PUBLIC POLICY MONITORING AND EVALUATION

An approach to addressing the sexual exploitation of children, based on the National Action Plans of the States in the region

Introduction

In the context of its *Inter-American Cooperation Programme for the Prevention and Eradication of the Sexual Exploitation, Smuggling of and Trafficking in Children*, the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN-OAS) submits a yearly report to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) on the actions undertaken by member States to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the Americas.

As from 2010, these reports began to be perceived as an opportunity to focus on issues which are specifically significant, and/or which the States have demanded. That year, the issue of CSEC and the Internet was addressed; in 2011 and 2012, the restitution of the rights of child victims of SE; in 2013, SEC in travel and tourism, and in 2014, national action plans to deal with SEC.[1]

The objective of the last report was to analyse public policies to fight CSEC in the region through National Action Plans. After a survey conducted among all of the States of the Inter-American System – of which eleven responded – and having gained access to the plans themselves, different aspects related to their design, implementation and evaluation were analysed according to the "Stockholm classification": Coordination and Cooperation; Prevention; Protection; Recovery and Reintegration; Child Participation.

Among the conclusions we arrived at, one stands out that cuts across all of the focal points: **the absence of monitoring and evaluation, both in the Plans themselves (with some exceptions) and in the specific actions carried out in accordance with them.**

Already in 2012, in a study for the creation of a system to monitor children's rights, the IIN noted a *"widespread shortage of reliable information, systematized and accessible,*

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[1] All of the Reports are available at the programme's website: www.annaobserva.org

in terms of geographical breakdown, sex, age, and other features that would make it possible to shed light on the real situation of children and adolescents in all its dimensions. Added to this, most of the existing information systems do not respond to the rights-based approach" (Santillán Pizarro, 2012: 9).

This is a comment which is often repeated by the Committee on the Rights of the Child when it examines the reports sent by the States in compliance with the commitments they undertook: there is almost a total lack of research and monitoring systems in the region that would make it possible to follow the evolution of the SEC phenomenon, and identify at-risk groups, prevailing modalities and geographical areas. In view of this, the Committee recommends that the States should ensure that data are compiled and analysed, and broken down, among other categories, by age, sex and minority or ethnic group, as this information is essential for planning and evaluating the implementation of policies.

We consider that evaluation is essential, both to understand the effects of the activities implemented, and to extract lessons which will lead to better planning of new actions and improve the handling of limited resources. This is why for 2015, we decided to focus the production of knowledge in the Programme on this area.

The aim of this note is, therefore, to provide a first approach to the concepts of monitoring and evaluation and their inclusion in National Action Plans to address CSEC in the States in the region.

Basic Ideas on Monitoring and Evaluation

What do we understand by evaluation?

Di Virgilio and Solano (2012: 39) define evaluation as *"a programmed activity to reflect upon an action, which can be planned to be performed **before, during or after the implementation of a policy, programme or project.** Evaluation is carried out by means of **systematic procedures involving the collection, analysis and interpretation of information, as well as through comparisons with established parameters**. Its purpose is to make **well-grounded and communicable value judgements on the activities and results** (…) of social interventions and **provide recommendations for decisions that aim to adjust action"** (Nirenberg, 2009).

On the basis of this definition, we can identify three components in evaluation (Di Virgilio and Solano, 2012):

- Object: the policy, programme, project or public intervention regarding which a value judgement is made. While not synonymous, different theorists who refer to the subject of evaluation take as their object of evaluation the so-called "3 Ps", without distinguishing between them, as any of these actions can be evaluated and/or monitored.

- Benchmark: the "desirability model" or standard reference against which the object of evaluation is compared. It is related to the policy/programme/project objectives.

- Systematic procedure or strategy for collecting and analysing information: "*To obtain and analyse the required information, rigorous methodological settings should be adopted and appropriate techniques applied*." These will vary according to the object and the purpose of the evaluation (Amaya, 2005: 18).

Regardless of the possible variations, **indicators** are usually established in order to determine what type of information must be gathered: *"An indicator is a tool which makes it possible to deliver qualitative or quantitative information regarding the degree of compliance of a previously established management objective of* […]*. Each objective may have several indicators […]"* (Amaya, 2005: 16)*.* Indicators must be accompanied by **goals** ("*quantity, magnitude or variation which it is expected to achieve as a result of the intervention")* and **measuring frequency** ("*how regularly will the indicator be calculated")* (Coneval, 2013: 48).

In general, definitions of the evaluation of policies/programmes/projects also include a "utilitarian aspect" related to why evaluation is useful. Thus, Amaya (2005: 2) defines evaluation as techniques used to construct "*useful information to improve aspects of the establishment and implementation of public policies*". Di Virgilio and Solano (2012) associate the definition of evaluation with a need to introduce changes that will solve or improve problems in a public project. This implies that evaluation cannot be conceived without anticipating the possibility of provoking consequences to modify the course of the project. Evaluation thus becomes an input for decision-making on doing, acting, building and/or modifying. Finally, from an economic perspective, and in the understanding that "*interventions compete against one another in order to raise funds"*, Freeman and Rossi (1989: 31) suggest that evaluation makes it possible to discover whether programmes produce sufficient benefits to justify what is spent on them.

Types of evaluation

It is possible to distinguish between different kinds of evaluation, which follow different criteria.

CRITERION	TYPE OF EVALUATION
How it is performed	Longitudinal studies
	Cross-sectional studies
When it is performed	Ex-ante
	Concurrent
	Ex-post
Who performs it	Internal
	Participatory
	Mixed
	External

a) Evaluations according to how they are performed

Basically, when analysing a policy/programme/project, there are two ways in which a study can be performed: **longitudinal studies** and **cross-cutting studies**. In the first case, after the intervention has begun, several measurements are taken within the same population, in order to compare them at different stages. Whereas in cross-cutting studies, "*at a single moment and at the same time, after the start of the implementation of an intervention, one measurement is taken of the population, or even of two types of population. In this last case, one of the types is subjected to public intervention, while the other is not. The search for the distinguishing features consists in comparing both populations, in the assumption, moreover, that both have identical characteristics*" (Meny and Thoenig, 1992: 209).

b) Evaluations according to when they are performed

Evaluation should not be understood as a process which takes place in isolation from the policy/program/project, nor from subsequent actions. Although when we think in terms of the *"sequential cycle"[2]* of policies, we tend to identify evaluation with the

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[2] While variations do exist, in general terms, the stages of the sequential cycle of policies/programmes/projects tend to be: identification of a problem; decision to intervene; design and formulation, with the corresponding proposal of objectives and targets; implementation; evaluation (Di Virgilio and Solano, 2012).

final stage, it can be present at all stages (and it is important that it should be). From this perspective, it is possible to distinguish between three types of evaluation: ex-ante, concurrent and ex-post.

Ex-ante evaluation is conducted before the execution of a programme. *"[…] it makes it possible to determine the feasibility of the intervention; i.e., the real possibility of its being implemented successfully and the social significance of the policy […]; that is, its suitability and relevance to generate social impact"* (Di Virgilio and Solano, 2012: 61).

In a similar sense, although with an economic slant, Cohen and Martínez (2004) explain that this type of evaluation conducted prior to a project makes it possible to estimate both cost and possible impact and thus to decide which alternative maximizes investment.

Concurrent evaluation is carried out during the execution of a project, with the purpose of constituting an input which will help correct courses of action and adjust components as needed to achieve the proposed objectives. It examines effectiveness (probability of objectives being reached, according to the rate of execution), efficiency (rational use of resources) and productivity (relationship between resources invested and results achieved) (Di Virgilio and Solano, 2012: 62).

It should be noted that, unlike monitoring, concurrent evaluation is a cross-sectional study conducted at a specific time, which serves to compare the situation "with the project" to the situation "without the project", simplifying our knowledge of changes which have occurred from the initial situation up to the present moment (Di Virgilio and Solano, 2012: 88). Monitoring, on the other hand, involves a continuous process of checking the planning, execution and first impacts of the project being implemented (Di Virgilio and Solano, 2012: 62). Thus, while monitoring follows the same policy throughout its life cycle, in order to discover how it progresses over each period, concurrent evaluation only occurs once, in order to compare an initial to an intermediate situation, taking the latter as if it were the final situation. In other words, while monitoring follows a longitudinal cut, concurrent evaluation is cross-sectional.

Finally, **ex-post evaluation** is conducted when the execution of an intervention is completed, and it examines all of the changes generated throughout its implementation, while also making use of all of the evaluations and monitoring activities conducted previously. Specifically, three aspects are usually assessed: outputs or outcomes (specific project results, obtained from a comparison between what was planned and what was obtained); effects (changes arising as a consequence

of actions; expected or not, positive or negative), and impact (implying an analysis of the possible development of the effects observed, in order to forecast long-term effects) (Di Virgilio and Solano, 2012: 62-63).

c) Evaluations according to who performs them

Taking the evaluation agency and how it performs its evaluation into account, two broad types of evaluation can be identified: internal and external; with two intermediate alternatives – mixed and participatory.

Internal evaluation is carried out by stakeholders directly involved in the execution of the policy/programme/project. It has the advantage of minimizing the reactivity of the members of the organization, while at the same time being less costly in economic terms and in human resources. The clearest disadvantage involves the risk of loss of impartiality in the evaluation and its outcomes, which would affect its social credibility (Di Virgilio and Solano, 2012: 57).

Conversely, an **external evaluation** is performed by agents who are external to the policy/program/project to be assessed. It is researchers, consultants and other external and independent agents who conduct the evaluation. This type of assessment tends to provoke some rejection among the implementing organization's stakeholders, but its main advantage lies in the assumption of objectivity in the independence of the evaluator, which maximizes the social credibility of the evaluation. On the other hand, it is usually more expensive than the previous type, in both financial and human terms (Di Virgilio and Solano, 2012: 58).

For their part, **mixed evaluations** attempt to combine both perspectives, in the belief that such a combination will enhance the positive aspects of both (Di Virgilio and Solano, 2012: 58).

Finally, **participatory evaluations** are a little more complex. In principle, they directly incorporate the recipients of the programme to be assessed. In addition, they seek to bring in all those with any links to the subject being evaluated, either because their interests are involved in or may be affected by the programme. In issues involving children, it is essential to include the voice of children and their families. This kind of evaluation is more successful in detecting unforeseen effects; however, it is the most expensive type and also takes the longest (Di Virgilio and Solano, 2012: 58).

Monitoring and evaluation in National Plans to address CSEC in the States in the region

As we have said, on the survey conducted prior to drafting the Fourteenth Report to the Secretary General of the OAS, none of the States reported any evaluation and monitoring activities, either for the plans themselves or for the actions carried out within their framework.

Nonetheless, a reading of the documents accompanying the plans makes it possible to pinpoint specific references or elements that contribute to evaluation: objectives (which constitute a benchmark), indicators, goals and deadlines. Below we provide a brief systematization of this information:

STATE	PLAN	REFERENCES TO MONITORING/EVALUATION
Brazil	National Plan to address Sexual Violence against Children (2000-2003)	Organized in strategic focal points, for each of which there are <u>objectives</u>, <u>goals</u>, a <u>time frame</u> and <u>success indicators</u>. *"Monitoring and evaluation of the National Plan should be performed by Conanda, in coordination with the National Forum, as indicated in the Natal Charter, in the process of development. It will be the responsibility of this Forum, initially, to discuss and propose management strategies for the National Plan"* (p. 14).
	National Plan to address Sexual Violence against Children (2013-2020)	Organized in focal points, for each of which there are <u>objectives</u>, <u>guidelines</u>, <u>actions</u> and <u>monitoring indicators</u>. As a precedent, it includes a review of the previous Plan's revision process (p.9).
Chile	Framework of Action against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	Organized in lines of action, which include <u>objectives</u>, <u>activities</u> and <u>outcomes</u> (however, no indicators are established with which to measure these outcomes).
	Second Framework of Action against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (2012-2014)	The Action Matrix includes lines of action, <u>objectives</u>, <u>outputs</u> and <u>activities</u> (it does not establish any indicators). The document highlights the significance of follow-up in a separate chapter: *"In order to monitor the implementation of the second Framework for Action, it is considered appropriate to maintain the Executive Secretariat permanently in operation, constituted by the Ministry of Justice and SENAME, with the purpose of monitoring the plan's commitments every six months and submit a report, in accordance with the agreements reached. Likewise, this instrument may be enhanced when it is set in motion at national, regional, local and international levels by the bodies involved in this challenge"* (p.15).

Costa Rica	**National Plan for the Eradication of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (2008-2010)**	Organized in components, each of which includes <u>strategic actions</u>, <u>objectives</u>, <u>goals</u>, <u>indicators and verification sources</u>. At the same time, it establishes operating principles and strategic focal points as elements which "*[...] must guide the formulation and implementation of a proposed National Plan to address CSEC effectively and efficiently*", one of which is <u>monitoring and evaluation</u>: *"This focal point implies the design and operation of an information system which will enable gathering reliable information regarding the fulfilment of the goals established in the Plan, at national, cantonal and regional levels." (p. 33-35).*
	Roadmap to make Costa Rica a country free from child labour and its worst forms (2010-2020)	The strategic framework proposed by this Roadmap includes six dimensions, understood as those areas of public policy which are most directly related to the prevention and eradication of child labour and to fighting its worst forms. For each of them it establishes <u>objectives</u>, <u>outcomes</u>, <u>indicators</u> and <u>goals</u>, and basic strategies to achieve them. In addition, a separate chapter contains a proposal on how to follow up and monitor the progress of the goals: "*The country already has a <u>National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Working Adolescents.</u> Ministries and other institutions, as duty-bearers, are responsible for achieving the agreed outcomes. <u>It is proposed that the Steering Committee should organize coordination, monitoring and evaluation boards, according to the dimensions of the impact being considered.</u> These boards will be responsible for promoting the execution of the actions anticipated in the Roadmap in their respective entities, according to their dimensions; they will also report to the Steering Committee on the progress and impact of such actions [...] <u>Each of the boards will have its own plan for Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability, which will enable it to check on progress or deviations from the plan</u>; each will make the relevant decisions*

		according to its level of competence and will draft the appropriate accountability reports" (p. 103).
Ecuador	**National Plan to combat trafficking in persons, unlawful migrant smuggling, sexual exploitation at work and other forms of exploitation of women and children, child pornography and the corruption of minors (2006 to the present).**	Organized around three focal points. Each of them includes policies (defined as long-term objectives), strategic objectives, lines of action, outcomes and responsible parties.
El Salvador	**National Policy for the Comprehensive Protection of Children (PNPNA, in Spanish) National Action Plan 2014-2016**	The National Policy for the Comprehensive Protection of Children is a public administration tool which establishes a number of goals and guidelines with the purpose of ensuring the full enjoyment of the rights of children. In 2014, the State began drafting a National Action Plan 2014-2016 with the purpose of making national policy operational. The PNPNA is organized according to areas of rights, and within each of them there are strategic objectives, strategies and lines of action. In a separate chapter, the Plan provides for a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation: *"In order to follow up and monitor the actions established in the PNPNA, the bodies and entities with direct responsibility for the implementation of strategies and lines of action established in the National Action Plan will produce a six-monthly progress report, which must be forwarded to the CONNA's Executive Board. The purpose of this report is to constitute a means of measuring the progress of the implementation of the National Action Plan and the PNPNA, and may be discussed in consultancy and support proceedings with the CONNA's duly appointed technical staff"* (p. 108).

	National Policy for the Eradication of Trafficking in Persons (2012)	This anti-trafficking policy will be set in motion by means of the implementation of the National Action Plan. *"Article 11 - Monitoring and Evaluation. A monitoring, evaluation, follow-up and revision system will be created for the execution of this policy, and the Council will be the body responsible for this task [National Council Against Trafficking in Persons] with the support of the Technical Committee."*
Mexico	**National Programme to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Crime Involving Trafficking in Persons and to Protect and Assist Victims of these Crimes (2014-2018)**	Establishes <u>objectives</u>, strategies and lines of action. Then, in a separate chapter, for each objective it establishes an <u>indicator</u>, and explains <u>how it is calculated</u>, <u>how regularly</u> and its sources.
Nicaragua	**National Plan for Human Development 2012-2016**	The Plan suggests a steering matrix in which national guidelines, policies/working focal points and <u>indicators</u> are established. In a separate chapter it indicates: *"These systems will serve to produce <u>monthly reports</u> to <u>identify early warnings about the goals or projects which may have compliance deficiencies. Measures are established to address these warnings, making it possible to overcome obstacles, which are subjected to weekly monitoring</u>. These reports are analysed by the National Commission on Planning, Investment, Budget and Cooperation (which includes all of the institutional committees on planning, investment, budget and cooperation), where agreements are reached for more detailed reviews and analyses at institutional or sectoral level. This Commission has also been beneficial in strengthening human talent by means of sharing best experiences and the challenges faced in the construction of the development model promoted by the Government and Reconciliation and National Unity"* (p. 196).

Panama	**National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of CSEC (2008 to the present)**	Organized in four components, each of which includes strategic objectives, <u>strategic actions</u>, <u>objectives</u>, <u>goals</u>, <u>indicators and verification sources</u>. In addition, a separate paragraph refers to a monitoring and evaluation mechanism: *"CONAPREDES, through its Technical Secretariat, will perform <u>half-yearly monitoring of the execution and impact</u> of the National Plan by the institutions responsible, as well as <u>yearly evaluations over the three years of the Plan</u>. Regarding monitoring and follow-up, the Technical Secretariat will develop a series of instruments aimed at facilitating these actions, both for the Technical Secretariat and the institutions. The purpose of monitoring is to review the Plan's progress and any issues which could lead to delays in execution. The objective will be to gather sufficient information to enable CONAPREDES and the institutions to make timely and relevant decisions which will make it possible to introduce the necessary corrective measures or decisions aimed at continuing the execution of the Plan and the fulfilment of its objectives"* (p.28).
Paraguay	**National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of the Sexual Exploitation of Children (2012-2017)**	Organized in seven components, each of which includes <u>specific objectives</u>, <u>lines of action</u> and <u>indicators</u>. In addition, one of the components specifically addresses "*<u>monitoring and evaluation</u>*".
Peru	**National Action Plan for Children (2012-2021)**	This is the public policy framework document for issues related to children. It includes four strategic objectives established in accordance with stages in life and 25 Expected Outcomes in relation to the various issues that affect children, three of which refer to sexual exploitation and trafficking. For each expected outcome there are also a <u>goal</u>, <u>indicators</u> (with a <u>baseline</u>) and implementation strategies. In addition, taking the previous framework into account, it proposes the implementation of a <u>Monitoring and Evaluation System</u> (SIMONE 2021), which will include an <u>annual monitoring report throughout the period of validity of the Plan, and three evaluations</u> (p. 96-97).

	National Action Plan against Human Trafficking in Peru (2011-2016)	Organized in four guidelines or strategic focal points, for each of which it establishes <u>strategic objectives</u>, <u>goals/outcomes</u>, <u>activities</u> for the achievement of the <u>goals</u>, and <u>indicators</u> (classified as quantitative or qualitative). In addition, one of the strategic guidelines specifically refers to "*implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the PNATP*".
Uruguay	**National Plan for the eradication of commercial sexual exploitation of children (2007)**	Organized in five sub-programmes, each of which includes <u>objectives</u>, activities and <u>goals</u>. In addition, one of the sub-programmes specifically addresses "*monitoring and evaluation*".
	National Plan for the eradication of commercial sexual exploitation of children (redesign, 2011-2015)	As it is a redesign of the previous plan, it maintains the same structure, and includes three new sub-programmes.

In short, all of the States contain in their Plans some specific reference to monitoring and/or evaluation, or are organized in such a way that both processes would be possible (containing the three components identified in the theoretical explanation). In this respect, while the reports did not initially include this, inquiring into and examining existing monitoring and evaluation experiences in greater depth will contribute to extracting lessons which can be replicated in other States.

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Note: all of the National Action Plans mentioned are available at the programme's website: www.annaobserva.org (Observatory site).