

Mexico

Ten Years since the Stockholm Commitments

This past March, the launch of the Monitoring Report on the status of action against commercial sexual exploitation of children took place in Mexico City.



The event was organized by ECPAT Mexico and took place in the National Museum of Arts of the capital city. It included the important participation of Carmen Madriñán, Executive Director of ECPAT International, who opened the event with a presentation of the world CSEC situation and its international trends.

Ten years after the commitments established by Mexico to address and fight all forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children, ECPAT put together a report which highlights that in Mexico, the update of the National Plan of Action to prevent these violations, is pending. It requires legal support, economic resources and mechanisms, to function as well as to maintain the continuity of programs.

The report relates the situation of children up to twelve years old who are brought by deception to the US-Mexico border, where they are sold to bars for between 18 and 36 dollars, kept in a situation of slavery, and forced to pay for their housing and food expenses and to consume drugs. As well, it emphasizes that the owners of many of these bars are Members of Parliament, bankers, mayors, and influential figures in the region.

Furthermore, it is also shown how in Mexico the main sexual "paradises" of child exploitation are in border areas like Tijuana and Juarez City, as well as in tourist destinations of the Federal District, Acapulco or Cancun, other emergent tourism destinations, and Oaxaca.

Norma E. Negrete, President of NGO "Espacios de Desarrollo Integral A.C." and Coordinator of ECPAT Mexico, presented the specific results of the Mexico report, followed by comments from Lázara Mazón Alonso, Senator of the Republic.

Approximately 100 people attended the event, together representing practically all sectors of society: representatives of the legislative branch, the House of Commons; the House of Senators and the Legislative Assembly; representatives of the executive branch; representatives of the National System for the Holistic Development of the Family (DIF National); among others. In addition, representatives from the Commission of Human Rights of the F.D. of the Academy, such as the National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM, and CEIDAS attended. The media coverage of the event was significant, at the national level as well as in other countries in the region.



Info ECPAT is an electronic newsletter produced monthly by ECPAT groups in America. Its objective is to share the experiences and actions that are being carried out in the region in the fight against the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

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Launch of the Mechiboletín Special Issue

The launch of the Special Issue of the Mechiboletín took place on Thursday March 29th, in the central corridor of the Merced Food Market. The adolescent reporters in charge of the event were: Rocío Esmeralda Arriaga, Karen Ramos Ildefonso, Maricarmen Santos, Jorge Alberto Garay and Ángel Barroso.



In a first instance, the NGO EDIAC - coordinating group of ECPAT Mexico - welcomed the audience: tenants, parents, and the group of reporters authors of the Mechiboletín and responsible for the event. Ana Karen Ramos spoke next, introducing the group of reporters. In her presentation, she highlighted the work carried out by various child reporters over the 10 years of existence of the Mechiboletín; in addition she articulated that it is directed to the tenants of the market and to all the members of the Mechita Club, with the objective of disseminating information on children's rights as well as the activities being undertaken within the Club. The sections comprising the Mechiboletín are: Rights, My Community, Health, Recreation, Kid's Corner, and News.

"Not only did I learn to use the computer, but I was also able to share many things with my friends."

Later, the reporter Rocío Arriaga commented on the activities being carried out by the children of the Mechita Club, stressing that the Club is a place where all can be members on the basis of their effort and commitment to each of the activities carried out. The Mechita Club is a space where children can learn about and exercise their rights.

Maricarmen, another reporter, explained that the Special Issue of the Mechiboletín celebrates the 10-year anniversary of its first issue, and in it the reporters retrace the steps of all the children who participated during that time.

Readers will find sections with up close interviews with the group of reporters about how they exercise and communicate their rights, in addition to a part featuring narrative testimonies about their daily lives and work inside the food market and in Merced, as well as the activities of the children and adolescents members of the Club.

"In the group I learnt to not be afraid and to speak in public."

Moreover, reporters Beto, Rocío and Maricarmen shared with the audience their experience and path with the group of reporters, where Maricarmen asserted: "not only did I learn to use the computer, but I was also able to share many things with my friends", "people and other children know about our way of thinking", "in the group I learnt to not be afraid and to speak in public".



The audience was composed of approximately 45 people: tenants and/or managers of businesses; family members or tutors of the participating children; boys and girls members of the Mechita Club; and a few other people who work or are involved in other activities in the market.

During the second part of the event, a space for questions and comments from the audience was opened up. The tenants congratulated the adolescents and encouraged them to continue their work, and in addition suggested that the Mechiboletín be circulated to other markets and school spaces.

At the close of the launch, the attendants were given an evaluation form with the following questions: Do you know about the monthly Mechiboletín developed by the children?; What do you think of the Special Issue?; Do you think it is important for children to recognize and disseminate their rights through this medium?; What suggestions do you have to improve the Mechiboletín?

Among the responses that stood out: *"It is very important that through this means the children exercise their rights, in addition to learning to express themselves"; "with the development of the Mechiboletín, they learn things that we their parents cannot teach them"; "everything the children write is very clear"; "by way of the Mechiboletín we the parents learn about what they think and what they like".*



Draft Bill Approved

The "Draft Bill Typifying the Crimes of Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking of Persons, and Establishing Norms for their Prevention and More Effective Criminal Persecution", was approved in the Family Commission on April 4th, 2007. Subsequently, it will pass through the House, and if no counter-instructions are given, it will go to the High House for final approval.

This Draft Bill, that fills a large legal void in terms of prevention, prosecution, sanctioning, and protection of victims of this crime, was presented by Member of Parliament Maria Antonieta Saa in January of 2005, and started to be discussed in the Family Commission as of August of 2006.

Chile

The initiative gathers together the proposals of the international conventions ratified by Chile, in particular the Palermo Protocols to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants. It is based on the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The draft bill modifies the Penal Code to include a new paragraph on the crimes of trafficking of persons and migrant smuggling. It stipulates that anyone who facilitates or promotes the illegal entrance of a person that is not a national or a resident into the country for profit, will be sentenced to imprisonment (a maximum of 541 days to a minimum of 3 years), with a fine from 50 to 100 UTM (\$1.610.300 to \$3.220.600). The punishment of imprisonment will be enforced at its maximum degree when the physical integrity of the affected person is endangered. However, if his or her life is in danger, or if the person is a minor, the punishment will increase by one degree.

We value the progress that represents this first legislative process, and now all must be attentive and committed to supporting its prompt and positive voting in both Chambers.



"No Excuses": Campaign against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

Five months have passed since the start of our "No Excuses" campaign in September of 2006. Dissemination, awareness-raising activities, trainings, public actions in regions, have been part of the efforts to generate knowledge and awareness about the complex issue of the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The "No Excuses" campaign arose from the framework of the ILO project "Weaving Networks against the Exploitation of Children and Adolescents", which carried out actions against commercial sexual exploitation and domestic child labor in Paraguay, Peru, Colombia and Chile, and which in Chile - together with the NGO Raíces, representative group of ECPAT in Chile - lead this successful strategy of social mobilization.

Our efforts have been fruitful. To date, over 58 institutions have committed to eradicating CSE. Government entities, NGOs, journalists, academics, and artists are now part of this network for the protection of our children and adolescents; although there still remains much to be done.

CSE is a multifaceted, hidden, and very complex issue, and its eradication is an urgent problem that needs to be addressed as a society in general, permeating the boundaries of this campaign.

The ILO and the NGO Raíces will see to the organization and execution of this initiative until the 30th of June of this year. This is why starting now,



we would like to invite you, in this final stage, to make this campaign your own, to pass on the message and actively participate in the eradication of CSE from your own field of work: office, institution, so that each can be a true promoter in their surroundings and across time.

During this time, we will focus on concrete actions to address commercial sexual exploitation. We will develop a pilot training plan for relevant actors in the travel and tourism industry through which we will raise awareness on commercial sexual exploitation in this sector.

In addition, a full catalog of the circulation and merchandising products created for the campaign are available in our blog, www.no-hay-excusas.blogspot.com, for them to be easily reproduced by individuals and institutions who wish to carry out a particular activity in relation to CSE.

Youth Participation

Thanks to an Initiative of ECPAT's Youth Group: Lonely Planet Guidebooks Encourage Responsible Traveling

After many months of work, the youth group of Beyond Borders was successful in getting their message against child sex tourism into the Lonely Planet guidebooks.

With the help of Child Wise, Australia's ECPAT group, the Beyond Borders youth were able to convince the Lonely Planet office in the United States that it is necessary to inform travelers of the risks and effects of child sex tourism. All of the Lonely Planet guidebooks on Central and South American destinations will now include a section designed by Beyond Borders youth, based on an information and awareness page developed by Child Wise for the guidebooks for Southeast Asia.

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The inserts inform readers of what child sex tourism is, and warns them that it is a crime. They suggest what to do should a traveler suspect another person to be sexually exploiting a child or adolescent, and they also include information on organizations that the traveler can contact if they want to volunteer to help stop CSEC while in that particular country.

This project was made possible by Child Wise, and supported by ECPAT International and ECPAT USA who helped the youth collect the required information for the pages. The commitment of the youth group, with the support of ECPAT International and its affiliate groups, have made this project a significant achievement and an important step forward in raising awareness and in the fight against child sex tourism.



Jill McLean*, ECPAT International Youth Representative for North America, Attends National Committee Meeting

The Committee against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth was created by the Canadian government in light of the First World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children. Formed by Senator Landon Pearson, the purpose of the Committee is to implement and monitor the strategy adopted in Canada's National Plan of Action for Children, "A Canada Fit for Children", which includes a section on sexual exploitation and trafficking. On February 19, 2007, the Committee met to discuss the sexual exploitation of children and youth, with a special focus on Aboriginal children and youth.

The Committee is composed of representatives from several governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations, the purpose of which is to stop the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal children in Canada and act as an advisor to Senator Romeo Dallaire in his role on the Senate Committee for Human Rights. It was noted that there was a lack of youth representation on the Committee, and suggested that Jill be involved as a youth representative. She was taken up on her offer and spent the following months in search of existing literature on the subject of sexual exploitation of Aboriginal children in Canada. As a result of her research and persistent request for youth representation, she was invited to attend the Committee's round table discussion in February of 2007.

The topics addressed at the discussion focused on analyzing the factors that make Aboriginal children particularly vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, looking at what resources exist to fight the CSE of Aboriginal children, and what is needed to help fight it.

It was made clear by the Committee that Aboriginal children are the most vulnerable group of children in

Canada, and that each group has different experiences and needs. It was also made clear that there is a lack of research surrounding this specific issue, leading to detrimental implications for prevention and support programs. As such, the recommendations were focused primarily on generating research and support.

The importance of youth participation in this endeavor was brought to the attention of the Committee by several members. Jill continues to bring one youth voice in her work with the Committee. She was asked to help propose a research project which will include the organization of public hearings, focus groups and in-depth interviews. The proposed research will include youth, and the results and recommendations will be presented to the Committee and the Senate Committee for Human Rights.

The next meeting of the National Committee against Sexual Exploitation of Aboriginal Children is being planned for June of 2007. Topics to address have not yet been finalized; however the main discussion will focus on the progress of the Committee.

ECPAT's policies on child and youth participation make evident the importance of youth involvement. Children and youth are experts on youth, and when the aim of a movement is to empower youth in order to prevent sexual exploitation, their involvement is a key step in the fight against it.

**Jill McLean is the North America Representative of EICYAC, ECPAT International's Child and Youth Advisory Committee, in addition to being a member of Beyond Borders, the ECPAT group in Canada.*

Media Awards Raise Awareness on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

It's easy to underestimate the benefit of good media coverage on the issue of child sexual exploitation. The media can have a huge influence on public attitudes as well as public policy. There are many aspects of sexual exploitation that the average person would simply not be aware of if not for the media coverage the issue has received.

Three years ago, Beyond Borders, an ECPAT affiliate group in Canada, launched a modest national media awards program to recognize exemplary work on the part of journalists who had done stories on the sexual exploitation of children. Over those three years, awareness about the award has grown and it's becoming a sought after symbol of distinction for journalists in print and electronic media. Media awards set the standard for journalistic excellence and raise awareness about how reporting on child sexual exploitation can be done in a compelling yet respectful way.

The Beyond Borders award is judged against the following three key measures:

Increased awareness

The submission provides the audience with accurate information that highlights the dynamics and realities of sexual exploitation. It may provide new insights or uncover underlying causes of the issue. The coverage may lead to further journalistic investigation of the story or support legislative or policy changes to better address the issue.

Quality of work

The submission is well researched and balanced in its approach. It is well written and in the case of broadcast, has high production values. It may use innovative or dramatic techniques that reinforce the message included in the coverage.

Respectful

The submission uses respectful language that does not denigrate or inadvertently cast blame upon those victimized through sexual exploitation. The piece must not contravene the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that stipulates guidelines for media in covering issues related to the abuse of children. Submissions must represent the issue in a clear and balanced manner that does not sensationalize the abuse of children in any way.

The 2006 award recognized three journalists and for the first time included a winner in the electronic media category. Diego Briceño-Orduz of Montreal-based PÉRIPHÉRIA PRODUCTIONS won for his documentary entitled *Souvenir Kids*. The filmmaker traveled to Acapulco to meet some of the street kids that fell victim to nine Americans and three Canadians arrested and accused of engaging in child sex tourism in 2003. He followed the kids during the two-year trail and ultimately discovers that no verdict will ever redeem the harsh reality they have endured.

To learn more about the Beyond Borders Media Awards or about the 2006 recipients, visit www.beyondborders.org.



Strategic Action Plan for the Protection of Victims of Child Trafficking in Quebec

by Claire Poretz and Catherine Gauvreau, IBCR

Since its creation in 1994, the International Bureau for Children's Rights (IBCR), an international non-governmental organization based in Montreal, Canada, works in the effort to contribute to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child by identifying and spreading awareness on the fundamental issues that arise from these human rights violations, all while contributing to finding practical solutions; such as a better understanding on the issue, public awareness and international cooperation.

In an attempt to respond to the increasingly urgent need surrounding child trafficking, the IBCR has launched the *Strategic Action Plan for the Protection of Victims of Child Trafficking in Quebec*. The global strategy comprises three general objectives: (1) to improve the protection of child victims of trafficking, (2) to prevent child trafficking and (3) to reduce crime by gaining a better understanding of this problem. This project that will take place over a period of two years (2006-2007) is led by a multidisciplinary team and includes both a research study and an action strategy.

This research study on child trafficking is the first to address the situation in Quebec and to identify the needs of its victims. The stakeholders who are concerned by child trafficking in Quebec have shared their past practices and experiences, as well as their concerns and specific needs with regard to this issue.

Currently, the research phase of the project has been finalized. Subsequently, the IBCR has adopted and emitted recommendations. The IBCR has made an assessment designed to meet the needs that were identified during the research study that will guide us throughout the second part of the project, which will involve developing and implementing our action plan. We invite you to consult IBCR's web site for more information on this project at: www.ibcr.org

Results and Assessment

Victims of trafficking in minors do not correspond to one singular profile. Nevertheless, the majority of such victims tend to be girls aged 14 to 17. The principal factors that place persons at risk are poverty, globalization, social isolation, armed conflicts, technological advances, and restrictive immigration policies. In the case of external trafficking, the modes of recruitment are much more numerous and diverse than those used in internal trafficking. The common element between the two is often the use of violence and deception as a means of controlling the victims.

What we can draw out from the analysis of results is the varying degrees of awareness and knowledge concerning human trafficking, as well as the lack of a commonly shared definition of this phenomenon. It is imperative that the stakeholders adopt a collaborative approach as to increase the effectiveness of the initiatives undertaken in the framework of the present action plan.

Furthermore, professionals likely to intervene with child victims of trafficking or children who are at risk must receive adequate training in order to better identify them, to improve intervention methods, and to meet the special needs of this particularly vulnerable category of children. All these steps are necessary for signaling victims of trafficking in minors to the appropriate youth protection authorities. Hence, the main challenge is to detect children at risk before they become victims of traffickers and to identify the children who are victims of trafficking. Furthermore, there is a fundamental need to spread awareness on the "identification" issue in order to change the perception that Canadian authorities as well as the general society at large have of children victims of trafficking. In some instances, these vulnerable individuals are identified as illegal migrants rather than victims of trafficking; thus are not gaining access to the proper protection and assistance.

Due to the clandestine nature of the migratory pattern as well as the exponential growth of child trafficking, the need for developing accurate data bases is urgent. Many child victims of trafficking as well as at-risk youths fall into the cracks and disappear due to the absence of an effective identification and intervention method that would permit authorities to maintain a follow-up on these children.

In conclusion, we can state that trafficking exists in Canada as well as around the world. The immediate priority of the IBCR is to issue the series of recommendations which pertain to the fight against child trafficking in Quebec. These recommendations will serve as a basis for the elaboration and implementation of our action plan.