

PREVENTION AND WITHDRAWAL



International
Labour
Office



COLLECTION of **Good Practices
and Lessons Learned** related
to the prevention and elimination
of commercial sexual exploitation
(CSE) of girls, boys and
adolescents

Programme for Prevention and Elimination of Commercial
Sexual Exploitation of Girls, Boys and Adolescents
in the Triple Border Area (Argentina-Brazil-Paraguay)

PREVENTION AND WITHDRAWAL



International
Labour
Office

Marta Casal Caharrón

Programme on Prevention and Elimination of the
Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Girls, Boys and
Adolescents on the Border between Brazil and Paraguay

Copyright © International Labour Organization 2005
First published 2005

Publications of the International Labour Office enjoy copyright under Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. Nevertheless, short excerpts from them may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation, application should be made to the Publications Bureau (Rights and Permissions), International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, or by email: pubdroit@ilo.org. The International Labour Office welcomes such applications. Libraries, institutions and other users registered in the United Kingdom with the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP [Fax: (+44) (0)20 7631 5500; email: cla@cla.co.uk], in the United States with the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923 [Fax: (+1) (978) 750 4470; email: info@copyright.com] or in other countries with associated Reproduction Rights Organizations, may make photocopies in accordance with the licences issued to them for this purpose.

CASAL CAHARRÓN, Marta

OIT/IPEC. *Collection of Good Practices and Lesson Learned Related to the Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE) of Girls, Boy and Adolescents:*

PREVENTION AND WITHDRAWAL.

Asunción: ILO, 2005. 104p. Child labour, Good practices, Prevention, Sexual exploitation, hazardous work, Girl, Children, plan of action, Brasil, Paraguay. Pub OIT. 02.02.1

ISSN: 92-2-117880-3 (Print)

ISBN: 92-2-117881-1 (Web PDF)

ISSN: 92-2-117890-0 (Print Complete Collection)

ISBN: 92-2-117891-9 (Web PDF Complete Collection)

ILO Cataloguing in Publication Data

The designations employed in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the International Labour Office concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the International Labour Office of the opinions expressed in them. Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the International Labour Office, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval. ILO publications can be obtained through major booksellers or ILO local offices in many countries, or direct from ILO Publications, International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland. Catalogues or lists of new publications are available free of charge from the above address, or by email: pubvente@ilo.org ILO publications can be obtained in Las Flores 295, San Isidro, Lima 27-Peru, or through PO Box 14-124, Lima, Peru.

Visit our website: www.oit.org.pe/ipecc

Printed in Paraguay

Funding for this publication was provided by the United States Department of Labor. This publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the United States Government.

Index

Foreword	7
Acronyms Used	9
Executive Summary	11
1. Introduction	15
2. Objectives and methodology	17
2.1.Objectives and activities	17
2.2.Conceptual and methodological observations	18
2.3.Field study	19
2.4.Research techniques	20
2.5.Observations on field study constraints	20
3. Context of the action programmes	23
3.1. Political and institutional context	25
· Paraguay - Ciudad del Este	25
· Brasil - Foz de Iguazú	28
3.2. Manifestations and characterization of CSE	30
· Ciudad del Este	31
· Foz de Iguazú	33

4. Strategies and methodologies for withdrawal, assistance and prevention _____	37
4.1. Description of direct action programmes _____	37
5. Good practices models _____	49
5.1. Good practices in prevention _____	50
5.2. Good practices in withdrawal _____	61
5.3. Impact of the action programmes _____	76
6. Lessons learned _____	81
6.1. Design of action programmes, implementing agencies and assistance professionals _____	81
6.2. Target group _____	83
6.3. Bonds with the Programme _____	84
6.4. Assistance strategies and methodologies _____	86
7. Conclusions and next steps _____	93
Bibliography _____	97
Annexes _____	101
Annex I: Project documents reviewed _____	101
Annex II: Fieldwork activities _____	103



Foreword

The book you are holding in your hands is part of a series of publications on lessons learned and good practices related to with the prevention and elimination of commercial sexual exploitation of girls, boys, and adolescents. This series is the product of a project carried out under the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) with financing provided by the United States Department of Labor on the triple border between Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay from September 2001 to October 2005.

This project stemmed from the unanimous adoption of ILO Convention 182 (in 1999) against the worst forms of child labour. This Convention regards sale, trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of girls, boys, and adolescents as slavery-like practices and calls on all member States to take urgent and immediate steps to prohibit and eliminate them.

During its implementation, the project in the triple border area has accumulated a large number of lessons learned and good practices that would be useful in helping member States in this area. This book compiles lessons learned and good practices connected with strategies for prevention and withdrawal of girls, boys, and adolescents from commercial sexual exploitation.

The other books in the series examine lessons learned and good practices in the application of legislation in Argentina and Paraguay on one hand, and in Brazil on the other; there are also studies on lessons learned and

good practices in awareness raising, institutional strengthening and, finally, income generation.

It is our hope that this book will be useful in the struggle to prevent the recruitment of girls, boys, and adolescents into different forms of commercial sexual exploitation, in protecting and ensuring the rights of victims, and in the suppression and punishment of their exploiters, not only in the three countries involved in the project, but also in other parts of the world.

Paraguay September 2005

Acronyms used

CAIA:	Integral Assistance Centre for Adolescents
CEAPRA:	Centre for Attention to Girls, Boys, and Adolescents in situations of CSE
CPI:	Parliamentary Committee for Criminal Investigation
CRC:	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSE:	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of girls, boys and adolescents
IDB:	Inter-American Development Bank
ILO:	International Labour Organization
IOM:	International Organization for Migration
IPEC:	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
MERCOSUR:	Southern Cone Common Market
MEW:	Ministry of Education and Culture
NASA:	Solidarity Action Nucleus against AIDS
NGO:	Nongovernmental Organization
AP:	Action Programme (term used by ILO/IPEC to refer to direct action programmes with children and their families)
PETI:	Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (Brazil)
PRODEPA:	Programme of Literacy and Basic Education for Young People and Adults
SCNSA:	Sociedad Civil Nuestra Señora Aparecida
STI:	Sexually transmitted infections
UN:	United Nations
UNICEF:	United Nations Children’s Fund
USA:	United States

PREVENTION AND WITHDRAWAL



Executive summary

This study systematizes the good practices and lessons learned related to methodologies to prevent the recruitment of girls, boys and adolescents for commercial sexual exploitation, and for withdrawal and assistance for child and adolescent victims of this form of exploitation in Foz de Iguacu (Brazil) and Ciudad del Este (Paraguay), in the context of the ILO project carried out in that zone from 2001 until mid-2005.

The action programmes for intervention, withdrawal and prevention of recruitment for CSE have been implemented by local NGOs involved in the protection and care of children, as well as by other organizations especially created to carry out these programmes.

To prepare this report a review was conducted of the documents produced in the course the programmes of action in both contexts. Those documents catalogue progress, difficulties, lessons learned, and results. In addition to a review of those documents, a field study was conducted in Ciudad del Este and Foz de Iguacu in February 2005, during which interviews were held with the professionals involved in the action programmes and the target population in both areas. At the same time it was possible to observe the activities of these programmes firsthand.

This document examines good practices and lessons learned, as well as results and challenges pending in the light of the information available. These studies are focused closely on the local context in which the different programmes are carried out, which, despite their proximity,

have marked differences in terms of institutional and political capacities, and the characteristics of CSE. These differences and peculiarities have produced different developments, results and good practices in each context, thus further enriching the lessons learned about successful strategies for combating commercial sexual exploitation.

With respect to programme targets, the information available shows that the targets for measures to prevent recruitment for CSE have been met and surpassed. In this context, not only were the quantitative targets set exceeded, but multiple innovative strategies have been developed that could be replicated in other similar contexts. The activities designed to mobilize the community and key actors involved with girls, boys and adolescents in Foz de Iguacu and in Ciudad del Este have been the most effective and sustainable mechanisms for the prevention of CSE. The methodologies implemented to that end are described and analyzed in detail in this report. That aside, we have found that the key to prevention is not only, or even mainly, the work done with girls, boys and adolescents, but the involvement of actors from civil society and the government sectors responsible for their well-being and protection.

As regards withdrawal of girls, boys and adolescents from exploitation, the quantitative targets set for the programmes were not met in full. However, that does not mean that good practices have not been developed in this regard; rather it has to do in good measure with the complexity of the problem and the need to implement different types of strategies that are effective for all profiles of populations affected by CSE. Thus, the withdrawal strategies and methodologies applied by the programmes showed that they can be very effective for one group of CSE victims but not for another. Commercial sexual exploitation violates fundamental rights; however, it is also the cause and consequence of many other instances where rights are not observed or denied that need to be comprehensively addressed in the withdrawal process, which makes it a long and very complex process. Several good practices and methodologies were identified for withdrawal from exploitation in both contexts: informal education, formal education, personal advancement, and, fundamentally, consolidation of affective ties. However, surely the most important contribution of these programmes for withdrawal from sexual exploitation are the multiple lessons learned thanks to the work, innovation, creativity, and flexibility needed in the search for solutions for this complex task.

The lessons learned collected in this document concern the characteristics of sexual exploitation and of the victim population; the aspects that

must be taken into account in the designing of action programmes and the selection of professionals to implement those programmes; and each phase and timing of the withdrawal and prevention processes.

Finally, the document sets out the steps necessary to consolidate the process initiated against commercial sexual exploitation in the triple border area. The action programmes have unquestionably set the ball rolling in this area by drawing attention to the potential of this process and the most effective mechanisms for carrying it out. However, the next steps must involve all the actors in government, the business sector, and civil society that have a key potential role to play to complete this process: the need to eliminate the commercial sexual exploitation of girls, boys and adolescents cries out to them all.

PREVENTION AND WITHDRAWAL

1. Introduction

The triple border area encompassed by the cities of Ciudad del Este (Paraguay), Foz de Iguacu (Brasil) and Puerto Iguazú (Argentina) is a busy commercial zone and a popular tourist destination that generates a high volume of cross-border movement of people. NGOs that work with children and adolescents, as well as sociological studies have determined that in this area there is a high incidence of commercial sexual exploitation of girls, boys and adolescents in all of its forms (child prostitution, trafficking of children and child pornography). This exploitation is encouraged, among other factors, by a lack of control by the competent of authorities on this border. Precisely because of this frequent and large volume of movement between the cities, the implementation of a project to combat commercial sexual exploitation required an integrated and simultaneous intervention in all three contexts.

The ILO, through the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), launched the *Project for Prevention and Elimination of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of girls, boys and adolescents on the border between Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay* in 2001. To that end, it received financing from the U.S. Department of Labour and the assistance of public and private institutions that participated as local counterparts. The project initiated its activities in Ciudad del Este and Foz de Iguacu in September 2001; Puerto Iguazú was included in June

2002. The first phase of the programme lasted from 2001 until August 2004; following a review, it was deemed advisable to extend the project until October 2005.

The project proposed a strategy of action based on six complementary core components to combat commercial sexual exploitation.

First an institutional structure was set up to harness funds, efforts, and wills through the formation of local committees against commercial sexual exploitation in Foz, Ciudad del Este and Puerto Iguazú, as well as the coordination of activities among the three committees. These bodies brought together important actors from public and private entities to combat CSE.

Generation of knowledge on CSE was another core component implemented through research on aspects such as institutional capacity, legal framework, and the characteristics of CSE and persons affected by it in Foz de Iguacu and Ciudad del Este.

The awareness raising and social mobilization component implemented several activities targeting the general community in mass awareness raising campaigns, as well as other more specifically targeted activities designed to mobilize government and civil society actors, in order to secure their involvement in tackling CSE and implementing the programme at the local and national level.

All of these components strengthened the integrated care and CSE withdrawal strategies that were implemented through direct action programmes (APs) in Foz de Iguacu and Ciudad del Este. These APs were implemented by existing NGOs and by other organizations especially created for that purpose.



2. Objectives and methodology

2.1. Objectives and activities

The objective of this study is the systematization of good practices and lessons learned on methodologies to prevent the recruitment of girls, boys and adolescents for commercial sexual exploitation, and on withdrawal and care for child and adolescent victims of this form of exploitation in Foz de Iguacu (Brazil) and Ciudad del Este (Paraguay)¹.

To that end, the following activities were carried act:

- Compilation of documents prepared by the action programmes, describing progress, difficulties and results in their implementation, as well as other documents on specific programme activities and their methodologies, such as: internal planning, educational plans and projects, etc.
- Compilation of other documents generated in the framework of the programme that were significant for this systematization; and CSE bibliography.
- Field studies to collect information firsthand from the professionals implementing the programmes and from the target population.
- Systematization and analysis of all the information.
- Preparation of the final document.

2.2. Conceptual and methodological observations

"Systematization is the critical interpretation of experience, and based on the organization and reconstruction of that experience, what is discovered or what becomes apparent includes the logic of the process experienced, the factors that have intervened in the process, how these factors have interacted, and why they have interacted in a determined manner». *Guidelines for Action Programme Systematization. IPEC South America. February 2003.*

*«... anyone who systematizes is not only seeking to know more about something, but, above all, to be and to do things better; knowledge is at the service of action; better action is only possible through better understanding, and this includes not only the direct target of an intervention, but also the objectives of that intervention, including its long-term objectives. The idea is that anyone who systematizes should explicitly clarify and ask themselves about the aims of the actions, and the coherence between those actions and their intentions. Systematization should give rise to proposals that guide new actions"***Barnechea, M; González, E; Morgan, M. La producción de conocimientos en sistematización. La Piragua. Revista Latinoamericana de educación y política. No. 16. 1999.**

The activities proposed for this study fall within the framework of an investigation that seeks to systematize experiences in the area of social intervention, for the specific purpose of identifying good practices and lessons learned. A good practice can be defined as:

"...anything that works in some way in combating child labour, whether fully or in part, and that may have implications for practice at any level elsewhere."DED Guidelines: "Good practices". ILO-IPEC, Geneva, 2001.

A key aspect is that a good practice be something that actually has been tried and shown to work. The overriding criteria of a good practice should be its potential usefulness to others in stimulating new ideas or

providing guidance on how one can be more effective in some aspect related to the prevention and elimination of child labour.

There are seven core criteria to determine if a practice is “good”. These are:

- Innovation or creativity
- Effectiveness/Impact
- Replicability
- Sustainability
- Relevance
- Responsive and ethical
- Efficiency and implementation

Good practices can be classified at three different levels, according to the ILO classification:

Level 1: Innovative practices

Level 2: Successfully demonstrated practices

Level 3: Replicated good practices

Finally, a lesson learned is a conclusion drawn from the implementation of a project regarding the factors that have led to the success or failure of certain measures. A lesson learned also acts as a guide on how to boost the effectiveness of initiatives to prevent or eliminate child labour.

2.3. Field study

Prior to the field study we reviewed relevant documents to understand the context in which the programmes are being carried out, the characteristics of the target group, and the objectives and activities of the action programmes in Ciudad del Este and Foz de Iguazu (see Annex I).

The design of the field study included the participation of the professionals involved in implementing the action programmes, the persons responsible for the main areas of assistance, as well as the coordinators of centres and programmes. There were no problems in this regard because the various professionals were available and willing to be interviewed and to carry out some of their activities in the presence of an observer.

Different data recollection instruments were prepared in line with the objectives set out, the core issues defined in advance, and the type of actor interviewed or activity observed: interview guidelines, observation guidelines and field notebook.

2.4. Research techniques

As mentioned, the techniques chosen were consistent with a qualitative methodology designed to examine processes, meanings, relationships, perceptions and subjective experiences.

- Participatory and non-participatory observation in programme activities.
- Semi-structured interviews with professionals from assistance programmes.
- Semi-structured interviews with indirect beneficiaries (mothers of beneficiaries).
- Group and individual conversational interviews: experts, other professionals, direct and indirect beneficiaries.
- Group discussions with the multi-disciplinary teams from the programmes.

The field study covered two consecutive weeks in February 2005 (see Annex II).

2.5. Observations on field study constraints

The field study was affected by two factors:

In Ciudad del Este, the activities of the action programme were unexpectedly suspended in December 2004 and January 2005 for internal institutional reasons of the implementing organization. When this study was carried out they were recommencing activities and for that reason the level of activity at the assistance centre was low compared with other times.

In Foz de Iguacu the action programme implemented in 2003 and 2004 had concluded, making it impossible to interview the professionals who implemented it. The new *Acordar Programme* began to carry out direct action activities at the end of January, which meant that they did not have much experience as yet, although meaningful results were already visible.

These disadvantages were offset in good measure because in 2004 an extensive intermediate systematization of the action programmes' methodologies had been carried out. This systematization was conducted by the author of this report, which helped to compensate for gaps in information in the present field study. The 2004 systematization involved one month of extensive fieldwork on both action programmes, during which it was possible to interview all of the professionals and direct beneficiaries, observe almost all the activities carried out by the programmes, and interview the other key actors from NGOs and public institutions involved in combating CSE. This experience and the resulting document have been a core input for this systematization.²

¹ *The programme in the triple border area in Puerto Iguazu only focused on the institutional strengthening and awareness raising component.*

² *Casal Caharrón, Marta (2004), Review and systematization of the results of the methodology adopted for direct intervention services offered to children, adolescents and their families referral centres set up in the triple border area (Ciudad Del Este, Foz de Iguazu), (mimeo) Asunción, Paraguay.*

PREVENTION AND WITHDRAWAL



3. Context of the action programmes

The action programmes for prevention of and withdrawal from commercial sexual exploitation have been carried out in Ciudad del Este and Foz de Iguaçu. Despite being adjoining cities (divided only by the Parana River) they are separate contexts with their own differences and peculiarities. These differences have to do, as we shall see, with the characteristics and manifestations of CSE, the institutional capacities and resources to confront it, and their socio-demographic and economic characteristics.

Despite these differences, over time, both cities have developed and grown in parallel, as well as entered into a progressive decline connected with two key phenomena and events. On one hand, the construction of the Itaipu hydroelectric dam in the 1970's and 1980's converted these two cities into poles of economic development, drawing large numbers of workers and their families. Furthermore, Paraguay created a free trade zone in Ciudad del Este which increased domestic migration to that city and its outlying areas. Foz de Iguaçu was also affected by a wave of domestic and international migration attracted by the border trade and shopping tourism encouraged by the neighbouring country.

The bubble of economic and demographic expansion associated with trade burst in 1995 due to globalization and the consolidation of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR). Ciudad del Este went into a decline for which no viable solution has yet been found. For its

part, Foz de Iguacu benefited from an increase in domestic and international tourism thanks to the Iguazu Falls. Tourism is currently its main source of foreign exchange, but that does not provide sufficient employment for a population that has grown hugely in a disorganized and unplanned manner.

Social exclusion affects large sectors of the community in both contexts, with a very young population, without strategies for alternative development to offset the problems of unemployment in the short term, a growing informal sector, uprootedness, lack of educational, sanitary, and cultural resources, family, social and community conflicts that encourage problems of public security, violence, and a rise in illegal activities, such as drug trafficking.

Social exclusion and its degrading and destabilizing effects on individuals, families and communities; disorderly large-scale migration; tourism; a floating population attracted by trade, and the lack of social and political attention to commercial sexual exploitation, have created a favourable environment for many of the factors that increase supply and demand of this type of exploitation, which has been increasing, with its own peculiarities, in both cities in this border area.³

We will describe some of the peculiarities of each context at the time the Project on Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation in the Triple Border Area was launched in 2001. These peculiarities have been very important as regards the implementation of the direct action programmes, and for their development, results, achievements, and lessons learned. mercados globales, y a la consolidación del MERCOSUR. Ciudad del Este went into a decline for which no viable solution has yet been found. For its part, Foz de Iguacu benefited from an increase in domestic and international tourism thanks to the Iguazu Falls. Tourism is currently its main source of foreign exchange, but that does not provide sufficient employment for a population that has grown hugely in a disorganized and unplanned manner.

Social exclusion affects large sectors of the community in both contexts, with a very young population, without strategies for alternative development to offset the problems of unemployment in the short term, a growing informal sector, uprootedness, lack of educational, sanitary, and cultural resources, family, social and community conflicts that encourage problems of public security, violence, and a rise in illegal activities, such as drug trafficking.

Social exclusion and its degrading and destabilizing effects on individuals, families and communities; disorderly large-scale migration; tourism; a floating population attracted by trade, and the lack of social and political attention to commercial sexual exploitation, have created a favourable environment for many of the factors that increase supply and demand of this type of exploitation, which has been increasing, with its own peculiarities, in both cities in this border area.³

We will describe some of the peculiarities of each context at the time the Project on Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation in the Triple Border Area was launched in 2001. These peculiarities have been very important as regards the implementation of the direct action programmes, and for their development, results, achievements, and lessons learned.

3.1. Political and institutional context

• Paraguay - Ciudad del Este

When the project on prevention and elimination of CSE began to be implemented in the triple border area, policy initiatives in Paraguay to tackle this violation of children's rights did not extend further than a handful of formal initiatives and declarations. In that sense, it is necessary to bear in mind that the recently created institutional structure responsible for safeguarding the rights of children was still flimsy and being developed. The Secretariat for Children and Adolescents was created in 2001 following the adoption of the new Code on Children and Adolescents that year (Law 1680/01).⁴ The Code also provided for the creation and regulation of a decentralized National System for Integral Protection and Advancement of Children and Adolescents (SNPPI in Spanish), through the creation of the following agencies: National Council on Children and Adolescents; Departmental Councils on Children and Adolescents; Municipal Councils, and the Offices of Children's Defenders (CODENI in Spanish). Measures also began to be adopted to make standards consistent with the new Code and the country's international undertakings. These receive the permanent crucial backing of nongovernmental organizations and international agencies. The measures adopted by the state over the last ten years were essential as a starting point to combat this form of exploitation;⁵ however, as yet they are nothing more than a framework in which concrete steps have yet to be taken.

Accordingly, the project is set in a context of institutional weakness and a severe insufficiency of funding to ensure a proper qualitative and quantitative response to the violation of children's rights in the country. The absence of any effective public policies on health, employment and education other than uncoordinated stop-gap measures and responses implemented in emergency situations made this situation of vulnerability even worse.⁶

In the particular case of measures against commercial sexual exploitation of children, measures were carried out according to the irregular situation doctrine, rather than according to the principle of integral protection. Police round ups and a criminal approach were practically the only way in which the public sector addressed the problem, which reflected a lack of sensitivity toward CSE and resulted in the criminalization, stigmatization and further victimization of the girls, boys and adolescents it affected.

Only nongovernmental organizations and a few international agencies were doing anything to draw attention to, denounce, and attempt ways to tackle the problem. In this way, UNICEF and the ILO carried out a first review of the issue in 1997 in Ciudad del Este and Asuncion to raise awareness and characterize the problem;⁷ in 2000 the NGO Beca conducted a second study in the same cities in the framework of the A.M.A.R. Project.⁸

Various studies were also carried out at the beginning of the Project on Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation in the triple border area to examine the issue more closely. One of those was an institutional study, which revealed that, in addition to the absence of state efforts to address the problem, there was a lack of experience and institutional capacity to tackle it among nongovernmental organizations. The study found that there were 13 institutions in the country that engaged in some kind of activity to combat CSE; however, only one institution that did so specifically provided direct assistance to the victims. This single initiative, implemented in Asuncion by the NGO

Luna Nueva, was launched in 1999. It is an integral assistance programme for girls and adolescent victims of CSE that began with funding from ILO's IPEC programme and continued thereafter with financial support from international cooperation agencies.

In Ciudad del Este, before the ILO project was implemented there was no such experience or organization addressing the problem of CSE from any perspective. The organizations that worked on children's issues in

the city were too limited to engage in direct assistance activities because they lacked the funds. They implemented charitable activities in response to the severe lack of coverage of basic needs in broad swathes of the population; the lack of expertise and experience in coordinated and network activities made it difficult to tackle complex issues like CSE. Furthermore, lack of sensitivity, ignorance and a limited approach to the problem were weaknesses not just confined to the government sector, but also present in many NGOs that provided assistance to girls, boys and adolescents.

In 2001, when the project in the triple border area was initiated, there began a period of improvement in the government's attitude to this issue. Pressure and coaching from NGOs and international agencies were essential in bringing about this progress, some examples of which are:

- Development of the National Policy on Children and Adolescents, which entailed, the preparation and approval, inter alia, of the Plan for Elimination of Child Labour and Protection of Adolescent Labour, and the National Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of girls, boys and adolescents.⁹
- Ratification of the Optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.
- In 2004 Paraguay ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
- The launch in 2004 of various measures against trafficking in persons for purposes of sexual exploitation in the framework of projects financed by the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Organization for Migration, and United States Embassy.

The current challenge is to put these public policies and the commitments adopted with the signing of international legal instruments into concrete actions and results; to date, they have mainly been nothing more than declarations of intent. Furthermore, it is essential for the state to take up its responsibilities and ensure that local capacities necessary to deal with these issues are in place by the time international agencies withdraw

their pressure and technical and economic assistance. capacidades para abordarlas una vez el apoyo técnico, económico y la presión de los organismos internacionales haya desaparecido.

• Brasil - Foz de Iguazú

Brazil has a track record, experience, institutional structure and public policies that, despite their limitations and shortcomings, provided a more propitious setting for implementing the assistance programme in Foz de Iguazú.

At the time the project was implemented in the border areas, Brazil had a Law on Children and Adolescents that had developed considerably since its adoption in 1990, and was a groundbreaking instrument in light of its faithful consistency with the integral protection doctrine proposed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Brazil had also instituted specific policies against child labour (PETI) as well as other public policies which directly target the prevention of child labour and CSE, such as: *Bolsa Escola*; different family assistance programmes (basic basket, minimum wage); vocational training programmes for at-risk adolescents; child and adolescent health programmes, etc.¹⁰ These are national government policies implemented by municipalities in a decentralized manner. They are essential policies for preventing CSE but the budget they receive is insufficient to compensate for the profound inequalities and wants that blight the majority of the Brazilian population.

Specifically with regard to combating CSE, attention should be drawn to the measures implemented by nongovernmental organizations, in many cases with support and financing provided by the government and international agencies, as government policy initiatives in different parts of the country for the purposes of awareness raising, research, prevention, and direct action for victims.¹¹ While these experiences are insufficient to encompass fully the magnitude, depth and complexity of the problem, they have played a pivotal role in increasing its public visibility, in order to raise awareness and include it as a permanent topic on the political agenda. These measures were crystallized in 2001 in the National Plan to Confront Sexual Violence against Children and Young People, as well as in a federal programme (SENTINELA),¹² which is implemented in different municipalities and provides assistance to child and adolescent victims of abuse and commercial sexual exploitation.

As in Ciudad del Este, in Foz de Iguazú an institutional review was carried out in the framework of this project in 2002.¹³ The review showed that there were 74 nongovernmental organizations involved in social

intervention. None of these institutions directly or specifically addressed the problem of CSE. However, some of them provided assistance to girls and adolescents in this situation, as well as to their families, in the framework of broader programmes against social exclusion. Despite this gap in specific attention to CSE, nongovernmental organizations offered a favourable, potential context for implementing the programme, given their experience in work with children through educational, recreational, cultural, and vocational training, etc. projects. The weakness to be overcome had to do with their lack of coordination, duplication of efforts, and isolation in the use of resources, which limits their potential and possibility to provide a more effective response to growing social needs and exclusion. Another of the shortcomings mentioned in the institutional review was the absence of assistance programmes for drug addicts in the city, a lack which, in this context, is particularly significant due to the high incidence of drug abuse among the population affected by CSE, and which, on occasion, is not only one of the consequences, but also one in an intricate mesh of causes.

The main public institutions responsible for policies on children are the Municipal Secretariat for Children and the Protection Council. The city is also the location of the regional office of the Ministry for Family Affairs.¹⁴ Public institutions implement assistance programmes for deprived families and children at risk.¹⁵ These programmes offer a limited coverage and are unable to keep up with the rising needs of the population.

The Sentinela Programme was implemented in 2002 as a pilot project specifically designed to combat CSE. At the time its goal was to provide assistance to 50 victims of abuse or sexual exploitation. It had very limited infrastructure and human resources but was a key actor with the potential and strength to implement the action programme.

In Foz de Iguazu, therefore, there was greater potential for implementing the project and setting up networks to help CSE victims and prevent this form of violence, owing to the greater institutional strength and capacity in place compared with Ciudad del Este. However, the difficulty in Foz had to do with the problem's lack of visibility and the reluctance of families, society, and public institutions to acknowledge it. In turn, that reluctance was connected, among other aspects, with the fact that this type of exploitation is run by criminal organizations that are also involved in other illegal activities and enjoy protection and impunity.¹⁶

The acceptance as normal and failure to recognize CSE as a problem in Ciudad del Este; and the taboo and denial that surrounds CSE in Foz de Iguazu, constituted core factors that encouraged the existence,

permissiveness toward, and growth of this violation of children's rights in the triple border area. These socio-cultural aspects, combined with the region's socio-economic decline, have created a context, which, if it is to be confronted, requires the linkage of social actors, resources, and political will.

3.2. Manifestations and characterization of CSE

The victims of, or persons at risk from, commercial sexual exploitation who have been helped by direct action programmes are a very mixed bag. The children and adolescents all have in common the fact that they are victims of this human rights violation, or are at risk of becoming victims; however, there are many variables that distinguish them. Behind CSE there is a complex array of causal factors, conditions, and profiles that vary according to different socio-demographic factors, the local context, and form of exploitation.

In addition to differences in age, sex, ethnicity, or social class, there are differences to do with: type of exploitation; length of time in that situation; involvement in other types of activity connected, in these contexts, with sexual exploitation, such as drug trafficking or drug abuse; family background, and subjective perception or appraisal that each person has of their situation. These factors, among others, have made it clear that initiatives aimed at withdrawal from and prevention of CSE must take these variables into account, if they are to respond effectively to the peculiarities, needs and interests of each child or adolescent with which they work. Thus, what might bring about the successful withdrawal of one victim might not work for another. Some may commit to or become interested in the care programme and its aims in a matter of days, while others may take a year or more; others may never do so.

Before the assistance programmes were implemented, two assessments were carried out in Foz de Iguacu and Ciudad del Este in order to obtain an overview of CSE incidence and the characteristics and needs of the population affected. The installation of referral assistance centres revealed that in addition to those determined by the assessments, there were other profiles that added to the diversity, complexity and dynamics of the phenomenon, representing a further challenge for the action programmes, which had to adopt flexible, dynamic and creative strategies

to respond to very different subjective attitudes and social and personal situations.

• Ciudad del Este

A rapid assessment of CSE in Ciudad del Este was carried out in 2001 in the framework of the ILO project.¹⁷ This study was conducted as a prior strategy to the implementation of the direct action programmes for victims and persons at risk from CSE. The study profiles victims as well as places and forms of commercial sexual exploitation. This assessment guided the activities of the assistance programme professionals in the first six months of implementation. The assessment outlined a core profile based on a sample of 101 girls and adolescents, who displayed the following characteristics:

- Mainly female adolescents aged 15 - 17;
- They come from large families with serious wants in terms of material and affective needs;
- They have migrated to Ciudad del Este alone from rural areas looking for work, or are second-generation migrants;
- They do not live with their parents;
- They know how to read and write and have completed primary education, after which they dropped out of school;
- They are «professionally» linked to commercial sexual exploitation; that is, it is their livelihood and only source of income with which to meet their basic needs and purchase a limited range of consumer goods;
- They make contact with «clients» in the street and public areas traditionally identified as pick-up zones: city centre, principal thoroughfares, discotheques and bars, markets, Puente de la Amistad¹⁸, etc.;
- They are linked to illegal drug abuse.

The sexually exploited persons who meet this profile in Ciudad del Este are found in the more «professional» or institutionalized prostitution circuits; however, they were not initially receptive to the proposals of the action programme. Through contact activities in the streets, professionals from CEAPRA detected another profile of persons who were victims of a more diffuse and invisible form of commercial sexual exploitation that exists on the fringes of these circuits and places traditionally associated with the sex trade. While the assessment

mentioned the existence of young girls who were victims of this form of exploitation, it was not until the assistance programme was fully underway that the high incidence of commercial sexual exploitation of young girls came to light. These girls are aged 8 to 14 years old, and are exploited in their communities by neighbours or family members, or in the context of work activities in the informal economy, such as: street vending, vegetable collection at markets, windscreen cleaning, lottery ticket vending, etc.

This is the main profile of the girls and adolescents with which the direct action programme in Ciudad del Este has worked. They are a very young group and are exploited in a more diffuse and sporadic manner. They are paid very little money, which goes to cover their basic needs and those of the family.¹⁹ The typical family background is as follows: very large, headed by a single mother, sometimes with a common-law partner who is abusive and violent to the girls. They live in areas that are deprived, under-resourced, and very violent, where commercial sexual exploitation is an everyday occurrence and not regarded as a problem from the point of view of people's rights; it part of the lives of women and girls, for whom it is another way of meeting their basic needs.

As girls and adolescents they do not regard themselves as «prostitutes»; to a certain extent they rationalize sexual exploitation relationships as normal because they are commonplace in their environment and among their peers; they have not acquired the codes of the places and relationships associated with more institutionalized forms of commercial sexual exploitation; they maintain ties to their family and normally live with them; and they do not usually use illegal drugs. These are girls who want to carry on being girls and who, to some extent, are reluctant to accept their situation, which is why they are receptive to the proposals and activities of the assistance programme that conform to their desires, needs, interests, and life expectations. Because they are young they are interested in education, training, play, being in protected environment, and still aspire to a good family relationship. For them, *the street* does not yet represent the benefits subjectively perceived by older adolescents who have severed ties to their family and who see *the street* as an opportunity to find freedom and make money to support themselves and buy certain goods that would enable them to «be someone» and enjoy certain social standing in their environment.

The contextual framework that encourages commercial sexual exploitation in Ciudad del Este is characterized by extreme poverty,

social exclusion, and the deterioration of family and community life for girls, boys and adolescents. These conditions are at the root of the vulnerability to sexual exploitation of the core profile of persons with which the assistance programme has worked in the years that it has been underway.

It is essential to keep in mind all of these elements of the core profile determined by the assistance programme in order to evaluate the activities carried out, their evolution, achievements, difficulties and good practices.

• Foz de Iguazú

In Foz de Iguazú there were no existing studies prior to the assessment carried out in the framework of the ILO Project. Therefore, the assessment was essential to identify the incidence and diversity of manifestations of CSE in the city, which, as mentioned, was denied and ignored.

The assessment revealed the existence of four different levels or manifestations of sexual exploitation, depending on different population profiles, places of exploitation, and the network of relationships surrounding it. These levels were as follows:

- **First level:** Exploitation in which the victims are girls and adolescents in situations of extreme poverty, who work in the informal economy (street vendors, mules for smugglers, etc.) in the vicinity of the *Puente de la Amistad* which links the cities of Foz de Iguazú and Ciudad del Este. They are girls, boys and adolescents who live with their families and contribute to the household income. While at work these may be girls offered money by men in return for sex; sometimes they solicit sex themselves. On other occasions they have pimps being their own family or network of close acquaintances. It is usual for them to use drugs or help at the lowest level of drug trafficking activities, acting as lookouts («*olheiros*»). Sexual exploitation in these cases responds to the necessity to meet basic needs and barely provides enough on which to live.
- **Second level:** Here we find adolescents of both sexes who make contact with their «clients» in the city streets and squares, which are very often places where the traditional sex trade is plied. At this level sexual exploitation is supplemented with small-scale drug sales. These activities enable them to support themselves and very

often also their families, who are usually unaware of their activities. Often the adolescents no longer live at home but are still in contact with their families.

- **Third level:** Adolescents who are exploited in small houses used as brothels, as well as bars, and establishments of different types. Usually they are also drug users and live at their place of work.
- **Fourth level:** exploitation of middle-class adolescents at middle and high-level establishments (nightclubs, brothels, hotels). These adolescents are usually recruited by modelling agencies and amongst themselves. This is the most inconspicuous and clandestine segment on which there is least information.

On the first three levels, the victims come from income segments that range from extreme poverty to lower-class, who do not need the income from sexual exploitation to support themselves, but use it to purchase articles and services that they could not otherwise afford (clothes, technology, leisure activities, drugs, etc.). These are the three levels to which the direct action programme has mainly provided assistance.

They are usually adolescent women, mainly aged 14 or over, who experience an array of highly complex problems. They come from deprived sectors of the city; most of them use very dangerous and highly addictive drugs, such as crack cocaine; many do not live with their families or do not contact them for long periods; for these adolescents «the street» is their physical and symbolic milieu, which offers them resources, fun, identity, a sense of belonging and affection. These adolescents are not only exploited sexually, but also used by drug trafficking networks as lookouts or as mules to smuggle drugs, which they regard as a «rise in status». The causes of CSE in this context are not necessarily connected with extreme poverty and the need to meet basic material wants as in the case of Ciudad del Este. While they come from deprived backgrounds, their link to CSE has to do more with the possibility of increasing their purchasing power, the search for adventure, the perception that their situation gives them a certain glamour and distinction, emulating their peers, and rebellion against situations of social exclusion and family conflicts. The absence of clear principles and values in the family, community, and society in general; consumer pressures, and pressures to do with sexuality, combined with a lack of contentment and expectations leads them to make critical decisions.

If the core contextual element in the assistance programme's activities in Ciudad del Este is the extreme poverty of the victims, in Foz de Iguacu there are the added contexts of crime and long periods of exposure to life on the street, with the repercussions that this has on the formation of individual and group identities strongly associated with this environment.

While the main focus of the programme's activities is CSE, other features of the target group's profile, aside from the fact that they are victims of sexual exploitation, have a strong influence in determining their needs and priorities. Accordingly, they also determined what working strategies the action programme needed to adopt. In this way, the action programme faced the challenge of providing alternatives to everything offered by the street environment and culture. The profile of the target population makes securing their commitment to the programme a very slow process, and requires efforts in education, encouragement, and a very firm critical awareness of their life situation.

³ In May 2003 the ILO project estimated that there were approximately 3,500 children and adolescents in the border region who were victims of some kind of sexual violence, which represented a risk factor for their involvement at some stage in commercial sexual exploitation.

⁴ This code replaces the Minors Code, which was based on the irregular situation doctrine and, therefore, conflicted with the integral protection doctrine that guides the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Paraguay signed in 1991.

⁵ Signing of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption; Adoption of the Inter-American Convention on International Traffic in Minors; Signing of ILO Convention 182 and Recommendation 190 on the Prohibition of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Immediate Action for Their Elimination; as well as Convention 138 on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and its Recommendation 146.

⁶ Paraguay has the lowest level of social spending of all the countries in the region.

⁷ Acosta, M. y Acosta, N. (1997): Explotación sexual de niñas y adolescentes en Asunción y Ciudad del Este. UNICEF; Moreno, A. (2001): La explotación sexual infantil en Paraguay. BECA.

⁸ Moreno, A. (2001): La explotación sexual infantil en Paraguay. BECA

⁹ Paraguay undertook to design a plan of this nature in 1996, in keeping with its accession to the Stockholm Declaration; however, the plan was not approved until 2003. The creation of the plan was the result of pressure from NGOs involved in children's issues that belonged to the Coordinator for the Rights of the Child (CDIA) and of support from ILO/IPEC and UNICEF. The plan was designed as a participatory process with actors from the government and nongovernmental sectors. The plan was approved by the Ministry for Children and Adolescents in December 2003, in keeping with formal commitments. However the measure has been an empty gesture because an implementation plan, budget and concrete measures have not yet been adopted for its execution.

¹⁰ Análisis das políticas e Programas sociais no Brasil. *ILO, IPEC Programme, South America, Brasília 2004.*

¹¹ “*National System for Reception, Treatment, Counseling, Monitoring and Evaluation of reports of abuse and sexual exploitation of girls, boys and adolescents*”; «*National campaign on Prevention of Sexual Violence against Children and Adolescents*»; «*Programme to combat abuse and sexual exploitation of girls, boys and adolescents*”.

¹² *The Sentinela programme is a federal programme implemented in 395 Brazilian municipalities aimed at combating sexual violence and commercial sexual exploitation of girls, boys and adolescents. In the state of Parana it is managed by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Advancement (SETP).*

¹³ *Gilka, A. (2002): A Oferta Institucional para responder às necessidades de atenção e promoção dos direitos das crianças e adolescentes atingidos pela exploração sexual comercial infanto-juvenil em Foz do Iguaçu– Brasil. ILO*

¹⁴ *At the time of the institutional review this ministry said that it was «officially» unaware of the existence of CSE in the city of Foz de Iguaçu because there were no official data on this matter.*

¹⁵ *Family Assistance Programme; Street to School Programme; International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour; S.O.S. Programme; Programme for Initiation of Employment and the Community Services Programme.*

¹⁶ *In 1995, a Parliamentary Committee conducted a criminal inquiry into child prostitution in the state of Parana based on a number of complaints and a dossier prepared by several NGOs. The committee of inquiry had a negligible impact in terms of ensuring that attention was given to tackling the problem. This fact attests to the protection that the groups that organize sexual exploitation in Foz enjoy, as well as their links, according to the testimony of witnesses, to drug trafficking. The involvement of public officials in these offences and their ties to organized crime has been mentioned on many occasions.*

¹⁷ *Britos, J. (2002): Explotacion Sexual Comercial de Niñas y Adolescentes. Paraguay – Ciudad del Este. Evaluación Rápida. ILO*

¹⁸ *N.T: The Puente de la Amistad or Friendship Bridge connects Ciudad del Este in Paraguay with Foz do Iguaçu in Brazil.*

¹⁹ *According to the professionals working with the assistance programme, these girls are usually paid between 10.000 and 30.000 guaraníes (between \$1.00 and \$5.00) for sexual relations.*



4. Strategies and methodologies for withdrawal, assistance and prevention

4.1. Description of direct action programmes

The project in the triple border area includes several strategic components, all of which were designed to have an effect on institutional, social, cultural and legal aspects that could help to reduce CSE in the region and lead to its gradual elimination. The overall objective of the project is to help build up institutional capacities, attitudes, and experience to that end. Thus, the project combines activities in the areas of:

- Generation of a knowledge base
- Linkage of social actors
- Awareness raising
- Direct action programmes (APs)

While our review centres specifically on the direct action programmes with girls, boys and adolescents, this strategy was not isolated from the other components of the project but has been strengthened by those components and vice versa. The target group of these programmes consists of girls, boys and adolescents in situations of, or at risk from, commercial sexual exploitation, and their families.

The ILO regards as a victim of CSE any child under 18 years old who has been the subject of such exploitation in any of its forms: prostitution,

pornography, or sale. **Withdrawal**, according to the ILO definition, refers to *children and adolescents in situations of commercial sexual exploitation which, as a result of the project's interventions enter a protection network (educational and therapeutic assistance through referrals centres). It applies both to those who have withdrawn and to those who are in the process of withdrawal as a result of enrolment in formal education or because they have received informal education or vocational training, in addition to the necessary psychological and social support. They may also have benefited from a number of services not connected with education (health, nutrition, etc.).*²⁰

The direct action programmes were also designed to prevent recruitment into CSE. Prevention activities centre on girls, boys and adolescents at risk (due to their domestic situation; proximity to economic activities likely to use girls, boys and adolescents; and those who have dropped out of school or are at risk of doing so). The risk criteria specific to CSE established by the project consider the following:

- The fact that the child or adolescent is in a family or community environment in which other children have been victims.
- Children whose family or social environment is likely to lead them to drop out of school and initiate child labour.
- Children who are victims of systematic domestic sexual abuse which the family denies.
- Children who live in proximity to brothels or streets where prostitution is exercised.
- Children with an adult relative involved in prostitution.

The **targets** set by the project were the withdrawal of 700 victims from CSE, prevention for 1,200, and support for 400 families.

Following we describe our impression of the action programmes before presenting an in-depth analysis of the components and methodologies that constitute good practices.

• **Direct action strategy and methodology in CIUDAD DEL ESTE**

The *Programme on Prevention and Integral Care for Children and Adolescents in Situations of Commercial Sexual Exploitation* was implemented by the Diocese of Ciudad del Este from January 2003 to August 2005.²¹ The Centre for Attention to Children and Adolescents (CEAPRA) was set up for that purpose.²² The action programme implemented by CEAPRA managed to harness the cooperation of local

public and private institutions, which, either at the outset, or in the course of the programme's implementation, contributed resources and services to enhance the programme's assistance capacity. In particular, the following entities should be mentioned:²³

Itaipú Binacional: Covered the financial expenses incurred by the rental of the home; maintenance of facilities and infrastructure; basic services; remodelling of the centre premises; meals for the children and adolescents taken in by the institution; transport costs of street educators; pastoral outreach workers; and the services of a social worker to contact the beneficiaries and visit their families.

Itaipú Binacional Environment Superintendency: Appointed two experts to set up an organic vegetable garden at CEAPRA and provide instruction to the families of beneficiaries on implementing a vegetable garden at their homes.

Tesai Foundation: Provides specialized care for children who cannot be dealt with at the centre, as well as for their siblings under 18 years old.

Public Ministry: Appointed four attorneys to prosecute cases of sexual violence and other abuse committed against children and adolescents. In March 2005 it created a Specialized Children's Unit.

National Police: Keeps a round-the-clock guard on the centre and assigns officers to the investigation team that follows up on complaints, in conjunction with officials from the Public Ministry and CEAPRA.

Ministry of Education and Culture: Has appointed a teacher to provide literacy training at the centre. It also channels all cases of children and adolescents who need to be put back into formal education. Teacher training is provided on a permanent basis.

Pastoral Youth Association (*Pastoral de la Juventud*): Young people who implement artistic and recreational activities with child and adolescent beneficiaries of the programme.

Catholic University: Makes available its clinical analysis laboratories and provides dental care for programme beneficiaries.

Universidad Privada del Este: Final-year law students provide legal assistance to programme beneficiaries.

Universidad Nacional del Este: Student interns provide remedial teaching classes in different areas for victims and their siblings, with a view to their re-enrolment in formal education.

Ciudad del Este Regional Hospital: Two professionals from the hospital carry out prevention activities against different illnesses for programme beneficiaries and their families.

Parana Hairdressers' Centre: Offers refresher courses for adolescents who have completed hairdressing courses at CEAPRA, as well as arranging internship opportunities at member salons.

An additional programme entitled «*Programme on Prevention and Rehabilitation of Children in Situations of CSE in Ciudad del Este following vocational training for their families*» supplemented the activities of the Diocese. This programme was implemented by the Esperanza Foundation and provided training on income generation for 200 families of direct beneficiaries of the assistance programme. The programme ran from January 2003 to August 2004.

The **objectives** of the direct action programme were the withdrawal from exploitation of 350 victims (of which 30% are expected to be boys and adolescent males), prevention for 600 at-risk children and adolescents, and coaching for 200 families.

The action **strategy** for prevention and withdrawal of children and adolescents from CSE involved two core themes in CEAPRA's activities. On one hand, direct assistance for victims and the population at risk; and on the other, awareness raising and mobilization activities with the community (neighbours associations, parents associations at schools, etc.) and key sectors (hotels, police, teachers, law enforcers, etc.). The objective was to strengthen their prevention, detection, and assistance role as regards CSE, and to pave the way for the creation of networks in support of the institution's activities with a view to generating sustainable strategies.

As regards direct assistance activities, these were designed under an integral and multi-disciplinary approach aimed to ensure observance of rights, such as the right to live without violence, the right to health, a family, education, recreation, an identity, and legal protection. To that end, the action programme offered the target group the following services:

Physical health care: medical assistance for CSE victims and their families. The free services provided by the Tesai Foundation were vital for delivering this care.

Psychological assistance: offered in various forms and intensities according to the needs, profiles, and demands of the target group.

Psychological assistance was provided in the form of individual and group therapy, as well as personal development workshops.

Formal education: to encourage the target group to stay in school and facilitate the reintegration of girls, boys and adolescents who have dropped out.

Informal education: through artistic activities (theatre, guitar, handicrafts) and group workshops to raise awareness about sexuality, drug abuse, gender, rights of the child, etc.

Vocational training: through professional courses provided by CEAPRA and the Esperanza Foundation, among other entities that offer training. The courses for adolescents include hairdressing, cooking, leather working, and computers.

Family assistance: to offer mediation in domestic conflicts; reconstruction of affective ties, and material assistance (scholarships, basic basket of commodities, school materials, etc.) to families in order to help them get their children into school and out of child labour.

Legal assistance: advice, coaching and resources for direct beneficiaries and their families to obtain identity documents and other administrative procedures; filing complaints and coaching through that process, etc.

Temporary shelter: CEAPRA has a shelter for 20 girl and adolescent victims of CSE that was an essential component for the withdrawal of those who were unable to return to their families because that would entail a risk to their physical and psychological well-being.

All of these activities were carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals: the action programme coordinator; a social worker; two educators; pastoral outreach workers who made contact in the exploitation zones as street educators, as well as carrying out activities in the community; a lawyer; a medical doctor; professional training instructors; two psychologists; and a group of volunteers who contributed to educational, recreation and community-based activities, as well as approaching victims in the street; and administrative personnel, kitchen staff and educators at the shelter.

It should be mentioned that in the area of withdrawal CEAPRA has worked mainly with girls and adolescent women, in contrast to the area of prevention, which also focused significantly on males²⁴.

• Direct assistance strategy and methodology in Foz de Iguazu

In Foz de Iguazu, the programme on integral assistance for girls, boys and adolescents in situations of commercial sexual exploitation was implemented in two phases. The first phase lasted from December 2002 to August 2004. Following an evaluation of this first phase and of the multiple lessons learned in this period, a new action strategy was designed that gave rise to a new programme which was carried out from November 2004 to August 2005.

In the first phase, the action programme was coordinated by the NGO SCNSA (*Sociedad Civil Nuestra Señora Aparecida*), which has extensive experience of working with at-risk children and adolescents in this area. The programme was carried out by creating a core network composed of three referrals centres, each of which performed specific functions within the overall assistance programme. This core network was sustained by a network of public sector organizations and NGOs, which were involved in the action programme to different extents during its implementation.

The objectives and components of the action programme were similar to those of the programme in the Ciudad del Este. However, owing to the better institutional structure in Foz de Iguazu, the action programme was designed for implementation by a network of organizations in the city, in order to:

- Enhance the quality and coverage of services by harnessing and strengthening the resources and accumulated experience in the area of child assistance.
- Generate greater involvement of institutions in combating CSE.
- Create conditions to ensure the sustainability of the programme's activities against CSE.

The main **referral centres** for direct assistance were:

Referral Centre I, Sentinela Programme:

Referral Centre I was part of an existing programme created by the federal government of Brazil. Its function in the AP was to serve as gateway to the assistance network. The Sentinela Programme was responsible for approaching victims in sexual exploitation zones and referring them to Centre I. At the centre a team of psychologists and social workers diagnosed each case and referred them to the other

network centres. The financial contributions of the action programme made it possible to improve the structure of the Sentinela Programme to offer legal assistance and receive anonymous complaints via a toll-free (0800) hotline service.

Referral centre II, Integral Assistance Centre for Adolescents (CAIA)

This was an existing centre belonging to the SCNSA, which became part of the AP and provided services to its target group. This centre was responsible for providing medical care to beneficiaries, as well as offering a range of educational activities and sports.

Referral Centre III

This centre was created specifically to provide assistance to the AP target group. It was designed to provide care to child and adolescent CSE victims. Its work involved a range of artistic, educational, and therapeutic activities designed to stimulate self-esteem and the desire in child CSE victims to change the situation in which they live by discovering their abilities and potential to develop alternative ways of life.²⁵ Its functions also included encouraging formal education, vocational training, and employment in the labour market for beneficiaries through referral to the appropriate entities.

Guardia Mirim: offered professional training opportunities for programme beneficiaries.

Protection Council and child assistance entities: contribute to the referral of girls, boys and adolescents to the referral centre network.

Itaipú Binacional: this institution has been a core component of the programme and has participated with commitment in several strategies as well as providing direct assistance for girls, boys and adolescents. In the latter area the entity has also provided financial resources for professional training, as well as internship opportunities for the target group through its employment programme «Bom menino». Its contribution was crucial for the implementation of prevention and awareness raising activities.

Shelter Network: the city's public shelters offer temporary accommodation for adolescent beneficiaries who for different reasons are unable to stay with their families.

The evaluation of the programme following its close in August 2004 revealed several shortcomings in the way work was carried out that prevented certain quantitative and qualitative goals from being met.

The experience of this programme was essential, offered many lessons, made it possible to visualize unforeseen factors, and redesign a new organizational and methodological strategy. In November 2004 a new phase was set in motion as an extension of the previous AP, which included the adjustments and modifications that arose from the evaluation, as well as the technical and methodological lessons learned. This was the ACORDAR Programme.²⁶ Taking part in the implementation of this new AP are four institutions with ample experience in their sphere of intervention, an essential input for this new programme. Each of these institutions is responsible for given functions through specific integrated subprogrammes that are coordinated through a network. The institutions that comprise this network are:

SCNSA "Programa Saúde total" (Total Health Programme): Responsible for overall management and medical care through its outpatient polyclinic, as well as artistic and educational activities at the CAIA Centre (Integral Assistance Centre for Adolescents).

Solidarity Action Nucleus against AIDS (NASA), "Programa Vê se me entende" («See if you understand me» Programme): This organization is responsible for approaching girls, boys and adolescents in areas of exploitation and referring them to other network institutions. It also carries out risk-reduction activities through awareness raising and health education for the target group, as well as awareness raising on CSE in communities and leisure centres in areas where children are at high risk of sexual exploitation.

Fundação Nosso Lar, "Programa Família Saudável" («Healthy Family Programme»): This institution is responsible for diagnosis, follow-up, and comprehensive individual and family care. In addition to providing psychological and social assistance, its professional staff refer beneficiaries to other network services for formal education, vocational training, employment, etc.

Casa do Teatro "Teatro e cidadania" («Theatre and Citizenship»): This institution is responsible for artistic, educational, and training activities that are of considerable importance in the design and aims of the programme. These activities are a part of the prevention and withdrawal strategies and are executed in five districts identified as areas where there is greatest demand for the programme's activities. These are environments where there is a high risk for CSE and have been identified as areas where various profiles of the target population reside. The *Casa do Teatro* also carries out activities for stimulation and motivation

for formal education through an educational project called «*Club de letras*» («Letters Club»), adapted to the needs, interests, and peculiarities of the target group.

Another of its responsibilities is to produce the show "*Fronteiras*" ("Borders"), with funding provided by Itaipú Binacional. It is a theatrical production given on a mobile stage (a converted bus) that goes around communities and schools to inform, raise awareness and mobilize public opinion on CSE.

The combined targets of the two assistance programmes carried out from 2002 to August 2005 in Foz de Iguazu were the same as those of the programme in Ciudad del Este: withdrawal of 350 girls, boys and adolescents; prevention for 600; and assistance to 200 families.

The review of good practices and lessons learned looks in depth at the specific methodologies of the relevant assistance programmes; however, it is important here to mention some observations on the development of both programmes, which, despite the difference in programme contexts and the profiles of the target group, have in many ways evolved in parallel.

They emerged as innovative programmes in contexts where there was a lacking of experience and trained professionals to deal with the problem. The initial period in both programmes could be described as an «eye-opening process for the programme staff». This process is the result of their familiarization with the complexity of commercial sexual exploitation, as well as of the ambivalence of the situations, feelings and desires of the target population. It was thought that there would be a «*marriage made in heaven*» between the assistance programme and this population, which programme's staff had characterized as poor, willing to receive the assistance that the programme would provide, and opposed to the exploitation in which many of them seemed to be immersed against their will. The reality proved far more complex and ambiguous. Staff from both programmes realized that the withdrawal process would be slow; that the children and adolescents determined the pace of withdrawal from CSE, which did not always coincide with the pace of the programme, or with the time frames and targets set for it.

They also realized that the immediate needs and interests of these girls, boys and adolescents were not always consistent with what the programme offered. Arousing the interests of child and adolescent CSE victims in the programmes' educational and therapeutic projects very

often required a long and painstaking process that entailed building up hopes for the future, self esteem, self-confidence, and trust in others. The importance of these small but significant changes and essential conditions for moving forward with aspects of education or employment was very often not fully grasped, even by the educators. They were not reflected as specific goals or indicators in the project, which led to frustration.

In this first phase, which lasted six months to a year, the programmes sought to establish bonds of trust to the target group, to familiarize themselves with their diversity, contexts and relations, and to try out working methodologies, some of which bore fruit, while others failed. Subsequently, in both contexts, given the slow progress of the withdrawal processes, the need began to be realized for a more continuous, in-depth and comprehensive work approach with the families, since that is where some of the causes that lead boys and girls to become vulnerable to CSE lie; at the same time, they also have the potential to revert that situation. In this second phase it was realized that:

“The programme is not going to rescue anyone; it is a vehicle that allows the others to act and find support, but it is they who must rescue themselves. « (Familia Saludable Programme Coordinator. Nosso Lar Foundation. Foz de Iguçu)

In addition, more effective approaches and methodologies were designed for work with families, communities and other actors involved with children on a daily basis. The assistance programmes evolved from a work approach and focus that centred excessively on the children, to a broader approach which included other actors that were essential for the sustainability of the withdrawal and prevention processes that the programme was developing through its strategies and activities.

This translated into direction changes that resulted from action-reflection processes that were essential to stimulate creative measures to respond to the needs and demands of the target group.



²⁰ *Terms of reference, for the consultancy: Systematization of good practices and lessons learned on methodologies to prevent recruitment of children and adolescents into CSE and on withdrawal and care of child and adolescent victims of CSE in Foz de Iguacu (Brazil) and Ciudad del Este (Paraguay). ILO. 2004.*

²¹ *Prior to the direct action programme, the ILO commissioned a rapid assessment on CSE in the city (Britez, J. 2002). In that assessment, girls and adolescent victims of CSE said in interviews that the Church would be the most trustworthy institution for them in the event of a future assistance programme.*

²² *The lack of organizations in the zone with the capacity and will to implement the programme made it necessary to create a new body that would devote itself specifically to its implementation.*

²³ *Executive summary of the CEAPRA Programme, 2004.*

²⁴ *Only two male CSE victims received ambulatory assistance from CEAPRA. Several reasons were given by the professionals to explain this situation: males do not regard CSE as a problem; different approach and assistance methodologies are required which could not be implemented with the human and material resources available to the programme; refusal by girls to share environments and the shelter with males.*

²⁵ *The centre carried out a variety of innovative activities, such as swimming, drama, capoeira, handicrafts, vegetable gardening, citizenship workshops, cultural visits, recreational excursions, etc.*

²⁶ *The name of the Programme sums up its philosophy and objectives. The verb 'acordar' has several meanings in Portuguese: "to add color", "to agree", "to awaken". The ILO provides a very small contribution to this Programme.*



5. Good practices models

The Project on prevention and elimination of commercial sexual exploitation in the triple border area has been a strategy that has impacted on many fundamental aspects for combating CSE, a complex, diverse, and multi-causal problem.

The provision of direct assistance to persons affected and at risk, as well as to their families, is an essential part of these integral strategies but it is not enough to eliminate this violation of fundamental rights. The causes of CSE transcend the situations and conditions of this internally highly heterogeneous population.

It is crucial to remove legal and cultural obstacles and to generate awareness, sensitivity and institutional capacity to confront a problem that has been 'made invisible', stigmatized and even denied by society. Combating CSE requires the commitment of all actors and structures in society, and, therefore, is a long and complex process. It is not the purpose of this review to refer to the Project as a whole; however, it is necessary to point out and emphasize that its different strategic components are interrelated and that the activities and impact of some have strengthened others. Thus, activities such as the creation of networks and inter-institutional committees against exploitation, widespread social awareness raising and community mobilization campaigns, measures in the area of reporting complaints and criminal prosecution, and targeted training for different social actors have

successfully created a more favourable environment for implementing direct action programmes for the target population, particularly when we bear in mind that we are dealing with contexts where this violation of rights is an issue that has been brushed under carpet, denied, or accepted as normal.

Furthermore, owing to their broad, multi-dimensional and integral design, direct action programmes are models that contain numerous good practices. In addition, implementing the programmes by forming various social actors into networks has proved to be an approach that, while certainly complex and not without difficulties, has been highly effective and had a significant impact because it has made available to the target group the experience, professionals, resources and services of a whole range of areas, as well as offering greater possibilities for ensuring the sustainability of the work carried out.

5.1. Good practices in prevention

Bearing in mind the criteria determined by the ILO for identifying good practices, which we mentioned in the section on methodology, we can identify several such measures among the different strategies implemented for the prevention of CSE both in Ciudad del Este and in Foz de Iguacu. All of these measures stand out for the ethical principles on which they are based, their responsibility and relevance, as well as their efficient use of resources and the results and impact that they have achieved. Furthermore, as we shall see, many of them take sustainability into account.

• Empowerment as a prevention strategy

Preventing a boy or girl from becoming a victim of CSE requires efforts as complex and far-reaching as the causes that lead to that situation. Thus, CSE prevention operates on several levels. We can at least identify the macro level, where we can help to transform structural causes (economic, cultural, political), and the micro level, where we can have an impact on personal variables, family situations, or immediate environments that place children and adolescents at risk. Obviously the macro and micro levels are related.

The former requires measures that largely exceed the possibilities of any direct action programme. However, some aspects are addressed in other programme components. The micro level is where action programmes have centred their efforts and identified successful

strategies to encourage empowerment for boys, girls, adolescents and the people in their immediate environments (family members, educators, neighbours, etc.). These strategies have consisted of offering the children tools to reduce their vulnerability and tackle the difficulties and threats of a macro and micro context that represent a risk, as well as to mobilize and strengthen the capacities of the community to play an active role in the prevention of this form of exploitation.

We will try to summarize to what extent and how action programmes have succeeded in preventing CSE. First we must ask ourselves, what are the risk factors for commercial sexual exploitation? And, therefore, where should a prevention programme centre its efforts? There are multiple factors: poverty and family break ups and neglect stand out in research on this issue. These are elements which, when combined, make children and adolescents highly vulnerable. Accordingly, programme activities targeted the population in these contexts. However, not all boys and girls who grow up in these vulnerable contexts become victims of this form of exploitation. Obviously many elements go unobserved by studies on micro causes but there is one fundamental element that appears in many exploitation cases and shed lights as regards necessary prevention strategies. In many cases, children who are victims of CSE, in addition to being in conflictive family environments caused by material wants, have, in particular, lacked one of the principal needs in the development of any human being: affection and recognition. The absence of affection, contentment, recognition and appreciation during development leaves them in a very critical personal situation, which, when combined with economic need, exponentially increases the possibility of becoming a victim of this form of exploitation.

Accordingly, the prevention model of these direct action programmes sought to stimulate empowerment for the population at-risk by different strategies:

- Offering access to opportunities for personal development and strengthening.
- Strengthening family and community capacities to offer support and contentment.
- Restoring or ensuring access to education as a right and a strategic need.

But how has this been done? There have been several strategies, which have changed as lessons have been learned during the process; and a lot of lessons have been learned. It is important to mention that the activities proposed have been warmly welcomed by the target group, which means that they meet their needs. The level of participation has exceeded quantitative targets, putting considerable pressure on work activities, and making it necessary to rationalize resources and rethink how the work should be done in order to meet demand.

The assistance programmes have given particular attention to personal development with the aim of strengthening the boys and girls from a rights-based perspective, in order to give them the possibility to exercise their rights fully as citizens. Empowerment brings power to the extent that it increases our capacity to control our lives, make decisions and reduce our vulnerability and dependence.

No one can empower anyone else; it is an individual process and for that reason the programmes' efforts have centred on providing the conditions to encourage that process. To that end, it has been vital, in the good practices described, to take the needs and interests of the boys and girls in each particular context as the starting point. These factors were different in Ciudad del Este and Foz de Iguacu and, therefore, the prevention strategies gave priority to different aspects, depending on the population profiles and context. As mentioned, most of the AP target group in Ciudad del Este was involved in CSE initially because of unmet basic material needs, while in Foz de Iguacu the involvement had to do more with non-material factors, in many cases related to a lack of clear values, peer pressure, a certain fascination with the street culture and the criminal world (drug trafficking), consumerism, and lack of expectations of becoming someone by other means, such as education or formal employment.

Despite the different strategies, the objective remains the same: to strengthen girls, boys and adolescents by stimulating access to opportunities for contentment and positive relations, growth of self-esteem, and discovery of their capacities.

• **Informal education: art for development**

In the framework of the Acordar Programme we identified a prevention strategy that deserves to be catalogued as a good practice²⁷. It is the "*Teatro e Cidadania*" subprogramme implemented by the *Casa do Teatro*. Through a range of attractive artistic activities this programme has offered an opportunity for play and education to girls, boys and

adolescents living in five deprived districts with a high incidence of commercial sexual exploitation among the youngest population.²⁸

The subprogramme has been an innovative measure because these districts lack activities and opportunities of this type. For that reason, the adult population and community-based organizations have been very receptive to the implementation of these activities for their child and adolescent population who lack sufficient opportunities for contentment, education, affection and positive relationships. These districts are tarnished by violence, material want, lack of services, and a high incidence of illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, in which children and adolescents find negative role models.

By bringing its activities out of certain referral centres, "*Teatro e Cidadania*" has managed to cover a much larger proportion of the target population and optimize resources.²⁹ This has brought it into direct contact with communities, which helps to increase its knowledge of risk contexts on a daily basis. Furthermore, it has helped to lower taboos and resistance to addressing the problem of commercial sexual exploitation by including other awareness raising and community mobilization activities which have not been rejected and could even lead in the medium term to the creation of CSE prevention and detection networks. Furthermore, the communities have become involved by making available to the subprogramme community centres, schools and Church halls.

The artistic activities chosen have been highly appropriate for several reasons. On one hand they employ playful and expressive methodologies that encourage the participation of people who reject formal education models. Play and enjoyment is encouraged, not as ends in themselves, but as instruments to stimulate dialogue, responsibility, participation, and critical awareness of the reality and environment in which they live.

The various daily activities organized in the five districts include theatre, hip-hop, modelling, visual arts, and percussion. These activities make it possible to work with different age groups of both sexes at the same time and to introduce issues connected with daily life that concern and affect them.

Two of these activities, namely hip-hop and modelling, have been especially popular since these activities are part of the fashion trends and collective imagery of children and adolescents.

Hip-hop includes all the artistic expressions surrounding this cultural expression: Music, lyrics, graffiti, and dance. Its main advantage as an

educational strategy is that it can be used to address problems that concern the community, young people and individuals, in order to express them and reflect on them in a playful, artistic and collective manner.

Modelling has been a very popular activity among all adolescent girls, but in particular for female adolescent victims of CSE, among who it has been in most demand. Modelling in "*Teatro e cidadania*" seeks to correct female adolescent values and beliefs regarding their body, sexuality, fashion and consumer pressures, as well as the roles traditionally assigned to women in society. It turns a patriarchal instrument and symbol into an instrument that fights that very notion, by analyzing the implications of modelling from a gender perspective. Through this strategy it has been possible to attract a group that was openly resistant and opposed to participation in the assistance programme. This attractive activity takes their interests as the starting point and uses a playful and informal approach to make them aware of the exploitation of women and of their own situation.

In addition to this critical approach the activity is also a constructive because it addresses issues such as care for the body, health, education and good manners, beauty in a way that goes beyond purely physical aspects, and self esteem. This programme was designed by an educator with artistic, educational and therapeutic objectives. These workshops are led by artists and educators from the *Casa do Teatro*; however, due to the possibilities offered by this space to address deeper aspects of identity, CSE and traumatic experiences that can lead to emotional breakdown (abuse, commercial exploitation), the activity also includes a psychologist from the *Nosso Lar* Foundation, who is responsible for social and therapeutic work, offers guidance to the educators, and intervenes directly in the workshop. In this way, these moments of crisis can be positively channelled and addressed. This experience is an innovative and ethically sound practice that combines professional and technical resources as well as methodological approaches.

Experiences such as this are the first steps that the programme has taken to generate the possibility of sustainable change and of ensuring the involvement of adolescent girls in other activities, such as formal education or professional training, which would permit them to develop alternative options to live independent lives.

At the same time as artistic activities in the workshops, the programme also implements other specific activities to impart information on and raise awareness of CSE (videos, talks, staged representations).

• Formal education: school as a right and strategic need

The Action programme implemented by the Diocese through CEAPRA in Ciudad del Este has given priority to stimulating admission and permanence of the population vulnerable to exploitation in the formal education system as a prevention strategy.

The specific contexts and profiles of the population in Ciudad del Este made efforts in this direction necessary. The population at risk from CSE that received assistance from CEAPRA mainly consisted of young girls and boys (aged 8 to 12), who were relatives or neighbours of other child CSE victims who also received assistance from the AP. These boys and girls were forced to drop out of school due to lack of financial resources and because of the need to help meet their family's basic needs by working in the informal economy. They are not boys and girls who rejected formal education; however, their extreme poverty and the absence of any state or privately sponsored measures to ensure their right to an education have excluded them. Added to this is the pressure from their families to work and the little value that many such families ascribe to education. In addition to external contextual difficulties, for their age, these boys and girls are very significantly behind in terms of the formal educational skills they should have acquired. Furthermore, some of them have special learning difficulties caused by lack of stimulation, childhood trauma and malnutrition.

The strategy designed by CEAPRA contains several positive elements that define a good practice, such as innovation, impact, effectiveness, ethics, responsibility and sustainability. How has the programme achieved this?

CEAPRA developed a very complete and comprehensive strategy that targeted each of the obstacles preventing access for boys and girls to education.

- Programme professional staff provided guidance to families on enrolment procedures and interceded with schools to ensure places for the children. Whenever families were unable to do so, the programme's staff enrolled the boys and girls themselves.
- Families were provided with the necessary material resources in the form of scholarships that covered enrolment and other costs;³⁰ school uniforms and materials; basic food baskets.³¹ These resources were supplied in return for a pledge that the boys and girls would attend school.

- In addition to material assistance, and to go beyond purely charitable measures, the programme worked with families, in particular mothers,³² to raise awareness of the strategic importance of education for their sons and daughters and of the risks of working in the streets. The work with mothers was carried out by social workers who made home visits, and through personal development workshops designed specifically for them in CEAPRA.³³
- These efforts had a very positive impact, not only on the children, but also on a group of approximately 120 mothers who attended regularly. On many occasions it was also a long and frustrating process because it entailed confronting deeply rooted beliefs, a great deal of despair and a lack of expectations, which are factors that hamper mobilization and attitude and behaviour changes. However, one impact in many cases was the sustained attendance at school of their sons and daughters after they stopped receiving material assistance.
- Another positive impact of this measure was an improvement in family relationships, which are essential to the emotional state of children and, therefore, their progress and performance at school. Family motivation is the main factor in avoiding scholastic failure.
- At the same time workshops were held to raise awareness about CSE with teaching staff and education officials of the Department of Upper Paraná. These workshops were attended by more than 200 teachers, and thanks to them and the commitment and political will of the education authority, the programme managed to secure consistent and firm support ensuring places in schools for the target population. As a result it was also possible to recruit two teachers from the Education Ministry to support remedial education activities at the assistance centre.
- In addition to awareness raising with teachers, the programme followed up on the boys and girls at school through school visits, which also served as a method to provide ongoing support and motivation for teachers. Many teachers became involved in follow-up activities and sent periodic reports on student attendance and performance to the assistance centre.
- The programme took into account the different educational needs and wants of the population, and, to that end offered remedial and levelling activities at CEAPRA, as well as basic education through

PRODEPA for over 14 years-olds who were significantly behind for their age.³⁴

- In 2005, given the large number of beneficiaries in schools, it was decided to decentralize and relocate the educational activities of CEAPRA to schools with large student bodies, in order to carry out follow-up and provide assistance *in situ*. This optimized the use of economic and human resources and enabled greater continuity in support provided to the target group because going to the centre was no longer an issue. In addition to the positive impact on the children, this relocation measure also facilitated the necessary continuous contact with schools and teachers to ensure their involvement in CSE prevention.

This strategy has demanded efforts in many sectors but its results have been very positive in terms of restoring and ensuring the observance of rights, reducing the vulnerability of boys and girls to risk, and developing possibilities for better living conditions. More than 600 boys and girls at risk from CSE exercise their right to education thanks to these strategies.³⁵

▪ **AWARENESS RAISING COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION STRATEGIES**

While these are not direct assistance activities carried out by referral centres, nevertheless, their impact in terms of prevention has been very significant.

“Art against barbarity”³⁶

One model of good practice that should be mentioned in this area is the subprogramme, *Fronteiras: arte-educando nos bairros*, implemented in Foz de Iguacu from March to December 2004. This activity was carried out by the SCNSA and the *Casa do Teatro*, with financing provided by the ILO as well as the essential support of the company Itaipú Binacional.³⁷

The objective of the subprogramme was CSE prevention through awareness raising on the issue. To that end a theatrical production entitled “*Fronteiras da escolha*” was prepared,³⁸ in which the character of an adolescent girl called Lola is used to explore the difficulties that adolescents face and the different risks to which they can be exposed and on which they must make decisions; the production also examines

the consequences of different decisions. The play is based directly on the day-to-day reality of adolescents and the pressures that can lead them into CSE. It is also based on factors that, in the local context, lead many girls, boys and adolescents into sexual exploitation, which, as we have mentioned, frequently have more to do with social pressures, consumerism, and the absence of clear values, rather than unmet basic needs.

The production also introduces a simulated community radio station through which the actors provide information and clear messages about CSE, as well as other issues, such as sexually transmitted diseases or drug abuse. This part of the production was especially interesting for the audience, which was able to participate actively in the play and interact with the actors by asking them questions and taking part in dynamics and games designed to stimulate critical capacity.

The play was put on at 64 public schools in the city as well as in deprived districts, social and community-based organizations, and other public spaces. It reached more than 22,000 people, which makes it a highly significant resource optimization strategy.

It had a number of positive impacts:

- A direct empowering effect against CSE for the child and youth population.
- Generation of other awareness raising and educational measures implemented by school teachers based on the production, such as essay writing, discussions, for artistic expressions on the subject.
- A first step toward community mobilization and creation of active support and prevention networks.

An unexpected positive outcome of this activity was the identification of cases of abuse and CSE in the audience. On several occasions, girls, boys and adolescents told the actors about situations that they had suffered or were suffering, which made it possible to provide them with direct guidance and refer them to the assistance network.

It is worth drawing attention to the qualitative leap brought about by this innovative subprogramme as regards to public acknowledgment of a problem whose existence was previously denied in the city. It made it possible for the first time to speak to a widespread audience using a rights-based, ethical, responsible and clear approach to commercial sexual exploitation and what a serious problem it represents.

The community as player in prevention

Another of the strategies implemented by the APs in Foz de Iguazu (in both the first and the second AP) and in Ciudad del Este, was awareness raising with specific social actors that are close to girls, boys and adolescents owing to the nature of their activities, or because they live in communities where CSE is a serious problem. The objective of this awareness raising was to involve the community, different civil society actors, and key institutions in the prevention of recruitment into CSE, as well as in the identification of cases of abuse or CSE. Different strategies were adopted in each context but all had a highly positive impact.

In the first AP implemented in Foz de Iguazu until August 2004, awareness raising measures designed to promote prevention were carried out in communities and schools, mainly through the activities described in the preceding point. The new AP (Acordar Programme) introduced a number of sweeping strategy changes. Referral centres ceased to be focal points for the provision of assistance services and instead activities were taken to communities identified with a high incidence of CSE. This strategy on its own helps to increase knowledge of the contexts in which the children and adolescents live, and brought about close relations and daily contact with the community, which helped secure its involvement in CSE prevention. This strategic change has been particularly enriching bearing in mind the taboo surrounding this issue and the reluctance to acknowledge or talk openly about exploitation in Foz.

While the main weights of specific awareness raising measures targeting the community were assigned to the «*Teatro e Ciudadania*» Programme, all of the programmes that make up the Acordar Programme have made their own contribution to this objective.

Initial contact between communities and the Acordar Programme was with community leaders and representatives of neighbours associations. Initially there was no express mention of CSE; rather, the programme was presented as a strategy for prevention of various risks for children and adolescents in the community. CSE was another of those risks. Using this approach, it was possible to begin to introduce the subject more directly with key actors in communities. All of the communities were very receptive to the programme because initial emphasis was put, among all the services that it offered, on artistic and educational activities designed to fill a real lack of positive pursuits for children and adolescents in these areas. The neighbourhood was very receptive to

the programme because it offered a response to their concerns regarding how criminal organizations use girls, boys and adolescents and lead them into drug abuse, drug trafficking and other illegal activities.

The Healthy Family Programme also contributed by implementing community therapy activities in these neighbourhoods aimed at preventing CSE. For their part, the NASA street educators also reached communities through talks on health and drug abuse prevention. These educators extended their awareness raising activities to include premises that encourage CSE or places in the vicinity of exploitation contexts (bars, nightclubs, filling stations, restaurants, community kitchens, etc.). As an initial approach to gain acceptance they distributed condoms and leaflets on safe sex. In some of these places they sensitized women sex workers who were willing to help identify CSE victims.

The communities became involved in the programme and asked for and took part in awareness raising discussions on problems that affect children and adolescents, in particular CSE. They made available educational and community facilities for holding activities, and community leaders have started to mobilize to identify cases of CSE and abuse in order to bring them to the attention of programme staff.

In Ciudad del Este, CEAPRA staff engaged in intense awareness raising by offering talks in communities, schools, universities, churches and community-based organizations. In these communities the challenge for awareness raising was to stop CSE being accepted as normal and make people conscious of the harm it does to children and adolescents.³⁹ These efforts accomplished very positive impacts and results:

- Participation of 88 people who have become involved voluntarily in programme measures, to which they have contributed in a professional capacity or through their position in institutions.
- Creation of protection networks to report cases of abuse and exploitation based on work with parents at two schools. Another school reported two cases of sexual abuse which were presented to the prosecutor's office.
- Demand among teachers for awareness raising activities with parents, as well as awareness raising initiatives for students in the classroom.

All the good practices mentioned here have benefited from or been supported by other activities implemented by the programmes in Foz de Iguacu and Ciudad del Este: medical care, nutrition, material

assistance, legal advice and documentation. These activities, which would not have a significant impact in combating CSE on their own, are a pre-condition in many cases for carrying out broader strategic measures for change, such as the ones identified here.

5.2. Good practices in withdrawal

If prevention of recruitment into sexual exploitation is complex, actual withdrawal from it is a long and complicated process with several stages:

1. The victim's awareness that the situation he or she lives is one of exploitation.
2. Recovery from physical and emotional injuries.
3. Construction of their own identity and recovery of self esteem, as essential elements to begin to build an alternative life plan.
4. Accomplishment of the material conditions and affective ties necessary to support themselves away from sexual exploitation.

These stages are not necessary in all cases, nor do they always occur linearly; rather, they depend to a large extent on the population profile, the causes that led to their involvement in exploitation and the length of time they have been in that situation. At any event, these stages have been part of the detachment processes of most of the population that has received assistance from the programmes in Foz de Iguacu and Ciudad del Este.

The basic strategies for withdrawal from sexual exploitation in both programmes have centred on helping to create the conditions to protect and restore the rights of victims through multiple areas of assistance (mentioned in the description of the programmes) in the framework of an integral assistance model.

While all the components of the direct assistance provided to the victims have been pivotal in the process of withdrawal from exploitation, experience shows that the success of strategies varies according to the victim's profile. Thus, in Ciudad del Este, enrolment in school and family strengthening activities have been core elements in the withdrawal of most of the population assisted by the programme; however, in Foz de Iguacu the main type of victims who sought assistance from the AP required intensive preparatory work to open their eyes to a situation that they, as victims, did not necessarily object to or regard as a problem, not to mention motivation and informal education prior to their

participation in strategic actions, such as enrolment in formal education, vocational training, or employment.

Therefore, while the assistance components in both contexts were similar, the emphasis and sequence of activities in either one varied according to the core profile of programme participants and their individual needs.

Those differences aside, these programmes contain models of good practices in both their overall strategies and specific methodologies, and have shown that there are no set recipes or working models, but that the key ingredient of a good assistance and withdrawal model is to listen to the demands and needs of the girls, boys and adolescents; keep firmly in mind that it is they and their families who are the main forces for change in their situation; and that each one needs different amounts of time and processes. This starting point poses enormous challenges for the professional men and women who undertake this task, requiring them to be innovative, flexible, and able to cope with frustration.

Despite the individual peculiarities of each withdrawal process, formal and informal evaluations of the two programmes have shown that each successful process has been underpinned by three cornerstones. The cornerstones of this detachment are:

- Restoration and strengthening of affective and family ties
- Personal strengthening and development of victims
- Formal education

With these cornerstones providing a solid foundation for the withdrawal process, at the time of collecting information for this study in March 2005, the AP in Ciudad del Este had provided assistance to 318 girls and adolescents.⁴⁰ In some cases, these girls and adolescents had initiated an ongoing withdrawal process, while others had severed all links to their situation of sexual exploitation.

In Foz de Iguacu, at the time the information for this study was collected in March 2005, 139 girls, boys and adolescents had received integral assistance from the AP and were in the process of withdrawal.⁴¹

Before discussing these cornerstones in depth, let us first examine the process of bonding with the programme

• BONDING WITH THE PROGRAMME

Good practices in approach and referral

The role played by street educators has been pivotal for forging bonds between victims of commercial sexual exploitation and the programme.⁴² They have been the driving force of the withdrawal programme. The approach strategy and methodology is the first key step and determines the success or failure of ensuing assistance measures.

The impression that boys and girls receive of the programme and their receptiveness toward it hinge on the initial approach and on the kind of relationship that street educators strike up with them. Without the right approach strategy, whose fundamental working premise is respect for and sympathy with the target group, and their times, needs and willingness, the entire programme will suffer the consequences.

While the population at risk from exploitation has been receptive to the AP and its objectives, the same is not initially true of the girls, boys and adolescents who are already being exploited, in particular if they are over 14 or 15 years old; have been in that situation for over a year; have turned it into their livelihood; and their relationships and the reference points for their affective ties and identities revolve around it. If they are also addicted to drugs, then the interest in the programme is even smaller.

It is necessary to start from the premise that the CSE victim population is not homogeneous, nor are their interests and subjective needs, or their opinions of the situation in which they live. For that reason, the initial approach cannot be the same for all victims, which makes an adaptable and flexible approach strategy crucial.

In this sense, the strategies implemented in Ciudad del Este and Foz de Iguacu, in particular in the framework of the *Acordar Programme*, have been models of good practices for the following reasons:

- They have succeeded in reaching the population that is most reluctant to receive assistance and have lived in the street world for long periods.
- They have identified the profiles that are most receptive to APs through research in the field and their daily work activities.
- They have encouraged bonding with the AP in an ethical and respectful way, generating a bond of trust, a very significant achievement, bearing in mind the fear and suspicion with which

these girls, boys and adolescents view institutions in general, including those that exist to provide them protection and care.

A positive impact and core indicator of this bond of trust has been that the children and adolescents themselves have spontaneously acted as multiplying agents, and have contacted and attracted others in their situation to the programme. Another indicator of this bond is the fact that the target group may have drifted away from the programme temporarily for some reason but, nevertheless, they stay in touch by telephone and make it clear to programme staff that they already regard them as positive role models.

Furthermore, in this bonding process educators have realized the importance of allaying the fears and putting the time constraints and pace at which adolescents want to go before of the programme's targets. This may seem to be a shortcoming, but in reality it is not because it helps to ensure the sustainability of the withdrawal process in which the adolescent is the lead player, as well as to maintain the principle of ethicality and respect.

The first contact with the AP through street educators is the moment of the «opportunity to initiate withdrawal»; however, it is also a moment of «risk» due to the characteristics of the target group: distrust, fear of losing their liberty or of reprisal, and rejection of any kind of formal or authoritarian structure.

"They have to enter the programme of their own free will; we have to show them that they can trust us, tell them candidly and clearly what we think is best for them, and lay out the situation for them, along with the options and the consequences of each option. But only they can take that step.» (Street educator, NASA - Acordar Programme, Foz de Iguacu)

"The first lesson was to lose our naïveté. We saw the children as victims to be rescued by the AP and that is not the case. For them there are positive things in the street. If we do not recognize and work with that then we are bound to fail.» (Coordinator, Referral Centre III, Foz de Iguacu).

The core methodologies for identifying, approaching, and establishing a bond of trust with the target group were as follows:

- Identification of new profiles that are more receptive to the AP: A study was carried out in Ciudad del Este that involved the observation and search for key informants to expose new contexts of exploitation in which young girls were victims.
- The identification of new spaces (neither evident nor traditional) of exploitation: one of the impacts of the AP in its first phase in Foz de Iguacu was the disappearance of children in situations of commercial sexual exploitation from the streets and public places where prostitution traditionally occurred. For that reason, in the second phase, streets educators spent long days mapping the city and observing places at different times, in order to locate new places of exploitation to target their activities: sports grounds, filling stations, bars, private homes, outside of schools, etc. In Ciudad del Este they also mapped and detected new areas and places, such as markets, night clubs, public swimming places, deprived districts, bars, etc.
- The approach methods that have proved successful have been informal, slow, and respected the pace of the boy or girl, which is what determines how this process moves forward. A hurried and invasive approach that tries to bring about the immediate withdrawal of the adolescent girl and her induction in the programme only creates rejection, distrust, and a breakdown in relations. As well as losing a chance for the withdrawal of that girl or adolescent, it also has a knock-on effect on other boys and girls, who become suspicious of the AP and the institutions that implement it.
- In Foz de Iguacu, educators approach victims after several days of observation. In this initial contact no explicit reference is made to CSE; instead they make contact and offer information about health, condoms, educational leaflets for reducing risks, etc.⁴³ Some adolescents spontaneously approach them and ask for information or condoms, which helps to identify cases that might have gone unnoticed. Depending on their receptiveness, they talk to them about the programme without mentioning CSE and invite them to go along to one of the artistic activities that the programme organizes. They do not raise the issue of sexual exploitation directly since this prompts immediate rejection and denial from victims. The approach strategies that have been validated are informal activities on prevention of health risks, to which they are very

receptive, and the offer of recreational and artistic activities provided by the programme; the girls and adolescents immediately find these activities attractive and they encourage them to make contact with the programme.

- It is important that what they initially offer the adolescents makes sense to them; in other words, it must strike a chord as regards their needs and be consistent with their reality and world view. In this sense, one very successful experience has been to offer adolescents girls the possibility of enrolling in modelling courses offered as part of the artistic activities organized by Casa del Teatro in Foz de Iguacu.⁴⁴
- Also important in establishing contact between victims and the programme has been for street educators, both in Foz de Iguacu and in Ciudad del Este, to accompany adolescents on their first visit to the referral centres or activities that interest them. They have a very important role in the transition from the street environments to programme environments. Their presence reduces the anxiety and fear of the boys and girls and makes it easier to establish a bond of trust with other programme staff.
- Another important strategy has been for educators not to be seen to report any illegal activities. It is important that the children do not identify them with law enforcement officials, whom they fear and reject based on previous experiences of victimization by them. Their role has been strictly educational and only in a situation where they are unable to reach victims in this way would they consider the possibility of asking other programme actors to report it.
- A confirmation of the soundness of this decision has been the programme's experience with girls and adolescents who come to assistance centres having been referred by a court order following police raids on brothels. The results in this connection are ambivalent. On one hand, it makes it possible to prosecute the crime and protect the victims; on the other hand, the victims, in particular if they are adolescents, regard these situations as an intrusion or a detention because it happens against their will, and they do not view their situation as one of exploitation from which they wish to escape, at least not in this way. This is simply another indicator of the complexity of sexual exploitation, the positive and negative aspects that adolescent girls attribute to it, and the depth

of past deprivation and harm that leads them to look at the experience in a positive light, as glamorous or an adventure.

- Another strategy developed by street educators to contact and identify victims has been to hold discussions or small expositions in communities, neighbours associations, churches, recreation centres, etc., which helps them to identify victims and helps to ensure the sustainability of these activities by involving the community.⁴⁵

• **Good practices in the withdrawal process**

The action programmes got underway with programmed activities. All of these activities, which are described in summary outlines, are crucial in this withdrawal process. However, something that was not properly planned was the timing of each activity. One of the lessons learned from this project is the need to establish a sequence for implementing activities with each beneficiary based on their particular situation and needs. In other words, it is necessary to establish an individualized process in which some needs have to be addressed before others, since meeting some are a pre condition for tackling others.

Enrolment in educational programmes or vocational training courses was the main withdrawal indicator in the programme's original design. For that reason, significant efforts were made in Ciudad del Este and Foz de Iguacu to enrol adolescents with whom contact was established. However, withdrawal, as a process, is not achieved through one particular activity, namely formal education, even though this education is a fundamental right of children and a key factor in the sustainability of the process and improvement of their prospects in life. What do we mean by this? On one hand, confirmation that formal education is a crucial element of any withdrawal process, and, on the other, that the experience of these programmes shows that it is neither the only, nor the most important, element, in particular in the initial stages of this process, and particularly with certain profiles of victims that are more complex to approach, as we have mentioned in the description of the target group.

As we shall see, one good practice in withdrawal processes, in the particular case of Ciudad del Este, has been the enrolment and continuation of girls, boys and adolescents in situations of CSE in the formal education system. However, it has also been a good practice to

wait for the right moment to enrol, in order to increase the likelihood of success. This does not constitute a denial of the right to education; on the contrary, the aim is to try to ensure that both the target group and educational institutions are ready, so as to avoid failures that would only result in increased rejection of the education system, in particular by adolescent boys and girls.

In the course of the project has become clear that school enrolment is no guarantee of the withdrawal of adolescent boys and girls from sexual exploitation. Boys and girls who have never dropped out of school are exploited in this way, even ones who do not suffer extreme economic deprivation. It has also become clear, moreover, that girls, boys and adolescents who are not in school have managed to withdraw from exploitation thanks to the construction of stable affective ties.

In any event, the project's experience indicates that inclusion in formal structures like schools, employment, and even assistance programmes has to be a gradual process, because this target group is accustomed to operating in completely informal environments. The transition from the street (and all that it represents in terms of values, rules and culture) to these formal structures can come as a shock, which, if not undertaken consciously and completely voluntarily by the target group, runs a serious risk of being unsustainable. Assistance programmes have developed good practices in their mission to encourage and stimulate the necessary changes in the target group, their families, and institutions such as schools, so that this transition and withdrawal process can be not only possible, but lasting.

Therefore, what forces must be set in motion in providing assistance to this population in order to ensure their withdrawal? Let us recall the three cornerstones: restoration and strengthening of affective and family ties; personal strengthening and development of victims; and formal education.

Spaces for personal development

There are multiple social actors involved in commercial sexual exploitation. Children and adolescents are among them. As victims, very often they are also «active players» in this victimization process. That is, the action programmes' target group obtains «benefits» from exploitation; this situation goes victimización.

beyond the mere exchange of sex for money, and is precisely the area on which assistance programmes must centre their efforts. What prevents

girls, boys and adolescents to withdraw from CSE? Are the reasons purely economic? What do they get out of the exploitation and what does it represent for them? What are their needs?

The way to find the answers to these questions is through trust, listening, care, and individual knowledge of each of these boys and girls.

Assistance professionals draw the following conclusions from this process: these boys and girls are not all the same, nor are the causes that lead them to this situation, or the way they experience it. In Ciudad del Este, as we have mentioned, the core victim profile rejects this situation because of their young age; they still want to be girls and the street does not offer them the same benefits as it does to adolescent girls. For the core profile of victims in Foz de Iguazu the street is an adventure; it offers access to a status and material life style that would otherwise be unattainable; it is immediate satisfaction of their material needs; it is also a space for freedom, fun and role models. At the same time that is not to say that it is not an environment of exploitation and permanent dangers and risks, but what characterizes these adolescents is their daring, the desire for adventure, the belief that they can do anything, the low perception of risk, instant gratification, and rejection of authority.

They have been deprived of fundamental rights and needs: education, family, and above all the affection that enables integral and healthy development as well as self-esteem.

*«Most of them know there is something wrong in all this; they have a lot of anger inside. They know that society condemns what they do and it is a form of transgression.»
(Coordinator, Nosso Lar Foundation - Acordar Programme, Foz de Iguazu)*

If beneficiaries approach the programmes of their own free will they have already taken an important step. That is the moment when the programmes provide opportunities for affection, contentment and self-discovery. Artistic and recreational activities are at their most successful at these initial stages. They are attractive to the target group and enable them to express themselves, have fun, learn new things, discover vocations, get off the street and have the opportunity to share positive experiences with other boys and girls.

However, this by itself is not enough. The strategy in Foz de Iguazu, in the first stage of the Programme (until August 2004) put considerable emphasis on artistic and recreational activities and offered a broad selection to choose from at referral centre III. While they attracted the

target group to the programme and had a positive effect on their attitudes and the way they relate to others, ultimately the activities did not consolidate changes in terms of profound self-perception; the target group continued to refuse to participate in any medium-term or more formal education or training activities, and most of the population remained in situations of sexual exploitation while they frequented the assistance centre, despite having participated in the programme for months.

The experience in Ciudad del Este made clear what caused this. It demonstrated the need to strengthen the knowledge and experiences acquired through play with internal reflection processes coached by a therapist. Therapeutic coaching is crucial for this process in which the victim can begin to critically evaluate their exploitation, as well as for strengthening self-esteem. Without this coaching, the benefits of game-playing, artistic and educational activities are lost and do not accomplish the desired results. Therapy in these experiences is not designed to cure psychological pathologies but to provide coaching for emotional growth. Therapy worked in Ciudad del Este and had a very positive impact on the whole withdrawal process. Its success had partly to do with the fact that professional psychologists tried to break away from the traditional patient-doctor roles. They were familiar figures who spent almost the entire day at the centre and made themselves available to the girls and adolescents in informal settings. These informal settings and situations helped foster a bond of trust with the girls and adolescents and encouraged them to seek coaching. Therapy was provided not only on a one-to-one basis but also in groups and personal development workshops that made it possible to cover the high demand, and enabled participants to learn, reflect, and grow as a group.

In Ciudad del Este, the level of participation in schools and professional training of CSE victims was much higher than in Foz de Iguagu. Evidently this has to do with more factors than just therapeutic coaching, but the willingness of the girls and boys, and the broadening of their life expectations stimulated by this therapy was the main starting point.

Encouraging these personal development processes is crucial; it is the main cornerstone that can encourage adolescents to change their situation and sustain these changes. However, obviously everything does not depend on those processes alone. The role of the family is pivotal, as is that of educational institutions. Therefore, working with them was also a part of the overall withdrawal strategy.

Strengthening family ties

With time and from experience, the assistance programmes, in both Foz de Iguacu and Ciudad del Este, have reached the conclusion that their work with children runs the risk being unsustainable if it is not accompanied by a significant effort with their families. Because childhood and, in particular, adolescence are such critical times, that there must be a minimum amount of coherence between the programme environment and that of the family, in order to provide stability and to enable them to stop oscillating between life associated with CSE and the objectives of the assistance programmes. This situation creates tensions and contradictions within them that many of them are unable to resolve positively without the support of their family.

"«I liked Referral Centre III a lot and I also go to visit the aunts (referring to the educators) at Centre I. Here, my job is to look after the garden... I like everything: the swimming pool, playing and especially painting (shows his drawings). I've come here because I've been caught stealing several times and this time I should have gone to the adult prison but the judge sent me here. I don't want to go to prison. I don't want to be in the street anymore. You get nothing from the street... now I am going to go to school, but not all the time because there is my son's mother and I always have problems with her.. I live at home but I don't sleep there because I don't trust my mother; I can't sleep there. What if she killed me during the night?

I want to be an artist. That's what I like best... and a good father. I have problems with the kids here. I'm always fighting and they throw me out of the centre. If I try to behave like they tell me, to see and speak properly, they laugh at me and I fight them. « (16 year-old adolescent victim of CSE, Foz de Iguacu)

Based on this realization the assistance programmes have strengthened their family work strategies.

The family is usually a conflictive environment for these boys and girls, which leads them to run away or spend most of their time away from home. In some cases, the family is so dysfunctional that it is not in the best interests of the boy or girl to go back there. In such cases, the initiative of CEAPRA of setting up a special shelter for this population has been very positive. Despite the fact that its capacity is too limited

to cope with the full extent of demand and needs, the experience has shown that the existence of temporary alternative strategies to the family home, such as shelters, are crucial to enable withdrawal processes that would otherwise take much longer or might even be impossible. The shelter has provided many girls with a chance for effective withdrawal from the street and exploitation. It has provided them with a stable environment and affective relations that have permitted them to embark on a process of change which they would not have been in a position to initiate while involved in sexual exploitation even had they wanted to.

That aside, many other families are plagued with conflicts and problems but they can be addressed through the activities offered by the assistance programmes. The action programmes implemented several strategies with these families:⁴⁶

- On one hand they sought to strengthen them by providing material support and basic services (basic baskets, help with enrolment in school, health care, legal assistance, etc.). Although initially this is what mainly drew families to the programme, the programme regarded these activities as pre-conditions for generating other types of more profound change that might ensure the withdrawal from CSE of the boys and girls, as well as prevention for their brothers and sisters.
- Thus, the programmes also centred on restoring and strengthening affective ties in the family.

We have identified good practices in connection with family activities in the model implemented by CEAPRA. This programme was carried out in a context of extreme poverty with a target group that is accustomed to handouts and charity; however, the CEAPRA strategy succeeded in progressing beyond relations of this type and triggered deeper, sustainable change processes in families that had a very positive impact in terms of withdrawal and prevention of CSE.

Initially activities with families consisted of supplying goods and services on the condition that their sons and daughters in situations of CSE were enrolled in school. To that end, it was necessary to establish a bond of trust with their mothers, as the principal point of contact in the bond between the family and the programme. Home visits carried out by a religious social worker and pastoral outreach volunteers facilitated the task of establishing these ties.⁴⁷ The fact that these people belong to the Church helped to secure the trust and receptiveness of mothers.

Having established a bond of trust, the programme organized a series of personal development workshops for mothers. We have already mentioned those workshops in the section on good practices in prevention but it would be worthwhile to refer to them again. The mothers were reticent toward individual therapy but not to these groups environments. These workshops were organized by psychologists from the centre, who use very informal methodologies and address various issues based on concerns that the mothers raised. The workshops tackled diverse topics concerning matters of interest to them as women (violence, labour, sexual and reproductive health, sexuality, etc.) and as mothers. This experience was maintained over time despite the disappearance of initial stimuli such as a travel allowance. The number of mothers grew until it reached 130, who were divided into different groups. This growth was a major factor in motivating other mothers.

This experience had a very positive impact on the women, their daughters and sons, the family and the community. For the women it represented the possibility to access information, tools for empowerment, and a space to themselves. This space encouraged them to open up and complain about the domestic violence they endured from their partners, which they had accepted their whole lives;⁴⁸ to visit the gynaecologist in spite of their reluctance (some for the first time); and to participate in vocational training activities, etc.

Another positive impact observed was that girls stay at home as relations improve. In this sense, it is very important to mention that many conflicts between mothers and daughters are over a clash of values. The mothers have entrenched within them to a greater extent than their daughters traditional male chauvinist values that lead them to want to control them at all times, especially during adolescence, and to stigmatize, reject, and accusing them of behaving like prostitutes. Work on gender awareness with mothers helps to reduce conflicts of this type.

Awareness raising on the importance of a school education and training, in particular with a gender and rights-based perspective, also helped, not only to get girls into formal education, but to ensure their continued attendance thanks to the support and motivation that came from their mothers. They continued to attend even when the programme ceased to provide the material support to stimulate their enrolment, which demonstrates the impact and sustainability of these activities, which have produced a gradual change in values and expectations regarding formal education and the life prospects of their daughters.

Finally, another impact of these activities started to become visible in 2005. A group of mothers who had been regularly taking part in CEAPRA's activities offered to be mediators in their communities, in order to pass on what they have learned through the workshops by creating women's self-help groups. A big challenge is to find effective strategies to involve male partners in processes of this type, since they usually create the most conflicts in the home and are more opposed to allowing their daughters to go to school or participate in the assistance programme.

Formal education

In the previous section we described the strategies that consolidated as a good practice the enrolment in schools of boys and girls at risk from CSE in Ciudad del Este.

This was also identified as a good practice in the case of victims. The basis of the strategy was similar to that for prevention;⁴⁹ however, due to the added special difficulties of getting girl and adolescent victims into school it was necessary to give more attention to certain measures and to implement other supplementary additional activities. Before describing the good practice, we will mention which difficulties required attention.

- Lack of interest and feelings of embarrassment in programme participants upon going to school. Although they talk about education as a need, in practice their continued attendance in the education system is very uncertain.
- Most of the children under 14 have never been to school which makes their enrolment difficult; at the same time they are too young to go into adult education.
- While some of them have gone to school at some time, their knowledge is very limited due to their poor attendance, lack of interest, and problems in their lives that affect their concentration during study.
- Very little family support for enrolling their daughters in school and for insuring their effective attendance. It is not a priority for them.
- In some cases extreme poverty rules out the possibility of making medium- and long-term plans; the future does not exist for these families, which think in day-to-day terms and, therefore, do not believe that education will improve quality of life for their children

in the short term. In other cases, families want their daughters to go to school but don't have the means⁵⁰ to send them, and they need their older daughters to contribute to the family economy by working.

- The lack of identity documents of the girls and, in many cases, of the parents, delays their entry into school because documentation procedures take a very long time.⁵¹
- Difficulty in finding places in schools for these girls for a number of reasons: in part this has to do with discrimination; there is also a shortage of school places in the country as a whole; and the girls enter school at different times in the academic year, depending on when they enter the AP.
- Very scattered population, which, given the limited human resources of the AP, hampers permanent follow-up on attendance, performance, or any problems that arise.

Faced with this situation, the programme adopted a number of strategies for getting at-risk boys and girls into school, as well as implementing other measures to strengthen this process.

- A more intensive effort was made in direct awareness raising with teachers.
- Lobbying with the Education Ministry representatives responsible for the zone was essential for securing places and acceptance of these girls and adolescents.
- Awareness raising with students was also intensified, sometimes by the teachers themselves, in response to manifestations of rejection and stigmatization of the girls and adolescents as prostitutes.
- Another strategy to avoid the stigma associated with CSE and girls' backwardness was to distribute the target group among different schools and to find as many places as possible for them in schools in poor districts where they were excluded less.
- The follow-up, study support, and teacher coaching provided by CEAPRA instructors for this group was much more intensive so as to prevent loss of motivation among the girls and also among teachers.

- Furthermore, due to the special learning difficulties of some girls,⁵² the instructors prepared a special plan for each case in which a highly personalized and creative work methodology was used.
- It was also necessary to work very intensively on awareness raising with families.⁵³
- Even with all of these efforts there were dropouts; in response, instructors intensified their follow-up, worked with the family and the girl, and succeeded in persuading some of them to return to school.
- Honourable mentions were also extended to schools that cooperated with the Programme as a sign of recognition and motivational mechanism.

This integral strategy achieved a high level of school enrolment: of the 318 girls who initiated a withdrawal process,⁵⁴ 297 entered school. Of those, 83% stayed in school for the whole school year.

This good practice and its results can be interpreted in at least two ways. On one hand it reflects a job well done with the families, girls and schools. On the other hand, it portrays a series of positive impacts in terms of strengthening the withdrawal process, improved self-esteem, and reduced vulnerability through education. Even for those girls and adolescents who did not fully withdraw from CSE while at school, the fact that they went to school at all is a sign that they have plans for the future away from CSE and aim to reduce their exposure to risks.

5.3. Impact of the action programmes

The implementation of the ILO project in the triple border area has had multiple impacts at the local and national level. Due to the high incidence of this problem in the region and the fact that it is ignored in public policies, the project has accomplished immediate effects that are already visible in terms of construction and linkage of capacities, mobilization of social capital, public awareness, criminal prosecution, etc. The impact of the action programmes at the local and national level transcends the direct assistance provided to children, in particular with respect to the following:

Local impact

1. An immediate improvement in living conditions and future prospects of girls, boys and adolescents in situations of, or at risk from, exploitation, who received the assistance from the action programmes, and for whom there were no proper or specialized resources in place in the region.
2. Capacity building for tackling CSE in the institutions that have implemented the programmes and their staff. Having implemented these programmes they have gained experience, training, and awareness of the problem, enabling them to take action using a rights-based approach instead of the traditional approach adopted by other public or private agencies which criminalized or further victimized the victims.
3. This rights-based assistance approach has been transferred to other actors (justice officials, teachers, medical staff, community leaders, police, etc.), through awareness raising, training, and working alongside professional assistance providers. These measures have helped to strengthen capacities and wills among different social actors, and have already borne fruit:

In Ciudad del Este a mothers group has been set up to report cases of sexual violence against girls, boys and adolescents.

In Ciudad del Este a working group set up under the leadership of a public criminal prosecutor has made very significant strides in the criminal prosecution of CSE.⁵⁵ This experience triggered the creation in 2005 of a specialized prosecutor's office for crimes against children and adolescents connected with CSE.

The involvement of numerous public and private institutions in both cities that have become part of the assistance network against CSE in the framework of a rights-based approach.

4. The existence of care and protection agencies for victims has enhanced the possibilities of criminal prosecution. This experience is reflective of the positive impact that the existence of proper assistance bodies has as regards encouraging reporting of CSE; enabling victims to press charges because they feel protected;

and follow-up on proceedings to ensure that girls, boys and adolescents do not become victims again.

5. One of the impacts of the daily activities of the assistance programmes and their successes and failures has been to generate knowledge on the quantitative incidence and qualitative complexity of commercial sexual exploitation and the way in which it is tackled in Ciudad del Este and Foz de Iguacu. Armed with this knowledge a new design was prepared for the second phase of the assistance programmes that is better suited to local contexts, and to the reality of the target group and their needs. It constitutes an essential building block for the design of future assistance measures, awareness raising, and public policy shaping.

· National

1. The assistance programmes have become models at the national level due to their quantitative scope in direct assistance and the social and institutional mobilization they have accomplished in contexts where previously there were hardly any initiatives at all against CSE.

These programmes have been visited by international experts in sexual exploitation of children from agencies such as the IDB, the U.S. State Department, other UN agencies, etc.

In the case of Brazil, the initiative on community-based awareness raising and prevention through the subprogramme **Fronteiras: arte-educando nos bairros** was recognized as one of the best 50 of 1,200 social responsibility projects by the Good Corporate Citizenship Guide.

2. Other impacts of the assistance programmes at the national level have to do with the assumption by the government sector of responsibilities in combating CSE.

Thus, the *Acordar Programme* in Foz de Iguacu received economic support from the Special Secretariat for Human Rights and there is a possibility that that support will continue in the future.

In Paraguay, the National Secretariat for Childhood and Adolescence Issues has assumed responsibility for the management of the first trilateral office to combat sexual exploitation in the triple border area,⁵⁶ for which it has specifically appointed civil service staff. Furthermore it included in its proposed 2006 budget presented to the Ministry of Finance the budget for the CEAPRA shelter.

3. Awareness raising and training for different public institutions also had the effect of building up institutional capacities at the national level.



²⁷ We mention this activity because of its significant achievements even though it had only been in operation for two months when we collected data for the systematization.

²⁸ Cidade Nova I, bairro Cidade Nova II, Três Lagoas area, Porto Meira, Profilurb II, Parque Morumbi I, area covered by Karla, Petrópolis and Laranjeiras.

²⁹ The arts workshops held in the first two months of the programme (February-March 2005) were attended by 786 children and adolescents of both sexes. Of these, 424 are girls and 362 are boys. The arts workshops were also attended by 20 girls in situations of commercial sexual exploitation who were referred by the Nosso Lar Foundation and NASA.

³⁰ Despite the fact that education is supposedly free in Paraguay, schools charge an annual registration fee to cover school maintenance expenses due to limited state funding.

³¹ The contribution of the company Itaipú Binacional was crucial for providing all this support.

³² Male family members are reluctant to participate directly in the action programmes and are usually also the ones who create most obstacles for putting their sons and daughters into school.

³³ These workshops implemented by psychologists address issues concerning not only the development and rights of their sons and daughters, but also their own development. Issues like women's rights, gender violence, sexual and reproductive health, and CSE could be approached using informal and participatory methodologies.

³⁴ PRODEPA-KO 'E PYAHU is the Programme on Youth and Adult Literacy and Basic Education, which has been underway in Paraguay since 2000.

³⁵ Programme Database, December 2004

³⁶ Programme "Fronteras: arte-educacao nos bairros". Report on the activities of the mobile unit. 2005.

³⁷ Itaipú provided the funds to purchase a bus which was remodelled as a mobile stage to put on the programme's theatrical productions in different parts of the city.

³⁸ In English: «Borders of choice».

³⁹ In some of the districts where the programme has worked, the incidence of CSE is alarmingly high and before the arrival of the AP there was no response or reaction of any kind from the community. At a school in Remansito, one of the districts where the programme has worked most intensively, there are 220 students, 96 of whom were exploited.

⁴⁰ Only three were male

⁴¹ 119 (23 boys) in the first phase received assistance and initiated withdrawal. During the first trimester of the second phase, a further 20 boys were inducted into the programme and initiated withdrawal. Furthermore, contact was re-established with 72 boys, girls, adolescents and their families, who had taken part in the first phase of the AP. Of those, 62 still have links to exploitation and the programme continues to follow up on and work with them.

⁴² Some victims enter the programme through referral; however, this has been the main gateway to the AP.

⁴³ As NASA educators with years of experience in risk prevention work they do not arouse the distrust of the target group. They are familiar figures.

⁴⁴ See previous section: Good practices in prevention

⁴⁵ See previous section: Good practices in prevention

⁴⁶ In this connection we should mention the good practices developed in Ciudad del Este. In Foz de Iguacu a special family work subprogramme was launched in January 2005 in the framework of the Acordar Programme, which required a significant volume of human resources to carry out combined social and therapeutic work in the family (The «Healthy Family» Programme implemented by the Nosso Lar Foundation). However, because the subprogramme had only been underway for a short time when the information for this review was collected, it was not possible to assess its impact and results in order to identify good practices. In any event, we can mention the high receptiveness of families to home visits by the programme staff, as well as family demand for therapeutic coaching that could yield very positive results.

⁴⁷ Without the participation of these volunteers it would have been impossible to ensure the coverage and follow-up necessary for the 300 families that took part in the programme.

⁴⁸ Programme staff mentioned the surprise of many women upon hearing the legitimacy of gender violence being questioned. They have also been victims of different forms of violence since childhood, so it is not surprising that they should accept that their daughters also suffer it even in the home. CEAPRA provided legal assistance in 18 cases before the magistrate's court involving women who accused their partners of domestic abuse. In three cases the aggressor was expelled from the home. This type of assistance is an indicator of the lack of social resources available to the population, ignorance of their rights, as well as confidence in CEAPRA for exposing family problems.

⁴⁹ See the section on Good practices in prevention.

⁵⁰ Uniforms, fares, books and school materials, enrolment fees, etc.

⁵¹ In these cases the girls have been put into school but there is no possibility of graduation at the end of the year because they cannot sit examinations without documents.

⁵² Such difficulties are normally connected with traumatic experiences, lack of stimulation during early childhood, malnutrition, concentration difficulties, absence of studying habits and methods, etc.

⁵³ See the point on strengthening family ties (Section on Good practices in withdrawal).

⁵⁴ Information taken from the Seventh technical progress report of CEAPRA (as of December 2004).

⁵⁵ Köhn, M. (2005): Sistematización de lecciones aprendidas y buenas prácticas sobre la aplicación de la legislación en el combate y prevención de las diferentes modalidades de violencia sexual contra niñas/os y adolescentes en la Triple Frontera particularmente en Ciudad del Este (Paraguay) y Puerto Iguazú (Argentina). ILO.

⁵⁶ One of the objectives of this office is to continue to provide linkage between measures adopted against CSE in the three countries. Its management will rotate on an annual basis among the three countries. In 2005 it receives support from Itaipú Binacional.



6. Lessons Learned

In implementing a project of this scale in a context where no prior experience existed, and bearing in mind the complexity of the problem addressed, the lessons learned from the failures and successes are one of the most important contributions to combating commercial sexual exploitation of girls, boys and adolescents. Many lessons have been learned during the almost three years of implementation of the action programmes thanks to intense efforts, the multitude of strategies implemented, the creativity, failures, and personal commitment of most of the professionals who carried them out. Here we mention some of the main lessons; however, each tiny measure is crucial to the success of a programme of this type. That, in itself, is one of the lessons learned: everything counts, every detail must be analyzed in providing assistance to girls, boys and adolescents in an exploitation context.

6.1. Design of action programmes, implementing agencies and assistance professionals

1. In programming their implementation times, assistance targets and resources, action programmes must take into account the complexity of providing assistance to children who are victims of, or at risk from, CSE. Any imbalance between these three aspects

can create situations that seriously impair the quality of work and the rights-based approach needed to carry it out; the sustainability of processes initiated with the target group; and even the health of the assistance professionals. Flexibility is vital in order to be able to adjust these three variables in the course of the programme and foster reflection on the work, creativity in proposals and methodologies, satisfaction of target groups needs, and, ultimately, good practices

2. The two main resources are time and assistance professionals. Withdrawal processes take a long time and the boys and girls need continuous assistance, someone who will listen to them and affection as the prime motivation for joining the programme, staying in it, and initiating a process of withdrawal. Significant amounts of time and resources are needed to effect processes of cultural change to transform beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours in children, their families, communities and institutions.
3. Multi disciplinary assistance networking is an effective strategy against CSE because it mobilizes and combines resources, expertise and wills in contexts that are strewn with obstacles for tackling problems such as this.

However, networking is not without its difficulties and risks owing to the lack of a culture of work coordination; inter-institutional jealousy and rivalry; coordination errors, etc.

Very important and satisfactory strides have been made in this connection, despite the lack of inter-institutional linkage and coordination in the two cities. It is important, to that end, for all the organizations that comprise the networks to receive training and awareness raising on CSE; to receive express public recognition and appreciation for their contributions to programmes, in order to stimulate their participation, especially if they do not receive specific economic resources from the Project; to be effectively coordinated so that they share a common vision and mission with respect to CSE and action programmes, and can channel their efforts in an integrated manner.

4. Direct assistance professionals (assistance centre coordinators, educators, psychologists, social workers, lawyers), in addition to being good professionals in their particular field, also needs to be sensitive, open, and able to deal with frustration. It is necessary for professionals to receive specific training in CSE from a gender

and rights-based perspective. Good professionals may also have a moralistic vision of CSE that could be counter-productive. Similarly, without a profound understanding of the complexity of CSE and of the ambivalence in which the girls, boys and adolescents live, they could start to feel frustrated, impotent, and resigned, leading them to blame the situation of exploitation on the victims. The consequences of this for a project can be fatal because it leads to immobility, and a mechanical and bureaucratic approach to work.

Training is also necessary so that they can develop a work methodology with an informal, playful and hands-on approach, which has achieved the most positive results in all areas of assistance (health, formal and informal education, therapy, etc.). Professionals who use rigid or traditional educational and therapeutic methodologies will drive the boys and girls away from the AP.

5. Assistance professionals must play an educational and therapeutic, never a punitive or repressive, role. Acting like security guards only generates rejection in the target group and they will stop going to assistance centres.
6. The need, as professionals, to respect the times and wills of the girls, boys and adolescents (even though very often this conflicts with the objectives and time frames of the action programme).

6.2. Target group

- 7.- CSE is not a homogenous reality. The causes that lead boys and girls into this situation are extremely diverse, as are their experiences of it. Getting to know the root causes, subjectivities, world views and values of the target group is essential for guiding work activities, in order to mobilize them towards a change of life.
8. It is important to move past the romantic vision of the AP «as the saviour and rescuer of boys and girls», and of the victimization of girls, boys and adolescents, in order to reach a more complex and realistic understanding of commercial sexual exploitation in which, in addition to being victims, children and adolescents are very often active players. Their decisions frequently contradict the objectives and strategies of the programme and what it offers them; accordingly it does always meet their subjective needs and expectations.

9. It is necessary to develop different methodologies and strategies according to sex, age, ethnicity, sexual identity, type of exploitation, length of exploitation, etc. Programmes cannot cover all profiles and situations. It was found in Ciudad del Este that dealing with cases of indigenous girls or transgendered adolescents poses special difficulties.⁵⁷ For example, the following situation arose in the case of indigenous girls:

Girls and adolescents from different indigenous backgrounds are victims of sexual exploitation in Ciudad del Este. Three adolescents (of the Mbya guaraní people) were approached by street educators at the bus terminal and invited to the assistance centre where they stayed for a number of days because initially the team was willing to work with this population profile.⁵⁸ The AP encountered several difficulties while working with them:

- The team does not feel qualified to work with them because they do not know which people each belongs to;
- Communication problems;
- Permanent conflicts because the other, non-indigenous, beneficiaries rejected them;
- Difficulties for working with families⁵⁹;
- The objectives and methodologies of the AP were not appropriate for them. They rejected all the programme's proposals: psychological care, enrolment in school, etc.

It is necessary to evaluate the advisability and possibilities of preparing specific action programmes for this population, as well as to train programme staff and include in the AP objectives and activities that are appropriate to their cultural conception of sexuality, abuse and sexual exploitation; their needs, living conditions and ways of life; and their social and family structures. This would require additional specialized human resources to deal with the particular needs of these situations and offer a more individualized type of assistance.

6.3. Bonds with the Programme

10. Street educators are a vital strategy for identifying situations of CSE and referring the victims to assistance centres. To a large extent their work can determine the success of the programme or jeopardize it. Educators must keep clearly in mind that their role

is precisely that: to educate, stimulate awareness in boys and girls, encourage their interest in the programme, provide information and guidance about resources available to them, and present alternative solutions to their situation.

The street educator strategy cannot be hurried or subjected to pressures to meet quantitative targets. The boys and girls are distrustful; they reject contact with the educators and are controlled by other persons or confined to restricted places, such as brothels. Only trust will draw them out, and creating that bond takes time.

The first attempt at a street approach in Foz de Iguacu had negative effects because the intervention approach used by the educators connected with the Sentinela Programme was not appropriate. The police-like (rather than educational), invasive and excessively direct nature of their approach methodologies aroused fear in the victims and rejection towards the AP. It also led to the disappearance of the boys and girls from the areas where they were usually found to more clandestine places, which made later contact difficult and increased their vulnerability. The image of the action programme was harmed, as was the ability to reach the target group.

The experiences in Foz de Iguacu in a second stage (Acordar Programme) and in Ciudad del Este constituted good practice models due to the respect shown to the target group, the creative educational strategies used, and the results in terms of the entry and continuation in the AP of the children and adolescents approached in this way.

11. It is very positive if the street educators whom the boys and girls trust can accompany them on their first visit to an assistance centre. Shepherding their arrival at these environments, be it an activity or a referral centre, is very important because this is the first impression given to an initially distrustful target group. It is not advisable to subject them to an immediate psycho-social analysis; a prudential time should be allowed to pass so that the boys and girls do not feel interrogated or harassed. It is essential in these initial contacts to help them lose their anxiety and fears surrounding the programme, gain confidence and come to see it as an opportunity for relaxation, recreation, a place where people listen and show them affection. The street educator can help transfer that bond of trust, introduce the programme staff, explain the programme, etc.

-Inadaptación de las propuestas y metodologías del PA para el trabajo con ellas. Rechazaban todas las propuestas del programa: atención psicológica, escolarización, etc.

Habría que valorar la conveniencia y posibilidades de elaborar PA específicos para esta población, o bien capacitar e incorporar al PA objetivos y actividades adecuados a sus concepciones culturales de la sexualidad, el abuso y la explotación sexual; a sus necesidades, condiciones y formas de vida; y a las estructuras socio-familiares. Serían necesarios más recursos humanos, y especializados, que pudiesen atender a las necesidades particulares de estas situaciones y ofrecer una atención más individualizada.

6.4. Assistance strategies and methodologies

12. All the assistance measures, services and activities proposed in the programmes had an impact in terms of prevention of and withdrawal from CSE. All restore rights, satisfy immediate needs and address strategic interests. Some are a pre-condition for implementing other measures that have a greater impact on the lives of the boys and girls.
13. The most appropriate prevention and withdrawal strategies vary according to context, characteristics of the CSE and victim profile. Be that as it may, it is important to start from the premise that the overriding aim is damage reduction: reduce time on the streets; provide guidance and information to reduce their vulnerability; preventive health measures and health care; care for drug addicts; nutrition, recreation and places where they can express themselves and relax with a view to initiating a more profound transformation process toward changes in beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. Attempts to force beneficiaries to conform to time frames and progress rates can provoke rejection or the pretence that they are changing in order to continue to benefit from certain goods and services, which is ultimately unsustainable.
14. Therapeutic support is essential in these internal mobilization processes; therapy should aim to foster personal development and construct a life plan, rather than cure pathologies. Therapy works when it is based on a bond of trust between the boy or girl and the therapist. It is necessary to establish a rapport before initiating therapy. Approaches that have worked in this connection are informal talks in non-consultation environments and personal

development group workshops where playful methodologies, such as theatre, role-playing, audiovisual materials, etc., are used.

In therapeutic coaching it is essential for the professional not to regard the children as victims. It is necessary to start by recognizing their strengths, abilities, resilience, and all the positive aspects of a person, in order to strengthen that person and, on that basis, address the more traumatic aspects of their lives. In particular, adolescent victims are also leaders. Paradoxically, they suffer from low self-esteem and yet, at the same time, feel extremely self-sufficient and capable of doing anything without realizing their limitations. The challenge is to channel all the capacities of these adolescents towards more constructive activities in their lives.

15. Without these efforts to strengthen self-esteem and self-identity (because they do not normally know «who they are», or «who they want to be»), economicist or educational solutions do not produce the desired results. When CSE meets basic needs or is an enforced situation resulting from explicit coercion, withdrawal is easier. However, strategies become more complex when other factors are in play, such as self-identity, affective deprivation, the desire to be someone and to break rules, peer pressures or drug abuse.
16. Entry to and continuation in school is a good indicator for prevention and that a withdrawal process has been initiated. It also constitutes a core support for the sustainability of that process. Without detracting from that, however, it is necessary to qualify, relativize, and enrich it with the experiences of the AP's.

As well as confirming what we have said so far, these experiences have also found that school enrolment generates rejection, in particular among adolescents, especially those with long-term experiences of the street and links to CSE. In these contexts, the school remains a rigid, authoritarian and excessively formal institution for persons who are used to existing in informal contexts. Furthermore, school does not guarantee withdrawal from CSE in all cases: there are instances of girls and boys who continue to be exploited by their companions at school; who are recruited in this environment by pimps; or who come from a middle-class background and have never dropped out of school despite their links to CSE. Without denying that education is a right and a core factor in withdrawal and prevention, its true value as an accurate indicator of effective withdrawal from CSE has been enhanced,

making it more complex to analyze the implications and significance of a withdrawal process and of successful strategies to that end.

17. Direct beneficiaries (in process of withdrawal or prevention) are more attracted to, and motivated by, professional training than school. School produces results in the long term and this group is more immediatist, has imminent needs, and family backgrounds that very often press them to obtain resources. Therefore, vocational training holds more interest for them. They do not expect to pursue long educational or academic careers; they want to work as soon as possible. The training activities tried out in the programme have demonstrated this attraction and made their potential clear, and are a great motivating element in the participation of the children. However, the programmes have learned that there are several aspects to take into consideration.
 - This target group is not accustomed to studying and has many disadvantages in terms of basic knowledge and even psychological and motor skills. Their training requires a great deal of attention and follow-up. Therefore, training should be provided in small groups with sufficient time allowed to enable highly individualized follow-up so that they can receive a quality education that allows them to enter the labour market later on. The training activities carried out, in particular in Ciudad del Este, where there was great demand for them, have not accomplished the awaited results in terms of technical skills imparted to the target group. The very large groups, time constraints and limited materials and resources for practical training have resulted in initial contact with areas of professional employment (hairdressing, leather working, cooking, screen printing, etc.), which has been important as far as determining whether or not they like it or awakening their interest, but not enough to attain professional employment.
 - In addition to technical skills the need was identified to work in parallel and simultaneously on positive aptitudes, attitudes and habits to help find formal employment, or undertake cooperative projects. These aptitudes and attitudes are the result of a long learning process and should be made cross-cutting themes of the whole programme: punctuality; precision and quality at work; patience; responsibility; self-management; service; cooperation; the value of money; ability to manage spending; savings, etc.

- It is crucial to mainstream gender in the design, selection and implementation of training activities, to avoid the selection of feminized labour activities, which are typically associated with poor working conditions.
18. Employment was another of the objectives of the withdrawal process for the target group. However, the results in this area have come up short of expectations. Many factors contributed to this outcome. The target group starts with very great disadvantages in terms of training, social and personal skills, and social contacts in a highly competitive world where jobs are in short supply. It is essential to allocate considerable resources to provide proper training, as well as to work with the public and private sectors to create employment opportunities, and even adopt positive discrimination measures for this population. A number of agreements were signed with companies to provide internships; however, these were insufficient for the target group and did not produce encouraging results due to the shortcomings mentioned in the preceding point. Public policies need to adopt a very active role in promoting APs, in order to generate employment opportunities.

"We no longer provide the fish; we provide the pole. But there is no river to fish in. Now the challenge is for all of us together to make the river» (Coordinator of the «Healthy Family» Programme, Nosso Lar Foundation, Foz de Iguacu).

19. Among the multiple factors that trigger a withdrawal process we mentioned evidence of the undeniable impact of affective aspects. Thus, in Foz de Iguacu, a context in which the victims showed a great deal of resistance to the AP and participation in formal education, we noted several cases of sustained withdrawal in which the key factor was the building or rebuilding of emotional ties, for example, through the resolution of conflicts with the mother; establishing a stable couple relationship; the birth of a child; or involvement with religious groups.
20. Direct assistance to girls, boys and adolescents for prevention and withdrawal is only one way to reach these objectives. Stimulating an active role for the family and the community in these processes constitutes a successful and sustainable strategy that enhances the effects and results of the assistance that programmes provide to the children and adolescents.

21. On the subject of work with families, we should keep in mind that a large number are single-parent families with a woman at the head of the household and numerous children. The mother has been the family figure who has participated most in the programme; it remains a challenge to encourage the participation of male figures, who do not want to have anything to do with care and responsibility for their sons and daughters.⁶⁰ The participation of single women was greater than that of women with partners, who would very often prevent them from taking part. Women who sustained their participation in the programme, and its educational, therapeutic and personal development activities, became more closely involved with their daughters and consolidated stable withdrawal processes. These activities made it possible for programme staff to learn a great deal about these women and change their attitude to them in a positive sense. The mothers are responsible for the situations of their sons and daughters, but they are also victims of violence, and even of commercial sexual exploitation in the past. They live with a sense of fatalism, resignation, and acceptance of extreme gender violence. The challenge is to break the chains of violence that are transmitted from generation to generation.
22. Poor people in these contexts are used to social policies and initiatives that are almost always of the charity kind. Material support provided to the family by the programmes as conditions to permit other changes (enrolment in school, professional training, personal development, etc.) has proved pivotal. However, in addition to this assistance, it is necessary to work at the same time on awareness raising and personal development for the mothers. Without this, situations occur, in particular in contexts of extreme deprivation like Ciudad del Este, in which mothers only regard the programme as a source of resources and fail to take into account its true objective. There have even been cases of assault on programme staff to compel them to provide material assistance and, in extreme cases, mothers who have lied that their daughters are involved in CSE, or who encourage them into prostitution so that they can become programme beneficiaries. It is important to bear in mind the normality and acceptance of commercial sexual exploitation as a survival strategy in impoverished areas of Ciudad del Este.
23. While institutionalization is not desirable, it is an essential temporary measure in many cases due to the nature and causes of the

problem. Specialized shelters and proper, sensitive care for victims of CSE have been essential to the success of many withdrawal situations. While the right to a family is undeniable -and programmes should certainly intensify efforts to that end- there are conditions that are so serious, and the family so dysfunctional, that they exceed the technical and material limits of these programmes to address them. In these cases, the children need alternative holding spaces. Very often it is impossible to combine life in CSE with participation in the programme, and without the possibility of a shelter it would not be possible to initiate withdrawal processes.

24. Another of the strategies tested in Ciudad del Este is to look for foster families if, after going through the programme, the girls or adolescents are unable to return to their families and are not yet able to support themselves independently. There have been few experiences in this area because it is not easy to find families who are willing to take in girls and adolescents with this background. They fear that they would steal from them, cause of marital discord by having sexual relations with the men of the house, etc. All the pilots attempts in this area failed. The girls and adolescents did not feel part of the family and ended up rejecting it, and there were cases of families who used the girls as domestic workers to some extent, which prompted them to leave.
25. In addition to the need to allocate more resources and effort to work with families in order to achieve the objectives, another of the lessons learned was the advisability of progressively decentralizing, as much as possible, the programme's services and assistance away from referral centres and into the communities. This contributes to the sustainability of activities, awareness raising and social mobilization, efficient use of resources, and less stigmatization and rejection of the target group, who do not have to go to special centres to receive assistance.
26. In order to go into communities without prompting rejection, it is necessary: not to raise the issue of CSE directly; to offer services or activities that are consistent with real needs, and to use familiar and trusted organizations (Church, NGOs) as mediators.

⁵⁷ Paraguay's indigenous peoples account for 1% of the population. There are 17 different indigenous peoples, most of them offshoots of the Guarani people. The situation of this population in the country is very precarious: they had been uprooted from their original communities, are landless, and economically and socially excluded.

⁵⁸ Two of these adolescents ran away from the CEAPRA shelter and one was referred to another shelter (Hogar Betel). This shelter works with a small number of girls (approximately 10). According to the CEAPRA team, this makes it possible to work in a more individualized manner, give more attention to affective aspects in the work methodology, and work towards integration between them and the non-indigenous girls in the shelter. This adolescent girl continues to receive assistance after remaining voluntarily at the shelter for months, and according to different information sources, is making positive progress.

⁵⁹ For the Guarani peoples the family is very extensive and corresponds to the community as opposed to the family nucleus model in the western bourgeois sense. The programme does not take into consideration the cultural diversity of Paraguay and what this could entail in interventions with indigenous boys and girls and their families. The problems that CEAPRA encountered had to do on one hand, with the distance and remoteness of the girls' communities of origin; and on the other hand with the fact that several members of their community installed themselves for days in front of the referral centre expecting all kind of assistance (food, health care, money, etc.).

⁶⁰ It is necessary to take into account that in a high proportion of these families the men are not the beneficiaries' fathers, but their mothers' partners. These men tend not to establish affective ties with the boys and girls because they do not regard them as theirs. Moreover, relations between the children and the mother's partner are very often the source of conflicts that lead the boys and girls to run away from home and put them in situations where they are very vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

7. Conclusions and next steps

The objectives of the direct action programmes on withdrawal and prevention of CSE carried out in Foz de Iguazu and Ciudad del Este represented enormous challenges because they involve the initiation of profound cultural changes. The direct assistance to the children and adolescents was implemented in contexts where there was no previous experience of this, and this entailed a huge effort in terms of developing innovative methodologies and strategies to deliver assistance, mobilize social actors, and build capacity and awareness with respect to the problem. The objectives of the action programmes represent a children's rights-based approach to tackling CSE.

For the boys and girls, taking part in the programme, especially in withdrawal activities, very often entailed a cultural shock as well as a clash of values, lifestyles and living habits. It represents a transition from denial of fundamental rights to possibilities, from exclusion to opportunity. Furthermore, as strange as it might seem, this is a difficult, traumatic and painful step to take because it involves becoming aware of oneself, of the situation in which one lives, and of the social and personal forces that must be unleashed to change that situation. It brings fear of uncertainty because they know what they have, what they lose and what they leave behind, but not what awaits them, or if they will be accepted into that «*other world*» beyond exploitation.

After almost three years of implementation, the action programmes have made major strides, learned vital lessons and accomplished very significant results. Now there are several challenges that have to do with that «*other world*» assuming its responsibilities with respect to CSE. The programme has demonstrated and confirmed that it is possible to make progress in all areas (awareness raising, social mobilization, institutional linkage), and that prevention and withdrawal of girls, boys and adolescents is not only a commitment and an obligation that cannot be put off any longer, but that it is indeed possible. Escaping exclusion and exploitation depends more on the excluders and exploiters than on the victims, particularly if the latter are children and adolescents.

The challenges and measures to be adopted lead off in different directions but have the same objective: the elimination of CSE in the region. For that the following is essential:

1. Continue to work with victims and at-risk children and adolescents. The sustainability of the efforts undertaken by the action programmes is crucial in order to consolidate the processes that have been set in motion and eliminate this widespread form of exploitation from the region.
2. Intensify work with affected families and civil society organizations, which have been identified as the main forces in contributing to withdrawal from and prevention of CSE.
3. The participation of the business sector is fundamental in many respects, as shown by the contribution made to the project by Itaipú Binacional. The signing of agreements with companies to enable victims of CSE to find employment is an essential factor to enable them to stay away from exploitation.
4. The adoption of responsibilities by public institutions, some of which have started to become involved in measures to combat CSE. They cannot postpone any longer their commitment to concrete measures and effective progress in the areas of legislation and public policy shaping. It is essential to provide a budget for national plans against commercial sexual exploitation.
5. Dissemination and transfer of lessons learned and successful methodologies to all social actors that might be involved in tackling this problem is also crucial.
6. Finally, effective linkage between governmental and non governmental actors in the triple border area is urgently needed.

In addition to CSE, the sale of children and adolescents has also been detected, which must be dealt with through an integrated approach that tackles the institutional weaknesses and gaps in the law that facilitate this trade.



Bibliography

A.M.A.R (2003): Memorias del segundo congreso internacional de infancia y adolescencia: "Crecer con derechos". A.M.A.R. Asunción.

A.M.A.R (2002): Hacia una política social de infancia y adolescencia en Paraguay. A.M.A.R. Asunción

Acosta, Luz Marina; Acosta, Nilse A. (1997): Explotación sexual de niñas y adolescentes. Asunción: UNICEF.

Banco Mundial: Base de datos y base documental del Banco Mundial sobre Paraguay.

<http://www.WbIn0018.worldbank.org/External/lac/lac.nsf/Countries/Paraguay/>

Barboza, L. y Martínez, T. (2001). Compendio...niñez. Marco normativo de los derechos de la niñez y adolescencia en el Paraguay (Tomo I yII). AMAR, UNICEF y CDIA. Asunción.

Barnechea, M; González, E; Morgan, M. (1999): La producción de conocimientos en sistematización. La Piragua. Revista Latinoamericana de educación y política. nº 16.

Beca y Moreno, A. (2000): La explotación sexual infantil en Paraguay: marco conceptual. Contexto. Diagnóstico y propuestas de intervención. A.M.A.R. Ediciones. Asunción.

Bendlin, C (2003): Consulta Nacional para la elaboración del Plan Nacional contra la ESC. Inédito

Bontempo, D.; Bosetti, E.; César, M.A. & Leal, M.L.P. (Coord.) (1996): "Explotación sexual de niñas y adolescentes en Brasil". UNESCO, CECRIA & Thesaurus. Brasilia D.F. Brasil.

Britos, J.G. & PREVER. (2002): "Explotación sexual comercial de niñas y adolescentes. Paraguay-Ciudad del Este". OIT-IPEC. Paraguay.

Buscarons, E. (2000): El papel de la familia frente a la explotación sexual. Fundación Red Solidaria Azul y Blanca. Inédito.

Cárdenas, S. & Rivera, N. (2000): "Renacer. Una propuesta para volver a nacer". UNICEF Colombia – Fundación Renacer. Bogotá D.C. Colombia.

Casal Caharrón, Marta (2004), Análisis y sistematización de los resultados de la metodología adoptada para los servicios de atención directa ofrecidos a niños/as y adolescentes y sus familias en los centros de referencia instalados en la Triple frontera (Ciudad Del Este, Foz de Iguazu), Mímeo, Asunción-Paraguay.

Centro de investigación sobre la prostitución (CIPRO), (1975): Algunos aspectos relacionados con la prostitución de la mujer. Asunción.

Centro paraguayo de Estudios de Población (CEPEP), (1999): Paraguay. Encuesta Nacional de Salud Materno Infantil. Asunción.

CODEHUPY, (2003): Derechos humanos en Paraguay. Coordinadora de Derechos Humanos del Paraguay. Asunción.

Dirección General de Estadísticas, Encuestas y Censos (DGEEC, 2001): Evolución DE las encuestas de hogares 1994/2001. Asunción.

ECPAT (1996.a): Documento del Congreso Mundial contra la Explotación Sexual Comercial de niños/as y adolescentes. Estocolmo, Suecia. Agosto 27-31.

ECPAT (2003): La Implementación de la Agenda para la acción contra la Explotación Sexual Comercial de la Niñez, 2001-2002. ECPAT Internacional. Taiwán.

Fogel, R. (2002): "Pobreza y rol del Estado en el Paraguay". CERI. Asunción. Paraguay.

Galeano, L. A. (2002): "La sociedad dislocada". CPES. Asunción. Paraguay.

Müller, V.R. & Morelli, A.J. (Coord.) (2002): "Crianças e adolescentes. A Arte de sobreviver". Editora da Universidade Estadual de Maringá. Maringá. Paraná. Brasil.

OIT/IPEC (2003): Guía Programas de Acción. Sistematización. IPEC Sudamérica

OIT/IPEC (2002.-a): Informe Global 2002 "Un futuro sin trabajo infantil".. <http://www.ilo.org/public/spanish/standards/decl/publ/reports/download/report3/part1chapter2.pdf>

OIT/IPEC (2002): Programa de erradicación de la ESC en la triple frontera: Argentina, Paraguay, Brasil. Cd-Room.

OIT (1998): "Trabajo Infantil en los países del MERCOSUR: Argentina, Brasil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay". Oficina Regional de la OIT para América Latina y El Caribe. Perú.

OIT-IPEC (2003): "Boletín temático nº 1. Programas de atención directa con enfoque de derechos humanos para personas menores de edad víctimas de explotación sexual comercial". OIT. Costa Rica.

OIT/IPEC (2001): Guías de DED: "Buenas Prácticas". Ginebra

Pinto Leal, M.F.; César, M.A. (Coord.) (1998): "Indicadores de violencia Intra-familiar e exploração sexual comercial de crianças e Adolescentes". CESE, Ministerio da Justiça, Secretaria Nacional os Direitos Humanos, Departamento da Criança e do Adolescente, Fundo Cristão para Crianças, CECRIA. Brasília D.F. Brasil.

Rizzini, I. (Coord.) (2003): "Vida nas ruas. Crianças e adolescentes nas ruas: trajetórias inevitáveis?". Editora PUC-Rio & Edições Loyola. Rio de Janeiro – Sao Paulo. Brasil.

SNNA (2003), Plan nacional de prevención y erradicación de la explotación sexual de niñas, niños y adolescentes en Paraguay. Mimeo, Asunción-Paraguay.

Sprandel, M. y otros (2004) La explotación sexual comercial de niños, niñas y adolescentes: en las legislaciones de Argentina, Brasil y Paraguay: alternativas de armonización para el MERCOSUR. Asunción-Paraguay.

Tobón, M. (2000): Aprendiendo a amarlas. OIT/AECI/Fundación Restrepo Barco. Bogotá.

UNICEF (1999): Informe alternativo sobre cumplimiento de los derechos de la infancia. Asunción.

UNICEF (2000): Paraguay Basic Indicators http://www.unicef.org/statis/Country_1page136.html

UNICEF (2001): Aprovecharse del abuso: un estudio sobre la explotación sexual de nuestras niñas y niños. UNICEF. N.Y.

VV.AA (2004): "La dinámica de la población: desafíos y estrategias frente a la pobreza. Memorias del Primer Congreso Paraguayo de Población". UNFPA & ADEPO. Paraguay.

Internet information

<http://www.ecpat.org>

<http://www.unicef.org>

<http://www.ilo.org>

<http://www.anty-slavery.org>

<http://www.gaatw.net>

<http://www.focalpoint.org>

<http://www.casa-alianza.org>

<http://www.renacer.org>

<http://www.savethechildren.org>

<http://www.stop-traffic.net>

<http://www.iom.org>

<http://www.anesvad.org>



Annexes

ANNEX I: PROJECT DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). Multilateral technical cooperation programme. Country: Brasil-Paraguay.
- Action Programme Summary Outline: "*Programa de atención integral a crianças e adolescentes em situação de exploração sexual comercial em Foz do Iguacu*".
- Research Document: "*Exploração sexual comercial de crianças e adolescentes. Brasil- Foz do Iguacu*". April 2002.
- Research Document: "*A Oferta Institucional para responder às necessidades de atenção e promoção dos direitos das crianças e adolescentes atingidos pela exploração sexual comercial infanto-juvenil em Foz do Iguacu – Brasil*". Executive summary. April 2002.
- Action Programme Summary Outline: "*Programa de Prevención y Atención Integral a Niños, Niñas y adolescentes en situación de Explotación Sexual Comercial en Ciudad del Este*".
- Action Programme Technical Progress Report: "*Programa de Prevención y Atención Integral a Niños, Niñas Y adolescentes en situación de Explotación Sexual Comercial en Ciudad del Este*".

- Research Document: "*Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niñas y Adolescentes. Paraguay- Ciudad del Este*". June 2002.
- Research Document: "*Políticas Sociales y Oferta Institucional para la confrontación de la Explotación Sexual Comercial de niñas, niños y adolescentes en la frontera Paraguay- Brasil (Ciudad del Este)*". June 2002.
- Technical Progress Reports of the action programmes en Ciudad del Este and Foz de Iguazu (First to seventh quarters)
- Systematization of Seminar: *Avances y Desafíos de las Redes de Combate a la Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes and la Triple Frontera – Plan de Trabajo 2004* (Progress and Challenges of the Networks against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Girls, Boys and Adolescents in the Triple Border Area – 2004 Work Plan). December 4 and 5, 2003.
- First technical report, Acordar Programme-Foz de Iguazu. May 2005.
- Executive Summary CEAPRA. 2004
- Self-assessment of the Programme in Foz, Final Output Report (2005) "*Programa de Atención Integral a Crianças e Adolescentes em situação de Exploração Sexual Comercial em Foz do Iguazu*"
- Action Programme Summary Outlines on the Acordar Programme.
- Evaluation document "*Programa de prevención y rehabilitación de los menores en situación de ESC en Ciudad del Este tras la formación y la capacitación laboral de los miembros de su familia*".

ANNEX II: FIELDWORK ACTIVITIES

ACORDAR PROGRAMME- FOZ DE IGUAÇU

Subprogramme	Type of actor/activity	Techniques
"See if you understand me"	Coordinator	Semi-structured interview and informal conversations.
"Healthy Family"	Coordinator	Semi-structured and conversational interviews
"Teatro e Cidadania"	Coordinator	Semi-structured interview
"See if you understand me"	Street educators	Semi-structured and conversational interviews
"See if you understand me"	Complete team of experts	Discussion group
"Família saudável"	Complete team of experts	Discussion group
"Família saudável"	Psychologists	Semi-structured interviews
"Família saudável"	Social workers	Entrev.semi-estruturadas
"Família saudável"	Coordination meeting with team of experts	Non-participatory observation
"Família saudável"	Community-based therapy	Participatory observation
"Theatre and Citizenship"	Theatre workshop	Non-participatory observation
"Theatre and Citizenship"	Percussion workshop	Non-participatory observation
"Theatre and Citizenship"	Plastic arts workshop	Non-participatory observation
"Theatre and Citizenship"	Art educators	Conversational interviews
"Acordar Programme"	Coordination meeting	Non-participatory observation

INTEGRAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME – CIUDAD DEL ESTE

Referral centre	Type of actor /activity	Techniques
ILO/IPEC	Project Coordinator in Ciudad del Este	Semi-structured and conversational interviews
CEAPRA	Centre coordinator 2005	Semi-structured and conversational interviews
CEAPRA	Instructor	Semi-structured and conversational interviews
CEAPRA	Street educators	Conversational interviews
CEAPRA	Psychologist-instructors	Semi-structured interviews
CEAPRA	Psychologist	Semi-structured and conversational interviews
CEAPRA	External monitor (documents, legal follow-up)	Semi-structured interview
CEAPRA	Pastoral outreach worker (responsible for home visits)	Semi-structured interviews
CEAPRA	Centre coordinator 2003-2004	Semi-structured interviews
CEAPRA	Complete team of experts	Group discussion/ Good Practices identification
CEAPRA	Group of mothers of direct beneficiaries	Group interview

PREVENTION AND WITHDRAWAL



International
Labour
Office



COLLECTION of **Good Practices
and Lessons Learned** related to
the prevention and elimination of
commercial sexual exploitation
(CSE) of girls, boys and adolescents

Financed by the United States Department
of Labor

Drawing made in the workshop "We have
the right to play" by boys, girls and
adolescents of the CEAPRA and School 354
of Ciudad del Este. July 2005.