

REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION



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(...)

Desconfiarei daqueles que visão ouvir-me,
em voz baixa e precavidos:
É preciso agir;
É preciso falar;
É preciso andar;
É preciso esperar, na forma em que esperas,
porque esses recusam a alegria de tua chegada.

Desconfiarei também daqueles que visão dizer-me,
com palavras fáceis, que já chegaste,
porque esses, ao anunciar-te ingenuamente,
antes te denunciam.

Estarei preparando a tua chegada
como o jardineiro prepara o jardim
para a rosa que se abra na primavera.

Educação óbvia, Paulo Freire (1971)

FOREWORD

During the last years, as in other parts of the world, Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean region has seen a significant increase in violence. This situation has set off the alarm in the population, governments and international organizations. Violence in the area is seen through several manifestations, from violence to boys and girls, up to gangs, gender violence or xenophobic discrimination to immigrants.

This phenomenon has become one of the main causes affecting development and life quality of people, especially the most vulnerable; resulting in what has become “violence culture” in society.

In this sense, I am pleased to present the work done by the National Society’s of the region included in this “Regional Strategy for Violence Prevention” (RSVP), which purpose is to work on preventing all kinds of violence, intolerance and discrimination.

Since 1998, and based on the experience of hurricane Mitch and other natural disasters that occurred in the region, the Spanish Red Cross undertakes—in close coordination with National Societies and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent—different activities aiming to the social development of vulnerable communities from different community development approaches. Work and accompanying processes initiated with the communities have generated an important heritage of knowledge and experience for the Institution regarding the violence problems these populations face.

The most significant intervention takes place in Honduras through the community program *Ciudad España Plan* and the Honduras Red Cross project *Extending Opportunities*, pioneer in the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent regarding juvenile violence prevention. The Inter-American Regional Committee, in its Plan of Action 2003-2007, encourages National Societies to promote violence prevention strategies in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Based on these experiences, the Spanish Red Cross considers necessary to congregate and coordinate efforts and capacities of the agents of the Movement—supported by public, private and international institutions with common objectives regarding violence prevention—beginning in 2004 to work on a methodological instrument for the promotion of the value of dialogue and understanding



between the parties, in order to improve the life quality of the most vulnerable people and groups.

This Strategy will serve for the preparation of national projects, programs and strategies, and for improving National Society's capacities in participating as a Movement in global efforts for violence prevention.

The objective of promoting the non-violence culture is one of the deepest aspirations in the humanitarian spirit of the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. This Strategy is a step forward in the peace culture actively promoted by our Organization.

Juan Manuel Suárez del Toro Rivero

President

Spanish Red Cross

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AT THE SERVICE OF CENTRAL AMERICA, MEXICO AND THE CARIBBEAN

This Regional Strategy for Violence Prevention 2005 (RSVP) is oriented to prevent, from a development approach, any kind of violence, intolerance and discrimination towards people in the Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean region.

Inspired in the **Fundamental Principles and humanitarian values** of the International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, and designed based on the international Cooperation Plan of the Spanish Red Cross, the RSVP presents a diagnosis based on a participative investigation process over a period of fourteen months, which includes the **learning experiences** that since 1998 the different National Societies (NS), the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) and the Spanish Red Cross (SRC) have enjoyed.

The RSVP, which also considers the methodological experiences in violence prevention developed by the Spanish Government mainly through the Red Cross Youth, includes an operative manual or "practical guide" to facilitate effective planning of specific projects by National Societies which **have identified the violence phenomenon at national or local levels**. This manual is an applied version from the IFEE methodology (Identification-Formulation-Execution-Evaluation) for the implementation of SRC International Cooperation projects.

The RSVP will improve in the mid term the capacities of NS in the violence phenomenon prevention approach and therefore will contribute to the increase of human, community and institutional capacities of society. As they contribute in the long term in reducing the incidence of its different manifestations, the national projects and strategies supported by it will contribute at last to the improvement of **life quality of the most vulnerable** – especially considering boys and girls, the youth, and women in general as main objects of violence.



As seen throughout the document, the creation of networks and alliances is inherent to planning violence prevention, due to the complexity of the development scenario, the large number and diverse nature of involved agents.



PARTICIPATING ENTITIES AND ALLIANCES

During the research process, diverse agents, **from within and outside the International Movement** of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (the Movement) have participated. It is important to highlight the participation of almost all NS of the region, as well as the IFRC Secretariat. Also, at the consultation level, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has shown interest in this initiative —and for the concrete results of the projects developed from it— in light of Resolution No. 9 of the Movement Delegates Council of 2003, called “Promotion of Respect for Diversity and Combat against Discrimination and Intolerance”.

Likewise, it is important to point out the collaboration during the research period of international and supragovernmental institutions, such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Central American Coalition for Prevention of Youth Violence (CCPVJ) and agencies of the United Nations System, such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Women Development Fund (UNIFEM), the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) or the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). Likewise members from public and judicial bodies participated in the investigation (such as public universities, specialized district’s attorney offices or the Drugs Abuse Resistance Education DARE program), and other private or non-profit organizations that take part in the global violence prevention and reduction effort, such as Casa Alianza, Save the Children, Women Studies Center, El Caracol Association and the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) among others.

As for partnerships, the **SRC and the IFRC** establish a series of agreements as the research process develops, highlighting the special participation of the Secretariat on a Regional Consultation where eleven NS of the region participated. It is also important to highlight the joint contacts with the UN System agencies previously mentioned, which during different times of the process show their interest for a possible **joint regional action** at mid term.

THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL SECRETARIAT STUDY 2003-2005

Because of the alarming worldwide situation, in 2001 the Boys and Girls Rights Committee asked the UN General Secretary, through the General Assembly, to prepare an integral **international study** about violence against minors under eighteen years old.



This study will be oriented to facilitate, through the definition of technical and methodological recommendations, the formulation of strategies oriented to prevent and strategically combat such violence. During its elaboration (2003-2005), coordinated by Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, and executed based on regional consultations and application of techniques such as “focus groups”, special attention was given to ensure the opinions and experiences of the minors themselves would document the process: handicapped children, homeless children, ethnic minority children, children living with HIV/AIDS and children going through other kinds of *difficult* situations.

The RSVP has specially considered the **“violence against boys, girls and adolescents”** conclusions of the UN General Secretariat, which includes all the recommendations gathered in this study, distributed in five areas:

- Policies, programs and resources for violence prevention
- Prevention of violence to boys, girls and adolescents
- Claim and reestablishment of rights
- Communication media
- Knowledge generation: research and information systems.

The process is being supported and receiving follow-up by the UN Human Rights High Commissioner, the World Health Organization WHO and UNICEF and is expected to finalize with the presentation of the last World Report —for discussion and approval- to the UN General Assembly in 2006.

THE MILLENNIUM GOALS, LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The approach of the so called UN Millennium Goals (MDG) shows that the region presents some **“medium” encouraging development levels**. However, factors such as high level of spare time in young population, the increasing population living in “urban hovels”, gender inequality and the spreading of HIV-AIDS, contribute to the linkage of the RSVP approach to the essence of development of the world goals (check www.unmilleniumproject.org).



A symptomatic example is education, where there is a high number of registrations (especially in elementary school), however there is very low quality and malfunctioning of the educational system (high level of school and teacher's absenteeism, low level of teachers training, lack of materials and school spaces, etc.). The truth is that in terms of "exercise of rights" this situation represents a social problem very similar to that of low registration.

The eight general goals are:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce mortality in children under five years old.
5. Improve maternal health.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability.
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

It is important to point out that the MDG are designed from the perspective of extreme poverty and human development, which prioritizes geo-politically Sub-Saharan Africa and some areas in Asia. This fact somehow contributes to the generation of the **"development fallacies"** which, in summary, place Latin America and the Caribbean outside a hypothetical perimeter of the danger, when considering that poverty and underdevelopment taking place in these countries is somehow "acceptable" compared to the global aspect. Most added macro-magnitudes hide the poverty and exclusion situations when ignoring, by definition, one of the main regional characteristics: inequality.

The truth is that many of these achievements have been produced only at a formal level, strengthening private options and in detriment of the public concept (Smith: 2003). Deep structural problems persist in all sectors.

