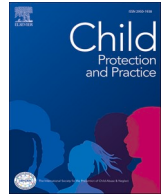




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Alumbra: a digital platform supported by a knowledge community for child sexual violence prevention

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ABSTRACT

Alumbra is an initiative to address sexual violence against children and adolescents housed at the Early Institute, an NGO think tank in Mexico City, Mexico. It is grounded in a spectrum of prevention model designed to address complex public health problems, within the framework of INSPIRE, a set of WHO approved evidence-based strategies proven to prevent and respond to violence against children.

This initiative integrates multisectoral collaboration and digital innovation to respond to this critical issue. Since its inception in 2018, Alumbra united over 50 NGOs, government institutions and international organizations forming a knowledge and practice community dedicated to the prevention of sexual violence against children. Central to its efforts, is a digital platform which consolidates official statistics, educational resources, tools for prevention and a directory for legal, psychological, and medical support services.

With its multisectoral approach and reliance on evidence-based research, Alumbra's digital platform has become a key reference for equipping caregivers, practitioners and policymakers alike who address violence prevention with essential resources and information. To this day, the digital platform has reached over 400,000 beneficiaries. This case study outlines Alumbra's development while providing insight into the challenges and successes in Mexico.

1. Introduction

Sexual violence against children is a severe human rights violation and preventing it requires coordinated efforts across sectors. In Latin America, sexual violence prevalence estimates range between 3 % and 6 % for boys and 13 %–16 % among girls (Casas-Muñoz et al., 2023). Meanwhile, in Mexico, 12.6 % of women reported in a national survey sexual violence before the age of 15; this is equivalent to 6.4 million women (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2021). Although most of these cases are not formally reported: in 2023 there were 35,866 investigations initiated for sexual violence crimes against children (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, 2023).

In response to persistently high rates of violence and underreporting, the Early Institute, an NGO think tank in Mexico City, Mexico, conducted an initial assessment –accessible on the Alumbra website– and identified critical deficiencies in multisectoral interventions. Consequently, in 2018 Alumbra was launched as a national initiative to prevent sexual violence against children. Its goal was to create a knowledge community that unites over 50 national stakeholders, including NGOs,

governmental institutions and international organizations.

2. The platform and its activities

Alumbra utilizes the spectrum of prevention model (Cohen & Swift, 1999), a framework for developing multifaceted approaches to injury prevention. The 'spectrum' works at six separate but related levels: (1) strengthening individual knowledge and skills, (2) promoting community education, (3) educating providers, (4) fostering coalitions and networks, (5) changing organizational practices, and (6) influencing policy and legislation. Alumbra promotes this framework alongside the World Health Organisation's technical package referred to as INSPIRE: seven evidence-based strategies to prevent violence against children.

To define a prevention tool that integrates effective strategies, a global review of existing resources was conducted. Among the benchmark platforms, Protect Children (Finland), the National Center of Missing and Exploited Children (USA), and Chicos.net (Argentina) are world-renowned for their efforts. The review confirmed that digital platforms offering prevention materials are highly effective across all

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stakeholders engaged in violence prevention, including the education and empowerment of children and their caregivers (Tamayo & Pérez, 2017). Moreover, digital platforms are cost-effective, enabling outreach to thousands with minimal investment.

The community's stakeholders have adapted these frameworks to the Mexican context and, through a series of workshops, identified key priorities. This process resulted in the selection of four central approaches:

- **Generate knowledge** to quantify the problem addressing a significant gap in Mexico.
- **Educate and support caregivers** by promoting prevention practices.
- **Develop prevention capacities and skills** in children through educational resources.
- **Promote public policies** supporting evidence-based approaches.

Consequently, since its inception, Alumbra has incorporated the best available prevention resources for caregivers, educators, and children. Additionally, a specialized directory has been developed to provide legal, medical, psychological services for victims. To assess its effectiveness, a data and regulatory analysis is performed regularly. Thus, the platform undergoes a monthly monitoring process that identifies areas for improvement and determines which resources can be optimized to attract and engage more users. By this, results provide real-time data to inform the design and evaluation of public policies to strengthen child protection mechanisms.

3. Progress and challenges

Alumbra is one of the most significant platforms for the prevention of child sexual violence in Mexico and has engaged with more than 400,000 users. In fact, in 2023, the platform registered 225,000 new visitors indicating a significant demand for information on how to prevent and respond to childhood sexual violence. Users range from those who visit once to those who repeatedly access resources for downloading and sharing. Findings indicate that *Semáforo Corporal* (Body Traffic Light), a tool that uses colors to teach children about public and private parts, is one of the most accessed resources. In 2023, this resource received 24,421 visits. To further extend its reach, a webinar was organized engaging over 37,000 views on Facebook.

This approach validates the end user and the need for “dialogic engagements at country-level to better understand the barriers, opportunities and needs” while “creating the space for peers to elicit feedback... drawing lessons from the participants’ knowledge and experience” (Maternowska et al., 2024, p. 5). This is also the space

where Alumbra learns, documents and support stakeholders around sexual violence policy and practice change.

In conclusion, while Alumbra is celebrating its successes, measuring its impact remains challenging. In the future, new measures designed to monitor and evaluate change in policies, practices, attitudes, behaviours, and social norms will be important for sustainability.

Overall, Alumbra exemplifies an innovative evidence-based approach for preventing child sexual violence. Sharing Alumbra's experience underscores the potential of culturally adaptable frameworks to inspire global efforts in child protection and specifically sexual violence prevention—a subject that is notoriously sensitive and challenging in any setting.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Renata Díaz Barreiro Castro: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Project administration, Investigation. **Ana Reza Calvillo:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft. **Adrián Zentella Tusié:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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