



FACTS ON *Commercial sexual exploitation of children*

The 1st World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Stockholm, 1996) defined commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) as a violation of the fundamental rights of girls and boys involving sexual abuse on the part of an adult and the remuneration in funds or in kind both for the child, as well as for a third party. The ILO views child prostitution, child pornography and the sale and trafficking of children as crimes of violence against children. They are considered to be economic exploitation akin to forced labour or slavery and are cited in ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999 (No.182) as worst forms of child labour that must be eliminated without delay.

While it is practically impossible to know the true extent of the problem, given its hidden and illegal nature, ILO global child labour figures for the year 2000 estimate that there are as many as 1.8 million children exploited in prostitution or pornography worldwide. While the age that a child becomes involved may be quite young, 15 to 17-year olds are most affected.

These young people often suffer irreparable damage to their physical and mental health. They face early pregnancy and risk sexually transmitted diseases, particularly AIDS. They are often inadequately protected by the law and may be treated as criminals.

The causes of CSEC are complex and patterns differ among countries and regions. For example, in some areas the commercial sexual exploitation of children is clearly related to foreign tourism, in others it is associated with the local demand. In most countries, girls represent 80 to 90 per cent of the victims, although in some places boys predominate.

IPEC regional programmes to eliminate commercial sexual exploitation of children

Africa:

IPEC recently completed Phase I of a sub-regional programme for Anglophone Africa. This programme produced studies on good practices in fighting CSEC in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia and supported national workshops in these countries and a final

Some observations on CSEC from recent IPEC Rapid Assessments

The Rapid Assessment survey, developed by IPEC and UNICEF, relies on interviews and other, mainly qualitative, techniques, to provide a picture of a specific activity in a limited geographic area. It is a highly useful tool for collecting information on the worst forms of child labour, like CSEC, that is difficult to capture with standard quantitative surveys.

- In **Sri Lanka**, children often become the prey of sexual exploiters through friends and relatives. The prevalence of boys in prostitution here is strongly related foreign tourism.
- An estimated 12,000 **Nepalese** children, mainly girls, are trafficked for sexual commercial exploitation each year within Nepal or to brothels in India and other countries.
- Some 84 per cent of girls in prostitution interviewed in **Tanzania** reported having been battered, raped or tortured by police officers and sungu sungu (local community guards). At least 60 per cent had no permanent place to live. Some of these girls started out as child domestic workers.
- In **El Salvador**, one-third of the sexually exploited children between 14 and 17 years of age are boys. The median age for entering into prostitution among all children interviewed was 13 years. They worked on average five days per week, although nearly 10 per cent reported that they worked seven days a week.
- In **Viet Nam**, family poverty, low family education and family dysfunction were found to be primary causes for CSEC. Sixteen per cent of the children interviewed were illiterate, 38 per cent had only primary-level schooling. Sixty-six per cent said that tuition and school fees were beyond the means of their families.



sub-regional workshop to present findings and share experiences to build strategies for the future interventions. The second phase will support the replication and scaling-up of these good practices through direct action to withdraw and rehabilitate victims of CSEC in these four countries plus Ethiopia. The programme also aims to improve the capacity of national and local institutions to fight CSEC.

Central and South America:

With the financial support of the US Department of Labor, IPEC has developed a three-year regional project for the elimination of commercial sexual exploitation of children in seven countries of Central America: the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. This project has activities aimed at strengthening institutional capacities and the development of national policies; communication campaigns; and the development of pilot models of prevention and protection of the victims in three localities of the region.

IPEC also has large programmes to combat CSEC underway in Chile, Brazil and Paraguay, and Mexico.

South-East Asia:

A sub-regional programme to combat trafficking in children and women, the majority of whom are trafficked for prostitution, was begun in 1998 covering Cambodia, China (Yunnan Province), Laos, Thailand Vietnam. In cooperation with the ILO's Gender Promotion Bureau, a three-year pilot intervention has focused on working with local partners in implementing projects in education and skills training, alternative livelihood promotion, legal literacy and awareness raising. A region strategic framework added capacity building, advocacy and cross-border consultation to these national actions.

As is the case for other worst forms of child labour, severe poverty, relatively high earnings perceived, low esteem for education, family dysfunction, a cultural obligation to help support the family or the need to earn money to simply survive are all factors that make children vulnerable to CSEC.

There are other non-economic factors that also push children into commercial sexual exploitation. Children who are at greatest risk of becoming victims of CSEC are those that have previously experienced physical or sexual abuse. A family environment of little protection, where one or both parents are absent or where there is a high level of violence or alcohol or drug consumption, induces boys and girls to run away from home, making them highly susceptible to abuse. Gender discrimination and low educational levels of the parents, mothers in particular, are also risk factors.

On the demand side, certain factors can aggravate the problem. For example, tourist areas are a source of demand for prostitution. The presence of military troops or of large public works may also create demand. Client preferences for young children, particularly in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, pull in additional children. Additionally, the expansion

of the Internet has facilitated the growth of child pornography.

Experience has shown that certain socio-economic characteristics, such as population density, concentration of night entertainment (bars and discos), high poverty and unemployment levels, movement of people, and access to highways, ports, or borders are also associated with CSEC.

Role of the ILO

ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) calls on ratifying member States to undertake immediate and effective measures to prohibit and eliminate the use, procuring or offering a child for prostitution, the production of pornography or for pornographic performances (Article 3 (b)).

Four of the five countries now implementing IPEC-supported Time-Bound Programmes for eliminating the worst forms of child labour as required under Convention No. 182 have targeted CSEC among those worst forms to be completely eliminated within a specified timeframe. These include the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, the Philippines, and the United Republic of Tanzania. The fifth country, Nepal, has included the trafficking of children (most of whom end up victims of CSEC) among its targeted worst forms.

Relevant ILO Conventions

Convention No. 138 (1973) on the minimum age for admission to employment and associated Recommendation No. 146

Convention No. 182 (1999) on the worst forms of child labour and associated Recommendation No. 190