

CRACKING DOWN ON PORNO-TOURISM

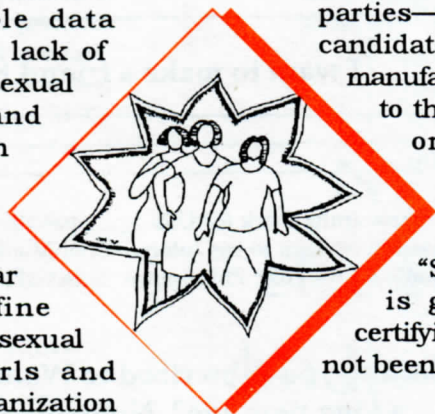
BRAZIL (IPS)—The first Seminar Against the Exploitation of Girls and Adolescents held in the Brazilian Capital last 16-19 April came up with the conclusion that an alliance between the government, the media and non-government organizations is essential to fight the widespread problem of sexual exploitation 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*

Kota newspaper said on Wednesday.

Indonesian police chief General Banurusman Astroemitro was quoted as telling a parliamentary commission on Tuesday that a woman's virginity would have to be verified before she could enter academies for the military, which includes the police. He said some women entering military academies had to leave after they were discovered to be pregnant.

"Usually the community in the region will give a party for a woman when she is accepted into the military. During that event, women who have boyfriends are left a "deposit." That deposit usually becomes known after a few months," Banurusman said. "The result is that the female cadet soldier must end her education," he said.

Answering legislators' questions, Banurusman said: "If needed, the examination can be done by a woman doctor."
(Source: Today, 7 March 1996)

NEW CURE FOR AN OLD COMPLAINT

CHILE (IPS)—Child abuse may be an old problem but it has never merited close attention and scrutiny. At least, not until recently. Official figures show that some 300,000 minors are victims of physical and psychological aggression in Chile. The country ranks third in terms of the prevalence of child abuse according to the National Women's Service. Publicity campaigns have made the public aware of this widespread problem especially since the

case of a five-month-old baby who was put into a coma by a beating from her father, hit the headlines.

The Chilean pediatric surgeon, who concentrated on the issue of child abuse for five years, expressed his frustration at the situation. This problem, according to him, existed mostly in industrialized nations and cuts across all socio-economic levels although he noted that it is more concealed in the upper classes. He cites the need for enacting more laws that deal specifically with child abuse as well as information campaigns in the media and community levels.

GETTING TOUGH ON PAEDOPHILES

PHILIPPINES (IPS)—An Australian businessman convicted under a 1992 Philippine Law on Paedophilia signals the start of concrete government efforts to crack down on paedophiliac activity in Asia. Similar actions have started in other countries in the region. Thailand, for instance, indicted a Japanese businessman for sexually abusing two under-aged girls in the Northern province of Chang Mai. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downes initiated an inquiry in response to reports of Australian aid money being extended to orphanages and schools which supply "clean" children for Australian diplomats—sending out a clear message that he will not tolerate such unethical behavior from his compatriots.

Paedophiliac activity reportedly abound in the region with child prostitutes

numbering to more than a million in Asia. While NGOs fighting paedophilia are happy with the recent efforts to curb these activities, they still see the need for stricter implementation of existing laws as well as for richer countries to enact and enforce laws that would prosecute paedophiles returning to their own countries.

TRAFFICKED INTO INDIA

The Indian and Nepali governments share complicity in the abuse of thousands of women and girls who are trafficked from Nepal to India for the purposes of prostitution. "The willingness of Indian and Nepali government officials to tolerate and, in some cases, participate in the burgeoning flesh trade exacerbates abuse," says Human Rights Watch/Asia in a 90-page report released in July 1995.

HRW concludes that half of Bombay's 100,000 brothel workers are women and girls from Nepal. The report, *Rape for Profit: Trafficking of Nepali Girls and Women to India's Brothels*, says that the workers are kept in conditions tantamount to slavery.

"Held in debt bondage for years at a time, they are raped and subjected to severe beatings, exposed to AIDS, and face arbitrary imprisonment." Non-government workers in Bombay estimate that 20 percent of Bombay's brothel workers are under the age of 18 and at least half could be infected with AIDS.

"These abuses are not only violations of internationally recognized human rights but are especially prohibited under domestic laws of both

