

Republic of Cuba

Second Congress on Sexual Exploitation of Children

Sonia Beretervide Dopico

Prevention and care in the area of commercial sexual exploitation of children in any of its manifestations, constitutes a working priority for State institutions and agencies, the Government and social organizations in Cuba.

The participation of a delegation at the highest level in the I World Conference held in 1996, ratified the importance given to this problem by the highest spheres. Furthermore, Cuba pledged itself to the Stockholm Action Plan.

What mechanisms do we use?

In 1986 the National Committee on Social Prevention and Child Care was created and under the Permanent Parliamentary Commission on Youth and Child Care and Women's Rights. The Committee is of multi sectoral and multidisciplinary nature and has a similar structure both in provinces and municipalities. It acts as governmental co-ordination mechanism to:

- Prepare and propose social prevention and care policies.
- Coordinate and supervise their implementation.
- Provide counsel to the its participants.
- Systematically assess compliance and development of tasks and enforced measures.
- Carry out pertaining studies and research.
- Integrate action plans in response to social issues.

Which were the first actions taken after Stockholm?

- Preparation of a TV broadcast to inform society about the agreements signed at the Conference.
- Meeting with directors and officers of the Department of Tourism.

- Conduct training, think tank and sensitization workshops for directors and workers in main tourist destinations.
- Integration of the Stockholm Action Plan agreements to the agenda of Ministries, institutions, agencies and civil society that participate in the National Committee on Social Prevention and Care.

Main goals achieved:

- Differential treatment of problems of children, adolescents and youth at all educational levels and within the family.
- Selection of those children with special educational needs through a multidisciplinary team of the Diagnosis and Orientation Centers and the Child Care Council (Ministry of Education).
- Development and implementation of a National Program on Sexual Education.
- Creation of a National Committee on Prevention and Care for victims of intra-family violence.
- Follow-up and assessment of the primary care mechanism aimed at preventing, identifying, diagnosing, caring and rehabilitating victims.
- Implementation of a tourist development policy aimed at creating new and strengthening existing facilities for health, family and ecological tourism.
- Periodic assessment of the National System for Child Care, Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Evaluation of the National Follow-up Plan on the Beijing Conference, implemented in 1997.
- Preparation of a project on "Information on the Rights of Children and Adolescents in Cuba", with the support of UNICEF and the Finnish Government.
- Ensure free universal education at all levels, including universities.
- Implementing the Program "Educate your child" that provides specialized treatment for children from birth till the

age of 6, a program that has achieved 98.5% coverage.

- Operation (as of February 2001) of the General Training Program for Young People for their reinsertion in labor markets or in study programs, aimed at youth between 17 and 29 years of age, providing the necessary materials and a monthly stipendium of 100 pesos.

The community participates in all these programs, thus ensuring wide coverage and monitoring of its impact by the community itself.

The work of mass media, under the Cuban Institute for Radio and Television, (ICRT) deserves a special mention.

- The links with collaborating institutions and entities were strengthened, via information, training, orientation and support.
- Regular spaces for these issues were enlarged both on Radio and on TV. Children participated actively in writing scripts and in "Interest Circles", developed in 32% of Cuban radio stations.
- Studies were carried out so as to determine the tastes and preferences of the audience.
- Since 1994, the ICRT and its satellite entities have carried out theoretical events on children and communication
- An integral editorial plan on specialized publications for children, adolescents and youth is being designed.
- During 2001, the institute has been working on the creation of an educational station aimed at the "Children's Circle".

All these tasks have been performed as well as the installation of solar panels in 1944 rural schools that have no electricity, even in those that only have 5 - 10 students.

Care and protection of children's rights: Cuban legislation

- Constitution of Cuba,
- Family Code,
- Code of Children and Youth,

- Executive law No. 64 of the Care System for Minors with Behavioral Problems,
- Executive law No. 95 regulating the National Committee on Social Care and Prevention,
- Executive law No. 76 regulating the legal framework of adoption.

Amendments to the Criminal Code as per Stockholm agreements:

In June 1997, executive law 175 was passed, in 1999 law 87 entered in force, both provisions ensure the severity of the criminal treatment to those that commit crimes against children and adolescents.

- Procuring and trafficking in persons are included as a crime (including all those that induce or cooperate with prostitution or carnal trade manage or own facilities for these practices). Sanctions shall be applied in order to protect health, public order, education, tourism, youth orientation, to strengthen the fight against prostitution, if there is threat, blackmail, coercion or abuse of authority or if the culprit is the victim's guardian.
- The chapter on "Crimes against the normal development of children and adolescents" stipulates more severe sanctions.
- The characterization of crimes such as violation, pederasty with violence and lascivious abuses is severely modified.

In all cases, accessory sanctions implying confiscation of property whose ownership is either related or derived from these practices are applied.

Challenges:

- Always keep the issue in mind when preparing social policies and programs.
- Continue working on increasing awareness of the population and on tourism related initiatives, training included.
- Follow-up information and promotion of rights of children and adolescents campaigns including preparation of the family as a whole.

- Carry on with studies and research on male and female sexual identity.
- Continue working on the database with gender perspectives, database that will enable us to achieve higher sensitization.
- Continue searching for alternatives that offer information to visitors on commercial sexual exploitation and the legal provisions and sanctions in force.
- Work towards achieving special editions in mass media programs and towards a transversal approach to the issue.