

# What is commercial sexual exploitation?

The commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents **is a crime** that occurs when one of more people involve a boy, girl or adolescent (under 18 years of age) in sexual or erotic activities in exchange for payment of money or any other reward in kind (clothes, food, drugs, etc.).

It includes any of the following forms of exploitation:

- Paid sexual intercourse and activities
- The production and distribution of child or adolescent pornography
- Participation in public or private sex shows

Due to the fact that commercial sexual exploitation is a very complex problem, the fight to eliminate it requires that it be dealt with in a comprehensive manner involving the active participation of all social sectors. The intervention of the education sector, along with that of officials from the health, migration, legal and police sectors, in addition to child and adolescent protection institutions, non-government organizations, international cooperation organizations and the public at large, is fundamental for preventing and putting a stop to this problem.

## Those involved in situations of commercial sexual exploitation

### The exploiters

- This group is made up of:
  - ◆ **Client-exploiters:** pay (with money or rewards of any kind) for sexual activities with children and adolescents.
  - ◆ **Pimps:** involve or lure boys, girls and adolescents in sexual activities, and in exchange they receive payment from the client-exploiters.
  - ◆ **Intermediaries:** facilitate or mediate the exploitation in order to obtain financial gain (can be taxi drivers, owners and staff of hotels, massage parlours and photographic studios, etc.).
- They are the people who are directly responsible for the problem.
- They may be of any age, nationality, profession, marital status or sex, although the majority are male.
- They may be locals (nationals or foreign residents) or from other areas or countries (tourist exploiters).
- They sometimes bring about the movement of victims within or outside the country, thus committing the crimes of sale and trafficking in persons.
- In addition to sexually exploiting the victims, the client-exploiters may infect them with sexually transmitted diseases, make them pregnant, attack them physically and treat them as objects.
- **The exploiters should be reported and penalized.**

### The victims

- They are boys, girls and adolescents under 18 years of age; the majority are female.
- They have lived in conditions which make them vulnerable: poverty, intra-family violence, being turned out of the family, exclusion from the education system, addiction to alcohol or other drugs, child labour and living on the streets, etc.
- They have not chosen to be sexually exploited, nor can they consent to it.
- Although they are not guilty of the situation, they feel responsible for what happens to them and cannot find a way out.
- Their human rights have been violated (the right to live with their family, the right to health, education, State protection, justice, integrity, etc.).
- They are subjected to sexual violence, economic exploitation and slavery.
- They do not "like" to be exploited or abused and they are not perverse, promiscuous or seducers, nor have they "lost" their moral values.
- They experience many negative consequences: social stigmatization, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, physical and emotional abuse, drug addictions and even death.
- **The victims should be protected by the State, the families and society.**

## What are our responsibilities in the fight against commercial sexual exploitation?

### Preventive actions:

- Training and creating awareness of the issue in different population groups: staff working in education centres, students, parents, and the community in general.
- Put up posters or informative material aimed at potential exploiters and the general public.
- Ensure the students remain within the education system and promote the reinsertion of those who are not studying.

According to a regional ILO/IPEC (2003) study, the victims of exploitation presented low levels of schooling, and up to 84% of them remained outside the education system.

Furthermore, the efforts of education centres have proved insufficient in promoting the reinsertion in the education system of both the victims and those at risk.

When a boy, girl or adolescent is excluded from the education system this makes them vulnerable to the possibility of becoming involved in a situation of exploitation since a low level of education constitutes an obstacle for the victims to have access, as adults, to income-generating options that will allow them an appropriate standard of living. It is therefore important to promote the inclusion and permanence of the boys, girls and adolescents in the education system.

Some examples of actions that ensure the fulfilment of the right to education that all underage persons have are:

- Make the offer of education programmes more adaptable to the students' needs.
- Devote more attention to students who repeat the year or those with low academic performance.
- Process student grants.

...I had a teacher who was a very good man...and I don't know what explanation my Dad gave him because we lived very far away from the school but no-one ever came to my house to see why I wasn't going to school..."

(Statement made by a victim of commercial sexual exploitation).

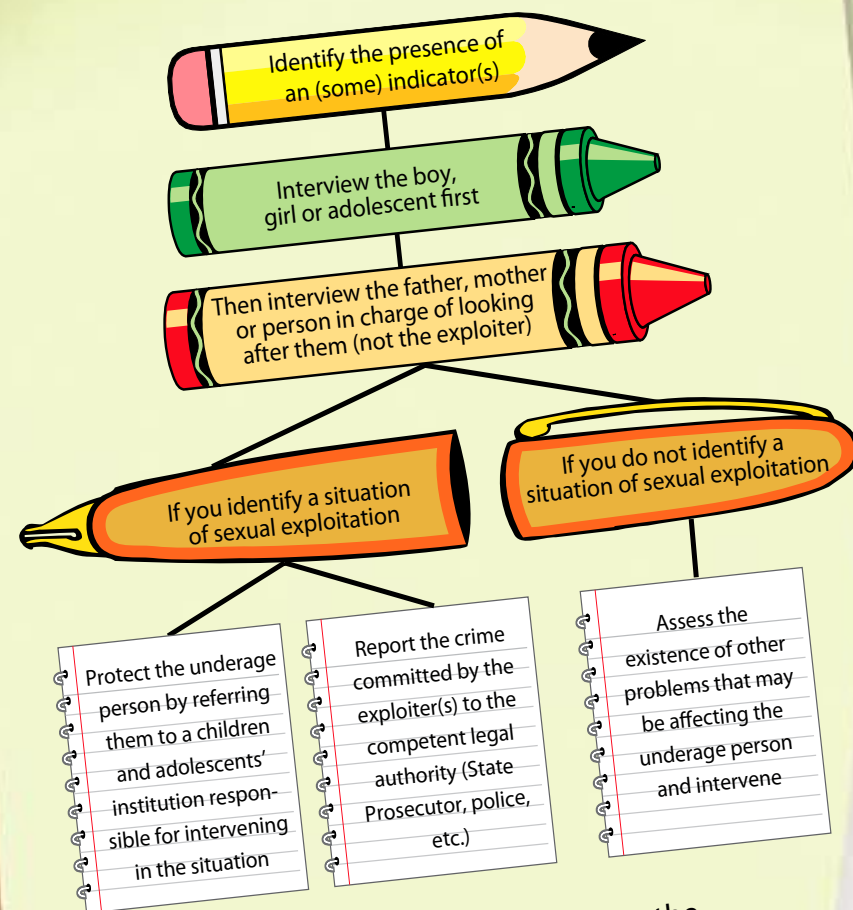
## Detection actions

The daily contact you have with your students makes you an ideal person for identifying the **probability indicators** that are signs of suspecting, or **warning signs**, that a boy, girl or adolescent could be being sexually exploited. It is important, therefore, that you are very much aware of:

- Pregnancies
- Induced or spontaneous abortions
- Physical evidence of aggression
- Self-destructive behaviour: self-mutilation or suicide attempts.
- Running away from home.
- Irregular school attendance; drowsiness; lack of concentration; poor performance at school
- Handling quantities of money, clothes or objects that are inconsistent with the family's economic situation (for example, mobile phones).
- Drug taking (including cigarettes)
- Sexualized behaviour and language with peers and adults
- Difficulties in obeying rules
- Night time spent at places linked to commercial sexual exploitation (bars, nightclubs, hotels)
- Involvement in criminal activities.
- The boy, girl or adolescent belongs to a socially vulnerable group, that is, they present some of the following conditions: the family lives in conditions of poverty or faces drug addiction problems; they have been subjected to intra-family violence, child sexual abuse, incest, abandonment and mistreatment; they have been turned out of the family; they have been excluded from the education system; they work, wander or live on the streets.

You are the person most suited to ensuring the fulfilment of the boys', girls' and adolescents' right to education.

If you identify one or several of the probability indicators, adopt the following procedure:



If you do not feel qualified to carry out the interviews, coordinate with a professional in psychology or a social worker from your education centre. If there are no such staff, contact a professional from the nearest health centre or from a child and adolescent institution in order that they may carry out the interviews.

### Care actions for the victim

- Listen, at all times, to the victim's opinion and keep them informed of the procedures that will be undertaken for their protection.
- Avoid scolding, complaining or blaming the boy, girl or adolescent. Remember that he or she is the victim and is not guilty of what is happening.
- Inform your immediate boss of the situation detected in order that together you may decide what intervention measures are to be taken.
- Where necessary, request the help of a professional in psychology or a social worker who is familiar with dealing with the problem.
- Contact the institution in charge of protecting children and adolescents in your country in order that they may intervene in this respect (case reference).
- Ensure the boy, girl or adolescent's safety until the children and adolescent's institution assumes intervention in the case.
- Prepare a report on the situation identified. Include:
  - identification details of the underage person
  - details of the alleged exploiter
  - description of the situation identified to date.
- Hand in the report to the child and adolescents' institution.
- Report the crime committed by the exploiter(s) or the situation of exploitation to the legal authority competent in processing this type of reports. For this purpose, it is essential you familiarize yourself with the current legislation on sex crimes; who has the legal authority to report these, and what the procedure is.
- Provide follow-up and support to the actions undertaken by other institutions and incorporate the recommendations they make in order to facilitate the victim's recovery.
- Participate in local networks, committees or inter-institutional coordination spaces to guarantee a system of reference and counter-reference of both the victims and the population at risk

Below please find basic information on some of the institutions that combat commercial sexual exploitation and whom you may contact:

#### Key phone numbers to report CSEC

Department of Human Services	Key phone numbers to report CSEC
Belize Dist	227-7451 / 7452
Cayo Dist	804-2098
Corozal Dist	402-2120
Orange Walk Dist	302-2058
Stann Creek Dist	502-0038
Toledo Dist	702-2021

Belize Police Department / Family Violence Unit	Key phone numbers to report CSEC
Belize City	227-2222 / 2223
Belmopan	822-2221 / 2222
Corozal	422-2022
Dangriga	522-2022
Orange Walk	322-2022
Punta Gorda	722-2022
San Pedro	226-2022

For more information or orientation about CSEC contact:  
 National Committee for Families and Children  
 Tel: 2230059 / 1180 • Fax: 2231229 • E-mail: ncfcbtl.net

### Remember:

You may be the only source of support for a boy, girl or adolescent victim of commercial sexual exploitation.

We must fight for the victims' protection and report the exploiters!

Project: "Contribution to the Prevention and Elimination of the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of children and adolescents in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic."  
 International Labour Office  
 International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour  
 For further information, please visit the following web page:  
[www.oit.or.cr/ipepec/esc](http://www.oit.or.cr/ipepec/esc)



Our responsibilities as teachers faced with the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents

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