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COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION PROPOSALS FOR PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE TO CHILD VICTIMS

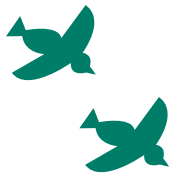
The Cyclic Model of Combined Responses as a
strategy to ensure the comprehensive
protection of rights

María Cecilia Claramunt



IPEC

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First edition, 2005

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ILO - IPEC

Commercial sexual exploitation. Proposals for providing comprehensive assistance to child victims.

San José, Costa Rica, International Labour Office, 2005.

Sexual exploitation, Manual, Human Rights

02.02.1

ISBN:

92-2-317938-6 (print)

92-2-317939-4 (web pdf) ILO Cataloguing in Publications Data

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See our websites: www.ipec.oit.or.cr and www.oit.or.cr

Printed in Costa Rica



Acknowledgements

“Commercial sexual exploitation. Proposals to incorporate specific factors into assistance for child victims”.

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Foreword

Since 1999, when the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) - the ILO technical unit in this area - has been supporting the urgent efforts of the countries that have ratified it to tackle the worst forms of child labour, in accordance with the Convention.

The so-called absolute worst forms of child labour include commercial sexual exploitation, which ILO considers a crime comparable to slavery and forced labour. Although data is incomplete, it is estimated that commercial sexual exploitation ensnares hundreds of thousands of children in Latin America and throughout the world. Prior to becoming trapped in the web of the sex trade, many of them have had other work experiences where their rights have been violated, they have dropped out of school or been expelled, and they have suffered from a lack of material and affective resources, all of which has rendered them especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

ILO, together with the ministries of labour, and the workers' and employers' organizations that shape its mandates, has played an active role in the global campaign to eliminate this appalling form of child exploitation and has vigorously supported the creation of strategic partnerships with other stakeholders to tackle the problem.

These partnerships include, in particular, the one that IPEC has entered into with the universities of different countries in order to increase the knowledge base that permits the design of policies and strategies that are better adapted to combating commercial sexual exploitation. On this occasion, the collaboration is with the School of Psychology of the Universidad de Costa Rica. A variety of strategies are being developed with the School, including a direct action programme to remove girls and boys from commercial sexual exploitation in one of the country's most underprivileged areas. This project will also allow a pilot model of assistance to child victims of commercial sexual exploitation to be tested. In addition, several students have already focused research for their degree thesis on this issue, which has substantially increased the knowledge base.

This document looks specifically at the crucial issue of providing assistance to the victims and makes a series of proposals to guide the specific response to determined groups of children, on the one hand, and to facilitate the implementation of actions in the sphere of family intervention, on the other. All the proposals are based on the same principle: the identification of tools that will help ensure the comprehensive protection of the human rights of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Guillermo Dema

Subregional Coordinator of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour for Central America, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Haiti



Preface

Over the past decade, the Latin America region has had to acknowledge the existence of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. Although the problem is not new, its recent exposure has given rise not only to a growing interest in the area of research, but also to the search for strategies and mechanisms to eliminate it. Nevertheless, given the complexity of the economic, social and cultural factors involved in its appearance and persistence, an effective response is still pending and is a challenge that must be met.

In the course of identifying and implementing mechanisms and programmes to eliminate the use of children and adolescents in the sex trade, several specific elements that need to be tackled have been identified: the prevention of the propensity or tendency of adults to have and to tolerate sexual contact with children; the prevention of factors that render specific groups of children and adolescents more vulnerable to entrapment in the sex trade; the effective punishment of exploitive practice and, lastly, timely and direct assistance that can truly protect the human rights of those who are its victims or who are at high risk of becoming its victims. It will be readily appreciated that each of these elements calls for concrete strategies and actions; however, the success of the latter is related to the way in which efforts in each area are combined.

This document looks expressly at the issue of assistance to children and adolescents and presents a series of proposals to guide the specific response for determined groups of boys and girls and to facilitate the implementation of actions under the family intervention component. All the proposals are based on the same principle: identification of tools that will ensure the comprehensive protection of the human rights of child victims; to this end, they are based on the Cyclic Model of Combined Responses.¹ The latter is a guide to the application of the human rights approach in direct assistance services.

The elaboration of proposals giving a specific content to the Cyclic Model is the result of two basic initiatives. First, the research programme “Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Contribution of Psychology to the Construction of the Comprehensive Protection Model for Child and Adolescent Victims”, carried out by students graduating in psychology from the Universidad de Costa Rica, which is supported by the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the International Labour Organization (ILO-IPEC). Within this framework, other contributions have been made such as the design of an instrument to monitor the application of the human rights approach in programmes and services for victims, and research studies designed to generate specific recommendations for direct assistance. The latter include a study on the reconstruction the experience of victimization -owing to commercial sexual exploitation- in adult women, and another on the inter-generational cycle of violence, which provides guidelines for incorporating the maternal figure into processes of assistance to child and adolescent victims.²

Together, these efforts and the current proposals constitute the contribution of a new

¹ The model is explained in the first chapter of this document.

² All these documents have been published in: *Explotación sexual comercial. Documentos de trabajo. Reflexiones sobre programas de atención directa*. San José, Costa Rica: International Labour Office/International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. 2003



generation of professionals in psychology who seek to transcend the individualist and psycho-pathologizing model of the responses traditionally used in the services provided to victims of interpersonal violence and, in particular, gender-based violence.

Another prior initiative implemented by the School of Psychology of the Universidad de Costa Rica was a social action programme to help eliminate commercial sexual exploitation. This included a joint project by the School and ILO/IPEC to provide direct assistance to child victims in the communities of Golfito and Corredores. In this regard, the proposals, and the research on which they are based, are expressly intended to provide theoretical and practical tools to render the actions carried out within the framework of the project more effective.

One of the first tasks of the research group responsible for the proposals presented in this document was to identify the principal gaps, problem areas and challenges. Based on this, the research team chose four different areas, in order to offer guidance for the response in each one.

The areas where the greatest challenges were identified, and which were therefore chosen as a focus for proposals, comprise the special characteristics of three groups of children and adolescents: boys, child and adolescent mothers, and children who use drugs. Another area that represents an enormous challenge is the intervention to ensure the right of the child to grow up in a family environment, despite weakened family networks; consequently, the fourth proposal contains guidelines for applying the principle of the triad formed by the State, the family and the child (human rights doctrine).

The proposals have been drawn up under the individual responsibility of their authors; however, they have been reviewed and discussed by the research group as a whole in order to ensure a shared vision. The group was made up of Nadia Blanco, who designed the proposal for family intervention; Rogelio Pardo, who prepared the guidelines for working with male victims and also children who use and abuse drugs; and Adriana Rodríguez, who chose to elaborate the guidelines for offering effective responses to child and adolescent mothers.

It should be noted that the proposals are neither a prescription nor an end product. Accordingly, with this publication, they are made available to those interested in tackling the problem, so that they may be developed and enhanced.

The publication also has an introductory article on the approach of comprehensive protection for the rights of the child and, in keeping with the remaining articles, its purpose is to invite reflection on the practical meaning of this approach in the provision of direct assistance to children and adolescents.

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The Cyclic Model of Combined Responses as a strategy to ensure the comprehensive protection of rights³

María Cecilia Claramunt

1. The human rights approach

The human rights approach may be understood as the paradigm⁴ that stresses a series of values that are considered essential to ensure respect for human dignity and compassionate coexistence among individuals and peoples. Even though the doctrine of human rights was first contemplated in the eighteenth century, when significant efforts were made to conceptualize it (leading to the French Revolution), the main document that enshrines the principles of dignity and humanity is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The rights embodied in this Declaration are understood to be inalienable attributes or characteristics of the individual, essential for his dignity and for peaceful coexistence. Thus, every individual possesses them, irrespective of age, gender, race or any other condition.

Two central concepts must be considered in order to understand this approach:

- a. Human dignity
- b. Co-responsibility

The international community has reached agreement to single out those values that give a meaning to the concept of human dignity in terms of well-being and security; for example, the right to work, to a nationality, to freedom of movement, to property, to health and to education, etc. The following articles of the Declaration illustrate these values:

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 25: Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services...

Co-responsibility -the second concept- refers to the relationship between the dignity of the individual and the dignity of others. In other words, the approach emphasizes the principle that everyone is also responsible for requiring and ensuring that the human

³ See also the document: “*Explotación sexual comercial. Guía de trabajo para proveedores/as y encargados/as de servicios dirigidos a personas menores de edad víctimas*”. San José, Costa Rica: International Labour Office/International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. 2003

⁴ A world view that predominates in a culture or social group.



rights of others are respected. It endeavours to stress the importance of respect in relations between human beings, communities and nations. Rights are not exercised on an individual or isolated basis.

Human rights are:

- **Universal:** everyone is entitled to human rights. For example, this principle rejects cultural relativism in their exercise. This means that, irrespective of the values or practices of specific cultures or groups, an individual cannot justify violating human dignity.
- **Inalienable:** rights are intrinsic to human life. They are never lost or recovered. They are always present, even though they have been violated. Thus, the concept of “re-establishing rights” is erroneous.
- **Absolute:** this characteristic is equal to stating that one cannot speak of the partial respect of a right.
- **Indivisible:** human rights form a whole; if one right is violated, all human rights are violated. Likewise, when seeking to protect one right, all rights should be protected.
- **Compulsory:** Everyone is entitled to rights; consequently, everyone can demand them from Governments, institutions and other individuals. In the context of this approach, this principle relates to that of autonomy. This means that the individual realizes that he or she can demand respect for his or her rights. In the case of children, the expression used is “increasing autonomy”; this means that adults must help children and adolescents develop their autonomy, so they can demand their rights for themselves.
- **Non-renounceable:** No one can waive any or all of his or her rights.
- **Individual:** Rights are intrinsic to each individual.
- **Inalienable:** Rights are not lost with the passing of time.
- **Inviolable:** No one can attack the rights of an individual with the excuse that he is doing so to protect the rights of a group; with the possible exception of limitations that may be imposed on their exercise when the public welfare is at stake (the element of co-responsibility).

As can be observed, human rights are exercised by everyone; however, given the characteristics of the culture and the economic models in force, the notion of what is human usually omits many groups of individuals; particularly, women and children. This can be interpreted as the result of the reigning androcentric vision:⁵ human = adult male. Thus, until very recently, the human rights approach was restricted to the area of political rights and to freedom of expression in the public sphere (the media, for example).

Accordingly, it took more time for the violation of the human rights of women, children and adolescents to be recognized - approximately 40 years after the Declaration. In particular, the recognition that children are entitled to rights is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations in 1989. The Convention stipulates that children and adolescents are entitled to all the rights

⁵ Androcentrism is the tendency to consider that man and traditional masculine values are synonymous with the human being. Accordingly, masculinity is the accepted model and women and values that are traditionally considered feminine are deemed a deviation from the ideal.



established in the Universal Declaration. And additional rights are specifically recognized, based on their age and stage of development. These include: the right to grow up in a family environment, to education, to recreation, to special protection, and to specific regulations for children who are employed.

The countries in the region transferred the Convention into national laws by ratifying it during the 1990s.⁶ Consequently, the States, their institutions and their officials, civil organizations, communities, and all adults have the obligation to ensure compliance with the provisions of this instrument.

The legal provisions designed to ensure the exercise of the human rights of children are therefore very recent. They specifically include the State's obligation to protect the rights of all children and adolescents who are at risk or who are subject to different forms of exploitation and abuse and, in particular, to enact legislation that prohibits child labour, regulates the work of adolescents, and punishes crimes related to commercial sexual exploitation with imprisonment.

The changes in or reforms to the law constitute significant progress and a first step towards implementing the social changes to which they are intended to contribute. However, there are certain cultural values that persist and that conflict with those established as essential values for human dignity. For example, the view that recognizes paternal authority to punish children physically as a means of discipline, which runs counter to the right of every individual, including those under 18 years of age, to a life without abuse.

In this regard, it is important to identify the essential contents of the paradigm that preceded the human rights approach and which, for centuries, perpetuated the invisibility of children as social subjects while, at the same time, promoting cultural tolerance of their enslavement and exploitation.

This is important because this paradigm coexists or remains in the culture, despite reforms to the law. It is known as the doctrine of “irregular situation” or the needs approach.

1.1 The “irregular situation” approach. This is the predominant view of childhood and adolescence that reached its apogee in the nineteenth century. The following characteristics describe this world view.

- The use of the term “**minors**” to designate children affected by any type of social problem (abandonment, abuse, mendicity, delinquency). This word is used to distinguish two very different groups: the “children” who live under the protection of their families and, above all, under parental protection (and, thus, do not require the protection of the State), and the others, who live in the so-called “irregular situation”. For example, children who have not been acknowledged by their fathers - illegitimate children, or children who live in families without a father, and amid poverty and violence, among many other characteristics that deviate from the ideal model of the family. The State's protection of “minors” should “ideally” be achieved through judicial procedures.
- “Irregularity” is interpreted as an exception or deviation from the social norm,

⁶ All the countries of the Ibero-American region have incorporated the commitments arising from this instrument into their laws.



principally in relation to family life. Therefore, **society is not called into question**. The social problems faced by children and adolescents (such as the “*maras*” or gangs, delinquency or commercial sexual exploitation) are the result of a family that does not behave according to the social norm.

- The cause of the “irregular situation” can be found in the “family background” or in the lack of paternal protection; therefore, the **family is considered directly responsible**. Consequently, for example, child sex abuse and mendicity are usually construed to be the result of lack of supervision by the mother or adult “irresponsibility”, respectively. Based on this approach, certain expressions are coined that seek to describe such families; the main one is the “dysfunctional family”. Given that the mother is the principal figure in childrearing, she is therefore described as an “abandoning mother”.
- **The family is not considered a sphere of action** because its problems are considered unsolvable: poverty, violence, and the absence of a paternal figure, are the main examples. Any measure designed to solve these problems would require understanding the “irregular situation of the minor” as a manifestation of a social or structural problem. In the same way, given that, in many of these families, women are the only responsible adult figures, any action based on the family would require an approach that supported the exercise of maternity, and this would contradict androcentric⁷ or patriarchal cultural patterns. Consequently, since it has been decided that it is not possible to change the family, the child becomes the focus of “reform”. To achieve this, it is considered necessary to remove the child from the family environment; hence, institutions for “minors” become the main solution for “irregularity”.
- **Institutionalization** accomplishes two main functions; the “reform of the minor” and the protection of society; the latter refers to preventing any harm the minor could cause to the rest of society (such as delinquency or giving a bad example). In this way, institutions were created initially as children’s institutions or reform schools; they were usually established and administered by religious organizations, because the “reform” was considered to be a matter of a charitable and moral nature. Subsequently, with the emergence and growth of the social disciplines, the “reform” became a focus of professional interest, and psychology and social work gradually began to substitute the religious emphasis.

Example of the application of the “irregular situation” approach to the problem of commercial sexual exploitation

Problems of lack of self-esteem and values, the desire for an easy life, and a history of sexual abuse lead adolescents to choose prostitution

Therefore,

In cases with a history of abuse, promoting self-esteem and self-respect inculcating values and providing support are options to encourage these adolescents to abandon prostitution.

⁷ See footnote number 5.



1.2 The human rights approach. This is drastically opposed to the previous approach and reaches its highest expression in the ratification by almost all the States in the world (the only exception being the United States) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations in 1989. This instrument has two important international predecessors: the 1924 and the 1959 Declarations on the Rights of the Child. However, neither of them had a relevant effect. This approach was developed as a result of various international social movements that recognized the need to eliminate the separation of childhood into minors and children and to identify, by consensus, the period of life that calls for increased social attention owing to the process of growth and development.

At the same time, an agreement was reached to develop an international policy framework that contributed to the recognition of children and adolescents as subjects of rights rather than objects of protection. The characteristics of this approach, which are enshrined in the Convention, are:

- Childhood is defined as the **period of life up until 18 years of age**.
- The universality of human rights. In other words, **the distinction between minors and children is eliminated**. Also, any justification of the violation of rights based on factors such as race, religion, social origin or migratory status is prohibited.
- The State's obligation to ensure the exercise of human rights to all persons below the age of 18. To this end, contrary to the previous model, a triangular relationship between the State, the family and the child is envisioned. The State does not assume the family's role, but acts as a mediator between the family and the child. In this regard, the child's right to grow up in a family environment and the State's duty to support the family is recognized. Consequently, the welfare of the family becomes a focal point for public policies.
- The origin of the social problems experienced by children (abandonment, child labour, commercial sexual exploitation, expulsion from school) is not located exclusively in the child or its family. **The State assumes its own responsibility for the inexistence or weakness of economic and social policies**, which contributes to making children vulnerable or at risk in the face of those social problems.
- **Combating poverty, ensuring the right to education, and implementing mechanisms to mediate between the child and his or her family are identified as the responsibility of State institutions** in order to ensure the exercise of human rights.
- Children are subjects of all the rights established in the 1949 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nevertheless, bearing in mind their youth, the existence of **other age-specific rights**, which are not applicable to adults, are recognized. For example, the right to special protection.
- Human rights form a whole. No right is more important than the others and no right may be violated in order to protect another right. Given the indivisibility of rights, when one is violated, they are all violated. In this regard, this model is also known as the **comprehensive rights protection** approach.
- Comprehensive protection is possible through the coordination of **State and community services**. Every State agency, community, civil organization and family is obliged to safeguard the best interests of the child. However, the State has the greatest responsibility, because it is empowered to demand and monitor this



undertaking; it also has the obligation to punish violations of the human rights of the child.

- **The State must ensure the right to grow up in a family environment.** Institutionalization is conceived only as a protection measure of last resort (to protect rights). It should be used temporarily while seeking to resolve the problem that gave rise to the measure.

Currently (at the start of the twenty-first century) there is a **juxtaposition of the two models**. Progress has been made in enacting legislation based on the doctrine of human rights, but social and cultural practices based on the “irregular situation” approach are still in evidence.

2. Application of the principles of the human rights approach

The following are some examples of the application of the principles of this approach, specifically in relation to commercial sexual exploitation:

- **The human rights of children and adolescents are indivisible.** In this regard, the institutions that provide services are obliged to ensure the exercise of all the human rights of every child assisted and, therefore, to offer a comprehensive response. Also, when one right exists, another right cannot be violated in order to protect it. For example: when a case of commercial sexual exploitation has been detected, the first step is to identify the violation of other human rights, such as the right to welfare, the right to health and the right to education. The second step is to coordinate the institutional response in order to ensure not only the right to protection from sexual exploitation, but also the right to justice and the exercise of the rights that are being violated. Other rights, such as the right to grow up in a family environment, cannot be violated so as to ensure the right to protection against commercial sexual exploitation. Consequently, the response should incorporate assistance to the family by applying the triangulation principle (State/family/child).
- **Rights cannot be waived.** Hence, the institutions that provide services may not ask children whether they wish to exercise their rights. For example: they may not ask whether a child wishes to continue being sexually exploited, or whether he or she wishes to go to school. Furthermore, the child or adolescent cannot be made responsible for revictimization when he or she does not accept the measures offered by the institutions. The options should be examined jointly, in keeping with **the right to participation**. This means that children must take part in solving their own problems and in everything that concerns them.
- **Human rights are universal.** This means, for example, that public services designed for victims of commercial sexual exploitation cannot be restricted to those who have been born in the country, or limited to young children and exclude adolescents. The absence of comprehensive protection services cannot be justified by the behaviour of the child; for example, denying access to services when a child manifests violent behaviour, or behaves or dresses in a manner contrary to what is expected of his or her sex.



- **The State and its institutions are obliged to ensure the complete protection of human rights and cannot justify the absence of programmes for budgetary reasons.**

An essential characteristic of commercial sexual exploitation is the repeated violation of rights; consequently, this violation can be understood as a factor that cross-cuts both vulnerability to sexual exploitation and the continuance of children in this environment. This can be appreciated in the following diagram.

Figure N° 1

The violation of rights as a cross-cutting factor in commercial sexual exploitation

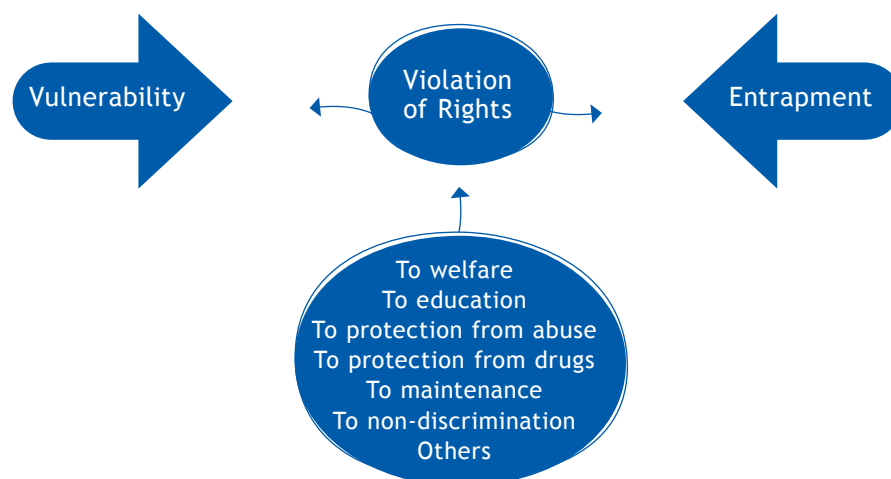


Figure 1. Conceptual diagram illustrating the role of human rights violations as a factor that renders children vulnerable and keeps them trapped in the sex trade.

3. International commitments concerning assistance to children involved in commercial sexual exploitation

A country assumes commitments -obligations- when it ratifies international instruments. In relation to the protection of the rights of children involved in commercial sexual exploitation, such commitments arise specifically from the Convention on the Rights of the Child⁸ and its Optional Protocol or Annex 2, concerning the sale of children, child prostitution and the use of children in pornography, and from Convention No 182 of the International Labour Organization on the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour.

⁸ Article 1 of the Convention defines the child as every human being below the age of 18 years.



Responsibilities of the State according to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

- a. To adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect all children under the age of 18 years from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.
 - b. To establish social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, as well as to follow up on such programmes.
 - c. To adopt measures to help parents ensure the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, moral and social development; particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.
 - d. To take all appropriate measures to secure the recovery of maintenance for the child from the parents.
 - e. To recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.
 - f. To take all appropriate national, bilateral or multilateral measures to prevent the inducement or coercion of the child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity, the exploitive use of children in prostitution, pornographic performances or materials or any unlawful sexual practices.
-

Responsibilities of the State according to ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour Article 7

- a. To prevent the engagement of children in the worst forms of child labour;
 - b. To provide the necessary and appropriate direct assistance for the removal of children from the worst forms of child labour and for their rehabilitation and social integration;
 - c. To ensure access to free basic education, and, wherever possible and appropriate, vocational training, for all children removed from the worst forms of child labour;
 - d. To identify and reach out to children at special risk and, in particular, to take account of the special situation of girls.
-



4. Barriers to incorporating the human rights approach into services

Despite legislation that makes application of the principles derived from the human rights approach compulsory, there are various barriers that prevent service providers from incorporating them into their work. For example:

Examples of barriers

- Unawareness of the approach and the legislation;
 - Limited understanding of the approach;
 - Use of theories of a psychological or psychopathological nature to explain the causes of commercial sexual exploitation;
 - Ignorance, stereotypes, mistaken beliefs concerning the characteristics of children involved in commercial sexual exploitation and their families;
 - Ignorance, stereotypes, mistaken beliefs concerning the causes and manifestations of poverty;
 - Limited theoretical and technical consideration of how to tackle problems using a comprehensive protection approach;
 - Lack of interest or refusal to coordinate responses with the justice system;
 - Pessimism about the possibility of substituting the “irregular situation” approach with the comprehensive protection approach;
 - Institutional culture based on the “irregular situation” approach;
 - Little or no experience in working in coordination with other services, programmes and institutions and with families;
 - Justification of the use of the “irregular situation” model based on lack of resources.
-

In this regard, institutional policies, adequate resources, and training personnel and monitoring their actions are essential steps to overcome the barriers to applying the approach in the services provided to children.

5. The Cyclic Model of Combined Responses

The success of a programme⁹ aimed at the comprehensive protection of the rights of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation will depend on the way in which the platform of services available at the national and the community level are combined. In keeping with the principle that rights are compulsory and may be demanded, the programme should pay special attention to the legal responsibilities of the different State institutions and

⁹ Programmes can be implemented by State institutions or by non-governmental organizations.



ensure they are complied with.

Moreover, this platform should be understood as a cycle of responses¹⁰ made available according to the specific circumstances of each child or adolescent and his or her family. It is very important to understand this, because if we only consider linear or unidirectional responses we may not achieve our goal. For example, at the individual level, an adolescent may require the same or similar responses at different moments of the intervention process.

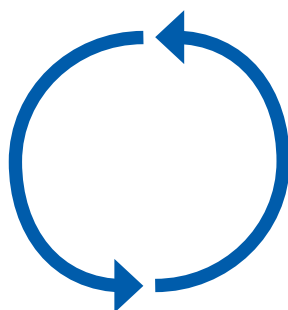
Children trapped in the sex trade, and also their families, require a wide range of responses depending on their specific circumstances. Consequently, the identification and implementation of options for their protection may require several different actions. That is to say, if we plan services for all individuals and families in a linear manner, we are not taking into account their specific circumstances related to factors such as age and the number of family members, or the gender of the victim and the responsible adult. In addition, the type of services required by an individual may vary at different moments of his or her life or, in the case of a family, the services required may be different for each family member. This does not mean that the objectives change, since the goal remains the same: to provide comprehensive protection for the rights of the child.

The linear model is based on designing a programme of assistance grounded on a series of **uniform and consecutive procedures**; in other words, one step leads to the next one. It supposes that all individuals and families require the same responses. This does not mean that we should ignore or reject the existence of protocols, but rather that programmes should be planned on the basis of the specific circumstances of each situation.

In a linear model, programmes of assistance are elaborated without taking into account the vulnerability factors that have placed or place the child at risk of being ensnared in the sex trade; these include family poverty, expulsion from the family home owing to violence or sexual diversity, drug addiction, individual or family debts, as well as many others. This is the main problem of the linear model.

For example, placement in a home will not be necessary for everyone; however, it may be unavoidable several times in the life of one individual. Accordingly, access to the responses offered by different State, non-governmental and community institutions should be included in a cycle of combined responses.

Cyclic Model of Combined Responses



¹⁰ Responses can include different services or measures offered by State institutions, civil society organizations, organized community groups, the Churches, and others. These responses form part of the comprehensive human rights protection approach; thus the platform should include responses to ensure the right to education, health, justice, welfare, etc.



Thus, the purpose of the proposed model is to guide those who work in programmes providing direct assistance to child victims when they take decisions aimed at ensuring the protection of the right to a life without abuse and exploitation. Since this objective is encompassed in a comprehensive human rights protection programme, intervention programmes must be supported by a platform of responses that are accessible to children, adolescents and their families.

What is the purpose of combining the available responses within an assistance programme for children and adolescents who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation?

To make available to children and their families all the State, private and community programmes, actions and services offered in the community in order to reduce the factors that have made the children and adolescents vulnerable to entrapment in the sex trade and to ensure the exercise of the other rights that have been violated.

What does a combined response mean?

It means combining two or more institutional responses in order to achieve a common goal. This refers specifically to a form of combination based on the freedom of movement of the components (for example, the services offered by reproductive and sexual health programmes are combined with educational programmes within the platform, so that they respond to the same objective, but retain their own functional autonomy.)

What is purpose of the combination?

An individualized intervention plan for each child or adolescent and his or her family.

There are three fundamental premises for developing a platform of combined responses:

- a. The institutional, private and community programmes, actions and services must be seen as a continuum of responses. In other words, the responses cannot be considered in isolation. They must be combined and monitored. The assistance programme consists of more than just isolated institutional services or fragmented professional assistance; it should include interrelated actions offered by public and private institutions and the community.
- b. Children and their families can access the available programmes, actions and services at different times, depending on the element included in the intervention programme and its follow-up.
- c. The responses require the involvement of numerous entities (governmental, community and family, for example). Consequently, they must be inclusive and cannot be limited to the sphere of emotional support.
- d.



Recommendations for designing the platform of responses

- 1: Identification of existing institutional and community resources** for both the children and their families. In particular, bearing in mind that many family groups are headed by a woman, it will be necessary to identify resources to support her such as: micro-credits, specific vocational training and work-related programmes and subsidies, and also programmes to support battered women, as well as any others that exist in the region.
- 2: Identification and implementation of accountability mechanisms** for the institutions that are legally empowered to implement actions or programmes to ensure the exercise of human rights.
- 3: Identification of the required resources outside the community or the country.** For example, identification of institutions responsible for children in other countries when a situation of international trafficking is detected; also, verification of whether specific programmes needed by the platform exist, but only in other parts of the country.
- 4: Identification and implementation of mechanisms to strengthen the platform of responses.** This means that actions must go beyond the mere “willingness” of officials.
- 5: Definition of indicators of success** for the action plans implemented by the platform. They must be verifiable and be aimed at ensuring the comprehensive protection of human rights.
- 6: Design and implementation of a monitoring mechanism** for the indicators of success.

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Bearing in mind the above, the combination of responses can be described in relation to the phases of the assistance process. These stages and the respective steps are presented below; they should not be interpreted as the *modus operandi*, but as general guidelines.

Phase preceding the response aimed at the protection of human rights

Step 1: Detection and safeguard of rights. It is not enough to identify the existence of a situation of exploitation; the factors that render the child or adolescent vulnerable to the sex trade must be determined. These factors are generally to be found within the individual, family and community sphere. It is also necessary to safeguard the exercise of all the human rights that are usually violated in this population (health, education, etc.).

During the detection process, the risk of revictimization, death and other related problems are assessed. In addition, they must be categorized based on the need to develop an urgent protection strategy when the person is in imminent danger. This means that the risk factor must be taken into account.



This assessment involves several different procedures such as individual and family interviews, medical examinations and institutional reports.

In this regard, it is important to understand that the causes of commercial sexual exploitation are not to be found within the victims, but in the economic, cultural and social factors that induce adults to have sexual contact with children and to profit from satisfying this demand. In this respect, there is a significant difference between causes and vulnerability. The latter refers to the individual, family and community context that places specific groups of children and adolescents at greater risk of entrapment.

Vulnerability is a process that is developed socially and the strategy to provide protection against this modern form of slavery is to address the factors that have promoted it. Consequently, the development of vulnerability as a process that takes place over time (in some cases starting from a child's birth), and in different spheres of life, involves diverse factors within the family and the community. The goal of the cyclic model of combined responses is to have an impact on these factors.

This impact requires specific knowledge of the conditions of the family and the community that, together, place the child at risk of sexual exploitation.

Several paths that lead to vulnerability have been identified in Latin America, depending on age, sex and sexual diversity. However, some elements are common to almost all of them. One of these is poverty, which obliges children and adolescents to look for a means of ensuring their own survival, that of their family, or that of their own children - and, in some cases, all these aspects. In this situation, selling their body is the only viable option for earning money. Other factors that render a child vulnerable include domestic violence and intolerance of sexual diversity; and, in many cases, both situations lead up to expulsion from the home. When the expulsion is combined with a prolonged period on the street, children and adolescents frequently encounter unscrupulous adults who offer them food and a roof in exchange for sex. Open or implicit expulsion from the home is thus a common vulnerability factor.

Based on the above, the intervention addressed at the family is crucial, not only for the child who is being assisted specifically owing to his or her victimization in the sex trade, but also for the other children and adolescents who form part of the family and who are vulnerable to this form of victimization and to other forms of violence and exploitation.

Once the situation of the child ensnared in the sex trade has been assessed and, consequently, this includes assessment of the family - which is frequently the first link in the chain of human rights violations - a plan of action must be designed that modifies the child's daily living conditions. To this end a combination of institutional responses are needed in order to promote alternative lifestyles in keeping with the guaranteed exercise of human rights.

Step 2: Elaboration of an emergency safety plan to reduce the risk of imminent revictimization, death, or other grave danger.

For example, when an adolescent is found in a brothel; when a child is gravely ill from a drug overdose; when an adolescent says that his or her life has been threatened and he or she is afraid; when a child who is pregnant has a vaginal haemorrhage; or when a child is living on the street, among other situations.



Step 3: Elaboration of a plan to reduce vulnerability to the sex trade.

The plan of action generally has two components: the child or adolescent and his or her family. To guarantee the right to grow up in a family environment, and bearing in mind that, in most cases, institutionalization is not a viable alternative for child victims, it is necessary to work with the child's family or reference group. In this respect, a series of responses should be available for both the child or adolescent and the family group.

Factors to take into account when elaborating the plan of action:

the children and adolescents should participate, in keeping with their age and cognitive development, and other variables that intervene in decision-making. Also, the family should be encouraged to take part in the elaboration and implementation of the plan of action.

Response implementation phase

This is the phase during which the actions that should or can be offered by the various institutional or community services or programmes need to be combined. The series of actions offered by different institutions is called the response platform.

Examples:

- a. Education
- b. Health
- c. Justice
- d. Nutrition
- e. Welfare (income generation, subsidies, a housing bond, etc.)
- f. Physical safety of the child and his or her family (police, attorney general's office, family courts, etc.)

Each programme or service is intended to perform a specific action within the individual or family intervention programme. This action must be combined with the actions offered by the other programmes or services in order to achieve the continuity and comprehensiveness of the responses.

The platform concept is illustrated in the following diagram:





Following-up and monitoring phase

Just as the platform requires a coordinating body, the follow-up on the individualized programmes also requires a person in charge of coordinating the actions and monitoring their effectiveness. This person monitors and assesses how the different governmental services, which are legally obliged to plan and implement specific responses, comply with their responsibilities and, in consequence, makes the necessary modifications to achieve the goal.

In summary, to be effective, the platform requires:

1. A person or entity in charge of coordinating the services and supervising compliance with institutional responsibilities and competencies.
2. Coordination meetings to plan actions.
3. Follow-up meetings to assess the effectiveness of the intervention programme for each case.
4. Indicators to assess the pertinence and effectiveness of the actions.
5. Combined monitoring and evaluation of the intervention programmes. This may be based on common elements, and typical or atypical situations, among other criteria.
6. Enforceability mechanisms to ensure that each institution complies with its responsibilities within the platform. To this end, it is suggested that public, private and community institutions develop monitoring mechanisms as well as sanctions and incentives.



Final observation

Putting together the response platform is a challenge, because institutional cultures characterized by the absence of medium and long-term planning and the lack of mechanisms and instruments for assessing the impact of the services offered must be overcome. It is also necessary to go beyond isolated or fragmented institutional and professional responses and develop a combined and coordinated response.



COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
PROPOSALS FOR PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE
ASSISTANCE TO CHILD VICTIMS

Proposed Measures for the Comprehensive
Protection of Child and Adolescent Mothers,
Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation
and their Children

Adriana Rodríguez Fernández



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Labour
Office



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First edition, 2005

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ILO - IPEC

Commercial sexual exploitation. Proposals for providing comprehensive assistance to child victims.

San José, Costa Rica, International Labour Office, 2005.

Sexual exploitation, Manual, Human Rights

02.02.1

ISBN:

92-2-317938-6 (print)

92-2-317939-4 (web pdf) ILO Cataloguing in Publications Data

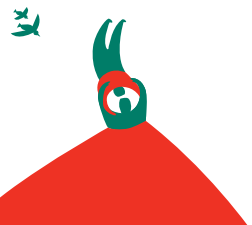
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Printed in Costa Rica



Acknowledgements

“Commercial sexual exploitation. Proposals to incorporate specific factors into assistance for child victims”.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)

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Proposed Measures for the Comprehensive Protection of Child and Adolescent Mothers, Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation and their Children

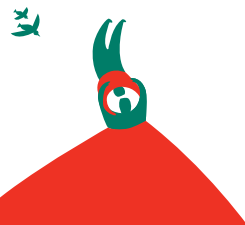
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Executive Summary

Early maternity in children and adolescents is a dimension of the problem of commercial sexual exploitation that constitutes another link in the chain of human rights violations suffered by children entrapped in sexual exploitation networks. The main purpose of this article is to establish a helpful proposal for assisting these children and adolescents, and their own children. A qualitative study was carried out in order to elaborate the proposal; the strategies used included case studies to explore the experience of maternity from the perspective of the young people themselves.

Taken as a whole, the stories related by the children interviewed reveal the path that makes them vulnerable to entrapment in sex trade networks, along which domestic violence, child sexual abuse, ostracism, poverty and expulsion from school are some of the experiences endured. These same factors are also related to their pregnancies. One of the results of the study was to reveal the link between commercial sexual exploitation and maternity, where the latter not only increases the vulnerability of the child or adolescent to being victimized in the sex trade, but also fosters her continuation in it. In addition, children face maternity totally unprotected, even by the institutional mechanisms that should ensure their rights are protected. Based on the results, some specific guidelines have been elaborated for the comprehensive protection of this population. They have been developed based on the human rights approach and the gender approach.

The overall purpose of this proposal is to develop and strengthen a protective environment for mother and child. The process includes three main phases: the first corresponds to detection, where the principal objective is to assess the vulnerability of child and adolescent mothers to exploitation in the sex trade, by evaluating their health and the contact between the child/adolescent and her family. The second phase corresponds to the first-level intervention, where efforts are aimed at protecting the life, safety and health of the child/adolescent and her children. Lastly, the second-level intervention is designed to develop guidelines for the comprehensive protection of all the rights of the girls and their children.



Introduction

Commercial sexual exploitation involves a violation of the integrity and human rights of the child. It includes all the forms of violence and abuse perpetuated as a result of the patriarchal ideology that reigns in our society, precluding the rights that, as a human being, every child should legitimately enjoy.

Early maternity is one of the risks that a sexually-exploited child or adolescent faces. As Treguear and Carro (1998) have mentioned, owing to the frequency and conditions of the sexual contacts to which they are exposed, this population represents a high-risk group for sexually-transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancies.

The purpose of this article is to design and develop a proposal for an intervention to assist child and adolescent mothers involved in commercial sexual exploitation, and their children. To this end, it is essential to be able to describe the psychosocial context in which some of these children and adolescents have to assume the experience of maternity, and also to identify their principal psychosocial needs and support networks.

This proposal has been developed on the basis of a qualitative study with three main strategies: (a) documentary research on the subject and a review of national and international legal provisions; (b) consultation of key experts and others with pertinent information, through personal communication with service providers in public and private institutions; and (c) case studies.

The case studies consisted in an extensive interview with two child mothers,¹ victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The interviews were based on several crucial issues in order to explore the context of each child's pregnancy and maternity. The intention was not to generalize the results, but rather to try and understand the problem from the point of view of these children and by listening to their needs.

To identify the participants, the child victims of commercial sexual exploitation detected by the project "Contribution to the prevention and elimination of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in the communities of Corredores and Golfito",

¹ The expression "child mothers" has been adopted by the author to refer to child and adolescent mothers, victims of the sex trade or victims of sexual abuse, in order to emphasize their vulnerability in relation to decision-making about maternity as a free and voluntary option. In addition, from this perspective, the intention is to break with the adultocentric approach in providing assistance to early maternity, where the adolescent is treated as an adult, because she has become a mother. The use of this expression has political implications, because the intention is to foster a social change at the level of public policies and legislation. Pregnancy in children below the age of 15 is a serious violation of human rights and a form of violence; consequently, governmental and non-governmental agents should develop effective measures to protect the lives and physical and psychological integrity of this population.



executed by the School of Psychology of the Universidad de Costa Rica with the support of the ILO/IPEC Time Bound Programme, was used as an external resource. The child informants were chosen on the basis of several criteria, including their age, that they had been part of the said project, and that they were willing to participate. It should be noted that, in any study involving children, their physical and psychological integrity must be protected. Accordingly, care has been taken to protect the identity and other personal information of the participants in this study, to ensure they remain anonymous.

The presentation of the study begins with an overview of the theoretical basis and other concepts related to the problem in question, to encourage reflection on the situation of child and adolescent mothers, on social exclusion and on human rights violations. Then, the results of the analysis of the case studies are presented and, finally, a proposal for assisting this specific population is developed.

The elements developed in this article are based on the human rights approach and presented from a gender-sensitive perspective. Additionally, the proposed intervention is based on the Cyclic Response Model presented by Claramunt (ILO/IPEC, 2003), which establishes a series of general aspects of assistance to child victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Based on this intervention model, a series of specific guidelines are established for assisting children and adolescents who are mothers.

The proposed intervention is considered extremely important, because, in addition to bringing us face to face with the reality experienced by child mothers who are victims of exploitation, the results of the study show that the existing institutional response is very weak and rarely has either the tools or the resources to provide comprehensive protection to this population and to prevent its revictimization. Moreover, very often the ideological framework used when intervening in this type of situation does not respond to the real needs of the children and adolescents who require assistance, because attitudes that treat these children as objects are sometimes reproduced and children are revictimized owing to their situation:

...the magnitude of the social crisis, with the devastating effects of exclusion-expulsion, is added to the objectification to which children in crisis are exposed, based on traditionally positivist concepts. This, together with the fundamental deterioration of rights that economic globalization is causing, are determinants of social vulnerability, particularly in children and adolescents (Dobón, 2004:41).

I. Some theoretical considerations

Sexual exploitation and maternity: what do we know about these children and adolescents?

Various studies confirm that unplanned pregnancies are a real consequence that children and adolescents may suffer owing to commercial sexual exploitation and, in many cases, early maternity is one more link in the chain of violence and human rights violations (Treguear and Carro 1994, 1998; Claramunt 1998, ILO/IPEC, 2002). One of the first systematized studies of the problem of child sexual exploitation in Costa Rica carried out by Treguear and Carro (1994), indicated that of 30 adolescents aged from 13 to 16 years involved in commercial sexual exploitation:



-
- 4 of them had their first child when they were between 11 and 12 years old
 - 12 of them had their first child when they were between 13 and 14 years old
 - 3 of them had their first child when they were between 15 and 16 years old
 - 2 of them had their first child when they were 17 years old
-

Several years later, Claramunt (1998) presented the findings of a study on 121 children involved in commercial sexual exploitation. Over 80% of them were girls, a third of whom had one or two children, and only 50% of them lived with their children, because most of the children of the other 50% were being cared for by a State institution or were in paid care.

A similar study on 100 young people involved in commercial sexual exploitation revealed that 40% of the adolescents were mothers. Despite their youth, 33 of them had one child and six of them had two children. Some of them became pregnant when they were 10 years old, and this was related to child sexual abuse and incest (ILO/IPEC, 2002)

Child and adolescent mothers: ostracism and human rights violations

Maternity can be understood as:

...a very complex biological and psychological process that subjects a woman to a series of physical and emotional changes, which begin as of conception. Since maternity is a focal point of the feminine identity, the relationship developed with the new being is influenced by gender (UNICEF, 2001:80).

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When children and adolescents become pregnant, the changes that maternity involves are more pronounced, because adolescence is a stage in life during which physical, mental and emotional changes occur. In addition to all these changes, a whole series of stigmas and stereotypes that are attached to these children and adolescents in relation to their age, sexuality and lack of planning of their pregnancies must be taken into account:

In the case of adolescent girls, this situation is aggravated by the guilt they feel and which society finds it difficult to forgive, even though the adolescents have been subjected to psychological blackmail, rape or sexual abuse (UNICEF, 2001:80).

Consequently, society has the notion that children or adolescents should be “punished” for their condition, expecting them to lose their freedom and the rights they should enjoy as children, because they must assume a whole series of adult responsibilities. Consequently, the meaning of maternity is lost sight of in the case of these children and adolescents, because they are expected to comply with social and cultural mores.

Unplanned pregnancy in children and adolescents is a social phenomenon that occurs mainly in areas where the socio-economic conditions are extensively deteriorated, characterized by high rates of unemployment, makeshift housing, nutritional problems, school expulsion and lack of access to basic services among other factors. These substandard conditions affect the physical and psychosocial development of both mother and child.

Hence, the fact of being an adolescent or a child and living in conditions of great poverty are characteristics that obviously place this population in a situation of risk



and vulnerability to sex trade networks. In this regard, it should be recognized that discriminatory economic policies implemented in the social sphere have resulted in a lack of protection for these sectors of the population, for whom the possibility of integrating the dominant socio-economic model is becoming more and more remote.

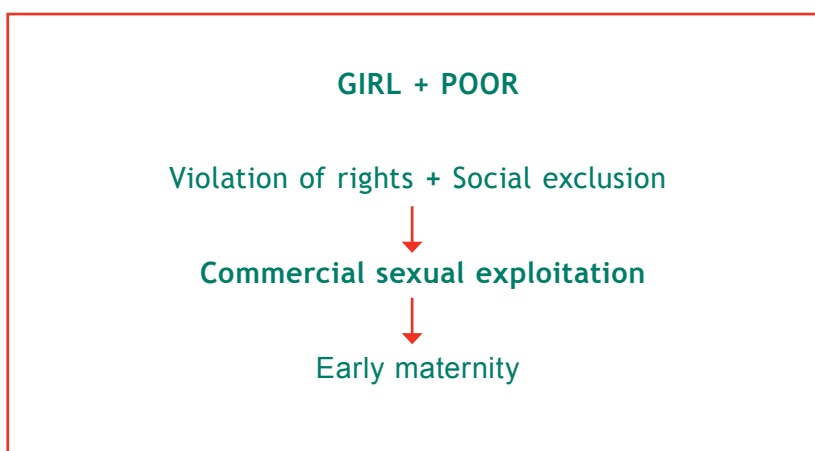
Extreme poverty is a social condition from which many families that experience a significant exclusion from access to basic resources such as housing, public services, adequate nutrition, education, clothing and the possibility of recreation find it difficult to emerge. This exclusion modifies both the family structure, and the way in which families fulfil their social functions of reproduction and primary socialization (Porrás and Rojas, 2003).

The real possibilities of these sectors of the population are jeopardized by all that they lack. In this regard, they are excluded from the dominant socio-economic model and are unable to accede to a better quality of life, because they are faced with unemployment, expulsion from the school system, and the difficulty of satisfying their basic needs.

According to Treguear and Carro (2002), many of these children and adolescents face maternity without any family or social protection: “Thus, it is not exaggerated to argue that, the fact of being female, a child, and poor is a latent risk factor in the life of every young person, even in relation to sexuality and reproductive health” (Treguear and Carro, 2002:8).

The situation confronting these “excluded” children and adolescents is extremely difficult, because it limits their possibilities of self-affirmation, as well as personal growth and development. According to Treguear and Carro this becomes even more complex when a pregnancy has to be assumed: “a situation in which the young girl is obliged to reconcile all that she lacks as a member of the impoverished classes with the needs of every adolescent and the demands of a maternity, which is frequently unplanned” (Treguear and Carro, 2002:8).

In this way, the following relationship can be established:



We can therefore state that the risk factors for pregnancy in children and adolescents are closely related to the psychosocial and material conditions in which they are growing up. In general, these child and adolescent mothers face a somewhat complex situation. As we have already mentioned, their rights are invisible at the social level and they are exposed to a general lack of protection, which extends to the institutional mechanisms that are supposed to guarantee and ensure compliance with the rights that, as children, they should enjoy.

In addition, it should be pointed out that pregnancy in a child below the age of 15 should be considered a grave violation of her human rights and, in such cases, the best interests of the child should have preference. Hence, sexual activities with girl children should be considered a crime, because they are an attack on their lives and on their physical, psychological and emotional integrity.

II. Case studies

The case studies are presented in two parts. First, there is a brief general description of each case in order to explain the circumstance of the two children. The context of the pregnancy is reconstructed and the conditions in which they became mothers are described. In the second part, we examine how they experience their maternity, and also their principal psychosocial needs and support networks. When referring to the children interviewed, fictional names have been used and all personal information has been omitted in order to protect their identities.

1. A look at the reality: the reconstruction of their stories

The following is a descriptive table with some information on the children interviewed:

	Age	Age at the time of conception	Age of entrapment in commercial sexual exploitation	Highest level in the educational system	Presently attends school
Janet	14 years	12 years	12 years	Third year of primary school	No
Tatiana	16 years	15 years	15 years	Sixth year of primary school incomplete	Yes



A. Janet's story

The story of Janet, 14 years of age, reveals the path towards vulnerability to entrapment in the sex trade networks followed by many children and adolescents. Starting at the age of 6, she was sexually abused by various men in her family and this situation continued until she was 10 years old. Her childhood was characterized by a lack of both financial and family stability; in other words, she never had a stable family circle or home, but moved from one place to another. Evidently, this undermined her social support networks and increased her vulnerability; for example, as she herself states, she was unable to continue her schooling “... *because they moved, they lived here one day, and there the next... they were never just in one place*”. This resulted in the child taking to the streets which, in turn, led to her becoming a victim of the sex trade when she was 12 years old.

Among the consequences of the sexual victimization Janet experienced, she was subjected to physical violence by her exploiters. Also, as she herself states, “living on the street”, she became involved in other situations such as the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol. Hence, she became pregnant at the age of 12, and this was directly related to the situation of commercial sexual exploitation of which she was a victim: “*I was 12 years old when I became pregnant. I knew after about a month, because I was in a rehabilitation institute for drug addicts; I went and did a test and it was positive*”.

In this child's case, early maternity was a direct consequence of being exploited in the sex trade. Owing to the conditions in which she was being exploited when she became pregnant, the child is not sure who the father of her child is; however, she believes that it was one of the men who offered her money in exchange for sexual contact. Janet continued to be exploited in the sex trade until the sixth month of her pregnancy. She herself relates how, at that time, it was very evident that she was expecting a baby and the men who were exploiting her were aware of this. This shows how Janet was doubly victimized by these men, who continued to exploit her despite her condition.

At the time of her pregnancy, the child had some support resources, including her mother and some members of her family. However, these support resources did not provide a network of ongoing affective support; to the contrary, they responded to very immediate needs and were sources of neither support nor protection.

B. Tatiana's story

The story of Tatiana is also marked by pain and numerous experiences of violent treatment. She herself describes it with the phrase: “*My life is very difficult, and my past was also very difficult...*”. Her first experience of violence was within her family circle, where she was physically abused by her father.

Although this child acknowledges that her mother exercised a protective role, her relationship with her mother has been characterized by some ambivalence, because from time to time her mother abandoned her: “*...I accused my mother of abandoning me because she left me when I was young and alone*”. In general, the living conditions of her family group have been characterized by the lack of both affection and financial resources.

Contrary to what happened to Janet, in Tatiana's case her pregnancy was not related to commercial sexual exploitation. She says it was a “planned pregnancy”; “*it was something my mother wanted and I complied, because my mother wanted a baby, a grandchild*”.

by me...”. Accordingly, Tatiana “decided” to have a child with the person who was her partner at the time, a man eight years older than she was. It should be pointed out that, although she said this was the partner she chose, it was an asymmetrical relationship that increased her vulnerability. In addition, her partner was not a source of support but, to the contrary, endangered her life: “... *I was interned in the hospital for a month; we had a fight and he hit me; I was two months pregnant, the pain was very strong and I thought I was going to have a miscarriage...*”.

In Tatiana’s case, maternity was one of the factors that made her vulnerable to entrapment in the sex trade, because her financial conditions did not allow her to satisfy her basic needs and those of her daughter. She had to develop “survival strategies”, and commercial sexual exploitation was one of the valid possibilities. This was compounded by a fact that evidently acted as a trigger: the absence of her mother, because the latter was arrested for drug-related offences. In view of this situation, Tatiana and her siblings had to move many times and they were left without any adult supervision:

“...before that no, because I had my mother; she had not been arrested... after I had the baby, when it was one month old, well, my mother was arrested... and I had to do what I had to do, for my baby...”.

In addition, she began to use and abuse drugs and alcohol; this was related to her situation as an exploited child and to the state of abandonment in which she and her siblings were left. Owing to this situation, the child had to leave the care and upbringing of her own child to another person because, as she herself acknowledges, she was unable to assume this responsibility owing to her many financial needs and the risk this posed to the baby’s life.

Based on the stories of Tatiana and Janet, we can identify the principal factors that led to their vulnerability to entrapment in the sex trade and to early maternity. The following tables summarize these aspects.

Vulnerability factors: commercial sexual exploitation

Janet	Tatiana
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of child sexual abuse • Expulsion from school • Poverty • Deterioration of affective support networks • Absence of parental figures • Use and abuse of alcohol and drugs • Being on the street • Presence in places for adults (bars, discotheques, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternity (impossibility of satisfying her needs and those of her daughter) • School expulsion • Poverty • Break-up of the family • Absence of parental figures • Use and abuse of alcohol and drugs • Abandonment by partner (the father of her daughter)



Vulnerability factors: pregnancy

Janet	Tatiana
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial sexual exploitation • Limited information about sexuality and birth control • Exploiters refused to use condoms • Deterioration of affective support networks • Expulsion from school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idealization of maternity • Relationship with an older man • School expulsion

2. How these children experienced their maternity**a. What does being a mother mean?**

When referring to the subject of maternity, the children interviewed ask themselves: *what does being a mother mean?* In response, both of them refer first to the experience of the delivery and birth of their children. In other words, giving birth is the most significant event to describe what it means to be a mother; also, it was a time when they experienced many feelings: happiness, pleasure, fear and pain: *“I was so happy when he was born... it was in the hospital, they interned me about eight days before, because the baby was late, and because it was a high-risk pregnancy”*. (Janet)

During the delivery, the adults who surrounded the children expected them to behave like adult women, to be brave and strong and to show fortitude. When this did not happen, the children were criticized and slighted; for example, Janet describes how the doctor who attended her during the delivery, told her she was a “coward”. It should be noted that both children had high-risk pregnancies because of their age, and this aspect is not always taken in account in health centres and by service providers.

With regard to the relationship that the girls establish with their children; namely, the ties that bind them, at times they experience contradictory and ambivalent feelings: *“Sometimes I thought that I would love it, and sometimes I thought that I would hate it; sometimes I told people that I would give it away. But everything changed when it was born”*. (Janet)

This ambivalence is more evident in Janet’s case owing to the conditions in which she became pregnant; nevertheless, it is evident that these feelings become clearer with the passing of time and daily coexistence. As Treguear and Carro (1998) have indicated, the feelings that child and adolescent mothers have towards their children represent a *“contradictory affective sphere”*; because the children can result in further stigmatization for the mothers as well as ostracism and difficulties in finding employment and can also prejudice the development of a life project. Nevertheless, at the same time, the children come to substitute for the lack of affection, and become the depositaries of their mothers’ psycho-affective needs.

In Tatiana’s story, her daughter has come to substitute for this lack of affection; in this respect, she idealizes maternity; but, in contradiction, she is unable to be a mother,



because, owing to her extreme poverty, she has had to leave her daughter with someone else: *“sometimes I start to cry and I think about my baby... when I had her... it made me so sad to leave her there”*.

However, the concern to be “a good mother”, which evidently responds to the social ideal of maternity, is latent in what these children say. The impossibility of fulfilling this social ideal identifies these children as “bad mothers”, which makes them feel guilty and, as in Tatiana’s case, regret they are unable to assume the role of mother: *“I was so sad, I didn’t sleep; I wanted to have the baby beside me; unfortunately, all that is now in the past”*.

In both cases maternity was linked to commercial sexual exploitation. In Janet’s case, becoming a mother was a result of being a victim of the sex trade. To the contrary, in Tatiana’s story, being a victim of the sex trade is a consequence of becoming a mother. In both instances, maternity strengthened the link with commercial sexual exploitation, but also weakened it. According to Janet, this link became weaker following her maternity: *“... it made me be less involved in it. Because after I had my baby, I almost stopped working in it, I wanted to be with my baby more and on the streets less...”*.

The contrary occurred in Tatiana’s case, because becoming a mother triggered her entrapment in the sex trade. Hence, the needs related to her maternity, such as maintaining her daughter, were factors that strengthened her link to commercial sexual exploitation. This was combined with a series of psychosocial factors that made her even more vulnerable:

“...because I was in a very bad situation, the baby became ill; it was interned in the hospital; they stuck needles into him everywhere; and I had no money for nappies ... so a friend came and looked after the baby while I went out to get nappies.”

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One of the similar features of these two children’s stories is that they had to hand over some of the functions of motherhood, such as the care and upbringing of their children, to other people. This experience caused Tatiana a great deal of anguish and also exposed her to conditions that endangered her life: *“After the pregnancy, I began to drink; giving my daughter to my sister really upset me...”*.

The above shows that, when children become mothers in these conditions, they face a series of challenges related to their youth, the socio-affective context in which they become mothers, and ostracism. Treguear and Carro (n.d.) have indicated some of the difficulties these children must resolve; the following apply to Tatiana and Janet:

- Financial difficulties (when the new child reduces the family income)
- Limitation of educational opportunities
- The high risks of early maternity
- Uncertainty about the future
- Learned despair
- The process of achieving sexual maturity and developing a personal identity
- Rejection and abandonment by the family group and society



b. How does one learn to become a mother?

When the children were asked this question, they both said that, at first, they did not know what it meant to be a mother and to care for a newborn baby. Subsequently, they referred to the presence of a feminine figure who “taught them to be a mother” and who explained how to look after a newborn child: *“I didn’t know how to bath a baby; I didn’t know how to dress her. I didn’t know how to change a nappy; so my mother showed me, when she was with me”*. (Tatiana)

However, the children were not always able to rely on the support of these women and, as they stated, at times they had to fend for themselves and seek help for specific needs from other people; for example, friends, neighbours and acquaintances.

c. What are the main needs?

When the children were asked about their principal needs, they were unable to answer this question; in other words, they were unable to express the immensity of their many daily needs. In this regard, they do not understand what it is “to have needs”, despite all the things they lack in their lives. This could reveal that being unable to recognize exactly what their needs are is related to a lack of awareness about their rights. These children are used to very limited options that are permanently jeopardized not only by the scarcity of financial and material resources, but also by the lack of affective resources.

Listening to their stories, many needs can be identified. Above all, there are the material or financial needs directly related to their maternal role; these include: food and clothing for their child; and the purchase of nappies and milk: *“I didn’t have any clothes for the baby to wear when we left the hospital”*. (Janet)

These financial needs increase their dependency on commercial exploitation because, since they have no way to satisfy their basic needs, they are more vulnerable than ever to entrapment by procurers and exploiters:

“... I have done this at times, because one has so many needs... when I had no nappies for the baby, I went out and looked for them. So, all this was for my baby, because I gave her a lot.”
(Tatiana)

In addition, the fact that they are mothers places them in a different social position. For society, they are no longer children; now they are “women” and, as such, they must make a financial contribution to the maintenance of their children and their family group. This “adultization” is introjected by the children, who have had to find a way to maintain their children.

This involves them in adult responsibilities at a very early age; consequently, they are concerned and feel a very great sense of responsibility about the “obligation to help” their family group. Also, these children are engaged in hazardous child labour such as domestic child labour and agricultural activities. This is the case of Janet, who has to work sowing yucca on a farm far from her home. There, she is exposed to a situation of risk at many levels, including risk to her life and health, because she has to spend long hours standing under the sun and she has a very tiring work schedule. In addition, she risks being sexually abused or exploited again because, as she says, many men work there: *“I find it very hard; it’s very tiring. I have to walk about bending down, in the full sun for part of the day, and it is very hard because the boss is there watching...”*.

Child labour under these conditions is a violation of the rights of the child and the adolescent, because it represents an imminent risk for their life and safety. As article 3(d) of ILO Convention 182 defines it, dangerous child labour is “work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children”.

In Tatiana’s case, her survival strategies are focused on the sex trade as a way of solving her financial needs and those of the rest of her family: *“my aunt says bad things to me; that I should see how I can make a contribution to the house and help her because she needs lots of things...”*.

There are also needs that involve the fathers of their children, needs concerning maintenance payments and the absence of the fathers’ support. For example, in Janet’s case, she does not know who the father of her child is and has almost no possibility of obtaining any kind of maintenance payment.

The girls also face a series of affective needs, which are principally related to their maternal figure of reference. Neither of them can be with their mother, and even though the latter is an ambivalent and contradictory figure at times, the girls perceive her to be one of their main support figures.

There are also a series of educational needs related to the impossibility of developing a life project that will safeguard their physical and psychological integrity and also uncertainty about the future. For the girls, studying represents the possibility of “improving their lot”; however, this possibility is constantly jeopardized by the lack of opportunity, since they are not in the best situation to enter the educational system: *“it would be very nice to study; I had very little choice in the matter”*. (Janet)

Lastly, there are needs related to their health in general and particularly during the pregnancy, which, owing to their extreme youth, put their lives in danger.

Their principal needs

<i>As children...</i>	<i>As mothers...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial needs: -Satisfaction of basic needs such as nutrition, clothing, health. -Recreational possibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction of the basic needs of their own children: -Adequate nutrition. -Clothing, nappies, etc. -Health conditions -Medical insurance for mother and child



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-affective needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Protection by the family group. -Affective support networks. -Enjoyment of childhood and adolescence. -Relationship with the maternal figure of reference. -Relationships with contemporaries. -Recovery from painful experiences (exploitation, sexual abuse, domestic violence, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support networks for the care and upbringing of their children.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling concerning their maternity.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of remaining with their children.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Insertion in the educational system. -Maintenance in the educational system. -Appropriate conditions for studying (educational materials, books, transport, food) -Comprehensive information on sexuality and birth control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-evaluation of their experience of motherhood.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal support to obtain maintenance payments for their children.

d. Who will help?

The answer to the question “who will help?” is quite complex, because, at times, some of the children’s support figures later turn their back to them. Also, these support figures are not always permanent; this is the case of their former partners: *“during the months I lived with him, he behaved very badly towards me; I remember how he left me with the baby and I had to manage alone, but there was a time when I almost gave up”*. (Tatiana)

For both children, their mothers were an important figure and a source of support at some moments in their lives; but, as mentioned, both mothers were very unreliable at times and did not always protect their children. This is consistent with the psychosocial context of these families. There have also been other mainly community-based sources of support; nevertheless, the latter have not evolved into long-term support networks, but rather have responded to immediate needs; in other words, they have not provided long-term emotional support.

e. And the institutions...?

The children have had little contact with the institutions that are supposedly responsible for assisting and protecting them. For some institutions, the solution for this type of situation continues to focus on institutionalizing the most vulnerable girl children and adolescents; and this frequently adds to the chain of human rights violations that characterizes their stories.



Contact with the health services has involved bureaucratic procedures that come before a child's needs and rights. In general, institutional assistance has been limited to assistance in very specific situations, but no type of comprehensive care has been received encompassing the protection of all their rights. It is therefore clear that the lack of protection experienced by the children extends to the institutional mechanisms that should ensure their welfare.

Based on these case studies, it is obvious that both commercial sexual exploitation and motherhood place girl children and adolescents in situations of risk and greater vulnerability. In this regard, the lives of both children reveal a chain of violations of fundamental rights over time, as well as the absence of prompt and effective institutional actions to ensure their integral protection.

It is also important to understand that their children are also growing up in a situation of vulnerability, in very inadequate living conditions, exposed to situations of violence, and are liable to suffer serious human rights violations, similar to those suffered by their mothers.

Bearing this in mind, as well as the type of response that has characterized the institutions responsible for assisting this population, urgent measures need to be taken to provide comprehensive protection to these child mothers and their children, and effective actions must be deployed to ensure their rights.

III. Intervention proposal

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For the comprehensive protection of child and adolescent mothers, who have been victimized, and their children

Based on the human rights approach, assistance is a right that must be ensured to all children who are at risk. In this regard, as stated by Claramunt (ILO/IPEC, 2003):

...those who offer assistance services must seek the underlying causes of commercial sexual exploitation in order to understand them and thus ensure the well-being of all children entrapped by exploiters. (ILO/IPEC, 2003:41)

In the case of children and adolescents who are being exploited in the sex trade, the type of assistance offered should be addressed at protecting all their rights that have been violated; in other words, assistance should be synonymous with comprehensive protection. During this intervention, maternity is one of the aspects that require special attention from the existing assistance programmes. The design of specific intervention policies for this population should be based on some fundamental principles for assisting victims of exploitation, as indicated by ILO/IPEC (2004, a):

- Commercial sexual exploitation should be considered a crime; consequently all interventions should be coordinated with the justice system. In this regard, victims are not responsible for the abuse they endure.
- Children must be removed and protected from the sex trade and their physical and emotional recovery fostered.
- All human rights should be respected in the design and implementation of



assistance programmes. In this respect, civil society and State institutions are responsible for protecting children and ensuring that their best interests are safeguarded.

- The right of children and adolescents to express their opinion on matters that concern them and to participate in the design of plans of action should be respected.
- It is necessary to work with the victims' immediate family or extended family in order to ensure the success of the intervention and the sustainability of the protection of their rights.

Bearing in mind these principles, we recommend that the model proposed in the first article in this publication, which is described at length in the document *Explotación Sexual Comercial. Guía de Trabajo para proveedores/as y encargados/as de servicios dirigidos a personas menores de edad víctimas* (ILO/IPEC, 2003), should be used as a reference. According to this model, all assistance:

- Should be based on a human rights approach.
- Should respond to the needs and special characteristics of the population in question.
- Should be coordinated within an inter-institutional platform of services addressed at protecting the rights that have been violated: and these services should be available to all child victims and their families.
- Should include two basic types of intervention: First Level interventions and Second Level interventions.

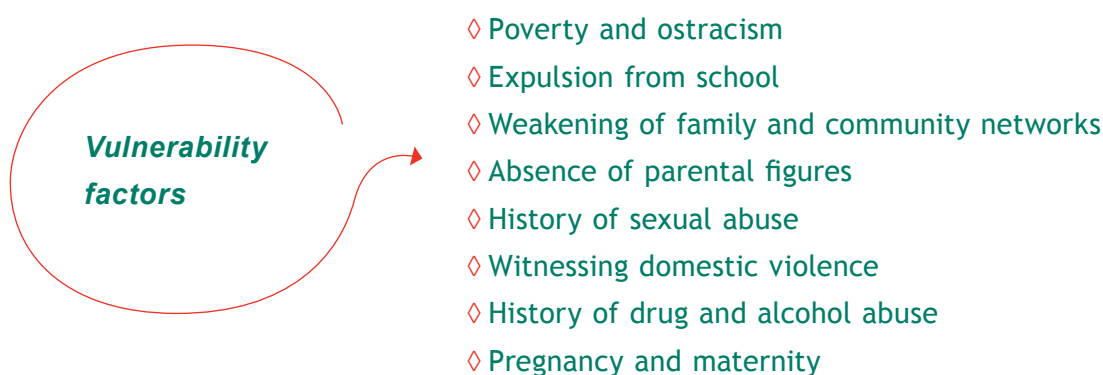
It is essential to establish the process of assisting child and adolescent mothers who have been victimized on this basis, because the fundamental principle underlying this model is the design of strategies that protect children from sex trade networks and ensure the full exercise of their rights. As mentioned above, "The assistance provided should be understood as a continuum of interrelated services" (ILO/IPEC, 2003:19); that is to say, a cycle of services available to children, according to their specific needs and, to this end, there has to be an inter-institutional platform. This assistance must always be provided promptly, opportunistically, efficiently and effectively.

In this regard, the following recommendations refer to the assistance provided to children and adolescents who are pregnant or who are already mothers. First, this intervention must have two main purposes:

- 1) To eliminate the vulnerability factors that can be eliminated on the critical path towards commercial sexual exploitation and pregnancy in children and adolescents.
- 2) To reduce the impact of the vulnerability factors that cannot be eliminated.

For a better understanding of the purpose of this intervention, the case studies developed previously will be used as a reference.² The analysis of the two stories enables us to construct the critical path or the vulnerability path that led to both Tatiana and Janet being trapped in the sex trade.

Also, some of the same factors are present on the critical path towards pregnancy. The vulnerability path that is common to both children is presented below; it could be similar in other cases. This path is not a linear process or one of cause and effect, but rather it is the result of a chain of human rights violations.



In this diagram, the first four vulnerability factors correspond to conditions that can be eliminated in the short, medium or long-term. In other words, they can be reduced by an effective inter-institutional intervention. Poverty, expulsion from school, and the lack of family and community support networks are conditions that can be modified by actions designed to protect the rights of the child and adolescent victims and to strengthen their families or reference groups.

In contrast, the last four factors are conditions that cannot be eliminated, because they have had a significant impact on the physical, emotional and social aspects of the life of the children and adolescents; this is true also of exposure to situations of violence and sexual abuse. In addition, drug abuse leads to both physiological and psychological problems, so the assistance provided must be aimed at reducing the consequences and preventing the children and adolescents from taking up the habit again.³ Lastly, early maternity cannot be eliminated, but, since it is a factor that makes a child or adolescent vulnerable to the sex trade, maternity-related needs must be reduced. In this regard, the impact of these factors can be reduced by providing comprehensive assistance that guarantees the child's rights, thus protecting her from a future pregnancy.

This brief description provides an overview of the direction that this intervention should take; it is also important to recall that, even though a number of vulnerability factors on the critical path are common to all children entrapped in the sex trade, each child and

² See the case studies in section II.

³ The article on commercial sexual exploitation and drug use by Rogelio Pardo, included in this publication, should be consulted.




adolescent has a unique and special story, so that her specific vulnerability path must be established in the first place. Bearing this in mind and based on the Cyclic Response Model, and also the assistance guidelines (ILO/IPEC, 2004, a) and detection guidelines (ILO/IPEC, 2004, b), we will now describe each phase of the intervention process. It is worth mentioning that this is neither a static nor a linear process; rather, the actions must be adapted to the circumstances of each child and adolescent.

3.1 Detection phase

This first phase is very important because the process of comprehensive protection for child and adolescent mothers, victims of exploitation, and their children, can only be started once the detection process has been completed. This process includes a series of procedures designed to verify or rule out whether the child has been the victim of commercial sexual exploitation, and may be initiated based on: a suspicion, detection by the responsible institutions, or referral by third parties. The service provider should use a series of indicators of significant probability of commercial sexual exploitation in the detection process.

In addition, the general detection plan must include a medical evaluation, a psychosocial evaluation, and an assessment of the family. Consequently, detection is a process of assessing: the facts relating to victimization by commercial sexual exploitation, the risk of revictimization in the sex trade, the individual and family needs, and the available resources (ILO/IPEC, 2004, b). In the case of child and adolescent mothers, the following measures are specifically recommended:

3.1.1 Evaluation of the child's health: a thorough medical evaluation should be made to determine the status of the child or adolescent's health. This should include a general physical examination and a prenatal or postnatal evaluation, as applicable.

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- If it is suspected that the child/adolescent may be pregnant, the appropriate laboratory tests should be carried out to confirm this and to determine the presence of sexually-transmitted diseases or HIV/AIDS.
 - If the child/adolescent is pregnant, a gynaecological examination should be conducted to assess the status of her pregnancy or the presence of sexually-transmitted diseases or HIV/AIDS.
 - If the child/adolescent is already a mother, a general gynaecological examination should be carried out to determine the presence of sexually-transmitted diseases. Moreover, a complete evaluation of the health of her child is also necessary.

3.1.2 Interview of the child/adolescent: a one-on-one interview of the child/ adolescent should be conducted in order to make a psychosocial evaluation. Preferably, this should be conducted by an appropriately-trained female official; among other characteristics, this person should be a good listener, able to establish empathy, gender-sensitive, respectful of the rights of the child, and with the ability to communicate clearly with

socially-disadvantaged groups. The interviewer must establish an environment of trust and security, free of superstitions or blame for the child/adolescent. In addition, the interview should be conducted in private, in a place where the child/adolescent feels comfortable and secure.

During the interview, a series of aspects related to the critical path or vulnerability path towards commercial sexual exploitation should be explored, as well as aspects related to the pregnancy or maternity of the child/adolescent (**See Checklist⁴ 1**). Clear, simple language is important; this means that sophisticated words should not be used and the style of communication should be adapted to the child's level of development and cognitive capacity and to her psychosocial context. It should also be recalled that, even though the purpose of this interview is to collect important information on the child/adolescent, it should respect her right to receive emotional or psychological support, if this is needed. In this regard, the interview should not become an interrogation, but provide the opportunity for the child/adolescent to express herself freely in an environment of comprehensive listening and emotional support.

CHECKLIST 1

Detection phase

- Is the life of the child/adolescent or that of her child at risk?
- Is the child/adolescent or her child in imminent danger?
- Has the child/adolescent been exploited in the sex trade, is she being exploited; or, is she at risk of being exploited?
- What forms of commercial sexual exploitation has the child/adolescent been a victim of (paid sexual relations, pornographic performances, pornography, trafficking, sex tourism, pseudo-affective relationships⁵)?
- Has she received threats (to herself, her child, and/or her family) from exploiters, procurers, intermediaries or any other person connected to the sex trade?
- Is the child/adolescent ensnared in any exploitation, drug-trafficking or other network that jeopardizes her life and security?
- Are any safety measures in place to protect the child/adolescent and her child from exploitation networks?
- Is the child/adolescent and/or her child living on the street?
- Has the child/adolescent and/or her child been institutionalized in any children's institute or home?
- Is the child/adolescent living with her child currently? (If she is not, it is necessary to inquire about the child's situation and who is looking after it.)
- Is the child/adolescent suffering from any physical illness or sexually-transmitted

⁴ The purpose of the checklists presented in this intervention proposal is to guide the process of assistance offered by the service provider. The elements included on each checklist should be dealt with and monitored during each phase of the intervention process to ensure the comprehensive protection of the child/adolescent and her children, and the realization of all her rights.

⁵ The expression "pseudo-affective relationship" refers to the existence of an asymmetric relationship or connection between a child/adolescent and an adult, where there is some form of benefit, whether material or not, for the child and her family, including early marriage.



disease that endangers her life or that of her child?

- Is her child healthy?
- Is the child/adolescent suffering from any type of addiction to drugs or alcohol that endangers her life or that of her child?
- Is there any other factor that endangers the health of the child/adolescent and her child?
- Does the child/adolescent have adequate information about her health and that of her child?
- Does she have family or community support figures?

In the case of pregnant children/adolescents, the following aspects must be taken into consideration:

- Did the child/adolescent know she was pregnant?
- How long has she been pregnant?
- Was the pregnancy the result of sexual abuse, incest, commercial sexual exploitation, or another factor?
- Does the child/adolescent know who the father of her child is?
- Has she received prenatal care and information about the delivery process?
- Is the pregnancy endangering the life of the child/adolescent?
- Does she have any health problem that jeopardizes her pregnancy?
- Has the child/adolescent been pregnant previously?
- Has the child/adolescent been exploited and victimized during her pregnancy?

3.1.3 Contact with the child's family: the person responsible for the child/adolescent should be interviewed; this will probably be a female figure, either her mother, grandmother, aunt, sister or another female relative. This first contact with the family is extremely important because it will allow the service provider to detect whether the child has any support figure in her family and it will give the service provider an idea of the social and family situation of the child/adolescent.⁶ For the purpose of this intervention proposal, the objective of the interview could be as follows:

- To learn about the principal psychosocial needs of the family or reference group of the child/adolescent.
- To assess whether these family needs could become factors rendering the child/adolescent vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation.
- To determine the child/adolescent's principal sources of support (family and community) and their availability to participate in

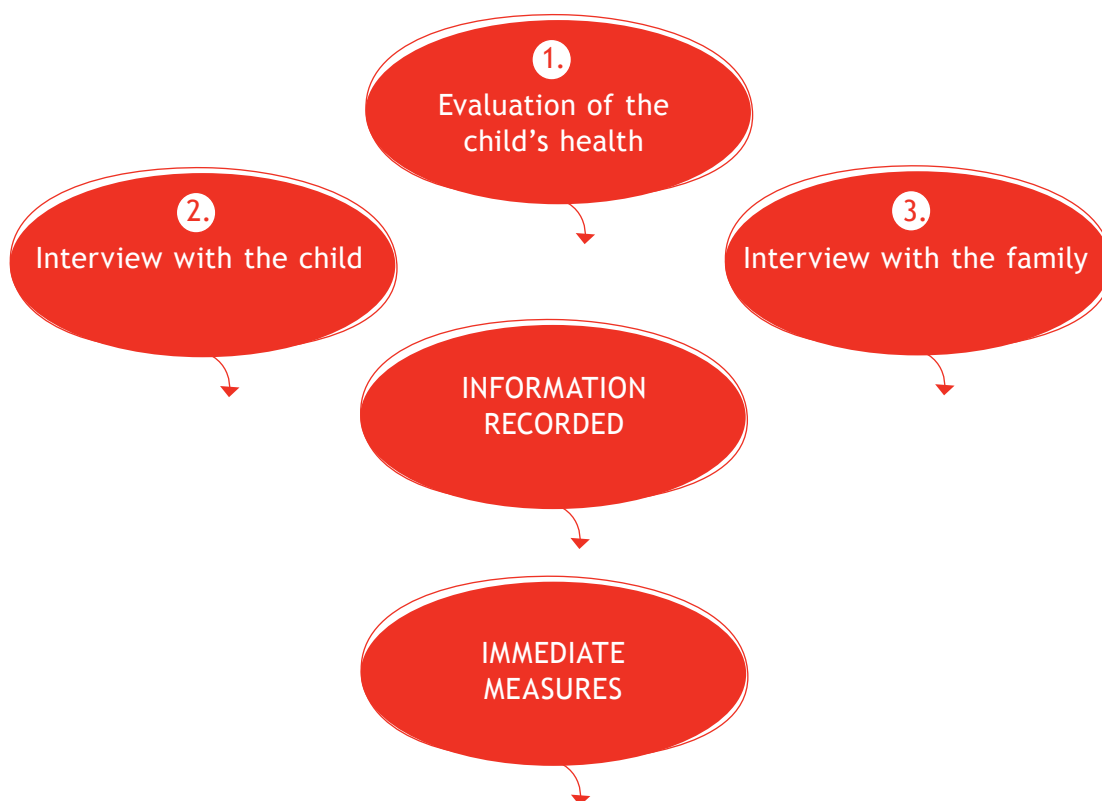
⁶ When conducting the interview with the family of the child/adolescent mother, the guidelines established by Nadia Blanco in "Proposed measures involving the family for the comprehensive protection of child and adolescent victims of the sex trade" should be taken into account.

the intervention plan.

The detection phase should equip the service provider with sufficient information to respond to the contents of **Checklist 1**, and this should be carefully recorded. Once the information has been completed, the first phase will end and the First Level Intervention should be started as soon as possible. The following diagram summarizes the main components of the detection phase:


3.2 First Level Intervention

Based on the general guidelines for assistance to victims of commercial sexual exploitation described by ILO/IPEC (2004, a), the main actions during the First Level Intervention should be aimed at safeguarding the right to life and the right to health, and protecting the child or adolescent from being exploited again. An important aspect of this intervention is to include the children of the child or adolescent in the plan; this means that the platform of services must also be available to the latter throughout the process. During this phase, assistance should be addressed at achieving the following:



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- **Protection of the life and safety of the child/adolescent mother and her children**
 - **Protection of the health of the pregnant child/adolescent and her children**
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To accomplish these objectives, the critical path of the child/adolescent should have been established previously and the factors rendering her vulnerable to entrapment in commercial sexual exploitation clearly determined. The factors that make children vulnerable to early maternity should also be borne in mind, even though, as we have mentioned throughout this study, these factors are sometimes very similar, because they relate to the human rights violations that have characterized their lives. A protection plan should also be established; this should be designed in conjunction with the child/adolescent and her family support figures. In this regard, attention should be paid to several priority areas, such as:

- 
- Risk of commercial sexual exploitation (including threats by exploiters or procurers to the child/adolescent, her child and family group)
 - Risk of sexual abuse, incest, domestic violence (to the victim and to her child)
 - Health problems of the child/adolescent and her child
 - Nutritional problems of the child/adolescent and her child
 - Use and abuse of drugs and alcohol
 - Basic needs of the child/adolescent and her child
 - Pregnancy (prenatal control, medical care)

Very specific needs must be dealt with during this phase, relating to the impoverished conditions that may characterize the family context of the child or adolescent victim. These needs may involve her maternity and the maintenance of her child, for example: she may not have milk or other types of food for the baby; she may not have money to buy nappies, or she may not be able to clothe her child. Although these needs may appear very simple, they all contribute to increasing a child's vulnerability to becoming ensnared in the sex trade again, because, as the case studies revealed,⁷ **motherhood in a vulnerable adolescent is a condition that can reinforce the link with commercial sexual exploitation. In this respect, the service provider should ensure that the basic needs of the child/adolescent and her children are satisfied at all times.** If the family group is unable to cover these needs, the respective public agencies have the obligation to provide financial or employment-related support to those responsible for the child/adolescent.

It should also be recalled that every child has the right to grow up in a family

⁷ See section II.



environment; consequently, institutionalization or placement in a home should always be the last option. If the immediate family cannot take charge of the child/ adolescent, sources of support should be sought in her extended family and then in the community. It is important to ensure that these people are reliable and willing to ensure that the child is protected. In this regard, the following table contains some recommendations:

<i>For the child/adolescent mother...</i>	<i>For her children...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify women who can provide support, because they inspire more confidence in the child/adolescent and can accompany her in her pregnancy and maternity. • Poverty is never a valid motive for the institutionalization of the child/adolescent and/or her child. In this case, it is the State's responsibility to create favourable conditions for the family in the socio economic and labour spheres. • The right of the child/adolescent to take decisions regarding her maternity should be respected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right of the child to live with his or her mother must be respected, even though the mother is a child. In this respect, actions should be designed to create support networks for the child/adolescent and to create conditions that are favourable for maternity. • If the child/adolescent is interned in hospital or placed in an institution owing to health problems or drug addiction, her child should remain with the closest reliable family member and be taken to visit its mother from time to time. • If the child/adolescent mother is unable to look after her child, the latter's right to a family should be ensured and actions should be taken to ensure its protection and safety. This means that institutionalization of the child should not be the first or the only option.

It should be pointed out that the service provider must take into account the specific situation of children/adolescents who have been victims of trafficking; this involves the transfer of children to other regions, both within and outside the country, in order to exploit them sexually. The recruitment of girl children from other geographical regions makes it more difficult to establish contact with their families and have access to personal documents. In these cases, efforts should be made to identify alternative community support networks and it is also essential to locate sources of support within the family. It should not be forgotten that these children should enjoy the same rights as other children even though they are far from their homes, and it is important to seek legal assistance.

Children/adolescents may be exposed to threats regarding the custody of their children and fear that either institutions or people who are close to them (the father of the child, relatives, exploiters, etc.) may try and take the children away from them. In such cases, legal advice must also be obtained and protection provided to both mother and child.

It is also necessary to be very aware that, in most cases, **these pregnancies were the result of the violence and the human rights violations to which these children and adolescents have been exposed.** A child should never be blamed for her pregnancy, and



no attempt should be made to make her “face the consequences of her acts”; this would be completely wrong, because, owing to their situation, the girls have not been able to make a free and conscious choice about their maternity. Therefore, any intervention of this type would only add to the chain of violence that has shaped their lives.

What, then, is the purpose of this process of assistance?

To reduce the impact of pregnancy and maternity as factors of vulnerability to the sex trade and to violence in general:

- Commercial sexual exploitation should **NEVER** become a survival strategy to enable the child to satisfy the basic needs of her child.
 - It is essential to reduce the impact of the pregnancy as a factor of vulnerability to physical, sexual and psychological violence.
-

Accordingly, the service provider must ensure a series of essential aspects in order to fulfil the two basic objectives of this stage. To this end, **Checklist 2** may be used as a guide, and other aspects that are considered important can be included. Following this, the Second Level intervention can be started.

CHECKLIST 2

First Level Intervention

For the child/adolescent:

Protection of her life and safety...

- Protect the child/adolescent from commercial sexual exploitation and any type of threat.
- Protect the child from all physical, sexual, psychological or patrimonial violence.
- File the corresponding reports on commercial sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, domestic violence, etc.
- Ensure that the child/adolescent lives with her family group, or with reliable adults, in a safe place.

Protection of her health...

- Ensure that the child/adolescent is in good health.
- Provide prompt care and access to appropriate medication for the treatment of sexually-transmitted diseases and infections, or HIV/AIDS.
- Monitor that the child/adolescent attends medical appointments regularly, or prenatal controls if she is pregnant, and that she is accompanied by a person she trusts or a source of support. Otherwise, the service provider who is assisting her should attend the appointments with her.



- Provide specialized care for her addictions, if applicable, or refer her to such care.
- Ensure that her basic needs are being satisfied (food, clothing, etc.).
- Ensure that the child/adolescent feels that she has support and that her best interests are being respected.
- Ensure that her right to information is respected, bearing in mind her age, cognitive development and level of education.
- Allow the child/adolescent to take part in developing strategies and taking decision in matters that concern her at all times.

For her child:

Protection of its life and safety...

- Protect it from any dangerous situation that jeopardizes its life and safety.
- Protect it from any physical, sexual, psychological or patrimonial violence.
- Ensure that it lives with its mother, or with a reliable person from its family group.
- Ensure that the child is legally recognized and that the legal procedures concerning acknowledgement of paternity and maintenance payments are completed, when possible.**
- Protect its best interests.

Protection of its health...

- Ensure that it receives prompt and satisfactory paediatric care.
- Ensure that it is treated for any illnesses and has access to appropriate medication.
- Ensure that it has received the necessary vaccinations.
- Ensure that its basic needs are being satisfied (milk, food, nappies, clothing).
- It is essential to provide emotional and affective support to the child/adolescent and her child throughout the process.

** When the child/adolescent's pregnancy was the result of victimization in the sex trade, issues relating to paternity should be managed with great care, because this involves a serious form of violence and a crime committed by the exploiters. In these cases, specialized legal advice in the area of childhood and adolescence should be sought and it should be ensured that the State provides protection to the baby and protects all its rights.

3.3 Second Level Intervention

The objectives of this stage of the assistance process are:

- To develop strategies that will ensure the full enjoyment and exercise of the other rights that have been violated.



- To ensure monitoring and follow-up of the initial actions (ILO/IPEC 2004, a)

To achieve these objectives, the service provider must ensure compliance with all the measures included on **Checklist 3**, as well as any others considered necessary. In addition, each of these actions must be monitored in the medium and the long term. It should be noted that, when preparing this checklist, some elements were included that are mentioned by Porras and Slooten (ILO/IPEC, 2003) in their checklists for incorporating the human rights approach into the programmes of assistance to victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

CHECKLIST 3

Second Level Intervention

HEALTH:

- Monitor regular attendance at doctors' appointments for the child/adolescent mother and her child.
- Follow-up on STDs and HIV/AIDS infection and treatment.
- Ensure that the health services are providing the child/adolescent with proper care.
- Provide information on the health of the baby and how to safeguard this.
- Provide access to milk if the child/adolescent is unable to breastfeed.
- Ensure that the child/adolescent and her children have enough food.
- Ensure that the child/adolescent has a source of support to show her how to breastfeed, change nappies and feed her child. **Otherwise, the health service providers should show her.**
- Provide comprehensive information on birth control and sexuality in general.
- Monitor assistance for problems of drug dependency in the child/adolescent.
- Promote strategies that encourage the child/adolescent to take care of herself.

EDUCATION:

- Ensure that the child/adolescent attends school and make resources available to help her remain within the system (for example, help in obtaining scholarships, student meal services, transport, uniform, etc.).
- Facilitate educational and teaching materials, and times and places to study and do homework.
- Provide information on her rights, the laws that protect child/adolescent mothers, matters concerning responsible paternity and maintenance payments.
- Encourage participation in vocational training and personal development programmes for adolescent mothers over 16 years of age.



- Provide vocational counselling and information on other educational options.
- Develop alternative childcare strategies to facilitate the mother's education.

EMOTIONAL RECOVERY:

- Provide therapeutic and emotional support during the pregnancy and maternity.
- Facilitate emotional recovery from any experience of sexual abuse, incest, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic violence, etc.
- Provide emotional or therapeutic support for the child/adolescent's children.
- Provide spiritual support for the child/adolescent and her family (this should be free of any myths or blame for the victim).
- Re-evaluate the experience of early maternity, through the identification, recognition and validation of the feelings of the child/adolescent mother towards her motherhood and towards her child.
- Provide psychological support in any legal procedures and denunciations.

RECREATION

- Support the child to participate in recreational activities, such as sports, recreational, artistic and cultural activities.
- Encourage the child to participate in activities that offer spiritual guidance.
- Facilitate contact with contemporaries in support groups, recreation programmes, clubs, etc.

If the child/adolescent is pregnant, the following should be monitored:

- Prenatal and post-natal care.
- Appropriate gynaecological and obstetric care.
- Information on the status of her health and pregnancy. This includes information on whether she could suffer any complications or whether her pregnancy is high-risk. In this case, preference should be given to her best interests.
- Childbirth classes.
- Information on whether she has any illness or sexually-transmitted disease, etc. that could jeopardize her life or the pregnancy.

Throughout this intervention phase, it is essential to provide the child with support that “helps create opportunities for empathetic reflection, enabling the child to re-evaluate the experience of revictimization, transforming it into an experience that retrieves, incorporates and emphasizes the potential of periods of crisis to engender positive change” (ILO/IPEC, 2004, a:34).

Accordingly, it is necessary to consider and re-evaluate not only the situation of sexual exploitation that the child has experienced, but also the experience of early maternity and



the special conditions in which each child becomes a mother, as well as the feelings and thoughts associated with this experience. During this phase of assistance, it is important to adopt a gender-sensitive approach, in conjunction with the human rights approach, to allow the child or adolescent to be heard and understood, and the expectations and myths surrounding her maternity to be examined and situated in a specific psychosocial context and a particular moment in time.

As Barg (2003) has stated, some methods of tackling this problem require child and adolescent mothers to prove to society and the institutions that they are “good mothers”; this is undoubtedly motivated by a feminine ideal determined by society. Yet, at the same time these mothers are considered to be irresponsible and are frequently judged because they have rebelled against what is “normal” by being sexually precocious.

It is essential to make a break with this type of approach as well as with the stigmas created around child and adolescent mothers in general, and especially around those who have been doubly stigmatized by commercial sexual exploitation. Dealing with the situation on that basis only leads to a “forced adaptation” and does not produce changes that allow these children and adolescents to develop fully.

In contrast to the above, an intervention approach based on the rights of children and adolescents as members of society must be developed. As Barg (2003) has indicated, an approach is needed that takes into account their opinions, together with their best interests and those of their family, where respectful support is provided in the process of developing their autonomy and their specific way of being a mother in accordance with their psychosocial development.

As mentioned above, the purpose of the second phase of intervention is to **protect and guarantee the fundamental rights of both the child/adolescent mother and her child that have been violated**. To this end, there are certain essential factors that must be borne in mind to facilitate and to ensure this process of comprehensive protection:

-
1. It is essential that each child or adolescent take part in developing strategies to deal with its own reality.
-

During the intervention process, it is necessary to listen to each child/adolescent and allow her to take part in all decisions or actions that involve both her and her children. These children/adolescents “are subjects of law with a unique and non-interchangeable personal history; with needs and skills obtained in their fight for survival, skills which should not be rejected but incorporated into the assistance strategy” (Frías, 2004:38).

The best interests of the child/adolescent must be a priority in any action designed to deal with the problem; in this respect, the degree of maturity and personal conditions of the child/adolescent must be taken into account. It is also essential to recognize and bear in mind the socio-economic conditions and life story of each child.

-
2. The right to health is an issue that must be monitored throughout the assistance process.
-

Optimal health must be ensured for both the child/adolescent mother and her child;

access to health services and medical care for both, paediatric care and vaccinations for the child. Bureaucratic procedures should be avoided so that both mother and child receive assistance from this type of service. The State and its institutions must ensure that this care is provided; in other words, no bureaucratic formalities should obstruct the exercise of these rights. For example, even if a child or adolescent has no papers or medical insurance, it is the responsibility of the health personnel to provide timely, prompt and adequate services. Accordingly, the absence of documentation can never provide justification for not doing this.

The child/adolescent must be given sufficient, clear and comprehensible information about the status of her health and the necessary guidance to ensure the healthy development of her children. In addition, the way in which the child/adolescent is treated in the health centres should be monitored and any situation that endangers her safety reported.

3. Children and adolescents must be able to remain within the educational system and complete their school courses.

It is the responsibility of the different social actors to facilitate this process and to provide these children and adolescents with the required resources. In this regard, the right to non-discrimination must be respected and, insofar as possible, the isolation of the child/adolescent or her removal from the formal educational system should be avoided. If the child/adolescent is pregnant, the State and its public policies should make it possible for her to remain within the educational system during her pregnancy and return to school as soon as she is able after her child is born. It is recommended that the service provider remain in permanent contact with the teachers in charge of the child/adolescent so as to monitor the schooling process effectively.

In addition, children/adolescents should be informed of the educational options offered by the State and their reinsertion should be facilitated, taking into account their individual capabilities, needs and circumstances. In Costa Rica, for example, these options include:

-
- The regular educational system
 - *The open education system (any other type of centre or institute authorized by the Ministry of Public Education)*
 - *New opportunities system (educational modules)*
 - *Distance education to obtain a high school certificate*
-

UNICEF has observed that, after the family, the educational environment is the second circle of protection for children: “Schools can perform a very effective protective role in a child’s life, particularly in the case of the most vulnerable children” (UNICEF, 2004:51). According to this perspective, the school can physically remove the child from potential danger and help her develop skills and acquire information that will protect her:

The protection provided by having received an education continues to be important in the prevention of child labour and in combating commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking, which threaten girl children in particular (UNICEF, 2004:51).



Furthermore, it has been found that girl children who have received schooling, particularly those for whom education on what to expect in life has given them more confidence in themselves, become less vulnerable to domestic violence and commercial sexual exploitation: “A child who has received schooling is less likely to be drawn towards work in conditions of exploitation outside the home, and is less likely to perform housework that is excessive for her age” (UNICEF, 2004:51).

Bearing in mind the age of the child or adolescent and the importance that her right to education be respected, options for the care of her children should be organized and made possible, as well as financial support and grants from the State.

4. All interventions processes must strengthen the affective support network amongst the children, their families (the immediate and the extended family) and other sources of support.

The expansion of this network should be a priority, because the child or adolescent needs external resources that help her assume her maternity and the maintenance of her children. The principal **sources** of support (particularly, female figures who can provide support for the process of motherhood) should be identified during the first level intervention and, during this second level intervention, they should be strengthened, in an attempt to convert them into secure, stable and lasting **support networks**.⁸

As we have already mentioned, initially, these sources of support should be sought within the immediate family of the child/adolescent. If this is not possible, reliable members of the extended family should be involved; lastly, other sources of support may be sought in the community.

It is worth emphasizing that the service provider should also become part of a support network that the child/adolescent can rely on in any circumstance. This implies abandoning traditional approaches that try to “keep a distance” from the person assisted; a method of intervention that prevented the establishment of an empathetic relationship, where the service provider becomes a person the child can trust. In contrast, approaches focused on the child/adolescent should be developed, which go beyond the traditional models in order to ensure her protection and welfare.

For example, if the child has no one who can fulfil this role, the service provider can offer support in procedures related to maternity, such as: important medical examinations, prenatal appointments, the delivery, the departure from the hospital after the birth, and medical appointments for the newborn child; as well as in legal, educational and other procedures. These are all very valuable contributions and, although they may exceed established institutional functions, they should form part of the professional and personal commitment of each service provider to the protection of the human rights of children/adolescents and their children.

5. Importance should be accorded to the sexual and reproductive health of the child and adolescent.

⁸ Strengthening the relationship between the child/adolescent and her biological mother or the women who raised her may be a very positive measure and encourage the latter to participate and collaborate in the assistance programme. However, it should be borne in mind that this is not always possible.

It is important to provide clear and simple information on sexuality and birth control, free of myths and stereotypes. Nevertheless, it should be recalled that many of these children and adolescents were not able to choose when to become mothers, because both sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation prevented them from assuming their sexuality and maternity as a free and deliberate decision. It is therefore vital to provide emotional and spiritual support that permits a re-evaluation of the repeated experiences of abuse and diminishes the psychological effects of victimization. This support should be provided not only to the child or adolescent mother, but also to her children, taking into account their ages and stage of development.

Added to the above, it is important that the child/adolescent be able to find and give a meaning to her maternity, and recognize herself as a mother, identifying and accepting the corresponding feelings. As Barg (2003) affirms, it should be recalled that the child/adolescent cannot find a meaning to “being a mother” if she feels that society and the institutions judge her and reject her. It is most important that children feel supported and understood throughout this process:

“...But, what is evident is that she requires support so that, during this process, she can perhaps experience a different situation from the successive abandonment that she has undergone, learning together with “others”, “us”, how a mother should behave”. (Barg, 2003:142)

Each service provider must respect the privacy and confidentiality of the child assisted, and also collaborate in developing the gradual autonomy of these children and adolescents; “...helping them form opinions that allow them to take appropriate decisions to deal with their awakening sexuality, as regards protecting and taking care of themselves” (Barg, 2003:142).

6. Efforts should be made to foster a healthy relationship between the child or adolescent mother and her child throughout the assistance process.

We have already pointed out the importance of respecting and protecting the child’s right to live with its mother, despite the latter’s youth and circumstances. Consequently, efforts must be focused on creating and facilitating a protective environment for mother and child, as well as on establishing external support networks to provide care and attention.

As Vargas (2003) has stated, most assistance programmes do not consider child mothers and their children a priority population; moreover, they are frequently discriminated against because some institutions consider that adolescent pregnancy is a factor that excludes this population from their programmes. Nevertheless, the right of the child or adolescent to remain with her child or children should not be questioned, unless the lives of either of them are in danger. This is in keeping with the human rights approach, since both the mother’s desire to be with her child and the child’s right to a family should be respected.

The possibility for an adolescent to remain with her children in an institution that offers protection from commercial sexual exploitation is in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, because it is in keeping with the children’s right to live with their mother. It is also an effective action to promote responsible maternity in adolescents and reduce the risks of the generational cycle of abuse. (Vargas, 2003:56-57)



When the child/adolescent is responsible for the care of her child, it is extremely important that she receive counselling on “how to be a mother” during this second intervention phase. **Many of these children and adolescents have never had a person of trust to show them what it is to be a mother and how to take care of a child.** Consequently, they may feel insecure, frightened, uncertain and guilty that “they are not doing things properly” during the care and parenting process. Added to this, society has a tendency to pass judgment and, instead of counselling and teaching the child, it labels her a “bad mother”. Accordingly, this phase of the intervention should include counselling and educational activities on:

-
- Prenatal care and the delivery
 - Care of the newborn (including aspects related to breastfeeding and other alternatives)
 - The rights of the child
 - Childcare (in relation to the cleanliness and hygiene of the child, how to change nappies, adequate nutrition, duration of breastfeeding, health, vaccinations and special care)
 - The growth and development of the child
 - The education of the child and parenting models
 - Establishing limits for your children
 - Establishing an affectionate relationship with your children
 - The importance of physical contact with your children
-

When implementing these actions, it is necessary to take the following aspects into consideration: the age of the child and her stage of development, the rate at which she learns, and her personal resources. The child should not be made to perform functions that she is not ready to assume, but rather a gradual process of learning should be facilitated, where her youth is respected; in other words, **it should not be forgotten that, although she is a mother, she is still a child....**



Final Considerations

This article has examined the situation of child mothers involved in commercial sexual exploitation, emphasizing the need to develop new intervention policies that provide comprehensive protection for the child and her children. It is obvious that these children and adolescents have suffered from ostracism and witnessed many events infused with extreme violence. These experiences must be re-evaluated throughout the assistance process, not only from a psychological or emotional perspective, but, at times, from a legal perspective also.

In addition, actions that provide real possibilities of satisfying the basic needs of the girls and their children must be included. As we have suggested throughout this analysis, maternity may trigger commercial sexual exploitation, it may strengthen the child's connection with the sex trade and it may determine her remaining in the sex trade. It is therefore necessary to understand how maternity has acted as a vulnerability factor in each case, and establish action plans designed to reduce its impact.

Consequently, it is important to develop interventions with a high level of support and empathy, and the team of professionals responsible for providing assistance should have received rigorous training in the human rights and gender-sensitive approach.

A strong and healthy, supportive and understanding relationship should be developed with the children and adolescents assisted. This is very important if it is recalled that, in many cases, they have experienced repeated relationships suffused with exploitation, violence and a lack of respect. It is vitally important to monitor the whole process of assistance in order to ensure that the child or adolescent does not feel that it is being revictimized.

In addition, all the actions should be focused on the child and its particular circumstances and be directly related to the violation of her rights and the harm she has suffered at all levels, so as to promote and facilitate the process of growth, self-esteem and development.

As mentioned above, usually, the plan of assistance should contain multi-directional strategies on different levels: physical, psychological, social, legal, etc., so that the assistance provided to the child ensures the comprehensive protection of both her and her children. Obviously, this has to be an inter-institutional and inter-sectoral effort, involving different actors and diverse social sectors. In order to implement it successfully, a platform of available services must be established that respond to the needs of each child and adolescent and also of their children. In this regard, it is important to emphasize that the assistance cannot be restricted to the psychological component alone; rather it is vital to put in place an interdisciplinary effort that involves professionals from other areas, such as health, social work, the law and education.

The main objective of this assistance process should be to develop and strengthen a protective environment for the child or adolescent mother and her children; in other words, to establish stable and lasting support networks for the comprehensive protection of the children and adolescents. Hence, the State and its different institutions have an essential role to play; public policies must be strengthened and existing legislation enforced in order to ensure actions aimed at protecting at-risk and vulnerable children.

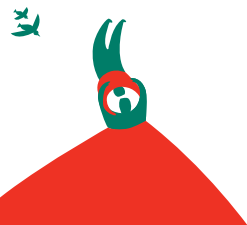
As a general rule, it is very important to recall that, in this type of intervention, assistance should always be synonymous with protection. This means that the assistance



should always be designed to protect the children and ensure the exercise and enjoyment of their rights. Unfortunately, this has been one of the major shortcomings of the models currently in force, which provide “assistance” to the children without necessarily deploying actions that are addressed at protecting their rights.

In conclusion, the following are some final recommendations for service providers:

- The adultocentric approach that predominates in our society should be discarded. It has resulted in the child who is pregnant or a mother being denied her status as a child. In other words, she is treated as an adult because, by becoming pregnant “she is no longer a child”. Therefore, since she is “an adult”, actions that protect her rights are not implemented and she is given more responsibilities than she is able to assume.
- It is necessary to develop an approach that integrates ethnicity and takes into account the particular situation of indigenous children; also the specific condition of the victims of child trafficking who have been removed from their city or country of origin.
- The child or adolescent should be provided with emotional support and accompanied during any type of legal proceeding; and it should be ensured that she does not feel revictimized by such proceedings. It may be beneficial to include strategies in which group opportunities for support and reinforcement are organized, where child/adolescent victims can share their experiences, learn from the experiences of the group, and find other forms of support.
- The service provider does not know better than the child. This means that the child’s opinion should always be heard and respected, because the child’s experiences are more significant than those the professional may have accumulated through scientific knowledge. In this respect, it is the child who knows her own situation best, and her best interests should be considered at all times.
- Clear, simple and accessible language should be used to communicate with the child/adolescent and her children.
- Monitoring and evaluation strategies should be developed which involve the State institution responsible for children and adolescents.
- It should be borne in mind that many of these children and adolescents have never had access to the educational system, so that we should not speak of “re-insertion” in the system, but rather of a first real insertion.
- It is essential that the service provider develop effective strategies to take care of herself and channel her own emotions.
- The institutional response can improve if new intervention models are introduced, and professionals are trained to be gender-sensitive and committed to human rights.



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3

COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION PROPOSALS FOR PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE TO CHILD VICTIMS

Comprehensive protection for male victims of commercial sexual exploitation: guidelines for providing services

Rogelio Pardo Hernández



IPEC

International
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Office



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First edition, 2005

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ILO - IPEC

Commercial sexual exploitation. Proposals for providing comprehensive assistance to child victims.

San José, Costa Rica, International Labour Office, 2005.

Sexual exploitation, Manual, Human Rights

02.02.1

ISBN:

92-2-317938-6 (print)

92-2-317939-4 (web pdf) ILO Cataloguing in Publications Data

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See our websites: www.ipecc.uit.or.cr and www.uit.or.cr

Printed in Costa Rica



Acknowledgements

“Commercial sexual exploitation. Proposals to incorporate specific factors into assistance for child victims”.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)

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Comprehensive Protection for Male Victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Guidelines for Providing Services

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Executive Summary

This chapter presents an intervention proposal with key elements, suggestions and guidelines for dealing with male victims of commercial sexual exploitation, using a gender-sensitive, age-related and human rights approach. The guidelines are intended to have a significant impact on the comprehensive protection of this population, by taking into consideration the special characteristics and vulnerability path of these children and adolescents.

The proposal is based on a study on male victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. Working directly with the population, we were able to identify the crucial moments and circumstances in the lives of these children and adolescents that contributed to their vulnerability to the sex trade and, thus, to define their critical path. Experts on masculinity and on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation also contributed valuable information for understanding the vulnerability factors present in these children's life stories.

This has allowed us to define some of the specific issues that must be considered in interventions with male victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and that must cut across all the actions implemented by service providers. They include elements such as the development of masculinity, identity and sexual diversity, the role played by expulsion from the family and living on the street, discrimination, drug addiction, and sexually-transmitted diseases.

The intervention should also aim to be consistent with a strategy designed to have an impact on and reduce the vulnerability factors in this population, as established in the Cyclic Model of Combined Responses proposed by Claramunt (ILO/IPEC, 2003), which provides a general framework for this proposal for working with male victims. The proposal offers recommendations and guidelines concerning the modifications that should be made in the inter-institutional platform, and the services that should be included in order to provide an adequate approach for children and adolescents entrapped in the sex trade, in keeping with their special characteristics.

In this respect, recommendations are made on an approach aimed at reducing the vulnerability of the victims by working with them and their families and, in particular, by strengthening the institutional response in areas such as health, education, vocational training and protection services.



Presentation

Despite the importance of the problem of commercial sexual exploitation and its public visibility in recent years, theories and methods of approaching this grave violation of the human rights of the child are only just beginning to be developed. This means that many aspects of our knowledge of the circumstances that lead to the entrapment of children and adolescents in the sex trade are only now being studied, together with strategies for providing assistance that seek to have a positive impact on the comprehensive protection of the rights of these victims.

In this regard, it is urgent to develop a proposal for assisting male victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Clearly, such children and adolescents form one of the most invisible groups of victims of this very grave human rights violation. This invisibility, together with the social stigma they endure, leads to a significant increase in their risk of suffering a major deterioration of all human rights and, at present, there are no resources or services designed to respond to their specific situation.

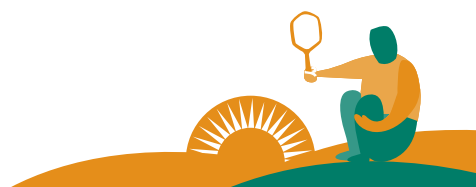
In general, institutions have ignored the need and utility of developing individualized plans of action to counter severe violations of the human rights of the child. This individualization relates to the conditions, personal experiences and special characteristics of male victims evidently influenced, not only by their condition as children and adolescents, but also by the development of their masculinity and sexual diversity.

In this regard, and using a comprehensive protection approach, the purpose of this chapter is to provide guidelines for assisting male victims of commercial sexual exploitation, based on the Cyclic Model of Combined Responses. Consequently, the proposal attempts to reduce and influence the factors of vulnerability to the sex trade revealed by male children and adolescents, through a platform of inter-institutional services implemented in a combined and coordinated manner, ensuring the exercise and enjoyment of all the rights of child and adolescent victims.

The proposed approach is based on information obtained from a research strategy that included the following:

- Interviews with male victims of commercial sexual exploitation.
- A discussion workshop with adult males, survivors of commercial sexual exploitation.
- Interviews with experts on masculinity and victimization, experts on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation, and individuals who have helped develop proposals for tackling this problem using a comprehensive protection approach.
- A review of findings concerning the male population in previous studies on commercial sexual exploitation.
- Compilation of information from the files of male victims; specifically, children and adolescents assisted by projects specialized in dealing with the problem of commercial sexual exploitation.

The first section presents essential issues to bear in mind when attempting to provide comprehensive protection to male victims of commercial sexual exploitation, particularly aspects relating to masculinity and sexual diversity, HIV/AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases, the role of drugs in male victimization, and the importance of an



approach focused on the special characteristics of each child or adolescent.

The second section explores the specific characteristics of the victimization of male children and adolescents, the crucial events in the development of their vulnerability, and their special needs that should be taken into account when endeavouring to achieve the comprehensive protection of their rights.

Lastly, the third section presents the principal elements in the development of a strategy to allow male victims of commercial sexual exploitation to fully enjoy their rights. Recommendations include the process of developing and evaluating the intervention plan, the phase of implementing this plan, and the phase of monitoring its impact on the situation of child and adolescent victims.

I. General considerations for assisting male victims of commercial sexual exploitation

When exploring the vulnerability path of male victims of commercial sexual exploitation it was possible to define several elements that should be taken into consideration when defining a strategy to protect children and adolescents entrapped in the sex trade. These elements included factors and issues relating to male victimization and, by describing them in this study, we hope to give the service provider crucial information that will have some bearing on the responses and services offered to this population.

In this regard, a brief explanation of the elements that may prove essential when defining solutions designed to reduce the vulnerability of male victims of commercial sexual exploitation is in order. They are as follows:

- a. Masculinity, adolescence and victimization
- b. Sexual diversity and commercial sexual exploitation
- c. The use of drugs by male victims of commercial sexual exploitation
- d. Sexually-transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS
- e. Living on the street and violence
- f. Individuality as the basic element of the intervention.

In this section, we will refer to these elements, which should be borne in mind when establishing a systematic strategy for assisting this population.

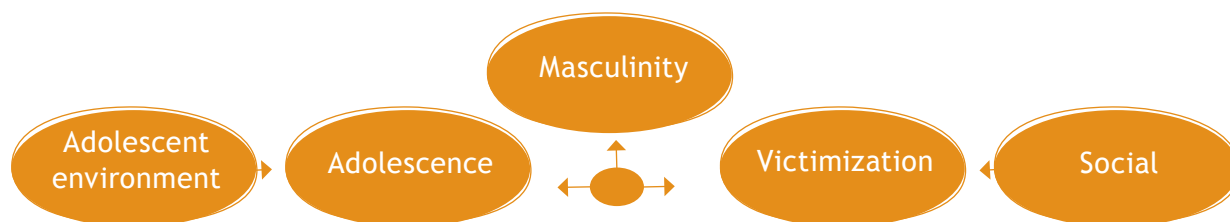
1.1 Masculinity, adolescence and victimization

This conceptual triad is of great importance when assisting male victims of commercial sexual exploitation, because it permeates the way in which children and adolescents relate to their environment and to other individuals and, of course, how they react to any assistance that service providers may offer with the intention of ensuring the full exercise of their human rights, starting by a life free from violence and exploitation.

In this regard, these elements will act as conditionalities that not only interact among themselves, but also intervene between the child and the social context in general, which makes it essential to arrive at a satisfactory understanding of the way in which this conditioning occurs.



Diagram 1

Factors that influence the relationship of a child or adolescent with the social environment

As can be seen from this diagram, the response of the child or adolescent to the social environment is influenced significantly by factors relating to the development of masculinity in our societies, the stage in the life of the child (adolescence), and previous and current experiences of victimization. In addition, these three elements are interrelated and form a sort of filter that will affect the way in which the male victim of exploitation understands his environment and, consequently, his reaction to it. Evidently, the efforts made by the platform of services to ensure that the child fully enjoys his rights take place within this social environment. Although there may be other elements in the psychology or the specific context of a child or adolescent that affect his response and his interaction with other people, these three elements were mentioned by experts in male victimization as the most influential aspects in this respect.

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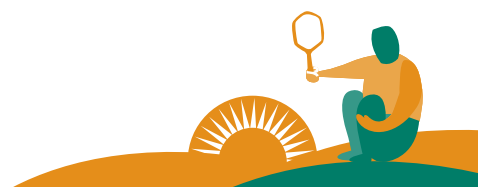
The relationship between masculinity and adolescence is particularly significant. As Garita (2001) indicates:

For boys, adolescence means leaving behind the world of their mothers and the women of the household and establishing a 'masculine' identity. This calls for a gradual change in their roles in relation to their parents and adaptation to the models provided by other boys and male adults around him. (Garita, 2001:24)

Adolescence is also a time for the gradual consolidation of a series of roles that will establish the individual's social identity as a man, and these are learned mainly from social modelling. These roles are associated with conducts that are frequently related to exercising power over others. Campos and Salas (2002) explain that:

... within the group of friends, the masculine culture teaches or transmits to the youth that he must be aggressive, competitive and insensitive. To be accepted by his contemporaries, a boy must develop a certain level of aggressiveness, while submission is associated with the danger of feminization. (Campos and Salas, 2002: 28)

In this way, the child learns that "being a man" frequently involves an acquired behaviour associated with violence and a display of power over others, the rejection of elements of femininity (associated with vulnerability), and portraying himself as an independent individual who needs no help and who, to the contrary, can mistreat other people and even use violence towards them.



The third element of this triad is the victimization that mediates in the relationship between children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation and other individuals and society in general. The experience of victimization is primarily related to a violent social context that questions a child's condition as a man, because it victimizes him, making him play a submissive role. This can lead children and adolescents trapped in the sex trade to overcompensate this questioning of their gender or sexual identity by using violence themselves. At times, it causes them not only to become victims who resist receiving help or even basic services (which would imply accepting their condition as victims), but also, in some specific cases, to victimize other more vulnerable individuals, and this possibility increases as the adolescent grows older. This tendency is reinforced by the models of masculinity they have had contact with - who are precisely the individuals who have used violence against them (stepfathers, neighbours, sexual exploiters, etc.).

This has significant implications for the services that institutions provide for boy children. Obviously, it does not imply that all male victims should be expected to be violent *a priori*. Moreover, if they do become violent, their aggressiveness is generally directed at other vulnerable individuals, such as other child victims. Nevertheless, exceptionally, some children or adolescents may be defiant or even aggressive, and this possibility should be taken into account.

When dealing with male victims of commercial sexual exploitation, service providers should bear in mind that they are children and adolescents who have suffered systematic violations and, also, that institutions and adults in general have failed to protect them. In this regard, developing the empathy and trust required to work with them may take longer than expected.

In this regard, it should always be recalled that, from a comprehensive protection approach, human rights cannot be waived, and that not even the expressed request of the child or adolescent or his behaviour or attitude can justify the failure to try to achieve comprehensive protection. It is the obligation of the State and its service providers to ensure that all the rights of all children are protected.

1.2 Sexual diversity and commercial sexual exploitation

Studies conducted in Costa Rica on the commercial sexual exploitation of children have revealed some of the most significant factors involved in this grave violation of the rights of the child and the adolescent. The panorama revealed by this incipient research (Claramunt, 1998, ILO/IPEC, 2002) has enabled us to identify the principal consequences of the sex trade on the life of the victims, and also the events in their lives that contributed to their vulnerability to exploitation.

Another aspect that has been identified clearly is the gender of the exploiters: the immense majority of offenders are men (ILO/IPEC, 2002). More than 90% of the children interviewed were exploited exclusively by adult men.

This is confirmed by the experts who were interviewed during this study. Even though some children and adolescents may occasionally be victimized by women, they are principally exploited by men. This means that male victims are generally subjected to



homosexual practices as part of their victimization.

This is also related to the fact that, among the male victims, there are a significant number of children and adolescents in different categories of non-heterosexual sexual diversity;¹ either because they identify themselves as homosexuals or even transvestites, or because their sexual practices are associated with these categories (see Part 3 of this article: Who are the male victims of commercial sexual exploitation?).

In this regard, it is important to establish some of the characteristics of sexual diversity in children and adolescents. First, it is important to mention that, at the beginning of 2004, the United Nations stated that it accepted that “the correct understanding of fundamental human rights principles leads ineluctably to the recognition of sexual rights as human rights” (Amnesty International, 2004; <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engPOL300202004?open&of=eng-200>).

It should also be recalled that most countries have domestic legislation deriving from the Convention on the Rights of the Child that protects the right of children to their own identity, and this evidently includes their sexual identity.

In this regard, service providers are obliged to respect the sexual identity of children and adolescents, even though it differs from their own sexual practices or identity, or from their moral and religious principles. This respect should be expressed by developing guidelines and actions based on a human rights approach.

Therefore, for children who are sexually diverse, whether homosexual or transgender (including transvestites, transsexuals and transformists²), the intervention should not be designed to suppress or attempt to change the identity of the child or adolescent. That type of action would violate the child’s right to his own identity and sexual experiences, and would plainly be a manifestation of violence towards him that could have significant consequences on his well-being, such as traumas or causing him to run away from home or any other context where this violence occurs.

The sexual rights of the child are human rights. Respect for the way in which a child lives his or her sexuality, excluding situations of abuse or exploitation, should be a cornerstone of assistance to victims of commercial sexual exploitation and to children and adolescents in general. They have the right to their own sexual identity.

In any case, male victims of commercial sexual exploitation should be given information on their sexual rights, based on a position of absolute tolerance concerning the sexual orientation and experiences of the child or adolescent. Any attempt to suppress any type of sexual conduct (provided this does not entail abusive actions involving others or against the child or adolescent himself) would run counter to the human rights approach, which should guide the path followed by the services addressed at this population. *However, this basic principle concerning a child’s right to define his own sexual identity should not be used as an excuse for failing to intervene in situations where the child is the victim of*

1 For the purposes of this article, **sexual diversity** is understood to mean non-heterosexual sexuality, even though, by definition, heterosexuality is part of this diversity. See glossary in the annex to the article.

2 See annex.



abuse or exploitation. No child should be subjected to such situations, and the obligation of the service providers is to ensure that the process of the development of a child's own sexual identity does not involve experiences and situations where an abuser or exploiter takes advantage of the vulnerability that this process implies. The right to live free of exploitation and abuse cannot be waived.

Even though the conduct manifested by children and adolescents could change in the future, since adolescence is a stage of transition and definition in many aspects of human identity (including sexuality), it is important that they are treated with respect at all times and receive appropriate guidance, based on tolerance of diversity as regards a child's sexuality.

The following are some aspects that need to be considered when assisting male victims of commercial sexual exploitation:

- Some children and adolescents perform homosexual acts in the context of exploitation. This does not necessarily make them homosexuals and they should not be treated as such, unless they identify themselves in this way.
- Some adolescents may be reticent to identify themselves as homosexuals, because there is a social stigma attached to this. Moreover, in the context of the development of their masculinity, it suggests femininity (which has a negative connotation from the traditional patriarchal and masculine perspective) and vulnerability. The service provider's tolerance should be reflected in a position that does not replicate the social stigma and disapproval of homosexuals.
- Children and adolescents with conducts associated with transgenderism have the same rights as other children. Transgenderism includes transsexualism, transvestism, intersex, fetishism, and transformism. Transgenderism should be considered just a form of gender identity and respected as such. However, given the reality of the social context, many of the actions offered by the inter-institutional platform of service should be aimed at reducing the vulnerability that conducts associated with transgenderism may entail, as we shall see below.
- The services provided to this population (male child and adolescent victims of commercial sexual exploitation, whether or not they are sexually diverse) are really no different from those that should be provided to other child victims of the sex trade, apart from some aspects that are obviously specific and limited to it and which will be explained below. Psychological treatment should not be a preferred strategy within the services provided and even less a tool to achieve protection from abuse and exploitation. Psychological treatment is confined to strategies to mitigate the consequences of sexual victimization, according to the special characteristics of each child, and always as part of the assistance provided once the safety, health and life of the child or adolescent have been ensured.
- Homosexuality and transgenderism are not pathologies and, *per se*, do not imply the need for assistance, and even less psychological treatment. In this respect, recent studies have rejected the causal relationship that it was once thought existed between previous experiences of abuse and sexual diversity.

1.3 The use of drugs by male victims of commercial sexual exploitation

During the research process, it was confirmed that the use of drugs is particularly



elevated among male victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

As other authors have already explained (Claramunt, 1998; ILO/IPEC, 2002), drugs play diverse roles among victims of the sex trade (see also the chapter on “**Commercial sexual exploitation and the use of drugs**” in this publication), but it is significant that, among male victims, they are used to alleviate the physical and psychological pain resulting from their sexual victimization, and to offset lack of food and shelter.

However, the use of drugs, particularly when a dependency is created, becomes an important factor of vulnerability to the sex trade. Hence it is important to evaluate the precise role that drugs have played and are playing in the development of this vulnerability and in retaining children and adolescents in the sex trade.

1.4 Sexually-transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS

As victims of the sex trade, children and adolescents are exposed to contagion from sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. The implications of this exposure for the health of this population are evident, and even jeopardize their right to life.

Recent studies on commercial sexual exploitation in male victims (Alvarez-Correa and Suárez, 1998) have stressed the role that these diseases play in the context of the sex trade involving children and adolescents and the effect of this exposure on the life of the victims.

Contagion from STDs, which reaches almost epidemic proportion in this population, is corroborated by the testimony of victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation. While adult survivors tell of how they have lost many acquaintances (also victims of the sex trade) owing to HIV/AIDS, an adolescent victim states that:

I never used a condom with a client ... they didn't like it and I never asked them to. (Mario³, victim, 14 years of age)

This adolescent was victimized on the streets for five months and, during this time, he was infected with syphilis and a chancre. The intervention plan for such individuals should clearly include specific elements relating to the presence of sexually-transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

When developing a platform of services that responds to the needs of male victims of commercial sexual exploitation, it is important to include at least two services in relation to this aspect:

- Counselling and information on sexuality and responsible sex: this is done so that the adolescent can use this knowledge in his own life, with his partner, and have safe, protected sex. Nevertheless, the service provider's efforts should be aimed at ensuring the comprehensive protection of the rights of the child, and not at “improving his living conditions” while he remains in the sex trade.
- Appropriate health services for the treatment of STDs and HIV/AIDS; this may mean that the inter-institutional platform needs to modify and/or add services. The necessary tests, medication and treatment should be easily available so that this population can obtain them promptly.

³ The names of the children have been changed to protect their identity.



1.5 Living on the street and violence

As we shall see below, living on the street, and the violent episodes that accompany this experience, are important factors to take into account when designing an intervention plan for a male victim of commercial sexual exploitation. Among male victims, it is exceptional to find children or adolescents who remain at home while they are being exploited.

This is even more evident in the case of male victims who are sexually diverse, particularly those whose conducts are associated with transvestism, as will be explained below. In any case, living on the street can have the following consequences for children and adolescents:

Diagram 2

Consequences of living on the street



It should be pointed out that the devastating consequences, closely related to human rights violations, that are specifically associated with commercial sexual exploitation increase significantly according to the length of time children and adolescents remain on the streets. Any strategy designed in this area should aim to detect street children as rapidly as possible. Also, when defining individual actions, an important variable to bear in mind is the length of time the child or adolescent has been without an adequate place to live.

1.6 Individuality as the basic element of intervention

The plans and strategies implemented to ensure that children and adolescents fully enjoy their human rights should, by definition, take into account the individual characteristics of



male victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The presence of homosexual adolescents and/or conducts associated with transvestism is an example of differences that must be borne in mind and that conditions the type of response that will be effective for the victim.

Likewise, the existence of other factors, such as the presence or absence of drug dependency, possible family and/or community networks, the specific history of violence, contagion with sexually-transmitted diseases or breaking the law, must always be taken into account when designing strategies for this population.

It is particularly important to bear in mind the opinion of the child or adolescent and to ensure his participation in any plan or strategy, because, in addition to this being his right, it also means that essential information will be included in the elaboration of the plan and increases the possibility that the adolescent will be willing to accept it.

II. Who are the male victims of commercial sexual exploitation?

In order to define the specific strategies that should be used to ensure the comprehensive protection of the rights of male victims of commercial sexual exploitation, it is essential to have detailed knowledge of who these children and adolescents are.

This is necessary in order to gain a thorough understanding of the biographical events and social conditions that created their vulnerability to the sex trade and that keep them trapped in it. It will also provide valuable information about the specific characteristics and needs of this population and facilitate the design of precise strategies to reduce this vulnerability. Unless we are aware of the typical history and vulnerability path of child and adolescent victims of the sex trade, efforts made to ensure the full exercise of their rights will be fruitless or, at any rate, of little avail.

The examples of vulnerability paths mentioned below were established based on the stories of male victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation, and also on the opinion of experts on the subject.

2.1 The development of vulnerability in child and adolescent victims of commercial sexual exploitation

Given the very significant differences between them, two main groups of male victims of commercial sexual exploitation can be identified. On the one hand, there are the children and adolescents who display conducts associated with transvestism or with noticeably effeminate behaviour and, on the other hand, there are the victims who do not have these characteristics.

As explained above, the possible paths that made them vulnerable to the sex trade were identified based on the experience of direct service providers and experts on the subject. The interviews with adolescent victims served principally to illustrate what the key professionals had indicated, and help complete the description of the possible paths.

2.1.1 Children and adolescents who display conducts associated with transvestism

As indicated by experts, victims and survivors, the conduct associated with transvestism,



or very effeminate behaviour, appears very early in the development of children and adolescents. And when it appears, the child or adolescent begins to suffer significant experiences of stigmatization and rejection, which will be key factors in developing his vulnerability.

The experiences of discrimination and even violence encountered from a very early age significantly increase vulnerability. These manifestations of discrimination and violence frequently originate within the child's family and social environment. The discrimination marginalizes and isolates him, developing into a major risk factor for suffering grave human rights violations, because his support and control networks collapse.

Intolerant communities tend to make for intolerant families. Unsupportive communities foster the existence of families that find difficulty supporting their members. It is essential to strengthen the community in order to strengthen the family.

The deterioration of these networks, marginalization and ostracism often culminate in expulsion from the family and the community, as a result of a process of stigmatization in educational, community and family circles.

The following diagram illustrates the vulnerability path of children and adolescents with conducts associated with transvestism or very effeminate behaviour that are determinants in developing their vulnerability to sexual exploiters.

Diagram 3

Key conditions and events that are significant in the development of vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation

This is only one possible path for developing the vulnerability of children and adolescents



with these characteristics. It probably includes the most common elements; however, it is simply an example, a possibility. In actual fact, the biographical events that gradually increase the risk of a child or adolescent with effeminate behaviour becoming involved in the sex trade vary with each child. Each case history has its own variables which must be evaluated and taken into account in the intervention.

Nevertheless, as mentioned, the diagram contains what appear to be the most common elements. The aspect of the effeminate or transvestite behaviour is a key factor in the development of vulnerability, and the problems of poverty and even sexual abuse may or may not be present. Nevertheless, this population has usually suffered from violations and sexual abuse, while poverty is occasionally a factor. In any case, survival in contexts where there is extreme poverty is related to the possibility of an individual or a family being able to satisfy their basic needs in an economic system that subsists due precisely to the exploitation of one social sector.

As in the case of any event of this type, the sexual abuse endured by the victims has significant emotional consequences, including psychological trauma and a negative impact on the development of a child's self-image and sexuality, factors that increase his vulnerability to the sex trade.

Also, as previously mentioned, the existence of effeminate or transvestite behaviour on this critical path is at the core of the increased vulnerability of these children and adolescents owing, above all, to the stigmatization and intolerance towards sexual diversity that prevails in our society. Hence, this type of conduct is accompanied by harsh experiences of violence ranging from discrimination to physical and sexual violence. These experiences of violence lead to the isolation and marginalization of the child or adolescent, precipitating the process of expulsion from the school, the family and the community.

The expulsion of the child or adolescent from all his support networks compels him to live on the street. The process of living on the street can take place gradually, as the child becomes marginalized from his support mechanisms or from one moment to the next when he is literally "thrown out". Living on the street puts him in contact with peer groups who have been living on the street longer, who are often already ensnared in the sex trade, and who "teach" him to survive through sexual exploitation.

Once the child or adolescent has become ensnared, drugs play a role in keeping him in the sex trade. Many children and adolescents start using drugs to mitigate the emotional and physical impact of victimization, but when they become dependent on drugs, the dependence becomes a factor that entraps them further, because the only way they can obtain the money to buy drugs is through sexual exploitation.

In addition, the dangerous conducts they frequently learn by modelling increase their vulnerability, because many of them turn to crime (according to the service providers and the experts who work with this population, many of them steal or sell drugs). This makes it difficult for them to access services related to the exercise of their rights and develop support networks with people other than criminals or children offenders, which further deteriorates their way of life and complicates their removal from commercial sexual exploitation.

Furthermore, the institutions tend to render the existence of this population invisible, and the offer of services for these children and adolescents is usually non-existent. When services are offered, no consideration at all is given to the special characteristics implicit



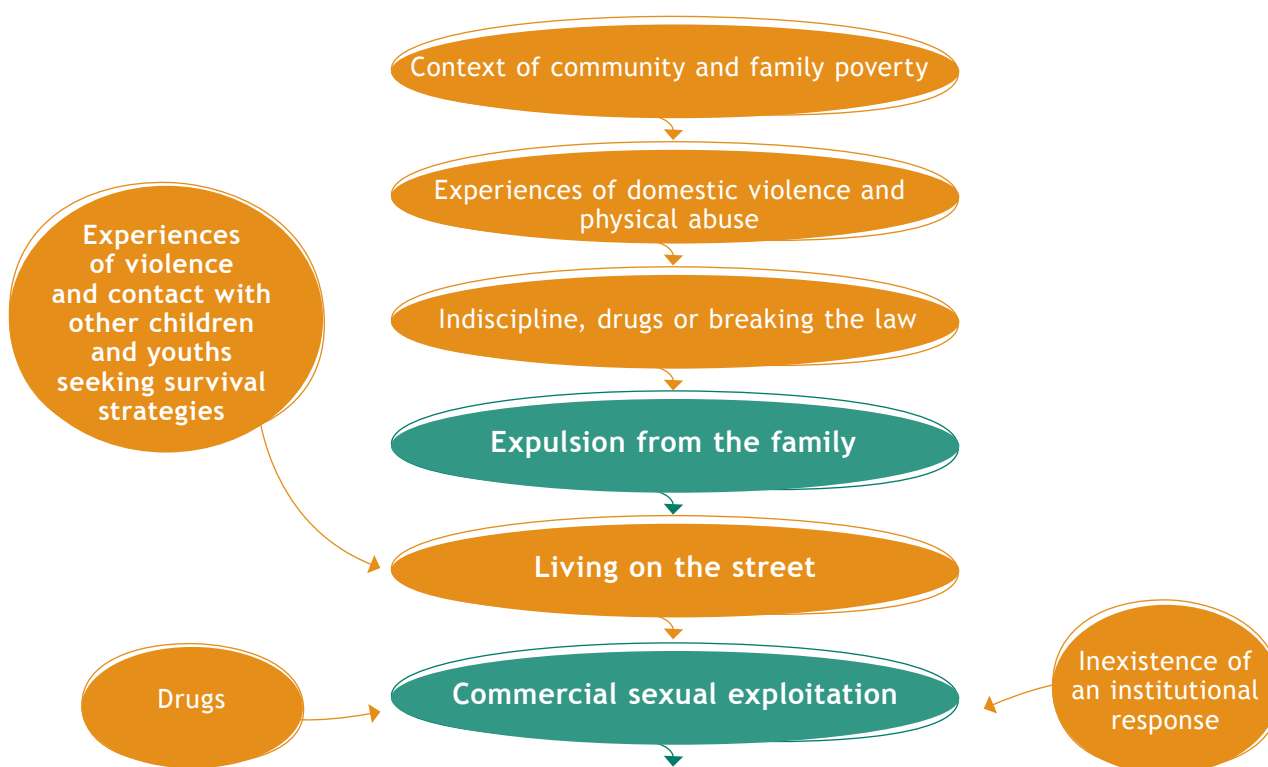
in their sexuality and the special needs that result from it. For example, one of the children interviewed (Mario, 14 years of age, transvestite) related that he was transferred to a shelter (an institution administered by the public institution responsible for children and adolescents) where he was violated repeatedly during the 10 days he spent there. Accordingly, he asked to be transferred from the shelter, and then “escaped” from it, alleging mistreatment by the professionals.

2.1.2 Other children and adolescents entrapped in the sex trade

As previously mentioned, there are also children and adolescents who do not have transvestite or effeminate behaviour in the sex trade. Even though they share some elements of the vulnerability path described above, there are other elements that differentiate them.

Diagram 4

Important living conditions and events that create vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation



Contrary to the children or adolescents previously described, in this case the most prominent factor is significant disciplinary problems, frequently associated with the use of drugs, and breaking the law.

Poverty plays a crucial role in developing the vulnerability to the sex trade of male victims. The difficult conditions in which they live have a major influence on the family's ability to control them, because there are often several children in the family with only one adult to supervise them, and because this adult also has to maintain the family, which weakens their role as the children's protector. This situation frequently results in expulsion from the educational system or even lack of insertion into the system, which, in itself, may be considered expulsive, owing to the deficient quality of the services offered in terms of their adaptation to the real circumstances of the children and adolescents, and to the scant effort made to retain them within the system.

At the same time, domestic violence exists in many cases and the child frequently suffers severe physical abuse. This produces a gradual expulsion of the child or adolescent from the family environment, increasingly prolonging his permanence on the street. Expulsion from the family is often completed when the parental figures give up the attempt to control the child's conduct and literally throws him out of the home.

Once, definitively on the street, the process followed is very similar to that of the first group of children and adolescents, with an increase in the use of drugs and an inadequate or non-existent response from the State to the needs of these children.

The common defining moment for most male victims of commercial sexual exploitation, in relation to the development of their vulnerability, is the expulsion from the family environment and the consequent permanence on the street, owing, above all, to the absence of the necessary tools for the family to be able to manage, understand and/or tolerate the conduct of these children and adolescents.

Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that these are only general examples of vulnerability paths and that there are numerous possible events in the life of any specific child or adolescent that need to be explored and assessed in order to define the best strategy that will truly reduce the child's vulnerability.

2.2 Special characteristics of the population: the human rights that have been violated and the obstacles to their full exercise

When assisting male victims, according to their special characteristics and specific conditions, there are certain problem areas that must be tackled and resolved by the inter-institutional platform of services in order to ensure that this population may enjoy all human rights.

The following are some of the principle difficulties and the suggested solutions to ensure the full exercise of the human rights of male children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation.



2.2.1 The right to grow up in a family environment: since expulsion from the family is the turning point in developing the vulnerability of children and adolescents to the sex trade, ensuring this right is vital for reducing vulnerability.

Institutionalization is contrary to the principles of the human rights approach to children and to their right to live in a supportive and safe family environment. A shelter or an institution can become an element of risk for children or adolescents, because they frequently suffer physical and sexual violations in such contexts. Institutionalization is a particular risk for effeminate boys or adolescents, or for those who manifest conducts associated with transvestism.

However, some difficulty may be encountered in guaranteeing this right to the population in question. This derives mainly from the intolerance (of either the effeminate behaviour or the lack of discipline) that the families manifest towards these children and adolescents. Nevertheless, the following recommendations are made, in keeping with the comprehensive protection approach:

- a) It is necessary to work with the family as the principal option, in order to reintegrate the child into the family circle. The purpose of this effort is to ensure that the family not only accepts the child or adolescent, but that it is able to support him effectively, providing him with an appropriate protective environment (see the respective chapter in this publication).

The effort to strengthen the family will depend above all on the original reasons that precipitated the child's expulsion. In the case of boys with significant discipline problems, efforts should be aimed at obtaining the necessary resources so that the parental figures can impose adequate limits on the other members of the family. Consequently, obtaining financial resources, through grants, subsidies and contributions that enable the adults to remain at home, and reinforcing them as figures of authority, must be one of the principle measures taken.

Simultaneously, it may be useful to guide the family in applying other forms of discipline than physical punishment, and gradually but effectively establishing limits.

In the case of children and adolescents who are sexually diverse, the effort should try to develop the family's tolerance of the child's characteristics and rights. This can be based on information and awareness-raising about alternative sexuality. In this regard, there are organizations that can offer service providers guidance on the topic of sexual rights, and they may prove a useful tool (the *Movimiento de Lucha contra el VIH/SIDA* [the Movement to Combat HIV/AIDS], the *Centro de Cultura en Diversidad Sexual de Costa Rica* [Costa Rican Sexual Diversity Cultural Centre] and CIPAC [Centro de Investigación y Promoción para América Central de Derechos Humanos/Human Rights Research and Promotion Centre for Central America] are examples of such organizations).

However, as mentioned, it will probably not be easy to strengthen these families. With their background of being unable to handle the particular characteristics of these



children and adolescents, it may be an arduous task to develop the necessary tolerance for the reintegration of the victim into the family circle. However, no effort should be spared to achieve this goal.

- b) **Identify alternative family resources** in the extended family and among members of the community, who have conditions that are adequate or that can be worked on for the insertion of the children and adolescents. To begin with, the extended family can be an important resource, because the child usually knows its members already, and this would facilitate its acceptance. If there are no family members that can take him in, the community should be explored to identify other family resources or individuals who could take the child in. In this regard, it is important to identify a community family resource that, even though it does not have all the desired characteristics, could be strengthened to convert it into a supportive environment for the child or adolescent.

Members of the community who demonstrate gender tolerance or even those who have had alternative sexual experiences, but who are able to provide adequate support and protection to the child, may be a very valuable resource in the case of children and adolescents who are sexually diverse.

- c) **The establishment of an option for cohabitation** among male children with similar characteristics would be the final alternative, following the failure of the previous strategies to offer the child or adolescent a satisfactory affective environment for his development.

Using the “**group home**” model, groups of male victims with similar characteristics can be set up in a group home, where they would receive care and protection services, in order to allow them to develop significant affective relationships in a context that establishes acceptable limits. The limits may be put in practice in the form of domestic obligations, schedules and routines, rule to respect, etc. This option would be an experimental undertaking, because it has never been attempted in Costa Rica before, and would involve the following:

- Identification of a physical site for each group of boys, where aspects such as space, physical safety and comfort can be ensured.
- Close monitoring by professionals from different disciplines, through an action that allows them to impose effective limits on the male victims of sexual exploitation, and also to develop affective relations with them.
- A person in charge of the daily running of the group home, with the required profile for working with this population; this would involve training in commercial sexual exploitation, street living and sensitivity to sexual diversity.
- A routine ensuring that all the children and adolescents can exercise their rights, including the rights to health, protection and education. This may entail regular visits by professionals providing services related to these rights.
- Seeking homogeneity in the groups who live together in order to minimize the possibility that one child may victimize another. Moreover, strict vigilance should be exercised in this regard. When selecting the groups, factors relating to age, length of time on the street, and the sexual identity and/or practices of the children and adolescents should be taken into consideration.

Since this is an option that has not yet been explored, it would be useful to start with



a small group of older adolescents, and the monitoring activities conducted by the professionals would include the preparation of reports to systematize the lessons learned in order to refine the model.

2.2.2 The right to protection from drugs. The existing institutional offer is currently insufficient to respond to the needs of drug-dependent children.

One of the main problems to be resolved is the lack of State options to tackle the problem. This is because the offer of services is in the hands of the private sector and the Government has little control over the nature of the services provided.

The panorama is exacerbated by the fact that most, if not all, the private organizations do not offer services to children who are sexually diverse and, in most cases, it is difficult for children and adolescents who have been on the street for a prolonged period, with the resulting behavioural problems, to comply with their requirements.

In this respect, it is important to recall some of the points indicated in the article on this subject included in this publication. For instance:

- When the use of drugs is moderate or light, there are drug treatment options that do not involve the institutionalization of the child. Moreover, the actions taken to reduce vulnerability to the sex trade usually have very positive results on protecting this population against drugs, without having to take direct action concerning the latter. However, very close monitoring is necessary and the effects of the drug factor in a victim of commercial sexual exploitation should never be underestimated. Other alternatives that do not require institutionalization include strategies that involve support groups as well as medical options for dealing with the use of drugs.

In the case of children and/or adolescents, institutionalization should be avoided, and the possibility of treatment being received in an “out-patient” setting should be explored. Another possible strategy could be the selection of a “big brother” in the context of a psycho-pharmacological strategy to reduce drug use, combined with a stress reduction method to control environmental factors that increase use.

- In cases where there is a dependency on drugs, this aspect should be dealt with first, owing to its role in rendering the child vulnerable. The existing options are generally residential; in other words, they involve placement in an institution for a specific period of time. The effectiveness of creating communities that protect a dependent child or adolescent against the use of drugs has not been proved, but they are an option that could be implemented under the adequate guidance of professionals. In any case, if it is necessary to use the residential option, owing to significant substance use by the child victim of commercial sexual exploitation, the chosen institution should facilitate the continued implementation of the intervention plan with the child or adolescent and make it possible to combine and coordinate efforts, not only to protect the child from the use of drugs but also from the sex trade.
- A change in the social context (the community or district) can be a positive factor in reducing drug use and in the level of protection afforded to the child or adolescent from both problems: drug dependency and sexual exploitation. Locating



a family and/or community resource in a different place from the one where the victimization occurred would contribute significantly to the intervention strategy's probabilities of success.

2.2.3 The right to education and vocational counselling. Bearing in mind the special characteristics of the population and the needs they imply, the children should be given access to the educational services (both schooling and vocational training) that interest them and would be useful. In this regard, it is not a question of offering just one option, since both options are essential in the creation of a positive life project, especially for this population. Both options (formal education and vocational training) should be offered simultaneously.

For example, both survivors and victims of commercial sexual exploitation who are sexually diverse mentioned that the vocational options that interest them are usually not included among those offered by either the Ministry of Public Education or the National Apprenticeship Institute. While many of the training opportunities offered by the latter interest them, the prerequisites make access impossible. In general, they referred to activities related to fashion, beauty care, professional make-up, etc. A choice of appropriate possibilities should be offered, which include not only those just mentioned, but that respond to the needs and interests expressed by these adolescents, because this is a key element to avoiding their expulsion from vocational training.

The possibilities offered by the educational establishments should facilitate the entry and permanence of this population in the educational and vocational training process. Also, flexible options for formal education should be maintained and strengthened.

III. Recommended methods of assisting male victims of commercial sexual exploitation based on the Cyclic Model of Combined Responses

The following are specific points that must be taken into consideration when assisting male victims of commercial sexual exploitation on the basis of the Cyclic Model of Combined Responses. This model is based on the notion that it is necessary to reduce vulnerability in order to achieve the comprehensive protection of the victims of this tragic situation. The methodological framework set out in the documents *Guía para la detección* (ILO/IPEC-Rahab, 2004, b) and *Guía para la atención* (ILO/IPEC-Rahab, 2004, a) should be used when implementing the guidelines presented below and the suggestions that appear previously in this chapter. The proposal provides specific indications for assisting male victims in line with this intervention model.

In this regard, the basic strategy proposed is an intervention in stages (ILO/IPEC, 2003). It should include the following:

- a) A stage for collecting relevant information and assessing the factors of vulnerability to the sex trade, as well as for designing an intervention plan based on this assessment. This is also known as the **detection** stage.
- b) A stage for implementing the plan that has been designed, prioritizing actions at two different moments: first, to guarantee the right to protection from exploitation and also the right to safety and health and, second, to guarantee the exercise of



the other rights, such as the rights to education, family life and recreation. These are also known as **Level I and Level II interventions**.

- c) Implementation of the **follow-up** and monitoring plan, in order to ensure the sustainability of satisfactory conditions for the full exercise of the rights of the child.

As the name indicates, the model is based on the idea that the process should be implemented in a cyclic manner, and be adapted to the special characteristics of the child and to every possible circumstance and event that could occur. The concept of stages should be understood merely as an illustration of the priority that should be given to certain actions. Consequently, it should not be understood as a series of rigid and linear steps towards achieving a specific goal within a set timeframe, but rather as a reiterative strategy that attempts to reduce the role of certain aspects of the child's life in rendering him vulnerable to the sex trade.

In this context, the following suggestions should be incorporated into the strategies for assisting male victims of commercial sexual exploitation. In this regard, they are specific to the proposed model and should be understood within the application of this model.

3.1 Elements to be taken into account in the detection process

The characteristics of male children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, in relation to the triad proposed in the first section of this article (masculinity-adolescence-victimization), have a direct influence on the way in which the detection process is carried out.

It should be recalled that detection is a process and not an action (ILO/IPEC-Rahab, 2004, b); it involves activities that include collecting information on the victimization and vulnerability of the child, assessing these aspects, and then developing an intervention plan that gives priority to actions that make it possible to reduce this vulnerability. The following aspects should be mentioned:

- a) Most victims of commercial sexual exploitation have grown accustomed to living on the street and have endured harsh experiences of violence; this, added to the variables relating to the development of masculinity, resulting in an intense resistance to being assisted by individuals they do not know and to developing empathy with the service providers - a basic aspect of the intervention. Owing to the length of time they have spent on the streets, some of them may also have formed affective networks with other victims and/or victimizers, and both they and the members of their networks may display aggressive or merely resistant behaviour.

This signals that service providers should be recommended to exercise caution when approaching a child victim of commercial sexual exploitation in a public place. This action should be avoided insofar as possible, because it is likely to produce little effect, and because it entails an element of risk for both the victim and the service provider. It is recommended that the child or adolescent should be approached in his home (although, caution should always be exercised); or even, as some experts suggest, that this population should be offered a safe place, where they can find responses to their needs, so that it is they themselves who gradually approach the place where assistance is provided. This strategy should take into



account the specific characteristics of these children and adolescents.

- b) Closely related to the above, is the use of the “snowball” strategy, where the victim refers or even brings along others. The effectiveness of this technique has already been demonstrated in the case of female victims, and it could be particularly useful with male victims who are sexually diverse.
- c) When designing the intervention plan, the service provider should ensure that he or she has the active participation of the child or adolescent. In addition to respecting the victim’s human rights, this is crucial for the success of the plan, particularly in the case of boys, because, due to factors relating to masculinity, it is important they do not feel that a plan is being imposed on them.
- d) When assessing the factors that make children or adolescents vulnerable, it is important to consider factors relating to gender identity (above all if the child is transgendered), and their implications for efforts to guarantee the exercise of all human rights. It is worth recalling the difficulty of integrating children who are sexually diverse without violating their sexual rights, owing to general intolerance at the family, community and institutional level. Educational establishments, and also the community, are often very violent places for these children and adolescents. This must be borne in mind when deciding how to reduce vulnerability.
- e) Efforts with the family should be prioritized and planned almost immediately, because for victims with effeminate behaviour and/or transvestites, and for those who do not manifest such conducts, family support means ending life on the street, which results in a very significant reduction of vulnerability to several human rights violations. Previous comments on to the right to grow up in a family environment should be recalled (see preceding section).

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This is the stage during which the first contact with the child is made and, above all, it should avoid revictimizing the child or adolescent. Although it is to be hoped that the service provider has the necessary training and discernment to assist this population, mistakes are often made, especially with children or adolescents who are sexually diverse. All professionals working with these victims should have followed an extensive process of familiarization with alternative sexuality. The following are examples of what should not be done and suggestions of what should be done, when assisting this population:



What should not be done

- Question, criticize or censure the child because of how he dresses, speaks or acts.
- Discriminate or give priority to other children who are not effeminate or transvestite.



What should be done

- Listen openly and without prejudice to the child or adolescent.
- Offer the child or adolescent the services he requires promptly.





- Try to convince the child to change his sexual identity or his sexual practices.
- Blame a third person for the sexual identity or practices of the child or adolescent.
- Psychopathologize any aspect of sexual diversity

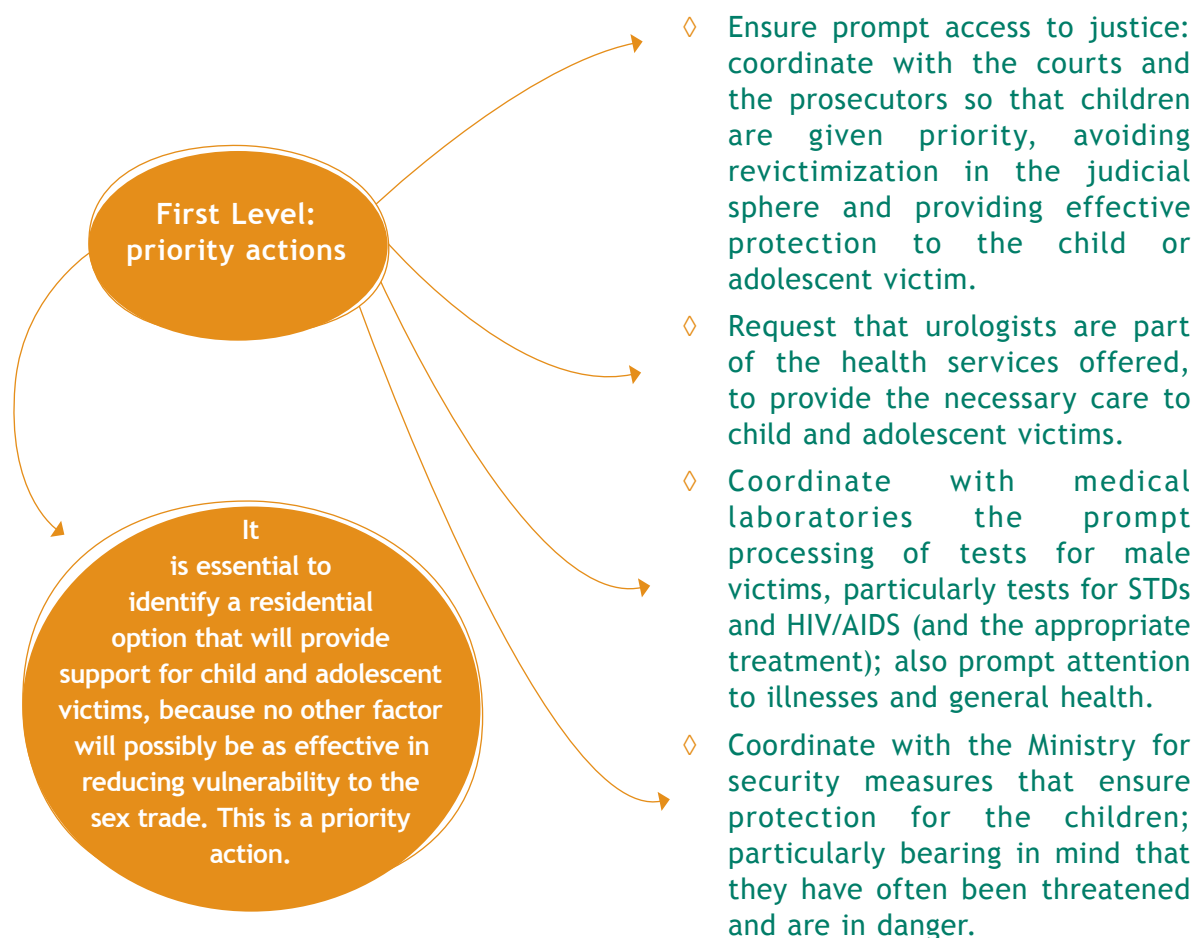


- Accept the child for what he is, and treat him as you would any other child.
- Provide him with information on his rights, including his sexual rights, and information on sexual health.

3.2 Elements to take into account during the assistance process

As explained above, effective assistance depends on putting together an inter-institutional platform of services that enables children and adolescents who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation to exercise all their rights.

Some of the aspects that should be taken into account when designing this platform, either at the Level I or Level II stage, and which are mentioned below may be specific for male victims of commercial sexual exploitation, or may also be suitable for other groups of victims. The following suggestions are based on the *Guía para la Atención* (ILO/IPEC-Rahab, 2004, a).



3.3 Elements to be taken into account for follow-up activities

During the **follow-up activities**, it is important to give priority to the right to grow up in a family environment and also to protection from drugs. In the case of the family environment, efforts to strengthen the family should be continued in the long-term and should be evaluated at prudent intervals (according to the type of support the family context needs) in order to ensure that it is truly being changed into a place where the child is protected and exercises his human rights.

If a group residential option is developed to provide emotional support, as described in the previous section, the follow-up should be even more rigorous, because adjustments will probably have to be made according to the needs of the children to whom this alternative is offered.

In any case, the establishment of a proper file, where all the information on the child or adolescent is safely recorded, as precisely as possible, will facilitate the follow-up procedure and the continued evaluation of the intervention process in the long term.



Final Considerations

Knowledge of the biographical events and circumstances that helped lay the foundations for the vulnerability of child and adolescent victims of commercial sexual exploitation provides us with information on their most crucial needs, so that the existing institutional offer can be adapted in order to respond to them satisfactorily.

Since expulsion from the family circle is one of the most important turning points in the development of the vulnerability of children and adolescents to the sex trade, reinsertion in an affective and supportive environment is a key factor when defining priority actions to achieve their removal from commercial sexual exploitation and the full exercise of their rights. In this regard, systematized, viable alternatives based on suggestions offered by the victims themselves and by experts and survivors of exploitation should be offered. All those consulted, share the same opinion: institutionalization ends up becoming one more violation of the human rights of the children and adolescents, and one more factor that increases their vulnerability.

Furthermore, no programme of action or intervention plan designed for a male victim of commercial sexual exploitation can ignore the precise circumstances of his situation and these should be taken into account when designing a strategy which, by definition, must be individual and specific in order to respond to the particular needs of each child and adolescent. Aspects such as the development of masculinity in adolescence, the strong presence of a significant number of victims who are sexually diverse (with behaviour associated with homosexuality and/or transvestism), the use of drugs and the presence of sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, are factors that must be taken into account in the approach.

Consequently, the offer of services available through an inter-institutional platform must be coordinated so that it includes elements such as access to flexible and attractive educational and vocational training processes, health services that include prompt access to urological services and to appropriate tests and treatment for STDs and AIDS, as well as a varied offer of treatments for drug addiction.

Above all, the service providers responsible for implementing the inter-institutional offer must have the ability to assist male victims of commercial sexual exploitation with respect and tolerance; this will enable them to develop the necessary empathy and concern to ensure the success of the actions designed to achieve the comprehensive protection of child and adolescent victims of commercial sexual exploitation.



Recommendations

To ensure that the inter-institutional platform offered in response to the needs of male victims of commercial sexual exploitation has the desired impact, the following recommendations should be borne in mind:

- Take the necessary steps (some of which are suggested in this chapter) to make male victims of commercial sexual exploitation visible and facilitate their access to agencies working to defend their rights, and to the inter-institutional platform of services in general.
- Channel the necessary resources to adapt the existing offer of services, so that the needs of these children and adolescents are truly met. Frequently, this does not even involve requesting new resources, but rather the rational redistribution of those that exist.
- Institutionalization should be avoided at all costs. It has been confirmed that placing victims of commercial sexual exploitation, particularly children and adolescents who are sexually diverse, in institutions involves an imminent risk to their physical, psychological and sexual integrity, and it also runs counter to the human rights approach.
- Working with the families is a priority. The families should not be blamed, but rather they should be strengthened insofar as possible, encouraging the family's protective role, and thus facilitating the child's reinsertion. Identifying family and community alternatives should be part of this strategy, which should be designed to look beyond the individual child or adolescent.
- Since expulsion from the family is one of the most important factors in developing the vulnerability of children to the sex trade and numerous other violations of their rights, a genuine policy of preventing expulsion from the family and strengthening the supportive role of this social group should be implemented by the institutions responsible for children and adolescents.
- The necessary resources should be channelled towards raising the awareness of service providers and training them on all aspects of masculinity, male victimization and sexual diversity. In the absence of professionals with the necessary knowledge and sensitivity to work with the special characteristics of this population, it will be difficult for the platform of services to have the desired impact on the problem.
- In relation to the above, professional training centres, especially public universities, should address the issue of preparing students with the necessary knowledge and sensitivity to be able to make a significant contribution based on the reality of Costa Rican society.



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Annexes

Annex 1: Concepts relating to sexual diversity

Sexual Diversity

Sexual diversity is an overarching term that includes every valid manifestation of sexuality, across the whole spectrum. However, it excludes manifestations of sexuality that affect or violate the right to integrity of those involved (such as child sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, and other similar manifestations).

In order to understand the terms relating to sexual diversity, the following is a brief glossary, based on the terminology proposed by Mauro Cabral and Javier Leimgruber in their “*Un Glosario en construcción*”, which appeared in the third issue of the journal *Series para el debate*, published by a Campaign for a Convention on Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Most people are unaware of the meaning of all these terms because, in our society, only heterosexuality is accepted as a valid manifestation of sexuality.

Gender identity: the identification of each person with the gender they feel, recognize and/or choose as their own. It differs from the accepted binomial of man and woman, and includes the transgender or “trans”.

- **Transgender or “trans”:** transgenderism is characterized by the sense of contingency: in transgenderism there are neither two “natural” sexes between which a transition can be made nor a necessary “obligatory” relationship between anatomy, gender identity, gender manifestation and sexuality, etc. “Trans” came to be used to define all those categories that are not typically associated with a person’s assigned sex (transvestites, transsexuals, intersexed individuals and transformists).
- **Intersex people:** those with hermaphroditic aspects, who were born with both feminine and masculine biological elements.
- **Transvestite:** usually used to designate a person assigned the masculine gender at birth, but whose gender expression corresponds to some culturally-intelligible version of femininity, independent of sexual orientation.
- **Transsexuality:** is generally defined by the following characteristics: enduring conviction of belonging to the opposite sex to that assigned at birth; intense discomfort regarding one’s body; persistent desire to adapt the body to the corporal morphology of the opposite sex using hormonal or surgical procedures.
- **Alternative dressing:** is the use of gender manifestations, especially clothing and make-up, corresponding to the opposite sex, but on a temporary basis, owing to work or a stage performance.

Gender manifestation: this is the way in which each person manifests or externalizes their gender in aspects such as clothing, hairstyle, gestures, expressions of affection, lifestyle, etc.

Sexual orientation: refers to a person’s focus of amorous or erotic desires, according to their sex. Thus, a person attracted by the opposite sex is called a *heterosexual*; someone whose love object belongs to the same sex is called a *homosexual*, and someone who does not have an object of desire is *asexual*. This is independent of the gender identity. For example, a transvestite may be a heterosexual.



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COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION PROPOSALS FOR PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE TO CHILD VICTIMS

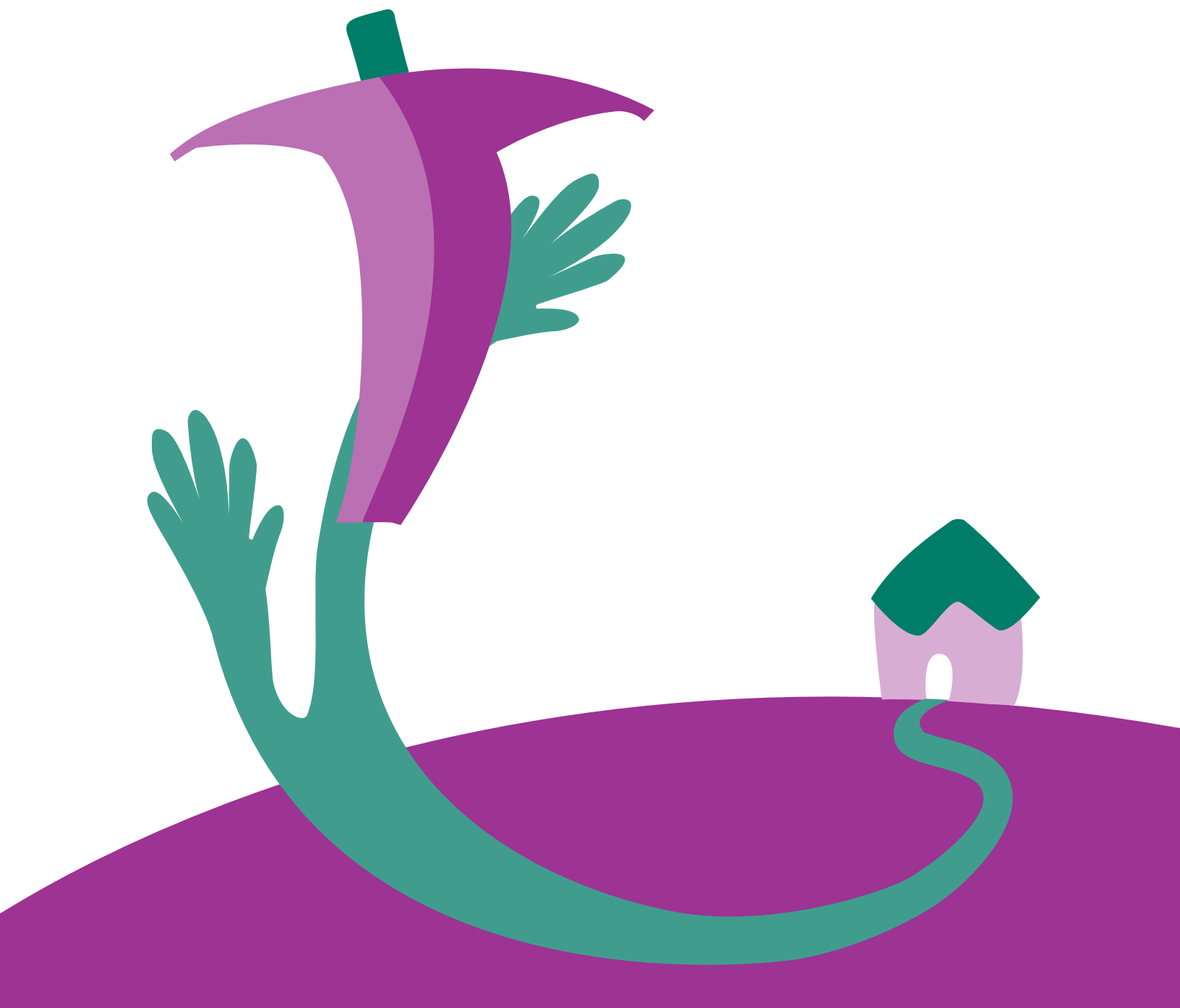
Commercial sexual exploitation and the use of
drugs: Integration of the issue of drug
addiction and substance abuse into services
providing direct assistance to victims of
commercial sexual exploitation

Rogelio Pardo Hernández



IPEC

International
Labour
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First edition, 2005

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ILO - IPEC

Commercial sexual exploitation. Proposals for providing comprehensive assistance to child victims.

San José, Costa Rica, International Labour Office, 2005.

Sexual exploitation, Manual, Human Rights

02.02.1

ISBN:

92-2-317938-6 (print)

92-2-317939-4 (web pdf) ILO Cataloguing in Publications Data

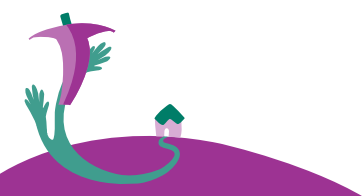
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Printed in Costa Rica



Acknowledgements

“Commercial sexual exploitation. Proposals to incorporate specific factors into assistance for child victims”.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)

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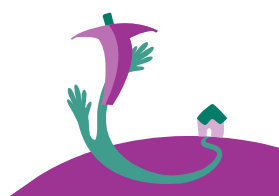
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Commercial sexual exploitation and the use of drugs: Integration of the issue of drug addiction and substance abuse into services providing direct assistance to victims of commercial sexual exploitation

Rogelio Pardo Hernández

Executive Summary

This article explores the way in which commercial sexual exploitation and the use of drugs by children are related, and how the presence of both problems makes this population extremely vulnerable to reiterated and increasingly severe violations of their rights. Owing to the nature of drug dependency, child victims of commercial sexual exploitation have special characteristics that significantly affect the comprehensive protection of their human rights.

The strategy is in line with an approach that reduces this vulnerability and is based on the framework provided by the Cyclic Model of Combined Responses, which provides guidelines for evaluating and prioritizing actions offered by the platform of services when dealing with commercial sexual exploitation. In this respect, in addition to a conceptual basis for understanding the way in which both problems interact in this population, guidelines are proposed and recommendations made for dealing with drug addiction and substance abuse in services that provide direct assistance to children who are victims of the sex trade.

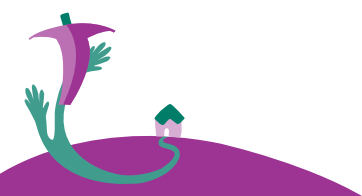
The proposal presented seeks to explain how the issue of drugs should be incorporated into the services required by the victims of commercial sexual exploitation, so that its inclusion can have a real impact on reducing this population's vulnerability due to its exposure to psychoactive substances.

Presentation

Despite progress in making the problem of commercial sexual exploitation more visible, and in focusing efforts on different aspects of this problem, such as suppression and investigation, important actions still need to be implemented, and resources need to be channelled towards the fight to eradicate commercial sexual exploitation.

It is precisely the existence of a series of gaps in our knowledge of this violation of the human rights of the child that have translated into gaps in the implementation of assistance strategies focused on the comprehensive protection of this population's rights.

The proposed Cyclic Model of Combined Responses is one of the most significant efforts to elaborate a general strategy for tackling the problem. It establishes the importance of reducing vulnerability to the sex trade, as the central element when evaluating and



prioritizing actions service providers should implement to achieve the comprehensive protection of the rights of children involved in the sex trade (ILO/IPEC, 2003).

Based on this significant advance, this chapter deals with the relationship between commercial sexual exploitation and the victims' use of and dependency on drugs. It also describes how this human rights violation increases the vulnerability of the child or adolescent to the use of drugs and how substance dependence makes the child more vulnerable to entrapment in the sex trade. The term used for this is *concomitant vulnerability*.

In addition to exploring this relationship, the second part of the chapter presents guidelines and basic recommendations for integrating the issue of drug use and dependence into the services for providing direct assistance to victims of commercial sexual exploitation in order to reduce the role of drugs as a factor that increases the vulnerability of victims of the sex trade.

I. Conceptual Framework. Where do we start?

1.1 Drug use and dependence

It should be understood that a child's dependence on psychoactive substances involves heightened vulnerability to other severe violations of his or her rights, including sexual abuse and exploitation and, in itself, is a violation of his or her human rights, because:

Drug use and dependence significantly affects the quality of life in our societies, and because of its magnitude, transcendence, and extremely high social and economic cost, is ranked among the most serious problems of public health (CICAD/OAS, 2000: 9)

This implies that the use of drugs by children has a major impact on their quality of life in terms of physical deterioration and the presence of illnesses, psychological and psychiatric effects, and also exposure to other violations of their rights and the respective consequences.

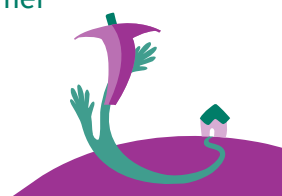
In this regard, the need to protect children from the use of drugs and from the negative consequences of drugs on their overall wellbeing has been recognized internationally.

For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) establishes that:

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances. (Article 33, Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN, 1989)

In this context, a distinction must be made between three different categories of utilization of psychoactive substances: **use, abuse and dependence**.

According to Martín and Fernández (1999), when we speak of use, this should be understood as one-time, occasional, sporadic use, without any habitual rhythm and without tolerance or dependency. According to this definition, the occasional use of psychoactive substances by adults does not, in itself, imply a risk for the individual or a violation of rights. However, in the case of children, it cannot be considered that the use of drugs does not involve some level of risk, because the effects of exposure to drugs always entails a risk for a child's physical and psychological wellbeing owing to his or her



development and growth processes. Consequently, even though this category can be used in the case of adults, it cannot be applied to children.

Substance abuse can be understood as:

Any use of drugs that damages the physical, mental or social wellbeing of an individual, several individuals or society as a whole (British Royal College of Psychiatrists, cited by Martín and Fernández, 1999: 5)

Martín and Fernández (1999) indicate that drug abuse generally involves an evolutionary process towards drug dependency; moreover, in itself, it entails risks and consequences for the health of the drug abuser. Nevertheless, these authors also point out that many people who use drugs may abuse them for a relatively long period without becoming dependent on them. In any case, drug abuse is defined by the risk it entails and this may arise from the conditions in which drugs are consumed, the amount or type of substance, or a combination of these elements.

Regarding drug dependency, the American Psychiatric Association, in DSM-IV, specifies that:

The essential characteristic of substance dependence is a group of cognitive, behavioural and physiological symptoms indicating that the individual continues to use the substance despite the appearance of significant problems related to this ... there is a pattern of repeated self-administration that often leads to tolerance, abstinence and a compulsive ingestion of the substance. (DSM-IV, APA, 1994)

At any rate, dependence has been categorized according to whether it is physical, psychological or social. The three have specific characteristics but the common feature is that the individual is dependent on compulsively using and obtaining drugs; in general, they should be considered interactive elements that affect the addictive behaviour.

It should be pointed out that the use of psychoactive substances and, especially, drug dependence is considered a severe violation of the human rights of children and adolescents, because it is recognized that it increases vulnerability to suffering a significant deterioration in their quality of life.

However, few specific criteria have been developed concerning the use and dependence on addictive substances, based on the actual circumstances of children and adolescents, which are applicable to the particular conditions of children (including their age, degree of maturity, good judgment, and specific condition as subjects of rights).

For example, the elements to define substance abuse can be identified (and the principal diagnostic tool is the existence of a level of risk derived from use that affects the wellbeing of the individual or those around him or her); this implies considering the situations and circumstances in which drugs are used. However, in the case of children, there is no circumstance in which drugs are used that does not involve a significant risk to their wellbeing.

1.2 Preliminary indications of the relationship between commercial sexual exploitation and the use of drugs

In our country, significant efforts have been made in the area of research, and this has made it possible to publish studies that, even though they are not focused on the connection that exists between the commercial sexual exploitation of children and the victims' use of drugs, have revealed the presence of a high level of interaction between



the two problems.

In one of the first studies that took into account the variable of drugs, commercial sexual exploitation and the human rights of the child, Claramunt (1998) found an elevated use of alcohol and drugs among victims of commercial sexual exploitation, especially alcohol (87.6%), marihuana (70.2%), cocaine (43.0%), crack (45.5%) and basuko (41.3).

The figures show a significant presence of drugs among this population, with the consequent exposure to situations of abuse and dependence, and the resulting consequences of the quality of life.

According to the study, around 60% of those consulted stated that they used alcohol and crack daily or very frequently, which is a clear indication of dependence on these substances. A similar situation exists with regard to the other substances that victims of commercial sexual exploitation use most. It is also important to point out that there is a significant use of pills, generally psychoactive medicines such as sedatives, tranquilizers, anti-depressants and anti-psychotics (Claramunt, 1998).

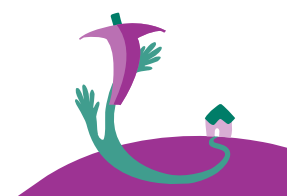
The author established a connection between drugs and the sex trade in this study. On the one hand, she was able to establish a correlation between the age of starting to take drugs and entrapment in sexual exploitation and, on the other hand, she was able to identify drugs as an important factor in helping exploiters keep the children ensnared, because the sex trade provides the latter with resources with which to acquire drugs. The reasons why the victims may use these substances include peer pressure and traumatic experiences that can be alleviated by the use of drugs.

Another study (ILO/IPEC, 2002) also reveals an elevated prevalence of the use of drugs and psychotropic substances among the victims of commercial sexual exploitation. More than 85% of the victims interviewed consumed alcohol, 80% reported they used marihuana, and more than 40% used crack. In addition, almost one-third (29%) stated that they used drugs other than alcohol every day, which clearly shows their high degree of dependence.

USE OF DRUGS AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES		
Drug/Active substance	Use	
	YES	NO
Alcohol	86.0	14.0
Tobacco	82.0	18.0
Marihuana	80.0	20.0
Cocaine	34.0	66.0
Crack	41.0	59.0
Basuko	30.0	70.0
Pills	7.0	93.0
Cement	11.0	89.0
Gasoline	2.0	97.0*

*One girl did not answer the question, so the figures do not add up to 100%

Table 1. Source: ILO/IPEC, 2002



The same study indicates that the problem of commercial sexual exploitation is linked to and cuts across the drug phenomenon in different ways. It mentions, for example, that in many cases payments received by victims of commercial sexual exploitation, either from the client-exploiter or from the intermediary, may be given in the form of drugs. Moreover, since the sex trade is connected to other crimes and unlawful activities, many children entrapped in the sex trade are used to transport and distribute drugs. This reveals the connection between commercial sexual exploitation networks and drug-trafficking networks.

In this regard, the children's dependence on drugs becomes not only a significant factor of vulnerability to entrapment but, above all, an element that consolidates their permanence within the exploitation activities, and makes it extremely difficult to provide comprehensive protection for the rights of children and adolescents in the sex trade. This is particularly true because this dependence is used as a strategy by the exploiters (they oblige the children to pay their drug debts), or because the children use drugs as a way of "anaesthetizing" the pain resulting from being so intensely exposed to abuse and violence and even, in many case, to compensate for the lack of basic necessities.

II. General guidelines for assisting victims of commercial sexual exploitation who use psychoactive substances

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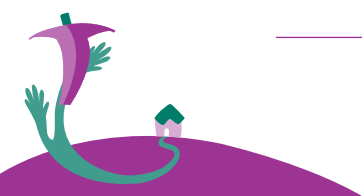
General considerations

The following are some general guidelines that attempt to provide guidance for assisting victims of commercial sexual exploitation who abuse of psychoactive substances or are dependent on them.

As mentioned previously, the relationship between the two problems results in a significant increase in a child's vulnerability to possible violations of his or her human rights, including severe violations of the right to health, to a life free from violence and abuse, and the right to life.

In the first place, it is necessary to take into account the relationship between the use of drugs and commercial sexual exploitation, since it increases the child's vulnerability:

Diagram 1



This diagram shows the effect of each problem as a factor of vulnerability that increases the risk of entrapment in the other, and vice versa. In this regard, one of the principal effects of commercial sexual exploitation, as a violation of rights and as a phenomenon that leaves serious psychological scars owing to the suffering from the repeated violence endured, is that the child resorts to the use of psychoactive substances as a way of anaesthetizing or enduring the experiences of sexual exploitation and even of compensating for the lack of basic necessities - to alleviate feelings of hunger or physical pain.

Furthermore, the use of drugs and, particularly dependence on them, places the child in a situation of greater vulnerability to sexual exploiters. Owing either to the need to pay for the drugs, or merely to the fact that both criminal activities occur in the same context (drug-trafficking networks and commercial sexual exploitation networks frequently overlap), children and adolescents who are dependent on drugs become an easy target for sexual exploiters. And even if the use of drugs has not directly resulted in entrapment in the sex trade, it makes a significant contribution to maintaining victims ensnared in exploitation activities.

This indicates that the two violations may frequently be associated and that, when they coincide, they tend to significantly exacerbate the situation of vulnerability of the victims. Consequently, assistance should be aimed at dealing with both situations.

Certain preparatory elements are therefore required in order to tackle the co-existence of these phenomena effectively: concrete resources must be identified and obtained, and the professionals directly responsible for providing services to victims of commercial sexual exploitation must develop and apply specific intervention tools.

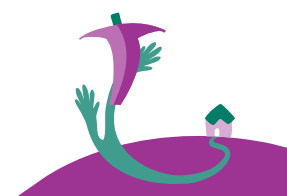
The guidelines offered are adaptations of the Cyclic Model of Combined Responses (developed by Claramunt in the first chapter of this publication) for assisting victims of commercial sexual exploitation, and are based on technical specifications and recommendations made by experts and a specialized bibliography on drug dependence. In this regard, in order to apply the guidelines contained in this article, it would be useful to read the general documents that explain the assistance model (*Guía de trabajo para proveedores/as y encargados/as de servicios dirigidos a personas menores de edad víctimas*, ILO/IPEC, 2003; *Guía para la Detección*, ILO/IPEC-Rahab, 2004, b; *Guía para la Atención*, ILO/IPEC-Rahab, 2004, a), because the contents of this chapter are specifically based on this model of assistance to victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

These guidelines have been defined based on the stages of the intervention model:

- Detection and registration
- Assistance: First and Second Level Interventions
- Follow-up and monitoring

In addition, basic recommendations are made for dealing with the problems that arise in drug-related emergencies (acute intoxication and overdose).

There is also a section that describes the measures that should be taken before dealing with the co-existence of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and the latter's use of and dependence on drugs to ensure that the necessary mechanisms are available.



2.2 Procedures that should precede dealing with the use of drugs by victims of commercial sexual exploitation

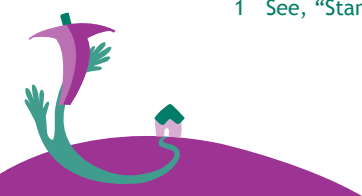
Owing to the very great possibility of encountering cases where drug use is identified, the following actions are recommended as part of the procedures that should precede the design of general intervention strategies in the case of victims of commercial sexual exploitation, in order to have a significant impact on both problems and thus provide responses adapted to the special characteristics of each child and adolescent.

- **Put together an appropriate platform of services for assisting victims of commercial sexual exploitation who abuse or are dependent on psychoactive substances.** This involves several stages. First, all the institutional resources, at both the local and the national level, that provide services to these children should be identified and a list prepared. The list should contain a general assessment of the quality of the services that these institutions provide,¹ particularly with regard to respect for the human rights of the child. Lastly, and most importantly, a process of coordination must be established with the institutions considered appropriate for the referral of cases, so that such actions are carried out promptly when required. Consequently, it is necessary to understand each institution's requirements and what they imply for the service provider. This coordination process should include negotiating the possibility of providing continuity to the intervention plan aimed at providing comprehensive protection for the human rights of the child, particularly in cases where the resource is a therapeutic community (residential treatment). This is an important element to consider when referring children to centres that specialize in addictions.

If there are no health professionals in the zone with specific training in dealing with children with addictive behaviour, the necessary steps need to be taken with Government authorities to obtain this resource, either by incorporating new professionals or by training those that exist in the zone.

- **Service providers from the institution that assists victims of commercial sexual exploitation should be trained to deal with the use of psychoactive substances by children.** This training should include aspects such as dealing with drug-related emergencies (first aid), dealing with children under the influence of psychoactive substances, and counselling on the elaboration of the relevant protocols and instruments.
- **The elaboration of procedures and protocols to deal with the coexistence of commercial sexual exploitation and use of psychoactive substances.** This generally involves developing instruments for the detection and care of drug abuse and dependence in victims of commercial sexual exploitation, such as guidelines for interviews, tools for identifying drug dependence, checking and cross-checking mechanisms to be used with agencies that provide services to children and adolescents with addictive behaviour, etc. It is possible to use instruments that already exist as a basis; however, these instruments should not be applied directly, but be adapted to the explicit context of the agency to ensure that they

¹ See, "Standards of Care in the Treatment of Drug Dependence: Experience in the Americas.", CICAD/OAS, 2000



are adapted to the specific circumstances of the children to whom services are provided. This is to ensure the maximum benefit when attempting to respond to the special needs of the victims of commercial sexual exploitation who are assisted.

2.3 Detection element

The first step in interventions in cases of commercial sexual exploitation from a human rights approach, and specifically within the framework of the Cyclic Model of Combined Responses, is setting the detection process in motion.² Detection is understood to be:

...a process rather than an action. It is defined as a series of procedures to confirm suspicions and assess the situation. (ILO/IPEC-Rahab, 2004, b: 17)

Consequently, the detection process initiates and guides the comprehensive protection strategy. It involves confirming the suspicion or ascertaining that a child is entrapped in the sex trade, as well as a family and psychosocial assessment of the child or adolescent, and of the situation of victimization, including the related risks.

The process of detection calls for a procedure that is implemented once a victim of commercial sexual exploitation has been identified; it involves the assessment of personal, family and community factors that place the victim at risk of entrapment in the sex trade. The child's drug abuse and dependence should be explored and analyzed during this assessment.

Detection is a process during which the following are assessed:

- A) The facts related to victimization by commercial sexual exploitation;
 - B) The risk of revictimization within the sex trade;
 - C) Individual and family needs;
 - D) Available resources.
-

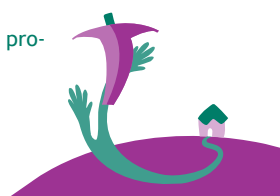
Source: *Guía para la Detección*, ILO/IPEC-Rahab, 2004, b.

Since detection is a process during which the factors associated with commercial sexual exploitation are assessed (including aspects such as the risk of the child being revictimized, as well as the special characteristics of the child and his or her family), the process of **detecting the use of psychoactive substances** should take place within this general process of detecting commercial sexual exploitation.

As mentioned previously, this is because the presence of drug abuse or dependence may be related to the child's initial entrapment or continuance within the sex trade. At any rate, as we have repeatedly indicated, the presence of this problem increases the vulnerability of children and adolescents to severe violations of their human rights.

2.3.1 Principles that guide the detection of the use of drugs in victims of commercial sexual exploitation

² This is described in the *Guía para la Detección* (ILO/IPEC-Rahab, 2004, b), which should be studied carefully, because it provides a general framework for the detection process.



The first and most important observation in this regard, is that the guiding principles proposed by ILO/IPEC-Rahab (2004, b) are applicable. However, in order to provide an appropriate response to possible needs should the use of drugs be detected, the relevant aspects should be emphasized.

Thus, the guiding principles for detecting the use of drugs in victims of commercial sexual exploitation are as follows:

- Detection of psychoactive substances use entails a series of actions that often involve collecting information from different sources, including the child, his or her family, the community and the peer group, in order to be as certain as possible about the presence or absence of the problem.

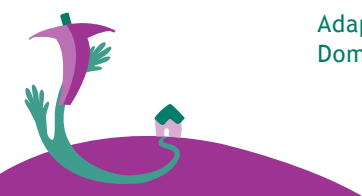
Service providers should always give due importance to the use of legal or illegal drugs. Any conduct that appears to indicate use should be assessed, owing to the inherent risk involved in a child's use of drugs.

- The purpose of the detection process should be to confirm or rule out the use of drugs and, should drug use be confirmed, to obtain relevant information for preparing an intervention plan to provide comprehensive protection for the rights of the child. The purpose of the intervention in cases of drug addiction is to reduce the vulnerability of the child or adolescent to the sex trade. This involves assessing two significant aspects of use: the connection with victimization by commercial sexual exploitation, and the type of use (including the type of substance, the presence of abuse or dependence, and the type of risk involved).

2.3.2 Procedures for detecting the use of drugs in victims of commercial sexual exploitation

These procedures should be included in the general process of detecting commercial sexual exploitation and they should be implemented at the same time. Exploring for the use of drugs in this population should be a basic element of the detection process. Should drug use be suspected or identified, exploration and evaluation should increase; this could be prompted by the recognition of indicators such as:

- Alterations in perception (seeing things that no one else sees, hearing things that no one else hears)
- Alterations in attention
- Alterations in psychomotor behaviour
- Alterations in thought processes (for example, hallucinations)
- Alterations in judgement
- Sudden changes in mood and attitudes
- Sudden and continued decline in attending school and poor performance
- Sudden and continued resistance to discipline at home and at school
- Stealing from the home, school or work
- Possession of a hypodermic needle, a medicine dropper and/or a spoon
- If the eyes are sometimes glassy and reddened and the pupils dilated
- If there are sometimes small blood stains on the shirt sleeves



The following strategies can be used when assisting the victim:

1. Interviews
2. Use of appropriate instruments
3. Medical examinations and toxicology tests

The interviews should follow the same general guidelines indicated by ILO/IPEC (2003). Accordingly, the main purpose of the interview is, on the one hand, to help develop empathy between the service provider and the child (psychological contact) and, on the other, to be a highly effective assessment tool.

The interview should be designed to assess the following aspects of the use of psychoactive substances by the victim:

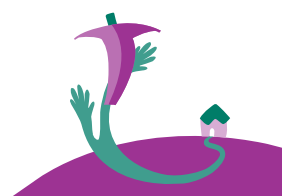
A. Existing relationship between drug use and commercial sexual exploitation.

This involves exploring aspects such as the role that drugs may play as an agent of the entrapment and maintenance of the child in the sex trade. To this end, it is necessary to determine whether the connection is direct (payment in drugs, exploiters as providers of substances to facilitate abuse, arrangements between drug-trafficking and exploitation networks, use of the child in trafficking and distributing drugs), or indirect (the money received is used to buy drugs).

B. Definition of the type of use. This can usually be determined during the interview, according to the way the child or adolescent describes his or her use. However, in this regard, it is useful to employ tools or instruments (such as short questionnaires) that have been specifically designed for this purpose. The idea is to determine the frequency and intensity of drug use and to evaluate the presence of indicators of physical and psychological dependence.

C. Determination of vulnerability to suffering severe human rights violations as a result of drug use. This involves determining the human rights of the child that are at greatest risk of being violated, as a result of vulnerability linked to the use of drugs. This is derived precisely from the aspects mentioned above as objectives of the interview. Obviously, there is a significant probability that the right to health is one of the rights that are being violated, and also the right to a life free of violence and abuse, because of the significant danger of revictimization by commercial sexual exploitation for a victim who suffers from drug abuse or dependence. But the situation of each child or adolescent is distinct so, in each case, this vulnerability must be carefully explored.

D. The resources that the child can count on and that can be organized to resolve the situation of substance use. In this aspect, family and community resources are the most important and, when dealing with problems related to drug dependence, they have proved to help significantly in reducing the problem. The special characteristics of these resources must be taken into account, because the service provider must often carry out a parallel effort with members of the family or the community before really being able to use them as a valuable support resource. (See the article by Nadia Blanco regarding the intervention with the family, in this publication).



In any case, an adult's support in following-up on and monitoring the child's drug addiction treatment is an invaluable part of this process. Also, the insertion of the victim into community activities (such as parish activities for young people, groups that practice sports, etc.) can be very useful.

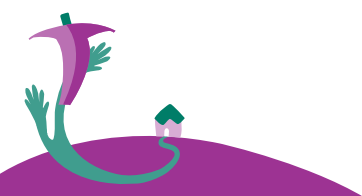
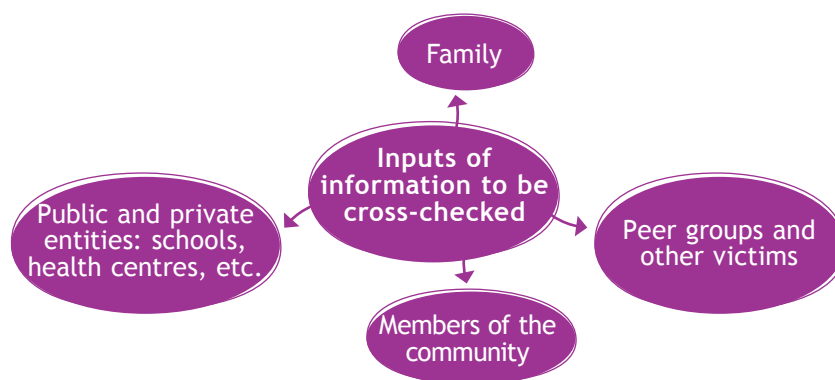
The instruments are tools designed to strengthen the process of detecting substance use in victims of commercial sexual exploitation. It is especially useful to have checklists for verifying indicators of dependence and detection of abuse, and also guidelines for interviews to explore use during the first contacts with the child, and during monitoring and follow-up.

An example of one such instrument can be found in annex. As mentioned in the section on procedures that should precede the intervention, this instrument, together with the other tools, should be reviewed and adapted before being used with the population. The suggested tools are recommended by the United Nations and were originally prepared by the United Kingdom. It is extremely important to design an instrument that permits the existence of drug dependency to be clearly defined. Consequently, this instrument should be elaborated based on DSM-IV or CIE/10 criteria.

Medical and toxicology tests should be designed to strengthen the overall process of detecting substance use in the child or adolescent victim of commercial sexual exploitation. When it is suspected that a child uses drugs, but it is difficult to confirm this, one option is the use of blood and/or urine tests as a detection tool.

Such tests will confirm or disprove the suspicion of drug use by the child, and will even provide an idea about the type of use. They can be included as an input when assisting the child or adolescent. In this regard, some prior measures may be useful, such as coordinating with the health agencies (clinics, hospitals) that offer this service in order to speed up tests for the child.

Diagram 2
Sources of information



Finally, it is worth pointing out that *the existence of both commercial sexual exploitation and the use of drugs pose difficulties for the identification and, thus, the detection of victims*. The rarity of cases of drug dependence detected by projects that provide assistance to victims of commercial sexual exploitation, according to those who provide direct service to this population (in contrast with the findings of research into this phenomenon), suggests that service providers are not trained to detect the problem.

Two basic strategies to try and resolve this situation would involve: (a) training service providers working with commercial sexual exploitation to detect and assess substance use, and (b) training service providers working with drug dependence to detect and assess commercial sexual exploitation.

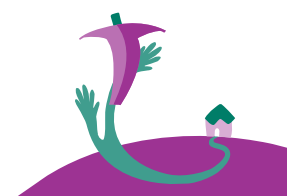
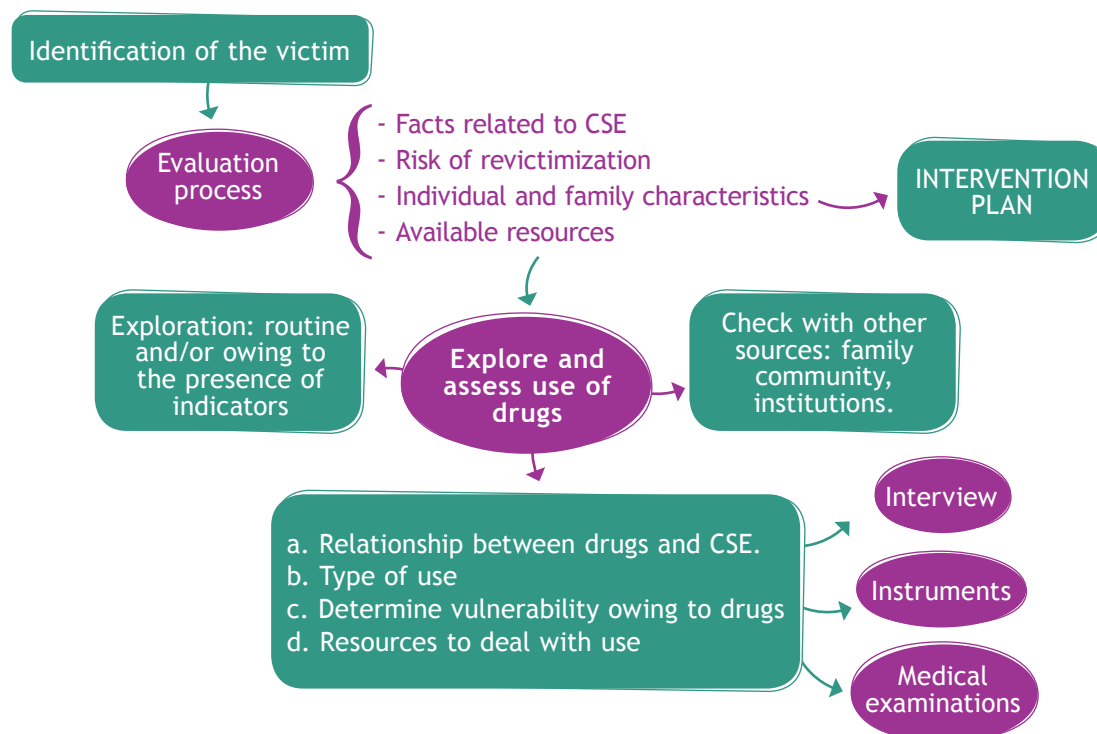
The training offered should clearly stress the importance of identifying victimization by commercial sexual exploitation among children who use drugs, because tackling the problem of substance dependence in isolation, without taking into account the circumstances in which sexual exploitation occurred and its relationship to the latter, would have little impact on the attempt to ensure the victim's enjoyment of his or her rights.

Once substance use has been detected, professionals and people in general tend not to identify or give importance to the presence of other problems. They direct all the attention and resources to the substance use, and this has an adverse effect on the possibility of ensuring that the children can exercise all their rights.

The following diagram summarizes the principle elements of the detection process.

Diagram 3

Summary of the Drug Factor in the Detection Process



2.4 Assistance

As mentioned previously, this component is implemented once the relevant information for taking decisions that will enable the child to exercise all his or her rights has been collected (during the detection process).

Assistance for drug use in victims of commercial sexual exploitation should be an integral part of the assistance provided for them. Consequently, assistance relating to the decrease and ultimate elimination of the use of psychoactive substances should be a central element of any intervention designed to ensure the child can exercise all his or her rights.

This component includes the Level I and Level II Interventions and, as in the case of the detection process, the procedures are described in the *Guía para la Atención*, designed by ILO/IPEC-Rahab (2004, b) based on the Cyclic Model of Combined Responses.

The idea behind assistance to victims of commercial sexual exploitation is:

...to provide the basic inputs that allow service providers to develop and implement a plan of immediate assistance that offers real opportunities for the protection of child and adolescent victims, and fosters their emotional and physical recovery from the after effects of victimization. (ILO/IPEC-Rahab, 2004, b: 10)

Hence, one of the manifest purposes of this assistance is to achieve the comprehensive protection of the rights of children, through a strategy that effectively reduces their vulnerability.

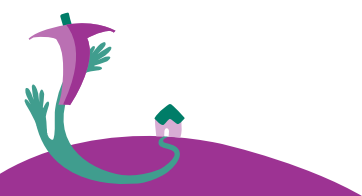
It involves an open-ended number of actions, which will depend on the specificity of the problems of each victim of commercial sexual exploitation and, for the most part, they are included in the combination of services offered by the institutional platform.

The following are the strategies or tasks for dealing with the problem of drug use within the framework of Level I assistance to victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The actions described are those that should be implemented in relation to this specific element; the complete assistance strategy should be much broader according to the special characteristics of the victim of commercial sexual exploitation.

2.4.1 Guiding principles for treating drug use in victims of commercial sexual exploitation

The following are some aspects that should guide the intervention in cases of commercial sexual exploitation where there is also drug use; they closely follow the rationale behind the guiding principles described by IPEC/ILO (2004, a) in the *Guía para la Atención*. In addition, they include some aspects contained in the *Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment*, elaborated by the United States National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) (2001):

- Supplying drugs to a child under the age of 18 is a crime punishable by law; as such, the service provider is obliged to report the crime being committed against the child or adolescent, as in cases of abuse and exploitation.
- No single intervention strategy is effective for every individual. An intervention should provide specific responses to the particular situation of the child, taking into account the information compiled during the detection process, and making it possible to take individual decisions which have a real impact.

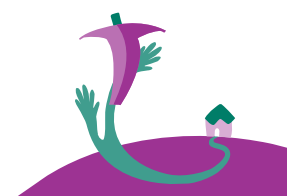


- One of the most important starting points when defining the type of intervention to implement is the nature of the drug use: whether it is substance use, abuse or dependence. There must, of necessity, be a correlation between this factor and the design and implementation of the intervention plan.
- Again, the use of psychoactive substances by children and adolescents should never be underestimated, in terms of the potential risk, even if no abuse or dependence has been detected. This also means that the existence or repetition of behaviours related to drug use must be monitored closely, to avoid a child using drugs, to carry out an early intervention or to prevent a relapse.
- The co-existence of these phenomena may sometimes mean that child victims of the sex trade have also been trapped by drug-trafficking networks, and even that both criminal activities may involve the same criminal organization. This implies significant security issues for both the child and the service providers.
- The intervention plan must prioritize actions or strategies aimed at protecting the life, health and safety of the victim. Consequently, it is essential to assess the role of drugs as a risk factor for health (life and wellbeing) and safety (threats from criminal networks) in the context of the plan.
- The intervention plan with regard to drug abuse or dependence must be assessed continually and, if applicable, modified to ensure that it remains abreast of the changes in the child's needs. A child or adolescent may require combinations of services and treatments that vary during the course of his or her recovery. Over and above mere assessment or psychotherapy, the child may frequently require social and legal services, assistance at the family and community level, medications and medical examinations, and educational and vocational services, among many other possibilities.
- Work with the family and the community, which is an essential component of the intervention for commercial sexual exploitation, is especially important in cases where abuse or dependence on psychoactive substances is also observed. In particular, the family can become a strategic resource to achieve a reduction or relinquishment of the addictive behaviour. However, this frequently implies significant previous (and parallel) work with the family and the community so that they can become collaborators in the process of enabling the child to exercise his or her rights.

2.4.2 Actions concerning drug use within the framework of the First Level Intervention with victims of commercial sexual exploitation

The general recommendations for tackling the issue of drugs in the context of the first level intervention with victims of the sex trade should be differentiated according to the child's level of use.

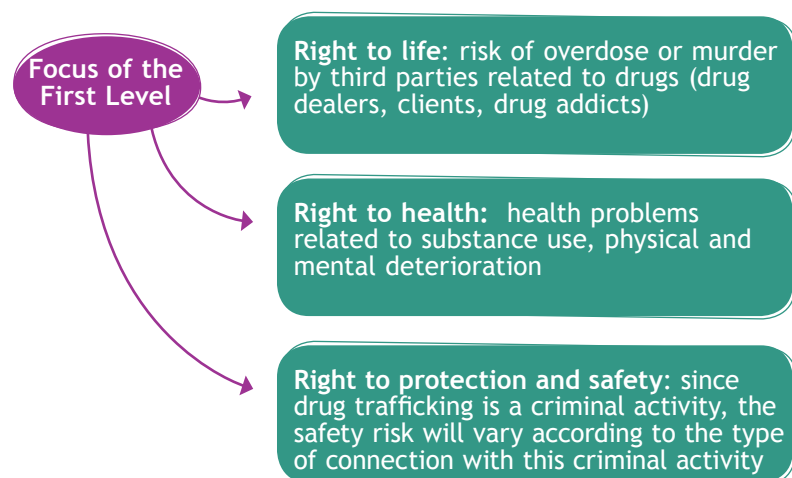
Thus, in cases where significant use or drug dependence is detected in the victim of commercial sexual exploitation, the identification of an option for specialized treatment should be the preferred first level measure.



In the presence of drug dependence in a child, it is difficult, if not impossible to carry out an effective intervention designed to allow the full enjoyment of his or her rights, without first resolving the situation of dependence

Since it is difficult to ensure the enjoyment of the rights of the child, when faced with behaviour that is clearly addictive (owing to the urgent, biological and psychological need to obtain and use drugs), it is necessary to deal with substance use during the first level intervention.

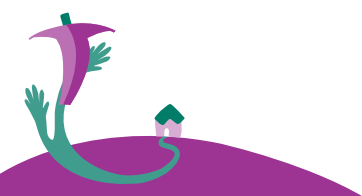
This use and, in general, the presence of drugs in the life of the child or adolescent represent specific problems that must be dealt with during the first level of intervention, because they relate to the rights to life, health and safety, which must be given priority in the treatment strategy. For example:



Appropriate solutions must be found for all the problems mentioned, in order to meet the needs of the child or adolescent that have been identified.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that decisions have to be taken aimed specifically at the ***effective reduction and ultimate elimination in the medium-term of the use of drugs*** in order to ensure the right to life and health. While the addictive behaviour persists, it is not possible to ensure the full exercise of the rights of the child or adolescent, and his or her exposure to severe violations will continue.

One of the alternatives for achieving this specific objective of the first level intervention (which must be combined with the other actions proposed for this stage that are related to the situation of commercial sexual exploitation in general) is to incorporate the child into a ***therapeutic community*** (this is a treatment option that requires the child's temporary and one-time placement in a centre or institution). As mentioned in the section on the measures that should be taken prior to dealing with the problem, identification of local and national agencies that offer this type of service (which implies the temporary placement of the user in a specific physical environment, living with other individuals who are dependent on drugs) and coordination efforts should already have been carried out, as well as an appraisal of the best options in this respect.



The placement of children in residential treatment because of drug use involves two aspects related to the first level intervention:

- a) It implies their temporary placement in an environment that isolates them from their daily routine, so that it generally represents a provisional measure to ensure their right to safety and protection, especially in the case of children who have been trapped by drug-trafficking networks, or those whose lives have been threatened.
- b) The first level intervention process for commercial sexual exploitation and the corresponding overall intervention plan should not cease with the placement of the child in the therapeutic community, even though the duration of the stay tends to be relatively long (it varies from a month to a year).

Although placement brings about a change to a situation where the child or adolescent's protection is significantly increased, owing to the isolation and the safety standards involved in this treatment option, this scenario should only be temporary. Accordingly, it must be ensured that these same rights are guaranteed when the child or adolescent abandons the centre. This entails designing strategies for dealing with commercial sexual exploitation based on the Model: working to strengthen the family, seeking community options for protection, and coordinating with agencies that provide services, etc. (ILO/IPEC, 2003; ILO/IPEC-Rahab, 2004, a).

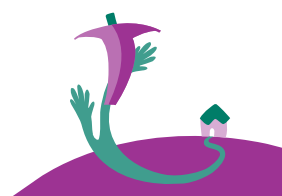
If, for any reason, is not possible to place the child or adolescent in a therapeutic community, an institutional recourse should be found that offers similar therapeutic measures for reducing and eliminating the addictive behaviour. If possible, options that have the best proven results in treating drug dependence should be chosen. Alternatives, other than residential treatment, for treating dependence could include out-patient treatment or monitored pharmacological treatment. The advice of health professionals specialized in drug dependence could be particularly helpful during this stage of defining the appropriate treatment.

In cases in which substance use involves **non-addictive behaviour**, and when it tends to be more sporadic and in amounts that involve less risk, drugs should not be the priority (at least not as they are when there is dependence) in the treatment at this stage; all the same, they should never be underestimated. However, together with adequate monitoring to prevent a change in the type of use towards dependence or an increase in the level of risk, a side effect of the general work to ensure the rights of the child has proved to be its positive impact on reducing or eliminating the use of drugs.

2.4.3 Management of emergencies related to the use of psychoactive substances

Since the work of those who provide services to victims of commercial sexual exploitation may expose them to emergencies related to the use of drugs (intoxication, as well as overdoses and withdrawal complications), due to the coexistence of commercial sexual exploitation and the use of psychoactive substances, some recommendations and factors that must be taken into consideration when managing such emergencies are presented below.

The following is a summary of information obtained from several sources, particularly: *Síndromes de Intoxicación y Abstinencia a Drogas Psicoactivas: recomendaciones para su manejo* (2000) by Dr. Franklin Jiménez Rojas, published by the Costa Rican Institute on



Alcoholism and Pharmacodependence and *Policy and Guidelines on the use of Illicit Drugs*, Exeter University, the United Kingdom.

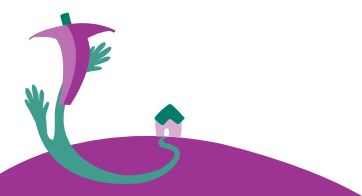
With regard to identifying these emergencies, it is important to point out that the symptoms or indicators of drug intoxication or overdose vary from one substance to another, but the following should be mentioned:

-
- Abnormal size of the pupils:
 - dilated pupils (enlarged)
 - contracted pupils (very small)
 - non-reactive pupils (pupils that do not change size when exposed to the light)
 - Sweating
 - Agitation
 - Convulsions
 - Tremors
 - Stumbling or unsteady gait (ataxia)
 - Difficulty in breathing:
 - accelerated breathing (tachypnea)
 - slow and shallow breathing (respiratory depression)
 - forced breathing
 - Somnolence
 - Unconsciousness (coma)
 - Hallucinations
 - Delirious or paranoid behaviour
 - Violent behaviour
 - Death
-

It is important to point out that the presence of these symptoms constitutes a medical emergency; consequently, specialized help should be sought as soon as possible. This entails calling the emergency services in order to place the person in an environment in which he or she can be given medical treatment. The procedure should be as follows:

- a) Call an ambulance;
- b) Perform first aid procedures;
- c) Keep any tablet or substance found or, if this is not possible, keep a sample of the person's vomit, because this could be very useful to determine the substance he or she has used and, thus, the treatment to be given in the clinic or hospital.

With regard to the first aid procedures, ideally some if not all the personnel of the agency that provides services should have specific training in first aid. It should be one of the obligatory courses for those who could encounter emergencies of this type. However, if there is no one with the appropriate training, someone close at hand (in a nearby



establishment, etc.) who does have such training should be found.

The following are some basic instructions concerning the first aid treatment that should be offered in this context:

If the person is under the influence of a drug:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>If the person is under the influence of a drug:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try to take the drug or substance away from them, but without an argument. - Do not reprimand them or sermonize, they are unable to accept or understand this at that moment. - Help them to calm down and make them feel secure. Avoid threatening them and do not expect normal behaviour; they could become violent unexpectedly. - Do not allow them to sleep and do not leave them unsupervised. People have drowned in their own vomit in such circumstances. - Take note of the incident and record it in the person's file. | <p>If the person is unconscious:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Place them in the recovery position or lying on one side. - Open windows and loosen their clothes around the neck and chest, but keep them warm until help arrives. - If their pulse or breathing has stopped, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) should be administered. - Stay with the person until the ambulance or the emergency medical services arrive. |
|---|---|

2.4.4 Actions related to drug use within the framework of the Second Level Intervention with victims of commercial sexual exploitation

Once the first level intervention has allowed the security and protection of the victim of commercial sexual exploitation to be ensured (which involves reducing the level of use until there are no significant consequences for the health and safety of the victim of commercial sexual exploitation), the second level intervention can be started, in order to ensure the other rights and eventually mitigate the effects of victimization. (ILO/IPEC, 2003; ILO/IPEC-Rahab, 2004, a)

Consequently, we should be able to assume that none of the victims with whom we work at the second level of intervention will demonstrate behaviour related to drug abuse or dependence and, ideally, most of them will not use drugs at all. Furthermore, based on the cyclic concept of the intervention model, it may be necessary to implement first level actions at some point of the intervention.

However, the purpose of the second level intervention is to provide children with tools to manage the consequences of the time during which they were addicted. It may include:

- Working with the family, if it has been affected by the child or adolescent's drug use.
- Working with the community, particularly if the use was accompanied by illegal



acts (such as theft or assault) and, in general, stigmatization of the child or adolescent.

- Providing tools to prevent a relapse.

The last point refers to the possibility of the person providing services to victims of commercial sexual exploitation offering children the necessary tools to improve their likelihood of avoiding a repetition of the conduct of abuse or dependence.

In this case, it is crucial for the service providers to coordinate the required training and obtain the necessary resources. Consideration of the different possibilities that can be offered is recommended. For example, individual treatment could be offered, or a group could be organized to develop these tools.

As we have mentioned repeatedly, each agency that provides services should adapt and implement its own intervention strategies and protocols. When helping children to avoid future substance use, there are several options that can be used as a basis, including the one proposed by Argüello (unpublished, 2004) on stress management, which involves teaching them techniques that can improve their quality of life and help them endure daily situations of tension in a more healthy manner, thus reducing the harmful physical and psychological consequences of stress.

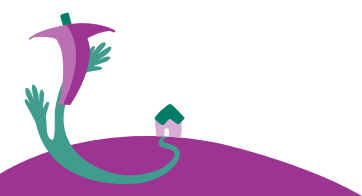
2.4.5 Monitoring

When monitoring the use of psychoactive substances, special consideration should be accorded to the fact that this should be continued throughout the process, once there are clear indications that the addictive behaviour has been overcome.

This means that monitoring is essential, even during the first level intervention (if it is necessary to work on other aspects that affect the right to life, health and safety of the child, once abuse or dependence has been overcome), in order to be on the alert for a repetition of behaviour related to use. This should extend to all the stages of the intervention on commercial sexual exploitation (second level and follow-up), because it is important to take prompt measures, if there is a change in the frequency or level of use, to avoid a repetition of the abuse of psychoactive substances or dependence on them.

The monitoring strategies can be borrowed from those suggested in the section on detection: interviews, use of instruments, drug tests. However, the interview should be the preferred approach, and the other two strategies should be used as tools, if the presence of addictive behaviour is suspected.

As in the detection phase, another strategy is to use information from other victims, the peer group, the family, neighbours, people in the community and officials from institutions whose work brings them into contact with the child (including, primary care health assistants (ATAPS), and officials from the health and educational sectors). In this regard, the institutional follow-up can include requesting information that will help the monitoring process.



Final considerations

It is obvious that the co-existence of commercial sexual exploitation and drug abuse or dependence involves a significant increase in the adverse effects on the well-being and quality of life of the child who is a victim of these problems, as well as an escalation of the risk of suffering severe human rights violations.

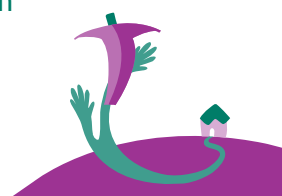
It is therefore important to point out that an intervention on drug use in these cases should be included within the general strategy for dealing with the situation of victimization due to commercial sexual exploitation. However, it can be stated validly that the priority of treating substance use is justified, because it entails risks for the life, health and safety of child and adolescent victims, and also because, unless the problem of drug use is resolved, particularly when it involves abuse or dependence, the work to ensure the other rights is very difficult, if not impossible.

Likewise, it should be emphasized that, to be able to offer appropriate treatment for addictive behaviour, in the context of the services aimed at removing a child from commercial sexual exploitation and the full exercise of the rights of child victims, the implementing agencies must take specific measures, including the elaboration of protocols and instruments that facilitate the treatment.

Recommendations

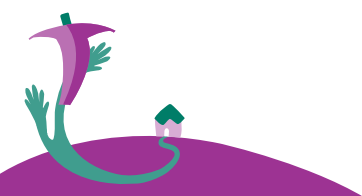
The following recommendations should be borne in mind by the different sectors that provide services to the population in question, in order to obtain the desired effects in terms of reducing the problem of commercial sexual exploitation and ensuring that the interventions have a significant impact on the victims:

- Appropriate training should be offered to those who provide services to children and adolescents. In the case of those working in the area of commercial sexual exploitation, they should be given the technical means to carry out an appropriate process of detection and treatment of the use of drugs within the framework of their intervention. While those who provide services in the area of drug addiction in children should be trained to deal appropriately with cases of victims of commercial sexual exploitation.
- It is vital to strengthen the institutional platform and the offer of services in relation to the use of drugs, particularly by children and adolescents. Several options for dealing with the problem are needed, especially in the area of treatment. Therapeutic communities should not be the sole alternative and, in this respect, the State should support research into new treatment options that are proved to have an impact on the problem and their implementation.
- The State, through the agency responsible for providing health services, or using the corresponding mechanisms, should evaluate and monitor the services made available by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) when providing assistance in



cases of drug addiction. In particular, it is necessary to verify the impact of the different intervention models and their conformity with the human rights approach. These appraisals should be facilitated to all service providers working in the area of childhood and adolescence.

- The public universities should support the development of new proposals for treating drug addiction, especially as regards the presence of the problem in children and adolescents. This would enable them to play a crucial role as producers of useful knowledge on an issue that is a priority on the national agenda.



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Annexes



Priority checklist

- ☐ Client is pregnant
- ☐ Children may be at risk
- ☐ Client is currently injecting drugs
- ☐ Client has physical health conditions/symptoms that are likely to require treatment
- ☐ Client has psychiatric problems that are likely to require treatment
- ☐ There is concern about the client's risk of self-harm
- ☐ There is concern that the client may represent a safety threat to others

Action

1. Client is currently in treatment/contact with:

Specialist substance abuse service:

General practitioner (GP):

Community mental health team:

Criminal justice programme:

Social services:

Other type of treatment (specify):

Details of treatment/service:

2. Referral priority

Substance abuse problems - circle

0 = No referral required (no identified drug problems requiring further assessment)

1 = Standard referral (substance problems requiring triage assessment by substance abuse service)

2 = Priority referral (substantial problems requiring priority assessment by substance abuse service)

3 = Immediate referral (acute, urgent problems requiring immediate assessment by substance abuse service)

Other medical/social problems – 0,1,2,3

3. Referred to:

Specialist substance abuse service:

General practitioner (GP):

Hospital Accident/ER Department:

Social Services:

Details: _____

Screened by: _____ Date: _____



5

COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION PROPOSALS FOR PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE TO CHILD VICTIMS

Proposed measures involving the family for
the comprehensive protection of child and
adolescent victims of the sex trade

Nadia Blanco Guzmán



IPEC

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First edition, 2005

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ILO - IPEC

Commercial sexual exploitation. Proposals for providing comprehensive assistance to child victims.

San José, Costa Rica, International Labour Office, 2005.

Sexual exploitation, Manual, Human Rights

02.02.1

ISBN:

92-2-317938-6 (print)

92-2-317939-4 (web pdf) ILO Cataloguing in Publications Data

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See our websites: www.ipecc.it.or.cr and www.oit.or.cr

Printed in Costa Rica



Acknowledgements

“Commercial sexual exploitation. Proposals to incorporate specific factors into assistance for child victims”.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

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Proposed measures involving the family for the comprehensive protection of child and adolescent victims of the sex trade

Nadia Blanco Guzmán

Executive Summary

This article presents a proposal for providing assistance to the families of children who have been victims of commercial sexual exploitation. It is addressed to those who work to ensure the comprehensive protection of the human rights of children and adolescents.

The proposal is based on the author's research on the socio-economic situation and intergenerational dynamics of the families assisted by the project: "Contribution to the prevention and elimination of commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in the communities of Corredores and Golfito" (ILO/IPEC-Universidad de Costa Rica)." In-depth interviews with children and their families were used, together with a questionnaire that recorded the socio-economic situation of each family and whether there had been incidents of domestic violence. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with officials and experts. The theoretical and ethical analysis was carried using two approaches: human rights and gender.

Based on the above, it was possible to obtain a description of the processes within the family and the community that make children vulnerable to sexual exploiters. Some of the factors that have weakened the family support networks in each generation have been mentioned in previous research; they include violence due to gender and age, extreme poverty and the lack of access to basic social services (Castro and Chaves, 2002). Other dynamics within the family and the social system were observed, such as the impunity of commercial sexual exploitation and the lack of opportunities for advancement. Furthermore, influences arising from a culture of significant marginalization take the form of beliefs and actions within the family and the community that hold the children responsible for the very exploitation that victimizes them.

Lastly, a proposal is presented for assisting the families mentioned, in order to strengthen their support fabric in keeping with the model of comprehensive human development.



I. Basic elements for assisting the family

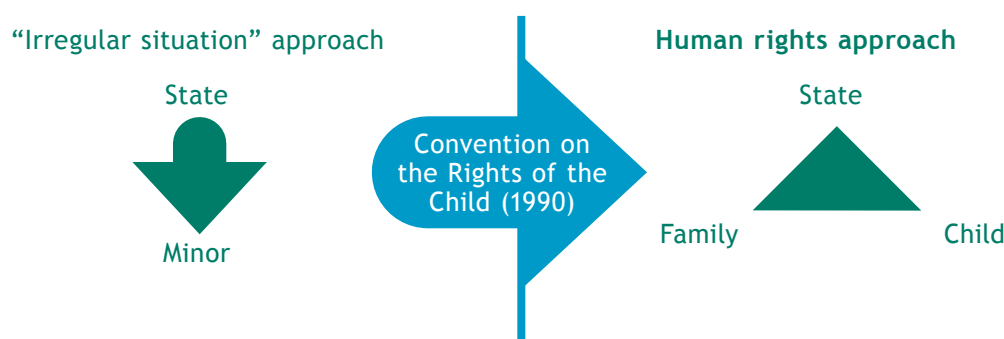
It should be recalled that, when the States parties signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), they pledged that their institutions would establish policies for actions to ensure comprehensive assistance for children and their families. The opening preambular paragraphs recognize the importance of the family group in the development of children and adolescents, and the goals to which assistance to this group should be directed:

Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990)

Contrary to the “irregular situation” approach that proposed removing children from the family environment and institutionalizing them, the human rights approach accords the family a privileged place as a highly significant group for promoting the protection of the child. The following diagram illustrates the difference between the institutional interventions relating to the two approaches.

Diagram 1

Relationship between the State, the family and the child



According to the rationale of the best *interests of the child*, family life should be respected in any type of intervention for the comprehensive protection of the human rights of children and adolescents. If the family environment is not suitable, the State institutions must design a plan, in collaboration with the family, to improve its living conditions. This is particularly important in the case of the assistance that should be provided to families living in conditions of social vulnerability.¹

Numerous studies have shown that the families of child and adolescent victims of sexual exploiters experience severe situations of social vulnerability, especially due to poverty and the daily struggle for survival that exclude them from the opportunities for development to which they have a right (Alfaro and Rojas, 2003; Castro and Chaves, 2002; Claramunt, 1998; Johnson and Rivera, 2003; ILO/IPEC, 2002; Porras and Slooten, 2003)

¹ The concept of social vulnerability refers to the increased probability of a person or social group having their human rights violated during their lives (Castel, 1997).



Moreover, succeeding generations have repeated and exacerbated patterns of gender- and age-related violence. In addition, they have had very limited access to the services of the social institutions, and the latter are not prepared to collaborate in strengthening the family support network, or have not yet developed policies and procedures to identify and assist cases of commercial sexual exploitation; hence, the urgency to design a formal model for assisting such families.

Professional support designed to strengthen the support fabric cannot be limited to psychological assistance, because the most pressing needs also have a material basis. However, help cannot be confined naively to short-term financial solutions (such as grants unrelated to planned development strategies) that fail to take into account the intergenerational dynamics of violence. Under the gender and human rights approaches, comprehensive assistance to the family calls for the active and creative collaboration of social organizations in the process of strengthening the family support network, so as to reinforce both its affective and productive resources. Only in this way can real progress be made towards achieving the social participation of traditionally excluded groups, and an end be put to approaches based on handouts that, in the long run, tend to affect the autonomy of the family group and the future of the children that form part of it.

The following sections contains some theoretical observations on the family, domestic violence, social vulnerability and, lastly, the type of assistance that the pertinent institutions should provide to vulnerable families in order to ensure compliance with the human rights of child and adolescent victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

1.1 The family

The family is a long-established institution that, as such, has undergone various changes, according to the socio-historic context in which it has been formed. In recent decades, the family group has changed towards more diverse and flexible arrangements, such as a woman and her children, unmarried couples with children, married couples without children, marriage between people who are divorced, homosexual unions, and families of individuals who have no blood relationship.

In the early socialization processes, the family shapes and programmes the child's conduct and sense of identity. The family unit is not a closed system, but rather is in continuous interaction with its surroundings. Thus, the family is the intermediate and dialectic sphere between the individual and the social spheres. Consequently, it can be said that the family group is *inter-dynamic*, in its relations with other family groups and institutions, and also *intra-dynamic*, because it creates relationships among its members. It is therefore influenced by the dynamics of the social system around it; for example, the level of development of the country and of its community, or the difference between social classes. This will define the possibility of its participation in the system of production, distribution and consumption. The internal relationships are permeated by the dominant ideology and, even though they are subject to gender relations, and by age, they are structured in a way that allows each family to have its special characteristics (Campos and Smith, 1999).

Martín-Baró (1996) considers that the family has played and plays a significant role in society by reproducing traditional social relationships. Thus the family reproduces relations



of power among people or groups. “Power” is understood to mean the nature of social relations based on the differentiated possession of resources that allows some to realize their personal or class interests, and impose those interests on others. “In relation to the possession of resources, one of the subjects of the relationship, an individual or a group, has something the other does not have, or has less of (quantitatively or qualitatively)” (Martín-Baró, 1996: 97). Power arises, therefore, from an imbalance in the relationship concerning a specific object or condition; one member of the relationship is superior to the other in some way: for example, in age, size, strength, knowledge, health, social position, privileges, etc.

In addition, the same author explains that the family, as a core group, “depends essentially on the macro-social context, whose forces it reflects and whose interests it expresses”... “Much of what takes place within the family... is the result of class determinism or cultural or situational conditioning (Martín-Baró, 1996: 302). In the family, adultocentrism and “*machism*” become part of the conventional wisdom - the family ideology - and thus define cultural mandates with regard to the legitimate place that each person should occupy both with its subsystems, and in the social universe.

1.2 Domestic violence

This is defined as “any act or omission that results in harm to the physical, sexual, emotional or social integrity of a human being, where there is a family or close relationship between the individuals involved” (Claramunt, 2001: 7). It is manifested by physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, emotional neglect or negligence, and by any act that results in the degradation, control or coercion of other persons.

Domestic violence is based on an imbalance of power owing to asymmetrical relationships, such as those that occur naturally between adults and children and adolescents, or owing to cultural structures, such as those between genders. Accordingly, violence in the family environment tends to be exercised by those with most power, who are usually adult men.

Domestic violence against women and children, as has been amply researched, stems from the immense power conferred on men by the patriarchal system. This leads them to develop a feeling of superiority that they internalize in their process of socialization. (Batres, 1993: 43)

On the other hand, this same socialization means that women and other vulnerable individuals within the family accept this supposed superiority as an irrefutable truth and, consequently, place themselves in a position of inferiority.

The repetition of domestic violence from one generation to the next has been observed frequently by professionals, and it is a phenomenon that is definitively related to the reproduction of social power relations. Boszormeyi-Nagy and Spark (1994) note that patterns of violence are repeated in families inter-generationally, via an organized system of loyalties, betrayals, fairness, unfairness, myths, secrets, rights and wrongs that operate among the different members. Therefore, the family dynamic can be observed on the basis of its existential connotations and assertions of guilt and obligation transmitted from generation to generation. In this regard, Castro and Chaves (2003) show how the patterns of violence are exacerbated intergenerationally in three generations of families with a member involved in commercial sexual exploitation that have not received adequate assistance. In this way, we can speak of a problem of intergenerational family interaction,



which violates human rights, which is dialectically affected by extreme poverty, and which progressively weakens the family support network.²

Despite evidence that domestic violence is present at all levels of society, various studies show a strong relationship between poverty and the reported occurrence and severity of child abuse, especially neglect. This does not mean that most poor people are violent towards their families, but that the men (and some mothers) have a greater tendency to resolve problems by the use of brute force and their attacks are usually more frequent and intense³ (National Research Council-Institute of Medicine, 1998, which cites Giovannoni and Billingsley, 1970; Pelton, 1981, 1994; Wolock and Horowitz, 1979, 1984; Straus and others, 1980; Wauchope and Straus, 1992). In the case of neglect, these authors have had to include other criteria in their research in order to understand that in extremely poor households, or in situations that compound the difficulties, such as child or adolescent maternity or when a member of the family is disabled, the real possibilities of providing children with adequate care as regards affection, nutrition and hygiene are limited.

In summary, domestic violence is an enormous social problem that originates in the inequalities of the patriarchal culture. As a tolerated and justified social practice, it is transmitted from generation to generation within the family, becoming increasingly more intense, and weakening the support network for the children. The dynamics associated with poverty, such as the tensions and strife characteristic of the daily struggle for survival, make poor families more vulnerable to the incidence and severity of the violence used by those members of the family with most power.

1.3 Poverty and marginalization

The purely material component of the context in which the family interacts with other systems intervenes in its daily dynamic. The socio-economic situation of the family plays a significant role in conditioning its real possibilities of development. For a poor family, the main problem is survival; consequently, its efforts are focussed on obtaining food, housing and clothing. There is almost no recreation and health is very vulnerable; the possibility of its members receiving an education is extremely limited as is the subsequent possibility of employment. “In general, the psycho-affective condition is characterized by indifference and the early maturity of its members and ... the cycle of family life is linked to fluctuations in the situation of the domestic economy” (Leñero, 1968; cited by Campos and Smith, 1999:14).

Poverty is closely related to marginalization; namely, “the lack of an economic role linked to the reigning social system” (Martín-Baró, 1996). Thus, the marginalization of these families is directly related to their segregation, the lack of basic services, their working conditions and standard of living, their lack of formal and informal participation in decision-making at the community or institutional level, their cultural differences in relation to the rest of the population and, owing to their existence on the periphery, their differentiation from the central areas of society (Martín-Baró, 1996, citing Germani, 1973).

2 Family support network: capacity of the family structure as a whole: (a) to provide safety and protection to each member; (b) to provide a space for developing affective relationships where respect, solidarity and the insertion of the individuals into the established social order are encouraged, and (c) to promote and increase the possibility of developing life projects. All this in order to provide a healthy framework that permits a connection with the external world (Porras and Rojas, 2003:14)

3 The sexual abuse of children is the only manifestation of violence that affects all social sectors equally.



The lack of access to basic social services is an essential element of this study, because, as mentioned previously, this is a constant in several consecutive generations of families of children and adolescents who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. While the lack of financial resources does not explain completely the repetition of patterns of violence towards the most vulnerable members, the difficulties in obtaining adequate assistance in order to resolve family problems continues over time and does not permit any change in the patterns of abuse.

This factor merits special attention, if it is recalled that these families are submerged in a socio-historic context of social violence that leads to the least protected members being consigned to a market where they will be violated by sexual exploiters.

1.4. Professional assistance for families living in conditions of social vulnerability

The term “interventions” refers to the series of services and policies used to implement strategies at the individual, family and community level. Interventions include not only organized services, but also legal, judicial and regulatory policies and procedures, such as protection orders and obligatory reporting systems (National Research Council-Institute of Medicine, 1998).

In the case of the family intervention, it is important to be aware that, traditionally, services have been provided piecemeal. There has been a tendency to call in specific organizations depending on the nature, frequency and gravity of the event that leads to the intervention, as well as the age, sex and other characteristics of the person affected, and the identity of the offender, the social status of the family, etc. Thus, a single family may be receiving assistance from various institutions, each unaware of the work of the others.

This is understandable when we observe the number and severity of the problems of the families with children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. It should also be mentioned that any human rights violation of any member of the family, particularly a child or adolescent, should be reported, since this human rights violation is a punishable offence or crime.

The challenge for professionals faced with the new social panorama is to rediscover alternatives and possibilities for their professional work, setting guidelines for formulating family intervention proposals that are in keeping with the way of life of the members, considering them not only as victims of the system, but also, above all, as individuals who are struggling to keep alive and retain their humanity. This challenge is one of the focuses of contemporary professional work. (Barg, 2003:48)

For example, Barg (2003) refers to research carried out by Argentinian authors examining the connection between the increase in family problems and the significant escalation in unemployment. Thus, to tackle the problem of marginalization, it is necessary to train sensitive and competent professionals, formulate creative and viable institutional policies, and reject institutional procedures that promote social discrimination.

Consequently, the professional intervention with families caught up in the process of ostracism must attack the problem from many different angles. The intervention strategies, instruments and techniques must be very flexible, to counteract the vast complexity of the family and community problems.

Barg (2003: 118-119) recommends that the professional intervention with the family should be addressed at making a change that helps develop more participative and



democratic relationships. To achieve this, it is important to take strategic decisions based on considering and understanding the actual daily conditions of the family members as regards their societal life; to reinforce ethical principles and values in keeping with respect and human dignity; and to develop mechanisms of protection and autonomy, according to the stage of development of the each family member. A family intervention, from a sensitive perspective, will be based on human rights doctrine and will avoid the individualistic, discriminatory concepts and notions of inadequacy or ineligibility, present in the hegemonic model of “normality”. Thus, this assistance must:

- Be planned.
- Apply the dialectic critical method.
- Include “family knowledge” in the process.
- Be based on healthy aspects and strengthen them.
- Understand that the subject of the assistance is a subject of rights.

For example, in the United State, interventions in cases of domestic violence have combined social, legal and health sector services. The prevention of violence is promoted in schools and mechanisms requiring violence to be investigated have been established in schools and in hospitals. Among the most interesting programmes are those based on visits to the home, permanent and intensive assistance to families, improvements in procedures involving child witnesses and the compulsory treatment of offenders (National Research Council-Institute of Medicine, 1998).

Systemic family therapists offer an excellent example of how it is possible to combine clinical treatment with other social services, such as the protection of victims of domestic violence, legal procedures, and the preparation of children to testify at trials, etc. (Madanes, 1997; Nannini and Perrone, 2002).

II. General characteristics of the families of child and adolescent victims of commercial sexual exploitation

Based on information provided by the project: “Contribution to the prevention and elimination of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in the communities of Corredores and Golfito” (ILO/IPEC-UCR) (Morera, G. and others. Personal communication. 19 March 2005) with regard to the first 25 families assisted,⁴ the following table summarizes some of the essential characteristics that could be considered when planning institutional policies and actions for this population.

⁴ This information is still representative six months later, when the project is assisting a total of 72 families (Morera, G. Personal communication. 18 September 2005)



Table 1

Characteristics of the families of child and adolescent victims of commercial sexual exploitation

Who do these children and adolescents live with?

- Most of them live with their extended one-parent family: mother, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, etc. It is frequent to find several children who are victims of sexual exploitation in the same family.
- Just over a third of the mothers have no partner. Most are living with a new companion who is not the father of their older children. In only 3 of the 25 families is the mother living with the biological father.
- When they do not live with their mother, they are in contact with her. This is contrary to the situation with the fathers, who they have usually never seen again.
- The biological father generally plays no role in the lives of his children. He has almost no function. In exceptional cases they receive child support or some type of financial assistance. In one case, the current provider is a brother-in-law of the adolescents.
- The paternal figures are irregular providers, because they are frequently unemployed or only occasionally employed.
- A conflictive or abusive relationship with the stepfather is the usual reason why the child or adolescent abandons the family home.
- Often, the younger siblings of the children or adolescents who are victimized do not live in the same household, because they have been “ceded” to aunts or grandmothers owing to the lack of financial resources to maintain them. In one family, the mother is in prison, and her children have been distributed in the homes of various relatives, or live alone or with neighbours. In another family, when the parents separated, the children were divided between them.
- In some cases, children frequently “escape” from the family home. At times, these are temporary “escapades” with a partner. They usually say they have kept themselves by stealing, asking for loans or receiving money from sexual exploiters. In one case, a girl spent periods of time at an apartment paid for by the sexual exploiter.
- Some girl children and adolescents, for different reasons, regularly change the group they live with. At times, the situations that lead to this instability are of a financial nature.

At other times, at an early age, “they decide” to move away from their home or community or travel to the capital. Frequently, adolescent friends, both boys and girls, who have left their own homes and who are also being sexually exploited, move in on a temporary basis.

What conditions do these families live in?

- The adults have informal jobs, such as construction work, street vending, raffles or domestic employment. Very few have completed secondary studies; almost all have completed the first years of primary school, and a few the first years of secondary school.



...Daily socio-economic dynamics

- These families live in conditions of poverty and extreme poverty. Income is less than expenditure in most homes; the families do not have enough food or have an “overdraft” economy, because they are unable to cover their basic needs.
- In a few cases, the families receive help from other people, such as the grandparents.
- When the adults are at work, the younger children are looked after by the adolescents.
- Child labour is frequent. Unpaid child labour consists of domestic chores and caring for the younger children, and paid labour consists of work in the informal sector

...Their housing

- There are many problems relating to property titles for the houses in which they live. Most of the houses belong to them, but are greatly deteriorated. Since the property titles are not in order, they are unable to access State programmes for housing construction or improvement. Very few of the families rent a house or cabin, because they do not have the means to do so. Some families live in squatter settlements.
- Irrespective of the number of inhabitants, almost all the houses have two rooms, a communal room and a bathroom, which, in some case, is outside the home (latrine).
- Most houses have electricity and potable water, but some have neither.

...Their health and the services they receive

- All the families live in communities where there are electric lighting, waste collection, primary and secondary schools (even though these may be relatively distant), public telephone, police presence and health centres.
- Most adults are not insured or are insured by the State. Owing to the instability of their jobs, the men are usually not insured.
- They receive good healthcare. Their vaccinations appear to be in order. It has been observed that adolescents tend to avoid the health centre.
- Malnutrition and anaemia are reported in the children, apparent from their low weight and stature. Skin diseases are very common (funguses related to their living conditions).
- Almost all the children and adolescents who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation consume some type of substance or alcohol, and two of them have serious addictions problems. At times, older members of their families also suffer from addictions; in particular, some of the fathers have episodes of alcoholism.

...Regarding the right to education

- Almost all the child victims have dropped out of the educational system at some point, and very many of them have fallen behind (approximately 80% have fallen significantly behind in their schooling).

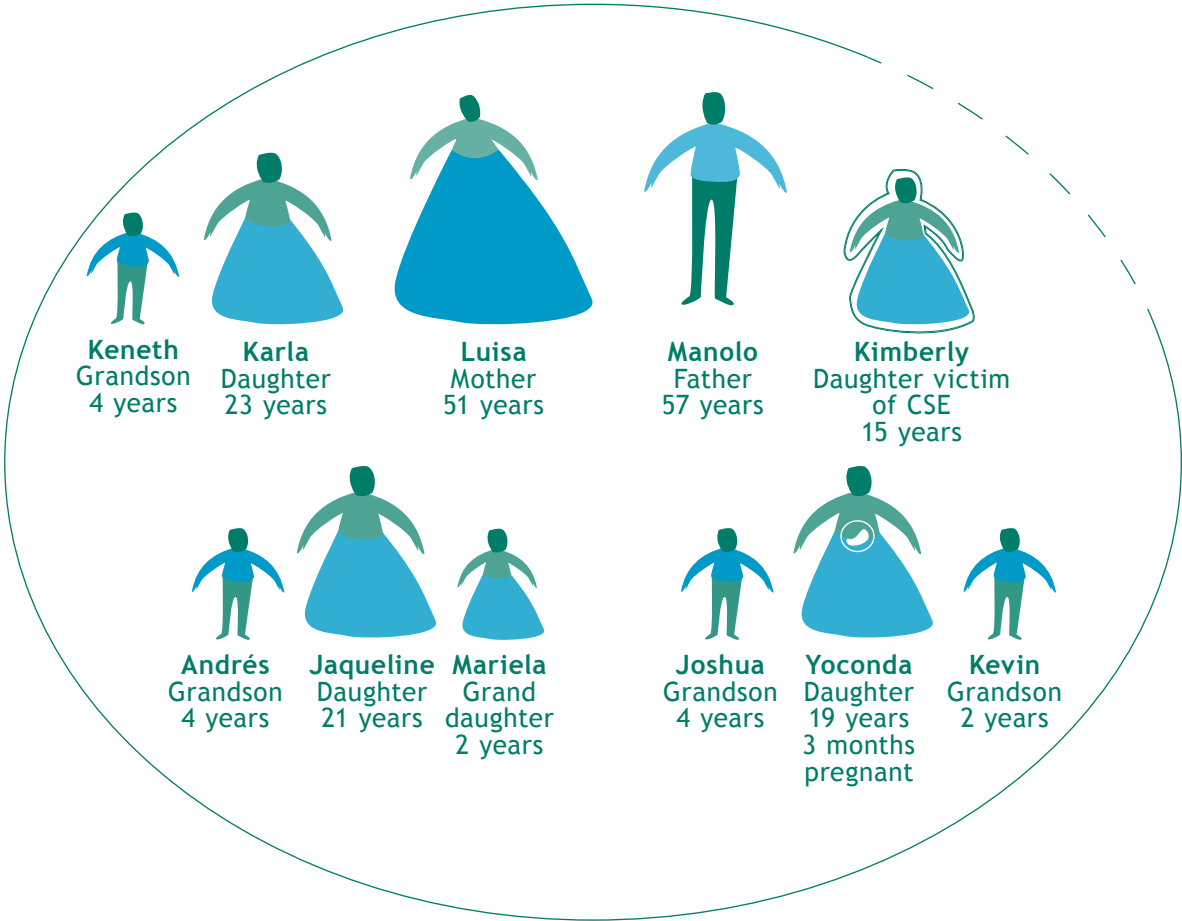


III. An in-depth examination of the intra-family dynamics...

The following tables describe the situation and dynamics of two families who took part in the in-depth individual and group interviews. A summary of the problems they both face follows. It should be emphasized that, as this is a qualitative technique, the results cannot be generalized; however, both cases are examples of typical situations that could be present in other family groups.

Table 2

Diagram 2
Family A



Family A

The diagram does not include the four oldest children who live with their respective nuclear families in the same community; the oldest child is the son of the mother and a man who did not acknowledge his paternity. Karla, Rosa and Yoconda lived with their partners, but, following a separation, they returned to their parents' home with their own children.

The family recalls great-grandmothers, grandparents and great uncles who, at the beginning of the last century, left their plots of land to migrate and were recruited as labour for agricultural work in a transnational company. The mother and father spent their childhood with their large nuclear families. Luisa was educated by her mother, Benigna, and her uncles; Benigna herself had been educated by one of her uncles, because they "made her mother go mad" and treated her very badly. Manolo had lived with his parents, siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins. The family finances of the forebears of Manolo and Luisa, and their own, were eroded because all the wage-earners had problems related to alcoholism and "women".

The grandparents' generation never attended school; so most of them did not know how to read or write. Luisa and Manolo attended primary school for a few years and only one of their children finished secondary school. Their sons were affected by the dynamics of poverty; like their forefathers they left school to work. Their daughters have dropped out of school; apparently "due to laziness": after repeating several school years, they did not return and/or became pregnant. The family never received any type of educational voucher, although they did receive periodic contributions from the social welfare agency.

Manolo, who is 57 years old, has not had a steady job since the foreign banana company left the country; he has even been dismissed from informal work without being paid the wages he was owed. This, and his addiction to alcohol, has meant that the family's socio-economic situation has been very unstable; the result has been the failure to meet basic needs day after day. The three eldest daughters have informal jobs from time to time, because they have to look after their own children, who are at an age when they are very dependent. They maintain their children principally with financial contributions from the fathers, of whom only one pays child support. At present Yoconda is looking for work as she is in the early months of her pregnancy. The oldest sons contribute to the family's finances, but, despite this, the needs persist.

When she was young, Luisa worked hard to maintain her first son and her mother and, after she moved in with Manolo, she looked after the home. For the past few years she has had severe circulatory problems (especially in one leg), which oblige her to stay in bed; in emergencies, she uses State and private medical services. Almost all the adult members of the family are insured by the State and have received services from the nearest hospital. At the time of the interview, several members of the family were suffering from vomiting and diarrhoea; the supply of potable water had been interrupted; at times, for more than eight hours.

As in any large family, the members are in different age groups and, consequently,



their needs are very diverse. Of the daughters, only Kimberly has not attained her majority and, as an adolescent, she seeks greater independence from her parents. The three oldest sisters had problems with their respective partners and left them. Two of them have lived for a time with different partners. In this way, at a very young age, they have had to assume the numerous responsibilities of maternity in very uncertain circumstances. In contrast, their siblings have developed partnerships at a more mature age and have relatively stable employment. Kimberly, who is 13 years old, has lived with two different partners (both of them minors), and their respective families.

Kimberly has serious problems with her father at present; he is constantly making verbal attacks on the other members of the family. The mother appears to be the person who provides emotional support to the family, because all the children turn to her; however, all the blame for the family's problems also falls on her. The daughters think their mother "interferes" in their affairs. Yoconda is constantly arguing with the others, so she cooks her meals separately.

Both Luisa and Manolo say they have educated their children as they themselves were educated. Luisa was in charge of rearing them and, when Manolo was at home, he punished the children rigorously, sometimes when he was under the influence of alcohol. Luisa intensely resents the way Manolo grossly mistreated her children and herself in the past. There were times when they even threatened to kill each other; it appears that the oldest children endured the period of greatest brutality, particularly, the boy who was not Manolo's son. At the time, Luisa sought the help of the police authorities, but they never did anything.

The family justifies the father's excessive violence, recalling Manolo's tales of his own harsh youth. In the individual interview, Manolo did not speak of these events and, to the contrary, said that he hit his children very little, compared to the way in which he was educated.

At the outset, the father exercised a despotic, authoritative role over his children and his companion; but the power hierarchy in the family changed drastically when the boys grew up and confronted their father. This has resulted in an overall rejection of the father and his authority, particularly by Kimberly. The other daughters tend to be more tolerant towards him.

There is a myth in the family that if Kimberly was treated more "strictly", she would be obedient and would be a "home-loving girl". There is no effective strategy in place to establish limits that would help protect her, because there is considerable indecision about whether to give in to her or to administer severe physical punishment. Owing to the difficulties with her father, Kimberly prefers to be away from the house; she feels that she is being treated badly.

Partnerships are established when a couple "start living together" and have children. There are multiple tales of male infidelity, which is tolerated by the women in different ways. One of the strategies used most is for the women to quarrel with "the women" of "their man". The men, on the other hand, are jealous and very controlling, but they blame their women and insult them calling them prostitutes in front of the children.



The daughters blame the mother for the early pregnancies of the three oldest daughters, because they say that she should have discussed the subject of sexuality with them, but did not do so because she was embarrassed. The father recalls that, at one time, he exercised considerable control over the children, and did not even allow them to talk to each other. Luisa and Manolo hoped the school would provide their children with sex education; the subject was brought up at school, but partially and from a moralistic and male chauvinistic perspective.

Kimberly tells of situations where commercial sexual exploitation is evident, as if they referred to relationships with “boy friends”. It is important to point out that the family tells stories about couples in which the men were much older than the adolescents (when Luisa was 17 years old she became pregnant by a man who was 30 years old). At the present time, Kimberly has a pseudo-affective relationship with a man of 48 years of age, with whom she has been “going out” since she was 12 years old; he pays for an apartment so that she can sleep there at times, and he gives her money. This man has many lawful and unlawful businesses; for example, he traffics and sells drugs. She looks after one of this man’s children and believes that she is in love with him, even though she knows that he has parallel relationships with other women; at times she has had physical confrontations with some of them. The exploiter has presented her publicly as his wife and the mother of his child, boasting about her youth.

Family A lives in a border town. The community has stigmatized Kimberly, and this is of concern to her family. Some neighbours have said that she sells drugs and is a prostitute.

Most members of the family prefer not to talk about their problems among themselves or with anyone else. The whole family knows about Kimberly’s situation and they employ two strategies towards it: they blame her or they advise her. Those who blame her explain that her situation is due to lack of discipline and morals; she has made herself vulnerable to the men who exploit her, because she has always been like that. (Yoconda tells of an incident when some cousins fondled her younger sister when she was a child, and blames her for this.) The older sisters are concerned about Kimberly, but they have given up hope and either insult her or blame Luisa for not establishing limits. Those who give her advice, think that it is a passing phase. Luisa asks God to change her daughter so that she returns to the fold. Karla seems to be most aware of the vulnerability of Kimberly’s situation and thinks that something should be done, but she does not know what to do, or how to do it.

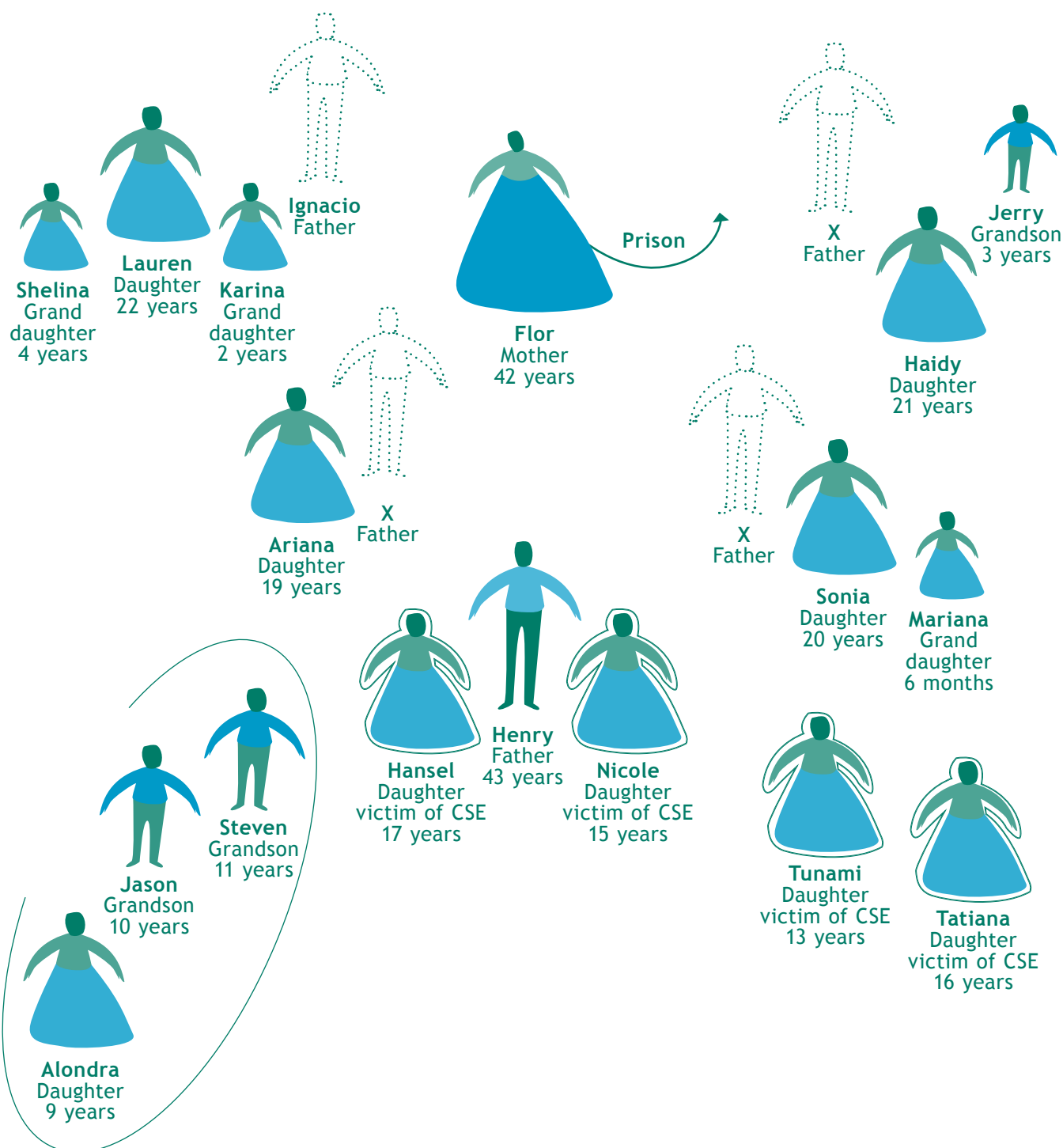
Luisa fears reprisals from the exploiter or that, for some reason, she will be arrested. Manolo filed a report against the exploiter before the agency responsible for children and adolescents, and is very frustrated because he thinks that the corresponding investigations are not being made.



Table 3

Diagram 3

Family B



Family B

This diagram is fairly complex owing to the characteristics of this family and the oldest son, who is 26 years old and who is currently wanted by the law, does not appear in it. The fathers who have not played a significant role in the family are indicated with dotted lines.

Flor, 42 years old, has had 12 children with 5 different partners. With her last husband, Henry, she had a more stable relationship and her 7 younger children were born of this union. The five older children, aged 26, 22, 21, 20 and 19 are living with their current partners.

Flor was recently sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for selling drugs. Following her arrest, her seven youngest children were transferred to different places to live alone or with relatives on a temporary basis; at times, they have been living in squatter settlements, surviving on their own. Currently, the three youngest children live with their sister, Lauren, their nieces and their brother-in-law, who is not the father of these children. Haidy, Ariana and Sonia live with their partners in the capital. Tatiana, 15 years old, has a daughter, who is a few months old, and who is being cared for by her elder sister, Sonia.

When reconstructing the family's past, grandfathers and great-grandfathers were identified who, when they were children, worked in the countryside with their families, and were mistreated and exploited by adults. Their forebears left their land to work in a transnational company. Only Henry's paternal grandparents lived in the capital and, it seems, had no financial problems.

Flor was physically and emotionally abused by her mother, María, and was sexual abused by her stepfather who also abused his biological daughters. When she was 12 years old, having repeatedly revealed the situation to her mother and not finding any protection, she left home. Her children say that she worked very hard and that, at times, had to "pulsearla"; in other words, she was also a victim of commercial sexual exploitation. She had her five oldest children and, she herself says that "she prostituted herself" to maintain her children. Later, she moved to the capital, leaving the children in her grandparent's house.

In the capital, she met Henry. They lived in highly marginalized communities and had seven children. Years later, when she was able, she brought her three older daughters to live with her and they formed a large family. The two oldest boys remained with their extended family. Flor and Henry had several lawful and unlawful businesses and, because of the latter, the girls witnessed some ugly scenes, including murders, beatings and physical attacks.

The relationship between Flor and Henry was characterized by frequent quarrels and beatings, which the children witnessed. Henry was addicted to alcohol and began a habit of disappearing for several days or weeks. On arriving home, he attacked Flor brutally. Hansel tells of the anguish and the resulting "trauma" this situation caused her. Despite this, some of the daughters say that Henry was a good father and loved them; Hansel even says that, when she was 8 years old, she went alone to look for him underneath the bridges to get him to come home. Nevertheless, other daughters are very



resentful, because he insulted them telling them they would be prostitutes like their mother.

The daughters recall that both Flor and Henry took time to talk to them and never hit them when they were angry. They both advised their children, telling them that they should not follow their parents' example, because what they did was bad and, with regard to the sale of drugs, that they did this to maintain the family. Henry insisted that they should not fall into evil ways.

Hansel and her sisters relate how Flor talked to them freely about sexuality, because she did not want what had happened to her to happen to them. She asked them to tell her if they were going to have sexual relations so that she could give them pills and take them to the doctor for a check-up. However, three of her daughters became pregnant while they were adolescents (Tatiana, when she was 14 years old).

After a while, Henry left Flor and formed another family, without taking any responsibility for the children he left behind. Flor therefore continued with the unlawful businesses and, with her children, moved back to the community she was originally from where she had other partners and, finally, was arrested and imprisoned.

The adolescent girls and their younger siblings went to their maternal grandmother's house, but they were unable to tolerate this for very long, and went to live on the street. The grandmother and her companion forced the boys and Alondra to do dangerous work on the farm. If the children did not work, they did not feed them and, once, the man thrashed Steven because he had broken a plant. Consequently, from time to time, they went to live on the street with their sisters and later returned to their grandmother's house. Finally, Lauren "fought for" her younger siblings and took them to live with her and her husband, who was unemployed part of the time. Lauren's house does not have electricity or potable water.

The adolescent and pre-adolescent girls, Hansel, Tatiana, Nicole and Tunami had to obtain money for food for themselves and their younger siblings. In these circumstances, they were made victims of commercial sexual exploitation by neighbours and other men who were passing through the community. Even men who were friends of Flor maintained them for a time in exchange for sexual relations.

The four girls have spent period of time with uncles and aunts in the capital, and with their sister, Lauren, and currently they live with a family composed of the mother (who suffers from strong addictions) and four daughters, a son, and a grandson. In this other family, there are also children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

In the case of this family, extreme poverty, abandonment by social organizations and the presence of abusive men made the girls and adolescents vulnerable to such a point that, as in the case of their mother when she was young, they were obliged to submit to sexual exploiters to keep themselves alive. They sometimes have sexual relations with boys of their own age in



exchange for money or invitations to go out. They say they do not believe in love.

In Family B, at the present time, the interpersonal relationships between brothers and sisters are very close; however, there are fierce quarrels from time to time. They are anxiously waiting for their mother to be discharged from prison. They have a very tense relationship with some family groups of grandparents, elder sisters, aunts and uncles, because they resent that the latter did not help them; they get on very well with some uncles and aunts who live in the capital. The State institutions did not help this family. They tell stories of fleeing from the representatives of the agency responsible for children and adolescents to avoid being “shut up”, or having conflicts with them. The girl children and adolescents have not attended school and have not received any type of social welfare assistance, other than a temporary grant to Tatiana owing to her pregnancy. They also relate an experience in which the police and personnel from the institution in charge of electricity and communications evicted them violently from their home to demolish the squatter settlement in which they lived. The youngest children are underweight and have skin infections as a result of the extreme poverty in which they live. One of them, Karina, has asthma and has to be taken to the hospital from time to time.

Processes that make the children in Families A and B vulnerable

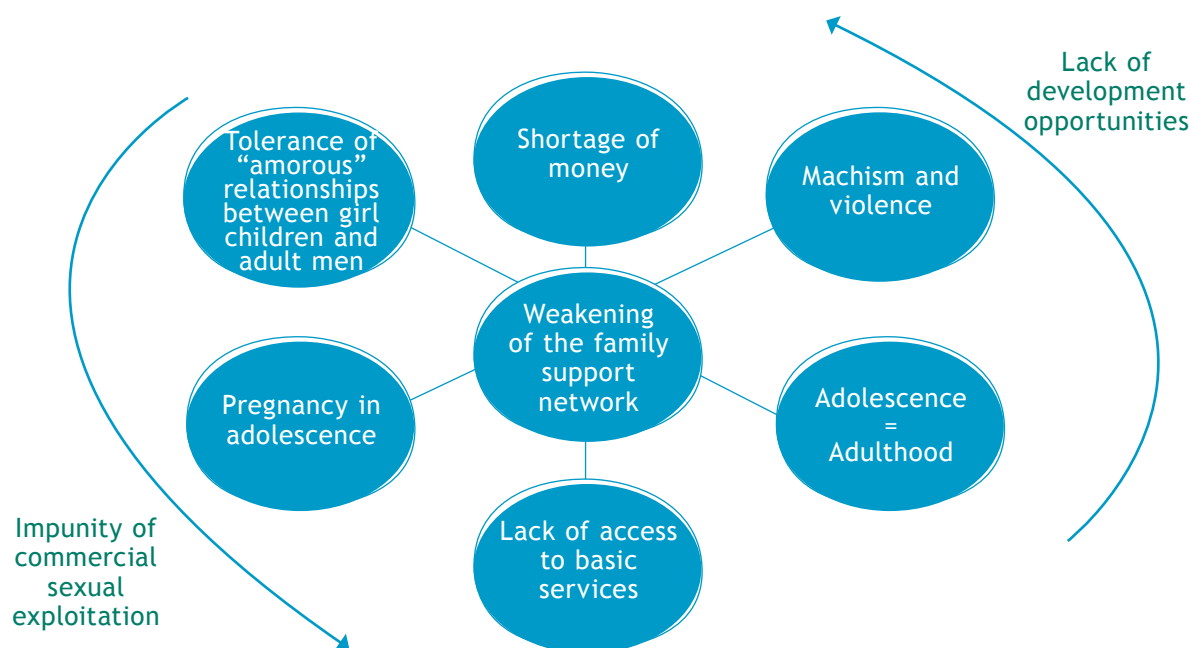
The ways in which the children and adolescents in each family have been victimized may seem different and, therefore, one might mistakenly seek different reasons for their vulnerability. However, by exploring the history of several generations, important similarities can be observed between the families and their interaction with the social systems. The repetition of patterns of poverty and domestic violence by the succeeding generations is evident. These dynamics have continued and increased owing to the absence of effective interventions by the social institutions.

The following diagram illustrates the main forces that have had a strong influence on the processes that weaken the family support network in the families studied. Some of them arise from attitudes related to the patriarchal culture and others from the ostracism that affects the family system.



Diagram 4

Family conditions that make children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation



The impunity of commercial sexual exploitation and the lack of development opportunities are constants of the environment in which the families try to carry out their role of protection. There is impunity at the level of both the pertinent institutions and society in general. Moreover, the children have few opportunities of having a different life from that of their fathers and mothers.

Machism and domestic violence. There were numerous incidents of violence at the hands of different people, especially male members of the family. An extremely stereotyped socialization of gender can be detected, to which there appear to be no alternatives. The sexually-exploited girl children and adolescents have witnessed scenes of extreme brutality in the home, and the memory of this causes them profound anguish. In addition to this, there is a sort of vicious circle in which the transgressions of the men are constantly made invisible, and the women are blamed for the men's acts. During almost all the interviews, a phrase was used that could be summarized as "MEN ARE MEN". This expression is used to justify and to "normalize" every type of abuse and to limit the possibility of a change towards more equitable relationships between the genders.

Tolerance of "amorous" relationships between girl children or adolescents and older men. The great normality accorded to relationships of this type is significant. Indeed, there is only a short distance between these relationships and those established with a client who exploits them.

Inexistence of adolescence as a stage distinct from adulthood. The level of responsibility required of children of around 11 years of age corresponds to that required of an adult.



This cultural belief means that, once a girl child has acquired her secondary sexual characteristics, she is not protected adequately by either her family or the community. This is also revealed by school desertion because a child has to work or due to an undesired pregnancy. It is also manifest in the evident tolerance of adolescents moving in with their partners. Since they are already considered to be women, these girls are blamed for being “prostitutes” by their families and by the community, for whom there is no difference between the notion of commercial sexual exploitation and prostitution. This point coincides with the results of research carried out by Campos and Salas (2004), according to which the men do not consider it a crime to pay adolescents for sexual contact. The men who exploit them are never held responsible, because there is a tendency to consider that everything is due to the girls’ bad behaviour or lack of morals. The girls themselves feel responsible for being “bad” or “muy vivas” [“know-alls”]. In this way, the children and adolescents are stigmatized by the community, the family and subjectively.

Pregnancy in adolescence. Whether or not they have information on birth control, in both families there are many cases of girls who became pregnant in difficult situations, which further limited realization of their human rights. The existence of a child increases the vulnerability to the sex trade of the adolescent who wishes to provide for her child.

Lack of access to basic services and financial problems: The families have reproduced patterns of poverty and domestic violence for several generations, which also signifies that the human rights of the most vulnerable members have been repeatedly violated, and the State has never intervened. Furthermore, factors related to the criminality, characteristic of the poorest members of society, can be observed. The severity of the circumstances in which the families exist limits the family members’ hopes for a better future. Desertion from school and child labour, which can be observed in all the generations, lessens their perspective of competitiveness in the job market and announces the prolongation of these circumstances to another generation. It can therefore be concluded that the families have experienced grave human rights violations, which have been repeated from generation to generation, and which are the fruit and seed of a social system that has not promoted the social integration of excluded sectors or the comprehensive care of children and adolescents, for at least 100 years (four generations). Their stories reflect few State interventions aimed at modifying their conditions of poverty and social vulnerability.

Despite the suffering caused by the experiences that weakened the family support network during several generations, the children and adolescents have relationships with many members of their family who provide them with support. These family members, in turn, are frustrated by not knowing how to protect those who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

IV. Proposed family intervention for the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents who are victims of the sex trade

This proposal is based on the recommendations of the families interviewed and the work of experts who have established basic guidelines for the comprehensive assistance of children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation.



What does assisting a family from a human rights approach mean? It means focusing the human and material resources of the social institutions on an innovative intervention unit, THE FAMILY, and always based on strategies that are congruent with the human rights approach. This is done by using coordinated and monitored plans drawn up with the family itself, which are aimed at strengthening its support network. The goal is to realize the human rights of each member of the family, at all times respecting the best interests of the children.

Anyone in the relevant institutions who provides assistance services can use this proposal as the basis for coordinating their functions with the personnel of other institutions. It should be recalled that, in view of bureaucratic formalities and other frequent difficulties, application of the human rights approach at each stage of the intervention calls for a conscious and committed effort on the part of individuals and organizations to resolve the problems that make families vulnerable. Flexibility and creativity, within the evident limits of individual/ institutional responsibility, are essential to realize the rights to participation and social integration of these families.

Providing assistance to the families of children and adolescents who are victims of the sex trade merits special consideration because it is a truly complex task. Added to this is the urgency to eradicate this grave violation of the human rights of the child, to which the institutions have an ethical and legal responsibility to give priority.

Ethical and practical aspects of comprehensive assistance to the family

All the actions included in this plan should be based on the following principles:

- It is necessary to keep in mind a broad concept of the family, free from moralistic or traditional ideas. It is also important to take personal prejudices and principles into consideration; otherwise these families could be compared to hypothetical models that would not allow their strengths to be appreciated. In practice, there are family groups that do not comply with the model of the nuclear family (father, mother, children), but have members of the extended family and of the community who are willing to help in different ways. Also, it is important to examine personal and institutional stereotypes concerning marginalized families, and identify any type of stigmatization that places the families in a passive or pathological position that will clearly jeopardize the results of the intervention. **THERE ARE NO PERFECT FAMILIES** and it is necessary to start off from this concrete reality in order to design effective strategies and promote living conditions that are in keeping with the realization of human rights.
- The possibilities of assistance are endless. When one strategy is applied to resolve a problem and it does not function, other alternative strategies should be tried, instead of blaming the family. There is no single recipe to resolve all the problems faced by these families, so a creative effort is essential and the permanent development of innovative efforts among the institutions. However, it is important to maintain **frequent contact** with the family, because this is the only way of assuring its members that the institutions have a real interest in improving their living conditions. Since the plans are developed in conjunction with the family, empathy is a fundamental factor in achieving the proposed goals.
- The centres providing assistance to families should **always** work in coordination



with the social welfare and law enforcement agencies to develop punitive measures for sexual exploiters and protection mechanisms for the family. Commercial sexual exploitation is a crime and arises from a demand by unscrupulous men; in this regard, comprehensive assistance to the families will increase the levels of protection for the children but will not eliminate the networks of abusers/clients; accordingly, action by the justice system is also required. The families may receive threats from the networks of exploiters, so it is necessary to ensure their safety. Nevertheless, it is better to let the judicial investigation agencies carry out their work and not take unnecessary risks.

The plan of action should **always** respect the child's right to **grow up in a family environment** in his or her community. Consequently, if, within the family group, there are persons who are harming the safety of the children and adolescents or other members, it is vital that they be protected within the family environment. This could involve the temporary or permanent removal of those members of the family who are endangering the overall health of the others. When it is not possible to count on the child's mother or father, it will be necessary to identify options for the child to live first with members of the extended family and, otherwise, with members of the community. Only in very exceptional cases, should temporary institutionalization be considered an option for a child. Institutionalization increases the probability of the child suffering abuse with impunity, so it should be avoided insofar as possible.

- **Commercial sexual exploitation is not the victim's psychological problem**, so it is not "cured" by clinical treatment. This can be part of the assistance plan, but it is only one option for the members of the family. Professional assistance must have many other components for the protection of human rights (life, health, family life, education, dignity, housing, basic services, recreation, etc.)
- Information about the family must be kept strictly confidential, both with regard to its members, and to those outside the family group. Only in truly exceptional situations, such as human rights violations, can this commitment to confidentiality be broken, and the corresponding report made. The purpose of this is to preclude the disrespect usually shown by public institutions when they reveal personal information about the least protected people unnecessarily.
- The changes that need to be made to ensure the social participation of these families under equal conditions begin by the sensitivity and skill that each service provider in the governmental and non-governmental organizations should develop. Contrary to the traditional custom of blaming children and their families for the situation of commercial sexual exploitation, a respectful and understanding contact must be established concerning the situations and circumstances that have made them vulnerable.
- The traditions and customs of the family and the community must be respected, provided they do not violate human rights. Prior knowledge of the special characteristics of the culture, in which the family functions, will obviously facilitate assisting them. If, for any reason, it is considered necessary to question certain ideas or actions, the appropriate information should be offered with the maximum respect, and never from an arrogant or aggressive position.
- It is urgent to train the officials who provide assistance to these families on issues



related to the application of the human rights approach, gender sensitivity, and dealing with family dynamics and expanded systems⁵.

- As the intervention plans are implemented, a systematic record must be kept of the actions and arrangements organized, in order to review and improve them.

Based on the manuals for detection and for assistance to child and adolescent victims of commercial sexual exploitation⁶ (ILO/IPEC-Fundación Rahab, 2004, a; b), some guidelines are proposed for dealing with the family support network. Two phases or processes in the family intervention are recommended.

Diagram 5

Phases of the Plan of Action for the families of children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation



4.1 Detection phase⁷

During this phase, the institutional resources are set in motion to confirm the suspicion that a child is a victim of commercial sexual exploitation. Irrespective of how this suspicion arises, the first step will be to establish contact with both the child who is allegedly being victimized and his or her family. It is helpful if the service provider introduce himself or herself as a professional who wishes to collaborate in improving their living conditions through the realization of their human rights. This is particularly important if he or she works for an institution which has traditionally been seen as threatening, owing to procedures that may have been implemented previously under the

⁵ Expanded systems are all those social organizations, which, in one way or another, influence the development of family systems, at times occupying a dominant place in decisions on the present and future of the members (Imber-Black, 2000).

⁶ It is most important to use this material, together with any other that provides guidance on the procedures to be carried out when detecting children who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation and providing assistance to them.

⁷ The detection process should be incorporated into the daily work of the agencies responsible for children and adolescents, social welfare offices, private and public health centres, educational centres, institutions that work with families, psychology and social work departments of judicial bodies, municipal offices, organizations responsible for women's affairs, and any other public or non-governmental organization working with children and adolescents.



“irregular situation” model. The issue of commercial sexual exploitation should not be tackled until there is sufficient evidence and a relationship of trust has been established with the child and his or her family.

In the case of an adolescent, a first contact could be made with the adolescent and, subsequently, with the family; proceeding in this way increases the probability of forming a good relationship. Information that could result in conflicts between family members should never be revealed, because this could cause a scene of domestic violence, which would clearly jeopardize the intervention in the family system.

It is important to bear in mind that, since sexual exploitation is an unlawful commercial activity, it is often associated with other crimes such as drug-trafficking. Consequently, appropriate precautions must be taken for the family and for agency officials. Information in this regard should also be managed carefully.

Several approaches will probably have to be made to different members of the family in order to obtain more information on the risk the children run. The person who has been identified as occupying the role of the child or adolescent’s mother or father can be very helpful. Generally, contact with the mother is extremely important, given the close relationship she usually has with her children. Also, the way in which the family group receives the official from the institution offers some information about the family dynamics and about the answers that are usually given during interaction with other groups. It should not be forgotten that these families have possibly developed a certain level of mistrust and pessimism regarding the assistance offered by the social agencies.

Interviews should take place in the safest and most suitable environment possible, but the official should be sufficiently flexible to adapt his or her tools to the surroundings⁸. Preferably, the professional should visit the family several times at their home, because the conditions in which the family lives provide important information on the day-to-day difficulties it faces. It is important to note whether any of the members tries to coerce or silence another member in order to conceal information concerning situations of vulnerability; possibly there are aggressive family members who evidently do not wish to stand out. It should also be borne in mind that no family finds it easy to confide its problems to a stranger; it is therefore necessary to overcome possible resistance gradually, showing authentic interest in finding resources to protect the human rights of the children.

It is necessary to establish empathy with those interviewed. Hence, it is very useful to listen attentively to their point of view and adapt to the language in which they express themselves. It is better first to ask general questions on aspects in the past and the present related to risk factors and, subsequently, when greater trust has been established, to ask more specific questions. If the family approaches the topic, or the situation of commercial sexual exploitation is imminent, it should be approached very delicately and, as indicated, without blaming anyone. It is possible that the child or the family will not reveal the situation of victimization in the sex trade for some time; consequently, other inquiries should be made at the same time by reviewing institutional files and consulting officials or other members of the community. Above all, it is necessary to keep in constant contact with the family until the suspicion is rejected as baseless or the plan of action is

⁸ This type of approach differs substantially from the traditional position of some social science disciplines, according to which contact with the persons assisted should occur in a closed environment. Here, the idea is to introduce the service provider into the families’ daily surroundings.



started.

It is important to get to know the vocabulary about commercial sexual exploitation habitually used in the social group to which the family belongs, because many situations of violence or risk may remain hidden or not be identified, due merely to a matter of communication.

Assessment of the family support network is a process that cannot be carried out hurriedly; it seeks to identify the family's strengths and vulnerability factors. It is necessary to record each household's capabilities and resources, as well as its needs and difficulties.

The following elements of the family support network should be observed:

- The composition of the family
 - The interpersonal relations among the members (affection, warmth, loyalty, aggressiveness, indifference, rejection of a member, etc.)
 - Number of children in relation to the number of providers
 - Employment situation of the adults
 - Family finances
 - Contributions that the family receives from governmental or non-governmental agencies (vouchers, subsidies, etc.)
 - Presence of child labour
 - Conditions of the home and the services it has (water, electricity, etc.)
 - Status of the health of the members and access to the corresponding centres
 - School attendance by the children
 - Presence of children or adolescents who are pregnant or already mothers
 - History of domestic violence
 - Addictions in different members of the family
 - Existence of factors that put the children at risk of commercial sexual exploitation
-

All the interviews should end with a summary of the issues discussed from a human rights approach, and an explanation of the institution's position with regard to the problems confided. Lastly, if necessary, the family should be provided with some services, or given advice concerning programmes offered by other agencies, irrespective of whether commercial sexual exploitation is detected or not. It is essential to complete the necessary checks and cross-checks with the corresponding institutions, because the family could be at social risk and the human rights of the children and of the other members could be violated.

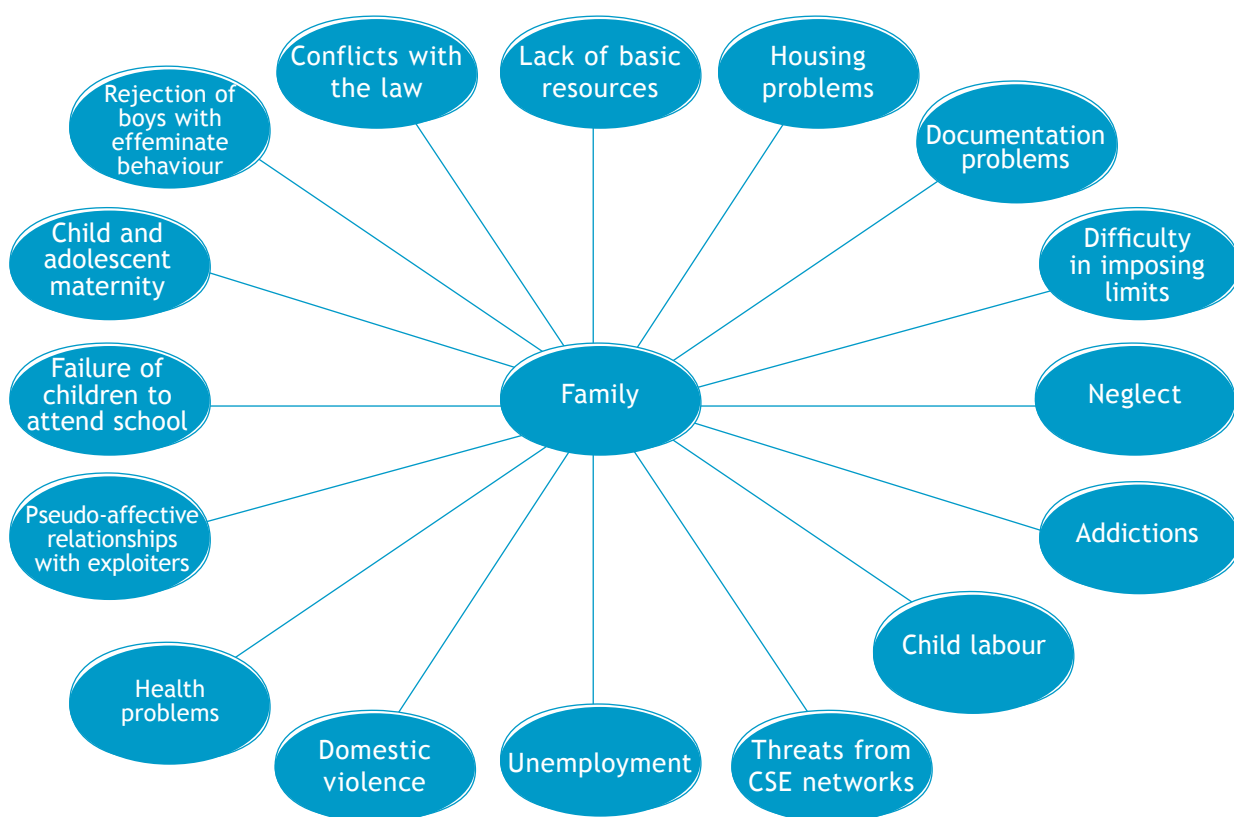
Since issues are being discussed that could be painful, it is important to offer emotional support and appropriate options for institutional care. If signs of domestic violence are identified, immediate measures should be taken to report the aggressor and to protect the members of the family who could be in danger.



After contacting the families, it may be concluded that they are facing some (or many) of the following problems:

Diagram 6

Possible problems of the families of children and adolescents who are victims of the sex trade



Some of these problems correspond to the private environment of the family and others occur in the context of the family and the surrounding community. Nevertheless, the identification of possible solutions always involves the collaboration of the community and governmental and non-governmental organizations. Consequently, it is essential to be aware of the possibilities of assistance that exist and to take the necessary steps to introduce or to diversify other services that could help the families.

If the suspicion that the child or adolescent is being victimized by the sex trade is confirmed, the assistance phase must be initiated. The child or adolescent, and also his or her family, must be informed of the actions that will have to be coordinated, such as the respective report. Immediately, several meetings must be held to design the plan of action and to define the obligations of each of the parties. If it is detected that several members of the family are victims of commercial sexual exploitation, a family plan is designed, taking into account the specific needs and characteristics of each person who is victimized.

4.2 Family assistance phase

Based on the Cyclic Model of Combined Responses, the assistance should be provided through an inter-institutional platform of coordinated services that are available to the victim or victims and their family throughout the intervention (ILO/IPEC-Fundación Rahab, 2004, a; b). As each country has its own specific organizational framework, the plan may vary in each case, but there should be an institution in charge of implementing and coordinating services under a national plan for the eradication of commercial sexual exploitation. The institution that heads the process may be the one that has direct responsibility for the protection of children and adolescents; it must coordinate the appropriate intervention for each problem with State or civil society agencies. Given the multiple factors that may render families vulnerable, national assistance strategies should be established in the context of social and economic policies in order to integrate excluded families. Consequently, coordination with the State's planning agencies is fundamental.

These family assistance strategies should encompass both the macro and the micro-social level; in other words, they should be announced by the senior management of the institutions and materialized in the services offered by the offices providing assistance in each community. Annex 1 describes the key institutions that should be included in a national plan of assistance to families of children and adolescents who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The institution responsible for children and adolescents are responsible for drawing up this plan with the family and coordinating the corresponding actions. It is preferable that one person be assigned to remain in constant contact with the family and monitor the plan; but, if this is not possible, the institution can ensure assistance to the family.

There are two parts to the Assistance Plan: the *First Level Intervention* and the *Second Level Intervention*. During the first part, the right to life, health, family life and protection from commercial sexual exploitation are ensured. During the second part, the exercise and full enjoyment of all human rights is ensured and all actions taken are monitored. As mentioned previously, this plan is developed with the family so as to identify its problems and the resources that the family itself has to resolve each problem; it is essential that the official provides empathetic guidance concerning existing alternatives. It is also vital



that the family should play an active role in the plan, because this guarantees their right to participation. The family must be able to communicate directly with the officials who assist it.

When dealing with the issue of commercial sexual exploitation, a careful explanation must be given of why it constitutes a grave violation of the human rights of the member or members of the family who have been entrapped. All the myths raised regarding the blame that is attributed to the children will be discussed, and the criminals who are using them will be held responsible. It will also be explained that the State and all the social agencies are obliged to intervene to resolve the situation of vulnerability, emphasizing the right of the family members who have been victimized to enjoy the same benefits enjoyed by children and adolescents who have not lived through this experience (right to equality and justice).

It is important to discuss the strategies the family has implemented to put at end to the situation, and that its efforts are commended, while at the same time respectfully evaluating why these efforts have not worked; this must be done without blaming them. The family must undertake to support and not punish the children in any way for having become entrapped in the sex trade. It is possible that the latter have formed habits exposing them to situations of risk that must be modified. However, in the case of adolescents, they cannot be prohibited from going out to enjoy themselves or to look for their friends, because, if they are treated repressively, they may cease to take part in the plan. They should be encouraged to contribute, with the parental figure, to establishing appropriate limits and forming new recreational habits; to this end, the contribution of national and community entities responsible for culture and sports is essential.

While the family intervention is being implemented, there may be changes in the objectives and the corresponding actions. The assistance plan should be established for a minimum period of two years, because the changes it is hoped to generate are profound and merit a well-planned social investment, aimed at integrating the family group into sustainable human development alternatives.

All the institutions that form part of the national plan for the eradication of commercial sexual exploitation should have the following policies:

- Information for all social groups on the human rights they have and should demand
- Establishment of mechanisms for detecting and reporting situations of commercial sexual exploitation and domestic violence; also mechanisms for elaborating and developing plans for assisting children and adolescents who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation and their families
- Inter-institutional coordination for elaborating and implementing the plan of action for each family, using clear checking and cross-checking mechanisms
- Confidential systems for recording the family interventions
- Training and aware-raising activities for officials about the human rights and the gender approach and about commercial sexual exploitation
- Follow-up, assessment and monitoring systems and mechanisms
- Establishment of the system of conditioned financial transfers, which means that



any financial contribution is granted to the family conditional on compliance with a contract in which it undertakes to follow the assistance plan. The conditions will relate to a change in relationship patterns or dynamics that prejudice its members; however, food subsidies, school vouchers or services for children are not conditioned.

Finally, here are some of the projects that could be implemented in the communities to address the different problems that stand in the way of the comprehensive development of these families⁹:

Table 1

Problems that could occur in the families of children and adolescents who are victims of the sex trade, and possible solutions

Problem	Institutional strategies and services	Institutional coordination
Lack of basic resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Productive alternatives -Employment offices -Food subsidies -Breastfeeding programmes -Conditioned financial transfers -Childcare/mothercraft programmes -Assistance for proving paternity and requesting child support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Community development boards or committees -Institution responsible for children and adolescents -Institute responsible for employment affairs -Social welfare institution -Justice system
Housing problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Conditioned financial transfers for the rental, purchase or repair of housing -Housing projects -Installation of potable water, sewerage, electricity and telephone services, etc. -Housing loans -Private sector contributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Community development boards or committees -Social welfare institution -Housing programmes -Institutions responsible for potable water, sewerage, electricity and telephone services, etc. -Banking system

⁹ The body responsible for planning national social and economic policies is not included in the table, but it is one of the most important institutions for the implementation of projects throughout the country. Coordination with non-governmental organizations will evidently enhance the intervention.



Immigration difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Collective information and awareness-raising campaigns on the human rights of migrants, with emphasis on the human rights of the child -Increase of programmes for the protection of the human rights of the child in border areas and the principal migrant settlements -Design of special strategies for penalizing commercial sexual exploitation in border areas -Mechanisms for the safe transfer of children whose families are in other countries -Support for migrant families who wish to regularize their residency status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -All the institutions mentioned in Annex 1 should include the issue of immigration, and assistance programmes for the immigrant population
Difficulties in establishing limits for children and adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Counselling and implementation of programmes to improve the parenting role of those in charge (parenting courses, family counselling and therapy in community health centres, options for training in skills for establishing limits, parenting courses in churches or other community organizations, etc.) -Mass communication campaigns on responsible paternity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Institution responsible for children and adolescents -Health system -Education system -Women's organizations -Non-governmental organizations



Neglect ¹⁰ by responsible adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Information to adults on the harm caused by neglecting children and adolescents -Counselling and implementation of programmes to improve the parenting role of those responsible (parenting courses, family counselling or therapy in community health centres and training opportunities in skills for the care and protection of children, parenting courses in churches or other community organizations, etc. -Childcare/mothercraft programmes -The programmes mentioned for resolving the lack of basic resources -Mass communication campaigns on responsible paternity -Protection measures included in a plan against domestic violence for children and adolescents who have been abandoned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Institution responsible for children and adolescents -Health system -Education system -Women's organizations -Non-governmental organizations
Addictions to alcohol or psychotropic substances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communication campaigns on the risks of becoming dependent on legal and illegal addictive substances -Inclusion of the topic of addictions in the national education programme -Implementation of a national plan of assistance to addicts that takes into account the specificity of children and adolescents -Mechanisms for the early diagnosis and treatment of addictions in community health centres -Institutions specializing in the detoxification of addicts that apply the human rights approach -Judicial mechanisms that require family members to become part of programmes to treat addiction -Identification of alternatives to ensure family life for children and adolescents when those responsible for them required temporary placement for detoxification -Financial transfers conditioned to participation in addiction treatment programmes <p>Note: See article No. 4 by Rogelio Pardo on this subject, in this document.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Institution responsible for children and adolescents -Health system -Education system -Non-governmental organizations -Justice system -Social welfare institution -Organizations that protect the human rights of addicts

¹⁰ Although neglect is a type of domestic violence, it has been considered a separate problem in order to deal with those cases in which it can occur owing to ignorance, as in the case of child and adolescent mothers, or owing to lack of basic resources.



Child labour	-Implementation of national action plans to eliminate child labour and the regulations concerning work performed by adolescents	-All the institutions with programmes of assistance for families with children who work
Threats from commercial sexual exploitation networks	-Measures of protection for the families that receive such threats -Temporary shelters for placing the whole family while the exploiters are investigated and sanctioned -Implementation or improvement of programmes for the professional supervision of children who testify during judicial proceedings	-Justice and security system -Institution responsible for children and adolescents -Social welfare institution
Unemployment	-Design of comprehensive development policies based on a study of the socio-economic conditions of each region -Inclusion of the issue of employment as a fundamental element in the coordination of social and economic policies -The programmes mentioned for resolving the lack of basic resources -Alternative adult education programmes -Free technical training for adolescents over the age of 15 years and adults	-Regional or community development boards or committees -Institute responsible for employment affairs -Institution responsible for children and adolescents -Social welfare institution -Education system
Domestic violence	-Enactment of national laws against domestic violence and establishment of specialized courts -Penalization of domestic violence -Design of national plans for detecting domestic violence and providing assistance, according to whether it is perpetrated against women, men, children or the elderly -Comprehensive sexual education in educational and health centres, based on sexual and reproductive rights -Prevention of sexual abuse by disseminating information about the problem and about reporting procedures -Establishment of opportunities for those responsible to learn skills in how to educate children and adolescents	-Justice and security system -Institution responsible for children and adolescents -Social welfare institution -Education system -Health system -Women's organizations -Organizations for the protection of the family -Organizations for the protection of the human rights of specific groups (the elderly, the disabled, ethnic groups, etc.)



Domestic violence	<p>-Professional monitoring of victims of domestic violence by the corresponding institutions</p> <p>-Judicial investigation procedures when it is suspected that a member of the family is being victimized, set in action by referrals from educational and health centres and individuals</p> <p>-Training police groups on how to intervene during incidents of domestic violence and court officials so that revictimization does not occur</p> <p>-Measures of protection for victims of domestic violence, that include the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court orders for the aggressor to leave the home and not to approach the family • Court orders for the arrest, prosecution and trial of offenders • Surveillance of the home by the community police • Temporary shelters for the family • Health services for the victims (medical care, individual psychological care and/or support groups for survivors, witnesses of domestic violence and children who testify in criminal proceedings) • Conditioned financial transfers • Court orders for the treatment of juvenile offenders and adult offenders¹¹ <p>-Improvement and continuous monitoring of the procedures and conditions of the temporary institutionalization options for children</p> <p>-Pertinent training for officials who work in temporary shelters for institutionalization</p>	
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¹¹ The treatment of adult offenders is offered only to those who, following a specialized criminological diagnosis, have high possibilities of changing and it must be implemented by the penal system. This service should not, under any circumstance, provide the offender with tools for carrying out new offences. It is recommended that the offender should not live with his family, because the safety of its members should not be put at risk.



Health problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communication campaigns on the right of every child to be treated in any health centre -Referrals so that all members of the family can receive healthcare -Specialized care and counselling when a family member is disabled in any way -Rehabilitation programmes -Implementation of programmes on sexual and reproductive rights (information, comprehensive sex education, gynaecology and urology services, laboratory tests, birth control, diagnosis and treatment of sexually-transmitted diseases, prenatal and postnatal care, etc.) -The programmes mentioned for resolving the lack of basic resources when illnesses or disease are detected that derive from the conditions of poverty of the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Institution responsible for children and adolescents -Health system -Education system -Regional or community development boards or committees -Social welfare institution -Institutions responsible for employment affairs
Pseudo-affective relationships with sexual exploiters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Specific information on this type of commercial sexual exploitation in training provided to officials -Comprehensive sex education in schools, colleges and community health centres, based on sexual and reproductive rights -Counselling the family on the human rights violation that this relationship constitutes and the risks it involves for the child or adolescent -Improvement in the mechanisms for penalizing the sexual exploiter -Conditioned financial transfers for obtaining basic resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Institution responsible for children and adolescents -Health system -Education system -Regional or community development boards or committees -Social welfare institution -Justice and security system



Failure of children and adolescents to attend school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reinsertion in the educational system -Creation of attractive educational opportunities for those who have been repeating school years or have fallen behind or have some disability -Tailored curricula -School vouchers -Financial transfers conditioned to the obligation to send the children to school regularly -Technical education -Grants for university 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Institution responsible for children and adolescents -Education system -Regional or community development boards or committees -Social welfare institution
Maternity in children and adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Training officials on the rights of children and adolescents who are pregnant or mothers -Comprehensive sex education based on sexual and reproductive rights -Facilities for pregnancy tests and gynaecological examinations -Ensuring the priority of the right to life of children who are pregnant -Emergency birth control -Diagnosis and treatment of sexually-transmitted diseases -Pre-natal and post-natal control -Childcare counselling -Specialized programmes for assisting child and adolescent mothers -Financial transfers conditioned to complying with the rights of the child (education, recreation, etc.) <p>Note: See article No. 2 by Adriana Rodríguez on this topic, in this document</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Institution responsible for children and adolescents -Education system -Health system -Justice system -Regional or community development boards or committees -Social welfare institution
Rejection of male children and adolescents with effeminate conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Collective communication campaigns on the right to non-discrimination -Comprehensive sex education based on sexual and reproductive rights -Awareness-raising on gender discrimination for officials -Counselling for the family in educational and health centres -Referral to specialized organizations <p>Note: See article No. 3 by Rogelio Pardo on this topic in this document</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Institute responsible for children and adolescents -Education system -Health system



Conflicts with the law ¹²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Programmes of assistance to families whose parental figures are being prosecuted; inter-institutional coordination begins at the same time as the investigation of the crime¹³ -Inclusion of representatives of the institute responsible for children and adolescents in police operations -Alternatives for the penalization of minor offences and consideration of the situation of the family, particularly for women heads of one-parent socially-vulnerable households -The programmes mentioned for resolving the lack of basic resources -Specialized courts for offences committed by children that use the human rights approach and the generational contextual approach -Programmes for treating illicit conduct by children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institution responsible for children and adolescents -Education system -Justice and security system -Regional or community development boards or committees -Social welfare institution
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Consequently, the family intervention calls for applying existing programmes and developing institutional strategies that are adapted to the goals of social integration and protection of the rights of the child. As can be appreciated, this plan consists in providing the family assisted with the tools to comply with its functions of protection and to integrate the social protection system. The institutions involved will have to carry out periodic assessments, under the leadership of the institution responsible for children and adolescents, to verify that the goals are being achieved and to make any necessary changes. The principal indicator that the plan has been successful is that the family is aware of the services offered in the community and has access to them.

¹² This includes domestic violence, but it is considered separately for practical reasons.

¹³ The justice system should never remove the only parental figure of a family so that the children are simply abandoned.



Final considerations

The professional intervention with the families of children and adolescents who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation is a complex matter that requires taking into consideration factors ranging from national policies to specific issues such as the family dynamics. Thus, using innovative procedures, a contribution is made to a process of social change in which families that have traditionally been excluded can demand their right to a decent life, while they commit to changing from within the family patterns of interaction that make their children and adolescents vulnerable.

From the macro-social point of view, the social movement must struggle against the neo-liberal policies of exclusion and against patriarchal and adultocentrist cultural patterns that allow commercial sexual exploitation by unscrupulous adults, in full view of men and women who are indifferent. In the micro-social sphere, the community, the family and the individual cannot be omitted from a well-coordinated inter-institutional approach that seeks to strengthen the family support networks.

As Liliana Barg (2003) notes, the present moment calls for sensitive and active professionals who denounce abandonment and neglect by the institutions who are responsible for the people they work with, and who propose new forms of intervention that are truly effective.

One of the roles of a sensitive and conscientious professional is to take part in social movements aimed at achieving greater democracy and participation by all sectors of the population. This involves a professional ethical commitment to the struggle for a better administration of State resources.

The attainment of a system of high-quality professional assistance for the families of children and adolescents who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation is a goal for professionals who wish to take part in the social change towards a world with greater political, class, gender and generational equality.



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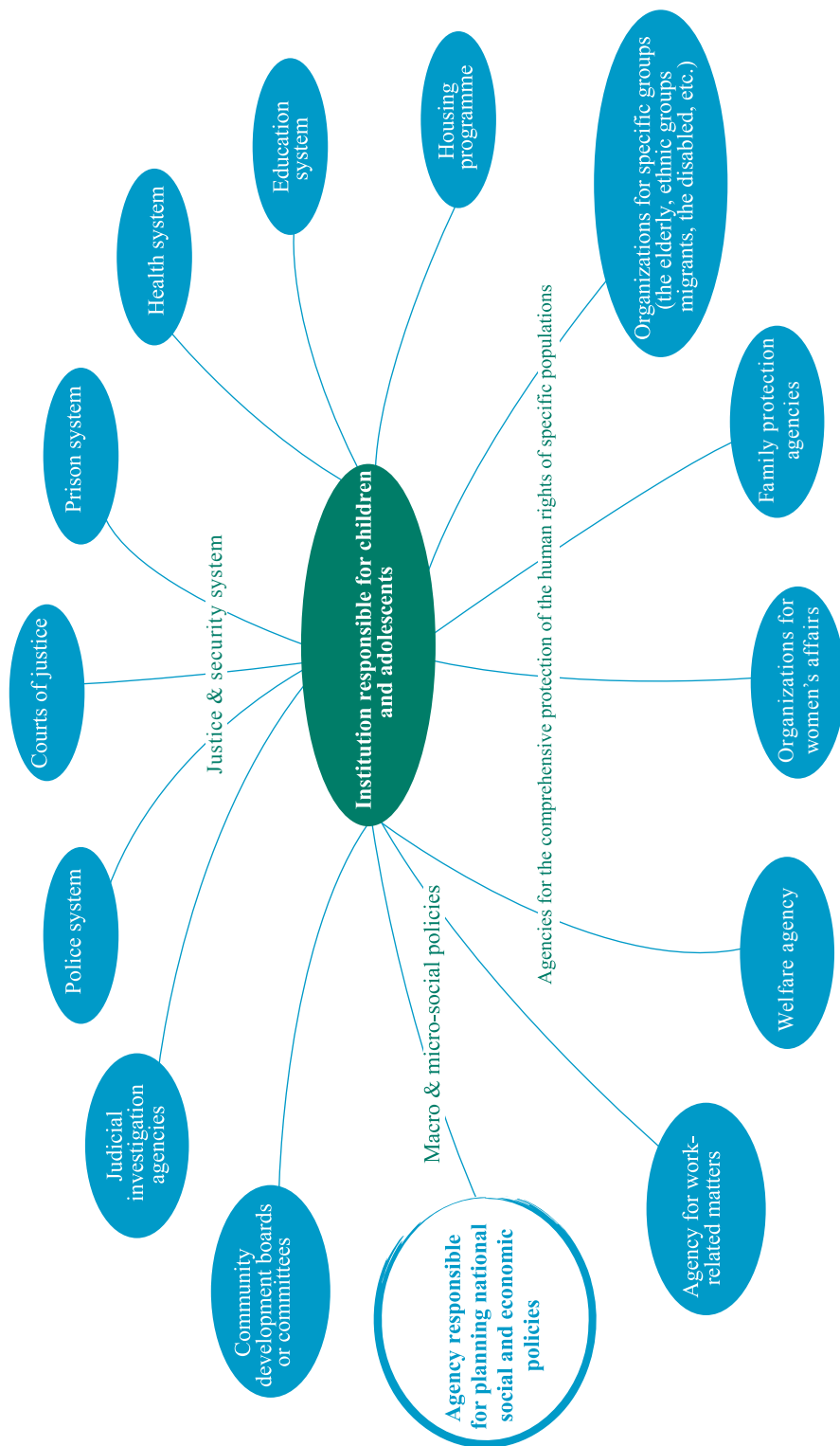


Annexes



ANNEX 1

Inter-institutional coordination for assistance to the families of child and adolescent victims of commercial sexual exploitation



The institution responsible for protecting the rights of children and adolescents is in charge of coordinating the institutional services and receives information on the assistance provided to children and their families. However, each agency may independently carry out actions coordinated bilaterally with the others in order to facilitate services.