



A Proposal for MD-19 Lions



Project Name: Ending Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Girls
Project Location: San Miguel, El Salvador
Amount Requested: \$80,000 for 2-year project (\$40,000 per year)
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Background

Child labor is a problem that significantly affects most children and adolescents between the ages of 5 and 17 in El Salvador. In particular, young girls are most vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation, which is one of the worst forms of child labor. It is a tragic situation that also limits their access to education and their freedom to develop their full potential. Commercial sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents continues to be a concealed problem, specifically near areas bordering other Central American countries, and programs that address the situation are limited. Moreover, the risk children face is worsened due to weak child protection systems, low literacy rates and deep-rooted social and cultural behaviors and attitudes that jeopardize their dignity and rights.

Girls and adolescents from the municipality of San Miguel in eastern El Salvador (bordering Honduras) are often exploited and exhibited for tourists and border-crossers by formal and informal businesses. This is a situation that, to date, society has tolerated. It represents a violation of children's rights and failure of authorities to enforce international commitments related to the worst forms of child labor that have been ratified by government of El Salvador.

Comprehensive interventions are needed, including elevating awareness of the situation and building the capacity of local champions. CARE's proposed actions tie in to our existing *Primero Aprendo* (First I Learn) education program and will target the municipal mayor's office, community development associations, families, rights groups and private sector actors (cooperatives, chambers of commerce and industry associations) in San Miguel. CARE will educate key stakeholders about the problem, advance compliance with regulations designed to eradicate child labor and promote the rights of children, especially the right to education. And for girls, education is often the key to escaping the cycle of poverty within their families and communities. This proposed

project will contribute to the testing of a comprehensive Central American model for working with private commerce and service industries to eradicate the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

Overview of Proposed Project

With support from MD-19 Lions, CARE would be able to make important strides against the commercial sexual exploitation of girls in San Miguel, El Salvador. The overall **goal** of this proposed two-year project is to develop and improve environments that favor the compliance with policies adopted by El Salvador to eradicate the commercial sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents. CARE will coordinate with the Women's Development and Self-Determination Association (AMS), an organization committed to the eradication of commercial sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents in the municipality of San Miguel. With MD19's support of this goal, CARE will implement the following **activities**:

- Design and implement a training and awareness program for the local government;
- Develop a training program for employers (formal and informal) in the commerce and services industries, focusing on the risks of commercial sexual exploitation for girls and adolescents as well as protection measures;
- Design municipal action plans that comply with municipal bylaws against human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation;
- Promote a reporting and protection action guide related to the commercial sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents in the municipality of San Miguel;
- Promote recreational activities designed to promote children's rights and the eradication of commercial sexual exploitation;
- Strengthen the prevention and reporting units of justice and health agencies so that they can better handle cases of human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents;
- Develop a plan with the chambers of commerce and industry to eradicate commercial sexual exploitation in San Miguel;
- Design and support the establishment of a private sector code of conduct in order to eradicate the commercial sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents;
- Organize two forums and five roundtable discussions with representatives from the informal commerce and service industries regarding the eradication of commercial sexual exploitation;
- Build an awareness campaign for combating the commercial sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents;
- Create or reactivate networks of girls and adolescents to defend and promote their rights; and
- Design and promote a self-guided educational material kit for girls, adolescents, families and education officials to raise awareness about the issue, prevent commercial sexual exploitation and promote the importance of school enrollment and retainment for at-risk children.

Expected **results** include:

- 250 at-risk girls and adolescents, 60 families, four communities, 120 local and national actors and seven private sector entities will participate in activities designed to raise awareness to combat the problem of commercial sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents;
- An alliance with the private sector and social organizations will be created and strengthened to eradicate commercial sexual exploitation in the municipality of San Miguel;
- A code of conduct for the commerce and service industries in the municipality of San Miguel will be developed and implemented in order to establish zones free from commercial sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents; and
- The municipality of San Miguel will be empowered with the capacity to defend and protect the rights and dignity of children.

By supporting this two-year project, MD-19 Lions can help CARE address the problem of one of the worst forms of child labor in El Salvador. Support of this project will help ensure that girls in San Miguel, El Salvador have better opportunities in the future and the chance to escape the cycle of poverty. Experience gained through this pilot will be used to replicate similar activities in other parts of the country. We appreciate your consideration and partnership.