

Boy and Girl Victims of Sexual Exploitation in Mexico

UNICEF-DIF

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Introduction

The Mexico office of the United Nations Children's Fund and the National System for Integral Family Development (DIF) worked together on this study with the objective of analysing the problems faced by boys and girls who are subject to sexual exploitation for commercial purposes in Mexico, a problem that has been little approached and, to a large extent, is hidden from the view of most of the population.

We have been moved by the desire to give visibility to this problem, not as an end in itself that ceases along with the interest to know, but as a means aimed at understanding the situation of these children in order to be able to design the measures necessary to avoid them suffering the very often irreparable harm that this kind of exploitation entails. That is why, of all the questions that come to mind, questions about the children are the ones that seem to us to be the most important to answer: Who are they? Why are they there? How did they arrive? How were they induced? Where do they come from? What has happened to their families? What kind of support do they receive? What type of support do they need? What are their expectations?

The principal objectives behind the study are: 1) to identify the nature, extension and causes of the commercial sexual exploitation of girls and boys in the towns chosen; 2) to identify the ways in which they are recruited, the modes of operating and movement of the children from one region to another by the persons who exploit them and, 3) to collaborate closely with the local and national authorities in order to collect the information that is needed and use it to design policies that will make it possible to confront the phenomenon and offer greater protection to the children.

The study was carried out over ten months, from September 1999 to June 2000, in six towns of the Mexican Republic: Acapulco, Cancun, Ciudad Juárez, Guadalajara, Tapachula and Tijuana. Among other criteria, that are explained in detail in the first part, the selection of the towns also obeyed the fact they all have an important background on the existence of the phenomenon and the local authorities are interested in finding better ways of approaching it.

In spite of this deliberate bias, it seems to us that the study constitutes an important sample of what is happening in the country. We have been able to show this in an analysis of 120 cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children that came to light at a national level between 1998 and 1999, and that have permitted us to sustain that this is a phenomenon that is present in virtually all the country, in both small towns and rural zones, even though its dimensions are always greater and more visible in urban areas and tourist and frontier zones.

Indeed, the third part of the study puts forward criteria on the basis of which we estimate that there are nearly 16,000 girl and boy victims of commercial sexual exploitation in Mexico today.

In the study, we similarly attempt to explain the similarities and differences that we found in the phenomenon in the six towns and describe the most frequent types of exploitation and ways of operating in each place. In all the towns, the existence was explored of cases of the four types of commercial sexual exploitation of children: prostitution, traffic, pornography and child sex tourism. Descriptions and typologies were prepared in order to come to an understanding of the different situations of the children involved.

Among other things, the study made it possible to show that, although it is an illegal phenomenon and there have been recent changes in the legislation to increase penalties and dissuade aggressors, these cases very rarely reach the law enforcement institutions, and these and other institutions very rarely act against the exploiters and in benefit of child victims.

Neither did we find attention programmes especially designed for child victims who, on the whole, remain on the margin of ordinary life, of services, of the care and comprehension of society that often understands little about what is happening to these children.

It is worth adding that the study also forms part of a broader academic initiative that covers the countries of the North American region. In United States and Canada similar studies are being undertaken, following the same methodology with the purpose of obtaining comparable results that will offer a comprehension of the phenomenon beyond our borders and in benefit of the children of the region. This initiative will take place in the longer term but, without doubt, the results here presented constitute an important advance that must continue and be gone into more deeply.

The work is divided into three parts. the first contains the conceptual and methodological framework under which the research was developed; the second gives the results of the study carried out in six towns of Mexico and the third presents the conclusions and recommendations arising from the information collected. Tables, a bibliography and appendices are annexed.

It remains only to add that if this study contributes to making visible the children that are subjects of sexual exploitation, by making their reality comprehensible and, above all if it becomes a useful instrument for the authorities and organisations that can have an influence on modifying their reality, then it will have fully complied with its purpose.

FIRST PART:

CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Background

The sexual exploitation of children to obtain benefits of different types is a phenomenon that can be traced back to the most remote stages of the history of mankind. However, it is necessary to take into account that the characteristics and functioning that this phenomenon has had within different socio-cultural contexts have varied widely from one period to another, and it is therefore not possible to give a rapid historical review without falling into generalisations that would distort the phenomenon.

As this is the case, we shall only refer to the most recent background within which this study can be situated; that is, beginning with the adoption of a series of measures and policies that have been agreed on by countries and international agencies at an international level, in their concern for the growing number of children who are incorporated into the sex trade each year.

The most immediate starting point and the one with greatest weight is the Convention on the Rights of the Child, passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, signed by all the countries – except two – and adopted by Mexico in 1991. Article 34 of the Convention establishes the obligation of the State Parties to protect children against all kinds of sexual exploitation and abuse and to take all necessary measures to prevent their sexual exploitation. Among the international measures adopted on this subject, mention should be made of the International Agreement for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic of 1904; the Slavery Convention signed in 1926 and ratified by Mexico in 1934; and the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, signed by the majority of the Member States, in force since 1949 and ratified by Mexico in 1956 (Pérez Duarte, 1998).

After 1949, the commercial exploitation of children was mentioned in various instruments designed to combat the trafficking of persons with sexual purposes. In 1982, a Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on child work mentioned prostitution as one of the principal categories to be taken into account in the fight to eliminate child work. The following year, a Special Rapporteur on trafficking of persons and the sex trade presented a report to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in which he particularly mentioned the specific problems of children subject to sexual exploitation (IBCR, 1999).

With the Convention on the Rights of the Child, new measures and initiatives have been designed to face the commercial sexual exploitation of children. These include the appointment by the General Assembly of the United Nations of a Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and the use of children in pornography who reports on specific cases, carries out missions to different countries and draws up recommendations. Two Special Rapporteurs have been appointed to date: Vítit Muntarhorn, 1991 to 1994, and Ofelia Calcetas-Santos, 1994 to date. Ofelia Calcetas-Santos visited Mexico and

presented a report on her mission that constituted an important point of reference for the present study (Calcetas-Santos, 1998).

Similarly, within the United Nations Commission for Human Rights, a working group formed on the trafficking of children, child prostitution and child pornography returned a resolution in 1992 called Programme of Action for the Prevention of the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, an instrument that created a series of governing principles that have made it possible to establish the goals and objectives to be reached in this field by the Member States (IBCR, 1999)

During the nineteen nineties, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also promoted studies and supported numerous actions carried out by public agencies and non governmental organisations from different countries aimed at combating the sexual exploitation of children. Like the International Labour Organisation, UNICEF has recognised the link between the sexual exploitation of children and the need to eliminate child work. Child prostitution was thus included in Convention 182 of the ILO in 1999 on the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour and immediate action to eliminate it. It was also included in the International Programme for the Eradication of Child Labour put into operation by the ILO in 1991.

During the eighties, the decade in which the Convention was drawn up, some non-governmental organisations also played an important role in attracting the attention of governments and international institutions on this subject. Among these it is important to mention ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism) that had its origin in a campaign undertaken in Thailand. It is now an organisation with world-wide scope opposed to all types of sexual exploitation of children. It was precisely ECPAT, together with UNICEF, the Swedish government and the working group from non-governmental organisations on children's rights, that convened the World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm in 1996 (IBCR, 1999).

The World Congress was one of the most productive, significant events that have taken place in the fight against the sexual exploitation of children. Its declaration and action agenda were signed by 12 countries that committed themselves to confront the problem. The Congress made it possible to attract attention and develop international awareness as to the size of the phenomenon.

In parallel, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights has been discussing an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to make the commercial sexual exploitation of children a criminal offence of an international character. This Protocol, that has not yet been passed, would imply submitting to universal jurisdiction cases involving the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography, placing them as crimes against humanity, thus assuring the jurisdiction of all the State Parties independent of the nationality of the aggressors or the place where the crime was committed (IBCR, 1999).

The Report of the International Office for Children's Rights (IBCR, 1999) on the international dimensions of the sexual exploitation of children states that, in spite of the advances mentioned above, during the years following the World Congress it became evident that the resolutions discussed and the recommendations cannot be indistinctly

applied in all contexts, and it is clear that much work will need to be done at national level before the international recommendations can be applied.

It is perhaps within this work prior to the adoption of measures where this study can be placed as an effort that, we hope, will contribute to the fulfilment of the commitments that Mexico has made to protect children against all kind of sexual exploitation.

2. Introduction to the Problem

The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) has not yet been the object of a study in Mexico aimed at understanding, in an integral way, the characteristics that the phenomenon has at national, regional and local levels. This is in spite of the fact that it is a serious problem and that it is foreseeable that it may get worse as the result of the expansive nature of the global economy, the extension and permeability of the northern and southern borders of the country, as well as the different processes of change that have had an impact on families, weakening social links and increasing risks to and maltreatment of minors¹.

Studies developed in other countries have postulated that the globalisation of the economy, internationalisation and free trade have brought a series of unforeseen social problems (Estes, 1997a, 1998b; Lie, 1996; Rodríguez, 1998; Williams, 1995). Among these can be found an increase in the incidence of CSEC, including the commercial use of children by adults in prostitution, pornography and other types of “sex work” (DoL, 1995; Ireland, 1993; Munir & Yasin, 1997; United Nations, 1995).

According to these studies, the increase in CSEC seems to be driven by: a) a worsening of the living conditions of poor families (Barr et al., 1996; DoL, 1995; Longford, 1995); b) the promotion of child prostitution in the family circle (Dembo et al., 1992; Mueck, 1992); c) the use of sexual activities by children who have run away from home as a means of survival in the streets (Davidson & Loken; Haq, 1996; Snell, 1995; Azaola, 1998); d) the recruitment of children as sex workers by organised crime networks (Harris, 1998) and, e) the transfer of children from underdeveloped countries to developed countries which they enter illegally as “sex workers” (Chin, 1990; Ireland, 1993; McDonald, 1995; Seabrook, 1997; Williams, 1995).

The processes by means of which children are recruited for this type of activity are complex and vary not only between countries but also between cities within the countries, although they always almost involve adults who obtain economic advantages.

Some types of recruitment have been described in studies carried out in different countries and include: abduction (Barr et al. 1996; DoL, 1995); pressure from parents (D'Asaro & Foley, 1997); arrangements between parents and traffickers who may belong to organised crime networks (Seabrook, 1997; Yoon, 1997) and seduction or marriage prior to the exploitation of the victims (EDIAC, 1996; Azaola, 1998). Once these children have been recruited they are typically taken to “places of work” far from their places of origin.

¹ The project was drawn up following the guidelines proposed for the study of the phenomenon in the three North American nations by Professor Richard Estes of the University of Pennsylvania.

2.1 Proposed Explanations

Poverty is the most frequently factor cited to explain the involvement of large numbers of children in these activities (Boye, 1996; Estes, 1997; Longford, 1995; Shamim, 1993). However, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children of the United States has suggested that this factor alone cannot explain the large number of children under 16 years of age recruited for these activities, particularly in rich countries like the United States and Canada. In other countries, a large number of children recruited come from middle class sectors and become involved in this type of activities as a result of different circumstances, including having run away from home (Snell, 1995).

Other studies show that there is also a strong correlation between the sexual victimisation of children and adolescent pregnancies (Dembo et al., 1992; Widom, 1996); adult prostitution (Widom, 1996; Azaola, 1998); substance abuse (Ireland & Widom, 1994); violence (Gelles & Wolfner, 1994; Schwartz, Rendon & Hsieh, 1994; Weiner & Wolfgang, 1989; Weiner & Ruback, 1995) and other types of adult criminal behaviour (Dembo, 1992).

In Mexico, although some of the child victims of sexual exploitation are children who have lived in the streets, not all necessarily share this background, as we shall see in this study.

...Other factors that various pieces of research have proposed to explain CSEC are: paedophilia (Cole, 1993; De Mause, 1991; Prently, Knight & Lee, 1997), ease of access (Harris, 1998; O'Grady, 1992), weakness of legal controls (Gutiérrez, 1998; Harris, 1997; Samath, 1998), links due to debt (DoL, 1996; Knight, 1998), sadomasochism (Finkelhorn & Brown, 1985), intergenerational prostitution (Seneviratne, 1994) and the earnings obtained in countries where sex tourism with children is an important activity (Barr et al 1996; Boye, 1996; ECPAT, 1996; International Bureau for Children's Rights, 1998a, 1998b).

Other plausible explanations, but ones that have been less studied to date are: the high demand that promotes the recruitment of a growing number of children (Barr et al. 1996; Yoon, 1997); community disintegration (D'Asaro & Foley, 1997; Dembo, 1992); the social and cultural devaluation of children (Flowers, 1994; Gutiérrez, 1998) and the prior existence of organised crime networks with transnational financing and transport capacity (Barr et al. 1996; DoL, 1996; Muntarhorn, 1996; Williams, 1995 and Yoon, 1997). The availability of children, traffickers and clients converge around these factors that potentially bear an influence on the situation of these children.

2.2 Estimates as to Size

As this is an illegal phenomenon, we know that there are difficulties in estimating its size given the lack of reliable sources of registration. Nevertheless, the United Nations Children's Fund recently calculated that in southern Asian alone, nearly one million children are submitted to sexual exploitation practices, while several hundreds of thousands are found in similar conditions in Europe, Latin America and Africa. It also estimated that each year one million children throughout the world swell the ranks of the victims of this business (UNICEF, 1997). This was denounced in both the Seminar Against Sexual

Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in the Americas that was held in Brasilia in 1996 and in the World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, held the same year in Stockholm in which delegates from 120 countries took part.

Even in the developed countries, it is not known exactly how many children are being exploited. For example, the estimated figures for the United States vary between 100,000 and 300,000 children (ECPAT, 1996), although other sources calculate that there could be 500,000 (Flowers, 1994; Greenfeld, 1997). In Canada only approximations are available for a few regions (Proulx, Perrault, Ouimet & Guay, 1999). Similarly, the estimates that have been formulated for some underdeveloped countries vary within a very broad range from one source to another.

It is for this reason that one of the objectives of this study is to generate, through primary sources, more reliable statistical estimates in each of the 6 towns that have been selected, and using secondary sources, a first approximation of the number of children that could be subject to sexual exploitation in Mexico. These estimates derive from careful analyses of the triangulation of the data obtained from different sources in each of the towns chosen for the study.

With respect to the present state of knowledge on the subject, as can be seen from the bibliography, there are numerous studies that have been carried out on one or other aspects of the phenomenon in other countries, but very few in Mexico. The lack of knowledge on CESC in Mexico is even more glaring and worrying given the high level of attention given to the subject by governments of other countries and regions, principally Europe and Asia (European Commission, 1996; ECPAT, 1996; Vittachi, 1989). It is of note that during the last few years more than 20 countries have promulgated laws, in some cases of an extraterritorial character, to prohibit the commercial sexual activities of adults with children, even though the children reside in a country other than that of the aggressors. Meetings of experts and officials have also been organised and agreements have been signed by representatives of Asian and European countries in order to modify laws and draw up programmes to protect children from sexual exploitation (Third Asia-Europe Child Welfare Expert's Meeting, in: Calcetas-Santos, 1999).

Taking the above into account, we consider that the study, whose first advance is presented here is relevant, not only because it deals with a little studied problem on which there is a lack of reliable information from primary sources, but also, and above all, because the knowledge it produces will make it possible to formulate policies to more effectively face a problem that, as the principal international agencies protecting children have insistently pointed out, tends to get worse with globalisation.

3. General Objectives

This study uses an innovative approach with respect to the generation of original data from primary sources and the combined use of quantitative and qualitative research techniques that are described in the sections below.

The general objectives behind the study are:

- ❑ To identify the nature, extension and causes of CSEC in 6 towns in the Mexican Republic
- ❑ To identify the relative weight and modes of operating of the networks involved in the CSE of children
- ❑ To circulate the results of the study, formulate recommendations and collaborate with the authorities and agencies at a local and national level in order to strengthen their capacity to protect children from CSE

4. Specific Objectives

At the same time, the project also seeks to satisfy the following specific objectives:

- ❑ To identify the extension and behavioural patterns of the sex trade in children in 6 towns of the Mexican Republic
- ❑ To understand more completely the mixture of social, political and economic factors that intervene in the phenomenon and drive children to become involved in this kind of trade
- ❑ To understand more completely the combination of social, political and economic factors that motivate adult clients to have sexual relations with children
- ❑ To identify the procedures by means of which children from different regions are sexually exploited in the 6 towns studied
- ❑ To identify the strong and weak points in the care child victims of sexual exploitation receive from local institutions
- ❑ To formulate recommendations that will contribute to strengthening the capacity of local governments to confront the problem in a better way and offer greater protection to children.

5. Definition of Concepts

The definitions we use are those proposed in international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and are the same as those used in other international studies on CSEC (World Health Organisation, 1996, Ennew et al., 1996). These definitions are:

- a) **Child:** persons up to 18 years of age.
- b) **Child maltreatment:** to recurrently inflict physical or emotional damage on a dependent child, through intentional blows, uncontrolled corporal punishment, persistent ridiculisation and degradation or sexual abuse, usually committed by parents or care-takers.
- c) **Child sexual abuse:** sexual activity of either of the two following types between a child and a person over 18 years of age. Type 1: sexual penetration and/or sexual activities that involve the genitals and, type 2: sexual activities without penetration and without involving the genitals (i.e. observation of sexual acts performed by others, exploitation as subjects in pornography, etc.).
- d) **Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:** sexual abuse of children involving financial advantages for one or several of the parties intervening in the sexual activity

that can be of two types: 1) involving the transfer of money from an adult to a child in exchange for sex and, 2) involving provision in kind or services that an adult exchanges for sex with a child (i.e. shelter, food, protection, etc.).

- e) **Child prostitution:** act of engaging or offering the services of a child to perform sexual acts for money or other considerations with that person or any other person. Given the diversity of forms child prostitution takes and depending on whether the child works alone or forms part of an organised group, the study proposes several types of child prostitution in order to be able to reflect the complexity and specific characteristics that this phenomenon has in the 6 towns studied.
- f) **Child pornography:** the representation – in films, prints, photos, audio or video recordings and computerised digital representations – of children performing real or simulated sexual acts for the sexual gratification of the users, including the production, distribution and use of said materials.
- g) **Trafficking of children for sexual activities:** the movement of children from one place to another within a country or from one country to another with the purpose of obtaining financial profits from their sexual activities. The use of force is frequently, although not always, a trait of this traffic.
- h) **Sex tourist:** person or persons who travel beyond their national frontiers with the intention of becoming involved in sexual activities with persons from their country or others, including children.

6. Methodology

Any study involving different towns with extremely varied characteristics confronts a series of methodological challenges including: sampling, measurement, design and implementation. Scientific rigour is also put to the test in this case due to the clandestine, illegal character of the phenomena to be studied, which makes it difficult to collect data, and also because of its multidimensional nature.

In spite of the difficulties associated with the study of CSEC, there are methodologies available which, used in combination, make it possible to go beyond the surface of the phenomenon and, with this overview, examine the processes in greater detail (Kilias et al., 1993; McDonald, 1995; Woodiwiss, 1993). Said methods have been used successfully, in various combinations, in the study of other highly sensitive phenomena involving complex criminal activities such as: drug trafficking (Hallums, 1997; Kaiser, 1994; Perl, 1994), prostitution between adults (Wijers & Lap-Chew, 1997), money laundering (Gilmore, 1992), other financial crimes (Ruevid, 1995), international arms trafficking (Alves & Cipollone, 1997), environmental crimes (Edwards, Edwards and Fields, 1996) and violent crimes committed by organised groups (Chin, 1990; Chin, Kelly & Fagan, 1993). All these phenomena have been studied in a closer, more constant way than was initially thought possible. The key to the most successful studies has been persistence and the application of a combination of scientific rigour, sensitivity and creativity, associated with the experience of highly trained researchers.

On undertaking this study, the most direct access possible to both victims and clients and exploiters was proposed as one of the main procedures, on the one hand, and to the officials directly involved in confronting the problem, on the other. Similarly, it was proposed to collect information at various levels in order to cover the conceptual spaces that give shape to CSEC (individual, family and community, social, structural, cultural). Different methods, both quantitative and qualitative, were used to ascertain critical relations, depending on the type of informant, the conceptual level and the type and level of measure used. Data were compiled on individuals (children / exploiters / clients), families (of child victims), communities (where exploitation takes place) and structural and cultural aspects of the communities.

While the subject cannot be covered through the design of just one sample, conceptual level or sole method given the size and dynamics of the phenomenon, the co-ordinated, standardised application of the study in the 6 towns constitutes the first indispensable step in generating solid knowledge on which it will be possible to base studies that go deeply into one or other of the aspects of the phenomenon.

The study in the longer term, represents an ambitious proposal to obtain first generation data on the subject and put to the test tools designed for a better comprehension of the complex aspects and dynamics of CSEC in Mexico, so that its results can be compared with those of other studies and are being carried out in the region.

The final intention of this effort is to detect ways, and the most adequate points, to be able to interrupt these activities at each level and find the most efficient ways to protect children and adolescents in Mexico, decreasing the risk of their being subject to this type of exploitation.

6.1 Selection of Towns

The 6 towns selected to carry out the study in Mexico were: Guadalajara, Acapulco, Cancun, Tapachula, Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez. The first was chosen because it is the second most important urban zone in the country, offering one of the largest concentrations of population and resources, where the characteristics and way in which the child sex trade in the main urban zones of the country can be observed. The second two were chosen as they are the most important tourist centres in the country, where sex tourism with children could have an important role. The last three were selected as they are important border points in the country and there is evidence that the children who have been recruited for sexual trade enter or leave through them. Similarly, three of the cases (Cancun, Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez) are the towns that the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations included in her mission to Mexico on the commercial sexual exploitation of children and whose Report constitutes an important point of reference for our study (Calcetas-Santos, 1998).

Other general criteria that contributed to the selection of the towns are: 1) developed urban areas; 2) towns with a background of having attempted to control the sex trade including the participation of children; 3) towns in which it is known that organised crime groups related to drug trafficking and prostitution operate; 4) towns with a legal infrastructure capable of prosecuting and controlling criminals and, 5) towns that have

government and non-government organisations giving care and protection to children and adolescents that could collaborate in local research.

6.2 Key Informants

One basic component of the study is comprised of interviews with high level officials who, in their different spheres, have a relation in each town selected with attention to prevention of the commercial sexual exploitation of children. In this way, it was intended to obtain relevant, comparable information about the child recruitment patterns; the types and modes of operating of the exploiters and the composition and characteristics of the clients.

Lists of the key informants who were contacted both at local and national level were drawn up. These persons and organisations were identified as those who were expected to have detailed information about the size, nature and ways of operating of the child sex trade in each of the towns selected (cf. Methodological Appendix).

The first lists were revised and modified in accordance with the suggestions of the local co-ordinators, so that they would adjust to the differences in the legal structure and the services available in each town. Once the key informants had been identified and convened by the local co-ordinators, they were invited to collaborate in the study and participate in the focus groups that were led by the person responsible for the project in each town.

In order to be able to make comparisons between the data obtained in each town, key informants were sought out from the same type of institutions and groups. In this way, key informants from, at least, the following sectors were invited to participate in the focus groups:

- public institutions giving assistance and protection to children
- institutions enforcing and administrating justice
- health institutions
- public human rights institutions
- non-governmental organisations giving assistance and protection to children
- academic specialists on the subject

With respect to the interviews with child victims of sexual exploitation, contact was made with them through institutions that offer services (justice / health / assistance) given that in the places where they work (bars / brothels / clandestine houses) they are under control and it would not have been possible to approach them in an atmosphere of trust and security for both them and the interviewer. When it was possible, in depth interviews were held to attempt to understand both their personal and family situations prior to their involvement in commercial sexual activities, as well as their situation at the time of the interview; recruitment and migration patterns; their expectations, demands, etc. Interview guides were drawn up although in each case both the terms and the particular situation of the children were adjusted (cf. Methodological Appendix). In all cases, special care was taken in safeguarding their rights, respecting their silence and protecting their identity.

The data relative to recruitment patterns and modes of operating of the exploiters were obtained from both the children's testimonies and from adult women who had been initiated into prostitution when they were children. It is, of course, obvious that in this case

we did not expect to count on testimonies of the exploiters themselves except for those who were in prison. However, this has not been possible at this stage of the study, but it is not discarded for the following stages. To do so, we have the support of legal authorities who have given their support to the project by allowing consultation of the files of traffickers and exploiters that are in prison and permitting personal interviews with prisoners who have been sentenced for this type of offence.

Information on the clients has also been obtained in an indirect way through the data provided by the children about the type of clients who demand their sexual services and the interviews held with young men from the area, generally university students who agreed to be interviewed.

6.3 Other Data Collection Procedures

As well as identifying and constructing the key informants' network, the support of the local co-ordinators was requested to:

- a) Identify and obtain a copy of the studies, reports and theses that had previously been done on CSES by both officials from different agencies and specialists or academics in their town.
- b) Compile data published in the main local newspapers on cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the town during the previous year at least.
- c) Locate on a map of the town the main zones or points in which it is known that there are establishments where there could be children subject to sexual exploitation and accompany this map with an analysis of the possible modifications that have been observed during the last few years with respect to if the zone has grown or shrunk, if it tends to be concentrated or scattered, or has moved towards the outskirts. Similarly, indicate if the zone where the phenomenon is located is characterised for being commercial, tourist, residential, transit, marginal or laboural and if it is found in the centre or on the periphery.

6.4 Measurements

Various types of measurements were used at different levels. At a macro level, measures to calibrate factors that could be related to the phenomenon at local or national level were employed (i.e. employment, income, migration, schooling, norms relating to gender and age, family composition, etc.). At a micro level, measures were considered that are or could be related to individual, family and community characteristics linked with child victims, exploiters and/or clients.

Information was also obtained from censuses and other comparable sources of aggregate data on each town where the study was carried out in order to be able to find the structural and cultural elements associated with CSEC.

With respect to the figures of children that we estimate that could be subject to sexual exploitation, these must be considered as barely a first approximation, since in most of the towns covered in the study there was no background of having attempted to quantify the phenomenon.

In a strict sense, we have not proposed to design statistically representative samples of the groups we are interested in studying (child victims / traffickers / clients). We have rather proceeded to follow the snowball technique; that is, allowing both the authorities initially contacted and the children, exploiters and clients to help us to identify other persons that should be included and interviewed. This type of procedure has been successfully used in the study of other phenomena that also operate clandestinely (e.g. drug trafficking, organised crime, etc.).

Furthermore, it should be added that even though it seemed important to us to obtain a first approximation with respect to the number of children that are victims of sexual exploitation, it seemed just as or more important to establish direct contact with the children that are or have been exploited in order to be able to determine: who they are, where they come from, why they are there, how they were involved in the sex trade, who obtains benefits, what role their families have played, what their needs are, what kind of attention they receive or require, what aspirations they have, etc.

6.5 Focus groups

In each town included in the study, at least five focus groups with 5 to 10 participants, who were invited because they know one aspect or another of CSEC at a local level, were held. These groups were made up of officials from institutions for public safety and justice, public and private social and welfare services, health institutions and professionals or academics acquainted with the problematic, among others (cf. Appendix with the list of participants in the focus groups and individual interviews held in each town).

By means of techniques usually employed in handling focus groups, an attempt was made to generate convergent information that could be compared between the towns chosen for the study; that is, information relevant to understanding the institutional, cultural, organisational and individual aspects of the sexual exploitation of children with commercial purposes (cf. Methodological Appendix).

In each of the focus group meetings that were held, the participants were invited to identify other persons or local institutions that could contribute to the study and, as well as approaching the relevant subjects on children, exploiters and clients that were worked on in all the groups, they were also invited to put forward their interpretations of the forces that give shape to the sexual exploitation of children at a local level and to formulate the proposals they consider it necessary to implement in order to be able to confront the problem in the most effective way possible.

SECOND PART:

THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN SIX TOWNS

Acapulco

*“The State of Guerrero is characterised as a space in whose diversity the unequal distribution of wealth is repeated...”*²

1. The Urban and Social Context

1.1 Sociodemographic Profile

The Municipality of Acapulco de Juárez is located on the coast of the State of Guerrero, facing the Pacific Ocean. In 1995, the State had 2,916,567 inhabitants, while Acapulco with 687,292 had almost one fourth of its total population. During the period from 1990 to 1995, the State had an average rate of growth of 1.89, while Acapulco had one of 2.60, higher than the national average of 2.04 percent.³ Today it is calculated that Acapulco may have nearly 900,000 inhabitants, above all due to the large amount of indigenous population that has gone to the Port in the last few years.

The State of Guerrero has third place in the Republic with respect to its high indices of marginality, preceded only by those of Chiapas and Oaxaca.⁴ In 1995, the State had an infant mortality rate of 36.5, higher than the national average of 30.5 and took third place in the Republic with respect to Gross Domestic Product per capita.

The population not born in the State represents 14.2% of the total. The fertility rate is 3.1, higher than the national average of 2.8, while only 88.5% of the women of childbearing age know about any contraceptive method. Those who have less knowledge of these methods are women without education and those who speak an indigenous language.

According to the National Survey of Demographic Dynamics of 1997, it is in the State of Guerrero in which there is a higher percentage of women of childbearing age in the country that have never used any contraceptive method: 54.5 percent, closely followed by Guanajuato, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Puebla and Querétaro. With the exception of Querétaro, these states are characterized as having a high percentage of the population living in small localities with less than 2,500 inhabitants, and because the largest part of the State's population is concentrated in these places. The greatest relative weight of the rural

² Marguerite Bey, Review of the book by Armando Bartra, Guerrero bronco: campesinos, ciudadanos y guerrilleros en la Costa Grande, in: Guerrero en Movimiento, Revista Trance, Orstom-Cemca, June 1998: 81.

³ Gustavo Garza (coord.), Atlas Demográfico de México, Conapo – Progres, Mexico, 2000.

⁴ Consejo Nacional de Población, Indicadores socioeconómicos e índice de marginalidad municipal 1990, Mexico, 1993.

population in these states influences not only the question of fertility but also the phenomenon of migration to the most important urban areas, as can be observed in the case of the population of the different localities of the State of Guerrero that migrates to the Port of Acapulco.

It should be emphasized that, with the exception of what happens in Acapulco, the State of Guerrero does not receive population from other states, but rather is characterised as being an expeller state. Indeed, the migratory balance during the period 1990 to 1995 was negative, that is, almost 400,000 inhabitants moved outside the State.⁵

According to data from the 1990 Census, 89% of the inhabitants of the Municipality of Acapulco were born in the locality or in some other in the State of Guerrero, while only one tenth of its population came from other states, principally from the Federal District of Mexico City and Oaxaca.⁶

One point four percent of the female population from 12 to 14 years of age in the State is married or living with a partner, whereas the national average is 0.9%. This means that one of each two hundred girls aged 12 to 14 in the State of Guerrero has had children, 568 girl mothers, in absolute numbers. In Acapulco, according to the Census of 1990, 115 girls from 12 to 14 years of age had had at least one child, while 4,056 adolescents aged 15 to 19, 10 percent of the total for this age group, had had one or more children.

With respect to schooling, between the ages of 6 and 14 the percentage of girls and boys who know how to read and write is the same in the State, with a slight difference in favour of the girls: 75.6 in relation to 75%, although fewer of them go to school than boys of that same age, 87% for girls and 91.6% for boys. However, after 15 years of age, a change in schooling can be observed in both groups; while 42.8% of the male population aged 15 and over have no schooling or have not finished primary school, 50.1% of the girls are in the same situation. Be that as it may, the schooling average is low in relation to other states; 5.4 years for women and 6.1 for men.

In Acapulco, 88.3% of the girls and boys from 6 to 14 years of age know how to read and write, while 11% of the population aged 15 and over is illiterate.⁷

The economic activity that predominates in the State is agriculture. After the age of 12, 28% of the women and 72% of the men form part of the labour market. In Acapulco, on the other hand, of an economically active population made up of 181,989 persons in 1995, 127,570, that is, 70 percent, were employed in the tertiary sector, fundamentally in services related to the tourist activity, while only 32,000, 18 percent, were employed in the industrial sector. Of the total of the economically active population in Acapulco, 30 percent are women and, in absolute numbers, 573 of them are aged from 12 to 14, while 6,068 are between 15 and 19 years of age.

1.2 Tourist Enclave

⁵ INEGI, *Hombres y Mujeres en México*, 3rd Edition, Mexico, 1999.

⁶ INEGI, *Cuaderno Estadístico Municipal. Acapulco de Juárez*, Mexico, 1997.

⁷ INEGI, *Conteo de Población y Vivienda*, Mexico, 1995.

In Colonial times, Acapulco was an important Port through which most of the trade in various products, especially luxury ones, with the Middle East was carried out. Chinese and Philippine ships brought all kinds of merchandise, above all, fabrics, carpets and ceramics. Later on it was also the point where contingents of African slaves arrived who had been brought to work in the plantations that abounded in the State and whose descendants still live in the Costa Chica of Guerrero, to the south of Acapulco.

The State is considered as one of the country's pluri-ethnic and cultural mosaics, where mestizos and afromestizos live alongside the four principal indigenous groups to be found in the region: Tlapanecas, Amuzgos, Nahuas and Mixtecos.

These groups also have an important presence in Acapulco. In the nineteen seventies, a large number of Nahuas moved to the Port, above all to sell their handicrafts to tourists. For their part, Tlapanecas and Mixtecos, that come from the Mountain area, occupy most of the posts as bricklayers and domestic workers. Similarly, in the last few years, Amuzgos and Tlapanecas have migrated to the Port where they sell all kinds of merchandise on the beaches and in the streets. Indeed, one part of the children who live in the streets of Acapulco also come from these groups.

Although the Port has a long history, it was particularly at the end of the forties when it consolidated itself as a tourist enclave whose image since then has been one of the best known symbols or faces of the country throughout the world. From the forties to the seventies it was, if not the only, perhaps the most important tourist beach resort in Mexico and, since then, it has had to fight for its place with others like Cancun, Ixtapa and Puerto Vallarta, which have presented strong competition.

According to data from the National Statistics, Geography and Informatics Institute (INEGI), during 1996, 2,017,093 tourists stayed in Acapulco, most of them, 1,585,130, from other states of the country and 431,963 from abroad: 79 and 21 percent respectively. The transport of passengers by air was around 1,202,000 persons in national and international flights.

It is worth considering what it means for the population that lives in a determined locality for most of its activity to revolve around an influx of tourists.

The condition of tourist defines a type of occupation and relation to a territory in terms of the maximisation of its advantages with respect to leisure, recreation and consumption. It is the absence of reciprocity that characterises the social relation that is established between the tourist and the persons who provide services or a move towards a type of reciprocity based on "paying to be there", a situation that is possible while the holiday-maker has, for a time, suspended his/her usual, productive life. A peculiar type of encounter is produced between the daily life of the tourist, removed from normality in terms of routine, networks of affection and commitment, and that of the local population that provides services and is linked or anchored to the locality and immersed in productive activities and social bonds, even though they may be weak or unstable.

The encounter between these two "normalities" becomes even more peculiar from the moment in which the work one of the poles of the relation performs consists, most of the time, in providing direct or indirect services for the other pole (from taxi drivers, boatmen,

chambermaids, receptionists, tradesmen and waiters, to barmen, entertainers, dancers and prostitutes). The relation that we formulated on one side as “paying to be there”, can be expressed from the other “I earn money because you are there”, a formula that even if it is valid in many other human activities of a productive type, differs in this case as it is the total of the set of relations that are established between the holiday-maker and the population of the tourist enclave.

From another angle, a phenomenon linked to the one described above appears, that is called “exposure effect”, which is produced when different ways of life come into contact, some that are peculiar to those who come from economically developed countries and others who do not. The exposure effect becomes manifest in a double track since each of the poles acknowledges the contact and will approach questions habitually considered to be cultural (customs, consumption habits, cues to interpersonal relations, etc.) and others of an economic type (level and options of expenditure, satisfaction of needs), being the latter the set of variables most affected by the conditions of exception or subtraction of the normality in which the tourist is found.

Both types of variables are going to affect the local pole, whether it is a tourist enclave or a frontier zone, since this pole will be permanently in contact with persons who make their differences patent and who inevitably make a show of the comparative advantages in terms of economic development in the face of someone who obtains a livelihood offering services that others demand during their period of rest, of relaxation. How much and how does this proximity affect the customs of the local pole or its consumption habits?

Among other signs, we can observe that the young locals look for the same type of relaxation activities and similar consumption patterns to those they observe in the tourists: from going to the discotheques, to using clothes with a brand name or tennis shoes and the consumption of substances in accordance with the model of the life of leisure.

One extreme manifestation of a perverted effect of what these bonds between the tourist and those who offer services mean will be seen in the following section in the case of the children who are prostituted or have been used to produce pornography in Acapulco.

2. The Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Locality

2.1 Prostitution

“It’s because we don’t have work, a home and being here in Acapulco living like an animal... that’s why we go in for prostitution”.
“The economic situation has the people cornered, you have to work at whatever you can”.

In Acapulco there are more than 500 registered red light establishments and bars, as well as many others that are not registered and operate clandestinely. It is well known that there are all types of nightclubs, discotheques, bars and places with striptease, table dance, etc. In many of these places there is access to the sexual services of the persons who work there, some of whom are minors.

Child prostitution in Acapulco is not a phenomenon that takes place only in the tourist area, but is widespread in different zones of the town and even in the poor areas. Indeed, it exists in other towns in the State and not only in the tourist poles like Ixtapa, but also in Altamirano and Chilpancingo.

Although the situation of the girls and boys who are being exploited can vary considerably from one place to another, groups or categories of boys and girls who face a similar situation can be distinguished. We shall refer to these groups.

On the one hand, there are girls mostly from 13 to 17 years of age who work as *waitresses* in small bars or canteens, for example in Puerto Marqués or Pie de la Cuesta, in which they are also asked to provide sexual services. In Pie de la Cuesta, there are also adults who take girls and offer them. Similarly, girls go on pay-day to prostitute themselves with the soldiers in the airforce base located in this town.

In suburban zones, like Las Cruces and Renacimiento, there are bars where younger local girls are exploited. In the red light district there are also children in the bars where mainly soldiers and the local population with low incomes, like bricklayers and street sellers, go. From la Diana to Caleta there are children in practically all the nightclubs.

In El Coloso housing estate, a very densely populated low class area, there are also bars, song bars and clandestine houses where the children are exploited. In Progreso district there are other places where soldiers and young local people with low incomes go where girls are exhibited outside the establishments. A large number of the girls who work in bars live in the marginal areas on the outskirts of the town, such as la Sabana, Mártires de Cuilapa or la Máquina.

In general, it could be said that while boys who are being exploited predominate in the tourist zone (la Costera, la Condesa), girls prevail in the centre zone, as has happened for a long time back in the hotels and bars of the red light district.

The area from la Condesa to la Diana is one of child prostitution, above all boys, in the streets and on the beach. A group of some 40 boys can be found there, most of them from 14 to 17 years of age, who prostitute themselves mainly on the Condesa beach, in a zone

where they come into contact with gays from Mexico and abroad, above all Americans and Canadians. The boys come in part from different State localities and in part from different States of the country.

One group of 10 of these boys lives very close to the Condesa beach in some rooms a poor family rents to them. According to them, it is not a place with good hygiene and the food is deficient, although the boys do not demand much as before this they lived in the streets. These boys can charge from 150 to 700 pesos for their services, depending on the client, and it is generally foreigners who pay the most.

Some of these boys are transvestites and for this reason, especially at night, they dress as women. Some of them also take hormones to transform their bodies and it is known that, because they use bad quality products or take them without medical supervision, they have suffered serious diseases. One of them died after injecting himself with edible cooking oil. Other boys who are also transvestites do not prostitute themselves on the beach but work in various gay bars or *pozole* restaurants in the town centre doing shows. They rent their own apartment.

One of these transvestite boys who works in a gay bar shared his experiences with us. He said, *"I was born here. I've been living away from home for three years. My dad is a tradesman and my mum a housewife. I had many problems because my dad drunk a lot and wouldn't accept me being like this... he is very 'machista', tough. When I was a small, he used to hit my mother and that made me mad... I see my mum almost every day... she tells me to change, but she's almost resigned to it now; she's getting used to it... I live in an apartment with 6 friends: one girl, three guys and two gays. Almost all of us work in discotheques.*

I dance, I give shows in two gay bars. One show is at 1:30 and the other at 3:00 a.m. I like to dance, and sing a lot, especially when I imitate Talía, Madonna... I've got more friends in the gay atmosphere... they don't discriminate against me or think I'm ugly; I can walk and dress as I want to. Sometimes they attack me or make fun of me in the street. In one bar, I do three shows for 50 pesos each; in the other it's one show for 200 pesos. The shows are from Friday to Sunday and every day during vacations. The owners of the bar treat me well; I feel at ease... Sometimes they invite you to do a special show for some client and they give you 10 pesos for each drink the client has. Several clients want something more but if you go with someone who's very drunk, you run a risk because they can give you a bad time...

I always go to sleep at 5 in the morning and I've got used to sleeping in the day. We almost all arrive at the same time and if, when we wake up, we feel really lazy and we've got a lot of money, we go and have lunch at a small restaurant; if not, we do the cooking between us... we go out and buy chicken or something. We all help out with the cleaning, although to tell you the truth, we're a bit lazy... At the weekends we work more, we don't do the housework and then all the clothes pile up... Our neighbours don't think badly of us, they even come down to play draughts or watch television with us. . the more you talk to them, the better you get on with the neighbours.

I finished high school and my mum wanted me to go on and do a technical course in electro-mechanics, but I didn't like it... I have many foreign friends: from Switzerland,

America, Canada... They send me messages by e-mail. I'd like to learn English, French and be a tourist guide for my friends... It feels nice when someone's concerned about you...

The police treat you badly all the time. They say you're drugged, that you sell drugs... they've even stripped me to get my money off me. They beat me and my friends if we don't give them their 50 pesos. They told us that if we said anything, they'd kill us... we're scared. Even though you have a job, the police want to take you in in any case... they want 200 pesos off you because they are 4 patrol cars at 50 each. If you give them 30 they get angry, they humiliate you, they even tell you what you're going to die of".

The different testimonies we obtained confirmed the problem of extortion by the police that the children who prostitute themselves suffer from. Several children referred to having been picked up by patrol cars for refusing to hand over money to the police and to having been retained in the police station for three days without being given food. Other children mentioned that policemen invariably wait for them when they leave the bars they work in to demand their *share*.

Another transvestite boy, aged 15, that we interviewed on the beach, said that he was born in Guadalajara and that he left home when he was 12 to go and live in the streets in Mexico City where he was in an institution for some time, but left because he wanted to go to Acapulco. He explained that one of the reasons why he decided to leave home and then the institution was because they made fun of him. Now he lives near the beach with a group of friends who prostitute themselves like him.

He explained that he finds his clients during the day on the beach or at night in the streets where he dances a bit to attract attention. He referred to his wish to change his body and the problem that the best hormones are very expensive, while the cheaper ones harm them. He says that his best clients are Americans because they pay more. Some live in Acapulco and take them to their homes or put them up in an apartment; others come for periods and take them to their hotels. They also have clients from Mexico but they pay less. Some girls, he said, prostitute themselves for 50 pesos, the boys, on the other hand, charge 200 or more, according to the client.

Some boys have more stable clients or partners and others only go for a night or a short time. He also had a partner for a while; an American who took him to live for a time in his house, but he left because he got bored and did not like to be shut up. He mentioned that *his friends* taught him many things like how to behave in a restaurant, a cinema or a discotheque, for he had never been to those places. He uses the money he earns to pay for his accommodation and food (20 pesos a day for the room and 10 for each meal) and to buy himself clothes, hormones and makeup. His greatest desire is to be able to change his body and lose his masculine characteristics.

Another group of children who are being sexually exploited is one of girls and boys who live in the streets. In the centre zone of Acapulco, it is calculated that around 400 children work in the streets and go back to sleep with their families, while 70 live in the streets. Of the latter, almost all of them have had to prostitute themselves, at least from time to time in order to be able to survive, although some, perhaps the majority, form part of well organised groups that are operated by adults that exploit them in both the centre and along

the seafront, where, through catalogues, they offer them to the tourists who are staying in those areas or others who arrive on the cruise liners that put into the Port.

One 17 year old boy who lives in the streets explained why boys like himself prostitute themselves. He said: *“I’m from Altamirano but I’ve been here for several years now. The first time I went to the main square (Zócalo) and joined the others. I left home because of family problems and because my mother preferred that man to me... I left home when I was 8 and I’ve only been back twice since then. I’ve met many people in the Zócalo who live in the streets.*

I get on well with 4 who are from the same place as me and now others have arrived from Cuernavaca, from Toluca... they’ve all left home because of problems like mine. No child is in the street because he likes it. Some leave home because they were raped and because of that they get into drugs and prostitution... Prostitution works here day and night, but mainly at nights. I also know some boys who have gone to live with Americans. They’re the ones who go most after children and take them with them and then let them go with a sum of money that they think is doing good, but they’re not really. I say this because two of my friends have died of AIDS.

*My opinion is that this happens because several of them like to get easy money but there are many who do it out of necessity, because they don’t have anywhere to live, because they’re not from here and they don’t have a home. They even come from Sonora, Durango, Puebla, Morelos and many have been coming from Mexico City... they go to la Condesa, looking for whatever they can find, because they have been forced to do so. It’s also because they don’t have a job, a home and they’re here in Acapulco like little animals.. that’s why we’re into prostitution”.*⁸

Another boy who we interviewed also explained: *“... they come from everywhere but there are more boys from Mexico City than from Acapulco here. Many of the boys prostitute themselves because they don’t have a job, if there was someone who could give them a sense of security, a job, they wouldn’t be around here... they boys earn their living as best they can”.*

This last boy, who works in a bar, gave the example of two small boys, aged 5 and 6 years old, who are living alone in the streets and escaped from home because their mother burned their hands and their father beat them with a length of cord. The boy would like to adopt these children and take charge of them.

Other boys who prostitute themselves live in a piece of waste ground in the centre area of the town. They all have severe addiction problems. What they use most frequently is marijuana, glue, thinner, cocaine and crack. Some have prostituted themselves since they were 8 or 9 years old. Others leave their homes because their families did not accept their sexual preferences.

Most of the street children who prostitute themselves do so in hotels in the central zone which also offer these children on their own account. They are frequently used to produce

⁸ It was possible to carry out these interviews thanks to the work previously done with these boys by Oscar Martínez who coordinated the study for the DIF – Acapulco.

pornographic material in the hotels or in residences they are taken to and kept under lock and key for days or weeks, Most of the persons who are known to have exploited children in this way are foreigners, Americans and Canadians, but it has also been done by Mexicans and some Europeans.

With respect to the owners of the best-known bars and nightclubs, these are people who live in the locality and belong to groups with high levels of influence and power. It is known that there are also government officers who have been owners of these places, including some in which children are exploited.

In some cases there are intermediaries who place the children in one bar or another and move them round from one place to another. There are also procurers who recruit them and offer the girls work as dancers or waitresses without telling them about the sexual services that will be part of the job. It is very rare that the children denounce these people or those who exploit them and, even when they speak about their activities, they do not refer to them. Other intermediaries that offer and promote the services of children are waiters, taxi drivers, receptionists, security guards in night clubs, valet parking attendants, street sellers, etc.

There is no one way of operating in exploiting children. Among the girls who work in Acapulco, some are exploited by their families, by their lovers or by their pimps (*padrotes*). What is common is that several people around them depend on them. Persons who have time to become acquainted with this environment point out that it was previously frequent for them to be “kidnapped” and kept in las Quintas and they were not allowed to leave or change their place of work. Nowadays they move from one bar to another without the owners treating them violently. The ones who are violent are their pimps who continue maltreating them. Some of the girls identify them as such but others have not wanted to realise that the same person has several women working for him. Some say “*Yes, I have a pimp who takes care of me*”.

Most of the girls are from the State of Guerrero. For some time foreign women were coming until the owners of the bars agreed to prohibit it as the persons who brought those women took all the clientele. Most of the girls are mothers, although it is known that there is also a high rate of abortions.

Another group of girls, perhaps from a higher socio-economic level, who are being exploited, is a group of children from the locality, aged from 15 to 18, who work for firms that organise private parties, generally in residential areas like las Brisas and others. This kind of business does not have established premises but operates through the use of cellular phones by means of which their services are requested.

Several school secondary teachers mentioned knowing about clandestine brothels where the female pupils go in an undercover way in the afternoons. They also said that other secondary school girls work as dancers in bars. On the whole, these girls live in suburban areas and continue living with their families who sometimes know about their activities and sometimes do not. According to the teachers, some of these girls have made plans to go and work in bars in the north of the country with the intention of staying there only for a time, saving money and later doing a university degree.

Some teachers said they feel these girls challenge them when they ask how much they earn in a fortnight and point out that they get the same in one night. Several policemen who we interviewed said something similar. They told us that their salary is 1,700 pesos a fortnight and they have to buy their uniforms, boots and decorations out of that because they are not provided with the job.

In the same sense, a boy who works in a bar gave us his opinion: *“I was into that and its pretty awful... but you can earn in one night what a person who works in the DIF can earn in a week or a month... In the high season, a girl can earn up to 1,500 or 2,000 pesos a day... Although you can also get a client who threatens you, who wants to tie you up, who wants to throw you off the balcony in order not to pay. There are clients who are capable of doing that to you and to leave you an hour from here in a Motel or on the road... there have been cases like that”*.

2.2 Other Types of Exploitation

The use of children to make pornographic material is quite frequent and known about in the locality. The girl and boy victims are, in many cases, although not solely, children who live in the streets. It is known, for example, that there are apartments that some people of the locality rent in the centre zone which include children and the possibility of video filming or taking photographs of them. It is also known that there are foreigners who take them to their residences with this purpose, and of others, above all Americans and Canadians, who have several houses in different points and districts of the town (Costa Azul, la Mira) where they keep children under lock and key for days or weeks while they make this kind of material. The children generally agree because, as well as earning some money, during this time they have good food, a bed, toys and, on occasions, drugs.

In one case detected by a teacher at one side of a school, an American had had several children, aged 6 to 14, kept naked and in captivity for some time. The children were not allowed any contact with the outside world and although several neighbours had realised what was happening, they preferred to keep quiet to avoid problems and accept the bribes that the American offered them. It is worth adding that when the teacher attempted to denounce this case to the authorities, she was told that she could not do so unless she was the mother of one of the children.

Another well known case was one that occurred in 1995 in which, after the death of an American citizen, it came to light that he formed part of a network that produced and distributed pornographic material in which children from the locality, aged 7 to 11 years old, appeared. Another American was put in prison in this case, but only for three years, in spite of the large amount of material that was found, including a catalogue of the children, arms, drugs and hundreds of pornographic films of the children.

One seventeen year old boy who had been living in the streets in the Zócalo area for several years, explained to us what the circumstances were that had led him to accept being video-filmed. He was born in the State of Jalisco and at the age of 8 decided to leave home. He lived with his grandmother and his brothers and sisters and each of them left because their grandmother beat them. *“I got tired of her beating me, that’s why I left”*. He went to Mexico City but did not like mixing with the other children because he did not

want to take drugs. Some time later, he tried to go and live with his mother who was a prostitute in Tijuana, but his mother did not pay much attention to him, and besides she had a small child with brain damage that he had to look after. After convincing himself that his mother would not pay attention to him, he sadly left his little brother and went to Acapulco. He arrived at the Zócalo only to live alone again and beg for food. He was there for two years and several times some Americans came who had a house near Caleta where they took several street children. *“I liked to go there because they had a swimming pool and while the men were there we had everything we wanted; they fed us well...”*.

Other persons informed us of the existence of well organised networks, in which both people from the locality and foreigners participated, with distributors in La Merced and the Buenos Aires district in Mexico City. These groups operate by obtaining and buying children from the poorest regions of the State; the Mountain and the Coastal regions, and move them around from one place to another, and almost always keep them under the effect of drugs. Girls and boys aged from 6 to 12 years old have been detected that are brought from a village called Cruz Grande where procurers offer the parents to take the children away to give them education and a job and, although they send them a monthly sum of money, they do not know that they are being used to make pornography.

In another house where foreigners produce pornography, it is girls who are at school in the morning who go along in the afternoon and agree to be photographed. They receive between 500 and 600 pesos and are under the threat that if they denounce their exploiters they will show their parents the material they appear in.

Another way of operating is through middle class children aged 13 to 16 who are offered money in exchange for making material filming their sisters, female cousins and friends. This material is then bought from them to be commercially distributed.

Some of the foreigners detected in the production of pornography in Acapulco are Spanish, French and Peruvian as well as American and Canadian.

An American who has lived in Acapulco for some time, pointed out that he has observed that some of the foreigners who go to live there do so because they have some deviation, they like children or drugs and go to places like Acapulco, *“because they know that if they pay the police they can always leave”*. However, this person added that the parents are responsible as well because at times they go and sell their children to Americans.

Indeed, the traffic and sale of children are known in the State of Guerrero. It is well known that parents, from both Ciudad Altamirano and different regions of the State, go to Acapulco to put their children up for prostitution or “sell them” so that they can work in domestic service, without discarding sexual services. It is also known of numerous cases of girls who are given in marriage to older adults who give economic benefits to the family in exchange.

There are also other spaces where children are sexually exploited that are increasing day by day. These are massage parlours, agencies for companions and party entertainers which, in spite of not being authorised to provide this kind of service, offer and promote them openly in the media, as can be appreciated from a few advertisements we shall cite below of the many that appear each day in the local press.

- “All you desire! Beautiful, precocious young girls. Just what you deserve”.
- “University girls, sexy, daring, inviting and insatiable”.
- “School girls and ardent young boys. The best services you can find. Just dare!”
- “Beautiful, loving slaves, educated to satisfy your most disturbing fantasies. Phone us!”.
- “We please ladies and gentlemen. We are discrete boys”.⁹

Persons who have observed the evolution of this phenomenon in the locality for some time, say that a greater relative increase can be appreciated in male prostitution with both local and foreign clients. Similarly, there is a growing participation of bisexual boys who offer themselves to both men and women in the shopping precincts and the town’s Zócalo.

In synthesis, it should be mentioned that the sexual exploitation of children in all ways exists in Acapulco: prostitution, traffic, pornography and sex tourism. The estimated number of children in this situation, considering all the groups and categories we have mentioned, is at least 1,000 girls and boys.

3. Institutional Responses

“Children here are highly unprotected.. it’s very difficult to deal with the police, there’s so much corruption... Instead of trying to punish the exploiters, the police only try to get money out of the children”.

In Acapulco, at the moment of working on the study, there was no governmental institution that provided shelter for children living in the streets. Neither was there any public or private institution that gave specialised care to the child victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The DIF had a house to give shelter to several children years ago but closed it, although they are thinking of beginning a new care programme soon.

On the other hand, there are three religious homes that care for children who have been abandoned or ill-treated that have also received street children and child victims of sexual exploitation, although they do not have specialised programmes for offering them attention. In one of these homes, it has been known for some time that a priest has been abusing the children.

The DIF has carried out programmes on the prevention of drug consumption, and has been attending boy prostitutes who ask for medical supervision for the use of hormones. The boys have also gone to obtain information about sexually transmitted diseases and to have studies done and take information back to their friends. Of 12 boys who have gone for examinations, three turned out to be infected with HIV.

Neither are there adequate programmes in Acapulco for children with addiction problems. There is only one known institution, Piedra Roja, but the children speak about maltreatment there, and even of having been chained up.

⁹ Novedades de Acapulco, 30 March, 2000.

With respect to health care, only the children who work in places subject to obligatory health control receive medical attention, the rest of the boys and girls who are being sexually exploited receive none.

A doctor from the Department of Sexually Transmitted Diseases from the Health Ministry informed that the Department began to operate barely 15 years ago and that, at the beginning, it worked in a well known brothel that had been operating for many years although it has now closed its doors. He mentioned that nowadays it is possible to observe a greater proportion of children who prostitute themselves in relation to adult women. Each week 350 persons go for examinations, 15 percent of whom are male. The total number of registered prostitutes is 3,500, but it must be taken into account that these are only those who work in the 75 establishments that are subject to control, while there are many more that are not controlled.

The doctor estimated that one fifth of the total number of prostitutes are minors, although he pointed out that it is also frequent for minors to be hidden, even in establishments that are subject to control. Similarly, he mentioned that it is a question of floating populations that are difficult to control since the children are often moved from one place to another and from one city to another. He informed us that, until 1999, 200 cases had been registered of HIV-AIDS in the locality, although there are important sectors at risk, like the children who are exploited in the Zócalo, Caleta and la Condesa who have not had studies done.

With regards the aspect of law enforcement, he informed us that very few of these cases are denounced and that the aggressors rarely go to prison. Even in those cases in which the children have been raped or suffer sexual abuse, there is a quite generalised attitude on the part of the families in the sense of not denouncing the crime “in order to avoid the scandal”. It is also frequent that the exploiters are not denounced out of fear of reprisals.

CONCLUSIONS

It attracts the attention that several of the persons interviewed referred to data about places they know, for example, that there are children kept under lock and key to produce pornographic material or clandestine brothels where children are exploited. It would seem that after an initial period in which the community was surprised or moved by these cases, they began to form part of the daily life of the neighbourhood, as if these facts were “normal” and almost nobody expected anyone to intervene on behalf of these children. As if, perhaps, after we have played the role of spectators and contemplated the children living in the streets as something natural, nothing could move us to protect them and prevent them from coming to more harm. In this sense, it cannot and must not be seen as coincidence that a street child should have compared his situation to that of an animal.

It also attracts the attention that a group of hotel keepers recently went to the authorities to show their concern over the increase in drug consumption and child prostitution as a result of a group of tourists having expressed their “unease” before leaving the country. As if tourists had to say it to make evident what the local society had not been able to perceive, or for it to merit the authorities listening to them.¹⁰ Perhaps this group of hotel keepers

¹⁰ Novedades de Acapulco, 9 March, 2000.

should be taken at their word when, according the newspaper article we cite, they said they would be ready to offer support to any home so that the children would give up prostitution. This, of course, does not take into account that the solution does not consist in shutting the children away in some home so that they do not “upset” or “perturb” the tourists.

To overcome a situation of this kind evidently requires the help and good intentions of many, or rather, of all the sectors that integrate local society. It also requires our laws to become effective and to place in the foreground, above any other consideration, the needs of the children, particularly of those whose rights, as in the case of the population that concerns us, have been systematically ignored.

Cancun

“Here we lack identity as a society because we come from all over...”. “It isn’t a town with traditions and good customs... there’s no consolidated identity”.

1. The Urban and Social Context

1.1 Sociodemographic Profile

The town of Cancun forms part of the municipality of Benito Juárez that is located to the north of the State of Quintana Roo and to the north east of the Yucatan Peninsula. According to the projections of the State Population Council, by the year 2000 the municipality of Benito Juárez will have an approximate population of 580,000 inhabitants, while the State will have almost 1,090,000. If this projection proves to be true, Cancun will have grown explosively, since in 1995 the municipality had 311,696 inhabitants, which implies that, in only five years, its population will have almost doubled.¹¹

Quintana Roo is clearly a receiver state since the percentage of the immigrant population, 53%, is considerably higher than the national average of 23% and distinguishes it from other states like Guerrero where only 14% of the population was not born there. Female immigration is 52.9%, practically the same as male immigration, 53.8%. The fertility rate of 2.7% is almost the same as the national average, 2.8%, while the percentage of the female population of childbearing age with knowledge of contraceptives is 92%, above that of other states.¹²

The State is divided into two main zones: the north, where tourist developments like Cancun, Playa del Carmen, Isla Mujeres and Cozumel are to be found, and the south, that is the Maya zone where Chetumal, the State capital, is located. There is a strong contrast between the zones: while the north has experienced fast development that has brought major conflicts and imbalances along with it and whose problems are typically of an urban type (violence, trafficking and consumption of drugs, prostitution), the south is characterised for being a predominantly rural zone where poverty and lack of opportunities prevail.

In the State of Quintana Roo, 83.5% of the boys and 83.9% of the girls aged 6 to 14 know how to read and write and go to school. However, after the age of 15, a slightly higher percentage of the girls drop their studies than boys. As a result, while 27% of the male population aged 15 and over have been given no education or have not completed primary school, 35% of the women are in the same situation. Average schooling in the State fluctuates from almost 8 years for men and 7 for women, both of which are near the national averages.

¹¹ INEGI, Cuadernos Estadísticos Municipales. Benito Juárez. Estado de Quintana Roo, 1998.

¹² INEGI, Hombres y Mujeres en México, 3rd edition, 1999.

In Cancun, according to the Population Count of 1995, 87.3% of the children aged 6 to 14 know how to read and write, while 5.1% of the population aged 15 and over is illiterate.

The annual average rate of growth during the period 1990-1995 in the municipality of Benito Juárez was 10.6%, the highest in the whole country whose average was 2.04%. This is due to the surprising growth in the hotel industry and in tourism in the region. It is a recent population since, according to data from the 1990 Census, only 21% of the inhabitants of the municipality were born in Quintana Roo, while 74% came from other states, particularly the neighbouring State of Yucatan, 51%, and 12% from Mexico City.

Almost three-quarters of the population employed in the municipality, 74%, work in the tertiary sector, while only 17% are employed in the secondary sector. Most of this population works in building and in different posts in hotels. Eight percent of the population in employment earns less than the minimum wage, while 45% earn between 1 and 3 minimum wages. The State has seventh place in the country in terms of Gross Domestic Product per capita.

With respect to the female population of the municipality, according to the last census, 17% of the adolescent girls aged between 15 and 19 have children. Similarly, of the economically active population, estimated to be 68,053 persons, 16,828 were women; 281 of them between 12 and 14 years of age and 3,062 aged between 15 and 19.

Regarding the weight that the presence of tourists has for the town of Cancun, it is sufficient to consider that during 1997, accommodation was provided for 2,621,269 tourists, two million of whom were foreigners that preferably used high and middle level hotels. Nevertheless, the total movement of passengers by air was around 5,890,000 persons on both national and international flights.

1.2 The Appearance of Cancun

“...they are arriving in mass... people are coming who leave everything behind them... they come with a spirit of adventure”.

The project of Cancun as a tourist enclave arose during the government of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) as the result of a poll carried out by the Bank of Mexico that concluded that the zone, up to that time consisting of coconut palms, was “touristically exploitable”. The few inhabitants who lived in the place were to be found in Puerto Juárez, the port for crossing to Isla Mujeres.¹³

Unlike the hotel zone, the town grew up spontaneously and in parallel with the construction of the tourist pole. The bricklayers who arrived to build the hotels were the first to settle in what would later be the town of Cancun.

The oldest inhabitants, who have been living in the town for a bare 26 years, speak about the arrival of families and how they were given small pieces of virtually jungle land that

¹³ We wish to thank Norma Salazar, from the State DIF and Jorge Alfredo García from the Municipal DIF for the information they gave us, with which we were able to write this part.

they themselves had to clear to be able to build small huts (*palapas*) that had no utilities or urban infrastructure. Indeed, the last section, known as Franja Ejidal, is still preparing to receive a large population contingent that will arrive to satisfy the construction needs of a new tourist development to be located between Cancun and Playa del Carmen.

The inhabitants mention that hardly had an area had hardly been cleared when beer shops, that were often the first solid constructions in the region, sprang up. This has continued to happen since, to date, there are many more places that sell alcoholic drinks (perhaps some 2 thousand) than schools, health centres, or sports and recreational establishments for children and young people. In reality the town has only recently, for example, built two higher education schools and another two offering technical studies, there are also only two small libraries, that are badly conditioned and with few books, and that do not have the resources or modern technology necessary to make culture accessible to the young people. It goes without saying that there are no other alternatives for culture, art and recreation in the locality.

The town is populated as the hotel zone grows and becomes consolidated. The districts are called *super-blocks* and take their names from numerical language. Thus the *one hundreds* (101, 102, 102) can be found, as can the *two hundreds* and so on up to the present *five hundreds*. It is worth wondering whether this use of numerical names is not related to the difficulty of the inhabitants of Cancun to find an identity they can be recognised by, an identity that is different from the one of providing services and welcoming tourists, that is, the identity that is anchored in a purely economic profile. Be that as it may, it can be said that the town was not built around public spaces that usually constitute land marks and identity for its inhabitants: the parade ground, the main square, the cathedral or government offices, spaces that provide distinctive symbols for a community.

The layout of the so-called *Regions* that grew up in the 1990's also uses numbers for identification and in response to a search for order in the continual occupation of land where there is a permanent state of tension between the formal process of allocation of plots of land and the spontaneous award of the same. At the beginning of the nineties, the so-called Franja Ejidal began to take shape consisting of recovered land, that now occupies twice the surface area of what Cancun was in the nineteen eighties.

The vertiginous development of tourism in the zone has made it an undoubted pole of attraction for large contingents of population coming from all over the country, but above all from the neighbouring states. Even today it is calculated that some 100 to 150 persons arrive each day with the intention of settling down in the locality, which day by day brings up the question of the capacity of the incipient local society, in a permanent construction-reconstruction process, to incorporate and absorb these contingents. The expectations of those who arrive cannot always be satisfied since prosperity or crisis are intimately linked to the fortune of the hotel zone. This dependence leaves local society in a situation of fragility and unstable equilibrium in the face of variables that it is not in their power to control. "*In spite of everything, new people keep on arriving*", say the inhabitants we interviewed.

The new arrivals tend to group together according to the state they come from. There is, for example, an important contingent from Guerrero, "*they came from Acapulco, because they already had experience in the field of tourism: they are dancers, musicians, waiters*".

Others came from Mexico City and they are easily distinguishable because they have come to put up their street markets (*tianguis*).

As opposed to this improvised town, poorly set up and in a permanent state of expansion, the hotel zone offers a clear contrast since it has many grandiose buildings with urban infrastructure and all kinds of services. There can be no doubt that this world exercises a strong power of attraction for the young locals who, in one way or another, long to form part of it, "*the young men here are always going after American girls*". The tourists, the type of life they lead in Cancun and their entertainment constitute the model to be followed by young local people who perhaps lack other points of reference.

The young people also resent the preferential treatment the local authorities give to tourists and not rarely mention feeling discriminated against in their own country. The foreigners, they say, are given all kinds of concessions and are exempt from the police rules prohibiting the consumption of drugs and alcohol in the streets, the presence of minors in night clubs and offences against morality, all of which happen frequently particularly among the more than 100,000 spring breakers who arrive each year and squander an enormous amount of money which is considered more important than applying the rules. Then, nobody is unaware that taxi drivers, policemen and young locals participate in the sale of drugs to tourists.

It is also important to bear in mind that while the style of living of the young tourists generally lasts only as long as their vacations, for the young locals, on the other hand, it constitutes the obligatory point of reference that they have within their reach, as they live in a locality that has gone out of its way to satisfy tourism. "*Here, if you don't go to the discotheque at least twice a week, they say you're sick or wonder what's happened to you*".

2. The Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Locality

2.1 Prostitution and Sex Tourism

“Cancun’s like that; that’s what... that’s why many tourists come here”.
“It looks like it’s part of Cancun to offer these services”.

Bars and nightclubs of all types where it is possible to have a drink, dance, see a show or ask for girls are considered as an intrinsic part of the way of life diversion in Cancun. Although the figures vary from one source to another, it is said that there are between 200 and 300 sex trade establishments in the locality, they also exist in all the tourist points of the region, especially in Playa del Carmen, Isla Mujeres and Cozumel, as well as in the tourist corridor that runs from Cancun to Playa del Carmen.

The figures of those who are responsible for health control in Cancun indicated that of each thousand prostitutes, 300 are under age. Indeed, they state that 350 children attend these controls regularly, although they recognise that a large part of these children do not go because they work in clandestine establishments that are not subject to control. They also indicate that in order to try to avoid children working in this milieu they used to ask for official documents certifying age, but they have stopped doing so because the only thing they achieved was to deprive the children of attention. *“They are only refused a card if they are very young girls”*. The cost of the *complete* health card is 230 pesos.

Doctors point out, *“as time goes by, there are increasingly more children... they do it for money and out of need; besides they are persuaded to go to work and once they’re there, they see they have money and that makes them go on...”*.

There are also adolescent boys who work in the milieu, either as transvestites in shows or as prostitutes for homosexuals. For every 10 establishments where girls work, it is calculated that there is one for boys. They are mainly boys who come from other states of the Republic for they prefer to avoid reproaches from their families and their communities. Similarly, there are young waiters and entertainers who offer their sexual favours to older female tourists or girl students who come during the spring break.

Most of the girls who prostitute themselves are aged between 15 and 17 and there may be some even younger. Two groups of these children can be distinguished: one of dancers and the other of waitresses. The first is considered to be a higher level than the second, even though there may be important differences according to the place and zone where they are working. The girls that are dancers in the hotel zone come from different parts of the country and abroad. They have been brought out by plane, live in hotels and are *rotated* from one town to another. In this zone there may be girls that come from towns in the north and the centre of the country (mainly Monterrey, Guadalajara, Mexico City and Acapulco) and to a lesser extent from Cuba, Argentina, Canada, the United States, etc.

The girls who work in bars outside the hotel zone come mainly from poorer towns in the neighbouring states of Yucatan, Veracruz, Campeche, Chiapas, Tabasco and Oaxaca. The same happens with the waitresses who may also be local girls who live in precarious conditions in Regions 102 and 103. The waitresses who come from other states have been brought to work in Cancun by procurers who make contact with them in their towns and

offer them good jobs as waitresses in *snack bars* and beer shops in Cancun. The girls take up the opportunity, as they don't realise that prostitution is part of the job. As with the dancers in the hotel zone, they are *rotated* from one town and even from one country to another. The girls who work in the less exclusive zones are *rotated* from one beer shop or nightclub to another. Depending on the place where they work and the client who contracts them, the girls can earn from 200 to 2,000 pesos per hour.

Some adolescent girls that we interviewed and that work as *dancers* in bars or in private shows, explained how they perceive their work. One girl of 16 years of age said, "*My father was an alcoholic and drug addict and as we didn't want to suffer any more, we went to live with my grandmother... then, when I was 14, I started to work doing strip tease in the palapas of the hotels or in the discotheques. Now I work in Plaza 21, they pay me 100 pesos a dance because I'm only just beginning to make myself known. The charge is 150 pesos for a table dance in private... now if the client wants to take the girl away, he has to pay for her to leave or she has to pay for the day... Cancun's like that, that's what.. that's why so many foreigners come here*".

Another girl, aged 15, explained that a woman recruits 13 year old girls to train them and teach them to dance and strip, letting them wear a mask at first, "*so they don't feel ashamed*". "*She first gets the girls to work as waitresses and then gets them to dance and give service to the clients.*" In these shows they also raffle *the services* of a young girl. "*Each week they bring out a new girl and throw her to the public*". The girl added that all her friends work there, "*most of the girls and boys from Cancun work in this because elsewhere there are a lot of requirements and they're not given the job*". "*We can get a health card if we pay for it, it doesn't matter if you're not old enough...*"

Of the girls they know, about one half work in Plaza 21 or in seedy bars or do their clandestine shows, while a third of them work in bars that they call "decent". They also added that the boys are only attracted to "fresh" girls, "*who have had nothing to do with us*". Similarly they showed their concern over the increase in drug consumption, "*some years ago there weren't as many drugs as there are now. It used to be a question of dancing, nothing else, but now it's pills, glue, cocaine, ecstasy... the police come by and buy their drugs and there's even one who sells tubes: 25 pesos for marijuana and 150 cocaine*".

With respect to the girls who are tricked into working in the night clubs, there was one case of a group of young girls who had been brought from the State of Chiapas and whose families made a denouncement because they did not like the work and they managed to escape. The denouncement did not go very far because the owner was a very well known person and owner of several bars.

Indeed, the persons who live in the locality know the owners of the bars and night clubs very well. In some cases, they are persons who have come from other parts of the country because they have already had experience in operating this type of business; in others, it is local officials or people close to them who are owners of several establishments. They are also known to use pseudonyms. "*There're a lot of interests here, even the officials are involved*". "*The patents are in the hands of officials or ex-officials who are outside the law because they have a lot of influence*".

There are bars and night clubs of different types in the town and in the hotel zone. In the area around el Parían, for example, there are low level bars where the bricklayers and working class people of Cancun go. In the centre zone there are about 20 bars, most of them in Yaxilán avenue, and even though the prostitution that took place there moved mainly to the outskirts of the town, to Plaza 21, there are still some places where it is practised. Near this area there are several gay bars where male adolescents prostitute themselves. The places for shows and prostitution where minors work are concentrated in Plaza 21. A large number of tourists go to this place. The bars in the Plaza are promoted through Internet as also happens in other tourist zones of the region.

In the same way, Internet is used to promote *escort* agencies that assure the travellers of the opportunity to obtain *companions* that are advertised in a catalogue, which also includes boys and girls. These directories, which offer all kinds of services, can also be found in the two sex shops to be found in the region.

One adolescent girl aged 17 that we interviewed while she was staying in a home for minors with addiction problems, told us how her desire to be popular led her to prostitution. *"We come from Yucatan, we came here because my father worked here... I began to have problems because I was a bit capricious and felt that they didn't take me into account, only my sister... I was one of 7 brothers and sisters and what I wanted was to be popular, I wanted them to know me and to talk to me. I began to go out with other friends and, while my mother thought I was going to church, I began to be popular, to get back home late, to get marijuana... Then I lost interest in school, my character changed, I never went home, I didn't care about my family... I went around with a girl friend who was just like me: parties, rows and problems. I took drugs and began to go out with a boy who sold them.. I got money out of some men that he took to me. I got fed up with that way of life because my boyfriend inhaled a lot of glue and beat me and I was getting more and more into drugs... My family went to get me out of prison where I'd been taken many times for being an addict until we found out about this place and they brought me here..."*

Another 16 year old girl also told us how she became a dancer. *"My parents are from Yucatan and they brought me here when I was 4; they speak Maya. When I was small, my parents beat me a lot, because I was a girl they didn't give me my place as little sister... they bought my brothers shoes but not for me... I only studied up to sixth grade; I never really liked school because nobody wants to go to school if they treat you badly... My brothers did study right up to high school. That's why I left home, because they didn't pay any attention to me... I left when I was 13 and I was working as a dancer in a dancing club and lived with a woman... my friends got me to work there and gave me drugs... then I met my boyfriend and I got married when I was 14... he won't let me work now because I'm pregnant... My friends, who worked in a bar, were sent to work in Plaza 21 and they're still working there because that's how they make their living..."*

As well as the points mentioned above, which are the most visible and recognised ones, there are clandestine brothels in different parts of the town, in both working and middle class areas, where minors also work. Some of them are students who live with their families and go to these places in a covert way while their parents are out at work, either because they have problems with addiction or because it gives them access to a certain way of living and consumption that their parents cannot give them. *"They have friends who begin to give them drugs and get them into this kind of business because they see that their*

friends have money, cars, drugs and that's how they induce them...". "We parents are afraid to go into our children's rooms and find drugs... we're also afraid of discovering that our daughter is prostituting herself".

The clandestine brothels are "repeopled" by persons who have worked in the milieu and receive, among others, tourists who find out about the place through a network of taxi drivers and hotel receptionists who also get a commission. *"There are also other gay places where boys aged 14 to 16 work and they are taken to hotels while someone waits outside for them so as not to run any risks".*

It should be said that taxi drivers play an important role as middlemen between the tourists and the different options offered by the sex trade in the locality. They (a large syndicate with 6,000 affiliates, 3,000 for each shift) recommend places the tourists can go to and receive good commissions for each client they channel to a certain place. At the same time, they know the girls who work in the milieu and transport them and, even though they sometimes consider themselves to be their *protectors*, at others they can also become their *pimps*.

This last point is not very clear for some people interviewed stated that in Cancun the girls do not have a *pimp*, *"there are no pimps here, the women don't permit it... what they have are full-time lovers"*. In any case, they are persons who benefit from the exploitation of children.

The taxi drivers we interviewed showed that they knew the places where the girls live very well, according to the types of places where they work. The girls in the hotel zone, they pointed out, usually live in hotels in the centre; on the other hand, it is more probable that those who work as *waitresses* or dancing in the beer shops in the districts live in the *Regions* where most of the people who live in the hotel zone work. Most of the girls are young single mothers who work to keep their children. Some are even hotel maids and work as prostitutes only a few hours to complete their meagre wages.

With respect to local police reports, the lack of proportion of prostitution cases in the different zones brought before authorised judges during 1999 attracts the attention. In effect, of a total of 638 cases, only 21 were from the hotel zone while 449 corresponded to the poorer areas of the town. The persons convicted, of whom 60% are said to be hardened offenders, were sentenced to 36 hours in prison or a fine of 1,200 pesos. This lack of proportion makes it clear that the police are more interested in controlling the sex trade in the poorer areas while they hardly dare intervene in the hotel zone.

The police informed us that only in a few cases were the persons detained for prostitution children and that, even though it is true that many work in the milieu, they cannot act if no denouncement is made, and that also when there are "operations", the girls are warned and disappear from the bars. They pointed out that it must also be taken into account that in the State of Quintana Roo the age of majority for criminal matters is 16 and so they consider that after that age they are no longer children.

With respect to street children, it is not considered that they are a group linked to prostitution in Cancun. Indeed, it is said that there are no children living in the streets although there are some 400 who work in the streets and 1,200 who work in different types

of public spaces. Similarly, about 1,000 children from 5 to 17 years of age have been detected with addiction problems and 1,435 adolescents from 12 to 18 form part of gangs in the *Regions*.

With respect to the cases of HIV-AIDS, local figures underestimate the problem since Cancun does not have third level hospitals and so the patients are sent to Mérida where their cases are recorded. However, a non-governmental organisation that seeks help for persons who have been infected and lack medical service mentioned that there have been at least ten deaths of adolescents from AIDS in the locality. They also stated that they have found 12 infected children, aged between 11 and 15, that work as prostitutes in the hotel zone. It is thought that if these children developed the disease at such an early age is was because they were abused when they were very small and very probably in their homes.

Indeed, sexual abuse in the family is a frequent background among the children from the locality who prostitute themselves. One girl under 15 years of age who prostitutes herself said that when she was small her father had abused both her and her sisters and liked them to walk around the house naked “*for he used to say they we had to be for him and only for him*”.

Going back to the cases of AIDS, the organisation we referred to said that it has 1,300 infected persons registered in the locality, 300 of whom receive attention in the Social Security System for private sector workers and 250 in the State Workers’ Social Security System (ISSTE). They calculate that, according to the rate applied in other countries, the known cases should be multiplied by 12 to give the number of as yet unregistered infected persons.

2.2 Other Types of Sexual Exploitation

Several cases of pornography have been learned about that have mostly been made by foreigners with children from the locality. One of these cases was of an Italian who met up with several children in a petrol station and took them to a place in Puerto Juárez where he abused them and took photographs of them. The officials interviewed consider that there are elements to think that there are many more cases than those that have been denounced.

In another case, one of the girls we interviewed, of 14 years of age, was induced into pornography by a woman who had recruited her in Acapulco and initiated her by showing her material of this type. The girl, as frequently occurs in these cases, could not say much about her experience except “*they are things you will never be able to forget*”.

Similarly, cases are known of the trafficking and sale of children. One of the girls interviewed said that she had had contact with a Japanese man who had been looking for young people aged between 14 and 20 and offered anyone who could obtain them for him one thousand dollars for each one and up to ten thousand for the youngest. He asked to be brought girls from the neighbouring villages who might be interested “*in earning a lot of money for doing a job that is not very hard-going*”.

Another sector where it is known that there are children who prostitute themselves is the massage parlours as well as some beauty parlours and modelling agencies. It is difficult to

know the number and the situation of these girls since they do not go to the public health services nor other community services, and is therefore still a group to which it has been impossible to gain access. The same happens with the girls who work for agencies that exist in the locality who are offered for parties or private shows. These agencies, that also promote their services in the hotels, operate without a fixed address, through cellular phones. One of these agencies that offers to obtain girls of the age and characteristics requested is operated by an American who only takes them to events within the hotel zone.

From what we have said up to now, there are four types of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Cancun: prostitution, sex tourism, trafficking and pornography, although the first two are clearly prevalent. The approximate number of children who, according to the data collected, we consider to be exploited in the locality is at least 700.¹⁴ This calculation corresponds to the girls who regularly attend the health controls, 350, plus the boys and girls who work in clandestine brothels and in other *lines of business* that are not registered as sexual services, although they are provided. This does not take into account that in other tourist points in the region there are also girls and boys who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

3. Institutional Responses

There are no specific programmes in the locality for giving attention to the children and adolescents that are subject to commercial sexual exploitation. There are only two civil homes for children who have been abandoned or maltreated and one government one provided by the Municipal DIF.

This last home, called Casa Filtro (Filter House), receives some 400 children a year, from newly born babies to 16 year olds and although it has at times received girls and boys who work in the sex trade they recognise that these cases are beyond their competence because they would require specialised attention that they are not in conditions to provide. Neither are they in conditions to receive adolescents with severe addiction problems or problems of another type.

There is no Tutelar Council in the locality and children under the age of 16 who have broken the law are sent to Chetumal and after this age they are sent to the local prison for adults.

¹⁴ We included in this calculation boys and girls up to the age of 18 because we considered that the fact that the Penal Code in the States establishes 16 as the age of majority for criminal effects only does not leave the criteria of the Convention on the Rights of the Child that was signed and put into force in Mexico without effect in the sense that persons up to the age of 18 must be considered as minors. Furthermore, the fact that 16 year olds can be punished the same as adults is not relevant to our subject since prostitution is not typified as a crime and the distinction would only be relevant to determine the age at which the perpetrators are considered to have abused a child. It should be pointed out here that it is worrying that in the State of Quintana Roo sentences of 6 months to 5 years in prison are dictated for the crime of corrupting children while sentences of 2 to 10 years in prison are established for the theft of livestock.

The homes in Alcance Victoria are the only alternative that exists in the locality for adolescents with addiction problems.

CONCLUSIONS

The commercial sexual exploitation of children in Cancun must be classified as a phenomenon that goes hand in hand with the explosive growth of population that occurred suddenly, barely 30 years ago. It is therefore a society that is only just beginning to give itself shape and that the inhabitants refer to as being without a history, without an identity of its own, without traditions. A society, on the other hand, that has excessively turned towards the eyes and demands of tourism which, to a large extent, seems to have prevailed over the needs of the local population.

It is interesting to note the impact that this type of development has had on the families that arrived and continuing arriving, fundamentally with the expectations of finding secure, well paid employment, which they have not always obtained. This provokes tensions that frequently end in the separation of the parents or in alcoholism and violence within the family. In either case, the children show difficulties in adapting themselves to the new situation or suffer maltreatment or abuse from the new partner, all of which can lead them to take drugs, to distance themselves from or leave home or become involved in prostitution. The testimonies of the girls that we collected are very clear in this respect. As another person we interviewed said, *“it’s a chronic problem of the breaking up of the family that has to do with the gold fever in Cancun”*.

Another question that increases the vulnerability of the children is the fact that, in general, nuclear families move to Cancun that have left behind them in their places of origin, their grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins, the whole network of relations that usually help the family in difficult moments and that, above all, that often take charge of the children when both parents go out to work. This has meant, among other things, that the families lack the points of reference that gave shape to their own history. It is characteristic of Cancun that the children do not have these networks, these links that can operate as a wall of contention when the family faces severe crises. It is what some of the persons interviewed accurately called *“a society where grandparents are missing”*.

It should be added to the above that the rhythms of work and activities of parents and children often do not coincide. It must be realised that tourism increases at night, at weekends, during the vacations and on bank holidays, so that it is precisely when the children rest from their school work that their parents are working. The same thing happens during the times at which other families usually get together: Christmas, New Year, Easter, etc.

Then we find that uprooting becomes a factor that is repeated as a characteristic of the milieu in which it is produced and the sexual exploitation of children is reproduced. In this case, it is the families that have left their roots behind, that have had to suspend their family ties that placed them as part of a determined social network, that have had greatest difficulties in facing crises that, in turn, have contributed to their children being caught up in the sex trade.

It is clear that in order to be able to face a situation like this, a series of measures and policies are required that will reach the roots of the phenomenon. One of these policies could be, for example, diversifying the local economy that up to now has revolved around tourism in a disproportionate way. That is, if up to now it has been a society that has turned outwards, that has revolved around the demands and exigencies of tourism, perhaps now it needs to look more attentively at itself, and in doing so put in first place the needs and demands of the children and young people in the locality.

It is also clear that the foregoing would require a broad social consensus that exceeds the limits and possibilities of institutions which, like DIF, could not totally assume the commitment to avoid there being an increasing number of children in the sex trade.

Ciudad Juárez

*“The need to survive leaves no other alternative but to flee from your own roots and uproot what you are and what you love”.*¹⁵

1. The Urban and Social Context

1.1 Sociodemographic Profile

The municipality of Juárez is situated to the north of the State of Chihuahua on the border with the United States. As it is one of the most important frontier zones in the country, it concentrates a little over one third of the state's population: 1,011,786 inhabitants, of a total of 2,793,537 according to the data of the 1995 Count.¹⁶

Nowadays it is calculated that Ciudad Juárez has nearly 1,600,000 inhabitants which, if certain, would imply that in only five years its population has increased 50% and would be more than double with respect to its twin town on the other side of the border, El Paso, that has some 700,000 inhabitants.

Indeed, the rate of growth between the Censuses of Ciudad Juárez during the period 1990-1995 was 4.19%, that is, twice the national average of 2.04%.¹⁷ This rhythm of growth, that has increased rapidly in comparison to other areas in the State and in the country, is explained by the large number of persons, said to be 300, that arrive each day either because they have the intention of crossing the border, which they do not achieve most of the time, or of obtaining employment in the *maquiladora* (in bond assembly) industry of the town.

In effect it should be pointed out that, in round numbers, of a total of 900,000 workers who are employed in the *maquiladoras* in the country, 600,000 work in border municipalities, and almost one third of them in Ciudad Juárez.¹⁸

Be that as it may, there are large contingents of population that are continually putting to the test the capacity of local society to incorporate them and provide the infrastructure and services necessary for a continual, unstoppable flux of persons who arrive with nothing other than their manpower and the expectation of obtaining an employment that will permit them to leave behind them the hunger of rural and impoverished urban areas that have been left to their luck.

Not a few people in Ciudad Juárez consider this to be a challenge that clearly surpasses their capacity and has contributed to exacerbate the problems of an urban, border society in permanent expansion, which have their most dramatic manifestation in the growing indices

¹⁵ Blanca Villaseñor and Rodolfo García, “Migración en las comunidades de origen”, in: Migración: México

entre sus dos fronteras, Senado de la República, Mexico, 1999.

¹⁶ INEGI, Hombres y Mujeres en México, 3rd Edition, Mexico, 1999.

¹⁷ Gustavo Garza (coord.), Atlas Demográfico de México, Conapo – Progres, Mexico, 2000.

¹⁸ INEGI, La Industria Maquiladora de exportación, Mexico, 1999: 18, 52.

of drug consumption and violent deaths in the locality. Suffice it to say that violence is the second cause of death in the town, preceded only by diabetes.¹⁹

With respect to the migrant population, while the 1990 data indicated that one third of the population of Ciudad Juárez came from another state, particularly from Durango (34%), Coahuila (20%) and Zacatecas (16%), it is calculated today that more than 40% comes from other states with an increase in the population coming from the southern states, above all, Veracruz.²⁰

With respect to schooling, between 6 and 14 years of age, girls and boys know how to read and write in the same proportion throughout the State, with a slight difference in favour of girls: 89% in relation to 88% of the boys. However, after the age of 15 this slight difference is inverted since 24% of the girls stay on in the school system and 27% of the boys do so. Among the population aged 15 and over, 26% of both men and women lack schooling or were unable to finish primary school.

In Ciudad Juárez, according to the 1995 Count, 89.2% of the boys aged 6 to 14 know how to read and write, while 2.9% of the population aged 15 and over is illiterate.

Similarly, it should be pointed out that of the female population in Juárez aged between 12 and 14 that was 25,758 girls in 1990, 140 had children while of the 49,714 aged 15 to 19, 6,438 had at least one child. Almost all the women of childbearing age in the town, 97%, are acquainted with contraceptive methods.

1.2 Female Employment in Maquiladoras

*“The problems of Ciudad Juárez have much to do with so many people who come here... all kinds come, even in a state of decomposition”.
“The town has nothing nice or pleasant, people don’t come for that, they come out of necessity... because there’s more poverty where they come from”.*

In terms of incorporation into economic activity, after the age of 12, 35% of the women in the State of Chihuahua form part of the labour market. One third of them work in the secondary sector, a percentage that indicates a strong female participation in the export maquiladora industry, since the national average is 18% of the women working in this sector.

In the municipality of Juárez, of the total of 283,182 persons in employment in 1995, the majority, 49%, worked in the secondary sector and 45% were engaged in the tertiary sector. Of this total, 88,163 are women; 1,003 are girls between 12 and 14 years of age and 18,3000 between 15 and 19. Sixty percent of the population in employment earns between 1 and 3 minimum wages.

¹⁹ Charles Bowden, “I wanna dance with the strawberry girl”, in: Talk, September 1999, vol. 1, no. 1.

²⁰ INEGI, Cuaderno Estadístico Municipal. Juárez. Estado de Chihuahua, Mexico, 1996.

Indeed, Chihuahua has the highest number of persons employed in the export maquiladora industry in the country, followed by Baja California. It has, however, eleventh place in the country with respect to Gross Domestic Product per capita.²¹

In 1997, the monthly average number of persons employed in the maquilas in Ciudad Juárez was, in round figures, 190,000, of which 92,000 are women; 81,000 of whom are workers (more than male workmen in this sector); 5,000 technicians (compared to 21,000 male technicians) and 5,000 in administration positions (a slightly lower figure than for men). The main maquiladora industries of the locality are ones that produce textiles, electronics and transport.²²

Intensive female labour in the maquiladoras is one of the traits that has characterised the growth in this sector in Ciudad Juárez during the last three decades and that, at the same time, has caused deep changes in the family and in local society. The preference of these firms for young women and minors is linked to the fact that they are considered to be tame labour, less aware of their rights and less liable to claim them, and so more “apt” to tolerate the meticulous, tedious work and hard working days, all of which, together with the low wages they are paid, increases the rate of return and comparative advantages of more than 250 foreign firms in this branch that operate in the locality.

Through the maquiladora industry the women participate in an accumulation model whose basis is the internationalisation and segmentation of production and of labour. They are industries that are characterised by intensive use of labour in which the development of manual ability and sharpness of the senses are an essential part of the profile of the women workers.

In spite of this, the low wages and conditions of marginality of women workers are characteristic. Persons who have studied these industries have concluded that “*both the maquiladora entrepreneurs and the State and its institutions seem to be contributing nothing to the payment of the total cost of maintenance and reproduction of women workers*”.²³ That is, their wear and tear is not compensated and their wages do not permit them a minimum level of well being, which perhaps constitutes one more expression of violence towards the woman.

There can be no doubt that the growth of this sector has attracted important contingents of young women and minors from both the locality and rural areas of other states who move to the town with the expectation of obtaining employment and settling down there, or getting enough money together to cross the border. The former happens on most occasions, but as many of them have children of an early age and almost no firm has a nursery service, a large number of children remain alone. This is considered to frequently be the origin of the large number of children who from an early age spend a lot of time in the streets, leave home, take drugs and/or form gangs.

²¹ Gustavo Garza (coord.), Atlas Demográfico de México, Conapo – Progres, Mexico, 2000.

²² INEGI, La Industria Maquiladora de Exportación, Mexico, 1999: 18.

²³ Rocío Barajas and Carmen Rodríguez, Mujer y trabajo en la industria maquiladora de exportación, Fundación Friedrich Ebert, Mexico, undated.

It has also happened in other cases that some girls are recruited for the sex trade after having tried to work in a maquiladora and having been able to prove that the wages of between 400 and 600 pesos a week do not cover their needs above all when they have children to keep. Indeed, today perhaps most of the girls who are involved in the sex trade are girls who work in maquiladoras but need to complement their earnings.

It should also be added that it is within the sector of young women or minors employed in the maquiladoras that most of the 200 murders have occurred, followed by rape and harassment, in Ciudad Juárez from 1993 to date (20 of them from January to April, 2000). This painful panorama provides evidence, among other things, of the high indices of violence towards the woman that exists in the locality, even more so, as is the case, when it is a question of young women and girls who are twice as vulnerable due to both their condition of gender and age and their belonging to the least favoured social classes. At the same time, the fact that this continues to happen, also provides evidence of the incapacity of the authorities to duly protect this sector, fulfil the law and submit the aggressors to justice. *“It is easy,”* said one woman we interviewed, *“to follow the example and go and dump women in the hills”*.

1.3 Repatriated Children

Another distinctive phenomenon of the northern border during the last few years has been the large number of minors who try to cross alone to the United States, either because they are looking for their relatives or because, like them, they want to find a job. The restrictions imposed by the migratory policy of the United States, especially since 1996, have caused a large number of children to be returned to our country and made it increasingly more difficult, costly and risky to cross the border without authorisation. In El Paso this has been the result of the implementation of the operation “Hold The Line”.

Thus, during 1998 there was a total of 12,635 children who were repatriated along the northern border. Of these children, 1,706 were repatriated from El Paso to Ciudad Juárez and, while the estimated figure for the total number of repatriates for 1999 had dropped to 10,740 children, the figure for El Paso increased to 2,637 children.²⁴

Of the total number of minors repatriated each month from El Paso, 55% correspond to children from Ciudad Juárez and 45% from children coming from other states of the Republic.

The children repatriated to Ciudad Juárez have been classified in the following way:

- 1) Migrants. They represent 45% of the repatriates, most of them boys from 15 to 17 years of age, 64% of whom come from the State of Chihuahua and the rest from different states, above all, from Guanajuato, Durango, Zacatecas, Michoacán and Oaxaca.
- 2) Street children. These are children from Ciudad Juárez who go to the United States without documents to beg or perform some temporary job. Their age varies from 10 to 15 years of age.

²⁴ DIF, SRE, INI, CONAPO, PAISANO, UNICEF, Tercera Reunión de Evaluación del Proyecto Interinstitucional de Atención a Menores Fronterizos. Evaluación 1998-1999, Mexico, 1999: 46-47

- 3) Offenders. They cross the border with the purpose of committing some crime, above all, theft or drug trafficking.
- 4) Abandoned children. These are children who are not cared for by their parents and devote themselves to vagrancy and try to get into the United States, or who have been abandoned or maltreated in the United States by Mexican parents and are under the custody of some court for minors in that country.

The last three categories represent 55% of the children who are repatriated to Ciudad Juárez from El Paso.²⁵

2. The Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Locality

2.1 Prostitution

“... the girls realise that for dancing, they earn more than in the maquiladoras

The bars, the dance halls and the brothels have been an important part of the economic activity in Ciudad Juárez for a long time. This is propitiated by it being a zone which large contingents that do not belong to the locality continually go through and because it is just a few steps from the most prosperous economy in the world where, however, there are greater restrictions on both the sex trade and the consumption of alcohol, particularly among young people. *“There are many people who depend on the jobs in the bars, so they don't want this to change”*.

The capacity of Ciudad Juárez to supply this kind of service and respond, at the same time, to the request for employment of large groups of persons who arrive in the town, is complemented with the demand for these services by persons who are passing through and those who come from the other side of the border because it is more comfortable for them to avoid the controls that exist in their area.

Nowadays prostitution is no longer regulated in Ciudad Juárez in the sense that there is no obligatory health control. This was eliminated in 1996, as we were informed, because of the abuses committed by the inspectors and the maltreatment the prostitutes received, as well as because they selectively controlled only women from the marginal sectors. *“The authorities realised that they couldn't control the prostitution and wiped their hands of it”*.

Although this control does not exist, which makes it more difficult to determine the number of persons who devote themselves to this activity, it is estimated that, at a local level, about 4,000 women today are dedicated to prostitution in approximately 350 establishments with different types of licences. Eighty percent of these establishments are located in the centre zone where there are also 27 registered massage parlours.

These licences can be bought, sold and exchanged between the owners, for it is difficult to obtain them. The price of the licences may vary from 25 to 40 thousand dollars, according to the type of establishment, the permits they have or the number of penalties

²⁵ Op. cit. pp, 12-13 and 46-47.

they have received, which shows the magnitude of the profits to be obtained from these businesses. Eighty percent of the licences are in the hands of beer shops and they are the establishments that trade them since, when a business changes its name, charges raised against it for not complying with the regulations are annulled.

Part of those who are engaged in the sex trade are minors. On the one hand, there are street children, especially boys aged between 12 and 17 who occasionally prostitute themselves in order to be able to subsist and pay for their addictions and this they do either in the town or crossing the border to offer their services. In this last case, the boys meet on Puente Negro to then cross to the other side. It also happens that these children are requested through middlemen for homosexual clients of different social strata, both locals and people from El Paso, who locate them in parks, pieces of waste ground and entertainment places for children. While the middlemen receive US\$200, the children are paid US\$20, although sometimes they are paid with drugs or asked to do additional jobs related to pornography.

According to the last Census on child workers done in 1998, of a total of 2,599 children who work in the streets and in different public spaces, only 32 indicated that they prostitute themselves regularly, and many more do so occasionally. The points where these children are mainly to be found are: the Centre zone, the ex-cinema Coliseo, Carreño alley, the monument to Benito Juárez, the Pronaf area, the international bridges, Vicente Guerrero and Constitución.

One woman, an ex-addict in rehabilitation, explained how she came to recruit street children: *“I began to take drugs at the age of 13; I inhaled, smoked marijuana, took pills, cocaine, heroine and injected cocaine... my need was so great that my body asked for it. I did all I could to get the drug: prostitution, theft, whatever... I went as far as to get little boys for the clients; the clients got drugs for me and I took the boys... I got them in the streets because they were cheaper than in the canteens”*.

It should be noted that in this last case, the children are referred to as if they were merchandise, which lets us see one of the mechanisms that perhaps permits or facilitates their exploitation, that is, when they are no longer perceived as human beings, as fellow creatures, and become strange or foreign “things” then anything is justified as it is then a question of “the others” or rather “the other”, not someone like “ourselves”.

Then, there are people who recruit children, above all girls aged 14 to 17 among whom are children who have come from different parts of the Republic with the intention of crossing the frontier. These girls are highly vulnerable, and not rarely are victims of abuse and rape, for on the whole they do not have relatives or acquaintances in the locality and their families are not in conditions to help them.

Many of them are induced into prostitution and drug consumption, above all cocaine, with which the exploiters ensure that they will not leave their work. In a short period of time they begin to consume all kinds of substances, including heroine – which we cannot find in other towns, except Tijuana. They frequently form groups that consume heroine in which a young girl who prostitutes herself becomes supplier for the others. It is worth noting that in Juárez there are 2,000 registered users of heroine, and many more who are not registered.

Another woman in rehabilitation said: *“I began to take drugs when I was 14... I discovered them when I was very small because my mother was out working and the woman who took care of us took drugs. When I was 14 I began with pills but before that I had used marijuana and alcohol... after that I went into the streets. When I was 17 I used cocaine and began to prostitute myself, I worked as a dancer. I earned money and everything I got was to buy drugs... As I stole from my clients they beat me, I saw things very difficult... once they threw me out of a car....”*

Indeed, one of the concerns that all the people interviewed insistently showed was one related to the increase in drug consumption at both the level of the society at large and among the children from the sector we are studying, in particular. Similarly, frequent mention was made of the participation of the police in the trafficking and consumption of drugs, of corruption by the different authorities, which has lessened their credibility, and the extortion by the police that the women who prostitute themselves are continually suffering.

One woman, an ex-addict and prostitute, was very clear on the subject: *“When I was 14 I began to get to know all types of drugs: heroine, cocaine... I don’t even know how it happened but I think it was seeing my friends at school... I never had any communication with my parents, my father was alcoholic and my mother was completely under his orders... he beat her all the time. Then I began to go around with people who were into drugs: policemen, and the like... I took so many drugs they didn’t satisfy me any longer. My boyfriends gave them to me. With time, I liked money and began to get into the business because before that cocaine was only for the police; now anyone can get it, but before only directly from the police... After that I no longer liked cocaine and began with heroine; I got it stealing from the police... they could have killed me, they often beat me. I also worked as a prostitute... In prostitution you realise that you have to give money to the person you work for because they give you a house, food, they give you everything and you have to give to the police too... you’re tied to them, you just look at them, and even if you do nothing, it’s as if they know you, you have to give them money, as much as 600 or 700 pesos a time... The police beat me up and I was afraid to go onto the streets”.*

According to different testimonies, the persons who exploit them are often identified as their *“representatives”*, who can be men or women, who convince them that they are *“there to protect them and offer them the best opportunities”*. This same person often supplies them with drugs as in the case of one exploiter who, as we were told, controlled 50 children who were *rotated* from one night-club to another in the locality.

In another case we were told about by a group of children we interviewed in a home, 4 girls in their district, aged between 13 and 16, were being exploited by a soldier who beat them and had reached the extreme of burning their house because, according to him, *“they didn’t give him all the money”*. When the children were asked what they thought of this case and if some authority had intervened on behalf of the girls they considered this unthinkable and added that the girls *“had looked for trouble by trying to deceive the soldier”*.

The above seems to us to be evidence of the high degree of acceptance that exists with respect to violence against women, violence that, in this narration, seems to be a premise or

understood value that is beyond all questioning. Here we must bear in mind that this is not an isolated case but something that happens relatively frequently, for example, when a girl decides to leave the place where she is working.

There are also children who have been brought to the locality by networks that control this kind of business and take them from one town to another all along the border. These girls only stay for some time in the locality and, although on occasions they have gone to homes, they refuse to denounce their exploiters or provide data about their families and therefore very little is known about their situation.

As one official said: *“People who are in the institutions in contact with these cases do realise what is going on, but most of the people are indifferent to the situation... even when they see children prostituting themselves, they don’t do anything because they don’t want to get themselves into trouble”*.

Even the children who have come with their families are susceptible to being recruited into the sex trade. According to a psychologist: *“the persons who come here, come with the illusion of obtaining something better and see a very strong contrast in the culture, in values and many families cannot assimilate these changes... they arrive with nothing and have to pay rent, services... the parents’ alcoholism is aggravated, the family breaks up. The children begin to go onto the streets and they are more vulnerable... people who dedicate themselves to prostitution and pornography find these children a ready ground for business...”*.

Another factor that increases the risk of these children being recruited is the maltreatment and sexual abuse they had previously suffered from members of their families. Indeed, Ciudad Juárez has the highest index of ill-treated children in the State. During 1999 alone, the Assistant Attorney’s Office for the Defence of the Child attended 1,060 children for different types of ill-treatment. During the same period, however, only 61 cases of child corruption were legally denounced and these included some cases of pimping, very few, and inducement to take drugs were the majority. During the same period, the Attorney at Law’s Office received nearly 150 denouncements for sexual abuses of different types committed against minors.

The co-ordinator of a home told us, *“The mothers always tell us the same story: that their daughter, aged 13, left home and they cannot control her... they have been looking for her all over the centre of the town. Many left home because their stepfathers abused them. In 90% of the cases the mother was out at work and they were alone”*.

A woman prostitute talked about how she had been abused when she was a girl contributed to her going into prostitution when she was still a minor *“When I was very small I was abused by my brother... I was afraid to tell my parents, afraid they would do something worse to me... I was like that for a long time, from when I was 8, it was a terrible experience. I thought that as they hurt me, that my body was of no use, so why should I look after it... When I was 17 a friend took me to work in a bar and I began to work and I earned good money... they always gave us drugs free. When I began to work, they pretended that some other person was giving you drugs... now it’s more open, they give them to you directly...”*.

Another woman prostitute also suffered abuse when she was small, “*When I was 6 a man abused me... my parents went out and the man would go into my house. Then they threw me out of the house and I slept under the walls... since the age of 9 I hung around with older people. The neighbour who had abused me threatened that he was going to do something to me and I felt safer with a group. All my friends from the block were sniffers... that’s how I grew up, like that with my mates... I left when I was 15 because my cousin told me about a brothel in the centre and although I said I didn’t like it, I stayed there to work and sell drugs... After that we began doing business: I went as far as to take the partners small boys, even adults, whatever*”.

There are different kinds of establishments, zones and prices in the sex trade in the town. For example, the adult women and children who prostitute themselves in Carreño and Victoria streets charge 5 pesos for one dance with the client and 50 for their sexual services. The Tarahumara girls who prostitute themselves in the area that was once the Coliseo cinema charge 200 pesos but there are other children in massage parlours who receive 300 pesos or girls who dance in a higher level type of establishment where they can charge 100 dollars or more for their services. Most of the children are to be found in the dance halls of the Mariscal and la Paz zone but they can also be found in Degollado and Martínez, in Francisco Villa, in the Bellavista and Obrera districts, in the Puente Negro and the so-called Zone of Silence.

With respect to the Tarahumara girls, it is a recent phenomenon for them to come to the town and prostitute themselves at the age of 14 or 15 that was not previously observed. It seems that these girls have moved to the town with their families who they support by prostituting themselves. Almost all of them are addicted to *celestial water* (toluene).

There are also gay bars where boys prostitute themselves or do transvestite shows. Both people from the town and others who come from El Paso go to these bars. Cases are known of boys who have been offered US\$20 in these places in exchange for letting themselves be recorded or photographed for pornography.

It is common for women to begin to work in prostitution at the age of 13 or 14, although most of the girls are between 15 and 17 years old. There are also younger children who have been recruited by homosexuals. In one recent case, a doctor from the locality abused five boys aged between 9 and 16 who he paid in different ways (house, food, clothes, entertainment) for their services that included letting themselves be photographed. Even when it was very difficult for the boys to agree to give testimony, they did it and the doctor went to prison, but he was set free shortly afterwards, thus providing evidence that this type of crime often goes unpunished.

With respect to the clients, they come from the locality and also from the neighbouring town of El Paso. Youths above all come from El Paso and they are mainly looking for drugs and alcohol although homosexuals also come who are looking for children. Soldiers from the base at Fort Bliss used to come often, but now that restrictions have been imposed they come less frequently. Similarly, Mexican soldiers come who the girls identify as being violent and assiduous clients of sleazy places. The other clients are men from all social sectors, occupations and sexual preferences.

2.2 Other Types of Exploitation

It is also known that children prostitute themselves in massage parlours that are promoted by taxi drivers who guarantee them clientele. It is known that these parlours usually move from one place to another to prevent control, but it is not known how many children work in this sector or in what conditions they are found as it has not been possible to make contact with them. Cases are also known of girls who have been recruited in gyms to work as dancers in night-clubs in the locality.

Trafficking of children exists, above all of children who are sold by their parents, bought by middlemen and sold again to be given in adoption to American families. In some of these cases there has been complicity on the part of the authorities who allow the children to leave the country in an irregular way or provide documents to “legalise” the adoption.²⁶

With respect to pornography, it is clear that children are frequently exploited in this way, although few cases are denounced and the exploiters penalised. In one recent case, seven children aged between 15 and 17 were induced by a man from the locality to consume drugs and perform sexual activities that were photographed. The case is being tried.

Sex tourism also exists with the participation of American citizens who cross the border with the intention of having sexual activities with children.

To summarise, there are cases of sexual exploitation of children in all its forms: trafficking, pornography, sex tourism and prostitution, the latter two types being the most frequent.

Taking into account the girls and boys from the different sectors we have mentioned in both registered establishment and others, we consider that there could be around 800 girls and boys in Ciudad Juárez who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

3. Institutional Responses

In Ciudad Juárez there are homes for repatriated and street children that on occasions have been prostitutes, but there is no institution or programme especially designed to offer the specialised attention that these children need. Moreover, it could be said that it is a population that nobody, to date, seems to be interested in working with. Even for the large number of adult women addicts and prostitutes, we only found two non-governmental organisations that accept them when they want to rehabilitate themselves and this is notoriously insufficient.

²⁶ There is evidence on both sides of the border that permit the documentation of a large number of these cases. Among others, in December 1999, the Assistant Secretary for Migratory Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior informed that during the last years it had had knowledge of 500 cases of children who had disappeared and were presumably victims of child trafficking on the border with the United States. It is necessary to add that although in many of these cases aprocriphal documentation has been found which was used to regularise the movement of the children, in no case was it mentioned that these documents were issued by the authorities of Ciudad Juárez responsible for issuing this kind of documents.

There are about 20 homes, most of which are religious, for children who have been abandoned but neither do these contemplate the special attention boys and girls who have been sexually exploited require. For their part, the Attorney's Office for the Defence of the Child, the Woman and the Family and the Attention Centre for Border Children do not have specialised programmes of attention for this sector, but they do provide legal and psychological advice and social work for all child victims of different types of abuse who request these services and they have collaborated in denouncing and in the follow-up of sexual exploitation before the corresponding authorities.

With respect to the legal sector, the cases that come to the knowledge of the authorities are few, since almost nobody presents denouncements, which shows both the lack of confidence and credibility of these instances, and what is probably perceived as a lack of alternatives. *"There's not much faith in the law", "there's a lot of corruption" and "these cases aren't denounced because people feel there's no sense in doing it"*, were words we heard on repeated occasions.

Concerning the health services and sexually transmitted diseases, 466 cases of HIV-AIDS have been registered in the locality and, during 1999, 35 new cases of AIDS were reported among young people and minors that prostitute themselves. Of the 20 males infected, 5 prostituted themselves with homosexuals in the United States. Some of them were infected when they were very small and to date continue to be sexually active for, as we were informed, no controls are applied to avoid the virus continuing to be spread nor is follow-up given to the cases. *"There is a Community Centre for Sexually Transmitted Diseases which 860 women regularly go to, but there are so many places where these services are also provided that it is impossible to conduct an effective control and know how many there are"*.

For their part, according to information we were given, night-club owners are not interested in the health of their sex workers, *"they aren't interested in the health of their girls, all they're concerned about is that their hours aren't cut back"*.

CONCLUSIONS

Although we have frequently heard that one of the factors that has propitiated children being victims of sexual exploitation in Ciudad Juárez is the fact that their mothers work away from home and leave them alone for a long time, we do not believe that this tends to minimise or hide other equally important factors. For example, the fact that fathers and mothers work long hours because if they did not they could not survive; the fact that the father often abandons his wife and children without sharing the responsibility that both have not only with respect to their keep but also in bringing up and taking care of them; the fact that constant flows of migrants make it difficult to generate and consolidate modes of community organisation and solidarity; the fact that the persons who exploit the children have operated and continue to do so with utter impunity; the fact that the firms where the parents work pay wages that do not permit a dignified standard of living and the fact that neither the entrepreneurs nor the governments are concerned about the children who are left alone nor do they propitiate the organisation of work in such a way that this does not happen or collaborate with the establishment of nurseries. In short, the fact that

responsibility for the children is not left only on the back of the mothers and that it is taken so naturally that the fathers abandon their share of it.

It is true that in a society like the one we have tried to describe, one that is in a permanent state of expansion and that, for that reason, is not able to assimilate the continual arrival of new members, families are subject to changes that are often faster than their capacity to process them. In many senses, the institutions also seem to have lagged behind or have been overwhelmed by the complexity of the problems they have to face: the old schemes are no longer of any use to explain the new problems affecting the families who claim attention. But, without doubt, more than the families and the institutions, it is the children who most deeply suffer from the crises their families face and the inadequate or insufficient responses they receive from the institutions.

All this paints a panorama that demonstrates the high degree of social decay that is most painfully manifested in the explosive growth in drug consumption, in the incorporation of increasingly younger children into the sex trade and in the multiple expressions of violence from which neither girls nor boys, women nor men escape.

It is also true that the authorities have had to face a reality that surpasses their capacity to provide responses. The cost of the neglect of the rural zones in the country has fallen in a disproportionate way upon their shoulders.

To be able to make profound changes in this situation requires much more than the co-operation of the authorities. While there is no will unifying all sectors to protect children in which everyone plays a part, the reality faced today by the girls and boys of this town cannot be modified.

Guadalajara

1. The Urban and Social Context

1.1 Sociodemographic Profile

The city of Guadalajara, capital of the State of Jalisco, is located in the western central region of the Mexican Republic. Together with the Municipalities of Tonalá, Zapopan, Tlaquepaque, El Salto and Tlajomulco, that follow one from the other and form part of the same metropolitan zone, it constitutes the second largest urban area in the country in both terms of population and economic activity.

According to the Count of 1995, Guadalajara has 3,461,819 inhabitants. It is estimated that today, together with the three Municipalities mentioned above, it has four million inhabitants. The growth rate during the period between the censuses of 1990 and 1995 was 2.64%, slightly higher than the national average of 2.04%.²⁷

The percentage of migrant population in the State is 20.6%, close to the national average of 23.4% and in an intermediate position between states like Guerrero with only 14.2% and Quintana Roo with a noteworthy 53.4%. The fertility rate is 3.1%, a little higher than the national average of 2.8%. Of the women of childbearing age, 96.6% are acquainted with contraceptive methods, more than in Quintana Roo (92.2%) and Guerrero (88%) and almost the same as in Chihuahua (97%).²⁸

Of the female population from 12 to 14 years of age in the State, 0.8% is married or lives with a partner, a slightly lower percentage than the national average of 0.9%, while 0.32% of the girls of this age have had one or more children, also a little below the national average of 0.40%. In Guadalajara, 182 girls aged between 12 and 14 are mothers of at least one child, while 6,637 adolescents from 15 to 19 years of age are in the same situation.

From 6 to 14 years of age there are fewer men who know how to read and write than women in the same age range in the State: 87.4 and 88.6 percent respectively, although the girls go less to school than boys of the same age, 92.4% of boys in comparison with 90.6% of girls. In contrast, unlike other States, the percentage of girls aged 15 and over leaving the school system in Jalisco is a little less in comparison with the boys: 23.5% in relation to 22.9%. However, 31% of the men and 32% of the women aged 15 and over have not completed primary studies or had no schooling, and the schooling average in the State fluctuates around 7 years. In Guadalajara, 89.5% of the girls and boys from 6 to 14 years of age know how to read and write, while 4.6% of the population aged 15 and over is illiterate.²⁹

After the age of 12, 35% of the women and 65% of the men form part of the labour market. The women go preferably into the tertiary sector, 71%, in comparison with 46% of

²⁷ Gustavo Garza (coord.), Atlas Demográfico de México, Conapo – Progres, Mexico, 2000.

²⁸ INEGI, Hombres y Mujeres de México, 3rd Edition, Mexico, 1999.

²⁹ INEGI, Censo de Población y Vivienda, Mexico, 1995.

the men. However, an important participation of women can also be observed in the secondary sector – 22%.

Twenty-seven percent of the total population of the State lives in Guadalajara, but if we add the population of the neighbouring Municipalities of Zapopan, Tlaquepaque and Tonalá, this zone concentrates more than half (55%) of the total population of the State. According to data from the Municipality, 81% of its inhabitants were born in the same state. Most of those not born there come from Michoacán, Mexico City and Zacatecas.³⁰

With respect to employment in Guadalajara, most of the persons employed in the Municipality, 62%, work in the tertiary sector and 34% in the secondary sector, part of whom work in the *maquiladora* industry that has an important weight in the locality. The main occupation is that of bricklayers and craftsmen, with 19%, followed by tradesmen and shop assistants and then office workers. More than half, 57%, of the employed population receives from 1 to 3 minimum wages. The State of Jalisco takes thirteenth place in the country for Gross Domestic Product per capita.

Among the economically active population, estimated to be 559,000 persons in the Municipality of Guadalajara, 178,546 are women; 1,888 of them are aged between 12 and 14 and 29,000 between 15 and 19.

It should be added that Guadalajara receives an important flow of tourists each year. For example, in 1996, 120,760 commercial flights went to Guadalajara, 17,200 of which were international flights transporting 1,287,000 passengers, as well as four million persons who travelled from other parts of the country.

2. The Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Locality

2.1 Prostitution

*“Codes abound... what’s missing is a lack of respect for them”.
“What forces girls into it is their economic situation”.*

In Guadalajara there are several groups of girls and boys who are exploited sexually for commercial purposes, each of them faces a different situation that we shall attempt to describe.

On the one hand, there are street boys and girls who are estimated to be a total of about 2,000 and who work in public spaces, while some 400 normally live in these spaces. Within the last group, one part of them occasionally prostitute themselves to order to be able to survive while a smaller proportion, about 80, do so in a stable way as their way of living. Both girls and boys are involved although boys predominate. They are aged between 12 and 17 and most of them come from lower class areas in the metropolitan zone and from other States, especially Veracruz, Zacatecas, Guanajuato, Sinaloa and Michoacán. These children are mainly to be found in the centre zone, around the old bus station, in the streets of Madero and Javier Mina, although a total of 51 points in the city have been identified that are centres for drug consumption and prostitution.

³⁰ INEGI, Cuaderno Estadístico Municipal. Guadalajara, Mexico, 1997.

The boys are prostituted by homosexuals of local origin and by foreign tourists who come into contact with them in certain areas. While the locals go frequently at night to the Revolución or Morelos parks, the tourists go mainly to look for them in the Plaza del Sol.³¹

There are also smaller boys, some 7 years old, who are exploited in these zones. Most of them inhale substances and smoke marijuana and, those who are from the locality come from the marginal districts nearby: Cerro del Cuatro, Arenales, Santa Ana and Villa Guadalupe. Some have been temporarily in homes but leave to live in the streets again and only sporadically visit their families. Many of these children (70% according to a religious organisation that attends them in the San Juan de Dios area) were victims of sexual abuse at home.

One 17 year old boy, who prostituted himself in Revolución park and is now in a shelter, shared his experiences with us, *“I was born here in Guadalajara, I’m an only child. As a boy I lived with my mother in my grandmother’s house because she didn’t get married or anything like that... We had many problems with my grandmother and my uncle, they spoke beating me, telling me I had to do all the housework. Not one day went by when my uncle didn’t beat me, until I got mad. Before I finished primary school, I grabbed my schoolbag and wrote a message in a notebook for my mother saying that I had decided to leave home. I got on a bus and went to the centre. I already had some friends who rented a room for twelve pesos a day. My friends went to Revolución park, which is the park for prostitution.*

Night came and I went with a friend and did what he did. There are always about 15 boys standing on the corners after eleven at night and cars come by for them. You make a deal, whether you’ll go to a hotel or someone’s house or the boys already have a hotel they always go to. One boy my age was exploited by an adult, he had to give him money. Then I worked in a Night club. There I met this guy and he asked me if I wanted to live with him. He was 32 and we went to the bus station to rent a room near there. Then I got annoyed with him and went to live in a piece of waste ground.

There were 40 boys and girls living in the waste ground; all of them took drugs. They just spent their time begging or stealing. The girls prostitute themselves in the bus station. The money they get is for drugs: inhalants, cocaine, pills. Once five patrol cars drove up to the waste ground. They stole from us, they kicked us and the girls had to go with them so they wouldn’t take them away... Now they’ve closed this piece of waste ground down, but the boys are living in another in 16 de Septiembre. I wanted to always follow the same routine: get up, go to the crossroads to clean windscreens, buy drugs, beg for food in the market... but then I thought of my mum and that’s why and thought of making my own way and I came to the home. At first I wasn’t keen on coming because they told me there was a policeman, but then I saw that I could be here and I stayed”.

There are other children who prostitute themselves in a more stable way with some foreigner, principally Americans, who live in the residential areas of the city or in Chapala.

³¹ We should clear up a point here that is valid for the rest of the study. Our work refers to homosexuals who are aggressors, exploiters or procurers of children which, evidently, does not apply to everyone with this sexual preference and who we, by no means, wish to point to or disqualify.

The boys go with them in exchange for a roof, food, clothes and payment that can be higher if they agreed to be photographed. One boy of nine who the local DIF had contact with referred to a *queer* who normally picked him up at the crossroads, took him to his home, and kept him locked up for some days tied to a chair. The boy preferred to go back to Mexico City where he was from. In other cases, homosexuals stop at the crossroads in their cars and offer drugs to the children so that they will agree to go with them.

This phenomenon not only exists in Guadalajara but also in the residential and tourist areas that surround the city and particularly in Puerto Vallarta, just over two hours away, where the number of boys who are exploited is larger. In Puerto Vallarta there is an important gay community and also organised sex tourism with boys. Street boys from Guadalajara or other parts of the State and other States go there in search of clients.

It was recently discovered that foreign tourists took boys from Puerto Vallarta in boats with the purpose of producing pornographic material. In 1999, several Mexicans and foreigners involved in this type of crime were arrested, but were allowed to go shortly afterwards. One American involved who had abused several street children and threatened them was also set free. Similarly, the case is known of a Canadian who has several boys in his house in Playa de Muertos who he exploits and uses to produce pornographic material.

According to the law enforcement authorities, *“it has been difficult to prosecute these cases because the boys do not denounce these persons. They declare themselves to be their benefactors and even say that the boys are their godsons, although in reality they exploit them. Even though charges have been made in both the case of Chapala and Puerto Vallarta they did not proceed because the boys withdrew them. They say they are protected by these people.*

Most of the girls, on the other hand, prostitute themselves in the hotels in the central zone of the city. Some of them can be very young, from 8 years of age, although the majority are aged 13 to 17. They can be found in San Juan de Dios, Plaza del Mariachi, Plaza Tapatía or in the area around Hospicio Cabañas, that historically have formed part of the red light district. Some of these girls are exploited by procurers or pimps and others by their relatives who have devoted themselves to this activity for some time. In the latter case, they go almost naturally into prostitution because the family propitiates it in one way or another and they have grown up in neighbourhoods or hotels where this takes place. Almost all the girls, like their parents, have problems with addiction. In San Juan de Dios mothers have been found offering their twelve year old daughters.

In one group of 12 girls from 11 to 17 years of age that we interviewed in the Observation Centre for Young Offenders, perhaps the most important common factor we found was that they had left home due to the alcoholism of their parents or stepfathers and their violent behaviour. The girls told us over and over again what it had meant for them to live with parents who not only did not take care of them or respond to their needs, but often made the girls play this role. They often waited in vain for their mothers to support them, but they also proved unable to contain the violence. After leaving their families, some of them had lived in the streets, others had occasionally prostituted themselves and one of them had travelled to several States of the Republic, going from bar to bar, where she said she had come into contact with hundreds of children who worked in these places and were in a similar situation to hers. Almost all of them took drugs and had been arrested for different

motives. One of them, the youngest, had done everything possible to be arrested after stealing in front of policemen. Five of them had been victims of sexual exploitation.

Some girls who are being exploited by pimps live in neighbourhoods in 5 de Mayo street. They consider them to be their *protectors* or their partners, even though it is clear that they live off the work of the children. As the director of a home said, *“the girls who have been abused by their step-fathers are the most likely to fall into prostitution and let themselves be deceived by the persons who exploit them”*.

According to the authorities of the Observation Centre for children, at least one third of the 26 girls they receive on average in a month for committing different offences have been prostitutes. As they pointed out, it is very difficult for these girls to recognise that they are being exploited since on the whole they say that they are there because of *“friends who invited them”*. The zones where they say they work are: Gigantes and 5 de Mayo streets, Plaza de los Mariachis, Plaza Tapatía, Morelos park and the hotels located in Calzada Independencia, from Libertad to Morelos park, the old bus station and the San Juan de Dios area. Just over half of these girls come from the locality and the remainder from different States of the Republic.

There is also another group of adolescents, from 15 to 18 years of age, who work in a firm that offers their sexual services in hotels in the Plaza del Sol area. There are about 60 girls, most of them middle class students in the locality that offer this kind of service almost always in a covert way.

In relation to girls and to boys there are middlemen and recruiters who have well established ways of operating. For example, in order to offer them to tourists some people have catalogues which they show in the areas around the Expo and they can take the children to hotels if the client so wishes. Other middlemen are the taxi drivers who can provide information on the places and how to gain access to children. The waiters in certain bars or night clubs may also act as middlemen. It is known that there are lesbians who ask the waiters to put them in contact with secondary school girls who they take to the residential zone of Santa Anita. It is also known that there are procurers who use a truck and recruit children at the crossroads.

On occasions, the children that are exploited form part of a network of complicity that is woven around them. This was the case of the children who were being prostituted in the old bus station and part of whom came from families that devoted themselves to prostitution or had abused them. Around these children there are links between the prostitutes and their children, bus drivers, policemen, taxi drivers and bar tenders, all of whom earn some money for offering the children: the younger the girl or boy, the more money they receive. On several occasions the police also abuse these children or extort them.

Different authorities intervened in 1998 when it was learned of the boys and girls who prostituted themselves in the old bus station. They also intervened in a hotel in the area where girls prostituted themselves and arrested several persons who were exploiting them. Today, although the problem in the old bus station is less evident, it still subsists in the

surrounding area and there are still girls in the hotels. In just three hotels, of the almost 40 that exist in the zone, we found out that 25 children were being exploited.³²

Another point where there is a similar network of complicity, is in the Market area where the children even prostitute themselves in the trucks that transport merchandise. Similarly, in the Tonalá gastronomic corridor there are girls of 12 or 13 years of age working as waitresses who are also sexually exploited.

Most of the clients that go to the hotels that are situated around the old bus station or in the Market are tradesmen or farmers with very low incomes that are spending a few days in the city. These clients are distinguished from those others who go in their vehicles for the children in Morelos park or the foreigners who take them to their residences, as well as from the tourists and persons from the locality who go to the hotels or places around the Plaza del Sol. Near the Plaza del Sol there is also a bar where young men perform nude shows that women from the middle and upper classes of the locality go to.

There are other points where homosexuals come into contact with children. In Mina and Calle Cuarenta there are two houses where homosexuals and transvestites meet. About 20 boys live in each of them but they offer their services in the streets.

Some of these children have been sent to the Observation Centre for Children for having committed different offences. Authorities from this Centre informed us that they operate in specific zones like the centre of the city, especially in Avenida Juárez, López Cotilla and Madero; in the San Juan de Dios area, Plaza Tapatía, the old bus station and some houses located in Javier Mina street, between 46 and 50 streets of Sector Libertad, where the children have mentioned having clients who go regularly to look for them.

According to the authorities of the Attorney's Office for Justice, during 1998, 186 preliminary investigations were carried out into the corruption of children and 133 in 1999 for different motives not necessarily linked to sexual exploitation. However of all these investigations only one person was remanded for the corruption of children and two for inciting children to prostitution, which lets us see that very few cases are denounced and even fewer end in the trial of the persons responsible.

Similarly, the Attorney's Office stated that in 1998, 94 cases of rape of children aged between 13 and 17 were denounced and 49 assaults on the modesty of children aged 13. In 1999, there were 99 cases of rape and 70 assaults on modesty, although, according to the authorities interviewed, many more cases occur than those that are denounced.

With respect to health control, this is not carried out through giving cards to the women who prostitute themselves. As the doctors explained, the service was provided in this way, but it was considered that it did not guarantee the control of sexually transmitted diseases. The women now go to health centres or the Civil Hospital and ask for attention without being obliged to go every certain period or having to register their occupation. During 1999, 29 children were attended for venereal diseases in the Civil Hospital.

³² We wish to thank the Municipal DIF and María Antonia Chávez, researcher from the University of Guadalajara for the information they provided on street children who prostitute themselves.

One doctor from this Hospital explained that most of the children who prostitute themselves go to private doctors, “*so they are not found out about,*” and added that, “*the children do not go to public institutions for fear of being denounced, and also because they can pay for these services since they earn well*”.

According to the Epidemiological Yearbook of the State of Jalisco, 280 cases of AIDS were reported in the State in 1998 and 266 in 1999 that must be added to the 362 cases accumulated between 1993 and 1997. It should also be pointed out that among the main causes of disease more than one thousand cases of genitourinary infections were found in 1998 in both the health regions of Guadalajara and Puerto Vallarta, taking ninth place among the most frequent diseases of said regions. Within the group of boys and girls from 5 to 14 years of age, a total of 419 cases of sexually transmitted diseases were reported during 1999 in the State including 2 cases of AIDS. Within the 15 to 24 age group, 3,306 cases of these diseases were reported and 2 cases of AIDS. Similarly, in 1999, 6,980 births were registered in women under 20 years of age in the State and 683 abortions, which implies that 10% of the pregnancies in young girls of this age end in abortions. It should be pointed out that possibly a large number of the boys and girls about whom sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS and/or abortions are reported are victims of sexual exploitation.

2.2 Other Types of Exploitation

Cases are known in which children are used to produce pornographic material. In Plaza Tapatía, for example, there are persons who procure the children for 300 pesos so that they agree to be photographed. In other cases, they look for these children in different places, like videogame establishments and can induce them by showing them material of this type. Similarly, some foreigners who take them to their residences in Guadalajara and Puerto Vallarta have also exploited them in this way.

Other types of covert prostitution are those that take place in massage parlours, beauty parlours, modelling and escort agencies. These kinds of establishment have proliferated recently in Guadalajara and Puerto Vallarta and they also offer the sexual services of minors, as do companies with party entertainers and travel companions. Up to now we are dealing with a universe of children, mostly female, that remains hidden and since they do not go to care or community services, it is not known how many there are or what their living and work conditions are like.

There is also the participation of foreigners in this type of businesses that recruit children, as is the case of a Japanese man who went to the locality trying to recruit girls to whom he offered employment as “*models*” in his country.

As we have said, sex tourism with children exists in both Guadalajara and Puerto Vallarta. Authorities from the tourist sector mention that although they are aware of the problem, they have not detected any travel agency that openly promotes or offers sexual services with minors.

With respect to child trafficking, after Mexico City, Guadalajara is the city that reports the greatest number of stolen children each year. Although figures vary from one source to

another, it is certain that there are children who are sold by their parents and given in adoption in an irregular way. The same happens with a part of the children who are stolen and leave the country with apocryphal documents to be given in adoption abroad. There is also knowledge of the trafficking or sale of children who have been under custody in public and private institutions in the locality and of the participation of officials in granting irregular adoptions.

That is why, according to the law enforcement authorities, 4 persons have been sentenced for the crime of child trafficking – that includes the removal and theft of minors – while another 4 are being tried for the same offence in the Municipality. The figures for the State are 9 sentenced and 8 being tried for child trafficking.

Perhaps one of the features that should be stressed as being distinctive of the sexual exploitation of children in this city, is the large participation that is observed in relative terms of boys in comparison with what we found in other places. This also seems to be the case in Puerto Vallarta where, as we were told, more boys than girls would be exploited.

In Guadalajara, we estimate that, taking together all the boys and girls of the different groups and types of exploitation we have mentioned, there could be a total of at least 600 girls and boys who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The predominant type of exploitation is prostitution, followed by sex tourism.

3. Institutional Responses

In Guadalajara there are about 30 homes for children that have been abandoned or maltreated, most of which are private institutions of a religious type. None of them, with the exception of the one attended by nuns, have specialised care programmes for the girl and boy victims of sexual exploitation. Some attend a large number of children as is the case of a Korean-American foundation that attends nearly one thousand children and the Hospicio Cabañas that cares for just over 400.

The DIF, for its part, in each of the municipalities that integrate the metropolitan zone, has directed its attention particularly to street children and, although they do not have specialised programmes for child victims of sexual exploitation, they have a high degree of knowledge and offer adequate support to the sector of street children who are exploited, particularly through Albergue las Palmas. However, other groups of children who are also being exploited are not receiving attention.

We learned only of one institution that attends minors with addiction problems which is considered to be insufficient in relation to the size of the problem.

With respect to the law enforcement field, it should be pointed out that representatives of this sector say that very few cases are denounced of sexual exploitation of children and, even in the cases that have been presented, it is frequent for the children to drop the charges because the exploiters threaten them and pretend that they are their *godfathers* or *benefactors*. The same happens in other cases in which children are subject to sexual abuse, because the persons who have the authority to represent the children in this kind of denouncements are almost always their aggressors.

CONCLUSIONS

The problems facing the girls and boys who are being sexually exploited has not been sufficiently visible nor comprehensible to the different sectors that could and should intervene on their behalf. Various factors contribute to keeping the situation hidden. Among them is the difficulty in recognising that the children can be going through situations that are so difficult and harmful. Similarly, a large part of the children who are being exploited are to be found in enclosed spaces, hidden in the case of establishments that have manifested other purposes (massage, hair dressing) and even in clandestine places (like ones where pornographic material is produced). Perhaps this explains, in part, that up to now attention has been directed only at street children who prostitute themselves for they are certainly the most visible.

We also noticed that it is a phenomenon whose contours are not generally clearly defined and whose frontiers often tend to be blurred or confused with other phenomena. This was notorious in different groups that continually go without distinction from sexual abuse in the family to commercial sexual exploitation, as if the common factor of sexuality ruled out the very characteristics of each phenomenon or as if the fact that a child had been abused could account for or explain the fact that he/she was subsequently sexually exploited.

In this last sense, it should also be pointed out that on occasions the models used to try to explain the phenomenon prove perhaps to be insufficient in relation to its complexity. Family disintegration is often spoken of, for example, without perhaps having a broader view of the social factors that are propitiating it or without bearing in mind the way in which other elements intervene. These elements include: the way in which the exploiters operate; the type of link they establish with the children; the existence of procurers; the way in which the owner of the establishments where children are prostituted promote their interests, the way in which clients persist in having relations with children; or rather, the factors that propitiate greater vulnerability in certain children or that make them more susceptible than others to being caught by the exploiters.

Similarly, the interviews with the girls showed that the problems their families face are more complex and go beyond disintegration or malfunctionality and that often the attention they receive from the different institutions does not manage to give a proper response to the specific situation they face, which also contributes to their entering or remaining in sexual exploitation circuits, sometimes because they cannot find viable or ideal alternatives to their situation.

Another problem that is manifest is that although there are numerous public and private institutions giving care to children in Guadalajara, rather than creating new institutions to care for child victims of sexual exploitation, what is perhaps required is the generation of better ways to co-ordinate efforts between them, as well as procedures to agree on the aspects or tasks with which each of them could contribute to relieve the situation of these children. A start has been made to do this in Puerto Vallarta where a group has been formed called "For Our Children" in which representatives of different sectors concerned about children who are being exploited are taking part.

To put at the reach of the girls and boys who are being exploited answers that really have an influence on modifying their situation, requires, without doubt, the co-operation of

various sectors and public and private institutions since, evidently, no institution by itself can cover all the aspects that demand attention.

Tapachula

*"Rather than a strict frontier in the south we have a long line of historical-cultural contact. The tradition of free transit and trade between Mexico and Central America is old. The great Mayan cultural substratum is the element that gives cohesion to this zone, but the frontier phenomenon over the last one hundred years is present for the people from the area with a strength that increasingly determines their history and social life."*³³

1. The Urban and Social Context

1.1 Sociodemographic Profile

The town of Tapachula is located in the south east of the State of Chiapas, almost on the border with the Republic of Guatemala, and it is the second largest town in the State in terms of the number of inhabitants. The municipality, that comprises the town of Tapachula and a small number of nearby localities, had a population of 244,855 in 1995.

Unlike what happens in the rest of the State where 768,700 persons over five years of age speak some indigenous language, in the municipality of Tapachula only 1,500 people speak one of these languages. This would seem to be related to the size and greater urban development of the locality.

According to data from the 1995 Count, 92% of the population of Tapachula was born in the locality, 6% come from other states and only 2% from other countries. However, it is highly likely that the large number of Central American domestic workers, mainly Guatemalan women, who work in this town were not included in these figures.³⁴

The growth rate of the population in Tapachula during the period between censuses from 1990 to 1995 was 2.9%, a percentage one third greater than the national average of 2.04%.³⁵

With respect to the level of schooling, in the State of Chiapas 74% of the children aged 6 to 14 know how to read and write and 86% go to school. However, only 28% of the males aged 15 to 24 continue studying. Among the girls, 72% know how to read and write and 83% of those aged 6 to 15 go to school, but after that age only 20 out of every 100 continue studying. That is why among the female population aged 15 and over almost 60% have never received any schooling or have not finished their primary studies, which means that more than 32% of the women are illiterate, in comparison with 19.2% of the men and the percentage of female illiteracy is the highest in the country.

³³ Juan Pohlenz in: Fabienne Venet, "La otra frontera", in: Senado de la República, Migración: México entre sus dos fronteras, 1999: 48.

³⁴ The information on the State of Chiapas comes from: INEGI, Hombres y Mujeres de México, third edition, 1999 and on the municipality, from: INEGI, Cuadernos Estadístico Municipal. Tapachula, 1997.

³⁵ Gustavo Garza (coord.), Atlas Demográfico de México, op.cit.

In Tapachula, according to the 1995 Count, 89.3% of the children aged 6 to 14 know how to read and write, while 7.7% of the population aged 15 and over is illiterate.

With respect to employment, of the 66,195 economically active persons registered by the 1995 Count in the municipality of Tapachula, 15,801 are women, 357 of them aged between 12 and 14 and 2,031 between 15 and 19.

Most of the population in employment, 54%, work in the tertiary sector, while 15% work in the secondary sector and 27% in the primary. The latter percentage indicates that even though the town concentrates a large number of typical urban occupations like commerce and office work, agricultural activity continues to have an important place, while the percentage of workers speaks of the paucity of industrial activity that exists in the municipality and the lack of sources of employment.

Salaries in the municipality are concentrated in the lowest levels: 32% of those in employment receive less than one minimum wage and 30% between 1 and 2 minimum wages; that is, more than 60% of the population earn less than 2 minimum wages. According to the social margination indicators prepared by the National Population Council, these incomes are considered to be “excluding”. Indeed, the State of Chiapas is in thirty-first place with respect to Gross Domestic Product per capita in the country.

Economic activity in the region is based mainly on the coffee, mango, sugar cane and banana plantations that surround the town. The labour force that works in these plantations and that comes mainly from Central America, principally Guatemala, constitutes an important contingent of floating population that other activities depend on, including the sex trade that is also subject to fluctuations that in part follow the agricultural cycles.

Suffice it to consider that during 1999, the migration authorities authorised 79,253 work permits for agricultural labour in just five frontier towns of the region: Talismán, Ciudad Hidalgo, Unión Juárez, Mazapa and Ciudad Cuauhtémoc. And, in order to have an idea of the importance and relative weight that this population has in the region, the case of Ciudad Hidalgo where 21,479 of said permits were granted can be taken as an example. This figure almost equals that of the population of 22,000 inhabitants that live permanently in the locality and is exceeded by the numbers for the floating population, above all if it is taken into account that many enter the region illegally.

1.2 The Migratory Flow

"... there are family relations, there is family on both sides of the river".

Both the municipality of Tapachula and its neighbours form part of the great territorial extension of the State of Chiapas that borders onto Guatemala and whose geographical and population characteristics (selva, rivers, scattered population, common ethnic groups) make it fitting for the existence of a continual migratory flow in both directions. Similarly, there is a significant amount of illegal immigration by Central American citizens who intend to cross through national territory to get to the United States or to obtain employment in Mexico and make a certain amount of money that will allow them to reach their objective.

To have some idea of the size of this flow, suffice it to consider that, according to the National Migration Institute, during 1999 a total of 72,290 persons were expelled along the frontier zone of the State of Chiapas, although it must be taken into account that there are important population flows that are not registered. This figure is the equivalent of an average of 198 persons being expelled each day of which 31,647 (43%) were Guatemalans; 26,001 (36%) Hondurans; 13,627 (19%) Salvadorians; and only the remaining 2% had some other nationality. As we shall see later on, the girls that are sexually exploited in the zone belong in similar proportions to these nationalities.

It is also important to consider the continuous and serious violations of rights suffered by the Central Americans who cross our frontiers illegally. In a report recently presented to the Senate of the Republic, Grupo Beta Sur has identified 45 points of criminal incidence in an area of approximately 360 kilometres in the State of Chiapas, in 8 of which incidents with greater frequency and intensity are produced. This Group has documented that 51% of the complaints are about acts committed by agents of authority (different police corporations, migration agents, etc.) while 49% can be attributed to gangs of common criminals. These gangs act with extreme violence and in an environment where it is easy to be victim to an ambush because of the need to evade inspection points and migratory controls. The violations most often suffered by persons without documents, from both criminals and the authorities are: assault, theft, sexual abuse, extortion and abuse of authority (Venet, 1999).

According to data from Beta Sur itself, during 1999 the organisation attended a total of 22,160 migrants who were seeking social or legal assistance or protection for having been victims of some crime. That same year, 23 deaths of immigrants were documented, most of whom were drowned or happened while they were trying to get onto a moving train.

The women who cross the frontier, either accompanying their husbands who are going to do agricultural work or who are looking for work, are also subject to continuous violations of their rights, including sexual abuses. The girls working in bars along the frontier are especially vulnerable since their condition of illegal immigrants is added to the prohibition of working in such places (to which, however, they have been taken by means of coercion or false pretences) making it difficult for them to denounce the series of violations to which they have been subjected.

There is also another constant population flow involving hundreds of people who daily perform commercial or labour activities in an area near the frontier line. This flow takes place in an informal way without any control as is the case of the persons who each day use tyres to cross the river Suchiate that marks the frontier between Tecún Umán, Guatemala, and Ciudad Hidalgo, in Mexico (Venet, 1999).

The existence of “cross over” points between both countries and all the dynamics that is generated in these localities constitutes a characteristic feature of the social landscape of the town of Tapachula and the nearby villages, particularly Ciudad Hidalgo in the neighbouring municipality of Suchiate.

To the frontier movement of immigrants must be added the presence of other groups that, without doubt, also alter the urban and social landscape in the region. This is particularly notorious in the case of the large number of trailers that drive down the narrow streets of Ciudad Hidalgo and each day cross the bridge leading to Guatemala in one direction or another, since these localities are in the area that is passed through by most of the trade in all kinds of products between Mexico and Central America, without forgetting the traffic in drugs, arms and illegal immigrants (see map of the trailers’ route).

It is estimated that in Ciudad Hidalgo nearly 300 trailers cross each day to or from Central America. The trailer drivers, who usually remain in the locality for several days, constitute one of the main floating populations that the sex trade seeks to win over and please. At the same time, they are also seen as a threat to the bar and canteen owners who fear they will take the girls away with the promise of getting them better jobs or taking them to the northern border.

Other groups of floating population located in the region are the *polleros* who offer their services to take illegal immigrants over the border. The army also has barracks in the outskirts of Ciudad Hidalgo and the sailors have a naval base in Puerto Madero, a few kilometres from the locality.

All the groups mentioned: temporary farm workers, illegal immigrants, *polleros*, trailer drivers, occasional visitors, soldiers and sailors are characterised for being predominantly male populations that are in a transit zone where they have no family neither do they intend to settle down there, hence the feature that unites them is lack of roots which, as we have seen, constitutes an appropriate environment for the sex trade.

1.3 The Girls, the Women

Some demographic indicators in relation to the girls and women that should be pointed out are that the State of Chiapas has the highest fertility rate in the country: 3.7% in contrast to the national average of 2.8%. Similarly, and in comparison to other states, a lower percentage of women in the State of Chiapas are acquainted with contraceptive methods and only 53% use them. This percentage is the lowest in the country. The percentage of the female population from 12 to 14 years of age that is married or living with a partner is also the highest in the country, 1.7%, as is the percentage of girls of this age who have had one or more children.

In the case of Tapachula, of the total number of 8,502 girls who in 1990 were aged between 12 and 14, 57 were already mothers and of the 13,589 in the 15 to 19 age group, 1,722 had had at least one child.

These data proved to be consistent with what we were told by different people at a local level in the sense that not only is it common for adolescent girls to begin their sex life at the age of 12 or 13, but that it is also considered that this age or a little later at the age of 14 or 15 a girl is ready to marry and have a family. The socially shared belief is that the tropical climate makes a woman mature sooner: *“the women here mature very quickly, at the age of 13 or 14 they’re already mature... the men don’t care how old they are, if the girl lets them, they don’t care...”*. A testimony that in a crude way reveals how adolescent girls are seen by local society and the preponderant role assigned them as sex objects.

2. The Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Region

2.1 Prostitution

“What leads people to look for young girls is because they have been perhaps less exposed to venereal diseases...”

In Tapachula there is a red light district for establishments where prostitution is practised which, ten years ago, the municipal authorities resolved to situate in the outskirts of the town. This zone, known as “Las Huacas” is composed of some 15 or 20 bars where there are also areas for prostitution. Some 250 women work in this zone and most of them come from Central America. Even though the regulations prohibit it, a part of the women who work there (possibly some 50) are minors, almost all without documents.

In some cases, they are minors who have stayed on to work because they were assaulted when they tried to cross the country to go to the northern border. Their wish is to stay for a time, save money and try again. It is not easy for them to do it considering that for each client they receive 30 pesos and the owner 75. Besides, their illegal situation leaves them in a delicate position, for each time there are “operations” they run the risk of being arrested, in which case they would be fined 21,000 pesos, which they do not have, or a sentence of 3 or 4 years in prison.

It must also be said that this does not happen too often, because the owners of the bar buy police protection and because the police also extort the illegal immigrants, and this does happen often.

Among other factors, it is their condition as illegal immigrants that is used to justify the type of regime practised in these establishments that is characterised for keeping the women and children in isolation, virtually without allowing them to leave their places of work. This does not only happen in Tapachula but also in several localities in the region as is the case of Cacahoatán that also has its red light district known as “El Ranchón” or “La Atlántida” where 200 women and children prostitute themselves. In Puerto Madero there is a zone known as “El Pijuyal” and another in Talismán and they can even be found in smaller localities like Metapa that has a bar significantly called “El Kinder”.

The regime of keeping the girls locked up is ensured in several ways. For example, in Cacahoatán, all the bars are to be found in a zone called “La Atlántida”. The girls are not allowed to arrive in the village after one in the afternoon; at that time they have to be in the red light district and cannot go to other places. *“Otherwise, the people of the village might complain and the police could fine them”*. Something similar happens in Ciudad Hidalgo where the Municipal Regulations for the running of bars expressly establishes in article five that *“the waitresses shall remain inside the business and the person who is outside shall be appointed by the municipal command”*.

Perhaps in order to palliate the effects of this type of regime, the girls are moved around from one locality to another in the region and from one bar to another within the same locality. This rotation is not decided by the girls themselves but by the owners of the bars who make the changes, since according to them, *“the business needs novelties and depends on diversity”*. As a basis for the exchanges, *“the youngest ones are changed for two or three of the most worn out... the younger they are, the better the price”*.

The same type of regime exists on both sides of the border and very few denouncements have been made. In Tecún Umán two years ago the case was known of 5 girls from Honduras and El Salvador who had been tricked and obliged to work in a bar where they were kept under lock and key and had been severely maltreated. This case, which was well known in the region, was taken to court thanks to a group of nuns that supported the children, although recently everything seemed to indicate that that persons responsible would be exonerated.

In the case of “Las Huacas”, the inhabitants of Tapachula identify it as an unsafe, dangerous and violent place that even taxi drivers refuse to take passengers to. It is not rare that these establishments, as also happens in Ciudad Hidalgo, are guarded by men who have better arms than the police, which also certainly contributes to dissuading the women who would like to abandon their place of work.

One official responsible for issuing licenses for the sale of alcohol in said establishments, was unintentionally very clear about the regime under which the women are locked up. *“En Las Huacas there are 15 establishments and 8 in Puerto Madero where they have prostitutes in captivity, so that they don’t swarm all over the town because it’s better like that... and although there are definitely other prostitutes who want their freedom and are like small birds that won’t stay in one place, the public health officials are against it because they can’t control them”*.

This official, however, was concerned about the fact that the women are exploited twice over by making them drink alcohol as part of their job, *“they should be confined to one place only for the prostitution but without this going together with alcohol because that is very bad for their health; it produces physical and mental deterioration”*.

Although the zones we mention were created to keep said places away from the town, there are also areas in the centre of Tapachula where bars have opened up again or new ones have been established in which children can also be found prostituting themselves. Some of these girls live in a kind of boarding house where a man rents them a room and sells them food. One of them said that they consider this man to be more like a “father” or “protector” than an exploiter, although he is someone who obtains benefits from their work.

In this case, as happens with the pimps, the exploitation relationship is usually hidden behind the figures of protector, representative, benefactor or lover, which only serves to show the vulnerability of the girls subject to this kind of bond.

In both Tapachula and Ciudad Hidalgo some clandestine houses have also been detected where prostitution is practised and minors participate. Some of them are girls from the locality who live with their families, go to secondary school and only go to these houses some afternoons in a covert way. There are also minors who work as waitresses in beer shops but, if the client so requires, the owner can authorise them to leave for a fee. This is quite frequent throughout the region. In other cases, there are Guatemalan girls who prostitute themselves in Tapachula, following the way of living their mothers have had in the locality for some time. And, in yet other cases, there are also procurers who try to take the domestic employees, who go out for a walk in the Miguel Hidalgo Park in the centre of town, to work in the bars.

Another phenomenon that is not recent but that has been seen to grow tangibly during the last year is that of a group of 40 girls who come from the neighbouring municipalities and from Central America and offer their services in the parks and squares in the centre of the town. These girls, who are mainly from 13 to 16 years old, often arrive with their children who they leave with some companion while they go to one of the small nearby hotels in which illegal immigrants usually stay. The police and the health authorities often arrest them, but they return there to work a few days later.

In the words of an employee from the public health office who has tried to approach these girls, *“we have a tremendous problem with child prostitution and we don’t know what to do... it’s a group of about 40 girls who come from nearby villages, others from Central America, they are 13, 14 years old and are out in the streets at 11 or 12 at night... this is new, it didn’t happen before... these girls are very poor and very bitter... they’re angry about everything. I try to take them in, I take them to the municipal prison, but they ask me how they are going to keep their children... they are 15 years old and they’re carrying two children... they wish I would drop dead... They go to the park at midnight, they won’t tell me where they come from, they come in groups, the woman who sells corn cobs, the taxi driver, the woman who sells fruit support them... I take them in, I let them go and a few days later they’re back again... They have to confront their reality, they have to eat... I can say nice things to them but they go back home and there’s no milk for the baby, there’s nothing for him to eat...”*

With respect to the 1,800 children that, according to the last census, work in the streets or other public spaces in Tapachula, these children are not generally identified as a group related to prostitution. It is even said that very few boys prostitute themselves for homosexuals in the town or in the region. In these cases, they are boys who also come from Central America or neighbouring states and that have left their families and communities to hide their sexual preference.

The health control authorities say that in Tapachula there are approximately 800 women who practise prostitution and although it is prohibited for children to practise it, they are not asked to provide evidence of their age and it is possible that at least 150 of them are under age. According to these authorities, *“we’ve thought of speaking to all the brothel owners so that they know that if there are minors we will fine them... they hide the girls, they only*

let them out at certain times". And with respect to the effectiveness of health control, they said, *"before they used to turn up drunk, aggressive, half naked, they were used to being dragged all over the place... now they know that if they don't have their card they can't work"*.

On trying to verify the number of establishments of this kind with the person responsible for issuing the licenses, his reply was conclusive, *"tell me what your next question is, because I'm not going to answer that one..."*.

2.2 Trafficking and Sale of Children

"They hire girls as domestic workers, they take them to a bar and then they don't let them out... it's a whole structure that works like that."

With respect to the trafficking or sale of children, there is a large number of cases of different types in the region. On the one hand, there are children who are sold or given up in adoption by their parents in an illegal way and who often leave the country having "legalised" the adoption through documents obtained in an irregular way. These cases are very frequent in Guatemala, but they also exist in Mexico. In Guatemala, official reports state that, during 1999, 1,332 children were given in adoption to foreigners, 60% of whom were from the United States, which is a figure much higher than that of other countries in the region (in Mexico there were 138 during the same period) and has given rise, along with other data, to talk of an open trade in children whose destination is not always known, although it is known that their price is usually 4,000 quetzals.³⁶

On the other hand, there are girls, mostly from Central America, who work in bars and canteens in Ciudad Hidalgo and who have been sold to procurers either by their own families, which is less frequent, or they have been "bought" by the bar owners from procurers who find them in their villages and bring them along under false pretences and with false promises of work. In these cases, the girls begin work having to pay the debt the owner paid for them, plus the amount they accumulate for lodging and the food they are obliged to accept so that, once again, this is an efficient procedure for keeping them. Throughout the region, there is even the custom that when they leave for some reason, they have to leave a deposit to ensure they return. In this case, the owners tell them that they have to pay to reserve their place of work, but it really is the owners who ensure that they will return.

Referring to this system that exists on both sides of the border, a nun from Tecún Umán explained that, *"there is a variant here: there are no pimps, but bar owners. They decide what they will do with the girl. There is a network of traffickers who sell them and, if they are sold here, they can't go anywhere else. There are procurers who get them into debt and they have to buy their freedom because their debt goes on growing and growing. The bar owner says: they can't go because they owe me so much and so much... Sometimes their families sell them, sometimes the procurer and at other times they go and look for work, they begin as waitresses and end up hooked... it's a system of indebtedness..."*.

³⁶ Further data on this subject can be consulted in the report delivered by Ofelia Calcetas, Rapporteur of the mission to Guatemala in 1999. The data on Mexico come from: DIF-Unicef, Boletín Jurídico, January – December 1999:23.

Most of the Central American girls found working in bars or canteens throughout the region are between 15 and 17 years of age and come, in almost equal proportions, from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Previously, most of them came from Guatemala but, as a result of natural disasters, the proportion of Hondurans and to a lesser extent Salvadorians increased notoriously. These are girls who in many cases lost their families, homes and/or modes of subsistence. In some cases it is also possible to find younger girls as could be observed with two Guatemalan girls, 10 and 12 years old, who prostituted themselves for soldiers in the military barracks in Ciudad Hidalgo.

As in many cases, the girls were brought to the bars under false pretences and were not prepared to assume the risks of their new occupation, both pregnancies and abortions are frequent for they do not always have the opportune medical attention they require. Similarly, the large number of women who work in this milieu and have been infected with HIV is worrying. In Ciudad Hidalgo alone, 11 cases were detected during 1999 and 2 in homosexuals. According to the health authorities, if Central American girls are infected, they are prohibited to work in the place and are sent back to their country, a situation that is also unfair since it is difficult to suppose that they can find another job or the medical attention they need.

Most of the clients that go to the bars and canteens are farmers from neighbouring plantations and trailer drivers who are stationed for several days in the numerous plots of land that have had to be assigned for this purpose in Ciudad Hidalgo. However, bar owners complain of unfair competition, in their opinion, from the owners of the boarding houses where the trailer drivers stay who have also begun to bring them girls and in this case are clandestine businesses that are not subject to the same controls nor the payment of licence fees or medical examinations of the girls and so offer better prices to their clients.

According to the president of the bar and restaurant owner's association, *"We are properly controlled by the Alcohol Office, by the National Council for the Fight against AIDS, by Migration and we try to comply with all the regulations. The health sector has strongly demanded that we comply with the norms, and so it is easier to contract a disease in the clandestine establishments than in the bars... but there are cases of little ladies who prefer to prostitute themselves in rooms, in boarding houses, because trailer drivers go there and there is no control... There are even more clandestine establishments than registered ones.. for me that's anonymous sex with children..."*

Although the municipal authorities say that they do not have data to estimate the number of these establishments, they do mention that their number is much greater than the 20 bars that are registered and submit themselves to health controls. Similarly, they say that younger girls, from the age of 13, are to be found working in boarding houses, a situation they say cannot be avoided since they are not formally registered as prostitution establishments. Indeed, the larger number of children is found in these places.

Several factors propitiate the growth of places outside municipal control. Among them is the interest in profits of the owners who consider that the licences and taxes are too high, as well as the clients' interest in paying lower rates. Also, the women and children who work in these places consider that the charge for medical examinations, 200 pesos a week, is excessive so, when they can, they prefer to avoid them, although this is prejudicial to their

health. This is especially worrying in the case of the girls who prostitute themselves in boarding houses and do not go to the health centre.

Most of these girls are also Central Americans and sometimes hope that, in exchange for their services on the journey, the trailer drivers will take them to the northern border or to better places where they can save money to draw nearer to their objective. Perhaps that is why the region is increasingly becoming known as *The Little Tijuana of the South*.

In the opinion of one bar owner representative, *"some young girls stay here but the trailer drivers go to the heads of others and they take them to the north... they take the prettiest ones and they leave us the ugly ones here..."*. And when he was asked if it was difficult to get girls to work in his bars, he replied, *"no, there are people whose job it is to procure them; they go to a place and bring them for 300 or 500 pesos and then the girl has to pay that sum..."*. Later on he added that the person *"who buys them"* pays them their board as well as the fee agreed on... a testimony that is particularly revealing of the way in which the girls are indeed conceived of as business objects.

Since Ciudad Hidalgo lacks other economic activities, what the municipality obtains from bar and canteen licences and the health authorities for medical services is perhaps the largest part of their income. The lack of other employment is also manifest in the large number of rickshaws circulating in the locality for whom there are 10 unions with a total of 2,000 members. This means that about one fourth of the economically active population living in the locality are make their living from rickshaws.

As they are the only means of public transport, the rickshaw owners know the places and persons who work in the sex trade in the locality very well. One of their leaders expressed his opinion of the children who prostitute themselves, *"there are people who have no-one to support them and they can't make a headway... little girls go to a room and prostitute themselves because in this way they help their mothers... our mothers wash clothes, they are tired, we have many little brothers and sisters..."*.

Another rickshaw leader said, *"the exploitation of children is seen a lot here... the municipality supposedly controls this, but they don't control everything because we know quite a lot of girls from 13 to 15 years old who are working in the bars. For the owners, if they have a 14 year old child, they know it will give them a better image... if a client is going to have a beer, he will drink as many as ten with the child... the girl ends up being exploited because the owner of the business takes 70 or 80 percent..."*.

For their part, 18 women we interviewed before they began their working day in two bars in Ciudad Hidalgo, 8 of them children from 15 to 17 years of age, said that they were from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. In the first bar, the owner is a woman and the children openly showed their discontent at the way she treated them, in spite of the fact that during the interview there was a moment when the owner appeared to give her point of view.

The children, who were at the back of the bar that communicates with the ten rooms where they stay and receive their clients, said that the owner made them work long days, from 2 in the afternoon to 2 in the morning, and drink alcohol without having eaten anything. Two of the children said they were seriously worried about their health. One of

them had a bad infection that she had not been able to cure and the other said that she had been bleeding for a month. Others indicated that the food was not enough and was of a bad quality, although their food and lodging were discounted each day from what they earned. But perhaps the main motive for their concern was that they could not go home often because the journey is very expensive and the money they earn is not enough and their debt is forever growing. They almost all have children who they have left with their grandmothers and it is for them that they have agreed to do the work, in order to be able to take something back to their homes. Another of the children said that if she could go, she would, but her debt of 400 pesos prevented it and added that the owner gives them drugs (cocaine) so that the money they owe keeps on increasing.

For her part, the owner said, *"Just look at the time and these girls haven't begun to work... they don't understand, no matter how often I call them they don't take any notice... I also tell them that they shouldn't go home so often because, just imagine, if they want to go every month and stay several days, well, that's not business... besides, they spend all their money on drugs, I tell them not to take drugs, that it's not good for them, but they don't pay attention"*. She then turned to the girls to threaten them with dismissing them because they were no good.

In the second bar, the owner is also a woman although the children did not seem so upset about the way she treated them. They also mentioned their children, how much they wanted to visit them and how difficult it was to do so. Some said that their families knew where they worked and others did not. They stated that they did not know they had been "sold" to the bar by the person who had promised them work as waitresses, until the moment they were told the amount of "their debt". They had been "sold" for 200 to 400 pesos.

The children said, *"The clients don't understand, they think we like this work.. but how can we like having to attend all types of people!..."*. *"And then they get us addicted... from drinking so much it becomes an addiction"*. *"We do it so that our children won't have to go without like we did"*. *"If there were other jobs we wouldn't be here"*. *"I think the same as her: what we need are good jobs"*.

It became quite clear that the situation of the girls in this zone is perhaps more serious than in others because to their sexual exploitation is added loss of liberty, the relationship between servitude and indebtedness, and being treated like merchandise that can be "bought", "sold" or "exchanged" by bar owners who can use them as if they were in effect part of their patrimony. It must be taken into account that just in the zone we have been referring to (which includes the municipalities of Tapachula, Tuxtla Chico, Suchiate, Frontera Hidalgo and Cacahoatán) there are at least 600 children who are in this situation.

In short, it should be pointed out that the predominant modes of sexual exploitation that exist in the region are prostitution and the trafficking or sale of children and that even though there are cases of sex tourism they are not so frequent as in the main tourist zones of the country or along the northern border and neither is it common for this situation to be denounced or come to light. With respect to pornography, even though it is possible that there are cases, they have not come to the public knowledge nor are they known of by the authorities and institutions who gave us information in the locality.

3. Institutional Responses

In Tapachula there are only three civil homes for children in a situation of abandonment and one governmental one run by the DIF that attends a wide range of people from small children who go to nursery school right up to the aged. None of the institutions have specific programmes for child or adolescent victims of sexual exploitation. Even the DIF has found it difficult to offer attention to adolescents who have addiction problems, which speaks of the few alternatives that exist at local level for children or adolescents who need special attention.

The Home for Immigrants receives an average of 50 immigrants, adults and children a week; 49 of them are Central American and ask for help because they were robbed when they arrived in Mexico. They have also received a few girls who were being prostituted and fled from their places of work where they had been kept captive without any food. This Home is completely insufficient to satisfy the demand for services they receive each day.

With respect to the law enforcement area, according to the Public Safety authorities of Tapachula there are very few cases of child procurement that are denounced and when this has occurred it is not rare for the children to desist, to drop the charges against their aggressors, who they allege are *their uncles* or when it has proved possible to arrest them, they are released shortly afterwards and go back to the same business. They also mention that when the cases are not denounced there is nothing they can do.

CONCLUSIONS

The fact that the girls and women are not allowed to leave their places of work under the argument that they do not have their papers in order or that it could provoke a scandal in the community, does nothing but cover up what is a clear relation of exploitation and servitude, as well as an efficient control strategy.

It is evident that a system like this can only be sustained because it is supported by the desire for profits of the exploiters and also the pressing need for resources of the children, as well as a whole network of complicity that is woven around these two poles: that of the clients but also that of the authorities who in different ways obtain benefits from the payment of licences and taxes or health controls to fines and extortion of different types.

In any case, it is indefensible that the authorities have not only turned a blind eye to the regime of captivity and servitude because of the debts the girls have to pay, but that they have upheld it with municipal regulations that approve and ratify this confinement.

The situation described corresponds exactly to what have been called the new types of slavery in modern society. These types of slavery, it has been said, occur in a context of rupture of the traditional social order that propitiates the appearance of the availability of persons for slavery in conditions of social change provoked by globalised capitalism. This phenomenon is closely related to the loss of the capacity to respond to crisis situations (i.e. natural disasters, armed conflicts, movement from one country to another) by families whose primary community links of responsibility and kinship have deteriorated. In this

way, globalisation and modernisation have exhausted the traditional means of overcoming crises in poor families, which has led them to the enslavement of their most vulnerable members, usually the girls (Bales, 1999).

The emergence of new slavery occurs when the social order has broken down and the options of the poor have decreased. In the midst of the irruption of fast social change, one of these options is enslavement. The enormous increase in the population has propitiated for the first time in the history of mankind the existence of a super-abundance of potential slaves. This new availability has dramatically increased the amount of profit that can be extracted from the slave and has caused a decrease in the length of time that a person normally would be enslaved for. The new slavery is characterised because people become disposable and easy to substitute (Bales, 1999).

One of these modern forms of slavery is debt servitude in which what matters is not the legal ownership of the slaves, as happened in the old forms, but the control that is exerted over them, principally by means of the use of violence. This gives an important advantage since total control can be acquired without any legal responsibility falling upon the person who possesses it. These slaves are normally used for simple, traditional jobs, not technological ones, like agriculture, mines or prostitution. The criteria to justify slavery in modern society has nothing to do, as it had previously, with colour, tribe or religion, but is based on weakness and privation. The girls trapped in prostitution by means of the system of indebtedness will sometimes have contracts that specify their obligations, however, the most important thing to remember is that they have been taken as slaves and remain so against their will with the purpose of exploiting them (Bales, 1999: 19-20).

Forced prostitution, says the same author, is big business: the expenses are low, invoices are high and the profits immense... the availability of women and the additional earnings obtained from small girls ensure a high yield. Sexual slavery is even more successful when the economic alternatives are few and the educational level of the girls is low (Bales, 1999:54).

It is evident that the dismantling of a system like the case we are concerned with, that is very similar to the one the author describes for rapid growth areas like the frontier zones of Brazil and Thailand, cannot take place from one day to the other. There is a long road to tread whose first step must be to withdraw the veil covering the modern debt slavery that exists in the region. Only in this way will it be possible to design policies that place the higher interest of the girls and boys in the centre.

TIJUANA

“...and they believe they’re coming for the American dream and then they can’t cross over, they stay here and get into drugs, into prostitution.. or they’re assaulted on the way, or they’ve been exploited by the polleros, or the girls are raped, or they’re picked up by a patrol car because they look like beggars... that’s how the American dream comes to an end”.

1. The Urban and Social Context

1.1 Sociodemographic Profile

The municipality of Tijuana is located at the north west of the State of Baja California, on the border with the United States. According to the 1995 Count, the State had little over two million inhabitants and Tijuana less than one million, although it is calculated that today Tijuana has more than one and a half million inhabitants which means that its population will have increased by more than 50 percent in only five years, taking, along with Ciudad Juárez, one of the first places in population in Mexico.

Although the State has five municipalities, its population is concentrated in Tijuana, 47%, and Mexicali, 33%.³⁷ The rate of growth of Tijuana during the period between the censuses of 1990 to 1995 was 5.98%, that is, almost three times more than the national average of 2.04%.³⁸

The percentage of migrant population in the State is 49.5%, which places it in second place in the Republic, only slightly below that of Quintana Roo. There are a few more women migrants, 50.2%, than men, 48.8%. The fertility rate is 2.3%, slightly lower than the national average, while 98.7% of the women of childbearing age are acquainted with contraceptive methods.

The percentage of the female population aged from 12 to 14 who are married or living with a partner is 1% which represents 580 girls out of a total of 55,361 living in the State. In this age range, we also find that 0.48% of the girls have had one or more live born children; both percentages are close to the national averages.

With respect to schooling, between 6 and 14 years of age, boys and girls know how to read and write equally in the State, with a slight difference in favour of the girls: 88% in comparison with 87%. However, after the age of 15 only 27% of the women continue in the educational system, while 31% of the men do. Among the population 15 years of age and over, 21% of the men and 24% of the women lack schooling or have not completed primary school. The average number of years of schooling for men and women are 8.2 and 7.8 respectively, and are among the highest in the country and above the national average.

³⁷ INEGI, Hombres y Mujeres en México, 3rd Edition, Mexico, 1999.

³⁸ Gustavo Garza (coord.), Atlas Demográfico de México, Op.cit.

In Tijuana, according to the 1995 Count, 88.2% of the children from 6 to 14 years of age know how to read and write, while 3.1% of the population of 15 years of age and over is illiterate.

After the age of 12, 34% of the women and 66% of the men in the State form part of the labour market. One third of the women work in the secondary sector, while 38% of the men do the same, a percentage that indicates the importance of female labour in the manufacturing sector that is almost twice the national average for women's participation in this sector which is 18.4%. In the tertiary sector (commerce, transport, government and other services) we also find a high female participation, 63%, in comparison with 51% for men.

In 1997, there was a monthly average of 196,784 persons occupied in more than 800 *maquiladoras* that are to be found in the State, a number that is evenly divided between the two sexes. Of the total, there were more women workers than men while the technical posts were preferably occupied by men in a ratio of 1 to 4, and a slightly higher number of men occupied administrative positions than women.³⁹

Tijuana is a relatively recently created town for it was founded barely 108 years ago. Nevertheless, with respect to both its population and the resources that enter the municipality it is one of the most important in the country.

In 1995, the municipality of Tijuana had 991,592 inhabitants, 500,557 of whom were men and 491,035 women. According to data for 1990, 53.5% of its population was born in another state, particularly Jalisco (19%), Sinaloa (13%), Michoacán (10%), Mexico City (10%), Sonora (6%) and Nayarit (6%).⁴⁰

Of the total of 261,526 persons employed in the municipality, most of them, 57%, work in the tertiary sector, while 38% do so in the secondary sector. The main occupation is that of workers and craftsmen with 21%, followed by tradesmen and shop assistants and then by operators of fixed machinery. Just over half of the population in employment earns between 1 and 3 minimum wages. The State of Baja California has ninth place in the Republic for its Gross Domestic Product per capita.

In 1997, Tijuana had a monthly average of 136,390 people employed in the *maquiladora* industry, 65,356 of whom are women, just under half of the total. However, in the category of workers, there are more women than men, 56,000 in comparison with 53,000, while women hold one fourth of the total number of technical posts, 4,000 out of 16,000, and a little less than half of the administrative positions.⁴¹

Among the economically active population estimated at 267,878 persons in the municipality of Tijuana, 75,560 are women of whom 761 are children from 12 to 14 years of age and 14,115 in the 15 to 19 age group.

³⁹ INEGI, *La Industria Maquiladora de Exportación*, Mexico, 1999: 18.

⁴⁰ INEGI, *Cuaderno Estadístico Municipal*. Tijuana, Mexico, 1997.

⁴¹ *La Industria Maquiladora*, Op. cit. p. 18.

1.2 “Transit” Town

For some time now, Tijuana has had a dual character as one of the limits of national territory: on the one hand, it is a *transit zone* for persons who want to cross the frontier legally or illegally; on the other, it constitutes a *receiver zone* for people who are returned and who, in many cases, remain in the locality only because they hope to be able to try again. In this sense, it is characterised by the uprooting of an important, and during the last few years growing, proportion of its population, a phenomenon that has developed as the crisis in the rural and urban zones of the country has deepened and the migratory policy of the United States has hardened.

The permanent, continuous flow of persons arriving in Tijuana with the intention of crossing the border is significant. Suffice it to say that it is one of the most important border zones in the world where 150,000 persons cross legally each day and, at the same time, it constitutes an important point for the return of illegal immigrants, especially since 1994 with the establishment in the State of California of *Operation Gatekeeper*.

In effect, it is estimated that during the high season, between 2,000 and 3,000 Mexicans arrive in Tijuana each week (more than 300 a day) of whom, according to the United States’ Immigration and Naturalization Service, some one thousand cross the border. For their part, the figures of deported Mexicans vary according to the time of year. There were between 1,500 and 2,000 deportations a day at the beginning of this year and 200 at the end of last year (1999) which is the season when the flow of illegal immigrants decreases considerably.

The deportation figures continue to be high even though the crossing from Tijuana has become increasingly difficult and has tended to move towards other zones as a consequence of the tight security. In the San Diego area alone, there are more than 2,000 border agents aided by 1,800 vehicles, 12 helicopters, kilometres of technified walls and solid fencing, infrared nightscopes, stadium-style lights and more than one thousand magnetic and seismic sensors.⁴²

Even so, 235,346 illegal immigrants were deported from different border crossing points from the State of Baja California during the first half of 1999. Of these, 30,160 were women and 2,136 children.⁴³

Until some years ago, half of the illegal immigrants from the whole country crossed from Tijuana, which is the most important crossing point on the northern border. Recently, due to the “sealing” of the border between Tijuana and San Diego, the crossing point has tended to move towards Mexicali and Tecate that are in Baja California, and to other points in the States of Sonora, Chihuahua and Tamaulipas. Nevertheless, towards the middle of 1999, 41% of the persons crossing over did so from Baja California; 33% from Sonora; 17% from Tamaulipas and 7% from Chihuahua.

⁴² “La tecnología de la muerte”, in: *La Jornada*, 5 March, 2000.

⁴³ José A. Moreno Mena, “Migración en la frontera norte”, in: *Migración: México entre sus dos fronteras*, Senado de la República, Mexico, 1999, pp 29-46.

As it is increasingly difficult to cross the border, the presence of traffickers of illegal immigrants or *polleros* has increased all along the border. Similarly, the fees they charge for their services have increased considerably, too, as have the risks the migrants run of not reaching their destination. In effect, in 1999 alone more than 2,500 illegal traffickers were brought before the authorities at a national level. Their fees have increased from US\$500 to US\$1,500 per person, although they often abandon them half way there. This in part explains why, since Operation Gatekeeper was set in motion to 1999, 450 migrants have died on the border line with the State of California.

According to the Casa del Migrante, the population that arrives at Tijuana comes from the States of Jalisco, Michoacán, Oaxaca, Mexico City, Veracruz, Estado de México and Guerrero, in order of importance, although it warns that many of the migrants considered to be from Veracruz may really be Central Americans. Indeed, the health officer in Tijuana often mentions giving attention to persons of different nationalities who fail in their attempt to cross the border, above all, Central Americans and Asians.

Most of the illegal immigrants, 80%, are adult males between 20 and 35 years of age who come not only from rural areas but also from impoverished urban zones. Their educational level is higher than the national average since three-quarters of them have studied primary or secondary school and only 6% are illiterate. Many of them have already worked at some other time in the United States.⁴⁴

The women, for their part, represent between 15 and 20% of the illegal immigrants and their participation has tended to increase during the last few years. On occasions they do the journey to try and meet up with their partners but there are also young women, aged 15 to 30, who are looking for a job. Their educational level is high since more than half of them have studied secondary school and only 4% are illiterate, a lower percentage than the national average. It can be observed that they do the journey increasingly out of economic and work reasons, not only family ones, and they tend to stay for longer periods than the men.

With respect to the children, an average number of 427 were deported monthly during 1999 from the different crossing points in the State of Baja California. Ninety percent of them are males aged 15 to 17 and they also have a high level of schooling. Most of them come from Michoacán, Jalisco, Guanajuato, Oaxaca, Sinaloa and States in the centre of the country. More than 60% are child labourers who have performed different activities.

Just over one third of the adolescents arrive at the border localities alone; 39% are accompanied by friends and 25% by relatives. Almost three-quarters have the intention of crossing the border to get a job and 69% come from urban areas.⁴⁵

Of the 687 children who were repatriated through San Diego from the middle of 1998 to the beginning of 1999, 88% were male; 57% from 16 to 17 years of age; 29% from the State of Baja California; 15% from Michoacán; 12% from Oaxaca; 7% from Jalisco; 75

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 30.

⁴⁵ DIF, SRE, UNICEF, CONAPO, INI, Tercera reunión de evaluación del proyecto interinstitucional de atención a menores fronterizos. 1998 – 1999, Mexico, 1999.

from Guanajuato and 5% from Mexico City. During the same period 86 juvenile delinquents were repatriated and 10 children died in their attempt to cross the border.⁴⁶

It should be noted that the most vulnerable persons likely to be caught up in sex trade are those boys and girls who try to cross the frontier alone, since they often fail in their attempt and fall into the hands of procurers. These children represent one third of the total who go to the border zones.

As is well known, the sale of alcohol and the sex trade have played an important part in the economic activity of Tijuana and although they have lost relative weight as its economy has diversified, they still have an important place.

During the last few years, Tijuana has also faced a difficult situation as a result of the growing indices of drug consumption and violence provoked by groups that have settled down in the locality and that fight over the control of important shares in national and international drug markets. This has not stopped affecting the local society where increasing amounts of these substances circulate and are consumed. Indeed, Tijuana today has the highest drug consumption index at a national level and one of the highest with respect to deaths from violence in the country. A recent survey showed that more than 8% of the men in Tijuana had taken illegal drugs over the last 30 days.⁴⁷

It is within this context that some of the most serious problems facing the girls and boys of Tijuana should be situated, for they cannot be seen as isolated from the circumstances that affect local society as a whole, a society which is subject to a rapid process of change, to a large extent provoked by contingents of immigrants who exercise strong pressure on this society. The growing number of street children, of children who consume drugs and the participation of children in the trafficking of illegal immigrants or in drug trafficking only serves to increase their vulnerability and the possibility of their being victims of sexual exploitation. All this forms part of the symptoms and the most painful manifestations of the weakening and breakdown in social ties.

It should be added that, in short, where the *American dream* of the illegal immigrants ends, the nightmare for Tijuana possibly begins. As a doctor of the health sector said, "*Tijuana is absorbing a great burden*".

2. The Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Locality

2.1 Prostitution

"There have been generations of children in prostitution here because there has been no way to change their situation..."

The bars and night clubs, which are called *antros* or *congales* in the locality, form part of one of the faces, or perhaps of the stereotypes, best known in Tijuana. A good number of businesses from hotels, restaurants and car parks to medical surgeries, drug stores and taco

⁴⁶ Ibidem.

⁴⁷ "Tough love in Tijuana", in: *Newsweek*, 20 March, 2000, pp 16-19.

stalls have grown up and survive around these places as a result of the large amount of clients they receive.

Different groups of children participate in the sex trade that takes place in the locality. On the one hand, there are some 70 children who work or live in the streets and prostitute themselves in order to be able to survive. Some of these children are very small, they are 8 or 10 years old, although the majority are aged from 12 to 17. Approximately half of them do so in a regular way, while the rest do so only occasionally. The children come both from the locality and from other States, especially Jalisco, Mexico City and Guanajuato, and form part of more than 6,000 children who work in the streets and other public spaces in Tijuana.

Most of these children's clients are homosexuals from the locality and Americans who go to look for them in the northern zone, mainly in the Plaza de Santa Cecilia, Teniente park and outside the gay bars where children are waiting for them. Another important meeting point is Balboa park in San Diego where children continue to go in spite of the migratory restrictions, although in a smaller proportion than they did some years ago. Balboa park is still a meeting point for homosexuals, paedophiles and children, although the American authorities have intervened in several cases.

When the children are prostituted in a more stable way by an older American, they call these persons *Chenchos* and recognise them as a kind of *father* or *uncle*, a figure with which they establish affective as well as economic ties and who they consider to be a protector, or sugar daddy. This explains why, when the children begin to perceive this figure in another way, they feel betrayed to the extent that there have been several cases in which they have even killed them. One case of this type, in which several Mexican children took part, occurred in Balboa park.

There are also paedophiles in Tijuana. One group of them, as we were told, even defends their *right to have relations with children* under the argument that they give them affection. These people come into contact with the children directly or through middlemen, generally young people they pay to take them to the children. In San Diego there was also a woman who recruited children for these persons from among the children who crossed the border looking for work.⁴⁸

Some of these children who prostitute themselves are also looked for by Americans to produce pornography. The children mention that the fees can go from US\$20 a day if they are only with them for a while to US\$200 or US\$300 if they stay the whole day and agree to be photographed. As well as the economic motivation which makes it possible to distinguish the street children who prostitute themselves from those who do not by the type of clothes and tennis shoes they wear, everything seems to indicate that for the children to agree to be photographed, it is important to ensure that their faces will not appear, although it is difficult to think that they could exert any control over this point. It is also important for them not to be identified as homosexuals although they have relations with men. It

⁴⁸ We wish to thank Guillermo Alvarado, director of the Integral Social Work Center for the information he provided on street, working and transborder children; and Catalina Tabacco, of the Tutelar Council for Children in San Diego for the information she provided on the children in Balboa park.

should be mentioned that, to a lesser extent, some of them also offer their services to women tourists, for example, on the beaches of Rosarito.

One group of 9 boys, between 13 and 18 years of age, who live in the streets and prostitute themselves in the area around the Plaza de Santa Cecilia and Teniente park, shared their experiences with us.⁴⁹ One of them said, *“I left home when I was 9 and began to get together with these... I lived in Otay. They invited me to take drugs and at first I didn’t want to but then I wanted to see what it felt like. I slept in the streets, I laid down anywhere. I’m 14 now and I’ve got to like being in the street... some clients come and look for us when we’re in the centre playing on the machines... that’s where the people go to find us; if you like the price, you go, if not, you don’t... Some offer you ten dollars to go to their homes, but you say thirty or it’s not on...”*

Another boy said, *“I left home when I was 6, and I got to know him first and I went to sniff, then I went back home to Sinaloa and then returned here again... I found a man and he said: I’ll give you 20 dollars if you come with me and I had no idea what he wanted... then I got to like this atmosphere because I could eat well, drink well... They give you money for drugs, they leave you in a rented room and if they give you more money you open up, if not, you don’t; you only do it if they put down the money... I’ll open myself up if they give me 50 dollars and that’s that”*.

Yet another boy said, *“I’ve been living away from home for 10 years, I was 8 when I left... I’ve always been in Tijuana and I’ve gone with many homosexuals... the ones who come here are coming to look for you. The first time I was really small and I went with a homosexual to a hotel in the red light district... the yank took three boys and began to say that he liked this, that and the other and gave us 10 dollars each but we robbed him... We go with Americans, Mexicans, all kinds... When you need money it’s the easiest way, go with a queer, or let’s say gay to make it sound more modern”*.

One last boy said, *“I left my home town about 10 years ago... I got bored of Mexicali and my family and so I came here... I began to make friends and we began to fool around and I liked it... I didn’t know anything about gays, I had no idea, until a friend told me we were going to earn some dough and when I began with this I was 8 or 9 years old... I’m 16 now and we’ll leave it there because the rest is very private”*.

The girls, on the other hand, work mainly in the *antros* and hotels in Revolución street, *“la Revu”*. The ones who offer their services outside establishments, in the street, are called *“las paraditas”* and they are considered to be on the bottom-most step among the girls who work in these circles. This step is generally taken by the girls who have just arrived and who are mainly between 14 and 17 years of age and come from the States in the south, above all, from Oaxaca, Chiapas and Guerrero. In some cases, they have come looking for work and have been recruited by middlemen or local exploiters, among others, it is said that they have been brought along under false pretences and are beaten and

⁴⁹ We wish to thank the team coordinated by Rosa A. López for the work previously carried out at night, in which Apolo Luna, Teresa Bautista, Elisa Macías, Carlos Godoy, Horacio Ortega and Hugo Arellano took part that made it possible for us to have interviews with girl and boy victims of exploitation and their mothers.

threatened that their families will come to harm. Some girls who work in this zone calculate that there are around 600 minors in “*la Revu*”.

One doctor told us, “Ninety percent of the “paraditas” come from the centre of the Republic and they behave differently. They come from Tlaxcala, Puebla, Oaxaca, but also from Jalisco, Sinaloa, Michoacán, Guerrero... some are also from Central America. Others are here from Tijuana and they work as “paraditas” because their partners drink and don’t give them money for the housekeeping... they have different levels of education... In the Health Centre we have 400 registered who we try to convince not to work in this because their families will reject them and disown them... We manage to convince some, but with others it’s impossible... They ask us where we think they are going to work if they’re not with their parents nor at home. And in the case of children, nobody will give them a job, that’s why they’re there”.

Some girls are exploited by *pimps*, others are controlled by *representatives* that can be men or women and there are others who work independently, although there are fewer of them. There are girls who are from the locality and work in the milieu because their mothers have always worked in it, “*they are girls who are here because their families are here*”. It is also known of establishments that are inherited from parents to children and are operated for years by families that are known in the locality.

One adult woman prostitute explained, “*There are families that are the owners of several places with night life and they keep on managing these places although they are in the name of their children because it’s best for them not to have everything in their name... They are people who have been in this for years. They have procurers who bring in children and others to get drugs. On some occasions they act as pimps but on others they give money to the procurers so that the girls work there for a few days... there are people from all over because it is something that brings in money; child prostitution brings in the most... ”.*

Some girls say that they are given work by women who take them from one place to another. On occasion, the girls themselves are responsible for taking others to their places of work. There are also middlemen, for example, the waiters or the men who watch over the bar doorways and who are called “*gatekeepers*” because they are in a position that enables them to obtain clients and *recommend them* to some girl who gives them a commission.

There is an atmosphere of competition for clients that can be very violent and some people are surprised that the girls get used to this and learn to lead a kind of double life. “*At night a hostile, violent atmosphere predominates... they compete for the clients and insult the girls who have more clients because they’re prettier or younger... a girl has to learn to survive, to trust no-one and to defend herself... At night it’s one world, in the day they’re mothers like anyone else... ”.*

The girls who work in the bars, especially the dancers, are considered to have a better position. The best known bars and night clubs are to be found in Coahuila street in the northern zone. In these places there are also minors who do a floor show, a table dance or strip tease as the client requests.

Even when federal and local laws prohibit minors to work in these places, it is estimated that at least one third of the girls who work there are under age, although inspectors and the police “certify” that there are not any. As the director of a foundation said, *“the police also take part in the problem because it is evident that there are minors working there, only it’s a subject that isn’t dealt with because it leaves a lot of money”*.

Some of the girls who work in the zone said that they are also extorted by the police, *“the police take our money from us and make us go with them by force... if we don’t, they put us in patrol cars and take us to the Tutelar Council”*. They also stated that some policemen are *pimps* and exploit their women.

The girls who work in the hotels usually live there, which is a control strategy on the part of the owners who also benefit by charging them for food and lodgings. It is common for them to stay for a time in one place and then go to another, which also happens when they are subject to the control of the women they identify as their *leaders*.

One group of 6 girls, from 14 to 17 years of age, who prostitute themselves in the zone around *“la Revu”*, shared their experiences with us. One of them said, *“I’m 17 years old, I’m from Irapuato. I first came here because I had problems with my stepfather; he beat us a lot and then as far as I can remember, since I was 5 or 6 he would spend his time grabbing hold of my private parts and then when I was 12 he raped me.. he threatened me, he said he would kill my mum and my brothers and sisters... Some time later my brothers and sisters and my mum, we all came to Tijuana and I began to go around with one boy and then another and another... I did it for money, because my family needed it... My mum didn’t take care of us, she left us alone and I had to look after my brothers and sisters... they tell me that all I’ve been through was because of a trauma... but I say that’s its because I need to do it to help my brothers and sisters”*.

Another girl said, *“I had problems with my stepfather, too... I’m from Mazatlán, I’m 15 years old. I left home because my stepfather wanted to touch me and I couldn’t stand it. Then I began to take drugs and came to la Revu... a morra (the youngest girl in a group) from here from the zone brought me here. I worked in a bar and I did it for money, too, because I needed it. My sister works in a bar, too. I began with crystal, grass, pills, heroine, cocaine... heroine is the cheapest, it costs 20 pesos, cocaine is more expensive, crack, too. There’s a man who owns several bars, if you want to stay and work in one place, you can. There are others who work for their pimp and if they don’t do what they want, they beat them. There are a lot of girls in every bar; in Adelitas there are about one hundred... just Americans go there... they pay better. Where I work there are 5 dancers and 20 who will dance for a fee; in the bar next door there are 30 dancers and 20 others who will dance for a fee.. half of them are minors, the other half, adults”*.

Another girl told us, *“I come from Sonora, I’m 14 years old; I came alone just a year ago. My mum treated me very badly, I got mad because I have a stepfather and he’s really bad, really drunk... I was in a home and I ran away. I came here and got to know some bars and found my sister... we both live in a hotel and prostitute ourselves outside a bar in the street. The clients from the hotel are pure Chinese Americans who come from the other side... I began with drugs, I’ve got into cocaine, crystal, pills, crack... We’re not in this because we like it, but out of need”*.

Another girl said, *“I’m from here from Tijuana. I’ve been in the street since I was little and I began to take drugs when I was 9. I left home because my mum worked in a bar and began to take drugs and treat us badly... I began to work as a prostitute because I had to keep my mum and my brother... we used to sell drugs too in order not to have to prostitute ourselves; it made me feel sick, I felt bad with myself... My mum insisted I gave her money and insisted I prostituted myself to get her drugs, I had to get them for her, and because my brother didn’t have anything to eat... I’m 15 years old and I’ve had to pay the rent since I was 12.. If we didn’t want to work in this, we would have to have a place to live in order not to have to take drugs...”*.

As well as the girls who work in the bars and the hotels, there are also minors in clandestine brothels in the districts. These places escape health control because they are not registered and it is not known how many children work in them. Cases have been heard of in which parents have allowed their children to be exploited to pay some debt.

The testimonies we have cited make it quite clear that there is an increasingly closer link between drugs and prostitution. Many of the boys and girls go into prostitution because they took drugs and could not pay for them; for others it works the other way round; once they are into prostitution, they begin taking drugs. Be that as it may, in the long term, the drug/prostitution binomial ends up being difficult to separate.

A patient in the terminal phase of AIDS said, *“In this town there’s a lot of male and female child prostitution. The persons who handle the children are drug users... the risks of getting AIDS are high either because the persons who invite them to prostitute themselves are already infected, because they take drugs and/or because they are prostitutes too”*.

Another patient told us, *“I’ve known I’m positive for ten years... I was in a place near Plaza Santa Cecilia... prostitution is very strong there... we saw a boy of 12 who had just gone for the first time and that day he went with seven people. It’s always a young adult who takes drugs who initiates them and gives them drugs”*.

A doctor added, *“the girls are drug users who have left their homes because of family problems. They usually go around with drug addicts and begin to take crystal, cocaine, heroine and then have to prostitute themselves so that they give them drugs... they don’t recognise them as being pimps because they say they are their partners, however, they have to pay for their drugs...”*.

Another factor that was frequently mentioned as a background in the girls who are exploited later on, is that they had suffered sexual abuse in their family. . *“... her mother didn’t support that girl because her stepfather raped her... or couldn’t defend her because, although what they did to her hurt her, she didn’t know what to do... This has always happened with stepfathers because we mothers have to go out to work... and then, as the girls feel dirty, they think it makes no difference if they work in this... anyway, they have to do what the men want...”*.

The person responsible for a centre giving treatment to addicts pointed out, *“Another big problem is incest... 70 percent of our population of addicts were abused by relatives”*.

One community health promoter told us, *“There is a pattern that repeats itself: the mother goes out to work and the father stays at home and abuses the children... or else the children are alone because the family has to go out to work and the working days in the maquiladoras are ten hours long... as there are no nurseries, the children go out into the street and begin to take drugs... The problem is very serious, in all the districts persons have been identified who sell drugs... the persons who use crystal are very likely to abuse children, but sometimes the families look here and there and don’t know where to go... the mothers have to do many days’ work”*.

It should be added that, during 1998, a total of 922 cases of sexual abuse against children were denounced before the Specialised Agency for Sexual Crimes in Tijuana, one third of which were committed by relatives, mainly fathers and stepfathers. This means that a large number of the cases that are denounced are committed by aggressors outside the family.

With respect to health control, this is carried out mainly with adult women and those who work in enclosed spaces. *“There is more control among adults, not with minors, because it isn’t allowed...”*. The doctors expressed their concern because the cards they issue are often used as a kind of authorisation for prostitution, which they consider to be a misunderstanding. They say that they do not issue cards to minors, although as they know that they are working in any case, they issue a receipt when they go for a consultation. Nevertheless, *“then they stop going because what they are interested in is the card... they see the card as a work permit, if they don’t get one, they don’t go...”*.

The doctors stated that during 1998 five minors who prostituted themselves died of AIDS. They also pointed out that there are very small children, 8 or 10 years old, who could be infected because they have suffered from various sexually transmitted diseases since they are exploited and no-one protects them. Another four minors, of 15 and 16 years of age, were detected as being positive, nevertheless they continue to prostitute themselves as they have no other way of making a living.

2.2 Other Types of Exploitation

In Tijuana there is a proliferation of other businesses where minors also work providing sexual services, like massage parlours, beauty parlours, Spas, escort and modelling agencies, etc. All these businesses operate outside the area covered by the public health controls because they are not registered as establishments that provide sexual services. It is therefore not known how many children are working in this milieu and the conditions in which they are doing so.

In relation to child pornography, it is clear that this is something that happens quite often, in particular with children who are exploited by Americans who offer them an additional payment to let themselves be photographed. We were also told about the case of a Canadian who used to come and hire boys to produce this type of material and who, as well as paying them, gave them drugs.

Although it is known that it is something that frequently happens, the law enforcement authorities mention the difficulties they face in prosecuting these cases for they have not found the way in which the children will agree to make denouncements and collaborate with the investigations. One agent from the Public Prosecutor’s Office said, *“it’s difficult*

for them to want to make a denouncement because they realise that with this they have clothes, food and a roof over their heads”.

Trafficking of children also exists on the border, particularly of children who are given in adoption to American families in an irregular way. These children may have been stolen or rather bought from their parents and later attempts may have been made to try to “legalise” their situation by means of false documents.

Sex tourism is something that happens daily as Americans cross the border every day with the purpose of having a sexual exchange with minors. Most of the clients are young and to a large extent also come with the idea of consuming alcohol and drugs. They often cross the bridge on foot, leaving their cars in safety on the other side. From the places they can get to on foot or in a taxi, they make contact with children who approach them. Members of the marine are also regular clients to the extent that each Monday a truck comes to pick up the marines who had to spend the weekend in custody for having committed some offence.

From what we have said so far, there are cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children of all types in Tijuana: prostitution, trafficking, pornography, and child sex tourism, with prostitution being the most frequent of all. Although it is difficult to estimate the number of girls and boys who are being exploited, given that as well as the visible universes or sectors there are also hidden ones, we nevertheless consider that there could be around 900 girl and boy victims of sexual exploitation.

3. Institutional responses

In Tijuana there are nearly 30 private institutions offering care to abandoned, maltreated, and transborder children and to children with addiction problems that are able to attend a universe of about 1,650 children. None of these institutions has, however, any special attention programme for the girls and boys who have been subject to commercial sexual exploitation.

The local DIF has been able to form and maintain good links with a group of street children who prostitute themselves and with some girls and their mothers who work in hotels and night clubs. It is clear, however, that the universe of the children who require attention is much larger and that just one institution cannot cover it. As an agent from the Public Prosecutor’s Office put it, *“if there were a promise of a safe place where they could stay, perhaps the girls would take a step, but there are no places where they feel safe because in the ones that exist, there are children with other problems and they feel they don’t fit in there”.*

In Tijuana, different types of collaboration between public institutions, non-governmental organisations and authorities from the other side of the border have been tried out and we believe that they should be reinforced, aiming their attention at the different groups of girls and boys who are being exploited.

It is also clear that the institutions that offer attention and rehabilitation programmes for addicts are insufficient, moreover there are no institutions of this type for women.

Similarly, the need was noted at local authority level for nurseries, given the large number of children who are left alone.

There is a home for terminal patients with AIDS whose creation was supported by the doctors who conduct the health controls in the Health Centre. Its resources are, however, insufficient to cover the demand and offer medical attention to all the children that are being exploited.

With respect to the children who continue to cross over the border to look for clients on the other side, according to the authorities in San Diego, unfortunately they do not give this problem the attention they should, in part because the local community is concerned that it would give a "bad image" to Balboa park, and they also say that if no denouncements are made, they cannot proceed even though they are aware that the problem exists. They remember how difficult it was to bring the case in 1993 when an Attorney decided to proceed against the exploiters of 8 Mexican children from 12 to 14 years of age in that park. Furthermore, it is difficult that the children will want to make a denouncement because they know that they will be repatriated afterwards.

CONCLUSIONS

Even though the sex trade and the participation of minors in it are not a recent phenomenon in Tijuana, it would seem that the changes society has experienced during the last few years have not contributed to decrease the problem. In particular, the continuous flow of migrants and repatriates that have imposed a vertiginous rhythm of growth on local society, together with other factors like the increase in drug consumption and the growing indices of violence that have brought with them a collective feeling of lack of protection and security are also indicative of the pressure that local society is experiencing. These factors also reflect the difficulties imposed upon local society to be able to incorporate new members and construct together with them a society that can form a unit, with its own identity, with types of community organisation that will make it possible to have strategies with which to face the problems from the basic nuclei of its population, like the districts, to the most aggregate, higher levels of organisation.

The fact that Tijuana continues to be a receiver zone for those who fail in their attempt to cross the border means that a large percentage of its population is characterised for being uprooted and having broken or suspended family ties. This situation implies difficulties in constructing a society with a high degree of social cohesion and the permanent risks of fracture, loss of structure and social decomposition that it faces.

From another point of view, it can be said that various factors converge upon the local sex trade: the supply of unqualified labour that is often found without a family or resources and an urgent need to obtain income, the demand for these services by local clients and persons who are in transit and have left their families in another place, as well as tourists who cross the frontier with this purpose in mind. These factors coincide, at the same time, with the existence of sexual exploitation businesses that were well established some time ago, and have a proven way of operating and recruiters who know the places and the way to approach and obtain the children.

The processes of change that affect local society and the difficulties it has to adapt itself to them, can also be seen in the families and in their capacity to guide the children and offer them opportunities for their development. In this way, the factors that we mentioned earlier have their correlation in the weakening of family ties that would make it possible to retain the risk situations that children and young people are facing: violence, drug consumption and sexual exploitation, among others and make evident the lack of strategies and alternatives families, communities and institutions have with which to respond to the risks children are facing in societies subject to rapid processes of change.

In some of the interviews that we held, it also seemed evident to us that in the face of rupture or fracture in family ties, the children have not found institutions capable of giving a response to their situation, of retaining them, welcoming them, offering them other alternatives. In some cases it was clear that with the problems that they have been dragging round for generations, there have not been public, private or community institutions capable of containing the violence that some children have confronted as if nobody were able to put a brake on the situation, as if nobody had to intervene when a girl has to use her body because she has been left the responsibility of keeping her family.

Without doubt, this also tells us that the institutions have been overtaken, overwhelmed by a demand for attention that surpasses their resources and capacity for response. This happens in both health institutions and welfare, education and legal institutions and in those whose function it is to provide the population with basic services.

Table No. 1**Types of commercial exploitation of children that exist
in the locality according to the sex of the victims**

Type / Town	Acapulco	Cancun	Cd. Juárez	Guadalajara	Tapachula	Tijuana
Prostitution	Yes. Girls predominate	Yes. Girls predominate	Yes. Girls predominate	Yes. Girls predominate	Yes. Girls predominate	Yes. Girls predominate
Trafficking, sale of children	Yes. Boys and girls	No recent cases are known of	Yes. Boys and girls	Yes. Boys and girls	Yes. Boys and girls	Yes. Boys and girls
Pornography	Yes. Boys Predominate	Yes. Boys and girls	Yes. Boys and girls	Yes. Boys predominate	No recent cases are known of	Yes. Boys predominate
Sex tourism	Yes. Boys and girls	Yes. Boys and girls	Yes. Boys and girls	Yes. Boys predominate	Few cases	Yes. Boys and girls

Source: Drawn up using data collected in interviews at a local level.

Table No. 2**Places where child prostitution exists in the locality**

Place / Town	Acapulco	Cancun	Cd. Juárez	Guadalajara	Tapachula	Tijuana
Streets, squares, markets, parks, bus stations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hotels, motels, brothels, boarding houses	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bars, canteens, table dance, night clubs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clandestine houses	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Snack bars, beer shops, or restaurants	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Massage parlours, beauty parlours, modelling and escort agencies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not known	Yes

Source: Drawn up using data collected in interviews at a local level.

Table No. 3

Place of origin of the children who are sexually exploited

Place of origin / Towns	Acapulco	Cancun	Cd. Juárez	Guadalajara	Tapachula	Tijuana
Locality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other States of the Republic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other countries	Not known	Yes	Not known	Not known	Yes	Not known

Source: Drawn up using data collected in interviews at a local level.

Table No. 4

Place of origin of the sexual exploiters

Place of origin / Towns	Acapulco	Cancun	Cd. Juárez	Guadalajara	Tapachula	Tijuana
Locality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other States of the Republic	Not known	Yes	Yes	Not known	Not known	Yes
Other countries	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not known	Yes

Source: Drawn up using data collected in interviews at local level.

Table No. 5

Place of origin of the clients

Place of origin / Towns	Acapulco	Cancun	Cd. Juárez	Guadalajara	Tapachula	Tijuana
Locality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other States of the Republic	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other countries	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Drawn up using data collected in interviews at a local level.

Table No. 6**Persons who recruit and/or obtain benefits from the children who are sexually exploited**

Persons / Town	Acapulco	Cancun	Cd. Juárez	Guadalajara	Tapachula	Tijuana
Relatives	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pimps	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bar and brothel owners	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Procurers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Homosexuals	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not known	Yes
Police	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pornography producers and salesmen	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not known	Yes
Taxi drivers, receptionists, waiters, etc.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Drawn up using data collected in interviews at a local level.

THIRD PART:

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this part we shall try, although briefly, to reflect on the results that we have obtained in the study, taking up some of the variables and offering some lines of interpretation. Similarly, in the recommendations section, we shall attempt to put forward general guidelines to orient some measures that, according to the results obtained, are perceived as being necessary in order to face the problem of sexual exploitation and offer some responses to the girls and boys.

Conclusions

A Globalised Phenomenon

We have tried to approach and, at least in part, make visible the reality faced by girls and boys whose destinies have been completely changed because they were used by adults to obtain economic benefits from their sexual exploitation. If we have wanted to penetrate this world that has been opaque and silent for the majority, it has not only been to reveal the horrors that it hides, but so that the knowledge obtained will allow us to take the steps needed to recognise the rights that have been taken from these children and to be able to integrate them into society like any other boy or girl who needs and is worthy of care and protection.

The fact that the study has confirmed what was known through other approaches, that is, that there are girls and boys subject to sexual exploitation in practically all the regions of the country, tells us, among other things, of the diffusion and perseverance of an ancient phenomenon whose modern face is increasingly acquiring new features as a result of the lines imposed upon it by globalisation (Ireland 1993; UN 1995; DoL 1995). In this sense, it is clear that our country forms part of a trend that goes beyond our frontiers and which cannot be evaded. This does not, however, prevent measures being taken, but rather advises that they are necessary if we are to offer greater protection to children.

The diffusion at world level of the market economy and consumer society that has broadened and deepened inequalities among human beings seems also to have turned children into merchandise, into goods that must be quickly consumed and then disposed of since, in a certain way, the premises of these economic models makes children be considered as replaceable consumer objects (Bales, 1999).

Similarly, it would seem that the criteria of efficiency and productivity that dominate the economic sphere have also been taken to the field of sexuality bringing with them, among other consequences, the increasingly precocious incorporation of a larger number of children into the sex trade. The fact is that, as shown in the World Congress held in

Stockholm in 1996, increasingly younger children are being incorporated into the trade and will be disposed of or substituted for by others at an ever quickening pace.⁵⁰

A recent calculation that is indicative of the global size of the problem shows that the profits obtained from the illegal trafficking of women and girls for the sex trade is estimated at seven billion dollars a year. The same source mentions that it would be possible to guarantee access to primary education for all the children in the world if only an annual contribution of 1% of the profits of the 200 wealthiest persons in the world were used for that end, which would represent an investment of seven billion dollars, that is, curiously enough the same figure as that obtained in profits from the sex trade of women and children.⁵¹

Diversity among the Exploited Children

With respect to the results we obtained in Mexico, one of the findings that seem most significant to us is that the study made it possible to visualise the complexity of the phenomenon to the extent that it refers to boys and girls who are facing different situations either because of the type of sexual exploitation they are suffering, the places where they offer their services or the way in which they are recruited and the procedures used to retain them. In an attempt to systemise the data we collected, we found that it is possible to group the differences we found into ten central aspects.

The ten central aspects, or pairs of opposites, that allow us to establish differences in the situation faced by the exploited children are:

1. They live in the streets / They live in enclosed spaces
2. They live with their families / They do not live with their families
3. They have exploiters / They do not have exploiters
4. They work in places expressly dedicated to the sex trade / They work in places where the sex trade is carried out in a covert way
5. They are recruited by *procurers* or by the exploiters themselves under pressure or false pretences / They are recruited without pressure or false pretences
6. They can leave or change their place of work / they are retained in their places of work against their will
7. Their exploiters are Mexican / Their exploiters are foreigners
8. Most of their clients are Mexican / Most of their clients are foreigners
9. They are exploited in the locality where they were born or where their families live / they are exploited in different places to the one they were born in or where their families live

⁵⁰ An interesting article by Vincendon and Boulay that analyses the role of Barbie as one of the emblematic objects of the century (100% of American girls, 96% of French girls and 99% of Italian girls from 3 to 10 years old have at least one Barbie) notes a process by means of which this toy has been aimed at increasingly younger girls in a direction that one can think is equally emblematic and applicable in many ways to these girls. See Sybylle Vincendon and Anna Boulay, "Objetos emblemáticos del siglo", Suplemento La Jornada Semanal, 26-XII-99:7.

⁵¹ Newsweek, The World in Figures. Special Edition, New York, December, 1999 – February, 2000, pp 64-67.

10. Their clients are of a different biological sex / Their clients are of the same biological sex

Using these central aspects and the multiple categories that could arise from their combination, it will be possible to distinguish different groups of girls and boys that, in theory, could be subject to sexual exploitation. However, we shall only list 25 categories below that we were effectively able to identify in the six towns studied, even though, as we showed in each of the towns, there are categories where we found a greater number of girls and/or boys than in others.

The 25 categories of girls and boys we found in the six towns are:

1. Girls and boys who live in the streets and prostitute themselves in a regular way as a form of subsistence.
2. Girls and boys who live in the streets and occasionally prostitute themselves when they have no other way to subsist.
3. Girls and boys who live in enclosed spaces but prostitute themselves offering their services in the streets.
4. Girls and boys who live in enclosed spaces and offer their services in enclosed spaces (bars, hotels, night clubs, etc.).
5. Girls and boys who live with their families, who participate or implicitly accept that they are being exploited.
6. Girls and boys who live with their families who do not know that they are being exploited.
7. Girls and boys who do not live with their families and that are subject to sexual exploitation in one way or another.
8. Girls and boys who participate in some type of sexual exploitation in exchange for money.
9. Girls and boys who participate in some type of sexual exploitation in exchange for some other type of compensation (food, lodging, clothes, toys, etc.).
10. Girls who are exploited by their partner, whether they recognise him as their *pimp* or not.
11. Girls and boys who work in establishments where they expressly offer their sexual services (hotels, bars, night clubs, brothels, etc.).
12. Girls and boys who work in establishments where they offer their sexual services in a covert way (snack bars, beer shops, massage parlours, modelling agencies, beauty parlours, escort agencies, party entertainment, etc.).
13. Mexican girls and boys who go or taken to other countries (principally the United States) to be sexually exploited.
14. Foreign girls (principally Central Americans) who come or are brought into Mexico to be sexually exploited.
15. Mexican boys and girls who are sold in the country for different purposes.
16. Mexican girls and boys who are sold and taken to other countries (principally the United States) for different purposes.
17. Girls who are ensnared by organised crime networks, which sexually exploit them and move them from one town or one country to another.
18. Girls who are ensnared for the sex trade under a system of debt slavery and are retained against their will.

19. Girls and boys who, once they have formed part of the sex trade, are induced to take drugs as a way of retaining them.
20. Girls and boys whose exploiters, in any type of sexual prostitution (prostitution, trafficking, pornography or sex tourism) are Mexican.
21. Girls and boys whose exploiters, in any type of sexual exploitation, are foreigners.
22. Girls and boys whose clients are mainly Mexican.
23. .Girls and boys whose clients are mainly foreigners.
24. Girls and boys whose exploiters or *representatives* are adult men.
25. Girls and boys whose exploiters or representatives are adult women.

As can be observed, not all the categories presented above exclude others, they are merely a way of favouring one variable and discriminating against another in order to form a category apart. It would be suitable then to propose a new grouping where different variables can be integrated in order to offer the smallest number of groups of children to whom attention programmes should be directed, taking into account their specific circumstances.

The governing criterion to form these groups could be the type of space in which they live or are exploited, leaving on the side other variables that could always be added to each of the groups (e.g. national / foreign clients; male / female exploiters, etc.). In this way three groups can be distinguished:

1. Boys and girls who are subject to any type of commercial sexual exploitation and who live in the streets and/or offer their services preponderantly in the streets.
2. Boys and girls who are sexually exploited in different places where they offer their sexual services in a more or less recognised or open way (hotels, boarding houses, bars, night clubs and brothels).
3. Girls and boys who offer their sexual services in a covert way in establishments that have other recognised purposes (snack bars, restaurants, massage parlours, beauty parlours, modelling agencies, escort agencies, etc.).

Should this classification prove useful for undertaking actions aimed at each of these groups, we think that there are three factors that could be present in each of them but that, in all cases, are worthy of special attention. These three factors are: a) the presence of drugs, above all, when they are provided by the exploiters as a strategy to retain them; b) the forceful retention in places of work especially when they are beaten, threatened or placed in a situation of debt servitude in order to retain them and c) the participation of relatives among the exploiters, which supposes a greater difficulty in approaching the children and in their opposition to being exploited.

Estimates as to the Size of the Phenomenon

Throughout the text we attempted to show which were the most numerous groups of girls and boys being exploited that prevailed in each town, and although it has not been possible to quantify the boys and girls who share certain circumstances in each case, we have been able to arrive at global estimates by adding those categories for which reliable data is

available (for example, the number of girls who go to specialised medical services) to others for which we have proposed approximations taking into account the number of establishments detected and the number of children that work in each of them on average according to testimonies that, as far as possible, we tried to cross or corroborate.

**Girls and boys subject to commercial sexual exploitation
in six towns of the Mexican Republic, 2000**

Towns	Number
Acapulco	1,000
Cancun	700
Ciudad Juárez	800
Guadalajara	600
Tapachula	600
Tijuana	900
Total	4,600

Source:: Estimate based on data collected in different public institutions and non-governmental organisations and from the testimonies of child victims of sexual exploitation in each town

Even though these figures cannot be considered definitive, but rather a first approximation, we believe they are useful because they provide parameters that other studies can use to continue advancing towards a more accurate delimitation of both the total number of children exploited and the different categories into which they can be divided. They also seem useful to us for formulating estimates of the size of the phenomenon at a national level which can be done taking into account the size and characteristics of the localities.

In this sense, we estimate that, with the exception of Mexico City, it is unlikely that there will be localities in the country with a larger number of girls and boys being exploited than the one we found in the towns in which we carried out the study. This is due to the features that characterise the towns studied that we have tried to stress throughout this work. That is, the size of the population, the type of development they present, the predominant socio-economic activities and the migratory flows they receive.

In this way, it should be emphasised that the six towns included in the study present a low or very low degree of marginality with the exception of the frontier municipalities in the State of Chiapas, according to the socio-economic indicators proposed by the National Population Council. This indicates that the phenomenon of sexual exploitation of children tends to occur more frequently in centres further removed from extreme poverty, even though it feeds off it.

To put it in other terms, the relation between the phenomenon and social exclusion can be mediated by factors like the type of urbanisation, the character of the economic attraction pole in the zone (expressed in the demand for labour for manufacturing or services) and/or its geographical location which makes the site a) a place for waiting or negotiation for transit to the north (the United States as the preferred objective); b) a place for the “rebound” of failed attempts; c) an obligatory place of transit for over ground trade and

transport between countries: United States to the north and Guatemala to the south, and/or d) a place of relaxation for a large number of visitors in transit.⁵²

As is known, the large inequalities that exist between the municipalities in the country mark the direction of the migratory flows that go from the poorest municipalities to those that offer better opportunities for work and income, and the former remain as supply or expelling localities and the latter as places of reception or transit. It is in these last where the sexual exploitation of children takes place more frequently.

The types of development that have been briefly described bring in train a series of effects on the social links that characterise the communities studied. As we have shown throughout the study, in most of the cases we are talking about societies that are distinguished for their low level of social integration and a high proportion of inhabitants that do not belong to the place and that, for the same reason, are uprooted, with weak links binding them to the community. They are societies that continually receive new contingents of population coming from different regions and do not share a history or an identity either and their integration supposes a long process that is not always finished or well completed.

These contingents, whether they have arrived to settle in the locality or only use the community as a transit point or are there for a short stay as is the case with the tourists, exert a strong pressure on local society whose capacity to integrate new groups without losing or compromising its identity is continually put to the test. In short, these social segments have lost their roots to a large degree or show detachment with respect to the community which, together with other factors, also gives rise to a large degree of anomie.

It can be stated that communities where a high degree of group and local identity predominates, with stable, lasting links of solidarity between its members and norms and regulations recognised by everyone will tend to handle their options for change and conservation without producing internal crises and ruptures, regulating the conflict and isolating behaviour that threatens or destroys the community fabric. On the contrary, human groups that have broken their primary and associative links without replacing them with new ones that fulfil the functions of cohesion and mutual recognition, and where normativity is external to said group will tend to disperse with crises, to exhaust their capacity to adapt to change and generate a weak affiliation towards new communities and locations.

In synthesis and from a normative point of view, it can be stated that anomie alters not only the limits of transgression but also the very perception of its existence. There is no transgression where norms have not been appropriate and sanction is weak. Thus, we penetrate into a world where everything is possible, a ground that is fertile, among other things, for the sexual exploitation of children.

In other words, phenomena like the sexual exploitation of children are developed with less resistance in a context where anomie prevails, where norms are weakly applied, which while it makes it difficult for these behaviours to be perceived as a transgression, promotes

⁵² I wish to thank Paulina Gutiérrez for her collaboration in this part.

the continued operation of the aggressors for they have been able to prove that the possibilities of being sanctioned are remote.

The social conditions described above – anomie, low level of social integration, weakness in social links – have also been identified and studied in other countries that, like ours, have been subject to relatively rapid processes of change as a consequence of modernisation and the putting into practice of economic adjustment models. The series of coincidences we found with respect to our study and a recent report on the paradoxes of modernisation in Chile attracts the attention. This report describes conditions, which the authors call “deterioration in sociability”. They state that said deterioration is manifest in “a high degree of mistrust, and even certain weakening of intergenerational cohesion in the family”, that they say other authors have called “social linkage pathologies”, among which the following are important: intrafamily violence, sexual violence, addictions, acts showing a lack of civility and anomic outbursts and juvenile delinquency.⁵³

Similarly, they describe a feeling of insecurity that is little precise but well diffused and is related to the weakening of social linkage, of community feeling, and the notion of order. They mention that the people they interviewed refer to the notion of “us”, that is, identity, trust and sociability, having “fractured” (1998:22).

The report stresses that the feelings of insecurity found come not only from undesired effects of modernisation but also from changes in subjectivity. For the authors, on the other hand, “human security emphasises social capital, that accumulated fund of social trust, of a shared creation in the rules of the game and association that are generated in society” and they stress that, from this point of view, it is advisable to strengthen said social capital, promoting relationships of trust, and of co-operation that will make it possible to strengthen the links between persons (1998:28, 30).

Indeed, they say that if Human Development can be conceived as “the process of extending the range of opportunities available to people, then Human Security means that people can exercise these options in a safe, free way and can have relative confidence in the opportunities they have today not disappearing completely by tomorrow” (1998:15).

It should be noted here that one of the needs the children interviewed most often expressed was to be able to find a “safe” environment with an atmosphere in which they could feel “protected”, a situation that they stated was one of the main impediments to their being able to denounce their aggressors.

It also seems important to us to point out that in Mexico the sexual exploitation of children not only takes place in the six towns we studied. An analysis that we have conducted of cases that have been publicised by the media during the last five years in Mexico City and during the last two and a half years at a national level have allowed us to come to the conviction that the commercial sexual exploitation of children is a phenomenon that is present today, to a greater or lesser extent, in practically the whole country.

⁵³ United Nations Development Programme, Desarrollo Humano en Chile. 1998. Las paradojas de la modernización, Santiago de Chile, 1998:28.

Although the greatest number of cases reported correspond to the type of towns we studied, that is, the main urban, tourist and frontier zones, we also found that cases are reported from a large number of medium and small towns and even isolated rural zones in which information is given of cases of children who have been transported to other places to be exploited, or who have been stolen or sold, although it is not known for what purpose. In this way, as happens in other regions of the world, a flow of children can be observed from the rural or most impoverished urban zones to the larger towns with greater economic dynamics.

Taking the above into account and in an attempt to make a first rough approximation of the number of children who could be subject to sexual exploitation in the country, we consider that a conservative estimate that we show in the following table could be no less than 16,000 boys and girls.

**Preliminary estimate of the number of girls and boys
subject to sexual exploitation in the Mexican Republic, 2000**

Type of town	No. of children
Six towns covered in the study: Acapulco, Cancun, Ciudad Juárez, Guadalajara, Tapachula and Tijuana	4,600
Metropolitan Zone of Mexico City	2,500
Other important urban zones (with more than one million inhabitants): Monterrey, Puebla, León	1,000
Other important tourist zones; e.g. Puerto Vallarta, Cozumel, Playa del Carmen, Mazatlán, Veracruz, Los Cabos, La Paz, Manzanillo, Ixtapa, Huatulco	1,500
Other important border zones; e.g. Matamoros, Reynosa, Nuevo Laredo, Agua Prieta, Nogales	700
Towns with around 500,000 inhabitants: Aguascalientes, Mexicali, Saltillo, Torreón, Chihuahua, Durango, Toluca, Morelia, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Culiacán, Hermosillo, Mérida	600
Towns with around 200,000 inhabitants: Jalapa, Coatzacoalcos, Colima, Campeche, Zacatecas, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Guanajuato, Irapuato, Chilpancingo, Pachuca, Uruapan, Cuernavaca, Tepic, Oaxaca, Villahermosa, Tampico, Ciudad Victoria, Minatitlán	700
Rest of the country	4,400
TOTAL	16,000

Source: Estimate drawn up using cases reported by the press at national level during the period Jan. 1998 to June 2000.

It is also worth pointing out that we started with the premise that this is a phenomenon that cannot be accurately quantified since there are no official records and, as it is an illegal phenomenon, the persons participating in it do their utmost to keep it hidden and develop it clandestinely. For this reason, we discarded the possibility of measuring it accurately and risk proposing these approximations as a working hypothesis to be corroborated or rejected by other studies to be undertaken that will surely propose the necessary modifications.

In order to have another point of reference, it should be pointed out that even countries with better records than ours, do not have a definitive figure and have also proceeded to formulate estimates. In the United States, for example, while some sources estimate that there could be between 100,000 and 300,000 girls and boys subject to sexual exploitation (ECPAT, 1996), others calculate that the numbers could be even higher (Flowers, 1994; Greenfield, 1997).

Factors Contributing to Sexual Exploitation

Beyond the possibility and the difficulties that exist in being able to measure the phenomenon, it seemed important to us to seek replies to a series of questions about the children with the intention of drawing back the veil that hides them in order to be able to visualise them as historical and social subjects. That is, as subjects whose history and relations within a determined social nucleus could tell us a great deal about the process that

has led them to a position of extreme vulnerability in which almost all their rights have been confiscated or annulled.

Without attempting to establish causal links, we can refer to factors that have had a more or less direct influence on sexual exploitation and that form determined constellations of phenomena for which it is possible to perceive certain constants. On the one hand, it is a question of poverty, although this is not sufficient in itself to explain the phenomenon and then we also found children who take part in these activities and belong to other socio-economic sectors.

On the other hand, the fact of having had to leave the family or having been thrown out of home, most of the times as a consequence of the violence and rejection they suffered there, places them in an unprotected situation that makes them liable to be recruited for the sex trade or that pushes them to look for this activity in order to survive. Here too, it must be said that not all the children who live in the streets have gone into the sex trade.

One factor that we have found to be a background to a good number of girls and boys that were later exploited, is that they had previously suffered sexual abuse, generally from some family member. In these cases the boys and girls show an important loss of self-esteem that makes them susceptible to new outrages since their defences are weak as is the support they obtain from a family that has already subjected them to violence.

In other cases, we found that the children with unresolved conflicts of sexual identity could drift into sexual exploitation since they are pushed to leave their family and community where they are rejected and made fun of. This background reduces their possibilities and induces them to move in circles where they find greater acceptance or less rejection of their sexual preference.

Another vulnerable group is that of boys and girls with severe addiction problems. In these cases, humiliations matter less than obtaining resources that will ensure their supply of the substances they require. We found cases in which children with these characteristics have been induced to sexual exploitation by their peer group, which in this way also assures its supply.

Two other risk factors that have been little dealt with are, on the one hand, that the boys and girls who have grown up in a family that in one way or another is linked to the sex trade, find their incorporation can be almost natural and obligatory. On the other hand, ignoring that these activities exist and that children are exposed to them may be a factor that contributes to an increase in the vulnerability of certain boys and girls if the opportunity presents itself and they do not know how to face it.

In addition to the above, another factor that is little mentioned but that is essential is the role of the procurers and recruiters who use and benefit from the circumstances mentioned that certain children are facing and have a direct influence on channelling them into the sex trade. The weight of this factor should not be despised given that, as numerous studies show, it will be difficult for children to go into this environment, however hard their circumstances are, if there is no-one to induce them, to put them in contact, to offer them employment under false pretences or take them under pressure and threats to the places of work. It is here where a series of measures should be taken to protect children from the

impunity with which all kinds of middlemen and recruiters act and not only the owners of the establishments.

It is worth emphasising the importance of the factors mentioned above that on occasions can seem relatively fortuitous until one finds that in one case and another they are repeated and that therefore they constitute patterns or common channels that influence the entry of certain children into the sex trade. Taking these factors into account will, we hope, permit the adoption of the measures required in each case in order to avoid more children being recruited.

Similarities among Exploited Children

Although in another section we made reference to the diversity of circumstances that the children being exploited are facing, in this part we wish to focus on what, in spite of the differences, unites them. We are referring to the fact that the sexual exploitation to which they have been subjected will invariably alter, leave indelible marks on the course of their development, due, among other factors, to the violence which is consubstantial.

We speak of “violence” when really the sexual exploitation of children supposes multiple forms of violence at different levels. In the field of rights, it implies negation or the most complete ignorance of almost all of them: the right to live with their families and that the family or, in its absence, the State, shall take charge of their material and affective needs; the right to receive care and protection; the right to receive education; the right to freedom; the right to dignity; the right to security; the right to equality; the right to culture and relaxation and the right to preserve their health and for it not to be continually and deliberately threatened by others. Similarly, and as a substantive part of this last right, we consider the following are also implied: the right to decide about their bodies, to preserve their intimacy, to be looked upon with respect, to decide as to their sexuality and their affection and to benefit from the formative opportunities they are offered to construct a dignified future.

In a special way, it seems to us that these children are denied one elementary human need: that of obtaining the recognition of others, to be looked upon as an equal and with respect, something that does not happen because they are stigmatised beforehand, they are rejected and all kinds of reproaches are directed at them from a moral standpoint that ignores their circumstances and is unable to visualise their lack of alternatives.

To the forms of violence referred to above that we found in all the cases, others are added that worsen yet more the situation of some of the children. This is the case of girls and boys who are subjected and kept under exploitation by means of blows, threats and different types of pressures. There is also the case of the children who are retained against their will and are not allowed to leave their places of work or are submitted by means of a system of debt servitude.

There are also, and perhaps more frequently, other types of more subtle control, less visible but equally effective, that are what makes exploitation possible thanks to the emotional bonds the aggressors establish with the victims and that make it possible to cover up the exploitation. These forms, although less ostentatious, are equally destructive because they slowly undermine a person’s self-esteem and security and this with time

reduces their possibilities of opting for another way of living. Equally serious are the cases in which sexual exploitation is added to the supply of drugs as a strategy to ensure that the children stay on.

The result of all these types of control is dejection, debilitation, a gradual destruction of the subject or, at least, serious damage that will leave indelible traces and will without doubt alter the course and possibilities that the girl or boy had to reach a healthy, integral development.

In other terms, as the exploitation operates on the body, on the sexuality and on the affective ties, it will definitively alter important spheres of the life of the person and will completely change in the future their possibility of relating to their own bodies, to others, with affection, as it will also modify the way in which, later on, they may trust or not in others who, like their exploiters, offer them care, affection and protection.

Could a girl in these conditions ever again trust an adult who offers her the same thing her exploiters have offered her? What elements can she use to distinguish between true and false promises? From where can she relate to herself and to others? How can she re-establish a link of trust in herself and preserve for herself an image of dignity and respect when her dignity has continually been trampled on? How can she reconstruct a history that will allow her to endure, to accept herself, to tolerate herself when she has been an object of trade put on the market by the person who claims to be protecting her and when she has systematically been denied the exercise of all her rights?

Several studies have attempted to answer this kind of question and have gone into the psychological effects of submitting a girl to this kind of experience, and they have also studied how the girls react on trying to adapt themselves to their circumstances. One study carried out in Thailand shows that, after a time, confusion and incredulity give way to fear, resignation and a kind of conscious separation of the bond that unites body and mind. In a context of this kind, the girls do all they can to reduce their wounds and mentally adjust themselves to a life in which they are used by up to 15 men a day. The reactions take well known forms: lethargy, aggression, self-hatred, suicide attempts, confusion, self-abuse, depression, psychosis to blows and hallucinations (Bales, 1999:59).

In this study, the author explains that within the same brothel the girls can also react in different ways. It is possible that some go into a state of trauma and resignation, while others find a more active adaptation that leads them to identify with their pimp or exploiter. This resignation has the crucial advantage of reducing the violence they suffer. In the face of a way out that proves to be impossible, any action or obedience that avoids hurt, and that makes their existence a little more tolerable, is viable no matter how degrading or illogical it is.

The author states that, “the immediate and forced application of terror is the first step towards successful slavery. A few hours after having been taken to the brothel, the girls are made to experience suffering and find themselves in a state of shock. As other victims of torture, they are dazed and paralysed in their minds but not in their bodies. For the youngest, who do not manage to understand what is happening to them, the trauma is

devastating. Broken into pieces and betrayed they are seldom aware of what has happened to them” (1999:58).

In the world they live in, as in the concentration camps, there are only those who have all the power and those who have no power at all. The reward and the punishment come from a sole source: the pimp. The girls often perceive that to build up a relation with him is a good strategy. The pimps are inclined to manipulation and to foster insecurity and dependence. Sometimes they can be friendly and treat the girl with affection with the purpose of increasing her flexibility and dependence. For their part, cultural and religious norms play their role and contribute to preparing the girls for control and submission (Bales, 1999:61-62).

In another study on the reactions that have been observed in the children used to produce pornographic material, four types of reaction are described: 1) *integration*, the one shown by children who can talk about their experiences without demonstrating too much anxiety. While blaming the perpetrator, they concentrate on the future and maintain reasonably normal relationships with their families, at school and with friends; 2) *avoidance*, when the child denies the experience or refuses to speak about it while showing feelings of anxiety and disgust. The child can be seen to still be intimidated by the perpetrator and has a tendency to live in the present without formulating plans for the future and feels ashamed for his/her participation in the abuse; 3) *post-traumatic repetition* in which the child presents many symptoms and can be seen to be severely perturbed, with strong feelings of guilt and harm. They blame themselves and cannot forget what has happened and often develop sexually explicit behaviour with which the risk of being exploited again is increased and 4) *identification with the exploiter* in which the child permanently defends the offender and repeats the trauma through sexual proximity to other children. This last type of behaviour is more common in children who have been exploited for more than one year and who tend to identify with the aggressor to a greater extent (Görian and Back, 1996:21-22).

The same authors state that the last three types of behaviour are much more frequent than the first and that the damage caused will depend on both the nature of the abuse and the duration and the relation that existed between the child and the aggressor. They also say that in the cases they studied, that took place in Sweden, the abuse was kept secret in all cases by the children, who did not tell anyone until the material was discovered and its origin investigated by the police. Similarly, they observed that in all the cases the children did not want to remember or talk about what happened, had great difficulty in admitting it even to themselves and had even done everything possible to block out or remove some memories (Görian and Back, 1996).

If we focused the problem on the aspect of the repercussions that sexual exploitation has on children and on their subsequent development, it is because it seems fundamental to us to be able to provide evidence of the pain and suffering hidden behind the supposed pleasure that the false images and stereotypes offer us of children incorporated into the sex trade.

That is why, from the point of view we have proposed here, it seems important to us to insist on the recognition of the right of boys and girls to preserve their intimacy; that they safeguard their bodies and the images they have of themselves; that the relation they have

with their bodies, their sexuality and with others not be interrupted or violated and that they are allowed to decide about it themselves; that nobody use them as objects of pleasure or trades with them as if they were merchandise, above all bearing in mind that they are not in a position to be able to resist or stand up to their exploiters.

We should also ask: What can we expect of future citizens whose experience has shown them that they lack rights, that they are not worthy of care and respect and that they must serve those who use them as if they were merchandise? How can they be expected to respect a system of norms that have had no validity for them?

We consider that as long as the rights recognised for children by law do not have full validity for Mexican girls and boys in their daily lives, they will continue to be exposed to risks like being victims of sexual exploitation. It will not be sufficient to perfect our laws while they are not exercised or while their violation is tolerated in practice.

Similarly, little can be done to modify the situation of these children while there is no will to face the groups that exploit them and procedures are drawn up to block the path of these persons, or while there are no institutions that can offer these children care, shelter and protection.

In short, while none of the above occurs, the situation of the girls and boys we have tried to show in this work will remain unchanged. They will continue without being able to make use of the rights they are granted at present by law and their possibilities for full development will have been curtailed forever.

Recommendations

In this part we propose to outline some general guidelines that we consider should orient the measures that need to be adopted in the country in order to provide attention to the child victims of sexual exploitation, as well as to avoid more children being exploited.

These guidelines do not intend to repeat or substitute the Plan of Action to Prevent, Attend and Eradicate the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Mexico proposed by the National DIF in 1999, but only to insist on some action lines that it seems important to promote in the light of the results obtained in the study of this phenomenon in six towns of the Republic.

Given the complexity of the phenomenon and the fact that multiple social, economic, political and cultural factors are involved in it, it would be recommendable to design a national policy on the subject that would have the consensus of the states so that it would be possible to act in a co-ordinated way at federal, state and local levels. Similarly, it would be necessary to establish collaboration agreements with other countries, especially with the neighbours in order to act in co-ordination in those cases that involve the movement of children from one country to another or the actions of foreign aggressors in the country.

As the content of this policy and these agreements exceed the limits of this work, we shall refer to some guidelines that could orient the design of a policy to confront the phenomenon at a local level, without losing sight of the fact that this policy must be consistent and be articulated to a policy of a national character.

A first measure that could be adopted would be to generate a social awareness about the phenomenon in the locality, sensitising the population from a perspective oriented by the recognition of the rights of the child and the violation of the child inherent in sexual exploitation. That is, from a perspective that makes it possible to make visible the adults who are responsible and who obtain benefits from the exploitation of children or who induce them to participate in these activities, while also making visible the circumstances that put children in the position of victims and that prevent or make it difficult for them to resist being exploited. From this perspective an attempt should be made to avoid attracting attention to the problem, in such a way that the victims will be made victims twice over, giving rise to the diffusion of images and prejudices that, instead of awakening the community's comprehension, provoke a greater stigma or social reproach.

This posture will only be consistent if measures are adopted in parallel to permit the reinforcement of the application of the existing laws or to make the necessary modifications in order to make prosecution of the aggressor effective. It would, then, be necessary to review the Penal Codes in order to verify if the behaviours involved in the different types of commercial sexual exploitation of children are typified. Similarly, it will be necessary to verify if in all cases sanctions are imposed on the aggressors, exploiters, procurers and all those who obtain benefits from the sexual exploitation of children but not on the children under 18 years of age who will be considered victims of such crimes, and for whom specific measures to repair any damage there may be should be prescribed.

Similarly, a review should be made of the proceedings used to denounce this kind of crime. The International Bureau for children's Rights has insisted that it is essential to offer care and protection for the children before, during and after commencing proceedings, and to listen to and take into account their points of view since, otherwise, more damage could be done to them and they could be doubly victimised as a result of the inadequate intervention of the law enforcement agencies.

The Bureau has also proposed that minimum standards be designed for the treatment of child victims and witnesses by criminal detection agencies and the judicial and legal system as a whole. The rules of procedure should particularly take into account the special circumstances of children who have been victims of violence and/or exploitation in order to insure the effective prosecution of such crimes and also attention to the special needs of the children. Similarly, they must take the measures required to guarantee the safety and psychological well being of the children, knowing that they will probably be intimidated and pressed or threatened in different ways to make them drop the charges.⁵⁴

The Bureau also recommends the design of friendly proceedings for the child victims of violence, abuse and/or exploitation, as well as proceedings that are sensitive to the questions of gender. This calls for the training and sensitisation of the personnel to

⁵⁴ International Bureau for Children's Rights, *International Dimensions of the Sexual Exploitation of Children*. Global Report, Montreal, 1999:41.

promote respect for the rights of the child at all levels, from police to judges, including lawyers and Public Prosecutor's Office agents. Among the proceedings the Bureau recommends developing are the following (1999:61):

- a) Inform the child victims and the witnesses about the role they will play during the proceedings.
- b) Allow them to express their points of view and respect them.
- c) Provide them with the legal advice they require, including defence by a lawyer who will support them throughout the proceedings.
- d) Reduce to a minimum the need to expose them and respect their privacy.
- e) Shorten and simplify the proceedings.
- f) Eliminate aggressive interrogations.
- g) Fight for the admission of previously recorded testimonies and to avoid confrontation with the aggressors.
- h) Protect the identity of the child victims.
- i) Avoid speeding up the denouncement when the children are not sure about presenting charges.
- j) Keep the child in a safe environment while the proceedings last.

With respect to the cases of trafficking or sale of children, we consider that the recommendations that have been formulated on different opportunities by the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on the sale of children, child prostitution and the use of children in pornography should be adopted in Mexico. Among these recommendations, it seems important to us to mention the following:

1. The sale and trafficking of persons must be unequivocally condemned for being an affront to human dignity as it reduces people to the level of commodities.
2. International standards must be established on the sale and trafficking of persons, together with international mechanisms that ensure the reporting and monitoring of actions undertaken in this field by the States.
3. Hospitals, clinics and nurseries must be strictly monitored in order to reduce the risk of theft, sale and trafficking of children in these places.
4. The possibility must be considered of establishing international and regional registers of children who have been adopted internationally.
5. There must be international and regional registers of missing children containing all the information pertinent to their identification.
6. Programmes must be established to avoid stigmatising single mothers so that they can keep their children if they wish to.
7. It is imperative to establish bilateral and multilateral co-operation mechanisms especially between countries that share frontiers and including the institutionalised, systematic exchange of information, if the problems of trafficking children are to be attended.
8. All legal agents, border police, customs agents and immigration officials as well as the relevant officials who form part of the judicial system of the affected countries must receive training and be sensitised to matters related to trafficking and the rights

of the victims. Immigration and deportation policies must be reviewed in order to prevent greater harm to the children who have been subject to trafficking.⁵⁵

For our part, we consider that similar measures should also be adopted to avoid sex tourism with children advancing further in our country. These measures should include the signing of bilateral agreements with the countries the greatest number of tourists of this type come from. The same should be done with respect to cases in which foreigners participate in the production of pornographic material, in which the collaboration of the authorities of the countries of origin of the aggressors should be sought.

From the point of view of the number of cases that are denounced, we consider that a careful analysis should be made of the factors in the locality that propitiate that only a few of these cases reach law enforcement instances, while most of the aggressors continue operating with impunity. This analysis should give rise to a series of measures to counteract the factors found and make it possible to reinforce law enforcement. It would be particularly important to design procedures in which the burden of proof does not fall upon the children as it has done up to now.

It is also important to emphasise the fact that girls and boys often resist making denouncements out of fear of reprisals from their aggressors and due to the lack of support other opportunities in life could offer them. It must be borne in mind that in many cases the children lack experience that would allow them to contrast or balance the risks and the cost of their being involved in the sex trade. In other words, they lack experience or reference parameters that would permit them to visualise or imagine other ways of living different from submission and loss of dignity.

In this sense, an important part of the work the local institutions have in front of them is to offer spaces for contention and the protection of children who are being exploited and to construct with them alternative ways of living that will permit them chose other options, if they so decide.

In this way, we consider that the task of enforcing the law must go beyond the review or adjustments in paper of the legal ordinances and must also contemplate the adoption of the necessary measures to ensure its full compliance.

With respect to prevention, a large number of policy and social justice measures could help more or less directly to avoid more children going into the sex trade. Of particular importance are policies that will make it possible to ensure that children and young people stay on at school, while offering them at the same time training for employment and employment that is properly remunerated. Similarly, the policies and programmes aimed at the attention of families who have problems with violence, addictions and/or sexual abuse should be introduced in order to avoid their children leaving the family environment and being susceptible to recruitment in the sex trade.

Within the school environment, it seems important to us that teaching programmes should include information on the phenomenon of the sexual exploitation of children as a way to

⁵⁵ Ofelia Calcetas-Santos, Informe de la Relatora Especial sobre la venta de niños, la prostitución infantil y la pornografía infantil, E/CN.4/1999/71, p.25.

make them aware of a reality, and to warn them and inform them about factors that can increase risks and measures that can be taken should they be so exposed. It would be especially important to talk to them about this phenomenon and show them the links between violence, drug consumption, sexual abuse, leaving the family and early pregnancies. Similarly, it would be important to focus on the phenomenon from the perspective of the violation or radical ignorance of the rights all girls and boys have.

With respect to the need to inform society, it seems to us again that the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur should be attended in the sense that it is convenient to diffuse the well-supported information available on the risks of trafficking, the practices of the recruiters, the circumstances in the brothels, the types of servitude that exist, etc., since they could have an important influence on the decision making process of many people. This is due to the fact that diffusion of the benefits that can be obtained by working in this kind of business is usually widespread and, when accompanied by success stories, can induce children and their parents to be voluntary victims of the traffickers and therefore this type of information must be counteracted by another showing the dangers and risks involved. This information must be passed on to different groups through educational programmes, the media and diffusion campaigns specifically designed for this purpose (1999: 26-27).

In the health sphere, we consider that, given that it is a population at high risk, access to specialised services must be guaranteed to all girls and boys involved in the sex trade, independently of the laws that prohibit them to work in this kind of activity. Otherwise the danger exists of placing them in a situation of greater risk that ignores reality in honour of a legality that is not applied and that, in any case, should not be used to deny children the right to health.

As we have insisted throughout this work, to give a response to the challenges posed by the phenomenon of the sexual exploitation of children cannot be left to just one institution or one sector, but requires the co-ordinated action of different social players. It would therefore be fitting to build up a multidisciplinary work team like the ones that are operating successfully in other countries,⁵⁶ which would involve the participation of at least the child protection sector, education and health services, law enforcement, human rights, trade associations and non-governmental organisations that offer attention to children and young people at risk. This team could draw up a work plan establishing the measures it considers should be adopted in the short, middle and long terms to attend child victims of sexual exploitation and avoid more children being recruited.

One of the advantages offered by forming work groups of this type is that it makes it possible to approach the problem in an integral way since the participation of several sectors guarantees that it will be seen from the different perspectives each institution has, given their different spheres of specialisation and competence. In this sense it is important to guarantee the presence and active participation of all the sectors that can contribute to improving the situation of children and young people in the locality.

At the same time, establishing a group like this ensures that the interventions of each sector will be consistent with those of the others and will be supported by a policy decided

⁵⁶ The informative leaflets published by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice (puborder@ncjrs.org) can be consulted.

on in common, thus avoiding the adoption of unilateral measures contrary to consensus or that have not been carefully analysed by all members.

In the border towns, that almost always have twin towns on the other side of the frontier, these groups should include representatives from similar organisations in the neighbouring locality, in order to be able to act in a co-ordinated way and be in conditions to offer responses to transmigrant children.

The creation of institutions offering shelter and protection to both the girls and boys that are being exploited and those who are at risk should be promoted in parallel. We think that these should be open institutions that offer the services these children need: a place to have a bath, to rest, to sleep or feel protected, and should they request it medical, legal or psychological assistance.

To be able to offer the attention and support that these children require, will also mean training specialised personnel sensitive to their situation so that their interventions will not only be effective but significant in terms of the quality of the services they supply. We do not think it would be convenient to institutionalise the children as Vitit Muntarbhorn, the first Special Rapporteur suggested, but believe their recovery should be supported in the community and the family and less in institutions; young people from the locality could even be invited to collaborate in this task. Similarly, it is important to emphasise the need to listen and take into account the opinion of the girls and boys who attention is aimed at, both in relation to the contents of the programmes and their orientation, and to the assessment of results. Otherwise, it could happen that they are offered responses that they do not consider to be ideal and that therefore do not offer relief from the situation.

Be that as it may, to try to draw near to these children to listen to them, to return to them the exercise of the rights that have been confiscated and to attempt in some way to mend the harm caused, will certainly have been worth it.

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METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

Below we reproduce part of the methodological guide that was given to the local coordinators so that they could identify the persons invited to the focus groups, and the guide to the subjects that these groups worked on.

I. Identification of subjects invited to take part in the study

Fundamental objective:

- Identify, locate and convene all those persons or institutions that have a close knowledge of the problems the child victims of sexual exploitation in any of its forms (prostitution, trafficking or sale of children for their sexual exploitation, pornography and child sex tourism) face in the locality.

Once identified, the objectives of the project will be explained to them and, should they agree to participate, they will be interviewed individually or they will be invited to take part in focus group meetings.

The persons and institutions that will be convened include:

- Girls, boys and young victims of sexual exploitation
- Officials from institutions giving care and protection to children: DIF, Attorney's Offices for the Child and the Family
- Doctors from health institutions who give attention to persons dedicated to sexual services: State Hospitals, Community Health Centres
- Officials from institutions of justice who are responsible for the prosecution of crimes like the corruption of minors and child procurement: State Attorney's Office, Tutelar Councils
- Migration authorities, in the case of the border States
- Officials responsible for promoting tourism, in the case of the main tourist centres
- Chambers of commerce that group together members of businesses related to the subject: hotel keepers, tradesmen, restaurant owners, owners of bars and canteens, etc.
- Public human rights organisations: State Human Rights Commissions

- ❑ Non-governmental organisations with programmes giving attention to children and women in situations of risk
- ❑ Academics or specialists who have done studies on the subject
- ❑ Journalists, and radio and TV broadcasters who know the subject
- ❑ Policemen and Health Inspectors who are responsible for supervising commercial establishments related to the subject: hotels, night clubs, bars, cabarets, etc.
- ❑ Established tradesmen or street sellers from the zones where the sex trade operates
- ❑ High school or university students who agree to collaborate in the study by answering a questionnaire.

II. Work guide for focus group meetings

The basic subjects approached using the focus group methodology and that were modified according to the particular characteristics of the participants (depending on whether they were officials from one sector or another, child victims, clients, etc.) are listed below.

1. General introduction to the project, its objectives and the use to which the information will be put
2. Introduction of group co-ordinators
3. Introduction of the participants indicating their activities with respect to the subject
4. Brief explanation of what is understood by the commercial sexual exploitation of children
5. Appreciation of the participants of the problem in the locality:
 - a) Estimates of size
 - b) Places where it is developed
6. Types of sexual exploitation of children that exist in the locality
 - a) Child prostitution
 - b) Child pornography
 - c) Child trafficking
 - d) Child sex tourism
7. Is it a phenomenon that is increasing or decreasing?
8. How can the possible quantitative changes (increase/decrease) observed in this phenomenon be explained?

9. How can the possible qualitative changes (in the type of sexual exploitation, a greater participation of girls/boys, etc.) observed in the phenomenon be explained?
10. Are there groups of children that are more susceptible or at greater risk than others of being caught up by exploiters?
 - a) If the answer is affirmative, which factors have increased their vulnerability?
 - b) If the answer is negative, which factors protect or warn the children?
11. Where do the children who are exploited in the locality come from? If they come from other states, how did they arrive?
12. Do the exploited children belong to any ethnic group in particular?
 - a) Are there any behavioural patterns of the phenomenon that are associated with ethnic differences among the children?
13. What are the types of child recruitment that are used in the locality?
 - a) Recruitment by exploiters from the locality (pimps, etc.)
 - b) Recruitment by exploiters not from the locality
 - c) Recruitment by relatives
 - d) Recruitment by friends
 - e) Recruitment by the children themselves
14. When the children give up this activity, how do they achieve it?
 - a) With the intervention of the law authorities
 - b) With the intervention of the child protection authorities
 - c) With the intervention of relatives
 - d) Others (specify)
15. Do the children who are exploited receive any support from the locality? What type?
 - a) Are there government programmes that offer them attention?
 - b) Are there NGO programmes that offer them attention?
 - c) Are there programmes on the part of human rights organisations?
16. Have cases been detected in the locality in which children have been exploited by networks that also act in other states of the country?
 - a) Are children known to have been taken to/from other states?
 - b) Have cases like this been prosecuted by the local authorities?
 - c) Have the authorities of other states been contacted to prosecute these cases?
 - d) What have the results of the prosecution of these cases been?
 - e) What difficulties have the authorities faced in prosecuting these cases?
 - f) What would be necessary for the prosecution of these cases to be effective?
17. Have cases been detected in the locality in which children are exploited by organised crime networks that act at an international level?
 - g) Are children known to have been taken to/from other countries?
 - h) Have cases like that been prosecuted by the local authorities?

- i) Has contact been made with the authorities of other countries to prosecute these cases?
- j) What have been the results of the prosecution of these cases?
- k) What difficulties do the authorities face in prosecuting these cases?
- l) What would it be necessary to do for the prosecution of these cases to be effective?

18. Please identify what you consider to be the principal obstacles for the authorities of the different sectors to be able to perform the functions that correspond to them with respect to the problematic of the sexual exploitation of children:

- Lack of legal norms that make it possible to face the problem
- Lack of the problem being socially recognised in the community
- Lack of a clear mandate with respect to responsibility to children
- Lack of material and human resources to take charge of the problem
- Inadequate training of personnel in charge of the problem
- Lack of technical support (computer equipment, access to data bases, etc.)
- Need for greater co-operation and co-ordination among all the sectors responsible
- Differences in the ways of facing the problem by the different sectors involved
- Others (specify)

19. Please mention specific recommendations that you consider the different sectors should adopt in order to be able to offer greater and better protection to children against sexual exploitation

APPENDIX

LIST OF FOCUS GROUPS, INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND VISITS MADE

1. Acapulco

1.1 Focus groups

Group 1: Seven adolescents, from 15 to 17 years of age, who prostitute themselves on the beach.

Group 2: Primary school teacher, doctor from the Municipal DIF, Municipal DIF Programme Co-ordinator and a Specialist in sexology.

Group 3: Five transvestite adolescents, from 14 to 18 years of age, who prostitute themselves on the beach and in bars.

Group 4: Six policemen from the Public Safety Ministry

Group 5: Four policemen from the Public Safety Ministry

1.2 Individual interviews

- 2 transvestite boys aged 15 who prostitute themselves in night clubs
- 2 adolescents aged 17 who live in the streets and prostitute themselves (1 man, 1 woman)
- 1 adolescent aged 16, victim of child pornography
- Ex – American Consul in Acapulco
- Municipal DIF Programme Co-ordinator
- Doctor from the Municipal Health Office
- Two secondary school teachers who prepared a study on sexuality in adolescents in the locality
- Assistant Attorney for the Child and the Family in Acapulco
- Two evangelist ministers responsible for a home for street children
- Director of a foundation to prevent the sexual exploitation of children

1.3 Visits

- Male prostitution zone and zone of transvestite adolescents on the beach
- Girl prostitution zone in bars, night clubs and hotels
- Points of female and male prostitution in the red light district, the centre, the zócalo and seafront
- Area for persons in custody in the Police Station
- Shalom Christian Home for street children

2. Cancun

2.1 Focus groups

Group 1: Officials from the State DIF; officials from the Municipal DIF; representative from Casa Filtro; Doctor from the General Hospital of Cancun; Doctor, Head of the Health District.

Group 2: Representative from the association of bar and restaurant owners; three representatives from a non-governmental organisation for patients with HIV-AIDS; visitor from the State Human Rights Commission; director from the Juvenile Integration Centre; director from Casa Filtro; representative from the National Migration Institute; representative from a non-governmental organisation offering attention to alcoholics.

Group 3: Five male university students.

Group 4: Four male university students and one woman

Group 5: One policeman, three officials and the Director of Public Safety of the Municipality.

Group 6: Eight taxi drivers

2.2 Individual interviews

- 5 girls who work in bars
- 2 members of a gang
- 4 girls living in a non-governmental home
- 2 girls who prostituted themselves, living in DIF's Casa Filtro
- 5 officials from the Municipal DIF
- 2 officials from the State DIF
- Competent Judge for administrative infringements
- Director of the School of Tourism
- Doctor from the Health Centre responsible for issuing health control cards

2.3 Visits

- Bars in the centre zone
- Night clubs in the hotel zone
- Red light district in Plaza 21
- Clandestine brothels in *the Regions*
- 1 home for alcoholics in recovery
- 1 non-governmental home for girls
- Casa Filtro belonging to the Municipal DIF

3. Ciudad Juárez

3.1 Focus groups

Group 1: Two officials from the School of Improvement for Young Offenders; two representatives from a home for border children, street children and children at risk; two officials from the Attorney's Office for the Defence of the Child and the Family.

Group 2: Two representatives from non-governmental organisations that attend women with drugs and prostitution problems; one representative from a non-governmental organisation supporting patients with HIV-AIDS; two representatives from the University of Ciudad Juárez; one representative from a Community Centre.

Group 3: One representative from the Specialised Unit for Sex Crimes and Crimes against the Family; the Head of Department for Inspection, Commerce Office (inspector of bars, canteens, etc.); Head of Social Work from the Police General Office.

Group 4: Two Municipal Policemen; doctor in charge of the programmes for attention and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV-AIDS; two representatives from the Attorney's Office for the Defence of the Child and the Family; one representative from a home for border children, street children and children at risk; one representative from a non-governmental home offering attention to women with addiction problems.

Group 5: Twelve psychology students from the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez.

Group 6: Ten psychology students from the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez.

3.2 Individual interviews

- 2 children living in the School for the Improvement of Young Offenders who prostituted themselves (1 boy, 1 girl)
- 4 street children who go to the Attention Centre for Border Children, boys 12 to 16 years of age who prostituted themselves
- 6 adult women living in a home for recovery from addictions, who went into prostitution when they were children
- Director and representative of a non-governmental organisation offering attention to women with problems with violence, Casa Amiga
- Assistant Attorney for the Defence of the Child, the Woman and the Family
- Director of the School for the Improvement of Young Offenders
- Director and area co-ordinators from the Attention Centre for Border Children

3.3 Visits

- Zone of bars, canteens and dance halls
- Zone of male prostitution

- School for the Improvement of Young Offenders
- Attention Centre for Border Children
- Home for women with drugs and prostitution problems, Reto a la Juventud

4. Guadalajara

4.1 Focal groups

Group 1: Personnel from the DIF – Zapopan; representative from the DIF – Puerto Vallarta; officials from the Observation Centre for Young Offenders; representative from the Centre for Juvenile Integration; representative from Albergue Eugénesis; representative from Hogar para Niños del Buen Pastor.

Group 2: Officials from the DIF – Guadalajara; representative from Hospicio Cabañas; representative from Albergue Palmas; member of the State Council for the Family; representative from the Assistant Attorney’s Office for the Child and the Family

Group 3: Officials from the Supreme Court of Justice of the State; representatives from the Public Safety Ministry; the Attorney General of the Republic’s Office; the Attorney General’s Office for Justice of the State; of the Guadalajara City Government; DIF– Puerto Vallarta and Visitor from the State Commission for Human Rights

Group 4: Representatives from the DIF – Jalisco; DIF – Guadalajara; DIF – Tonalá and DIF – Tlaquepaque.

Group 5: Visitor from the State Commission for Human Rights; representative from the Public Safety Ministry; two representatives from the Education Ministry; representative from the Tourism Ministry; two researchers from the University of Guadalajara; representatives from the DIF – Zapopan, DIF – Jalisco and DIF – Guadalajara.

4.2 Individual interviews

- 12 girls aged 11 to 17 from the Centre of Observation for Young Offenders
- 1 adolescent aged 17 who prostitutes himself
- 2 doctors from the Ministry of Health
- 1 researcher from the University of Guadalajara who has done studies on street children who prostitute themselves
- 1 researcher from the Technological Institute of Monterrey in Guadalajara

4.3 Visits

- Sex trade zones in Guadalajara
- Centre of Observation for Young Offenders
- Home for women prostitutes

- Home for street girls
- Civil Hospital

5. Tijuana

5.1 Focus groups

Group 1: Five women, mothers of children who prostitute themselves and who have also practised prostitution

Group 2: Meeting held in the offices of the Mexican Consulate in San Diego, California. Participants: representative of the Tutelar Council for Children in San Diego; representative from a day care centre for street children in San Diego; representatives from two non-governmental organisations offering attention to children in Tijuana; representative of a health programme for adolescents in schools in San Diego; representative from the Mexican Consulate.

Group 3: Representative from the Municipal DIF's home; representative from a shelter for children with addiction problems; representative from a home for migrant children; representative from a home for working children; representative from a home for street children.

Group 4: Three doctors from the Health Centre in charge of the sexually transmitted diseases and HIV-AIDS programmes; Head of Department of Health Control for the City Government; one health promoter in lower class districts; two representatives from the Specialised Public Prosecutor's Agency in Sexual Crimes.

Group 5: Representative of the Mexican Consulate in San Diego; Head of Police in charge of the Sex Crimes Unit in San Diego; two police agents investigating sexual crimes.

5.2 Individual interviews

- 9 street children who prostitute themselves
- 6 girls who prostitute themselves in bars
- 6 persons in charge of the MECED Programme in the DIF - Tijuana
- District Attorney for the Theft of Children in San Diego, California
- Director of the Foundation for Child Protection in Tijuana
- Ex-agent from the Public Prosecutor's Agency Specialised in Children

5.3 Visits

- Municipal DIF's home
- Home for terminal patients with HIV-AIDS
- Sex trade zones in Tijuana
- Zones of contact between paedophiles and clients in San Diego, California

6. Tapachula

6.1 Focus groups

Group 1: Consuls of Guatemala and El Salvador; Delegate from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; officials from the Municipal and Regional DIF; representative from Grupo Beta Sur; representative from the Public Safety Ministry

Group 2: Officials from the Municipal DIF; representatives from the Health District; representative from a non-governmental organisation on Human Rights.

Group 3: Representatives from three non-governmental homes for children; representative from Casa del Migrante.

Group 4: Meeting held in the offices of the Mexican Consulate in Tecún Umán, Guatemala. Participants; Mexican Consul; officials from the DIF - Tapachula; Municipal Mayor of Tecún Umán; representative from the National Civil Police; District Attorney; Health Centre Co-ordinator; representatives from the civil organisation Casa de la Mujer.

Group 5: Meeting held in Ciudad Hidalgo. Participants: Municipal President; Health Director; Director of the Health Centre; Director of the Municipal DIF; representative from the educational sector; representative of bar and restaurant owners; representatives from rickshaw owners' associations.

6.2 Individual interviews

- 8 women working in a bar (3 of them minors)
- 10 women working in a bar (5 of them minors)
- 2 adolescents living in a DIF home (1 man and 1 woman)
- Representative of the National Migration Institute
- Doctor from Public Health
- Doctor in charge of issuing licences for the sale of alcohol
- 2 officials from the Municipal DIF

6.3 Visits

- Zone of bars in Tapachula, *Las Huacas*
- Zone of bars and canteens in Ciudad Hidalgo
- Frontier zone Ciudad Hidalgo - Tecún Umán