

To extend safeguarding and eradicate trafficking



On 5, 6 and 7 May 2022, the 15th FAPMI (Federation of Associations for the Prevention of Child Abuse) International Congress took place in Santiago de Compostela (Spain) under the title “Steps in Safeguarding”.

Before that, on 4th May, there was an ECPAT* International Seminar on the subject of the trafficking of children for sexual exploitation under the title, “Weaving Safety Nets for Children in Bolivia and Spain”. It was held together with EDUCO, a non-governmental organisation for international cooperation concerning children.

The ECPAT seminar focused on the problem of human trafficking. Human trafficking is a serious crime and a gross violation of human rights. Every year, thousands of women, girls, men and boys fall into the hands of traffickers both in their home countries and abroad. Every country in the world is affected by this terrible social scourge, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination of the victims. Recently, in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine, mafias have been detected trafficking children and women fleeing the horror of war.

Unfortunately, this has not only happened in Ukraine but in all war situations. We can also see it in economic migration, as in the case of the "disappearance" of minors trying to cross the southern border of the USA, or the sex trafficking to which not only minors but also women are subjected. Another serious problem is the systematic rape of women and children as a weapon of war.

Despite the evident progress that has been made, there is still a long way to go on the road towards the eradication of this terrible form of violence. The Seminar was conceived as a meeting place for all those involved in the prevention and detection of trafficking in children and adolescents for the purpose of sexual exploitation from a double perspective: commitment to its eradication and the implementation of this commitment through proven successful initiatives, mainly resulting from the implementation of the PROTEJERES Programme -Weaving Safety Nets in Bolivia-, and based on research findings on these issues.

The organisation of the 15th FAPMI International Congress was not easy. It was a challenge to be present in person (although it could also be followed by streaming) after the hiatus caused by the effects of the pandemic and at a time of some social upheaval. Both the organisers and the people who traditionally attend this biennial event were asking for this edition to finally see the light of day. So, after almost four years, it was possible to hold this Congress that had as its theme, “Steps in safeguarding, consolidating protection paradigms”.

The concept of “Safeguarding” is not new, although it has only recently been incorporated in Spain in the new (8/2021) organic law for the integral protection of

children and adolescents against violence. Both the Federation and the associations that are part of it, as well as many other professionals, have been working for many years on a model of “safeguarding” as the best way to prevent and eradicate violence against children and adolescents. Safeguarding is a way to help children and adolescents and their families by giving them tools to improve family relationships that then empower all family members.

When we speak of safeguarding, we are also referring to positive parenting. Positive parenting is concerned with the capacity of the members of the family unit to love one another unconditionally while respecting each one’s individual differences. To achieve this, we need to be aware of the needs of the children at different stages of their development. We must use positive discipline, and help them to develop self-control, because this will improve both the psycho-emotional aspects and the socialisation of children. It will help them to become mature and to have empathetic and assertive personalities. In addition, it will enhance the child's ability to develop emotional intelligence and thinking skills. That is why it was decided that this had to be the theme of the congress. Safeguarding should not be seen as a target or a goal, but as something we must implement. The point is not to get there, but to make the journey.

The various presentations at the Congress dealt with a wide range of topics related to childhood and adolescence. These included mental health and its prevention, the media, abuse in sport, intellectual and developmental disabilities, transition processes for children leaving the care system, sexual exploitation of children, best practices in education, sexual violence, LGBT+, migrant children, child protection in sport, conflictual divorces, etc.

As president, I was very active throughout the congress, but I did not present any specific paper. ACIM participated with a paper on the “Vulnerability of children in conflictual separations”.

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*ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes).