

Panel:

"HUMAN RIGHTS AND BOY, GIRL AND TEENAGE MIGRANTS."

**NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES; GIRL, BOY, AND
TEENAGE MIGRANTS**

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How many of you have been taught some new technological wonder, such as how to use your e-mail, chat, Face book, Skype, mobile, by a child or by a teenager? New communication technologies belong to the world of children and young people, including girl, boy and teenage migrants.

Cyberspace may however be as dangerous a place for underage migrants as the vulnerable border zones where their human rights are often violated. When migrant workers leave home and their loved ones behind, family is still the key element for their survival in spite of the distance. Communication is vital both for those who stay at home, and for those who go away. Not long ago migrant families kept in touch by telegraph, by post, or by phone calls to the local post office, when someone would run to the house in question to tell them they had a call waiting. New communication technologies can help enormously to strengthen family ties among migrants with mobile phones, text messages, email, Skype, web camera. All of these make communication easier and more enjoyable.

There are countless benefits that new communication technologies can bring to improve the quality of life and social well-being of the migrant worker and his family. They can help reduce the disadvantages faced by girls, boys and adolescents of migrant families in education and work opportunities, personal growth, even understanding the new culture in the country of destination, and learning the language.

By implementing an infrastructure of communication technologies, through broadband internet and other technologies, new technologies may become accessible to everyone in the country. The development of an information society, where connectivity and digital literacy have priority, plays an important role whereby migrants and their families can have access to new media and learn how to use them.

That said, it is interesting to note the increased use of new communication technologies in 2008, according to the study published by the Mexican Internet Association (AMIPCI) in May 2009. If before there was a digital division between the different socioeconomic groups that is no longer the case. It can be seen that the profile of the internet user is exactly the same as that of unaccompanied migrant children - ages 13 to 17 with secondary school education.

What are the risks of new technologies for the children and youth of migrant families?

There are three main areas of risk in the use of new communications technologies:

Content - material harmful to minors;

Contact - with sex predators, sex tourists;

Behavior – the uploading of inappropriate content for minors, or involving minors, and cyber bullying.

In all three areas illicit acts can be committed.

All children, indeed, are exposed to risks on the Internet. In our work in civil society, we have detected an increase in pathologies related to the use of new communication technologies among minors who do not present the risk factors that would normally make them vulnerable. According to the binational study "Crossing the Bridge", carried out between the U.S. and Mexico, in which "Family and Society" took part, migrant children present more risk factors than other children, which

makes them in turn more vulnerable to addiction and to CSEC, that is, the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Also according to other studies by the National Institute of Pediatrics (INP), victims of CSEC often turn into offenders.

In the research project carried out jointly by the Jalisco State government, the National Institute of Pediatrics (INP), and the Institute for Internet Safety (ISI), a change in social behavior was detected in the child spending greater time on the Internet. He or she showed greater aggressiveness. The "heavy users" show less self-control, less tolerance for frustration, less obedience to their parents, less obedience to other adults.

The research also detected that the more time minors spend browsing the Internet, the greater the exposure to inappropriate content online and the greater the risk of becoming entangled in an addiction to Internet pornography.

Children need to know how to use the Internet so as to not become addicted to what is now known as the new drug of the 21st century: addiction to online pornography. Any drug is addictive in that it makes us dependent on the sensation... it enslaves us ... and becomes the center of our desires, our thoughts, our decisions and our actions. By depriving the person of the use of their freedom, addiction leads them to act in an inappropriate manner to the desires of their heart. The new drug of the twenty-first century is a silent invasive and destructive disease. Because of its silent, nature and the lack of digital training, adults are often unaware of the problems children and young people around them are experiencing online.

The addiction to Internet pornography among children and young people began to emerge some time ago following the introduction of the Internet. Children and young people learned quickly how to use the computer, which was not the case for adults.

Unfortunately, there is still an amount of cyber illiteracy among parents. This is even truer when the nuclear family is separated, as in the case of migrant families, and the children live with their grandparents. Many adults do not know what children in their care are doing and seeing online.

Why has this addiction so easily overpowered children and young people,

especially, when there are no risk factors making them vulnerable to other kinds of addiction? Not so for the children and youth of migrant families who are already vulnerable.

Yet the main risk factor for becoming addicted to Internet pornography is being a cybernaut - someone who knows how to use the Internet.

The main cause for this addiction is that children and young people are victims of early exposure to pornography online, at an age when curiosity about sexuality is natural. Pornography is the commercial exploitation of a natural curiosity. The Internet has no limit. It is accessible any time of night or day. Children and young people can surf the Web for hours looking at porn sites without paying a single penny. Or they can connect very cheaply for \$10 pesos, or US \$1, an hour at an Internet cafe in the provinces.

The first reaction from children coming across porn on the Internet is one of disgust and rejection. Then, curiosity takes over and they start to look, and the risk of falling prey to addiction is easy.

Studies of adults addicted to pornography find that it happens to people with low self-esteem who often experience emptiness in their personal relationships. These are precisely the normal characteristics during puberty and adolescence, which are often accentuated in the migrant's family, where children lack the love and support of being with their parents. Children and youth are in the process of maturity, they are not yet mature, and they become easy prey when they accidentally encounter pornography on the Internet.

Pornography is as addictive as any drug. Sexual images create a chemical reaction in the brain related to pleasure by releasing the hormone epinephrine in the blood. This effect occurs equally when the same images are stored in the mind and later recalled.

Symptoms of addiction can manifest themselves as depression, isolation, problems of concentration, mood swings, loss of hope, and thoughts and or threats of suicide. There is also the fear of losing the affection of their loved ones, if discovered. The child victim of addiction feels the need to act out what he has seen since it

overwhelms his whole being. This is where there is a great danger of abuse with peers or relatives of the same age or younger. Suicidal tendencies are more prevalent the younger the child is. Addiction in youth tends to manifest itself with fantasies, masturbation, and sometimes visits to sex workers. The sex addict is totally self-centered and cannot achieve intimacy because the obsession he has with his own needs leaves no room for giving to others. So addiction leads to the search for intensity rather than intimacy. It also has consequences that concern all of society, ranging from personal disintegration, mental health problems, and the danger for all of the increase in domestic violence and sexual crime.

There is evidence from addicts who say they are surprised at themselves for what they have come to see or do: "...Bit by bit, addicts intensify their behavior going through moderate stages to others that go beyond what they could have imagined, including seeing or doing things that months or years before would have disgusted them."

The levels of intensity of sex addiction that can manifest themselves among addicts to pornography on the Internet are described below:

First level: fantasy, pornography and masturbation.

Second level: real life pornography, fetishes, love affairs.

Third level: criminal offenses, prostitution, voyeurism and exhibitionism.

Fourth level: serious sex crime, sexual abuse of minors, incest, rape.

It is essential to ensure equal treatment about addiction to online pornography, in school education and government campaigns, as with other addictions, so that children learn about the dangers as soon as they start to use the computer. Children must learn to protect themselves from online pornography and cyber crime, so as to avoid being vulnerable to acts of corruption or violation of their human rights. These safety campaigns can be carried out by schools, health centers, media, workplaces, in close collaboration with the Ministries of Education, Health, Labor, etc.

Children and youth in migrant families can be supported by teaching them the proper use of new technologies at school, so that they learn to protect themselves online and to avoid the risks of new technologies by learning to navigate responsibly, safely and happily. Children have the right to be protected.

New communication technologies should serve to support and to respect, and not to violate, girl, boy and youth migrants' human rights. These same technologies could prove to be very useful in stopping crime, by reporting via the Internet, through the establishment of a national registry of missing children, through a national registry of missing persons and an online national register of sex offenders.

The Cyber health of our children and youth, as well as girls, boys and youth from migrant families, is in our hands. Everything depends on the GPS or SatNav we want to give them.