



# YOUTH JOURNAL

## YOUTH PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

Empowering Child Survivors and At-Risk Youth  
against Commercial Sexual Exploitation



## **ECPAT Youth Journal** **Youth Partnership Programme (YPP)**

Empowering Child Survivors and At-Risk Youth  
against Commercial Sexual Exploitation

We would like to thank all the youth authors and national coordinators who made this journal possible. We are also grateful to several staff in the International Secretariat, in particular Mark Capaldi and Jake Lucchi.

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# PREFACE

We are pleased to share with you the second edition of the ECPAT Youth Journal; all the articles have been written by the young people who are working on the ground in the fight to eliminate the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Most are young people that are directly involved as Youth Motivators and Peer Supporters within ECPAT's Youth Partnership Programme (YPP) against CSEC. They are also members of the ECPAT International Child and Youth Advisory Committee (EICYAC). These articles document and convey the energy and the inspiration of youth activism against CSEC across a range of cultures and countries of the ECPAT global network. The articles demonstrate the power of young people to design and lead awareness raising and advocacy activities against CSEC. They also provide field-based examples of how linkages can be made between participation and protection of youth, especially their increased capacities to assess risks, promote self-protection and to reach out to and assist their peers in need.

The ECPAT YPP works to ensure that all children can enjoy the right to actively and meaningfully participate, particularly in social change and work

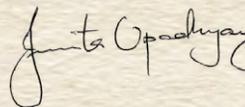
against CSEC. The YPP focuses on reaching out to the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups of children and youth, such as survivors of CSEC and those who are most-at-risk. These children and youth face significant barriers to participation and lack access to mainstream social services. Thus, promoting their meaningful participation requires innovative strategies that effectively reach out to these hidden children and youth.

The YPP focuses on implementing programmes and activities that provide systematic support to the mechanisms that ensure that survivors and at-risk young people can maintain a substantive and sustained involvement in the issues, programmes and policies concerning them. Within this context, the YPP's partnership with local institutions serving the most marginalised and at-risk youth has been remarkably successful in engaging hundreds of children and youth directly and thousands indirectly, through youth-led awareness raising and advocacy against CSEC.

As one YPP Peer Supporters explained: 'The personal development of children and youth, especially survivors

of trafficking, is the single most significant result of the YPP... this transition from 'victim' to 'survivor' to 'responsible, valued and contributing human being' is the most significant result of the participation process through the YPP'.

The articles in this journal speak for themselves of the benefits and impact of child and youth participation. We hope that you will find these interesting, useful and relevant to the work that you are doing against CSEC. The YPP youth have recommended that we widely disseminate the journal within the network, donors and key stakeholders so that others—especially those children and youth who do not yet have access to opportunities to participate can be reached and involved in the decisions affecting their lives. After all, as the UN CRC stipulates, participation is a fundamental right for all children regardless of their experiences, background, age and ethnicity.



Junita Upadhyay  
YPP Global Coordinator



# LATIN AMERICA

Brazil

## Building Bridges of Hope: A Brazilian Experience with Young and Adolescent Transsexuals

Fortaleza is the fifth biggest city in Brazil, with a population of just under 2.5 million. It is a popular tourist destination, and its beaches and nightlife draw both international and Brazilian visitors. However, the disparity between the rich and poor, significant throughout Brazil, is particularly pronounced in Fortaleza, where, despite a high average per capita income (R\$11,400), 43% of the population live in poor and improvised conditions, and 32% fall under the international poverty line. Poverty is one of the reasons why Fortaleza suffers the highest rate of commercial sexual exploitation in Brazil, a problem that is exacerbated by the fact that many citizens, including young people, have only limited access to basic healthcare, social assistance, education and accommodation.

One 2008 study examined a sample of 328 children between 12 and 18 years old who were working in the red light district in Fortaleza. Of the 328, 104 were boys (31.7% of the identified children), and 100 of these boys were transsexuals or were in the process of becoming one. The study also identified a strong link between transsexuality and the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). It revealed a social tendency among transsexuals in Fortaleza to legitimise their transsexuality through sex work.

Many transsexual participants that were interviewed described the challenges and discrimination they faced and their survival and coping strategies. As soon as they began to assume their new gender identity, dressing and acting as females and wanting to change their body, many male to female transsexuals chose to leave school due to the humiliation and discrimination they faced; some had even been directly expelled from their schools. Thus, many of them had low levels of formal education. In most cases, the transsexual boys were also rejected by their families and communities, forcing them to leave their family homes and find new accommodation and means to support themselves.

By Lía Rodríguez (24 years old)

In Brazil, transsexuals still face significant discrimination from mainstream society, and many employers will not accept transsexuals as employees. There are no specific government policies in Brazil that legislate against this kind of discrimination, which means that, for many, commercial sex is one of the few alternatives available for transsexuals to survive. Also, as many of those who were interviewed admitted, sex work is also the only arena where they feel they can express their sexuality without any discrimination; this is another factor that pushes them into CSEC. This combination of factors puts them in the most-at-risk category and increases their vulnerability to drug abuse, crime, HIV/AIDS, health risks and CSEC.

This context of discrimination, social exclusion and exploitation compounded by the lack of support services, and an urgent need among these vulnerable children for shelter and professional training motivated us to create a programme for adolescents and young transsexuals in collaboration with the ECPAT Brazil network. Some of these at-risk young people were already regular attendees of the Association Barraca da Amizade, who

had begun to seek a better life and a way to escape the cycle of sexual exploitation. Most of the individuals that are supported by this programme are between 16 and 25 years old and come from the outskirts of the city, where most inhabitants live in poverty and marginalisation and have a low level of education and lack access to health services.

The aim of this programme is to better enable victims of CSEC to transform their lives. This is done through multiple approaches. For example, through the building of interpersonal relationships with adolescent and young transsexuals by social educators, recognising and respecting the identity assumed by the victim, providing better support services and raising awareness and sensitising the public about the issue and the rights of adolescents and young transsexuals and influencing the public policies and programmes.

The project is based around a methodological approach, which is led by young people called social educators. The outreach strategy begins with the identification of the problem or the potential victim; then the observation and trust building period commences, which helps

identify the type of specific assistance that is required to help the victim leave the situation of sexual exploitation. The 'identification' process begins with an active targeted search, which is conducted in partnership with the Human Rights Secretariat and identifies victims at the point of exploitation or in high-risk venues such as entertainment establishments, bars or the Padaria Espiritual Avenue, where most transsexuals look for clients. After the vulnerable youth have been identified, we then conduct an informal observation period during which the social educators observe the movements and identify strategies to approach the adolescent transsexuals.

After identifying vulnerable individuals or groups we study the context according to the following main areas: the individual's background—their socio-economic status, family data, schooling, addiction to drugs, etc.; their work environment—their work venue, the local dynamics, their network of contacts and their occupations, possible crimes in the area; and the local service network—health centres, schools, local NGOs etc. Once we understand all of these aspects, we conduct a risk and needs assessment and then begin to plan ways in which we can approach these

adolescents and continue onto the next step.

The social educator initiates contact by approaching the victim sensitively; at this point they often offer the young person health aids such as contraceptives and lubricants. It is crucial that the young person be approached with sensitivity and tact, as the establishment of a relationship based on trust and respect is imperative to ensure he/she feels comfortable, safe and accepted. This is particularly the case because the majority of adolescent and young transsexuals have suffered extreme discrimination and rejection. The youth social educator usually then comes back to the victim several times. The youth educators spend a significant amount of time familiarising themselves with the area in which the sexual exploitation is taking place and understanding their lifestyle and social interactions. The social educators then start to create links with the young person to facilitate a trusting, respectful and non-judgmental relationship. This is the most important part of this step, as it allows us to discuss alternatives to sexual exploitation with the young person. It usually takes between three and nine visits (which occur over a

period of to up to three months) to move to the next step, although this can vary significantly depending on the personality and contexts of those involved.

The third step involves referring the youth to the support services they need and following up with them to ensure they are utilising the services, and trying to re-establish the violated rights of the adolescents and young transsexuals in their families and communities. To this end, we try to understand the reality of each of the adolescents and propose life alternatives that are appropriate and specific to their life and interests. We also provide the young person with opportunities for 'peer counselling' to discuss a variety of issues such as family, sexuality, work, gender, violence and drugs and other difficulties and challenges that they maybe facing. They are also encouraged to establish contact with their families so that they can be involved in this process of recovery and social reintegration whenever possible. The adolescents and young people are offered life skills training, along with referrals to healthcare providers, counselling and opportunities for social interaction and recreation through field trips, games, parties and excursions.

The fourth and final step involves strengthening the youth's autonomy. Here we encourage the adolescent to build a life project, encouraging them to reflect on what they want for their future, and establish strategies and timelines to reach this goal. The effect of leaving the cycle of sexual exploitation is discussed with the victim and their family, who often suffer financially in the initial stages of this transition. To help the young person regain financial independence, we work with educational and professional institutions to provide them with scholarships to enrol in professional and vocational courses.

We have already placed survivors in vocational courses that range from office assistant, cook, fashion designer, hairdresser, tourist agent and event organisers. We have also established partnerships with two educational projects that provide scholarships to the survivor so that they can immediately transition from an exploitative situation to support services and to an educational institution. This has been found to be a particularly effective way of aiding their recovery and reintegration.

Our programme began in September 2009, working with 44 adolescents and youth, of whom 13 were boys. The next year, the number of beneficiaries grew to 125, 30 of whom were boys, and, in the first half of 2011 (until June), we worked with 142 beneficiaries, of whom 34 were boys. Our programme is growing year on year. In 2010, almost 40% of those involved in our project ended up leaving sexual exploitation within the year. While the reasons for this transition vary, most beneficiaries cite the opportunity to generate an income as the most important factor that permits them to leave the cycle of sexual exploitation. However, many of

these adolescents are excluded from the formal job market, as they continue to face gender-based discrimination even after leaving prostitution; in most cases they end up creating their own independent businesses.

Clearly, there are many challenges involved in this work, including a lack of support services and relevant policies and the linkages between sexual exploitation and certain criminal or risky practices such as drug trafficking, human trafficking or illegal surgery (several transsexual individuals have undergone illegal and dangerous silicone prostheses surgery which are not regulated by the government).

Overall, our project shows how challenging yet effective this kind of grass-roots approach can be. Direct support responsive to the needs of the victims is an essential part of protecting children from sexual exploitation. However, projects like these are only one part of the solution; they can only function effectively in conjunction with a rigorous commitment from governments to guarantee the human rights of children and adolescents regardless of their age, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Each child deserves to grow up within their families free of discrimination and exploitation with access to quality education and health services.



Chile

## 'Avísate Por Tus Derechos' [Wake Up To Your Rights]: Using Social Media for Greater Action against CSEC in Chile

By **Javiera Torres** (16 years old)  
**Estrella Aguirre** (17 years old)  
**Catalina Rubio** (16 years old)  
**Jerandy Pérez** (13 years old)  
**Geraldine Ortega** (14 years old)  
**Constanza San Martín** (16 years old)

In Chile, almost 4000 children are estimated to be victims of commercial sexual exploitation; 64% of these children are aged between 11 and 15, and around a quarter are boys. Around a fifth of all victims of the commercial exploitation of children (CSEC) come from the V Region of Chile, which is why we have established our ECPAT Youth Partnership Programme (YPP) against CSEC in this region.

The Newen Centre for Child Victims of Violence and Sexual Abuse provides recovery support to children from both genders that have been victims of physical or sexual abuse in the V region. Support is provided through psychological support and therapy, and is offered to both affected children and their families. The centre joined

forces with the YPP two years ago, when some of the girls attending the centre were invited to participate in the project and become Peer Supporters. The Peer Supporters hold regular sessions to discuss key issues related to children's rights, protection and other issues that are of interest to children such as life skills training, youth-led awareness raising and advocacy. These sessions are also important because they facilitate the sharing of experiences, interests and ideas among young people.

Since these sessions were found to be very useful and interesting, we decided to expand their reach by starting an online campaign to promote children's rights using the most popular social medium in Chile—facebook. In April 2010, we launched 'Avísate Por Tus Derechos' (Wake Up to Your Rights)—a facebook profile that could be used as an online location for our support sessions. The Peer Supporters chose a wasp as the logo for this site because of the similarities between the Spanish words for wasp and awake.

The main aim of 'Avísate Por Tus Derechos' is to promote more frequent and effective communication and exchange among the YPP Peer Supporters in Chile, and to raise

awareness of children's rights. This is especially relevant in the context of Chile where, because of the size of the country, Peer Supporters often find it difficult to come together. Facebook has become one of the preferred channels through which the YPP youth communicate.

The facebook profile serves two different purposes. Firstly, it is used as an internal communication tool for our group of Peer Supporters. For instance, we use the profile to send reminders about our peer support sessions, which occur every 15 days, and to discuss other organisational issues such as agendas, roles and responsibilities and proposed activities. This helps our Peer Supporters interact with each other, find common interests and build trust and friendship, thus creating a more united and active group. This also helps us to be better informed about and prepare for the upcoming sessions.

Secondly, the profile is used as a medium for promoting the YPP youth-led awareness raising and advocacy activities. We announce our public events and activities on our profile, and invite all our facebook friends to participate. We also use the profile as a platform for posting pictures of our activities for the people that were unable to attend so that they can

be updated on the key activities and outcomes. This is also a good place to document and disseminate the work we are doing. The profile already has over 100 friends. We recently decided to expand our group, so we started a recruiting campaign, inviting other adolescents to participate in the project. Currently, there are six teenage girls in the group that coordinate the profile; they meet every two weeks to strengthen the group and design new activities and campaigns to promote children's rights.

Linked to our facebook profile, we also conduct on-the-ground awareness-raising projects; one of the most successful of these took place on 19 November 2010 in celebration of the International Day against Child Violence and Sexual Abuse. We coordinated various activities to raise awareness and to promote children's rights. These consisted of a march through the city of Viña del Mar, led by YPP Peer Supporters calling for better protection of children from CSEC. The march terminated at the city hall, where we delivered our message to the City Mayor Ms Virginia Reginato. We then marched to the headquarters of the NGO Paicabí, coordinator of the YPP project in Chile, where we were received by the Executive Director Mrlván Zamora and the

Technical Manager Ms Ana Victoria Silva, together with the rest of the office staff. After these interventions, we organised awareness-raising activities in the courtyard of one of the main shopping malls in the city. This attracted a lot of public attention and interest in our messages on the promotion of children's rights, child protection and the problem of CSEC. The march finally terminated at the Dr Jorge Duclos School for Deaf Children, where we presented our message to the principal through sign language. We also conducted awareness-raising activities with the children in the school. This awareness-raising activity was particularly relevant, as children with special needs are known to be disproportionately vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Our experience with the facebook profile has demonstrated that we can successfully launch a social media campaign to promote children's rights. The platform allows us to overcome constraints such as distance, time and resources to communicate more effectively. The awareness-raising activities were also easier to coordinate through the profile, as the communication was centralised which meant we were able to coordinate more effectively. Based on our positive experiences, we strongly encourage

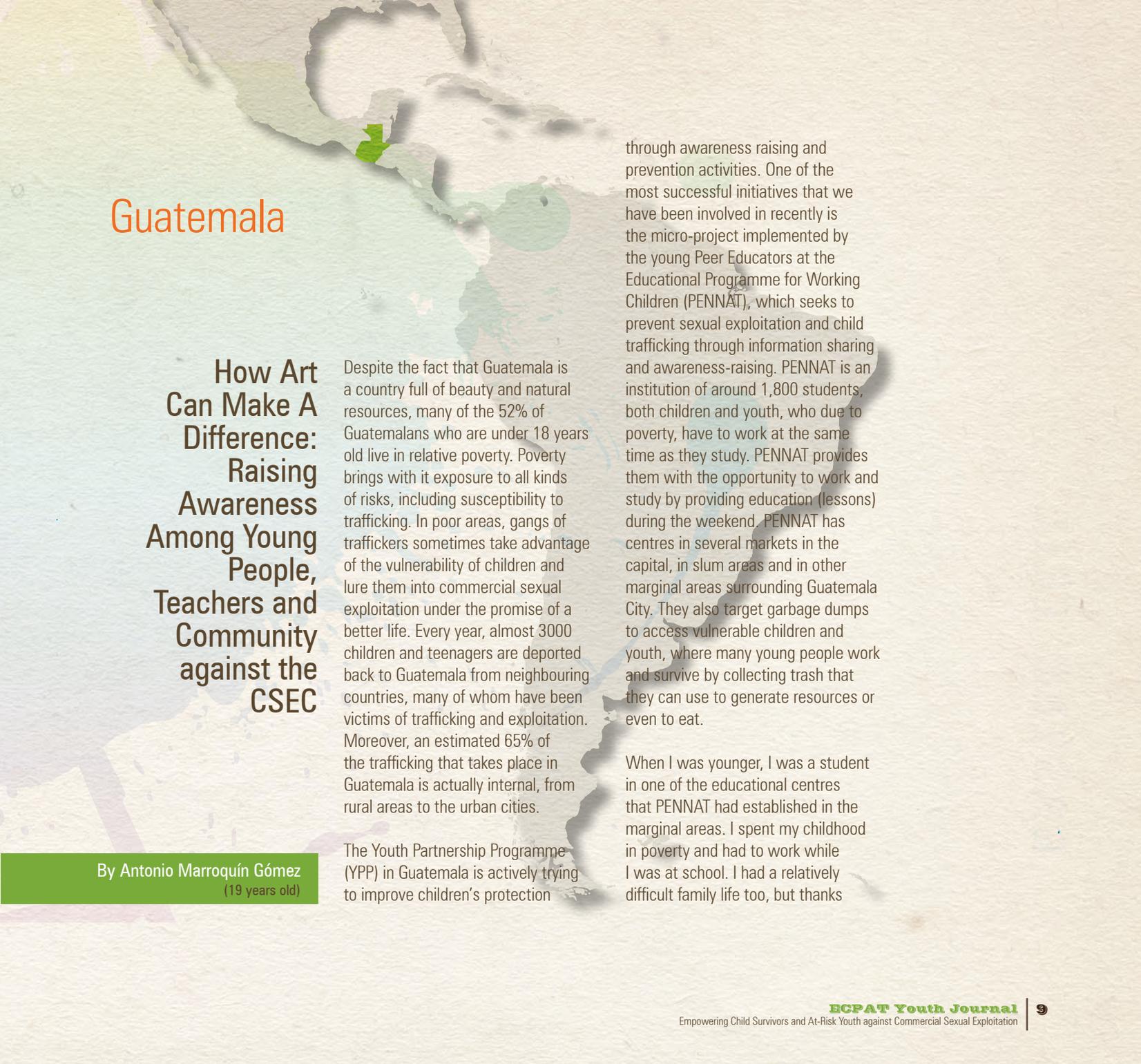
other young people to use social media to implement a campaign on human rights.

In addition, with the help of the communication officer from Paicabi, the YPP Chile youth have created a blog to share videos to raise awareness about their rights and the prevention of CSEC. The videos show Youth Motivators sharing knowledge

about CSEC prevention; these were used as the focus point of a workshop that was run on how best to use media to raise awareness of CSEC-related issues. Some of the videos can be viewed here: <http://ppjlaserena.posterous.com/>

Although online platforms offer several benefits for those engaged in awareness raising, it is also important

that the children and youth understand how to use the Internet safely (such as not providing personal details when online). Media guidelines are available from the YPP Child Protection Framework, and these should be adhered to and communicated at all stages of the online process to promote safe and meaningful participation of children and youth.



## Guatemala

### How Art Can Make A Difference: Raising Awareness Among Young People, Teachers and Community against the CSEC

Despite the fact that Guatemala is a country full of beauty and natural resources, many of the 52% of Guatemalans who are under 18 years old live in relative poverty. Poverty brings with it exposure to all kinds of risks, including susceptibility to trafficking. In poor areas, gangs of traffickers sometimes take advantage of the vulnerability of children and lure them into commercial sexual exploitation under the promise of a better life. Every year, almost 3000 children and teenagers are deported back to Guatemala from neighbouring countries, many of whom have been victims of trafficking and exploitation. Moreover, an estimated 65% of the trafficking that takes place in Guatemala is actually internal, from rural areas to the urban cities.

The Youth Partnership Programme (YPP) in Guatemala is actively trying to improve children's protection

through awareness raising and prevention activities. One of the most successful initiatives that we have been involved in recently is the micro-project implemented by the young Peer Educators at the Educational Programme for Working Children (PENNAT), which seeks to prevent sexual exploitation and child trafficking through information sharing and awareness-raising. PENNAT is an institution of around 1,800 students, both children and youth, who due to poverty, have to work at the same time as they study. PENNAT provides them with the opportunity to work and study by providing education (lessons) during the weekend. PENNAT has centres in several markets in the capital, in slum areas and in other marginal areas surrounding Guatemala City. They also target garbage dumps to access vulnerable children and youth, where many young people work and survive by collecting trash that they can use to generate resources or even to eat.

When I was younger, I was a student in one of the educational centres that PENNAT had established in the marginal areas. I spent my childhood in poverty and had to work while I was at school. I had a relatively difficult family life too, but thanks

By Antonio Marroquín Gómez  
(19 years old)

to programmes like PENNAT and YPP I managed to become a Youth Motivator. YPP Youth Motivators are responsible for leading the child and youth participation activities within the YPP and work closely with the Peer Supporters. Peer Supporters work with at-risk children and adolescents to alert them to the potential dangers of the Commercial Exploitation of Children (CSEC) and human trafficking and explore alternative paths. Children and youth who are engaged in the YPP Peer Support Programmes are children who are most-at-risk or already victims of CSEC; the programmes provide them with opportunities to participate and strengthen their ability and that of their peers to protect themselves against CSEC and other exploitative situations.

PENNAT has a centre in Mercado Sur II, in Guatemala City, where 110 young people study for their basic education certificate at weekends. The weekend lessons allow them to work during the week as market sellers, domestic servants, nannies and flier distributors; some are also involved in highly risky earning activities, such as transporting and trading illegal goods. Although these children take up these jobs to earn money to support themselves and their families, they often end up being involved in exploitative, criminal or dangerous situations, and suffer further

abuse and sexual violations.

To ensure that young people were aware of the dangers associated with such work, the Peer Supporters, together with me as the Youth Motivator, decided to create a mural to analyse and showcase some of the risks involved in the dangerous activities in which some unwittingly became involved. The main objective of this mural was to provide an opportunity to discuss issues around CSEC, trafficking of children and HIV/AIDS with the most-at-risk children and youth to engage them in a risk analysis and work with them in developing key prevention messages. We hoped that this would help the young people understand the key child protection concerns/issues in their communities and teach them how to detect and avoid situations where someone may be trying to deceive them or lure them into CSEC. We hoped that this would be an interactive and fun way to raise and discuss sensitive and serious issues concerning child protection in Guatemala.

The YPP Youth Motivators and Peer Supporters were entirely responsible for developing the proposal and implementing the mini project, and ECPAT Guatemala and ECPAT International provided technical and

financial support. All of the YPP youth and all of the teachers at PENNAT participated in this micro-project. Before we began work on the mural, two leading Peer Supporters—Lourdes López and Jesús Santander—worked with me to develop a series of informative workshops for the prevention of CSEC and trafficking in Guatemala. As a result of low education levels, lack of information and harmful cultural practices, many young people in Guatemala are unaware of issues surrounding children's rights and how they can protect themselves from various types of abuse and exploitation. The workshops were run on three consecutive weekends, as the PENNAT educative centres are only open on the weekends. On the first weekend, we organised workshops on the prevention of CSEC and trafficking; on the second weekend we conducted a training session on HIV/AIDS. On the third weekend, the children and youth came together to brainstorm how best to present the information they had learned for each grade and topic: HIV/AIDS, CSEC and trafficking.

The design of each mural was chosen by the young people themselves, who used newspaper articles, drawings and articles to creatively convey their key messages (see table).

HIV/AIDS	CSEC	TRAFFICKING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are HIV and AIDS?</li> <li>• Who can get HIV/AIDS?</li> <li>• The ways in which HIV can be transmitted</li> <li>• Discrimination against people who are HIV positive</li> <li>• Who is most at-risk of HIV/AIDS in Guatemala</li> <li>• HIV prevention, protection and care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is CSEC?</li> <li>• How to differentiate between CSEC and sexual abuse</li> <li>• What makes children and adolescents vulnerable to CSEC?</li> <li>• The difference between commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking</li> <li>• The impact of CSEC on children, teenagers or young people</li> <li>• How to prevent CSEC</li> <li>• Laws and Institutions that protect children and adolescents from CSEC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is human trafficking?</li> <li>• Who is involved in trafficking? Recruiters, smugglers, coyotes, etc.</li> <li>• Factors that contribute to child trafficking</li> <li>• What makes children and young people more vulnerable to trafficking</li> <li>• How can we prevent and self-protect from being victims of human trafficking</li> <li>• Self-protection mechanisms</li> </ul>

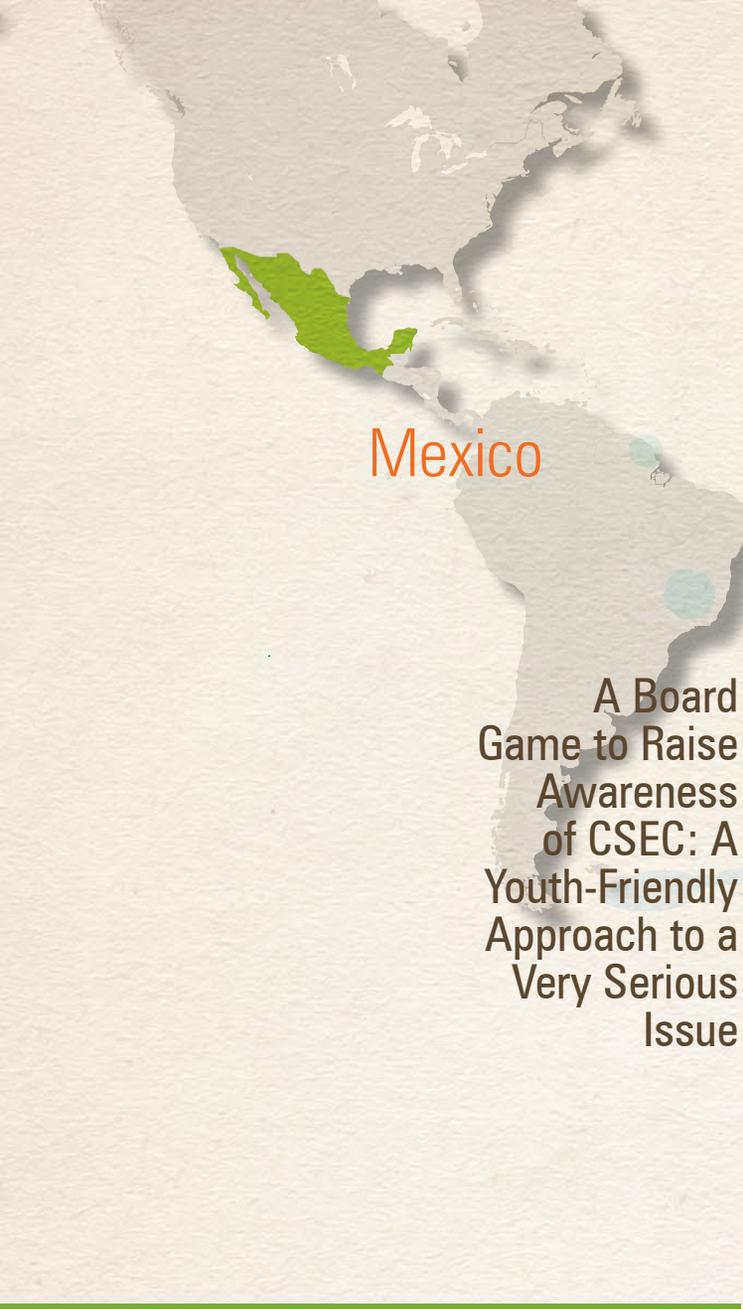
Over one hundred students helped create the mural. Because the presentation on these topics was also on the same day, there were also 25 parents and 20 teachers who helped. Because of this large turnout, and the inclusion of students, parents and teachers, the project involved many

members of the community and there was a greater sense of ownership of the project.

This project was an interesting and effective way to raise awareness in a vulnerable community; it also built the creative capacities of a number of at-

risk youth and enabled them to explore these issues within their community in an innovative way. The young people together with the teachers and parents identified key protection issues in their communities and analysed their causes and manifestations; they also proposed key messages and recommendations on prevention, based on their own personal experiences and those of their peers. This helped the young people to internalise the gravity of the problem and strengthen their sense of responsibility towards protecting children from CSEC and other harmful cultural practices.

The murals were on the inside walls of the PENNAT Centre so that all the children, adolescents, youth, teachers and parents would have a better understanding and awareness of these issues. The process of creating the mural was very participatory and created a strong sense of solidarity. Moreover, because of the process of creating them, and their placement, the influence of the murals' messages extended far beyond those who originally created them. There is now a greater understanding and a more collective responsibility towards the issues related to CSEC, trafficking and HIV/AIDS.



Mexico

## A Board Game to Raise Awareness of CSEC: A Youth-Friendly Approach to a Very Serious Issue

Jorge Alberto Garay Carvente (17 years old)

The two main objectives of the global Youth Partnership Programme (YPP) are to provide support to children and youth who have survived commercial sexual exploitation or are at risk of falling into the cycle of exploitation, and train young people to be able to reach out to and provide assistance through peer support. In order to achieve both objectives, the micro-projects developed by YPP Mexico have always been developed from a youth friendly and recreational perspective, as we think that this approach allows us to reach wider groups of young people in an interesting yet fun way, while also exploring issues surrounding the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) in a sensitive yet effective way.

This article will describe in detail the first recreational and interactive micro-project, an educational board game called 'The CSEC Labyrinth'. I will explain how it developed and how it was disseminated and implemented within Mexico and other YPP countries.

## The creation of a board game to prevent CSEC

The story started in 2009, when we were training young Peer Supporters and Youth Motivators, and we decided that, in order to achieve our objective of informing children and adolescents about CSEC, we had to create a tool that would be both fun and informative. We then looked for a recreational tool that would allow us to approach young people and offer peer support in a spontaneous, sensitive and innovative way, while also raising the children's awareness about CSEC. This would help to attract their attention and also engage them in discussions about social issues affecting them in a non-threatening and interactive way.

During one of our meetings, a colleague from Fundación Renacimiento told us about a game he knew that was similar to monopoly, which was often played by inmates in jail. The game involved lots of players and stations. We started playing and had a lot of fun and this gave us the idea that a game might be an excellent way to communicate information on children's rights and child protection to young people. So we decided on a new mission: create a board game to educate young people about CSEC! Before we started developing

the game, we needed to be sure that all those involved had a good understanding of the various issues related to CSEC, such as human rights, children's rights, child and youth participation, peer support and protection frameworks, key issues affecting children and youth and its causes and impact; to this end, we ran a number of training sessions. We also decided that we would use these sessions as a place to share ideas on how best to communicate these issues through the board game. In this way, we killed two birds with one stone, as we learned about CSEC at the same time as we developed a board game to use during peer support sessions and outreach work.

These training sessions were run by different specialists, including EDIAC, an organisation that has significant experience of training on issues related to CSEC and UCIEP, an organisation well-known in Mexico for their work in human rights, youth leadership and sexuality. We also organised a number of sessions to discuss ECPAT's Child Protection Guidelines and resource materials with these experts. In addition, we attended conferences about online risks at the National Institute of Paediatrics and spoke to doctors, nurses and psychologists about HIV/AIDS and other STDs. In every training session, the young

people worked with the trainers to ensure the sessions were interactive, fun and the messages were conveyed in a youth-friendly way. This helped us to test a number of approaches/ messages during the training sessions so that we could identify those that were most interactive, fun and effective and integrate these into the game.

Through these training sessions we not only learned about the social issues that affect children and youth in Mexico, but also made sure that the entire team that was working on the development of the board game fully understood and agreed with the concepts and was able to articulate these to an audience. This was important to ensure that, as facilitators of the board game, they were confident to raise and discuss key protection issues in accordance with child rights principles. This is also why we also focused on the content of the YPP Child Protection Framework, so we could be sure we were respecting the rights of young people playing the game and ensure their safe participation. Issues related to confidentiality, reporting mechanisms and referrals were also discussed. Similarly, team work, communications, conflict management and facilitation tools were also discussed in detail. This helped to build the capacities of

the team not only in understanding the issues but also with leadership and facilitation skills.

After receiving our training, all the YPP Peer Supporters, Youth Motivators and even the National Coordinator got down to work. Our objective was clear: create a board game that would make it easier to give and receive peer support to those at risk of CSEC. Everyone contributed to the game: some people designed the squares, others helped with the information in the cards and others helped decide on the rules. In general, the whole process was a lot of hard work but also fun!

We also faced some challenges. For example, we found it challenging to agree on a number of issues for the game. For instance, while the trainings that we had received made it easy to decide on which content/topics to include, it was difficult to make up our minds on technical issues such as the design of the board or the rules of the game. In the end, we resolved our disagreements by evaluating and combining the different proposals and choosing a final one that was agreed upon by the majority of the participants. Once we had made our decisions, a professional designer helped us make the game more attractive and easier to play.

We had to learn a lot about CSEC, board games and peer support to implement this micro-project, and it took us several working sessions before we came up with our first complete game proposal. We also gave a lot of thought to the name of the game; in the end, as it was designed in the shape of a labyrinth, we ended up calling it 'The CSEC Labyrinth'.

## Description of the CSEC labyrinth

The game was designed to motivate young people against CSEC in a fun and engaging way. The game we produced can be played by between 2 and 10 people; this allows us to keep the group of players relatively small to ensure active participation from everyone and helps facilitators to manage the group and address any sensitive issues or confidential information that could be shared during the game.

Once the game gets started, each player throws the die and can either advance their counter the number of spaces indicated by both dice together, or they can advance each of their counters the number indicated by each die. If both dice show the same

number, the player advances and throws again.

Once the counter is placed on a square, the player reads the words that are written on it and explains her/his relationship to the word. For example, if the player gets to the square entitled 'Youth' they can explain what this concept and experience means to them. The rest of players can then ask them questions related to that word, such as 'What do you think is the best part of being young?' or 'What's the most difficult experience you've had as a young person?' Some squares have prizes or punishments, and others have the phrases 'Find Out' or 'Tell Us' written in them, in which case the player will have to take a card from the corresponding pile and do the corresponding action.

The 'Find out' cards have information about CSEC and other related issues, which the player has to read out loud. There are total of 30 of these cards in the game. The following are some examples of phrases written on the 'Find it Out' and 'Tell Us' cards:

'Find it out'

- ➔ Vulnerability to CSEC is related to a number of issues, including a family breakdown, domestic violence, traveling alone, living

in communities where CSEC is present and/or where there are no social services, surfing the Internet unsafely, posting personal information and photos on social network pages, and consuming alcohol and drugs.

- ➔ CSEC harms victims both physically and emotionally.
- ➔ Sexual abuse of children is distinct to CSEC in that in situations of CSEC the child is not only used sexually, but for financial gain.
- ➔ Children never choose to be sexually exploited; rather, it is the adults who are responsible for threatening, deceiving and stealing from children in cases of CSEC.

'Tell us'

- ➔ Do you think that the use of electronic media (Internet, cell phones etc.) involves risks related to CSEC?
- ➔ In what way do you think that law enforcement can help prevent CSEC?
- ➔ What would you do if someone offered you 5 million pesos to pose naked for a magazine?
- ➔ Discuss the contributing factors of CSEC.
- ➔ How do you picture people that sexually exploit children?

The board was a square canvas measuring one metre on each side, making it easy to fold and transport. There are 53 squares; some help the player progress, some make them go back, others make the player miss a turn or take a card, but all of them relate to the main topic of CSEC and other related issues.

The first player to move all of his counters to the last square wins, but of course, the important thing with this game is not to win, but to share experiences among peers, support and trust each other, learn more about CSEC and other related topics and explore how to fight it and prevent it. The length of the game will depend on the number of players and the group dynamics, but it usually takes around one or two hours.

The game does not raise awareness in isolation. Instead, it feeds directly into our other awareness-raising tools. For instance, our peer support sessions became more fun and interactive, with meaningful discussions based on real life experiences and examples. This is because the game allowed the young mentor or counsellor to break the ice by raising these topics and discussing them himself. This made it easier for the other young players to share their experiences. We also realised that

having clear information on CSEC gives young people confidence to comment on the various issues addressed in the game, as they have a source for reliable knowledge and to form their opinions based on constructive discussions and real life experience sharing.

Therefore for the board game, we developed a theoretical and practical methodology, wherein mentors and counsellors offer workshops on CSEC and related topics before playing the game. At these workshops young people are actively participating, giving their opinions, discussing known cases, and talking about CSEC manifestations in their communities. Then, in the second session, the game is used as a tool to encourage them to talk about themselves in a child/youth friendly environment free from judgment, where they realise that what they feel and think is shared and understood by their peers, who can also offer them support. Little by little, through such interactions and learning, the youth receiving peer support start to develop their confidence and leadership and begin to support other youth in their schools and communities as protagonists or agents of social change.

The advantage of 'Labyrinth' is that it touches on many of issues that matter to young people (friends, leisure, youth, relationships, sexuality etc.) but also their concerns and problems they face (work, school, substance abuse, rights, family, health, HIV-AIDS etc.), and issues surrounding CSEC (prostitution, pornography, trafficking, perpetrators, intermediaries and customers of the CSEC etc.).

However, the best part of the game is that the 'Peer-to-Peer Approach' enables Peer Supporters to reach out to and engage those who are most-at-risk and have experienced CSEC by building friendship and trust in an environment that is social and non-judgemental. This evokes more positive responses from the youth and also enhances their confidence to open up.

## Experiences around the CSEC Labyrinth

Through this game we have reached 1,025 children and youth aged between 10 and 27, from a variety of backgrounds and contexts. For example, some of those with whom we have played the game are workers who are at risk of living on the streets, some are students, some are survivors of CSEC and some work in the tourism

industry. We have also used the game in several marginal areas of Mexico DF and rural areas of Oaxaca or Mexico state, where we had the opportunity to work with indigenous children.

Our experience of 'The CSEC Labyrinth' has been very diverse. Indeed, we have used it not only on young people, but also as part of our training of public officers from different institutions in our country involved in prevention of CSEC and attention to children in Quintana Roo state. This was a success and showed us that the game can also be used with adults!

After almost two years of using this valuable tool, it is clear to us that the game has to be used according to the local context based on the characteristics, needs and interests of those that are playing it. We are currently creating a database where we register how the game works with different populations and in different contexts. For instance, from our experience in Mexico we have noticed that, youth from different regions/places respond to the game differently. For example, elementary school children tend to take longer to start talking about themselves and give

opinions, this tendency is even more likely if the children are from rural or indigenous communities. In general, men are more open to discussions than women, but this also varies by culture.

We are very satisfied with the results of 'The CSEC Labyrinth', but the experience does not end here; as long as children are at risk of CSEC, we need to continue playing to prevent such crimes.

# COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

Ukraine

## Youth Power in Lobbying for Anti-CSEC Legislation Changes: A Ukrainian Experience

By Mariana Yevsyukova (24 years old)

Child and youth participation (CYP) is gaining ground each year as a powerful tool against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). While the majority of the participation is focused around prevention and information-sharing activities, many young people are also able to contribute significantly to areas such as lobbying and advocacy. In Ukraine, within the Youth Participation Programme (YPP), we have had many successful experiences of youth-led advocacy and lobbying, some of which we would like to share in this article. In 2004, the All-Ukrainian Network against CSEC, ECPAT International's affiliate group in Ukraine, was established. It consists of 25 member organisations that are actively involved in child rights protection, especially those that are linked to CSEC. In 2005, a youth section was established within the Network. The section

involves about 25 young people and children who advocate for children rights and the elimination of sexual exploitation and abuse; most of them are members of organisations of the All-Ukrainian Network against CSEC.

### The legislative context

In 2009, under the initiative of UNICEF, the Ukraine Centre 'La Strada-Ukraine' initiated research on the state of Ukraine's harmonisation with the provisions of the OPSC. To conduct the research, a group of experts was created (professionals from different institutions with expertise and knowledge in child rights protection and legislative work). This group of experts also included a youth panel, whose responsibilities included coordinating research, drafting amendments and participating in expert meetings. The analysis identified gaps in the Ukrainian legislation and its implementation and led to the experts developing very detailed recommendations for improving the legislation. In 2010, the expert group on legal harmonisation

in the field of protecting children from trafficking, pornography, prostitution and sexual abuse developed draft laws based on these recommendations.

The expert panel identified a number of ways in which the legislation fell short of these proposals. For example, Ukrainian legislation places legal liability on minors 16 to 18 years old for being engaged in prostitution, violating international standards that state clearly that children involved in prostitution are victims of sexual exploitation rather than offenders. Furthermore, adults who purchase sex with minors aged 16 to 18 are not held criminally liable. Draft laws to resolve these problems unfortunately met with strong resistance from the government and were postponed pending further consideration.

## The Body Shop campaign

Given Ukraine's failure to meet the standards set out in the OPSC, the YPP was keen to advocate for legislative change as well as raise awareness. ECPAT International and The Body Shop's 'Stop Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People' campaign, which began in Ukraine in 2010, presented an ideal platform for such advocacy. Children and young people from 14 regions of Ukraine collected more

than 55,736 signatures. Fifty per cent of these signatures came directly from children. It was hoped that the petition would push the Ukrainian government to harmonise child prostitution law as noted above, ensure effective prevention of child sex trafficking and create appropriate rehabilitation services for survivors of CSEC. Indeed, in Ukraine, the YPP took a very active role in ensuring the petition was drafted specifically to apply to the legislative context of the country. YPP activists elaborated on the draft of the petition, demanding that the Parliament of Ukraine establish a coordinating body for anti-trafficking activity in Ukraine, adopt effective legislation to protect children from exploitation in prostitution and ensure they are treated as victims rather than offenders.

The modified version of the ECPAT and The Body Shop petition was passed to the Parliament of Ukraine on October 5, 2011. To highlight the issue further, young activists conducted a flash mob to mobilise public support for their advocacy agenda. The advocacy efforts of the YPP, culminating in the flash mob, received a significant amount of media coverage from TV channels, newspapers and Internet media. Through their creative, dedicated and passionate campaigning, YPP youth in Ukraine ensured that issues related

to CSEC moved further into the public domain. This pushed more people to demand real change.

## Legislative change

On December 6 2011, the Member of Parliament who accepted the petition registered a comprehensive draft law against child prostitution in the Parliament of Ukraine and presented the petition to the Child Ombudsman. The Ukraine YPP had educated, advocated and lobbied to let the voice of the people of Ukraine be heard and their efforts resulted in legislative change.

## Tips for successful youth-led lobbying and advocacy

Through our successful lobbying campaign, we identified a number of effective approaches; these are outlined overleaf:



1. The nature of the existing problem must be understood in order to have a clear understanding of what is wrong, and what should be changed. Young people should be fully acquainted with relevant research and information in the media. They should also conduct consultations with experts.
2. Children and young people should be encouraged to reflect and debate the existing problem and solutions. They should then estimate the human and financial resources that will be required to implement their ideas. This should help inform the idea that is chosen.
3. The idea then needs to be turned into an action plan; the objective, target groups, strategic partners, etc. should all be defined. For children and young people it is very important to find the support of the right adult partners that can help them lobby successfully. These could be actors from NGOs with a good reputation or state bodies or decision-makers who are interested in this sphere and have experience promoting children's rights or lobbying for social change.
4. The coordination of the implementation plan must be clearly planned, with progress regularly monitored and evaluated throughout the project.
5. Everybody involved in the advocacy effort must be clear about the issue. It is very important to discuss the issue with children and young people who will be involved in the activities to ensure they have an advanced understanding. For example, if you plan a flash mob, all participants should understand the issue fully and be ready to answer any questions that arise.

Our experience proves that young people can contribute to the elimination of CSEC not only by becoming peer educators, but also by being active advocates for change. Young people can bring fresh and innovative ideas to legislation analyses, research, drafting laws, programmes and petitions. Children and young people can actively campaign against CSEC, as they are the ones who are most affected. As we have seen in our campaign, when those who are affected demand change in democratic society, change will happen. So let's collaborate to collectively lobby and advocate against CSEC!



Moldova

## A Personal Reflection of My Participation as a Youth Motivator in the YPP Project in Moldova

Eugenia Maxim (18 years old)

The issue of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is sensitive yet important. ECPAT International has done some significant work in disseminating accurate information and raising awareness on CSEC through the Youth Partnership Programme (YPP). The YPP focuses on reaching out to those children who are most vulnerable to CSEC and builds their capacity to lead actions against CSEC. In the Republic of Moldova, the YPP has been implemented with great success; we are increasing the awareness of children in disadvantaged situations and helping them understand the importance of child and youth participation in the fight against CSEC, while also finding real solutions and lobbying the government to take

greater action on this issue.

For many children in Moldova, their school is the main source of information. We focused our attention in working with partnership with the government schools through the YPP as the main point of contact and channel of communication with the children. We found that working in partnership with these schools yielded very effective results, as many of the children enrolled in government schools are at high risk of CSEC because of their disadvantaged background. We also learned that many of these children are insufficiently informed about the dangers of CSEC, and lack knowledge of self-protection mechanisms, believing that they have no control over their lives.

Through the Peer Support Sessions/ Information Seminars organised by the YPP, we focused on issues related to children's rights, CSEC, online exploitation of children, and HIV/ AIDS. Even though these subjects have been publicised and discussed widely by some NGOs in the region, we learned that many children still do not understand these concepts/issues and its risks and implications to their lives. Therefore, through the YPP we try to address many of these issues by sharing information in age-appropriate

ways, to inform young people about children's rights and the right of each and every child to protection

The YPP in Moldova is already in its third year of operation. Over the last three years we have recruited 34 children from 15 schools to become active Peer Supporters. This Peer-to-Peer approach has enabled us to offer considerable support to at-risk young people while also developing their knowledge and life skills considerably. The YPP activities have demonstrated that children are eager to acquire new information, especially in an environment where they can freely express their opinions without being judged by their teachers. They have also shown that they have the capacities to propose solutions to social problems that are worthy of being considered seriously and implemented by authorities or policy-makers. For example, one idea that emerged from our YPP group was the introduction of 'filters' to screen out paedophiles from the Internet. Another idea was the introduction of training for parents on the subject of sexual education for their children.

The YPP combines opportunities for participation with opportunities for capacity building of children; it focuses especially on those who come from vulnerable families. Without the

capacity-building element, we found that children lack the confidence to be active participants and take leadership roles. The YPP has helped many children at the personal level by providing them with opportunities to participate in prevention activities, sharing information about children's rights and protection and building their confidence and leadership skills. As a Youth Motivator, I worked closely with the Peer Supporters and other children in designing, planning and implementing sessions and various activities.

The YPP has taught all of us who work with the programme that children need more information on their rights and on how to protect themselves from CSEC. Without actively involving the children themselves in their own protection, it is impossible to truly empower them to be active advocates for social change. Through our advocacy actions, we have learned how young people can effectively lobby those in authority to improve the lives of children. We have learned how to communicate effectively with key stakeholders including teachers, parents, community leaders and high-level officials.

We have seen how some people at the highest levels of government support child and youth participation. For example, in Moldova, the Ombudsman

for children, Mrs Tamara Plamadeala, is a true advocate for children. She is very supportive of the YPP and is currently lobbying with the government to review the current legislation on child sex trafficking and CSEC in Moldova. Mrs Plamadeala has been instrumental in helping the YPP capture the attention of the government, by bringing the youth-led campaign petition against child sex trafficking to the attention of the relevant government officials, so that we could hand over the petitions with our call to action to end CSEC. She has also participated in many YPP activities and always showed her support and helped us lobby with the government on CSEC and child protection. She showed us the value of generating political commitment among relevant leaders and creating appropriate legislation in order to combat CSEC.

At the community level, we have used several methods to raise awareness of issues surrounding CSEC. One of the most effective methods that we have used are the posters that were made by the YPP participants; these were placed in school halls and provided indirect and subtle messages on CSEC-related issues with colourful and attractive designs and layouts. Another important action that we have implemented to draw attention to these issues is a 'flash mob', which we

used to draw public attention to issues surrounding CSEC. This attracts a lot of interest from the public and is a fun way for young people to get involved in advocacy and activism.

From my personal perspective, the YPP programme has helped me gain maturity over the few years of my participation in the project, and my transformation from a child and adolescent to a young adult has been strongly influenced by the activities and actions of the YPP. When I was chosen to participate for the first time at the 3rd World Congress in Rio de Janeiro, I had no idea that this would be the beginning of a project that would be so beneficial and that would influence my thinking and life

choices. For example, thanks to ECPAT and the YPP, I have chosen to study 'Psychology and Social Assistance', as I am passionate about helping children in difficult situations.

Participating in the Congress inspired me and opened my eyes to the truth about CSEC, and encouraged me to help those children who need it. Through the YPP, I now have the skills to offer information to all those who need help, and feel comfortable being a leader both within and outside of the organisation. I have also learned a lot about children's rights and other thematic issues as well as leadership and life skills. I have developed my communications, public speaking and social interaction skills, allowing me to

become more self-confident and self-assured in making my own decisions, learning how to say 'no', making the right choice and reaching out to those who may be in need of a friend. I have also improved my English, gained more work experience and earned the respect of my family, friends and colleagues. I am very thankful for this opportunity and hope that each and every child gets the opportunity to participate in a programme like this. As the YPP has shown, promoting participation of children and youth has so many benefits at the personal and community level that we cannot ensure the right for every child to live free from sexual exploitation without recognising their right to participation.



## Kyrgyzstan

### Effective Youth-led Strategies For Petition Campaigning Against CSEC In Kyrgyzstan

Tenizbaeva Zhyldyz (21 years old)  
Osmankulova Diana (16 years old)

Campaigning is an important advocacy tool in the fight against the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). In 2009, ECPAT International joined together with The Body Shop to launch a global campaign to 'Stop Child Sex Trafficking of Children and Youth People'. One of the most important components of the campaign has been the collection of petition signatures calling for greater commitment from governments to stop the sex trafficking of children. Although The Body Shop does not have a presence in Kyrgyzstan, the country does have a serious problem with child trafficking and other manifestations of CSEC. Therefore, Youth Partnership Programme (YPP) youth joined the ECPAT global campaign to collect petition signatures in Kyrgyzstan to raise public awareness and to

generate the necessary political will to strengthen actions against child sex trafficking. In this article, we explain the process and outcomes of the youth-led YPP Kyrgyzstan campaign.

### Rewarding partnerships

A lot of planning went into designing and implementing the petition campaign. At the very start, before we began collecting signatures for the campaign, we approached the Centre for Public Opinion Studies and Forecasting, El-Pikir, an affiliate member of ECPAT International, to consult with them and use their expertise to develop our own plans and youth-led strategies for the petition campaign. Although there was a lot of enthusiasm and interest among the YPP youth, we felt we needed a systematic approach to maximise the campaign and advocacy goals; hence, a significant amount of thought went into planning the process, which is one reason why it was so successful.

We established a timeline for the campaign and worked backwards from the time the petition signatures had to be handed over to a high-level government official. We also established target areas for petition collection and identified the routes

that the teams of young people and adults would take in the process of collecting the signatures. We produced campaign t-shirts and other materials that would help us be easily identifiable by the public. We used the campaign colours on all of our materials and used yellow balloons to indicate the locations where signatures were to be collected; banners with campaign logos and messages were also displayed to remind local people of their commitment to fight child sex trafficking.

## Forming teams for signature collecting

All the children involved in the campaign were divided into five teams. Each team consisted of four to five people, and one of them was appointed to be a leader responsible for the safety of the children and the campaign results. The children who participated came from five orphanages, and the leaders of the groups were all members of the YPP team. Some of the youth volunteers that helped were from El-Pikir; regional branches and partners of El-Pikir also joined in the campaign and helped organise.

The campaign teams also discussed a child and youth participation framework and set ground rules for the campaign petition to ensure that children could participate safely. Problem-solving sessions were organised throughout the campaign in order to address any concerns and challenges the young people were facing during the petition campaign.

## Identifying target collection points

The children collected signatures at a number of different places, including the orphanages in which they lived, streets, bus stops, shopping centres, educational institutions (where we showed a play first to encourage children to engage with the issues related to CSEC and trafficking), partner organisations of El-Pikir and umbrella organisations of ECPAT in Kyrgyzstan. We also collected signatures during several events related to the YPP that were organised by El-Pikir, so that these two activities were integrated together in order to reach out to larger audience and to collect more signatures.

## What we learned from the campaign

**Participation in the petition campaign strengthened confidence and interpersonal skills:** Through this advocacy and awareness-raising campaign, the young campaigners gained confidence in themselves and felt empowered to influence the process of protecting their rights locally in Kyrgyzstan and link it to a global campaign through the ECPAT network.

**Mobilisation of young people brought momentum and inspiration to the campaign:** We also learned that when young people are mobilised for a campaign, they bring to it lots of energy, inspiration and enthusiasm. The entire process was very positive, and the young people were consistently motivated to complete more activities and collect more petition signatures. The teams started to compete with each other in a friendly way, and helped the campaign run in a motivated and self-sufficient way.

**Young people found it easier to approach the general public for petition signatures:** We found that children were more effective than adults at collecting signatures; this is probably because members of public were less suspicious that children would be involved in lobbying for the elections in Kyrgyzstan. This was important because, around the time of the campaign, Kyrgyzstan was undergoing a lot of political unrest and there was a general feeling of uncertainty and insecurity. Authorities did not want people to form groups and carry out public activities. This made people reluctant to participate. However, the public seemed to be less suspicious of children than adults and this made them feel more comfortable participating in the petition campaign.

**Using young people in the campaign was cost-effective:** Although we had a large number of people engaged in the petition campaign, the costs were very low, as many of these were youth volunteers, who were consistently eager to work and implement activities. They also gave a lot of time to designing campaign materials and coordinating the activities. They were also an indispensable resource when the final thousands of petition signatures needed to be counted.

**Children and youth benefited from the capacity-building sessions:** The children who were engaged in the collection of signatures had undergone specialised training and participated in meetings before the campaign officially commenced. They learned about issues surrounding CSEC and the trafficking of children to ensure they were well prepared to answer any questions that might have arisen from the public on the objective and the rationale of the campaign. We also had many discussions on the relevance of the issue to Kyrgyzstan and the problem of trafficking of children within Kyrgyzstan and across the border areas. By the end of these sessions, the children fully understood the concepts and the gravity of the problem and felt confident to interact with the public on this issue.

**Young people make powerful advocates as they can speak directly from their experience:** We also conducted sessions on advocacy, campaigning and lobbying. We discussed the importance of young people being engaged or leading the petition campaign activities. The campaign involved many young people from residential institutions (orphanages etc.) in Kyrgyzstan. This was a very innovative approach,

because these young people often do not get a chance to participate in these kinds of public activity, despite the fact that they are the ones who are most at-risk of child trafficking and understand the vulnerabilities faced by young people to CSEC. Their experience and knowledge, combined with their capacity-building sessions on advocacy and leadership provided them with significant motivation to advocate on this issue and inspire to action other youth advocates. Their confidence grew as they learned how to approach people, explain the issue they were advocating for, and engage with them in debating the issue of child trafficking. These incredibly important life skills should also help these young people in the future.

## Challenges We Faced During the Campaign

When we first started gathering signatures in shopping centres and streets, we found it very difficult; this was a new activity for the young people and they found it challenging to go up to strangers and talk to them. Moreover, the time when we began collecting the signatures also happened to coincide with elections in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, most people

that we approached thought our petition had something to do with the political processes and that we were campaigning for a political party. This was our biggest problem. However, there were also some people who were aggressive about the cause itself as they denied that it was happening in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, some people told us that, because we were children ourselves, we did not have the right to collect signatures. Indeed, some even told us that they were not against

violence against children nor trafficking in children and that these issues were not important to them. These responses made it difficult to continue to keep our spirits and motivation high. However, we continued despite these challenges and focused on the successes that we had; soon, we were collecting many signatures and initiating debates with the public in issues surrounding child rights and trafficking.

Overall, the Kyrgyzstan YPP team gathered about 20,000 signatures for the campaign—a great success for the petition campaign against child sex trafficking and a very rewarding experience for all the young people that were directly engaged in the campaign



## SOUTH ASIA

India

### Child and Youth Participation against CSEC

Child and Youth Participation (CYP) is important because every child and young person has the right to be protected from sexual exploitation. Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child made it clear for the first time that children are not merely 'objects' of protection but 'subjects' with human rights, who have legitimate rights to participate in the decisions concerning them.

ECPAT's Youth Partnership Programme (YPP) puts children and young people, like us, at the heart of the fight against the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), an innovative approach that has changed the context of child protection significantly, making it more effective, relevant, and child-centred. In South Asia, children between 14 and 20 years old are most at-risk of CSEC. Clearly then, it is crucial to allow the voice of children

and young people to be the guiding force when shaping approaches to tackling this heinous crime.

Moreover, the YPP approach has been adapted specifically to respond to victims' needs; victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation suffer from a variety of physical, mental and emotional traumas that require a long healing process. There is significant evidence that shows that association with peers and participation and involvement in activities helps positively in the healing process. Peer association helps break the isolation that many victims feel once they have been rescued from the cycle of sexual exploitation. Involvement in activities and taking responsibilities breaks the 'self-guilt and self-doubt' that many at-risk young people and survivors feel, and the involvement of children and youth in this process means that it is implemented in the most sensitive, peer-appropriate and open way. Through this exchange, children and young people develop skills that help them to cope in their everyday lives and learn life skills such as teamwork and communication.

Young people who have escaped the cycle of exploitation (experiential youth) have garnered knowledge of the issues surrounding CSEC first-

Anjali Bin (19 years old)

hand, which they can use to reach out to other children. Experiential youth share their knowledge on a number of issues including child rights, trafficking and HIV; this information sharing helps other young people enhance their own protection. Including young people in the participatory process builds self-confidence and can help young people make effective decisions. When young people are involved in the decisions that affect their lives, they have a better understanding of why a decision was made and become a more empowered and engaged part of the process.

YPP is a valuable example of how CSEC survivors and vulnerable youth can play an active role in the design, implementation, decision-making and monitoring of a project designed for their benefit. It creates opportunities for children to take on leadership roles within their organisations and communities in which they live, recasting the role of child survivors from 'welfare recipients' to positive actors in decisions that affect their future and the society in which they live.

I would like here to share an incident about a boy called Samir (name changed) that illustrates how the YPP can save lives.

### Case Study:

A boy named Samir began to attend the SANLAAP centre where I am a Peer Supporter. His background and circumstances put him at high risk of being sexually exploited, and we had encouraged many of these at-risk young people to attend the centre. Samir was one of these. When he first arrived, he was very aggressive and was always starting fights. His behaviour towards the adults in the centre (teachers and staff) was especially disrespectful and aggressive. Talking with him I learned that his father had left him and his mother when he was very young. He felt neglected and unloved. I began giving him more attention and encouraged him to participate in the meditation and peer support activities. He was also given small responsibilities like maintaining discipline in class. This helped him feel that his views were listened to, and he earned the respect of the community by organising the YPP community awareness programme on child labour. By running the YPP life skills workshops, he became much more able to cope with his anger, and his behaviour began to improve. Thanks to his involvement in the YPP, Samir is no longer so angry; he feels validated and can see a future for himself that does not involve entering the world of sexual

exploitation.

I first became associated with SANLAAP after visiting their community centre for the first time when I was in Class V. Then, in 2005, when the YPP started at SANLAAP, I joined the programme because I liked the philosophy of working on a project that was led and implemented by children and young people.

I live right next to the red light area in Bowbazar, Kolkata. My family is extremely poor, and we have barely enough money to make ends meet. I have a lot of friends who have grown up in the red light district, and many of my neighbours are children of women who are sex workers. I saw that while we all belong to poor families, the children who live and grow up in the red light district face extra trauma, neglect, violence and stigma. It was then that I decided to support them. I was fortunate to already be involved with the YPP, and this gave me the training, skills and expertise that I needed to reach out to these children. When I first started working with the YPP in the red light district of Kolkata, my family was not very happy. Many people in our society feel that the children that grow up in the red light area have fewer morals and values, and my family were concerned that I

was spending time with ‘the wrong kind of people’. However, things have changed since I first started working for the YPP. I have shared my experiences with my family and helped them understand how complex the situation is for people growing up in this context, and how much we can help them by providing support and highlighting alternatives to sex work. In one recent case, I helped the adult workers of our YPP group in Kolkata rescue a minor Nepali girl who had been trafficked for sexual exploitation. While just a few years ago, my mother would have been scandalised to be seen working in this environment, this time, she came out to help us rescue the trafficked girl. She even stayed the night in the Night Shelter in the red light district while we waited for the adult caregivers to arrive. This was a huge step for my mother, who now talks about it with her friends and family and explains the complexities of this—often taboo—subject and shows that our work helps reach out to the wider community to change attitudes and behaviour as well as those who are in need.

## Peer Supporters

I am a Peer Supporter. I believe that the participation of Peer Supporters is very important in the YPP. As a Peer

Supporter, we reach out to vulnerable children and youth and encourage attitude and behaviour change in the wider community. As a Peer Supporter, I identify young people who might be affected by CSEC or other forms of abuse, violence or exploitation in the schools, shelters and communities where I work. After identifying the child, I try to talk to them and understand the problem in depth if possible. I inform the adults and Youth Motivators in the project and, together with the child, we form joint strategies to help the child escape the cycle of abuse. I also help to build a rapport with vulnerable children and at-risk youth and offer motivational support to help them understand the alternatives they have.

### Case Study:

One day, a girl of 11 years of age approached me after I finished conducting a session on child sexual abuse in one of the slum centres. She shared with me that a certain neighbour had been touching her in an appropriate way when her mother was out working. She had not realised that he was taking advantage of her until this session, and she had never shared this with anyone. The man had told her that it was a ‘secret’ game. I informed the YPP Child Protection Officer and talked to the girl and gave her support and strength to share this experience

with her mother. Her mother was informed, and we made sure that the neighbour was held accountable for his actions and never allowed near the girl again. This incident made me realise that the work I was doing could actually change someone’s life for the better.

## The impacts/benefits of the YPP on young people

Over the years, I have seen many changes and improvements in the children and young people with whom I have been working. I have seen positive changes both in individuals and in the environment and communities of the children as a direct result of the work of the YPP.

### Case Study:

A girl came to stay in one of our shelter homes when she was 14, having been trafficked when she was 13 years old and then rescued. In the shelter she experienced post-traumatic stress and became depressed and lonely. She was addicted to tobacco and sniffed glue to help escape the pain. I started communicating with her to build a friendship. I encouraged her to participate in the various micro-projects that are run here under the YPP. It turned out she was a talented artist, and she enjoyed taking the

creative classes that were offered to at-risk and vulnerable youth to help them express themselves and work through their experience. Her paintings and drawings were exhibited in a YPP event, which made her very happy. As she became happier, she became less reliant on substance abuse; eventually, she expressed an interest herself in becoming a Peer Supporter. She is now working as a Peer Supporter to other young people who have addiction issues.

The personal development of children, especially survivors of trafficking, is the single most significant result of the YPP... this transition from 'victim' to 'survivor' to 'responsible and contributing human being' is the most significant result of the YPP.

## The future of CYP

The YPP is an example of how children and young people can make

a meaningful and genuine contribution to helping at-risk young people escape the cycle of exploitation and abuse. However there are still places where voices of children and youth are still not heard or respected and where the views of adults are imposed on children. For example, I still see children being forced to participate in programmes unwillingly. There is a difference between encouragement and force. We must ensure that children are empowered and able to make free choices at every step of the process. Without this, there can be no genuine participation and exchange.

Today, survivors of trafficking living in SANLAAP's Sneha home are decision-makers in the shelter along with the adults. Their observations and opinions on the administration and activities of the shelter are respected and actively contribute to improving the quality of care and services given to survivors of trafficking and CSEC. YPP Peer Supporters are known as 'home

sisters', who are responsible for the well-being and protection of girls under their care. Often, YPP workers who are survivors themselves are elected as 'captains' of the shelter by all the girls. This has been observed and validated at Sneha Shelter Home of SANLAAP, where YPP Peer Support and micro-project activities are run. This is because the notion that these young women possess the necessary skills and capacities for crisis management, and extending support to others and can offer a unique, effective and appropriate experience base from which to construct prevention, recovery and advocacy strategies. An environment should be created to facilitate participation where adults understand and respect the capacity of children and youth to take part in project management. We have to ensure that participation is ensured at the grassroots level or at all levels in a child's life including families, schools and communities.



Nepal

## The Benefits of Youth-led Research on CSEC: Experiences and Lessons Learned from Nepal

By Priya Sherpa (19 years old)

The Youth Partnership Programme (YPP) in Nepal has used research as a mechanism to strengthen children and young people's participation in the fight against the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Youth-led research strengthens young people's capacity to identify, explore and find solutions to key issues affecting their lives. In addition, young researchers are better equipped to gain access to those young people who are most-at-risk of CSEC, conduct youth-appropriate training and build a rapport with those who are at risk to engage them in a sensitive and non-judgemental way. They are also in a position to make appropriate referrals to help their peers. Clearly, youth-led research not only benefits those who are conducting the research but also the young respondents.

### The many manifestations of CSEC in Nepal

In Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, large numbers of young girls are being recruited to work in establishments such as dance bars, cabin restaurants and massage parlours within the city itself. Many of those who work in the entertainment and service industry in Kathmandu are children. The YPP project has been designed to better understand the factors that

force children and young people into the sex industry and to implement targeted programmes to ensure their protection.

Previously, much of the research on CSEC in Nepal that had been conducted focused on the wider context of trafficking and HIV/AIDS. To help gain a more targeted and accurate picture of the complex factors that result in young people finding themselves trapped in the cycle of sexual exploitation, the YPP youth designed and implemented a youth-led research project. The YPP youth-led research is one of the most innovative and child-centric approaches to identifying the contributing factors of CSEC, as the youth who are involved in the research are also young survivors or those who are most-at-risk of CSEC. They understand the social context and have a unique insight into the lives of the respondents because of their own personal experiences. Moreover, the research encourages peer-to-peer assistance; for instance, if a problem or situation is identified, the youth researchers are able to respond proactively and appropriately to ensure the necessary follow-up actions are put in place.

## The youth-led research planning process

The YPP youth took the lead in planning the research process beginning with choosing the areas that they believed should be the focus of the research. Because most of the YPP youth workers had already been working within the red light district and other high-risk establishments, they were already familiar with the target locations. The YPP youth carried out the research process, by addressing the following areas: what the researcher aims to understand (objective), what is already known about the issue (literature review), how to better understand the issue (research methodology), where and how information is gathered (source and tools of data), understanding the issue with the data collected (data analysis), and what to do with the research findings (follow-up actions).

Once they had established the process, collected the data and conducted interviews, the youth researchers also reviewed secondary sources of information and discussed the charts and tables that were developed from the primary data in the light of this information. They then assimilated all the data and analysed their findings and presented their conclusions in a final draft report. At

all stages of the process, the youth researchers collaborated with the older, more experienced researchers to build their capacity in terms of conducting interviews, analysing data, increasing their knowledge of the issue, and increasing awareness of the issues surrounding CSEC within the community.

## The challenges of youth-led research

There were challenges involved in the data collection itself as well as the more specific challenges of working with respondents in risky and often potentially violent contexts. All research that is conducted in high-risk areas on very sensitive topics such as CSEC can be challenging and needs to be approached carefully and thoughtfully, regardless of whether those conducting the research are youth or not. Before conducting the research, the youth researchers conducted a risk assessment to anticipate any potential threats or risks that might be involved in the data collection. Many of the participants were approached and interviewed in high-risk areas, including massage parlours, dance bars and slums. Prior to conducting the surveys, all of the youth researchers were issued with identification cards so that, if members

of the community confronted them, they could show their cards to prove their affiliation with the local NGO to explain their presence. Youth were never sent out alone and were always accompanied by adults in high-risk areas. Although some interviews were conducted in the evening, the majority took place during the day to minimise the risk. The youth researchers were instructed to leave immediately if they ever felt like the situation had become unsafe or where confronted by a drunk or threatening person. The researchers fully understood how to conduct a risk assessment, were aware of the reporting procedures and had emergency contacts with them all the time.

Challenges related to data collection and analysing data were many and various. Sometimes the youth researchers encountered uncooperative respondents or garnered incomplete surveys. This meant that some of the data were limited or unreliable. As with all research of this sensitive nature, many of the respondents were reluctant to participate in the surveys because of their complex and problematic living situations. Some stated that they had participated in surveys in the past and were told they would be offered work by NGOs, but there was never any follow through. Many respondents

reported a desire to know how taking part in the research benefitted them.

## Youth-led research outcomes

Youth-led research is not only a means of collecting data but also of addressing needs within the community. Through conducting surveys, youth researchers and the wider NGO community become aware of situations that require urgent attention. For instance, one of our YPP youth researchers identified several at-risk children who had never been to school. To address this, they tried to involve the children in YPP activities. In one community, they established a youth club and began involving the youth in the Peer Support Programme. The reasons for this non-attendance were complex, and included factors related to poverty, discrimination against girls and having to work to support the family. However, the one reason that was most cited by the girls that were not attending school was that there was no separate toilet for the use of the girls, an issue that was easy to solve but had not been addressed by the school administration. This illustrates clearly the importance of youth-led initiatives.

Not only does this kind of research prompt targeted and specific actions such as this, but it also broadens the knowledge base about CSEC and child-centred research and helps raise awareness. For instance, a media event to launch the report helps to involve the various stakeholders—businesses, police, NGOs and ministers—to address why these things are taking place. The interaction creates dialogue and puts forth recommendations for follow-up measures, involving as many youth in the process as possible. One of the core follow-up plans is to get as many of the youth involved in the process as possible by promoting their participation and protection.

The YPP youth-led survey in Nepal has given stakeholders and the wider community a better understanding of the vulnerabilities of young people working in the red-light district in Kathmandu and the manifestations of CSEC that they are subjected to. As a direct result of the YPP Support Programme, almost 200 respondents have shown a willingness to join support groups. Moreover, the survey results have ensured that we now have an accurate understanding of the grass-roots situation of at-risk youth in the region. It has also highlighted the

high migration rate of young people from rural areas to urban areas and the lack of educational and employment opportunities that they face, which often forces them to enter high risk, informal and unregulated work such as that offered in the entertainment industry, bar restaurants and massage parlours and its linkages to sexual exploitation.

Attaining an in-depth understanding of the issues being faced by young people is essential if appropriate responses are to be put in place to break the cycle of exploitation and to address those factors that make children and young people vulnerable. The research has also provided opportunities for evidence-based advocacy—the YPP has been actively raising awareness of this issue and asking the governments to look into this matter. Similarly, the YPP has disseminated the report that resulted from this research to related government authorities, law enforcement, INGOs, NGOs and UN agencies. It is hoped that not only will this step up the necessary actions against the engagement of children and youth in highly exploitative work situations but will also address the root causes of the problem.



## South Asia

### YPP Peer Support Programme: Success of the Peer-to Peer Approach against CSEC in South Asia

By Apurba Bera (23 years old)

The Peer Support Programme exists under the Youth Partnership Programme (YPP) to empower youth to fight the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). The programme is self-sustaining and is run entirely by the YPP Youth Motivators and Peer Supporters. The primary objective of the programme is to promote awareness about the dangers of CSEC and use direct motivational support to help build both life and social skills for children and youth that are survivors or at risk of commercial sexual exploitation. YPP Peer Supporters are young people who are trained in peer support techniques and work with young people in local schools and shelters located in

areas where there are high rates of trafficking. Peer Supporters work with youth in both one-on-one and group sessions, utilising interactive and fun techniques to encourage discussion and share information. YPP Youth Motivators are youth members of the project management team who lead the implementation of YPP activities. Youth Motivators are involved in all aspects of the project, including strategic planning, coordination, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.

The Peer Support Programme is a key activity of the YPP for child survivors of CSEC in South Asia. In India, Peer Supporters work with children in the red light district as well as with the children of adult sex workers, those who live on the street and those who are found along the border region. In Nepal, they work particularly in the urban area of Kathmandu, within partner shelter homes and schools targeting at-risk children. In Bangladesh, the Peer Supporters work within shelter homes and the slum areas of Dhaka.

A successful Peer Support Programme is determined by the quality of the Peer Supporters. Students in primary school may be too young to offer support to other students; therefore, Peer Supporters are selected from those enrolled between grades six

and nine, with emphasis placed on children in lower grades who can remain involved in the programme for a longer time period. Selection criteria for Peer Supporters is also based on those who display a positive attitude, optimism, and empathy; those who have consistent attendance at school, perform well, and participate in activities; and those with a special skill that would be beneficial to the programme, such as speaking a second language or demonstrating strength in the arts. One of the major components of YPP is the partnership with survivors and youth at-risk of CSEC. Youth who have experienced a certain problem will be able to offer better support to others who may encounter or have encountered a similar situation. Youth who have recently come out of a traumatic situation, however, are not selected as Peer Supporters until they have been through a counselling programme.

## The peer support process

Peer Supporters must undergo a series of on-going trainings to prepare and equip them for their role. Senior Peer Supporters mentor new Peer Supporters through mentorship training; training sessions take place on topics such as overcoming communication barriers, presentation

skills and relationship-building techniques; and workshops include group sessions and activities, where the youth share their experiences and lessons learned.

The Peer Support Programme provides support to children and youth in three distinct ways: direct support, peer education and group activities. The direct support approach is primarily provided to students who have been subjected to sexual abuse, exploitation and intervention with those at risk or in situations that may lead to CSEC. Direct support aims to build resilience, confidence, creativity, self-esteem, and social and life skills. The purpose of direct support is to mitigate the impact of negative life experiences on their future as much as possible and to develop knowledge to protect themselves from abuse and exploitation. Peer Supporters must be good listeners, act as mediators and provide basic counselling support with the assistance of a professional counsellor.

Education is another very important aspect of peer support. Education activities are carried out by well-trained Peer Supporters who organise educational activities with their peers, aiming to develop their knowledge, attitudes and beliefs. Peer Supporters lead various sharing sessions and

creative discussions with young people on life skills and key topics such as child rights, trafficking and CSEC, health and hygiene, and early marriage. Peer Supporters also organise participatory activities in their schools by involving other students. These include competitions, discussions and other creative activities that contribute directly and indirectly to the understanding of issues related to CSEC. The direct support and peer education schemes focus largely on CSEC, whereas the participatory activities aim to generate the interest of students to become involved in the project.

## The risks and challenges of the programme

In order to ensure that the Peer Support Programme runs smoothly, Peer Supporters meet monthly to discuss challenges, good practices and lessons learned. One of the biggest challenges faced by Peer Supporters is working with children who have mood swings or depression that are a result of traumatic life experiences. Peer Supporters may feel overwhelmed by the needs of the youth they are working with. Another challenge is time management. Participation in the Peer Support Programme is voluntary, and some Peer Supporters may

become overburdened as they have other responsibilities such as school and work. Discussing taboo issues is also a challenge. Many schools do not want to implement the programme because they are reluctant to discuss a topic they believe is related exclusively to sex. The programme in fact covers a wide array of topics, beginning with life skills. Once schools have begun to understand the positive impact their work has on the children, then Peer Supporters can begin to discuss topics such as CSEC, sexual abuse and trafficking.

## Stakeholder involvement in the Peer Support Programme

Although the Peer Support Programme is entirely youth-run, Peer Supporters

work with adult professionals on the programme. This cooperation allows young people to be involved heavily with the programme while also allowing access to government and other arenas of power. In Nepal, the Peer Support Programme is working with government schools and in India with government-run shelter homes. Previously it was unthinkable for the public to have access to government institutions, but now they are accepting that children and youth have rights and are allowing them to participate in the quality and care of their protection.

The Peer Support Programme also works with the various governmental bodies to create child-friendly schools. In Nepal, the Peer Support Programme works with 28 schools and 14 protection homes in five districts. In India they work with 15

schools, shelters and organisations and in Bangladesh the programme works with nine shelter homes and six schools. The strategy is not to add new partners, but to establish the existing ones as resource institutions and encourage them to expand with the support of the YPP.

The Peer Support Programme is innovative, powerful and life changing, both for the Peer Supporters themselves and the children to whom they provide support. The manifold benefits of the programme include prevention and protection from CSEC, emotional support, a strong social network, becoming empowered, finding hope and positive role models, achieving insight and learning coping skills and resilience.



## SOUTH-EAST ASIA

### Cambodia

# The ECPAT and The Body Shop Youth-led Campaign to 'Stop Sex Trafficking in Cambodia'

By Sok Oudom (20 years old)

Cambodia is located in South-East Asia, an area where as many as one third of victims of human trafficking come from, pass through or end up; it shares borders with Vietnam, Thailand, and Lao PDR, and, as such, the trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is a lucrative industry. The 2010 US Trafficking in Persons Report found that Cambodia is a source, transit and destination country for victims of trafficking, and the number of Cambodian and Vietnamese girls who are trafficked to cities such as Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville to work in karaoke bars, massage

parlours and brothels is on the rise. Cambodia is the poorest country among the South East Asian nations—approximately 35% of its population living under the poverty line. Both its geographic location and the war that has wrought havoc over the last 20 years have weakened Cambodia's institutions, a situation that resulted in a growing trafficking and CSEC problem.

Cambodia is a haven for wealthy tourists who come to have sex with children; many of the children are easily lured into cycles of sexual abuse and exploitation through gifts, money or other valuables. Cambodian children are susceptible to the grooming techniques of sex tourists because of the poverty in which they live. The lure of cell phones, fancy clothes, food and shelter often outweighs any threat of danger. Monetary rewards manipulate children into engaging in sexual relations, and some families are unaware of the abuse that is happening to their children. Those most at risk of sexual exploitation are street children, orphans and children who are responsible for supporting their families and themselves.

“ I think this petition campaign was a great opportunity for me and other young people to learn various skills. From my involvement in various activities in the petition drive, I gained skills that made me capable of leading a preparation meeting, leading youth in activities and mobilising people to support the campaign’

*Sok Oudom, Youth Motivator*

## YPP Cambodia and its links to the global ECPAT campaign

Through the ECPAT Youth Partnership Programme (YPP) in Cambodia, we have been raising awareness on the issue of CSEC among local partners and communities since 2009. We also work to provide support to the victims and high-risk children and youth through the Peer Support Programme, having by the end of 2010 a total of 20 Peer Supporters from 10 YPP local partner organisations (school and shelter homes),

who have been closely and actively involved in supporting the project. This has also provided YPP Cambodia with access to a high number of at-risk children and their communities to raise awareness against CSEC.

The YPP Cambodia youth joined the ECPAT and The Body Shop’s ‘Stop Child Sex Trafficking of Children and

Young People’ campaign by initiating their own petition drive in Cambodia. To enhance the community’s awareness of CSEC-related issues, we established a series of preparation activities prior to the actual launch of the campaign. This provided the YPP youth with a good opportunity to link the local initiatives in Cambodia with the global campaign that ECPAT was implementing.

## Preparation key to successful campaigning

Preparation for the petition campaign began with a meeting held by the YPP on 11 January 2010. This meeting consisted of a question and answer session, a brainstorming session that resulted in a role-play script, and an update on the campaign goals. Questions focused mainly on the target audience, methods of collecting signatures, and ways to ensure the safety and protection of participating youth.

To ensure we had the requisite skills to garner the support of the community for the petition, we were first asked to develop an outline of what we would say when approaching members of the public and establish the method that we use to encourage them to

sign the petition. This was followed by a role-playing session in which each of us assumed the role of either a Peer Supporter trying to gather signatures or a community member who was being persuaded to support the campaign. This activity prepared us to handle varying situations, including how best to deal with situations where community members were resistant to signing the petition or were asking difficult questions.

We launched the petition drive by piloting a petition collection in a public market near the ECPAT Cambodia office, followed by a petition collection at the popular Russian Market in Phnom Penh. The Peer Supporters were split into four groups, each led by either a member of staff or a Youth Motivator, and sent out to different areas of the market for an hour and a half.

Despite our obvious enthusiasm for the campaign, approaching members of the public was not easy. Some of the children were shy and timid in the beginning, but they soon followed the lead of those who were more confident, and in total we collected over 200 signatures from a mix of shopkeepers, customers, and the motorcycle taxi drivers who wait just outside the market.

A feedback session was held at the office following the signature drive to discuss challenges. A minority of those approached did not want to support the campaign; some were unclear about the objectives of the campaign, assuming that the petition was a fundraising activity, or fearful that penning their signatures would result in the loss of their possessions. Others were hesitant to sign their names because they thought the petition would be submitted to the government; some people that we approached were sceptical about the effectiveness of NGOs and their campaign to eliminate child trafficking.

Despite these challenges, the pilot petition collection was a valuable exercise, as it gave us the chance to interact with the public to promote a good cause. This experience served as a learning process for Peer Supporters and Youth Motivators, as we prepared for obstacles that might arise in other campaigns, identify possible weaknesses in our approach and learn new strategies for the future.

'At first I felt as though I was not able to convince people to sign the petition form, as I didn't have confidence. I was scared that people might ask questions that I wouldn't be able to answer. However, after some practice, people signed the petition and I

started gaining confidence. The pilot session was a basic step in helping me practice the real campaign'. Youth Motivator, Hang Sovannara

## Launching the youth-led petition campaign

With all of the preparation underway, we put our campaign skills to use by launching the petition drive during the water festival, one of the biggest festivals in Cambodia, which brings together hundreds of thousands of people in Phnom Penh. The petition campaign took place between the 20 and 22 November 2010, beginning each day at 9am and ending at 4pm. Ensuring the safety of the young people was the top priority, as the water festival was very crowded. During the lunch break and at the end of each day, we conducted meetings with the YPP youth and the National Coordinator to discuss challenges and good practices from each group. The challenges experienced were similar to those felt during the pilot project. Some people did not believe the campaign could bring about change, and others were sceptical of the petition. Another challenge faced was that many people were illiterate, making it difficult for us to get signatures. To overcome this challenge, we suggested creating a petition form

that allowed those who were illiterate to sign with a thumbprint.

By the end of the three-day event, we were all quite exhausted, but our hard work paid off, and the piloting phase proved to be a key aspect in making this campaign event successful. We far exceeded our goal of 3,000 signatures, ending the campaign with a petition that had been signed by over 5,000 people.

## The National Day Against Human Trafficking

The celebration of the National Day Against Human Trafficking was another opportunity for the YPP youth to collect signatures for the campaign petition. Launched on 9 December at Wat Bothum Park in Phnom Penh, this event was organised by the Somaly Mam Foundation and AFESIP, a member of ECPAT Cambodia.

On this occasion, we were divided in three groups. The first group was stationed at the information booth to collect signatures for the petition form, the second group targeted the public and the third group targeted high government officials. In total, we collected approximately 1,200 signatures, including the signature of

Her Excellency Ms Ing Kantha Phavy, the Minister of Women's Affairs, Her Excellency Ms San Arun, the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and His Excellency Chiv Phally, the Director of the Human Trafficking Department. Her Excellency Dr Ing Kantha Phavy praised us for our courage in approaching such a high-ranking official to sign the petition form. We almost certainly would not have had the confidence to do this if we had not undergone such extensive training and piloting beforehand.

On 24 December 2010, AFESIP and the Somaly Mam Foundation organised a concert to celebrate the National Day Against Human Trafficking. The YPP National Coordinator organised a booth displaying ECPAT secretariat materials and 10 YPP youth were invited to help collect the signatures. Around 500 signatures were collected during this event.

## Tuk-tuk drivers—important intermediaries

ECPAT-Cambodia has been working with 100 tuk-tuk drivers in Phnom Penh to monitor and report suspicious cases of sex tourism. Seeing the potential in working with tuk-tuk drivers, the National Coordinator and Youth Motivators thought of a strategy wherein drivers were asked to collect signatures for the petition. We explained to each driver the project's aim, how to complete the petition form, how to encourage a customer to sign the petition and how to answer potential questions that might be posed by their clients. Each driver was asked to send the completed form every week to the ECPAT staff member in charge of monitoring tuk-tuk drivers. After receiving the completed form, we checked for any errors, which were reported back to tuk-tuk drivers to avoid future mistakes. About 3,400 signatures were collected through this mechanism.

## School and university students

The National Coordinator and YPP youth worked closely on the collection

of signatures from school and university students. We approached our friends at school to support the campaign and sign the petition form, we sent requests to school directors asking for permission to get into classrooms in other schools to explain about the petition campaign and ask for support, and to coordinate with a University Director to receive permission for the YPP youth to gain access to the campus and seek support from students. Build Bright University invited us to approach their students, so we set up a small stall at the university entrance displaying petition campaign banners and other materials, while we approached students and explained the purpose and importance of the campaign. All of the YPP youth did a great job collecting petition signatures from school and university students, and approximately 3,800 signatures were collected there.

## Signature collection from ECPAT Cambodia's NGO members

As the YPP Youth Motivator, I also gave a presentation on the petition campaign to 22 local NGO member organisations, who were attending

“This petition campaign has allowed me to understand how to develop a plan, realise the value of working as a team, and build up my confidence as I interacted with different people and heard different views regarding child trafficking’

*Sakal, Peer Supporter*

”

the quarterly members meeting of ECPAT Cambodia (a national network against CSEC). The presentation was found to be interesting and powerful, and focused on the objectives and expected outcomes of the petition campaign and, as a consequence, all 22 member organisations agreed to support the campaign. Out of the 22 member organisations, six members conduct outreach activities in their communities, and they agreed to mobilise their target people to sign the petition form. This allowed us to benefit from the work of other NGOs of the ECPAT Cambodia network and gave us the scope to raise awareness and seek support became even bigger. As a result of the impressive support from ECPAT-member organisations, we were able to gather 4,100 signatures for the ECPAT campaign within a month-long period.

## Conclusion

The petition campaign in Cambodia was a great opportunity for the YPP youth to build their capacity. From the planning of the petition campaign to the preparation meetings, and through to the implementation of various petition drive activities, we have encountered many challenges but have produced remarkable results. We have built our skills so that we can influence behavioural change among people at both a grassroots and a high-ranking governmental level. This testifies to the competency of the YPP youth. Many lessons have been learned and good practices have been identified. These have been documented so that we can share ideas and experiences with those in other countries where the YPP is implemented. Moreover, by supporting ECPAT's global campaign, we were able to add our voice to those of many other NGOs in calling for an end to child sex tourism.

“After the petition drive I noticed that my public speaking skills and confidence has greatly improved. I have more confidence speaking or working with friends and other people at schools and in shelters.”

*Sopheara, Peer Supporter*



## Thailand

### Age-Appropriate Strategies and Methodology in Working with CSEC Survivors and At-risk Youth: Experiences from the YPP Thailand Peer Support Programme

By Narissara 'Dear' Yebeo (25 years old)

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) is a significant problem in Thailand. The groups in the country that are most at risk are hill-tribe children and young people who live in remote communities, shelter homes or schools. One of the key activities that the Youth Partnership Programme (YPP) implements is a Peer Support Programme that aims to build young people's knowledge of CSEC and endow them with the necessary protection skills and capacities, while transforming negative self-image and changing adverse public perceptions.

The issues involved in CSEC can sometimes be difficult for individuals to understand and may be sensitive

for those who are survivors or who are most at risk. Therefore, the YPP here in Thailand tries to explore these issues through programmes that are tailored to different ages, genders, education levels or family backgrounds, and plan our activities and methods accordingly. We use different methodologies and strategies to approach different target groups.

The first target group is comprised of small children, made up of boys and girls between 7 and 11 years of age, some of whom live in shelters because they have no family or come from dysfunctional families. Some of them come from hill-tribes, many have no citizenship and some cannot read and write. Moreover, most of these children have no information on or understanding of child rights and CSEC, so they are at risk of being sexual exploited. To address this, we educate sensitively about human rights, children's rights, and we explore—in an age-appropriate way—the positive and negative issues affecting children in their communities, including CSEC (which we do not cover in-depth) and how to protect themselves from harm and report to adults. The methodology that we use to educate them includes storytelling, illustrative pictures and pop-up books. As they cannot read, we sometimes

use cartoon cards to educate them too, so that they can understand the concepts by looking at the pictures while we are explaining. For small children, exploring issues related to CSEC must be done in a sensitive and appropriate way. Young children are not able to grasp very complex ideas and are only able to concentrate for a short period of time. Therefore, we use fun and interactive activities such as jigsaw competitions or snakes and ladders, so that they can acquire knowledge and information about children's rights and CSEC in a fun way. We also ask them to draw and present their ideas about bad situations surrounding them, and then give them information to help them keep safe from that harm and report to adults when they are in a risky situation or see a potential harm to other children. Other effective methods that have been used successfully with this age group are movies, cartoon DVDs and theatre plays performed by our YPP youth group, as these are easier to remember and understand. In order to assess and summarise the learning session, we use simple methods such as Q&A sessions, or ask them to draw a picture about what they understood and learned from the activity.

Our second target group, teenagers, are young people between 12 and

18 years of age. These young people are transitioning between childhood and adulthood, so they are the most at-risk of sexual exploitation. They are highly influenced by their perception of what their peers do or think, and they believe and follow their peers rather than their parents. Some of them come from poor, indebted or large families, or have no citizenship because they come from a tribal group or are migrants. Most of them are very attracted by the city, consumerism and perceived opportunities, and—as with all young people—are tempted to try things they have never done before; this can include having sex at a young age and giving sex in exchange for money.

For these reasons, teenagers are a very important target group for our programme, so we educate them and provide them with in-depth knowledge on issues like human rights, children's rights, violence against children, CSEC—its manifestations, negative impact and how to protect themselves and their peers, life skills, communication skills, basic counselling, problem solving, reproductive health and the linkage of CSEC and HIV/AIDS.

These teenagers come from different backgrounds, have different personalities and have gone through

different experiences, so some are shy, scared and not confident about expressing their feelings or participating in activities. To address this issue and break the barriers that might limit their understanding and participation, we use fun and interactive activities to break the ice, help them get to know each other and create a suitable atmosphere before we start with the learning activities.

After breaking the ice, we sometimes use group discussions so that we can understand the lifestyles of the participants, their thinking and their ideas, and so that we can exchange experiences. If some activities have too many participants, we divide them into small groups to ensure that everyone gets the right information, as working in a small group is a more effective environment for sharing understanding and keeping their attention. Other methods that we use with teenagers include situational analysis, mapping and problem trees, which help them to better understand CSEC, its causes and effects, and how they can protect themselves and their peers. Other interesting informative activities that we use with young people are competitions, discussions and various creative activities. Some of the skills that we want to teach our teenagers are not easy to understand

from a purely theoretical point of view, such as basic counselling or self-esteem skills (how to say no to risky situations, for instance), so we also use activities such as role plays and case studies, so that the young people can apply the knowledge they have learned and practice their skills in a more tangible and relevant way.

The third and last target group is the wider community; this means we must cater to different genders, ages, levels of education, religious faiths, languages and occupations. Our target communities are usually in remote areas, sometimes in hill-tribe communities, and many of the community members do not have ID cards and have not received a good education. In many cases, these community members cannot speak Thai. People in these remote communities are most at risk of being lured into sexual exploitation, as they have no knowledge about CSEC and trafficking; to address this, we tell them about human rights, children's rights, human trafficking and CSEC and explain how best to protect themselves and their children from CSEC. Perhaps most importantly, we teach them how to report suspicions of CSEC and trafficking to the appropriate authorities.

One of the main activities that we use to explain various issues surrounding CSEC and trafficking is mobile theatre performances in local and hill-tribe languages; these help community members of all ages and genders to access information and acquire knowledge about CSEC through a medium that is familiar, enjoyable and powerful.

Moreover, we also provide opportunities for young people living in these communities who speak the local languages to join in our theatre performances. After the theatre performances we usually have a Q&A session to assess whether the audience have understood the message, get feedback and summarise what they understood or learned from the performance. We also use radio programmes in local dialects or hill-tribe languages to provide information to the community; this enables us to broadcast information to youth who are at risk and to the wider community. We also support a number of initiatives with children and young people who run their own radio programmes and that are used to raise awareness of CSEC.

To understand the opinions that are held by the wider community

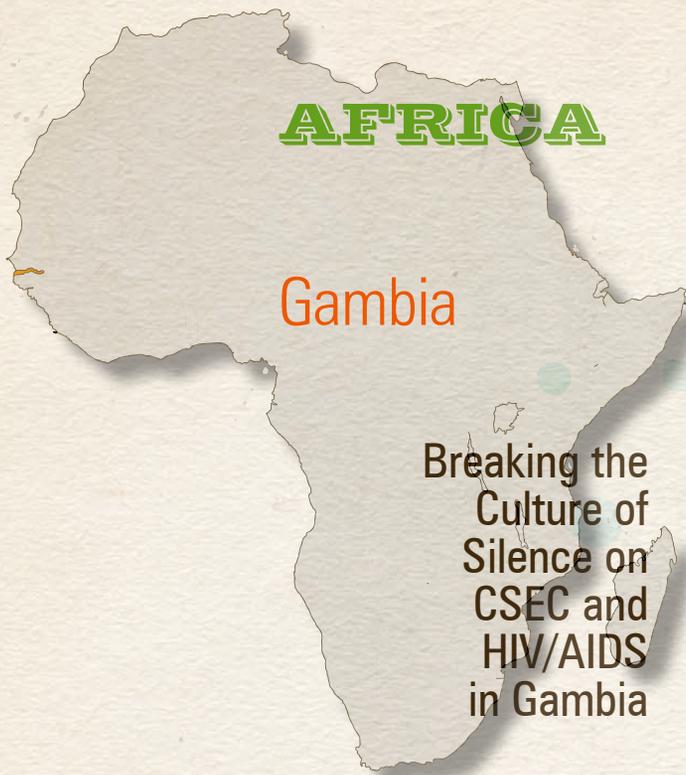
or by a specific group within it, we normally use focus group discussions, dividing the community by gender and sometimes by age. This helps us get a more detailed and nuanced understanding of people's perceptions of relevant issues. The participants use these meetings to share experiences about the situation in their communities, to discuss various personal problems and explore ways in which they can protect themselves from the harms of sexual exploitation. Finally, we also try to integrate the issue of CSEC into community activities; we do this by organising awareness-raising activities such as parades with banners that are held during community events such as Christmas, sports day or hill-tribe new year, when the whole community gathers in the same place. This method is a particularly powerful way of raising awareness of CSEC and child rights, because posters, postcards and artwork can be used to transmit messages to a wide audience.

Organising these activities was not without its challenges; some of our Youth Motivators and Peer Supporters struggled to fit all their responsibilities into their—already busy—schedules. At times, we also found it challenging to communicate effectively with the

hill tribe people, as their languages often did not have the appropriate words to explain the various concepts that we wanted to explain. There were also difficulties in approaching certain target groups, as children who are at risk are often very shy and difficult to approach.

In order to overcome the time constraints, we reduced the length of the sessions, planned them much more effectively and got straight to the point. To overcome the other challenges, we tried to speak with the community leader and other well-educated members of the tribe to identify appropriate ways to

communicate our message and ensure the security of the whole community. We also ran many counselling and peer support sessions to encourage the children to open up to us so that we could tell them about protection procedures, and we always made sure that we had appropriate child protection staff in all of our activities.



## Breaking the Culture of Silence on CSEC and HIV/AIDS in Gambia

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has decimated families, disintegrated community support structures and increased levels of poverty among victims all over the world, especially in Africa. Globally, the rate of HIV/AIDS infection is growing at an alarming rate, especially among young people. Therefore, there is a clear need for more extensive and rapid responses for children who are either infected with HIV/AIDS or at high risk of being forced into commercial sexual exploitation. The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is linked to increased rates of HIV/AIDS among the victims. In Gambian society, CSEC is seldom discussed openly, nor do children and adults tend to discuss these issues. Hence, the YPP Gambia decided to implement a micro-project aimed at enhancing the level of awareness of the risks of CSEC and HIV/AIDS among different sectors of society, ranging from government leaders to children and

youth. The micro-project aimed to sensitise children and youth exploited in commercial sex and those who are vulnerable to or living with HIV/AIDS in communities.

### Preparation and research

The Youth Partnership Programme (YPP) team decided to work in five communities and partner schools. When we informed the schools about the micro-project, they came up with an awareness-raising strategy based around music and film. Before we began the project, we first needed to ensure we had the consent of the community. To this end, we first had to ensure the community would support our initiative, so we applied for a police permit to carry out the activities in the region. Secondly, we held a preparatory meeting with the YPP Child Club Members and some members of the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs). This was important because through these meetings, the members of the clubs and PTAs were able to highlight specific HIV/AIDS and CSEC issues in the localities. From this meeting, they also helped in identifying places that would attract crowds of people. Thirdly, we paid a courtesy call to the village heads to inform them about the programme and to find out whether

By Amie Jobe (24 years old)

any communities were in mourning. In certain communities in Gambia, when an influential person dies, the whole community mourns and many activities are prohibited. These courtesy calls created mutual understanding and led to the attendance of the village heads and council of elders at the programme; many of these leaders also spoke at the programmes.

We also had to ensure we had access to the most accurate and up to date information; to this end, we contacted the National AIDS Secretariat (NAS) to inform them about the campaign and also to gather recent facts about the prevalence rate in the targeted areas and to identify the specific issues related to HIV/AIDS in our focus areas. We also collected some informative films from both NAS and the UNAIDS offices. They provided us with details on the different ways in which HIV/AIDS can be transmitted, the effects of the disease and where people in the region can go for treatment and advice. The YPP school members also conducted research on pressing HIV/AIDS issues in their communities and the findings of the research were shared with the YPP. They received some very interesting testimonies from people in the communities, which helped us better understand community attitudes toward these issues. For instance, one Peer

Supporter from Berending, Bakary Manneh, explained how 'teenage pregnancy is one of the root causes of early marriage in our community. Some parents believe that the reason why young girls get pregnant is because they are not married earlier. Therefore, they use teenage pregnancy as a pretext to marry off their daughters'. Testimonies like these help us to understand the complexity of the situation.

## Implementation

One session involved travelling to local villages, showing a film on the issues related to CSEC and conducting a quiz with the audience on the issues that were raised. The film was played at night because most people work in the fields during the day and because we used a projector to play the films, which only works in the dark. The film was followed by a discussion on the film and other related issues. To encourage active participation from the audience, we bought a number of prizes to give to the audience members who answered questions on the issues raised by the film correctly. The Youth Motivators made sure that, by the end of the session, the audience understood the facts and myths about HIV/AIDS.

Another session involved students of Farafenni and Janjanbureh performing sketches on the linkages between CSEC and HIV/AIDS. In addition, three young teachers of Pakalinding Upper Basic School did a ten-minute skit on child sex tourism and highlighted its link to HIV/AIDS. The team also adopted other good practices in the implementation of the campaign. We also ran several public education sessions in schools in the morning. All of our sessions were complemented by the distribution of leaflets and other information materials by the Peer Supporters and Youth Motivators.

## Lessons learned

We learned many valuable lessons from this project. We realised that our strategy of social mobilisation allowed us to reach out to a large number of people in one location. In addition, we learned that participation in these programmes could be enhanced if the village heads were informed, because they could use their traditional methods of communication to inform the rest of the community. We also found that the production of a child-friendly book on HIV/AIDS and the linkages between CSEC and HIV/AIDS was a powerful tool in disseminating information easily.

## Results of the campaign

As a result of the campaign, many people in the communities who had denied the existence of HIV/AIDS changed their minds. As Jainaba, a nurse from Berending explained: 'This programme is important because one problem I encounter here is the denial that HIV/AIDs exists...but with this campaign, many people acknowledge the reality of this disease'.

The campaign allowed us to consult with many young people and various other stakeholders on the risks to CSEC and how this relates to HIV/AIDS. Similarly, we discussed many myths and misconceptions regarding these issues, including those detailed in the table opposite.

Overall, this project has raised awareness of the YPP and its goals throughout the community. Many community members who were once ignorant of the different forms of CSEC and basic facts on HIV/AIDS now are much better informed. Moreover, the culture of silence on CSEC has been broken as a result of the public awareness-raising campaign.

What makes someone vulnerable to CSEC?	Vulnerabilities to HIV/AIDS
<p><b>Factors that contribute to CSEC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination against children, especially those who are very poor and are forced into CSEC</li> <li>• A high number of children who drop out of school at an early age</li> <li>• Children who are involved in exploitative labour, including domestic workers (who are often abused within the homes they work in), those who work in restaurants, and street vendors</li> <li>• Parents that do not carry out their responsibilities, exploit children themselves and tolerate CSEC</li> <li>• Children who experience domestic violence are at a higher risk of CSEC</li> <li>• Lack of awareness of children's rights encourages tolerance of violations of children's rights</li> <li>• Culture of silence and tolerance also helps encourage CSEC because no one raises it as a concern or punishes the offenders</li> <li>• Materialism (or Commercialisation) also encourages many young people to engage in CSEC to get quick money, as they want to maintain certain lifestyles</li> <li>• Religious/cultural practices such as child marriage, which is encouraged by many, is also a form of CSEC; this is especially the case when parents or caregivers gain things/money by arranging the marriage</li> </ul>	<p><b>Modes of transmission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sex without a condom (CSEC victims are often forced to have sex without using protection)</li> <li>• Through infected objects such as blades; this is a particularly high risk for those whose work brings them into close contact with other people's garbage</li> <li>• Use of infected needles by drug abusers who are also likely to engage in CSEC</li> <li>• Transmission from spouse to spouse; this is particularly a risk in polygamous or child marriages</li> </ul> <p><b>Myths and Misconceptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having sex with a child will cure AIDS</li> <li>• HIV/AIDS can be cured</li> <li>• HIV/AIDS and malaria are same type of disease</li> <li>• Sex with child makes you stronger and younger</li> <li>• SIDA (AIDS) means 'Syndrome Inventé pour Décourager les Amoureux'—Syndrome invented to discourage lovers</li> <li>• HIV does not exist, it is merely invented by others (white people) to control the population of Africa</li> <li>• HIV is in the condom and if you use it you will get HIV/AIDS</li> <li>• The HIV virus goes to sleep at midnight and if you have sex after this time you will not get AIDS</li> <li>• The AIDS virus will leave your body if you urinate first thing in the morning after having sex without a condom</li> <li>• If you have spiritual protection then you will not get HIV/AIDS</li> <li>• You will only get HIV/AIDS by someone giving you voodoo</li> </ul>



## Changing the Public's Mind-set Towards CSEC

The launch of the ECPAT International and The Body Shop campaign against the sex trafficking of children and young people was a very significant event in Togo. The implementation of the campaign demonstrated how information disseminated on the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) through a campaign could clarify any misconceptions and change people's mind-set, while enhancing the knowledge of children, youth and adults on CSEC. While this idea was initiated by ECPAT International and The Body Shop, the conception and the implementation of the project in Togo was undertaken solely by the YPP children and youth.

In Togo, many children and youth are vulnerable to CSEC as a result of poor living conditions and poverty. Some of these children have been neglected by their parents and have had to fend

for themselves. There are also cases of girls who have left their families to enter early marriages. We also see instances where boys and girls are trafficked for domestic exploitation, prostitution and pornography and subjected to other forms of violence. Some children and youth are forced to stop schooling because their parents cannot afford to pay the school fees; moreover, some parents do not believe that educating girls is important or necessary. Of these various factors, those that are most closely related to CSEC in Togo are early marriage and child prostitution.

## Planning

For the planning of the project, the youth members of the Youth Partnership Programme (YPP) initiated a discussion on the outcomes of the project and the kind of strategies and activities that could be used to achieve the outcomes was first conducted. Following that, we elaborated the details of the project and outlined the planning and delegation of roles and responsibilities. These were outlined clearly and rehearsals of the project were conducted with all those involved. This step was followed by the actual implementation of the project with each member carrying out his or her assigned roles. These

By Emeña Agalatossi (27 years old)

steps aided the success of the project as they promoted the involvement, cooperation and understanding of members and helped them foster a common goal.

In addition to members of the project being directly involved in the implementation, YPP Togo also obtained the participation of stakeholders such as school teachers, police and local community authorities. The team utilised different methods to engage these stakeholders. We asked a number of teachers/YPP supervisors to attend the working sessions on the project. We also sent police and community leaders letters explaining the project and at the same time, asking for permission to organise the campaign activities in the communities. It was heartening to obtain a positive response from the authorities. The authorities acknowledged the importance of the

project and appreciated and welcomed the initiative of the YPP.

In the implementation of this project, we carried out three kinds of activities—campaigning, performances of short plays and collection of signatures for the campaign petition. We chose these activities because they allowed us to reach a large audience. Our target audience was composed of children and young people in centres, students, parents, authorities and the community at large.

## Campaign outcomes

Overall, the campaign was a great success; we managed to reach out to more than 8,000 people in Lomé and Atakpamé. Many of these people were made aware of the consequences of the trafficking of children and youth for sexual purposes. In addition,

more than 6,000 people signed the petition, evidence that many people agree that the trafficking of children and youths for sexual purposes is a growing phenomenon that requires action. The children and youth became better able to defend their own rights and advocate for change, through their active participation in the YPP activities.

Despite the success of the campaign, we also encountered some challenges, including the refusal of some members of the public to sign the petition, despite the youth's explanation of the objectives. Those who refused cited reasons such as scepticism of the benefits of petitions and those who thought that CSEC did not exist. Overall, organising this campaign was a learning journey for the YPP youth, which demonstrated how rewarding, challenging and important youth-led advocacy can be.



## Youth-led Participation— An Effective Approach to Raise Awareness of CSEC and HIV/AIDS in Uganda

By Jonathan Ssembajwe  
(23 years old)

Between June 2009 and August 2010, the ECPAT International Child and Youth Advisory Committee (EICYAC) Youth Representative for Africa, in cooperation with other children and youth in Uganda, conducted an awareness-raising campaign to raise awareness of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and HIV/AIDS. The campaign targeted young people in schools and the wider community through the mass media.

The campaign was carried out in two phases; the first phase was implemented between June and October 2009 and focused on awareness-raising within local schools, and the second phase was conducted between May and August 2010 and focused on using media for wider public education and sensitisation. During the campaign, various issues were raised by young people and for

young people. Firstly, we focused on increasing the consciousness of young people and the public of the causes, misconceptions and consequences of CSEC. Secondly, the campaign highlighted the best possible responses to the issue, including publicising available reporting mechanisms (a toll-free hotline number that can be called to report anything suspicious related to CSEC, for instance). The campaign also drew attention to the most important self-protection measures that young people can implement to prevent themselves from becoming victims of CSEC. All of the activities were planned and implemented by young people—from the proposal writing stage to the final report, with advice from the ECPAT National Coordinator of Uganda and teachers who assisted the team in school activities.

The project proposal was developed in view of the high incidence of CSEC and HIV/AIDS in Uganda. There was a dangerous lack of knowledge on the dangers of CSEC in the region and widespread ignorance in regard to the right of all children to be protected from any form of sexual abuse and how best to combat this. Therefore, the project aimed to equip young people and adults with the skills necessary to help eliminate CSEC as well as ensuring they had access to

the most up-to-date and accurate information on the issue. The campaign was implemented successfully in both primary and secondary schools, and the messages were also disseminated through radio broadcasts.

## The campaign process

We started by organising a capacity-building meeting for selected youth peer educators from schools and organisations advocating for the rights of children. The young people were given information on the campaign and were asked to discuss the details of the focus, objectives and implementation of the campaign. We then visited schools and media companies requesting permission to carry out awareness-raising campaign activities on CSEC in their premises and drew up a schedule for the campaign activities. The peer educators were then divided into groups of three or four who would then either give a presentation in the schools or work with the media companies.

Our first target group was comprised of children and youth from the two districts of Kampala and Wakiso and their parents. These districts were chosen as they have a high rate of

CSEC. The children learned how to protect themselves while the parents, being the caregivers and guardians, learned how to protect their children from CSEC. Approximately 50,000 parents were reached in both phases, based on the number of people who tuned in to the radio programmes. In addition, it was estimated that we reached 60,000 students with our information.

The success of the youth-led campaign in Uganda could be attributed to various factors. First and foremost, the presenters at the campaign were young people who had been previously victimised; this meant they were very well aware of how commercial sexual exploitation could happen to children and young people. This experiential knowledge greatly contributed to the success of our campaign, as they were able to share their experiences and knowledge of exploitation. By speaking out, they highlighted the reality and seriousness of CSEC to the public.

In addition, this campaign allowed children and youth to vocalise their experiences of CSEC with their peers confidently, without any fear. Through this activity, we were able to obtain more information on the tactics of the perpetrator in luring students into commercial sex.

This campaign empowered the peer educators to fight CSEC with vigour and in a targeted and appropriate way. The energy and enthusiasm demonstrated by the peer educators clearly made this awareness raising campaign a huge success. The peer educators were able to reach the target group of youth through age-appropriate activities such as games, sports and thereby facilitated the peer-to-peer transmission of messages effectively.

## Impact of the campaign

We assessed the impact of the campaign on the basis of evaluation forms circulated to the students in schools and to the members of public who tuned into the radio programmes. The results obtained suggested that our campaign had increased awareness of CSEC for those who had been exposed to our campaign. Moreover, those who had been recipients of our campaign demonstrated a greater understanding of a child's right to protection and, most importantly, they understood that in the context of the sexual exploitation of children, the 'consent' of the child is irrelevant. Furthermore, both parents and children learned how and where to report sexual abuse cases

and understood that it is everyone's responsibility to protect children from CSEC.

Through the participation in these campaign activities, young people learned how to protect themselves from CSEC through being more aware of the potential risks, while their parents understood how to prevent their children from being victims.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

In spite of the achievements attained from the campaign, we faced several

challenges in engaging stakeholders. In some schools, the teachers were not receptive towards child rights, as they thought that it would embolden the children to 'turn against' the adults. There were several young people who were not willing to share their experiences of being exploited, and this wish was respected. Furthermore, we faced some resistance from adults who believed that the issue of sex should not be discussed by young people.

Over the period of the campaign, we saw a significant drop in the number of cases of child sexual abuse in Uganda. This may well be a direct result of

the Peer Educators and youth who implemented the ECPAT-supported campaign activities in 2009 and 2010.

One of the most powerful lessons that we learned was that youth-led participation is influential and effective. Young people who had prior experiences of being exploited were observed to be better able to motivate more people to support the cause against CSEC. Tapping into the synergy of youth-led participation, peer educators were also seen to be able to disseminate messages to their fellow peers at a much more efficient rate.







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