

Please find below a summary of my presentation during the Plan conference last week in which I shortly introduced INTERPOL's work on child protection, and the way birth registration linked into INTERPOL's work.

Created in 1923, INTERPOL is the largest International Police Organization, with a General Secretariat located in Lyon, France, a National Central Office in 188 member countries, 6 Sub-Regional Offices.

INTERPOL's child protection unit is located within the trafficking in human beings sub-directorate. The teams' tasks include coordination and promotion of international cooperation between member states, and of international operations in this field of sexual exploitation on minors. The child protection team administers an international expert group – to assist in investigations, and operates the international child sexual exploitation database, an operative tool to aid investigators world wide in the identification and rescue of victims.

In addition to operational activity and tools, such as trainings, criminal intelligence databases, response teams etc., INTERPOL also promotes policy development and prioritization of specific issues or crime areas among its member states.

INTERPOL's annual general assembly, bringing together heads of police and high ranking officials and decision makers from its 188 member countries, has regularly adopted resolutions of such nature in previous years, aimed at promoting best practices and advancing global security.

As an example, one such resolution, relating to child protection, is a 2002 Resolution on child trafficking and slavery - encouraging member states to introduce and implement legislation against child trafficking and slavery; Urging INTERPOL's national offices to increase information exchange on these crimes and asking states to protect and support organizations working to help victims in this field.

Similarly, a resolution in 2006 has called on member states to increase their efforts to share information on trafficking and sexual exploitation of children.

Such resolutions, adopted by an assembly of heads of national police forces from all areas in the world, have the added value of coming from within the governmental structures of member states, and being voted for and promoted by the people in charge of law enforcement themselves.

INTERPOL is currently studying the possibility of dedicating a General Assembly Resolution to the topic of birth registration.

The issue of Birth registration is naturally of great relevance and interest to INTERPOL and its work, and is seen both through its social and human rights perspective, as well as its protection and law enforcement perspective.

Birth registration is crucial for law enforcement for varied reasons. For instance, both a victim and a perpetrator should receive special treatment (by police and in court) if they were shown to be minors; similarly, rehabilitation and repatriation of victims of trafficking, adults and minors, depends on the ability to prove their identity and origin, which can be particularly difficult if they are unregistered.

Taking birth registration into the crime area of sexual exploitation of children - registration is crucial for proving that a victim of a sexual act has been a minor at the time of exploitation and thus establish the necessary criminality of the act.

Such an INTERPOL general assembly resolution could encourage states to ensure that birth registration is without compromise, baring in mind that birth certificate are breeding documents which lead to a range of other identity and travel documents. Such documents, as INTERPOL and its member states are well aware, are used in many cases by criminals and criminal organizations to facilitate illegal activity such as smuggling, trafficking, fraud etc. Maintaining an effective birth registry can greatly enhance the global fight against such crimes and hinder criminal organization's activity.

INTERPOL is also aware that children who are not registered at birth will have greater difficulties in life, concerning education, employment, marriage, health, obtaining bank accounts and travel documents. This in turn, will likely contribute to poverty and potentially increase criminal activity and identity theft.

An individual who can not obtain employment for the lack of a birth certificate, or can not travel for the lack of a travel document, may turn to criminal activities to obtain such documents or to be smuggled, and will become vulnerable to exploitation by criminal organizations.

Birth registration therefore can be seen as an effective preventive measure; an instrument fore crime reduction.

As demonstrated during the conference, birth registration can be the key for solving crimes. In the demonstrated case the UK Child Exploitation and online Protection Center (CEOP) has managed to identify and rescue a young child abused by her father, although very limited intelligence was available, solely due to her registration in the UK registrar of births deaths & marriages.

Uri Sadeh
Child Protection Unit

Trafficking in Human Beings Sub-Directorate
INTERPOL General Secretariat
200 Quai Charles de Gaulle
69006, Lyon
France
Tel. (33) 472 44 76 09
Fax. (33) 472 44 76 32
u.sadeh@interpol.int