

Mobilization of NGOs in the Combat of Sexual Exploitation of Children

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In 1993 informations made commercial sexual exploitation of Brazilian children a visible issue. Until that year there had been neither social concern nor mobilization with regards to this phenomena and it only appeared on the Brazilian agenda as a result of CPI reports published in 1991 with regards to the extermination of street children, in 1992 to the violence against women, and in 1993 to child prostitution. Owing to widespread mass media coverage of these reports, organized initiatives of civil society with youth groups to combat sexual exploitation and abuse were strengthened.

This report is based on the analysis of secondary data collected from databases¹, documents and publications, research, studies and actions conducted by social organizations striving to fight against commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, and by direct observation of the reporter since 1993 in his work with Civil Society Forums².

These experiences gave rise to the need to study NGOs social mobilization strategies³ to

include commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in local and global public agendas, making it therefore, the aim of our studies.

As a consequence, the 1988 Federal Constitution, the 1989 Law on children and Adolescents, and international instruments became relevant in redirecting the role of the State and society in the fight against commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

From this point of view and in the context of global capitalism and the throes of neo liberalism, we will study the issue framed in the slow democratization process of the State, society and their goals.

The Brazilian crisis of the 90s is a legacy of non-distributive economic and political growth models based on meritocratic logic aided by autocratic governments that inhibited the rights of citizens and the autonomous expression of civil society in the context of a contradictory relationship between the State and society.

¹ Network of Violence against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children and Adolescents (RECRIA), Database of the News Agency on the Rights of the Child (ANDI), CEDECA-BA Database, Database of the National Movement pro Human rights, ECPAT Database, ILO Database, IBGE Database, PNAD Database, EMBRATUR Database, DIEESE Database, CFÊMEA Database.

² We established and coordinated CECRIA / Reference Center, Studies and Actions on Children and Adolescents, 1993-1997, aimed at conducting studies and taking actions to guarantee and defend the rights of children and adolescents. The main issues were commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Brazil and how to tackle these practices.

³ The social mobilization focus adopted in this study emphasizes the political aspect of the concept, and is based on the fact that social mobilizations is a politically aimed action by civil society and its manifestations (NGOs, Forums, Social Organizations and Council), or the place for counter hegemony to tackle sexual violence against children and adoles-

cents, a strategy to encompass the needs of different classes, genders, races and tribes in the frame of social policies. Therefore, participation in social mobilization processes of governmental organizations and mixed organization (Councils and Forums) to tackle the issue, may be considered as a democratic initiative or as an enlarging of social rights as determined by participating forces. The perspective of a mobilization action is to strengthen social rights of children and youths aided by political intervention and supported by society's collective powers. In this sense, political organizations may mobilize their supporters so as to strengthen their influence on the government and other organizations. Recently "mobilization" has been utilized to describe a social phenomenon of great impact. In political contexts, social mobilization means universal voting, the end of political discrimination and an increased participation (PASQUINO, G., 1993, p. 765-766). Consequently, social mobilization is a power structured from the bottom upwards whose objectivity is manifested by the fight for collective legitimate interests, and therefore we find an emancipative counter hegemony.

The measures taken to tackle the crisis were mainly based on public spending cuts, fiscal readjustment, privatization and information on the State's previous activities; that is to say, measures inspired in the neo liberal doctrine. However, given Brazil's secondary condition, the country ends becoming more dependent on international pressures and the rules of global financial capitalism.

In this context, the relationship between the State and society, between social and economic policies is born: Ethics being a prisoner of larger countries and ruled by supranational agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, agencies that put issues such as deregulation and market primacy at the top of the world agenda, cuts in public spending, in particular social spending and curtailing the functions of the State. Along the same lines of these proposals, our priority is the quest for stabilization and fiscal adjustment, a formula that will restore macroeconomic stability and will result in improved social conditions.

Brazil is compelled by the influence of neo-liberalism and market globalization. A fact that results in the guarantees of the rights contained in the 1988 Constitution being subject to the whims of the authoritarian "hook" of a new trend that shapes the paths of politics and economies in the context of market globalization.

Thus, the government presents a social policy in speeches, and in practice implements a social policy deprived of rights (Vieira, 1997, p. 67-73).

In other words, the State does provide for some social rights but at the same time moves dramatically backwards in other areas. In order to achieve legitimacy and governance, the State uses critical discourse and the experience of organized civil society, but depoliticizing and subordinating social issues to fiscal adjustment goals, cutting spending, privatizing

public policies, resulting in a more fragile State (a minimal State) and strengthening the market.

Along those lines, the State diminished intervention in social issues turning its attention to some social and market sectors, strengthening the role of NGOs as partners in implementing social projects and programs thus adding flexibility and decentralizing local power as a means to share responsibilities and the costs of social policies.

In a reality dominated by worldwide capitalism and further shaped by pervading neo-liberalist trends, many collective needs lost their status as rights and were weakened by the lack of social covenants in really collective and emancipative projects. Social requests lost their collective and universal charisma, on the contrary they are formulated in a fragmented context, inspired in micro speeches, micro interests of a society polluted by the fetish of reigning capitalism instead of being inspired in social theologies (Carvalho, 2000, p. 63).

In this context, the State in countries such as Brazil curtails universal social action to some policies (in education and health), and at the same time addresses pressing issues, such as fighting poverty and other "minor" social issues byproducts of society, with strong globalization in a complex and multifaceted society.

Therefore, the quest for social equality is focused on specific segments (such as children, women, black people and the elderly) instead of on society as a whole. Social rights of all citizens that should be included in universal policies are then relegated. Key elements in contemporary social policy elaboration are focused on minorities and reinstating the values of micro-solidarities: social protection, a shared responsibility of the State, private initiative and society enshrined in the local welfare state. (Carvalho, 1998, p. 21).

This is the context in which commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents appears in national agendas. Focal policies stimulus is becoming more visible in actions aimed at children and adolescents in the frame of local and global actions. Said policy is somehow the result of a complex and multifaceted society. This context provides a strategic basis for the government, NGOs and defense boards, who despite being contradictory have planned strategies to fight commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents at national, state and municipal levels bearing in mind decentralization, participation, society and cooperation among governments, civil society and global agencies (ILO, UNICEF, ECPAT, OAS, UNAIDS, UNESCO, INTERPOL, UNHCHR, WHO, and NGOs).

From 1993 onwards, organized civil society in association with local governments started to work with issues related to children and adolescents, mainly in order to defend basic rights, for instance, child labor and sexual exploitation of children, and adolescents who had committed a crime. Civil society initiatives have been strongly supported by international agencies that have sponsored rising public awareness and information campaigns.

The purpose of this study is to analyze social mobilization strategies promoted by non-governmental organizations and the inclusion of priorities for children and adolescents suffering sexual exploitation in the Brazilian political agenda for the period after 1993.

For the purpose of this study, the following questions were asked:

1. Why do NGOs through their strategies and supported by supra-national human rights policies have failed to achieve a response from the Brazilian government in terms of elaborating a specialized policy of prevention and care to tackle commercial sexual ex-

ploitation of children and adolescents?

2. Do society and the government consider sexual exploitation a problem?
3. During the 90s civil society was defined as a third dimension of public life, and independent from the government and the market, has this definition minimized the political sense of society's fight strategies against the market and the State, prioritizing the notion of solidarity/society as an intervention strategy?
4. If during the 90s the Statute of Children and Adolescents – that provides the frame for policy implementation regarding guarantees and protection of children and adolescents, has failed to achieve effective promotion of universal public policies of protection and development of children and adolescents; how are we to define actions within public policies to tackle commercial sexual exploitation?
5. Shouldn't we open the discussion forum regarding commercial sexual exploitation to other civil society groups (groups of women, blacks, against violence, etc.) so as to strategically target discussions in multiculturalism ⁴

⁴ Multiculturalism implies expressing the interaction of differences whose rules are defined in social struggles by actors who, due to different causes have suffered the bitter experiences of discrimination and the prejudices of the societies they live in ... it is extremely difficult to understand the rules of the game without providing the social and historical contexts in which the individuals interact, in the sense of participating in meaningful policies that provide intelligibility to their own experiences at the same time as they become actors (women, African descendants, locals and Afro-Americans) ... the main point is not to defend a given definition of multiculturalism but to show the mutable nature of their meanings. A mutability that arises each time new individuals invade the social arena changing the rules of the game ... Multiculturalism as an ideological movement resulting from collective conscience, and human actions are directly opposed to all "cultural centers" ... The multiculturalist proposal is only one option and not the only one that contemporary cultural policies may include. It is forced to coexist (and confront) other projects that likewise have cultural diversity as the epicenter (Gonçalves, 1998, p. 13-19)

The hypothesis in this study holds that civil society mobilization in the fight against sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is based in the contradiction between repressing⁵ and emancipating⁶ sexuality, in the context of social and cultural ties that have historically shaped emancipative and repressive practices (regarding sex) of class, gender, ethnic group and income, among others.

The fight against sex as a tradable object (sexual tourism, traffic, etc.) may be easily tangled in the grips of conceptual clichés and the adoption of policies that can only be neutralized if we are successful in identifying processes, both emancipative and regarding the defense of rights related to human sexuality, as separate from those of sexual exploitation and sexual violence.

When trying to answer our questions we adopted a methodology based on historical-structural and political-cultural dimensions. Militating inquiry was chosen for research purposes, emphasizing in particular some multifaceted perspectives: the study of conceptual

⁵ According to Chauvi (1984) when conceptualizing repression it is worth taking into account that, *to punish, castigate, forbid and threaten assume the proportions of rules and precepts that if disobeyed or violated would result in repression. In the meantime, the meaning of repression changes when depicting oppression, violence and tyranny, in which case, repression is conceived as implying force, submission or repression. Oppression implies crushing, force implies going against the nature of something or somebody, tyranny is to withhold someone using a will other than his or hers, taking possession of somebody else using force and domination. Repression is therefore conceived as domination and repression as the submission to somebody else's will and force – an alienation.* (p.13).

⁶ For the purposes of this study, emancipation is based on the new theory of emancipation of Boaventura de Souza Santos when analyzing new democratic theories and new emancipative theories. For the author social emancipation would translate into social emancipations in paradigmatic transition of modernization for post-modernism. It still supports the thesis that *the project of modernism is based on regulation and emancipation. The first is composed of the principles of State, the market and the community; whereas emancipation is based on three logics of rationality: aesthetic-expressive rationality of art and literature, moral-practical rationality of ethics and law, and the cognitive-instrumental rationality of science and technology* (Calderon and Pinheiro, 1997, p. 191).

aspects of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, having as central categories the market in the context of globalization, sexuality, violence and the birth of a social movement to fight commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents at regional level. The indicators chosen reflect regional, and geo-social inequalities, migration, gender, ethnic group/race and sexual violence; new and old expressions of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in the context of the transformation of values and productive systems; and the study of social mobilization strategies of NGOs to fight the phenomenon; integrating conceptual analysis of civil society, mobilization and human rights.

Since the study aims at conducting research on social mobilization on one hand, and on illegal practices on the other, our active participation in national and international forums and networks that integrate mobilization initiatives and civil society actions was necessary. Along the Ministry of Justice, Interpol, and the Federal Police, we traced the clandestine roads of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents and systematized secondary data on the issue retrieved from varied databases⁷.

Our study tracked and mapped occurrences of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in several regions of Brazil. In other words, it tried to make clandestine practices (a reality) visible, through consultation with regional networks (forums, agreements, committees, movements, etc.), databases, institutional documents, research, studies, mass media and specialists in the subject. The whole process therefore resulted in the collection secondary information.

⁷ Rede de Violência contra a Exploração e Abuso Sexual de Crianças e Adolescentes (RECRRIA) (Network against sexual violence, exploitation and abuse of children and adolescents), Agencia de Noticias de los Derechos de la Infancia (ANDI) Database (News Agency on the Rights of Children), CEDECA-BA Database, Movimiento Nacional de los Derechos Humanos Database (National Movement pro Human Rights), ECPAT Database, ILO Database, IBGE Database, PNUD Database, EMBRATUR Database, DIEESE Database, CFEMEA Database.

A database was created in order to record, systematize and analyze collected data utilizing NGOs knowledge on sexual violence. The reference was the Network for Information on Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Abuse / RECRIMA/MJ/CECRIA.

The fact that it is an integral part of an NGO (Reference, Study and Action Center for Children and Adolescents / CECRIA) made the conduction of this study possible.

Other research tools were semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, participation in forums (approximately 354 trips both within Brazil and abroad) and militating research.

Fully aware of the fact that militating research may entail involvement and therefore possible analytical distortions, the method was nonetheless chosen as being the only feasible one to track and understand these phenomena. The method was utilized aiming at collecting information that guarantee enhanced objectivity and consequently limit the risks of a misleading analysis.

The study is divided into three chapters. The first one deals with conceptual aspects and the relationship between globalization, commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, and the State. The second chapter depicts the social context of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in the different regions, presenting indicators that show regional inequalities, socio-economic, cultural and geo-social. The third chapter presents a critical analysis of the strategies NGOs are implementing to fight against commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Brazil. There follows a conclusion, bibliography and annexes.