



TOOLKIT "GET YOUTH ON BOARD!"

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth

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1. Extent and causes of commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth

The sexual abuse of children and young people through commercial exploitation constitutes a fundamental violation of their rights. It is a universal and complex problem that encompasses a range of abusers, different forms of abuse, and various types and degrees of impact on the children at risk. It affects girls in particular and can result in lifelong, even life-threatening trauma for the physical, psychological, emotional and social development and well-being of a child or young person. The issue calls for intersectoral cooperation to promote appropriate prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for the long-term protection of children and youth.

Definition

The term “commercial sexual exploitation of children” (CSEC) refers to the abuse of a girl or boy for sexual purposes in exchange for cash, goods or in-kind favours. Through CSEC a minor becomes a sexual object and a commodity, with adults profiting from the exploitation. It is a violation of universally recognised rights of children and youth. According to international law, all minors are called children: the Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly defines any person under the age of 18 as a child.

The prostitution of girls and boys is the most common form of CSEC. It also includes child pornography, the sale or trafficking of minors with the aim of exploiting them sexually, and the sexual exploitation of children in tourism. CSEC is closely related to other forms of sexual abuse and exploitation, and the boundaries are often vague.

“The commercial sexual exploitation of children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children, and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery.”
The Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, para. 5, 1996.

Who are the minors at risk?

Girls and boys up to 18 years can be CSEC victims. However, the majority of minors at risk worldwide are girls between 12 and 17 years. Most of them are trafficked and held in brothels for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation by organised crime. As prostitution and tourism are rapidly expanding industries, new trends are emerging - including a preference for younger children, especially girls, and appearance in new areas, such as in Asia and Africa. This demand is due to the greater amenability of younger children, to cultural practices and to myths such as that sex with a virgin can protect against HIV infection. Only a minority of CSEC victims are boys. At a high risk of abuse are street boys as well as boys living and working in tourist areas (beach boys, souvenir vendors etc.). Girls and boys with disabilities have a significantly higher risk of becoming victims, as they are less able to escape abuse, to secure justice or to call on/receive social services. They are more likely to remain in situations that increase their vulnerability and risk of repeated abuse.

“I feel like they’ve taken my smile and I can never have it back.”¹

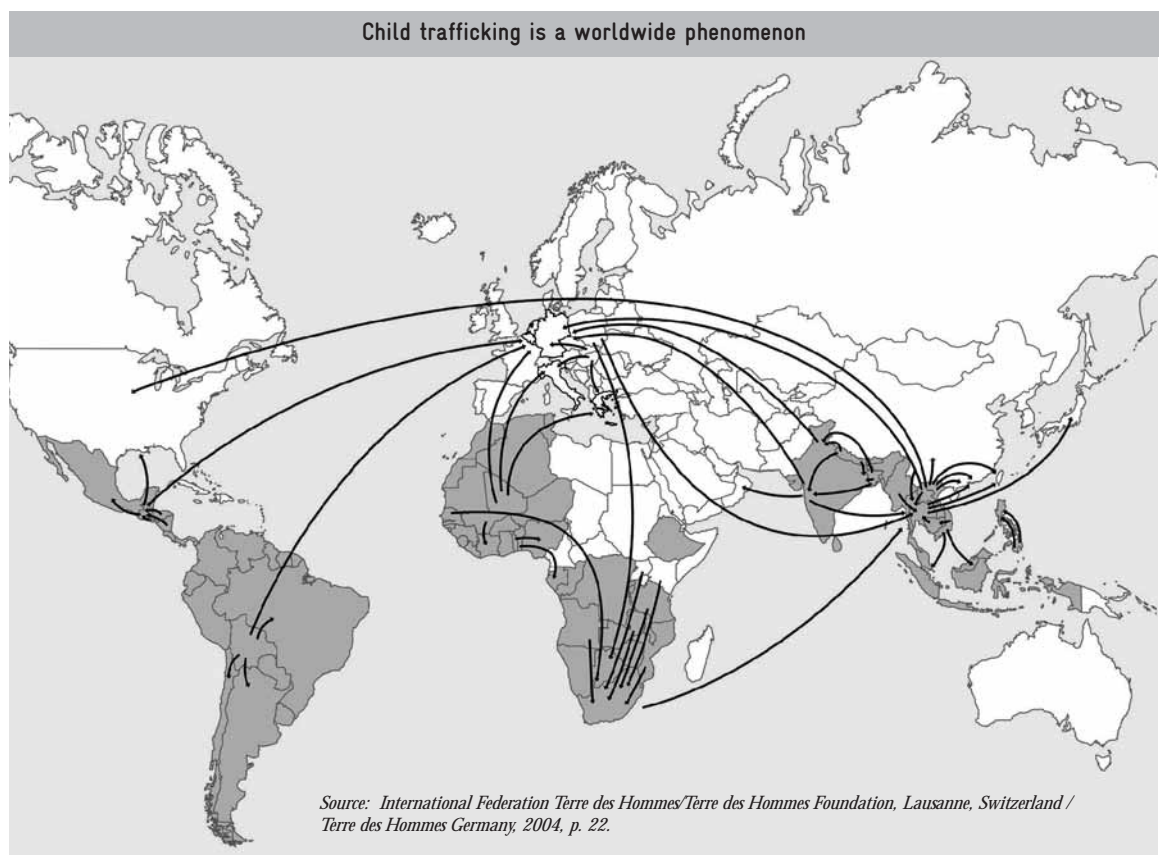
While not a new phenomenon, commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth has sharply increased in the wake of globalisation. Due to the clandestine and illegal nature of CSEC, numbers are difficult to estimate; they vary between 700,000 and 2 million children living in CSEC situations. Most cases of abuse and exploitation, however, go unreported. What seems to be clear, though, is that the number of victims continues to increase. In particular, child pornography in the Internet and through new information technologies has risen sharply over the past years.

¹ *Stolen Smiles, A summary report on the physical and psychological health consequences of women and adolescents trafficked in Europe, by Catharine Zimmermann et al., London, 2006, p. 2.*

Where does commercial sexual exploitation of girls and boys occur?

CSEC occurs everywhere around the world. There are large regional differences in the amount and quality of information, depending on the level of research and the presence of anti-CSEC organisations in a country or region. Data collection happens often ad hoc or is limited in scope and often not categorised adequately to present a complete picture. Also, due to its illegal nature, the sexual exploitation of children and young people is largely concealed, making it difficult to estimate the number of persons affected. For instance, there is more detailed

information available about trafficking in Europe and South-East Asia, while in Africa evidence is primarily anecdotal. Data seldom distinguish between the trafficking in women and the trafficking in children; and do rarely distinguish between children of different ages or gender. Moreover, trafficking in children is classified by intercountry, transnational, regional and international routes. Globally, main “receiving” regions of girls and boys who are trafficked into prostitution are Western Europe and the United States. The major “sending” regions are Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America.



In some areas, such as in Asia, CSEC, like prostitution in general, is very visible, particularly in the bars, night clubs or massage parlours in red-light districts. In other areas where law enforcement and investigation of CSEC has increased, the exploitation takes place in less visible places, such as in private houses rented by perpetrators for the specific purpose of abuse.

In Africa, CSEC often derives from informal ways and settings such as child marriage or domestic work. One example is that of housemaids, or “petites bonnes”. The practice of adoptive servitude, in which urban families employ young rural girls and use them as domestic servants in their homes, is widespread in many African countries. These girls are often not only subject to harsh working conditions but also suffer sexual harassment by family members or even commercial sexual exploitation.

In most countries, the majority of abusers are nationals or from neighbouring countries. Although international tourists play a role, especially in certain destinations in South-East Asia (Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia), Eastern/Southern Africa (Kenya, South Africa) and Central/Latin America (Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Brazil), they generally constitute only a minority of offenders in the respective countries. The offender actively seeks out minors for sexual contact, with a preference for pubescent or adolescent children, and it is important to distinguish this group from the paedophile.²

International instruments and commitments

There are several international conventions with additional protocols addressing CSEC. They are legally binding for the countries that have ratified them. These states must adopt them in their criminal and civil laws and policies. The two most important conventions are:

The Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

Entered into force 2002; 126 countries have ratified it (as of February 2008).

According to the Protocol, governments must effectively prosecute all activities related to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and protect the rights of victims, e.g. by legal, medical, social and other support services.

The Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime (also called “Palermo Protocol”)

Entered into force 2003; 118 states have ratified it (as of February 2008).

According to the Protocol, there is no such thing as consent by minors to their being trafficked or sexually exploited. This is also the case if teenagers or children willingly leave their homes to look for a job, or have been lured away with false promises, and end up in situations of commercial sexual exploitation.

States must take all measures to prevent and combat human trafficking.

² The paedophile manifests an exclusive sexual inclination for pre-pubescent children. Nonetheless, there is a discussion in psychological and medical circles around the categorisation of paedophilia as a clinical or pathological condition.

The demand for children as sexual partners essentially drives the commercial sexual exploitation of children. This demand is connected to social constructs such as gendered power relations, concepts of childhood, concepts of masculinity, notions of gender stereotypes and of sexuality.

Armed conflicts also contribute to an increase in CSEC, for a number of reasons. (Post) conflict situations make survival more fragile due to factors such as the break-up of families, displacement, and interrupted schooling and vocational training; they also bring young people into contact with military forces – a circumstance known to be associated with expansion in local sex industries. In times of armed conflict, poverty, hunger and desperation may force girls, in particular, into prostitution, obliging them to exchange sex for food or shelter. They also face a heightened risk of rape, sexual humiliation and other forms of gender-based violence, which can lead to unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

As demand for them has developed and economic inequalities have widened further, the supply of minors and young women vulnerable to CSEC has increased. Many minors entering the sex industries come from poor rural families or are homeless children living on the street. Children and young people may also become involved in order to support their families, to supplement their income from other sources, and to meet their survival and daily needs. But poverty should not be seen as a pretext for justifying the sexual exploitation of minors. There are many poor countries where CSEC is not a major issue, in contrast to several developing and even developed countries where it is rampant.

Inequality and discriminatory attitudes based on gender, caste, ethnicity or national origin may give children and youth a low social status, making them more vulnerable to CSEC. It also has a direct impact on the roles girls play within families and communities, and on their ability to gain access to basic education, health, recreational and social services. Studies show that the majority of minors involved in CSEC have suffered psychological or physical abuse within their families and many of them have been victims of some form of sexual aggression by a family member or a close acquaintance in the past. Other risk factors include histories of abuse, drug abuse, insecure income and unemployment, difficult family background, a lack of viable choices, stigmatisation, and isolation from society. A number of traditions and customs such as child marriage and FGM⁴ are considered as enforcing vulnerability to CSEC.

Many countries lack a sufficient legal framework for managing investigations, prosecuting perpetrators and protecting and assisting children during their recovery. Moreover, corruption among law enforcement authorities is a major obstacle in fighting CSEC. Police officers, for instance, can be bribed by traffickers or abuse the vulnerable situation of a victim. Under the law, children and youth should always be regarded as victims, not as criminals. But there are cases where social acceptance, corruption, bribes, inefficient law enforcement, and lack of child- and youth-friendly legal procedures result in little action being taken to protect minors and where sex with them is considered a less than serious offence.

2. How to address commercial sexual exploitation of minors

Breaking the silence: Why do we need to address commercial sexual exploitation of minors?

"In my opinion, the most important thing is that society should [not turn] their back to the problem. They should accept that it exists everywhere even though everyone tries to hide it and few people would accept that it exists in their society. Also, people should start realizing the importance of the problem and that it is not one we can ignore."

(Boy, 16, in Greece about measures to end CSEC)⁵

CSEC is an extremely cruel and gross violation of the human rights of children and youth and as such a crime. Victims often suffer deep physical and psychosocial traumatisation, which may last for the rest of their lives. Girls who try to escape CSEC are often expelled from and stigmatised by their families and communities, so that, left alone, they again enter prostitution.

CSEC occurs in most partner countries of development cooperation. Yet, sexual exploitation and abuse are often out of bounds for discussion. Toleration of a culture of silence concerning childhood and sexual abuse, however, fuels further abuse. The occurrence of CSEC and its consequences cuts across other development fields which address youth concerns, such as in the area of governance, poverty reduction, women's and girl's rights as well as in health, sexual and reproductive rights. The existence of CSEC and sexual exploitation and abuse in general hinders girls and boys from exercising their rights. This is particularly true for girls who are often discriminated against in several ways with regard to their sexual and reproductive rights (e.g. by early and forced marriages; absence of birth control devices, etc.). Therefore it is imperative to include the gender dimension when working with youth and youth programmes in partner countries.

What can be done?

To address CSEC, states have to adopt an approach that emphasises prevention alongside palliation⁶. Governments and local NGOs have to cooperate in taking effective measures to protect young people from CSEC and ensuring the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims. Development cooperation can support national efforts in this field through capacity development at macro, meso and micro level. Priority areas in addressing CSEC are as follows:

a) Legal reforms

International human rights instruments call upon states to fight CSEC by bringing national legislation into conformity with international law. Development cooperation can support partner countries in this process by providing advice and strengthening law drafting capacities.

b) Strengthening of law enforcement institutions

The implementation of the relevant international conventions also requires respective law enforcement mechanisms to be strengthened. In many development countries the police and the judiciary are often unable to enforce the law because of poor training, lack of resources, absence of systematic cooperation between ministries and inadequate monitoring. Child victims of CSEC are frequently criminalised, re-victimised and their rights violated during investigations and proceedings. Because government staff is often poorly paid and the exploitation of children and youth offers lucrative incentives, corruption and bribes play a role, too. It is therefore essential to train police, judicial and immigration officers on child rights and child protection. Development cooperation can support the development of training concepts and training materials.

⁵ *What young people are saying on Commercial Sexual Exploitation, UNICEF - Voices of Youth, No. 3/2003, p. 4, <http://www.unicef.org/voy/media/news.2003-02.PDF>*
⁶ *"The protective Environment: Development Support for Child Protection", Karin Langren, Human Rights Quarterly 27 (2005), p.215*

c) National Plans of Action

National Plans of Action are an effective instrument to systematically fight CSEC and implement the relevant international conventions. Today, many countries have such plans but their practical impact is often limited by lack of resources, political will, adequate capacities and absence of systematic cooperation between ministries. To improve the effectiveness of National Plans of Action regarding trafficking and CSEC the ministries in charge need capacity building in planning, budgeting and coordinating cooperation between ministries.

d) Monitoring

Due to the invisible, hidden and illegal nature of CSEC the collection and maintenance of reliable data is a major challenge. However, improvements in data collection are vital for the monitoring and evaluation of prevention measures. Given the fairly recent acceptance of the new international definition of trafficking, relatively few governments collect trafficking data systematically. In many countries it is still common to combine data relating to trafficking, sexual exploitation, and abuse. Frequently the existing data consist either of general estimates based on unclear methodologies or of administrative data kept by the various organisations on the victims they assist. These fragmentary datasets are very hard to consolidate into national figures and compare at international level. Greater cooperation among stakeholders and agreement on common definitions and registration criteria can help to achieve more effective and comparable data compilation.

e) Awareness raising

The public's knowledge about CSEC and human rights is often sparse, making awareness raising among youth, local communities and local decision makers into a core prevention measure. Local campaigns, radio programmes, advocacy or theatre projects can contribute to the discussion of sensitive issues and prevent families from selling their children. They can also sensitise teenage girls and boys to the false promises made by traffickers who try to lure them under the pretence of providing

them with a "good" job. Closely related to this are activities that sensitively address local and cultural taboos that exist around issues of gender-based violence and sexual/reproductive rights, and traditional practices that maintain this abuse. Development projects can advise the government and/or local NGOs on the design of public awareness raising campaigns.

f) Working with the private sector

Another important prevention strategy involves cooperation with actors in the private sector. In the tourism industry, a specific code of conduct for the protection of children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism was established in 1998. National and international tourism agencies can sign up to it and pledge to fulfil a number of criteria and measures for the protection of children in the context of corporate social responsibility.⁷

g) Life skills training

Life skills training aims to promote in young people the competencies necessary to make a healthy transition to adulthood, and adopt positive forms of behaviour that are protective to mental and physical health and well-being. It strengthens social and interpersonal, cognitive and emotional coping skills. Reinforcing the skills of children and youth in analysis, understanding consequences, decision-making, problem solving and negotiating helps them to cope with everyday circumstances and better protect themselves in specific risk situations. Through interactive, participatory teaching methods adolescents can be actively engaged in role playing or in open discussions centred on practical problems facing children on the streets, or in the sex industry, or concerned with dangers such as HIV infection. Educators, social workers, medical and psychosocial professionals need to be trained in the methods of life skills education to ensure that as many children and young people as possible can be reached. Children and youth can play an important part as multipliers and peer-to-peer educators in life skills training.

⁷ See: www.thecode.org

h) Rehabilitation and reintegration

Victims of sexual exploitation need help with physical and psychological treatment, recovery, social re-integration, as is their right. Once girls and boys are in CSEC situations, it is often difficult to reach out to them. It is important to recognise that both girls and boys can be victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. Gender-sensitive planning helps to address particular needs and challenges. Drop-in centres, hotlines or interception points in red-light districts, which also offer health, medical or counselling services, can help to support girls and young women in escaping exploitative situations. In order to make possible the recovery and social integration of these victims, shelters and integrated rehabilitation programmes addressing the various needs of victims- legal, health, psychosocial, economic, educational, vocational- are necessary. Teenage mothers in CSEC, whose reintegration into their families of origin is often particularly difficult, can be supported by specific programmes in finding alternative housing and income sources.

In most countries capacity development is essential for governmental and non-governmental organisations with regard to the situation and needs of commercially exploited girls and boys. This includes increasing knowledge and improving skills regarding CSEC in social work and in the medical, educational and psychosocial professions. These objectives can be achieved through specialised training, through developing and following professional guidelines for treatment of CSEC victims or through establishment of specific curricula. Cooperation between the government, local NGOs and donors is very important in terms of improving the accessibility and quality of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes in rural areas.

i) Youth participation in all interventions

Youth participation is essential in all prevention, protection and rehabilitation measures. Supporting youth advocacy against sexual abuse and CSEC is a useful strategy provided that the voices and recommendations of children and youth are taken seriously by governments. This permits young people, including former victims, to exercise their right to participate in decision-making on issues affecting them and to articulate their views and demands in the fight against CSEC. Another strategy calls for awareness raising activities (by former CSEC victims), for instance in local communities where the risk of child trafficking or sexual exploitation of minors is high.

In the Mekong region national and regional child forums on human trafficking have been held, where children and youth from various countries have formulated their perspective and demands to regional governments: "We want to see results. We want governments to take serious action against trafficking. We will follow up and examine the activities of governments." 8

What can you do as an individual?

Develop a critical awareness

- Open your eyes: are there areas or situations in your country where you think CSEC is likely to take place?
- Don't take the exploitation for granted or view it as something that cannot be changed due to cultural roots or values. This attitude enables CSEC and sexual violence to take place.

Inform yourself

- Contact a local or national child rights organisation, such as the local ECPAT chapter, to get information about CSEC in your country and about possible strategies to combat it (for a list see www.ecpat.net).
- Inform yourself through resources in the Internet.
- Discuss and share information with others.

Think creatively and take action

- When considering the function and the scope of activities of your organisation or institution, where do you see potential activities to combat CSEC? Think about existing project areas that can be linked to the issue, such as health, youth participation, education, reproductive rights, HIV/AIDS.
- How can you/your organisation collaborate with child rights or anti-CSEC organisations?
- Support youth organisations in anti-CSEC activities and advocacy (by writing a letter to the government; organising a forum, etc.).
- Join local child rights protection networks or e-groups on the issue of CSEC.

Relevance for Development Cooperation

In 2004, the German Government adopted the first Human Rights Action Plan in Development Cooperation (2004–2007) and the second (2008–2010) followed in 2008⁹. In these papers the government has emphasised the protection and implementation of human rights as central aims in all development cooperation activities. As part of this plan, GTZ implements the supranational Convention Project "Protection of Minors against Sexual Exploitation" on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The project aims to contribute to the implementation of the above mentioned Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in partner countries. The project supports government and non-governmental measures, e.g. in prevention, capacity development and psychosocial approaches in victim support, and supplies information and lessons learned. The major region of interventions is the Mekong region with focus on Cambodia. Other projects were implemented in Central America (Nicaragua, Guatemala) and South Eastern Europe.

Two bilateral projects have been implemented in Burkina Faso (since 2004) and in Côte d'Ivoire (since 2002) including activities aiming at enforcing children's rights and combating trafficking in children, primarily for labour exploitation.

⁹ *Entwicklungspolitischer Aktionsplan für Menschenrechte 2008 - 2010, BMZ Konzepte 155, Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, März 2008.*

3. Examples

Project examples in Cambodia

In regard to the extent of CSEC, Cambodia ranks second to the regional centre, Thailand, in the Mekong region. Girls, young women and boys are being sexually exploited within the country, and girls and young women are trafficked to neighbouring countries, such as Thailand or Vietnam. In February 2008, the government adopted a new law against human trafficking and sexual exploitation, demonstrating the country's desire to combat these human rights violations vigorously. A strong network of local and international NGOs addressing the issue has also emerged.

Psychosocial training for social workers and counsellors – Cambodia

Like many other post-conflict countries, Cambodia has a high rate of violent crime. Men tend to experience public violence from gang members, peers, family members and the authorities. Women and girls are more likely to experience sexual violence and assault, including in particular domestic violence by men. For many children and adolescents, such violence is 'normalised' from an early age. The need to foster psychosocial well-being, to strengthen social cohesion and to bring about trauma healing is thus of paramount importance to the development of the country. Cambodia has no established and certified social work training system. Instead, NGOs provide a patchwork of services such as shelters, legal aid and counselling for women and children who have been subjected to violence and/or commercial sexual exploitation. The demand for professional social workers outstrips the availability of adequately trained staff.

In order to close this gap, GTZ supports a Training Centre for Counsellors and Social Workers run by the Cambodian NGO Social Services of Cambodia (SSC). Since 2004, the cooperation has allowed SSC to develop a training curriculum to impart skills in social work and psychosocial counselling to NGO staff. To date, 198 staff members from 55 different organisations have graduated from SSC's Training Centre and are now using their skills to more effectively help their clients recover from gender-based violence. Preference has been given to NGO staff working with women and girls affected by sexual violence, including commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking.

The training is highly appreciated amongst a network of legal, social and human rights organisations working in the country and has set quality standards for other training courses. GTZ continues to invest in capacity development of the training centre to support SSC in improving their training approach.

Radio programme against commercial sexual exploitation of children – Cambodia

With GTZ support, the NGO Equal Access implemented a radio campaign in Cambodia designed to raise public awareness and inform rural communities in particular about CSEC. By 2007 the NGO had broadcast sixteen CSEC episodes as part of a Khmer language radio service on trafficking, safe migration and HIV/AIDS. Broadcasted once a week via satellite radio, the programme reached about 80 percent of the population.

Youth-friendly episodes on CSEC told the story of "Chan", a thirteen-year-old girl, who was sold to traffickers to work as a domestic maid in Phnom Penh and later resold to a brothel. Her story highlighted the risks, liabilities and deceptions in this process. Listeners also received information on CSEC, where to seek further support and what to do in the case of an abused/sexually exploited girl or boy in the community.

In the community sites, listener groups, including children and youths, met during the broadcast to discuss the contents with a facilitator from the local communities. Each facilitator had been trained by Equal Access in facilitation skills and key topics related to CSEC. The aim was to support communities in taking action against CSEC based on the information conveyed in the radio programmes.

As a result of the programme, local communities, including youth, have been made more aware of CSEC and child trafficking and their dangers and consequences. The listener group aged 11-18 years in particular stated that the broadcasts enabled them to take action against commercial sexual abuse.

Project examples in Central America

Law enforcement training on CSEC – Guatemala

In Guatemala, the number of minors affected by CSEC is constantly rising, at the national as much as at the regional level. However, neither the police, the immigration authorities nor the judiciary is sufficiently aware of the complexity of the CSEC problem.

GTZ cooperated with the NGO ECPAT Guatemala to train police officers and public prosecutors on aspects of CSEC. The objective of the training was to make the investigation and prosecution of CSEC more effective in protecting children and youth. Special emphasis was placed on prevention of re-victimisation and on the discussion of gender relations, masculinity and exposure to sexuality. For a country like Guatemala, characterised by strong conservative values, openly discussing such sensitive topics is something very new. During 2006 and 2007, 500 police and migration officers and 350 public prosecutors participated in training workshops. Participants later reported being better informed on how to identify victims and how to act in cases of human rights violations against minors without re-victimising them.

With a view to strengthening the institutional capacities of the public prosecution service, a joint manual was produced on investigative procedures and the application of the law in cases of CSEC.

Creating an information booklet on commercial sexual exploitation of minors – Nicaragua

CSEC is rampant in Nicaragua, demonstrating the need for increased target-group-specific information on prevention, awareness raising and ways to support victims. In 2007, GTZ supported the Nicaraguan foundation Puntos de Encuentros in their gender-sensitive public relations and awareness raising work. To spread information about CSEC, Puntos produced a supplemental booklet for their feminist magazine *La Boletina*, an easily accessible journal in simple language. The supplement, “When They Steal Your Life”, is addressed to girls, young women and mothers and is meant to provide a basis for analysing the complex set of CSEC problems in Nicaragua as well as for counteracting taboos and stigmatisation. Producing the supplement involved discussions with key local and regional organisations working on commercial sexual exploitation, including the NGOs Casa Alianza, INPRHU, TESIS, CODENI and DOS GENERACIONES, to gather as much relevant information as possible and to increase understanding of the dynamics of sexual exploitation. Young victims provided examples of risk factors taken from their own violent history/story.

An unexpected but welcome result of the process was the institutionalisation of the topic due to its intense discussion inside the foundation. The topic is now being incorporated into the priority topics for radio, TV and continuing education work, providing a broad outreach to target groups across Nicaragua.

Relevant literature and websites

Literature

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Websites

www.ecpat.net

International NGO End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes

www.ilo.org/ipec/index.htm

International Labour Organization - International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour

www.crin.org

Child Rights Information Network

www.thecode.org

Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism

www.unicef.org/protection/index.html

UNICEF - Protection of children from violence, exploitation and abuse

www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc-sale.htm

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

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