



BACKGROUND DOCUMENT ON THE TWENTY-FIRST PAN AMERICAN CHILD CONGRESS

THEMATIC FOCUS: CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN THE AMERICAS.

Introduction – Relevance

The sexual exploitation of children, on the basis of both financial exchanges and the imbalance of power, is a very ancient practice which has been present in all cultures throughout the ages. However, its modalities and forms of expression are not unaffected by social and cultural transformations. Together with the changes in the format of SEC, there have also been transformations in the way that societies and the international community itself view this form of child rights violation and how they act. Evidence of this is that in recent years, concern regarding child sexual exploitation (SEC) has been gaining ground in the agendas of the States and international agencies, with a significant number of actions taking place both in society and in legislation.

In this context, in 2007, the Directing Council of the IIN adopted resolution CD/RES.10 (82-R/07), which created the *Inter-American Programme for the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Commercial Exploitation, Illegal Trafficking and Trade in Children and Adolescents*. In 2008, the General Assembly of the OAS welcomed this step taken by the Directing Council of the IIN and adopted resolution AG/RES. 2432 (XXXVIII-O/08). Since then, the IIN has submitted yearly progress reports on the Inter-American Programme and has received new guidelines and mandates, giving rise to a number of resolutions issued by the General Assembly of the OAS: AG/RES. 2486 (XXXIX-O/09), AG/RES. 2548 (XL-O/10), AG/RES. 2686 (XLI-O/11) and AG/RES. 2686 (XL-O/11)¹. AG/RES. 2707 (XLII-O/12 and AG/RES. 2771 (XLIII-O/13); and AG/Doc. 2828(XLIV-O/14).

These resolutions, the last of which was adopted by the General Assembly held in Asunción, in June 2014, reaffirm the currency and relevance of the issue, inasmuch as “*the sexual exploitation and smuggling of and trafficking in boys, girls, and adolescents of both sexes continues to have a considerable impact on our states, and, therefore, that it is necessary to continue implementing effective policies and strategies to combat those criminal acts...*”. At the same time, it is acknowledged that “*IIN has continued to make progress in implementing the Inter-American Cooperation Program for the Prevention and Eradication of the Sexual Exploitation, Smuggling of and Trafficking in Children*” and the States are urged to increase their efforts to invest in plans and programmes for the eradication of SEC.

Documents available from: Organization of American States. General Assembly. Declarations and Resolutions:
<http://www.oas.org/en/sla/general_assembly_resolutions.asp>

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



“Inter-American Cooperation Programme for the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Exploitation, and Smuggling of and Trafficking in Children”

The Inter-American programme has taken on board the significant aspects of the mandates received and grouped them into three working areas:

Working Area 1: Compilation and systematization of meaningful and updated CSEC-related information, with particular emphasis on material produced in the region, and placing it at the disposal of States, organizations and other interested parties. Acting as a benchmark for this area is the *Inter-American Portal on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*: www.annaobserva.org.

Among its actions, this area includes a network of technical liaison officers appointed by the States and exchange agreements with organizations that act as reference points in the permanent search for contributions to nourish the website.

Working Area 2: Production of knowledge and tools to boost States’ capacity to address the sexual exploitation of children. This area includes: *The production of brief articles disseminated by means of Issues Notes; an annual report to the OAS Secretary General on actions undertaken by the States in this field; regional meetings to share good practices.*

Working Area 3: Increasing the capacity of the States to confront SEC, through technical assistance and training. This area includes: Technical assistance for the States on producing national plans; advice to national coordinators; training the States’ human resources by means of a *blended yearly course on the commercial sexual exploitation of children.*

It is as a result of its accumulated experience and the commitment developed over the years with regard to working on the eradication of SEC in all of its forms that the IIN has determined to focus on SEC as one of the key topics of the 21st Pan American Child Congress to be held in Brasilia in December 2014.

Background Documents

Significant progress was made in the twentieth century in relation to how SEC was conceived and confronted.

On 23 September 1913, the first law that expressly prohibited what at the time was referred to as child prostitution was enacted. This historic event is particularly significant in view of the fact that it took place in our continent and because it established a clear distinction between the sexual work of adult men and women and the exploitation of children.

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



The American Convention on Human Rights of 1969 established in its Article 19 that “*Every minor child has the right to the measures of protection required by his condition as a minor on the part of his family, society, and the state*”.

However, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was the first international law to specifically recognize in its Article 34 that children have a right to protection from sexual violence:² “*States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent: (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.*”

Similarly, in 2000, the **Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.**³ This protocol defines sale and exploitation through prostitution and pornography as:

“(a) *Sale of children means any act or transaction whereby a child is transferred by any person or group of persons to another for remuneration or any other consideration;*

(b) *Child prostitution means the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration;*

(c) *Child pornography means any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes.” (Art.2)*

In keeping with the criteria applying to the Convention (Art. 44), States that ratify or accede to the Optional Protocol must submit, within two years following its entry into force, “*a report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child providing comprehensive information on the measures it has taken to implement the provisions of the Protocol*” (Art. 12). Subsequently, they will add to the regular report on the CRC, additional information regarding the implementation of the Optional Protocol or, if they are signatories, but not parties to the CRC, they shall submit their reports every five years.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child of the United Nations⁴ regularly examines the progress achieved by each State Party in fulfilling the obligations undertaken with regard to both of these legal instruments. The Committee also receives a shadow report from civil society in every State Party. With both reports on the table, the Committee may and often does request further information by means of a list of questions that the State Party answers prior to a face-to-face meeting between members of the Committee and national delegations.

²Also see Articles 19 and 39 of the CRC.

³Henceforth, Optional Protocol.

⁴Henceforth, the Committee.

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



In recent years, in addition to the international laws mentioned above, other highly significant, complementary regulations⁵ have also been adopted. Namely:

- ILO Convention N° 182 concerning the Worst Forms of Child Labour, which urges immediate and urgent action to be taken for its elimination (17/06/1999). Among the “worst forms of child labour”, this convention includes the sale and trafficking of children, the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances.
- Inter-American Convention on International Traffic in Minors (18/03/94).
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (18/12/1979).
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (6/10/1999).
- Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women, the “Convention of Belém do Pará” (09/06/1994).
- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (15/11/2000).
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the “Palermo Protocol” (15/11/2000).
- The Rome Statute (17/07/1998).

World Congresses

Three world Congresses against the commercial sexual exploitation of children have been held since 1996: in Stockholm, Sweden (1996), Yokohama, Japan (2001) and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2008).

Although the declarations signed at the World Congresses are not legally binding for the States, they are, nonetheless, politically and technically significant, inasmuch as they establish parameters for addressing SEC-related issues. For these commitments to lead to practical effects, it is essential for organizations to follow them up and report on progress and any new challenges that might emerge.

1st World Congress, Stockholm, Sweden, 1996:

Delegates to this meeting agreed to produce an agenda for action and a worldwide commitment, known as the Stockholm Declaration.

http://www.annaobserva.org/web/public/ratificaciones/Estocolmo_ING.pdf

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



It was at this Congress that the definitions that are still current today were agreed: “It comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is treated as a sexual object and as a commercial object. The commercial sexual exploitation of children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children, and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery.” (The Stockholm Declaration, 1996).

In the Stockholm Agenda for Action, countries attending the meeting undertook to design national action plans to eliminate CSEC. Among the most significant contributions arising from this First Congress are the guidelines to design national action plans, known as the “Stockholm Focal Points”.

2nd World Congress, Yokohama, Japan, 2001:

The Yokohama Global Commitment, adopted during the Second World Congress, welcomed the comprehensive participation of private sector entities, amongst them, organizations of employers and workers, members of the travel and tourism industry, Internet service providers and other enterprises, with the purpose of eliminating CSEC.

http://www.annaobserva.org/web/public/ratificaciones/Compromiso_Yokohama_ING.pdf

3rd World Congress, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2008:

The Third World Congress addressed the increase of the CSEC problem and the emergence of new forms that defy the legal frameworks and the responses traditionally provided by the States. The Congress focused on five issues, and analysed, among other matters, the role of the private sector and the social responsibility of businesses, as well as issues related to the market demand for sex with children and the role played by masculinity in CSEC. It was characterized by the inclusion of all forms of sexual violence, without restricting itself to CSEC. A significant step was also taken with the inclusion of organizations of children who contributed their points of view to the subjects under discussion.

The full text of the Rio Call for Action can be consulted at this address:

http://www.annaobserva.org/web/public/ratificaciones/Declaracion_Rio_ING.pdf

As Brazil was the host country, follow-up to the Third World Congress has had a greater impact on OAS member states. For example, within Mercosur, the Niñ@Sur working group has embraced the issue as a priority, with a particular focus on executing the project in the border towns of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay.

This project was implemented by means of a partnership in each State, between the relevant governmental agency and an academic partner to assist in technical and methodological matters. Action focused on a participatory analysis of the issues existing in the respective communities and the responses provided by the different institutions.

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



The aims of the project were to mobilize and strengthen local communities and institutions, bringing them into line with protocols which were validated collectively and bi- or tri-national coordination and synchronization in order to share procedures and provide more efficient answers. The project left installed capacity in cities where, traditionally, there had been little State presence, and generated the commitment of the States to give continuity to the actions begun.

Also in this context, the **Fourth Meeting of High-Level Authorities in Human Rights and Foreign Ministries of the MERCOSUR and Associated Countries, 2006** took place. A document was adopted containing recommendations on rights and assistance for children who are the victims of trafficking, smuggling, exploitation, abuse and/or sale. Basically, these recommendations define the rights of and assistance provided to victims, with a shift from the conception of children as persons who infringe migratory rules or provisions, to victims who must be protected and enabled to enjoy their rights (see <http://www.juscorrientes.gov.ar/normativas/leyes/docs/reqlamento1.pdf>).

The IIN's Contributions: Annual Reports submitted to the Secretary General of the OAS

One of the activities that the IIN undertakes as part of the Inter-American Programme is *to submit a yearly report to the Secretary General of the OAS on the actions undertaken by the member states to combat sexual commercial exploitation of children in the Americas.*

For the IIN, these reports constitute background documents, inasmuch as they provide an account of developments in the region, pinpoint challenges and make recommendations to the States so that they can improve their responses to SEC. As from 2010, these reports began to be perceived as an opportunity to focus on a specific significant issue regarding which the States have expressed concern.

In that year, therefore, bearing in mind the impact of new technologies on day-to-day communications, and the use that criminal organizations make of them, as well as the existing gaps in relation to facing this new reality, it was decided to work on this subject; a decision which gave rise to the Tenth Report: *“CSEC and the Internet”*⁶.

In 2011, in response to the concern expressed by operators and by the authorities of the States themselves, with regard to the lack of validated knowledge with which to develop strategies for the restoration of rights of CSE victims, the IIN carried out the systematization and analysis of a number of experiences being implemented in the region, which contribute significant lessons. This led to the Eleventh Report: *“Experiences in harm reparation and restoration of rights existing in the region: developments and challenges”*⁷.

⁶ Available from: ANNAObserve Portal - Publications: http://www.annaobserva.org/observatorio/web/public/pdf/X_Informe_eng.pdf

⁷ Ibid. <http://www.annaobserva.org/2012/?cat=7&paged=2&lang=en>

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



In 2012, the Inter-American programme pointed to the need to go beyond the description and analysis of experiences and advance towards deriving lessons that would make it possible to produce a framework of reference for the reparation and restoration of the rights of child victims. In keeping with the rights-based approach, it was imperative for this framework to include the gender perspective. Thus, the Twelfth Report contained *“Proposals for producing a framework of reference for reparation and restoration of the rights of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation with a gender perspective.”*⁸

In 2013, we focused the Thirteenth Report on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism (CSEC-TT). This report is based on case analysis using the experiences of Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Mexico and Peru. Analysis was conducted on the basis of the Stockholm focal points matrix and its conclusions underscored the importance of commitment on the part of enterprises and worker collectives to transforming the image of tourist destinations as areas where normal rules do not apply. The creation of decent jobs should be promoted and staff should be trained in the conviction that the eradication of CSEC-TT in a tourist destination benefits the whole of the community. And as a result, the community should actively collaborate with the authorities and reject practices that foster sex trade with children.

In addition, analysing practices developed in response to CSEC-TT contributes to addressing other forms of exploitation. One of the most significant lessons learned is that it is important to achieve the active involvement of different State agencies (protection, health, education, security, tourism, infrastructure, communications) and social organizations; not only the specialized NGOs, but also trade unions and companies.

Position Focal Points

The position that the IIN has adopted in this form of violation of child rights is in keeping with a number of focal points.

The Rights-Based Perspective – A New Way to Look at an Old Subject

Bearing in mind the conclusions of the First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Stockholm, 1996), the commercial sexual exploitation of children is a fundamental violation of their rights. It comprises sexual abuse by adults, including payment in cash or in kind to the child, or to one or several third parties. The child is treated as a sexual object and as merchandise.

By sexual exploitation, we refer to any activity in which a person uses a child’s body for sexual and/or financial benefit, on the basis of an imbalance of power. Both individuals who offer others the opportunity of participating in the use of children (pimps and networks), as well as individuals who make the contact (johns) shall be deemed exploiters, regardless of whether the

⁸ Ibid. <http://www.annaobserva.org/2012/?p=529&lang=en>



relationship is occasional, frequent or ongoing. (SENAME, Chile, 2000, cited in Martínez, R. 2008)

After the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the First Congress against SEC held in Stockholm (1996), the conceptualization of the issue includes three elements that are key when taking a position on the matter and intervening in any of its phases:

- ✓ Positioning the child as a person whose rights have been violated, which is why we no longer speak of prostitution, but of sexual exploitation. We should note that studies confirm that while sexual exploitation constitutes an overwhelming encroachment of all rights, the reconstruction of the life stories of sexually exploited children shows them to have suffered the violation of their rights from the very outset of their lives. SEC takes root in the vulnerable ground generated by prior violations and the failure of protection mechanisms.
- ✓ The imbalance of power which is always present in any form of sexual exploitation. In addition to being an expression of gender violence, it is also the manifestation of an adult-centred domination system, where underage persons represent a sector dominated by adults.
- ✓ Considering “buyers” or “customers” to be exploiters, inasmuch as they promote exploitation and take advantage of the situation in order to gratify their sexual desires with children, in a seriously asymmetrical situation.

An analysis of the practices carried out by different organizations for the care of children exposed to SE shows the existence of a certain degree of confrontation between different perspectives. On the one hand is the rights-based approach based on the Convention, according to which children submitted to CSE are victims who should not be made responsible for the situation, and therefore intervention should punish the adults involved, either for benefiting from or hiring “sexual services”, but should be protective and repairing for underage persons. This concept coexists and often mingles with another that considers that children engage in deviant behaviour, which must be corrected or controlled. Both perspectives coexist within institutions and teams working on these issues, giving rise to certain incongruities when the time comes to carry out interventions.

About the Causes – The Production and Reproduction of CSEC

For a CSEC episode to take place, it is necessary for an encounter to occur between a person (usually an adult male) willing to pay for or “reward” sexual access, and a vulnerable child. There may or may not be a third party – an individual or organization – acting as an intermediary and benefiting from it. These meetings in markedly asymmetrical circumstances reinforce an adult’s feelings of power and, in return, objectify children and engulf their rights and

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



with them, their condition as rights-holders. This leads to considering the so-called “customer-exploiter”; that is, the person who pays for sex with children, as a key stakeholder. It is this actor who provides the money, generates the demand and sets the SEC production process in motion.

Most of the literature on the causes of SEC is restricted to an analysis of the microcosm in which the situation occurs. This has two consequences. In the first place, the issue is shunted aside into the margins of society and perceived as the behaviour of persons who are excluded from cultural and economic social settings. Secondly, we encounter a number of individual issues which trap us into making a psycho-pathological reading of both the customer-exploiter and the victims and their adult points of reference. This level of analysis conceals the social features of CSEC in the origin of the phenomenon and sooner or later causes us to make the victims responsible for their own suffering, with the consequent shifting of responsibility from the social order, since these events occur on its margins. A clear example of this is making the adults in the children’s environment overly responsible, to the point of referring to the transgenerational transmission of this kind of behaviour.

In view of this, we suggest thinking about the causes of CSEC as the product of the behaviour of several different actors who are part of an environment or system considered to be the exploitation context, which includes the whole of society.

We understand the exploitation context to be “a perverse system of practices, relationships and incentives that are built up gradually, become grounded over time, and make CSEC possible, maintain it and perpetuate it” (Martínez, R. 2008).

This context is not restricted to the victims’ immediate surroundings, but includes the whole of the social structure, with its forms of wealth and power distribution, and the way it generates social representations that perpetuate and legitimize this imbalance. Depicting the female body as merchandise is one of the cultural aspects that pervade the whole of society, without consideration of social class.

The process that leads to a CSEC event begins with the existence of persons (usually adult males) who are willing to pay for sexual access to children’s bodies. The explanation for this demand is to be found in the pervasive presence of forms of exercising sexuality with clearly patriarchal roots. “Despite some progress, male/female and adult/child relations continue, to a large extent, to resist the process of democratization in daily life. There are deeply-rooted cultural factors linked to sexuality, gender roles and adult-adolescent relations, which favour sexual violence and tend to naturalize exploitative relationships” (IIN 2012).

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



Field research performed among consumers of sex with children confirms the idea that the attraction that these adults feel towards the bodies of children is based on the “aesthetics of power” (Salas and Campos, 2004). Motivations can be broken down into four closely interconnected elements:

- The imbalance of power in a relationship with a vulnerable person is erotic, inasmuch as it reinforces the sense of domination.
- The purchase reinforces the individual’s sense of power in the possession of a piece of property, another element which is strongly rooted in subjectivity.
- The absence of a sexual partner who is a valid witness of the individual’s virility leads to a kind of freedom or impunity.
- Appropriating the only aspect that is appreciated about these devalued other persons – their young bodies – is a form of recovering lost or damaged youth.

These elements blend into a combination of power, appropriation and subjugation that create suitable conditions for them to discharge their sexuality upon persons who – because they are viewed as objects and their status as individuals is denied – do not resist or demand their own pleasure in the sexual act. Access to the bodies of others through payment is a form of appropriation and constitutes a form of relationship in which the predominant factor in the exploiter is the excitement he derives from power, which is culturally associated with masculinity.

We cannot fail to acknowledge the existence – although in a minor way – of women who buy sex with children, but this in no way diminishes the patriarchal model that guides these relationships. The study mentioned above (Salas and Campos, 2004) points out that the few women who were interviewed justified their behaviour by saying, “if men have done it for thousands of years, why can’t we do it too”. The same is true for homosexual relationships, in the case of both adult men and adult women. As an ancestral tradition, the purchase of sex – beyond any special features of the stakeholders engaged in it – responds to a number of values and interests that are culturally associated with masculinity.

For the submission/appropriation relationship to be possible, there must be a process involving the development of vulnerability, which results in a victim. While vulnerability tends to be linked to poverty and exclusion, these factors are not sufficient, nor even, on occasion, necessary to produce vulnerability.

Based on a study conducted on the frontier between Uruguay and Brazil, which included interviews with social operators, Dilacio, Giorgi and Varela (2011) observed that in the consideration of the victims’ families, their social background and the behaviour of other members of the group, their status as potential victims becomes “natural”, as if this were a hereditary problem. In view of this, the authors have concluded that abuse and the sale of

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



sexual services have become a natural development which is only to be expected in the lives of children who belong to the most vulnerable and stigmatized social enclaves in their respective communities. This appears to shift responsibility away from those who pay for sex, inasmuch as they do not generate anything new or different to what is already an established situation, independently of their conduct.

The role of families in the process of producing potential victims is worthy of a special mention. The analysis of the regional experiences conducted by the IIN leads to a certain family typology in relation to exploited children.

We encountered families whose capacity for protection and care had been weakened, but who could be receptive to interventions that strengthened their bonds and led to significant improvements in their living conditions, together with a change in the life projects of their children. Other families might include the coexistence of adults who enabled exploitation with others who showed the capacity to become support figures and develop partnerships within the extended family or micro-network.

Still others were highly deteriorated and constituted a favourable scenario for rights violations: neglect, violence, abuse, and often active participation in exploitation. In these cases, a substitute response should be found in order to allow children access to adult points of reference who provide the necessary support.

This variety of situations makes it important to conduct a detailed study of the family context, avoiding the quick stigmatization of adults who live with the victims, as well as the naivety of thinking that in every case, the family is the best ally in rights protection processes.

The process of developing a victim is enabled by a cultural context in which inclusion and how people are valued involve “having” rather than “being”. This “being-having” equation, which is characteristic of consumer societies, is linked to models of development that increase inequalities by displaying wealth without providing any real paths for subordinate sectors to gain access to it. This encourages children to search for the “fast track”, in order to gain access to those opportunities for consumption.

Induced by their surroundings, children begin to perceive their bodies as having a possible exchange value which will allow them access to consumer goods that they cannot find other ways to obtain. This is the key motivational factor that recruiters take advantage of.

Once this situation has been established, exploiters appear on the scene as “providers of opportunities”, who give victims the chance to access the market. This endows them with a benevolent image that justifies their practices, and even, to a certain extent, affords them the acceptance of the community, in the face of the absence of opportunities provided by other social stakeholders.

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



It should be noted that children who are subjected to these practices do not usually perceive themselves as victims as a result of their recruitment. On the contrary, they consider themselves to have been victims of prior circumstances related to their life histories (abuse, ill-treatment, neglect) and perceive the sexual activities to which they are induced as an opportunity to escape from situations they consider to be worse. This absence of an awareness of exploitation is an obstacle when attempting to develop a strategy to restore their rights.

While the Convention and subsequent instruments based on it clearly state that children subjected to exploitation are victims and, therefore, that interventions should aim at reparation and the restoration of rights, with punishment reserved for the adults involved, once this exploitation has been established, we cannot disregard the fact that victims are the object of social penalization within their communities. They are viewed as a kind of “irreversibly damaged social asset”, thus justifying stigmatization and discrimination. The possibility of social integration is thus closed to them.

The sexual exploitation experience gives rise to significant psychological consequences for the victims. Bearing in mind that they generally have a prior history of multiple rights violations, and usually from their very earliest days, the SEC experience is established on highly vulnerable ground that reinforces its devastating effects. Some of the most frequent symptoms, which should be taken into account when undertaking reparation are: low self-esteem, depression – sometimes with suicide attempts or other self-aggression episodes, such as the tendency to take risks –panic attacks, blocked learning capacity, difficulty to establish social relationships with their peers. Other associated problems may involve pregnancy at an early age, which increases vulnerability and often reinforces links with exploiters as a result of increased financial dependency, and drug abuse, often fostered by exploiters in order to facilitate the manipulation of their victims’ behaviour.

These issues should be approached comprehensively and in synchronization with processes involving strengthening and life skills acquisition: reintegration into the educational system; labour training; the development of social skills; the redefinition of their own bodily identity. In this respect, there are a number of valuable experiences in the region that include intervention models.

Developments and Challenges

Under this heading, we shall attempt to give a brief account of the situation in the region in relation to confronting the different expressions of SEC, the progress achieved and the challenges still being faced. To this end, we shall follow the guide of the so-called “Stockholm Focal Points” and take the work plans produced by each State in the region for analysis.

We should recall that one of the principal recommendations arising from the Stockholm Congress was the need for the States to have work plans that were duly structured and approved by the relevant political areas. Every action plan should be adapted to the State’s

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



needs or vision of how to organize its public policy against CSEC. The specific lines of action agreed at the First World Congress remain in place and constitute a guide for the design of these plans. These are: 1. Coordination and Cooperation; 2. Prevention; 3. Protection; 4. Recovery and Reintegration; 5. Child Participation.

1. Coordination and Cooperation

This focal point refers to the levels of harmonization reached between the various State agencies and society in the confrontation of SEC. It also encompasses international coordination and the existence of operational agreements at frontiers. The transnational nature of the different forms of CSEC and its links with trafficking make it necessary to adopt a higher level of coordination between countries in the region. This arises with regard to punishment for exploiters in any of their roles and in the protection and reinsertion of victims.

Coordination is particularly important in regions with highly porous and dry borders. In the south of the continent there has been significant integration in frontier areas. This favours the existence of almost daily traffic from one country to another. These economic and cultural developments should go hand in hand with measures to protect children from smuggling and trafficking, which are made easier with the flexibility of border controls.

These aspects have been brought up repeatedly by State operators and noted in documents issuing from sub-regional meetings in both South and Central America.

In the Caribbean, the freedom of movement between countries has been noted as a concern, as together with its positive aspects for integration, it also entails the risk of the smuggling of underage persons for a variety of purposes, among them, SE.

For their part, Canada and the United States of America have a memorandum of understanding which focuses on the investigation of online sexual exploitation. This MOU grants direct access to registry information, Internet protocol registries, secondary e-mail addresses from Internet Service Providers, which otherwise would have to be obtained by means of a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT).

One of the developments that coincided with preparations for and the celebration of the Third Congress was the establishment in all of the States in the region of National Commissions or Committees in charge of leading their Action Plans. These are usually formed by representatives from child protection agencies, the national police department, ministries of education, health, justice, labour and social development, and State tourism agencies.

The significance of these bodies is that they synchronize commitments to the issue on behalf of all the State agencies, bringing them into line with a rights-based perspective that views affected children as victims and sees the need to punish adult exploiters, whatever their role and condition.

A major aspect of the commissions is that labour ministries and tourism ministries or agencies are included among the bodies that form them. This is a particularly significant feature, bearing

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



in mind that one of the “new forms of SEC” takes place in the context of travel and tourism. These ministries are an institutional reference point within the State for tourist operators and enterprises. They issue rules and quality certifications, and launch promotional campaigns.

They can also regulate campaigns aimed at promoting tourist destinations abroad, which can be used as an opportunity to circulate messages that are in keeping with campaigns carried out within the country.

In this respect, lessons have already been learned in most of the States in the region with regard to the fact that CSEC-TT prevention policy should move beyond child-protection and crime control institutions in order to reach those sectors involving activities related to tourism, telecommunications, infrastructure works that demand the presence of large groups of workers, large-scale sporting events, and others that tend to attract SEC scenarios.

A major challenge is to convince the bodies that are part of this coordination network to undertake this commitment not as something which is beyond their normal field of operation, but inherent to their function as part of a State that has undertaken a number of international commitments. To this end, operational agreements should be reached and protocols should be designed in order to make coordination activities effective on the ground.

2. Prevention

Designing strategies to prevent these practices implies acting upon the genesis of the problem. It requires identifying and ranking their causes. Here we come up against a first difficulty, since the causes of child sexual exploitation are highly complex, with different levels of determining factors that, in turn, form links and interact with each other. A second difficulty is the existence of causes that operate at different levels of the social structure.

In view of this, we propose conducting an analysis of the problem from an wide-ranging social perspective. From this perspective, we can consider the factors that contribute to SEC in children’s immediate surroundings, the micro-system (the family); at an intermediate or meso-system (the community, neighbourhood, close institutional stakeholders) and within the macro-system, which includes the cultural universe of the whole of society, where depictions and values circulate related to the commercial value of the body, the relationship between sex and money, gender roles and other factors that contribute to sexual exploitation.

While families with fragile adults and immediate surroundings in which children have a higher chance of being trapped by exploitation networks do exist, they interact with development models that promote consumption among sectors that have no access to basic social and cultural assets. This is a model that displays without sharing. Together with a lack of real opportunities to build life projects available to children of the more vulnerable sectors, it creates conditions for manipulation by organizations whose purpose is trafficking and exploitation. In this regard, the action of the mass media should not be minimized. They construct a discursive

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



milieu that legitimizes many of the conducts associated with CSEC, such as the valuation of the body and sexuality as a means of social ascent, the early erotization that leads to the consumption of children’s bodies and the fantasy of rejuvenation by means of sexual access to a young body.

The complex features of CSEC are also apparent at the meso-system level. The weakness of protection networks comes into play here, together with the fragmentation of our societies and the actions of public institutions – State and civil society – that are present in children’s lives and intervene in these circumstances. We encounter phenomena such as the acceptability of sexual exploitation, the anticipation of the victims’ fate, which is accepted passively and often fostered through discrimination and exclusion.

The implementation of intervention policies and strategies that attempt to modify the conditions that lead to exploitation, must necessarily bring into question and dismantle such preconceived notions. This shift in perception would enable community action to protect children, without introducing discriminatory features which, in fact, reinforce the development of victims and legitimizes them as such in the imaginary of their communities.

SEC prevention is closely linked to the restoration of rights conceived in comprehensive terms. The life history of children subjected to SE shows the disregard for or violation of their rights which they have endured from their earliest days.

Therefore, protective measures should primarily involve the strengthening of protection systems, both universal and focusing on vulnerable populations.

A large measure of the success of these strategies is related to awareness-raising and mobilizing the community in defence of its children. To this end, it is important for the population to undertake to protect all children and that it should refrain from justifying the exploitation of those it considers to be “prone to these situations”. There is a wealth of experience in this hemisphere in relation to the active involvement of communities, both by providing opportunities to former victims and by observing, warning and reporting events that may be linked to CSEC.

Therefore, the model we propose includes specific actions to address the specific situations of possible victims, but is not limited to them. It attempts to avoid what operators term “ghettification”. It is an open model, synchronized with the protection system in each State and based on fostering the activation and responsibility of community resources.

Among these actions, we should not disregard the “cultural front” as an opportunity to work on building environments of peace and protection. This includes, as a key topic, a review of such aspects as gender representations, socially imposed forms of “being a man” or “being a woman”, relationship codes, the responsible exercise of sexuality and the eradication of sex trafficking.

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



3. Protection

Under the heading of *Protection* we address the legislative and/or judicial developments (legal reform) that have taken place in the States in order to improve the protection of children from CSE.

In this respect, all of the countries in the Inter-American system consider child sexual exploitation a crime and payment for sex with underage persons is punished. This punishment is not often rigorously applied, as there is still a tendency to shift responsibility away from adults who pay for sex with children. Several awareness-raising campaigns have been carried out among the population, informing people of the penalties an adult may incur for paying for sex with a minor. Training legal operators in this regard is essential.

Other significant developments include the establishment of legal provisions covering criminal acts associated with SEC-TT, such as promoting a location as a so-called “sexual tourism” destination, collaborating with these practices and handling funds derived from SEC-related activities. The use of new communication technologies has also resulted in new legislation, although there are still legal gaps in this field.

In the matter of protection, cooperation between governments is key. As we have stated, in the case of CSEC-TT, offences are perpetrated by persons who are “in transit”. As they are often foreigners, they must be brought before the court in countries that they do not inhabit, or extradited during the course of judicial proceedings. Because of this, it is very necessary to apply extraterritoriality in order to enable States to punish their citizens for offences committed while they were abroad, as well as to ensure cooperation in conducting investigations and in judicial proceedings.

In the case of child pornography, material circulates internationally and images are transmitted without the need for people to move away from their homes. This compels us to think of new forms of intervention that include technological updating and seamless cooperation between the authorities of different States.

4. Recovery and Reintegration

The Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents shows persisting concern on the part of the international community regarding the difficulties encountered by several countries when attempting to establish an effective and accessible public policy which is sufficiently wide-ranging and aims at the social reintegration of CSEC victims and the restoration of their violated rights.

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



This document points out the importance of making progress in knowledge-building and the sharing of good practices, in order to overcome some of the myths and prejudices that exist in relation to the potential for integration that children affected by these practices may have.

Considering that the sexual exploitation of children constitutes an affront to the integrity of individuals and their affective bonds, we can state that the situation jeopardizes human dignity and, therefore, all of a victim's rights. When we speak of rights restoration, we refer to a process of comprehensive reparation that returns to an individual the possibility of living in accordance with his or her nature as a full holders of rights.

This terminology has been brought into question, as it is understood that rights cannot be restored, as they are never lost. Rights are inherent to individuals and may be violated or infringed, but they are still enforceable rights. In addition, some also say that the term restoration is not appropriate because it is obvious from an examination of the life histories of child victims of CSEC that their rights have been disregarded from a very early age. This would be the first time that their rights are acknowledged. However, the expression 'restoration of rights' has been coined as a way to distinguish comprehensive interventions with a rights-based perspective from other more restricted approaches that limit themselves to simply halting or controlling the exploitation.

The process of restoration involves several steps:

- Providing care for children whose rights have been violated.
- Protecting the rights of these children.
- Punishing the aggressor or person who violated these rights.

CARE is the provision of assistance for children whose rights have been violated, as well as for their families and immediate surroundings, with appropriate methods and techniques to cover their health, psychological, legal, social and other needs.

PROTECTION makes it possible to offer children security. It should ensure that violations are not repeated and that adequate conditions prevail in order to ensure restoration.

PUNISHMENT establishes the consequences (incarceration, fines, dismissal from job) of an act that constitutes a violation of rights for the person or persons responsible for this violation (aggressors).

When these three processes have been completed in full, RIGHTS ARE RESTORED. This includes at least four elements: that the exploitation should cease immediately and definitively; the restoration of all of the rights that the situation violated; reintegration into the community and

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



relevant social settings (reparation or creation of new social and affective networks); reparation of the effects of the traumatic experiences and restoring dignity.

These restoration strategies resort to a variety of devices and methods:

- a) Experiences based on institutionalization. These pose difficulties related to the departure from institutions, with regard to both preparation for social integration and safety, particularly for children who are witnesses in judicial proceedings.

Other difficulties involve the lack of organization of reference and cross-reference systems, as well as of the routes children must follow. There is a need to clarify roles and audit practices (in some cases, institutions have no specific programmes for the care of child victims). One of the most generalized criticisms encountered with regard to these programmes is that institutionalization eventually becomes a punishment or a means of correction for the victim.

- b) Another strategy described involves forming local networks strongly rooted in the territory. These enable the involvement of institutional actors in the areas of health, education, security and tourism, together with the community, thus preventing the feeling among these stakeholders of being unconcerned in the problem. The participation of children is one of the strengths of this kind of strategy. To make this possible, it is necessary to carry out adaptations of language and the approach to local realities, while also transmitting the central concepts of the rights-based approach and of the public policy which serves as a framework to these activities.

A challenge arising from these strategies is the coordination of national, regional and local levels, amongst which gaps tend to exist. This leads to the importance of establishing vertical policy communication, reaching the levels closest to the community. In strategies which view institutionalization (internment) as a last resort, intervention is with regard to the factors causing vulnerability, children are not made responsible for their exploitation, they are provided with immediate protection, and actions are proposed to restore their rights.

The most significant challenges in relation to providing care to victims are: reincorporating survivors into their families, communities and society, promoting gender equity in order to make gender relations more democratic, and involving municipalities in the work of prevention and comprehensive protection of rights. This implies a need to advance towards an operational paradigm which will overcome institutional fragmentation.

The social reinsertion of CSEC victims is a challenge in the region. On the one hand, because of the real threat to their physical integrity. The safety of the victims of trafficking in the face of possible reprisals which criminal organizations may take is a real concern, particularly in the

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



case of witnesses in judicial proceedings. On the other, because of the lack of opportunities offered by society as an alternative for the generation of income and to redefine an identity other than in relation with CSEC.

From the information gathered by the IIN (2011-12) on the basis of secondary information as well as of questionnaires sent to the States, it emerged clearly that there are a number of valuable experiences in the hemisphere, from which lessons can be derived to improve the capacity to implement programmes for the restoration of the rights of SE victims.

Principal weaknesses involved the absence or fragility of forms of connecting these restoration programmes to the rest of the child protection system, including universal policies, as a means of breaking away from the stigmatization circuit.

Other critical knots identified were: the frequent failure to study the context and social and community resources available before organizing specific programmes targeting CSEC victims; the absence or weakness of ongoing training for operators and the lack of access to mental health self-protection opportunities for them; the lack of powerful proposals to strengthen the victims and train them for a social and working life.

Some clear ideas emerge from the analysis of these experiences that can guide the restoration of rights process. In the first place, some premises should be reaffirmed:

1. Child victims of CSE have a history of violated rights from the earliest days of their lives. Therefore, the objectives of the intervention should not be restricted to returning them to conditions prior to exploitation, but should include working on the full enjoyment of their rights.
2. This reaffirms the need for comprehensive interventions. It is not only necessary to repair the various effects of exploitation, but also to work on previous and concurrent violations.
3. Comprehensiveness comprises two elements. On the one hand, measures to recuperate the different areas of children's affective, cognitive and social lives, including their health, in its physical, psychological and bonding aspects. In this respect, as observed in several of the experiences we analysed, intervention should begin with a diagnosis that includes the extent of fulfilment or violation of all their rights, in order to implement a battery of measures leading to restoration. On the other hand, comprehensiveness involves the different phases and components of the restoration process: halting exploitation, with the requisite measures of protection; re-establishing all rights; restoring dignity and strengthening victims; social and legal penalties for offenders, and prevention. That is, steps should be taken with children and their environment in order to prevent exploitation from recurring. In this last phase, it is particularly important to provide follow-up and access to universal policies.
4. We should bear in mind that the ultimate purpose of intervention is that children should integrate socially, exercising their rights at levels of autonomy appropriate to the extent of their development. This calls for a balance between interventions based on specific programmes that aim to restore the rights of child victims of CSE and universal policies. Retaining children in settings that tend to perpetuate their status as victims should be avoided; they should be enabled to gain access to services that cater to the whole of the population. At the same time, it

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



should be acknowledged that when gaining access to such services they should initially be provided with support in order to ensure genuine integration.

Effective intervention is required, offering families opportunities for a decent life and this cannot be planned within stigmatized institutional settings that protect children, but inhibit autonomous evolution.

5. A significant aspect that should be borne in mind is the gender perspective when approaching CSEC. This makes it possible to make visible the specific effects of exploitation on males and on females, the connotations of homosexual behaviour induced in the context of exploitation and the different forms of stigmatization, as well as the opportunities and barriers to the social integration of each. Including men and women working together in teams makes it possible to re-establish children's bonds with adult men and women, which tend to have been damaged as a result of their experiences. Seeing men and women working together in an atmosphere of companionship and respect introduces different relationship patterns from those they have witnessed in their daily lives, in which gender violence prevails.
6. Finally, we should like to return to the importance of synchronizing plans and programmes for the restoration of the rights of CSEC victims with the whole of the protection system operating in the country, state or territory.

It is on the basis of these premises that we shall attempt to systematize the basic focal points that a programme for the restoration of the rights of child victims of CSE should contain.

It is based on the coordination of **three levels of intervention and services** to generate opportunities for the full enjoyment of rights:

I. Internal Actions of the Specialized Programme

- These actions target children and their significant adult figures, according to the special features of each situation.
 - Their purpose is to restore rights, repair the damage caused by the experiences undergone (not limited to SE, and including previous experiences) and enable social integration with access to universal policies.
 - Beyond the differences detected among the experiences we analysed, it is possible to identify four general steps:
1. Recruitment – Admission. This includes an evaluation of the children's entire situation in relation to their rights and the hazards and strengths of their environment, in order to design an intervention plan. At this stage, agreements are reached with the children and the role of adults in the process is determined. It is during this stage that the risks to which children are exposed should be assessed, as well as the steps that should be taken to safeguard their lives and physical integrity, and to ensure that they have food, clothing and shelter. The administration of residential resources should be careful and measured in order to avoid hindering the acquisition of autonomy and social integration skills.
 2. Programme Inclusion. The most intensive work on the different dimensions of restoration is carried out at this stage. Interaction between children, specialists and peers is strongest at this time. Participation and the sense of belonging are important as they encourage children's assimilation of the process. Individual and group activities are carried out, which can be grouped in different areas:
 - a) Health care covering all of its aspects. Particularly, the issues prevailing in this population: STDs, addictions, mental health, dental care.

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



- b) Cognitive and affective restructuring. Improving self-esteem, processing feelings of guilt and debasement, understanding the exploited victim situation. Identification of strengths and skills. Here we include support during court proceedings and working on their affective consequences.
 - c) Repairing bonds. Re-establishing the capacity to form relationships with peers and with adult men and women. The development of social skills.
 - d) Educational support. Returning to the education system requires support, levelling up, and encouragement in the face of difficulties. This makes it necessary to develop the appropriate habits for school work.
 - e) Job skills. Promoting the acquisition of skills that can open up opportunities to enter the world of work.
 - f) Most of the experiences successfully include art and self-expression, which can be included as cross-cutting activities to encourage participation and strengthen children's social skills.
3. **Evaluation – Discharge.** At this step, the extent to which the first goals of the intervention have been reached is assessed: the level of children's strengthening, their level of integration (educational, job-related, social) – to which end, coordination with non-specialized and universal services must previously be effected – and the characteristics of their life projects (are they realistic and consistent; do they have clear targets).
 4. **Follow-Up.** In several of the programmes analysed, this is not done. However, we should assume that children discharged from the programmes are vulnerable. They generally return or remain in environments where the threat of sexual exploitation or other threats are still present. Their condition as victims (or former victims) places them in a vulnerable situation to undergo renewed violations of rights. In this respect, follow-up for considerable periods (one or two years) leads to more sustainable achievements and makes it possible to intervene in time when new risks appear.

II. Interinstitutionally Synchronized Action

This focuses on interinstitutional communication.

If the objective is full and autonomous social insertion, coordination between specialized programmes and the body of services planned for the protection of the rights of the general population is a key component of the model.

The programme and the persons politically and technically responsible for it should handle a variety of resources to enable the enjoyment of rights and also make it possible to overcome the stigmatization of individuals who have been the victims of these criminal activities. The children served should be reconnected to basic services after work has been done to make their access as equitable as possible.

There is no single institution that can assume exclusive responsibility for the execution of a plan for eradication and/or care for victims. The plan should be synchronized and steered towards the joint action of several institutions at different levels (national, departmental/state-wide/provincial, local, community-based). Leadership of the plan should devolve upon a single institution, with the purpose of optimizing resources.

III. Action in the Community and the Environment

In addition to work conducted with affected persons and their immediate circle, the restoration of rights process includes other steps to be taken with regard to their environment. This can be grouped into three general objectives:

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

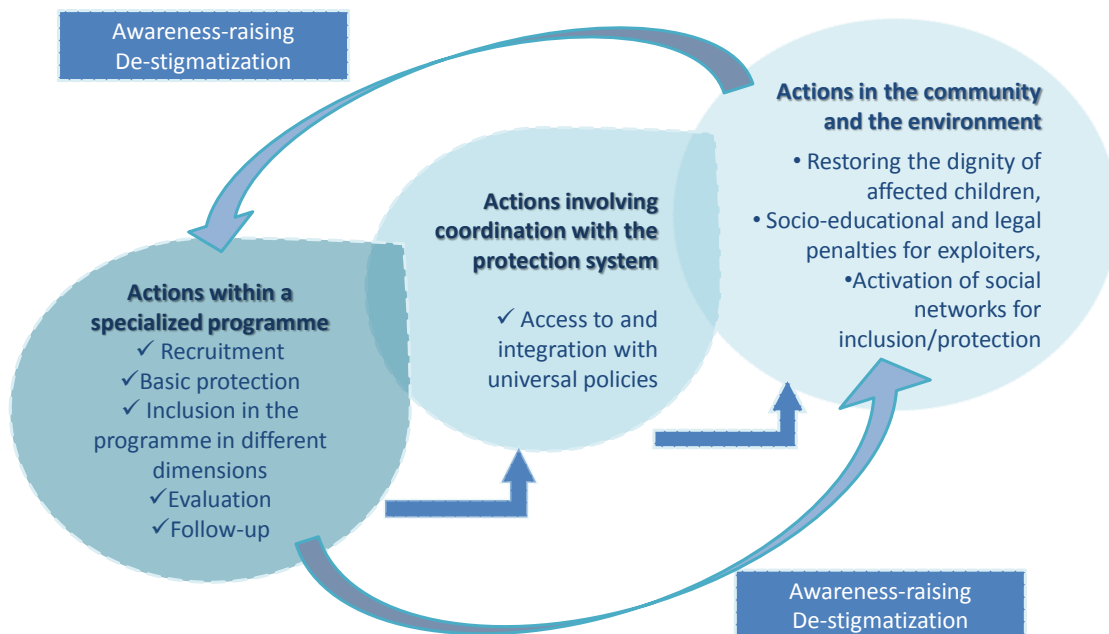
CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



1. Restoring dignity and recognizing potential. The social imaginary that perceives these children to be “an irreparably damaged social asset” must be dismantled. This perception leads to feelings of pity and compassion, but denies the possibility of overcoming the situation through social inclusion in other areas. It is essential to shift such attitudes in order to minimize the risk of recapture by networks of exploiters.
2. Legal and social penalties for exploiters. Legal penalties for those who profit from sexual trade as well as for those who pay to obtain access to children transcend legal implications. They become symbolic and cultural acts in which a legitimate authority clearly defines the position of offender and victim. This breaks away from the image of “benefactor” or “generator of opportunities” that intermediaries are often given. It also ends the tendency to absolve “customers” from responsibility. Penalties contradict the idea of impunity and power often used to intimidate victims. In addition to legal penalties, actions should also take place to strengthen the social penalties for these activities.
3. Protection Networks. A large measure of the success of a model for the restoration of rights is related to awareness-raising and mobilizing the community in defence of its children. To this end, it is important for the population to undertake to protect all children and that it should refrain from justifying the exploitation of those it considers to be “prone to these situations”. There is a wealth of experience in the continent in relation to the active involvement of communities, both by providing opportunities to former victims and by observing, warning and reporting events that may be linked to CSEC.

Therefore, the model we propose includes specific actions to address the specific situations of victims, but is not limited to them. It attempts to avoid what operators term “ghettofication”. It is an open model, synchronized with the protection system in each State and based on fostering the activation and responsibility of community resources.

FOCAL POINTS FOR A RESTORATION OF RIGHTS MODEL



NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



5. Child Participation.

Children’s right to participation is a right and principle contained in the Convention.

While this was a focal point at the three Congresses, it was at the Third Congress in Rio de Janeiro (2008) that the issue gained strength. Child participation in confronting SEC takes different forms that we shall attempt to describe briefly.

- Training and awareness-raising activities that seek to develop self-protection tools for children who face the risk of sexual exploitation.
- Workshops and educational activities that attempt to conduct a critical analysis of gender models, particularly the links between masculinity and violence and how this reflects on sexuality.
- The active involvement of children in prevention campaigns (distribution of graphic material, visits to hotels, urban interventions).
- Participation of youth organizations in the process of reincorporating affected children into new social venues, once a certain phase of the restoration of rights process has been achieved.
- Participation of the child victims themselves in the establishment of certain aspects of the rights restoration process.
- A factor which is often disregarded is the inclusion of the “voice of the victims” in the analysis of the issue and the evaluation of responses. While participation is important and is part of the “right to be heard” (Art. 12, CRC), great care should be taken to avoid exposing these children to a context still pervaded with strong feelings of discrimination in their regard. Furthermore, forms of inclusion should be sought that prevent children from forming relationships in their surroundings that take shape on the basis of their status as victims. Inclusion should occur, rather, in the framework of organizations that broaden their chances of diversifying their bonds.

In several States in the Inter-American system, there are programmes and experiences involving child participation. Despite this, participation is still an often neglected right and on the occasions when does come to the fore, it seem to be excessively tainted by the guidance of adults. In this respect, working with child and youth organizations may offer possibilities that are as yet unexplored in the prevention and eradication of the different forms of SEC.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The efforts made by the States, social organizations and international agencies have led to significant progress in the eradication of SEC and the restoration of the rights of victims. Despite this, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that SEC continues to constitute a concrete threat to the rights of children throughout the hemisphere.

This age-old rights-violating activity adopts new forms in order to adjust to changes in social life, communications, increased border flexibility and the increasing movement of people. The emergence of these new modalities demonstrate the need to carry out an ongoing review of regulatory frameworks, means of international cooperation and ways to protect children from these crimes.

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



Twenty-five years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and twelve after the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, there is wide acknowledgement of the fact that the eradication of these and other expressions of violence is inextricably linked to the process of democratic strengthening and consolidation in the region.

Despite some progress, male/female and adult/child relations continue, to a large extent, to resist the process of democratization in daily life. There are deeply-rooted cultural factors linked to sexuality, gender roles and intergenerational relations, which favour sexual violence and tend to naturalize exploitative relationships.

In this context, a positive factor is that the issue of the sexual exploitation of children is increasingly present on the public agenda. This is apparent in the multiplication of parliamentary initiatives and enacted legislation, as well as in the search for strategies to eradicate it and to strengthen the means of interinstitutional cooperation.

An analysis of progress achieved by the States in the region shows that there is increasing awareness of the links between phenomena such as abuse, trafficking and sexual exploitation and that they are part of the same sequence and answer to similar rights-violating rationales.

On the specific topic of SEC, the recommendations of the World Report on Violence against Children are useful, most particularly the three recommendations to which international priority has been afforded.

- a) Recommendation 1: The creation of national means of coordination for non-violence towards children, and public policies, strategies and comprehensive plans in this area. In this respect, nearly all of the States in the region have national commissions for intersectoral integration.
- b) Recommendation 2: Legislation reform in order to ensure the protection of children.

Legislation has made progress regarding the inclusion of trafficking as a crime, not only internationally, but also within countries. Moreover, the criminalization of persons who pay for the sexual services of children has gradually been incorporated into legal frameworks. There have been initiatives to establish comprehensive regulations that include punishment for crimes, the protection and restoration of the rights of victims, and social policies to address these problems in their different aspects. Many of these initiatives reflect a concern to prevent revictimization by establishing minimum standards for the protection and handling of persons affected.

- c) Recommendation 11: The creation of information and data systems in support of public policies, strategies and comprehensive plans in this area. This is one of the aspects that shows the least progress. It must be acknowledged that it is difficult to register and monitor events involving illegal, and therefore, concealed activities and that, as a result, institutional records only account for a minority of cases. Nonetheless, it is necessary to move forward towards systems that will allow the phenomenon to be seen in its true dimensions; to achieve geographical references regarding the areas with greatest activity, modalities, vulnerable groups and other variables that can be used as input for the design of intervention strategies adapted to the special features of the different territories.

One of the significant aspects on which work needs to continue is in training human resources, bringing them into line with the rights-based perspective and transferring tools that will increase

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA



the effectiveness of their actions, and at the same time, protect them from the burn-out and loss of motivation that working under adverse conditions can lead to.

Within communities, inclusive attitudes should be promoted in order to revert the vulnerability of the most unprotected children, while also enabling victims to form new bonds in other social settings.

It should be borne in mind that there are a great many experiences in the region, which can lead to valuable lessons. Among these lessons learned are:

- The importance of coordinating targeted programmes with universal policies, in order to strengthen and incorporate the children who have been directly affected or are at risk.
- Actively involving children in the proposal and encouraging their participation in different aspects of the programmes.
- The importance of a non-discriminatory social and community context that considers these children to be rights-holders who must be protected. Organizations of adolescents play a significant role in this social web.
- The gender perspective is revealed as a principle that cuts across interventions, in both the prevention and the restoration phases, making it possible to understand the suffering and social meaning that sexual exploitation experiences entail for boys and for girls. This reaffirms the importance of ensuring the presence of men and women on the working teams.
- In both general and focused actions, intervention should be conceived on the basis of “protection routes” that include successive steps in a process in which every institution develops relevant and timely interventions in keeping with their responsibilities and on the basis of a common strategy representing a regulatory core.

All of the above confirms the need to continue producing knowledge derived from practice and which will provide feedback to these practices, increasing their effectiveness and coordination from a rights-based perspective.

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With contributions from:

- *ECPAT (End child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking of children for sexual purposes)*

NIÑEZ Y ADOLESCENCIA: CONSTRUYENDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERENCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DE LA OEA

CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE: BUILDING ENVIRONMENTS OF PEACE

OAS SPECIALIZED INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

INFÂNCIA E ADOLESCÊNCIA: CONSTRUINDO AMBIENTES DE PAZ

CONFERÊNCIA ESPECIALIZADA INTERAMERICANA DA OEA

L' ENFANCE ET L' ADOLESCENCE: EN CONSTRUISANT ENVIRONNEMENTS DE PAIX

CONFÉRENCE SPÉCIALISÉE INTERAMÉRICAINNE DE L' OEA