



**Prevention, integral protection and restitution of the  
human rights of girls and adolescents victims of sexual  
violence, exploitation and human trafficking**

**FINAL REPORT**

**January 23th, 2014**

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## **I. PRESENTATION**

El Refugio de la Niñez is dedicated to serving victims of sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking in a holistic way. In addition to the health, psychological and protective services provided to the victims, shelters works to strengthen family ties and to develop legal proceedings, in order to help restore the victims human rights and works towards improving the criminal prosecution system by developing important actions that complement the strategy to combat sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking. Also, the psychological team has a very important role in this process, because they provide the necessary support to victims that allow them to participate in the prosecution process, serve as witnesses and even participate as expert witnesses (peritos) at the oral and public trial. In order to keep the prosecutorial cases running, the presence of the victims is key; the shelters ensures their presence by accompanying the victims and providing them with the services and protection they need during the trial.

In this context, the following report describes the most important results and achievements of El Refugio de la Niñez during the 2013, with the support of Kinderhilfe. This support has been very important to ensure the continued operation of our integral attention programmes for victims and survivors of sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking.

During this period, El Refugio de la Niñez implemented institutional changes that were identified as needed to advance in the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2010-2015. Therefore, the institutional programs were revised and the organization chart adjusted. The organization has strengthened staff’s capacities in order to ensure specialized responses to the problematic we work with.

Last year, each one of the programs was specialized in the specific problematic (sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking), in order to develop and improve methodologies and tools to ensure the adequate attention for the girls. Important achievements in regards of the girls and adolescents recovery and reintegration to family based options; also, important areas that need to be strengthened in order to secure their safety were identified, including the need to improve the follow up to reintegrated girls and adolescents.

El Refugio and Kinderhilfe have cooperated closely, the support from Kinderhilfe has been key for the continued functioning of the integral attention to girls and adolescents victims of sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking. The funding provided by Kinderhilfe have complemented efforts and have allowed us to provide challenge funding for middle term projects and have allowed us to establish collaboration with other organizations, including UNICEF, Plan International and the Guatemalan Government.

## II. CONTEXT FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The U.S. department launched in June its annual report. For the third consecutive year, Guatemala was placed in Tier 2; the report largely echoes previous years' evaluation of Guatemala's counter-trafficking progress and recommendations, but also highlights the role of official complicity in hindering trafficking in persons prosecution and the difficulties encountered by adult TIP victims in receiving comprehensive protection and assistance due to the lack of adequate identification and referral mechanisms. El Refugio seeks to strengthen the protection system through the daily work.

Guatemala has a modern and forefront regulatory framework that regulates the children protection system and includes a set of regulations y processes that should guarantee the prevention and restitution of human rights of boys, girls and adolescents; nevertheless, there are important gaps and problems in its application and implementation. Although the legal gap was closed with the approval of the Law against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Human Trafficking (9-2009 Decree), there is a gap in its implementation and most of the crimes still remain unpunished; as an example, each legal process against victimizers that El Refugio supports, takes up to three years to be completed.

During 2013, El Refugio provided support to 147 girls and adolescents victims of sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking under protection measures. From those 147 cases, 81 were cases of sexual violence and 66 were cases of exploitation and human trafficking; 6 were external cases that our lawyers supported. Also, 211 legal processes were supported and reached 41 verdicts were dictated (39 were convicted and 2 were absolved).

The issues related to sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking is starting to be relevant and visible in Guatemala. Increasingly, more complaints are being done; in the Northeast region in Guatemala, where El Refugio has implemented prevention and education activities, an increasing number of complaints are being made by family members and community leaders. It is common now to receive phone calls requesting room in the shelters managed by El Refugio.

Furthermore, the association concluded an institutional strengthening process that includes adjustments in the positions, revision of the institutional programs and the development of new tools for administration. We strongly believe this process will strengthen the organization and will set a basis for its future expansion of activities. The operating programs are the following:

- Integral Attention for Girls and Adolescents Victims of Sexual Violence.
- Integral Attention for Girls and Adolescents Victims of Exploitation and Human Trafficking
- Prevention and Psychosocial attention for Children and Adolescents victims of sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking, in Northeast Guatemala.

The first two programs include the residential attention programs; and include psychosocial attention, family strengthening, education, health and legal assistance; each one of the programs have their specialized staff that includes a coordinator, psychologists, social workers, educators, teachers, and lawyers. The program located in the Northeast region includes psychologist, social workers and promoters.

### III. RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

During the year 2013, El Refugio had important achievements regarding children protection. The most important results are described below, according with the specific objectives described in the proposal:

- ***Specific Objective 1: Provide Integral Attention for Girls and Adolescents Victims of Exploitation and Human Trafficking***

El Refugio provided integral attention for 147 girls and adolescents in the temporary shelters. From this total, 109 left the shelters; 78 girls and adolescents were reintegrated to a family based option, 7 were returned to their countries, 4 were repatriated, 4 were transferred to other shelters and 1 girl abandoned the program. At the end of the year, 38 girls and adolescents continue to advance in their recovery process and remain in the shelters. El Refugio pays attention to the following aspects:

- ***Education:*** like in public and private education centers, the girls and adolescents completed their evaluations and started vacations in October. In 2013, we continued providing the education services thanks to an agreement with the Ministry of Education, PENNAT and NUFED; a teacher gave classes in Lazos de Amor during the morning, and in Amor sin Fronteras during the afternoon. The experience was very positive because it provided an opportunity to advance in their studies; we apply follow up strategies to ensure that girls and adolescents that are reintegrated can continue their studies once they go back to their families.
- ***Health:*** In the temporary shelters, the girls receive medical attention according to their needs, including minor diseases and health education, in this cases there is a nurse in each shelter, in order, in cases of sexually transmitted diseases, gynecology, childbirth and psychiatric treatment and other services, we take the girls to the government health institutions and APROFAM.
- ***Psychology:*** every girl and adolescent receives psychotherapeutic attention through group and individual therapy; the psychologists also provide support to the girls when they have a crisis. The psychologists support the educators in the development of the treatment plan for each girl and adolescent, as well as the implementation of the attention model. The therapy sessions provided the girls with the opportunity to share their experiences and emotions with professionals and with others who have lived through similar trauma and they act as a constant tool for measuring developments in the reintegration process.
- ***Culture and Recreation:*** During the year, different activities were organized, including cultural evenings where the girls can sing, dance, act, paint and show their talents and creativity. Celebrations of important dates are also organized, including birthday parties, commemorations, national holidays and movies. These activities are important and help in the process of recuperation of the girls and adolescents because they help them to redirect their energies.
- ***Spirituality:*** During 2013, in shelter Lazos de amor, volunteers supported spiritual area, also, when is possible, we support the girls to go to church, according to their beliefs.

- **Occupational Training:** El Refugio provides training in bakery (in Lazos de Amor) and sewing (Amor sin Fronteras). Each training is organized in 4 modules, according to the level each girl is; each module has 15 girls and they receive 1 hour of daily training. When they complete the modules, the girls are ready to work in bakery or sewing activities. During the 2013, 70 girls were trained in bakery and 30 in sewing. Also, shelters have computer laboratories where the girls participated in basic training in computer programs.
- **Family:** working with the family allows el Refugio to create the conditions and to stabilize the relationships between the girls and their families, thus creating a safe and stable environment for their return. During the 2013, the following activities were implemented:
  - Parent's School: 18 activities were implemented during the year, with the participation of approximately 60 people each activity. The Parent's School has a monthly program that includes topics related to sexual violence, exploitation, human trafficking, responsible parenthood and the family. The parents that attend the school come from different areas of the country and sometimes their participation is complicated due to lack of funding for transportation, but increasingly they express the importance of the school for their families.
  - Home Visits: this year, the social workers conducted 290 home visits that included social investigations, contacting possible family alternatives and follow up visits for reintegrated girls and adolescents.
  - Family Visits: both, the social workers and the psychologists supervise family visits to the girls and adolescents in the shelters. The objective of these visits is to strengthen the family ties between the girls and their families. Twice a month, between 12 and 15 families visit their children.
  - Phone calls: the girls and adolescents constantly communicate with their families (usually once a week) via telephone. Each phone call is monitored by the staff in order to ensure that the communication will be positive and will contribute to strengthen the communication with their families.
  - Social Investigations: the social workers conduct home visits that include social investigations, contacting possible family alternatives and follow up visits for reintegrated girls and adolescents.
  - Family Therapy: the psychologist provides family therapy to families with strong problems. In some cases agreements are promoted between the girls and their families.
  - Support Groups: This year, support groups have been organized for girls and adolescents and for families, separately. In order to facilitate the participation, the support groups are organized after the Parent's School activity.
- ***Specific Objective 2: Influence in the Social and Legal Protection System, in order to promote the restitution of human rights and the correct application of the Guatemalan law in protection and legal cases of girls and adolescents victims of sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking.***

In terms of legal and protection processes, the legal department from El Refugio worked with all the girls and adolescents and supported their processes. The lawyers provided follow up to cases, legal advice for girls and their families and supported the legal processes. During the year, a total of 153 cases were supported for protection (81 cases of sexual violence, 66 cases of exploitation and human trafficking and

6 external cases). Also, 211 legal processes were supported; in 25 of these cases el Refugio is acting as joint plaintiff. This year 41 verdicts were achieved, with 39 condemnatory and 2 acquittal results.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

El Refugio was successful in implementing the model for integral attention to victims of sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking during 2013. El Refugio has consolidated as an organization that supports the Protection System in enforcing the law and promotes the proper application of the law.

El Refugio was the first shelter in Guatemala to offer comprehensive support to victims in connection with the prosecution of their alleged criminals. Its experience has set a standard for civil and governmental institutions, strengthened the victim assistance and criminal prosecution process in the country, therefore Kinderhilfe's support has been very important, because now we have the capacity to develop specific activities in prevention, protection and prosecution of sexual violence, exploitation and human trafficking; the capacity and knowledge are based in local, national and international level experiences supporting the strategies, methods and coordination techniques used for the implementation of the project, so is necessary to continue with this support and find long-term financing.

At the end of 2013, El Refugio concluded a process of institutional strengthening with the firm PwC; the firm supported activities in order to build a certification process that accredits the institution to receive USAID and private sector funding directly. The support being provided, include institutional strengthening in financial management, personnel management, procurement and technical and financial reporting. PwC has set out a plan of action to help El Refugio improve these areas during 2014.