

PROJECT
UNA ESTRATEGIA PARA COMBATIR EL ABUSO, EXPLOTACIÓN Y TRATA DE
NIÑAS, NIÑOS Y ADOLESCENTES EN EL ISTMO CENTROAMERICANO
A Strategy to Combat Abuse, Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Adolescents in Central
America
2008-2010

Executive Summary prepared for the Conference: The Role of International Cooperation in Tackling
Sexual Violence against Children

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SITUATION ANALYSIS

Sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking in countries like Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, are part of a structural violence sustained by unequal power relation within the family and in the political and economic structures performance/functioning.

Sexual violence cannot be understood adequately outside the context of social violence. adolescents. Cultural patterns that contribute to child sexual abuse are the same used by the police officer with victims, and those of many judges giving judiciary sentences. That same cultural pattern is found in the lens of the journalist who breaks the news about cases of sexual offenses.

According to FNUAP's research, in the four Central American countries involved in the Project, childhood is the periods of greatest risk of becoming victims of sexual assault: actually, the most abused women reported some form of sexual assault when they were under 18. Thus, in El Salvador, 3 out of 10 victims of forced sex had the first experience before age 15, and 3 out 10 victims were between 15 and 19 years old. The most vulnerable group to sexual abuse is from 10 to 14 years old. In Honduras, 11% of women are victims of sexual abuse before age 12 years old. In 30% of cases, the person who committed the abuse is someone known by the victim. In Guatemala, 34% of female victims of forced sex reported their first experience before age 14. Similarly, in Nicaragua, half of these victims reported their first experience of sexual abuse of a child under 15 years old. The percentage of women who report having been abused before age 10 years old is higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

Irregular migration of children is an activity that puts them at serious risk of being abused, exploited and treated during the journey.

MAIN RESULTS

LEGAL FRAMWORKS

In El Salvador, a new Criminal Penal Code came into force in 2011. The 22 articles on crimes against children and adolescents were product of UNICEF's intense negotiation; advocacy and technical assistance.

In Guatemala, The Sexual Violence Act passed in 2009 is the result of the efforts of advocacy and technical assistance of the Project and partners. Similarly, Alba-Kenneth Act is considered a valuable tool for the immediate search of missing children. The new legislation

created the National Anti-Trafficking Commission under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Sexual Offences and Trafficking at the National Civil Police, and the Public Policy to Combat Trafficking in Persons was approved. In Honduras between 2009 and 2010, UNICEF and its partners promoted the Special Anti-Trafficking Act which came into force in July 2012.

Due to the legal changes described, important articulation efforts were developed around the National Plan against Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking. The Commission for the follow up of the CICESCT (Inter-Institutional Commission for Combating Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking of Children and Adolescents) was created.

The Nicaraguan Penal Code was adopted in 2008 and was the result of efforts made in the framework of the First Phase of the Project through advocacy and partnership. The Project had significant impact as well as a significant influence on the training processes of judiciary personnel and the creation of protocols.

TRAINING, ESPECIALIZATION AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Training and specialization processes are referred to by partners and stakeholders as one of the activities having the most important impact on the way to approach to child victims of crime. Local universities played an important role by giving to training processes the necessary credibility and sustainability. Professional training went beyond the judiciary sector and reached journalists and media. Thanks to this training strategy, now it is possible to discuss and debate these complex issues in other areas beyond law. It also enabled the existence of permanent spaces of investigative journalism in radio and press that did not exist before.

Project activities in El Salvador, were characterized by an abundant production of educational publications that accompany and support the processes described above. Between 2008 and 2010, were published at least five documents that were part of the training process of behavior change.

From the UNICEF Regional Office and, as a result of the Sub-regional Congress on Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, held in Santo Domingo in March 2011, the major regional partners agreed to create a Central America Post graduate Program to contribute to institutional strengthening of justice systems, through continuous training of personnel of justice and protection system, through the "On line sub regional program on abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children and adolescents"

In Nicaragua, the project promoted the creation and strengthening of the Commission for Women and Children in the National Police which was crucial to introduce the subject of human trafficking and the creation of shelter for victims. This commission has been equipped and trained personnel with the Project funds.

One of the major contributions of the Project in Honduras has been protecting the rights of migrants children returned to the country. Repatriation protocols and staff training were crucial to sustain the process. Honduras has now an organized system that guarantees in land and air borders, care of children by trained and skilled personnel and adequate space for the temporary stay.

Friendly and protective spaces for children and young victims of crime came to institutions where conditions never existed before. In El Salvador, for example, the CENI (Centers for Children in Crisis) installed on the National Civil Police buildings are pioneering efforts to introduce a substantive change in the police institutional culture.

The installation of the Gesell Chambers and child friendly spaces as in Guatemala produced a subsequent multidisciplinary training processes, production of guides and protocols. All these efforts are inaugurating a new era in the protection of the children's rights in the beneficiary countries of the Project. Gesell Chambers are introducing a new institutional culture that permeates the public and create a debate on the importance of protecting the rights of child victims and witnesses in court proceedings.

A TRAVEL AND TURISM SECTOR COMMITED TO THEIR COMMUNITIES

In Nicaragua, the private and public tourism sector articulates actions with local social networks, which has resulted in an innovative experience of youth participation in partnership with private and public universities.

The commitment of Honduran Chamber of Tourism CHANATUR towards a sustainable tourism through the prevention of sexual exploitation in tourism activities is one of the best practices in the Project. These commitments ensure the sustainability of the actions and promote community participation as a key component of the initiative.

INNOVATIVE PREVENTING CAMPAINGS.

In El Salvador the risks of using internet by children without adequate supervision of parents and teachers was approached by the campaign "Cybernetic Predators". 560 cyber classrooms of the Ministry of Education of El Salvador even now drive this campaign, introducing new materials and messages.

MTV EXIT campaign is an effort of the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, launched in New York on November 21, 2011. "End Exploitation and Trafficking" is a multimedia project that seeks to increase the knowledge, information awareness and prevention of human trafficking and exploitation. This was done through television programs, online content, live events and opportunities for youth and adolescents in Latin America to be the protagonists of the initiative.

By the end of April 2012, more than 800,000 people had viewed the video made by UNICEF for the song "Preparamela Cena", whose rights have been donated to the Campaign by the musical group "Calle 13".

In Honduras, the program for adolescents and young journalists, led by the city of Tegucigalpa are is very effectively bringing a message of prevention and information to their communities and peers

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

LESSONS LEARNED

- The contribution of the Italian Cooperation has been a key factor in allowing UNICEF to serve as a catalyst to attract the attention of governments, civil society, media and public opinion to a highly complex issue like child sexual exploitation and trafficking.
- Combating sexual exploitation is part of a much broader and more complex task involving multiple facets, some with structural roots. Research conducted by the project, show a highly complex situation with rising trend of underage victims in an environment of impunity. In this context, the idea that the justice system could combat child sexual exploitation and trafficking of children and adolescents is not realistic idea.
- Despite important progress reported, the judiciary system, the police and prosecutors are still weak in criminal investigation and law application. They are permeable to corruption and penetration of organized crime.
- The new communication technologies, internet, mobile and social networks are both a risk and an opportunity for teens and young.
- The proposed Central American Convention for the Prevention of the Crime of Sexual Exploitation of Children to be presented promptly to the Central American presidents is a gateway to consolidate the progress made by these countries in the last seven years.

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE TASKS

- Consolidate regional monitoring efforts to have an instrument that allows a unified fight against national and transnational organized crime.
- Continue to promote information, participation and involvement of adolescents and youth locally and through communications technologies.
- Strengthening the rule of law in the Central American region.
- Coordination with regional security agendas.
- Creating a knowledge management system.
- Continue to strengthen local systems of child protection, particularly migrant children.
- Continue to give specialize expertise to the justice system and the police.
- Continue to positioning on the political agenda of governments the issues of sexual exploitation and trafficking of children and adolescents.
- Consolidation and expansion of the processes of appropriation of the Codes of Conduct through the travel and tourism sector
- Articulate the issues that deal with serious violations of children's rights that are committed by criminal networks with national and international agendas with SICA and other regional organizations.
- Coordinate actions is the subject of trafficking and sexual exploitation with the regional security agenda which aim to fight transnational crime in the region.
- At the regional level, it is important to have a system of permanent monitoring Sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.
- Improve the prosecution and punishment of crime.