DECLARATION OF MEDELLIN
OMEP LATIN AMERICA ASSEMBLY
FOR THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

In recognition of all the children in Latin America

As stated in the DECLARATION OF THE 66TH OMEP WORLD ASSEMBLY AND CONFERENCE in 2014; the OMEP Latin American committees decisively recommit to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the fundamentals of Education for Sustainable Development and offer to the regional community, and very especially their governments, the unwavering commitment, energy and expertise of their members in pursuit of these goals.

Therefore, the OMEP Regional Vice President, the Presidents, delegates and members of the Latin American Region, affirm our responsibility to advocate for the right to education in early childhood, the promotion of comprehensive public policies and the implementation of actions to legitimize and give it centrality; recognizing that education is the basis to ensure the fulfillment of the other child’s rights.

Taking into account that:

- Despite the efforts deployed in the Regional countries - since the adoption of the CRC in 1989 - to implement the commitment ratified by our governments to fully protect the rights of children, some major unsolved challenges in terms of early childhood education and care (ECCE) still persist;
- Many of these children are growing up in adverse environments and violent contexts that seriously affect their integral development: physical, psychological, social, emotional and cognitive;
- An adult-centred culture persists, where children are placed in a subordinate, minoritized and dependent relationship, so the own potential, ownership, participatory rights and cultures of children are not respected.
- Many families experience critical situations and/or do not have sufficient economic, cultural, social and/or educational resources to fully address the complexities of the protection and nurturing of young children;
- Relevant inequality in the supply of, and access to, ECCE prevail, especially from birth to 4 years;
- The ECCE has significant fragmentations that adversely affect the quality offered generating then inequality and disadvantages in present and future learning;
- Many institutions sheltering children only provide basic and un-symbolized care, neglecting the importance of enriching the learning to achieve a full and comprehensive development of each child, collaborating in the construction of their citizenship.

1It adheres to the following definition of Early Childhood: “In its consideration of rights in early childhood, the Committee wishes to include all the young children: from birth and their first year of life, going through the preschool period to the school period. Consequently, the Committee proposes as an appropriate working definition of early childhood the period below the age of 8 years”, General Comment Nº 7 (2005) “Implementing the child’s rights in early childhood”.
We call on the governments of the Latin American States, the institutions working for and with children and the general society to:

- Prioritize the creation and management of comprehensive policies involving an adequate inter-sectoral and multi-sectoral articulation to protect the materialization of each and every child’s right, ensuring sufficient resources for their sustainability.

- Grant centrality to education in the design of policies, as a right, which simultaneously will constitute a powerful strategy for meeting others, also recognizing the indivisibility of the life cycle.

- Promote different types of ECCE in urban, rural and semi-rural areas, and migrant communities, Afro-descendants and indigenous people, or excluded by poverty-related factors, ensuring inclusive, decent, equitable and quality education opportunities.

- Ensure the necessary conditions for teaching, providing materials as well as adequate and sufficient space and solid educative guidelines, giving centrality to play as an instrument and content of education.

- Ensure the educative continuity during the early childhood unifying criteria and practices between the initial level and the early grades of primary or basic education.

- Recognize the importance of training and the role of teachers as key and relevant players mediating in the ownership of cultural assets, the creation of personal and social identity, and the construction of citizenship of children.

- Provide protection and assistance programs necessary to strengthen the families in the assumption of their co-responsibility in enforcing the civil rights of children from birth.

- Require the national, departmental/provincial and local States and the different institutions and programs of public or private management, the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the follow-up of ECCE policies as well as the coherence between the fundamentals of initial education and the pedagogical and socio-educative practices.

We call upon

To spread this declaration through all media and social networks, in order to make visible the challenges regarding ECCE in the Latin America Region and affirm the relevance of building and implementing policies that will make the compliance with the educative rights of children from birth effective.

Medellín, May 20th, 2015