

# Protection of minors against sexual exploitation

According to international estimates, up to two million minors worldwide are sexually exploited. The victims are mostly girls, but boys are also affected. They are sold into prostitution or forced to perform other sexual acts. Child pornography, i.e. photographing or filming sexual practices with minors and distributing or showing the results in electronic or printed form, is also a form of sexual exploitation. Children are also trafficked to other regions of the country or abroad to be abused. For the dealers and everyone else involved in exploitation, these human rights violations are a lucrative business. The children and young people affected are at risk of physical and psychological injury and exclusion from their social environment.

## **Commercial sexual exploitation of minors – what is it?**

Commercial sexual exploitation of minors is a sexual act – usually for money – between a minor and an adult in a position of responsibility, trust or power with respect to the child or young person by virtue of his or her age and development, with the adult deriving sexual pleasure or satisfaction from the act. Older minors can also be perpetrators in this kind of relationship with another minor. It is irrelevant whether or not the minor is forced to comply. All sexual acts – for money or otherwise – with children and young people under 18 in one of the relationships described above with the older person constitute a criminal act. Apparently voluntary prostitution of a young person on the street, lack of objection by a child or expressed “agreement” are familiar arguments by perpetrators, but these do not hold up under criminal investigation.

## **What are the reasons?**

Impoverishment and a lack of prospects can lead to the destruction of social networks. The low social status of children and women, discrimination against specific population groups and a lack of awareness of wrongdoing or taboos result in these crimes being actively committed or tolerated. Armed conflicts and unstable political situations can lead to an increase in the occurrence of sexual exploitation. Another familiar phenomenon is sexual exploitation in tourism.

The limited ability of the police and courts to deal specifically with sexually abused young people – compounded by accusations and

repression by the perpetrators – means that the victims often fail to report what has happened. Due to inefficient investigation and police corruption, these criminal acts are often not prosecuted. This leads the perpetrators to believe they are safe.

## **What has to be done to combat sexual exploitation of minors?**

Sexual exploitation of minors is a violation of their fundamental rights – the right to physical and emotional integrity, sexual self-determination, and freedom from slavery and similar conditions.



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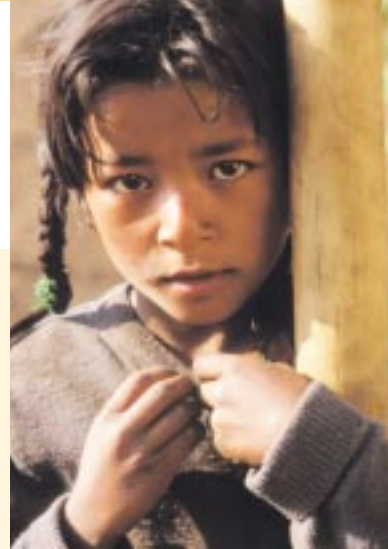
Federal Ministry  
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and Development

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The international community has committed itself in various agreements to take action against the sexual exploitation of minors, and to initiate extensive measures to prevent these crimes, rehabilitate the victims and prosecute the perpetrators. These agreements include:

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, with the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
- The Supplementary Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (“Palermo Protocol”) to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime
- ILO Convention 182 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour



At the First World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm in 1996, the participating states declared their intention to take action against all forms of sexual exploitation of minors. Following the Congress, a number of countries developed national action plans to implement the agreements.

Comprehensive multisectoral strategies to develop measures for the effective protection of children are most likely to be successful. These include:

- Development and amendment of laws ensuring the protection of minors, victim protection and prosecution of perpetrators, including prosecution beyond national borders.
- Extensive information campaigns to reach potential victims and their social environment, the general public and travellers.
- Implementation of economic, cultural and

social rights as fundamental human rights and important factors in combating sexual exploitation.

- Creation of a protective environment and strengthening the rights of women and minors.
- Upgrading and awareness-raising among specialists who come into contact with victims or potential victims (police, healthcare workers, social workers, teachers, judges).
- Promotion of high-quality rehabilitation facilities and psychosocial counselling, improving health and social services.
- Returning those affected to a safe social environment, possibly creating alternative sources of income.
- Informing potential and actual perpetrators about the consequences of their actions.
- Networking the various institutions at national and international level (data sharing, prevention, rehabilitation and prosecution).

The GTZ convention project “Protection of Minors against Sexual Exploitation” is supporting partner countries on behalf of BMZ in implementing the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

#### Further information is available from:

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