THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN BELIZE
The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize

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- Members of the Child Labour Committee

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For the elaboration of the present study, questionnaires were applied that were formerly used in similar studies carried out in the other countries of the region, such as:

- OIT/IPEC. (Enriqueta Davis, Instituto de la Mujer, Universidad de Panamá) La explotación sexual comercial de niños, niñas y adolescentes en Panamá. San José, 2002.
The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize
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<th>Acronym</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>Alliance against Aids</td>
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<td>BFLA</td>
<td>Belize Family Life Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
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<td>CIB</td>
<td>Criminal Investigation Branch</td>
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<td>CLU</td>
<td>Community Liaison Unit</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>CRD</td>
<td>Community Rehabilitation Department</td>
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<td>CSEC</td>
<td>Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Central Statistical Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>DHS</td>
<td>Department of Human Services</td>
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<td>DPP</td>
<td>Department of Public Prosecution</td>
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<td>DVU</td>
<td>Domestic Violence Unit</td>
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<td>FACA</td>
<td>Families and Children Act</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GOB</td>
<td>Government of Belize</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>ILO-IPEC</td>
<td>ILO-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Belize ISIS Enterprises Limited</td>
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<td>MCH</td>
<td>Maternal and Child Health</td>
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<td>MHD</td>
<td>Ministry of Human Development</td>
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<td>NCFC</td>
<td>National Committee for Families &amp; Children</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>NHDAC</td>
<td>National Human Development Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>NOPCAN</td>
<td>National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse &amp; Neglect</td>
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<td>NPA</td>
<td>National Plan of Action for Children &amp; Adolescents</td>
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<td>NPESAP</td>
<td>National Poverty Elimination &amp; Strategy Action Plan</td>
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<td>NWC</td>
<td>National Women’s Commission</td>
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<td>PAHO</td>
<td>Pan American Health Organization</td>
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<td>PASMO</td>
<td>Pan American Social Marketing Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNP</td>
<td>Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>STI</td>
<td>Sexually Transmitted Infection</td>
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<td>SVU</td>
<td>Special Victims Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCT</td>
<td>Voluntary Counseling &amp; Testing</td>
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<tr>
<td>WD</td>
<td>Women’s Department</td>
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<td>YES</td>
<td>Youth Enhancement Services</td>
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<td>YWCA</td>
<td>Young Women’s Christian Association</td>
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Living in a safe and nurturing environment, free from abuse and exploitation is a fundamental right of all children and adolescents. For over a decade and a half Belize has been upgrading its child protection systems to safeguard this right. Considerable work has been done in transforming globally accepted standards, outlined in international documents such as Convention on the Rights of the Child, its optional protocols and the ILO Convention 182 into the actual fulfilment of rights for children and adolescents. These efforts resulted in strengthened legal and policy frameworks as well as more child-centred programmes and services.

There is an understanding in Belize that truly ensuring the protection of children and adolescents means that there must be greater efforts to identify the emerging trends and the accompanying gaps in services. It means being willing to redefine and re-conceptualize existing problems so as to find the best solutions for our children. It means keeping abreast of the strides made by other countries and how in a globalized world these strides may positively or negatively impact Belize.

This study on the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is intended as one of the many efforts aimed at the continued strengthening of the child protection responses. It helps us to better understand the manifestations of CSEC in Belize, both in its old forms and its emerging ones, and it also helps us to see it through the new lens of being one of the worst forms of child labour being experienced by children globally.

The National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC), through its Child Labour Subcommittee, is pleased to have partnered with the ILO/IPEC in making this study a reality. This study is essential reading for all duty bearers - the political directorate, government agencies, civil society, parents, teachers, religious organisations and the community at large - to orient us to the realities our children and adolescents face as we try to fashion a stronger protective net for them and preserve their innocence.

Partnerships are important and crucial if we are to be successful in stamping out all forms of abuse and exploitation of our children and adolescents. The NCFC is therefore fully committed to work along with our national and international partners in ensuring that the information in this study translates into real gains for the children and adolescents of Belize.

Sandra Hall
Chairperson
National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC)
The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize
CHAPTER 1 - Executive Summary
1.0 Introduction

This study was undertaken on the premise that the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents (CSEC) was occurring in Belize. While two separate studies conducted in recent years supported the view that children in Belize were being sexually exploited commercially, there was no study that focused specifically on this issue. The extent to which it was taking place was not known, principally because the designation of the problem as a discrete crime committed against children distinct from other crimes - such as sexual abuse, child molestation or incest - is a fairly recent occurrence. Furthermore, the few cases so named thus far had revealed considerable inadequacies in the laws for prosecuting the crime and supporting services and mechanisms to fully assist the victims.

Belize is a signatory to several international conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, ILO Convention 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, that requires it to report on this issue but finds itself unable to fulfill reporting requirements for a want of relevant information. The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents in Belize 2004 - 2015 sets as a major goal the establishment, fortification and expansion of the institutional infrastructure to protect the rights of children and adolescents “from all forms of abuse, neglect, unacceptable forms of child labour, sexual and commercial exploitation, trafficking, abduction, violence, and exposure to threatening situations.” The fulfillment of these obligations entails the ability to clearly name and tackle the problem of CSEC.

Belize, through the stewardship of the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC), has forged a path to tackle CSEC comprehensively. NCFC took advantage of the opportunity presented by the ILO-IPEC sub-regional project “Contribution to the prevention and elimination of commercial sexual exploitation in Central America, Panama and Dominican Republic” to advance this process. As was done in the other countries, the sub-regional project commissioned a study to give greater definition to the problem.

1.1 Confirmation of CSEC in Belize

Over one hundred and fifty people - men, women, and children - from all walks of life in three districts of Belize confirmed the occurrence of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. Thirty of these respondents were victims themselves of the crime. Weekly media reports of sex crimes against children have now become common-place in Belize. Consternation about these crimes against children was expressed at the level of the Chief Justice as well as the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) even as they acknowledged gross under-reporting.

CSEC manifests itself in diverse ways in Belize. It is taking place from the brothel, to the street, to the school. CSEC is even happening in our homes and sometimes with the complicity of parents. Hard cash, a meal, payment of utility bills, payment of school fees, purchase of school books, and sweets are some of the ways CSEC is paid for. Clients are predominantly males and primarily Belizeans or persons living in Belize. They are of different ages.
Whilst this study confirms the perception that CSEC is happening in Belize, it acknowledges the difficulty in pinpointing and dealing with the problem because of its ‘hush-hush’ nature and the myriad ways in which it takes place. CSEC is not seen or treated as a discrete and heinous crime against children. It is still largely a crime without a distinct name or a crime that goes by another name - child abuse, child molestation, or unlawful carnal knowledge. At the same time as it is not evidently perceived as a crime, there is a high level of awareness that it is not okay.

The respondents in this study are very aware that CSEC is happening and generally feel that something should be done about it and that the community should take action against it, but readily admit that they have not done, or do not do, anything about it. One of the reasons stated for inaction on this issue on the part of service providers is a deep fear of reprisal from the perpetrators of this crime. This fear must be understood in the context of an overall high crime rate in Belize, in which witnesses to crimes have been threatened and victimized. The perception of a weak institutional response to CSEC also weighs heavily in a decision to forego reporting of this crime.

Not only do service providers and the general public refrain from reporting CSEC but victims themselves have indicated that they too have not reported their experiences of sexual violence, particularly those incidences which occurred below the age of 12. Sexual violence and CSEC experiences are therefore shrouded in silence. The shame and stigma associated with sexual violence, as reported by these victims, is a major inhibiting factor in speaking out against this crime. The wording of related laws to protect children reinforces the feeling of shame.

There is intellectual understanding of the implications of CSEC in the society but this has not translated into a movement against sex crimes perpetrated on children. In this regard the Youth Enhancement Services (YES), which is the only organization with a sustained and target campaign to address sex crimes against girls, can be singled out as a vanguard effort and it should receive every possible support from all quarters.

1.2 Causes of CSEC

Poverty was seen as the primary reason for the occurrence of CSEC in Belize. The rising cost of living including the rising cost of education was making it more difficult for families to make ends meet. The prohibitive cost of education for many families results in low levels of completion of primary and secondary schools. None of the child victim respondents in this study had completed a secondary level of schooling, which is reflective of the generally low levels of education among the Belizean populace. Only 17.4% of urban and 7.4% of rural residents have completed a secondary school education in Belize.¹

This view expressed by the respondents of the study need to be taken into consideration in the context of the national economic situation. The 2002 Poverty Assessment Study reported that 1/3 of the population lives in poverty with children being affected most. Despite efforts to reduce poverty in Belize, the national debt,
the rising cost of living without salary increases or even cost of living indexing, and inadequate minimum wages will not make the situation better in the foreseeable future. Unemployment rates are highest among the two groups most vulnerable to CSEC, women and youth.

Surprisingly, a significant number of persons in the study put the blame for CSEC on the children themselves; in other words they blamed the victim. The children were seen to ‘want’ it or to ‘tempt’ the men who then took advantage of the opportunity provided. As ridiculous as it may sound the onus is put on the child to be able to put the “breaks” on what is perceived to be ‘man’s inability to control his own sexual urges’. Men are only outrightly understood to be accountable if the child victim is pre-pubescent, below the age of 12. Over the age of 12 other factors come into play. It becomes understandable and ostensibly excusable if the child though underage looks like an adult, in local parlance passes the ’90 lbs test’. There is general acceptability of older men cohabiting with ‘physically developed’ children and children over 14 years of age. Among the CSEC victims surveyed in this study, 42.9% had at some point lived with an older sexual partner before turning 18 years.

The ambiguous nature of the laws of Belize coupled with traditional practices in some ethnic groups and rural areas also causes CSEC. Whereas the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Belize ratified, clearly defines a child to be anyone less than 18 years, the national laws have different definitions of what constitutes being a “child”. Children are allowed to cohabit from the age of 14 years once there is parental consent and it is legal for them to have consensual sex once they reach the age of 16 years. It would be difficult to prove commercial sexual exploitation of a child in either of these instances.

The Criminal Code, for example, makes a distinction between carnal knowledge and “unlawful” carnal knowledge based solely on the age of the child. Once the child is below the age of 14, carnal knowledge is automatically unlawful. However, in the case of children between ages 14-16, carnal knowledge must be proven to be “unlawful” to be recognized as a crime. In the latter case, the child’s moral character becomes a primary factor in how this crime is perceived by society and dealt with in the judicial system.

The only law in Belize which takes a human rights approach to crimes involving children is the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2003. In this Act, evidence of a victim’s past sexual behavior is “irrelevant and inadmissible for the purpose of proving that the victim engaged in other sexual behavior or to prove the victim’s sexual predisposition”2. Additionally, the Act states that the legal age of consent cannot be used as a defense to the crime of trafficking in persons. This can serve as a model for legislative reform initiatives as they pertain to sexual offences against children.

1.3 Issue of gender, morality and the law

As stated above, laws in Belize use prejudicial language such as “defilement of a young female”, “known immoral character”, “common prostitute”, and “unlawful carnal knowledge”, all in reference to sex crimes against children. The language

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itself is fraught with negative value judgments on the child victims of sex crimes. This goes completely against the fundamental human rights of children, as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The laws reflect a deeply engrained gendered view of girls and women as either “good” or “bad”. This view is further reflected in the expressed value statements of the general public. As articulated in one of the male focus groups, women are considered the true source of all evil - it is the women who tempt men, as Eve had tempted Adam in the Bible. This sentiment is also expressed by both men and women in gender awareness sessions across the country. The underpinnings of this view of women and men are rooted in religious dogma perpetrated by major institutions such as the national Church-State Education System.

The wording of relevant laws is also gender biased against boys. The laws provide for the females alone to be victims of sexual crimes and for males alone as the perpetrators. Legally, therefore, boys and males cannot be raped or commercially sexually exploited and women cannot be tried as perpetrators of these crimes. Addressing these deeply held gender-related attitudes, beliefs and legislative biases is a major challenge in confronting and eliminating CSEC in Belize.

Other negative attitudes towards children, such as the belief that they are the property of their parents, also impact on the legal outcome of sex crimes against children. As revealed in documented Supreme Court Cases, approximately half of all sexual offences cases are not advanced to the point of prosecution. This means that the cases are withdrawn by the Department of Public Prosecution. One of the primary reasons for the withdrawal of cases is the complainant’s unwillingness to testify or proceed with the case. According to the Police Department, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Public Prosecution, the main complainant in these instances is a parent, most often the mother.

The experience of key informants is that parents withdraw cases, not in the interest of the child, but for their own selfish reasons. This includes the possible withdrawal of economic or emotional support by the perpetrator, without regard for the independent human right of the child. The child is therefore not seen as an individual person with inalienable human rights but as an extension of the parent whose primary needs and interests come before the child’s. The law does not provide adequate protection of children to prevent these violations of their rights.

1.4 The Institutional Response

The institutional response has not kept pace with the rapid rise in reports of sex crimes against children. In the Belize District alone, reports of sexual abuse against children have increased 100 times. The number of cases reported in 1995 was 24 compared to the 248 cases reported in 2005. Yet, the human and financial resources provided to departments in the child protection system have not increased significantly over the same time period. The issue of institutional resource constraints has been flagged in a study\(^3\) assessing the vulnerability of the child protection system. Key informants in this study also reiterated these constraints. The situation

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is further aggravated by the austerity measures now being implemented in an effort to balance the national budget.\(^4\)

The implications of under-resourcing are: a.) the absence of transportation or fuel to travel to investigate cases, b.) the lack of human resource capacity to adequately document, investigate, prosecute and follow-through on cases, c.) the continued gaps in the provision of protective and rehabilitative services for victims of CSEC.

According to the Police Department and some Magistrates, CSEC is perceived to occur at alarming rates in rural communities, particularly among Mestizo, Maya and Mennonite communities. However, a lack of transportation within the context of a highly dispersed rural population in Belize paralyzes the institutional response to these communities. Even in the urban centers, child protection workers have had to be creative to ensure greater mobility in carrying out their duties.

Also affecting the institutional response is the heavy caseload of social workers, who manage at least double the number of cases recommended for one case worker. As a result, the Department of Human Services has established a rating system to enable the prioritization of cases. Sex crimes, particularly those involving adolescents, are not of high priority compared to the more pressing cases of babies and children who are in need of immediate assistance. Furthermore, the fact that presently CSEC is not articulated within the scope and characterization of sexual crimes against children makes it even less visible and therefore not addressed.

Other major human and financial constraints are present within the Police Department, the Magistracy and the Department of Public Prosecution. The police lack forensic investigative capacity for dealing with sex crimes. This is aggravated by a lack of DNA testing facilities in Belize and by the constant changing of officers assigned to the Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) which is responsible for dealing with sex crimes.

The magistracy also lacks adequate capacity to process the volume of “preliminary inquiries” mandated by the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act and the Indictable Offences Act. Because police and civilian prosecutors who bring cases to the Magistrates Courts are not legally trained, much of the Magistrates time is spent dealing with evidentiary procedures rather than disposing of cases. Cases are further delayed at the Department of Public Prosecution which continues to operate with a skeleton staff of only 4 crown counsels to serve the entire country. The legal opinion of crown counsels is indispensable in advancing cases to the level of the Supreme Court. As a result, cases of sex crimes against children drag on for what is perceived by service providers and victims as an “unreasonable amount of time”.

In addition to the inadequacies outlined above, there are also major gaps in child protective services. Among these are: the absence of legal aid for victims, limited opportunities for professional counseling, no safe houses and no direct rehabilitative programmes for victims and their families. Except for the public information initiatives of two Non-Governmental Organizations, there is no mass public campaign to create an awareness of CSEC as a crime in Belize. Other gaps are the lack of clear protocols for managing sex crimes against children across sectors as well as a lack of coordination between and among institutions within the child protection system.

1.5 Recommendations

The literature review undertaken for this Study revealed that many worthwhile recommendations have already been made, which, if implemented, would contribute significantly towards a national effort to eliminate CSEC in Belize. The major recommendation of this Study is therefore the need to build a capacity for resource mobilization, including advocating for greater participation in the national budget formulation process, to ensure the implementation of recommendations made. Linked to this recommendation is the need for an integrated, multi-disciplinary institutional plan of action to prevent and eliminate sex crimes against children, including CSEC. This plan of action should reflect a consolidation of all the relevant recommendations made in previous studies\(^5\) as well as this one. To be effective, it can be modeled off the design of the HIV Global Fund Project\(^6\) and the ILO HIV/AIDS Education Project\(^7\) in Belize.

An opportunity for initiating this dialogue on resource mobilization presents itself in the current updating of the new Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan (NPESAP) 2006-2010. The National Committee for Families and Children is well positioned to engage this dialogue through its representation on the National Human Development Advisory Council (NHDAC), which is responsible for the development of the NPESAP.

In the meantime, this Study recommends that resources be channeled to programmes already addressing the problem of CSEC in Belize. One such major programme is the advocacy campaign against child abuse and exploitation being implemented by the Youth Enhancement Services (YES).

Regarding legal reform, this Study supports the recommendation made by Cappua\(^8\) which calls for consolidation of all laws relating to sexual offences. This Sexual Offence law would amend all existing legislation to harmonize the definition of a child to under 18 years, eliminate prejudicial language and gender biases as well as increase penalties and fill gaps in the legal protection of child victims.

While legal reform can affect attitude changes in the perception of CSEC, other equally important strategies must be employed to target behavioral and attitudinal changes among service providers and among the general public. Based on the findings of this Study, behavior change communication strategies must also deliberately target adult males.

Two of the behavior change strategies to be highlighted are: a.) the mainstreaming of human rights and gender perspectives in the education curricula and all programmes to address CSEC, and b.) the forging of formal relations with the business sector to ensure the inclusion of workers as a target group for behavior change communications.

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\(^5\) Individual studies done by Diana Shaw, Alessandro DiCappua, Michael Rosberg, Juan Miguel Petit and George Heusner as referenced in the bibliography.

\(^6\) This refers to a current project funded by the Global Fund as part of Belize’s multi-sectoral response to HIV/AIDS.

\(^7\) This refers to a current ILO funded HIV/AIDS Workplace Education Project in Belize.

CHAPTER 2 - Introduction and Methods of Study
The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize
2.0 Introduction

As a part of its commitment to protect the rights of its children, Belize has signed and ratified numerous International Conventions and Agreements. Among these are the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child pornography and the use of children in pornography, the ILO Convention 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Inter American Convention on the International Trafficking of Children.

These international commitments have provided the international policy framework for the development of national policies and programmes aimed at strengthening the child protection system. The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is one of the emerging issues in the context of addressing the problem of child abuse and neglect. Therefore, a key aspect of the child protection system is the prevention and eradication of the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Belize.

Presently, information on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Belize remains at best anecdotal and dispersed among those involved as victims, clients or service providers. To systematically and scientifically collect and analyze existing data are important steps in the process of strengthening the country’s capacity to adequately and effectively respond to this issue. This situation has provided the catalyst for Belize’s inclusion in this Sub-Regional study commissioned by the ILO/IPEC Project entitled, “Contribution to the Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Central American and the Dominican Republic” (2004). Within the framework of this Sub-Regional Project on CSEC, several studies were carried out between 2001 and 2002 in all the countries of Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic, except Belize.

In this second phase of the Sub-Region Project Belize is being included through the efforts of the Government of Belize and the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC). The NCFC has overall responsibility for the coordination and monitoring of a National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (NPA) which incorporates Child Protection as one of its six priority areas of focus.

The Overall Goal and Specific Objectives of the Study on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize are outlined below:

Overall Goal:
- To contribute towards the prevention and eradication of commercial sexual exploitation of children (male and female under 18 years) in Belize

Specific objectives:
- To identify the characteristics of the problem of CSEC in Belize
- To understand the risk factors that place children in risk of CSEC
- To understand the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of adult males and community members regarding this issue
- To assess the policy and programmatic framework and institutional capacities of the national response
To make informed recommendations aimed at preventing and eradicating the problem

To gather the relevant data, the Study was divided into four components:

Part 1- Situation Analysis of the national context in which CSEC occurs in Belize and the perceptions of key informants and community members regarding CSEC in Belize

Part 2- Case Studies of 30 CSEC victims to better understand the situation of CSEC from the perspective of the victims

Part 3- Focus Groups and Individual Interviews with Adult Males to determine their Knowledge, Attitudes and Perception on the problem of CSEC in Belize

Part 4- A study on the Institutional Response to CSEC in Belize

2.1 Methods of Study

The CSEC Study used diverse research methods to capture the situation of CSEC in Belize from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. Each of the four components of the Study had distinct methods of information gathering as presented below:

Part 1 - Situational Analysis of CSEC in Belize

Part 1 of the study is a situational analysis of the context in which the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents occurs in Belize. The analysis provides data on the overall socio-economic, cultural and political realities of Belize and examines key issues that contribute to, and/or possibly result from, the commercial sexual exploitation of children. It includes a review and analysis of gender based violence, child labour and the social protection system for children and adolescents across the country.

To arrive at this information, the ISIS team carried out a literature review, conducted interviews with key informants in the public sector and civil society, visited sites where CSEC is believed to occur, and interviewed diverse individuals living in communities where the study was performed.

Literature Review

An extensive desktop review of documents relevant to understanding CSEC and the environment in which it occurs in Belize was performed. Documents included studies done on children in Belize in different areas, policy documents related to children, relevant international covenants and related reports.

media reports related to child sexual violence and commercial sexual exploitation were also examined.

**Key Informant Interviews**
A discussion guide was developed and administered to some 34 key informants representing service providers within the public, civil society and private sectors. This included public sector workers such as public health nurses, police officers, immigration officers, labour officers, women development officers, human services personnel and representatives from the Youth for the Future Initiative. Informants from civil society organizations such as the Belize Family Life Association (BFLA), the National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN), the Alliance Against AIDS (AAA) and the Youth Enhancement Services (YES), and private sector informants in the tourism and entertainment industries such as bartenders/waitresses, taxi drivers, tour guides and commercial sex workers were also interviewed.

**On-Site Observations**
Information was also obtained through visits to centres or areas considered to have a high prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the three areas studied - Cayo, Orange Walk and Belize Districts. The sites visited included bars, brothels, parks, and border points.

**Individual Interviews**
Interviews were conducted with 56 adults at the community level in the three areas to learn about their perception of the issue of CSEC. The interviews were conducted using the survey instrument provided by the ILO/IPEC Project on CSEC with minor changes to adapt to the Belize context. The Survey Instrument was coded and the survey database developed by an independent firm.

Twenty individuals in Belize City, 23 from Cayo, and 13 from Orange Walk were interviewed. The interviews were conducted by psychiatric, rural and community health nurses living and working in the three locations. Prior to conducting the interviews, the surveyors participated in training sessions to ensure their sensitivity to gender and human rights issues and their thorough understanding of how to use the survey instrument.

**Challenges Encountered**
No major challenges were encountered in carrying out Part One of the study except additional time needed to conducted the interviews and enter the information in the data base. However, the anonymous observation of sites was impeded by the fact that in a small society, the researchers are well-known.

**Part 2 - Survey with CSEC Victims**
Part 2 of the study profiles the lives of 30 children (males and females) under 18 years who are considered victims of commercial sexual exploitation. This includes children whose rights have been violated in activities such as paid sexual intercourse, child pornography and/or trafficking in persons.
Survey
To arrive at this information ISIS administered a survey directly with children and adolescents identified as victims of CSEC from the three areas included in the study. The instrument used for the survey was the one provided by the ILO/IPEC Project on CSEC with minor adaptations to the Belize context. The survey gathered general information on the participating children and adolescents, as well as information on their family, their education and health, their living circumstances and conditions, and their actual experiences with sexual violence and commercial sexual exploitation. The survey also sought information on the basic characteristics of the client exploiters and the child victims’ perspectives on the institutional responses to the problem in Belize.

To encourage the children and adolescents participation in the survey, interviewers assured them of the complete anonymity and confidentiality of the information shared.

Interviews with child victims were conducted by the nurses who carried out the community interviews for Part 1 of the study. Additional interviews were conducted by some service providers who were in direct contact with child victims. The nurses participated in training that provided information on the issue of CSEC, practice in administering the survey instrument, and ensured their sensitivity to gender and human rights perspectives in carrying out the work. Attention was also given to ensuring that the enumerators were able to respond appropriately to child victims’ interviewees whose sharing of their experiences may prove traumatic for them. In addition to these nurses, ISIS also had to contract the services of non-government service providers to conduct some of the interviews. One-on-one training sessions were held with each service provider to ensure their clear understanding of the instrument.

The selection of the child victims surveyed was informed by key informants, the interviewers and service providers.

Challenges Encountered
In the interviews with key informants, several indicated that they knew of child victims of CSEC. However, the selection of child victims to be interviewed was a long and drawn out process. Out of concern for the ultimate protection of the victims, key informants and service providers did not readily cooperate with the researchers in identifying the child victims to be interviewed.

In a few instances where the service providers were more willing to cooperate, the child victims refused to be interviewed by strangers (ISIS interviewers) for fear that sharing their information would expose them to danger. According to the service providers some of the victims being asked to participate in the survey had had a recent experience where the club they worked at was raided immediately after they had participated in a discussion with another organisation. Even though this was not the case, they felt that the organisation had sold them out to the police.

In the end to reach the required number of child victims, ISIS had to persuade some service providers to administer the survey to the child victims they knew. Since this was after the comprehensive training sessions carried out for the original interviewers, ISIS had to work one-on-one with the service providers to ensure their understanding of the survey instrument and the approach being used.
Part 3 - Adult Males Knowledge and Attitudes about CSEC

The third part of the study presents information that capture the knowledge, attitudes and perception of men regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of male and female children under the age of 18. The information was gathered primarily by use of a question guide with focus groups of men and a few individual interviews. The question guide for this part of the CSEC Study was informed by the ILO/IPEC regional research completed in 2004 entitled, “Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Masculinity”.

The study sought some answers to the following questions:

- Why do men buy sex from adolescents, boys, and girls? What incites some men to buy sex from children while others would never do so? (motives and inhibitors)
- Is the tolerance toward sexual exploitation generalized in various degrees within the larger male adult population, or are certain sectors more permissive and tolerant of commercial sexual exploitation?
- Are the factors that incite men to buy sex from underage persons the same or different in the various Central American countries?
- Are men who download child pornography from the Internet also willing to buy sex directly from boys, girls, and adolescents?
- Which factors could discourage men to use underage persons for sexual activities (information about the sanctions, about the damages caused to the victims, about human rights, about alternative masculine values, etc.)?

The actual information was gathered through the conduct of:

- Focus Group Interviews
- Individual Interviews

Focus Group Interviews:

Three focus groups, one each in Belize (7), Orange Walk (8) and Cayo (14) Districts with a total of 39 adult male participants. The participants were married and unmarried men between the ages of 21 and 63 and came from diverse backgrounds including the military, medical services, public officers, taxi drivers, tour guides, teachers, religious leaders, technicians, mechanics, sales representatives, and engineers, agricultural and manual workers.

The question guide for the Focus Group and Individual Interviews was modeled from the regional ILO/IPEC research study on “Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Masculinity”. The questions were divided into four broad themes: 1) The Construction of Male Sexuality, 2) Sexual practices and types of relationships that men seek out, 3) Factors associated with different forms of commercial sexual activity, and 4) Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children under 18 years.

Individual Interviews:

In-depth interviews were carried out with five individual men (2 each in Cayo and Orange Walk and 1 in Belize City) to enrich the understanding of the information gathered. The interviewees came from other sectors not represented by the focus groups: a gay man in his thirties, a 65 year old businessman/investor, a 47 year
mechanic married with children, a married cleaning supervisor and a 22 year old laborer.

**Challenges Encountered**
Setting up the focus groups proved to be a near Herculean task. It was decided from the outset, as per the regional study, that the men would not be told the exact nature of the focus group session. It was believed, and rightly so, that the men would not participate if they were told that the interview was about Commercial Sexual Exploitation. Instead, they would be told that they would be participating in a session on ‘Male Sexuality’. Even so, men did not readily agree to participate in the focus groups.

Focus group sessions in each of the three districts had to be cancelled because the men who had agreed to participate did not show up. Finally other means had to be employed to make the three focus groups that actually took place, happen.

In Orange Walk the facilitator piggy-backed on an HIV/AID session he conducted to get the men to participate. In Cayo the Belize Family Life Association assisted in setting up the group through contacts she had. When the problem of setting up the focus group was put to the members of the National Committee on Child Labour in Belize City, the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry Representative on the Committee volunteered to set up a focus group through the membership of the Chamber. Together with ISIS a list of members and the level in the organization was identified. They were not told the nature of study. However, of 15 confirmations only 7 attended. The facilitator for Belize City asked the participants in closing why men were so difficult to organize. An important observation was that men do not like talking about serious things in groups with other men. The participants in this group thought that it was better not to tell men the topic to be discussed as was done in this case. One participant actually said that if he had known the topic beforehand, he would not have come because he would not have been comfortable talking to other men about sex.

Because of major set backs in setting up the focus group the lead researcher could not conduct the sessions. Instead, a male facilitator had to be identified each in Orange Walk and Cayo. The male researcher attached to the project conducted the focus group in Belize.

**Part 4 - The Institutional Response to CSEC in Belize**
This component attempts to answer the following questions in relation to the institutional response to CSEC in Belize:

- Which institutions should according to the legislation and the political designation provide care for the children who are at risk of commercial sexual exploitation and for those who are already involved in this activity, and how do they fulfill their role?
- What are the governmental policies to prevent, evaluate, sanction, attend to, and follow-up on the problem?
- How do referral and counter-referral systems operate in those cases that require attention?
- Which policies, programmes, or projects intended to prevent commercial
sexual exploitation presently exist in the country? What are their objectives, strategies, implementing agency(ies), achievements, implementation level and challenges?

- Is the eradication of commercial sexual exploitation a priority for the government?
- Which institutions should guarantee the sanctioning and prosecution of offenders and how are they going about doing it? Also, identify the weaknesses in the sanctioning of offenders and provide information about the number of reports or complaints, as well as about offenders sentenced within the last five years.

The Institutional Response Section utilized the following methods to attempt to answer these questions.

- A literature review of past studies on issues related to CSEC in Belize
- A review of case files on CSEC in Belize
- Interviews with at least 20 key informants from multiple agencies that form a part of the institutional response to CSEC in Belize

### 2.2 The Literature Review

During the literature review, domestic policies and legislation were examined to understand the policy framework for responding to CSEC in Belize. Additionally, international treaties and conventions were reviewed to assess the level of adaptation of domestic policies and legislation to international legal instruments. National Policies and Plans of Action indicating specific public and civil society responses were also reviewed.

### 2.3 Review of Case Files

A review of case files of sexual offences against children was undertaken at the General Registry in Belize City. The General Registry archives all Supreme Court criminal case files. A total of 12 case files were reviewed and statistics on sexual offence cases were recorded and analyzed for the years 2002-2005.

### 2.4 Key Informant Interviews

A total of 34 key informant interviews were conducted, 10 of which were conducted in groups of 2 to 10 persons from various government institutions and non-government entities that form a part of the institutional response to child protective services in Belize. The questions developed to conduct the interviews to gather data for this component of the study were integrated into the interview guide developed for Part 1 of the larger study to avoid a duplication of interviews with the same stakeholders. A list of these key informants and a copy of the interview guide are attached.
While the study called for a comprehensive analysis of the institutional response to CSEC in Belize, budgetary constraints only allowed for the key informant interviews to be conducted in three of the six districts in Belize. However, the information gathered covers the key informant agencies’ responses across the country.

The length of time needed to establish some of the key informant interviews delayed the completion of the study, particularly the sections related to the review of case files and the analysis of the data on the prosecution of sexual offences in Belize.

Nevertheless, all key informants were generally willing to participate in the study and demonstrated genuine interest in the issue, despite the extensive constraints of their institutions in responding to CSEC in Belize.
CHAPTER 3 - Situation Analysis of CSEC in Belize
3.0 The National Context

Belize in Central America
Belize is one of the seven countries that comprise the Central American Region. It sits at the top of the isthmus, south of Mexico, and east and north of Guatemala. It is bounded on the east by the Caribbean Sea.

Belize is considered unique among its seven neighbors because of its historical colonial ties to Great Britain, in comparison to the Spanish colonial legacy shared by the other six countries. Its colonial past crowned it with English being the official language as well as socio-cultural, political and juridical institutions modeled off the Westminster system of government.

Unlike the other countries that gained their independence from Spain in the early 1800s, Belize only gained its independence in 1981. The country will celebrate its 25th anniversary of political independence from Great Britain in September 2006. Lastly, its small but ethnically diverse population is less than 300,000 people. The country with the next smallest population in the region is Panama with nearly 3 million. However, it has the second smallest land mass (22,960 sq kilometers) in the region, second to El Salvador.

Nevertheless, sharing the isthmus with the other countries has inevitably influenced the Belizean landscape. While English remains the official language, a majority of the population speak Spanish as a first language. This resulted from the major movement into Belize of people fleeing civil and political strife in their own countries, especially El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, and the steady out migration of Belizeans, especially Creoles and Garifuna, to the United States of America to seek greater economic fortunes.

Considered a medium-income country, Belize is positioned at 91 in the United Nation’s Development Programme’s Human Development Index (HDI) in the 2005 Report. Among the Central American countries it ranks third after Panama and Costa Rica\(^9\) (See Table).

### 3.1 Human Development Index for Central America

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>HDI Rank</th>
<th>Human Development Index (HDI) Value 2003</th>
<th>Life Expectancy at Birth (years) 2003</th>
<th>Adult Literacy Rate (% ages 15 and above) 2002/03</th>
<th>Combined Gross Enrollment Ratio for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Schools (%) 2002/03</th>
<th>GDP per Capita (PPP US$) 2003</th>
<th>GDP Index 2003</th>
<th>Education Index 2003</th>
<th>Life Expectancy Index 2003</th>
<th>GDP Index minus HDI Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>47th</td>
<td>0.838</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>9,606</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
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<td>0.804</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>6,854</td>
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<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
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<td>0.753</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>6,950</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
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<td>76.7</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>4,781</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
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<td>67.3</td>
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<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Demographics in Belize

With an annual growth rate of 2.7% Belize’s population estimate in mid-2005 was 291,800 people, 147,400 males (50.5%) and 144,400 females (49.5%)\(^{10}\). A slightly larger number of people reside in urban areas, 146,600 or 51.5%, compared to 145,200 or 48.5% in rural areas. The population continues it predominantly young trend with 177,650 (60.8%) being 24 years or less. Slightly less than half the population (47.8%) falls within the legal definition of youth (below 18 years) with no major distinction between males (50.5%) and females (49.5%).\(^{11}\)

Despite its small numbers, Belize’s population is a rich pot-pourri of ethnic cultures. The primary groups are the Mestizos commanding 48% of the population, followed by the Creoles with 25%, Maya 11%, Garifuna 6%, Mennonite 4%, and East Indians 3%. Another 3% of the population falls within the category of other which includes Chinese and people of middle-eastern origins.

Major shifts have taken place in the population over the past 20 - 25 years attributable to the influx of refugees and economic migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. At the same time, record numbers of Belizeans immigrated to the United States to improve the social and economic condition of their families. The dynamic and continuous movement of people in and out of the country manifested itself in the Mestizo succeeding the Creole as the largest ethnic group since the early 1990s.

The 1991 and 2000 Census revealed the foreign-born population living in Belize to be 13.8% and 14.8% respectively of the total population. The top four countries from which people came were Guatemala (10,698 in 1991 and 14,581 in 2000), El Salvador (5,658 in 1991 and 6,021 in 2000), and Mexico (2,558 in 1991 and 2,305 in 2000) and Honduras (2,337 in 1991 and 4,936 in 2000). While Mexico was the country sending the third largest number in 1991, it was replaced by Honduras in 2000.\(^{12}\)

The largest number of immigrants resides in the Cayo District. This has been consistently so since 1991. This was followed by Belize and Orange Walk Districts in 1991 but Stann Creek succeeded Orange Walk as the district with the third largest amount in 2000.\(^{13}\)

In 1991 14.7% of the men living in Belize were foreign-born compared to 13.0% of the women. By 2000 women were catching up significantly with the men; foreign-born men accounted for 15% of the male population and foreign-born women accounted for 14.5%.

Household sizes in Belize are between 4 and 6 persons, averaging out at 4.6 persons in 2002.\(^{14}\) A little over one quarter of households (26.8) are headed by women.

\(^{10}\) Central Statistical Office, 2005 mid-year population Estimates in 2005 Abstract of Statistic, Government of Belize, 2005
\(^{11}\) Ibid
\(^{12}\) Ibid
\(^{13}\) Ibid
\(^{14}\) Central Statistical Office, 2005 mid-year population Estimates in 2005 Abstract of Statistic, GOB, 2005
3.3 The Social and Economic Milieu

Despite its medium human development status in the United Nation’s HDI, Belize has a relatively high level of poverty for its small population. A study on the situation of poverty in the country conducted in 2002 assessed 33.5% of the Belize population to be living in poverty and 10.8% to be living in extreme poverty.\(^{15}\) The 33.5% living below the poverty line have great difficulty meeting the basic costs of food and non-food items such as rent, utility bills, education and health expenses. Those considered indigent are unable to satisfy their basic food needs.

Poverty in Belize is highest in the most southern district in the country, Toledo, with 79% considered poor. Poverty is lowest in the Belize District at 24.8%. The Maya are the poorest ethnic group in the country and the working poor comprise nearly 30% of the labour force. Children make up the largest age group of poor people in the country (39.0%). The poverty study warned that these high rates of poverty among our children (2 out of every 5) have major implications for children’s participation in the worst forms of child labour, for instance CSEC.\(^{16}\)

No major difference exists between individual male and female poverty levels; 33.9% of males are considered poor and 33.2% of females. However, the study reveals a most interesting phenomenon, that there are a notably higher number of male headed households in poverty (25.5%) than female headed households (21.8%). The poverty study observes, and the author agrees, that there is need to examine this phenomenon more closely. This is especially so when you consider that female-headed households, in the same study, express greater difficulty than male-headed households in meeting all expenses (rent, utilities, school) except health-related expenses.\(^{17}\)

People participating in the poverty assessment study identified low wages, lack of employment opportunities and unemployment, job discrimination, insufficient and inadequate education, inadequate access and use of land, poor markets for goods, loss of respect for the family, cultural erosion, and living above one’s means as foremost causes of poverty. The study also revealed that poor people’s primary means of coping with these financial difficulties was prayer. Furthermore, the poor were most likely to hustle than the non-poor.\(^{18}\) Though hustling is not defined in the study, it could include every imaginable (and unimaginable) activity not considered a part of the formal economy. Commercial sexual exploitation falls in the category of hustle.

Children are mandated by law to be in school until at least 14 years of age. Primary education is therefore universal in Belize. The universality of education notwithstanding, a critical number of children, 30%, do not complete primary school. Many will repeat at least one time in their primary school years. Furthermore, of those who enter and complete primary approximately 50% do not go on to receive a secondary school education. Of those who go on to secondary school, 50% do not complete.

On the basis of completing a standard five education a little over 70% of Belize’s
population is considered literate.\textsuperscript{19} This is some 20\% down from the oft touted 90\% literacy rate of the 1980s and 1990s. This lower 70's literate rate may even be lower if one is to judge by other factors. For instance in a national literacy survey carried out by the Literacy Council of Belize in 1996 although the literacy rate on the basis of educational attainment was about 75\%, the literacy rate on the basis of a test administered to a sample group of people at the time of the study put the national literacy level at less than 50\%.\textsuperscript{20} The 2000 census also revealed that whilst English is the official language of the country only 53.6\% of persons surveyed claimed to speak English well.

The quality, content and relevance of education in Belize are frequently being questioned in relationship to people’s functionality and productivity in the development and advancement of Belize. This is particularly important in consideration of young people’s preparedness to enter and participate maximally in the labour market and to play full and rightful roles in the development of the country.

The health and well-being of Belize’s population are seriously affected by causes such as: hypertension, acute respiratory infections, road traffic accidents, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, and diabetes. HIV/AIDS has become a major health and national development issue in Belize with AIDS being the primary reported cause of death among people in their most productive and reproductive years. Figures for HIV/AIDS since it was first noted in 1986 through 2003 indicate 2,700 (1\% of population) new HIV infections, 689 new AIDS cases and 510 AIDS deaths. Children and adolescents between the ages of 0 and 19 accounted for 12\% of all HIV infections and 7\% of AIDS cases.\textsuperscript{21}

In the early days of the HIV/AIDS disease being diagnosed in Belize males outnumbered females in acquiring the virus. However, as early as 1991, Health authorities in Belize observed that women were contracting the virus at a faster rate than men.\textsuperscript{22} Today women are at the very least as likely as men to be affected by HIV/AIDS.

The levels of violence and crime are further troubling issues for the small nation of Belize. Since the start of 2006, an average of 5.5 murders a month were committed; the headcount at the end of April 2006 was 22. Crimes against children and adolescents feature prominently. Sadly, young people are also perpetrators of many acts of violence and crime.

Gender-based violence continues unabated in the country. The annual figures for domestic violence cases in 2004 and 2005 were 962 and 969 respectively.\textsuperscript{23} More than 85\% of the victims of domestic violence were females. In 2005 14.3\% of female victims of domestic violence were aged 0 - 19 and 12.4\% of male cases were in the same age range. More than half the reported cases were repeat incidents and just over 30\% were first reported incidents.

Belize’s economy is small, open and vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the global

\textsuperscript{19} CSO - \textit{Population Census 2000: Major Findings}, GOB, 2000
\textsuperscript{20} Literacy Council of Belize, \textit{1996 National Literacy Survey}, 1996
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid
\textsuperscript{23} Unpublished figures produced by the Ministry of Health Surveillance Unit
market economy. Traditional export-oriented agricultural products (sugar, citrus and banana) are the primary economic activities. Tourism and shrimp-farming are progressively increasing their level of importance to overall economic growth.

Belize’s economic development has been dependent principally on preferential markets for its agricultural products. The loss of these preferential markets in this era of globalization is a major threat to sustained development of the national economy. Given the size of the country Belize lacks the economy of scale to compete on the world market in the production of most if not all of its products. In Central America alone, Belize’s cost of production of its various products far exceeds the cost of the same products in any of the other countries.

The estimated unemployment rate for the country in 2005 was 11.0. Female unemployment rate for the same period stood at 17.2%, more than double that of males at 7.4%. Unemployment was highest in the Toledo District (13.7%) and lowest in Orange Walk (8.8%).24

The economy grew by 3.1% in 2005, 1.5 percentage point less than 2004 (4.6%). At the same time inflation has steadily increased yearly since 2000. The annual inflation rate in 2000 was 0.6%, the rate in 2003 was 2.6% and in 2005 3.7%.25 The rise in inflation is largely attributed to continued increases in fuel prices.

Belize’s economic situation is currently perceived nationally and internationally to be volatile. Belize’s economic vulnerability has been aggravated by its rapid accumulation of public debt which exceeded 100% of GDP in 2004.26 The country’s economic rating is being consistently downgraded by international rating agencies. Cited in the IMF report27, on June 1, 2005, Standards and Poor’s rated Belize as CCC with a negative outlook and one week later, Moody’s ratings of Belize’s foreign currency was downgraded from B2 to B3 with a negative outlook. This situation has led to close monitoring by the IMF whose recommendations the Government has resisted due to their political implications.

Belize is instead implementing what it considers a “Home Grown Economic Recovery Strategy”. This is the second such national strategy being implemented in the last three years. Targets set under this National Strategy (for reducing the budget deficit) have not been reached within the prescribed period and Belize continues to face serious budget deficits due to its debt servicing and balance of payments crises which put the Belizean dollar in a precarious position.

The country’s current economic challenges have raised serious concerns for the developers and implementers of Belize’s new Poverty Reduction Strategy and the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (NPA). With the tightening of the fiscal belt, fewer financial and human resources are available for investment in the social sector. The frustrations of working within this economic context continues to increase within the public sector as many social sector agencies are not able to mobilize necessary resources to implement policies and plans. This situation is exacerbated by the overall reduction in international resources being directed at the Non-Government Sector, also putting non-government programmes in a precarious

24 CSO, 2005 Abstract of Statistics, GOB, 2005
25 Ibid
26 International Monetary Fund, IMF Country Report No. 05/352, September, 2005.
27 Ibid.
position. The issue of programme development and sustainability for social sector initiatives, including those directed at children and adolescents, is therefore one that will require serious dialogue, and strategic planning and coordination.

3.4 The Situation of Sexual Abuse in Belize

Almost everyday in Belize, there are media reports of cases of child sexual abuse. Belize’s weekly newspapers produced in February, March and April, 2006 alone include Headlines such as:

- “Girl, 14, alleges brothers, 18 and 23, had sex with her”
- “Shop Employee, Basilio Bolon, 20, accused by 10-year old girl”
- “Sexual Report filed against Lucky Strike Cleric”
- “Cop 29, gets 12 years for raping 12 year old”
- “Wife accuses husband, 31, of molesting daughter, 6”
- “Caye Caulker woman, 17, alleges rape by Julio Castillo, 25”
- “Abomination!”
- “Otoonel Chaman, 21, walks from carnal knowledge charge against girlfriend, 13”

The high media coverage of child sexual abuses cases in Belize is a reflection of the increasing reports of child sexual abuse cases in Belize. For example, the numbers of cases of child sexual abuse reported to the Department of Human Services (DHS) in the Belize District has increased ten-fold from 24 reported cases in 1995 to 257 and 248 reported cases in 2004 and 2005, respectively.

The figures for 2005 indicate that sexual abuse constituted 33% of all reported child abuse cases in the District. Sexual abuse remains the second highest type of reported abuse of children in the Belize District.

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28 Review of newspaper articles and radio and television news items over the last year.
29 The Amandala, No. 2042, Sunday, April 2, 2006, p. 1
30 The Amandala, No. 2027, Sunday, February 5, 2006, p. 25
31 The Amandala, No. 2036, Sunday, March 12, 2006, p.1
33 The Amandala, No. 2040, Sunday, March 26, 2006, p. 2
34 The Amandala, No. 2040, Sunday, March 26, 2006, p. 12
35 The Amandala, No. 2037, Wednesday, March 15, 2006, p.1
36 The Amandala, No. 2037, Wednesday, March 15, 2006, p. 4
### DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
#### TOTAL NUMBER OF REFERRALS - CHILD PROTECTION
#### 1995 - 2005

**Belize District Only**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional/Verbal Abuse</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandonment</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wandering</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>748</strong></td>
<td><strong>1001</strong></td>
<td><strong>805</strong></td>
<td><strong>665</strong></td>
<td><strong>553</strong></td>
<td><strong>622</strong></td>
<td><strong>520</strong></td>
<td><strong>203</strong></td>
<td><strong>162</strong></td>
<td><strong>281</strong></td>
<td><strong>158</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Human Services, Ministry of Human Development

Additionally, though not limited to cases of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, sexual offences represent 50% of all cases lodged with the Department of Public Prosecution.\(^{37}\) This represents cases which have been investigated by the Police Department and are being prepared for prosecution in the Supreme Court.

At the Supreme Court level, the Chief Justice in his annual report on the judiciary, with regard to sexual offences, states that “more alarming was the increase incidence of carnal knowledge against children; twenty six (26) of the serious sexual offences out of a total of thirty-three (33) were against children”\(^{38}\).

#### 3.5 Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Belize

For the purposes of this study, the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) is defined as the use of persons under the age of 18 for paid sexual relations or for child and adolescent pornography, or the use of boys, girls and adolescents for sex

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\(^{37}\) Interview with personnel from the Department of Public Prosecution, March, 2006.

shows or videos. It has to entail some economic exchange or some other form of payment to the boy, girl or the adolescent involved or to a third party acting as an intermediary for the child.

According to the Youth Enhancement Services (YES), “sexual abuse and exploitation of young women and girls is not a perversion of our society, but an integral part of it.” This same organization, based on data gathered from 1,100 girls, reports the prevalence among young women, including high school students, of dependence on older men for financial support. These men pay for school fees, and often assist with addressing personal needs such as food, clothing and shelter, in exchange for sex under the guise of a relationship.

This same organization has reported the case of the “Hit me on the Hip” and the “dalla wap” CSEC modes of operation in Belize City. The “Hit me on the Hip” phenomena points to organized crime within the tourism sector. It includes the use of the consumer of “services”, the intermediary and the victim. The intermediary solicits young girls (including those is school uniforms) to become commercial sex providers. The intermediary seeks out clients or consumers of “services” (including tourists) and sends a message (via cellular phone communication) to the victim. The victim, once notified of the need to provide “services”, finds a way to meet the consumer, even if this means pretending to be ill to be released from school.

In the case of the “dalla wap”, children provide commercial sex “services” in exchange for a “fry chicken” or in exchange for food. The term “dalla wap” comes from the popular fried chicken which is sold by Chinese Shop Keepers for prices starting from BZ$1.00. It is common for Belizeans, particularly in Belize City to consume this “fry chicken”.

Other Non-Government Organizations like the YWCA and NOPCAN also report coming in contact with CSEC cases. The YWCA reports that among its clients 1 out of every 5 indicates having been solicited for CSEC activities. This organization also reported having two clients (under the age of 15) who had children. According to this Organization dealing with CSEC is important because “we come in contact with this issue everyday. We can't run from it because it is a reality” Similarly, the National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN) comes in contact with CSEC cases and reports a perception of CSEC being prevalent in rural communities.

Magistrates in Belize City report being aware of pornography which involves CSEC victims but not being able to get enough evidence of this crime. They report that what comes to their desk is not the pornography or the trafficking but rather the carnal knowledge aspect of cases. According to the Magistrates and the Police Department, they don’t see cases “until the money does not go to the parent” then the parent brings the child in and charges carnal knowledge.

A 2002 Study on the Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children Sex Providers in Belize states that in all the locations in which the study was conducted, children

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41 Interview with staff from the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), February, 2006.
42 Interview with the staff from NOPCAN, February, 2006.
43 Interview with the Police Department and Magistrates, February, 2006.
were involved in commercial sexual activity. Of the 166 sex providers interviewed 36.3% were reported to be between the ages of 13-15 in the Corozal District, 14.2% in the Orange Walk District, none in the Belize District, 9.7% in the Cayo District, 9.0% in the Stann Creek District, 5.3% in the Toledo District and 8.3% in the Islands. Another 9.1% in the Corozal District were 16-18 year old, 21.5% in the Orange Walk District, none in the Belize District, 26.9% in the Cayo District, 27.4% in the Stann Creek District, 31.3% in the Toledo District and 27.8% in the Islands. This accounts for a total of 45.4% of the cases in Corozal, 35.75% in Orange Walk, 36.6% in the Cayo District, 36.4% in the Stann Creek District, 36.6% in the Toledo District and 36.1% in the Islands being 18 years and below.

3.6 Perceptions of CSEC as a Problem - Key Informants

At the level of key informants and community members, the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) is perceived as an emerging issue requiring priority attention in Belize. This perception was reiterated across sectors by Magistrates and Legal Officers, Police Officers, Medical Officers, Social Workers and Education Officers who have all come in contact, either directly or indirectly, with CSEC. However, regardless of an overwhelming consensus on CSEC as a problem, key informants reported that they were unable to estimate the extent of the problem in Belize because CSEC, other than what is presented in the media, remains a “hush-hush” (silent) crime due to:

1) CSEC being perceived as a culturally accepted practice rather than as a crime,
2) fear of reprisal of the person who makes the report,
3) the status or social position of the suspected perpetrator,
4) the perception that reporting CSEC will not result in an adequate institutional response regarding the conviction of perpetrators and or the rehabilitation of victims,
5) the active participation and knowledge of parents in promoting CSEC in Belize and the resulting lack of cooperation of family members in the reporting, investigating and monitoring of CSEC cases and
6) a lack of socio-economic alternatives available to children and families whose poverty situation can become exacerbated by the reporting of CSEC activities.

3.7 Perceptions of CSEC as a Problem - Community Survey

The survey of community perceptions of CSEC was conducted with 56 adults in the urban center of three districts in Belize: The Belize, Cayo and Orange Walk Districts. A total of 20 questionnaires were completed in the Belize District and a total of 36 in the Cayo and Orange Walk Districts combined.
General Demographics

The sample size of 56 respondents comprised 29 women (30) and 27 men (26).

**Figure No. 3.1**
Respondent by Sex
N=56

A majority of the respondents were of the 25-34 (18) and the 35-44 (19) age groups. The other age groups represented were within the 18-25 (8), 45-59 (7) and over 60 (4) age ranges.

**Figure No. 3.2**
Respondent by Age Group
N=56

A majority of the respondents were from the Cayo District (23). Another 20 respondents were from the Belize District and 13 from the Orange Walk District.

**Figure No. 3.3**
Respondent by Location
N=56
Knowledge of People under 18 years involved in commercial sexual exploitation

An overwhelming 19 out of 20 respondents from the Belize District, 8 out of 13 respondents from the Orange Walk District and 12 out of 23 respondents from the Cayo District knew of, or had seen people (male or female) under 18 years involved in commercial sex in their District. These community members not only see CSEC as a problem but also know of places where children engage in CSEC activities, primarily prostitution.

Except for people in the 35-44 age range (11 respondents), at least 70% of respondents of all ages knew of, or had seen, people (male or female) involved in commercial sex in their District. There were no major differences in knowledge of child commercial sexual activity across sex.
Knowledge of Places Where CSEC Activities Take Place

Equal numbers of men and women (18 each out of 27 men and 29 women) knew of places where males and females under 18 years were involved in paid sexual relations. Only 8 men and 5 women knew of places where children were engaged in nude dancing. Only 2 men and 2 women knew of places where children were posing nude for photographs and only one each knew where children were acting in pornographic videos. Another 5 men and 5 women knew of places where other kinds of CSEC activities were taking place.

Proportionately, respondents from the Belize District, more than respondents from the other Districts, tended to know of places where CSEC activities took place. They mostly knew about places where people under 18 years were involved in paid sexual relations than in any other CSEC activity - 17 out 20, 8 out of 13 and 11 out of 23 respondents from the Belize District, Orange Walk and Cayo Districts, respectively.
Another 6, 4 and 3 respondents respectively from the Belize, Orange Walk and Cayo Districts knew of places where people under 18 years were involved in nude dancing and no more than 2 respondents from all locations knew of places where people under 18 years posed nude for photographs or acted in pornographic videos. However, 10 respondents from the Cayo District knew of places where other kinds of CSEC activities were taking place.

Across age groups, a majority of respondents reported that they knew of places where people under 18 years old were involved in commercial sex activities. This was followed by knowledge of places where other types of CSEC activities took place for the 25-34, the 35-44 and the 60+ age groups. Knowledge of places where nude dancing was taking place was also reported. Fewer respondents across age groups indicating knowledge of places where posing nude for photographs and acting in pornographic videos took place.

**Figure No. 3.8**
Know of Type of CSEC Activities by Age of Respondent  N=56
Perception of where CSEC Victims Come From

Although the respondents perceived that CSEC victims come from multiple locations, a majority of respondents (18 out of 20) from the Belize District believed that CSEC victims came from their District. Almost equal numbers of Belize District respondents also perceived that CSEC victims came from other Districts (7) and from another country (8).

Almost half of the respondents from the Cayo District (11 out of 23) perceived CSEC victims to come from their own District while only 5 out of 13 respondents from the Orange Walk District perceived this to be the case. Only 2 respondents from the Orange Walk District reported that they believed CSEC victims to come from other Districts and most (7 out of 13) thought that CSEC victims also came from another country. Only 4 out of 23 respondents from the Cayo District perceived that CSEC victims come from other Districts and only 1 indicated that CSEC victims come from another country. A total of 7 respondents from the Cayo District stated that they did not know where CSEC victims came from.

**Figure No. 3.9**
Perception of where CSEC Victims come from by Location of Respondent
N=56

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>This District</th>
<th>Other Districts</th>
<th>Another Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belize District</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange Walk District</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cayo District</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure No. 3.10**
Perception of where CSEC Victims come from by Sex of Respondent
N=56

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>My District</th>
<th>Other Districts</th>
<th>Another Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A total of 15 out of 27 men perceived CSEC victims to come from another country followed by their own District (14 men). Women, on the other hand, mostly saw CSEC victims as coming first from their own District (20 out of 29 women) followed by coming from another country (11 women).

A majority of respondents in each age group perceived that CSEC victims came from their own district, followed by coming from another country. This indicates that respondents across age groups perceived CSEC victims to be locals from within their own district. Older respondents perceived that CSEC victims came equally from their district, other districts and from another country.

**Perceived Reasons for CSEC Activities in Belize**

The primary reason cited for CSEC in Belize was poverty (40 out of 56 respondents). Next was a loss of morals in adults (34 respondents) a lack of authorities’ efficiency (34 respondents), bad family role models (31 respondents) and home abandonment due to domestic violence (29 respondents).

A total of 24 out of 56 respondents each cited reasons for CSEC in Belize as loss of morals in children, a demand created by adults and the child liking or being attracted to it. Equal numbers or slightly more respondents reported that they did not think that CSEC was caused by these latter three reasons. A total of 16 respondents stated that CSEC was caused by other reasons.

**Figure No. 3.11**
Perception of the reasons for CSEC in Belize  N=56

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>DK/NR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad role models in the family</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of morals in children</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of morals in adults</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children like it</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Abandonment due to Domestic Violence</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand created by Adults</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Authorities’ Efficiency</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Reasons</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although the least stated reason for CSEC was loss of morals in children or because children liked or were attracted to it, 24 out of 56 still reflect a high number of respondents who indicate negative attitudes toward CSEC victims. This shows that although respondents believe that CSEC has multiple causes, such as poverty, just below half of them also believe that children are partly to blame for being CSEC victims. This attitude has serious implications for how CSEC cases are handled within the child protection and judicial systems.

All age groups cited poverty as the major reason for CSEC in Belize. In all age groups except the 35-44 group, half of the respondents believed that a reason for CSEC was because children liked or were attracted to it. Also the older the respondent, the more likely he or she cited that “a demand created by adults” was a contributor to CSEC activities.

Those who most perceived CSEC to be caused by a “demand created by adults” fell within the 45-59 age range. This same age was least likely to cite a “lack of authorities’ efficiency” as being a reason for CSEC activities. All other age groups saw this category as a major reason for CSEC.

**Figure No. 3.12**

Perception of the reasons for CSEC Activities by Sex of Respondent  N=56

As the graph above reveals, a majority of both men (22 out of 27) and women (18 out of 29) perceived poverty to be a reason for CSEC in Belize. There was little difference in the numbers of men and women who cited the following categories: Loss of morals in adults (16 men and 18 women); home abandonment due to domestic violence (13 men and 15 women); demand created by adults (11 men and 13 women).
Almost equal numbers of men and women (13 men and 11 women) also believed that CSEC was caused by a loss of morals in children. However, women (15 out of 29) more than men (9 out of 27) perceived CSEC to be caused because “children like or are attracted to it”. Also, more women (19) than men (12) believed CSEC to be caused by bad role models in the family. These findings may have serious implications for a gender based response which addresses the negative perception of CSEC victims in Belize. A total of 11 men cited other reasons for CSEC in Belize.

**Figure No. 3.13**
Perception of the reasons for CSEC in Belize by Location of Respondent  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Belize District</th>
<th>Orange Walk District</th>
<th>Cayo District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad role models in the family</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of morals in children</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of morals in adults</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children like it</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Abandonment due to Domestic Violence</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand created by Adults</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Authorities’ Efficiency</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Reasons</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Basic Reaction to CSEC Activities

A majority of both men (13 or almost half of the men) and women (18 out of 29 women) indicated that they would call the police if they learn about or see an adult paying a child to have sex with him or her. Only 2 men and 4 women stated that they would do nothing. There was a major difference with regard to the reaction by location of respondent. Only 1 Belize District respondent indicated that he would talk to the adult as opposed to calling the police (14 out of 20 respondents). Three respondents in the Cayo District said they would talk to the adult and 8 respondents from the Orange Walk District indicated a willingness to so. A total of 14 respondents out of 23 from the Cayo District stated that they would call the police while only 4 out of 13 respondents from the Orange Walk District indicated that they would do so.

Figure No. 3.14
Perception of Basic Reaction if learn about or see a CSEC case
N=56

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call the police</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do nothing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to adult</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure No. 3.15
Perception of Basic Reaction to CSEC by Location of Respondent
N=56

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Belize District</th>
<th>Orange Walk District</th>
<th>Cayo District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call the Police</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Nothing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to adult</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All age groups reported that their primary reaction to witnessing CSEC activities would be to report it to the police. The respondents which most indicated they would talk to an adult were from the 35-44 age group, and those who most stated they would do nothing were from the 25-34 age group. As demonstrated below, although most people knew of places where children were engaged in commercial sex and stated what they would do if they witnessed a CSEC case, very few had ever done something to denounce such behavior.

**Figure No. 3.16**
Perception of Basic Reaction if know about a CSEC case by Type of Action of Respondent

N=56

- Call the Police
- Do Nothing
- Talk to adult
- Other

**Figure No. 3.17**
Ever Denounced CSEC Behavior by Sex of Respondent

N= 56

11 Yes
45 No

Of all the respondents surveyed, only 11 or 20% had ever denounced CSEC behavior. The age group which most reported having denounced CSEC behavior was in the 35-44 age group. Only 6 male respondents and 5 female respondents had denounced CSEC behavior. Only 4 out of 20 respondents from the Belize District, 2 out of 13 respondents from the Orange Walk District and 5 out of 23 respondents from the Cayo District had ever denounced CSEC behavior.
Perceptions of Adults who Engage in CSEC Behaviors

When asked what they think about adults who engage in CSEC activities, 24 or 43% of respondents advocated for the victimizers to be punished using words like “penalized... lock up for good.... Given life time.... hang”. Another 18 or 32% thought that the victimizers were ill “have a mental problem... or they are sick”. Some (6 or 11%) used statements that justified or tried to explain CSEC behavior. They stated for example, that “younger girls are cheaper, most men like young girl over older women” or “want to experience sex with young girl, a lot of older women out there” or “maybe they were victims in the past”. Another 2 respondents blamed the victim and 2 indicated that children needed help from abuse.
3.8 The Manifestations of CSEC in Belize

Overall, the cases of CSEC reported were manifest in either of the following ways:\n
- Children under 12 years being sexually molested in exchange for sweets and food and other personal items. Families are usually not aware of this crime taking place.
- Children under 12 years selling food and other items or shining shoes or begging for money and food on the streets engage in CSEC when they don’t acquire enough money to contribute to the family income. In this case, families are either aware or not aware of this crime taking place.
- Adolescents having relationships (encouraged and approved by parents) with older persons who provide for them economically. The family receives benefits from this relationship which is reported to be prevalent among rural Mestizo and Latino communities in Belize.
- Adolescents having sex with one or more recognized partners in exchange for food, school fees, “bling bling”, or social status. The family benefits from this sexual activity.
- Adolescent students being solicited for CSEC activities during and after regular school hours. They leave school on the pretext of being ill to engage in this activity and have intermediaries who set up the contact with perpetrators. Families are either aware or not aware of this crime taking place.
- Adolescents exhibiting “uncontrollable behavior” partly constituted by engaging in sexual activity that cannot be controlled by the parent or guardian. Parents or guardians in these cases do not know what to do about the behavior.
- Adolescents left on their own to survive have no parents or guardians at home with them (either permanently or intermittently) to provide for their economic and social needs so they engage in CSEC activities to pay for food, utilities, and school fees.
- Adolescents referred to as “street-walkers” who target tourists as clients or who frequent bars and other locations where mostly older men pick them up for CSEC “services”.
- Immigrant adolescents working in bars as “waitresses” or “dancers”. This group lives in fear of police raids and the possibility of deportation. There are elements of trafficking in persons that are related to these cases.
- Adolescents engaging in pornography as an economic activity. Not much was reported to be known about this type of CSEC activity in Belize.

Although CSEC is believed to be prevalent in Belize, the attitude reported in a previous study on the Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children Sex Providers, indicates that “Many people feel that these persons make a free choice to participate

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45 These categories were developed based on reports from Key Informants regarding their experiences with CSEC in Belize. There was a general consensus among these Key Informants that CSEC in Belize is manifested in many different ways, some of which create challenges for the institutional response.

46 “Bling Bling” refers to personal items such as jewelry, shoes, clothes which are considered to be trendy and fashionable.

in such activity as being sex providers”. This attitude was reiterated among approximately 24 out of 56 community members interviewed who stated that the main reasons for engaging in CSEC was a loss of morals in children and because child like or are attracted to it.\textsuperscript{48}

### 3.9 CSEC Risk Factors

Key informants generally agreed that in Belize, children present multiple vulnerabilities which increase their risk for becoming victims of CSEC. One of the most critical predisposing risk factors reported by Key Informant and community members was the high level of poverty in Belize with 39% or 2 out of every 5 children living in poverty.\textsuperscript{49} The issues of poverty as well as other risk factors are discussed below.

#### 3.9.1 Families and Children Living in Poverty

The Poverty Assessment Report states that children living in poverty do not have their basic food and non-food needs met and that this has serious implications for child labour and its worst forms, among other problems.\textsuperscript{50} As documented in this Poverty Assessment Report, poverty affects children’s access to basic food, shelter and education and health services. For example, 83.8% of children receive no form of financial assistance to attend school. And of the 16% who report getting financial assistance, 70% did so from family or friends and 30% from some “other” source.

Key Informants further reported that for people living in poverty, CSEC is not seen as a crime but rather a solution - a way to get their basic needs met\textsuperscript{51}. As stated by School Liaison Officers, the

> “affordability of education is another real issue. Free education needs to be free for real to make it less likely for girls to turn to “sugar daddies for school fees”\textsuperscript{52}.

Key Informants reported that in their experience families living in extreme poverty experience hunger and will engage in CSEC activities to survive. CSEC may be their only source of income for the family. This results in families either promoting or supporting CSEC activities with their children and remaining silent on the issue because they have no other alternative for income generation. These informants believe that this situation is manifested in 13-14 year olds “hustling” for the family.

Poverty also affects children who need to travel to go to school. These children, based on observations along school routes on the Northern and Western Highways in Belize, have to hitch hike to and from school, thereby creating vulnerabilities for CSEC activities.

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\textsuperscript{48} Community Perception Survey conducted as a part of Component 1 of the CSEC Study in Belize.

\textsuperscript{49} NHDAC, 2002 Poverty Assessment Report, Government of Belize, 2004

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51} Interviews with Nurses, Police Officers, Magistrates, Education Officers, Principals and Non-Government Organizations.

\textsuperscript{52} Interviews with School Liaison Officer, March, 2006
Key informants also reported that a general lack of employment within rural communities and among residents of south-side Belize City, leads to a demand for income from informal sources. The lack of employment situation was seen to create risk factors for children in two ways: a.) by leaving children vulnerable to being used by their parents for CSEC purposes and b.) by forcing parents to “job out” of their area of residence, therefore leaving their children with older siblings, members of the extended family or with neighbors. The latter situation creates a lack of parental attention and financial support and makes children vulnerable to CSEC activities to pay for food and school expenses while parents and guardians are working elsewhere.

Families living in poverty also face the challenge of growing up in homes in which commercial sexual activity is the norm. The issue of women engaging in a sexual-economic cycle\(^3\) to access financial support for their children is well documented by McClaurin. Key Informants perceive that the modeling of this behavior within families in Belize pre-disposes children to becoming victims of CSEC.

### 3.9.2 Social Pressure to Fit In

Some Key Informants believed that there are CSEC cases among people who may not be poor but who feel pressured to maintain a lifestyle beyond what they can afford. In such cases, adults force their children to become victims of CSEC and in other cases, the children, without the knowledge of their parents, become CSEC victims. Many cases reported by Key Informants included adolescent CSEC victims who engaged in this activity to acquire material things that their families are unable (or choose not) to provide.

### 3.9.3 Lack of Healthy Family Support Systems

The lack of healthy family support systems with parents being absent (either due to “jobbing out” or due to abandonment) or negligent (with parents not knowing or not wanting to deal with child-rearing issues) leaves children with a lack of positive role models and no healthy family values to replicate. This was seen by Key Informants as a primary condition for predisposing children to become victims of CSEC. In almost all case files of sexual offences reviewed, the victim lacked a healthy family support system.\(^4\) The girl victims (ages 11 to 16) in these case files were raised either:

- by their mothers but stayed overnight frequently with other family members or friends or frequented bars
- by their grandmother, by the father alone, or by an adopted mother or mother figure

The one case of a boy victim (15) indicated that he lived with both his mother and father but was allowed to “hang out” with friends on the street and go out of the home “after hours” with the alleged perpetrator.

Additionally, according to a Study on the Impact of Crime and Violence on Children and

\(^3\) See McClaurin, Irma - *Women of Belize - Gender and Change in Central America*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 2000

\(^4\) Review of 12 case files of Supreme Court cases of sexual offences against children.
Adolescents\textsuperscript{55} boys and girls who were severely disciplined by either being cut with a knife (for boys) or being knocked out (for girls) were more likely to have engaged in sex to receive a gift in exchange. The Study also reported that both boys and girls who reported feeling that their fathers did not love them were more likely to have posed nude for pictures than children who believed that their fathers loved them. This study therefore attempts to show that the security deficits resulting from extreme forms of emotional, sexual and physical abuse creates vulnerabilities for CSEC activities.

### 3.9.4 Cultural Values

The issue of cultural values was raised in almost all interviews with Key Informants. Key Informants, particularly those engaged in the criminal and civil investigation of sexual crimes against children, report that often parents feel that their children are their property. This has translated into parents not understanding that they cannot engage in sexual activities with, or promote CSEC activities among, their children.

It was reported by these key informants that this perception is most prevalent among rural communities and among the Mennonite, Maya and Mestizo populations in Belize. The Mennonites, in particular, have an agreed contract with the Government of Belize, to operate as an autonomous community. The Maya do not have this type of agreement; nevertheless, they function as semi-autonomous cultural groups.

Among Mestizo communities incest and expecting children, mostly girls, to find older men to take care of them was believed to be the norm. As a result, Key Informants\textsuperscript{56} recount the high rate of criminal sexual offence cases being dropped by parents and other family members who prefer to “settle out of court”\textsuperscript{57}. The Mestizo communities, according to the Police Department and Magistrates, “tend to marry off the children when they are caught having relationships with older men”\textsuperscript{58}. This is seen as an acceptable solution to the family’s situation of poverty. CSEC becomes a crime or is reported only when the men stop providing financial assistance to families.

This perception is substantiated by the high number of criminal cases which are dropped by the Department of Public Prosecution due to “the complainant being unwilling to testify or proceed with the matter”\textsuperscript{59}.

One such case was reported in the media as follows:

> “Today in the Supreme Court in front of Justice Adolph Lucas, Benque resident Otonel Chaman, 21 walked out of the court a free man after the prosecutor, Audrey Matura, entered a “nolle prosequi” submission, saying that the office of Director of Public Prosecutions had no case against him in a carnal knowledge case. Matura told the court that the virtual complainant and her mother had indicated to her that they do no want to proceed with the matter.... The child alleged that Chaman, at the time,


\textsuperscript{56} Interview with staff from the DPP Office, the Magistrates Courts and the Ministry of Human Development.

\textsuperscript{57} Interview with the Police Department and Magistrates in Belize City, Cayo and Orange Walk.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} Statistics (with notes) on Supreme Court Sexual Offences from the Department of Public Prosecution, March, 2006.
was her boyfriend, but because of the law concerning the protection of a child under 16, he had committed a crime by law and he was therefore charged with carnal knowledge.  

Key Informants also spoke of a lack of education among adults that CSEC is unacceptable behavior that violates the rights of children. This lack of education on sexual and reproductive health among parents and adolescents was linked to the challenges of having a church-state education system in which sexual and reproductive health information is not made accessible to students.

3.9.5 The Issue of Morality and the Law

A lack of morals in adults and children were also reported. This was consistent with the findings of the community survey in which respondents were of the opinion that the reason for CSEC was a lack of morals in adults (34 out of 56 respondent) and a lack of morals in children (24 out of 56 respondent), or, that children like it (24 out of 56 respondents). Key Informants believed that these attitudes about morality among the general population prejudices the outcome of sexual offence cases within the judicial system and contributes to the low rate of convictions. The issue of morality is raised in relevant legislation such as the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act and the Criminal Code.

Section 18 (1) of the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act states that, “being a male person, in any public place persistently solicits or importunes for immoral purposes or ...” and Section 49 of the Criminal Code states that, “any person who procures or attempts to procure any female under the age of eighteen years of age, not being a common prostitute or of know immoral character, to have unlawful carnal knowledge either within or without Belize any other person or persons; or ...”

According to Cappua’s discussion paper of CSEC Legislation in Belize, “too often prejudices against the child victim have resulted in verdicts of not guilty in trials of carnal knowledge.”

3.9.6 The Age of Technology

Key Informants also reported that the age of technology also creates risk factors for CSEC in Belize. They report easy access of pedophiles to children through the internet. Some Key Informants referred the researchers to websites believed to promote pornographic pictures of Belizeans but were not aware of the ages of the young men and women posted on the site.

The sensationalization of sex crimes in the media as well as television stations that promote “bling bling” such as VH1, MTV and BET were seen to influence the spread of CSEC in Belize.

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62 Laws of Belize, Criminal Code, 1981
63 Di Cappua, Alessandro, Belize & CSEC: a snapshot, March, 2006
64 Key Informant Interviews, Orange Walk District.
3.9.7 Gender Issues

Gendered social norms were also perceived to contribute to the problem of CSEC in Belize. Key Informants reported cases in which young girls, due to violence producing conditions or economic need, are not able to negotiate safe sex with partners, especially with older men. Furthermore, Key Informant reported that gendered definitions of the role of girls and women as sex objects contribute to the widespread acceptance of CSEC in the society. Information gathered from focus groups with adult men corroborates this view of girls and women in Belize 65.

3.9.8 Migration

Key informants perceived that immigration and emigration patterns have created major risk factors for CSEC in Belize. According to Heusner66, many sex providers interviewed were “trafficked” into the country and working without work permits. The Study also reported that a majority of the women and girls who worked in established locations were from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. However, those who did not work in established locations were mostly Belizean nationals.

There was also concern expressed67 regarding the lack of a database and tracking system for pedophiles. This situation creates vulnerabilities for CSEC activities by: a.) not being able to track pedophiles that are either Belizians or foreigners and b.) not being able to track Belizean prison deportees from the United States who are either pedophiles or who see opportunities for economic sustainability by engaging in “pimping” activities.

Another well recognized issue68 raised by Key Informants in Belize City was the phenomenon of “barrel children” in Belize. This refers to children who are being raised by grandparents or guardians because their parents have migrated to another country. These children live “out of the barrel” or from remittances which absentee parents send home when possible. The “barrel children” were perceived as being vulnerable due to the lack of parental attachment and irregular parental financial support which according to Rosberg69, creates “security deficits” in the lives of Belizean children.

3.9.9 Tourism Development

Tourism, primarily cruise tourism, is the fastest growing service sector industry in Belize. It is said to account for 4 out of every 10 jobs across the country and an estimated 5,000 jobs in the hotel and tour guiding sectors, bringing in approximately US$125 million in foreign exchange per annum.70

Key informants raised concern that this growing industry can fuel the demand for

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65 The focus groups with adult men completed as a part of Component 3 of this Study.
67 Interviews with personnel from the Ministry of Human Development.
68 Almost all Key Informants referred to this phenomenon, particular Key Informant in Belize City.
The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize

3.9.10 Lack of Adequate Recreational Centers

Key informants\(^{72}\) reported an increased number of adolescents on the streets at night. It was their perception that these young men and women find themselves seeking night time recreational activities on the street for two reasons: a.) they lack adequate parent support and b.) they have limited opportunities for engaging in positive recreational activities.

3.10 The Perceived Implications of CSEC on the Belizean Society

Key informants demonstrated an acute awareness of the implications of CSEC activities on the Belizean society. A majority of key informants believed, for example, that although families and children saw their involvement in CSEC as a solution to poverty, CSEC activities can have a significant impact on perpetuating poverty among the victim population and their families.

The major implications of CSEC were reported as:

- The increased risk of teenage pregnancy among female victims who may not be aware of, or have access to, sexual and reproductive health information and contraceptive options. Nurses from the Maternal and Child Health Clinics see numerous teenage pregnancy cases on a regular basis. In many cases, the adolescent is pregnant for an older man who provides for her economically. The nurses indicate that not all teenage pregnancy cases are reflected in official reports due to gaps in the data collection systems within the Ministry of Health.

- The increased risk of STI and HIV transmission to victims who are young, socially and economically vulnerable and not able to negotiate safe sex with perpetrators. The Maternal and Child Health nurses, public health nurses and the STI clinic reported cases of children and adolescents testing positive for an STI or HIV transmitted to them through relationships with adult partners. In one case a 4 year old tested positive for genital warts transmitted by a man who provided economic support to her mother.

- Key informants across sectors also reported that they believe CSEC will cause a further breakdown in the family structure through an increase in single-headed households resulting from teenage pregnancy. Key informants felt that because adolescents who engage in CSEC activities are not in long-term committed relationships with sexual partners, they risk becoming single parents. Informants within the Police, Magistracy and Human Services Departments in the Orange Walk District report that in rural communities, CSEC cases are officially reported only when the older man does not want to, or discontinues, paying child support to CSEC victims and their families.

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\(^{71}\) This was the case only for Key Informants from the Belize District.

\(^{72}\) This was especially noted in interviews with Police Officers, Magistrates and Human Development Staff.
The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize

- The increased numbers of babies being given up by adolescent mothers for adoption since they and their families are not able to provide for the new baby. Social workers in the Department of Human Services indicate increased reports of this phenomenon in Belize.

- The increased risk of developing learning and other disabilities for children born to young mothers who live in poverty and are not able to practice proper nutrition while pregnant.

- Increased drug use and abuse among victims who are not able to engage in CSEC behaviors unless they are intoxicated or under the influence of drugs or the use and abuse of drugs as a way of coping with the memories or experience of CSEC. A social worker in the Department of Human Services and one from a non-government organization observed that generally, commercial sex workers tend to drink alcohol or use drugs before engaging in sexual behavior.

- Increased levels of mental health issues caused by the stress related to being a CSEC victim. Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners (PNP) report that they are seeing an increase in children being referred to them due to trauma resulting from child abuse, including sexual abuse. Both PNPs and social workers also comment on the need to examine the relationship between the increased numbers of suicides and attempted suicides on the one hand, and possible CSEC experiences, on the other.

- Increased levels of rebellion and resistance among adolescents reported by parents and guardians as “uncontrollable behavior”. The Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Community Rehabilitation Department (CRD) report concern of the increased numbers of referrals reported for “uncontrollable behavior” among adolescents. According to these social workers, some parents indicate that they are not able to control the sexual behavior of their children whom they perceive to be sexually promiscuous.

- The increased numbers of primary and secondary school dropouts. A staff member of the Department of Public Prosecutions reported that in all her sexual abuse cases, the child victim dropped out of school.

- One key informant in the non-government sector who works directly with CSEC victims reported that adolescent CSEC victims are re-victimized and re-traumatized when they access services. She therefore saw a pattern towards increased levels of stigma and discrimination against victims of CSEC, particularly towards immigrant victims.
CHAPTER 4 - Survey of CSEC Victims in Belize
4.0 Introduction

The survey of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC) was conducted with a total of 30 children under 18 years. The survey was implemented in the Belize, Orange Walk and Cayo Districts.

4.1 General Demographics

A total of 12 surveys were conducted in the Belize District 8 in the Orange Walk and 5 each in the Corozal and Cayo Districts. This is not representative of the population size of each of the Districts but allows for an insight into the CSEC experiences of children who live in those districts.

The survey of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation was able to capture the experiences of 21 female and 9 male respondents. The age of respondents ranged from 4 years old (1 case) to 18 years. The majority of respondents fell within the 16-17 age range with 9 and 13 cases respectively.
4.2 Foreign Born Respondents

A total of 19 respondents of the sample of 30 children reported being born in Belize. Another 11 respondents indicated being born in another Central American country, mainly Guatemala (5 respondents), followed by Honduras (4 respondents) and El Salvador (2 respondents).

Of these 11 foreign-born respondents, only 3 lived in the Belize District and the majority (8 out of 11) lived in 1 of the other 3 sites covered in this study. Three (3) of the 8 respondents from Orange Walk District were foreign-born while 3 out of 5 and 2 out of 5 from the Cayo and Corozal Districts, respectively, were foreign-born.

Six (6) of the 11 foreign born respondents arrived in Belize before turning 14 years and 5 respondents arrived in Belize between ages 15 and 16.

A majority of the 11 foreign born respondents were brought to Belize by a relative (8 out of 11 cases). Two (2) other respondents were brought by a partner and 1 by another person. All respondents from Honduras (4 cases) and El Salvador (2 cases) were brought to Belize by a relative.
Reasons for coming to live in Belize were primarily poverty related. In some cases, children were brought to live with parents who were already living here. Responses included statements such as: “things are hard with my family”, “better standard of living”, and “better job opportunities” or “to live with mother” and “my common-law husband is Belizean”.

4.3 Family Background

4.3.1 Respondents with Children

One-third or 10 out of 30 respondents (7 females and 3 males) reported that they had children. A total of 5 respondents did not respond to this question. One respondent indicated that she had had an abortion.

Those that indicated that they had children fell within the 15 to 17 age range. Most of the respondents who had children (8 out of 10 respondents) had only one child. Two 17 year olds reported having 2 and 3 children each. One of the 17 year old respondents had a child who was 5 years old. This puts giving birth at 12 for the 17 year old. The others gave birth at ages 14 and 15.
Of the 10 respondents with children, 6 respondents were born in Belize and 2 each were born in Guatemala and Honduras.

**Figure No. 4.7**
Respondents with Children by Children Living with Them
N=10

Of the 10 respondents with children, half had their children living with them (5 cases). However 4 respondents had none of their children living with them (1 female and 3 males) and only 1 respondent had some of her children living with her. Whether or not the respondent lived with a family member did not influence the number of children who lived with her. She was equally as likely to have her children with her if she lived with her mother, grandmother, a male friend or alone.

4.3.2 Relationship with Partner

Of the 30 respondents, 13 indicated that they had a present or past relationship in which they lived together with someone. Of this 13, a total of 8 first lived with a partner at age 15. Two (2) additional respondents indicated first living with a partner at age 16 and 1 respondent each reported lived with partners at ages 12 and 14 respectively. One respondent did not answer the question. Only one respondent from the Belize District had indicated ever living with a partner.

**Figure No. 4.8**
Ever Lived with a Partner by Age of Respondent
N=13
All respondents who had previously lived with partners (11 females and 2 males) indicated that their partners were male. The age ranges of their first partners varied from ages 17 to 50, with a majority of partners (9 cases) falling in the 20-26 age range. Two partners were between ages 17-19, 1 was 34 years old and 1 was over 50 at the time the respondent lived with him.

Although 13 respondents had reported having lived with a partner, only 6 out of 30 respondents reported currently living with a partner. One 14 year old respondent was currently living with a partner and 2 and 3 respondents at ages 16 and 17 respectively were also currently living with a partner. The ages of current partners were between 19 and 35 years. Only 1 of these 6 respondents lived in the Belize District.

### 4.3.3 Current Place of Residence

A little less than half (or 14 out of 30) of all respondents reported living in a private home or apartment. Of this 14, 10 were Belizean-born respondents. Another 11 lived in rented rooms with 7 of these respondents being foreign-born. One respondent lived in a hotel and 4 lived in other kinds of dwellings.

**Figure No. 4.9**

Respondents’ Current Place of Residence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a Private Home/Apartment</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented Room</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two-thirds of all male respondents (or 6 out of 9 males) lived in private homes or apartments while approximately half of all female respondents (or 10 out of 21 females) and 1 male respondent lived in rented rooms. Of the 11 respondents who lived in rented rooms, 6 were 16 years old, 3 were 17 years old, and 1 each were 14 and 15 years old, respectively.
4.3.4 Who Living With Currently

One-third of all respondents (or 10 out of 30) indicated that they live with their mother. Another 5 respondents lived alone and 4 lived with male partners. Five (5) respondents lived in other arrangements. Only 1 respondent lived with his father and only one lived with a grandparent.
Respondents who did not live with their families, reported their reasons for leaving as being either:

- their parents are in another country or have died
- they don’t want to live with their parents
- they walked out of the house,
- they moved in with someone else
- the house was overcrowded
- they needed to work

There was one respondent who reported that she left home because her mother was pressuring her to continue to be a CSEC victim. Another respondent reported that he was kicked out of his home when his parents discovered he was homosexual.

4.3.5 Relationship with Parents

Although only 1 respondent out of 30 reported currently living with his father alone, another 3 respondents lived with both their fathers and mothers. Seven (7) respondents stated that they have lived with their fathers previously but of these, only 4 were still in touch with him. Five (5) respondents knew their fathers but had never lived with him and 6 respondents did not know their fathers. Another 2 knew their fathers but their fathers were dead. Six (6) respondents did not specify the type of living relationship with respect to their fathers.

Figure No. 4.12
Respondents’ Relationship with Father
N=30

On the other hand, 23 out of 30 respondents indicated that they knew their mothers and have either lived with her for a while (13 out of 30 respondents) or were still living with her (10 out of 30 respondents). Another 2 respondents reported their mothers to be dead and 1 knew her mother but had never lived with her. Four (4) respondents did not answer the question. Less than half of Belizean-born (only 8 out of 19) and 2 (out of 11) foreign-born respondents currently lived with their mothers.
4.3.6 Economic Status

A total of 5 respondents lived alone and supported themselves economically. The other 25 respondents lived with other people.

Although only 4 out of 30 respondents currently lived with their fathers (one lived with his father only and 3 others lived with their fathers and mothers), a total of 6 respondents reported that the main income earner for their household was their father. This implies that although some respondents did not live with their fathers, their fathers still economically supported their households.

On the other hand, although 10 out of 30 respondents currently lived with their mothers, only 6 reported that their mothers were the major income earner for their household. In 1 case each, the major income earner was a stepfather and a stepmother.

Another 4 respondents each reported that the major income earner for their households were their common-law husbands or boyfriends and friends, respectively. An additional 4 respondents indicated that their friends were major income earners. One stated that she was the only income earner in the household. The other five respondents lived alone.
A majority of the income earners work in low paying jobs or in the informal economy. Among the 12 family-related male income earners there were 6 farmers, 2 workers in established companies, 1 gardener, 1 mason, a BDF soldier and a sanitation worker. Among the 8 family-related women income earners there were 2 vendors, 1 domestic worker, 1 sanitation worker, 1 working in an established company, 1 bar worker and 2 who were economically dependent on men - one was a “sweetheart for a rich man and his accountant”. Among the 4 friends who were main income earners, 3 were sex workers and one owned his or her own business.

Most respondents perceived the situation of their families to be either poorer or similar to other households around them. Only 5 respondents perceived their economic status to be better off. Of the 5 respondents who perceived themselves to be better off, all were Belizean-born, 2 were 16 years old and 3 were 17 years old. An additional 6 of the total number of 17 year olds (13 respondents) saw their economic status as similar to households around them.
Except for the Belize District, slightly more than half of respondents from the other 3 sites reported that they were poorer than others around them. The Belize District respondents tended to state their economic status to be either similar to, or better than, those around them.

4.3.7 Ever Ran Away From Home

Of the 30 survey respondents, 14 (10 females and 4 males) or a little less than half, reported that they had run away from home. Respondents from all 4 sites covered in the study had run away from home. This included 6 of all the 16 year old respondents (9 respondents) and 7 of all 17 year olds (13 respondents). The additional respondent who reported having run away from home was only 4 years old. Both Belizean-born and foreign-born respondents had run away from home.

![Figure No. 4.17 Ever Ran Away from Home](image)

Of the 14 respondents who had run away from home, 4 currently lived with their mothers, 4 lived alone, 3 lived with male partners and the other 3 lived with friends.

![Figure No. 4.18 Time Run Away from Home](image)

Half of the respondents who had run away from home (7 out of 14) had done so between 2 and 5 times. This included the 4 year old respondent.

One respondent had run away for more than 5 times and the other 6 respondents had done so only once. The respondent who ran away more than 5 times currently lived with her mother.
Of the 14 respondents who had run away from home, 4 had done so to live with boyfriends and 2 were avoiding sexual abuse from their mother’s boyfriends. Another 4 respondents ran away to avoid “family problems” or “disagreement”. Among the last 4 respondents who had run away, one ran away to hang out with friends, the other stated that she ran away due to “bribery”, 1 ran away to be with her biological mother and the last one ran away for economic reasons.

Figure No. 4.19
Who Went To Take You Home by Respondents Who Had Run Away
N=14

Of the 14 respondents who had run away from home, 5 went back on their own although 1 did not stay. Of the other 9, family members went for 5 of them, the police took one back home, a boyfriend took another, but no one went for two of the respondents.

4.4 Educational Levels

Of the 30 survey respondents, 4 (all female) indicated that they did not know to read or write. This included the 4 year old respondent. Another 15 out of 30 or half of all respondents said they knew how to read. Of these only 4 were foreign-born respondents. Ten (10) other respondents indicated knowing how to read “a little”. Similarly, 19 respondents said they knew how to write and only 7 indicated knowing how to write “a little”. Of the 9 males in the survey, 8 indicated knowing how to read and write and 1 stated that he knew how to read and write “a little”.

Figure No. 4.20
Know to Read and Write by Sex of Respondent N=30
Although at least half the respondents stated that they knew how to read and write, none had completed high school. Half of all respondents (15 out of 30) did not complete a primary school education. Another 7 respondents had completed primary school as the highest level of education achieved and 4 had an incomplete high school education. Two (2) respondents had no education and 2 did not answer the question.

Only 1 foreign-born respondent (out of 11) had completed primary school, 1 had no education and the others had an incomplete primary school education.

Figure No. 4.21
Highest Level of Education Complete by Age of Respondent  N=30

Of the 22 respondents in the 16-17 age range 10 had not completed their primary education. Another 6 respondents had completed their primary education. Four (4) respondents within this same age range had not completed their secondary education and 1 had no education.

In the 6 respondents in the 14-15 age range, only 1 had completed a primary school education. The other 5 had not completed primary education. The 4 year old in the survey had not yet entered the primary education system and the 12 year old did not indicate her level of education.

Almost half of the male respondents (or 4 out of 9) had completed their primary education and 2 had an incomplete primary education. An additional 2 had an incomplete secondary education. One (1) respondent did not indicate his education level. On the other hand, only 3 of the female respondents had finished primary school. Two-thirds (13 of 21) of them had not completed primary school while 2 had started but did not complete secondary school. Two female respondents had no education.
Of the 30 survey respondents, only 8 were still studying. Of these 8 respondents, 7 lived in the Belize District and 1 lived in the Corozal District. One (1) out of this 8 was under 14 years, one was in the 14-15 age range and the other 6 were either 16 or 17 years old. This means that 5 respondents in the 14-15 age range and 16 respondents in the 16-17 age range were currently not studying.

Of the 8 respondents who were currently studying only 2 were enrolled in the formal education system – 1 was in 2nd Form (2nd year of secondary school) and the other was in Standard VI (last year of primary school). The others were enrolled in technical and vocational programmes outside the traditional formal education system.

For those who quit school (16 out of 30 respondents), the reasons for quitting, in order of frequency, were:

- poverty
- failing or not doing well in school
- running away from home or school
- sexual abuse and
- mother refusing to send the child to school

Of all the respondents who had an incomplete primary school education, only 1 reported that a teacher from their primary school tried to find out why he had quit.

4.5 Health

A little less than half (9 out of 21) the female respondents indicated having experienced a pregnancy. Of the 9 pregnancies, 4 each were reported by 16 and 17 year olds. The other pregnancy was reported by a 15 year old. Respondents in all four sites covered in the study had experienced a pregnancy.

Only 8 of these 9 respondents accessed healthcare services in relation to their pregnancies. One respondent admitted that she did not access prenatal services because she was only 11 years old and was ashamed to be pregnant. A male
respondent said he accessed prenatal services in relation to his unborn child.

Six (6) of the 9 females who had experienced a pregnancy reported accessing birth control services through the health system. Another two females who had not experienced a pregnancy also accessed healthcare services for this reason.

Almost half (14) of the 30 respondents had heard of AIDS or had taken an HIV test. Out of this 14, half (7) of the respondents lived in the Belize District, 5 lived in the Orange Walk District and 1 each were living in the Corozal and Cayo Districts. All 14 had accessed health care services in relation to either getting information on AIDS or taking an HIV test.

**Figure No. 4.23**
Health Care Experiences by Sex of Respondent  N=30

A total of 7 of all respondents (all female) reported having had a venereal disease with 1 of these respondents being a 4 year old child. However 8 respondents reported having accessed health care services in relation to treatment for an STI.

Respondents in each of the 4 sites covered in the study reported having experienced physical and psychological aggression. Of the 14 respondents who experienced physical aggression, 10 were female and 4 were male. Of the 12 respondents who experienced psychological aggression 9 were female and 5 were male. All were between the ages of 15 and 17. Not all these respondents accessed health services in relation to either physical or psychological aggression. Only 5 (4 females and 1 male) and 2 (both female) respondents accessed health care services for physical and psychological aggression, respectively.
A total of 18 respondents out of 30 stated that they had consumed alcohol. Of these 11 were female and 7 were male. An additional 5 respondents (4 females and 1 male) reported having experienced drug addiction. Of these 5 respondents, 3 were 16 years old and 2 were 17 years old. At least 1 respondent in each district covered in the study reported having experienced drug addiction. Of these 3 were Belizean-born and 2 were foreign-born respondents. Only 2 (both female) of the 5 respondents who experienced drug addiction accessed healthcare services in relation to their addiction and 6 out of 18 respondents who engaged in alcohol consumption accessed health care services in relation to alcohol related issues.
Approximately one-third of the 21 respondents who accessed healthcare services thought that the service was adequate. However, 2 respondents complained of a lack of follow-up from the social service departments. One other respondent stated that she was “roughed up” when she accessed services related to having had an abortion.

### 4.6 Sexual Experiences

#### 4.6.1 Violent Sexual Experiences Prior to Age 12

A total of 11 respondents out of 30 divulged that they had had a sexual experience prior to turning 12 years old. Nine of the respondents were female and 2 were male. Almost half or 5 out of 11 cases were to foreign-born respondents. All cases were sexually abused by men.

**Figure No. 4.26**

Sexual Experience Before Age 12 by Sex of Respondent  
N=30

Respondents in each of the 4 sites covered reported having had a sexual experience prior to turning 12 years. Five (5) of the 11 respondents lived in the Belize District, and 2, 3 and 1 lived in the Orange Walk, Cayo and Corozal Districts, respectively. Of these 11 respondents, 9 fell within the 16-17 age range and 1 each were 4 and 15 years old.

Out of the 11 (of 30) respondents reported having a sexual experience before turning 12 years, 3 female respondents were sexually abused without penetration by a stranger. In 3 cases a female was sexually abused without penetration by an acquaintance but not a relative. Two (2) females and 2 males were sexually abused by a relative. One (1) female each was raped by a stranger and an acquaintance but not a relative. Two (2) males were raped by strangers. One respondent was sexually abused by more than one perpetrator therefore accounting for 14 cases of sexual abuse occurring among the 11 respondents.
Of these 11 respondents 9 indicated what happened. Some were sexually abused by either a family member (4 cases), a friend (1 case) or strangers (4 cases). Two (2) respondents did not indicate what happened to them. In 4 cases, the respondents were paid for sex services by either a family member, a friend or a stranger.

One reported that she started having sex at 11 but that she “was not raped, I did it on my own”. Another reported that a stranger “gave me money to have sex with him, so he touch me”. One stated that “when my mother is out to work, my uncle came by and pay me to have oral sex” and another that “my stepfather sexually molested me”. Others were abused by the boyfriend of their mother or by a cousin. In the case of the 4 year old child, she was sexually abused by a man over 50 years and was given sweets and other similar gifts in return. This 4 year old had run away with this older man.

Of the 11 cases of sexual abuse, only 1 (a female) was reported. The main reason for the non-reporting of sexual abuse was because the respondents did not “tell anyone” about their experience of abuse. However, some respondents also indicated that their mothers did not believe them. Two (2) respondents stated that they “agreed” to or “wanted” to be with the perpetrator.

Only 2 of the 11 cases, both female, had received help from an institution. In both cases they accessed counseling services. The main reason cited for not receiving help was because they did not tell anyone about the abuse.

4.6.2 Forced Sexual Experience After Age 12

A total of 7 out of 30 respondents reported having had forced sexual experiences since turning 12 years old. Four (4) of these cases were female and 3 were male. Two (2) of these 7 respondents were born in Belize.

Figure No. 4.28
Respondents with Forced Sexual Experiences After Age 12

N=30

Yes
No
Of these 7 cases, 2 (1 female and 1 male) experienced incest. These 2 respondents lived in the Belize District. One (1) male respondent experienced rape by a stranger. Additionally, 1 female each was:
- raped by an acquaintance
- raped by several people simultaneously
- raped by the “client-exploiter”, and
- sexually abuse by a stranger

Figure No. 4.29
Respondents with Forced Sexual Experiences After Age 12
by Sex of Respondent
N=7
(beside the commercial sexual exploitation)

Only 2 of these 7 cases were reported. In 5 of these cases the perpetrator was a man. In 1 case the perpetrator was a woman who abused a male respondent. One (1) other respondent did not indicate who abused her.

Only 2 (both female) of these 7 respondents received assistance from an institution. In 1 case the respondent received advice and counseling and in the other the respondent was sent to the youth hostel for rehabilitation.

4.6.3 Experience of Incest

A total of 2 incest cases were reported. The respondents at the time of the experience were 16 (1 case) and 17 (1 case) years. In both cases the perpetrator was an adult male. The perpetrator was an aunt’s husband in one case and a nephew in the other. Both cases were repeated incidences which occurred several times for the year.

4.7 Experiences with CSEC

4.7.1 Age at first CSEC experience

The age at which respondents were first paid or received a gift in exchange for sexual activity varied. However, most of this experience was reported to have begun at/or after age 12 (9 males and 12 females). All males were approached for CSEC at age 13 or above. However, the female respondents were approached as early as age 3 (a 4 year old respondent). One other respondent each was approached at ages 9, 10 and 11, respectively. Two (2) females were approached at age 12.
4.7.2 Introduction to CSEC

The respondents were introduced to CSEC activities through varied sources. A total of 7 out of 30 respondents became involved in CSEC activities through their friends. Another 4 were introduced by relatives and 8 became involved through bar owners or strangers. In 3 cases the respondent reported engaging in CSEC activities on his or her own (2 females and 1 male). Two (2) cases each were introduced by either a neighbor or a boyfriend. Only 1 case each got involved in CSEC through a tourist and a teacher.

A few respondents elaborated on the cash or gifts received the first time they engaged in providing services. In their words:

- “I was at a party, a friend told me if I give him head, oral sex, he will give me $200.00”
- “I offered myself to a friend (blow jobs) in exchange for a tennis shoes”
- “I was at a dance and was drinking,
- “A guy took me to eat then have sex with him”
- “My neighbor tell me she could help me get fast money”
- “An old man and my mom encourage me to go ahead”
- “A man contacted me, told me he love me and I believed, so I went ahead”
- “The stranger handed me money”
- “Nobody, it is my common-law husband, we fell in love and he is taking good care of me”

4.7.3 The Client-Exploiter

A majority of respondents (or 21 out of 30) provided services only to men. Two (2) respondents provided services only to women and another 2 respondents provided services to both men and women. Five did not respond the question.
A little more than half (or 16 out of 30) of the respondents indicated that their clients came either always (6 cases), almost always (7 cases) or sometimes (3 cases) from the same region or district as the respondent. This was followed by twelve (12) respondents who said the clients always (3 cases) or almost always (9 cases) came from other Districts within the country. A total of 8 respondents reported that foreigners were also clients either almost always or sometimes.

### 4.7.4 Modes of Contact

Some respondents reported multiple forms of contact. However, the primary mode of contact for CSEC activities was through the telephone (mostly cellular phone) or the internet (13 respondent) followed by personal contact at parties, parks, bars or on the street (10 respondents). Others were contacts through intermediaries such their mothers (2 respondents), a relative (1 respondent) or a friend (2 respondents). Modes of contact did not differ across districts but the Belize District respondents reported more contact via the telephone than those in the other districts.

The younger respondents (under 16 years) were told what to do or were contacted through their mothers or a relative or while going to school. The older respondents (16 and 17 year olds) were mostly contacted via the telephone or internet or in person.

As some stated, “we hang out together a group of us, people know where we are”, “it just happen, they come and talk with me, then we go”, “usually go to the park or other places” or “when I am out of the street, they would stop”. Two respondents indicated that they go to the park and another stated going to parties.

### 4.7.5 Income

The remuneration received from clients varied significantly from $20.00 to $300.00. A total of 5 female and 1 male respondent reported received less than BZ$50.00. Three (3) respondents (2 females and 1 male) received between $50. and $100. One (1) male respondent received between $101. and $200. and another 7 respondents (3

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73 The Belizean Dollar is pegged at BZ$2.00 to US$1.00.
females and 4 males) received between $201. and $300. Those who received the most money were from the Belize District. The 16 and 17 year old respondents received the most money of all age groups. A majority of respondents (17 out of 30) did not answer the question.

Slightly less than half of all respondents (13 out of 30) reported that they had to share their money with someone else. The older the respondent, the less likely they had to share their money with anyone else. The amount that had to be shared varied widely from $20.00 to almost everything gained. The money is shared mostly with relatives (mostly mothers then aunt, grandparents and children), or with friends or boyfriends or with those who rent them the room to provide services.

Figure No. 4.32
What CSEC income is spent on by Sex of Respondent   N=30

Half of all respondents (15 out of 30) spent money on food. Another 14 respondents spent money on drugs or alcohol while 8 spent money on rent. Another 4 respondents used their money to help their relatives and 18 used their money to buy personal items such as clothes, phone cards, travel expenses, school books or medication. Only 3 respondents (1 female and 2 males) spent their money on childcare.

Most respondents (20 out of 30) did not have another source of income. None of the respondents from the Cayo District (a total of 5 respondents) had another source of income. The 10 respondents who reported having another source of income, received money from activities such as: hair-braiding, waitressing, cutting cane, working as a clerk in stores, tutoring, or being a tour guide assistant. Two (2) respondents received an allowance from either a father or a boyfriend. Only 8 of the Belizean-born (out of 19) and 2 of the foreign-born respondents (out of 11) had another source of income.
Those who had another source of income tended to be male (7 out of 10 respondents who reported having another source of income). Nine (9) out of the 10 respondents who had another source of income were in the 16-17 age range. A majority of those with children had no other source of income. None of the respondents under age 14 reported another source of income.

### 4.7.6 Use of Condoms and Contraceptives

Although the provision of services put respondents at a high risk of STI infection and HIV transmission, only 8 respondents (5 females and 3 males) reported that their male clients always used a condom. A total of 12 respondents (9 females and 3 males) indicated that their male clients used a condom sometimes and another 4 (3 females and 1 male) did not use condoms. Six (6) respondents did not answer the question.

Only 4 out of 19 of the Belizean-born respondents stated that their male clients always used a condom while 4 out of 11 of the foreign-born respondents indicated that their male clients always used a condom. The male clients of Belize-born respondents tended to use a condom sometimes. Those respondents whose male clients always used a condom were 15 years and older.

Of the female respondents, 14 out of 21 used a condom either always (5 cases) or sometimes (9 cases) while 6 out of 9 males used a condom either always (3 cases) or sometimes (3 cases).
Three (3) out of 9 male respondents reported that they themselves always used condoms and another 5 indicated that they sometimes used condoms. One (1) male respondent did not answer the question.

Only 9 out of 21 female respondents reported always using contraceptives and another 2 stated that they sometimes used contraceptives.

### 4.7.7 Other Forms of Abuse

A little more than half of the 30 respondents (11 females and 5 males) had endured insults and humiliation from people in general and 11 (8 females and 3 males) had experienced scorn from family members. Eleven (11) respondents (9 females and 2 males) also endured physical attacks by clients and initiation into drugs or alcohol (5 females and 6 males) due to CSEC activities. Six (6) of the females (out of 21 females) reported becoming pregnant by a client and 5 respondents (4 females and 1 male) stated that they experienced a sexual attack by clients.

**Figure No. 3.35**

Other Forms of Abuse of Respondents  N=30

Three (3) respondents (1 female and 2 males) also reported having experienced threats and assaults by pimps. Three (3) females had been arrested by the police and 2 females and 1 male reported being abused by the police.

A total of 8 respondent (5 females and 3 males) stated that they experienced a venereal disease due to CSEC activities and 1 female divulged that she was HIV positive.

### 4.7.8 Other CSEC Activities

A little less than half (9) of all 30 respondents reported having been paid to dance naked. At least 1 respondent in each of the 4 districts was paid to do this. Only respondents (1 female and 4 males) from the Belize District reported being paid to be photographed naked. Respondents from the Belize, Orange Walk and Corozal Districts were paid to dance in nightclubs or bars (4 females and 3 males). However,
only respondents from the Belize and Orange Walk Districts reported being paid to escort tourists (2 females and 6 males), to attend photo or video sessions (1 female and 4 males), to model (1 female and 2 males) or to give massages (2 males).

### 4.7.9 Indications of Trafficking

Slightly more than half (17 out of 30) of all respondents were offered to be paid to be taken to another district or to another country to take part in sexual intercourse. There was no difference noted between the Belize-born and foreign-born populations. All respondents who received this offer were 15 years and older. Ten (10) of the female respondents and 7 of the male respondents received this offer. Respondents in all 4 districts reported having received this offer.

### 4.8 The Last Client-Exploiter

In 27 out of the 30 cases (21 females and 6 males), the respondents’ last client-exploiter was a man. The ages of the client-exploiters ranged from under 22 years to over 50 years old. The last client-exploiter for most respondents was between 30 and 50 years old (10 females and 7 males). Another 8 respondents (7 females and 1 male) indicated that their last client-exploiter was between 22 and 30 years old. Only 3 female respondents reported that their last client-exploiter was less than 22 years. One (1) female and 1 male reported their last client-exploiters to be over 50 years old.

#### Figure No. 3.36

**Sex of Respondents’ Last Client-Exploiters**

- N=30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Client-Exploiter</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Client-Exploiter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than half of the respondents (19 out of 30) reported that their last client-exploiters were from their district. Only 3 respondents stated that their last client-exploiters were from another district and another 4 indicated that they were foreign tourists. In only 1 case was the last client-exploiter a foreigner living in the country. Three (3) respondents did not answer the question.
Only 5 respondents (4 females and 1 male) reported that they were contacted through an intermediary. This is consistent with the respondents’ reports that they meet clients mostly through direct contact or through the phone or internet services, rather than through intermediaries. Those who were contacted through an intermediary were 16 years and older.

The respondents’ last CSEC experience mostly took place either at the client-exploiter’s house (8 respondents out of 30), at a hotel (6 respondents), in a rented room at a bar (2 respondents) or at the house of an intermediary (1 respondent). Other experiences took place at a park, on the beach, in an abandoned house, in the market, at a bar or in a car.

4.9 Addictive Substances

With regard to addictive substances, 23 out of 30 respondents reported having consumed alcohol. All respondents who had consumed alcohol were 14 years and older. All male respondents had done so. Those who consumed alcohol did so everyday (2 males), once or more per week for 7 males and 7 females and once or more every two weeks for 5 females.

Another 16 out of 30 respondents indicated that they had consumed tobacco. Eight (8) of the 21 female respondents and 8 (out of 9) male respondents had done so. Those who consumed tobacco were between 14 and 17 years. Four (4) out of 30 respondents used tobacco everyday and 8 consumed tobacco once or more times per week. Another 4 respondents reported using it once or more times every 2 weeks.
For other drugs, 21, 9 and 3 respondents each stated that they had consumed pills, marijuana and cocaine, respectively. The “harder” the drugs, the older the age of the respondent who reported having used it. Those who consumed pills were between 12 and 17 while those who consumed marijuana were between 15 and 17 and those who used cocaine were between 16 and 17. Only 1 female reported having used cocaine. The 2 other cocaine users were male. One respondent, a 17 year old Belize-born female, stated that she has used crack. One other foreign-born respondent had consumed glue.

One respondent, a 16 year old female, used drugs everyday. Two respondents (1 female and 1 male) used drugs once or more times a week and 7 other respondents (4 females and 3 males) reported using drugs once or more times every 2 weeks.

**4.10 Institutional Protection**

Only 6 of the 30 respondents reported having ever received help from an institution. Of these, 5 were female and 1 was male. The male was beaten up and taken to the hospital where he was visited by a social worker. Two (2) female respondents received counseling services and another 3 females were provided with social services to meet their immediate needs of food and shelter. One (1) respondent, a four year old female, was referred to social services for attention as a sexual abuse case.

Two respondents had entered an institution because of living on the street. Both were placed at the Youth Hostel in the Belize District. One reported that the youth hostel was “too strict” so she ran away twice and the other indicated that there were “too much rules, arguments and thief” within the youth hostel.

Of the 6 respondents who had received help from an institution only four made suggestions on what they would like the institution and staff to help them with.
These were to:
- find another job and find how to pay for school
- get more room space
- not ask for identification or passport
- tell no one

One respondent also indicated that she was better off on her own with no assistance from an institution.

4.11 Analysis of Findings

The primary value of the Survey of CSEC victims was not to show the prevalence of CSEC in Belize, but rather to capture the life experiences of CSEC victims to allow for a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the occurrence of CSEC in Belize. The information gathered from these individual documented cases, when aggregated, provides some important insights on victims and their client-exploiters. The Study also demonstrates that CSEC is manifested in multiple ways thus articulating the complexity of this issue.

4.11.1 Who are the Victims of CSEC

The survey of CSEC victims covered 4 districts - the Belize, Orange Walk, Cayo and Corozal Districts. Although more female children participated in the Study at a ratio of almost 2 females to 1 male (21 females and 9 males), the findings show that both male and female children are victims of CSEC. Contrary to a perception that CSEC happens only to immigrant children, a majority of the victims surveyed were Belizeans. Also, while the ages of the victims ranged from 4 to 17, a majority were over 14 years. However, 11 of the 30 victims reported having had at least one forced sexual experience before turning 12 years and 7 had a forced sexual experience after age 12. Except for 4 cases (ages 3, 9, 10 and 11), all victims had their first CSEC encounter at, or above, the age of 12. Among the types of sexual abuse reported was the reality of incest for 2 of the 30 victims. This early forced sexual experiences may be an indication that there are consistencies between the experiences of CSEC victims and the perceptions of adult men with regard to children over 90 lbs. being ready for sex.

Approximately one-third or 10 out of the 30 victims (7 females and 3 males) reported having children. One (1) female respondent shared that she had had an abortion. Of the respondents with children, the 5 had all their children living with them and 1 had some of her children living with her. None of the male victims had their children living with them.

Overall, one-third of the victims (10 out of 30) currently lived with their mothers at the time of the Study. Another 5 victims lived alone and 4 were living with a male partner.

Although most victims still lived with their mothers, almost half of all victims (14 out of 30) reported at least one occurrence of having run away from home. While
some ran away to live with male partners, some ran away to avoid being controlled or abused by step-fathers or to escape other “family problems”. The mothers of a few of the victims were commercial sex workers or bar workers. One other mother begged on the street while another survived by being the mistress of a rich man.

Only 4 of the victims were currently living with their fathers and only one-third of all 30 victims had ever lived with their fathers. This correlates significantly with adult men’s perception that one of the contributors to CSEC is the situation of absentee fathers in Belize.

None of the CSEC victims had completed a high school level of education. Only two were currently still in the formal education system, one at the STD V level and the other in her second year of high school. This correlates with official census data (2000) which show that only 17.4% of urban and 7.4% of rural residents have ever completed secondary education in Belize.\(^{74}\)

The victims engaged in high risk sexual behaviors. Only 8 reported always using a condom. The rest used it sometimes or not at all. The foreign-born respondents were more likely to use a condom than Belizean-born respondents. This may be related to the fact that more foreign-born victims tend to work in bars and brothels which have been targeted for HIV/AIDS education and awareness programmes.

At least 7 victims reported having had a venereal disease, with one of these having contracted the HIV virus.

The victims of CSEC represented in the Study all lived in situations of poverty. Foreign-born victims gave poverty as the primary reason for migrating to Belize. Both foreign-born and Belizean-born victims attributed their engagement in CSEC to the fulfillment of their material needs. In addition to cash transfers, gifts such as food, clothing, jewelry, and footwear were provided to victims in exchange for sexual activities. Victims spent their income from CSEC primarily on meeting their basic needs of food, shelter and utilities. They also invested money on their physical appearance.

While all victims experienced CSEC by being paid, either in cash or in-kind, for sexual intercourse, they were to a lesser degree, also solicited for other kinds of CSEC activities such as being paid to dance naked (9 out of 30), be photographed naked (5 out of 30) or pose naked for a video (5 out of 30). This is consistent with the perception of community members that paid sexual relations remain the primary form of CSEC activity in Belize.

Similarly, 17 out of 30 victims were solicited to be trafficked out of the country or to other parts of the country, primarily to engage in sexual intercourse.

Eleven (11 out of 30) had experienced physical and/or psychological aggression in relation to CSEC and 2 reported being arrested and abused by the police. Approximately half of the victims (16 out of 30) had experienced being insulted and humiliated by the public, while 11 had been scorned by family members. This is an indication of the stigma associated with commercial sexual activities and the blaming of the child victim of CSEC.

Most victims (23 out of 30) had consumed alcohol with almost half currently

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consuming it at least once or more times per week. Two victims consumed alcohol everyday with others consuming alcohol less frequently. Approximately half of the 30 victims used tobacco and 8 used it once or more times per week, with 4 victims reporting tobacco use on a daily basis. A majority of victims had not consumed other addictive substances. However, 16, 9 and 3 had consumed pills, marijuana and cocaine, respectively.

Among these child victims, their reported behavior suggests the abuse of addictive substances. For example, 2 consumed alcohol everyday, 4 smoked tobacco everyday and 1 used drugs everyday.

The above profile of victims demonstrates that they live in situations of poverty for which CSEC is perceived, either by the children or by relatives and friends, as a solution to meeting basic needs. The instability of victim’s home environments in which fathers are largely absent creates vulnerabilities for CSEC. Victims exhibit “acting out” behaviors by running away from home. Most returned of their own volition. They were rarely ever brought back home by their parents (the mother in 3 cases) or the police (1 case). The lack of a supportive environment is also demonstrated by the fact that children suffered sexual abuse in silence and even those who reported it to parents, state that they were not believed.

Further vulnerabilities include the fact that victims lack a secondary school education and marketable skills to provide for themselves. Although some were employed in other areas alongside engaging in CSEC activities, for a majority (20 out of 30 victims) CSEC was their only source of income.

4.11.2 Who are the Client Exploiters

Contrary to a popular perception that CSEC is a crime committed by foreigners, only 8 out of 30 victims stated that their client-exploiters were foreign tourists and even less were foreign men residing in Belize. A majority of the client-exploiters were Belizean men, primarily between the ages of 30 and 50, living in the same district as their victims. This was followed by men who came from other districts in Belize.

A majority of victims (21 out of 30) provided services only to men but 2 victims provided services only to women and 2 provides services to both men and women. This indicates that women are also perpetrators of CSEC in Belize.

4.11.3 The Organization of CSEC in Belize

Only 5 out of 30 victims reported that clients accessed them through an intermediary. Those who were contacted through an intermediary were at, or above, the consensual sex age of 16 years. The intermediaries who first introduced victims to CSEC were relatives (including mothers), friends, boyfriends and bar owners.

A majority of victims were contacted either by telephone or through the internet (13 out of 30) or in person at parties, parks, bars or on the street (10 out of 30 victims). Some of these victims were solicited at specific locations where they “hang out”. The experience of these victims offers a very preliminary suggestion that CSEC may not yet be a highly organized criminal enterprise in Belize. In one way, this seeming lack of organization makes it difficult to detect CSEC and target an effective
institutional response. On the other hand, if CSEC is not yet highly organized, an opportunity presents itself to prevent its evolution into organized crime.

4.11.4 Institutional Protection of CSEC Victims

Experiences of CSEC and other forms of sexual abuse were rarely ever reported by victims. Only 3 experiences of forced sexual encounter were reported - 1 prior to age 12 and 2 after turning 12 years. All others were suffered in silence. The non-reporting of this crime did not create opportunities for institutional protection or support for victims.

Of those 6 victims who accessed institutional protection services, these were geared towards the provision of immediate needs of food, shelter or basic healthcare. Only one case (a 4 year old), was referred for services directly related to sexual abuse. This underscores the findings outlined in the Institutional Response Chapter of this Study that CSEC victims come in contact with the institutional protection system, not because of CSEC, but for services to address related issues, such as: pregnancy, HIV information and testing, STI treatment, basic healthcare or social welfare services.

This has implications for the empowerment of children to break the silence of sexual abuse and exploitation and for the development of programmes and protocols to ensure the early detection of CSEC within all agencies that provide services to children. The institutional response must therefore be three-pronged - a.) create awareness that CSEC is a crime and that children are victims, b.) develop programmes that aim to eliminate the risk factors that make children vulnerable to CSEC activities and c.) properly resource relevant institutions so that they can effectively respond to both the civil and criminal elements of CSEC cases.
CHAPTER 5 - Focus Groups with Males
5.0 Introduction

In contributing to fulfilling the overall goal of the study on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize, one of the specific objectives was to understand the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of adult males and community members regarding the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Belize.

This third part of the study sought to capture the knowledge, attitudes and perception of adult males regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of male and female children under the age of 18. This part of the study was guided by the International Labour Organization (ILO) International Programme on Child Labour (IPEC) Central American Sub-Regional study, entitled Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Masculinity: a Qualitative Study of Males from the General Population (2004). More specifically, it attempted to answer questions related to motivational and inhibiting factors for adult male involvement in CSEC activities, understanding the societal tolerance level for such activities from men’s perspective, identifying characteristics of CSEC male exploiters and recommending possible strategies for sanctioning this crime.

The information for this chapter was obtained through three focus groups and five individual interviews with men in San Ignacio and Orange Walk Towns and Belize City. A total of 44 men participated in this study.

The study considers that it is necessary to understand general male sexuality in order to also understand why men engage in CSEC activities.

5.1 What is Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children?

“Commercial Sexual Exploitation is the use of persons under the age of 18 for paid sexual relations or for child and adolescent pornography, or the use of boys, girls and adolescents for sex shows or videos. It has to entail some economic exchange or some other form of payment to the boy, girl or the adolescent involved or to a third party acting as an intermediary for the child. It constitutes a serious violation of the basic human rights of persons under the age of 18, and is a form of sexual violence and economic exploitation comparable to slavery and forced labor. International conventions define it as a criminal offence, and the countries in this region in Central America are changing their laws to make sure that this is prosecuted as a crime.” (ILO/IPEC: 2004)

5.2 Theme 1: The Construction of Male Sexuality:

5.2.1 Male Sexuality

When asked to reflect on the meaning of ‘male sexuality’, the majority of men interviewed for this study, though tentative in their offerings of a definition for the concept, instinctively spoke of it in terms of ‘machismo’ and male power and
control over women in sexual relationships. However, they offered a few other interpretations. Some interpreted the term to mean ‘males who love to have sex’ and ‘male sexual feelings’. One individual said it is something he has heard on television and he thinks it ‘refers to sex and gender issues and especially sexual preferences of men - gay, straight.’ One other person thought it is a determinant of one’s heterosexuality or homosexuality. One person saw it as male abuse of another man or a woman sexually. Another man related it to how a man responds to stimulation of his sexual organs by a woman. Another interesting observation of the term is that it symbolizes man’s inherent weakness and inability to control his sexual desires.

A review of the responses from focus groups and individual interviews revealed that the men were not clear or entirely sure about the full meaning of the term. Notwithstanding the lack of clarity, the primary view expressed by the participants supports a traditional patriarchal conception of sexuality that gives primacy to male domination and control in sexual relations, and satisfaction of the male libido. Taken collectively the responses point to the perception of male sexuality as limited to sex in relation to women. A view of male sexuality in its broadest sense, including issues of intimacy, self-awareness and self-identity, emotional expression, cultural values and concern about the well-being and satisfaction of partners, is lacking.

5.2.2 Learning About Sexuality

Participants in the study were unanimous in the view that male sexuality is not learnt in the hallowed halls of education or from parents in a systematic and conscious way. Instead, men learn about it from television, media, movies, discussions with male friends and peers, watching the father figure in the home, to some extent school, with a ‘prostitute’ or an ‘available girl’, and through the usual experimental experiences growing up and having sexual encounters. Commonly held views were that you learned to be a ‘real’ man from the father figure and that what you really learnt depended on your unique household and family.

A few participants said it was something that came natural to men at a certain age: ‘at a certain age it just sets in’ and ‘a natural development in the human person’. An interesting observation by a gentleman in his sixties was that ‘it was not a topic for discussion in (his) days; it was considered a sin to talk about, especially being a Catholic…you learned it from others experience and peers, the cinema, and if you were lucky, an older woman gives you the chance to have sex with her.’

Generally speaking, even though there is more open discussion about the topic today, men are ill-prepared for the exercise of responsible male sexuality.

Men learn that male sexuality is about male pleasure, enjoyment, sexual satisfaction, sexual relief, and that ‘sex is joyful action’. Male sexuality is about the ‘rights of passage to manhood’ - ‘to be recognized as a man in society you must have sexual relations’. Men said they also learnt that there is a risk of disease, they must give respect to the opposite sex, and they must know what each partner loves and enjoys. Some men also noted that they learnt that some men feel superior to women and those women can be dangerous—in terms of tempting you with their body. As a result men also learned that they need to protect themselves from these kinds of women.

A religious man stated that men are always seen as evil ones when women are the true source of all evil, as the bible says. They tempt men and get them weak.

In one of the focus groups, the facilitator noted that there was a lot of discussion on cheating. The general idea out there is that it’s okay for men to have more than one partner, but one participant felt that fidelity is under valued. The consensus was that “All men have a sweetheart” and they learn that this is okay from experience of life around them. It’s naughty but expected of them as men. It simply can’t be helped and is beyond their control.

5.2.3 What is Important to Men

Virility was seen as important to most men regarding their sexuality. Men are preoccupied with their ability to be sexually active and perform well for a good many years. It is also important to them to have a woman in their lives so that they can continue to prove their manhood. One person suggested that to be without a woman is to be considered a homosexual.

The responses to what excite and turn off men were a balanced mix of physical attributes and personality traits. Men named different body parts that excited them and spoke often about the beautiful and sexy woman being the ideal. However, they stressed that in as much as physical beauty was important, they were fearful of having a wife who was too beautiful because along with her came the possibility that she would be taken away by another man. In all the focus groups men made mention of the need for women to be clean.

From the gay man’s perspective, men are attracted to someone who is ‘pretty and gorgeous, someone you can show off’, supporting the view of straight men that physical beauty is important.

Conversely, they were particularly turned off by ‘ugly’ or ‘unattractive’ women. Among the unattractive features were ‘bad hygiene’ ‘bad ways’ and ‘vulgarity’. Some men also said that ‘women who are too experienced sexually need to be watched’.

5.3 Theme 2:
Sexual Practices and Types of Relationships that Men Seek and Prefer:

5.3.1 Men’s Choice of Sex Partners:

Distinction was made between different types of sex partners by two of the focus groups. The type of woman a man chooses is determined by the type of relationship: long term or for fun. One person said men choose the ‘brothel’ types just for sex and the church type with good background for a serious long term relationship. All the men in the focus groups preferred women but did not make any mention of their age. However, the tenor of the discussions suggested a linkage between physical attractiveness and youthfulness, and much ado was made about the physical beauty of the women.

In responding to the question, one gentleman focused on the term ‘sex partner’ and said that this term meant women you did not have serious relationships with, in
other words ‘women readily available for sex’. He went on to say that one looks for a girl or woman to be proud of when the time comes for settling down.

### 5.3.2 What Attracts Most Men in Sex Partners

In answering this question, members of one focus group also made a distinction between women who are wives and girlfriends and women with whom you cheat or have a fling. They responded to the question as if they were speaking about the latter. In this case the men were attracted by women who could provide physical enjoyment and good sexual performance, and ‘women who are open to new experiences and doing new things.’ These women were also expected to be able to respect confidentiality and ‘not talk too much.’

In the other two focus groups great emphasis was put on physical matters: the physical appearances of the women and the various body parts that attract different men. This sentiment was shared by the gay individual. The other two individuals interviewed focused more on personality traits.

### 5.3.3 Men Who Get Involved With Young People

All the men who participated in the study primarily rejected the notion of men getting involved with young people between the ages of 12 and 16. Such men were declared to be ‘messing with the judge’s daughter’, ‘a menace to society’, ‘the lowest kind of man’, ‘lacking in self-esteem’, ‘sick in the mind’, and generally lacking in respect for themselves. Some men were very strong in their condemnation of the act, especially in relationship to prepubescent children and those below the age of 14. One man in thinking about it saw it in relation to this happening to his own children or grandchildren and found it a completely repugnant notion. When directed to look at it in that way, the others in that focus group concurred with his view.

However, while the men generally did not condone men having relationships with young people, most could ‘understand’ how it could happen. There was a tendency for some participants to blame the young girls for ‘leading the men on and seducing them’. The girls themselves were seen to be actively seeking out older men who could give them things and be responsible for them. Some men could also understand how it would happen if the girls, regardless of their age, were physically developed (meaning that they weighed ‘90 pounds’ or more).

In one focus group, one participant drew the group's attention to and sparked a discussion about a recent case appearing in the news about a German man arrested for CSEC. Most participants found the story appalling. One thought it was mostly a ‘foreign thing’. The survey with CSEC victims disproved this notion. The greater majority of the victims interviewed client-exploiters were Belizean men.

In one focus group, one participant repeatedly brought up the issue of poverty being the primary cause of young girls going with older men. His colleagues agreed with this view but still saw young girls as culprits as well for encouraging it because they wanted to satisfy their vanity and need for acquiring material things.

Mention must also be made of the view held by this group that local culture played a role, especially the Maya, condoning the practice of older men going with girls.
This was perceived to be an acceptable practice in some cultures in Belize even if ‘foreigners’ thought otherwise of it.

5.3.4 What Age is Young

Most participants knew the age of sexual consent to be sixteen and felt that sex between men and girls below this age is definitely unacceptable. A few felt that below 18 and another few felt that below 20 was unacceptable. The gay individual felt that it is difficult to say because ‘the lines are blurred’. In his view it would depend largely on the age range: “While it may be okay for a 19 year old to go with a 17 year old, it’s not as cool for a 50 year old to go with a 17 year old.” One participant felt that there needs to be a minimum ten year age span between the man and the girl he is having sexual relations with, and others in his focus group agreed. On this basis then it would be acceptable for a 25 year old and a 16 year old to engage in consensual sex, despite the fact that the 25 year old person is committing a crime if there is a payment to the under 18 year old. “Consensual sex” is non-existent per definition according to the international conventions if there is a payment between the two parts. In that case the one who pays is using economic power over the under 18 year old and turning her/him into a commercial object and committing an illegal act.

Nevertheless, the physical development of the child was seen also as a factor in determining what was acceptable. As long as there was ‘physical development’, it was not seen to be a problem with some men, thus opening up for social tolerance of the use of underage persons for commercial sex activities if they are physical developed.

The physical development approach to acceptability was quantified in two of the focus groups. A participant in Belize City said, and others agreed, the acceptable weight on the street is 60 pounds, “60 pounds and dat good”. In Orange Walk reference was also made to the weight of the child but in this case it was said to be 90 lbs. Participants felt that there were men out there who had no regard for the age of the child; ‘as long as there is flesh out there it’s okay.’

5.3.5 Acceptable for Men to Have Relationships with Young People?

Whether it is courting, dating, having sexual relations or commercial sexual exploitation of young people, most men said it is only okay for men to have relations with young people if they are over 16 years of age, despite the fact that the last case (commercial sexual exploitation) differs enormously from general sexual relations since it involves a crime. In the words of the gay man, “It is only at 17-18 that young people even begin to make conscious decisions about sex.” A few men felt it was wrong no matter the circumstances and that sex should only be between consenting adults. The differing views are reflected in this scenario: A deeply religious man categorically declared it ‘all wrong and sinful’ regardless of the age. Another man rebuts him, “But it happens; it’s up to the female if she wants to.”

Poverty, economic deprivation, and a strong desire for consumerist items (such as ‘bling bling’) were the major explanations provided for why these kinds of relationships develop. Other supporting causes were the weak family structures, unstable homes in
which incest and sexual abuse occurred, vanity, immaturity, male image and manhood. One man made the point that ‘supply and demand’ plays a major role.

Some participants in one group felt that men can be the victims as well, especially if they did not know the age of the child, thus they were justifying CSEC when the child looked like an adult.

5.4 Theme 3:
Factors Associated with Different Forms of Commercial Sex

5.4.1 Why Visit Night Clubs, Watch Porn, & Pay For Sex?

Male participation in visits to night clubs, watching pornography and paying for sex was generally perceived to be related to fulfillment of sexual fantasies and desires and men’s need for relaxation. Some men “seek a whore house as therapy” to relax and get away, and strip clubs and porn are like sexual recreation without sex to help men “pick up the feeling” and be ready to satisfy their women at home.

A prevalent view in two focus groups was that men’s participation in these activities has to do with fulfilling sexual needs and desires that are not possible or allowed with their wives or women at home. Such activities included oral and anal sex and sex in positions other than the traditional missionary one. One man expressed this view thusly, “Wives don’t do the same thing as bar girls - lots of things at the bar you don’t get at home.” Three other reasons proffered by some men are that it is a way for young men to gain sexual experience, men with sexual problems to get relief, and older men who cannot find a woman normally to get some. The men did not distinguish between these services being provided by adults or underage persons.

From the gay male perspective, men like ‘new meat’ which they can get through these activities without a lot of effort (compared to dating and seduction).

5.4.2 Young People Engaged In These Acts

The men in this study reiterated the view that poverty is a cause of young people engaging in sexual exploitative activities and many were doing it not because they wanted, but they had, to. They expressed pity for the young women who were thus engaged and concerns about the possible consequences to them.

All the same there was a majority view that the young women were significantly responsible for what was happening. Young women were seen to be the ones creating the demand. No responsibility for creating the demand was assigned to men. A popular view in one group was that females are very aggressive today; they seek men out more than men seek out women: “Di young gial deh aggressive” (The young girls are aggressive). In another group the young girls were said to be “throwing themselves on men all over the place and it is difficult for the men to resist such aggressive temptation.”

According to the men interviewed, men have to be extremely strong to refuse to give into the temptation. One man relayed a personal experience to the group in which his strength to turn down a 12 year old girl who pursued him came from fear and his
religion. However, a man living in his neighborhood was not so strong. His neighbor ‘Plantain Man’ ‘mature(d) her’ and brought her out. He said that this girl is now working for the bank and still has many sex partners. This shows how men tend to justify sexual violence even against very young adolescents.

Another view shared by quite a few was that young girls today are vain and want everything: They “Use weh deh got fu get weh di wah” (Use what they have to get what they want) and “Deh wa throw back, throw da front, throw da side” (They want throw back, throw front, throw side). Furthermore, young girls were seen to be just as curious about sex as men were and therefore wanting to try things out. The age for sexual curiosity for females was said to be between 13 and 17 years, a “crazy age”. One person saw it as just part of growing up and the sexual development of girls.

Members of one group voiced the myth that that there are more women than men (a ratio of 7:1 by one man’s count)—and that this is hard for men to “handle”. The facilitator of this group corrected this and explored the perception further.

There was a general tendency to blame society and the girls more than the men themselves. One individual went so far as to say that people are exploited on both sides. The onus therefore should not be all on the (older) man he said.

5.4.3 Feelings About Men Going With Young People

All participants in the study resoundingly rejected the practice of men going with young people between the ages of 0 and 14. They saw this as absolutely criminal and called for castration or some other worst forms of punishment. While a great majority also did not support men going with children between 14 and 16, a few did not reject it vehemently and brought the ‘physical development’ and ‘60 pounds’ rule into the discussion at this point again. Some men observed that even though they also did not support men having relations with 16-18 year olds the law permitted it by making the legal age for consensual sex to be 16. The men in this study did not have any idea that despite this legal age of consensual sex, paid sex with a 16 or 17 year old is a crime.

5.5 Theme 4: Commercial Sexual Exploitation with Children (under 18)

5.5.1 Sexual Activities with Children

Most participants felt that men saw sexual activities with children as wrong and knew that it was happening in Belize Society. Some expressed the view that even some of those who feel and know that it is wrong still engage in the practice. Men will do it if they know they can get away with it.

76 ‘Throw back’ refers to a style of dress that is popular today, and the statement is a play on this name.
5.5.2 How Does A Man Know Age?

Men in all the groups felt that it was difficult to know and sometimes impossible to tell a girl’s age. It was especially difficult if the girl’s body was not developing according to her age. It was felt that even if you asked the girls their age, they would lie to you and some may even have false IDs. However, many felt that mature men should be able to detect if a girl was underage or not if they wanted to. Some men felt that men were also constrained to determine the age of a potential sexual partner by the fact that once the libido took control all other sense of rationality went out the window. “When e hard u mind get soft”, in other words, men do not (or are unable to) think about it once they are aroused.

The general consensus was that most men do not ask once they are in the situation. Some thought that it was the responsibility of the establishment to take care of the age issue, not the clients. Of course, this suggestion did not take into consideration the reality that CSEC occurs to a large extent in Belize outside the confines of an established brothel or night club or that the direct client is also committing a crime. Instead, it is a common way to avoid personal responsibility for the CSEC and to justify it in the society.

An offbeat suggestion was that men should seriously consider taking a tape recorder into night clubs or houses of prostitution to have the girls there state their age so that they can use it in their own defense in court if it found that the girl lied and is actually a minor. However, it is important to see this recommendation for what it is, another way to avoid personal responsibility.

5.5.3 The Demand for Men to Want Sex with Children and Adolescents

Several factors were seen to contribute to the creation of a male demand for sexual relations with children and adolescents. Chief among them were male power relations and man’s perpetual need to prove himself and his sexual prowess. Increasing levels of poverty in the society was also named as a contributing factor as was the pervasive presence of television, the heightened demand in society for consumer goods, and the lower moral standards and values in today’s society. A few men made mention of man’s desire for ‘new’ and ‘tight things’, a reference to a desire for virginity.

An economic reason from the man’s perspective was also offered as the basis for the increasing demand by men for sex with children. Whereas men will participate in paid sex, they too must find ways to pay for it. Some interview subjects thought that more men, with limited financial resources, opt for paid sex with children because they are more affordable than adult commercial sex workers in brothels. As noted in the section of this study on CSEC victims, the younger victims did make much less money than the older ones.

5.5.4 Sex With Adolescents Vs Children

There was zero tolerance for commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents generally. Yet, the issue of sexual exploitation of adolescents over 16 years was a grey area for many because of the legal sexual consent age and the physical and mental stages of development.
Most men in one group believed that there is an increasing number of sexual predators (defined as men who are sick) out there. It can be inferred from the discussion and the definition of sexual predators that men make a definitive distinction between pedophiles and men who have sexual relations with teenagers. There is a level of understanding for a man who finds himself in a situation where he is ‘seduced’ by a 16 year old but there is absolutely no understanding for the man who engages in sexual relations with a 12 year old. He is considered abnormal and fit to be tied and quartered.

Although this point was not followed up on, one participant said sex with children and adolescents was wrong but it was ‘doubly wrong if it was with the same sex’.

5.5.5 Knowledge about Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Most men did not know the term ‘Commercial Sexual Exploitation’ or fully understand it. They were more familiar with the term “Commercial Sex Worker” and so equated CSE with prostitution. A few had heard the term used in American television news story about containers of 14-18 female adolescents from Asia found in the United States for use in strip clubs. Once explained the men quickly understood the definition.

5.5.6 Awareness of Sexual Relations with Children as Crime

It was commonly felt among the participants that men knew sexual relation with children is a crime under the Laws of Belize, even though they may not know the full details of the law. They said that the lengths men go to hide their actions from the public’s eye is a clear indication of the awareness that it is a crime. They also knew 16 to be the legal age for consensual sex with adolescents. However, they were not aware that paid sex with all persons under 18 years of age is illegal and therefore there could be no consensual paid sex with a person below the age of 18.

5.5.7 Fairness of Law

Participants in the study were of the opinion that the law was fair for the most part but could be strengthened in a few significant ways. Most of them thought there was a ‘contradiction’ in the law between the legal definition of what is a child (under 18 years) and the legal age at which a child can consent to sex (16 years). They felt that there should be no difference between the two ages. In the eyes of some of these men, this ‘contradiction’ in the law was justification for why some men engage in paid sexual relations with persons under the age of 18. All three focus groups proposed changing the age of consent to 18 years, as reflected in the question, “If 18 is the age for voting, getting in club, drinking, driving, getting married without consent, why not for sex?”

This proposal of the men in this study, however, fails to distinguish between the right of adolescents to engage in consensual, non-abusive sexual relations (i.e. sex between adolescents and their boy or girlfriends) and paid sexual activities with a child or adolescent which by international definition is a crime and therefore can never be consented to.
A few men also pointed out that a change was needed in the law to address the fact that women can get away with sexual exploitation of exploiting young boys.

5.6 Concluding Comments

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescent was seen by male participants in this study as a serious issue in Belize that needs urgent attention. They perceived that “There is a thriving and growing sex industry in Belize, especially between poor people and the middle class. Young people are just a part of it and everybody knows about it.” However, sympathy for the victims of CSEC or outrage at the occurrence of CSEC is greater for persons under 14 years of age. Mixed feelings existed among men about persons over 14. On one hand, these feelings are related to the contradictions within the law about the age of consent and the legal definition of being a child. On the other, they are related to men’s perception of their own sexuality.

All the men in this study cited poverty as a principal cause of CSEC. They observed that poor young people and their families do what it takes to survive. Men exploit this situation by providing children with money to keep it confidential for fear of being ‘outed’. Children are seen as prime targets because they are generally cheaper than prostitutes in the houses of prostitution. Children were said to be “as cheap as a ‘fry chicken’ meal or $10.00”. Many of the participants also claimed that CSEC is increasing in Belize because more young girls are in supply and willing.

This prevailing view in one focus group session was tempered with a profound response by one participant that men are ultimately responsible: “No matter what you say and how you try to justify (sex with children) you as 28-30 year old men compare to 12 year olds should be much more responsible, intelligent, and mature to make the right decisions. Da wa (it’s) child-- and you (men) have more responsibility and ability to make decisions.” The challenge of course is to get all men to think this way.

The following are the most significant suggestions offered by the men interviewed to address the issue of CSEC in Belize:

- Conduct extensive education sessions about CSEC (seminars and other activities) for men across the country. New and imaginative ways will have to be devised to reach the men. (One respondent in this study said that although he probably would not have attended the session if he knew what it was about, he enjoyed it immensely and felt that more ways should be sought to systematically involve men in important discussions such as this.)
- Begin the education about CSEC at the primary school level since it is more difficult to change or deal with adults
- Seriously address poverty and unemployment since these are root causes of CSEC
- Improve home and family environments, including addressing the issue of absentee fathers
- Provide Parenting Education for all parents, especially the fathers
● Create greater awareness about the laws in relationship to sex with children and adolescents, particularly on paid sexual relations, and impose stiffer penalties

5.7 Analysis of Findings

Belize has made important gains in the struggle to achieve equality and equity between women and men. However, significant inequalities and inequities continue to prevail that affect the well-being of citizens and the society as a whole. The gender inequalities and inequities as well as the powerless position of women in society are with every certainty factors that motivate male participation in commercial sexual exploitation, including the commercial exploitation of children and adults. A fundamental aspect of gender inequality is the unequal power relations between men and women that give men greater say and control over women and children. Despite non-discriminatory laws, despite universal access to education by boys and girls, despite the greater number of women in the labour force the patriarchal culture of male dominance gives greater priority to the fulfillment of men’s needs. These needs include the adequate and urgent fulfillment of their sexual desires which if not possible by ‘normal’ means are met by other means such as CSEC.

As a respondent in this study noted, male sexuality to many implies an inherent weakness in men and an inability to control their sexual desires. Men rationalize their behavior of having sex with children by deflecting sexual responsibility onto the child. They perceive children, particularly the female child, as tempters, seducing them into sexual relations. This perception of children is completely devoid of an orientation that children have fundamental human rights. Instead, children are de-humanized and their bodies are objectified to meet the sexual needs of men.

Men state that their concepts of “masculinity” and “male sexuality” are rooted in how they are socialized as men throughout their lives. The institutions through by which they learn how to be a ‘man’ teach and reinforce sexist and violent notions of sexuality. The idea of children and women as tempters, for example, reflects a predominantly religious belief that women, like Eve in the Bible, are responsible for making men “sin”. Similarly, notions of women as being either “good” or “bad” reflect the “virgin Mary/ Mary Magdalene” dichotomy which allows girl’s and women’s “moral character” to be questioned in cases of sexual violence perpetrated against them.

Men are also exposed to sexist images of ‘manhood’ in and outside the home. The pressure put on them to prove their ‘manhood’ leads to extreme forms of dominance and control of those who are perceived to be less powerful. Within this patriarchal system, men are groomed to be perpetrators of sexual violence against male and female children and women.

Although men continue to rationalize sex crimes against children, the clandestine manner in which behaviors take place gives a sense that at some level, men are aware that having sex with children is not okay. In fact, some men make a distinction between sex with prepubescent vs. pubescent children. Once children pass what men define as a “90 lbs. test”, sex with them becomes acceptable. Meanwhile sex with prepubescent children or children less than 90 lbs. is repugnant to them.
Distinctions made in the Criminal Code for the crimes of “carnal knowledge” for children under 14 and “unlawful carnal knowledge” for those over 14, and the wide variance between the penalties reinforce the “rightness” of men engaging in sex with children. As the Study also showed, although men said they did not support the idea of having sex with children over 14 years, they referred to the legal age for consensual sex (16 years) as justification for those between 16-18 years who engaged in CSEC, despite the fact that the international human rights conventions explicitly state that any person under 18 years should be protected against commercial sexual exploitation.

What would inhibit sexually violent behaviors against children is the systematic re-education of the gendered roles of men and women as well as the promotion of more positive concepts of “masculinity” through all socialization institutions. The public awareness of the definition of a “child” being anyone under the age of 18 and sending a clear message that there is nothing in a child’s behavior or attitude that can justify a crime being committed against that child must be integrated into the re-education process. An understanding of the physical, emotional and physiological capacities of children at the different stages of development is key to changing the mindset that children are ready for sexual encounters once they appear to pass men’s “90 lb” test. Furthermore, widely publicizing the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents as a major crime which bears stiff penalties was stated by adult men as a possible inhibiting factor.

Adult men reiterated the view expressed throughout the Study, that poverty is a major cause of CSEC. They pointed out the increasing number of children who approach adult men for financial help as a survival mechanism for alleviating their situation of poverty. Related to this was a reference to the level of absent fathers in homes in Belize. In this context, an effective response to CSEC must include targeted programmes to reduce poverty among children and their families.
CHAPTER 6 - Institutional Response to CSEC in Belize
6.0 The National Institutional Response:

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (CSEC) is recognized internationally as one of the worst forms of exploitation and abuse. It violates the basic human rights of children and calls for special measures to be implemented to eliminate this problem. The urgency of this international call for action is reflected in numerous Conventions and Protocols many of which have been signed and ratified in Belize. However, most critical to addressing the problem is the level of adaptation and compliance of national policies, laws and plans of action to ensure the recognition, enforcement and monitoring of special measures to eradicate CSEC in Belize.

This section therefore examines five inter-related aspects of the institutional response:

- The International Legal Instruments signed and ratified by Belize
- The National Policy Context for addressing CSEC
- The Legislative Framework which criminalizes CSEC and protects children
- The Institutional Map of Key Informant Origin of Contact with CSEC
- The Referral and Counter-Referral Systems for addressing CSEC

6.1 International Legal Instruments

Belize has signed and ratified the following international instruments which in whole, or in part, provides the legal basis for developing and enforcing domestic legislation to protect children from and sanction perpetrators of commercial sexual exploitation.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of International Instruments</th>
<th>Year Ratified in Belize</th>
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<tr>
<td>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-American Convention on the Eradication of Violence Against Women</td>
<td>1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inter-American Convention on the International Traffic in Children</td>
<td>1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO Convention 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour</td>
<td>2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment</td>
<td>2000</td>
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As demonstrated above, Belize has a good track record for signing and ratifying international instruments. However, several studies report that the ratification of these international instruments have not translated into adequate domestic legislation to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation. In relation to ILO Conventions 138 and 182, these have been given the force of law in Belize even without enabling domestic legislation, notwithstanding the provisions of any other law, including the Labour Act. These ILO Conventions are therefore listed in the Schedule to Chapter 304:01 of the Labour Act but a review of Labour Laws indicates that additional measures may be required to ensure implementation.

### 6.2 The National Policy Context

CSEC, recognized as an emerging issue in Belize, is reflected in relevant national policies developed since 1999. However, none of these policies have clearly defined CSEC, or stressed the criminalization of the commercial aspects of CSEC activities. The relevant national policies are:

#### 6.2.1 National Gender Policy, 2002:

The National Gender Policy, under the section 4.3 entitled, “Violence Producing Conditions” recognizes that CSEC is a problem and contains provisions for the elimination of CSEC. Recommendation 131 calls for the more rigorous enforcement of provisions for trafficking in, employing or soliciting under-age workers to engage in commercial sex work.

This Policy also makes recommendations on related issues which, if implemented, can strengthen the institutional response to CSEC. This includes provisions for:

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● the rehabilitation of child victims of sexual abuse and other violence producing conditions
● amendments to Child Sexual Abuse Laws to ensure greater protection of children
● amendments to the Evidence Act to ensure that the process of child victims giving evidence in court is more child-friendly and child-sensitive
● extending coverage of Sexual Abuse Laws to protect boys as well as girls
● examining Child Abuse Regulations to ensure that sexual abuse investigations continue even if the parent seeks to withdraw such a complaint
● ensuring the adequacy of legal assistance to victims of violence and abuse
● instituting measures for the more timely prosecution of sexual abuse and rape cases

A Strategic Plan to ensure the implementation of the provisions of this Policy has been developed by the National Women's Commission (NWC). The NWC is responsible for the monitoring of this Policy as well as the commitments made under CEDAW.

6.2.2 The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents in Belize 2004-2015

The National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (NPA) in Belize recognizes CSEC as a problem. The Work Plan for Child Protection within the NPA explicitly states that children and adolescents “have a right to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect, unacceptable forms of child labour, sexual and commercial exploitation, trafficking, abduction, violence and exposure to threatening situation”\(^{79}\). Under this section, the Work Plan targets:

● the reduction of the incidence of child abuse in all its forms by 25%. The strengthening of child abuse prevention programmes as well as amendments to the legislative framework and the development of child protection protocols for all agencies involved in the child protection system were included. Additionally, the Work Plan calls for the implementation of a programme to track perpetrators of child abuse.

● the prevention and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as defined by national and international legislation (such as ILO Convention 182). Making relevant amendments to the Labour Act to address child labour issues, strengthening of child labour prevention programmes and implementing protocols and regulations to deal with the withdrawal and rehabilitation of victims were included.

6.2.3 National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy, 2002:
The National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy does not explicitly refer to CSEC as a problem and therefore does not make recommendations on this issue. However, the Policy recognizes the wider issue of sexual abuse of children and makes provisions for the development and strengthening of programmes aimed at education and awareness, rehabilitation and support of victims of sexual abuse. A Strategic Plan aimed at the implementation of this Policy is currently being finalized and a consultancy to develop protocols for the implementation of this Policy within the Ministry of Health has been tendered.

6.2.4 Handbook of Policies and Procedures for School Services, 2000
There is no National Education Policy in Belize. Therefore, schools are guided in the execution of responsibilities by the Handbook of Policies and Procedures for School Services (in Accordance with the Education Rules, 2000).

This Handbook does not explicitly recognize CSEC as a problem but contains provisions for the reporting of suspected cases of child abuse although it does not set out clear protocols for enforcing this regulation. Therefore, schools are guided in their approach to dealing with sexual abuse through their individual “Codes of Ethics” and internal protocols which, in most Church Managed Schools is handled between the student and the parents. These schools also expel pregnant students even when education is a.) mandatory up to the age of 14 and b.) the student is under the legal age of consent (16 years) and is therefore a victim of sexual abuse.  

6.3 The Legislative Framework
Currently the national framework for legislation which address sexual offences against children are outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONAL LAWS RELATING TO CSEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act, Chapter 98 of the Laws of Belize</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4 (1) (IX)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


81 ibid.
## NATIONAL LAWS RELATING TO CSEC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 4 (1) (XXX)</td>
<td>Common Prostitute who wanders in any street or place of resort and behaves in a riotous and indecent manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 15 (1)</td>
<td>Suppression of Brothels for persons who are a landlord, leasor or agent, or manages or acts or assists in the management of a brothel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 17 (1)</td>
<td>Search warrant or “women” or “girls” suspected of being held for immoral purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 18 (1)</td>
<td>Trading on Prostitution for any “male” who knowingly lives wholly or in part on the earnings of prostitution or solicits or importunes for the purpose of prostitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 18 (2)</td>
<td>Search warrant for the police to search a place and arrest a man living wholly or in part on the earnings of a female using the place for prostitution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Criminal Code, Chapter 101 of the Laws of Belize

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section 47</td>
<td>Carnal Knowledge of a “female” child under the age of 16 years, with or without her consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 49</td>
<td>Procuration of any “female” under the age of 18 years of age, not being a common prostitute or of known immoral character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 50</td>
<td>Procuring defilement of a female by threat or fraud or administration of drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 51</td>
<td>Household permitting defilement of young females on his premises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 62</td>
<td>Incest by a “male” of a “female”; if under 12, then incest is charged with out without the consent of the “female”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### NATIONAL LAWS RELATING TO CSEC

#### Families and Children (FACA) Act, Chapter 173 of the Laws of Belize

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>The Minister can make regulations “prohibiting the traffic of children for prostitution or pornographic purposes”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Statutory Instrument No. 38 of 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Abuse Reporting Regulations which legally mandates the reporting of all cases of suspected child abuse by nurses, doctors, or another medical personnel or person in charge and control of any hospital, or any family member, teacher, social worker, school counselor, employee of a certified children’s institution, school administrator, principal and deputy principal of any educational institution, dean or college, probation officer, police officer or any other employee or officer of the Government whose daily duties involves dealing regularly with children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Indictable Procedure Act, Chapter 96 of the Laws of Belize

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>Custody of a female under 18 years which gives the court the power to divest of a parent if the parent is found to have involved the “female” in seduction or prostitution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Evidence Act, Chapter 95 of the Laws of Belize

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>103 (2)</td>
<td>Corroboration of evidence given by a child (as in carnal knowledge cases)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Labour Act, Chapter 297 of the Laws of Belize

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54 (1)</td>
<td>A child not being capable of entering into contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 (2)</td>
<td>A young person not being capable of entering into contract except for employment in an occupation approved by a labour officer as not being injurious to the moral or physical development of young adults</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above-stated laws are now, since June of 2003, accompanied by the *Traffic in Persons (Prohibition) Act* which gives effect to the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children. This Act is most closely approximates legislation to address the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

The major issues raised regarding the legislation framework are:

- Although national legislation recognizes sexual abuse and exploitation as a crime, it does not adequately and explicitly address the issue of the commercialization of sexual relations with a male or female child\(^\text{82}\) nor does it address the wide scope of activities that comprise CSEC. The *Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act*, for example does not make “prostitution” or the buying of sexual activity as crimes and the *Indictable Procedures Act*\(^\text{83}\) does not specify child abuse as a crime, much less the sexual exploitation of children. Neither does the *Child Abuse Reporting Regulations* explicitly or comprehensively address the issue of child pornography.

- The laws contain inconsistencies in the definition of a child and have different sanctions based on age differences. For example, the *Labour Act* defines a child as under the age 14 the *Criminal Code* outlines different ages for different penalties, namely under 12, between 12-14, between 14-16 and under 18. This has created confusion among service providers who are not sure of what charges to lay on a perpetrator.

- The laws use language which can prejudice sexual offence cases against the victim, particularly the child victim. For example, the *Criminal Code* and the *Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act* use words like: “known immoral character” or “common prostitute” with regard to the victim.

- The laws are gender biased towards the girl child and assume that only a girl child can be raped or sexually exploited. No where in the law is reference made to the boy child. The *Criminal Code* and *Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act* are two of these laws that require revisions to make them gender neutral.

- The laws are not child sensitive enough, particularly with regard to: a.) the language used (moral language as discussed above) as well as with the process for giving evidence in court. For example, the *Evidence Act* does not allow children under the age of 7 to give evidence even when these children are capable of doing so. Also, the *Evidence Act* (Section 103) requires corroboration of evidence in cases of carnal knowledge involving children but does not have this same requirement for other victims of sex crimes. The Act states,

> “no accused person in a criminal case shall be liable to be convicted of any offence upon the unsworn evidence of a child unless that evidence is

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\(^\text{83}\) Ibid.
corroborated in some material particular implicating the accused person.\(^84\)

- Furthermore, the Criminal Code\(^85\) impose different penalties for sexual offences based on the age of the child. For example:
  - Section 62 of the Criminal Code imposes a sentence of 7 years on a perpetrator of incest if the victim is between 12 and 18 years and a sentence of 12 years to life imprisonment if the victim is under the age of 12.
  - Section 47 of the Criminal Code imposes a sentence of 12 years to life imprisonment on a perpetrator of carnal knowledge of a female child under the age of 16 years, with or without her consent but if the girl is above the age of 14 but under the age of 16 years the penalty is reduced to 5 years to 10 years.
  - Section 51 of the Criminal Code imposes a sentence of imprisonment for life for the owner or occupier of any premises involved in the defilement of a young female (under the age of 12) “for the purpose of being unlawfully and carnally known by any man .... any particular man or generally” but reduces this penalty significantly to 2 years imprisonment if the female is of, or above the age of 12 and under the age of 16.
  - A review of section 47 of the Criminal Code reveals that while section 47 (2) refers to “unlawful carnal knowledge” of the female child between the ages of 14-16 “there is no compelling legal reason for such breaking up of the crime of carnal knowledge in these two distinct figures”\(^86\) of “carnal knowledge” for the female child under the age of 14 and “unlawful carnal knowledge” for the female child between ages 14-16.

### 6.4 The Legislative Framework in Practice

There are no official reports of charges laid for the crime of CSEC in Belize. CSEC therefore remains one element (often an unnoticed or unrecorded element) of other sexual offences. In most cases, sexual offences against children are lodged as “carnal knowledge” or ”unlawful carnal knowledge” cases in which the commercialization of sexual activity may or may not be taking place.

The case presented below is an instance in which commercial sexual exploitation was present but not central to the criminal investigation process and not mentioned explicitly as a crime. The defendant was therefore charged with carnal knowledge:

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\(^{85}\) Shaw Diana, The Child Protection System: A Vulnerability Analysis, NCFC and UNICEF
\(^{86}\) Ibid.
Case Study
A 75 year old male defendant is charged for carnal knowledge of a 12 year old girl child. The victim visits the man’s shop to buy sweets. The defendant begins to provide the victim with sweets and pocket money in exchange for sex, which takes place in the back of the shop. Although the victim reported that the sexual activity initially hurt, she did not tell anyone. She thought it was her fault. She began to visit the shop regularly until her adopted mother discovered through her schoolmates, that she visits her “uncle’s” shop regularly. After questioning the victim, the mother goes to the police to report the case. In the presence of a police officer, the victim identifies the defendant as the perpetrator. The medical evidence gathered for the case reports that the victim has been carnally known as there are signs of decreasing tissues of hymen, signs of trauma and redness and grievous harm. But although sexual abuse has been substantiated, the verdict of the Supreme Court trial was “not guilty” for one count and a “hung trial” for the other.

Official statistics gathered from the Office of Public Prosecutions provides an analysis of the proportion of sexual offences (carnal knowledge and unlawful carnal knowledge) which result in convictions.

Figure No. 6.1
Supreme Court Criminal Cases: Unlawful Carnal Knowledge Cases 2002-2005

Of a total of 38 cases of unlawful carnal knowledge and 57 cases of carnal knowledge lodged in the Supreme Court between 2002 and 2005, only 3 cases (8%) of unlawful carnal knowledge and 11 cases (20%) of carnal knowledge resulted in convictions. Twenty-two cases (57%) of unlawful carnal knowledge and 29 cases (51%) of carnal knowledge were dropped on the basis of “nolle prosequi” and 13 (34%) of unlawful carnal knowledge and 16 (28%) cases of carnal knowledge resulted in acquittals. In 2005, 1 case resulted in a hung jury.
According to Section 174 (1) of the Indictable Procedure Act:

“At any time after receiving the documents referred to in Section 49, the Director of Public Prosecution may enter *nolle prosequi* either by stating in court or by informing the court in writing that the Crown intends that the proceedings shall no continue and there upon, the accused person shall be at once discharged in respect of the charge for which *nolle prosequi* is entered, and if he has been committed to prison, shall be released, or if he is on bail, his recognizance shall be discharged, but his discharge shall not operate as a bar to any subsequent proceedings against him on the same facts”.

The request for “nolle prosequi” was entered by the DPP’s Office for the following reasons:

1. The complainant was unwilling to testify or proceed with the case
2. The complainant left the jurisdiction or was unable to be located
3. The non-appearance of the accused or the accused being out of jurisdiction
4. The non-appearance of witnesses
5. The prosecution was unable to prove an element/s of the offence

Of concern to both key informants is the high rate of cases dropped by the Department of Public Prosecution (DPP) on the basis of “nolle prosequi”. As the following charts show, on an annual basis since 2002, approximately 50% of all cases are dropped and of the other 50% which goes to trial, another 50% result in acquittals.

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These statistics reveal that child victims of sexual abuse, including CSEC victims are not adequately protected under national legislation.

6.5 Map of Institutional Response to CSEC in Belize

These key informants further report that because CSEC remains a silent form of child exploitation which is not explicitly stated as a crime within Belize’s policy and legal framework, they encounter the problem mostly when responding to referrals made on related issues.
The following table maps out the origin of contact for institutions involved in responding to some aspect of CSEC in Belize.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Origin of Contact with CSEC in Belize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ministry of Health</strong></td>
<td>Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Clinics</td>
<td>When treating cases of teenage pregnancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Clinics</td>
<td>When treating cases of HIV and other STI's in children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Health Clinics and hospitals</td>
<td>When treating cases of child illnesses during which they suspect sexual abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Hospitals</td>
<td>When treating cases of child illnesses or conducting medical examinations in sexual abuse, mostly carnal knowledge cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychiatric Unit</td>
<td>When providing counseling and medical services to children whose mental state has been affected by sexual abuse experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) Clinics</td>
<td>When treating cases of children with HIV or STI's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ministry of Education and Education Services</strong></td>
<td>Community Liaison Unit (CLU)</td>
<td>When investigating cases of absenteeism from school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counseling Units in Schools</td>
<td>When counseling children for behavioral problems or for academic related concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals Offices in Schools</td>
<td>When dealing with school absenteeism or behavioral problems in children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Origin of Contact with CSEC in Belize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ministry of Human Development</strong></td>
<td>Department of Human Services (DHS)</td>
<td>When investigating cases of child abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse and carnal knowledge, or dealing with cases of “uncontrollable behavior” or trafficking in persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Rehabilitation Department (CRD)</td>
<td>When responding to referrals for “uncontrollable behavior”, or addressing the needs of children living in institutions and children who come in conflict with the law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women's Department (WD)</td>
<td>When responding to requests for information but they usually refer cases to the Department of Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ministry of Home Affairs</strong></td>
<td>Domestic Violence Unit (DVU)</td>
<td>When responding to allegations of rape or carnal knowledge when the alleged perpetrator is known by the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB)</td>
<td>When responding to allegations of rape or carnal knowledge when the alleged perpetrator is a stranger to the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police Prosecution Branch</td>
<td>When preparing for a case of rape, carnal knowledge or trafficking in persons to be reviewed in the Magistrates Court.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police Departments Generally</td>
<td>When rape or carnal knowledge cases are initially reported to their offices and when investigating these cases as well as during raids conducted to monitor trafficking in persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector</td>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Origin of Contact with CSEC in Belize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Legal/Judicial System</td>
<td>Office of the Department of Public Prosecution (DPP)</td>
<td>When reviewing files and conducting criminal proceedings in alleged cases of rape and carnal knowledge or trafficking in persons and in prosecuting alleged perpetrators of these crimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Prosecutors</td>
<td></td>
<td>When reviewing files of alleged cases of rape and carnal knowledge or trafficking in persons and in prosecuting alleged perpetrators of these crimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Courts</td>
<td></td>
<td>When hearing a child protection case involving the welfare of the child in child custody cases or when dealing with care orders for foster care, institutionalization or adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magistrates Courts</td>
<td></td>
<td>When hearing a rape or carnal knowledge or trafficking in persons case as part of a preliminary inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Courts</td>
<td></td>
<td>When hearing a trial case for rape or carnal knowledge or trafficking in persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Nationality</td>
<td>Immigration Department</td>
<td>When conducting raids as a part of monitoring of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act and when dealing with cases of undocumented immigrants involved in commercial sexual activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Labor</td>
<td>Labor Department</td>
<td>When responding to reports of children working in bars or brothels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Origin of Contact with CSEC in Belize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Municipal Government Bodies</strong></td>
<td>City Councils and Town Boards</td>
<td>When responding to reports of children consuming alcohol at bars and brothels, or when responding to reports of music from bars and brothels “disturbing the peace” in specific neighborhoods or to concerns of children working in bars and brothels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selected Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)</strong></td>
<td>Youth Enhancement Services (YES)</td>
<td>When addressing the personal development and counseling needs of their client population or when engaged in advocacy activities related to eliminating “sexual abuse” of children in Belize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)</td>
<td>When addressing the personal development and counseling needs of their client population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN)</td>
<td>When responding to cases of sexual abuse reported to them and when engaging in advocacy activities related to the elimination of “sexual abuse” of children in Belize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cornerstone Foundation</td>
<td>When responding to cases of sexual abuse reported to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pan American Social Marketing Organization (PASMO)</td>
<td>When conducting field work activities related to the promotion of safe sexual practices among commercial sex workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belize Family Life Association (BFLA)</td>
<td>When treating cases of teenage pregnancy, STI’s, or during HIV prevention and treatment programmes targeting commercial sex workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cases not reported or contact at Point of Contact

Origin of Contact with Institutions and service providers

Or

Cases not reported at Point of Contact

Police Dept. or community members observing sexual abuse or sexual exploitation

Cases reported to either the Police or Dept. of Human Services

Criminal cases dropped by complainant or families or cases dismissed at point of report

Criminal cases reviewed by police or families

Cases accepted for trial go to Supreme Court

Cases heard or receive a verdict

Investigation ensues and case files prepared for court (DPP reviews criminal case files)

Magistrate Court Preliminary Inquiry

Supreme Court Hearings

Verdict Rendered

Dept. of Human Services

Civil Child Protection Investigation made

Family Court Hearings

Verdict Rendered
A map of the origin of contact for CSEC reveals for example that a pregnant child may access pre-natal services during which either: a.) the Nurse observes and officially reports elements of CSEC or b.) the child victim divulges that she is a CSEC victim. The same holds true for children accessing other services or for adults reporting child protection cases to relevant institutions. The element of CSEC is therefore usually obscure and secondary to the presenting symptoms of pregnancy, STI’s, mental illness, “uncontrollable behavior”, school absenteeism, child labor, trafficking in persons, alcohol use or sexual abuse.

**Actual Cases**

1) A four year old child came for treatment of genital warts at one of Belize’s Regional Hospitals. When the attending nurse investigated the case, she found that the child was being prostituted (fondled according to the mother) in exchange for sweets and food products. The case has not been reported to the Police.

2) A twelve year old child went to a Maternal and Child Health Clinic (MCH) for pre-natal care. The child revealed that she was paid to have sex with several men, including a taxi driver who worked not far from the MCH Clinic. The Nurse reported the case to the Department of Human Services. The child was never seen again as she fled to another location. That same nurse has seen other cases but will not report due to: a.) fear of reprisal of the perpetrator and b.) the lack of protection services for children therefore putting children’s lives in danger by reporting.

3) A 15 year old young woman accesses counseling services at an organization which empowers young women. She divulges that in the past she was a CSEC victim and realizes that there are others there like her. Her case is not reported but she receives support that helps her to transform her life.

4) A 16 year old young woman who engages in commercial sex work participates in HIV prevention activities. She develops a close relationship with the member of staff of one agency. Once rapport has been established she divulges that she is below the age of 18 and is an illegal immigrant. The case worker does not report the case but works to educate her and ensure that she protects herself.

The situation of CSEC in Belize points to the critical importance of having a comprehensive, multi-sectoral, multi-dimensional approach to dealing with the CSEC cases in Belize. The mapping out of the Referral and Counter-referral system lays out some of the challenges faces by Key Informants in responding to cases of actual or suspected CSEC activities.
6.6 The Referral and Counter-Referral Systems

Currently the investigating of CSEC cases follows the protocols (written and unwritten) for investigating cases of child sexual abuse as follows:

Overall, throughout the child protection system which addresses sexual offence cases, including CSEC, there is no official referral or counter-referral systems in place, although child protection protocols are being developed to put an official system in place. However, there are cases in which the Police Department and the Department of Human Services work together to investigate a case, even though they work on parallel investigations at two different levels of the judicial system.

Sometimes cases are reported to the Police or to the Department of Human Services by other service providers who may or may not see themselves as being a part of the Child Protection System. Cases are also reported by the community or by parents or guardians of the victims.

6.6.1 At the Origin of Contact

The origin of contact with CSEC cases is most times not with the Police Department or the Department of Human Services. The origin of contact is usually when victims access services for other, sometimes related issue.

Of special interest is the low level of reporting of cases of sexual abuse and exploitation reported by Key Informants. This is the case even though there is a legal obligation to report suspected cases of child abuse. The lack of a clear definition for what constitutes child abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of children, especially as it relates to children above the age of 12, has created confusion among some Key Informants regarding whether or not a crime has been committed. This confusion is further aggravated when considering the situation of children between the ages of 16-18 since the age of legal consent for sexual activity is 16.

Some Key Informants, especially those in Belize City, report that due to fear of reprisals for reporting cases (for themselves as well as for the children) they refrain from reporting sexual abuse cases, including CSEC. In the MCH Clinics, in particular, the nurses report that they feel confronted with the moral dilemma (vs. the legal obligation) of balancing the needs of the child (for pre-natal treatment, for protection from further re-victimization and trauma, for counseling, and for financial support) vs. the need to have a criminal and civil investigation into the child’s life. The general lack of trust in the legal/judicial and child protection systems on the part of some Key Informants factors heavily into a decision to report or not report sexual abuse cases, including CSEC activities.

As reported in one Study:

“In some cases, victims came to the particular facility (health center) prior to going to the police because they do not want the police to know. The matter becomes a criminal matter to be prosecuted by the police once a case has been filed with the police. This is particularly true, according to some of the respondents, in relation to sexual abuse of children. They are generally referred from these facilities to the hospital to be seen by a doctor”.

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Because doctors in public facilities are unwilling to provide testimony in court and because doctors in private facilities wish to retain the anonymity of their clients, there is a general failure to report sexual offences to the police. This decision is left to the victim's parents of guardians.

Community members interviewed indicated that if they learn about or know about a CSEC case they would respond by either calling the or by talking to the adult for Cayo and Orange Walk Districts, although a majority had never done anything to denounce the behavior.

The perception of the system as stated in the Vulnerability Assessment of the Child Protection System can provide insights into community members’ perceptions that the child protection system is not doing enough to protect children from abuse. The issues outlined in the report mirror the issues raised by Key Informants in this study:

- Not knowing who or where to report a case of sexual abuse and even when knowing, not understanding that the case takes parallel tracks - one being a criminal case pursued by the police, DPP and the Supreme Court and the other being a civil case pursued by the Department of Human Services in the Family Court.

- Not being willing to participate in a child protection case by giving evidence because of fear of reprisal or being singled out as an informant, especially if they know the perpetrator or if the perpetrator lives or works in the same neighborhood as the informant. This situation is aggravated in Belize due to the small size of the population and the high visibility of cases in the media, leaving little or no space for anonymity of the person who has reported the crime.

- There are no alternatives available for dealing with the emotional, social and mainly the economic needs of CSEC victims.

- They believe that it does not matter if they report a case as cultural values among families and in society about CSEC will over-ride any legal consideration for CSEC as a crime.

- They feel disconnected from the Child Protection System because even when a sexual abuse case is referred to the Police of the Department of Human Services, they never hear how the case proceeds, indicating that there is not enough inter-agency coordination and no counter-referral system in place.

As a result of the above reported issues, both Key Informants and community members fail to report cases of sexual abuse, including CSEC. This means that many CSEC cases never get officially reported to the Police Department or to the Department of Human Services. The strengthening of the CSEC Institutional Response in Belize must address all these issues if it is to be effective. If not, CSEC cases will continue to go unreported.

90 Community Perception Survey conducted as a part of Component 1 of this Study.
6.6.2 At Point of Being Reported

If a CSEC case becomes officially reported it is documented in the official statistics as either: a.) sexual abuse (Department of Human Services) or b.) incest, carnal knowledge, unlawful carnal knowledge, trafficking, procuration or another crime, rather than CSEC as there is no crime of CSEC in Belize.

A case can be legally reported to the Department of Human Services or to the Police. The Department of Human Services is responsible for initiating a civil child protection investigation which is brought to trial in the Family Court. The Police Department is responsible for initiating a criminal investigation into the alleged crime to be tried in the Supreme Court. Issues presented at this level of the process include:

- At times a reported case does not get recorded or is not investigated due to a lack of resources to engage in the investigation. Sexual Offences are dealt with through the Domestic Violence Unit of the Police Department (criminal case) and the Department of Human Services (civil case). The lack of transportation to follow-up on a report is especially relevant for the Department of Human Services who must prioritize its cases. Children in extreme abuse situations and who are in crisis are prioritized over other cases. Even so the caseload of social workers is at least double what they can be expected to process. Cases not recorded or not investigated do not make their way to the court system. The lack of capacity to respond to many reports of sexual abuse has created an attitude of cynicism toward the child protection system among those who make the reports.

92 Interviews with social workers in the Department of Human Services, February, 2006.
93 Interviews with Nurses, Principals and School Liaison Officers, February and March, 2006.
• Some cases are dropped if the parent does not want to pursue the case, or if the witness does not want to collaborate in the case, the criminal case is discontinued at the point of reporting or at initiation of the investigation. The cases easiest to dismiss are the ones involving adolescent girls who have sexual relations with an older man, even if commercial sexual activities are taking place. Once the child or the family considers the perpetrator as a “boyfriend” with whom they are having a consensual sexual relationship with added economic benefits to the child and the family.94

• Furthermore, as is the perception in the Office of the DPP, if the police do not think that a complainant’s case is strong enough, they won’t take a statement or even file a complaint. They will only take statements and file a complaint if the case is strong enough to go to court. Because there are no set protocols in place for dealing with sexual offences, the police therefore make a decision on the strength of the case based on how they feel about the evidence or if they believe the complainant.95

6.6.3 At Point of Conducting Investigations

The objectives of the two parallel investigations conducted by the Police Department and the Department of Human Services are different96. One is to prosecute a crime and sanction the perpetrator and the other is to ensure the child’s welfare and safety. The evidence requirements for each of the parallel investigation and prosecution tracks are therefore very different with less stringent requirements for the civil case than the criminal case. During these parallel investigations, it is expected that there will be collaboration between the Police Department and the Department of Human Services. This however, is not always the case.

95 Interview with staff at the DPP, March, 2006.
There is a lack of inter-departmental protocols (these are currently being developed) reported by both the Police Department and the Department of Human Services. They report that at times they are not aware of cases being pursued by the other agency.

In cases in which there is collaboration, the social worker functions as an *amicus curiae* and prepares the family and the child for the criminal case as well as submits during the course of the investigation a social work report which becomes a part of the criminal case file. Approximately 50% of a random sample of 12 case files reviewed contained a social worker report.

In addition to working with the Police Department, the social worker also prepares the child and the family for the civil case to be tried in the Family Court. Some issues raised in relation to this step in the child protection system are:

- The level of capacity for investigation and evidence gathering among Police Officers is limited. They have no forensic investigation training and even for officers who have some training, there is no DNA testing\(^\text{97}\) done in the country to corroborate or dispute the testimony of victims. The weight of the case therefore depends heavily on the testimony of victims and perpetrators and on the medical information presented on medico-legal forms.

- Sexual Offences are investigated by either the Domestic Violence Unit within the Police Department, or in some cases the Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB) in Belize City\(^\text{98}\). However, the Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) is accessible only during normal working hours. Outside of normal working hours (8 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. from Monday to Fridays) the DVU Office is closed leaving no other semi-private space in which to record statements and begin to gather evidence for the case. The mere lack of privacy in reporting these cases is a deterrent to victims pursuing legal action against perpetrators\(^\text{99}\).

- Even when DVU officers are trained to deal with investigating sexual abuse cases, the practice of rotating police officers across Districts creates a loss in investment in training of DVU officers who are transferred to work in other Districts or to engage in other assignments\(^\text{100}\).

- Medical officers state that, especially in rural communities and in health centers and hospital facilities, there is usually no specialist to examine the victim\(^\text{101}\). This has been corroborated by the Police Department which reports that sometimes victims must wait overnight or over the weekend until they are able to be seen by a gynecologist since this specialist service

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\(^{99}\) Interviews with the Police Department, February, 2006.


is not always available at District hospitals and health centers. As stated by McKay, “there is a lack of sensitivity in the examination process particularly with respect to minor-aged victims of sexual violence. Medical attention is not prompt and creates difficulties with respect to the collection of forensic evidence.”

- During the investigative process, medical officers, particularly those who are on short-term contracts are unwilling to testify in court. This is reported to have resulted in some medical officers who conduct examinations deliberately making lesser diagnosis in the hope that the case will not go to trial. The lack of legal training of the prosecution and the lack of forensic medical examinations by medical personnel compound this issue since neither party ensures that all evidence gathering procedures are followed when completing the medical examinations.

Recognizing these constraints and knowing that CSEC must be treated as a part of organized crime, Key Informants, such as police officers, magistrates and social workers across the country, suggested that the police use its top officers or get external technical assistance to set up “sting” operations to catch CSEC perpetrators. They proposed that this “sting” operation follow the guidelines of the popular “Dateline” news series on Sexual Abuse which has been conducted in the United States and broadcast widely through NBC.

6.6.4 At the Point of Preliminary Inquiry in the Magistrates Court

Before a summary offence or an indictable offence goes to the Supreme Court, the preliminary inquiry is held in the Magistrates Court. The Magistrate’s Court then commits the case for trial with or without consideration of the evidence gathered. However, many cases are thrown “out of court” by Magistrates due to:

- The length of time it takes for a case to come up for review. The Magistrates and the Police report that case files tend to get “stuck” at the

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102 Ibid
103 Interviews with social workers in the Department of Human Services and reported in Shaw, Diana, The Child Protection System: A Vulnerability Analysis, NCFC and UNICEF, 2004
104 This was stated strongly by the Police Officers in the Orange Walk District. Social workers and nurses interviewed also referred to the Dateline Series and gave the researchers information of the date and time of the next Dateline show on this topic.
DPP’s office. They are not usually aware of why the files are delayed as there is a general lack of communication on this matter\textsuperscript{105}. In the interest of justice, cases that are delayed for an unreasonable amount of time are “struck out” since there is no fair reason to violate a defendant’s right to the administration of justice in a timely manner. According to the DPP’s office, incomplete investigations or weak evidence and sometimes the lack of human resources create major delays in the review and submission of case files for consideration in the preliminary inquiries.\textsuperscript{106}

- **Police and civil prosecutors** are not legally trained and at times lack information about evidentiary procedures which, if not followed, can result in evidence not being considered during trials. As was reported by the staff at the DPP, “The problem begins with the police who do not know what to ask the doctor to find. They never ask for the item of clothing that was worn at the time of the assault”\textsuperscript{107}. The Department of Public Prosecutions recognizes this; they acknowledge that they are supposed to provide legal counsel to police and civilian prosecutors\textsuperscript{108}. However, the limited human resource pool of crown counsels within the DPP makes this technical assistance need a mere good intention that cannot be translated into action.

- The Magistrates in the Family Court and the Magistrates Court are not qualified attorneys-at-law. This puts them at a disadvantage in considering evidence in a case when the defendant is legally represented\textsuperscript{109}. As stated by Shaw, “the magistrate is often not aware of all the evidentiary procedures required to be adhered to and is unwilling to rule against defense attorney who raise procedural objections”\textsuperscript{110}. Also, the Attorneys who represent defendants find multiple legal avenues for postponing cases, resulting in adjournments. When cases linger on at a slow pace, the chances of the victim and the victim’s family dropping the case is increased in the interest of simply “moving on with their lives”.\textsuperscript{111}

- Due to the long delays in processing sexual offence cases at the level of the Magistrates court, victims tend to drop the charges against alleged perpetrators. Sometimes, victims and their families find a way to “settle out of court” which implies remuneration of some kind or marriage of the victim with the perpetrator (mostly in Mestizo cultures)\textsuperscript{112}. According to Shaw, “Police suspect that the cases are being withdrawn because the parents and guardians are accepting monetary gifts from perpetrators to discontinue proceedings”.\textsuperscript{113} A fear of reprisal of the victim and his or her family and the long delays in court proceedings were the reasons cited to discontinuing with the case.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{105} Interview with Magistrates, particular from the District Towns. February, 2006.
\textsuperscript{106} Interview with staff from the DPP, February and March, 2006
\textsuperscript{107} Interview with staff from the DPP, March, 2006.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid
\textsuperscript{111} Interviews with Magistrates and reported in Shaw, Diana, *The Child Protection System: A Vulnerability Analysis*, NCFC and UNICEF, 2004
\textsuperscript{112} Interviews with the Police Department and Magistrates, February, 2006.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid
6.6.5 At the Point of Prosecution in the Supreme Court

When sexual offence cases are not “struck out” by the Magistrates Court, the case goes to the Supreme Court for trial by jury. Approximately 25% of the cases that reach the Supreme Court result in a conviction (guilty verdict). The other 75% result in either the case being dropped (approximately 50% nolle prosequi or not to proceed with the prosecution of the case) on request of the Department of Public Prosecution (DPP) or an acquittal (not guilty verdict for approximately 25% of cases). Only the DPP’s office has authority to withdraw or initiate a case at the level of the Supreme Court.

Some of the issues raised at the level of the prosecution of cases are summarized by the social worker cited below:

“So many people working on the cases...sometimes the people don’t get prosecuted. Social service just sits down and holds their head and cry because they don’t have any control over the prosecution of people. What social services control is the protection of the child ... But many of those cases are not as simple as they seem from the outside. There are so many issues going on and I know as a social worker ... Sometimes the people fight the cases from their perspective ... the father and we are going into the evening when they put the father on the stand and the father looked at the child straight in the child’s eyes and asked her what ... and she just crumbled.”

The same social worker was also cited as she explained a case involving a 5-year old in which the accused jumped bail due to the provision in the law. In the words of the social worker:

“You know why the case fell out because the magistrate could not legally deny the person bail and the minute the man got bail, do you know what he did? He jumped the country and everybody was working to timing. The social worker, the police and the family everything. But legally the magistrate could not deny him bail because in this country the only thing they can deny you bail for is murder. So having to adhere to the justice system, this man jump - gone. He was convicted but he is gone. Got convicted on absentia. Who will serve this sentence?”

115 Statistics provided by the DPP for the years 2002-2005.
The social worker, in the above cases, points to the following issues:

- The Evidence Act which needs to become more child friendly by having in-camera and on-camera provisions to allow children to give evidence against an alleged perpetrator and removing provisions for children’s testimony to be corroborated by other evidence. This issue has been raised in a White Paper\textsuperscript{117} presented for discussion by the Office of the Attorney General.

- The provisions for granting bail in the case of sexual offences against children are not stringent enough for sexual offence cases, particularly cases against children.

- Legal training for social workers and civil prosecutors so that both can understand the evidentiary requirements for prosecuting sexual offence cases in the Supreme Court, in particular, cases involving children.

Additional issues raised in relation to the resolution of DPP and the Supreme Court cases are:

- The lack of a “coherent, rational or sustainable legal aid”\textsuperscript{118} service available in Belize, particularly for people living outside Belize City. This causes the unequal representation of parties in a criminal case. The White Paper on Criminal Justice Reform also addresses this issue.\textsuperscript{119}

- The Office of the DPP is staffed with only 4 Crown Counsel to serve the entire country. Only three are at work at any particular time. They therefore move from one major case to another, leaving no time to conduct investigations, review files that are incomplete or return to files that are being sent back and forth to the Police Department. This means that they don’t have the human resource capacity to adequately prepare a case for prosecution, particular in instances in which the evidence is weak or if the defendant cannot be found. The DPP also report having no existing relationship with the Ministry of Human Development, medical institutions or the Women’s Department for communication on the progress of cases or for follow-up activities.

- Regardless of the outcome of the criminal cases, the DPP reports that victims have no access to adequate help. There are: a.) no rapid studies on the socio-economic situation of the child and his/her family, b.) no social help to counter-act the risk factors that create vulnerabilities for CSEC, c.) no counseling or rehabilitative services for victims and d.) no safe houses in the most extreme cases where the entire extended family is totally absent or dysfunctional. According to one crown counsel, all of her cases have resulted in the victim dropping out of school. For this reason, they see the importance of having a more efficient system of justice for victims and for the development of support services to complement the criminal process that the victim must endure.

\textsuperscript{117} Attorney General’s Ministry, \textit{Consultation Paper on Criminal Justice Reform}, Belmopan, 2005
\textsuperscript{119} Attorney General’s Ministry, \textit{Consultation Paper on Criminal Justice Reform}, Belmopan, 2005
6.6.6 At the Point of Dealing with the Civil Case in the Family Court

The Civil Case taken to the Family Court focuses on protecting the welfare of the child. The investigation therefore includes “home studies” conducted by social workers as well as interviews with the child and other relevant persons to assess the child’s level of safety. The social workers also recommend the best alternative care for the child as well as measures to be taken for rehabilitation purposes.

Although cases are heard in the Family Courts across the country, in all Districts except the Belize District, the Magistrates Courts double as Family Courts. Family Court personnel are trained to deal specifically with family cases, particularly in relation to children. The Magistrates Court does not have this same training. As a result there is a reported lack of sensitivity in Magistrates Courts towards sexual abuse cases involving children\textsuperscript{120}. This has resulted in evidence issues being dealt with very differently by the Family/Magistrates Courts across the country, therefore pointing to the lack of uniformity in the procedures involving sexual abuse cases in the Family Court. As reported in Shaw’s Study:

“The problem persists because magistrates are guided in their interpretation of the FACA by their own discretion or by the Family Court Handbook. There are no rules to the FACA regulating procedures in the Family Court and in the Family jurisdiction of the Magistrate Courts, this is a major lacuna in the child protection system that must be addressed.”\textsuperscript{121}

One of the primary differences in cases addressed in the Family Court is that evidentiary requirements are different from those needed to prosecute a criminal case in the Supreme Court. Therefore regardless of the outcome of the criminal case, the civil case can provide some redress for the victim. However, as reported by the staff at the DPP, the gaps in services for sexual abuse victims limits the level of care that can be provided to protect the welfare of the child.

The referral system during and after the results of the criminal and civil cases is therefore weak due to:

- The lack of resources within existing institutions for addressing CSEC or even to monitor CSEC cases, such as economic help to those families unable to provide clothes and food for their children.

\textsuperscript{120} Interviews with social workers in the Department of Human Services, February, 2006 and reported in Shaw, Diana, The Child Protection System: A Vulnerability Analysis, NCFC and UNICEF, 2004

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid
• Not having services to which to refer the victim and his or her family nor the perpetrator. Major gaps reported by Key Informants were:
  - Not having a safe house for CSEC victims. This is a problem currently being encountered for trafficking victims as well
  - Not having counseling services available to CSEC victims or any other victim of sexual abuse
  - Not having rehabilitative programmes for CSEC victims. The only services available exist within institutions such as the Youth Enhancement Services (YES) and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) since the Child Care Centers, the Youth Hostel and the Belize Youth Cadet Corp do not cater to this type of client.

6.7 Special Programmatic Opportunities:

As mentioned above, CSEC is an emerging issue for which a coordinated institutional response is non-existent. Within the public sector, CSEC cases were observed by service providers mostly in the health, education and human development sectors as well as by the police and the judiciary. However very few cases could be tracked from the point of origin of contact with a service provider to the point of a verdict being rendered in the Supreme Court. In most cases, key informants who had come in contact with CSEC victims (excluding the police, human services and the judiciary), either: a.) did not report the case to the police or human service or b.) if they made a report, exclaimed frustration with the slow and, in their perception, ineffective response of the police and human services. They recognized that their frustrations were affected by the general lack of human, financial and other resources within these agencies that must prioritize the delivery of services.

There are however, a few special programmes within the Government and Non-Government Sectors worthy of mentioned as they can contribute significantly to the response to CSEC in Belize. These organizations are members of the National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC), a statutory body legally mandated to coordinate and monitor Belize’s compliance with the commitments of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). These include:

• The Ministry of Human Development (MHD)
• The Youth Enhancement Services (YES)
• The National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN)
• The Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA)

One other organization which is not a member of the NCFC that merits mentioning, within the context of CSEC, is the:

• Pan American Social Marketing Organization (PASMO)
• The Belize Family Life Association (BFLA)
6.8 The National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC)

The National Committee for Families and Children (NCFC) first started out as a Coordinating Committee on Children (NCCC) established in 1990 to advise the Government on services and support to families and children and to monitor Belize’s compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In 1994, a Cabinet decision upgraded the status of the NCCC by appointing a Minister as chairperson. The NCFC was later given legal status through Statutory Instrument (S.I) No. 23 of 1999, included as Part XII, Sections 148-150 of the Families and Children’s Act, Chapter 173 of the Laws of Belize.

The NCFC has a twelve member Committee of members from both the Government and Non-Government Sectors. The members are appointed by the Minister of Human Development. The NCFC is legally mandated to do the following:\footnote{S.I. No. 23 of 1999, Part XII, \textit{Families and Children Act}, Chapter 173 of the Laws of Belize.}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Promoting, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, and ensuring that the Government meets its national and international obligations as party to the Convention;
\item Promoting, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the goals reached at the world summits on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, through the Belize National Plan for Human Development, Children and Youth;
\item Promoting public awareness on the national legislation affecting families and children, and facilitating effective and efficient planning and coordination of efforts among and between non-governmental organizations, service clubs, churches and other organizations involved in the provision of services for families and children;
\item Ensuring that the various institutions, communities and homes in Belize understand and apply the standards of protection and care of children set out in the Act and regulations made hereunder and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child within their institutional, community or family setting;
\item Recommending and advocating to, and at different levels and institutions of, the Belizean society for:
\begin{enumerate}
\item Policies for the care, protection and maintenance of families and children in Belize;
\item The contribution of resources from the international community and the local private sector.
\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}

Currently, the NCFC is one of Belize’s most active and dynamic national planning, coordinating and monitoring multi-disciplinary and multi-agency bodies. The NCFC is now guided in the fulfillment of its legal mandate by the recently developed National Plan of Action on Children and Adolescents (NCFC). The eradication of the worst forms of child labor, including CSEC, is outlined as a key strategy for Child Protection in Belize.

The NCFC, though with a small staff and limited resources, has the capacity to facilitate research, social dialogue and policy development on issues related
to children and adolescents. This well recognized and respected agency, along with its primary allies, the Ministry of Human Development (MHD) and the Youth Enhancement Services (YES), lie at the center of current efforts to create awareness and programme and policy actions aimed at addressing CSEC in Belize. Because the NCFC recognizes that CSEC must be addressed in an integrated manner and in conjunction with other issues raised in the NPA, its facilitating role is critical and must be supported. This will ensure the sustainability of policy and programme outcomes resulting from this study.

6.9 The Ministry of Human Development

The Ministry of Human Development is divided into three Departments: the Department of Human Services, the Women’s Department and the Community Rehabilitation Department. Of the three departments, the Department of Human Services is legally mandated to respond to cases of child abuse and exploitation. However limited human and financial resources consistently undermine even the best plans and intentions for effective service delivery.

The DHS, because of its resource constraints, prioritizes protective services to children who are at immediate risk at the time of the referral. According to Shaw’s report, “the sexual acting out of adolescents” merits a Priority III response, indicating that a response is required within 10 days of receiving a referral. But with an individual case load of approximately 60 open cases at different levels of advancement, social workers report finding themselves struggling to keep current in their investigation and reporting of child abuse cases. Because there is a low level of cooperation from family members in the investigation of CSEC cases, social workers become frustrated in their investigations. The situation is exacerbated for cases referred from rural communities since a persistent lack of transportation influences the investigation process and therefore the final outcome of the case.

Another major area of concern for the DHS is the need to dearth of rehabilitative services for child victims of abuse and exploitation. The Department now has one professionally trained counselor on staff in Belize City but this is far from adequate given the numbers of children requiring this service. The Community Rehabilitation Department operates a Community Counseling Center in Belize City. This center has one “counselor in training” and is not equipped to deal with the myriad requests of assistance from the general community. Currently the mental health needs of the population are being met by psychiatric nurse practitioners stationed in each district. This, however, is not enough as the children are in need of psycho-therapeutic counseling services making counseling services one of the most serious gaps in service delivery within the institutional response. As stated in Shaw’s report:

“clients of DHS also indicated that they have encountered residual issues in children who have suffered abuse once contact with DHS is complete but do not have adequate counseling or support systems to assist with those problems and the DHS is unable to provide long term follow up once the abuse has been addressed.” 123

One area receiving attention within the Department of Human Services is the development of a Departmental database of child abuse cases which can be used to analyze patterns and trends in child abuse statistics across ages, years and regions. Key informants propose that this database be extended into a national child abuse registration system patterned off the domestic violence registration system in Belize.

Belize is also linked to the Central American regional database for tracking missing children. This forms part of the regional response to eliminating trafficking in persons.

Despite the constraints, the DHS still sees opportunities for progress through its active participation in policy development initiatives. The DHS, for example, was one of the key stakeholders in the development of the NPA. The DHS also continues to provide input into the development of national and sector-specific protocols to address the situation of child abuse within all relevant agencies. This includes primarily the Police, Department of Public Prosecution, Magistracy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Human Development. These protocols, along with awareness building, training and the development of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are critical components of a multi-sectoral CSEC response in Belize.

6.10 The Youth Enhancement Services (YES) - Member of the NCFC

The Youth Enhancement Services (YES) is a Non-Government Organization. Across the country, this is the only Organization engaged in a sustained advocacy campaign to comprehensively address the issue of child abuse and exploitation in Belize. CSEC issues are mainstreamed into this campaign. The campaign, developed in 2004, evolved as a need identified by young women who access the services of YES. The campaign benefited from consultation and input by legal and social sector agencies as well as from victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. The campaign has the support of the National Committee for Families and Children, the Ministry of Human Development, The National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect and other agencies.

In November, 2004, the YES published its Position Paper on Reform to Laws and Enforcement of Sexual Abuse. In this paper, YES outlined the rationale for the development of its campaign, the objectives of the campaign and offered concrete recommendations for addressing child abuse and exploitation in Belize.

The Rationale:
The Position Paper states that:

“This abuse has become an everyday occurrence. Older men cruise both our high schools and primary schools for sex. Girls trade sex for school fees. Mothers sacrifice their daughters to abuse because the perpetrator provides the household with money or food. Young women are gang raped in a ritual know as a “train”. Most of these “everyday acts” go unreported.”

**Campaign Objectives:**
The Campaign has both long-term and short-term objectives:

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<tr>
<th>Long-Term Objectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>● To reduce, and eventually eliminate, sexual abuse and exploitation of young women and girls</td>
<td>● To have more effective laws and enforcement of sexual abuse</td>
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<td>● To ensure that laws and enforcement are truly effective in protecting young women and girls form sexual abuse</td>
<td>● To have more young women stand up for themselves and be aware of their rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>● To empower young women and girls to protect themselves and make positive choices concerning their sexuality</td>
<td>● To have more public understanding that abuse is wrong and that exploitation and abuse are connected</td>
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**Concrete Recommendations:**
Key informants perceive that support for the YES campaign remains an imperative given its relevance to addressing CSEC in Belize. A synopsis of the recommendations is provided below. They target many of the issues raised in this study.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Improve the collection of medical evidence in sexual abuse cases

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<td>Adopt the Medical Certificate developed by the NCFC for use in all medical examinations for sexual abuse cases</td>
<td>A system of doctors specializing in gathering evidence and giving testimony in sexual abuse cases should be developed and implemented countrywide. The Government should contract individual physicians or clinics to play this role. An appropriate funding mechanism must be developed to support this system.</td>
<td>Plans to acquire DNA testing should be implemented as soon as possible. When DNA testing is available in Belize, sexual abuse cases should receive priority.</td>
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## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 2. Improve procedures for gathering evidence and taking statements in sexual abuse cases

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<td>The police should develop a new protocol for gathering evidence in sexual abuse cases. This protocol should be developed in collaboration with the Department of Human Services, the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Family Court, and the NGOs concerned with the interests of abuse victims.</td>
<td>The police should develop and implement a new training programme on the issue of sexual abuse. This training should be developed with organizations working with abuse victims. It should incorporate a gender analysis of the issue of sexual abuse as well as sensitize police officers to work more effectively with abuse victims. Training should be provided to both new recruits and existing officers.</td>
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### 3. Provide increased support for victims in the court process

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<td>Clear terms of reference for the amicus curiae should be developed by the Department of Human Services with input from the Director of Public Prosecution, the Family Court, and the Supreme Court. These terms of reference should include the ability of the amicus curiae to speak in court to protect the interests of the child. An orientation session should be organized to familiarize prosecutors, judges and those acting as amicus curiae with the terms of reference for the position.</td>
<td>The Government should contract attorneys with the responsibility to represent the victim in sexual abuse cases.</td>
<td>Sexual abuse cases should not be dropped solely at the request of the non-offending parent. In cases where the request is made to drop charges, the Department of Human Services should make a recommendation to the court on whether the case should proceed.</td>
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## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4. Address problems related to inadequate systems in the Districts

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<tr>
<td>Branches of the Family Court should be established in all Districts.</td>
<td>One additional social worker should be available to handle abuse cases in each district, bringing the total to 2 per district. Social workers in the districts must have a vehicle assigned to them for priority use in the identification and support of abuse victims.</td>
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</table>

### 5. Ensure that the protection of the child does not solely depend on a successful criminal prosecution.

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<th>5-A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Court should develop guidelines for dealing with the protection of children if a alleged offender is not convicted. These guidelines should require additional input (such as a psychologist’s report) into any decision concerning visitation and access to the child. Sessions should be organized to sensitize magistrates on the implementation of the guidelines.</td>
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### 6. Ensure that juries are properly instructed in cases of carnal knowledge.

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<tr>
<td>Judges must ensure that juries are instructed that consent of the victim is not a defense in cases of carnal knowledge.</td>
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### 7. Review and revise the laws dealing with sexual offences.

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<tr>
<td>The Government should establish a task force to review all laws related to sexual offences and to make recommendations for legal reform. The task force should be specifically directed to take into account the impact of gender in its recommendations. In particular, the impact of gender inequality on women and girls must be addressed, as well as the need to provide protection for male children from sexual abuse. The task force should include representatives from with the legal and social service systems, as well as from NGOs and other organizations working with women and children. In addition to its review of the current laws of Belize, the task force should consider models from other jurisdictions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8. Address specific issues related to testimony and other evidence in cases of very young children

8-A

The Family Court, in collaboration with the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Supreme Court, should develop a protocol for gathering evidence and soliciting testimony in cases involving young victims. Government should provide the resources to the Court to investigate methods used in other jurisdictions that could be applied in Belize.

### 9. Develop and implement an innovative model for providing financial support and training to families where an offender is removed from the home.

9-A

The Department of Human Services should convene a forum with the goal of developing an innovative approach to providing financial assistance to families in need due to the removal of the breadwinner because of sexual abuse. This approach must recognize the family’s need for confidentiality in developing such a plan. The forum should include all sectors that might contribute to this approach - churches, service groups, representatives of government, etc. The government should provide the Department with the additional resources needed to finance the forum.

### Services

In addition to engaging in a sustained advocacy campaign, YES provides education and rehabilitation services to adolescent women who have dropped out of the formal educational system. CSEC is a reality in the lives of some of the adolescents who turn to YES for assistance. YES provides personal development and skill training programmes as well as ongoing counseling and follow-up services for their clients.

### 6.11 The National Organization for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN)

The National Organization for Child Abuse and Neglect (NOPCAN) is a Non-Government Organization dedicated to creating to addressing issues related to child abuse in Belize. NOPCAN has traditionally facilitated mass public awareness on this issue and was the organization which put child abuse on the national agenda during the late 1980’s and early 1990’s.

Over the last five years, NOPCAN has struggled with issues of institutional sustainability which required a down-scaling of its programmes. However, NOPCAN continues to create
public awareness on all forms of child abuse, including CSEC, and promote the use of alternative forms of discipline for children. This organization has also taken an interest in child labor issues, including its worst forms, such as CSEC. As a result, CSEC victims have approached NOPCAN to request assistance and support for ending the abuse.

6.12 Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA)

The Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), provides education and skills training programmes to adolescent women who have dropped out of school. This includes victims of CSEC, and those vulnerable to being CSEC victims. As noted by the staff of YWCA:

“Many of our girls would not survive in the school system. They would not make it due to the things they have suffered... they feel the sugar daddy will provide”

The demand for counseling and rehabilitative services among YWCA’s clients is growing as more young women are being empowered to break the silence of child sexual abuse and exploitation.

6.13 PASMO

The Pan American Social Marketing Organization (PASMO) is committed to reducing HIV/AIDS risk behavior through the use of safe sex methods. The work of PASMO includes the promotion of condom use accompanied by education and other interventions aimed to risk reduction. One of the primary target groups for the PASMO programme is commercial sex workers.

The PASMO experience with commercial sex workers has allowed them to build a strong rapport with this sector of the population who remain wary of public sector interventions. Among its client base, are Belizean and immigrant child victims of sexual exploitation who operate as commercial sex workers both within and outside of established brothels. PASMO therefore has the potential to reach CSEC cases among the Belizean as well as among the immigrant population.

6.14 Belize Family Life Association (BFLA)

The Belize Family Life Association (BFLA), like PASMO, forms a part of the National Response to HIV and AIDS in Belize. They provide personal development opportunities and family health education for adolescents. Through this medium they come in contact with information regarding CSEC cases among their client population.

The BFLA also provides voluntary counseling and testing services to communities, particularly women. Over the last three years, the BFLA has become interested in working closely with commercial sex workers to reduce risk behaviors that transmit HIV. Through this work, they have come in contact with CSEC cases. The opportunities for immigrant CSEC victims to approach the BFLA supersede that of public sector health organizations since immigrant women (mostly illegal immigrants) are fearful of accessing services through government agencies.

125 Interview with the staff of the Young Women’s Christian Association, February, 2006
CHAPTER 7 - Conclusions and Recommendations
7.0 Introduction

The overall conclusion of the Study is that CSEC is occurring in Belize and is manifested in varied forms. However, CSEC is still treated as a “hush-hush” phenomenon. CSEC is not characterized as a specific crime against children and gendered notions of “masculinity” and “femininity” provide an enabling environment for the crime to thrive. There is general consensus that poverty is a major contributor to the existence of CSEC, and concern about this is expressed in the context of an uncertain economic climate in which austerity measures limit resources for an effective institutional response.

All key informants indicated that there isn’t a planned or coordinated approach to dealing with CSEC across sectors. They reported a general sense of frustration regarding the institutional response to CSEC in Belize. They advised that although legal reform is a critically important aspect of strengthening the Institutional Response, legal reform is only a first step to reduce the level of CSEC in Belize, ensure the protection of children who access the Child Protection System or lead to the rehabilitation of victims. The approach must be comprehensive and strategic and must consider the needs of the victim from the point of first contact with the Child Protection System, whether through a Government or a Non-Government Organization.

7.1 The Perceptions of Key Informants and Community Members:

- CSEC is perceived as a culturally accepted practice rather than as a specific crime against children
- Key informants report a deep fear of reprisal by the perpetrators of CSEC especially given a high crime rate in Belize
- The status or social position of some suspected perpetrators deter the reporting of CSEC
- Key informant hold the perception that reporting CSEC will not result in an adequate institutional response regarding the conviction of perpetrators or the rehabilitation of victims
- The condition of poverty among parents and children creates vulnerabilities for CSEC to occur
- There is a lack of socio-economic alternatives available to children and families whose poverty situation can become exacerbated by the reporting of CSEC activities
- After poverty, community people see low morals in adults as a key cause of CSEC. However, they also blamed the victims, the children themselves, who they saw as the cause of CSEC through their ‘immoral behavior’ or their ‘wanting or liking’ sex. Men held this view to a greater extent than women. This attitude has implications for handling CSEC cases in the child protection and judicial systems.
- While a majority of people signified that they would take action against CSEC in the form of reporting it to the police, most of them had not done anything about it.
• The majority of community people felt that perpetrators of CSEC should be punished, but a large number also perceived them to be mentally ill.

• Commercial sexually exploited children are perceived to be generally poor, even though it is acknowledged that children from better off families are also involved. Poverty notwithstanding, the lack of a healthy family support system predisposes children to become victims of CSE. In almost all case files reviewed for this study, victims of sexual offences were reported to lack a healthy family support system.

• Cultural values in some communities were believed to also play a critical role in sex crimes against children. The Mennonite, Maya, and Mestizo cultures were singled out numerous times as having an inclination for accepting the practice of adults engaging in sexual activity with children. This was also seen as being more prevalent in rural communities.

• The current environment makes it difficult to name, investigate, and prosecute CSEC cases in Belize. Much would have to change if we are to successfully address this issue.

7.2 The Experience of CSEC Victims

• This study revealed victims of CSEC to be boys and girls although the majority of victims interviewed were girls (21 girls and 9 boys). CSEC victims were both Belizean and foreign-born with the majority interviewed being Belizean. The victims were of all ages although the majority of them were over 12 years old. Two (2) were under the age of 12 and they were 4, 12 years of age. Another 6 victims were between 14 and 15 and the majority were between ages 16 and 17.

• Seven (7) females and 3 male victims in the study had children. Of those who had children, half had their children living with them. One-third or 10 of the victims currently lived with their mothers while most had never lived with their father.

• None of the victims had completed a secondary school education either because they could not afford it or had not done well in school.

• All the victim respondents in this study reported having experienced economic hardship at some point in their lives. For 20 of the 30 victims CSEC was their only source of income. They used the money obtained through sexual exploitation for meeting their basic needs.

• A total of 14 victims (out of 30) had run away from home at least one time. Those that returned home did so of their own volition. A very small percentage returned home through the initiative of their mother and/or the police.

• Sexual intercourse was the primary activity victims of CSEC engaged in although some were also paid to dance naked, pose for naked photographs and/or take part in a pornographic video. Although none indicated that they were victims of trafficking, 17 out of the 30 victims (10 females and 7 males) said that they had been approached to be taken to another country or another part of Belize to engage in sexual intercourse.
• Eleven (11) of the 30 victims reported having had at least one forced sexual experience before turning 12 years and except for 2 cases, all victims had their first CSEC encounter at, or above, the age of 12. Almost all victims suffered their abuse in silence.

• Physical and psychological aggression was a reality for 14 and 12 of victims, respectively. Roughly half of the victims also endured insults and humiliation from the public in relation to CSEC. A significant number (11 out of 30) also said they were scorned by family members.

• Most victims reported having used addictive substances, primarily alcohol and to a lesser extent tobacco and cocaine on a weekly basis. Two (2), 4 and 1 victim, respectively, reported consuming alcohol, tobacco and other drugs on a daily basis.

• Both male and female victims engaged in high risk sexual behavior by not using condoms at all or consistently. Only 8 out of 30 victims (5 females and 3 males) reported that their male clients always used a condom. At least 7 of them had had an STI.

• The overwhelming majority of client-exploiters were Belizean men who resided in the same district as their victims. Although the men were of all ages, most of them were between the ages of 30 and 50 years.

• Victims for the most part met their client-exploiters without the use of intermediaries. Instead contact was made either in person or by phone or through the internet. The intermediaries, for those who had, were relatives, friends, boy friends or bar owners.

• CSEC victims hardly had any contact with child protective services. The very few instances in which they accessed services were for basic needs such as food, health and shelter.

7.3 The Perceptions of Adult Males

• The patriarchal culture of male dominance and control that permeates Belizean society gives greater priority to the fulfillment of men's sexual needs. This manifests itself in men exercising ownership and control over women and children.

• Men's concept of masculinity and male sexuality are rooted in how they are socialized throughout their lives. They are socialized to privilege their 'manhood' even at the expense of violating other people's rights. This makes it possible for them to engage in sexual activities with children, and specifically in CSEC.

• Some men expressed the idea of children and women as tempters, reflecting a predominantly religious belief that women, like Eve in the Bible, are responsible for making men “sin”. Men absolved themselves of taking responsibility for their own sexual behavior by categorizing girls and women as being either “good” or “bad” (the “virgin Mary/ Mary Magdalene” dichotomy). The ‘hot’ young girls were seen to cause a man to sin.

• Men rationalize sex crimes against children, but the clandestine manner in
which these crimes take place gives a sense that at some level, men are aware that having sex with children is not okay.

- Some men make a distinction between sex with prepubescent and pubescent children. Sex with prepubescent children or children less than 90 lbs. is repugnant to them. However, children who pass what men define as a “90 lbs. test” are seen to be ready for sexual encounters regardless of their age.

- Although men said they did not support the idea of having sex with children over 14 years, they referred to the legal age for consensual sex (16 years) as justification for those who engaged in CSEC. They also said that it was difficult for a man to know the age of a child since the child could lie about her age. Thus, there was social tolerance towards CSEC when the adolescents were between 16-18 years.

- Like other respondents in this study the men perceived poverty to be the major cause of CSEC.

- While sexist attitudes and beliefs predispose men to become client-exploiters, poverty and unstable home environments create vulnerabilities for children to become victims of CSEC.

- There was awareness among men that the laws needed to have a clear definition of what constitutes a child and to provide stiffer penalties for sex crimes against children.

- Men also acknowledged the need to be better educated about sexuality.

### 7.4 The Policy and Legislative Framework:

- Although Belize has signed numerous international agreements that recognize CSEC as an emerging issue and although elements of CSEC are recognized in the National Gender Policy and the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents, these do not carry the power of law which explicitly makes CSEC a crime.

- CSEC or the commercial aspects of sexual exploitation is not explicitly stated as a crime under the laws of Belize as well as the fact that CSEC is not perceived to be a crime, especially if it involves adolescents who report that they have consented to sexual relations with an older person, even if for cash, food or gifts.

- Because the commercialization of sexual activity is not adequately addressed in the laws, the perpetrator of this crime is not seen as a criminal.

- The wording of laws is gender biased using language indicating the female as the victim and the male as the perpetrator. This does not provide for boys and males to be raped or prostituted and therefore victimized for CSEC activities or for women to be tried as perpetrators of CSEC.

- Laws on the age of the child for sexual consent and on children’s rights need to be harmonized.

- Many laws and policies are on the books but are not enforced due to: a.) lack of human or financial resources b.) interference from different sectors.
and c.) powerful people who engage in CSEC.

- The cultural values and attitudes that allow parents to drop cases, laws to be written in prejudicial language and jurors to make decisions based on issues of morality and perceptions of the victim rather than on the crime of sexual abuse or exploitation.
- The unreasonable length of time it takes for a case to reach the Supreme Court (at least one year after being reported).
- The human resource capacity for investigating, prosecuting and monitoring CSEC cases is limited by a lack of human and financial resources and a lack of technical capacity to do the work.
- The practice of rotating police officers in the Domestic Violence Unit undermines the investments made in training officers to operate the Units. These Units are charged with investigating sexual abuse cases in which the perpetrator is known to the victim. There is also the need to analyze the specificities of the CSEC crimes and to establish close coordination with the organized crime investigation units and to carry out training on the specific police investigation methods required for investigating these kinds of crime with success.
- The active participation and knowledge of parents in promoting CSEC in Belize and the resulting lack of cooperation of family members in the reporting, investigating and monitoring of CSEC cases.

7.5 The Response at the Institutional Level

The institutional response was perceived as being affected by:

- The perennial human, financial and material constraints that prevent service providers from responding adequately to the needs of CSEC victims:
  - No transportation or gas to investigate cases
  - Not enough human resources to respond to case reports or to follow-up on cases
  - The large gaps in protective and rehabilitative services available for child victims of CSEC and their families:
  - No rapid socio-economic and social assistance services are available to extreme poor families to confront short and long term economic vulnerabilities
  - No safe houses to protect CSEC victims in case their families are definitively unable to take care of them, despite the provision of social services
  - Lack of counseling services available for CSEC victims and those who are vulnerable to CSEC activities
  - No DNA testing of specimens available although plans are in place to have this capacity at the national level by 2007
  - No rehabilitative programs for victims and their families
- The lack of effective case management and coordination among institutions within the child protection system:
- Lack of clear protocols on how to deal with CSEC cases within the public sector institutions that inter-face with CSEC victims and those vulnerable to CSEC

- Lack of coordination between public and private sector bodies in responding to direct CSEC cases or to issues related to CSEC. This includes both private medical institutions, the tourism sector as well as the Non-Government Sector

- The lack of training in areas which are key to ensuring an effective CSEC response. This includes a lack of legal and forensic training for prosecutors, medical officers, the police and social workers.

### 7.6 Recommendations

The literature review undertaken for this Study revealed that many worthwhile recommendations have already been made, which, if implemented, would contribute significantly towards a national effort to eliminate CSEC in Belize. The major recommendation of this Study is therefore the need to build a capacity for resource mobilization, including advocating for greater participation in the national budget formulation process, to ensure the implementation of recommendations made.

Linked to this recommendation is the need for an integrated, multi-disciplinary institutional plan of action to prevent and eliminate sex crimes against children, including CSEC. This plan of action should reflect a consolidation of all the relevant recommendations made in previous studies\(^\text{126}\) as well as this one. To be effective, it can be modeled off the design of the HIV Global Fund Project\(^\text{127}\) and the ILO HIV/AIDS Education Project\(^\text{128}\) in Belize.

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<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention of CSEC</td>
<td>Develop and implement a comprehensive multi-media behavior change communications (BCC) programme to target and change societal attitudes towards child victims of CSEC. This must include mass awareness of the reality of CSEC, in all its manifestations, in Belize. Men need to be targeted specifically through multiple strategies, including BCC programmes implemented in their places of employment. A clear message of CSEC as a crime which violates the human rights of children is to be highlighted.</td>
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126 Individual studies done by Diana Shaw, Alessandro DiCappua, Michael Rosberg, Juan Miguel Petit and George Heusner as referenced in the bibliography.

127 This refers to a current project funded by the Global Fund as part of Belize’s multi-sectoral response to HIV/AIDS.

128 This refers to a current ILO funded HIV/AIDS Workplace Education Project in Belize.
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<th>Issue</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Men see the satisfaction of their own sexual needs as being more important than respecting the bodies of children. Highly patriarchal concepts of masculinity and femininity and a view of children as their parents’ property contribute significantly to CSEC in Belize.</em></td>
<td><em>Implement sexual and reproductive health education across age groups to empower children with information about their bodies, instill more positive concepts of masculinity and femininity and better prepare men for the exercise of responsible sexual behavior. Mainstream human rights and gender equality education throughout the school system.</em></td>
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| *The society does not provide adequate economic and social support services for children who are vulnerable to becoming victims of CSEC. This includes children living in poverty and children living in unstable, uncaring and abusive home environments.* | *Develop a White Paper on Children and Poverty in Belize, including a special section on poverty as a contributor to CSEC. The Paper should include a call for the specific recommendations of this study to be integrated into the 2006-2010 National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan as well as ensuring a first priority call on the national budget for initiatives directed at children.*  
*While the National Poverty Elimination Strategy is being re-formulated, develop economic assistance programmes that can immediately target families living in poverty.* |
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<td><strong>Legal Reform</strong></td>
<td>Consider developing one law which amends all legislation related crimes of sexual violence against children and within the same law fill gaps that exist, for example:</td>
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<td>The commercialization of sex with children is not characterized as a specific crime and is therefore an invisible element is some cases labeled as ‘carnal knowledge”, “unlawful carnal knowledge”, “rape” and “incest”</td>
<td>• criminalizing the commercial sexual exploitation of children under 18</td>
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<td>The legal definition of a child differs across legislation</td>
<td>• harmonizing the legal definition of a child</td>
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<td>Laws to protect children are gender biased, omitting boys as victims of sex crimes, and women as perpetrators</td>
<td>• removing prejudicial concepts of morality from the laws</td>
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<td>The language of the laws are prejudicial against the female child</td>
<td>• making the laws gender neutral to protect boys and girls</td>
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<td>The penalties for sex crimes against children, particularly adolescents, are negligible</td>
<td>• protecting witnesses and children</td>
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<td>Evidentiary procedures demand that children’s testimony be corroborated by other evidence and children are required to face their perpetrators in court</td>
<td>• making evidentiary procedures more child friendly</td>
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<td>Non-reporting of CSEC due to a deep fear of reprisal by the perpetrator of the crime</td>
<td>• instituting stiffer penalties (25 years to life) for perpetrators and significantly increase the monetary requirements for bail</td>
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<td>Currently, parents are allowed to withdraw charges of sex crimes against their children</td>
<td>• making sex crimes against children crimes against the state so parents cannot withdraw charges, and</td>
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<td>There is no legal basis for victims to demand access to counseling and rehabilitative services</td>
<td>• mandating parent education classes (as needed) and counseling and rehabilitative services for victims and their families</td>
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<td>Issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional Strengthening</td>
<td>Rationalize the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the institutional response to CSEC within the National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents (NPA) 2004-2015 and the National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan (NPESAP) 2006-2010. Establish an official referral and counter-referral system for responding to CSEC cases. Prioritize the development and enforcement of child protection policies and protocols (that make clear provisions for the management of CSEC cases) within all relevant institutions. Provide training to social workers to strengthen their capacity for managing CSEC cases to allow for a holistic approach to addressing the needs of victims and their families.</td>
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<td>Lack of coordination between and among agencies within the child protection system, resulting in weak case management and no established referral and counter-referral systems in place</td>
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<td>Limitations in institutional capacity to investigate and prosecute cases of sex crimes against children, including CSEC. This causes perceived unreasonable delays in the processing of sex crimes against children and the increased likelihood that charges will be withdrawn by the families of CSEC victims</td>
<td>Create a Special Victims Unit (SVU) within the Police Department. This Unit can be an expansion of the Domestic Violence Unit (DVU). It must be well resourced with police officers, be accessible 24 hours 7 days a week, and have private space for the interviewing of victims. The practice of regularly rotating officers in and out of the Unit, as is the case with the DVU, is not recommended. Provide training for the police to: • conduct proper intakes of CSEC cases • understand the requirements of the Evidentiary Act regarding sex crimes against children • conduct age-appropriate forensic interviews with children • carry out proper forensic investigations based on the requirements of the Evidentiary Act • better prepare and prosecute CSEC cases, including utilizing organized crime investigation methods. Provide equipment and training to enable DNA testing in Belize and to carry out organized crime investigation of CSEC cases. Provide training for medical personnel in the forensic medical examination of child victims of sex crimes. Increase the pool of civilian prosecutors and provide them with training to adequately prepare and represent CSEC cases during preliminary inquiries at the level of the Magistrates Court Increase the number of crown counsels to facilitate more efficient processing of CSEC cases at the level of the Supreme Court With technical assistance from another country, set up and conduct “sting” operations to uncover victims and perpetrators of CSEC in Belize</td>
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<td>Limitations within the Department of Human Services in responding</td>
<td>Increase the number of social workers within the Department to ensure manageable caseloads based on international standards and code of ethics for people in this profession.</td>
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<td>to an increasing demand for child protective services</td>
<td>Adequately equipping social workers with the resources to facilitate the implementation of their duties in both urban and rural communities, taking into consideration the need for ready access to transportation to cover the wide geographic spread of the population.</td>
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<td>Major gaps in rehabilitative and support services for CSEC victims</td>
<td>Establish and staff posts for Professional Counselors to operate within the Child Protection System.</td>
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<td>and their families, in particular, a lack of professional counseling</td>
<td>Establish and resource safe houses for victims of CSEC. A safe house should be seen as transitory with the aim of either moving the child towards family re-unification (if in the child’s best interest) or alternative care through foster parenting or adoption. As much as possible the institutionalization of children is to be avoided.</td>
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<td>services and safe houses for victims and no programmes to address</td>
<td>Establish a special victims fund to allow for:</td>
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<td>their economic needs</td>
<td>• victims and/or their families to acquire marketable skills</td>
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<td>• victims to access self-empowerment programmes</td>
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<td>• victims to stay in, or get back into, school</td>
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<td>• victims and their families to access professional counseling services</td>
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<td>Introduce parent education programmes within existing institutions in the education, health and child protection systems.</td>
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<td>Inadequate preparation of service providers to respond to the needs</td>
<td>Provide training to service providers (social workers, medical personnel, labor officers, educators, police officers and magistrates,</td>
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<td>of CSEC victims which results in an unsupportive environment for</td>
<td>among others) to enable the early detection and adequate handling of CSEC cases and to create a better understanding of the nature of the crime</td>
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<td>victims</td>
<td>from a human rights and gender perspective</td>
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<td>The one programme developed specifically to address CSEC in Belize</td>
<td>Develop a strategy within the CSEC institutional response to provide assistance for the mobilization of resources to support and expand the</td>
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<td>has institutional sustainability concerns that limit the scope of its</td>
<td>YES advocacy campaign against child abuse and exploitation.</td>
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<td>outreach. This programme is an advocacy campaign against child abuse</td>
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<td>and exploitation headed by a local non-government organization - the</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Enhancement Services (YES).</td>
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The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize

BIBLIOGRAPHY
The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize
The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Belize


No. 2036, Sunday, March 12, 2006.


No. 2040, Sunday, March 26, 2006.

No. 2042, Sunday, April 2, 2006.


Statistics on Supreme Court Sexual Offences from the Department of Public Prosecution, March, 2006.


The elimination of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is a priority for the International Program on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The ILO regards commercial sexual exploitation as a crime equivalent to slavery and forced labour; it recognizes the right of persons under 18 years of age to be protected against this form of sexual violence and promotes the search for, prosecution and penalization of those involved in using boys, girls and adolescents for commercial sexual activities.

ILO/IPEC has produced, in coordination with national institutions and investigators, a study in each of the following countries: Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

Project: Contribution to the prevention and elimination of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

Tel.: (506) 280 7103
Fax: (506) 280 6991
E-mail: esc@olt.or.cr
WEB page: http://www.olt.or.cr/ipec/esc

With the financial support of the United States Department of Labour

Stop the commercial sexual exploitation of children!