

Dominican Republic

Youth Mobilizing against CSEC in the Sosúa Municipality

Initiating programs against CSEC in areas without prior experience in confronting community problems, and where there aren't any local organizations that the citizens trust, presents a challenge.

In February of 2004, the ECPAT group in the Dominican Republic, "Movimiento para el Auto-desarrollo Internacional de la Solidaridad" (MAIS-ECPAT), with the support of the ILO-IPEC, carried out a program for the eradication of CSEC in the Sosúa Municipality. Through a mobilization process with adolescents, they were able to overcome institutional and community resistance to CSEC in Sosúa, a district well known as a sex tourism destination for the past 15 years.

Where to Start?

The communities affected by CSEC viewed the issue with skepticism and hostility, which is why MAIS-ECPAT had to first gain their trust in order to start the process of social mobilization. From there sprung the idea of working with adolescents as a first step in initiating contact with the families and communities.

The best way to work with adolescents was through the school, as this institution has the benefits of being permanent and close to the community. Thus, MAIS-ECPAT approached the schools in Sosúa by introducing a proposal for an educational support project, since they noticed that there were a significant number of children who were out of the schooling system due to educational or behavioral difficulties.

These adolescents could be potential CSE victims, and so MAIS-ECPAT started working with a group of 60 of them. MAIS-ECPAT gained the teachers' trust, and through the children was able to initiate contact with their families as well as with other youth.



* Educational Support Classroom

The Mobilization Process

From this moment on, awareness-raising activities for the youth started. Talks on human rights and CSEC prevention were organized in all of the schools in Sosúa and Cabarete. Through these activities, motivated youth were identified, selected, and later trained to be integrated into community mobilization activities. An essential element of this process is that it involved youth from all social classes and nations.

More >>>

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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The students were then divided into groups and visited nearly 900 families in the communities. During the visits, they wore t-shirts and hats with the slogan "Son nuestros muchachos y hay que defenderlos" ("They're Our Kids and We Have to Protect Them"), the slogan of the initiative. The adolescents communicated to the families their concerns about CSEC, violence within the family, and child labor, and stressed the importance of family participation in eradicating these wrongs. The process of mobilization concluded with a large demonstration in which 300 youth and an equal number of adult representatives of authorities and local organizations participated.



* Visiting the Families

Results

This process raised the awareness of 7000 students regarding CSEC, and mobilized 350 youth peer educators in schools, coming from 11 communities affected by CSEC. Thanks to this youth mobilization initiative, 366 children were identified as being at high risk or victims of CSE and were referred to attention programs.

Beyond the numbers, an unexpected result is the change in perceptions of privileged groups about children affected by CSE. For youth from higher classes, the "slum" districts were nothing but places to look for "prostitutes". Learning of the reality endured in these marginal districts, and their bringing together with marginalized youth, changed their perceptions and attitudes. Solidarity between all adolescents was built, a solidarity that permeated social classes. This is reflected in the equal participation of public and private schools. In addition, youth from traditionally rival districts mixed.



* The Children of Sosúa Say "NO" to CSE

In terms of sustainability, there now exists a critical mass in Sosúa that is aware of commercial sexual exploitation of children; organized groups of adolescents are present in all the communities of Sosúa; the youth group will remain in the schools for at least an additional 2 years; and this group was integrated into the participation group of ECPAT International.

Factors Contributing to the Success of the Initiative

- > Know and respect the perspectives of the communities regarding the subject;
- > Identify entry points in working with families;
- > Maintain a strong presence in the field through peer educators;
- > Work in collaboration with a governmental structure (in this case the school) to ensure an institutional and permanent process.

Cybertip.ca Lists Top 5 Risks to Children on the Internet

Cybertip.ca is Canada's National Tipline for reporting the online sexual exploitation of children. This centralized web portal, created through an initiative in which participated Beyond Borders, the ECPAT group in Canada, receives and addresses reports from the public regarding child pornography, luring, child sex tourism, and children who are exploited through prostitution. Cybertip.ca also provides the public with information, referrals and other resources to help Canadians keep their children safe while on the Internet.

Cybertip.ca has compiled a list of the top five risks children are exposed to while on the Internet, based on the 16,000 reports the tipline has fielded from the public since 2005. While four of the five threats involve the increasingly sophisticated techniques sexual offenders are using to lure, groom and abuse children, reports also indicate that adolescents are engaging in risky Internet behavior.

1. **Sexual offenders** targeting online games that have chat rooms including interactive web games, computer and console games.
2. **Sexual offenders** hijacking instant messaging accounts and coercing children to send nude or partially clothed images of themselves. Between 2005 and 2006, reports of this threat **doubled**.
3. **Sexual offenders** using 3D animated characters, referred to as Avatars, to engage youth in online conversations.
4. **Sexual offenders** targeting social networking sites where children and youth are encouraged to create online diaries and connect with new people.
5. **Youth** sending nude images to peers **without understanding the images could be forwarded or permanently posted online**.

Since launching Cybertip.ca in September 2002, the tipline has forwarded reports to law enforcement that have resulted in 23 arrests and the removal of as many as 1700 websites.

Congratulations to Roz Prober on Her Nomination!

Roz Prober, co-founder of Beyond Borders, ECPAT's Canadian affiliate, has been nominated for the Women of Distinction Award. The YMCA-YWCA Women of Distinction Awards Program is a celebration of talent, achievement, imagination and innovation, honoring Winnipeg women who have made a unique and exemplary contribution to the development of others in our community.

In the short time span of one decade, Roz Prober has made visible in Canadian society the issue of children exploited in prostitution, pornography and sex tourism.

ECPAT congratulates Roz Prober for her achievements and hard work!



Pilot Project on the Prevention of Child Trafficking and Reinforcement of Sexual and Reproductive Health Knowledge

From August 2006 to June 2007, a pilot project on child trafficking prevention and the strengthening of sexual and reproductive health knowledge will take place in the cities of El Alto and La Paz, in the Department of La Paz in Bolivia. This initiative, funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), will focus on marginal and peripheral zones. At the national level, various agencies and ministries of the Bolivian state will take on the responsibility of coordinating and following up the project, while Proadolescentes Bolivia, the ECPAT group in Bolivia, will be responsible for its execution.

The overall objective of this project is to contribute to improving the levels of information, education and awareness of children on their human rights in the areas of human trafficking and illicit smuggling of migrants, and to improve access to information on subjects related to sexual and reproductive health.

The expected outcomes include:

- " 100 teachers trained
- " 4000 primary and secondary school children warned about human trafficking and the illicit smuggling of migrants, and reinforce their knowledge on sexual and reproductive health
- " 4000 families informed on human trafficking and smuggling of migrants
- " 10 communities aware of women and child rights
- " Audiovisual material designed against human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants
- " The Ministries of Education accept to include the issues of human trafficking and illicit migrant smuggling in the educational curriculum
- " A play on the topic is implemented in 10 schools in the cities of La Paz and El Alto.

Research Project "State Diagnostic on the CSEC Situation in Bolivia"

Proadolescentes Bolivia has initiated a research project on the CSEC situation in Bolivia. This initiative is financially and technically supported by ECPAT International and has a national scope with emphasis on capital cities and tourist areas of Bolivia.

The National Council on Human Trafficking and Smuggling of the Bolivian state is supporting the implementation of the project. The findings will be disseminated to local and national-level authorities, and will serve as a basis for the elaboration of a National Plan of Action against CSEC, and to strengthen the actions that are being developed in relation to the issue.

Stopping Child Sex Tourism

ECPAT-USA's Protect Children in Tourism Project, implemented in Mexico and Belize, has finished two years of work aimed at obtaining the cooperation of the travel and tourism industries in those countries to combat child sex tourism. Partnering with NGOs and travel industry associations allowed ECPAT-USA to promote The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (www.thecode.org).

In Cancun, Mexico, the largest Mexican destination for American tourists, the most important travel industry associations signed The Code and a number of Mexico-owned hotels began training their staff and implementing it.

In Belize, 47 companies nationwide signed The Code and trainings were conducted by ECPAT-USA's travel industry partner. Thanks to the passionate commitment of local communities, great strides in protecting children in these resort areas were made. ECPAT-USA hopes to receive additional State Department funding to continue implementing the project.

ECPAT-USA is currently pressing more U.S. companies to sign The Code of Conduct, particularly working with investor groups to assess how they can use shareholder resolutions or other methods to get more companies to sign The Code. The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility is a coalition of church investment groups in the United States who are especially interested in taking up the issue.

ECPAT-USA has also gotten YouTube, an extremely popular website hosting videos of all types, to post the Air France in-flight video on trafficking for sexual purposes:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xo8qbxUhGfI>



Children Trafficked to the U.S. for Domestic Servitude

ECPAT-USA will be beginning a research project on children trafficked to the United States for domestic servitude. ECPAT-USA learned of many anecdotal stories about children working in domestic servitude, however as the focus in the U.S. has been on trafficking of children for sexual purposes, there has been no systematic collection of data or centralized information source on child domestic servitude.

This research project has two goals: One is to reveal to the American public that this form of child abuse is one of the dark sides of globalization taking place in the U.S. The second is to recommend policies, programs and laws that would help prevent this form of exploitation from happening, improve the child welfare's system's ability to identify children who are exploited, and contribute to the development of services to help them.

The research will be a qualitative rather than quantitative study, based mainly on interviews with service providers who have assisted children, community groups that are aware of the problem in their communities, and law enforcement and immigration officials. ECPAT-USA hopes to learn about enough specific cases of child domestic servitude to be able to provide a good overview of the problem as it exists in the United States. In addition, it is hoped to be able to describe how this form of exploitation may differ from ethnic community to ethnic community, all the while drawing some general conclusions that will lead to increased awareness, and eventually to better protection.

To contribute any information relevant to the study, please contact ECPAT-USA:
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Theatre in the Rehabilitation Process of Children Violated in their Rights: An Experience in the NGO Raíces

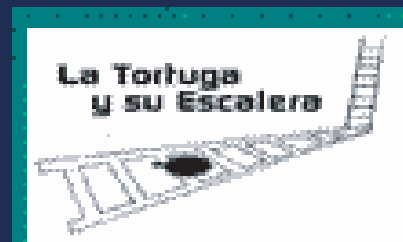
In January of 2007, the "Month of Theatre" in Chile, Raíces NGO in collaboration with the Professional Institute of La Casa Theatre, the Theatre La Palomera and the ILO, presented the Methodology in Theatrical Pedagogy, which has been put into practice for the past three years at the Attention and Reparation Center for the Damaged, a shelter operated by Raíces.

In 2004, Raíces initiated a theatre workshop for children victims of commercial sexual exploitation cared for in their shelter. Without quite knowing what would transpire of their efforts, nevertheless aware of the desire to generate a space for play, creation, and beauty contrasting with the traumatic and damaging experiences endured by these adolescents, a path of searching, learning, surprises, and a certain dose of magic begun.

Three years of work have passed since then, and the effect of theatre as a therapeutic and healing tool in the rehabilitation process was observed with greater awareness. Living through the experience, reflecting and analyzing its development, it has become evident that theatre generates enriching dynamics and therapeutic processes.

During those three years of work, the rehabilitation process of the adolescents benefited from theatre, which generated within the group a surprising creative capacity, an emotional link based on commitment, a greater persistence and constancy concerning tasks, as well as an awareness of their strengths and the capacity to express them.

In 2006, the maturity acquired by the group of adolescents permitted the passing of an important step in the process. The amateur theatre company "La tortuga y su escalera" ("The Turtle and its Ladder") was formed, comprising 11 adolescents and 3 workshop facilitators. This company put together and directed a collective creation named "Queremos contarles algo" ("We Would Like to Share Something with You") in which shines through their particular vision of the issues that surround them (teenage pregnancy, abandonment, infidelity, discrimination, violence, among others).



For the first time, the participants in the theatre workshop acted in front of an external audience, one who was unaware of their problems and who evaluated them as any other amateur theatre company. This reaffirmed the rigor of their work and commitment, and enabled the initiation of a path of exploration of theatre, not only as an asset in a rehabilitation process, but also as a tool for expression and identity-building of a group of adolescents who struggle with the violence of an environment that maltreats and stigmatizes them.

This experience was systematized in the document "Taller de Teatro en ONG Raíces. Una experiencia de pedagogía teatral con niños, niñas y adolescentes víctimas de explotación sexual comercial", available for download on Raíces NGO's webpage: www.ongraices.org

The link for downloading is:

http://www.ongraices.org/index.php?option=com_remository&Itemid=44&func=fileinfo&filecatid=87&parent=folder&lang=es