

*Summary of Side Event. ECOSOC Partnership Forum 2023.
Breaking the cycle of child poverty through
multistakeholder partnerships and social innovation
strategies to achieve the 2030 Agenda*

Background

The "**la Caixa**" **Banking Foundation**, which holds a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), has presented the **CaixaProinfancia programme**, a pioneering intervention model launched with a view to responding to the situation of child poverty in Spain. Also in attendance at the event were the **Spanish Government's High Commissioner for combatting Child Poverty** and **Save the Children Spain**, an NGO with which the bank has collaborated to develop the programme, highlighting the effectiveness and importance of public-private collaboration, involving public administrations and companies working in aspects that affect children. The bank has presented its methodology and the results of its project to break the cycle of poverty, which currently affects more than 2.4 million children across Spain.

The General Manager of the "la Caixa" Banking Foundation, **Antonio Vila**, and the Deputy General Manager of the "la Caixa" Banking Foundation, **Marc Simón**, presented the programme, which was launched in 2007 across Spain's main cities, currently assisting **more than 61,500 children and teenagers** aged 0 to 18 and **more than 38,000 families**. Thanks to its **innovative intervention model** based on networking **and consolidated over more than 15 years of experience in vulnerable environments**, the programme collaborates with **more than 400 social institutions** that are responsible for directly assisting families, prioritising aid and monitoring each case.

Key topics discussed

- **"La Caixa" Banking Foundation, more than a century building a better world.** Giving opportunities to people who need them most, with a view to contributing to the construction of a fairer and more equal society. This is the *raison d'être* of the "la Caixa" Banking Foundation, which was founded in 1904 and currently has a budget of more than 500 million euros per year. This makes it the leading private foundation in Spain and one of the most important at an international level.

- The priority of the "la Caixa" Banking Foundation is to develop social programmes that respond to the great challenges of our time, such as the fight against child poverty, the promotion of employment among disadvantaged groups, caring for people with advanced diseases and promoting active and healthy ageing. Medical research, the highest quality of training, culture and education, which are critical to promoting progress and equal opportunities, are other strategic lines of the Foundation's actions.
- **CHILD POVERTY, A STRUCTURAL PROBLEM AND A CHALLENGE IN SPAIN.** According to the analysis criteria employed by the European analytical standard *At Risk of Poverty and/or Exclusion* (AROPE), approximately 28.9% of the Spanish population lives in households below the poverty line. Children aged under 18 age are the most affected by this situation of vulnerability: 1 in 3 is at risk of social exclusion.
- **AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAMME, WITH A TRANSFERRABLE AND PROVEN METHODOLOGY.** The CaixaProinfancia programme develops new forms of addressing vulnerability and the risk of exclusion based on the collaboration and coordination of social and educational players. It mainly focusses on education to increase opportunities for children. Its aim is to have an impact by activating improvement and change processes, in a systemic way, with a view to **breaking the "circle of poverty"** that perpetuates the transmission of conditions of vulnerability from parent to child. To this end, the idea is for the **work to be innovative, efficient and assessable** and for it to serve as a reference for the companies and organisations that work with children at social risk. The intervention model has been developed under the scientific direction of the Blanquerna-Ramon Llull University.
- Applying a **methodology and contrasted results**, the programme has confirmed that 81.4% of participants complete compulsory secondary education to a similar standard as the rest of the population. And, looking at the stratum into which CaixaProinfancia children are classed, in terms of schooling, they outperform children who are not part of the programme by 32.6 points, which stands at 48.8%. In **low socioeconomic contexts, the Spanish average secondary school dropouts is close to 30%, while only 4% of the participants of the programme** leave school during compulsory secondary education.
- Furthermore, **the school performance of 76% of participants improve** and 65.6% of participants improve as regards the acquisition and development of skills: Communication and language, logical-mathematical and social skills. There are also positives for families: 78% increase in homework follow-up, attendance, involvement and participation of parents around the school.
- To this end, the Spanish Government's High Commissioner for combatting Child Poverty, **Ernesto Gasco**, and the General Manager of Save the Children Spain, **Andrés Conde**, have taken stock of the situation of child poverty. The poverty and exclusion rate risk **affects 28.9% of children in Spain**. In total, more than 2.4 million children are living below the poverty line.

Recommendations:

- **Comprehensive socio-educational action** is one of the pillars of the programme. Social accompaniment is critical as this in itself is an educational and empowerment process. In turn, offering educational improvement opportunities for children and families has a high social impact.
- Considering and **reacting in response to the context** is as important as doing so directly with children. The CaixaProinfancia Programme focusses on children, but from an open perspective, in other words, taking into account their context.
- The **empowerment of children from a multidimensional perspective and their families is the key strategy for success and future sustainability**. All children and their parents can learn and develop their skills that are often hampered by poverty, prejudice and stigmatisation. Education and the construction of a project give meaning and are affirmative in relation to autonomy.
- There is a strong **correlation between educational success and positive prospects** as regards learning potential throughout all educational stages. It can be said that resilience is constructed socially.
- It is important to promote the **development of the social capital of children and their families**. Socio-educational action should be aimed at improving sociability and socialisation, increasing "connections" with the world and the personal network of relationships. We know, for example, that not having access to quality extracurricular activities is currently an important factor in educational inequality. With this in mind, the CaixaProinfancia Programme aims to promote the work of the "micro-network" that is woven around each family and child. Care and support networks, first and foremost, but without forgetting about participation and citizenship networks.
- Therefore, the most innovative contribution of the CaixaProinfancia programme is the **construction of socio-educational networks at a local or community level**. The CaixaProinfancia Programme develops a local/community socio-educational network of intensification, diversification and sustainability of assets and resources to support and increase opportunities for children, with the involvement of local administrations considered critical to this end
- **THE CHALLENGE UNDERLYING THE CAIXAPROINFANCIA PROGRAMME** Only an effective, efficient and transformative response driven by a network made up of the public sector, the private sector, the charitable sector and civil society can reverse the situation of chronic poverty. A model that, faced with the complexity of social needs, tackles fragmented and disconnected responses. A model that requires new strategies and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating policies or programmes, developed from the perspective of **systemic, intersectoral and interprofessional** joint responsibility.

