

Ecuador
Beyond Myths
National Child and Family Institute (INNFA)
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National Child and Family Institute

Our Mission

"To propose, support and implement innovative solutions to the problems of Ecuadorian children, adolescents and families, in particular of vulnerable groups that have been deprived of their rights, with their participation, that of the State, Local Governments, society and the community." (to weave a social cloth).

Our vision

We are a private, unitarian and desconcertado organization, characterized by the utilization of participative methods based on a universality of rights approach, it will provide high quality services that address the needs of society, in particular of the most vulnerable groups. We also coordinate development policy formulation for children.

Programs:

At present we have 6 programs with national coverage:

Citizens for Tenderness

Growing up with our Children

Infant development

Social Action

Solidary health care and disabilities

Pro educational program for children

In the above framework, Citizens for Tenderness (ACT) is a social reference program that promotes the development of citizens through their rights, participation of each actor, gentleness, quality and warmth in relationships between children and adults.

ACT regards tenderness as a strong feeling that mobilizes people, it defines quality and warmth of relationships in terms of listening capacity, talking, spending time with children

and adolescents and reaching agreements to carry a disciplined life without violence.

The Program, based on the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, works with private and public organizations dedicated to children and adolescents in two main areas:

Specialized care

Child ill treatment

Lost and missing children

Family shelters

Therapeutic community

Prevention

Local participation to foster good relationships

The program's objectives are:

Provide specialized care to children and adolescents whose rights have not been observed and are in dire need of special protection.

Promote quality and warmth in relationships between adults and children/adolescents in every day life, that is to say, at school, the neighborhood, the family and in the health care center.

Existing strategies and /or plans to prevent and fight against commercial sexual exploitation

In July 2001, INNFA's ACT approached the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Ecuador for assessment purposes.

Objectives:

Identify those organizations working in research, prevention and care for cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

Analyze research results and intervention experiences collected by organizations.

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Draw basic strategic guidelines for inter-institutional cooperation in Sexual Exploitation.

The strategies already identified are:

Surveys, and "Experts" workshop.

Surveys allowed us to reach 84 organizations working with special protection issues at national level and collect information on their activities. Systematization of data enabled us to identify those few organizations that had carried out studies, one of them involved in direct care through the Association of Sexual Female Workers.

The results enabled us to organize a workshop and invite a group of professionals and delegates of identified organizations. The results show a close relationship with Ecuadorian economic, political and social situations. Records obtained during 1995, 1998, 2000 and 2001, and as a result of focal groups in Quito, Guayaquil, Machala, Esmeraldas and Santo Domingo, present mainly qualitative information.

Quantitative data available to the organization providing direct care is almost non-existent.

These cities are considered in the sample of the study: they were the leading ones in the economic development of the country and have thus become attractive urban centers for rural migration.

Updated indicators show the following:

Exogenous causes - indirect:

Acute increase of poverty levels from 34% in 1995 to 67% in 1999.

Collapse of the financial system.

Migration (exodus of breadwinners to foreign countries).

The financial situation, dollarization of the economy that has resulted in increased inflation and more poverty.

Clear political instability with five presidents between 1995 and the year 2000.

Natural disasters.

Endogenous causes - direct:

Early ill treatment and sexual abuse.

Disintegration of the family.

Child labor.

Minors at risk, working prematurely in barrios de tolerancia.

Unemployment and the "easy money" belief.

During 1994 prosperity of "recreational" centers turned into brothels.

Hiring adolescents to serve clients in the most ample sense.

Serious adolescent crisis not completely worked out.

Prostitution networks, incipient or well established.

Clients and pimps seeking sexual work of adolescents.

Falsification of identity cards so as to practice prostitution.

An indifferent and individualistic society.

Lack of social protection for victims.

In Ecuador, contemporary forms of exploitation are all practiced. Trafficking in children "for work purposes" have been documented in certain provinces, Chimborazo being one of the most affected according to reports by citizens on trafficking in children and adolescents to neighboring countries such as Venezuela and Colombia.

The true motives are unknown, however we may infer that sexual motives exist. The main sources of information are members of the community in question.

In that sense, the problems identified make reference to:

Lack of parent awareness who allow, legitimate and authorize their children's exit, never thinking of trafficking as a crime.

Complicity of local authorities, those who authorize the exit of minors.

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The economic problem, reflected in the lack of job opportunities that move parents to use their children as a source of income.

Trafficking networks composed of families and friends moved by the benefits perceived.

Fear of being reported, due to permanent threats issued by the trafficking network.

Middlemen.

Legal measures aimed at protecting children are unknown of.

Trafficking in minors is not considered a crime.

Successful program or project in the chosen area

At present we are working in the first phase of research and diagnosis. The results show the commitment undertaken by governmental and non-governmental organizations to establish the necessary committees to deal with the issue. The problem calls for careful consideration and thoroughly designed programs aimed at prevention altogether and direct care of victims.

Beneficiaries of the institutional program or project

Beneficiaries are all those being cared for by the institutions that have carried out research on and designed methodologies for sexual exploitation of minors in Ecuador.

We have identified 10 civil organizations, one of which works with prevention - sensitization of offspring of sexually exploited mothers -, and direct care of registered and clandestine adult sexual female workers, within this group there are sexually exploited minors.

Results

Results are measured in terms of agreements reached by the time the Experts workshop ended.

Institutional agreements:

To consolidate an inter-institutional coordinating network aimed at care and prevention of sexually exploited children.

To create ongoing training programs in the subject of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

To establish a permanent round table that surveys the enforcement of commitments undertaken by the State in International Conventions.

To revise and amend the varied legal provisions referring to sexual exploitation.

To define aims and methodologies that enable the provision of high quality care based on theoretical and pragmatically sustainable concepts.

Mechanisms to obtain financing

The annual operative program (POA - 2001) has allocated \$ 4000 to assessment and diagnosis of sexual exploitation issues.

The allocation is classified according to expenses:

EXPENSES TOTAL

Technical fees \$ 1800

Research

\$ 100 National expert Workshop \$ 1.000

Documents and other material \$

200 TOTAL

\$ 400

Some considerations on the relationship between these successful experiences and the Stockholm Action Plan

Some of the limitations the group of organizations related to children in Ecuador has had to face are the unawareness of agreements subscribed by Ecuador, a responsibility that has shifted hands with every change of government.

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The situation may reflect the fact that since 1995 we have had the worst political crisis, with an interim president and successive changes of president. We believe that this unprecedented situation has become a determinant in the unawareness of the Stockholm Action Plan.

Since its creation, 41 years ago, the National Child and Family Institute has developed sustainable programs for children always based on international instruments relating to the issue. Owing to this fact and to the deep concern that ails us, we started to work on a preliminary diagnosis of the issue. As a result, we have found that the underlying causes are linked to those found in other countries.

We do agree upon the need to build working networks that provide prevention and care for victims - both children and adolescents - of commercial sexual exploitation, and upon the responsibility of the Government, civil organizations and the family. It is extremely important to work on a common methodology to tackle the issue, that in the light of the economic, political and social contexts is able to effectively and efficiently undertake the creation of actions that allow us to provide adequate treatment of victims and their exploiters. In that same line we are working on the establishment of a permanent round table, with organizations experienced in the issue so that at the same time enforceable public policies referring to treatment, sanction and overcoming sexual exploitation of children issues are elaborated.

Obstacles that hinder either the development or the implementation of the Action Plan

Some of the obstacles are:

Unawareness of the Stockholm Action Plan.
Lack of public policies aimed at promoting physical and psychological recovery and reinsertion of victims.
The lack of social investment in prevention and care for cases of child prostitution and

pornography and sexual trafficking in children and adolescents.

Identifying problems and lacuna that foster birth and development of the different forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Social:

Acute increase of poverty.

Emigration of breadwinners, resulting in family disintegration.

Risky situations, resulting from child street labor in high tolerance areas until late at night.

Clients and pimps that value adolescent sexual "work".

Legal:

The lack of secondary public policies and legal provisions guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents that prevent, regulate and sanction commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

Ignorance of legal provisions that protect children.

Technical:

Lack of integral understanding of the issue that results in methodological lacunae to efficiently tackle commercial sexual exploitation issues.

Conclusions

Assessment has shown that:

There are few organizations at national level dealing with issues of sexual trafficking in children, child prostitution and child pornography. There is no clear methodology that enables adequate treatment in cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

Legal lacuna translated in a lack of public policies that prevent, support and sanction any attempt of commercial social exploitation of children and adolescents.

Lack of good will of the Government, as evidenced in social spending where the issue is not even included.

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Overt interest of related organizations to establish a permanent round table on the subject.

Recommendations:

In accordance with subscribed International Conventions on commercial sexual exploitation, Ecuador shall prioritize designing a set of public policies aimed at promoting physical and psychological integrity and social reinsertion of victims.

At national level: cooperate with immigration authorities and officers so as to enforce laws and policies that guarantee integral protection of children, in accordance with the provisions of international and national instruments in force.

At international level: create a space for implementing an agenda of regional talks enabling us to sign cooperation agreements for tackling issues such as trafficking in children, child prostitution and pornography.

Set an international information system with organizations related to care of victims and prevention of sexual exploitation that will enable enforcement, internal control mechanisms in each country and suitable monitoring of governmental and societal actions with regards to these issues.