

Child Sexual Exploitation in the Americas; A Rights-Based approach.

Exchange produced in different workspaces with Member States: Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, United States, Paraguay, Saint Lucia and Uruguay. The following lessons and recommendations are:

- Children are at risk of being targeted by criminal organizations. Social exclusion constitutes a form of structural violence that prevents the new generations from achieving their full development. Because of this, there is an pressing need to design policies that seek to eradicate the threats to their integrity and security.
- There is wide consensus on the need for inclusion and child participation in the design of security-focused policies that target children.
- SEC implies the breakdown of a number of psycho-social elements and alters the construction of a child's life project. Changes in the environment are essential to its eradication; opportunities and values should be promoted in order to make a decent life project visible and sustainable.
- There is valuable inter-State working experience in the region, in areas with porous borders. These experiences have led to the design of bi- and tri-national plans with inter-agency perspectives and the mobilization of communities.
- There has been significant progress in the region as regards legal frameworks. One of the key aspects in this respect is the punishment of client-exploiters. However, these developments are not in line with existing recovery and reintegration measures for adolescents affected by these crimes. In this respect, it is urgent to synchronize action to promote criminalization with measures for the restitution of rights, and these measures, with universal policies that foster social integration with a new approach.
- The existence of cultural patterns that legitimize and perpetuate behaviour that involves sexual access to children is reflected not just in a tolerant environment, but also in how judicial operators interpret and apply the law.

- During the sharing of experiences, there were accounts of actions tending towards doing away with the silence surrounding sexual abuse and searching for regulatory frameworks in order to criminalize persons who commit sexual offences beyond the borders of their own countries. The need to legislate on the new information and communication technologies and their links with SEC was also discussed.
- Child sexual exploitation involves a combination of subjective and visible violence; systemic violence and symbolic violence reflected, for example, in the use of language that promotes the objectification of young and adolescent girls, particularly those who come from stigmatized social sectors.
- It is necessary to link policies for the eradication of SEC with action against associated crimes, such as trafficking in persons, drug trafficking and the so-called worst forms of child labour.
- SEC is an expression of the cruellest form of abuse of power by adults over children and its eradication is an ethical commitment of the States and society's organizations.