

CRACKING DOWN ON PORNOTOURISM

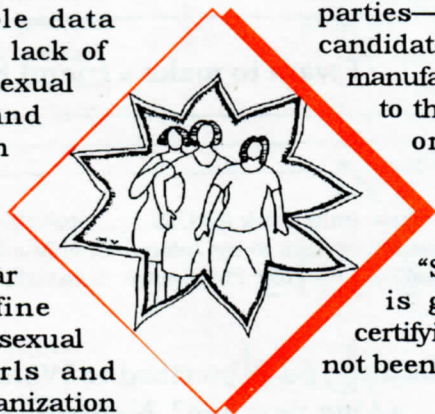
BRAZIL (IPS)—The first Seminar Against the Exploitation of Girls and Adolescents held in the Brazilian Capital last 16-19 April came up with the conclusion that an alliance between the government, the media and non-government organizations is essential to fight the widespread problem of sexual exploitation of minors. The seminar focused on specific problems plaguing each region—some of which are the lack of reliable data regarding the issue, lack of laws addressing the sexual abuse of minors, and police involvement in the “porno-tourism” trade.

To combat this problem the seminar proposed to redefine public policies on the sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents; the organization of a network of services in the areas of health, education, security and legal support focused on prevention and protection; and the creation of a network for creating public awareness and media support. The seminar’s conclusions will be presented at an international congress on the sexual exploitation of minors to be held in Stockholm, Sweden in August.

CHILD LABOR : SWEEPED UNDER THE CARPET BY EXPORTERS

INDIA (IPS)—“This is just a rumor. The fact is that there is no child labor here.” This is the lie that has been going around for the last 10 years in Bhadohi, India. The area, which is famous for its hand-

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woven wool rugs, is under fire from child activists who allege that the area forcibly employs children from outside and forces them to work long hours in wretched working conditions.

The activists of Saryathi’s South Asian Coalition Against Child Servitude (SACCS) are trying to make the plight of the “carpet children” an election issue by creating public awareness about them. The activists say that it is difficult to go against these carpet exporters since they are backed up by certain influential political parties—the ruling congress candidate, for instance, is a manufacturer. As a response to this problem, Saryathi’s organization created the “child labour-free carpet labeling scheme” in which a “Smiling Carpet” label is given to exporters certifying that the carpet has not been made by children.

INEQUALITY IN LITERACY

India is still struggling with its illiterate adult women. Female literacy has increased from 18.44 percent in 1971 to 39.24 percent in 1991. But it is still way behind male literacy which increased from 39.51 percent in 1971 to 64.13 percent in 1991.

This inequality stems from the fact that men and women are not equal in the labour market thus, women’s education is perceived as having lower economic utility.

The educational system itself reflects the lifestyles and expected roles of men and women. Textbooks and teachers generally project these images: the mother cooks, father goes to work, sister helps

mother, brother goes to play.

Also, the higher percentage of married females in the 15-19 age group, increasing death rate and deteriorating birth rate are factors in female illiteracy.

At higher education levels, the percentage of enrollees is small. When the students enrolling for higher education is only about 4.8 per cent of the relevant age group, the dropouts and failures account for 59 per cent of the students enrolled. At present, enrolling for higher education is better with about six percent of the relevant age group.

The high dropout and failure rates affect especially the girls and students belonging to disadvantaged sections of the population. Poor students are often weak either in the higher standards of education where English is the medium of instruction or even in the lesser standards that use regional languages as the media. All these prevent the lower groups from achieving the goal of equal educational opportunities.

The literacy problem is exacerbated by the growing polarization between educational institutions available to the elites and the masses and the growing irrelevance of education to the needs of the developing economy and the changing society.

(Source: Child Workers News, July-September and October-December 1995)

VIRGINITY A MUST FOR INDON ARMY WOMEN

JAKARTA (Reuter)—Virginity has been declared compulsory for women cadets entering the Indonesian police and military forces, the *Pos*