



# DEMAND AND THE UN'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

For the sexual exploitation of children (SEC) to be addressed by 2030 as pledged in a critical set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the eradication of the Demand Tree requires planning in the medium and long-term. A theory of change is necessary to identify the vision, the impact, the results, the outcomes, the strategies, and a set of broad actions required to plan activities and measure progress against the elimination of SEC at global and local levels. This paper makes an initial attempt to contribute to developing 'A Theory of Change to Eliminate the Demand for Sexual Exploitation of Children'. Similar tools should be devised by global and national partners committed to combating the demand for SEC with the objective of agreeing on a roadmap leading to a final solution of the problem starting with its causes.

**VISION:** Elimination of the demand for SEC caused by direct perpetrators, facilitators and underlying factors

**GOAL:** Contribute to achieving SDG targets relating to sexual exploitation of children, namely

- Target 5.2** Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, and sexual and other types of exploitation
- Target 5.3** Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- Target 8.7** Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms
- Target 16.2** End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children

**IMPACT:** Demand for SEC is eliminated – perpetrators are prevented from offending and children are safe from sexual exploitation

## STRATEGY 1: ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION ON DEMAND FOR SEC

### RECOMMENDATION:

Develop global, national and local situation analyses on demand for SEC, based on evidence and policy evaluation, in order to determine the demand size, characteristics and trends, and develop adequate evidence to inform policy and programme development at all levels.

## **ACTION AREAS:**

**1.1 Enhancing knowledge and information:** A plethora of programme actions implemented so far to address SEC has produced only partial results in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of existing practice. Deepening the understanding of the demand side of the SEC market and evaluating the impact of responses designed to address it should be set as a priority to fill some of the knowledge gaps in policy development and programme implementation. Although emphasis has been traditionally placed on rescuing victims, specialised government and non-government agencies dealing with perpetrators have built knowledge and experience on the demand angle of the problem, as well. Research on demand for SEC should be expanded in order to broaden the existing knowledge base on the functioning of demand, the drivers causing its expansion, the evolution of the different forms of demand, the linkages among main factors and the influence of emerging trends such as the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in exploiting children. In parallel to analysing the nature and functioning of demand, it is key to independently evaluate the effectiveness of measures adopted to tackle demand and identify successful approaches deserving to be brought to scale.

**1.2 Developing situation analyses on demand:** A key objective of research and policy evaluation activities should be to inform the development of rigorous and systematic situation analyses of the demand for SEC in order to boost evidence-based policy and programme development. Local and national level situation analyses should focus on high prevalence areas and groups, with the aim of further mapping the demand for SEC on a global scale. In order to meet SEC-related SDG targets, an analysis of the global situation would help provide the necessary baseline against which progress could be measured. Situation analysis reports should be disseminated widely among the public, including young people, the media and research organisations in order to reveal the responsibilities of individuals, businesses and governments in curbing demand and to further enlist the engagement of relevant stakeholders in combating demand creators.

## **STRATEGY 2: RAISE AWARENESS, EDUCATE AND DEVELOP CAPACITIES**

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Raise awareness on demand for SEC among the public at large, at-risk groups, and SEC victims and perpetrators; re-educate men to change perceptions of masculinities; and develop capacities of professionals and caregivers interfacing the various layers of demand to prevent SEC.

### **ACTION AREAS:**

**2.1 Raising awareness and spreading information:** An in-depth assessment of SEC demand would provide the necessary data to create awareness on a problem that has remained rather unexplored thus far. Enhancing information and awareness would help strengthen defence mechanisms in potential victims and discourage demand. Ongoing information, education and communication (IEC) activities targeting victims via mass media, the Internet, schools and social mobilisation should be reviewed, evaluated and expanded to address the demand side of SEC as well.

Television, the Internet and other media could warn against demand for SEC as it is done with the dangers associated with illegal drugs, alcohol, or tobacco use. Messages should target local residents as well as domestic and international travelling offenders, acting in both the real and virtual worlds, considering that crimes of a sexual nature may be perpetrated by unknown outsiders as much as by familiar next-door neighbours.<sup>1</sup>

IEC strategies should aim to empower children, parents, teachers, social service and law enforcement personnel and policymakers with sufficient understanding to make communities resilient to attacks by sexual predators. Priority should be given to at-risk geographical areas, such as low-income urban and rural settlements, source districts for trafficking, national borderland zones, communities with a high

<sup>1</sup> Andrews, Sara K. (2004), "U.S. Domestic Prosecution of the American International Sex Tourist: Efforts to Protect Children from Sexual Exploitation", *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* Vol. 94, no. 2 (2004): 441-451.

prevalence of child marriage, tourist sites, train stations, harbours, red-light districts, places where young people gather, and locations characterised by high-density population and transient groups.

**2.2 Building capacities:** In addition to information and public awareness, it is necessary to develop the capacity of professionals who interface with the demand side of SEC. Specialised training should address, in particular, personnel in the travel and tourism industry (such as taxi drivers, tour operators, airport and hotel staff), the transport business, the entertainment sector, the military, the peacekeeping and humanitarian organisations, NGOs and law enforcement, in addition to sporting event organisers, orphanage and child welfare programme staff and customs authorities. Interventions in humanitarian crises, services assisting migrating populations, relief efforts in post-conflict situations should systematically include programme components relating to SEC.

Vocational education and skill training for vulnerable populations would further contribute to opening avenues for non-exploitative income-generating activities for potential victims, while offering facilitators of demand viable alternatives to generating income in the sex industry.

The private sector can also contribute effectively to training staff, monitoring illicit sexual conduct by its clientele, enforcing codes of conduct (CoC) and taking social responsibility for initiatives designed to stop SEC.

**2.3 Changing men and boys' perceptions of masculinity:** Awareness, education and capacity generating prevention initiatives should prioritise boys and men to set in motion a process of change in perceptions of masculinity and gender roles. Focussing on boys would help strengthen the capacity of children to defend themselves from sexual harm by adults and peers, while instilling values respectful of human rights and dignity in a new generation.

While the practice of shaming men who solicit commercial sex has been challenged for the potential damage that can be caused to the accused if found innocent and to his family members,<sup>2</sup> men who represent healthy examples of masculinity can be effectively involved acting as positive role models and challenging misconceptions on masculinity and sexuality.

### **STRATEGY 3: PROMOTE THE TRANSITION FROM HARMFUL TO RIGHTS-SENSITIVE SOCIAL NORMS AND PRACTICES**

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Support local communities in questioning harmful traditional and emerging sexual practices, and in socialising gender-transformative child rights-sensitive norms and behaviours.

#### **ACTION AREAS:**

**3.1 Sustaining community-wide processes aimed to stigmatise sexual violence against children and foster the internalisation of rights-sensitive norms and practices:** Communities should be engaged in processes aimed to analyse and question the harmful outcomes of social and sexual norms and practices that may condone sexual violence against children. Community and religious leaders should be involved in addressing discriminatory, sexist and racist attitudes, and in fostering a change in negative behaviours and practices toward sexuality, masculinity and gender relations. Public manifestations of commitment against SEC should be instituted to support the establishment of SEC-free communities.

**3.2 Transforming perceptions to stop victim blaming:** Children who have been sexually violated often turn into social outcasts for being perceived as holding personal responsibility or guilt for their situation. It is necessary to change such prevailing perceptions about sexual abuse and exploitation, and stop victim blaming, an attitude that results in harming the child twice.

2 Walker, Kate (2013), "Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Call for Multi-System Collaboration in California", (California: Child Welfare Council, 2013).

## STRATEGY 4: FRAME AND ENFORCE LAWS AND POLICY

### RECOMMENDATION:

Enhance the use of international law to eliminate the demand for sexual exploitation of children and ensure state party compliance.

### ACTION AREAS:

#### **4.1 The Committee on the Rights of the Child holding a General Day of Discussion on Demand:**

A General Day of Discussion on Demand should be held by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to provide an opportunity to bring academics, advocates, policymakers and government officials together to place the subject on the international agenda.

#### **4.2 The Committee on the Rights of the Child developing an analytical tool to support state parties in reporting adequately on the issue of demand for SEC:**

The development of an analytical tool for studying reports in light of the information known on the demand for SEC would strengthen the knowledge base and monitoring mechanisms at the domestic and international levels on this issue.

#### **4.3 Countries ratifying all relevant international and regional instruments and ensuring harmonisation with their domestic laws:**

As, with few exceptions, international child law does not specifically address the issue of demand, it is important that such a key dimension of SEC be included in the ongoing debate on the subject. It remains essential that state parties ratify all child law at the international and regional level and ensure compliance with human rights standards by harmonising these instruments with domestic law, paying progressive attention to SEC-related issues, including demand.

#### **4.4 Developing national laws that focus on demand by criminalising child sexual exploitation and developing preventive strategies in child welfare, immigration and family law:**

While ratifying international and regional legal instruments is essential, at the country level there must also be adequate legislation in place to deal with demand. Forward-looking national-level legislation would in turn stimulate the development of more progressive international law in the SEC realm. Criminal law should be used to penalise those who offend against children but other areas of law may also provide solutions, such as immigration and family law.

#### **4.5 Where private sector actors fail to act to curb SEC on a voluntary basis, encouraging the adoption of mandatory regulatory mechanisms:**

In the area of demand, governments must provide incentives for the private sector to develop its own strategies to curb demand and minimise its involvement. In case this does not prove effective, governments may need to explore the use of the law to meet child protection-oriented goals.

#### **4.6 Identifying and mitigating the risks that result in barriers to the effective application of the law:**

Once domestic law is drafted in conformity with international and regional standards to hold both the public and private sectors accountable for curbing the demand for child sexual exploitation, there must be effective application at the law enforcement, prosecutorial and judicial levels, through the development of legislative mechanisms as well as education and engagement with relevant partners.

## STRATEGY 5: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT GLOBAL AND LOCAL STRATEGIES TO TACKLE DEMAND FOR SEC

### RECOMMENDATION:

Converge strategies aimed to prevent demand for SEC in global, national and local planning systems to mainstream SEC-related concerns in ongoing child protection processes at all levels.

## **ACTION AREAS:**

**5.1 Developing local anti-SEC strategies and incorporating them in existing planning processes to build community resilience and location-specific responses:** Village and municipal councils, partnering with children's councils and groups, schools, families and community leaders, can play a vital role in developing local safety nets to keep out perpetrators of SEC. Existing development plans should include provisions for preventing commercial sexual exploitation of children, child sexual abuse materials (CSAM), child trafficking, early marriage and child labour, and tightening controls over entertainment establishments, hotels, Internet cafés and other businesses that can put children at risk of sexual exploitation.

**5.2 Framing national and global strategies and mainstreaming them in existing planning processes to prevent demand systematically:** Prevention of SEC at primary, secondary and tertiary levels should be a national objective framed in the context of the SDGs. Action developed to tackle demand over a pre-defined timeframe should be planned as part of ongoing national development processes.

A global anti-SEC strategy should emerge as a distillation of national planning processes and, in turn, provide an international framework for decentralised planning in the context of both international law. Once SEC concerns are mainstreamed in ongoing development processes, it will be possible to move beyond ad-hoc reparative interventions and establish long-term systematic, comprehensive and preventive action.

## **STRATEGY 6: LEVERAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO PREVENT DEMAND**

### **RECOMMENDATION 6A:**

Make the Internet environment child-safe and empower young users to protect themselves using ICTs in a way to prevent demand.

## **ACTION AREAS:**

**6A.1 Creating a safe and inclusive digital environment to protect children from online predators:** To ensure that young people can benefit from an inclusive and safe digital environment, it is necessary to strike a balance between ensuring equal and effective access to the Internet by all children and minimising the potential harm that child users may incur online.

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) need to take responsibility and play an active role against online criminal behaviour affecting children. Internet regulations should be strengthened to make ICTs child-friendly. Making the web safe however, is only one approach that must be adopted. ICTs should also be turned to the advantage of young users. They should be used to connect children to each other for mutual support. Among other initiatives, the WeProtect Children Online Summit and the Global Alliance against Child Abuse Online offer strategic platforms to foster international cooperation and create a global alliance to combat online child sexual exploitation.

### **RECOMMENDATION 6B:**

Ensure that the private sector industries develop corporate social responsibility tools that include an analysis of their own contribution to demand.

## **ACTION AREAS:**

**6B.1 Developing codes of conduct that address the issue of demand:** Codes of conduct (CoC) can be an effective tool for a corporation to commit to addressing the issue of demand. Although codes have their limitations, the process of developing a code requires the company to look inwards and examine corporate policies and practices that may result in a culture of demand or in placing children at risk. Further, the publication of a company code of conduct puts possible offenders on notice that the private entity will not tolerate illicit behaviours against children.

**6B.2 Offering training to employees:** For a CoC to be effective, it is necessary that employees are trained on the values contained in the code and on the steps that will be taken should the code be violated.

**6B.3 Engaging the customers about the code:** The corporation should inform their customers about the code, the provisions made about the breaches to the code and the expectation of the clients to adhere to the values contained in the code.

**6B.4 Exploring the use of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO):** ISO certification could be expanded to require a new standard for the private sector about addressing demand for SEC. This may further motivate the private sector to manage corporate behaviour to ensure protection of children.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 6C:**

Ensure the private sector promotes anti-demand values and culture within their industries.

#### **ACTION AREAS:**

**6C.1 Corporations developing internal policies to promote an anti-demand culture:** In addition to adopting CoC, the private sector should remain engaged in a process of looking inwards and ensuring that their own policies promote an anti-demand culture. Companies should systematically examine human resource practices, chains of command and supply/outsourcing agreements to determine whether they are consistent with a prevention and protection model relating to children's safety. Collaborating with like-minded organisations that are already committed to protecting children from sexual harm will further help the corporation be seen as being a good corporate citizen.

### **STRATEGY 7: MEASURE PROGRESS TOWARD ENDING DEMAND FOR SEC**

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of ongoing policies and programmes addressing demand to measure impact and replicate successful approaches.

#### **ACTION AREAS:**

**7.1 Strengthening monitoring and evaluation:** Efforts aimed at monitoring factors influencing the different levels of demand must be strengthened to gauge the evolution of the market, especially as this becomes more hidden and difficult to assess. New tools must be developed to both measure demand and ascertain the impact of policies on existing and potential perpetrators and victims. Periodic situation analyses would provide benchmark data for rigorous monitoring and evaluation. In examining the evolution of SEC locally and globally, it may be effective to strengthen existing tracking systems linked to law enforcement agencies with market analysis methodologies. Understanding trends, mobility, seasonality, preferences, prevalence areas and purchaser groups as they change over time is necessary to design more strategic and efficient responses.

Adequate monitoring and evaluation processes are also necessary to help national governments report to the international community about their efforts to end SEC in the context of meeting SEC-related SDG targets.

### **STRATEGY 8: EMPOWER CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Empower girls and boys with adequate information, knowledge and participation opportunities to enhance resilience and contribute actively to local, national and global initiatives mobilised to curb demand for SEC.

#### **ACTION AREAS:**

**8.1 Empowering children to enhance their resilience to sexual harm:** Enhancing young people's resilience to sexual harm would be effective in protecting them from various forms of danger, while also

helping discourage demand. Learning about sexuality and sexual rights, understanding the risks associated with online and offline illicit sexual conduct, knowing how to recognise potentially predatory peers and adults, even among trusted or female relatives and acquaintances, are tools necessary to make informed decisions about one's own body and sexuality.

**8.2 Teaching children about online safety:** It is vital to empower young people to use ICTs in a safe way and increase their digital literacy. By teaching children and young people about the dangers of online sexual abuse and exploitation and the need for respect for peers in the real and virtual environments, potential victims will be empowered by the knowledge of how to safely navigate ICTs and the online domain.

**8.3 Encouraging children's participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of measures to contrast demand:** While recognising that young people can play only a limited role, if at all, in combatting criminal activities, it is important to acknowledge that children and adolescents can still contribute meaningfully in sharing information about the way they are contacted and victimised both offline and online. The participation of children in designing and implementing initiatives aimed to curb sexual exploitation has proven successful in tailoring responses to the age-specific needs, perceptions and sensitivities of young people.

**8.4 Raising awareness among peers:** New generations have the most compelling voices to raise against SEC. Quite often, they are also more articulate than their older guardians in detecting and reporting SEC within ICTs. Young people can be effectively involved in raising awareness on the harmful effects of SEC and spreading information on ways by which young people can be protected off and online.<sup>3</sup> Survivor at-risk and, in fact, all children can carry messages against SEC and mobilise peers as well as adults to make all possible efforts to ensure the family, the school, the community and the government violence free.

**8.5 Institutionalising participation in children's councils and parliaments:** An empowering tool for expanding participation, both at national and local levels, is children's councils and parliaments. Such fora provide formal channels for institutionalising young people's participation in government and civil society, overcoming short-term project-based involvement. Strengthening mechanisms for sustained child participation becomes even more vital as the fight against SEC is inscribed in the new global development agenda. The institutionalisation of children's participation in the government, schools and society at large allows young citizens to contribute to legal, policy and programme development in their own constituencies.

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<sup>3</sup> Cody, Claire (2015) "They don't talk about it enough: Report of the 2014 consultations with Youth Advisors for 'Our Voices'", Luton: University of Bedfordshire.

Researched and written by Mark Erik Hecht; Edited by Eliana Riggio; Based on "Power, Impunity and Anonymity" as researched and written by Eliana Riggio and Mark Erik Hecht.



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