

Annual Report 2008

ADVOCACY / ABORTION

SFPA advocacy efforts were in year 2008 mainly focusing to maintain the legal status of abortion, promoting the sexuality education and on the adoption of National Program on Sexual and Reproductive Health.

Constitution Court's decision on abortion law

In December 2007, the Constitution Court finally made the long awaited decision on the legal status of abortion law. The request to outlaw abortion was submitted in 2001 by the Christian Democratic Party. The motion to examine the abortion law said that the act on abortions contradicts the sentence in the constitution that says that human life is worth protection even before birth. They argued that in Slovakia, it is legal to perform abortions within the first three months without giving any reason.

Six years after it was asked to rule on the issue, the Constitutional Court decided on December 4 that it is not unconstitutional to perform abortions at a woman's request in the first trimester of pregnancy. Slovakia's constitutional court ruled against a request to make abortion illegal. The court said that the foetus is enough protected by the procedure a woman must go through if she wants an abortion, under the law: filing a request, receiving a medical examination, going through an interview with a doctor, receiving a second approval of the decision, and paying for the surgery. The time limit of 12 weeks is connected with the physiology of the foetus. The abortion decision has been one of the most-followed cases handled by the Constitutional Court in recent times. The public debate on abortion law followed during the whole year 2008.



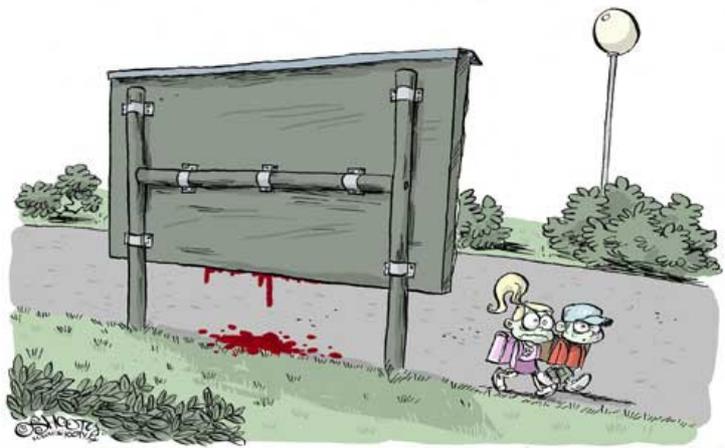
„Stop abortions!“

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SFPA contributed to the decision due the amicus brief which has been elaborated by Center for Reproductive Rights and International Women's Human Rights law Clinic, City University of New York, School of Law in cooperation with SFPA and Pro Choice Slovakia. The amicus brief has been sent to the CC in April 2007. Some legal formulation from our analysis has been presented in the CC ruling.

Advocacy against the anti-choice campaign

SFPA also became visible during the massive anti-choice media campaign held since September 2007. In the first stage, the campaign, called The Right to Live, flooded Slovakia with billboards showing a headless, bloody, 11-week-old fetus with visible limbs, in the palm of an adult. The campaign was organized by two until-now unknown non-governmental organizations, the Centre for Bio-ethic Reform and Pastor Bonus. It was allegedly financed by Slovak businessmen who wish to stay anonymous, and part of it was financed by donations.



In 2008, the campaign continued with mega posters in front of Slovak universities comparing aborted fetus to Holocaust and calling it genocide. The controversial campaign caused a vivid public discussion in which the SFPA has been presented as the main opponent to the organizers. Due to the media interest, SFPA became well known as a rational expert organization. Our experts were often invited to media to discuss the abortion law, often to opposition to the radical anti-choice campaigners.

National Program on Sexual and Reproductive Health

National Program on Reproductive and Sexual Health has been elaborated with a contribution of experts from SFPA and WHO office in Slovakia already four years ago. Because of the strong opposition by the Catholic Church, the previous government did not bring the program to a governmental session. After the governmental change, the issue started against a public discussion when the Ministry of Health introduced the actualized version of the program on its web page.

Despite the strategy fulfilling all the criteria defined by WHOM, the Slovak Catholic Bishops Conference (CBS) lodged an official protest against the program, particularly on the plan to ensure access to safe abortion and to introduce a comprehensive sex education in schools. The health ministry project represents an attempt to force "permissive and individualistic ethics onto Slovak society," to propagate "an ideology of consumption" and to "undermine the family," the Chairman of the Conference, Frantisek Tondra, said in an open letter published on the KBS website. The health ministry scheme intends to include sex education as part of a wider programme aimed at countering sexual abuse and giving information about sexually-transmissible diseases and contraception. Despite the program passing the necessary procedure to be introduced to the government, it has been cancelled in the last stage by the prime minister.

ADOLESCENTS: Material for sexuality education

In 2005, SFPA started with an implementation of an IPPF project on developing a new youth-friendly curricula for sexuality education. A team of sexuality education experts, teachers, and human rights advocates elaborated a new material – a handbook of methodology how to teach sexual education. The material has been completed with working sheets to be used by pupils. In years 2007 and 2008, SFPA started with distribution and trainings among teachers. Furthermore, we asked the Ministry of Education for an accreditation. The Conference of Bishops in Slovakia started a massive campaign against the materials because according

CBS they promote an irresponsible approach to human sexuality and relationship and thus encouraging young people to premature sexual activity.

After the intervention of the CBS, the Ministry of education refused to give an accreditation to our methodology. However, due the strong opposition by the Catholic Church the materials became very well known among teachers and public and the number of the downloads from the web page achieved ten times more than the number of printed copies.

The book has been disseminated according to the interest to Slovak schools and positively accepted by teacher. SFPA offered to the material a complementary training „how to use it“. The great number of teachers use the textbook in they everyday work with pupils.



Dear children, the life long celibacy makes us to the biggest experts on sexuality education

ACCESS: Gender Mainstreaming in the Reproductive Health services

Project supported by the European Social Fund Initiative Equal II. The project's ambition is to introduce Gender Mainstreaming in reproduction health services and include gender-sensitive education in the programmes of medical universities. In the project, SAS carried out a gender audit and analysis in the reproduction health services and in the medical education in Slovakia. The survey on the gender equality on the clinics showed clear discriminatory practices on women personal.

Experts for gender trainings and gender mainstreaming strategy has been educated and prepared for the praxis. Curricula for gender sensitive approach in the medical education were prepared and tested in a pilot project. The activities are being carried out by a partnership with Slovak Academia of Science (SAS) and Commenius University, Faculty of Philosophy, Gender studies department.

ACCESS – AIDS: Wolds AIDS Day

On December the 1st, SFPA in cooperation with a Club of Sexual Health by medical students organised a campaign on Save Sex. On campuses in tree cities in Slovakia – capitol Bratislava, Martin and Kosice – the students have got information leaflets about HIV/AIDS and condoms. The WAD ended with an infotainment Save Sex Party with many interesting plays.

MAIN CHALLENGES FOR 2008 ARE:

- Opposition to radical anti-choice movement imported and supported from USA
- Amendments to abortion law
- Institutional building of SFPA office

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