



PACIFIC PERSPECTIVES

ON THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH



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PREFACE

This publication comprises three papers commissioned by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). They cover different aspects of the issues leading to and associated with the commercial sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children in the Pacific.

Historical context

Asia is the first region where evidence of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) was brought to global attention in a strong way and initial steps were taken as far back as 1990, when the network of organizations and individuals End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT),¹ was established as a three-year campaign focused on ending the “commercial” aspect of the sexual exploitation of children. In the years that followed, more attention was directed towards the global scope of the problem and the need to involve children in addressing it.

The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond,² adopted in 1995, called upon Governments to cooperate at the international level and take effective steps, including specific preventive measures, to protect children, adolescents and youth from all types of exploitation and abuse. The following year (1996), the Government of Sweden hosted the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm. The issue of CSEC, which at that time had been largely unrecognized on a global level, attracted attention and mobilized support from a broad range of stakeholders, including Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), youth, civil society groups, academics and law enforcement officials. The Congress, attended by 122 Governments, adopted the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action,³ making a commitment to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation.

¹ It was later renamed as End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT International).

² General Assembly resolution 50/81, annex, adopted 14 December 1995.

³ A/51/385, annex.

The Second World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children was hosted by the Government of Japan and held in Yokohama in 2001. The objectives of the Congress were to: review progress in the implementation of the Agenda for Action adopted at the previous World Congress and strengthen political commitment to its implementation; share expertise and good practices; identify main problem areas and gaps in the fight against CSEC; and strengthen follow-up to the Congresses.

There have also been regional-level preparations, initiatives and follow-up events related to the global Congresses. For example, in 1996, the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Human Resources Development for Youth called upon the ESCAP secretariat to promote regional cooperation in eliminating sexual exploitation and abuse of youth in the region. In its resolution 53/4 of 30 April 1997 on the elimination of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and youth in the Asia-Pacific region, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific recognized the use of new communications technologies, including the Internet, in facilitating CSEC and raised the need for international and regional action on the issue.

In 2001, ECPAT International, ESCAP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), together with Save the Children and in cooperation with the Government of Japan, organized the East Asia and Pacific Regional Consultation for the Second World Congress in Bangkok. Participants adopted the Regional Commitment and Action Plan of the East Asia and Pacific Region against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Government participants requested ECPAT International, ESCAP and UNICEF to assist countries with the development of national plans of action that could be used to monitor the implementation of the Stockholm Agenda for Action. Pacific island countries were especially encouraged to adopt the Agenda for Action. Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu adopted the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda in December 2001; the Cook Islands in September 2003 and Papua New Guinea in May 2004.

In November 2004 in Bangkok, ESCAP, ECPAT and UNICEF organized the Post-Yokohama Mid-term Review of the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Commitment and Action Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. The three organizations also worked together to organize the East Asia and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, held in Bangkok on 18 and 19 August 2008.

Pacific regional response to CSEC

From 15 to 19 September 2003, ESCAP, ECPAT and UNICEF organized a meeting in Nadi, Fiji entitled “Pacific Regional Workshop on Combating Poverty and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth” with a focus on assisting countries to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child obligations and Stockholm Commitments into national action plans. The workshop participants also adopted the Pacific Statement of Commitment, which highlighted Pacific countries’ awareness of CSEC as an emerging issue.

One of the key recommendations of that workshop was to conduct situational analyses in Pacific island countries and to share the findings regionally, as many Pacific islands countries did not know the national or regional situation of CSEC and requested assistance in this regard. In response, a training workshop on CSEC and the closely linked issue of child sexual abuse (CSA) was held in 2004 to enable countries to undertake situational analysis research. Between 2004 and 2008, ECPAT, ESCAP and UNICEF supported the development of situational analysis research in a number of Pacific island countries. These included:

- Cook Islands: Funded by ESCAP and ECPAT-New Zealand; research carried out by the Cook Islands Women’s Counselling Centre, Punanga Tauturu Inc.
- Fiji: Funded by ESCAP; research by Save the Children, Fiji.
- Kiribati: Funded by UNICEF; research by Regional Rights Resource Team.
- Papua New Guinea: Funded by ESCAP and UNICEF; research carried out by HELP Resources, Inc.
- Samoa: Funded by UNICEF; research has been completed and a report is in preparation at the time of writing.
- Solomon Islands: Funded by UNICEF; research by the Christian Care Centre of the Church of Melanesia, Honiara with technical assistance from Regional Rights Resource Team.
- Vanuatu: Funded by UNICEF; research by Wan Smol Bag Theatre with technical assistance from Regional Rights Resource Team.

In December 2006, a regional synthesis report on CSEC, based on the situational analysis reports that were completed by mid-2005, was

launched in Fiji by the Pacific office of UNICEF and the Pacific Operations Centre of ESCAP, with the involvement of ECPAT. In May 2007, Child Wise, Australia, in partnership with UNICEF, organized a workshop in Papua New Guinea on a CSEC national action plan involving representatives from various provinces of the country. However, the Government has not adopted the plan and a non-governmental network continues to lobby on the issue.

In 2007, the Christian Care Centre of Solomon Islands followed up on its original CSEC situational analysis research by examining the issue in logging camps in the country's Makira Province. The outcome was a report, entitled "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Solomon Islands: A Report Focusing on the Presence of the Logging Industry in a Remote Region", containing in-depth documentation of situations of CSEC occurring in an isolated area when logging companies begin their operations.

Why are CSEC and CSA issues of concern? Both CSEC and CSA are forms of violence and violations of the human rights of children. The Secretary-General's In-depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women (2006) and the Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children (2006) have drawn attention to the damage that various forms of violence has on individuals, communities and nations. With the growth in tourism and urbanization and the greater movement of people for migration and as a result of human trafficking, increasing numbers of child and youth populations present increased risk of exploitation and abuse. The rising incidence of HIV and AIDS also presents additional risks and increases the harmful effects of such sexual abuse and exploitation on children.

This publication provides an analysis of the cultural, political, economic and social aspects of the commercial sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and considers the root causes and consequences of – as well as risk factors for – CSEC and CSA in the Pacific. It is hoped that the papers presented on gender relations, social and economic change, culture and traditions, and human rights will shed light on the connections with CSEC and CSA in the Pacific islands countries studied.

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