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# Acronyms

<b>ABG</b>	Attorney at law.
<b>CA</b>	Adoption Center.
<b>CODENI</b>	Municipal Council for the Rights of Children and Adolescents.
<b>CSJ</b>	Supreme Court of Justice.
<b>COMANPAP</b>	Coordinator of Judges for Children and Adolescents and Juvenile Justice in Paraguay.
<b>DIPROE</b>	General Directorate of Special Protection.
<b>MDP</b>	Ministry of Public Defense.
<b>MINNA</b>	Ministry of Children and Adolescents.
<b>MITIC</b>	Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies.
<b>MP</b>	Public ministry.
<b>MSPBS</b>	Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare.
<b>LIC</b>	Licensed.
<b>PPF</b>	Paraguay Movement Protects Families.
<b>ROLE UK</b>	Advocates for International Development's Rule of Law Expertise.
<b>SFAC</b>	Strengthening Families for Abandoned Children.
<b>UKAid</b>	United Kingdom Department for International Development.

# Executive Summary.

From August to December 2019, a national review of the child protection and care system in Paraguay was carried out for the first time, seeking to generate the necessary information to assess and analyze the roots of the problems and make informed decisions. This inter-institutional work was directed by the Ministry of Children and Adolescents and the Ministry of Public Defense with the Supreme Court of Justice and the Office of the Public Prosecutor, identifying the “bottlenecks” of the administrative and/or judicial process for special protection and care of children and youth who live separated from their families or who suffer situations of high vulnerability within their family. It was culminated in a strategic work summit, bringing together the key actors and the high authorities of the System in order to present to the Government the result of the cross-government review carried out and provide a road map with efficient and attainable solutions and improvements, which seek to optimize and restructure the protection and care system throughout the country, with the child as the only center.

The main findings that resulted from the various methods of research and cross validation of data between the institutions and key stakeholders of the System at the national level (questionnaires, case studies, conversations and interviews, as well as the compilation of previous studies of the last 20 years) include the alarming disparity in the data obtained on the number of children in court protection proceedings, the high number of pending cases classified as “national emergency”, the very serious shortage of professional resources to solve them, the almost zero investment / expenditure of the State to provide alternative care (currently dependent on the private sector), and the virtual absence of real participation by children in the process, among others.

Through the problem analysis, the following ten root issues were identified: 1) lack of the child being the focus or center of the process as rights holders; 2) lack of balance and due process, distinction of roles and responsibilities, and clarity in duties; 3) complexity of the system and stakeholders involved, multiplicity of participants, fragmented attention or response to needs; 4) lack of social work before, during, and after the judicial process for coordination and case management; 5) there is no process known by all, where each stakeholder or party involved is trained in what to do; 6) there is no access to information, nor an integrated database for case management, control mechanism and monitoring; 7) lack of family support, that is, availability and access to social services and programs; 8) insufficient or absent budget / resources / investment in the area of children; 9) weakness of the national system for the promotion and protection of children's rights; and 10) lack of interest and commitment of authorities in the area of children, with several exceptions.

In response to this national emergency situation in the current system, cross-government solutions were designed for the immediate response and in the short and long term, based on which a transversal implementation plan was developed.

From these root issues, the following short-term solutions are proposed in order to achieve the goal: 1) unified guidance manual of functions and procedures, that is agreed, validated and implemented as a line of action by the institutions involved; 2) an integrated, specialized and exclusive psychosocial team as an inter-institutional contingency response (MINNA, MDP, CSJ and MP) to conclude the 1,100 urgent open cases of children in residential and foster care; 3) empowerment of the National Council for Children, with effective mandate and data on social care and specialized services currently provided; 4) connection to family support programs, identifying the agency to connect with existing social support services for children at higher risk; 5) preparation of control and monitoring mechanism through a cross-government team; 6) awareness of all stakeholders about the protection and care process before, during and after the court proceeding; 7) conditioning of monetary transfers of the Executive Power to CODENI in its functions to promote basic rights of all children and their access to local universal services; 8) designating Justice Operators to be exclusive, specialized to children's courts and offer round-the-clock service t; 9) improve the roles in practice, for the bringing and prosecution of the case, the effective inclusion of the child's voice and actual cross-checking of the process.



Although the long-term solutions could not be developed in depth, given the emergency of the current situation and the time / resources required to plan more significant solutions, two subsequent summits were scheduled for April and August 2020, to analyze and define the following long-term solutions: 1) installation of an integrated database and case management support system with technological resources, central and accessible to all agencies involved in the process; 2) application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to the judicial process to modernize and expedite it, avoiding the delay and loss of information in bureaucratic proceedings; 3) cross monitoring and control mechanism, with standard criteria focused on the child; 4) percentage of minimum budget for CODENI in the promotion of children's rights, according to population and based on local diagnosis; 5) creation of an intermediate social agency, that is to say professional specialized "social services" for case management, under the Ministry of Children (National Government) hand in hand with CODENI in each community, which receives all referrals to carry out social protection work prior to court intervention, as well as during and post trial; 6) unified court proceeding and title of the case file so that each child is subject to a single process; 7) review of how the roles and balance of the process are carried out in practice, ensuring that the child is at the center of the process.

The cross-government implementation plan, designed at the summit as an immediate inter-institutional response to the emergency, contains the following lines of action to address the goals, for the emergency, short and long-term:

- **Project 1:** Conclude the 1100 current open cases, of children in residential and foster care, by the end of 2021.
- **Project 2:** Development and application of short-term measures to new cases at the nationwide level.
- **Project 3:** Development of long-term measures for a better and quicker process, vision of 6 months per case.

In order to initiate this plan, a clear mandate is first required, from the higher levels of the State, hiring a general manager for the implementation of the plan and designating the institutional liaisons for each line of action. As for the emergency, Project 1, it must have the human resources, with design and monitoring, forming the entire professional structure that will work for 18 months, empowering the different institutions that will form these professional teams; in addition, it should include training at the end of the project (transition) so that there is an installed capacity that can continue the work. As for the short term, Project 2, a special team is necessary to start a first phase in three departments (Cordillera, Caaguazú and Luque), and then expand to an additional five departments in a second phase, followed by nationwide training. Finally, many changes require more time, so Project 3 will focus on deeper study of long-term measures, with more extensive analysis of the root issues. These issues must be defined and confirmed at two subsequent strategic summits (April and August 2020), in order to determine these definitive solutions for the system, and not to lose the momentum achieved among the institutions that comprise it.

The preliminary budget proposal that quantifies how to solve the problems immediately and inter-institutionally, in the face of the emergency and in the short and long term, estimates a value of 2 million dollars, considering the necessary resources to implement the three projects which together constitute part of the cross-government plan, in order to change not only the history of Paraguay, but that of thousands of children and adolescents who await a family to protect and care for them.

# Introduction.

The purpose of this systematization report is to make available the information produced at the Summit in the final stage of the cross-sectional review of the child protection system, and to be a communication and planning tool at the service of the Government agencies that were part of this process. This document specifically includes the set of proposals prepared and presented by the research team and institutional liaisons, together with the subcommittee of the National Council for Children and Adolescents, in the development of possible solutions framed in three phases: immediate, short-term and long-term.



## Section I. The National Cross-Government Review.

### A. Background.

The #NoMoreChildrenInArchives campaign launched in September of 2019 began a process of cross-sectional review of the child protection and care system in Paraguay. The aforementioned national review, which seeks to optimize and restructure the system of special protection and alternative care, was carried out for the first time in the country, since 30 years after the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the international law that has installed the promotion of the holistic welfare of all children and adolescents as subjects of rights in the country.

This inter-institutional review was carried out within the framework of the Declaration of Commitment to “Best Practices in the Judicial Process of Protection and Care for the Child” signed by the Supreme Court of Justice, the Office of the Public Prosecutor, the Ministry of Defense Public and the Ministry of Children and Adolescents, on April 26, 2019, result of the international seminar held on the subject in November, 2018.

Thus, specific questionnaires were applied to all Justice Operators, programs and services of national Government and CODENI in the country, as well as with the four government bodies involved; cases, selected at random as well as paradigmatic, of child custody or guardianship (with relatives, non-relatives and in foster care), residential care and adoption, were studied; group conversations with all sectors of government and civil society were also carried out, in addition to interviews with children and families who were subject to this process. Through the work of the review it was possible to identify “bottlenecks” of the institutional process (administrative and / or judicial) of protection and care of children and adolescents who live separated from their families or who suffer situations of vulnerability, waiting for a family to protect and care for them.

The government bodies involved received technical support from the Paraguay Protects Families movement, national specialists Leticia Rodríguez and Alejandra Rodríguez from ENFOQUE Niñez, and international consultants Hugh Salmon, Ruth Sharon and Daniel Spanagel, as well as financial and technical support from ROLE UK, UKAid and SFAC, which made it possible to conclude the analytical phase. The summit received sponsorship and support from the Cordillera Governorate, the Alta Gracia Hotel, the Koeti Foundation, among others.

## B. Objectives.

The national review of the institutional proceedings of special protection and alternative care, for children and adolescents separated from their families or at risk of being so, has sought to generate the information necessary to transversely assess and address the roots of the problems and make informed decisions.

The final stage of the review was carried out in several steps, bringing together the key stakeholders and high level authorities of the System in a strategic work summit, in order to present the State with the results of the review and provide a roadmap for the Government with efficient solutions and achievable improvements, which seek to optimize the protection and care system throughout the country, with the needs of the child at the

**Image 1:** Empty chair in the center of the workroom during the summit, symbol of the child as the central focus of the review.



## C. Organizers, participants and guests.

### 1. Organizing institutions.



Inter-institutional coordination and liaison:



## 2. Research team and Institutional liaisons.



Abg. Anja Goertzen, PPF coordinator.



Abg. Adriana Fleitas, PPF coordinator.



Mag. Leticia Rodríguez, ENFOQUE Niñez specialist.



Abg. Alejandra Rodríguez, ENFOQUE Niñez specialist.



Lic. Damaris Kaethler, technical assistant, PPF Chaco.



Abg. Leticia Ocampos, MINNA technical assistant.



Abg. Dora Verón, Director of the Adoption Center, MINNA.



Lic. Larissa Recalde, Director of DIPROE, MINNA.



Abg. Natalia Colman, Commission for Purging Legal Cases, MDP.



Abg. Blanca Ugarte, Representative to Adoptions Council, MP



Judge Rosa Yambay, second instance Court of Cordillera, Chair of COMANPA, CSJ.



Abg. Alice Resquin, Director of International Affairs, MINNA.



Abg. Ruth Sharon, international specialist Role UK / SFAC.



Daniel Spanagel, international consultant, moderator.



## Technical support during research and review:

- Abg. Diana Vargas, Advisor to the Senate
- Lic. Celeste Rodríguez and Lic. Pamela Sosa, social workers, PPF
- Abg. Pamela Caballero, interim liaison of MDP
- Hugh Salmon, social worker, international consultant.
- Interns of the FAHCE, Evangelical University of Paraguay.
- Lic. Sara Zevaco, MBA, economic specialist.

## 2. Sub Commission for the protection and care of the child, National Council for Children and Adolescents.



Abg. Adriana Marecos, Children's Public Defender, MDP.



Abg. Patricia Rivarola, Deputy Attorney General, MP.



Abg. Carina Sánchez, Coordinator of the Specialized Unit against Trafficking in Persons MP.



Lic. Zusana Cáceres, Departmental Secretary for Children and Adolescents, Caaguazú Governorate.



Ms. Andrezza Ortigoza, Front for Children and Adolescents, Director of DEQUENÍ



Lic. Aníbal Cabrera, Director of the Coordinator for the Rights of Children and Adolescents, CDIA

## Participation and support during the review:

- Judge Gloria Benítez, Member of the Second Instance Court of Children and Adolescents, Capital, CSJ.
- Judge María Eugenia Giménez, Chair of Second Instance Court for Children and Adolescents, Central Dep., CSJ.

## Special guests participating in the summit:

- Abg. Sonia Van Von Lepel, Vigilance Committee, CDIA.
- Abg. Eduardo Escobar, Vice Minister of Integral Protection of Rights of the NNA, MINNA.
- Lic. Cynthia Peña, Departmental Secretary for Children and Adolescents, Cordillera Governorate.
- Ms. Rocío González, Director of the Koeti Foundation.
- Ms. Ana María Zubizarreta, Director of the La Esperanza Mission Home.
- Abg. Andrea Cid, Protection Officer, UNICEF Paraguay.

## 2. High level Authorities in the official presentation of results.

- Abg. Teresa Martínez, Minister of Children and Adolescents.
- Abg. Lorena Segovia, General Defender.
- Abg. Patricia Rivarola, Deputy Attorney General in Safeguarding Area, Office of the Public Prosecutor.
- Judge Rosa Yambay, institutional liaison of the Supreme Court of Justice.

**Special guest:** Mr. Rafael Obregón, Official Representative of UNICEF.



### Other guests:

- Econ. Néstor Martínez, General Director of Cabinet of MINNA.
- Mr. Brian McCobb, Coordinator of Paraguay Protects Families (testimony) and other representatives.
- Members of the National Council of Children and Adolescents and specialists in the field, among others.
- Abg. Diana Vargas, Advisor to the Senate
- Abg. Lourdes Barboza, Commissioner of the National Mechanism for Prevention against Torture.
- Justice operators and local / national system stakeholders.
- Young adults who experienced the protection and care system in Paraguay (testimony).

# Section II. Progress and Results of the Review.

## A. Research Methods.

The initial phase of research, carried out from August to December 2019, involved a cross-government review, the results of which made it possible to identify bottlenecks of, as well as recurring situations in the system (i.e. nonexistent or insufficient investment, lack of support programs, fragmentation of the response and processes, duplication of roles and functions, etc.). The research methods used at this stage were the following:

- Compilation of previous studies conducted on the subject in the last 20 years.
- Questionnaires to justice operators and system stakeholders: Judges (60% responded), Children's Public Defenders (70% responded), Prosecutors for children's courts (100% responded), Criminal Prosecutors (high percentage, still responding), programs and offices from the National Government (only responses from the Ministry of Children, not from other Ministries) and CODENI (almost 10% responded).
- Institutional questionnaires: MINNA, MDP, MP and CSJ.
- Group conversations: Executive Branch of Government, Legislative Branch, Judicial Branch, and with civil society and cooperation organizations.
- Interviews: with young adults who were part of the protection system when they were children; and also with families (child custody or guardianship / adoption)
- Case studies: both by random selection and paradigmatic cases (15 of 20 selected cases were obtained and analyzed)

## B. Program: Summit Week.

The week of the Summit was organized around the review of the research results and design of solutions, which was then divided into three main phases according to the type of work to be carried out and stakeholders involved. The itinerary was as follows:

- Research team and institutional liaisons: on December 13, 14, 15, and 16, the team conducted a review of the current situation based on the results obtained in the investigation. In addition, they worked on the design of how the system should be, what the current investment is, and what could be considered as the target investment.
- Sub Commission on Protection and Care, National Council for Children and Adolescents: On December 16 and 17, the Sub Commission joined the work team. It analyzed the design of how the process should be, previously developed by the research team, as well as the investment and the comparison of the costs. The next steps of the Government were defined at this stage, with a roadmap proposal.
- High Authorities: after a preliminary presentation on Tuesday December 17, on Wednesday December 18 the official event was held to present the results of the Summit to the high authorities and other guests.

Image 2: Summit Week Program December 2019.



## C. Methods Applied at the Summit.



During the Summit, explanation was given regarding the applied theoretical methods which fostered the necessary environment and provided structure in order to create a cohesive work team so as to attain the expected outcomes and proposals. The methods and theories applied are as follows:

- **The 'War Room Approach' technique:** it was to gather all the participants and liaisons of the different institutions for a week (the summit) in a secluded place, to be able to have the necessary time as well as to facilitate the necessary meeting to allow for the identification of inter-institutional solutions.
- **'Time boxing':** the fact that a limited time of one week was available until the high level Authorities arrived, to whom the results of the work had to be presented, gave the participants the pressure to focus on finding pragmatic solutions to the problems posed as a result of the investigation.
- **'Straw man proposal':** after presenting the results of the review, proposals were designed by initially setting out simple solutions and examples of best practice (this 'straw man' analogy being a preliminary proposal used as basis to generate discussion about its disadvantages and force the generation of new and better proposals); from there, the team worked on complementing and adapting these "straw men" to the identified needs and existing system of Paraguay.
- **Specific representative/use cases or 'personas':** current processes in the system were studied, as well as the possible solutions and the necessary processes to be added based on specific cases of children currently 'archived', how their case was processed, and how it could have been (similarly to the method of "design thinking" to improve the "user journey").
- **Problem -> root issue -> possible solutions:** using the problem analysis to break problems down into their root issues, and consequently be able to develop solutions that remedy the root issues; this method was used to get to the root of existing problems of the system and look for solutions and their variants, that are not "patch" solutions or false fixes, but really focus on changing the root issues.
- **The trust equation:** is created by the sum of credibility, reliability, intimacy, divided by personal orientation/personal interest. That is, the more credibility, reliability and intimacy (and less personal interest) in the interaction of the summit participants, the more confidence will be generated. This equation was presented to make the participants aware of the importance of establishing deep trust connections between the representatives of the different institutions, in order to have a strong and stable foundation to make inter-institutional solutions possible.



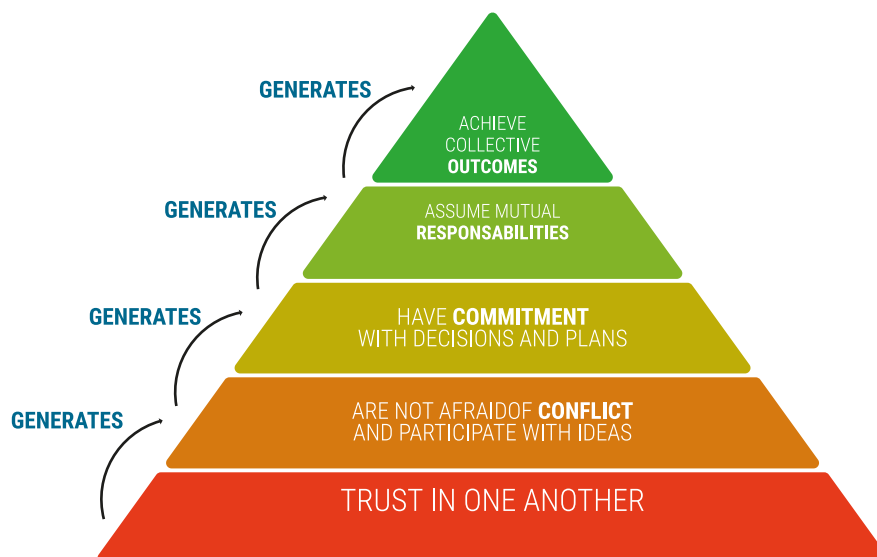
Image 3: The trust equation by Charles H. Green.

$$\text{Trustworthiness} = \frac{\text{Credibility} + \text{Reliability} + \text{Intimacy}}{\text{Self - Orientation}}$$

Charles H. Green

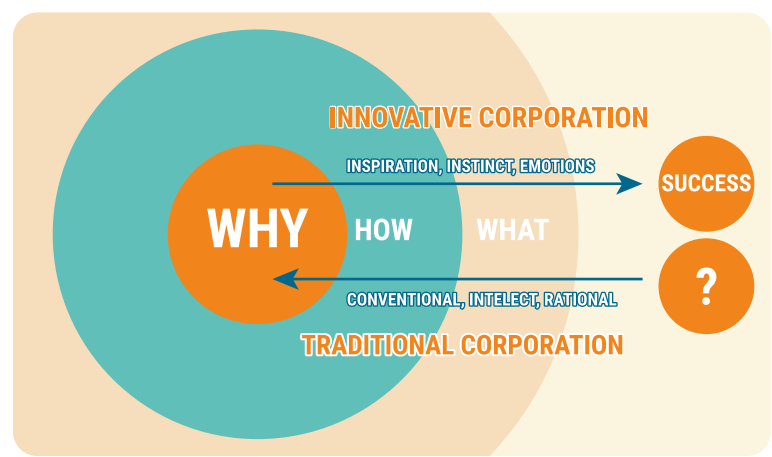
- *The 5 dysfunctions of a good team* proposes that there are 5 dysfunctions that prevent the optimal performance of the team, and they must be overcome in order of importance (from the ground up). This idea is summarized in a pyramid (see Image 4), clarifying that it is indispensable to eliminate all these dysfunctions to optimize team resources. This theory shows that the basis of every good team (as in this case the participants of the different institutions) is: **trust** as the foundation; which helps participants not to fear the **conflicts** in the discussions, to find solutions not considered until then, which are not included in the current institutional margin; so as to be able to assume commitments; and to be able to assume responsibilities per member/institution; in order to finally achieve **good results** (in this case solutions from a child's perspective).

Image 4: Overcoming the five dysfunctions of a good team of Patrick Lencioni.



• **The theory of the golden circle:** which conveys that in every process of change you have to start with the WHY and from there move onto the HOW you can implement this, and ending by looking at the WHAT. This replaces the conventional/more normally used process that begins with the WHAT, moves to the HOW, and asks WHY last. In this specific case, WHY would the children be at the center, and HOW would the best possible solution be provided in the shortest possible time, instead of looking at an institutional point of view, which would ask “WHAT is it that each institution should do?”

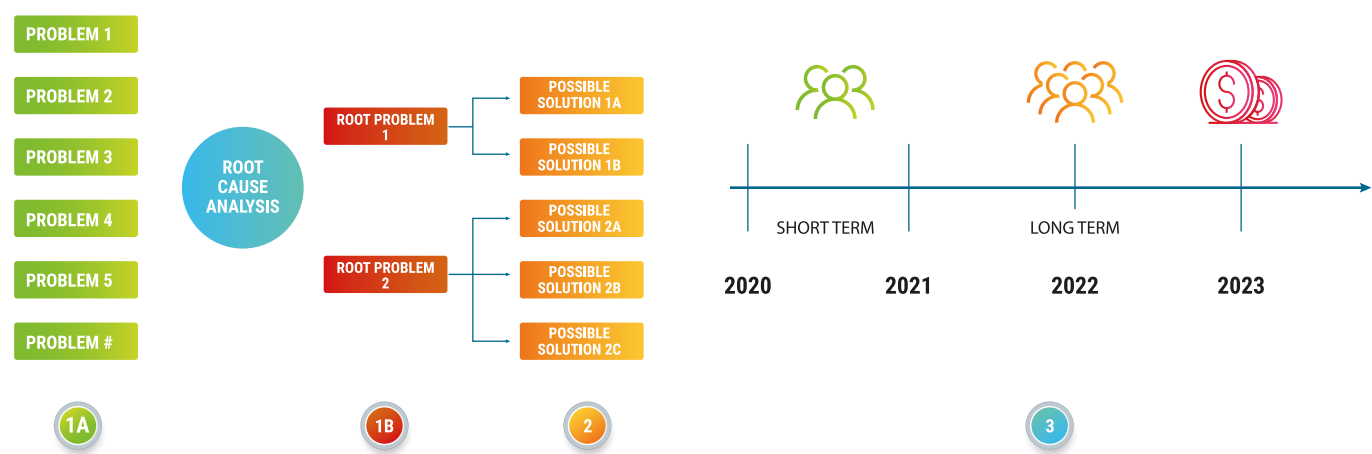
Image 5: The golden circle of Simon Sinek.



## D. Change Process

From the methods applied at the Summit, which guided the review and definition of the change process, ten root issues were identified at the core of all the possible problems. Possible solutions were then devised based on these ten root issues. From these solutions, both short-term (2020-2021) and long-term (2021-2023) roadmaps were developed.

Image 6: Outline of the change process.



## E. Research Results.

During the summit, the following raw data were presented, that helped to get an idea of the extent or total number of children affected; these data do not represent a statistical analysis.

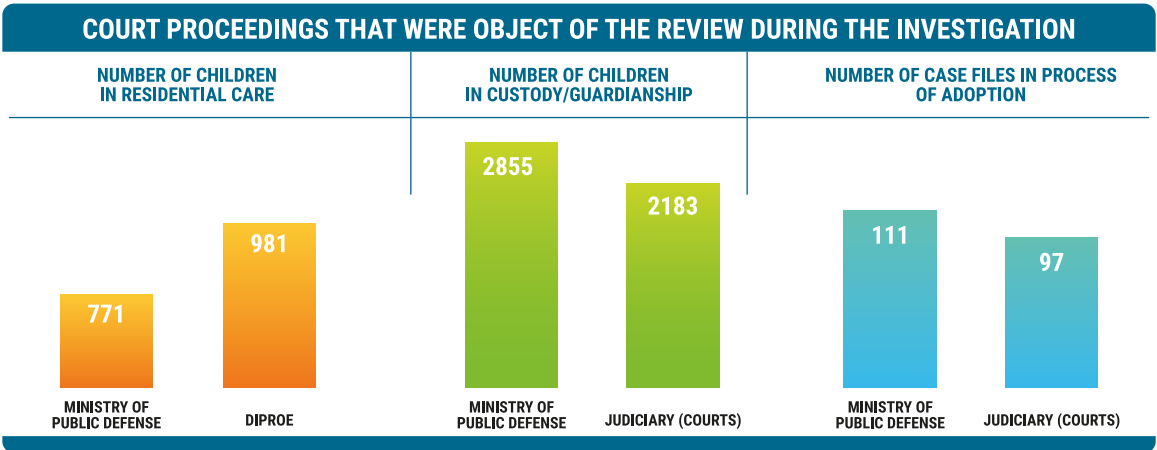
Table 1: Key figures of applied questionnaires.

Numbers reported by:	Judges	Public Defenders	MINNA
Responses received	33/59	78/108	2/2
Percentage of responses	56%	72%	100%
Number of children in residential care	310	771 <sup>1</sup>	981 <sup>2</sup>
Number of search/location of child's family completed	108	94/200	Obs <sup>3</sup>
Number of exhaustive family assessment completed	80	104/200	Obs <sup>4</sup>
Number of children in custody or guardianship	2.168	2.855	
Custody/guardianship with extended family	1.573	2.129	
Custody/guardianship in foster families	10	55	85
Custod/guardianship with non-relative third party family	328	382	
Number of cases in process of adoption	97	111	Obs <sup>5</sup>

### Observations

- <sup>1</sup> This particular data of the MDP reflects the response of 100% of the Children's Public Defenders.
- <sup>2</sup> Data of the DIPROE, MINNA reflects the update of inspection of residential care entities, total amount of children in their care.
- <sup>3</sup> Currently, the Adoption Center has 176 judicial requests pending for search and location of family and exhaustive family assessment work i.e. reunification efforts (62 children in residential care, 11 in foster care) of which 159 are overdue; this is parallel to the other roles of the Adoption Center listed in Art. 29 of Law Nr. 1136/97. DIPROE does not work this line of action.
- <sup>4</sup> Idem
- <sup>5</sup> Data recorded at the Adoption Center, MINNA, indicate that from 2017 to 2019 it has had intervention in a total of 255 cases in process of adoption (some pending from previous years); while in the same time period it was notified of 146 final adoption judgements (i.e. 159 children adopted, of which 44 were in alternative care before becoming part of their adoptive families, the others were already in care of the family by child custody (guardianship), before being declared eligible for adoption). To date, 43 children and adolescents are waiting to be adopted, according to CA data.

Image 7: Institutional data that differs, children in protection and care proceedings, 2019.



## The following conclusions are highlighted regarding the data presented by Justice Operators and other stakeholders:

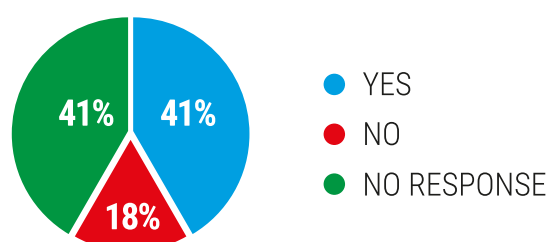
- The most striking result regarding the data presented is the large difference in number of cases that authorities manage as compared to the number of children actually in protection and care proceedings. This fact shows the gravity of the situation, that even after the present cross-government review, it is NOT possible to know how many children are in the care system. It is apparent that the data needs to be shared and cross-checked by the institutions.
- The main reasons given for separating the child from his or her family are abuse and maltreatment.
- There is no consistency in how to order a measure of protection in alternative care, be it child custody (guardianship) or residential care. Any of the three ways (i.e. Final Judgment, Auto Interlocutory or minor Court order) of ordering the care measure is valid; most of the time they do it by Auto Interlocutory (interim order), but also by Final Judgment and minor orders (to allow normal development of process, or for mere execution).
- The main reason why alternative care is not ordered, for children who are at high risk within their family homes, is that there are no foster families available.
- There is a lack of specialized professional teams to conduct the social assessment work of families (specialized professional work process to resolve the case); in addition, the existing professionals in the court arena are not exclusive nor specialized for children's courts, and they perform forensic as opposed to therapeutic work and social work; also, they do not work as a team with the Justice Operators.
- Courts mandate that the care measures be monitored, but it is not possible to know if this task is actually completed.
- The main problems in achieving swiftness in the proceedings: lack of professional teams, delay in submission of assessment reports, difficulty in notifying, civil cases of different nature in their charge, lack of resources in general.
- The biggest problem with the care system is the shortage of foster families, the total lack of financing for the provision of alternative care and its transformation to the family model, as well as the lack of professional resources for the implementation of the National Policy for Special Protection approved in 2012.
- In addition, the serious reality is that approximately 1,100 children in formal alternative care (residential and foster care) remain without response or conclusion of their case, in proceedings that last on average 4.5 years.



## Other findings of the questionnaires:

To the question, "When the Children's Public Defenders visit residential children's homes, do they interview the children and adolescents they represent?" The answers are as follows:

**Image 8:** Responses of Children's Public Defenders to the question whether they personally meet with the children they represent.



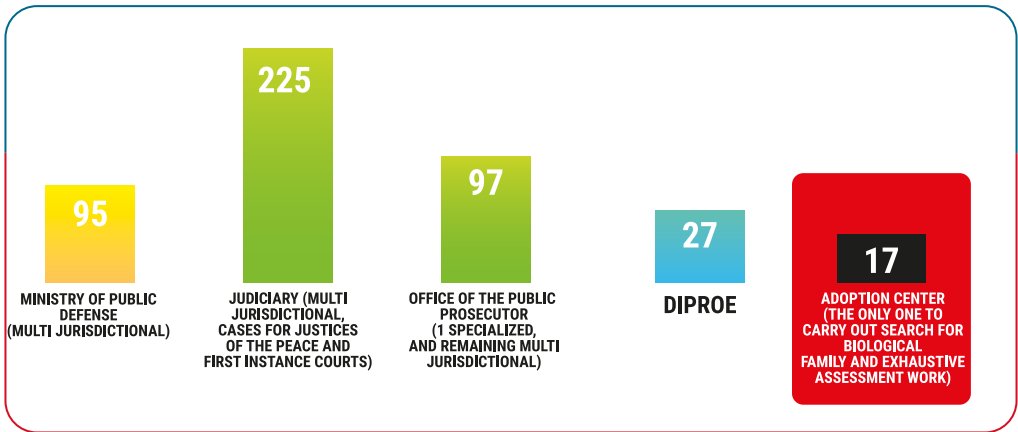


It is striking that the general answer is that they do not visit or interview children they legally represent who are in child custody or guardianship care. There is no clear instruction that the Children's Public Defender should interview these children, and the main reason why they do not interview them is because they consider it a job of the social worker.

Another fact that stands out is the lack of exclusivity of the jurisdiction of children's courts: the judges must give attention to other cases due to inhibition and recusal of other courts, the public defenders are multi-jurisdiction in some localities within rural areas, and there are only three specialized prosecutors for children's courts (the others are multi-jurisdiction).

With regard to the number of psychosocial professionals that the institutions have, the following scheme of results is presented (see Image 9). In the administrative Government arena, the only institution that performs the family assessment work (specialized professional work process to resolve a case) for the entire country is the Adoption Center. DIPROE is currently engaged in the work of supervision of residential care entities, transformation to family

Image 9: Number of persons in the professional teams, i.e. psychologists and social workers.



Conclusion of the cases of children reported in residential care:

- According to Judges' responses: in 35% of the cases a search for the child's family of origin is carried out, and in 26% the exhaustive assessment towards family reunification efforts is done, in order to resolve the case.
- According to Defenders' responses: in 47% of cases a search for immediate and extended family is carried out, and in 52% the extensive assessment work with the child's family is done.
- According to the response of the Children's Prosecutors: the majority did not answer whether or not search for child's family is carried out, nor do they have a record of how many children are in residential care.

Conclusion of the cases of children reported in child custody or guardianship:

According to the responses child on custody or guardianship, in its various forms (with relatives, with non-relative third party families, or in foster care itself), there is no clarity whether or not the exhaustive assessment of the child's family is carried out to resolve the case.

## F. Current Situation: System Structure.

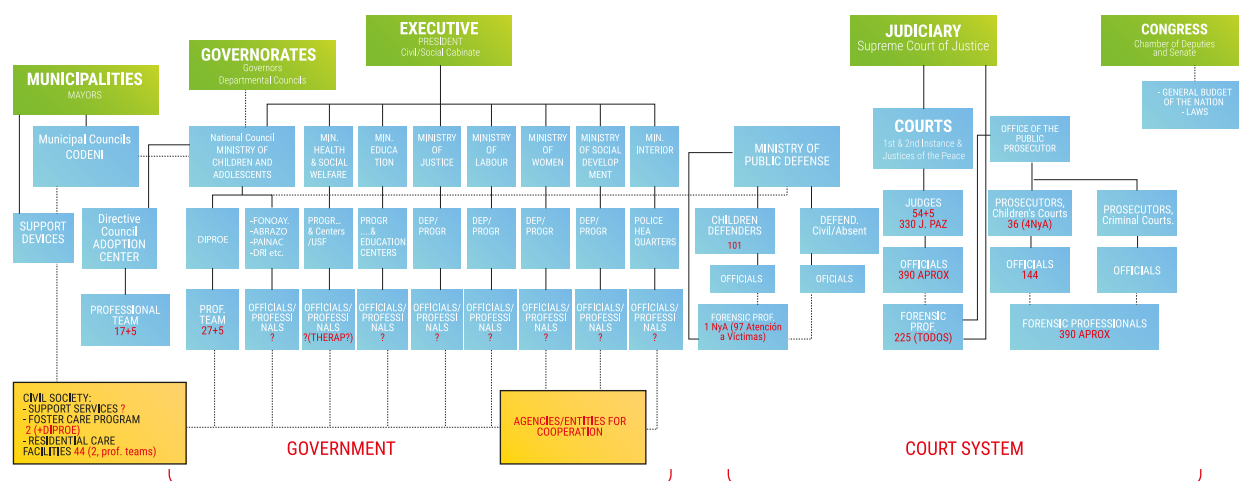
The current situation of the structure of the child protection and care system is outlined in a diagram (see Image 10). The number of judges, prosecutors, children's public defenders, and officials available to the system was observed. From the Executive Branch of Government, the only complete data obtained was that of the Adoption Center and DIPROE. The big question is to find out the following: What is the professional capacity? What resources are currently available? (Observation: no response was obtained from other dependencies of the national Government)

From the review of professional resources currently available to the system, the following are identified:

- Adoption Center: 17 professionals and 5 administrative staff (for work related to adoptions; currently also performs search and location of extended family, and exhaustive assessment towards family reunification).
- DIPROE: 27 professionals (for supervision of residential care entities, foster care, etc.).
- Public Defense: 95 forensic professionals (multi-jurisdiction, i.e. not exclusive nor specialized for children).
- Office of the Public Prosecutor: 1 psychologist specialized for children, 97 forensic professionals (multijurisdiction, for victim assistance in the criminal justice arena).
- Children's Courts: 225 forensic professionals (multi-jurisdiction, i.e. not exclusive nor specialized for children).

Likewise, it is observed that civil society assumes the majority of the expense for the provision of alternative care. Of the existing residential care entities (44), only 2 are State-run.

Image 10: Current situation: system structure.



## G. Case Studies.

Another issue to highlight is what happens within the process. The case studies were the most effective method of investigation to show the bottlenecks in the process. Twenty cases (12 selected at random and 8 paradigmatic) were requested, of which one case selected at random was examined in order to carry out an exhaustive analysis during the summit. Of the paradigmatic cases, different complexities were considered, such as a sibling group, residential and foster care, disabilities, a mother with mental health problems, and a teenage mother with her baby. In relation to the cases selected at random, files were taken from the Capital and Greater Asunción, as well as from the heads of Departments and from more rural areas, and with regard to the four types of care: residential care, child custody or guardianship with family member, with non-relative third party family and in foster care.

In regards to the exhaustive case study (case No. 1, selected at random) involving a group of siblings, it begins with a life-threatening emergency of a 3 month-old child. Time lapses are observed in which there are no movements in the process, but in general the different institutions (15 in total) that intervene in the case are recognized. However, among all the professional teams involved, they did not succeed in defining the situation in a clear way for the Judge. There was no plan of what was to be achieved in the case, in spite of all the proactivity visualized on behalf of the agencies that lead the process. The most striking aspect is that for 5 years the “state of emergency” never ended, and no appropriate and timely decisions are made throughout the process, even to the point that the youngest sibling almost died, due to the complexity and slowness of the process.

This complexity of the system is exemplified through a graphic diagram where all the agencies that intervened in the process, the moments of silence, and the comings and goings between the different institutions are visualized. (See Images 11, 12 and 13)

Image 11: Case study no. 1, part one.

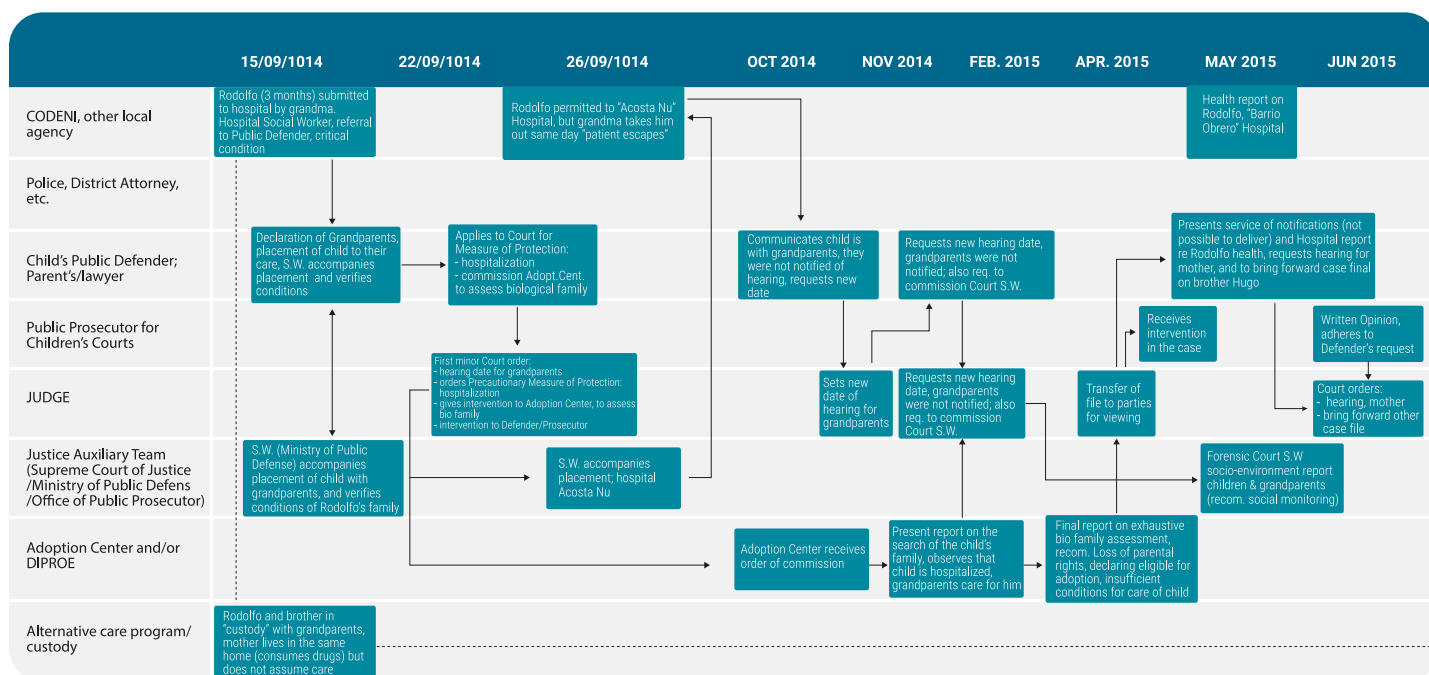


Image 12: Case study no. 1, part two.

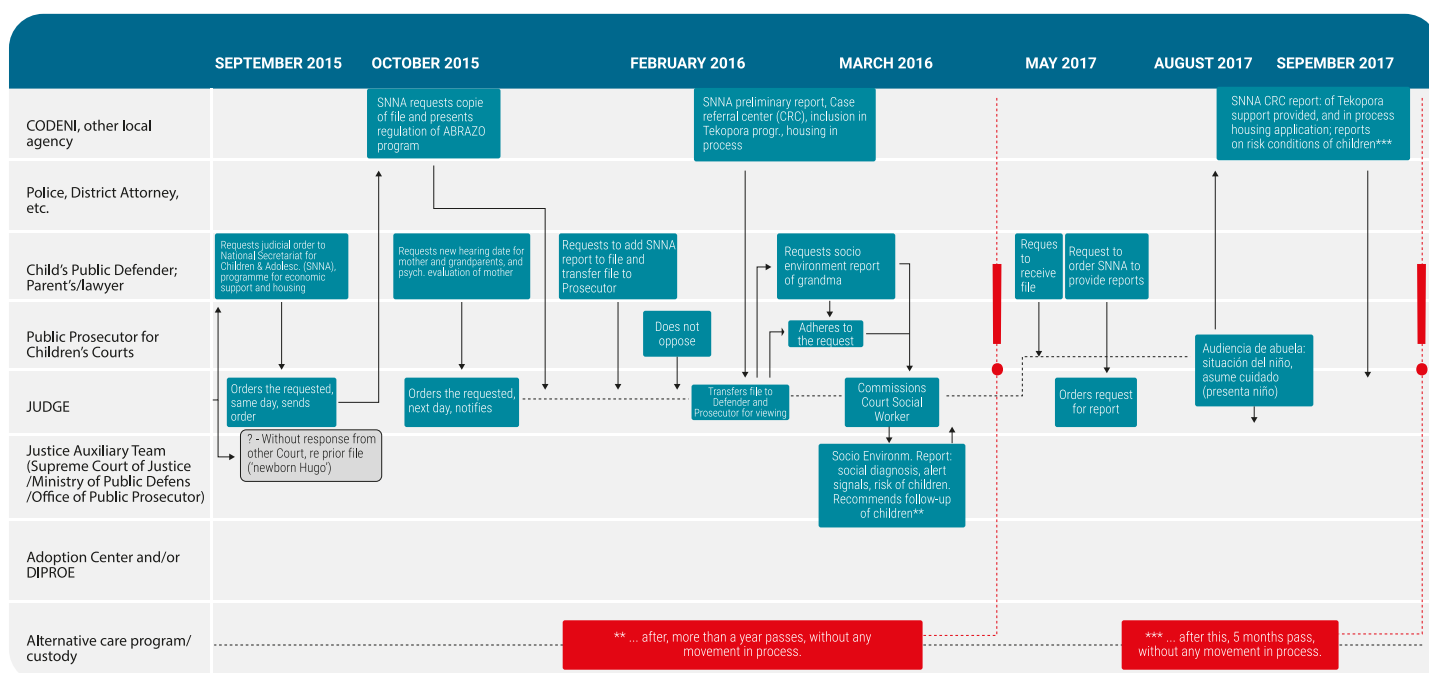
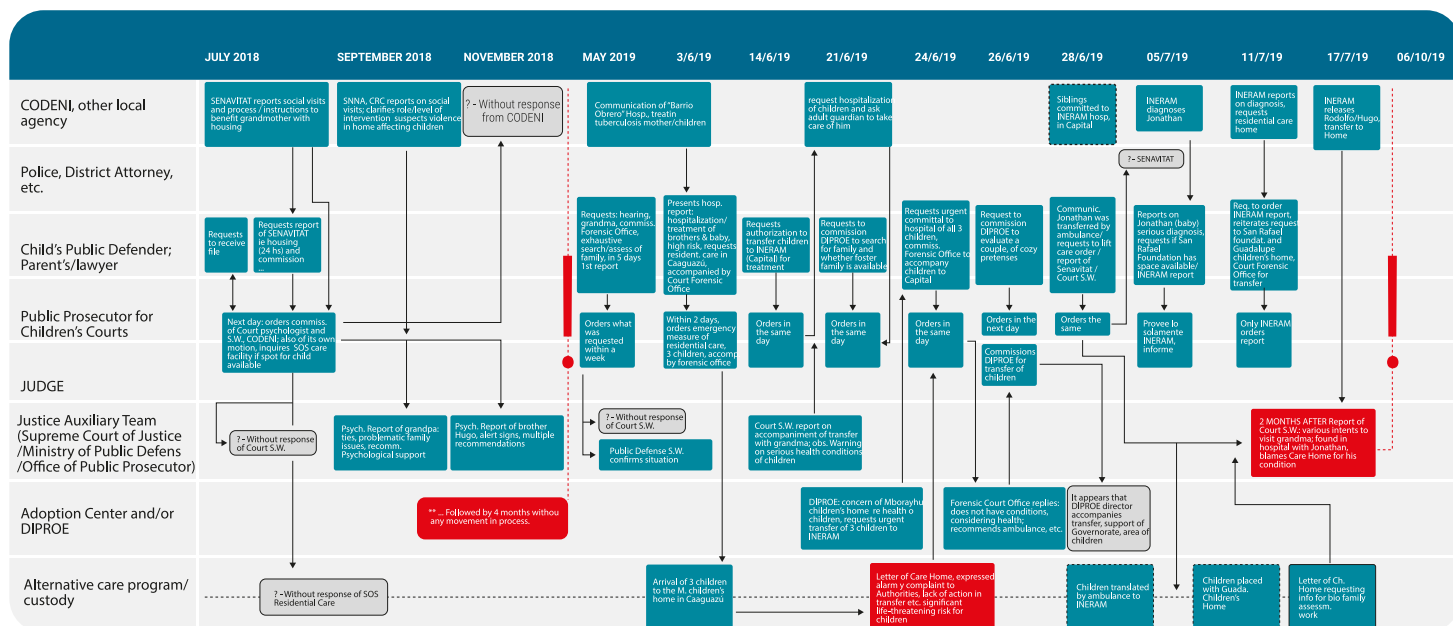


Image 13: Case study no. 1, part three.



Despite the multiple interventions of so many agencies, within both the jurisdictional and administrative arena, it is particularly striking that no decisions were made to resolve the child's life situation (although at the beginning the exhaustive assessment work of the child's family was already completed, recommending the loss of parental rights in consideration of the special conditions of the child and his family). Today, 5 years later, two brothers wait in a residential care institution while the youngest child is in serious health conditions in the hospital. Based on this study, the following findings are highlighted:

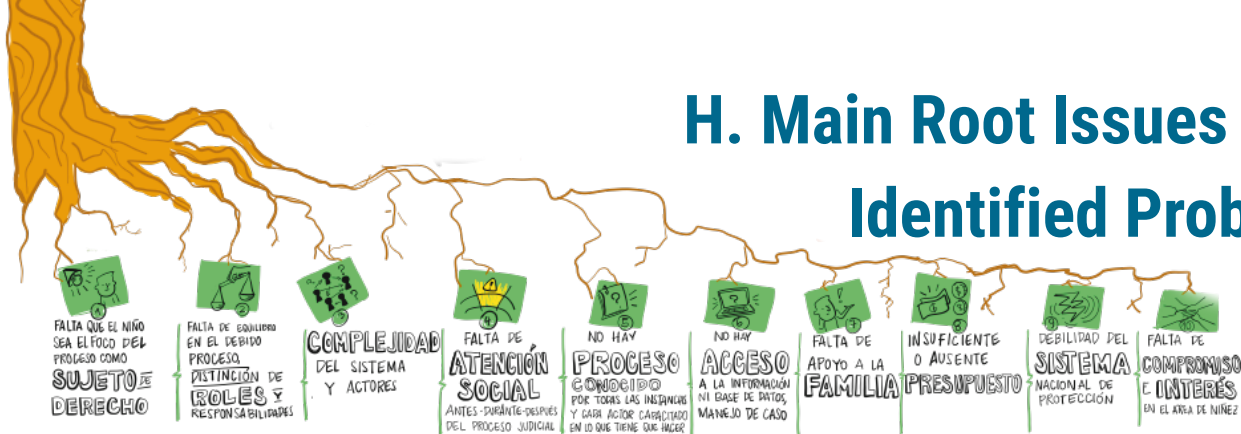
- Slowness of the process to respond in a timely manner to the needs of the child;
- Harmful impact of bureaucracy on the child;
- Lack of services for children and families, and avoidable court intervention owing to lack of specialized social services;
- Absence of a social body responsible for coordinating the appropriate responses;
- Failure to take advantage of early interventions and appropriate procedural agencies to solve the problem;
- Confusion, gaps and/or overlap of roles and functions; lack of direction within the process and plan to follow;
- Little or no participation of the child and family in the entire process;
- Re-victimization of child/family due to multiple, fragmented, and uncoordinated intervention from different agencies;
- Alternative care selection is sporadic according to availability (not suitability), and is assumed by the private sector;
- "Silences" in proceedings, where there is no procedural activity at all, to name a few.

During the summit, the research team and institutional liaisons, together with members of the National Council of Children and Adolescents, carried out a group reflection of the other case studies selected and studied by members of the team as a source of research for this review process. The findings they highlighted in these cases are very similar to those identified in case 1, regarding the difficulties and "bottlenecks" in the proceedings..





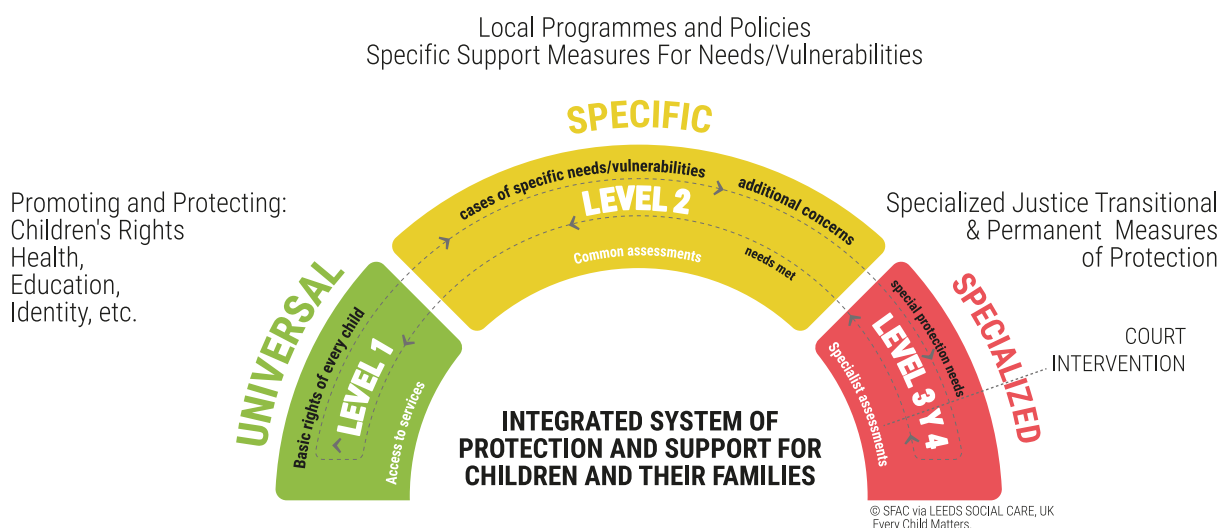
## H. Main Root Issues of the Identified Problems.



During the problem analysis (compilation and review of all the data obtained from the questionnaires, case studies, group conversations and interviews, as well as the compilation of previous studies) the root issues of the identified problems are as follows:

- *Lack of the child being the focus or center of the process as having rights:* centrality of the child.
- *Lack of balance and due process, distinction of roles and responsibilities, and clarity in duties:* a clear description of who needs to do that which is needed, and that those responsibilities are assumed, ensuring at all times that the child really is the center.
- *Complexity of the system and stakeholders involved, multiplicity of participants, fragmented service response:* the system itself is unbalanced, as it does not recognize the child as having/being in possession of rights; the child is made invisible.
- *Lack of social service before, during, and after the judicial process for the case management and coordination:* no one is in charge of providing social services, and accompaniment of the case (in yellow and when necessary red, see Image 14) with adequate human resources and training; too many institutions intervene in the process without being able to provide solutions.
- *There is no process known by all agencies, where each stakeholder or party involved is trained in what to do:* while training is needed, Government officials need to internalize the information, develop it in their areas, and actually put it into practice.
- *There is no access to information, no integrated database for case management, nor a control and monitoring mechanism:* there is no universal information accessible by all parties, with a software to monitor the workflow, and an escalation mechanism with alerts if deadlines are not met.
- *Lack of support for the family:* there are not enough specific and specialized social programs and services available in response to the different needs and risks identified, with adequate access to them.
- *Insufficient or absent budget/resourcing/investment:* lack of strengthening of each institution in the area of children; in addition, the expense to provide alternative care (foster and residential care) is dependent almost 100% on the private sector, and not on the State responsible for children separated from their families.
- *Weakness of the national system for the promotion and protection of children's rights:* it would seem that the area of children is viewed as inferior to other more important activities, as if it consisted of beneficence and not of responsibility; MINNA is not respected as the authority of the system.
- *Lack of interest and commitment to the area of children:* with some exceptions in the current authorities; it is necessary to change the view of "charity" to that of "investing".

Image 14: Windscreen graphic, to identifying the levels of intervention in the process.





## I. Short-term Solutions to Optimize the System and Process.

In response to the root issues, the following possible short-term solutions are proposed to achieve the goal of creating improved solutions for cases in child protection and care proceedings in a shorter time span:

- **Unified guidance manual of functions and procedures:** agreed, validated, and implemented as a priority line of action for the institutions; defines oralised process with application of the principle of concentration of procedure; standardized roles, criteria, and forms both for presenting the case and for the casework plan.
- **Integrated, specialized, and exclusive psychosocial team:** inter-institutional contingency team formed by MDP / MINNA / CSJ / MP for the definition of cases of residential and foster care, identified as the immediate urgency.
- **National Council for Children with mandate and data:** with the President and all Ministers; MINNA must be empowered as a real governing entity, as well as having power to manage how much is being invested cross-governmentally in the 'yellow' (pre-court social care and intervention) and in the 'red' (specialized services in the court arena).
- **Coordination of family support programs:** create or identify an articulating agency to connect with existing services before and after court process (i.e. through the Family Health Units of the MSPBS); develop a catalog of social support services available under the administrative government for children at greater risk.
- **Clearly earmarked transfers from the executive budget:** cross-government control team, with clear procedures established to act quickly in the knowledge of breach of deadlines or actions.
- **Conditioning of transfers of the Executive Power:** so that CODENI is strengthened in its functions of prevention (in the 'green'), for the promotion of basic rights of all children and access to local universal services.
- **Designating justice operators to be exclusive:** specialized to children's courts and offer round-the-clock service.
- **Enhance who presents the case, the voice of the child, and real cross-checking:** help ensure more proactivity, contact and real representation of the child, as well as effective accountability for cross-checking and balance in the process, with focus solely on the child and not just the procedure.



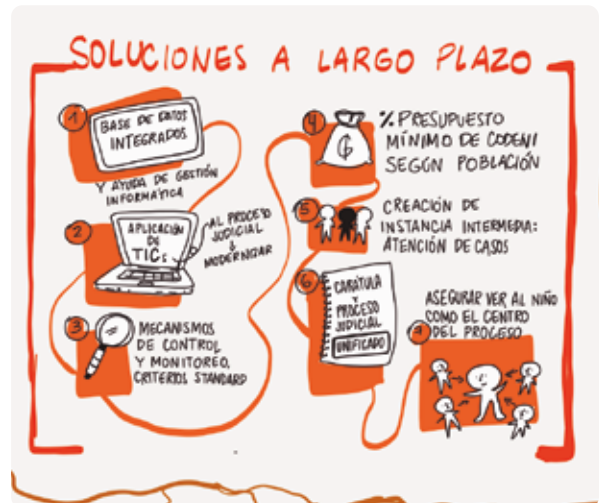


## J. Long-term Solutions to Restructure the System and Process.

During this Summit, the long-term solutions could not be discussed in depth because the short-term goals had to be prioritized due to the current situation being identified as an emergency, as well as in acknowledgement of the fact that planning solutions need more time and resources. Given the importance of long-term solutions for affected children, two subsequent summits for April and August 2020 have been scheduled with the inter-institutional liaisons.

The proposals presented for long-term solutions are as follows:

- **Integrated database and case management support system with technological resources:** central and accessible to all agencies involved in the process (of affected children's cases, as well as alternative care programs)
- **Application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to the judicial process, as well as modernization of the process:** to concentrate and expedite/streamline the process; avoids delay and loss of information in bureaucratic proceedings.
- **Control and monitoring mechanism, standardized criteria:** cross-government and crosschecking, with focus on the child.
- **Percentage of minimum budget for CODENI according to population:** for prevention and promotion of rights; based on local diagnosis.
- **Creation of intermediate social agency for case management:** under MINNA (National Government) with Municipalities, hand in hand with CODENI in each community. Specialized professional agency for "social services" that receives all referrals, to carry out social protection work prior to court intervention, as well as during and post trial.
- **Unified court proceeding as well as title of the case file:** one child, one single process.
- **Review of how to ensure that the child is at the center of the process:** looking at how are the roles and balance of the process are carried out in practice, and ensuring that it is on the basis of the child's comprehensive wellbeing, not only to comply with the procedure. Does the child have a real voice and participation?



## K. Cross-government Implementation Plan: Immediate Inter-institutional Response to the Emergency.

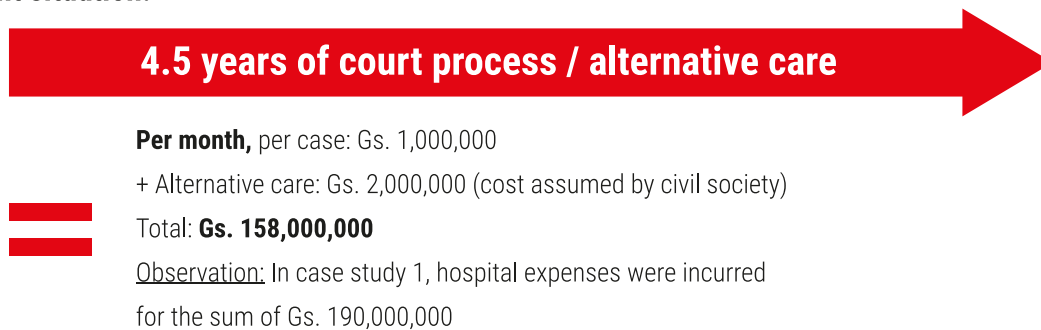
The following lines of action were identified to address the goals, for the emergency, short-term, and long-term:

- **Project 1:** Conclude the 1,100 current open cases, of residential and foster care, **by the end of 2021.**
- **Project 2:** Development and application of short-term measures to new cases at the country level.
- **Project 3:** Development of long-term measures for better and faster process, vision of 6 months per case.

## L. Financial Cost Analysis: Current vs. Restructuring Plan

A comparison of the cost of a case under current conditions and what the cost of a future case would be.

### • Current situation.



## + SOCIAL COST

Furthermore, there are the following social costs: re-victimization and suffering of severe moral damage, emotional harm, unemployment, do not contribute to paying taxes, early pregnancies, mental health issues, conflict with the law and recidivism, and their own children in the system. This has a significant financial cost for the country.

### • Target situation, plan for restructuring.



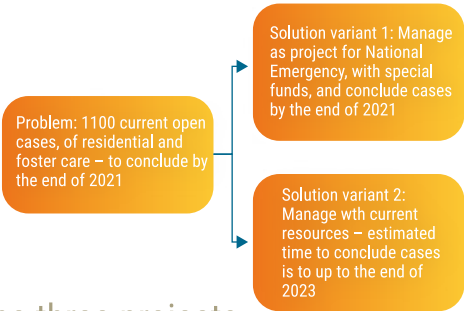
## + SOCIAL COST SAVINGS

In this approach a great social savings is identified: more possibility of establishing secure attachment, rehabilitation and/or reintegration, less damage suffered, more comprehensive health, and more possibility of employment. There is much less financial cost to the State, and greater social benefits are obtained.

# M. Implementation Plan: Change Management and Supervision.

## 1. Possible variants of the proposal to solve the problem (cases in the red zone).

The two possible variants that can be addressed to resolve the emergency situation of the 1,100 cases are outlined as follows:



## 2. Management structure of the three projects.

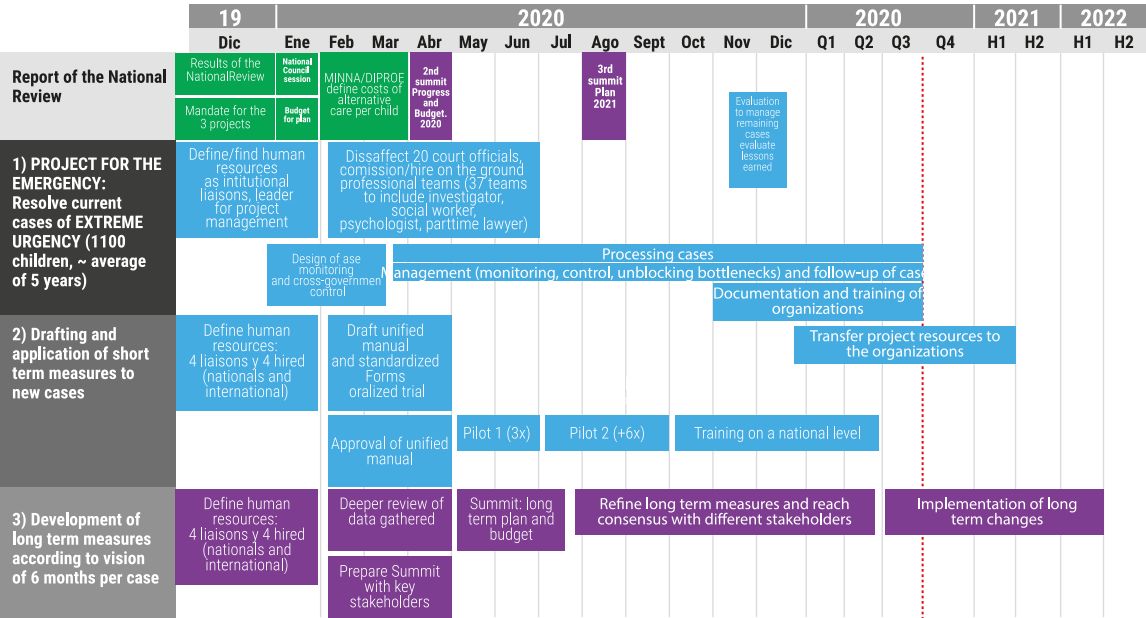
The route to the actions proposed in the master plan is presented through the project life cycle timeline (see Image 15). The master plan is subdivided into the three projects (emergency plan, short-term plan, and long-term plan).

Daniel Spanagel, the technical consultant and summit moderator, indicates that in order to initiate this plan, there must first be a clear mandate from a higher level to establish that this is to be achieved. The explanation of design, of each particular project, is as follows: the first emergency project must have human resources, with design and monitoring, to form the entire professional structure that will work for 18 months, as well as to empower the different institutions that will integrate these professional teams. In addition, it must include training at the end of the project (transition) so that there is an installed capacity that can continue the work. The professional teams that are formed must, after the project, integrate and strengthen the structures of the institutions, so it is necessary to provide sufficient funding in the budgets of the years 2022 onwards in order that these teams are permanently incorporated (at least partially and according to the needs of the institutions at that time).

As for the short-term project, a special team will conduct both several pilots and necessary national trainings. To be realistic, a first phase could be started in three departments and then expanded in a second phase to five additional departments. The jurisdictions that were proposed for the first phase are Cordillera, Caaguazú, and Central Dep. (Luque).

Many changes require more time, and for that reason, the long-term measures focus on a deeper study of the project and a more extensive analysis of the root issues; this is be socialized through two further Summits throughout the year 2020 (April and August) in order to determine these definitive solutions for the system. It is important to carry out these Summits so as not to lose momentum.

Image 15: Management structure of the 3 projects.



All of the 1,100 cases of extreme urgency are defined/resolved



### 3. Possible management of human resources for Project 1 (conclude the 1,100 open cases).

The magic triangle of a project: In a project it is important to consider that there are limitations that are dependent on each other.

**The basic constraints are the available resources, time, scope and quality:**



**In this specific case:**

- a. Scope: 1,100 cases
- b. Quality: a dignified solution for children 'in archives'.
- c. Resources: to be defined.
- d. Time: end of 2021

If it were decided to keep the time fixed (end of 2021), the resource would be the variant. On the contrary, if the resources were fixed (for example, only with the existing resources), then the variant would be the time (if it is presumed that the existing professional team can deal with the 1,100 cases, which according to the present review is not the case). The scope of the 1,100 should not change, since they are the most serious cases, and according to the consensus of the summit it is the minimum that has to be resolved urgently.

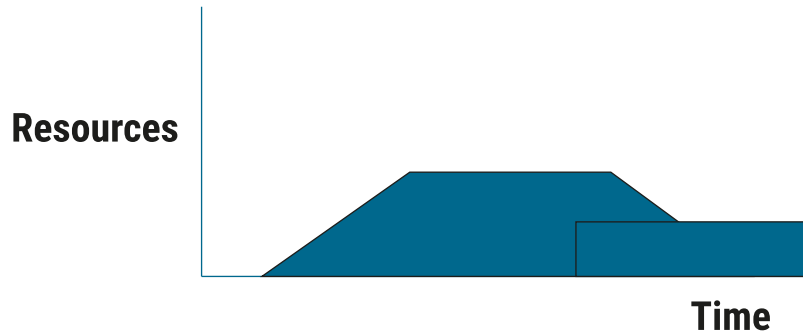


At the summit, it was agreed that the goal should be to resolve the 1,100 cases by the end of 2021. In order to achieve this goal, the following are required:

- **37 professional teams**, (to do the fieldwork) each consisting of a social worker, a psychologist, and a lawyer (experience shows that one lawyer is enough for every 3 professional teams) – that would be 86 professionals to form the integrated psychosocial team.
- **20 specialized court officials**, more specifically redesignating court officials currently working in many areas will be restricted to working solely within the child protection and care system. One official or court employee for approximately three courts in the country, that would rotate for weekly days within those three courts, for which he/she would be responsible to identify, coordinate with the judges, report progress to the central project team, and accelerate the 1,100 cases as much as possible.
- **A coordination team composed of 4 institutional liaisons, additional 4 professionals for coordination, plus 1 professional project manager**, to plan, manage, monitor, and report the progress of the project with all institutions, as well as the central entity providing mandate to the project.

**Resource management:** The incorporation of the 37 professional teams would be made progressively until the emergency situation (1,100 cases) is addressed; after the current situation has been adequately addressed, the number of teams would be reduced (although the amount remaining is yet unknown) – the remaining teams will be absorbed and integrated into the existing institutions in order to strengthen the current capacity which is low and insufficient. The rest of the central coordination team would dissolve after the project was completed.

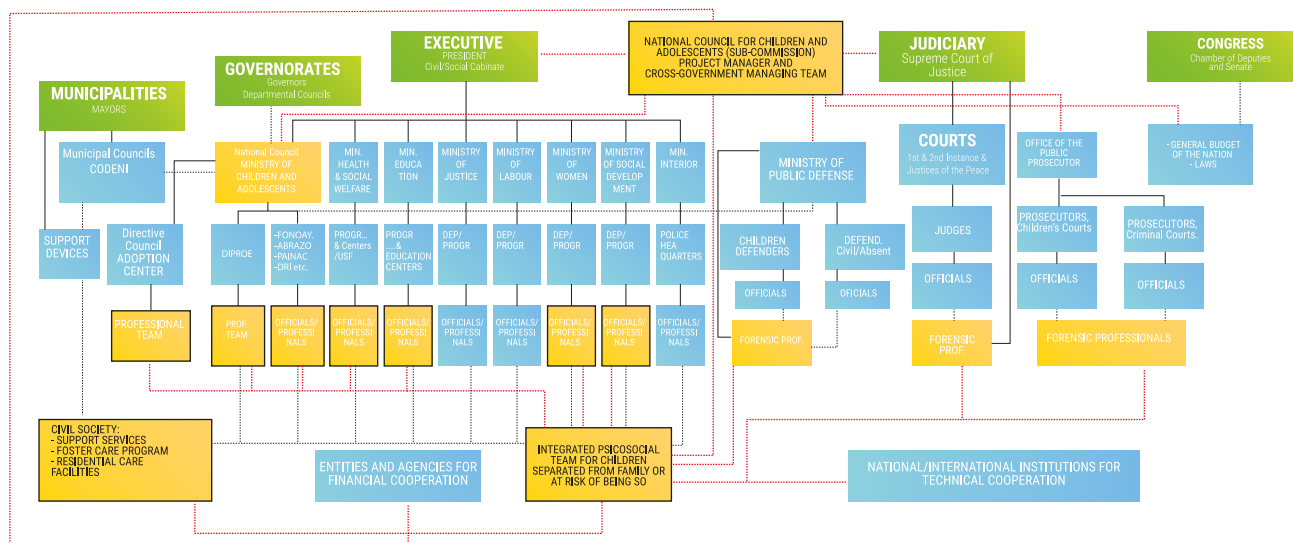
Image 16: Management of human resources for projects.



#### 4. Location of the integrated psychosocial team.

This is the preliminary view of where the inter-institutional professional team could be located, according to the current legal framework. This team will be composed of professional resources (commissioned) from the different institutions involved in the protection and care system as indicated in the graphic (see **Image 17**).

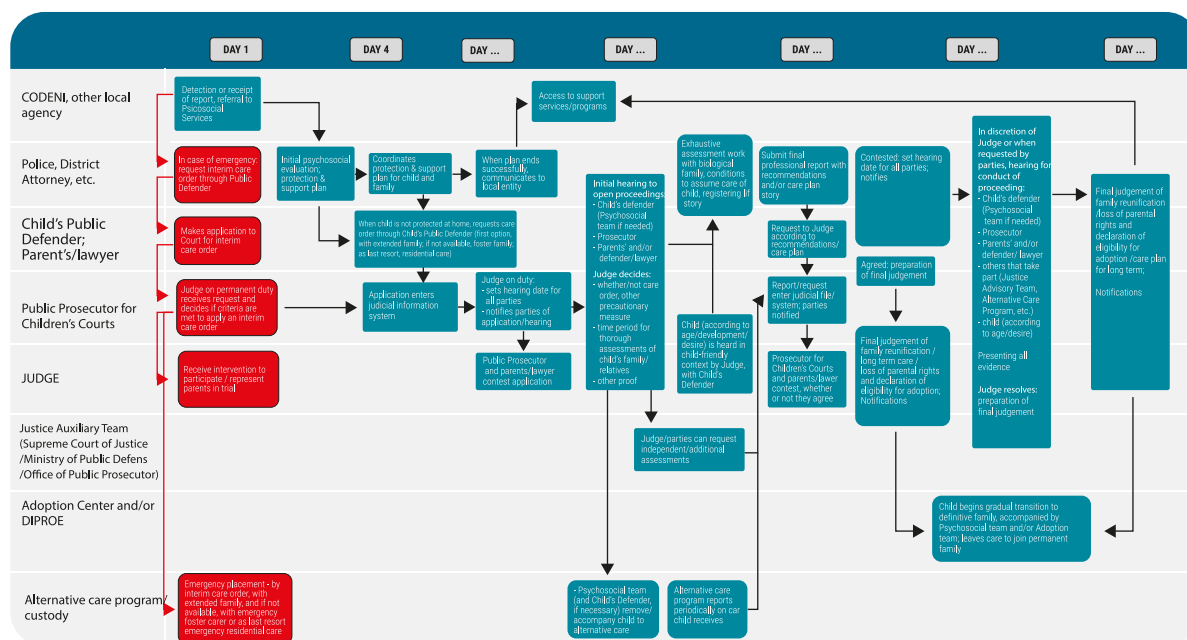
Image 17: Preliminary diagram of location of the professional team.



## 5. Proposal: process management outline.

The graphic below (see Image 18) is a preliminary demonstration of how the journey of a process within the child protection and care system could be considered, following this proposal, to be adjusted to the terms and procedures of the new law.

Image 18: Process stream proposal.



## 6. Proposal: preliminary target budget.

The preliminary budgetary proposal that quantifies how to solve the problems immediately and inter-institutionally, in response to the current emergency, and in the short-term and long-term, is demonstrated through the following table:

Table 2: Proposed preliminary target budget estimate.

MEASURE	PROJECT	ACTORS	DURATION	COSTS APPROX.
Emergency and Short Term (2020-2021)	Conclude ~ 1100 current open cases of residential and foster care until the end of 2021 (Obs. does not include the cost of providing alternative care).	37 Professional teams 20 Specialized court officials 4 Institutional liaisons, and 4 coordinators 1 Professional project manager	January 2020- Sept 2021	2020: ~1.66 m US\$ 2021: ~1.66 m US\$
	Short-term measures for new cases (manual and standardized forms, listed measures, national training, care options)	Short-term measures for new cases (manual and standardized forms, listed measures, national training, care options)	January 2020- Jun 2021	2020: ~0.185 m US\$ 2021: ~0.1 m US\$
Long Term (2020-2023)	Development of longterm measures for better and quicker process with vision of 6 months per case	Professional team (4) and national training + project management	January 2020- Jun 2021	2020: ~0.135 m US\$ 2021-23 to estimate
Total preliminary estimated costs for 3 projects 2020				~2 m US\$



## N. Final Testimonials.

Leticia Rodríguez of ENFOQUE Niñez moderated this part of the ceremony to present a testimony in which she invited two young adults, who lived for more than 8 years in a residential care facility, to share their experience of the process. She expressed appreciation to these young adults for their presence and willingness to share their story. The young people introduced themselves and shared some personal and family information. The following displays both the questions that were asked as well as the responses given:

**What do you remember of what happened? What was the reason of being separated from your family?** "The process was very painful, at home we constantly lived in situations of violence and instability, within my parents' relationship. Because we were a poor family, they sent us to the children's home."

**Do you have good memories of what life was like at home?** "I have good and bad, as I am the oldest I had to be the mother and father of my brothers and sisters. But before that, we were very happy living with my parents. I have few memories, some memories I blocked; I have only vague memories."

**How was the experience of living at the children's home?** "We had a roof, food, education, but we also had many challenges."

**If you had had the chance to change your history, what do you think you would like?** "I wish I had a family connection. I long for that connection."

**What would your life have been like today, if what was done would have not been done, if a referral was not made and if you were not separated from your parents?** "If we didn't get out of that situation, I probably would have been with a child today, I wouldn't have an education, I wouldn't have many things that I now have. My life, and the life of my siblings, has changed." "I would be on drugs and alcohol, I would be in the street."

**Did you have a chance to know who were the people that made those decisions in your life? Did you know the judge, prosecutor, public defender?** "No, only once they called me to go to court, for the entire time that we were at the children's home."

**If you could dream of a change, could you give us a recommendation, suggestion, or desire for what would be important for those of us who are working on this to consider?** "I would like all children to have a family and feel the protection and love of the family."

**Any message that you wish to leave with those of us who have the responsibility to continue with this work?** "It is important as it was said earlier, to put on the running shoes and go to the field get to know to meet the families. We did not have the opportunity to meet our defenders. It is important that those responsible know the child."



Testimony of two young people who lived the protection system and care in Paraguay



## O. Words from the High Authorities.

The panel of high authorities gave the following words during the official ceremony:

**Special guest, Mr. Rafael Obregón, UNICEF Representative:**

"For the organization this is a very important issue, therefore it is another opportunity to reiterate UNICEF's commitment to accompany the process. We are attentive to what the authorities determine. It is a big but necessary challenge."



**Abg. Patricia Rivarola, Deputy Attorney General:** "I joined this work team and I can tell you that these were very hard days because we debated a lot, it was very enriching; I in particular leave with a lot of things 'making noise' in my head to see what else we can project, what else can we improve, because being in this working group was something that really marked a renewed commitment, which we have as an institution."

"The Office of the Public Prosecutor has a double purpose in all this, on the one hand we are in the area of safeguarding with intervention in children's court proceedings; and, while being here in these work sessions, the Law of alternative care and adoption was approved... therefore the role of the Office of Public Prosecutor also changes in its intervention, now we are custodians of the Law as well."

"It is a very opportune moment to ensure that there may never again be a number as significant as these 1,100 that are at stake today. It is a very big challenge but we renew our commitment."

**Abg. Lorena Segovia, General Defender:** "This work proposal was made with evidence-based thoroughness so that the data cannot be debated. The rigorosity of the research carried out does not allow us to doubt the existence of the problem. Nor can we doubt the existence of having a way out for the urgency of 1,100 cases. Determining the existence of an emergency implies joining our efforts that will lead us to the solution."

"The commitment of the Public Defense is to do and improve. We are willing to change, we want a change, we want to improve. To talk about the best interests of the child is to listen to them, hearing testimonials is the first thing we must always do, it is what positions us in the problem. A first stage of 200 cases is proposed."





**Abg. Teresa Martínez, Minister of Children and Adolescents:** "It is a situation that challenges us as an institution, the number of children in residential care for lack of other responses (to their needs). A very good diagnosis and national review has been made, now we enter the stage of managing and activating towards the change. It is an extremely challenging action."

"We have a key actor that is not present who are the directors and coordinators of children's homes and residential care facilities because we will also impact these. These are mostly private institutions that do not receive support from the State, they must participate in the dialogue."

"There are assumed commitments and practices that we must uninstall. We cannot remain in having the information and yet continue to do nothing. The new law will facilitate processes, but it does not come with resources."



## “CHANGING HISTORY”



# Acknowledgments.

It is with the deepest sentiment that we express our gratitude to every person who collaborated in this National review of the protection and care system for children and adolescents separated from their families or at risk of being so. In this regard, together with the State Attorney General Dr. Sandra Quiñonez and the Minister of the Supreme Court of Justice Dr. Carolina Llanes, we celebrate the outstanding commitment of all Judges, Public Defenders, children's court as well as criminal Prosecutors, the directors of national directorates and CODENI managers, who invested time to answer the questionnaires; of all participants in the various group conversations carried out; of the respective institutional departments who contributed in collecting the requested institutional data; of the young people and families who were interviewed; and of the members of the research team who gave more than expected to conduct this national review and its design of solutions. We recognize the fundamental contribution of institutional liaisons to the research team, which are Judge Rosa Yambay (COMANPAP) for the Supreme Court of Justice; Deputy Attorney General Patricia Rivarola and Abg. Carina Sánchez for the Office of the Public Prosecutor; Abg. Natalia Colman and Abg. Pamela Caballero of the Commission for Purging Legal Cases for the Ministry of Public Defense; directors Abg. Dora Verón (Adoption Center), Lic. Larissa Recalde (DIPROE) and Abg. Alice Resquin (International Affairs), as well as Abg. Leticia Ocampos (professional of the Department of Legal Advice), for the MINNA. We also value the support to the review, since its inception, of the members of the National Council of Children and Adolescents that make up the sub Commission in this thematic area: Abg. Adriana Marecos, Children's Public Defender; Abg. Patricia Rivarola, Deputy Attorney General in the Area of Safeguarding; Abg. Carina Sánchez, Coordinator of the Specialized Unit against Trafficking in Persons; Lic. Aníbal Cabrera, Director of the CDIA; Ms. Andreza Ortigoza, on behalf of the Front for Children and Adolescents (Director of DEQUENÍ); Lic. Zusana Cáceres, Departmental Secretary for Children and Adolescents, Caaguazú Governorate; Judge Gloria Benítez, Member of the Second Instance Children's and Adolescent's Court in the Capital; Judge María Eugenia Giménez, Chair of the Second Instance Children's and Adolescent's Court in the Central Department.

We wish to recognize the generous professional work throughout this process of national specialists Abg. Alejandra Rodríguez and Mag. Leticia Rodríguez of ENFOQUE Niñez; and also international specialists Hugh Salmon and Ruth Sharon, for their presence, advice and support in person and at a distance during the review, and in its final stage during the summit. We recognize the efforts of Abg. Adriana Fleitas and Abg. Anja Goertzen of the Paraguay Protects Families movement in the coordination and development of this inter-institutional initiative, as well as the support of social workers part of PPF, Lic. Celeste Rodríguez, Lic. Pamela Sosa and Lic. Damaris Kaethler. We also thank the voluntary support of international consultant Daniel Spanagel as technical moderator, and the financial and technical support of the Advocates for International Development's Rule of Law Expertise (ROLE UK) Program, UKAid and SFAC, which made it possible to conclude the analytical phase. Furthermore, we value the sponsorship of the Cordillera Governorate, the Alta Gracia Park Hotel and Fundación Koeti for the implementation of the summit, as well as the financial support of Fundación Character, A Family for Every Orphan (AFEO) and Action International among others. We value the advice of specialist in this thematic area Abg. Diana Vargas, economic specialist Sara Zevaco, as well as UNICEF Protection Officer, Abg. Andrea Cid; the testimony of the PPF coordinator Brian McCobb, the assistance of interns from the Faculty of Humanities and Educational Sciences (FAHCE) of the Evangelical University of Paraguay, and of international intern, social worker Hannah Lindsey; also, for the support of the COMANPAP, the Association of Judicial Magistrates of Paraguay, the UNIBE and the Parliamentary Front for Children in carrying out the group conversations; for the systematization of the results by Guadalupe Rivas, the graphic documentation of the final presentation by Laura Báez, for press coverage and presenter Marian Pineda, and Exprésame SA for the production of photographs, audiovisual and graphic design of the report.

Without the dedication and contribution of all of these, this cross-government review and its outcomes, designing a roadmap for the State based on the diagnosis and evidence collected inter-institutionally, would not have been possible. Once again, we thank you for your commitment and trust, recognizing your valuable investment in this process. On behalf of the institutions involved we are committed to honor it and continue the work until the goal is reached. More than anything, the 1,100 children who today are waiting in the protection system for their cases to be resolved will be the ones who truly appreciate the impact and change in their stories.

*Abg. Teresa Martínez*  
*Minister of Children and Adolescents*

*Abg. María Lorena Segovia Azucas*  
*General Defender*

# PROPOSAL FOR NEXT STEPS

- 1. Signing of a Presidential Decree that formalizes the Commitment of the Executive** towards the special protection of children separated from their families or at risk of being so, and prioritizing the cross-government implementation plan designed as a result of the national review of the child protection and care system, with emphasis on inter-ministerial actions to enable its execution under the direction of the National Council for Children and Adolescents as the governing body of the system.
- 2. Clear mandate by the Maximum Authorities of the Paraguayan State**, that is to say the signing of an Inter-Powers Agreement of Commitment of the Republic of Paraguay for the Protection and Care of the Child, declaring the implementation of the cross-government plan to be of the State's interest; signed by the Presidents of the Executive, the Judiciary, and the Legislative Branch in compliance with the commitments assumed by the country, demonstrating the State's responsibility for children and adolescents without parental care and in families at higher risk.
- 3. Recruitment of a general manager for the execution of the plan and designation of the institutional liaisons** to form the three cross-government teams, integrated by the Ministry of Children and Adolescents, the Ministry of Public Defense, the Supreme Court of Justice, and the Office of the Public Prosecutor, which will lead the implementation of the three lines of action or 'projects' (for the emergency, the short-term, and the long-term).
- 4. Designate the necessary resources to implement the three projects that are part of the cross-government plan**, through the reallocation of existing resources, the allocation of a budgetary percentage for each institution, and the procurement and management of new resources, quantified at an estimated value of 2 million dollars, in order to solve problems immediately and inter-institutionally, in the face of the emergency and in the short-term, and long-term.
- 5. Specialize, and/or hire the necessary professionals to respond to the emergency** (Project 1), through the Ministry of Children and Adolescents, Ministry of Public Defense, Supreme Court of Justice, and the Office of the Public Prosecutor, in order to form 37 professional teams as part of the Integrated Psychosocial Contingency Team, so as to conclude or resolve the current cases by the end of 2021, and to have 20 court officials as part of the cross-government control mechanism.
- 6. Specialize, and/or hire professionals necessary to develop short-term measures**, in particular 4 specialist professionals (national/international) for the development, review, approval, and its gradual supervised implementation, of a unified guidance manual of functions and process, with training and on-site support of its application, in compliance with the current legal framework.
- 7. Specialize, and/or hire the necessary professionals to develop long-term measures**, that is to say 4 professionals to direct the development of the vision, and the design of the plan and budget for more in-depth solutions, among others by way of two Summits (April and August 2020), in order to achieve a better and faster process with a vision of 6 months per case.





Ministerio de la  
NIÑEZ Y  
LA ADOLESCENCIA

 **GOBIERNO  
NACIONAL**



**CORTE  
SUPREMA  
DE JUSTICIA**



Ministerio Público  
República del Paraguay



**PPF**  
PARAGUAY PROTEGE FAMILIAS

