

Mrs Alexandra Souza Martins, UNODC, Vienna

Mrs Alexandra Souza Martins, thank you for accepting this interview. May I ask you to introduce yourself?

My name is Alexandra Martins and I work as a crime prevention expert with the United Nations Office of Drugs Crime in Vienna. My current activities and responsibilities include development and extension of UNODC's policy work and programming technical assistance to developing countries in their Juvenile Justice and Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime.

What is the role of UNODC in the area of children victims and witnesses of crime?

The UN plays a key role in setting international standards and norms which are aimed to promote justice systems that are fair, effective and humane. In particular, the United Nations Office of Drugs Crime is the custodian of a growing body of international standards and norms, in crime prevention, criminal justice reform, treatment of offenders, and protection of victims, including child victims. Our office also provides, upon request, technical assistance to member states, to develop and improve their legislation, their procedures, policies and practices, in the area of child justice.

What is important in the Guidelines in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime?

The Guidelines represent international frameworks that member States should use in the development of their procedures, policies and practices for child victims and witnesses of crime.

The existence of these Guidelines is y recognition by the international community of the need to ensure that the rights and needs of children victims and witnesses are respected without discrimination and in an equivalent way in all countries. We all know that the challenge now is to ensure the implementation of this framework and to make sure that it does not remain a mere aspiration or declaration of intent.

What should national legislations set forth about child victims and witnesses of crime?

According to the Guidelines, which represent international standards and norms, The right to be treated with dignity and compassion.

The right to protected from discrimination.

The right to be informed

The right to be heard and to express views and concerns

The right to effective assistance

The right to privacy

The right to be protected from hardship during the Justice process

The right to safety

The right to reparation

The right to special preventive measures.

How do you plan to disseminate the Guidelines?

UNODC actually is working the dissemination of the Guidelines jointly with other partners. And it represents one of the activities carried out by UNODC within the programme of

technical assistance in the area of child Justice. The Guidelines have been disseminated among Parliamentarians, government officials, traditional actors of the Justice system such as lawyers, prosecutors, judges and police, but they have also been disseminating among other groups of professionals that deal with children victims and witnesses of crime, such as Doctors, psychologists, social workers and also volunteers. I would like to stress the fact that we have also developed a child-friendly version of the Guidelines. And our objective when disseminating the child-friendly version is not just to raise awareness of children and young people about the existence of international standards in this area, but also to make sure that the tool will be used by youth organisations, community organisations, and by community at large to advocate for the adoption of the international framework in their own country.