

ECPAT-USA news

January 2007

DOES THE U.S. PROTECT CHILDREN FROM COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

In 1990, a research project was unveiled at a conference in Thailand showing a tremendous increase in the number of children trafficked for sexual exploitation within Asia. At the time there was little recognition that such a problem existed and there were few efforts to stop it, in Asia or anywhere else. That's when ECPAT was born. Since that conference there has been much progress in every region of the world, partly due to the convening of the First and Second World Congresses Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

In the U.S., ECPAT-USA conducts research, training and awareness raising about how prostitution, pornography and trafficking affect children in our country:

- Every day American children are trafficked across our country for abuse in a growing sex industry.
- Thousands of children are trafficked here from other countries for sexual exploitation.
- Americans regularly travel abroad to sexually exploit children overseas, a practice called "child sex tourism."

ECPAT-USA puts these problems before the eyes of elected officials, policy makers and the general public to educate them about how to protect children from these abuses. In 2006, ECPAT-USA and ECPAT International published two reports measuring how far we have come. Together they give an overview of where we must focus our efforts to further

protect children's right to grow up free from sexual exploitation. Inside this newsletter are excerpts from these reports.

"Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: USA." Internationally, ECPAT continually presses all the governments of the world to live up to the commitments made at the World Congresses. This 44-country Global Monitoring Report, published in December, is designed to contribute to the growing global partnership against commercial sexual exploitation of children by promoting dialogue and sharing of experiences.

"Report from the U.S. Mid-Term Review on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in America." With partners Shared Hope International and Johns Hopkins University Protection Project, ECPAT-USA completed a 9-month long review of U.S. actions and policies on commercial sexual exploitation of children. The U.S. Review was one of many such national and regional reviews that followed up the Second World Congress. The review in the U.S. included reports from federal agencies, data gathered from service providers and other non-profits and a 2-day conference in Washington, D.C.

Excerpts of Recommendations from “*Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: USA.*” To read the full report: http://www.ecpat.net/eng/A4A_2005/PDF/Americas/Global_Monitoring_Report-USA.pdf

- The United States should ratify the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* as one of the main instruments for creating a protective environment for all children and withdraw its reservations to the *Optional Protocol*.
- A national plan of action against the commercial sexual exploitation of children is urgently required to guide and support states to combat these crimes against children in a consistent and effective way.
- A model state law should be developed by the US Department of Justice, for approval by the states, which uniformly defines and prohibits acts related to the prostitution of children, including provisions prohibiting the arrest, detention and prosecution of prostituted children.
- The law on child pornography should be strengthened within the framework of the US Constitution and greater efforts should be made to enforce child pornography laws. Also, as a matter of urgency, mechanisms must be put in place for better identifying and assisting child victims forced to create child pornographic images.
- The US government should develop targeted initiatives to tackle trafficking in children for sexual purposes specifically. At both national and international level, efforts to fight trafficking should discriminate between the different and complex forms of sexual exploitation and take the

specific action necessary to address these.

- Greater resources should be committed for combating sexual exploitation of children and youth in prostitution. More research must be undertaken to establish these violations affecting children and to better typify and quantify this particular problem, inform policies and programs to combat it.
- An aggressive effort is required to raise awareness to prevent sexual exploitation of children. In particular, more educational initiatives are needed to better protect children from commercial sexual exploitation.
- As a preventive measure, the United States should undertake an education program aimed at its citizens and residents who travel abroad to sexually exploit children. In addition, notification on individuals with criminal records of sexual crimes against children should be provided to relevant authorities in receiving countries.
- Training is needed for law enforcement officers, Juvenile Court staff, and social service providers to help build skills and knowledge for assisting sexually exploited children adequately. Assistance to families of affected children is also required for them to participate actively in their children’s recovery.
- Support services, especially residential services, for the care and protection of all child victims of commercial sexual exploitation must be expanded. Support services for American victims of trafficking must be made available.

YouTube now has the latest Air France inflight video against child sex tourism. Watch it here:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xo8abxUhGfI>

For more information about the First and Second World Congresses Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children go to: <http://www.csecworldcongress.org/en/index.htm>

Excerpts from Key Findings of *The U.S. Mid-Term Review on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in America.* To read the full report:

<http://ecpatusa.org/documents/MTRFinalReport.pdf>

1. Demand. The lack of programs focusing on demand for sexual services of children is an urgent issue. Demand for sexual services of children was recognized as the basis for the increasing crisis of victimized children in America. Demand must be addressed through both prevention and prosecution. There is a dearth of public awareness programs, treatment options and incarceration alternatives for buyers of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

2. The proliferation of child pornography. Child pornography has increased exponentially in volume and violence, and it is easily distributed due to emergent technologies. It is a cause, symptom and evidence of child exploitation. The growth of on-line child pornography in the U.S. was addressed as a catalyst for the rise in demand for child victims and child pornography was acknowledged as a gateway to further child sexual exploitation through trafficking, prostitution and sex tourism.

3. An urgent need for more resources. The need for greater resources was a theme echoed throughout. Available resources targeted towards effective and secure services for victims, especially physical shelter, are very limited. Existing funding is dedicated to state foster care systems unable to protect and control this

exploited population. NGO service providers are often unable to keep victims secure due to lack of resources or fund.

4. Cooperation between civil society and law enforcement. A need for continued and improved cooperation between local law enforcement, NGOs and the federal government was identified. While significant and productive partnerships have been built between these entities, closer communication and partnership is needed to effectively fight commercial sexual exploitation of children in the United States.

5. Further development of legislation. Recent U.S. legislation has expanded criminal liability for those who profit from commercial sexual exploitation of children and extended territorial jurisdiction over offenders. However, continued legislative initiatives are needed that focus on the protection of, and appropriate services for, child victims, including de-criminalizing exploited minors by refraining from arresting them for prostitution and not using juvenile detention or the juvenile court delinquency process against child victims; reforming policies and practices within state child protective services agencies to address the needs of victims of commercial sexual exploitation; making state age of consent laws more consistent with federal legislation by raising the upper age for protection of child victims; developing and implementing right to residential shelter legislation for child victims of commercial sexual exploitation; and reforming state laws and local law enforcement and prosecutor policies to facilitate the prosecution of all adult exploiters.

“Lives for Sale” an enlightening new video about human trafficking by Maryknoll and Lightfoot Productions will be coming soon to a PBS station near you. Go to www.livesforsale.com and click [PBS Stations](#) for listings.

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§ § **ECPAT-USA’s Executive Director** was the subject of a full-page feature article in New York’s Daily New in December highlighting her work to help children. To see the article: http://www.nydailynews.com/city_life/big_town/index.html

STOPPING CHILD SEX TOURISM

ECPAT-USA's Protect Children in Tourism Project in Mexico and Belize has finished two years of work aimed at obtaining the cooperation of the travel and tourism industries in those countries to combat child sex tourism. Partnering with NGOs and travel industry associations in both countries allowed us to promote the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (www.thecode.org), a voluntary code that gets the travel industry involved in using its own resources against child sex tourism. In Cancun, Mexico, the largest Mexican destination for American tourists, the most important travel industry associations signed the Code and a number of Mexico-owned hotels began training their staff and otherwise implementing it. In Belize, 47 companies nationwide signed the Code of Conduct and trainings were conducted by our travel industry partner. Thanks to the passionate commitment of local communities and funding from the U.S. State Dept. we made great strides in protecting children in these beautiful resort areas.

♥ Help Create a Protective Environment for Children ♥

When planning your next vacation, work trip, or conference, patronize a travel company that has signed the Code of Conduct. If you use a company that has not signed, ask them why not. For a full list of companies that have signed the Code of Conduct see: <http://www.ecpatusa.org/SignatoriesCOCCCondensedend2006.doc>

A PUBLICATION OF

ECPAT-USA, Inc.
157 Montague St.
Brooklyn NY 11201
ph 718 935-9192
fax 718 935-9173
ecpat@ecpatusa.org
www.ecpatusa.org

Churches are invited to join the ECPAT-USA New Underground Railroad to help educate others and to become leaders in their own communities against human trafficking and child sexual exploitation. See <http://ecpatusa.org/thenewundergroundrailroad.htm> for more information.

Your donations are extremely important to us. Make your tax-deductible contribution to continue our work: Go to <http://ecpatusa.org/donations.asp>

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