



PLACING THE ISSUE OF COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN ON THE AGENDA ON YOUR CAMPUS

I n t r o d u c t i o n

ECPAT is a network of organizations focused on one goal: ending child commercial sexual exploitation. An important way to achieve our objective is to make more people aware of and involved with this huge problem.

Raising awareness is tremendously important. One of the main explanations for the long standing existence of child commercial sexual exploitation is the resounding silence surrounding the issue. An unwillingness to confront this horrific form of child abuse, or even acknowledge and describe it, have helped to sustain it. If no one wants to talk about it, we can't even begin to put into place the measures that would hurry its demise. That is why adding it to the agenda of human rights, child welfare or other organizations on your college campus would be a huge step forward. Children's lives are devastated by being involved in child prostitution, pornography and trafficking. Adding these topics to the agenda would begin to shine a light on terrible practices that are only sustainable because good people are reluctant to speak out.

The information below will give you ideas and resources for helping raise awareness about the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S. on your campus. Remember that the ECPAT-USA office and website are updated regularly with information and contacts that you may need to help you in your efforts. We may also be able to answer individual questions, send you posters and brochures and discuss ideas you may have.

S t u d e n t G r o u p s G u i d e .

Welcome to ECPAT-USA's student groups guide. The idea of this section is to provide students with guidelines for endorsing and spreading ECPAT-USA's campaigns inside their universities and neighborhoods. Child exploitation is a huge social problem that cannot be combated by one or two groups alone. The main point in this struggle is to make the largest number of people aware of the problem and to give them the necessary tools to know what to do when they face it.

You can do this by identifying existing groups on your campus that may be willing to take up the cause. There are many types of student organizations on most campuses that would be appropriate to take up the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children. Some examples are human rights groups such as Amnesty International, activist groups such as Public Interest Research Groups (PIRG), child welfare groups, women's rights group, religious groups, HIV/AIDS activist groups, or peace groups. There may be others, not on this list, that might be interested in taking up the issue as well.

I. Get started

After you speak with the organizers of an existing campus organization, have a discussion with the members about whether they wish to devote a series of meetings to the topic or just one. Decide if you want to undertake activities as a group that would lend a hand to ECPAT-USA's campaigns against commercial sexual exploitation of children, or educate yourselves or help raise money for ECPAT-USA's programs.

Advertise the meeting or meetings of the group that will be about commercial sexual exploitation of children. Spread pamphlets around the campus inviting everyone. Don't forget to explain in a few words what the meeting or meetings will be about, place and time of the first meeting and the name of the group. Make sure the pamphlets are easy to photocopy and interesting enough to be read till the end.

Whatever you decide, you have to get informed. To lead the first meeting, read as much information on ECPAT-USA's website, bibliography and related links as you can manage. It is really important to make a solid introduction about the issues.

Think about what is allowed and possible to be done in your university. Announce in some classes about the meeting (you will probably have to choose some classes, so choose those that are, somehow, related to ECPAT's subject), use the university's newsletter...Use your imagination!

If your university has an Activities Fair it would be a great opportunity to recruit students who may be interested. Be sure to reserve a table in advance and have information and flyers available at the fair. Bringing food or candy to draw people to your table might also be a good idea. Be energetic and get people excited about your group.

Remember also that this is a very sensitive topic. Preparing and delivering information about sexual abuse and exploitation can be painful. People may get angry or upset. They may deny that sexual exploitation happens on such a wide scale, or they may have other emotional reactions. If any issues like this arise for you or others on campus it is a good idea to seek counseling through school guidance counselors or at the school health center. This is important to remember down the road as well, if your group gets involved in outreach activities around the campus or around town. If you do have events or projects, plan to have a debriefing session after each one to discuss any difficulties or problems that arose.

II. What would be the groups' actions?

1) Devoting one or more meetings of your existing group to the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Here are some things to do at your meeting, whether it is a one-time-only session or a series.

Invite a speaker. Sometimes an ECPAT-USA staff member, volunteer, board member or advisory committee member is available to speak at a campus event. Contact ECPAT-USA to

find out about availability. ECPAT-USA might also be able to suggest speakers from other organizations in your area.

Show a film. There are a number of good films now available about human trafficking and sexual exploitation in different cultural contexts, such as *Lilya4Ever*, *The Day My God Died* and *Born Into Brothels*. You may know of others yourself. Just screening films such as these can help to educate your group members.

Distribute information. ECPAT-USA's website has brochures, reports and links to more information about the commercial sexual exploitation of children. You can download all this material for free or contact ECPAT-USA and ask for copies of the available material.

2) Participating in ECPAT-USA's campaigns against child exploitation which will include writing letters to governmental authorities and companies that could help minimize this problem and make more people aware of it and knowledgeable about what they should do when they face child exploitation.

Get active. Even if you have just one meeting devoted to the topic of commercial sexual exploitation of children, people can still take immediate action. Check ECPAT-USA's website for current letter-writing campaigns.

Develop campaigns inside your university and neighborhood to make people aware of the problem and of the ways of combating it. If there are sex tours being advertised in newspapers or magazine in your area, you could write letters pointing out how sex tourism contributes to the sexual exploitation of children and asking those papers to stop running the ads.

If there other groups in your university that could be, somehow, related to this project (for example, groups that make some kind of work with homeless, poor people or other volunteer projects), talk to them about doing a joint project

Write a letter to your campus newspaper or town newspaper about what you have learned about commercial sexual exploitation of children. Describe the actions your group is taking.

If your school organizes trips in the US or abroad for any kind of study program or other travel, request that the campus travel office use companies that have signed the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. (See www.thecode.org for more information).

Mentor a child. Many communities have volunteer opportunities to provide counseling and companionship to at-risk children. See if your community has one and take advantage of it.

Contact ECPAT-USA for other ideas. Also, let us know about your activities so that we can share them with others.

3) Fundraising for resources to increase the expansion of all our work.

ECPAT-USA depends on numerous relatively small donations to underwrite our activities. You can make an important contribution to ending the commercial sexual exploitation of children by raising money to continue this important work. Here is a sample of what your efforts could pay for:

- \$100 will pay for reprinting 10 copies of our report about American children who are trafficked for sexual exploitation and sending them to policy makers and government authorities.

- \$200 will pay for educational materials and outreach to one US travel company to ask for cooperation in ending child sex tourism.
- \$1000 will pay for one outreach event (a play or community forum, for example) to educate people about the laws against human trafficking, how to identify a victim and where to refer victims when they are identified.

Fundraising activities can also be a means to raise awareness on your campus and in your community. Whether you hold a walk-a-thon, raffle off an i-pod, or sponsor an information table at public events where you collect donations, your presence and your voice will be letting the public know that there is a terrible problem of child exploitation being perpetuated in the U.S. and that you are willing to be part of the solution.

If you are seeking to raise money for your own meetings and activities, think through how much money you think you will need. It will depend on the size of the group and its' level of engagement with campaigns. Costs can include:

- 1) room rental, the tools used to record the meeting and refreshments if served; 2) publicity costs for posters, flyers and other methods;
- 3) postage to send letters to public authorities and companies that might help the cause;
- 4) activities that demand an initial investment, such as movie screenings, a concert or bake sale.

To raise money use your imagination. Find out the skills of the people in your group and try to imagine ways of making money with them. Always have a donation jar at your meetings and activities. Encourage members to donate and to use their personal relations to get donations, not just of money, but goods and services as well.

III. Act beyond the group

Introduce the child exploitation theme in some classes. This could be a great way of expanding peoples' knowledge about it. This action will depend on how flexible your university or professors are to introduce something new into the schedule. Try to talk to somebody responsible for academic issues, or directly to some professors who teach subjects that could be related to this theme, for example, in sociology, law or human rights.

Build a website. Advertise the main ideas of your group, upcoming events and the directions, and how to become a member. Some universities allow the groups that exist inside it to be linked with the universities site. Find out if that is possible.

These are just some ideas of how your group can work to spread the thought that child exploitation has to be eliminated. Use your imagination and think about other ways of doing it! Your ideas are always welcome in this fight!

Stay up to date by checking the ECPAT-USA website regularly. In addition to having the latest news and current ECPAT-USA projects, the website has a number of pamphlets and reports that may be helpful at your meetings and events.