

Interview

Antoni Pérez: "Childhood is a matter of high concern for governments but of low intensity"



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Children have serious problems of violence, poverty and migrations.

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Antoni Pérez, the director of 'Save the Children' in Catalonia.

The director of 'Save the Children' in Catalonia warns of the serious problems of violence, poverty and migrations that minors still suffer and the challenges for the protection of the children that remain to be resolved.

In general terms, can you give us an overview of the situation of children in the world?

Childhood is the group that has the highest vulnerability worldwide because it does not have its rights recognized in its countries and is most vulnerable to multiple factors such as violence, migration and poverty. One in four children in the world, about 500 million in total, live in countries affected by humanitarian crises, such as wars, natural disasters or epidemics. Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, major rights in the global sphere offer an improvement in issues such as malnutrition but there are still a number of very serious problems to resolve.

Give us some example

We can put on the table issues such as migrations: the rohingyas, the caravan ... in these situations 1 in 4 people is a child. But you do not have to go far. Also in the streets of our city there are smaller foreigners who are in a situation of serious vulnerability.

What are the main factors or causes that determine threats to children?

The great rights that must be preserved are those to protect minors from these main factors: violence, migration and poverty. There is also a serious health problem. When I speak of violence, I am referring to physical and psychological violence. There may be violence of action or omission but both are violence. There are cases of loss of the life of the boy or the girl because they are the parents who do harm or the violence that the minors themselves exert themselves among themselves. We also talk about sexual abuse against childhood ... Here in Catalonia we are about to enter into an organic law that contemplates the abuses towards childhood in a comprehensive manner.

In which countries is the greatest seriousness of childhood harm and why?

We work with more than 120 countries around the world. Basically they are concentrated in the countries of the south. In Yemen, for example, there is a great fratricidal war with a clear desire to end the Yemeni population. 75% of this population is in an emergency and this results in the worst times of hunger in history and the worst conflict that is currently occurring around the world.

We can also talk about the 30,000 children killed due to the mass exodus affecting the Mediterranean and Europe. At the same time, there is the situation of ultra violence in Central and South America with the theme of caravana, the sale of weapons ... There are many impoverished areas in the central part of America such as Guatemala, El Salvador where Violence rates are higher than before and these countries are considered as the storage yard in the United States.

Where does 'Save the children' focus? What is your priority?

Visibilize the situation of children to improve it. Not only as a single solution. We firmly believe that it is the laws of the countries that come to protect all childhood. We are working with laws and programs of awareness within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Children, although its application is still not complete.

In Catalonia, since 2010, we have a law developed for the rights of children but is totally under-budgeted. Our mission is to develop fully and this model can be scalable anywhere in the world.

In governmental areas, do you think that sufficient efforts are being made to end the damage to children?

We are many entities that we are collecting to ensure that institutions allocate more efforts in this field. But for the moment there is a phrase that summarizes everything: childhood is a matter of high concern but low intensity.

The refugee minors are on the agenda today ... In Catalonia, how many have they received?

In 2018, 2900 foreign children traveled alone. Foreign minors who are refugees in police stations or who end up sleeping in the city of justice ... the numbers are what they are and we ask the state government not to look elsewhere ... Unfortunately there are some protocols that do not are working In 2017 half of minors arrived ...

What resources does Catalonia have to help this group?

The Generalitat has created 125 centers of attention that correspond to some 2400 places but the situation is serious. There are groups of minors through the streets. Most come from Morocco, Sub-Saharan Africa or other countries of the Maghreb and come with all kinds of conditions: from minors who were already in a situation of street in their own countries with all the problems that this entails of drug dependencies , alcohol ..

Where and where do they come from?

They sell from the southern border. Salvamento Marítimo de España does a great job and rescues everyone who can. These minors come across the border and most of them end in Barcelona. These teens come with clear ideas, have a life project and they have to be heard. Most of them are men who come from Morocco (almost 75%). The system is in charge of them, but I repeat that the protocols do not work and all their rights are being infringed.

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