Making the World a Safer Place for Children

A New Historic Global Health Coalition

In November 2011 ICMEC hosted a meeting in Rome, Italy to address the global crisis of child sexual abuse and exploitation. One of the outcomes of the meeting was the creation of a Global Health Coalition to attack child sexual abuse and exploitation as a public health crisis. ICMEC launched this new Coalition in 2012, in Zurich, Switzerland and held the first meeting which involved many of the world’s leading health care institutions and issue experts. It was a historic meeting bringing together for the first time the world’s health care leaders to work on ending the scourge of child sexual abuse and exploitation. Initial members of the Coalition include Roche, Merck, Pfizer, GlaxoSmithKline, Menarini, Almirall, UCB, the Mayo Clinic, the CDC, Harvard Medical School, Bambino Gesu Pediatric Hospital (the Vatican), the Cleveland Clinic, the American Academy of Pediatrics; and many others.

Current activities underway by the Global Health Coalition include:

- Undertaking survey research on a global basis in partnership with the Harvard Medical School and Ipsos, the French research company.
- Reviewing and promoting evidence-based treatments for victims, including Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT).
- Developing primary prevention strategies to intervene before a person sexually abuses a child.
- Proposing that the World Health Organization adopt diagnostic codes for child sexual exploitation offenses, including child pornography for the first time.
- Collaborating with the Mayo Clinic to identify and promote content on child sexual abuse and exploitation for inclusion in medical school curricula and residency training for physicians.
- Working with leading pharmaceutical companies to build a module on child sexual abuse and exploitation into their training programs for health care workers around the world.
- Designing a global Prevention Campaign that will help build public awareness regarding child sexual abuse and exploitation; engage and mobilize communities, including the world’s great religions and seek to generate global dialogue on the abuse and protection of children’s rights; reduce the demand for commercial sexual exploitation of children; address social norms and awaken policy makers and the public to the increasing ways in which children are being sexualized at earlier and earlier ages; and promote multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary collaboration and public-private partnerships to encourage prevention.

The Risk of a New Virtual Shadow Economy

Commercial child pornography and sexual exploitation have moved to a new underground Internet-based economy that includes anonymous Internet services, digital currencies and bulletproof hosting. ICMEC’s partner PayPal is spearheading a comprehensive effort to address the abuse of the payments system and the emergence of an unregulated, anonymous system which is facilitating this unlawful activity.

Some of the hosting companies have become conduits for this traffic. ICMEC is particularly concerned about the emergence of so-called “Cyber Lockers,” many of which are safe havens for piracy and other criminal activity, including child sexual exploitation. ICMEC, PayPal and other companies have formed a working group to develop best practice models and ensure that these companies are not havens for illegal activity.

In addition, ICMEC will host a one-day conference on the virtual shadow economy in conjunction with Thomson Reuters in Washington, DC in June, 2013.
The Global Impact of the Koons Family Institute on International Law & Policy

ICMEC has had great success in persuading parliaments to change or enact new laws. Highlights of the accomplishments during 2012 include:

Child Pornography Model Legislation & Global Review

For the past seven years, through our Koons Family Institute on International Law & Policy, ICMEC has worked with parliaments around the world in an effort to persuade them to enact new law. One hundred countries have enacted new laws to protect children from child pornography, including Cambodia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia, India, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Colombia, Nicaragua, and many others.

Each year ICMEC reviews the law in 196 countries, the findings of which are outlined in a report entitled “Child Pornography: Model Legislation & Global Review.” ICMEC completed the 7th edition of this publication in 2012.

In 2006, the possession of child pornography was not a crime in 136 countries and 95 countries had no law at all. Today, 42 of the countries that had no law in 2006 now have law, and the number of countries deemed to have sufficient law has climbed from 27 in 2006 to 69 in 2012. Yet, 53 countries still have no law at all, and 127 countries still do not have what we consider to be sufficient law. Since 2006, 51 countries have enacted child pornography legislation for the first time; 49 passed legislation defining child pornography; 57 criminalized computer-facilitated offenses; 47 criminalized simple possession of child pornography; and 8 mandated reporting by Internet Service Providers.

The Child Protection Project

ICMEC’s joint project with The Protection Project at Johns Hopkins University made significant strides during 2012. Child protection legislation from all 193 U.N. Member Countries (more than 400 national laws) was reviewed and analyzed. A comprehensive Model Law on child protection was drafted and reviewed by 129 experts representing 114 individual organizations from 43 countries and was presented to the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child. A model curriculum on child protection for educational institutions was completed, as well as a “100 Best Practices in Child Protection” guidebook. A Parliamentarian’s Guidebook continues in development.

Missing Children’s Research Project

ICMEC is reviewing existing legislation and policies in all countries around the world. It will provide guidance and best practices on how to establish policy and legislation on missing children and child abduction. The first regional report was completed on Central America in 2011 with the support of UNICEF TACRO. In 2012 ICMEC focused on research for additional regional reports on eight countries in West Africa, South America and ASEAN member countries.

New Partnership with the World Bank

The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children has become an official partner of the World Bank through its Global Forum on Law, Justice and Development. As part of this collaboration, ICMEC’s Koons Family Institute is reviewing human trafficking laws and online grooming and enticement laws in 196 countries.

New Center Planned in Russia

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a commitment to establish a National Center for Missing & Exploited Children in Russia. ICMEC is working closely with Russian leaders, Internet industry leaders, and key NGOs in the planning and implementation of the new Center.
New Resources for Law Enforcement Help International Child Victims

Law Enforcement Training in China and the Middle East

In conjunction with INTERPOL, and through the generous support of Microsoft, to date ICMEC has trained law enforcement in 121 countries on computer-facilitated crimes against children.

During 2012 the training was expanded to specifically address child trafficking and included police and prosecutors from 18 Latin American and Caribbean nations, including Bahamas; Belize; Chile; Colombia; Costa Rica; Dominican Republic; El Salvador; Jamaica; Honduras; Panama; Peru; and others. We also conducted anti-trafficking training in Mexico, Korea and Thailand.

ICMEC also partnered with Guo Shengkun, China’s Minister of Public Security, to conduct trafficking investigations training in Harbin, China and participated with Minister Guo, along with the Minister of Labor and other senior officials in a public roundtable discussion on the problem of human trafficking in China. As a result of the successful training, China asked that ICMEC repeat the program in Beijing, Shanghai as well as a third city, while continuing to collaborate with them on training in the region as a whole. The first session will be in Vietnam.

ICMEC is also making progress in the Middle East, particularly in Qatar, where we have conducted extensive training for law enforcement, working closely with Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al Thani, the Interior Minister.

New Technology Helps Identify Victims Faster

Today forensic specialists are overwhelmed with the sheer volume of child pornography images reported and are unable to review every image in order to identify and rescue child victims. Project VIC is a new initiative that will enable law enforcement to use technology to quickly identify and remove images of victims that have already been identified; screen out images that are not illegal and focus their attention on those of unidentified children. The goal is to ensure no child is unidentified and no child is left behind.

ICMEC launched a pilot of this project during 2012 with an impressive list of law enforcement and major technology partners including Microsoft, Sweden-based NetClean and many others.

Expansion of Child Alert Program Aids Abduction Cases

The ability to respond quickly is critical in missing child cases. Research in the US shows that in three-fourths of child abduction homicides the child was dead within the first three hours. The primary purpose of the AMBER Alert is to ensure a rapid response when a child goes missing and involve members of the public in the search.

In 2012, ICMEC continued efforts to expand the simple but powerful AMBER Alert program globally. Today, 18 countries around the world utilize child abduction alerts. There are differences in systems around the world, but the common thread is that law enforcement selects the cases for alert distribution and activates the system while the media provides vital information to the public.

More Countries Join Global Missing Children’s Network

An estimated 8 million children are reported missing each year around the world. In 1998, ICMEC created the Global Missing Children’s Network, a multilingual database featuring photographs and information about missing children from around the world. Members of this Network can access this database to display information and photos of missing children in their countries as well as quickly create missing child posters. Annual conferences are held to provide member countries with training and forensic investigative tools, with support from the Motorola Solutions Foundation. Belarus, Russia and Poland joined in 2012, increasing the number of member countries to twenty-two.
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The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children is a private 501(c)(3) non-governmental, nonprofit organization. It is the leading agency working internationally to combat child abduction, sexual abuse and exploitation. The organization has built a global network of 22 nations, trained law enforcement in 121 countries and worked with parliaments in 100 countries to enact new laws on child pornography. ICMEC works in partnership with INTERPOL, the Organization of American States and the Hague Conference on Private International Law among others.

For more information or to make a donation contact:
International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children,
1700 Diagonal Street, Suite 625, Alexandria, VA, 22314-2844
USA Tel +1 (703) 837-6313 www.icmec.org.

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