

## **THE SEX EXPLOITER**

**Theme paper for the Second World Congress Against  
Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper emphasises the fact that there is no 'sex exploiter' as such. Instead, there are people (adult and child, male and female) who sexually exploit children in many different ways, for many different reasons and in many different social contexts. In particular, the paper argues that questions about who sexually exploits children cannot be reduced to questions about 'paedophiles'. Though we must urgently address the existence of, and harm caused by, those who consistently and consciously seek out young children to abuse, questions about why children are sexually exploited and by whom do not end here. The paper considers the diversity of 'sex exploiters' in terms of their identities, attitudes and motivations, reviewing evidence on those who sexually exploit young children and adolescents in non-commercial settings; in the commercial sex industry (including those who exploit children for financial gain, rather than sexual gratification); and in the context of more diffuse and long-term sexual-economic relationships.

The social, political and economic factors that shape demand for CSEC in a range of settings are examined, and the paper draws attention to the strong relationship between socially prescribed or tolerated attitudes and practices and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. It points to the need to develop and fund public education campaigns to challenge and undermine the popular and widely endorsed beliefs about sexuality, gender, race, class, caste, childhood, economic life and/or prostitution that exploiters of all types draw upon to rationalise and defend their actions. It argues that this means making links (at local, national and international levels) between efforts to tackle the commercial sexual exploitation of children and efforts to combat other forms of discrimination. It also shows that the violation of children's rights through commercial sexual exploitation is not separable from, or unrelated to, other human rights' issues. In particular, questions about 'sex exploiters' cannot be divorced from more general questions about poverty, gender relations, social exclusion, child labour, welfare policies, structural adjustment programmes, tourist development, racism, migratory pressures, AIDS and sexual health, and prostitutes' civil and human rights.

The paper notes that the actions of all those involved in the commercial sexual exploitation of children are neither identical nor morally equivalent, and notes that this fact should be reflected in the range of policy measures designed to address 'the sex exploiter'. In many instances, the environment behind sexual exploitation rather than the individual who exploits must be the primary focus of our concern and interventions. It concludes that there is no single, quick or easy solution to the problems posed by those who commercially sexually exploit children. Efforts to strengthen and enforce laws against child sexual exploitation must be balanced and complimented by long-term measures to transform the environments that produce sex exploiters. Such measures will require a great deal of investment, and adequate resources must be committed to them if we are serious about combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

## **REFERENCES**

## **THE SEX EXPLOITER**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Declaration and Agenda for Action of the First World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children made it clear that CSEC (commercial sexual exploitation of children) is rooted in a complex mix of economic, political, social and legal factors, and needs to be addressed through a wide range of measures at local, national and international levels. This emphasis on the complexity of CSEC may have exerted some influence upon debates concerning the sexually exploited child over the past five years, but it has remained largely absent from public and policy debate regarding those who commercially sexually exploit children. There has been a continued tendency to assume that the demand-side of CSEC consists of ‘paedophiles’ and the criminals who supply them with children to abuse, and/or to concentrate on legal and criminal justice aspects of demand. This preoccupation with ‘paedophilia’ is inconsistent with an understanding of CSEC based upon the United Nations’ definition of a child as a person under the age of 18, and the emphasis on law and law enforcement obscures the complexity of the questions, issues and challenges presented by the demand-side of CSEC. This paper starts from the premise that the problem of CSEC includes, but extends far beyond, that of ‘paedophilia’. It considers the diversity of ‘sex exploiters’ in terms of their identities, attitudes and motivations, and draws attention to the social, political and economic factors that shape demand for CSEC in a range of settings. It stresses the fact that there is no single, quick or easy solution to the problems posed by those who commercially sexually exploit children. Efforts to strengthen legal controls over individual offenders must be balanced by efforts to devise and set in place a wide-ranging series of short and long-term measures addressing the factors that underpin and reproduce the demand-side of CSEC.

### **2. KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS**

This paper employs the term ‘sex exploiter of children’ (or, for the sake of brevity, ‘sex exploiter’) only as a shorthand way of referring to those who commit acts of child sexual exploitation, and not as a term to describe a particular kind of individual, or a specific group or class of persons. Indeed, one of the paper’s aims is to show that it is impossible to speak of *the* sex exploiter in the sense of a single type of person who possesses some particular or unique set of characteristics. Those who sexually exploit children do so in a range of different social contexts, for a variety of reasons and cannot be distinguished by any specific inner quality, personality trait or even sexual proclivity. Their only common characteristic is the fact that they engage in forms of action that constitute child sexual exploitation. Key conceptual and definitional issues that need to be borne in mind throughout any discussion of the demand-side of CSEC are set out below.

#### **Sex Exploiters and Sexual Consent**

Children, defined as persons below the age of 18, are not always or necessarily incompetent or entirely lacking rational autonomy with regard to sexual expression. The sex exploiter cannot therefore be simply defined as ‘any individual who has sex with a child’, as this would deny all rights of sexual self-expression to everyone aged below 18. Such a definition would, by default, universally raise the age of sexual consent to 18, making it impossible to acknowledge that a 17 year old, for example, may be capable of consenting to a sexual relationship with a nineteen year old girl or

boyfriend. It would also mean that when two 15 year olds entered into a sexual relationship based on mutual attraction, each would simultaneously become a child sex exploiter and a sexually exploited child.

Any definition of the 'sex exploiter' must be sensitive to the fact that those under the age of 18 are sometimes, and in some circumstances, capable of experiencing sexual desire and giving meaningful sexual consent. At the same time, however, questions as to whether a child consented to, instigated, or even obtained gratification from, sexual interaction with another person cannot be used to determine whether or not that person has committed an act of sexual exploitation. Our understanding of those who sexually exploit children must also recognise that children can be manipulated, induced or otherwise pressured into consenting to relationships, activities and/or contracts that may harm them. Whether aged 7 or 17, they have a right to protection against those who seek such consent, as well as against those who use force to sexually abuse or exploit them.

### **Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence**

The Longman English Dictionary defines 'exploit' as 'to use or develop fully, especially for profit or advantage... to take unfair advantage of for financial or other gain'. This emphasis on unfair advantage points to the existence of some imbalance of social, political, economic and/or physical, psychological or emotional power between the exploiter and the exploited, and so serves to distinguish 'exploitation' from simple criminality. The burglar who breaks into a house and steals a diamond necklace commits a crime, but we would not define her or him as an 'exploiter' of the rich. Meanwhile, a multinational corporation that aggressively markets tobacco in poor and developing countries takes advantage of, and profits by, the fact that poorer countries are unable to fund extensive and effective anti-smoking education. It could thus be said to exploit the vulnerability of those countries' populations, even though it may act within the confines of national and international law. Applied to questions about the sexual exploitation of children, this suggests that 'sex exploiters' can be defined as *those who take unfair advantage of some imbalance of power between themselves and a person under the age of 18 in order to sexually use them for either profit or personal pleasure.*

Three points about this definition should be noted. First, it clearly excludes consensual sexual acts between children of equal power and status. Second, it includes what is more usually described as 'child sexual abuse', a term which refers to forms of interaction or bodily contact between a child and an adult or older child which take place for the sexual gratification of the adult/older child. Child sexual abuse thus covers a wide range of sexual behaviours (from exhibitionist exposure, through fondling to vaginal or anal penetration), which can take place in a variety of settings and in the context of very different relationships between the perpetrator and the child concerned. Because the perpetrator invariably takes advantage of an imbalance of power between him or herself and the child in order to abuse, the 'sex abuser' can also be described as a 'sex exploiter'. However, the term 'sex exploiter' further extends to cover third parties who have no actual sexual contact with children, but profit from facilitating or orchestrating children's sexual contact with another person or persons. This is important, given that many countries' existing measures to monitor and control sex exploiters focus primarily upon those who have personally committed acts of child sexual abuse.

Third, the term ‘sex exploiter’ cannot be automatically applied to all those who commit acts of sexual violence, since violence can transcend social, political, economic and even physical inequality, whereas sexual exploitation cannot take place in the absence of such inequalities. A thirteen-year-old boy might be able to rape his thirty-year-old teacher, for example, but he cannot sexually exploit her. This distinction is, however, complicated by the fact that sex attackers often do exploit the social, political and/or physical vulnerability of certain groups, selecting victims who are least able to protect themselves and/or who are afforded least protection by the state. Furthermore, the definition of ‘sex exploiter’ provided above does not preclude the possibility that sexual exploitation may include extreme forms of sexual violence. The exploiter may, for example, derive sexual pleasure from performing sadistic acts, up to and including torture and murder, or may seek to profit from the production or distribution of pornographic records of such violence. Yet we must also remember that sex exploiters do not always or necessarily use force against, or cause physical damage to the body of, the exploited, and it is therefore necessary to pay close attention to the social, economic, political and legal structures which make it possible for sex exploiters to obtain children’s sexual compliance without resort to physical force.

#### **‘Commercial’ and ‘Non-Commercial’ Sexual Exploitation**

Children can be sexually exploited in the context of a wide range of social relationships. These social relationships can be loosely divided into three broad types:

- \_ those that are commercial and relatively short term;
- \_ those that involve longer term economic dependency;
- \_ and those that have no commercial element and/or are not primarily economic.

The boundaries between these categories are not hard and fast, and one individual sex exploiter may abuse in all three contexts. However, in terms of understanding the motivations and *modus operandi* of sex exploiters and devising effective child protection measures, it is helpful to examine what is peculiar to each type of relationship, and to consider overlaps between the ‘commercial’ and the ‘non-commercial’.

The term ‘commercial sex’ embraces a diverse range of phenomena (see O’Connell Davidson, 1998). In most countries of the world, it is possible to divide the commercial sex trade (which includes prostitution, trafficking, pornography and sexual ‘entertainment’) into two key sectors, one formally organised, the other informally arranged. Children are sexually exploited in both sectors, but within the formal sex industry, sex is sold as if it were a commodity like any other. Here, the exploiter enters into narrow and explicit contracts, so, for example, a sum of money is paid in exchange for a specified sexual ‘service’, or a particular pornographic video. In the informal sector, exploiter and exploited often enter into more loosely specified, diffuse exchanges, within which the exploited may provide a range of services (perform sexual acts, pose for pornographic photos, clean, cook, shop, flatter, converse, counsel, translate, to name but a few) in exchange for a range of benefits (for example, a bed for the night and a hot shower, a meal, gifts of money or clothing,

a place to live, help setting up in business, food rations in a refugee camp, assistance in migrating from a poor to a wealthy country or in escaping from persecution in the child's home country).

The informal sector of the commercial sex trade shades off into sexual relationships that have an economic basis and are exploitative according to the definition provided above, yet have none of the characteristics of relationships between two parties to a simple commodity exchange. So, for example, relatively wealthy adults may provide long term financial support to a poor family on the understanding that this entitles them to a sexually abusive relationship with one of the children, or they may marry, cohabit with, date or adopt children, making sexual use of them and providing them with gifts and economic support in return. Children can also be sexually exploited in the context of longer-term relationships that are explicitly economic but ostensibly non-sexual. So, for example, children who are employed as domestic workers, or as tourism, farm, plantation or factory workers may be forced, pressured or manipulated into sexual acts by their employers, their employers' clients or friends, and/or their adult co-workers. The child may not be offered cash or other benefits in exchange for submitting to individual episodes of abuse, and yet may well feel that her or his continued employment rests upon acquiescing to such demands.

The question of when exploitation ceases to be CSEC and becomes a non-commercial form of child sexual abuse is further complicated by the fact that those who sexually abuse children within what would normally be considered non-commercial relationships (e.g., parent/child, teacher/pupil, priest/supplicant, scoutmaster/scout) also often attempt to secure the child's compliance and/or silence by giving them money, gifts or other benefits. To determine whether or not such relationships are *primarily* economic in basis would require us to decipher the significance of the 'payment' for the victim, something that would raise all manner of problems. Finally, we should note that children who are vulnerable to physical attack (for instance, those who live and/or work on the streets, or in refugee camps, or in institutions in which those in authority fail to provide them with adequate protection against abuse and violence by other inmates) sometimes trade sexual access in exchange for protection, rather than any financial benefit.

Taken together, these points suggest that attempts to completely separate commercial and non-commercial forms of sexual exploitation, either analytically or temporally, are bound to be unsatisfactory. It is better to think in terms of a continuum and to recognise that some cases of child sexual exploitation fall into a grey area between that which is clearly 'commercial' and that which is indisputably 'non-commercial'. When these cases involve children who are above the age of sexual consent, but below the age of 18, they are particularly difficult to legislate against.

### **'Paedophilia' and Beyond**

'Paedophilia' is a clinical diagnostic category with a very specific and limited meaning. According to the American Psychiatric Association's 1995 manual, it refers to a person aged over 16, who 'has had repeated, intense, sexually exciting fantasies for a period of at least six months, has had sexual urges or has carried out behaviours involving sexual acts with one or more children (usually under the age of 13)'. Furthermore, 'the fantasies, the sexual urges or behaviours act as considerable impairments in the individual's ability to function socially, professionally or within

other important spheres' (cited in Svensson, 2000: 27). Some of those who conform to this definition pose a very serious risk to children, and can be individually responsible for the sexual abuse of large numbers of children. Yet we should also note that to be clinically diagnosed as suffering from 'paedophilia', an individual need not necessarily have committed any act of child sexual abuse, and we cannot therefore claim that *all* 'paedophiles' are sex exploiters. It would be still more emphatically wrong to claim that all sex exploiters are 'paedophiles', and this would remain the case even if the term were more loosely used to refer to adults with a sexual interest in young children (as it is used in popular parlance).

Sex exploiters who are involved as third party beneficiaries of CSEC are rarely motivated by personal sexual desire or obsessive fantasies. They sexually exploit children for profit, not because their acts of exploitation bring them psychic relief or sexual gratification. Next, there are those who sexually exploit children if and when they find themselves in situations where a child is more readily or cheaply available for sexual use than an adult, but whose satisfaction does not hinge on the physical or emotional immaturity of the individual they exploit. There are also adult men who choose young children as sexual partners primarily on the basis of misconceptions about sexual health, or because they uncritically accept myths about virgins being able to restore potency, bring luck to new business ventures, and so on. None of these people are driven by sexual fantasies about children *per se*.

Furthermore, if children are defined as persons under 18, it is necessary to recognise that adult-child sexual contact is rarely completely proscribed. In most countries, it is legal for an adult to marry, co-habit with or date a person below the age of 18. Meanwhile, most societies attach a good deal of aesthetic and erotic value to youthful bodies. Adults who seek out younger and more attractive sexual partners, including persons under the age of 18, are not necessarily transgressing the socially agreed perimeters of acceptable sexual desires and therefore cannot be automatically described as sexually 'deviant' or psychologically 'abnormal'. To use the terms 'paedophile' and 'sex exploiter' interchangeably is thus to grossly over-simplify the phenomenon of child sexual exploitation. Though we must urgently address the existence of, and harm caused by, those who consistently and consciously seek out young children to abuse, questions about why children are sexually exploited and by whom do not end here. We need also to ask why it is that people who are *not* 'paedophiles' sexually exploit children.

One further point. Those who conform to clinical definitions of 'paedophilia' can display a focused sexual interest in either male or female children, or in both. However, 'paedophiles' have sometimes been stereotyped as men with a fixed interest in boys, and homophobic individuals and groups have asserted that there is a relationship between homosexuality and child sexual abuse. In reality, statistical evidence on child sexual exploitation points only to the conclusion that there is a relationship between gender and abuse, in the sense that a) girl children are far more likely to be victims of sexual exploitation than boy children; and b) males are far more likely than females to commit sexually exploitative acts for personal pleasure. Certainly, some men who self-identify as homosexual sexually exploit boys under the age of 18, just as some men who self-identify as heterosexual exploit girls under the age of 18, but it does not follow that all homosexual men are potential sex exploiters any more than it follows that all heterosexual men pose a threat to girl children.



Moreover, Western usage of terms such as 'homosexual', 'heterosexual' and 'paedophile' is not universally meaningful. There are many places in the world where men have sex with other men or boys without necessarily defining themselves, or being defined by others, as 'homosexual'. In South Asia, for example: 'sociocultural frameworks are supremely gendered, and often sexual relationships are framed by gender roles, power relationships, poverty, class, caste, tradition and custom, hierarchies of one sort or another. Here for many men/males, we have gender identities, not sexual identities' (Khan, 2001, 5).

### **3. RATIONALISING THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN**

The sociologist Orlando Patterson (1982, 18) observes that 'Human beings have always found naked force or coercion a rather messy, if not downright ugly business, however necessary'. Most societies have therefore sought ways in which to clothe the 'beastliness' of power, to propound a set of ideas which make coercive power 'immediately palatable to those who exercise it'. Just the power of dominant groups in society is typically cloaked or justified by discourses which humanise or deny it, so individuals are usually reluctant to view themselves as abusive, dominating, cruel or evil. Whether we are talking about acts of genocide, rape, wife beating, or child sexual abuse, the vast majority of people will only use force or coercive power against another human being if and when they can tell themselves it is natural, right and justifiable to do so, or when they can conceal from themselves the fact that they are exercising such powers. Thus research has consistently found that very few of those who sexually exploit children consider themselves to be abusive or exploitative, but will rather seek to deny, justify or humanise their sexual use of children.

The concept of 'cognitive dissonance' provides one way in which to understand this finding. Psychologists have pointed out that people experience anxiety where there is a lack of congruence between their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour. For example, if a man believes himself to be a good and moral person, and also believes that those who sexually abuse children are bad and immoral, he will experience anxiety if he has sexual contact with a child, since the propositions, 'I am a good person', 'adult-child sexual contact is always wrong', and 'I have sex with children' are incongruent. To bring them into line, and so reduce his anxiety, the man must adjust at least one of them. He can either revise his view of himself as a good person, or change his attitudes towards adult-child sexual contact, or adjust his beliefs about whether or not he has had sex with children. British and US studies of convicted child sex offenders suggest that they are most likely to respond to the cognitive dissonance associated with child sexual abuse by shifting their attitudes towards adult-child sexual contact and/or towards their victims. Thus, they typically exhibit distorted attitudes and beliefs which allow them to construct children as being in some way responsible for their own abuse, and/or to imagine that children are not harmed by sexual contact with adults, and/or that children are able to consent to, or obtain benefits from, sexual encounters with adults (Ward *et al*, 2000). This may involve minimizing the meaning and consequences of abuse (as when the abuser tells himself that 'fondling' or oral sex does not really 'count' as sex and causes no harm to the child concerned), and/or denying the coercive nature of the abuse (as when the abuser tells himself that the child instigated, invited or deserved the abuse).

The degree of distortion and denial involved can be quite extraordinary. There are even offenders who claim that their sexual contact with a baby was not wrong because the baby invited or consented to the abuse by, for example, smiling and gurgling when the abuser changed its nappy. Clearly, no existing society's framework of beliefs can support such a stupendous level of self-deception. Those who sexually abuse very young children therefore have to massively distort socially agreed ideas about consent and the powers one human being can legitimately exercise over another, as well as about the proper objects of adult sexual interest and the proper relations between adults and children. Such people often have an extremely fragile hold on their sense of self, and experience great psychological stress as they attempt to maintain a view of their own actions as justified or harmless. However, those who abuse very small children are in a minority amongst sex exploiters, and there are other forms of child sexual exploitation which are much easier to accommodate within the framework of socially prescribed or tolerated attitudes towards sexuality, age, consent and the legitimate exercise of power.

All of this implies that in order to protect children from CSEC, we must concern ourselves with the ideas which inform and guide the action of sex exploiters, and find ways to challenge and undermine the beliefs which allow sex exploiters to deny, justify, humanise or naturalize their acts of exploitation. The way in which adults convince themselves that sexual use of a child is warranted and defensible often hinges in part upon the social relationship within which exploitation occurs. Sections 4, 5, and 6 therefore explore how sex exploiters justify and/or deny the coercive powers they exercise over the children within non-commercial relationships, commercial relationships, and longer-term sexual-economic relationships.

#### **4. EXPLOITERS IN NON-COMMERCIAL CONTEXTS**

Western research on convicted child sex offenders has found that a) they often use children to meet demands for emotional intimacy and/or sexual contact because children are easier to control and make fewer demands than adults b) they have little empathy for their victims, and c) they employ cognitive distortions to deny or avoid seriously considering the harmful consequences of abuse for their victims (Grubin, 1998, Ward *et al*, 2000). Some perpetrators imagine their acts of abuse as the harmless pleasuring of a child within the context of an affectionate, caring and/or reciprocal relationship, and insist that they love the children they abuse. Some perpetrators justify their acts of sexual abuse on grounds that the child invited or deserved it (she or he is worthless, deliberately naughty, wicked, possessed by the devil, and so on), and here the sexual contact may be extremely hostile and punitive, taking place within a relationship that is more generally abusive and violent. So, for example, Borje Svensson of Save the Children Sweden's Boys' Clinic states that 'When it comes to boys who have been sexually abused by their biological fathers, physical violence has often occurred in combination with the assaults' (2000, 21).

No matter what form the abuse takes, there are important connections to be made between child sexual abuse and the ways in which childhood is socially constructed and imagined. Research has consistently shown that children who are sexually abused in non-commercial settings are far more likely to be abused by adults they know than by strangers (Grubin, 1998). Within this, children are at greatest risk of sexual abuse by the adults who exercise the most power over them, which is to say by their parents,

guardians, relatives, and adults who act in *loco parentis* in a range of settings, including kindergartens, schools, colleges, residential homes for children with or without disabilities, churches, sports clubs, foreign/educational exchange visits, and so on (Kelly and Regan, 2000). In most societies, parents and adults who act in *loco parentis* are both allowed and expected to exercise powers over children of a type and degree that would be unthinkable in relation to any other social group. Such powers are not granted simply or solely on grounds that children's immaturity prevents them from acting autonomously. They also reflect the fact that childhood is widely viewed as a state of immanence. Children are imagined as adults-in-waiting, incompetent, unformed and unable to realise themselves as individuals, and it is thus often considered acceptable for adults to discount their spoken wishes, to attempt to 'mould' their character, interests and opinions, and to punish them for failing to conform to adults' demands and expectations.

This not only makes it very easy for adults to justify treating children as property/objects, but also allows room for much confusion about whether particular powers are being exercised in the interests of the child or the adult. Thus, people who self-identify as 'paedophiles' will often defend activities aimed at sexually stimulating their victims as somehow helping the child to 'discover' and 'realise' his/her nascent sexuality, and argue that 'paedophiles' can help children by gently guiding them through the difficult terrain of puberty. Whether they legitimate sexual abuse by insisting that the child's needs and interests are identical to their own, or by insisting that adults have a right to use and discipline children as they see fit, there is a sense in which abusers often extend, rather than reject, socially tolerated attitudes towards adult-child relations.

The relationship between social values and attitudes and child sexual abuse is also evidenced by research suggesting that children from social groups that are socially stigmatised (for instance, street dwellers, domestic workers, persons with disabilities) are amongst those at particularly high risk of sexual abuse. Though these children may be targeted because it is easier to access them and/or the abuser calculates that the risk of detection is low, it also seems likely that their widespread social devaluation makes it easy for the abuser to dehumanise the victim, thereby reducing guilt or anxiety that might otherwise arise. This suggests that social norms, ideas and codes which prohibit adult-child sexual contact have a greater inhibitory effect in relation to children who are considered to be part of an abusive adult's own society than in relation to socially excluded or marginalised children. The inhibitory potential of socially agreed codes and prohibitions against adult-child sexual contact also appears to be linked to the adult's sense of connection to the wider society. When this is disrupted, for example in situations of civil war or armed conflict, people often find it possible to rationalise and justify behaviours that would formerly have appeared to them as indefensible.

Finally, we should note that anecdotal evidence suggests that those who sexually abuse children in non-commercial contexts often attempt to buy their victims' compliance and/or silence with money or other benefits. This represents another means through which adults can deceive themselves into believing that the abuse was desired or deserved by the child. When sex abusers give their victims money, they can not only tell themselves that the act of abuse has been mutually beneficial, but also that the victim was somehow morally complicit because she or he accepted the money.

## **5. EXPLOITERS IN COMMERCIAL CONTEXTS**

Sex commerce is a stigmatised activity that generally takes place within a shadow and/or illegal economy. It is therefore extremely difficult to obtain accurate data on any aspect of the global sex trade. However, some claims about the demand for prostitution can be advanced with reasonable confidence. To begin with, research suggests that demand comes overwhelmingly (though not exclusively) from men. Surveys also show a good deal of variation between countries as regards how many men admit to prostitute-use: around 9% in the UK, 14% in Hong Kong, 16% in the USA, 38% in Spain, 60-70% in Cambodia, 75% in Thailand, for instance (Wellings, 1993, FPA, HK, 2000, Mansson, 2000, Brown, 2000). Research further shows that certain subsets of the male population of any given country are especially prone to prostitute-use (see below). Reliable data on the number or background characteristics of clients of children in prostitution are even harder to come by. There is, however, a more general body of empirical evidence on prostitution around the world which allows us to state that whilst there is a small, and largely concealed 'market niche' within prostitution in most countries which caters primarily to demand from people with a specific interest in sex with young children or virgins, the vast majority of children in prostitution are integrated into the mainstream prostitution market, and serve demand from all prostitute users. So, for example, all over the world, girls aged between 12 and 18 years are reported to be prostituting alongside those over 18 in mining encampments, brothel districts, tourist areas, ports and truck stops, on the streets and in a variety of off-street forms of prostitution. Boys under 18 are likewise present in mainstream male prostitution.

This has enormous implications for our understanding of sex exploiters. It means that third party beneficiaries of child prostitution do not usually have a specific or dedicated interest in CSEC, but rather an economic interest in prostitution in general (see Section 8). It also means that the clients of children in prostitution are often simply members of those groups that supply a demand for prostitution in general, rather than people with a focused sexual interest in children. In other words, we can state that many individuals come to sexually exploit children through their prostitute use, rather than using prostitution as a means to get access to children. To answer questions about who sexually exploits children in commercial sexual contexts and why, we therefore need to consider the demand for commercial sex in general.

### **Groups Especially Prone to Prostitute-Use**

There is a great deal of historical and contemporary evidence to suggest that groups of men whose work separates them from home for prolonged periods are particularly prone to prostitute-use. This is especially the case where their employment is sex segregated, and where the work culture is informed by an ethos of machismo. Unsurprisingly, then, prostitute-use is common amongst men in the armed forces. Seafarers, truckers and male migrant workers who spend long periods working in poor conditions in isolated regions (for instance, those who work in logging and mining) are three more significant groups in terms of providing demand for prostitution. Meanwhile, though businessmen may not work away from home for prolonged periods, they often travel a good deal, and in most major cities around the world, adults and children in prostitution report that foreign and domestic businessmen are amongst their clients. In most settings, local men also provide

demand for prostitution, including child prostitution. In all the categories mentioned here, there may be individuals who have a focused sexual interest in children, and use prostitution as a means to secure access to them. But there are also many 'situational sex exploiters', i.e., people who sexually exploit children because they find themselves in situations wherein the prostitute who is most cheaply or readily available, or most attractive to them happens to be under 18. Finally, research suggests that people are far more likely to enter into various forms of sexual-economic exchange whilst on holiday than they are when at home. One segment of demand for children in prostitution comes from preferential abusers or 'paedophiles' who travel to poor or developing countries with the explicit aim of buying sexual access to young children. Because it is difficult to secure access to young children in any country of the world, such individuals sometimes group together to form small networks and assist each other by exchanging information and contacts, often via the internet (see Section 7). However, tourism is also strongly associated with the sexual exploitation of adolescent prostitutes by 'ordinary' tourists.

### **Rationalising the Sexual Exploitation of Children in prostitution**

Attitudes towards gender, sexuality and prostitution are remarkably consistent all over the world. Most societies teach their members to believe that there are natural and fundamental differences between male and female sexuality. It is almost universally assumed that men are *by nature* sexually active and subject to strong sexual urges or appetites, whilst women are assumed to be *naturally* sexually passive and receptive and great value has traditionally been placed upon female sexual purity and continence. These traditional beliefs about gender difference form the basis for the 'double standards' that most societies apply to prostitution. Although prostitution is widely viewed as a distasteful or immoral institution, it is also considered as a 'necessary evil'. There has always been prostitution, people say, because men have always been possessed of uncontrollable sexual impulses. Prostitution is imagined to perform an important social function, 'soaking up' excess male sexual urges which might otherwise lead to rape, marital breakdown and all manner of social disorder, thereby protecting the virginity and innocence of 'good' girls and women. And while men who use prostitutes are generally excused on grounds that they have simply given in to a 'natural' impulse, females who work as prostitutes are condemned and penalised as 'unnatural' women.

The idea that men have sexual 'needs' (as opposed to socially constructed 'wants') may be widely accepted, but in practice, there is no biological imperative to orgasm any set number of times a day, week or year. People may on occasion find it unpleasant to go without sexual release, but the absence of another person to bring them to orgasm does not actually threaten their continued survival. Human sexual desire is grounded in emotional and cognitive, as much as physiological, processes, and notions of biologically based sexual 'needs' cannot provide a direct explanation for prostitute-use. Biology is an enabling, not a determining, factor in human sexual behaviour. However, the idea of male sexual 'need', combined with popular beliefs about contractual consent and the social construction of female prostitutes as 'dirty' and 'impure', does make it very easy for clients to rationalise and defend their own use of both adults and children in prostitution. Research with clients all over the world has found that they invoke popular beliefs about male sexual 'needs' to explain why they wish to use prostitutes. They then justify their prostitute-use by referring to widely accepted ideas about economic life. The client normally tells himself that he is

entering into a commodity exchange, rather than a human or social *relationship*, with the prostitute.

This allows him to overlook certain facts about the prostitutes he uses, facts that he might well consider important in his non-commercial sexual life. The prostitute may, for instance, be another man's wife or girlfriend, or pregnant by another man. The prostitute may be being coerced into having sex with the client by a third party. She or he may be extremely young, a mere child. However, because the client imagines himself as entering into a commodity exchange, he does not feel morally compelled to interrogate what lies behind the prostitute's sexual 'consent'. He can simply think in terms of an exchange of values -  $x$  amount of money for  $x$  sexual benefit. Thus the client of a child prostitute need not experience the anxiety he would feel were he to abuse his own child, niece or nephew, or the child of a neighbour, for example. Where prostitution is contractually organised as a commodity exchange like any other, the buyer can tell himself that the powers he exercises over the child are quite legitimate. He is simply behaving as any sovereign consumer in a free market behaves, and if he does not purchase the child's 'services', the man behind him will.

In this sense, many men's use of children in prostitution is better understood as an act of moral indifference than a wilful act of harm, and this kind of moral indifference is actually widely endorsed in free market societies. Buyers are generally expected to act solely on the basis of self-interest, and to feel no connection with, or moral responsibility towards, those who produce the commodities they purchase. Equally we should note that the demand for commercial sex is known to be high amongst groups of men working in extremely dangerous and exploitative conditions, separated from family and friends, with few opportunities for leisure, relaxation or intimacy (such as miners in parts of Africa and Latin America). Such men exercise very little power or control over their own working lives, and their indifference to questions about the circumstances which lead women and children to enter prostitution contracts with them often mirrors the indifference with which they themselves are regarded by the world.

The idea that there is a firm and meaningful line of demarcation between 'good' and 'bad' women ('Madonnas' and 'whores') further equips clients with a justification for CSEC. Because they 'agree' to sell their sexuality as a commodity, female prostitutes are usually considered to have surrendered their right to belong to, or be protected by, the imaginary community of good, respectable, heterosexuals. Thus the rape, even the murder, of a prostitute does not evoke the same degree of popular outrage as the rape or murder of a 'good' woman. Likewise, the sexual use of a child prostitute has not traditionally been viewed in the same light as the sexual abuse of an 'innocent' child. Girls aged below 18 continue to be subject to criminal sanctions for their involvement in prostitution in many countries, and men who are convicted for sexual offences involving children in prostitution are still often treated more leniently than those convicted for offences against non-prostitute children. Though male prostitutes are rarely legally constructed as a separate class of persons in the same way that female prostitutes are, they are generally socially stigmatised. Boy prostitutes are thus considered to be as 'dirty' and 'corrupt' as girl prostitutes. This helps to explain how it is that ordinary men can use children in prostitution. For most clients, a child's status as 'prostitute' overrides her/his status as 'child'. In this again, clients accept and reproduce what is widely socially endorsed.

Finally, we should note that where societies are hierarchically stratified along ethnic, racial or caste lines, and/or are deeply xenophobic, then it is possible for adults from dominant groups to sexually exploit children from inferiorised groups without this interfering with their view of themselves as moral and good. Research shows that historically and cross-culturally, a large percentage of clients seek prostitutes whose racial, ethnic, caste or national identities are different from their own. Thus we find that women and children in prostitution serving local demand are often migrants, and that men's prostitute-use increases when they are abroad. Racism, xenophobia and ideas about 'caste' encourage sex exploiters to view Otherised groups as 'natural' prostitutes. So, for example, white western sex tourists say that the women and children they exploit in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America are *naturally* more sexually willing than white women and children, while in parts of India, men from privileged social groups will declare that the 'lower caste' women and children they use are 'sexually promiscuous' and have incited them. Exploiters' abuse of children in prostitution who do not share their own social identity is facilitated by the assumption that these children either do not need, or are unworthy of, the care and protection that would be accorded to children 'of their own kind'.

In short, clients do not have to cognitively distort dominant attitudes towards sexual life very far at all in order to feel comfortable about using a child prostitute. Popular beliefs about gender, sexuality, race/caste and prostitution allow the client to tell himself that the child instigated sex (s/he solicited his custom), consented to sex (s/he accepted money or another benefit in exchange), deserved to be sexually used (s/he is just a 'dirty' prostitute), and/or was not really harmed by the sexual contact (s/he is not 'one of my own kind', and/or has already been sexually used by many others, so what difference can one more violation make?).

## **6. SEX EXPLOITERS AND MORE DIFFUSE FORMS OF SEXUAL-ECONOMIC EXCHANGE**

### **'Benefactors' and Sugar Daddies**

Vast numbers of children in the contemporary world live in poverty and/or especially difficult circumstances. The role of 'benefactor' to young children who are impoverished and/or homeless and/or neglected or unloved has obvious attractions for those adults who might be diagnosed as 'paedophile' and who yearn for relatively long term, stable and 'affectionate' sexual relationships with children. It is much easier to construct and maintain fictions of consent and mutuality with such children, who may genuinely value the non-sexual aspects of their relationship with the abuser as well as need the material benefits associated with it. Moreover, the child's economic dependence on the adult makes it less likely she or he will report the abuse. However, lack of access to effective sexual health education and to adequate medical care can also encourage adults who do not conform to clinical definitions of 'the paedophile' to seek out young children as sexual partners. There are, for example, reports of adult men in parts of Africa severely affected by the AIDS epidemic providing long-term economic support to impoverished families in exchange for regular sexual contact with one of the children, on the assumption that young children pose no threat of sexually transmitted disease. The rising incidence of child rape in sub-Saharan countries that are bearing the brunt of the AIDS tragedy is also thought to be linked to myths about the cleansing properties of sex with children. Meanwhile,

the sexual exploitation of female school pupils by male teachers is reported to represent an increasingly widespread problem in sub-Saharan Africa (Kuleana, 1999, Shumba, 2001).

When adults take advantage of a young child's vulnerable and/or marginalised position in order to sexually exploit them, they clearly transgress socially agreed codes and conventions regarding relationships between adults and children. The same cannot always be said of 'Sugar Daddies'. This is the phenomenon whereby older men provide youthful sexual partners, including adolescents, with long term financial support and/or material benefits in the form of gifts, accommodation and/or access to entertainment and a life-style that would otherwise be beyond the youth's reach. Relationships between adolescents and Sugar Daddies or 'Boops' have recently attracted concern in Jamaica, South Africa and Kenya, but the same phenomenon can be found in many other parts of the world, including in affluent Western countries. Wherever they live, poor and socially excluded youth are vulnerable to this form of sexual exploitation for much the same reasons as those identified by the authors of a study on sex and violence among Xhosa Township youth:

poverty, mind-numbing boredom and the lack of opportunities or prospects for advancement contribute to young people investing substantial personal effort in the few arenas where entertainment and success are achievable, most notably their sexual relationships. These become an important vehicle for gaining (or losing) respect and 'position' among peers, as well as for material benefit (Wood and Jewkes, 2001, p318).

In contexts such as this, the Sugar Daddy does not need to coerce or 'lure' adolescents into sexual relationships. Furthermore, providing the child concerned is above the legal age of sexual consent, there is not usually anything in national law to prevent adults from taking unfair advantage of their greater economic power in order to date or cohabit with children. Indeed, far from transgressing dominant social conventions in relation to sexual life, the relationship between Sugar Daddy and adolescent girl often mirrors (albeit perhaps in an exaggerated form) inequalities that are quite normal in heterosexual relationships. In most countries of the world, gender inequalities are so great that there is frequently a huge imbalance of economic, social and political power between heterosexual lovers and spouses, yet few people would accept the proposition that this makes most men 'sex exploiters' in relation to their wives or girlfriends. There are thus many situations in which both adults and children are legally and socially considered capable of giving meaningful sexual consent despite being massively disadvantaged in relation to their sexual partner in terms of socio-economic power. It follows, then, that the Sugar Daddy does not usually need to distort social agreed ideas about childhood or sexual consent in order to rationalise a sexual relationship with a teenage girl. Nor can his motivations necessarily be described as aberrant. In many cultures, youthful female bodies are considered sexually desirable, and men are expected to demonstrate their masculinity through their capacity to command sexual access to 'desirable' female bodies.

### **Domestic Work, Forced Marriage and Other Slavery-like Practices**

Vast numbers of children work as domestics in the contemporary world (5 million in Indonesia alone, ILO, 1996). In both affluent and developing countries, domestics



work in a largely unregulated sphere, are frequently required to work long hours in conditions which pose risks to health and safety, and are vulnerable to physical, psychological and sexual abuse (Anderson, 2000, SACCS, 1999). Often, they are powerless to protest against such abuse not only because they are dependent on their employers for food and shelter and because they lack social status relative to their employer, but also because they are denied legal protections accorded to workers in other sectors. Where domestic workers are migrants, and their immigration status depends on their continued employment by a specific employer, it is still more difficult for them to challenge or escape sexual or physical abuse. Domestic work and domestic workers are widely socially devalued (Anderson, 2000, CMR, 2001). This makes it easier for adults to deny or rationalise their abuse of child domestic workers on grounds that they do not merit the care that would be extended to children of higher social status. Ironically then, though domestic work is frequently vaunted as a harmless and appropriate form of employment for women and girls and a 'respectable' economic alternative to prostitution, it is very often a site of sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of abuse. Little research attention has been paid to the demand-side of domestic work, but pioneering work in this field by Bridget Anderson (2000) suggests that it is often linked to the desire to preserve and demonstrate one's position on status hierarchies along lines of gender, class, race, ethnicity and/or caste. Since these status hierarchies are based on the notion that it is possible to rank human beings as being more or less worthy of privilege, care and protection, it is unsurprising to find that those who imagine themselves to be at the top of such hierarchies may be capable of sexually abusing those they consider to be at the bottom.

Sexual abuse can also feature as one of many forms of oppression suffered by children affected by various forms of debt bondage in the contemporary world (Robertson, 1997). Forced marriage and early marriage represent further traditional practices within which children can be sexually exploited. Though it is difficult to obtain reliable statistical data on these phenomena, it is estimated that millions of children in Africa, Asia and Latin America are affected, a significant minority of whom are married before the age of 15, and some of whom are married below the age of 10 (Forum on Marriage, 2000). Here the exploiter also justifies the powers exercised over the child through reference to beliefs about 'proper' hierarchies of gender and age. Forced and early marriage is thus another form of child sexual exploitation that can be implicitly or explicitly sanctioned by the community within which the exploiter lives.

## **7. SEX EXPLOITERS, NETWORKING AND PORNOGRAPHY**

Individuals who self-identify as 'paedophiles' sometimes make contact with others like themselves, forming networks or 'rings' through which to exchange information, advice and child pornography. These networks may be involved in a number of different forms of CSEC, as illustrated by a 1997 French case involving 7 men who had variously collected and circulated child pornography, sexually abused children in Romania, and brought two Romanian children to France to abuse them and sell them to others to sexually abuse (ACPF, 2001). Often, those who conform to the clinical definition of 'paedophilia' are compulsive collectors of images of children and/or child sexual abuse, including photographic, audiotaped and/or videotaped records of children being sexually abused by self and/or others. Computer and internet

technology has greatly enhanced such people's ability to record, store, retrieve and share large collections of child pornography, and the case of the Wonderland Club (see Child Pornography Theme Paper) provides some insights into the motivations of 'on-line' abusers.

As well as giving members access to a vast collection of child pornography, the club provided men who self-identified as 'paedophiles' (and so as beings wholly reviled and rejected by wider society) with a sense of group belonging and self esteem. Thus, one of the British men convicted for his involvement in the club said in an interview for a BBC documentary, "I had friends all over the world. I never had so many friends before", and "we were the elite". Close contact with like-minded men helped to reinforce the distorted thinking necessary to minimise and justify abuse. Even though the collection included pictures of infants being violated, this man explained that "We didn't see it as abuse" and was adamant that the photographs and videos had been taken by men who were involved in consensual relationships with their victims. Those who collect and exchange records of child sexual abuse through networks such as the Wonderland Club are not normally motivated to do so for commercial gain. However, UK Customs and Excise officers report that in recent years, they are increasingly intercepting commercially produced child pornography, much of which is produced in Eastern Europe or Central America. These materials have typically been advertised over the internet, and ordered by 'paedophiles' with a collector mentality who wish to possess hard copies of videos or CD Roms depicting abuse. Customs' officers observe that whilst there may not be a mass market for this kind of child pornography, the fact that there are over 100,000 people in the UK with convictions for sexual offences against children suggests that the market is not insignificant either. Considered globally, then, there is certainly room for individuals to make substantial profits through the production and sale of child pornography aimed at those with a focused sexual interest in children.

There has been little systematic research on children's exploitation in the commercial production of pornography aimed at either 'paedophile' or mainstream markets. It is known that one segment of the commercial market is explicitly dedicated to those with a sexual interest in adolescents, however. Internet sites named 'Teen Steam', 'Webs Youngest Women' and 'Live Teen' between them received over 10 million visitors in 1999 (Kelly and Regan, 2000, 55). Though the large companies, which produce wide circulation, glossy magazines may take pains to ensure that the models they use are aged over 18 (even those posing for 'teen' pornography), children under 18 are certainly present in other parts of the mainstream pornography industry. Indeed, many countries' legislation against child pornography offers no protection to children above the age of sexual consent, which may be as young as 14. The fact that pornography for the Western European market appears to be increasingly produced in Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States is especially troubling in this regard.

It is also important to consider ways in which the mainstream pornography market shades into other forms of commercial and non-commercial sexual exploitation. In Japan, for example, there is not only a high level of demand for prostitutes dressed in school uniforms (who may or may not be under 18), and various types of pornography depicting the sexual use of adolescent girls, but also for a range of commercial sexual services that fall somewhere between 'teen' prostitution and 'teen' pornography.

There is, for example, a club in Tokyo which charges clients ¥2000 for a service called 'Ripping pants off a school-girl', and further offers them an opportunity to molest girls as they stand holding onto handles hanging from the ceiling in a room which simulates the environment of a subway train. This latter reflects a reality of women and girls' lives. Last year, 1,854 men were arrested for molesting women and girls on trains, for 'molesters on the subways, or *chikan*, are incredibly common in Tokyo a survey conducted this year found that 72 per cent of teenage girls had been groped on their way to school' (Wood, 2001, 23).

Next we should note possible overlaps between 'paedophile' networks and organisations formed with the spoken intention of lobbying for legal and attitudinal changes towards 'paedophilia'. Such organisations argue that 'paedophiles' are members of an oppressed sexual minority group, and that 'non-violent' paedophilia should be recognised as a legitimate sexual preference. The idea that adult-child sexual contact can be consensual is thus central to their claims for legitimacy, and to this end, such organisations publicly rehearse the cognitive distortions that convicted child sex offenders typically employ to justify and defend their acts of sexual abuse. Members of such organisations claim to be exercising the right to freedom of thought and expression by lobbying for changes to the law, rather than encouraging people to break the law, and they have met with different responses in different countries. In Britain, for example, one of the leading members of the Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE) was imprisoned for corrupting public morals in the late 1970s, and PIE subsequently collapsed. By contrast, the Danish Pedophile Association (DPA) is a legal organisation under the Danish constitution. Despite considerable lobby work by children's rights organisations, the government has chosen not to close the group, and has instead left it to lobby very actively. Indeed, the DPA claims to have received some 341,645 visitors to its website since March 1999, and has dialogue and connections with similar Swedish and Dutch groups.

Articles published on the DPA website explain, among other things, that children enjoy and benefit from sexual relationships with paedophiles, that child pornography depicts children experiencing sexual pleasure, and that if customers were prevented from buying sex from children in prostitution in the 'Third World', then the children and their families would be thrown into even greater poverty and misery than before. Links to other websites are also provided, as are opportunities for self-identified 'paedophiles' to chat with each other. In short, the DPA openly performs many of the functions performed by more clandestine networks, such as the Wonderland Club. It enables 'paedophiles' from around the world to make contact with each other, share and exchange information, and reinforce each other's beliefs about the harmlessness of child sexual exploitation. A recent television documentary produced evidence to show that members of the DPA were involved in organising tours to India to engage in CSEC, and were also involved in abusing children in Denmark. As a direct result of this documentary, the Danish police have, at last, launched their first ever investigation into the group's activities. However, even if this investigation leads to prosecutions of individual DPA members for sexual offences against children, it is by no means certain that the government will respond by making it illegal to operate a website which facilitates networking between 'paedophiles'.

Finally, it should be noted that pornography depicting sex between those over 18 can be linked to the sexual abuse of children in the sense that it is sometimes shown to children by abusers as a way of preparing or ‘grooming’ them for sexual abuse.

## **8. TOWARDS A MORE COMPLICATED AND DIFFERENTIATED VISION OF ‘THE SEX EXPLOITER’**

Questions about childhood, sexuality and commercial sex can be hugely controversial, and those who campaign against CSEC often attempt to sidestep disagreements by focusing on aspects of abuse and exploitation upon which there is most agreement. In practice, this means keeping the focus firmly on the sexual use of younger children. Thus we find that public awareness raising materials produced both before and since the First World Congress have, through the use of particular images (broken rose buds, discarded toys, small children being led away by large, shadowy male figures), and examples of cases involving children aged between 3 and 12, tended to stress the sexual exploitation of young children, rather than adolescents. While the impulse to stick to uncontroversial, common ground is understandable it also carries certain risks. It leads to an emphasis on sexual abuse and CSEC as the violation of childhood ‘innocence’, and in so doing, suggests that a particular model of childhood (as a state of passivity and dependence) can be universalised and extended to cover both young children and adolescents up to the age of 18. The general dangers of a discourse about child sexual abuse and exploitation as the theft, shattering, rape, or betrayal of ‘innocence’ have been incisively discussed by Jenny Kitzinger (1997), and readers are referred to her work. This discourse also poses particular problems in relation to our vision of, and response to, ‘the sex exploiter’. By constructing CSEC as the simple and unambiguous meeting of innocence and corruption, good and evil, we not only ignore and erase many of its most painful realities, but also risk proposing solutions that are likely to be at best unworkable or ineffective, and that at worse may contribute to a host of new human rights abuses. It is therefore vitally important to develop a more complicated and differentiated vision of those who sexually exploit children.

### **Children as Sex Exploiters**

Although we tend to think of children as the most socially powerless group of all, it is important to remember that all children are not equally unequal. As well as the massive physical, emotional and psychological differentials between, let us say, a child of 3 and a child of 16, children are divided by class, gender, race/caste, disability and sexual orientation. The teenage sons of a wealthy family, for instance, exercise substantial powers over the teenage girl domestic worker employed by their parents; a child without disabilities can be enormously powerful in relation to a child with disabilities. There is increasingly evidence to show that children, as well as adults, can take unfair advantage of such imbalances of power for purposes of sexual/psychological gratification. Recent research in North America, the UK and Sweden reveals that adolescent males are amongst those who commit sexual offences against children (Grubin, 1998, Svensson, 2000). Adolescent males are also amongst those providing demand for prostitution (Monto, 2000, FPA HK, 2000). There are no data available on the age of prostitutes used by child clients. However, given the fact that some boys under 18 are known to use prostitutes in settings where children aged under 18 are present in prostitution, we cannot discount the possibility that children in prostitution may sometimes be exploited by child clients.

Boy children are also known to be involved in more diffuse forms of sexual-economic exchange. For example, a report on young people's sexual health in Kafue, Zambia, notes that girls are increasingly trading sex, and most sexual relations among boys and girls involve the exchange of money or goods. Girls are clear about the fact that poverty leads them to enter into such exchanges, while boys explain that 'having sex with girls is a way of proving that one is a man and it is a means of gaining popularity' (Chikwenya *et al*, 1997, 21). There are also reports that some adolescent male refugees are seeking younger and younger sexual partners amongst other refugee and displaced children in settings where HIV and AIDS are prevalent. Pornography is also used by persons under the age of 18 (see FPA HK, 2000), and in May 2001, a 13 year old British boy was convicted and placed on the Sex Offenders Register for dealing in pornographic images of children, having downloaded materials from the internet. Finally, we should note that adolescent male soldiers are amongst those involved in some of the most brutal forms of sexual violence/exploitation taking place in the contemporary world (see Section 9), and that both boys and girls under the age of 18 are sometimes involved in CSEC as pimps or procurers.

Save the Children Sweden's clinical and research work with young offenders who abuse in non-commercial contexts concludes that: 'A child or young person does not commit such an abnormal act as a sexual offence on another child unless abnormal circumstances exist in the child's own life. These abnormal circumstances may be short lived or chronic. All children have been violated in one way or another' (Svensson, 2000: 35). This insight may also hold good for some of the adolescent males who sexually exploit other children through their consumption of pornography or their prostitute-use, but in most cases, their behaviour is probably better explained through reference to their society's prevailing attitudes towards gender and sexuality. Masculinity is almost universally idealised as involving the exercise of power over self, others, and material objects, and men who are able to command sexual access to female bodies are widely celebrated in film, fiction and popular song. That teenage boys, who are generally both implicitly and explicitly encouraged to demonstrate their masculinity (and frequently taunted and ridiculed for failing to appear sufficiently 'manly'), should often display an interest in sexually objectified female bodies is hardly surprising. And in settings where men's prostitute-use is widely viewed as normal, adolescent boys may be encouraged by older male relatives, as well as by peers, to buy commercial sex.

As with adults, then, there is an important distinction to be made between children whose acts of abuse against other children express some kind of psychic turmoil or emotional dysfunction, and those whose acts of sexual exploitation are the unintended by-product of a wish to conform to social norms regarding masculine sexual expression. And still further differentiation is necessary if we are to understand the children who sexually exploit other children for financial gain, rather than sexual gratification. Poverty and other forms of social exclusion pave the way into this side of the sex trade, just as they are the major routes into prostitution itself, and the complexity of the issues posed by those who become involved in CSEC as third party beneficiaries is considered in more detail below. First, however, it should be noted that girls who themselves work in prostitution sometimes supplement their income by procuring other children for their pimps or regular clients, for this highlights the fact that females can sexually exploit, as well as be sexually exploited.

### **Female Sex Exploiters**

In most societies, women are imagined as naturally both sexually passive and predisposed to nurture and care for children. Such beliefs make it difficult either to conceive of a female 'sex exploiter', or to understand that sexual abuse by women damages children in the same way as sexual abuse by men. However, Swedish, American and British research suggests somewhere between 5 and 20% of all incidents of child sexual abuse are perpetrated by women, and that the consequences for the children are just as severe as the effects of sexual abuse by male perpetrators (Saradjian, 1996, Grubin, 1998). Clinicians who have worked with women who sexually abuse children observe that they usually exhibit the same kind of distorted thinking as that displayed by their male counterparts. Women can also provide a demand for commercial sex. In Japan, Australia, North America and Western Europe, a small but growing number of women are using their greater economic power to indulge in various forms of commercial sexual experience at home or abroad. Amongst them there are women who sexually exploit adolescent boys aged between 13 and 18 in developing countries, and even some who pay to abuse younger children. Women, both local and foreign, also sometimes take on the role of 'Sugar Mummy', using their greater economic and social power to command access to a series of adolescent boyfriends. Cases of boy children being sexually abused by women in the rebel forces in Sierra Leone have also been reported.

We should, however, remember that women are very much in a minority amongst those who exploit for pleasure in either non-commercial or commercial contexts. The same cannot be said in relation to the sexual exploitation of children for profit, for women have a strong presence in the global sex trade as third party beneficiaries of CSEC.

### **Third Party Beneficiaries**

CSEC takes place within a complex and multi-faceted 'sex sector' which is linked in a variety of ways to both the formal and informal economy in any given country (see Lim, 1998). Some of those who derive economic benefits from the sex sector are wealthy and powerful. They can include government and police officials and those who own and control businesses in the leisure and entertainment sector, which often enjoys a symbiotic relationship with the sex industry. Given that persons under the age of 18 are present in the mainstream sex trade, such people can be said to benefit indirectly from CSEC. Large and respectable tourism, mining, logging and shipping companies might also be said to be indirectly involved in the sex sector in the sense that a flourishing demand for prostitution, including CSEC, is one of the by-products of their main profit-making activity and/or employment policies (such as providing dormitory accommodation for a migrant male workforce instead of housing for the men and their families). However, those who own and control companies are rarely held personally responsible for the social or environmental costs associated with the sectors within which they operate. Indeed, they are often loudly applauded for taking even the smallest of steps to ameliorate the negative side effects of their firms' profit-making activities.

Others third parties benefit from CSEC in more immediate ways. Economic rewards can be obtained from CSEC through a variety of activities, including: trafficking children for purposes of sexual exploitation; organising and/or controlling children in

prostitution; procuring children; producing and distributing child pornography for commercial gain. Individuals can also obtain economic rewards from CSEC without actually becoming directly involved in arranging any child's sexual exploitation (corrupt officials can benefit from bribes; bar owners can 'turn a blind eye' to CSEC on their premises and benefit from the custom it draws to their establishment; retailers can profit by selling pornographic materials involving persons under the age of 18, and so on). Few of these people dedicate themselves simply and solely to promoting CSEC, and most come to exploit children through their involvement with the sex trade more generally.

We should further note that several exploiters, rather than one single exploiter, are usually implicated in any given child's sexual exploitation. So, for example, a trafficked child's journey from her home to the brothel, street or private flat where she ends up being commercially sexually exploited is usually charted by a number of different social actors: those who recruit her (perhaps people who themselves were originally trafficked into prostitution), those who encourage her (perhaps her own friends or relatives), middle agents, corrupt officials, pimps or brothel owners. This 'division of labour' reduces any sense of responsibility on the part of each of the individuals involved. Those at the start of the chain do not necessarily know or see the end consequences of their actions, whilst those at the end of the chain can blame the people who acted further back down the line for the child's situation. The motives of these different actors are not always identical, and they do not have equal interests in the commercial sex trade. While some rely on that trade as a major source of income, others benefit from their involvement on a 'one-off' or irregular basis.

Very often, the action of those who knowingly derive economic benefits from CSEC is informed by the kind of moral indifference that was described in Section 5. In the course of research in a number of countries, the author has interviewed a range of individuals involved in CSEC as third party beneficiaries. None saw themselves as personally implicated in the sexual abuse of a child. They reasoned that they were not morally responsible for the actions of the client, and if they did not sell him the service he wanted, someone else would. Likewise, it was the child's parents, or perhaps the state, but certainly not they, who had a moral obligation to protect and care for the child. This kind of moral indifference is largely consonant with dominant attitudes towards economic life in most countries of the world, but people can 'buy into' such attitudes to different degrees and for different reasons. Some of those who sexually exploit children for profit are affluent and privileged individuals who are willing to cynically take advantage of the misfortunes of others for their own personal advantage. Often the children they exploit are of a different racial, ethnic, caste or national group from their own, and their willingness to tolerate or promote CSEC is partly linked to their racism/xenophobia. European and North American expatriates who allow children to solicit from bars they own in tourist resorts in developing countries, or procure children for tourists, provide a good example of this type of exploiter (see O'Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor, 2001).

But other third party beneficiaries of CSEC are far from privileged and powerful. Women and children, as well as men, are involved, and it is not uncommon for an individual 'career' in the sex trade to start with selling sex, then progress to organising the prostitution of others, including children. Nor is it unusual for prostitutes, including children in prostitution, to supplement their income by

procuring or pimping others. Regardless of their age or gender, a good many people's involvement as third party beneficiaries of the sex trade is precipitated by exactly the same factors which make children vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, including; poverty, lack of alternative economic opportunity, absence of educational opportunities, domestic violence, drug addiction, and/or a range of exclusionary social practices and policies based on discriminatory beliefs about gender, race, ethnicity, caste and/or sexuality. Indeed, many thousands of the world's children grow up in brothel districts or other communities that are entirely economically dependent upon the sex industry, including child prostitution. Often, the stigma attached to prostitution is so great that neither prostitutes nor their children are able to freely leave such communities. A recent study in Bangladesh shows that children born in the brothel community have little sense of what life is like in mainstream society, and no hope of leaving the community. Moreover, 'All but the most protected children are routinely caught up in illicit activities from drinking, drug taking and gambling to theft, pimping and extortion' (Uddin *et al*, 2001, 45).

In these and other similar communities, adults who are yesterday's exploited children are today exploiting the children who will become tomorrow's exploiters. Such cycles of exploitation have virtually nothing to do with individual morality or criminality, but a great deal to do with the legal and social construction of prostitutes as a separate class of persons and the systematic violation of their human rights. The actions of all those involved as third parties to CSEC are neither identical nor morally equivalent, and it is vitally important that this fact is reflected in the range of policy measures designed to address 'the sex exploiter'. In many instances, the environment behind sexual exploitation rather than the individual who exploits must be the primary focus of our concern and interventions.

## **9. THE ENVIRONMENT BEHIND EXPLOITATION**

### **Armed conflict**

There is a strong historical association between militarism, nationalism, and armed conflict on the one hand, and sexual violence and exploitation on the other. The motivations of military personnel who engage in prostitute-use are probably best explained through reference first to the fact that they are mostly young men, usually working in poor and extremely dangerous conditions, and separated from all that is familiar to them. Prostitute-use, which is widely sanctioned by military authorities, is one of the few 'leisure activities' open to them, and there is enormous peer pressure to participate in it. Second, most have been brought up in societies which teach them, to a greater or lesser degree, to believe that masculinity is demonstrated and affirmed through the performance of heterosexual sex acts. As members of the armed forces, they are explicitly required to exhibit what are taken to be 'masculine' qualities. Under threat of ostracism and/or punishment, even death, they must display fearlessness, detachment from their own emotions, and an ability to detach from the emotional needs of others. The pressure to demonstrate masculinity through heterosexual sex provides an impetus for prostitute use, while the pressure to deny human emotionality makes it easier to use women and girls as sexual objects, rather than interacting with them as full human subjects. We should also note growing concern about the sexual exploitation of children mostly boys but also sometimes girls who have been conscripted by either rebel or government forces in a number of countries. In Afghanistan, for example, Northern Alliance commanders are issued



with monthly quotas of cash and foodstuff to maintain personnel, and frequently choose to recruit boy soldiers who are not paid a salary, but merely given food, medicine and clothing. Such children are clearly vulnerable to sexual, as well as other forms of exploitation, and it is reported that commanders often take advantage of this vulnerability (Illyas Khan, 2001).

Rape has also long been a feature of both wars and nationalist struggles, not only committed by individual soldiers as random acts of violence, but also orchestrated and systematically used by military leaders as a weapon of war and for the purpose of displacement and ethnic cleansing. Rape of the latter type has become a particular focus of international attention and concern during the 1990s. It has been estimated, for example, that around 20,000 Muslim women and girls were raped in Bosnia between April 1992 and January 1993 (Enloe 1993, 240). Rape was also systematically used in all areas where the militia were massacring civilians in Rwanda, and sexual violence and exploitation has also been a feature of the conflict and refugee crisis affecting Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. Less attention has been paid to the fact that males, too, can be victims of sexual violence. In Bosnia and Hercegovina, and in Croatia, men and boys were also subjected to widespread, systematic sexual violence, sometimes literally castrated, sometimes symbolically 'emasculated' through rape or being forced to rape fellow male prisoners-of-war (Zarkov, 2001).

The extent and nature of sexualised violence perpetrated against both adults and children during armed conflicts is almost beyond comprehension. As well as being forced into prostitution, and subject to rape, children can be compelled to witness sexual violence against family members or to take part in such violence. They can also be abducted and forced into a condition of slavery that includes repeated sexual, as well as physical and psychological, violations. This phenomenon is thought to be particularly prevalent in Uganda and Sudan, where girls as young as 12 are given to LRA commanders as 'wives'. A recent report notes that approximately 85% of the girls who attended at the Gulu Trauma Centre in northern Uganda after having been held in captivity by rebel forces had contracted sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS (World Vision, 1999). In interviews, Ugandan girls who had been abducted by rebel soldiers observed that the rebels justified all manner and extremes of violence on grounds that they were 'fighting for the ten commandments'. The girls also noted that some of those who kidnapped and violated them were themselves boys aged between 10 and 15 (Prosser, 1999). Among other things, this underlines the urgent need for 'peace treaties and agreements to recognise the existence of child combatants and make suitable provision for their demobilisation' (World Vision, 1999).

More generally, it is tempting to conclude that male soldiers' capacity to rape 'enemy' women and children is linked to the fact that they are often expected to blindly subordinate themselves to a set of abstract beliefs about national and/or ethnic honour, and required to suppress normal human responses in order to kill their fellow human beings. And yet it is also important to remember that not all soldiers rape, and that sexual violence is not equally prevalent in all situations of armed conflict. We should therefore pay attention to the interplay between existing social/cultural attitudes

towards gender and sexuality, the particular social and political factors that shape any given armed conflict, and the individual psychology and personal histories of the soldiers involved in sexually violent acts. In this regard, readers are referred to the work of Cynthia Enloe (1993), and Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark (2001).

### **Refugee and Displaced Children**

Children under the age of 18 account for approximately 10 million out of the world's 21.5 million refugees and other persons of concern (UNHCR, 2000). They are known to be at particular risk of sexual exploitation by five key groups: soldiers, including members of peacekeeping forces; third party organisers of the sex trade and local and foreign clients; staff and caregivers in institutions, school teachers, and humanitarian workers; neighbours, acquaintances and others in their own community; other refugee and displaced children. The motivations of individuals in each of these groups may differ along lines already discussed in Sections 4, 5 and 6, but the key point to note is that those who specifically target refugee and displaced children do so because these children are made particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation by the circumstances in which they are forced to live. Adolescents, in particular, often have to fend for themselves and may also have to assume adult responsibilities such as caring for siblings. Studies in Bosnia, Liberia and Colombia suggest that children aged between 12 and 18 sometimes trade sex for official papers, privileges for themselves or their relatives, clothes and food, and/or protection, as well as for cash (Kadjar-Hamouda, 1996). Prostitution and/or other forms of sexual-economic exchange are often the only or best means of subsisting, and in this context it is very easy for adults to rationalise their own action by telling themselves that they are helping, rather than harming, the children they sexually exploit.

### **Poverty, Economic Restructuring and Demand**

Over the past three decades, 'the poorest 20 percent of the world's people have seen their share of global income decline from 2.3 percent to 1.4 percent... Meanwhile, the share of the richest 20 percent has risen from 70 percent to 85 percent' (Castells, 1996, 80-1). This polarisation is occurring both between and within nations, and has been exacerbated by the pursuit of neo-liberal policies for fiscal discipline and economic restructuring. In the developing world, the policy packages tied to structural adjustment loans have meant cuts to public spending and subsidies, increasing unemployment and decreasing real wages. The poor, especially women and youth, have been left struggling to survive. These developments have had an enormous impact on patterns of sexual exploitation that can only very briefly be reviewed here.

First, in undermining welfare benefits and minimum wage levels, and cutting the subsidies that made housing, transport, child care, education and health care more affordable, neo-liberal economic reforms in both affluent and developing nations have intensified many of the pressures that lead children to work and live on the streets (Mickelson, 2000, 272). Whether in Canada, Zambia, Brazil, Romania or Cambodia, children who live and work on the streets are vulnerable to sexual abuse, violence and exploitation from several different groups. Though many street children 'form strong, supportive and loving bonds with their peers and members of marginal cultures with whom they interact', relationships formed on the streets can often be 'transitory and exploitative', and children are thus at risk from fellow street-dwellers (Posner 2000, 253). Girl children who live and/or work on the streets are vulnerable to recruitment

into full-time street or brothel prostitution, where they will be exploited by prostitute-users and/or third parties of the kind discussed in Section 5. Meanwhile, street children often engage in 'survival sex', trading sex for food, clothes, medicine, protection and/or a place to stay. They are therefore at risk of sexual exploitation by 'benefactors' and 'Sugar Daddies' (discussed in Section 6), and/or by men who have a particular interest in paying for sex with those they perceive as especially 'debased' or vulnerable. Finally, street children often report being sexually assaulted by police officers and/or staff in homes, hostels and prisons in which they are remanded.

The behaviour of the latter group of exploiters, as well as that of those who specifically seek out street children for commercial sex, appears to be linked to the widespread social devaluation of poor and abandoned children. Where street children are popularly stereotyped as thieving, manipulative, unnatural and immoral beings, and referred to as 'cockroaches' and 'vermin', it is very easy for an adult to rationalize acts of sexual abuse against them. They do not count as children, and they are unworthy of care or protection. Brazil is notorious for the prevalence of such attitudes (see Huggins and Mesquita, 2000), but is certainly not alone in tolerating the dehumanisation and even murder of street children. Indeed, governments implicitly endorse the idea that poor children are unworthy of care every time they cut the social and welfare spending which might otherwise provide a safety net for such children.

Poverty and global economic restructuring impacts on the demand-side of CSEC in other ways. Consider, for example, the recent financial crisis in Asia. Macroeconomic policies being enforced by the IMF to reduce domestic expenditure and increase interest rates have led to cuts in public expenditure on education and on health systems in the region, including on HIV/AIDS programs (Rhodes, 1999). In a region where men's prostitute-use is widely tolerated, where myths about sex with a virgin or young child bringing luck, strength or virility continue to be accepted by some people, and where misinformation about sexual health is known to be linked to the demand for young prostitutes, cuts to spending in these areas have enormous implications for CSEC. Consider also the fact that since the 1970s, world financial institutions have encouraged indebted nations to respond to economic crisis by developing tourism and/or 'non-traditional' export industries such as gold, diamonds and timber. One side effect of such development policies is the creation of highly concentrated, effective demand for prostitution: affluent tourists seeking 'entertainment' and predominantly male, migrant workers in isolated mining and logging regions with cash to spend on 'recreation'.

A good deal of attention has been paid to demand for sex tourism from Australian, North American, Western European and Japanese men, but it should also be noted that there is demand from women (see Sánchez Taylor, 2001), and that sex tourism takes place between and within developing countries. In developing countries, the minority who are prospering as a result of economic restructuring find themselves in a position to consume commercial sex, as well as other luxury goods. So, for example, Chinese men provide the bulk of demand for Vietnamese women and girls working in tourism resorts on the Viet Nam-China border; Jamaican men travel to Cuba to sexually exploit local women and girls; domestic Indian tourists provide demand for children and women in brothel districts in Goa. No matter whether tourists come from affluent or developing nations, attitudes toward both travel and racial/ethnic difference are significant for understanding their propensity to engage in CSEC. The

sentiment behind the Japanese adage “shameless behaviour during a trip is to be scraped off one’s mind” (Allison, 1994, 140) is shared by a great many tourists, whether they hail from Bombay, Beijing or Birmingham. Likewise, racism and nationalism is associated with a tendency to sexualise those who are constructed as inferior ‘Others’, and to imagine them as ‘natural’ prostitutes (see Section 5). The key point to note here, however, is that whilst the individual sex tourist or expatriate’s *desire* to sexually exploit children may arise from a complex interplay between individual psychology, personal history and socially given ideas and beliefs about gender, sexuality, race, travel and so on, his or her ability to *realise* such desires rests crucially upon the existence of the global economic and political inequalities that have been discussed thus far.

There are other ways in which economic crises and inequality can contribute to increasing levels of sexual abuse and exploitation. In Russia, for example, living standards have fallen rapidly and dramatically through the 1990s, and the gap between the poor majority and a small minority of wealthy ‘New Russians’ has grown (Gilinskiy, 2000, 171). Though it is women who have been worst affected by rising unemployment and falling real wages, some groups of men are at particular risk of descent into poverty. For instance, ‘a great number of military personnel, many from the officer class... have lost or are losing their jobs. In the next phase of army reduction, 200,000 people are due to be made redundant’ (Gilinskiy, 2000, 143). Even before these developments, sexual violence and abuse was believed to be common in Russia, for as Igor Kon (1997, 2) explains, ‘The traditional male lifestyle and stereotyped image has always emphasized such virtues as energy, initiative and independence. These qualities are extremely important for male self-esteem. Yet the economic inefficiency of the Soviet system, the political despotism, and bureaucracy left little room for individual initiative and autonomy’. Kon goes on to identify three typical reactions to these contradictory pressures:

- (1) Psychological compensation and overcompensation through the acquisition of a primitive image of a strong and aggressive male, affirming himself through drunkenness, fighting, and both social and sexual abuse;
- (2) The combination of humility and subservience in public life, with cruel tyranny in the home and family directed at the wife and children; and
- (3) Social passivity and learned helplessness, a flight from personal responsibility to the careless, play world of eternal boyhood (1997, 3).

Each of these reactions could be argued to predispose men towards sexually exploiting children. The first would encourage prostitute use, and within that would encourage men to seek particularly inexperienced and powerless prostitutes, i.e., children in prostitution; the second would encourage sexual abuse of children within the home; the third would encourage a narcissistic form of ‘paedophilia’ within which men seek sexual partners who are idealized versions of their boyhood selves, and/or select children as partners because they make fewer emotional demands and are easier to control. Each of these psychological reactions are further likely to have been exacerbated by economic crisis and the sudden loss of status and economic power experienced by many Russian men, and NGOs working with sexually abused and exploited children point to this as one of the explanations for rising levels of sexual abuse and CSEC.

Finally, we should note the links between poverty, HIV/AIDS and child sexual abuse and exploitation. At the end of 1999, UNAIDS estimated that 13.2 million of the world's children aged under 15 had lost their mother or both parents as a result of AIDS, and that 90% of these children live in sub-Saharan Africa. It is further estimated that '44 million children in the 34 countries hardest hit by HIV/AIDS will have lost one or both parents from all causes, but primarily from AIDS, by 2010' (USAID, 2000). The vast majority of children orphaned by AIDS struggle to subsist, often also to support siblings, and are thus highly vulnerable to involvement in commercial or survival sex. At the same time, the HIV/AIDS pandemic fuels a growth in the demand for CSEC (as well as incidence of child rape) in the regions worst affected. The global inequalities noted above effectively deny people with AIDS in poor countries access to even the most basic health care. It is believed that, as a consequence, some HIV infected men turn in desperation to old myths about the outward transmission of disease, hoping that sex with a young child will cleanse them (see gender-aids forum, 2001).

### **Uneven Development, Migration and Trafficking**

The phenomenon of 'trafficking' cannot be separated from the broader phenomenon of migration, since adults and children normally only become vulnerable to trafficking in the context of strong migratory pressures. Patrick Taran (2000, 14) identifies 7 macro factors that drive migration, namely: armed violence; ethnic and racial conflict; globalisation of the free market model; environmental degradation and disasters; development-induced displacement; denial of democracy; abuse of power and corruption. People below, as well as above, the age of 18, are affected by these factors, and as has already been noted, displaced and refugee children are vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation. Furthermore, some adolescents view migration as a strategy for attaining security and well-being. Some also know that prostitution is more highly rewarded than any other form of work available to them, and the third parties who help to arrange their movement across borders or within countries to work in prostitution do not necessarily need to use deception or force to effect the movement. However, many children (and indeed many children's parents) are naïve, ill informed and suggestible, and it is easy for unscrupulous third parties to take advantage of their hopes, dreams or desperation to trick them into the commercial sex industry, or to deceive them about earnings and conditions in the sex trade (or indeed domestic or agricultural work or factory employment). Since third parties are usually motivated by economic self-interest, it is important to consider the context in which 'recruiting' labour for the sex industry becomes a profitable activity. Very often, this means thinking about the uneven impact of national and international economic development policies. In South East Asia, for instance, some geographical areas have seen increases to local men's disposable incomes and so an expansion of the demand for sexual services in the 1990s, whilst neighbouring areas or countries have enjoyed few of the benefits of development and have instead witnessed increasing pressures on women and youth to migrate (see Feingold, 1997, 1998).

### **Gender, Sexuality and Power**

Socially prescribed and/or tolerated attitudes towards gender and sexuality are vitally important environmental factors in the creation of 'sex exploiters'. It is sometimes argued that cultural differences exist in terms of adults' propensity to sexually abuse children. Certainly, there are instances of 'predisposing' attitudes and beliefs which

are more likely to appear in some societies than others, for instance, myths about the restorative powers of sex with a virgin or young child. On the whole, however, the attitudes which encourage people to engage in CSEC are present, to a greater or lesser degree, in virtually all contemporary societies: for example, the sexual value attached to youthful bodies; the idea of male sexual 'need'; the stigmatisation of female prostitutes; the sexualization of groups deemed to be racial/ethnic/caste 'inferiors'. And even beliefs specific to particular cultures or regions are generally underpinned by attitudes towards gender that have a much broader currency. For example, myths about virgins are linked to anxieties about male potency, which, though manifested in different ways, are common to most societies.

Virtually all contemporary societies teach their members to believe that gender difference and inequality is natural, rather than socially and politically constructed; and that it is desirable for men to be 'masculine' and women to be 'feminine'. All over the world, societies vigorously maintain and violently police the boundaries of gender. Females who fail to meet social demands that they be modest, chaste, obedient, passive and/or dependent frequently run the risk of being raped, beaten or even murdered by male spouses, relatives or strangers; men and boys who do not live up to social expectations that they be tough, active, virile, assertive and independent often find themselves ostracised, ridiculed, bullied and rejected by both males and females, and may also be violently assaulted by older male relatives, fellow students and/or co-workers. Most societies further teach that 'masculinity' and 'femininity' can be expressed and affirmed through particular kinds of sexual practice as well as threatened or erased by others, and sexuality is thus constructed as a sphere in which gender identity and honour can be attained or lost. It also becomes a sphere in which perceived slights to men's gender honour can be avenged.

This near universal insistence on gender difference and horror of sexual and other behaviours which demonstrate men and women's sameness helps to account for ordinary men's involvement in a range of sexually exploitative practices. It also helps to explain why sexual violence and exploitation are often highly visible in settings where men feel that their 'masculinity' is at risk (e.g., when they work in exploitative conditions over which they have little control) and/or in settings where the social premium placed on 'masculinity' is suddenly raised (e.g., periods of armed conflict). The obsessive attachment to gender difference is relevant to understanding the sexual abuse and exploitation of both male and female children. If men are taught to believe that masculinity is expressed through the act of insertive sex with a passive and receptive partner, then boys, as well as girls, can be used as vehicles for attaining masculinity. In societies in which the devaluation of women leads to a high level of sex-segregation, men often have greater access to boy than to girl children, and boys can thus become particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Meanwhile, homosexual men can be just as eager as heterosexual men to demonstrate their 'masculinity' through their capacity to command sexual access to bodies that are deemed sexually desirable (which often means bodies that are youthful). The idea that masculinity is expressed through the taking of an active, dominant role in sexual relations can further encourage both heterosexual and homosexual men to seek partners who are willing to accept a passive and submissive role. Again, an adolescent often fits this bill rather better than a sexual partner of the same age and equal social standing.

## **10. CONTROL, PREVENTION AND REINTEGRATION**

### **Law and Law Enforcement: Problems and Issues**

In the five years since the Stockholm Congress, many countries have reformed existing laws or introduced new laws to strengthen the legal framework pertaining to the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. However, it is rarely possible to assess the impact of such reforms, since very few countries have heeded calls to improve data collection methods. Accurate and consistent data on investigations and prosecutions of cases of sexual abuse, violence or exploitation against persons under the age of 18 are not available, and this is a situation that urgently needs to be remedied (Kelly and Regan, 2000). Since questions about law and law enforcement are dealt with in depth in another of this Congress' theme papers, the present paper will restrict itself to the following observations.

First, sentencing policy with regard to sexual offences is inconsistent between and within nation states. It gives rise to concerns about human rights violations at one extreme (for instance where the death penalty is applied) and failure to protect children's rights at the other (for example where paltry fines are given to those who serially rape children). Legislation and sentencing with regard to child pornography is particularly weak and inconsistent, and in many countries offers protection only to children below the age of 16, or in some cases 14. Second, inadequate witness protection continues to hamper the successful prosecution of sex exploiters, and in some places, the unacceptable length of time it takes for cases to come to court is further believed to discourage reporting and impede successful prosecution of sex exploiters. Third, concerns remain about registration provisions that either existed, or have recently been introduced into legislation on sexual offences in some countries (see Plotnikoff and Woolfson, 2000, Eldridge, 2000). Sex offender registration is often believed to have contributed to improved quality of information and working relationships between police and other agencies. However, it does not necessarily represent a solution to the problem posed by those who abuse children in their immediate or extended family, and return to live with the children they abused following release from prison, nor does it cover all categories of sex exploiter that have been discussed in this paper. There is a need for close cooperation with communities in order to avoid 'moral panics' in relation to 'paedophile registers', and, given the serious lack of resources in many countries, it is important to consider whether treatment programs might make a more cost effective contribution to prevention than registration schemes.

Finally it is vital to remember that legal reforms are not, on their own, the solution to the demand-side of CSEC. Even where good laws are in place, corruption and/or lack of resources can lead to lax law enforcement. Moreover, the enforcement of laws on sexual exploitation and trafficking is very often neither gender nor child sensitive, and laws can thus be applied in ways which actually harm victims of exploitation (ECPAT, 1998, 3). Indeed, because CSEC often takes place in the context of the mainstream sex industry, calls for stricter law enforcement can often have unintended consequences. Whether based on a model of prohibition or regulation, prostitution law and law enforcement practice around the world invariably focuses on the control of female prostitutes, rather than their clients (Sweden is a notable exception to this general rule). Moreover, in most countries of the world, the civil and human rights of

females who work in prostitution are routinely, and often grossly, violated. Prostitutes variously face arbitrary detention, deportation, forcible eviction from their dwellings, enforced health checks, including HIV testing, forcible 'rehabilitation', corporal punishment, even execution; few states offer prostitutes adequate protection from violent crime or abusive employers, and prostitutes are frequently victims of crimes perpetrated by corrupt law enforcement agents, including rape, beatings and extortion. The scale and severity of the human rights violations perpetrated against female prostitutes in the contemporary world was recognised in the 1992 general recommendation made by the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to include prostitutes among those who needed to be offered equal protection under the law (Kempadoo and Ghuma, 1999, 293, see also Alexander, 1997).

Since states are amongst those who most consistently violate prostitute women's rights, it would be naïve to trust that calls for stronger legal controls over those who exploit children within prostitution will automatically produce desirable outcomes for either prostitute women or teenagers. Indeed, crackdowns on CSEC and trafficking have often had extremely negative consequences for both adults and adolescents working in prostitution, and the numbers of people arrested for sexually exploiting children in prostitution generally pale into insignificance next to the numbers of women and teenagers arrested for prostitution and/or immigration offences. There is a great deal of work to be done in terms of changing attitudes towards prostitution and creating legal and social environments which are protective of female prostitutes' human rights before we can be confident that calls for tighter and more extensive criminalisation of CSEC will not continue to have these unintended and undesirable consequences. The Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action called on governments to 'adopt a non-punitive approach to child victims of commercial sexual exploitation in keeping with the rights of the child', but did *not* call on them to adopt an approach that is respectful and protective of the human rights of all those working in prostitution. This needs to be remedied.

There are other reasons to exercise caution when discussing sanctions against those who sexually exploit children. Consider, for example, the fact that there are places in the world where it is estimated that between 15 and 30% of those working in prostitution are under the age of 18 and that up to 75% of the male population engage or have engaged in prostitute use. In such places, proposals to give custodial sentences to anyone who engages in CSEC could translate into proposals to incarcerate more than half of the male population. Custodial sentences would be equally problematic in contexts in which people become involved in the sex trade as third party beneficiaries simply because this is their only real possibility for economic survival. We should also remember that there are places in the world where the demand for commercial sex comes from men and boys whose lives are every bit as hopeless, violent and bleak as those of the women and children they exploit. Calls for the incarceration of all perpetrators of CSEC do not always or necessarily represent either a realistic or a humane response to the problem. Deterrent sanctions not only need to be accompanied by appropriate medical and psychological interventions where appropriate, but also by measures to address the economic and social factors which underpin the demand-side of CSEC.



## **Treatment and Prevention**

Good treatment and relapse prevention programs are widely believed to reduce recidivism amongst those convicted of sexual crimes against children. In a useful review of developments in this area, Hilary Eldridge concludes that multi component therapies are most effective in sex offender treatment, and that 'The programs which show the most consistently positive results are those which combine cognitive and behavioural techniques with relapse prevention' (2000, 329). Though there are many positive developments to report in relation to therapeutic work with sex offenders, there is little room for complacency about existing provisions. To begin with, we should note that the development of appropriate treatment programs for young offenders is very much in its infancy. More resources need to be invested in specific programs, as well as research and evaluation. Experts working in this field have recently expressed concern about approaches which fail to recognise that young perpetrators of child sex abuse are children and as such entitled to the rights identified in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Holman, 2001).

Next, we should recognise the fact that good treatment programs are expensive. In poor and developing nations that are currently being forced to make cuts to basic social spending, there is little chance of funding the kind of therapeutic and relapse prevention programs that have been developed in the affluent world. Even in affluent countries, these programs are not made available to all those who are convicted of sexual crimes against children. Such programs thus only reach a tiny minority of convicted sex offenders in the contemporary world. Since convicted sex offenders represent only a small minority of individuals who sexually exploit children in any given country, we can thus conclude that existing sex offender treatment programs only reach the farthest tip of 'the tip of the iceberg', and there is an urgent need for investment in this area.

Furthermore, existing therapeutic programs have been developed through work with convicted offenders, and are strongly geared towards those whose acts of exploitation clearly and unequivocally transgress social norms regarding sexual expression (incest, sexual violence, abuse or exploitation of children under the age of sexual consent). They are not always or necessarily relevant to those whose sexual exploitation of children takes place in the context of socially tolerated or prescribed sexual behaviour (prostitute-use, the consumption of mainstream pornography, more diffuse forms of sexual-economic exchange, etc.), nor to the behaviour of those who sexually exploit children for profit. There is thus also need for investment in the development of programs aimed at these latter groups.

'John Schools', piloted in a number of cities in the US, the UK and Canada, represent one of the few measures designed to address the demand-side of prostitution. Here, men arrested for kerb-crawling offences are 're-educated' about the commercial sex industry, and efforts are made to challenge their attitudes towards prostitution and sexuality. It is difficult to evaluate the impact of the schools. In Los Angeles, only 4 out of 1400 men attending the John School have reoffended, compared to an average of 60 percent recidivism among those who are processed through the usual legal system, and similar results appear to be being produced in Toronto and Leeds (Weitzer, 2000). At the same time, however, demand for prostitution in the cities where John Schools operate appears to be unaffected. Nor can we be certain that the re-educated 'johns' have given up prostitute use *per se*. They may simply have

switched to off-street prostitution, where the customer's risk of arrest is negligible. Finally, we should note that because John Schools are used in conjunction with clampdowns on street prostitution, prostitutes' rights groups do not unequivocally welcome them. If the John School model is to be applied more widely, and/or adapted to focus more specifically on the problem of CSEC, it is important that women currently working in prostitution are consulted and involved in the design of programmes.

Some NGOs have piloted innovative projects providing training on issues of sexual exploitation for armed forces preparing for peacekeeping duties (see, for example, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, 2000, and ARC, 2000), and there is an urgent need for more of this kind of general preventative work with all groups that are particularly prone to prostitute-use. Some of these groups are actually already being targeted by organisations working on AIDS prevention, and such organisations have much to teach us in terms of how to develop effective strategies for changing sexual attitudes and behaviours. Sex education in schools is another under-utilised vehicle for preventing the demand for CSEC. It provides a forum in which the popular beliefs about and attitudes towards gender, sexuality, prostitution and race/ethnicity/caste that play such a central role in shaping the demand-side of all forms of CSEC, could be systematically challenged. We also need to consider ways in which to challenge or counter the widespread eroticisation of youthful bodies, the sexual devaluation of older bodies, and the assumption that sex naturally and ideally involves interaction between a dominant and a submissive partner.

As with recommendations concerning law and law enforcement, however, we must carefully consider the potential impact of measures to combat CSEC in each context, rather than assuming that 'one strategy fits all'. Equally, we need to be alert to the unintended and undesirable consequences of measures designed to prevent CSEC. In this regard, there is a particular need to think more critically and creatively about public awareness campaigns. The continual emphasis on the abuse of small, passive, dependent and 'innocent' children is not only a potential source of fascination and titillation for those who might be clinically defined as 'paedophile', but also reinforces the popular attitudes that many exploiters call upon to rationalise their acts of CSEC (i.e., a child who is not small, dependent, or sexually 'innocent' does not count as a child). The message has to be more complicated, and needs to address the socially tolerated attitudes and beliefs which underpin the demand-side of CSEC, as well as to raise awareness about those with a focused sexual preference for young children.

## **11. WHAT IS TO BE DONE?**

This paper has emphasised the fact that there is no 'sex exploiter' as such. Instead, there are people (adult and child, male and female) who sexually exploit children in many different ways, for many different reasons and in many different social contexts. Strategies to prevent child sexual exploitation, and to deter, control and/or reintegrate sex exploiters must recognise this diversity. We must also address the fact that there is a strong relationship between socially prescribed or tolerated attitudes and practices and the demand for CSEC. There is a need to develop and fund public education campaigns to challenge and undermine the popular and widely endorsed beliefs about sexuality, gender, race, class, caste, childhood, economic life and/or prostitution

which exploiters of all types draw upon to rationalise and defend their actions. This means making links (at local, national and international levels) between efforts to tackle CSEC and efforts to combat other forms of discrimination. So, for example, sexual exploitation needs to be placed on the agenda when racism is being discussed, and vice versa. Equally, the violation of children's rights through CSEC is not separable from, or unrelated to, other human rights' issues, and questions about the demand side of CSEC cannot be divorced from more general questions about poverty, gender relations, social exclusion, child labour, welfare policies, structural adjustment programmes, tourist development, racism, migratory pressures, AIDS and sexual health, and prostitutes' civil and human rights.

This points to the need for 'joined up thinking' on the part of national and international policy makers and governmental organisations in order to devise and implement effective longer term measures addressing the economic, social and political conditions which underpin demand. It also suggests that even broader and more inclusive approaches to partnership building are required. In particular, there is an urgent need for dialogue between children's NGOs, on the one hand, and sex workers' rights organisations, migrant workers' organisations, AIDS prevention groups, and gay rights' and anti-racist activists on the other. These latter groups not only have knowledge and experience that is highly relevant to efforts to tackle the demand-side of CSEC, but also are also sometimes negatively affected by unintended consequences of measures designed to combat CSEC. Such groups can potentially make an invaluable contribution to the struggle against CSEC, but for this to happen, children's NGOs need to engage with their concerns more closely.

Efforts to tackle the demand for CSEC also need to take into account the fact that a sizeable number of those who sexually exploit children are themselves members of groups which are vulnerable, marginalized, and exploited, and/or belong to occupational groups which place members under strong subcultural pressures to engage in commercial sex. Punitive and moralistic campaigns will not necessarily be the most effective way of changing their behaviours or sexual practices. Again, there is a need for broader partnership building. Organisations that have the strongest relationships with groups prone to prostitute-use (for example, seafarers unions, and trades unions in logging, mining and tourism industries, NGOs involved in AIDS prevention out-reach work), need to be involved in the design and implementation of awareness raising and prevention strategies. Equally, employers, including the military, need to become more involved in educational and preventative work with their employees. There is also a role for the private sector in terms of developing meaningful and sustainable economic alternatives to third party involvement in CSEC. In this regard, it is perhaps even more vitally important to encourage international financial institutions, development banks, and economic advisors to consider the impact of development policies and structural adjustment measures on the demand for commercial sex in any given country or region.

Finally, there remains an urgent need for more extensive and detailed research on the root causes of demand for CSEC, since this would feed into more effective measures for prevention and awareness raising. There is also a need for better and more consistent data collection regarding sexual offences involving children, and for research to evaluate the impact of specific measures.

Above all, we need to remember that there is no simple, single policy solution with regard to those who commercially sexually exploit children. Efforts to strengthen and enforce laws against CSEC must be balanced and complimented by long-term measures to transform the environments that produce sex exploiters. Such measures will require a great deal of investment, and adequate resources must be committed to them if we are serious about combating the problem of CSEC.

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