

- c) undertake gender-sensitive training of medical personnel, teachers, social workers, non-governmental organisations and others working to help child victims of commercial sexual exploitation on child development and child rights, bearing in mind the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant human rights standards;
- d) take effective action to prevent and remove societal stigmatisation of child victims and their children; facilitate the recovery and reintegration of child victims in communities and families; and where institutionalisation of the child is necessary, ensure that it is for the shortest possible period in accordance with the child's best interests;
- e) promote alternative means of livelihood with adequate support services to child victims and their families so as to prevent further commercial sexual exploitation; and
- f) adopt not only legal sanctions against the perpetrators of sexual crimes against children, but also socio-medical and psychological measures to create behavioural changes on the part of the perpetrators [...].

World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, "Legal protection," Background Document, Stockholm, Sweden, August 28, 1996.

The majority of police and law enforcement agencies around the world are working to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children. Internationally, INTERPOL, for example, has a Standing Working Party on Offences against Minors, which includes representatives of non-governmental organisations working against commercial sexual exploitation of children, and has been active in promoting extraterritorial legislation, detection and conviction of criminals.

At the national level, most countries do have laws making abuse of children a crime. Additionally, 188 countries (at 1 May 1996) have signed or ratified the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and have enacted legislation in its wake to help them keep the promises they have made by signing this important Convention. There are also many diverse national laws which prohibit or otherwise regulate under-age sex, prostitution, pornography, kidnapping, enslavement, abuse—a whole range of criminal acts, in fact, which occur in the arena of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

In recent years there has been growing awareness, too, of the transnational nature of commercial sexual exploitation of children. Pornography and children are trafficked across borders. Exploiters travel to set up their networks. Clients travel to buy services on foreign shores. Inter-government cooperation is consequently absolutely vital, not only in defining the problem but also in policing it, cracking down on it and then publicising successful convictions.

Several countries have enacted extraterritorial legislation which, with the cooperation of other governments, allows them to investigate crimes outside their country of jurisdiction and/or bring their nationals to justice when they return home. As a result, the phenomenon of foreigners arrested for child sex crimes

bribing their way to freedom and escaping to their home country no longer offers protection.

Ironically, existing laws often punish the children more than the exploiters. Between 1989 and 1993, for example, 1,500 convictions were secured in England and Wales against children for offences relating to prostitution. Other laws cause trafficked children to be deported, back to the place which sold them in the first place.

It has also been clearly documented that children found in brothels, massage parlours, the streets or other places where they are being sexually exploited for profit are often locked up in cells with adults who abuse them. In western countries, often their faces are shown in the press and media whereas the face of the adult exploiter is masked to protect his or her identity, and they are treated as criminals.

But making laws is not the same as enforcing them. It is certainly difficult to make laws work well against covert activity. It is more difficult when, as in some documented cases, local law enforcers are themselves involved in corruption and make a profit from exploiting the children. It is often neglected, for example, in the face of pressures to promote tourism in a country and authorities turn a blind eye to activity which otherwise brings revenue. But laws must be enforced. They are the ultimate protection for children, and not enough is being done either to make laws sufficiently strong or to enforce them when they are in place.

World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, "Trafficking Routes," Fact Sheet, Stockholm, Sweden, August 28, 1996.

In 1987, a report to the Council of Europe identified five international trafficking networks into Europe known to involve children:

- Latin America to Europe and the Middle East
- South East Asia to northern Europe and the Middle East
- a European regional market
- an Arab regional market
- exports of girls from West Africa.

In Eastern Europe today, the traffic generally moves east to west. Girls from Russia, Ukraine and White Russia are transported insignificant numbers to Poland, Hungary, the Baltic states, or on to western European capitals, joined by girls from bordering countries. Researchers have also identified traffic in Romanian prostitutes to Italy, Cyprus and Turkey.

There are also several well defined routes in South East Asia:

- Myanmar (Burma) to Thailand
- Southern China to Thailand via Myanmar
- Cambodia and Vietnam to Thailand

Internally within Thailand and other countries where child prostitution is common