

Sexual exploitation of children and adolescents: the voices of Africans

In preparation for the World Congress III, experts and representatives from Africa, including children and teenagers, met in Dakar from 24 to 25 September 2008, to review developments of the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents on the continent since the Arab-African Conference in Rabat (2004) and the Second World Congress in Yokohama (2001).

The objective of the meeting, in a context where no country can claim to be spared the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, was to better define the causes of these phenomena, to identify trends and best practices and approaches to fight against sexual exploitation of children and adolescents and to better protect them.

Following the meeting, recommendations will be presented at WCIII. These include:

Social norms can encourage the sexual exploitation of children or be barriers to effective prevention and the establishment of appropriate responses for child protection, indigenous people must work to change some of these standards.

Economic factors are also causes of the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. It is necessary to properly allocate more resources to develop new strategies for social protection designed especially for vulnerable families and children. On the other hand, the importance of development strategies for poverty reduction to prevent of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents should be emphasised to governments and parliamentarians as well as with the African Union.

A mechanism to ensure the monitoring of the National Action Plan in partnership with civil society must be developed.

The registration of births must be a national priority with the aim of achieving universal registration by 2013.

To combat sexual exploitation in and around schools, it is necessary to strengthen protection policies and to implement systematic sanctions against perpetrators of sexual violence .

Educators must be involved in combating sexual abuse of children. Community-based care for children, parents' access to relevant information is necessary.

In terms of sexual violence based on gender in conflict situations, the coordination of humanitarian response must be strengthened by focusing on a concerted approach by all actors without forgetting the essential role of government. The quality and coverage of data related to sexual violence in situations of conflict or post-conflict must be strengthened. It must also support systems for child protection at the community level, in particular in countries where institutional mechanisms are not functional during periods of conflict.

Documenting and sharing best practices among NGOs, governments and civil society in Africa in order to promote their adoption across the continent is also important.

To strengthen the ability of children to protect themselves against exploitation and sexual abuse, African governments are expected to incorporate into their curriculum a training module on sex education, including sexual exploitation of children. Traditional chiefs also have an active role in community mobilization.

Businesses have a social responsibility to play: the media and information industry and the tourism industry in Africa have roles to play.

For more information

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