Inter-institutional Cooperation for the Integrated Attention of Unaccompanied Migrant Children

San Antonio, Texas, enero de 2009

Patricia Fragoso Sánchez
Subdirectora de Coordinación y Concertación
Coordinación de Relaciones internacionales e Interinstitucionales
Inter-institutional Cooperation for the Integrated Attention of Unaccompanied Migrant Children

• It is a priority for the Mexican Government to provide the needed integrated attention to unaccompanied children.

• An unaccompanied child is a person under 18 years of age, who migrates without the company of an adult who is by law responsible for the child’s care.
Reasons for Migration

- Mexican children migrate to the United States mainly to join their families, (commonly already in the USA) and to look for a better quality of life.
Repatriation of Mexican Migrant Children
(January-November 2008)

- The National Institute of Migration registered 30,453 events of repatriation of Mexican migrant children.
- 17,306 traveled unaccompanied and 13,147 traveled accompanied.
- 23,289 males
- 7,164 females
- 3,351 under age 12
- 27,102 over age 12
Local Agreements of Safe and Planned Repatriation of Mexican Nationals between Mexico and the United States

- There exist seven local agreements of repatriation (covering border states of both countries and Chicago)

- **Principles and General Criteria:**
  - Preserve family unity during the repatriation process
  - Any disabled person, any child (accompanied or unaccompanied) and any other vulnerable person will be repatriated during day time only, and in places selected to provide for their own security.
Local Agreements of Safe and Planned Repatriation of Mexican Nationals between Mexico and the United States

✓ The authorities of the Department of Internal Security (DHS) will provide timely notification on the cases of unaccompanied children, cases of individuals with medical or mental issues, or with any other type of special needs.
Inter-institutional Program for the Attention of Children along Borders

• The Inter-institutional Program for the Attention of Children along Borders is in operation since 1996.

• OBJECTIVE: To address in an integrated way, the risk encountered by vulnerable children at the border area between Mexico and the United States.

• The program is coordinated by the Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral para la Familia (SNDIF) with participation of the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE) and the Secretaría de Gobernación (SEGOB), through the Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM).
Inter-institutional Program for the Attention of Children Along Borders

- **Target Population**
  Mexican boys, girls, teens, from the border

  **Intervention:**
  
  **North Border:** Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León y Tamaulipas

  **South Border:** Chiapas mainly.

  Located in the South is the Tapachula Shelter, providing services to Central-American minors

- **Network of Shelters**
  In the North area **19 shelters are operating**, out of which **13 are under the DIF System**, 6 are part of the Organizations of the Civil Society.

  7 Units of Attention to repatriated children who travel on their own.
Inter-institutional Program for the Attention of Minors along Borders
Shelter Network

- **Core Services**
  - Lodging
  - Food
  - Clothing

- **Reception**
  - Medical evaluation
  - Psychological evaluation
  - Social evaluation
  - Review of legal situation

- **Direction towards place of Origin**
  - Location of relatives
  - Inter-institutional engagement and coordination
  - Moving the minor
  - Delivery to institution or family
Units of Attention to repatriated children who travel on their own

- Created by SNDIF for repatriated children traveling on their own

  - Services include Medical evaluation, Psychological evaluation, Social evaluation, Review of legal situation

- Seven units exist today, as follows: frontera norte: Tijuana, Mexicali, San Luis Río Colorado, Nogales, Agua Prieta, Ciudad Juárez and Ojinaga.
Inter-institutional Program for the Atention of Children Along Borders

- Single System of Information of NNA and immigrants and repatriated children
- Will allow the aggregation of data, and follow up to migrant children from repatriation to insertion in community
- Inter-institutional Program for the Atention of Children along Borders
Roundtable of Inter-Institutional Approaches to Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Women

- Strategic effort across systems related to the issues associated with the migrant vulnerable populations.
- Objective: Exchange information and agree on policies and mechanisms that guarantee the rights and protections of children leaving or entering the country.
- Participants: Institutions and organizations known for their interest to support solution-focused approaches to the problems of children and women who migrate.
Roundtable of Inter-Institutional Approaches to Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Women

• The inter-institutional effort resulted in a Model for the protection of the rights of unaccompanied migrant children.

• An element of this model was the creation of the Officers of Child Protection named Oficiales de Protección a la Infancia (OPI) by the Instituto Nacional de Migración NM.

• 178 Migration Agents employed by the Federal Government, according to a profile designed in partnership with the Council office of the Sistema Nacional DIF.
Roundtable of Inter-Institutional Approaches to Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Women

- The OPI’s receive continuous and specialized training.
- Are identified by a special badge
- Training of OPI’s is a joint effort by: SNDIF, OIM, COMAR, UNICEF, ACNUR, Centros de Integración Juvenil y la OSC Proteja.
- Training included: emotional intelligence, communication skills particularly focused on vulnerable children, crisis situations, children’s rights, international protections (trafficking and refugee issues), violence, maltreatment and abuse, and gender-based perspectives.
Action Plan for UNICEF – INM

- Signed September 2008.
- Model of Protection of unaccompanied migrant children.
- Establishes the methods for the operation of OPIs.
- A survey of perceptions of the OPIs about children’s rights.
- New telephone lines at the migratory stations to guarantee that children can exercise their right to communicate with their families. Communication provided at no cost by NEXTEL.
- Video on the rights of migrant children.
Regional Guidelines for the Attention of Unaccompanied Migrant Children

- Proposal by the Mexican government presented to the member countries of the Regional Conference on Migration (CRM)

- Guidelines provide direction and support so that member countries ensure that the return of unaccompanied migrant children is performed within the higher interests on children, in fulfillment of all their rights, and guaranteeing that they are not discriminated by reason of gender, race, age, socio-economic status, or culture.
Regional Guidelines for the Attention of Unaccompanied Migrant Children

- Guiding Principles:
  - The higher interest on children
  - Non discrimination.
  - Right to participation
  - Translation
  - Confidentiality
  - Disclosure of Information
  - Principles of family unification
  - Due process
  - Special protections against violence, abuse, and exploitation
  - Principle of no return in cases of risk or threat to the life, freedom or security of the child in the country of origin