

Taking action: responses and gaps

The Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action: a framework for action¹

The 122 participating governments, NGOs, intergovernmental agencies and others at the first World Congress in Stockholm in August 1996 unanimously adopted the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action. This instrument provides a checklist of essential actions (varying from criminalization of the adult exploiter to non-penalization of the child victim) and integrated measures (from prevention to recovery and reintegration, from law enforcement to child participation) that need to be taken if efforts to eliminate the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) are to be effective.

The Agenda for Action set two principal goals by the year 2000. Participants undertook to:

- identify/establish national agendas/plans of action against CSEC;
- identify/establish national focal points and collect disaggregated data on CSEC.

While the Declaration and Agenda for Action spelled out the measures that were needed, it did not establish a monitoring mechanism to follow up implementation of the promises. The presumption was that existing mechanisms such as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, would ensure such follow-up. To some extent this has happened and, additionally, ECPAT has published annual reviews of government action taken in fulfillment of the Agenda for Action. So what has been the aftermath of the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action?

Some positive moves since Stockholm

There have been some encouraging developments since 1996. In brief:

- CSEC has gained a much higher profile at all levels. The Stockholm Congress and instruments have been very much a platform on which cooperation has been founded and efforts have been focused.
- Some although not enough countries have developed or are developing national plans of action against CSEC (approximately 50 countries at mid-2001).
- There have been important legislative changes as well as some high profile examples of successful law enforcement efforts against exploiters, including transnational operations illustrating good cooperation among different national law enforcement groups and Interpol.
- The private sector has become more involved in work against CSEC, particularly the tourism sector and the Internet service sector.
- There has been wide-ranging NGO and IGO programming against CSEC (see below) and improved planning, information exchange and cooperation at field level.
- There has been greater emphasis on children as stakeholders against CSEC and the need to enable and respect them as actors against the phenomenon, including through two important global conferences of young people against CSEC, in Vancouver and Manila.

¹ This Fact sheet borrows heavily from a paper by Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn, General Rapporteur of the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, presented to the February 2001 Kyoto Symposium

- In some regions there has been increased resource commitment, including for example through the European Commission, and regional and sub-regional cooperation and information exchange has improved.
- At global level, three major treaties have been adopted in the area of CSEC: an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000); ILO Convention 182 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1998); and a Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000).

Not-so-positive signs

There remain unmet challenges in the Stockholm Agenda for Action and the fight against CSEC, however:

- The target of all countries having national plans of action in place by the 2nd World Congress will not be met, although it is to be hoped that the holding of the Congress will itself give added impetus to this effort.
- Similarly, it is not clear how many countries have identified national focal points and data collection mechanisms, but there are very few.
- There is still much to be done in the area of law enforcement and implementation of policy and action strategies.
- Child victims are still being revictimized by the national process and the relevant authorities in some countries and there is particularly poor follow-up of children who have been trafficked and then returned to their country of origin.
- New forms of technology continue to challenge those working against CSEC to keep in step with the skills of exploiters.
- There is still work to be done in mobilizing all the potential players against CSEC and in facilitating their sharing and working together; this is particularly true of the private sector.
- There is much to be done to tackle the demand side of the CSEC equation, including understanding and sharing information on the nature of the exploiter and the mechanisms for exploitation; an understandable emphasis on the need to protect and help children has meant that very little work has been done to reduce or mitigate demand.
- Finally, some countries have still not made tackling CSEC a priority, despite the heinous nature of the crime, and continue to limit discussion of this issue as well as expenditure on it.

Field programming against CSEC

A whole range of programmes are run by NGOs, United Nations organizations and other bodies working against CSEC. These can be categorized into a number of different areas of programming:

Protection, prevention

- Girls' education/empowerment
- Boys' education
- Awareness-raising targeting family/social services/media/schools/community
- Advocacy, education, media, mobilization

- Awareness-raising among police/customs/judicial sector
- Neighbourhood watch groups (often volunteers)/helplines

Rescue, recovery, rehabilitation, reintegration

- Reporting mechanisms/rapid intervention
- Interception at point of vulnerability
- Rescue/raids
- Drop-in centres/refuges/case management
- Skills training/alternative life skills/alternative income-generating schemes
- Health and legal intervention/reintegration into community
- Long-term care/half-way houses

Legislation, training, law enforcement, implementation

- Legislative review
- Training of police, customs, judicial sectors
- Exchange programmes in law enforcement
- NGO, media and community monitoring of implementation

Policy, advocacy, research, strategy, planning

- Work with governments/private sector/groupings eg trade unions
- Advocacy among communities/families/young people/opinion-leaders
- Strategy at local, national, regional level/strategic plans/collaboration/multi-sectoral work

Networks, information sharing, multi-sectoral cooperation

- Web sites/newsletters/meetings/exchange mechanisms/focal points
- Multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary
- Cooperative planning/databases/lessons learned/experience-sharing

Each of these areas of activity is independently important in tackling the specific needs of a child or group of children, depending on the child, community, town, region or country in which the action takes place. The individual strengths and experiences of the agency implementing the activity is also an important factor. Beyond individual programming, however, it is particularly important to ensure that all the small, individual programmes build into a consolidated, ideally coordinated response to CSEC.

To support this, a number of regional and sub-regional initiatives exist, including for example the UN inter-agency Trafficking in Women and Children Project and working group in the Mekong sub-region, the European Commission's Daphne Programme which is a framework for action by the 15 Member States of the European Union and accession and EFTA countries, and the ILO's Central and West Africa framework against trafficking.

The important lesson of coordination and complementarity learned at Stockholm continues to prove its worth.