children, they need to play and always “talk” in their own language not being pressured in any way by adults timing, but motivated by participation for the promotion of the rights of the child.

5.2.10. To AMIC

Is encouraged to advocacy - since now - for the participation of one member of RCJJ in the next session on Guinea-Bissau. Their involvement in the process for the 63rd session was very much appreciated; however, they should have the opportunity to also be there in Geneva representing the children of Guinea-Bissau.

Is also invited to research about *Educommunication* because maybe this can be a good approach to the challenged shared by Medina¹⁸² in his interview that the organizations need to learn on “how to better work with children”.

¹⁸²Interview (in Portuguese) with Laudolino Carlos Medina, secretary-executive of Association of Child-Friendly People (Associação Amigos da Criança – AMIC) and who is also secretary-executive of the Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters (Coligação das Organizações de Defesa dos Direitos da Criança na Guiné-Bissau - CODEDIC-GB). Geneva on 7 June 2013.(Transcription in Annex).

5.2.11. To RENAJOC Brazil

Is called to increase the exchange initiatives with RCJJ in order to promote a mutual capacity building between the children and youth that composed both organizations. This exchange started with the trip of one member from RCJJ Guinea-Bissau to Brazil. The next step should be delegation from RENAJOC travel to Guinea-Bissau to cooperate and learn with the achievement of the sustainability of their organization and by the other hand RENAJOC would be empowered with new *Educommunication* methodologies that are implemented by the children in Guinea-Bissau. This should not be restricted to RCJJ, but to all children and youth organization in the country.

5.2.12. To the members of the Committee on the Right of the Child

The members are encouraged to ask to the NGO Working with the Child Rights Matters in Guinea-Bissau to provide more information produced by children to the next Session on Guinea-Bissau, especially by RCJJ because they were already involved the children in the elaboration of the last report from civil society to the 63rd Session, but as step further they should be encouraged to promote, through *Educommunication*, the participation of the children in the report of the situation of their rights in their country to the Committee by sending radio programs or video that were jointly produced with other children. The participation of one or more children of RCJJ in the next Session is strongly recommended. RCJJ could be the lead organization of this process because they already have the *Educommunication* expertise and they could invite other children to produce drama plays or even radio programs with the human rights violations they think are the most committed against them in their country. It is a process that should be start now to have a quality result in the preparation for the next Session on Guinea-Bissau.

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Interviews

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Interview (in Portuguese) with Laudolino Carlos Medina, Secretary-executive of Association of Child-Friendly People (*Associação Amigos da Criança – AMIC*) and Secretary-executive of the Group of NGOs Working on Child Matters (*Coligação das Organizações de Defesa dos Direitos da Criança na Guiné-Bissau - CODEDIC-GB*). Geneva on 7 June 2013.

Interview (in Portuguese) done through Skype with Sónia Polónio, Child Protection Specialist of UNICEF Guinea-Bissau. Bissau-Padua. 13 June 2013.

ANNEXES
INTERVIEWS

1. Interview (in Portuguese, translated to English) through Skype with: Ró-Gilberto Gomes Cá, 17 years-old, secretary-general of RCJJ - Rede de Crianças e Jovens Jornalistas da Guiné-Bissau (in English: Children and Young Journalists Network of Guinea-Bissau)

Date: 13 May 2013

1. How could you describe the life of a child in Guinea-Bissau?

Since 1998, after the civil war and also after the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child the organizations are doing their best to improve the situation but not even with this effort we can face the problem of education today in Guinea-Bissau. All public schools are under strike at this moment, children face problems in the area of harmful practices and we have problems in health protection and education. I believe those are the three most complicated areas for children.

2. Since when the schools are under strike? And what do those children do during a strike period. How are their lives? Do they stay at home?

This time, since last week. As we are in the season of the Cashew Campaign, even when there was no strike, children drop out of school and vain for the Cashew Campaign to help their parents in the garden to harvest nuts and cashews. And as in this period there are no classes, they vain for regions of the country to harvest. They go with their relatives to help them to make a good campaign and the other children who are here (capital Bissau) do nothing. Thus remain in the streets, doing nothing.

3. And what about your life in Guinea-Bissau? How could you describe it?

My life is normal. Last year, I concluded the twelfth year (last year of Guinea-Bissau basic education system) and now I am looking for scholarships. My daily routine is to do nothing. Not only me but the majority of the youth face the same situation. You wake up in the morning and until the evening you do not have anything to do.

4. What about your school? How was your school? Did you have food, water, electric energy?

There were teachers, but many of them did not have specific capacity and degree to teach, I mean a professional level. There was no food. We never had. However, we had electric energy and many people used to attend classes in the evening.

5. What about water, didactical books and material?

There is no drinking water available for students in Guinea-Bissau. No toilets. Regarding material, we did not use books, but the teachers work with what is called support text. The teachers take the text in their class and the students copy the material.

6. In your opinion, the situation of Education has increased or got worse in the last years?

After the civil war the situation has gotten much worse than before. In 2003, 2004 we can say that there were not academic year in schools. It was none and, after that, we could not study three periods in schools anymore, only two. The concepts and subjects transmitted by the teachers were in the beginning of the eighties. Until now the situation is like that.

7. Now, let's talk about you. Why and how did you decided to take part of RCJJ?

It was in October of 2008. I was invited by a friend who is now studying abroad thanks to a scholarship. At that time he was the Secretary-general of RCJJ. In October of this year I will complete years 5 years of participation in this organization.

8. You were a child at that time. You were twelve years-old. What have motivated you?

(Robert smiles and started answering it with motivation). It was the radio program made by children. At that time, RCJJ had a radio program, the same program that we still produce and transmit every Saturday. I liked a lot. I really like to listen to that friend of mine and many other children to talk about children's rights on the radio. That is why one day I told him that I really liked it and he invited me to attend one meeting of RCJJ and make a submission test. I was approved and I am a member until today.

9. What test is this about?

We have a three phase test *(every child that is interested in being part of RCJJ has to be submitted to this test)*. First, is the oral phase in order to evaluate the level of communication in Portuguese language? The second, is the orthography test and, thirdly, reading. Those are the basic mechanisms for a child to enter RCJJ. After being accepted, we provide a special training on basic journalism skills.

10. I am sorry. I have the impression that I interrupted your answer before. You were about to say something about the year 2010? Did I listen to it correctly?

Yes. I was telling that in 2008 I became a member of RCJJ and in 2010 I assumed a position in the coordination. In that year I candidated myself for a Secretary-general position and I was elected by the General Assembly. This year we will have another General Assembly.

11. Thank you. Coming back to the point when you decided to take part of RCJJ. When you were 12 years-old you told me the main motivation was the fun of the radio program produced "by children" and transmitted "to children". But, at that time, did you know anything related to the right of the child?

At that time, I did not know anything about it. I have learned a lot with RCJJ. The way those children speak on the radio. I learned a lot about this topic *(the right of the child)*

because every week we talk in the radio about subjects related to the life of children in Guinea-Bissau. I can say that I have learned a lot with RCJJ and I am a communicator of this organization and I keep working for the welfare of the children in Guinea-Bissau.

12. As I understand, you learned the CRC by actively participating, studying it with other children. We can say that you lived the real participation of a child. You lived “Article 12” along your experience. So, within this context, what is the experience of a real participation for a child and what is the difference between children that have the opportunity to participate as you did to another that does not have the same opportunity?

I think the opportunity of participating of an organization like RCJJ is great but many children do not have the same opportunity because RCJJ does not receive any regular support since 2009 and that is it. We have limitations to mobilize other children, do researches.

13. In 2008 you had support and since 2009 you have not received any regular support. How does it affect children participation?

In reality, it is very difficult when you do not have support to make the activities and produce the radio program for example. Many times we plan activities but do not have means to realize them because of the lack of support. Regarding the child that does not participate, he or she does not have the same level of information as the others. I say that because the child that participates he or she communicates with her relatives, when the members of RCJJ participate in activities held by international organizations for example they have the privilege to access information regarding the Millennium Development Goals for example, they are able to research those topics in the internet and learn more. But, that child who does not have the opportunity to participate gets limited. Many children do not know the different duties and rights and they also do not know anything about the duties and their own rights.

14. What is this real participation that RCJJ allow the children? What does it mean for a child to participate?

The participation in the radio program is really important and fundamental. I learned many things that I did not know before.

15. In Guinea-Bissau, is this right to participation equally guaranteed to every child, including the ones that live in rural areas?

Unfortunately, the answer to this question is no because RCJJ is the only organization created so far to allow children to participate. This network, basically, was created with the aim at making children able to talk about their rights. There are no adults that talk about children. The children are the ones that immediately suffer with any violation of their rights. That is why RCJJ was created in order to make the children the ones to talk

about their rights. In the program we produce at Radio Bombolom the children produce and talk. On other radios in the country the children are invited sometimes only to declaim poems and that is it. Regarding the children in rural areas I think they do not have this right guaranteed and even here in the urban zone they do not have it (*the opportunity to participate*). The percentage is really low. The number of children that do not participate is too much higher than the other who has the opportunity to participate.

16. What does prevent them from participating?

Many adults think the children do not have skills. I think the other reasons that prevent children from participating are: the adults do not give the opportunity to children; they think they are not able to do things. That is why children do not have opportunity to participate. Not only in the Radio Program but within their own family. The child does not participate in the decision making process in their homes, the opinion of the children is not heard. In the family and even at school. This is hard. Children do not have opportunity.

17. Do you think RCJJ provides to these children the voice that they do not have in practical?

Yes. RCJJ is a unique organization that, so far in Guinea-Bissau, gives the opportunity to the children to express their feelings through a communication channel as the radio. I think RCJJ has preserved the real participation of the child. As I said before, on other radios the children only go to dedicate music, tell a story and declaim a poem. In those programs they do not talk about their rights, do not debate. There are no concepts to make children talk about their rights as we do.

18. Talking about children's rights. In your opinion, does the political instability interfere in this area? If yes, how?

Of course, it impacts. With the military coups as we are living now a political crisis, a moment of transition, this transitory government does not pay salaries to the teachers. The teachers do not go to schools to teach the children. This daily impacts the children... (*Robert makes a pause to look for a word in Portuguese language. His colloquial language is Creole*). The ones who suffer more are the women and the children.

19. Why do the women suffer more?

The women suffer more because, firstly, as I told you before, as we have this transitory government they do not pay the salaries also to other ministries and public institutions. Our fathers do not receive money and then our mothers have to sacrifice to guarantee our daily food. More specifically, they work as women who sell things in the streets. All suffering fall, firstly, into women, and after into their children.

20. Does RCJJ have any research or data regarding the human rights violations suffered by children in Guinea-Bissau? In case no, you can answer based on your own experience working for the promotion of CRC in the country.

Firstly, harmful practices. Female genital mutilation and early-forced marriage. Sexual violation among children is extremely alarming, including trafficking of children to the neighbors countries as Senegal, The Gambia to become Talibé children (*according to PLAN International, Talibé children are the ones that go worst Koranic schools that force children to be out on the street every day. They receive no formal education and suffer poor living conditions. Boys from age 3 to 15 they are forced to beg, while girls are put to work in school –or daara – itself*). Another problem is forced labor, many children sells things in the street of the capital Bissau. Besides all those problems, health protection and education.

21. In your opinion, your work on the promotion of child’s participation can make any difference in this critical scenario? How do you see this issue?

Obviously, the work we do has a huge importance because we work to inform, educate and promote awareness to all levels of childhood and also including the older (*as the youth*). The work I do it is important because it helps the population in general on the fulfillment of the duties and it helps preventing the eventual violations that may affect the children.

22. Nowadays in Guinea-Bissau, if a child has conscious of her or his rights and those are violated. To whom she can denounce or ask for help?

Here we have the Minor’s brigade, the Judiciary Police which deals specifically with the violations of the rights of the child. If one child suffers any kind of violation she can talk directly to us (*RCJJ*) or go to the members of the Children’s Parliament or even to AMIC. Recently, we have followed one case of violation and we took it to the Minor’s Brigade because they have the competence to analyze the case. After taking care of that child’s case they sent the process to the Ministry of Justice and there is also the Magistrate where they send the case to the Ministry of Justice and there the people evaluates the case and send it to judgment. (*Robert interrupts the interview to answer a phone call from his dad*).

23. Robert, as I explained before I am writing this Master thesis focusing on the implementation of the CRC in Guinea-Bissau. If you were in my place, what approach do you think you would follow? What should be the priorities of a study that talks about children’s rights in Guinea-Bissau?

I cannot answer this question. It is so difficult to me. (*Robert really shows difficult on answering this question*)

24. Supposing you would give an advice to me. What should be my priorities?

Even not choosing an article of the convention (*CRC*), I would say that you should look for more information about what is happening now in Guinea-Bissau. Data about what is occurring right now in the country, the situation in the schools with the strikes, the frequent violations of the rights of the child that happens daily here.

25. And, what would you say if you have the opportunity to directly dialogue with the heads of UNICEF, PLAN INTERNATIONAL and other important partners that work for the implementation of the CRC in the country?

Firstly, they should get in touch with the Ministry of Education in order to find a way that teachers could talk about the convention in the classrooms. This would bring many benefits and it would be very important. Because, all those events (*seminars that children or even teachers attend*) if I am invited, I go but I do not share the information afterwards to my neighbor. (*Here Robert does not refer about himself but gives an example about those who attend an isolated event*). As a guest, I receive the information but I come back home with the information but I do not do anything with that. The best way of disseminating the convention, in my opinion, would be that those international organizations should contact the Ministry of Education in order to make the professors able to talk around 10 or 15 minutes per class about the CRC not only here in the capital Bissau but also in other regions of the country. They should organize *Djumbai* (*word in creole language that means community meeting, a circle of talking*), taking a thematic and promoting a debate with children participation and also their parents. I believe this way the message will be well-disseminated in the neighborhoods, in the regions.

26. Nowadays, do those organization support children participation in your country?

They support because thanks to UNICEF we (RCJJ) exist and also PLAN International created a group with the same characteristic as our organization, with the same work we do. Recently, we received some capacity building in the area moviemaking, reportage, articles and newspaper. We published five articles at the newspaper No Pintcha. Once in a while we receive support from UNICEF but those organizations do not support us 100%.

27. What is missing then? You have just mentioned that those organizations offer capacity-building opportunities. In these meetings, do they provide food and water to the children that participate? And beyond those initiatives? If you have the opportunity to have a direct dialogue with the bosses of those organization, what would you ask for?

There are still many things to do in the field of child protection because our organization is well recognized because of the children participation but so far we do not have a headquarter, a room, a place to develop our activities (*The weekly meetings are held in a*

room of a public school with bad structure without electric energy and place to them keep any material because the room has no lockers, cabinets and even door). There is a huge lack of working material. Many things are missing. The first challenge is the financial resource. All our activities are financed by us, the children. It is very hard because we have to contact the other children, without money is really complicated.

28. To wrap up, could you tell what is the RCJJ and how it was created and how it works nowadays?

The RCJJ is a collective person of private rights without profits means that works to identify, denounce and contribute for the promotion and dissemination of the rights of the children in Guinea-Bissau. It was created to least an undetermined time and it was legalized in 2006 in the capital of Bissau. It has around 50 members and its functional body is divided in three parts: first, the General Assembly, secondly, the Directive Council and thirdly the Inquiry Commission. In the Directive Council there is a coordinator, a vice-coordinator and a secretary. The General Assembly is composed by its components, the president, the vice-president and a secretary. The Inquiry Commission is composed by a president, a vice-president and a secretary.

29. The RCJJ was created in 2006 with UNICEF support. What was the last financial support received by RCJJ?

The most recent support we received it was to our activities under the framework of International Children's Day of broadcasting. We held a radio debate produced by children at Radio Bombolom, where we produce and transmit our weekly radio program and also at another radio, Radio Sol Mansi.

30. And how was it? Did you receive financial support?

They (UNICEF) paid direct to the radio the amount regarding the time of transmission. We received money for transport, communication and food.

31. What about structural support for the weekly activities? You meet every Sunday, so, do these children have food and water?

No, we do not have. The last support we received it was in 2009, by UNICEF, for the T-shirts to all members and in 2011, with your support, we were invited by the UN and UNIOGBIS to participate in events as the International Peace Day, The UN Day and the International Day of Volunteers and also the World Aids Day. We received capacity-building from you on how to produce the collective "Wall Journal" and we produced and exposed in those events. *(In the same year they received the capacity-building mission on theater for development provided by Grupo Arte Simples de Teatro, financed by the Ministry of Culture of Brazil).* And this year, only the 10th March (International children's day of broadcasting).

32. So, for the weekly meetings, no support? And how many children participate?

No. Around 25 children participate in our meetings on Sundays.

33. Do you think if you have a financial support you would access more children with your work?

We want to increase our radio program to other different radios in the capital and also we want to create regional structures for our organizations. In the regions and also in the capital we want our program to be transmitted also by communitarian radios and also other radios.

34. Currently, RCJJ's radio program is on air every Saturdays on Radio Bombolom. What time? The radio does not charge neither supports you, right?

Yes, it does not charge neither supports us. In the beginning UNICEF paid the time we were on air to the Radio, but after the direction of the Radio saw that we had some experience and decided to give us that time on air for free. We are on air every Saturday, from 9h am to 10h30 am.

35. And then, the support was over?

Yes, only in occasional events and since you left in 2012 we received this more specific for the 10th March International children's day of broadcasting.

36. Besides the radio program, what are the other activities developed by RCJJ?

As I was saying, we learned how to collectively produce the collective "Wall Journal" and during next Children's Fortnight (celebrated in Africa from June 1st and ends with the Day of the African Child on June 16th) we will expose those in many places of the capital Bissau and we also do drama in our radio programs and we will have special theaters in public spaces at Imperio Square (the main square in Bissau) for the occasion of World Day Against Child Labor together with the NGO AD.

37. I would like to thank you very much and ask if you have a last final consideration. This space is open to you?

So, I would like to thank you again for all you have done for us. God blesses you, I hope that your thesis will be a success and I would like to thank you on behalf of all members of RCJJ and I would like to say that we will continue to do our job with or without support of international or national organizations. Thank you.

2. Interview (in Portuguese) held in Geneva: *Laudolino Carlos Medina, executive-secretary of AMIC and national executive-secretary of CODEDIC-GB*

Date: 7 June 2013

1. Quais os principais desafios da implementação da Convenção na Guiné-Bissau?

Muito obrigada, a questão é muito pertinente. A Guiné-Bissau é um país com vários problemas e desafios para a implementação de uma Convenção internacional, sobretudo de uma matéria muito sensível como a proteção de todos os direitos da criança. Coloca vários desafios, portanto, mas eu acho que o primeiro desafio tem a ver com a domesticação da Convenção das Nações Unidas na Guiné-Bissau. Isto passa a prática pela a revisão de todas as legislações, remover todas as barreiras e harmonizar as legislações nacionais ao espírito da Convenção das Nações Unidas.

2. Então, não houve harmonização até então? Hoje em dia não há um estatuto da criança, um código de proteção à criança único no país?

O Código (**audio problem**) de Menores da Guiné-Bissau é um documento muito velho da era colonial, salvo o erro de 1968 ou 1972, Código de Assistência Constitucional dos Menores. Então, é um documento muito velho e ultrapassado onde ainda persistem ainda alguns aspectos que são contrários as disposições da Convenção das Nações Unidas relativa aos direitos das crianças. Portanto, nós enquanto organização em prol da promoção e defesa dos direitos da criança desde a quinta legislatura estamos a fazer um lobby com muita fé portanto para que haja a harmonização e a revisão e agora estamos na oitava legislatura com muitas tentativas apoiadas por vários parceiros, como o INEP, no sentido de fazer esse estudo da com vista a revisão e a harmonização, depois passado pela Faculdade de Direito de Bissau e recentemente o UNICEF financiou portanto um trabalho de revisão e harmonização. De acordo com as últimas informações que eu tenho é que já se fez o trabalho portanto é agora para avançarmos rapidamente para a elaboração de um código da (único, da criança) na Guiné-Bissau. Só que parece que o problema coloca-se a nível de meios para que os consultores possam avançar com o processo. Para além desses aspectos meramente legais, há aspectos também que tem a ver com a persistência das práticas nefastas que constituem de fato barreiras à implementação da Convenção na Guiné-Bissau. Portanto, com isso.(entrevistador interrompe).

3. Qual é o cenário hoje das práticas nefastas no país?

Temos um direito muito desenvolvido sobre as práticas nefastas, portanto são nocivas a saúde e a integridade da criança nomeadamente a questão da mutilação genital feminina que atinge cerca de 50% das mulheres nomeadamente as crianças, também a questão por exemplo do casamento precoce forçado, a questão do trabalho infantil, das piores formas de trabalho infantil, a questão das crianças talibés enviadas a priori (para) o exterior para o ensino corânico e que caem nas armadilhas dos traficantes e que são traficadas o que nós chamamos de forma moderna da escravatura. Há vários tipos de práticas tradicionais, portanto é preciso de fato, intensificar as ações de sensibilização com o diálogo.

4. Hoje em dia já há uma lei na Guiné-Bissau que proíbe a MGF, certo?

Sim, mas a lei por si só como eu já disse não é tudo. É importante sim, mas é preciso continuar as ações de sensibilização e também adotar uma estratégia holística porque muitas das causas tem a ver com o estado de desenvolvimento, as nossas comunidades, por exemplo, o analfabetismo, a questão da ausência de infraestruturas sociais de base portanto tudo isso tem implicação direta na implementação da Convenção dos Direitos das Crianças na Guiné-Bissau. Portanto, aspectos económicos ligados à pobreza, como eu disse a pouco, a falta de serviços sociais de base, saúde, educação, água, saneamento, portanto ao nível de Bissau sente carência, mas a medida que você vai deixando Bissau para as regiões a carência aumenta ainda mais, portanto no mundo rural, eu diria a discrepância é enorme. Há muito que trabalharmos para diminuir e minimizar essa distância.

5. Em relação ao que o senhor disse sobre os desafios da disseminação e eu gostei do que disse sobre uma estratégia holística. Nesse sentido, a minha tese tem ênfase no artigo 12, participação, da criança ter o direito de ser ouvida, de participação. Como está essa situação na Guiné-Bissau hoje? O artigo 12 é acessado pelas crianças? Se não, quais são as dificuldades?

Olha, modestia a parte a AMIC é a organização pioneira na matéria da promoção e defesa dos direitos das crianças na Guiné-Bissau, foi criada em 1984 e vai completar 30 anos de existência. Sim, a participação é um dos grandes calcanhares de Aquiles, mas temos avançado e nunca ficamos com os braços cruzados. (pausa, entrevistadora questiona o porquê, se é problema geográfico ou outro aspecto). É a forma, é o como trabalhar com as crianças. Portanto, a medida que nós vamos avançando nós estamos a adquirir experiências de trabalhar com as crianças, sobretudo organizar as crianças. Portanto, a AMIC foi a primeira estrutura de apoio às crianças e jovens trabalhadores que são organizadas em uma associação e neste momento integram aquilo que nós chamamos do Movimento de Crianças e Jovens trabalhadoras, portanto tem um foro próprio tanto a nível sectorial, regionais, nacional, onde podem exprimir as suas opiniões, onde são consultadas e as suas opiniões são tidas em consideração ou tem espaço propício para fazer a pressão para que sejam ouvidas para que as suas opiniões sejam escutadas. E também nós fomos a primeira organização na Guiné-Bissau a enquadrar um Parlamento Infantil que agora neste momento esta a ser gerenciado pelo Instituto Mulher e Criança, mas o primeiro Parlamento Infantil da Guiné-Bissau foi realizado pela AMIC. Portanto, são espaços propícios onde os adultos podem ouvir as crianças. Eu me lembro perfeitamente o último parlamento infantil que a AMIC realizou, na altura, convidamos o presidente da república Nino Vieira, a presidenta do Parlamento era uma menina como a atua presidenta do Brasil, que no fim de tudo entregou as recomendações ao presidente da república e disse a ele: “espero que desta vez o senhor presidente da república não vai meter essas recomendações na gaveta”. Ele recebeu, rio e disse: “eu prometi e não vou meter essas recomendações na gaveta”. Infelizmente, quando estávamos a avançar num caminho com vista a criar situações favoráveis para a implementação da Convenção, ou seja, a aplicabilidade do direito da criança, caiu nos aquela desgraça do conflito militar de 7 de Junho de 1998 e com esta crise e com o mergulhar do país em múltiplas crises depois do 7 de Junho de fato houve uma estagnação. (entrevista pergunta: O Parlamento

Infantil é antes de 98?). Sim, a década de 90 se podemos assim caracterizar diríamos que foi a década de ouro em termos dos direitos da criança porque foi marcado pela a primeira assinatura da convenção, a sua entrada em vigor, a participação da Guiné-Bissau no mais elevado nível em conferências internacionais, sobretudo, na Cimeira de Nova York que resultou num plano de ação com metas concretas. Acho que foi o primeiro plano de ação e o único até então. Vê-se claramente hoje que não existe nenhum plano nacional de ação (específico sobre os direitos das crianças). Não existe nenhuma política definida no domínio da infância nem sequer um plano nacional de ação. E quando é assim é difícil chegar lá, atingir os objetivos.

6. No DENARP há algo específico pela criança porque a delegação da Guiné-Bissau não respondeu essa pergunta que foi feita agora há pouco por um membro do Comitê?

Há uma parte da criança, há uma parte da mulher, mas os meios ficam muito muito aquém, não há recursos para implementação do DENARP como nós gostaríamos de ver, portanto a implementação fica muito a desejar.

7. E como esse último golpe de estado de 12 Abril de 2012, as coisas mudaram?

Neste momento é muito difícil mobilizar recursos para a Guiné-Bissau, já estamos em um retrocesso, a situação está praticamente estacionária. Portanto, tudo dependendo da transição, portanto tudo dependendo da organização das eleições para o fim desse ano. É só depois que as novas portas vão se abrir, novas perspectivas no domínio da aplicabilidade, mas neste momento nós não podemos cruzar os braços, apesar desta situação difícil temos dado alguns passos importantes sobretudo ao nível da prevenção de vários fenómenos que violam os direitos da criança, nomeadamente, a questão do tráfico da criança. Como pode saber com o golpe de estado, com a fragilização das instituições, ao contrário verifica-se a generalização dos fenómenos atentatórios ao direitos das crianças. Neste momento, praticamente, todos os dias, nós somos chamados a fazer parte (auxiliar) casos de violações dos direitos das crianças.

8. A AMIC recebe denúncias e encaminha para as autoridades competentes?

Fazemos denúncias, damos a orientação, muitas das vezes trabalhamos em colaboração com alguns juristas, que dao conselhos jurídicos e no caso da assistência nós temos o centro de acolhimento das crianças para vítimas de trafico, crianças vítimas de casamento precoce e casos que requerem um acolhimento mais longo encaminhamos as instituições especializadas como a SOS Aldeia das Crianças e à casas geridas por instituições religiosas, sobretudo as brasileiras. Dá para dizer que a situação não está a ser fácil neste momento, mas não podemos ficar parados. É por isso que estamos aqui (63rd. Session Committee on the Rights of the Child) como observadores para sairmos com ideias, recomendações, observações concretas para com as quais nos vamos trabalhar nos proximos tempos para melhorar a situação dos direitos das crianças na Guiné-Bissau.

9. Sobre a participação das crianças, quais seriam as características das experiências de sucesso das ações implementadas pela AMIC para fazer com que de fato a criança guineense participe além da criação de espaços como vocês fizeram? E na escola, é na família, o que é?

A participação tem que ser uma componente transversal. Na casa, na família, na sua comunidade, na escola, tem que ser um processo a medida em que a criança vai participando ela vai aprendendo, sem receios, sem medos, sobretudo onde podem cometer erros, os erros são permitidos, a criança vai aprendendo com os seus erros. Portanto, a participação tem de ser transversal em todos os espaços onde a criança está presente.

10. E para finalizar, como você avalia o trabalho da Rede de Crianças e Jovens Jornalistas da Guiné-Bissau (RCJJ) e como você vê que uma organização que ao meu ver é tao bem organizada pelas crianças não tem uma sede, não tem financiamento, como você avalia essa questão?

Eu acho que a RCJJ é um exemplo concreto de participação. Para mim a questão da sede nem é tanto um problema, o problema são recursos para que possam fazer o seu trabalho porque, por exemplo, a RCJJ, integram a Coligação das Organizações Defensoras dos Direitos das Crianças, da qual eu sou o secretário-executivo nacional. A COREDIG também funciona nas instalações da AMIC, portanto membros da rede podem conectar os seus computadores e ter acesso à internet. Além do mais, uma das organizações membros da coligação, a SOS Aldeia das Crianças acabou de nos ceder um espaço onde a coligação pode funcionar. As organizações que não tem a sede são bem vindas, só que precisamos equipar o espaço, para torná-lo funcional. (pausa, entrevistadora pergunta: há recursos para gerir esse espaço?). Estamos a mobilizar recursos, há recursos da PLAN Guiné-Bissau que está a disponibilizar uma certa participação financeira, poranto, para dizer de fato que o problema da rede é ao nível da mobilização de recursos. Eu vejo que receberam várias formações, mas tem que ser reforçadas as capacidades em termos de mobilização de recursos. Mas, não é fácil no contexto guineense conseguir mobilizar recursos, mas estão de pé, estão ativos, tem programas radiofônicos periódicos, fazem ouvir suas vozes e isso é extremamente importante. As pessoas sabem que estão lá, estão a trabalhar, isto é extremamente importante.

11. Para finalizar, alguma consideração final?

A Guiné-Bissau é um pequeno país na costa ocidental africana. Com cerca de 1, 5 milhão de habitantes, sendo a maioria constituída pelas crianças. Agora, eu não vejo um desenvolvimento do Estado com programa, um plano, ou seja, uma política bem definida no domínio da infância. Um estado com essa característica com população maioritária jovem tem que se concentrar ao nível desta categoria. Sim, apesar das multiplas crises desde a luta pela sua independência e das crises subsequentes da independência eu ainda acho que a promoção e defesa dos direitos das crianças na Guiné-Bissau é possível. É possível, com a colaboração efetiva de todos e a todos os níveis, com a determinação e ações concretas e deliberadas, vamos atingir a esse objetivo. Estou a crer que podemos brevemente criar melhores condições para a observância dos direitos da criança na Guiné-Bissau.

3. Interview (in Portuguese) through Skype with: Sónia Polónio, Child Protection Specialist – UNICEF Guinea-Bissau

Date: 13 June 2013

1. Quais são os principais desafios enfrentados hoje na Guiné-Bissau para a implementação da Convenção?

...(audio problem) de ordem económico, convenção, (audio problem). Como eu estava a dizer, as principais dificuldades são de duas ordens. A primeira é no aspecto económico, a fragilidade do país, um Estado que não tem recursos financeiros e nem recursos humanos para implementar as suas políticas e planos de ação que envolvem a proteção da criança. Então, porque muitas das vezes há vontade, mas as instituições do Estado não conseguem implementar essas ações. Um outro aspecto é a questão da harmonização da legislação a nível interno. Harmonizar significa empreender uma revisão da legislação e tem também que trabalhar (audio problem) o que começa com a questão central de lei que não está de encontro com a Convenção. Até agora não conseguimos fazer todo esse trabalho que é um trabalho de muitos anos, trabalho de longo prazo (audio problem) complexo, não conseguimos harmonizar.

2. Já foi feito algum estudo de como seria feita essa harmonização? Na última reunião do *Committee on the Right of the Child* sobre a Guiné-Bissau mencionaram algo nesse sentido.

Há muitos anos estão trabalhando neste tema. Foi feito primeiro um estudo que identificou todas as áreas da legislação nacional que poderiam ser harmonizadas e então pensou-se em fazer uma harmonização através dos processos que já estavam em curso de revisão legislativa, mas com isso teríamos que esperar o processo de revisão do código penal, portanto viu-se que (audio problema) e começaram a fazer algumas legislações específicas como a do tráfico de seres humanos o que foi positivo, mas não essencial e vimos que poderíamos fazer na Guiné-Bissau o que muitos países optaram por fazer: um único código de proteção à criança. Todas as componentes que tem a ver com a criança estariam inseridas em um único código de proteção à criança e não para fazer revisões pontuais de leis como esta da incisão, portanto, neste momento o Ministério da Justiça e parceiros tomaram essa decisão e já estão a trabalhar (audio problem) para um único código de proteção da criança. Todas as componentes de família, trabalho, adolescentes, adoção, etc, tudo estará num único código o que para o legislador estará muito mais fácil de trabalhar. Agora temos de agir para termos esse código de proteção à criança finalizado e aprovado. Mas são coisas que demoram muito o que fazem muitas vezes que as coisas fiquem um bocado paradas. (audio problem). O Estado muitas vezes não têm recursos e instituições que podem dar assistência à criança (audio problema), um trabalho com a família, mesmo a nível judicial, neste momento há coisas simples, mas que o Estado não tem capacidade para responder. (audio problema). E o terceiro desafio é a falta de coordenação das respostas também das estratégias de proteção, a coordenação entre as diferentes instituições. A coordenação por exemplo de quem faz o que mesmo

dentro das instituições do Estado, muitas vezes os papéis se confundem, o papel da polícia judiciária, o papel do Instituto da Mulher e da Criança, da ONG, portanto muitas vezes isso faz com que a resposta acabe não sendo adequada. A nível também dos ministérios há uma fraca coordenação, muitas das ações do Ministério da Família estão relacionadas a outros Ministérios como o da Saúde e Educação quando queremos apoiar uma criança vulnerável. Há um acordo (de coordenação) entre os diferentes ministérios, mas na prática o acordo não é aplicado. Então, há uma falta de resposta e às vezes não é só a questão do dinheiro, é falta nessas estruturas a capacidade de responder de forma eficaz aos problemas. Por exemplo, uma criança que chega ao hospital que foi vítima de violação sexual. O Ministério da Saúde tem um acordo com o Ministério da Mulher para que essa criança não pague, a família da criança não tem que pagar o custo para o hospital, mas eles continuam a cobrar, esse tipo de situação, muitas vezes a família tem medo e acaba por pagar, as pessoas tem medo de reclamar pelos seus direitos.

3. Quais são as principais áreas de atuação do UNICEF no país? Houve alguma mudança depois do último golpe de estado de 12 de Abril de 2012?

Por essa razão que fiz força para lhe mandar o SITAN (relatório) que traz as nossas principais áreas de atuação. Para nós, nesse momento há uma maior preocupação principalmente na área da educação porque como você sabe nesse momento o país enfrenta o grave problema com as greves (**audio problem**) há uma especial atenção do UNICEF a esse ponto não so no aspecto das infraestruturas das escolas: todas as escolas apoiadas por nos são construídas com a componente de atenção a criança com necessidades especiais, temos também a questão da formação dos professores, a capacitação dos professores, a área da educação sem dúvida é uma área prioritária. A área da sobrevivência da criança também continua, todo o trabalho é feito para assegurar que a criança tenha acesso às vacinas (**audio problem**) A questão da nutrição, esse é um ponto muito importante para nós e continuamos a trabalhar com o Ministério da Saúde que é o nosso principal parceiro e algumas ONG. Agora temos a componente do agente de saúde comunitária porque temos algumas vezes a situação de que os postos de saúde estão lá, o centro de saúde, mas por causa daquela componente que nós falamos agora há pouco sobre o fato de a população não reclamar por seus direitos, não há uma boa relação da população com os serviços de saúde, então o agente de saúde comunitária tem um papel muito importante para a protecção e no apoio das populações a usarem esses serviços (**audio problem**), principalmente as mulheres grávidas. (**audio problem**). Eles estão em todas as tabancas (vilarejos) do país. Eles são pessoas das tabancas que são capacitadas e trabalham em parceria com o Ministério da Saúde. Depois, temos a área de água e saneamento, principalmente até depois do golpe de estado o UNICEF reforçou o trabalho com as organizações comunitárias de base, não se trabalhava (**audio problem**), então depois do golpe de estado, uma das estratégias do UNICEF foi reforçar o trabalho no terreno, como o UNICEF já tinha muita experiência no terreno porque haviam muitos projectos que apesar de terem uma forte participação das estruturas do governo, estavam interligados a nível da comunidade, então nós reforçamos, nós não ficamos parados, enquanto a nível superior continuou aquela discussão se trabalha com o Governo ou não, nós continuamos a trabalhar a nível comunitário, foi dada especial atenção principalmente na área da água e do saneamento, com o apoio que é dado para as questões das vacinas, também houve um trabalho para a mudança de comportamento relacionada às práticas sociais (**audio problem**).

4. Não tiveram que encerrar nenhuma ação por causa do golpe?

Nos só tivemos, o que na altura foi público, a União Europeia em alguns projetos suspendeu recursos, mas nos não suspendemos nenhuma ação e reforçamos a resposta no âmbito comunitário.

Outra área prioritária é a da protecção da criança que nós trabalhamos aqui (se refere a seu departamento de trabalho), houve um certo atraso por causa dos trabalhos desenvolvidos com ministérios (**audio problem**), mas as actividades que desenvolvemos no âmbito comunitário com as ONGs continuaram.

5. Como a conexão de internet está muito ruim, gostaria de confirmar com você se as grandes áreas de atuação são: educação, sobrevivência da criança, água e saneamento, e proteção?

Esqueci de mencionar uma área muito importante que é a do HIV/AIDS, dentro do programa, atuamos directamente com o Secretariado Nacional de Luta contra a Sida (SNLS) e com muitas ONGS. Então, sobre o golpe, reforçamos nosso trabalho com associações de base, a nível comunitário, essa é uma área prioritária. E temos também uma área transversal que é a comunicação que dá apoio a todos os programas como áreas temáticas são essas.

6. No foco central desta tese académica, eu gostaria de saber se há algum investimento específico focado ao artigo 12 e como isso é feito? Há algum meio de medir a implementação deste artigo no país?

Como eu vejo a questão, no passado, o programa do UNICEF (acordo de cooperação de cinco anos) a componente de participação teve um forte foco, eu mesma quando entrei no UNICEF o meu posto era participação e desenvolvimento da criança, simplesmente depois o programa foi redireccionado e achou-se que a questão da participação da criança deveria ser integrada no programa de comunicação, por isso que muitas vezes eles trabalham com o Muniro e com o Venício, mas antigamente era comigo. Dentro do componente de participação, trabalhávamos com todas as estruturas juvenis. (**audio problem**)

7. Como tivemos uma falha na conexão, só gostaria de esclarecer: no quinquénio anterior havia uma componente específica para participação e desenvolvimento. E agora integrada no departamento de advocacia e comunicação. Ela é trabalhada de forma transversal? Não há um *budget* específico para participação?

Não há. O que está é que dentro do orçamento da área de *advocacy* e comunicação podemos colocar uma ou duas ações ligadas ao componente da participação. Porque antes nós tínhamos um programa e um budget, mas agora esta questão é trabalhada transversalmente, Nós na área da protecção para lhe dar um exemplo, ou melhor, um outro exemplo mais recente que é o da Educação, toda a questão da greve das escolas (**audio problem**), nós tentamos sempre

envolver as crianças em todo o processo, principalmente as estruturas juvenis e o Parlamento Infantil, portanto nós fazemos com que na nossa planificação e também nas demais áreas (**audio problema**) que se incluam atividades que sejam as próprias crianças e jovens que implementam entre seus pares, que participem mesmo, então já não há um programa específico, agora todos os programas tem essa componente. Mas você pode perguntar, está bem implementado ou não está? Aí já é outra questão porque a tendência é que tudo que tem a ver com a participação da criança é com a área da proteção ou comunicação. Então muitas das vezes é que aí (**áudio problema**), mas há casos positivos como o da Educação que sempre tentam inserir essa componente, talvez com a saúde não seja tão visível. (**áudio problema**). Eu pessoalmente até por uma questão pessoal por ter trabalhado com eles, eu tenho essa preocupação, então mesmo que não haja budget, nos tentamos fazer com que integrem actividades que eles querem fazer com outras actividades. Tentamos fazer um género de integração nos domínios que se tenham o interesse e que eles devem participar. Eles devem participar em tudo, não é? Então, nós tentamos integrar pelo menos o Parlamento Infantil nessas ações todas.

8. Você deve ter acompanhado pessoalmente até a criação dessas instituições. Cito o novo membro do *Committee on the Right of the Child* – Wanderlino Nogueira Neto, o fato de ter conversado rapidamente com ele sobre a RCJJ, ele atua há mais de 20 anos na área da infância e trabalhou no UNICEF Cabo Verde, e o desafio é que o UNICEF cria e apoia essas organizações, mas depois o desafio é fazer com que eles adquiram a sustentabilidade de sua atuação, o que é um pouco difícil. Por isso que a *Viração*, aquela revista feita for jovens, eles tem financiamento do UNICEF, mas também captam com outros parceiros. Então talvez o grande desafio, agora que a componente da participação está transversal, que essas organizações captem fundos em outras organizações.

É difícil, porque o UNICEF Brazil eu acho que eles até tem um programa dedicado à participação dos adolescentes, nós não.

9. Você considera o artigo 12 um desafio para a Guiné-Bissau?

Eu considero um grande desafio, mas podemos dizer que (a implementação do artigo 12) está melhor que há dez anos atrás porque continuamos apesar de assistirmos, o que é muito positivo nos últimos anos, a criação de estruturas de crianças e jovens que conseguem levar a voz dos seus colegas junto das autoridades locais, nacionais, administrativas, como a Rede de Crianças e Jovens Jornalistas, tudo isso são ganhos muito positivos, mas continuamos com um grande desafio porque o aspecto cultural da sociedade, porque a Guiné-Bissau é um país pequeno, mas com muitas culturas diferentes, você vê as diferenças quando você vai ao leste, ao sul do país, há algumas etnias que a criança tem uma posição dentro da sociedade mais livre de se expressar diante dos adultos, mas há outras nas quais as crianças praticamente não tem esse espaço, mesmo na faixa etária do grupo criança, há (diferenças entre) a criança feminina e a criança masculina, a menina e o rapaz, nem todos tem o mesmo direito em determinados espaços comunitários de terem expressadas suas opiniões. Portanto, há restrições e há muitas regras principalmente ao nível rural que continuam a fazer com que as crianças

não consigam expressar suas opiniões, seus desejos. É importante destacar que mesmo ao nível regional há muitos programas, as ONGs (**audio problem**). O que nós temos que fazer é trabalhar mais a nível comunitario para que essa atuação não se torne restrita a uma atividade do 1 de junho (Dia da Criança Africa) e depois a ONG vá a ter a vida e tudo volta ao normal, temos que trabalhar com os pais, com a propria comunidade e ainda há muitos desafios.

10. E para complementar essa pergunta, como você vê o trabalho específico da Rede de Crianças e Jovens Jornalistas da Guiné-Bissau? Você acha que eles contribuem diretamente a implementação da Convenção? E como o UNICEF os apoia?

Eu, pessoalmente, como eu te disse há um bocado, como nós tínhamos naquele tempo que o programa tinha esta componente específica (da Participação) talvez a atuação era maior, e me lembro a comunicação tinha uma equipe maior, também há a questão dos fundos, mas eu via mais a criança da rede mais no nosso escritorio, agora não os vejo tanto. Então, eu continuo a acreditar muito no trabalho deles, principalmente na rádio, porque a radio é um vetor se não o principal deles, a nível da rádio eles continuam a ter um grande impacto, continuam com os seus programas, continuam a passar boa informação, conseguem levar a outros colegas, conseguir levantar e a discutir essas tematicas a nível da radio, mas fora da componente da rádio, se você me perguntar o que eles estao a fazer (além da rádio) neste momento, eu sinceramente não sei te dizer porque não sinto tanto como eu sentia antigamente. Ou até como sentia no tempo quando tu estavas cá, às vezes uma pessoa ou uma organização dar aquele apoio a estrutura é muito importante porque são crianças porque são jovens e importante orientá-los para eles terem um acompanhamento. Portanto, eu sei que o UNICEF sempre foi parceiro da rede desde a sua criação e neste momento talvez até as proprias crianças podem dizer com maior detalhe o que eles estao a fazer. (**audio problem**)

11. É importante ver que você reconhece a importância do trabalho deles. Não como você vê, mas eles tem uma metodologia que eles criaram, a dinâmica de trabalho, da criança para a criança. Como você que é especialista da área avalia isso?

Eles são um grupo muito respeitado pelos seus pares, muito sério, desde a sua criação nunca ouvimos, porque aqui é muito pequenino se comenta tudo, às vezes algumas ONGs ou associação de jovens a gente ouver dizer que dá problema porque se zangaram, até mesmo no Parlamento Infantil às vezes temos essas situações, portanto tentamos até apoiar, mediar, mas eu sinto com a rede, eles mesmo sem terem muito apoio até como o Parlamento Infantil, por exemplo, tem fundos da Assembleia Nacional Popular da Guiné-Bissau que dá anualmente ao Parlamento Infantil, enquanto a RCJJ não tem nada disso, mas eles fazem. Entao eu vejo o trabalho deles mais numa perspectiva de voluntariado para cidadania muito positivo. Eles estão a fazer um muito bom trabalho, mas é preciso reforçar e não apenas fazer uma ou outra atividade e depois nunca mais vê-los, tem que haver uma continuidade.