

**End child prostitution pornography and trafficking
May 2001**



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Child prostitutes are victims, not offenders

Since there is so much media coverage at the moment on children and young people involved in prostitution in our country it is timely to explore just exactly what the words "child prostitution" or "child prostitute" actually mean.

A general definition of child prostitution is that of a "child or young person exchanging his or her sexual services for either cash or other material benefits." Often the child may exchange a sexual activity not only for money but also for food, other types of consumer goods, drugs, or even a place to stay.

We also need to examine the conditions that have prevailed in our society allowing child prostitution to become a problem. In places such as Thailand or the Philippines it is commonly acknowledged that poverty and the breakdown of traditional family structures are key factors. It is harder for us as New Zealanders to accept that these very same conditions now exist in our own country.

The majority of young people become involved in this sort of exchange or "trade" at an opportunistic level. Or they may become involved so they can "survive" from day to day. Some of these children have felt they were forced to leave their own homes because they were being sexually abused and raped by members within their own extended family. For many the education system has let them down, at an early stage, and they drop out. Attaining an education becomes impossible and loses any meaning for them. A smaller proportion of these young people actually end up becoming "professionally" involved. They engage in sexual activity with adults as a "full time job."

However ECPAT believes that there is a key underlying issue that is rarely addressed. It must be, if we are to ensure our children do not have to engage in sex for their survival. The real problem is not that children and young people are involved in prostitution but that adults, (the majority of whom are men), are actively seeking out these young people to sexually exploit. These children are not "on a level playing ground" with adults.

ECPAT believes that in any exchange of sexual activity between a child and an adult there is first and foremost a power imbalance. It is unfortunate that media attention is not given more to those doing the exploiting rather than attention being focused on the children being exploited.

For these reasons it is extremely important that these children are not seen as offenders but victims in these situations. Since it is common for these children to be involved in other forms of "street crime" such as graffiti, burglaries, and theft it is easy to lose sight of how they were forced onto the streets in the first place. Protection services are needed rather than criminal procedures for these young people.

The New Zealand Government has recently taken an active step through legislative reform to ensure that children under 18 years engaged in “commercial sex” will be protected, and that it is illegal for anyone to solicit a person under 18 years for sex. This is in keeping with Article 34 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by the NZ Government which also states that young people under 18 years who are being commercially sexually exploited should be protected rather than criminalized.

Sue Martin
Projects Coordinator

National Plan of Action drafted

The New Zealand Government has at last drafted a National Plan of Action against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. A Ministry of Justice consultant met with ECPAT NZ and other interested groups in April to discuss the plan. ECPAT NZ and other agencies are meeting with the Ministry in Wellington on 6 June to finalise the Plan.

Police pick up child prostitute

Auckland police picked up an 11-year-old girl working as a prostitute in the inner city last month.

News of this incident was reported extensively by the New Zealand media and backs up the preliminary findings of Dr Miriam Saphira’s research that were reported in the March ECPAT NZ newsletter. Dr Saphira has been commissioned by ECPAT NZ to research commercial sexual exploitation of children in New Zealand.

ECPAT NZ national coordinator Denise Ritchie says there have been increasing reports in New Zealand of children selling themselves for as little as five dollars or a bag of glue. These child prostitutes, both boys and girls, come not only from Auckland, but also from other parts of the North Island.

Labour MP Dover Samuels was so concerned about these reports that he accompanied Maori wardens on their rounds in South Auckland on a recent Friday night. He described the young girls he saw on the streets as “just babies”.

Reports of child prostitutes on the streets of Auckland prompted Social Services Minister Steve Maharey to request an investigation by the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services. About 40 people representing social service agencies from throughout the greater Auckland region attended a meeting called as a result of Mr Maharey’s request. A subgroup, which includes a representative from ECPAT NZ, is considering how to handle the problem and identifying which agencies have the

Update on NZ child porn convictions

Since its inception in July 1996, the Department of Internal Affairs' Censorship Compliance Unit has conducted 906 investigations into the distribution and/or possession of child pornography in New Zealand. From those investigations:

- 383 New Zealanders have been caught trading child pornography via the internet, predominantly through chatrooms approximately 20-25% of traders have been aged 14-19 years.
- 114 cases have been prosecuted:
 - of 86 that have gone to court, 82 have resulted in convictions, 4 pleaded guilty but were discharged
 - 28 cases are yet to go to court

To date in 2001, there have been 14 convictions for possession and/or distribution of child pornography as follows: Auckland (4), Christchurch (1), Dunedin (1), Gisborne (1), Manukau (2), Porirua (1), Pukekohe (1), Tauranga (1), Waitakere (1), Whakatane (1).

Sentences (some multiple) ranged from fines (9) to supervision (4), periodic detention (3), community service (2), and imprisonment (3 months) (1).

Campaign to raise CSEC awareness

ECPAT International is running a youth arts campaign to raise awareness of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). All forms of artworks are sought including poetry, essays, theatre pieces, songs or dance. Performance art pieces must be filmed and the videotape submitted. The artworks will be exhibited at the Second World Congress in Yokohama in December 2001. The artists must be under the age of 25. Artworks must reflect the situation of CSEC in the artist's country or region or suggest how to address CSEC.

Entries must be received by ECPAT International by 30 September 2001 and can be sent to: Youth Participation Coordinator, ECPAT International, 328 Phayathai Rd, Ratchathewi, Bangkok 10400, Thailand.

ECPAT NZ thanks...

J R McKenzie Trust, the Jack and Emma Griffin Charitable Trust, the Tindall Foundation, Save the Children New Zealand, Watchdog and Mike Pinkney for funding our Education & Resource Development Programme.

Esteem Jewellery for the donation of necklace and earring sets and Rainbow's End for the donation of a family pass as spot prizes at our recent fundraising concert.

Air New Zealand for donating trans-Tasman flights for ECPAT NZ staff travel.

Energizer NZ Ltd for providing batteries to Manurewa Maori Wardens.



If you know anyone who would like to support our organisation, please pass on your newsletter when you have finished reading and get them to contact us directly.

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