

Developments of the counteraction to commercial sexual exploitation of children In the Russian Federation

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**Submission by NGO Stellit related to Russian Federation
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NGO Stellit is a regional non-governmental organization located in St. Petersburg, established in 2002, one of its priorities is combating commercial sexual exploitation of children as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is also the leading organization of the ECPAT International network in the Russian Federation, an international movement focusing on combating commercial sexual exploitation of children all over the world.

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Executive summary

The attention of the Russian government to the protection of children's rights has significantly increased in the recent years and certain positive developments are clearly seen. However there are more improvements to be made and issues to be strengthened. The following report focuses on the most acute flaws of child protection in the Russian Federation including improvement of legislation, prevention of commercial sexual exploitation of children and protection of the survivors.

Positive developments

- In 2009, an independent Ombudsperson for Children's Rights was appointed at the federal level to strengthen child protection in Russia. In 2012 a total of 83 constituent territories of the federation have set up this institution.
- On June 1, 2012, the president of the Russian Federation signed the Executive Order approving the National Children's Strategy for 2012–2017 in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to the document, the Presidential Executive Office has been tasked with submitting a draft regulation on the Presidential Coordinating Council on implementing the Strategy. The President also instructed the Government to approve a plan of priority measures for the period up to 2014 to implement key provisions of the National Children's Strategy.
- On September 26, 2012, Russian Federation has signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.
- On October 1, 2012, Russian Federation has signed the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote convention).

General recommendations

- Bring the national legislation in the sphere of combating commercial sexual exploitation of children in accordance with the international standards.
- Conduct monitoring and data collection to obtain a clear vision of the situation with commercial sexual exploitation of children in Russia.
- Develop prevention programs for various target groups.
- Develop evidence-based rehabilitation programs for children-victims of commercial sexual exploitation.
- Implement child-friendly procedures in justition.

International legal standards

Since the last periodic review Russian Federation has declared it's commitment to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation by signing the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. However, these documents need to be not only signed but also ratified.

Recommendations:

- The Government of the Russian Federation must ratify the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.
- The Government of the Russian Federation must ratify the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.
- The Government of the Russian Federation must sign and ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

National policy

The National Children's Strategy for 2012–2017 focuses on protecting children in difficult life situations and should serve as a basis for regional programs addressing various issues. It is key to include special measures addressing the problems of commercial sexual exploitation of children and sexual abuse in the regional programs.

Recommendations:

- Develop and implement through a multi-stakeholder participatory process a comprehensive national plan of action against commercial sexual exploitation of children.
- Ensure that specific measures on combating commercial sexual exploitation of children are included in the regional programs based on the National Children's Strategy for 2012–2017.
- Guarantee that specific measures on combating commercial sexual exploitation of children are allocated sufficient funds.

Obtaining complete information on the state of child rights in the country

The first step to combating commercial sexual exploitation is obtaining full information on the country situation. The National Children's Strategy for 2012–2017 includes statements of the necessity of monitoring during the realization of children's rights. The National Strategy mentions a system of indicators that should be developed in order to assess the effectiveness of the regional programs. Currently only limited data on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the Russian Federation is available to the specialists and the general public. In order to strengthen the National Children's Strategy for 2012–2017 it is highly recommended to include a block of indicators concerning specifically this problem in the nationwide monitoring, preferably in cooperation with NGO's.

Recommendations:

- Allocate funds for research dedicated to CSEC, so that accurate data on the problems of CSEC in Russia can be compiled and accessed.
- Conduct the research dedicated to CSEC in cooperation with field-oriented NGO's to ensure the transparency of the research methodology and openness of the results.
- Establish an institute of the National Rapporteur on Children's Rights and allocate funds for preparation of an annual thematic report on the situation of children's rights in the Russian Federation.

Developing effective prevention programs

Prevention programs are key to avoid involvement of children into commercial sexual exploitation. Professional evidence-based prevention programs must be based on best international and national practices and address various audiences: children, parents, specialists, teachers, potential perpetrators and the general audience.

Recommendations:

- Organize awareness-raising campaigns for children, parents, specialists and the general public providing information on the problem of commercial sexual exploitation and possible actions.
- Develop specialized prevention programs and measures to inform parents on the problem of commercial sexual exploitation and protecting children from being involved in it.
- Provide trainings on commercial sexual exploitation of children to government officials, education, social and youth workers and other relevant stakeholders to strengthen

understanding and increase prioritisation of commercial sexual exploitation of children and increase the number of identified cases.

Developing targeted rehabilitation programs

Children who have been involved into commercial sexual exploitation should receive timely comprehensive professional assistance in all fields: social, medical, psychological and juridical. In order to provide this assistance, all the specialists working with children in difficult life situations should receive relevant training on assisting victims of sexual exploitation.

Recommendations:

- Adopt a child-centred approach when interfacing with victims, one that is sensitive and responsive to their individual needs and ensures that the “best interest of the child” is given primacy.
- Provide comprehensive victim assistance, recovery and reintegration through the allocation of government funding to GO’s and NGO’s providing such services.
- Implement special training on the work with children survivors of commercial sexual exploitation for all the specialists working with them and ensure such trainings are consistently conducted throughout the country.
- Ensure that the social services departments for children provide comprehensive, systematic and consistent delivery of services that meet the specific needs of victims of CSEC.
- Develop and implement special rehabilitation programs for parents of children who have been involved in commercial sexual exploitation and allocate funds for these programs.

Implementing child-friendly procedures in justition

Today the Russian legal system doesn’t have the necessary child-friendly mechanisms to protect children-victims of various crimes from secondary traumatization. It is absolutely necessary to implement such mechanisms and provide qualified psychological assistance to children during the investigation and the court hearing.

Recommendations:

- Guarantee equal rights to all children independently of the legal status of the child and it’s nationality.
- Provide special training to all representatives of the law-enforcement and legal systems who are working with children.
- Organize child-friendly interrogation rooms with the possibility of video-recording.
- Allow to replace the child’s presence in court with video-recording of the evidence so that the child doesn’t have to meet with the perpetrator after the crime.

Stimulating social responsibility

Business in the Russian Federation is rarely involved in combating commercial sexual exploitation of children and other crimes against minors. The government should devote attention to encourage representatives of the private sector to take part in solving various social problems including commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Recommendations:

- Assume special measures for the representatives of private sector which take part in social programs such as tax admissions.
- Encourage the actors of the tourist industry to sign the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and implement the relevant actions.