



THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN AFRICA

Developments, progress, challenges and recommended strategies

November 2014





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FOREWORD

Over the past decade, evidence has emerged worldwide suggesting that the sexual exploitation of children is becoming more pervasive and increasingly complex. Unprecedented developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) along with the erosion of social norms and sexual mores met with global trends that transcend national contours like poverty and the major growth in travel and tourism, all put an increasing number of children at risk of becoming victims to the various manifestations of sexual exploitation.

The sense of outrage and relentless efforts spearheaded over the years by ECPAT member organisations in collaboration with other stakeholders have undoubtedly led to progress on many fronts. Through its civil society network active in almost 80 countries and longstanding partnerships with a myriad of child protection agencies, ECPAT seeks to revitalise actions to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children in every region of the world.

The Strategic Framework that the ECPAT International Assembly sets forth every three years for the organisation is intended to guide in the achievement of this goal. The review and planning process that defines this Framework is meant to identify strategies and interventions needed to address the evolving and multi-faceted forms of child sexual exploitation. This Regional Overview on the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Africa was compiled as part of the process to determine the Framework for 2015-2018.

In addition to mapping and examining the key socio-economic factors impacting the protection of children and the emerging trends related to child sexual exploitation in Africa, the Overview assesses the status of actions taken against this crime within individual countries in the region. It also proposes recommendations for strengthening child protection systems and responds to the prevention, protection and recovery needs of child victims and vulnerable children. The document was validated during two ECPAT International Regional Consultations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (1-2 August, 2013 and 23-24 October, 2014) and one sub-regional meeting in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (24-26 June, 2014), which led to the identification of regional priorities and strategies for enhancing political will and actions in Africa.

The development and validation of the Overview was facilitated by Zingui Mессomo, Africa Regional Representative to the ECPAT International Board of Trustees, ECPAT member organizations, officials of regional mechanisms and entities and child rights experts. We are indebted for their generous technical inputs, collaboration and commitment in fighting the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The year 2014 marks the 25th the anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. ECPAT presents this Overview with a reminder to all duty bearers of child rights in Africa that according to the Convention every child – regardless of background, ethnic origin, gender or location– has the right to live free from sexual exploitation. Protecting children from this intolerable crime is everyone's responsibility and can only be realised with the commitment and support from all key stakeholders and sectors.



Dorothy Rozga
Executive Director
ECPAT International

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Significant review, consultation and planning went into the development of this Regional Overview that merit recognition and appreciation.

The Overview drew from the ECPAT International Country Monitoring Reports on CSEC in each member country in the continent and relied on substantive inputs from ECPAT member groups, partner organizations, child rights experts, and Secretariat staff.

We would like to especially acknowledge the contribution of the following individuals and organizations:

Zingui Messomo, Africa Regional Board Representative to the ECPAT International Board of Trustees for leading reviews, consultations and validation among the ECPAT Network in Africa.

The ECPAT member organizations that were part of the Regional Consultations and contributed towards the validation of the Regional Overview:

Comité de Liaison des Organisations Sociales de défense des droits de l'Enfant (CLOSE) (Benin); Association Burkinabé pour la Survie de l'Enfance (ABSE) (Burkina Faso); Association, Enfants, Jeunes et Avenir (ASSEJA) (CAMEROON); SOS Violence Sexuelles (Cote d'Ivoire); Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment (FSCE) (Ethiopia); Child Protection Alliance (CPA) (Gambia); Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (GNCRC); Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON); WAO – Afrique (Togo); Children in Need (CHIN) (Zambia); Fair Trade Tourism (South Africa); Kiota Women's Health and Development Organization (KIWOHEDE) (Tanzania); Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN)/ ECPAT Uganda; Rede da Criança (Mozambique); African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) (Kenya); ANDT (Niger); ECPAT Netherlands; ECPAT UK; ECPAT France; ECPAT Luxembourg; ECPAT USA; and Youth Representatives; Jonathan Ssembajwe – YPP Representative (Uganda); and Amie Jobe – Africa Youth Representative to EICYAC (Gambia).

Partner organizations and experts:

Dr. Najat M'jid Maalla – former Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography; Dr. Benyam Dawit Mezmur – Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACERWC); African Union (AU); African Child Policy Forum (ACPF); European Union (EU); UNICEF Ethiopia; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); OCHA Liaison Office AU/ECA; International Labour Organization (ILO); International Telecommunication Union Africa Regional Office; Oak Foundation; Africa wide Movement for Children; Terre des Hommes (Kenya); OXFAM International Liaison Office with the AU; International Organization for Migration (IOM); Plan International – African Union Liaison & Pan Africa Program Office; Save the Children; ChildFund International USA Africa Region; Nia Center for Children and Family Development (NiaCCFD); Conrad N. Hilton Foundation; and Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children.

ECPAT Secretariat staff:

Special appreciation to the Programme team for compiling this document. The overview was written by Alessia Altamura with substantive contributions from Catherine Mbengue and Jade Tachie-Menson, ECPAT Coordination Office for Africa, and edited Alison Raphael. The Overview was designed by Manida Naebklang. Overall project supervision was provided by Junita Upadhyay, Deputy Executive Director for Programmes.

ACRONYMS

ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACPF	African Child Policy Forum
ACCSI	African Children Cyber Safety Initiative
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AU	African Union
AU COMMIT	African Union Commission's Initiative against Trafficking
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
CSO(s)	Civil society organisation(s)
CST	Child Sex Tourism
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMCAC	Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa
FSCE	Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment
HIPSSA	Harmonisation of ICT Policies in sub-Saharan Africa
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICTs	Information and communication technologies
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
ISPs	Internet Service Providers
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MDGS	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa region
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NGO(s)	Non-governmental organisations
NPA(s)	National Plan(s) of Action
OP3 CRC	Optional Protocol to the CRC on a communications procedure
OPSC	Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RIATT	Regional Inter-Agency Task Team
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SANTAC	Southern Africa Network against Trafficking and Abuse of Children
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
UCRNN	Uganda Child Rights NGO Network
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VAC	Violence against Children
WASPA	Wireless Application Service Providers' Association
YPP	Youth Partnership Programme (ECPAT)
ZICTA	Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing rapid demographic and economic growth, leading to improvement in living standards for some. But a complex matrix of multidimensional factors – led by rising income inequality – leave large numbers of African children and youth vulnerable to the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Rural poverty has spurred migration to cities that are largely unprepared for the influx, leaving migrants to continue living in poverty. The estimated 30 million children living on the streets of African cities and towns become targets for exploitation, along with large numbers of primary school drop-outs and children left parent-less and abandoned due to AIDS. Combined with frequent outbreaks of armed conflict, environmental disasters and systematic discrimination against women and girls – and their subordinate status in society – these factors make African countries a perfect enabling environment for all forms of CSEC.

The existing knowledge base on CSEC-related violations of child rights is limited, due in part to weak information systems and in part to the stigma associated with sexual offences and the hidden nature of the sex trade. Nevertheless, commercial sexual exploitation of children in all its forms appears to be intensifying, and there are well-established links between them. These issues and gaps were discussed at a series of regional consultations convened by ECPAT in 2013 and 2014 that brought together ECPAT leaders, regional experts and others concerned about the rise of CSEC in Africa.

Manifestations of CSEC

Prostitution of children: Research undertaken in all regions of the continent confirms a trend of increasing prostitution of children, mainly in cities, and including boys and very young children. This CSEC manifestation is also prevalent in areas of high tourism, traditional brothels and in more hidden sites, such as hotels or rented houses, at truck stops along major transportation routes and near mining and fishing sites. A large proportion of children in prostitution are victims of internal or cross-border trafficking; others are driven to engage in transactional sex by chronic poverty in order to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and school fees.

Child Trafficking: The 2012 UN Office on Drugs and Crime Global Report on Trafficking in Persons indicates that Africa and the Middle East are the regions most affected by child trafficking; two-thirds of victims (68%) between 2007 and 2010 were children under age 18; more than one-third (36%) were trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation. Trafficking routes and methods are complex, diverse and fluid, adapting daily to specific regions and cultures, new laws and regulations and technological developments. Much trafficking takes place within the region, but routes also connect African countries with Western Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Documented child traffickers in Africa include organised international criminal networks, long-distance truck drivers and occasionally border control agents, spiritual leaders and family members.

Sexual Exploitation of children via ICTs: Little data or information is available on the nature, scale and dimensions of online child sexual exploitation in Africa. Available research, however, suggests that more and more African children and adolescents are now exposed to online threats and vulnerabilities due to expanded access to new information and communication technologies, whether at home, school or cyber-cafes, where few controls or protection methods are in place. ECPAT research in five countries confirmed this trend: 54% of young people surveyed had seen someone their own age on a pornographic website.

Sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism: Increasing levels of child sex tourism is facilitated by the proliferation of new flights to Africa, weak application of laws and corruption of some officials, allowing offenders to commit abuses against children with impunity. Some African countries are primarily destinations for travelling sex offenders, while others are the source of demand for sex with children. Some, like Nigeria and South Africa, are both. The myth that having sex with a virgin reduces the risk of contracting HIV (or can even cure it) is responsible for some demand for sex with young children. The factors contributing to demand for sex with children are vastly under-studied.

Addressing CSEC in Africa

Only a handful of countries in the region have adopted comprehensive National Plans of Action (NPAs) and policies to prevent and counteract CSEC. Instead, most have developed overall child protection policies and plans, which may or may not specifically address CSEC. The most likely topic to be included in such plans is trafficking, although some countries are developing plans to combat violence against children and harmful child labour. National

efforts to strengthen child protection mechanisms in several countries are receiving coordinated external support and represent an opportunity to ensure the inclusion of CSEC in revised strategies or programmes. The recent emergence of online sexual exploitation of children as a growing, pressing issue has sparked partnerships and coordinating mechanisms to counteract this CSEC manifestation, often involving communication ministries.

The African Union (AU) and regional economic communities (ECOWAS, SADC, etc.) play an important role in the fight against CSEC. To date their focus has been primarily on trafficking; the resulting multilateral and regional agreements and commitments emphasise the need to protect children and provide services to child victims. The AU also took a strong stance against child marriage, which is fairly prevalent in Africa and often serves to mask child sexual exploitation. A Pact among states of the Great Lakes region specifically addresses sexual exploitation, trafficking and prostitution of women and children. Several United Nations agencies also play an active role in strengthening regional child protection mechanisms. Civil society groups have taken the lead on some issues; ECPAT's member groups focus mainly on: research, co-financing of operations, exchanging good practices, networking, resource development, civil society strengthening and joint anti-trafficking programming between countries of origin and destination.

Way Forward

Future strategies fall into three main areas: advocacy with regional bodies, governments and international governing bodies; strengthening partnerships with regional and international entities, and increasing the availability of reliable data on CSEC, to inform efforts in policy reform.

Among the specific observations and recommendations arising from the Regional Consultations and subsequent analysis of CSEC in Africa are the need to:

- Enhance coordination and cooperation to establish comprehensive child protection systems that address CSEC and mainstream CSEC into NPAs;
- Foster and enhance coordination and collaboration at the regional and sub-regional levels;
- Enhance synergy and collaboration among ECPAT groups, especially those in Europe and Africa;
- Expand the current knowledge base on CSEC in Africa, through research and partnerships;
- Develop effective CSEC prevention strategies involving the media and outreach to vulnerable households;
- Involve the private sector in strengthening accountability and responsibility for protecting children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism and through ICTs;
- Advocate for the ratification of international legal instruments relevant for combating CSEC;
- Support meaningful participation by young people in discussion of CSEC-related issues.



INTRODUCTION

“Despite many commitments, despite many actions, and after three World Congresses, commercial sexual exploitation of children is increasing; each day that passes more children become victims of these crimes and have their childhood stolen”.

Dr. Najat Maalla M’jida, UN Special Representative on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, presentation at ECPAT’s “Regional Consultation on Action to Stop the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Africa”, Addis Ababa, 1-2 August, 2013.

Notwithstanding the numerous prevention, protection – and even punitive measures – put in place by governments, civil society organisations and other actors involved in the global fight against the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), conclusive evidence shows that the global extent of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents remains high, and that certain forms of CSEC are increasing exponentially, in particular through abuse of the Internet and new technologies and as a result of increased mobility, travel and tourism.

Africa is no exception to this trend. Studies and available data suggest that this pervasive problem has recently intensified across the region due to various inter-related factors that adversely impact the well-being of African children, heightening their vulnerability to different types of abuse and sexual violence. With mounting concern over the increasing magnitude of CSEC in Africa and fully aware that the fight against this contemporary form of slavery has not received sufficient priority, ECPAT International is spearheading efforts to revitalise and expand coordinated actions to end this scourge on the African continent.

This Overview reflects the current state of knowledge of CSEC in Africa and outlines priority areas and strategies for change, with the ultimate aim of ensuring better protection of African children from sexual exploitation. While strengthening and deepening core strategies adopted in the past

years, over the coming period, ECPAT, in dialogue and collaboration with key partners, will introduce new approaches to better respond to opportunities, counter obstacles and maximise the impact, reach and influence of its work to put a stop to CSEC in Africa. By “reviving the vibe” in the region and intensifying actions on several fronts, ECPAT expects to accelerate progress towards the ambitious, yet achievable, goal of ending one of the worst crimes committed against children so that every child – regardless of background, ethnic origin, gender or place in the world – can enjoy his/her fundamental right to live free from commercial sexual exploitation.

After conducting a preliminary literature review of different forms of CSEC and an in-depth, evidence-based analysis of progress, challenges and key priorities for the region, the ECPAT Secretariat, together with its Regional Board Representative for Africa, Zingui Messomo, and the host organisation, Forum on Sustainable Child Empowerment (FSCE), convened a two-day Consultation on 1-2 August, 2013. The meeting brought together senior management of ECPAT member organisations in Africa, selected ECPAT Europe member organisations, ECPAT youth representatives, officials of the Oak Foundation, the UN Special Representative on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Chair of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC).¹ This consultative process with network members and experts provided valuable input for the refinement and finalisation of ECPAT’s strategy for Africa, better aligning it to its overall mission by anticipating and responding to new learning and changing dynamics and shifts in the environment. During the Regional Consultation, ECPAT International was also honoured to receive the Hilton Humanitarian Prize for 2013, which was officially announced by Ms. Judy Miller, Vice President of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

Following this successful event, ECPAT organised a sub-regional meeting in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (24-26 June, 2014) for Francophone member

groups in Africa and reconvened with network members in Africa at a Regional Consultation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (23-24 October, 2014). Both meetings aimed to identify regional priorities and strategies for the ECPAT Network in Africa, which will inform ECPAT's Strategic Directions for the years 2015-2018. The October 2014 Regional Consultation also provided an opportunity for member groups in Africa to build partnerships with key stakeholders in the region, including the African Union, ACERWC and regional offices of UN agencies and international/pan-African NGOs.

These meetings and consultations, providing substantive inputs from several sources, proved to be extremely useful for the development and

validation of ECPAT Network regional priorities and strategies against CSEC as well as promoting pan-African linkages, cooperation and partnership.

Capturing observations, contributions and feedback from experts and participants in this set of three consultations, ECPAT International wishes to thank all the experts who took part in the meetings in Addis Ababa and Ouagadougou for their ongoing contributions and commitment to combatting CSEC and for providing special advice and guidance for more vigorous and effective ECPAT work in Africa. It also extends its sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Conrad Hilton Foundation for their generous gift and support to ECPAT's mission.



SECTION 1. CONTEXT AND INTERSECTING VULNERABILITIES

As highlighted by the UN Special Representative on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, during her presentation at the 2013 Regional Consultation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, a complex matrix of multidimensional and interrelated factors leave children vulnerable and shape the forces and circumstances that allow them to be sexually exploited for commercial purposes. These factors are grounded in the political and socio-economic context in which a child lives and develops. In Africa, as in other regions, several structural facilitators underpin violations of children's rights, influencing their extent and nature.

Demographic factors

Africa is in the midst of a remarkable demographic shift with profound consequences for its future. With a population growing faster than that of any other region and a median age of 18 years, Africa is the world's youngest continent. The child population in Africa, estimated at about 477 million, represents nearly half of the continent's population.² There are currently 70 million more Africans under the age of 14 than a decade ago and this number is expected to rise by another 76 million over the next 10 years. As a result of this significant demographic change, Africa is about to benefit from a sharp increase in the number of people of working age. However, if not supported and sustained by adequate policies (education, training and job creation), this could lead to rising levels of youth unemployment, social dislocation and hunger.³

Economic factors

Despite financial crises, Africa's economies are consistently growing faster than those of almost any other region and at twice the rate of the 1990s. Human development is improving and governments are becoming more accountable.⁴ According to the

2013 UNDP Human Development Report, 11 of the 14 countries that recorded gains in their Human Development Index of more than 2% annually since 2000 are from sub-Saharan Africa. Progress has also been made towards achievement of some UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as reducing child mortality, increasing primary school enrolment and overcoming gender disparities in education and other sectors.⁵

Notwithstanding these promising advances, the region continues to face several challenges. Africa's impressive growth is being jeopardised by rising income inequality. Although seven of 10 people in the region live in countries where average economic growth surpassed 4% annually over the past decade,⁶ poverty rates are persistently high; in 2010, 48.5% of the population lived on less than US\$1.25-a-day and nearly 70% on less than US\$2.00.⁷

World Bank data indicate that sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world where the total number of poor people has increased – more than doubling, to 414 million, in 2010 – from three decades earlier.⁸ The region has made little progress in achieving MDG 1: halving the number of people who suffer from hunger by 2015. Nearly 240 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, or one person of every four, lack adequate food, and record food prices and drought are pushing more people toward chronic hunger. Today, 30 million children (one in five) in sub-Saharan Africa are underweight – 5.5 million more than 20 years ago⁹ – and another 2.6 million die each year from malnutrition.¹⁰ In addition to causing health problems (such as increased risk of infection and infectious disease), malnutrition has adverse psychological effects on children and a negative impact on their physical development and learning ability.

More than 70% of the continent's poor live in rural areas and depend on subsistence agriculture for food and livelihood.¹¹ However, the region is currently experiencing the highest urban growth rates in the world. At present, about 200 million children live

in Africa's urban areas. Inequality prevails in urban contexts; cities in sub-Saharan Africa have the highest levels of urban poverty of any region in the world. Over 60% of the African urban population live in slums, the majority of whom are children and youth.¹²

Abject poverty, widespread unemployment and high levels of rural-urban migration have pushed many African children onto the streets, forcing them to enter the labour market at an early age to meet their basic needs and ensure their family's survival. Estimates indicate that there are 30 million street children in Africa, mostly boys. Children living and/or working on the streets are vulnerable to all forms of inhuman treatment and abuses,¹³ including sexual exploitation.

In Egypt, for example, the Centre for Egyptian Social and Criminal Research recently reported that 36% of street children have suffered sexual abuse, violence and other coercive practices, such as prostitution.¹⁴ Sub-Saharan Africa also has the highest rates of child labour in the world; 26% of children aged 5-17 (49 million) are involved in work¹⁵ and one-in-four in the worst forms of child labour¹⁶ (such as the armed forces, illicit or dangerous activities, etc.). Child labour is frequently associated with sexual exploitation, especially in child domestic work. In Uganda and Ethiopia, child domestic workers were identified as one of the groups most exposed to commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. In Kenya, Plan International reports that child labour, early marriage and child trafficking (including for sexual purposes) constitute major obstacles preventing the enrolment of millions of children in schools. The report points to poverty as the underlying driver of all three phenomena.¹⁷ Likewise, recognising the link between child labour, child trafficking and related forms of child abuse

and exploitation has led to the decision in the state of Kwara in Northern Nigeria has made a decision to prosecute parents who offer their children as domestic help within the state.¹⁸

HIV/AIDS

Numerous children working to support their family or living and working on the streets have been orphaned by AIDS. Despite a 25% reduction in the rate of new HIV infections¹⁹ and significant increases in funding to counter the epidemic since the adoption of the Abuja call in 2006,²⁰ sub-Saharan Africa remains the most severely affected region; nearly 1 in every 20 adults (4.9%) lives with HIV and the region accounts for 69% of those living with HIV worldwide.²¹ It is estimated that 80% of the world's HIV-positive children under the age of 15 live in Africa. In 2010, the number of African children who had lost one parent was estimated at 58 million, of whom about 16 million lost the parent to AIDS.²² Worldwide, 16.6 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS-related illnesses; of these, 15 million live in the sub-Saharan Africa region.²³ Women and girls are still disproportionately affected by the disease. In sub-Saharan Africa, women accounted for 58% of all people living with HIV in the region in 2011.²⁴ In North Africa the number of people newly infected with HIV increased by 37% between 2001 and 2011.²⁵ North Africa and the Middle East are the only regions that have yet to see a reduction in the number of children newly infected with HIV.²⁶ Many studies have confirmed that children orphaned by HIV/AIDS have a greater chance of being exposed to exploitation, abuse and violence. Conversely, when children have inadequate protection against these violations they become more vulnerable to HIV infection (see sub-section below on linkages between HIV/AIDS and CSEC).

“To effectively combat CSEC in Africa, it is essential to address the linkages between this violation and other key issues such as education, health, HIV/AIDS and civil conflict.”

Mr. Zingui Messomo, ASSEJA ECPAT Group in Cameroon, and Regional Representative to the ECPAT International Board, presentation at ECPAT’s “Regional Consultation on Action to Stop the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Africa”, Addis Ababa, 1-2 August, 2013.

Education

Africa has registered progress in achieving universal primary education and promoting gender equality. Net primary enrolment in most African countries shows tremendous gains, with ratios exceeding 90% in several countries. Primary completion rates, however, have seen little progress, and are as low as 33% in some countries. Teacher absenteeism, late age entry by children in primary school cycles, poor health and nutritional status of pupils, financial constraints, distance to school and quality of educational facilities are some of the main factors affecting educational quality and completion rates. African countries have also made significant strides in promoting gender parity in primary education. However, dropout rates continue to be higher among girls than boys, with very limited progress in equalising gender ratios in secondary and tertiary education.²⁷ Several elements contribute to girls’ high dropout rates from secondary education, including cultural practices in families and society that tend to favour male over female education (unlike boys, girls are seen as having domestic responsibilities and are expected to marry early), vulnerability to violence in and out of educational settings and the perception, in some countries, that the benefits of education do not always translate into jobs.²⁸

Gender inequality and gender-based violence

Systematic discrimination against women and girls and their subordinate status in society is a major contributor to sexual violence and exploitation in Africa. In numerous countries in the region, women lack access to and control over common economic resources, such as land, personal property, wages and credit.²⁹ When they do work, girls tend to be employed in sectors on the borderline of the law (for example, domestic work, restaurants and bars), where there is greater risk of exploitation, including sexual exploitation, especially for those without legal status.³⁰ This unequal social status reflects and reinforces gender stereotypes that propagate male superiority and entitlement and also tolerate and justify sexual violence against women and girls.³¹ In South Africa, for example, it is estimated that a woman born in the country has a greater chance of being raped than of learning how to read. Confirming the normalisation of sexual violence against girls, a survey conducted among 1,500 schoolchildren in South Africa’s Soweto Township found that according to a quarter of all boys interviewed, “jackrolling” (gang rape) was fun.³²

Armed conflicts (civil wars, insurgencies, and terrorism) and natural disasters

Gender-based sexual violence has been facilitated, *inter alia*, by the many civil wars that occurred in sub-Saharan Africa during the last two decades. Fifteen African countries are currently involved in war or experiencing post-war conflict and tension.³³ As a result of this endemic problem, sub-Saharan Africa has more displaced people than any other continent.³⁴ African children are particularly affected by armed conflicts. Besides being displaced internally or across borders, thousands of children living in war-torn and post-conflict countries have

been victims of abduction, torture and forced recruitment into the armed forces, with very large numbers also experiencing rape, sexual violence and exploitation. In Uganda, for example, during the 24-year civil conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government, hundreds of unaccompanied children living in camps for the displaced were exploited in transactional and organised commercial sex, while others were recruited as child soldiers by the LRA, including a large number of girls who were sexually abused and used as servants.³⁵

"Recent episodes of sexual harassment and abuse against women and girls reported by the media during the post-Arab Spring reveal that gender-based violence remains a pervasive and persistent problem in MENA region."

Deniz Kandiyoti, "Fear and fury: women and post- revolutionary violence."

Democratic uprisings that began in 2010, known as the "Arab Spring," have spread across many Arab countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Jordan) and continue to impact children. Egypt and Tunisia experienced refugee crises along their borders following the forced displacement of 930,000 civilians in Libya. Children throughout the region were exposed directly or indirectly to scenes of violence.³⁶ Concern that human traffickers could be taking advantage of the Arab Spring by luring women and girls from conflict-ridden countries was raised by some rights advocates.³⁷ Recent episodes of sexual harassment and abuse against women and girls reported by the media following the Arab Spring reveal that gender-based violence remains a pervasive and persistent problem in the Middle East and North Africa.³⁸

Similarly, one of the bleak consequences of instability and conflict in South Sudan is the rise in child prostitution. In Juba, "approximately 500 girls out of [an] estimated 3,000 street children could be

engaged in child prostitution."³⁹ A survey conducted by a South Sudanese-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) and the French embassy found that 31% of 159 street girls surveyed were victims of commercial sexual exploitation, a situation reportedly fuelled by the increased presence of soldiers in Juba; some girls involved in prostitution are just 12 years old.⁴⁰

Another example is the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, which has led to widespread insecurity, particularly in the northern parts of the country, due to the frequent kidnappings and acts of violence perpetrated by the group. The April 2014 abduction of nearly 300 schoolgirls in the town of Chibok served to renew international focus on the problem of human trafficking in Nigeria and on the continent. Boko Haram's threats to sell the kidnapped schoolgirls, raised grave concern that some will be dispersed to neighbouring countries (such as Cameroon and Chad) or to the global marketplace and forced into marriage and/or all manner of work, from domestic and agricultural labour to sexual exploitation, forced begging and child soldiering.⁴¹

Likewise, according to a 2014 report on trafficking in persons in Somalia, traffickers reportedly take advantage of Somali children fleeing the militant group al-Shabaab and seeking refuge in Kenya by subjecting them to forced labour or sexual exploitation. Refugee children at Kenya's Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps may also experience exploitation in prostitution and forced labour. Truck drivers often facilitate the trafficking of young girls for sexual purposes. Trucks used in "transporting goods from Kenya to Somalia return to Kenya with young girls and women; traffickers acquire these young girls and women and place them in brothels in Nairobi or Mombasa or send them to destinations outside Kenya."

Natural disasters are another major driver of CSEC in the region. Like wars and internal conflicts, natural disasters cause a breakdown

of social infrastructure and population displacement that, in the medium- and long-term, allow traffickers and other exploiters to operate with impunity.⁴²

For instance, Chingwizi Camp, a transit camp housing more than 3,000 families displaced by flooding in early 2014 in south-eastern Zimbabwe, was reportedly a high-risk location for trafficking (including for sexual purposes). Flood victims facing desperate conditions at the camp were vulnerable to traffickers, especially unsuspecting girls, who are lured away with false promises of good job prospects outside the camp.⁴³ Flood victims at the camp also accused government workers and Zimbabwean police officers in charge of distributing aid, such as food and other basic necessities, of demanding sex from females (including girls) in exchange for these commodities, reportedly leading to a rise in prostitution in the camp.⁴⁴ To combat these vulnerabilities, child protection systems need to be scaled-up in crisis situations.⁴⁵

Child migration

Civil wars and economic and political crises in the region have dramatically increased the flow of children crossing borders to seek safety and basic social services in neighbouring countries. As a result, irregular child migration⁴⁶ across countries in the region has reached alarmingly high levels in recent years.

Contemporary migration in Africa is mainly ‘mixed’ in nature, consisting of “flows of people (including children) who are on the move for different reasons but who share the same routes, modes of travel and vessels.”⁴⁷ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UN High Commissioner for Refugees explain that mixed flows can include refugees, asylum seekers, trafficked persons, stateless persons and unaccompanied or separated children as well as other irregular migrants

moving for various reasons such as economic, environmental, and humanitarian factors. These categories of people are not mutually exclusive, as there is often more than one reason that people move from one place to another. Human smugglers are frequently involved in facilitating mixed migration.⁴⁸ Also, children are increasingly becoming part of today’s mixed migration flows. The number of unaccompanied minors, separated children and child victims of human trafficking has significantly increased – between 2006 and 2009, IOM supported more than 20,000 unaccompanied minors.⁴⁹

According to the *Forced Migration Review*, although mixed migration is hardly a new phenomenon, its scope and complexity have changed; including the response of destination countries. “The proliferation of causes, the involvement of criminal enterprises, security concerns and the sheer number of people on the move have led states to intensify their efforts to fight irregular migration, often applying blanket measures without any screening for protection needs,”⁵⁰ which can lead to mass deportations, to the detriment of vulnerable children.

In Eastern and Southern Africa, sub-regions with a long tradition of labour and population movements, children on the move are becoming a growing concern. Although the exact magnitude of the problem remains unknown due to the irregular nature of the movement and poor recordkeeping by immigrations officials, available evidence suggests that thousands of children are affected. On average, around 2,500 children from Zimbabwe are deported from South Africa every month; children also make up a significant number of the approximately 7,000 Mozambicans deported from there. At the same time, children from Horn of Africa countries like Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, are moving to the Arabian Peninsula to take poorly paid jobs, and many children from Madagascar and Comoros end up in the Middle East as domestic servants. Girls and women make up a large portion of the migrant population and are particularly vulnerable to severe

human rights violations, including sexual violence and exploitation, labour exploitation as well as physical and emotional abuse during the entire migration process. Whilst trafficking and migration are two very distinct phenomena, traffickers often use migrants “irregular” legal status to control them, and children are frequently among the most vulnerable victims.⁵¹

Harmful traditional practices, beliefs and evolving social norms

A number of religious and traditional practices and beliefs continue to sustain and condone child sexual abuse and CSEC. Despite the existence of laws in many countries that regulate the age of marriage, in sub-Saharan Africa 36% of women aged 20-24 years were married before age 18, with peaks close to 70% in Chad and Niger, which have the highest child marriage rates in the world.⁵² In some countries child marriage is associated with CSEC as well as with female genital mutilation,⁵³ a harmful tradition that is gradually declining but remains prevalent in some areas (in Mali, for instance, prevalence rates among the youngest generation reach 75%).⁵⁴

“We need to recognise that harmful cultural practices such as early marriage, ‘crimes of honor’, and ‘trokosi’ in Ghana, significantly increase children’s vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation.”

Dr. Benyam Dawit Mezmur, Chair of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, presentation, ECPAT’s “Regional Consultation on Action to Stop the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Africa”, Addis Ababa, 1-2 August, 2013.

Harmful customs, which have been used to disguise or facilitate CSEC, also include “*trokosi*” and “*vidomegon*”. Still practiced in Ghana and other West African countries such as Nigeria, Benin and Togo, *trokosi* requires parents to offer their virgin

daughters to a fetish shrine to atone for offences allegedly committed by a member of the girl’s family. The girl becomes the property of the fetish priest and must provide sexual services as well as perform other tasks for him.⁵⁵ Another culturally accepted practice that increases vulnerability of Ghanaian girls to sexual exploitation is the “*kayaye*” phenomenon: young girls from poor communities in Ghana’s Northern region migrate to cities in the South, such as the capital Accra, to work as *kayayes* (female porters) “to alleviate financial constraints, including the pressure to acquire marital accessories for their future married life.”⁵⁶ A 2006 situation analysis of vulnerable children in Ghana revealed that many migrants and *kayaye* have no real source of shelter at night and often engage in commercial sexual activity as a secondary source of income.⁵⁷

In Benin, under the practice of *vidomegon*, poor rural families send their children, usually girls, to work as domestic servants with the hope of providing them a better life. The sending families arrange with an urban family, sometimes relatives, to provide housing and food to the working child and then the two families share the income generated by the child’s labour. While such arrangements are generally voluntary between the families, children frequently work long hours, receive insufficient food and are vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation.⁵⁸ Furthermore, there have been reports that “*vidomegon*” has been used by traffickers to recruit children into the sex trade.⁵⁹

There is evidence that the practice whereby families send their boy children to the city to learn the Koran from religious teachers, or *marabouts*, continues to heighten children’s vulnerability in countries such as Senegal. Besides being forced to beg on the streets, religious students (known as *talibés*) are exposed to physical and sexual abuse, including sexual exploitation, especially by older boys.⁶⁰ This tradition is also used to cover trafficking in children who are used for begging within and across countries, as testified by the presence of *talibés*

from Guinea and other neighbouring countries on the streets of Senegal.⁶¹

“Traffickers may convince parents that their child is a witch to instigate the rejection of the child. Once recruited, traffickers can also manipulate the child victim’s beliefs and superstitions to foster a fear of dire spiritual consequences should an attempt be made to escape the exploitation.”

ECPAT UK, “Safeguarding children controlled through belief in ritual oaths, ‘child witches’, or religious and traditional practices.”

Harmful traditional beliefs also contribute to the commercial sexual exploitation of children. For example, ECPAT International’s 2014 *Global Monitoring Report on Nigeria* documented a rising link between witchcraft stigmatisation and child trafficking in the country: “Belief in witchcraft has been widespread in Nigeria for a long time, but the phenomenon of accusing children of witchcraft, resulting in their abuse, neglect and even murder, is fairly recent. These children are vulnerable to all forms of CSEC as they are shunned by their communities and often left to fend for themselves on the streets.”⁶² The growing correlation between child witchcraft stigmatisation and human trafficking can be observed in Akwa Ibom State, which has the highest known number of children accused of witchcraft in Nigeria and the highest known level of child trafficking.⁶³

According to research by ECPAT UK, witchcraft is yet another means of recruiting and dominating child victims. Traffickers may convince parents that their child is a witch to instigate rejection of the child. Once recruited, traffickers also manipulate the child victim’s beliefs and superstitions to foster a fear of dire spiritual consequences should an attempt be made to escape the exploitation.⁶⁴ A confluence of factors contribute to the link between witchcraft and child trafficking, including “...the lack of social protection to help families in poverty, a

lack of access to education for vulnerable children, corruption, the influence of senior religious and political figures, and culturally entrenched gender norms.”⁶⁵ Similar factors are also responsible for the phenomenon of “baby farms”, a form of child sexual exploitation particular to Nigeria, in which young girls are locked up in locations, often parading as shelters or orphanages, and used to produce babies, which are then sold at a profit for adoption or use in witchcraft rituals.⁶⁶

Low levels of birth registration

Despite some progress registered in recent years, low levels of birth registration remain a major concern in Africa. According to UNICEF, sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest birth registration rates in the world; only an average of 38% of children below the age of five have a birth certificate, despite strong advances in registration in Burundi, Djibouti, Gabon, South Africa and Togo.⁶⁷ In Eastern and Western Africa, ethnic minorities, people living in remote areas, internally displaced persons and children living in refugee camps or conflict zones tend to have the lowest birth registration rates.⁶⁸ Factors contributing to this gap include a lack of sustained political commitment, limited institutional capacity, costs, cultural barriers and lack of awareness among families about the importance of registering their children.⁶⁹ Low levels of birth registration continue to be a significant facilitator of CSEC and child trafficking in several countries, including Ethiopia, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda.⁷⁰

In recognition of the importance of birth registration records in combating CSEC, South Africa introduced new immigration rules as of October 2014, requiring parents/guardians to provide an unabridged birth certificate for all travelling children under 18 (applies to both South Africans and foreigners travelling in and out of the country). These new regulations are intended to deter child trafficking and child kidnapping/abductions, which are on the rise in the

country.⁷¹ Although South Africa's tourism sector raised concerns about a potential detrimental effect on the industry, the government has defended the regulations as forming part of its international commitment to combat child trafficking.⁷²

Consumerism and peer pressure

Consumerism is another important factor contributing to increased commercial sexual exploitation of children in Africa. Persuaded by peer pressure and the need to belong and conform to the value placed by society on expensive brand-name products and luxury goods and services (reinforced through advertising and various media), children and adolescents may exchange sexual services for money or other status products. The so called “sugar daddy” or *fataki* phenomenon – whereby girls provide sex services to older men in exchange for gifts or other forms of consideration – reflects this growing trend (see sub-section on “prostitution of children” for more details).

Demand

While all the above-mentioned factors play an important role in pushing children into commercial sexual exploitation, the existence of CSEC cannot be explained without analysing and understanding the issue of *demand* for sex with children. Underlying attitudes about male entitlement and masculinity can foster the perverse notion that it is acceptable for men to sexually exploit children, either in their own countries or abroad (as in the phenomenon of sexual exploitation of children in tourism). Such attitudes are further reinforced when buying sex from a child appears to be socially acceptable and does not lead to important social stigma or serious legal punishment. Contrary to popular misconceptions, the demand for sex with children does not come exclusively from paedophiles, but is largely generated by people who pay for sex. Persons (nationals and foreigners) who patronise the commercial sex market may end up sexually exploiting a child. Therefore, there is no specific profile for child sex exploiters: they can be young or old, married or single, and come from different socio-economic backgrounds and professions. Unfortunately, knowledge about demand in Africa is limited, which is one of the reasons why it remains largely unaddressed by governments.

SECTION 2. CSEC MANIFESTATIONS AND EMERGING TRENDS IN AFRICA



Despite a growing number of studies and situation analyses shedding light on the forms, causes, consequences, experiences and perceptions of CSEC in African countries, the existing knowledge base on this violation of child rights remains limited and scattered, especially in North Africa. Reliable data, estimates and statistics capable of determining the true scale of CSEC are fragmented and scarce, mainly due to the lack of centralised data collection systems; hidden and illegal nature of the sex trade; and taboo and stigma attached to sexuality and CSEC in many African societies, leading to under-reporting of related offences.

“Visibility of child prostitution is high in depressed parts of Monrovia, where young girls are often pressured by their own peers and family members, as opposed to crime syndicates, to engage in the practice in order to earn an income.”

Clair MacDougall, “Liberia’s Child Prostitutes.”

The increasing victimisation of children in countries in the region has been confirmed by numerous news reports and research studies. In Cameroon, for example, research published in 2011 found that the sexual abuse of children, including sexual exploitation, is far more rampant than in the past.⁷³ In the Democratic Republic of Congo, as a result of the armed conflict that has impoverished many families, making them unable to care for their children, the media report a growing number of brothels being opened in North Kivu, where under-age girls are being sexually exploited.⁷⁴ ECPAT’s second edition of Country Monitoring Reports and other research studies in 2013 confirmed this rising trend in several Eastern and Southern African countries. In South Africa, according to some child rights activists, commercial sex is increasing sharply, especially in Durban, where some girls are pushed into selling their bodies by their own parents.⁷⁵ In Uganda a 2011 report estimated that the number of child victims of sexual exploitation had increased

from 12,000 in 2004 to 18,000 in 2011.⁷⁶ CSEC is also reportedly on the rise in Tanzania, especially in urban areas, as well as in Mauritius.⁷⁷

The different manifestations of CSEC discussed below describe how sexual exploitation occurs in Africa and identifies some recurring and emerging trends:

- Commercial sexual exploitation of children in all its forms appears to be intensifying and there are well-established links between trafficking in children for sexual purposes, prostitution of children, and sexual exploitation of children in tourism and child pornography;
- Despite a dearth of research and lack of awareness and acknowledgement, there is increasing evidence that boys are being sexually exploited in prostitution and other forms of CSEC;
- The growth in Internet usage across the continent is exposing African children to a number of online threats, including grooming and “sexting”;
- The number of African countries affected by sexual exploitation of children in tourism appears to be growing, with some countries becoming emerging destinations for travelling sex offenders;
- Sexual abuse, exploitation and violence in schools, along with child marriage for purposes of sexual exploitation, remain a concern;
- There is evidence that children with disabilities face higher risk of different forms of violence and abuse, including sexual exploitation;
- Girl domestic workers continue to be victims of sexual abuse and exploitation;
- A significant correlation between the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and the HIV/AIDS pandemic is evident.

Prostitution of children

The factors contributing to children and young people falling victims to prostitution vary from one country to another, but existing knowledge suggests that abject poverty is the underlying cause.

It appears that the involvement of children and adolescents in prostitution is on the rise across the African continent, although it remains unclear whether this reflects a true growth of commercial sex or increased awareness and reporting. A report on the status of child sexual abuse in East Africa released in 2011 points out that regionally, prostitution of children is increasing, especially in the capital cities of Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.⁷⁸ ECPAT's second set of Country Monitoring Reports and a number of media reports and studies substantiate this finding, confirming a rising trend in this and other African regions. In West and Central Africa, prostitution of children was found to be growing, *inter alia*, in Togo (especially Lomé)⁷⁹, Liberia⁸⁰, Sierra Leone (particularly Bo)⁸¹, Burkina Faso⁸² and Angola.⁸³ In Southern Africa, the number of children engaging in paid sex is reported to be on the rise in Mozambique (primarily in Maputo, Beira, Chimoio, and Nacala⁸⁴), South Africa⁸⁵ and Zambia⁸⁶ among others. Some North African countries also report a growth in child prostitution. For example, the Government of Egypt stated that prostitution activities are increasing, affecting children as young as 10.⁸⁷

The visibility of child prostitution is high in depressed parts of Monrovia, where young girls are often pressured by their own peers and family members, as opposed to crime syndicates, to engage in the practice in order to earn an income. In Liberia and elsewhere, the situation is further exacerbated by a generally patriarchal culture and corrupt law enforcement.⁸⁸

Not surprisingly, commercial sex was reported to be especially present in cities, in conjunction with a stronger presence of children living and working on the streets. As in other regions of the world, children involved in prostitution in Africa are mainly girls aged 14-17 years, although cases involving younger girls have been reported. In Cameroon, for example, recent research found that 6% of the 4,000 children found in prostitution were girls between 11 and 17 years of age.⁸⁹ In Uganda, a 2011 study indicated that the debut age continued to decrease; many children stated that they were 10 years old when they first engaged in commercial sex.⁹⁰

Regardless of the specific country context, the sexual exploitation of boys in prostitution remains generally more concealed and under-reported than female prostitution, mainly due to persisting societal condemnation and stigmatisation of this practice. Although knowledge remains very limited, the involvement of boys in commercial sex has been increasingly exposed of late. In Ethiopia, a study conducted by FSCE revealed the prevalence of male victims of child prostitution in Addis Ababa. Male children are specifically targeted due to the widespread misconception that anal intercourse is less likely to transmit HIV/AIDS than vaginal intercourse.⁹¹ Furthermore, offenders exploit socio-cultural taboos related to homosexual activity, whereby public and religious discourse dismisses homosexuality as "not Ethiopian".⁹² This makes it difficult for child victims to convince a trusted adult that the abuse has taken place. In Uganda, a 2011 study identified a growing trend of boys engaging in commercial sex with older and wealthier women, locally known as "sugar mummies".⁹³ Research conducted by ECPAT France on CSEC in three towns in Madagascar confirmed the existing, yet marginal, involvement of boys in paid sex: of the 285 cases of child prostitution identified, 14 involved boys.⁹⁴ Regardless of the specific country context, social stigma means that the sexual exploitation of boys in prostitution remains generally more concealed and under-reported than female prostitution.

Prostitution of children may be visible, with transactions taking place in public places, or hidden, taking place within the private sphere. In Ethiopia, for example, a study conducted jointly by Save the Children Denmark and the Addis Ababa City Administration identified various types of child prostitution, including commercial sexual exploitation in nightclubs, bars, brothels, arki (local alcohol houses) and rented houses, with each location exposing children to different risks and hazards.⁹⁵ In Cameroon, research published in 2010 indicated that children engaging in commercial sex could be found in hotels (30.9%), on the streets (29%) and in sex establishments.⁹⁶

Prostitution of children is generally more widespread in locations where there is a strong demand for commercial sex. Besides urban centres, research indicates that this CSEC manifestation is more prevalent in tourist areas, at truck stops along major transportation routes, and near mining and fishing sites.

For instance, in a report produced by the Zimbabwe Youth Council, in partnership with UNICEF, child prostitution was found to be highly prevalent in transit and/or mining towns such as Ngundu, Neshuro, Hwange and Lukosi. The direst cases were found in Hwange, a rural mining town where child prostitution and early marriage were cited as the most prevalent harmful practices against children in the area.⁹⁷ The rise in the phenomenon is fuelled by depressed economic conditions in these small towns and demand from locals, especially truck drivers. The inherently hazardous conditions faced by girls in prostitution are often exacerbated by sexual harassment from law enforcement, as well as a culture of silence, stigma and victim-blaming within the general community, as is reportedly the case in Shangani, another Zimbabwean mining town

facing a rise in child prostitution.⁹⁸ Children may also be moved from one place to another in order to meet demand for paid sex. This is confirmed by the fact that a significant proportion of children in prostitution are also victims of internal or cross-border sex trafficking.

The exchange of sex services usually involves cash or other forms of remuneration, such as drugs and alcohol, which are frequently associated with child prostitution. Save the Children's research in Addis Ababa found that sexual contact was most frequently exchanged for money or khat (a local herbal stimulant) and other drugs.⁹⁹ In South Africa, some children involved in the sex trade reportedly give all their earnings to pimps in return for drugs.¹⁰⁰

Transactional sex (the exchange of gifts or money for sex), usually involving girls or young women and men who are several years older, continues to be widespread in sub-Saharan Africa. Known also the 'sugar-daddy syndrome', transactional sex is sometimes seen as a short-term solution for girls unable to pay for school fees, food and other needs, or in exchange for good grades in school (see box below on sexual abuse and exploitation in schools). A recent study on transactional sex in rural Malawi found that girls were driven not only by survival needs but also by "attractive consumer goods, passion and revenge". In South Africa, researchers argued that transactional sex is attributable to gendered material inequalities and a particular construction of masculinity, but is also seen as a 'normal' part of sexual relationships motivated to acquire the commodities of modernity.¹⁰¹ The "sugar daddy" phenomenon has long been identified as a key factor influencing the spread of HIV, given that girls have limited power to negotiate safe sex and are likely to engage in sexual relationships with multiple older men, a population with a high prevalence of HIV.¹⁰²

CSEC in and around schools

Despite its prevalence, frequency and intensity, violence in and around schools has yet to be fully and systematically documented, although several studies on the subject were carried out by government agencies, civil society organisations and UN agencies in recent years. Focusing on different regions and countries, existing studies on school-based violence reach the same conclusion: schools across the continent, both private and public, need to become safer and more protective environments for children.

A 2010 study on school-based violence in West and Central Africa conducted by UNICEF and other agencies found that data regarding the incidence of sexual exploitation in educational institutions varies greatly across the region, partly because it is often combined with sexual abuse. However, the most reported form of sexual exploitation was found to be sex for grades, usually involving a male staff member and a girl student. Indeed, the practice included mainly transactional encounters such as good reports or good marks in exchange for sexual acts, or sexual relations as payment for school fees or supplies (girls may also be 'offered' by male students to teachers in return for reduced fees).¹⁰³

School-based sexual violence, including sexual exploitation, is also rife in Eastern and Southern Africa.¹⁰⁴ In Kenya, data from a 2009 report revealed that teenagers on occasion initiated contacts with teachers primarily for the possibility of material gain in terms of pocket money. In South Africa, whilst the Department of Education is said

to be turning a blind eye to evidence of sexual relationships between teachers and pupils, the media has long been reporting on male teachers who propose love to female pupils in exchange for exceptionally high marks on tests and assignments.¹⁰⁵ In Uganda, a 2007 study found that a majority of girls had sex to pay for school fees and supplies, encouraged by their mothers to do so.¹⁰⁶

Connections have been found between prostitution of children and child domestic labour in some countries. In Guinea, research conducted by Human Rights Watch exposed several cases of girl domestic workers having been sexually harassed, sexually exploited and raped.¹⁰⁷ In Mozambique, girls employed as domestic workers or in subsistence agriculture were found to be exploited in prostitution at night for additional money. Similarly,¹⁰⁸ in Uganda, child domestic servants and store clerks were reported to be particularly vulnerable to CSEC, especially when they needed to earn more money.¹⁰⁹

Sexual exploitation of children with disabilities

There is growing evidence from Africa that children with disabilities may be subjected to different forms of abuse and violence, including CSEC. A 2011 report by the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) found that out of a sample of 956 young disabled people interviewed, girls and boys were equally likely to suffer a given type of sexual violence once or twice (28% of all cases), but girls were far

more likely to suffer a given sexual violence more than 10 times (28%) than boys (16%). In terms of prevalence, there were several large differences between the country samples – for example, 52% of respondents in Cameroon and Zambia had been forced to have intercourse, compared with 14% in Senegal, 24% in Uganda and 30% in Ethiopia. An astonishing 30% of respondents in Cameroon had also been forced into prostitution, compared with less than 1% in Senegal and Zambia.¹¹⁰

In addition to the risks of sexually transmitted diseases, psychological trauma, rape and physical harm, child victims of prostitution often face abuse by authorities and punishment for their involvement. In Tanzania, for example, the police tend to arrest the child, not the offender who is breaking the law.¹¹¹ Likewise, in Zambia, where the law provides that children involved in prostitution who are 12 years old or over, may be charged and prosecuted.¹¹² The tendency is to criminalise the children rather than their “customers” or intermediaries.¹¹³

Trafficking of children for sexual exploitation

The number of trafficked persons in Africa cannot be readily ascertained, as reflected in the differing figures provided by various agencies. However governments in the region are concerned at the ever-rising rate of human trafficking, confirmed by a recent International Labour Organization (ILO) ‘Global Estimate of Forced Labour’ that affirms the number of trafficking victims in Africa has grown continuously since 2005.¹¹⁴

Whilst the number of children involved remains unknown, the 2012 UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Report on Trafficking in Persons indicates that Africa and the Middle East are the regions most affected

by child trafficking; two-thirds of victims (68%) detected between 2007 and 2010 were under 18 years of age. Almost half of the victims were exploited in forced labour and 36% for sexual exploitation.

Other forms of trafficking, including for use as child soldiers, rituals, organ removal and other purposes, accounted for 14% of cases. Most human trafficking flows originating in Sub-Saharan Africa are intra-regional (nearly 58%) or domestic (about 40%, mainly from rural to urban areas), while in North Africa and the Middle East over two-thirds of the victims (70%) are from outside the region. Some flows link Africa to other regions: trafficking of West African victims accounts for a significant share of human trafficking in Europe, while East Africans constitute a significant portion of the victims detected in the Middle East.¹¹⁵ Some African countries are also reported to be the destination for women and children trafficked from other continents (e.g., women and girls from Thailand and China trafficked to South Africa or Kenya for sexual exploitation).¹¹⁶

The routes and methodologies used by traffickers are complex, diverse and fluid, adapting daily to specific regions and cultures, new laws and regulations and technological developments. In Africa, several trends in child trafficking flows have been identified in recent years:

- Western and Central African countries appear to be particularly affected by child trafficking. The 2009 UNODC trafficking in persons report found that *in West Africa alone children constituted nearly 100% of victims*. In this sub-region trafficking activities take place along clearly recognised routes that traverse Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Cote d’Ivoire, Gabon, Gambia, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. Other routes include those along Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.¹¹⁷ As pointed out in a UNICEF study, many are both sending and receiving countries, and trafficking flows are complex. Frequently, neighbouring countries are engaged in child trafficking in both

directions across a common border. For example, children are trafficked from Ghana to Togo and Ivory Coast or from Benin to Nigeria, and vice versa;¹¹⁸

- A major route for trafficking children for sexual exploitation goes from Southern Africa, and to a lesser extent, Central Africa¹¹⁹ (e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo) to South Africa. According to a 2010 government-commissioned study, trafficking of children and young people to South Africa takes place predominantly from neighbouring countries across land borders, with the main countries of origin being Mozambique and Zimbabwe, followed by Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho.¹²⁰ The EU-funded ECPAT report “Don't Look Away - be aware and report the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism” also revealed that increasing numbers of children are smuggled into South Africa from neighbouring countries as well as from China, India and Taiwan. Nigerian, Eastern European and Chinese traffickers are generally behind these child trafficking and prostitution rings.¹²¹ Furthermore, “due to its direct flights and shipping routes, South Africa is classified as a transit point for trafficking operations between Europe, United States and Canada and the rest of the developed world;”¹²²
- Trafficking flows in East Africa are intra- and inter-regional, but also increasingly directed towards the Gulf States.¹²³ Rising numbers of children are reported to be sexually exploited along the Kenya-Tanzania border as well as in tourist areas, to meet the sexual demands of travelling sex offenders. Children from refugee camps in Rwanda are brought to Kigali, as well as to Kenya, Sudan and South Sudan and Uganda by other refugees or Rwandan and Ugandan 'sugar daddies' for use in the sex trade;¹²⁴
- In North Africa, information on trafficking flows is scarce, but international organisations and local NGOs report that women and children from sub-Saharan Africa may be trafficked there (e.g., unaccompanied children and women from

Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria are highly vulnerable to sex trafficking and, to a lesser extent, forced labour in Morocco) or may transit *en route* to Europe.¹²⁵ Cases of sexually exploited Moroccan and Tunisian unaccompanied children detected in Italy suggest that these North African countries may also be a source of child sex trafficking.¹²⁶

Although child sex trafficking affects mainly girls, there is evidence that boys may also get trapped in the sex trade. For example, it has been reported that a number of Zambian boys are taken to Zimbabwe for prostitution.¹²⁷ Similarly, 2008 research on internal trafficking in South Africa conducted by IOM indicates that boys under the age of 18 are increasingly lured into sexual exploitation, often for use in pornography. The same study also found that adolescent girls and young women who leave exploitative situations as domestic servants are vulnerable to recruitment into the sex industry.¹²⁸ Incidents of this type were also reported in other countries, such as Benin.¹²⁹

Studies on child sex trafficking in African countries suggest that certain characteristics are associated with a child's likelihood of being trafficked, including: poverty, orphan-hood, living and working on the streets, strong presence of harmful cultural traditions (early marriage, tolerance for “fostering” by distant relatives), lower levels of education (especially for girls), dysfunctional families, lack of birth registration, being employed as a domestic worker and already being involved in prostitution.¹³⁰

As in other regions of the world, documented traffickers in Africa include international organised crime networks, organised criminals operating throughout the region or continent, long-distance truck drivers, as well as occasionally border control agents, spiritual leaders and even victims' family members. In addition to the vulnerability of their prey, traffickers also rely on corruption, lax border controls, poor individual documentation and weak legislation to facilitate their work.¹³¹ In terms of traffickers' gender and nationality, the 2012 UNODC

report reveals that female offending for trafficking-related crimes is lower in Africa than in other parts of the world; about 20% of those prosecuted and convicted were females. The study also pointed to a disproportionate presence of foreign nationals among the few convictions reported in sub-Saharan African countries.¹³²

Child abuse materials and sexual exploitation of children online

With very few exceptions, information on the incidence and prevalence of child pornography is generally lacking across Africa. Along with a dearth of statistics (on criminal investigations, prosecutions and convictions for related offences), there is a paucity of qualitative research to enhance understanding of the phenomenon. Thus much about the nature, scale and dimensions of this CSEC manifestation in the region remains unknown. Evidence and the few investigations conducted to date suggest, however, that Africa is no exception when it comes to the production, distribution and possession of child abuse materials.

The advent of new technologies and growth in Internet access in African countries, while bringing many benefits, have greatly facilitated online child sexual abuse and exploitation perpetrated by networks of commercial buyers, traffickers, child sex tourists and other sexual predators.

As a result of the expansion in ICTs – in particular increased use of mobile phones and wireless Internet and the popularity of cybercafés,¹³³ – more and more African children and adolescents are now exposed to online threats and vulnerabilities, endangering their safety.

In an effort to address current gaps in knowledge and assist in the design of suitable interventions, ECPAT International in 2011/12 conducted a youth-led survey to assess children's vulnerabilities and the

risks arising from their online presence, particularly in Cameroon, The Gambia, Kenya, Togo and Uganda. The study confirms that Internet penetration in these countries has a number of child protection implications that should be urgently addressed. In terms of risky behaviours, the survey found that although online practices that have the potential to cause harm did not seem to be widespread among the children interviewed, there is cause for concern based on several findings: a) almost half of the children (49%) reported having accessed adult pornography online; b) the majority (54%) had seen someone of their age represented in pornographic materials; c) about 10% had been approached by online contacts asking them to share sexualised images of themselves, of whom 3% said that they actually shared such images; d) about 14% of the total sample had met someone offline whom they had first met online; e) almost 45% read guidelines on safety posted online, but 32% did not; another 14% were not aware of such materials.

The research also looked at child safety in cybercafés which are, by far, the location where children most access the Internet. Whilst cafés in Cameroon, The Gambia and Uganda allow children to access pornography, most Kenyan (82%) and Togolese (70%) cybercafés said that they did not allow pornographic content to be downloaded or viewed. However, none reported taking concrete measures to prevent this behaviour. In addition, the survey found that most schools did not have filtering systems installed and that few children received parental guidance regarding the safe use of ICTs.¹³⁴

South Africa is one of the few African countries where online risks for children, including the production and distribution of child abuse materials, have gained massive media and political attention, while also becoming a major area of law enforcement activity and social concern.

Online threats faced by South African children have been increasingly identified and investigated. Besides exposure to violent and sexual content and sexual

harassment,¹³⁵ studies point to recurring threats such as “sexting” (sending or receiving of sexually explicit or sexually suggestive images or video via a cell phone), talking with and meeting strangers and online grooming. The Wireless Application Service Providers' Association (WASPA) reported that 22% of teen girls and 20% of boys had sent nude or semi-nude photos of themselves over the Internet or their phones.¹³⁶ A UNICEF study revealed that every day, 42% of young people talk to strangers on Mxit,¹³⁷ while another survey in the Nelson Mandela Bay area found that 40% of students interviewed had met someone in person after having chatted online. The media have reported cases of girls who met with strangers online and were later sexually abused and exploited.¹³⁸ The UNICEF report also highlights a unique practice among Mxit users, of asking the “ASLR” (Age, Sex, Language and Race) of their online friends, which can have implications for gender- and-race based violence against children.

Cases of self-victimisation of children (including “sexting”) are becoming more and more widespread, even in countries with limited Internet penetration. For example, pornographic movies involving young girls can easily be found in Burkina Faso and there is evidence that they were shot by young students in Ouagadougou who later circulated them via mobile phones and the Internet.¹³⁹ In Uganda, an increasing trend of girls who take nude studio photos of themselves in exchange for money was exposed in research published in 2011. The same study also found that children visiting Internet cafes sometimes log into chat rooms to search for “clients” from different parts of the world in order to market their services.¹⁴⁰

It appears that in some African countries the production of child abuse materials is organised on a commercial basis, often with no prosecution of offenders.

In Tanzania, for example, according to Terre des Hommes Netherlands, there is suspicion that the making of child pornography is coordinated and organised on a professional level, in part by

Europeans. It has also been reported by various NGOs that tabloid newspapers and magazines (known as “udaku” in Kiswahili), have published immoral pictures of children and that no legal action was taken against them, even though it is prohibited by law.¹⁴¹ In Uganda, there is evidence that child sexual abuse materials are growing at a very fast rate. In the capital city, Kampala, child pornography has evolved into a practice for commercial gain, involving well-coordinated networks comprised of music celebrities and bar and karaoke group owners. It is estimated that almost 1,800 children are exploited every week in Kampala through this form of CSEC. Child abuse materials include films, photos and videos, production of which is frequently linked to child sexual exploitation through strip dancing (known as “ekimansulo”).¹⁴² The use of children for the production of abusive materials has also been reported in other countries. In Senegal, recent evidence indicates that young girls are being recruited for pornographic films and bestiality (i.e. sexual activity with animals). Similarly, in Cameroon, boys and girls aged 14 to 18 can be found posing and working in strip clubs, where they are filmed.¹⁴³

In contexts affected by sexual exploitation of children in tourism, an increase in child abuse materials produced by traveling sex offenders has taken place. Recent media reports from Kenya indicate that according to NGO workers, more children are becoming involved in pornography in coastal areas, largely as a result of a specific demand from tourists.¹⁴⁴ Cases of child sex tourists who sexually abuse children for the purpose of producing child pornography were also reported, among others, in The Gambia,¹⁴⁵ South Africa¹⁴⁶ and Uganda¹⁴⁷.

Although very limited information is available on the spread of child abuse materials in North Africa, existing evidence suggests that this is a problem in the region. A report on child pornography published in 2011 by the Italy-based Meter Association, an agency specialised in counteracting online child sexual abuse and exploitation, revealed that 0.4% of internet servers discovered by the organisation were found in Africa, all located on servers in Libya.¹⁴⁸ In

Egypt, despite the lack of reliable statistics on child pornography, the government acknowledged in 2009 the need to prioritise fighting this crime.¹⁴⁹

Sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism

Many African countries have encouraged tourism to attract foreign investment and fund infrastructure development. According to the UN World Tourism Organisation, Africa has experienced the second-highest growth in tourism of any region in the world, after Asia and the Pacific, with a growth rate of 6% and a total of 52 million tourist arrivals in 2012 – a figure expected to rise to 134 million by 2030.¹⁵⁰ A renewed focus on Africa by tourist-sending countries has sparked this growth on the continent, which in turn has been accompanied by an increase in child sex tourism (CST).

While the problem has long been associated with several countries in West and North Africa, such as Morocco and Senegal, it appears that other African countries and regions are experiencing an influx of tourists seeking sex with children, including many from within the region. The rise in the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism has been facilitated by the proliferation of new flights to Africa, weak application of laws and the corruption of some officials, which allows offenders to commit abuses against children with impunity.

The second edition of ECPAT Country Monitoring Reports on CSEC and a review of the 2013 and 2014 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) reports released by the U.S. Department of State provide an updated picture of CST in Africa, suggesting that while some countries remain particularly popular, others are emerging as new destinations for travelling sex offenders.

In North Africa, besides Morocco (particularly Marrakech and Casablanca), there is evidence of child sexual exploitation by tourists in Egypt (especially in

Cairo, Alexandria and Luxor)¹⁵¹ and Tunisia.¹⁵² In West Africa, The Gambia and Senegal continue to attract large numbers of travelling child sex offenders. In The Gambia, analysis suggests that organised networks use both European and Gambian travel agencies to promote child sex tourism.¹⁵³ Although Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Mali are not believed to be popular destinations, some evidence of CST in these countries has been presented.¹⁵⁴ In Benin cases of child sex tourism involving both boys and girls were reported in the Department of Mono and on the shores of the Bight of Benin, while in Togo the government acknowledged the existence of the problem and commissioned a study in 2012 on how to best combat it.¹⁵⁵ In Nigeria, there have been reports of “recruitment and transportation of adolescent girls between the ages of 15-18 from one part of the country to another, or within the same city, for sexual entertainment of wealthy men or visiting officials from both public and private sectors.”¹⁵⁶

In East Africa, Kenya remains a major hotspot for child sex tourism, including for offenders from the region. A UNICEF study provided details of both the scope and manifestations of CST in the country, revealing that 2,000-to-3,000 girls and boys were sexually exploited year-round by sex tourists in the coastal towns of Malindi, Mombasa, Kilifi and Diani, while another 30,000 girls aged 12-to-14 were lured to be sexually exploited in hotels and private villas in the same areas.

The UNICEF research also identified the nationality of sex offenders, ranking Italians (18%), Germans (14%), and Swiss (12%) as those most involved in CST, with tourists from Uganda and Tanzania the fifth and sixth most frequent exploiters, respectively.¹⁵⁷ The Kenyan coastal town of Malindi is reported to be a site of child sex tourism, particularly in secret locations along the beaches. Children as young as 12, but mainly between 15-17 years, are being drawn into prostitution and pornography as a result of abject poverty and the allure of quick monetary gains. “Clients” are mostly Italian men (50-80 years)

who take advantage of the vulnerability of children in the area. The town's child sex trade is facilitated by local beach boys who act as middlemen between the tourists and the girls, forming an illicit industry. So far, authorities' efforts at tackling the problem have only served to drive the practice further underground. The lack of official reporting is blamed on corrupt law enforcement and victims' reluctance to come forward. No figures are available on the scope of the problem.¹⁵⁸

Tanzanian NGOs report that the sexual exploitation of children in tourism is increasing, especially near Indian Ocean beach hotels, where many tourists come specifically seeking to have sexual intercourse with children, both male and female. Zanzibar is also recognised as one of the areas most affected by the sexual exploitation of children in tourism in Africa.

According to Tanzanian NGOs, the sexual exploitation of children in tourism is increasing, especially along the Indian Ocean's beach hotels, where many tourists come specifically to have sexual intercourse with children, i.e both male and female. Zanzibar is recognised as one of the areas most affected by the sexual exploitation of children in tourism in Africa.

Although child prostitution is strongly denied by Zanzibar authorities, the island is viewed as a desirable destination for men looking to have sexual intercourse with young boys. These travelling child sex offenders have been identified as foreigners involved in mining and other industries, as well as NGO employees.¹⁵⁹

A number of media reports and small-scale studies indicate that Uganda is becoming a destination country for travelling child sex offenders. According to a 2011 study on child sexual abuse in the Jinja District, young girls living in this area are exploited by a wide range of abusers, especially trailer drivers,

salon operators, tourists and businessmen. Another study confirmed that many tourists in the Jinja District are involved in child pornography-related activities, especially along beaches.¹⁶⁰ Although evidence remains very limited, the 2013 TIP report suggests that Burundi is also a child sex tourism destination in East Africa, with male tourists coming mainly from the region and the Middle East.¹⁶¹

In Southern Africa, sexual exploitation of children in tourism is a concern primarily in South Africa and Madagascar. In South Africa, academics claim that the country is becoming a major hub for underage sex tourism in major destinations such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Durban.¹⁶² In Madagascar, a dramatic increase in child sex tourism was registered in 2012, particularly in the coastal cities of Toamasina, Nosy Be and Antsiranana. Most child sex tourists are said to be French nationals, with some reports of sexual exploitation by Italian and other Western European nationals.¹⁶³

Although the presence of women sex tourists is limited and little is known about their motivations and how they access children, there is evidence that they are also engaging in commercial sex with young people in some destinations in Africa. Reports of female tourists, especially European women, coming to Kenya to meet with local beach boys and promoting male prostitution have been ongoing.¹⁶⁴ Likewise, research, journalistic investigations and blogs have exposed the problem of women travelling to The Gambia and Senegal for the purpose of engaging in paid sex with youth.¹⁶⁵

Current research by the ECPAT Network has also provided much-needed and updated insight and information on the situation, as well as the context for child sex tourism in some parts of the continent. ECPAT groups in Austria, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands conducted country assessments in five sub-Saharan African tourist destinations (Gambia, Kenya, Madagascar, Senegal and South Africa). The research is part of the EU-funded 'Don't Look Away' Project that

aims to “improve the protection of vulnerable children in tourist destinations of developing countries.”¹⁶⁶ Overall, the studies concluded that child sex tourism was a recognised problem in all five countries. Most child victims were girls (14-17 years), although some boys are also victims. The sexual exploitation occurred not only in traditional tourist spots (beaches, brothels and clubs) but also in non-traditional establishments such as private residences and guesthouses. Individuals tied to tourism (such as taxi drivers, tour guides and hotel workers) were cited as facilitators. Increased use of the Internet to establish and facilitate contact with international tourists was also reported. A major global recommendation emanating from the assessments concerned the need for robust multi-stakeholder cooperation: this would involve collaborations to transform attitudes and practices that condone the phenomenon at all levels, from regional and national to district and community, including government bodies and civil society organisations (CSOs). Advocacy efforts should also target the private sector, especially the travel and tourism industry and Internet and telecom service providers to ensure that combating the issue forms an integral part of corporate social responsibility.¹⁶⁷

Child marriage as a form of commercial sexual exploitation

According to the ACPF, most African countries have legislative bans on both forced and child marriages, although implementation is weak. In line with international standards, 33 countries have currently set the minimum age of marriage at 18 for both girls and boys. In Algeria, Lesotho, Libya and Rwanda, it is over 18 for both. In the rest of the continent, the minimum age of marriage is either below 18 or gender discriminatory.¹⁶⁸

In parts of West and East Africa, marriages taking place before one or both individuals have reached puberty are not unusual, while marriage shortly after

puberty is common among those living traditional lifestyles in North Africa. ECPAT International considers the marriage of children and adolescents under age 18 to be a form of commercial sexual exploitation when the child is used for sexual purposes in exchange for goods or payment in cash or in-kind. Typically in such cases parents or family members marry off a child in order to gain a benefit or support the household.¹⁶⁹

Most literature suggests that child marriage is practiced mainly in rural areas and within poorer communities. But poverty is only one of the multiple causal factors behind child marriage. A report by ECPAT on child marriage as a form of CSEC in Africa attributed the prevalence of this practice to numerous causes, including: inadequate laws, the persistence of traditional, cultural or religious practices (such as payment of bride price and female genital mutilation); civil conflicts (with some families giving their daughters to militia members in order to defend family honour or secure ‘protection’ for themselves and the girl); existence of family ties and debt bondage; fear of HIV infection (which has encouraged men in many countries to seek younger partners); and gender inequality.¹⁷⁰

Early marriage threatens the realisation of a child’s human rights, including rights to education, health and freedom of expression. In some African countries, once married, an underage person can lose the status of “child” and the associated legal protections. Sometimes such marriages are not intended to be a permanent union: in some countries, temporary marriages are possible via a short-term marriage contract, known as *siqueh* in the Middle East and North Africa. This, combined with a low legal age of marriage, makes it possible to circumvent the illegal act of child prostitution.¹⁷¹

Many girls forced to marry early suffer from prolonged domestic violence and maltreatment by their adult spouses or their spouse’s families. Early marriage is often linked to wife abandonment, divorce and separation,

plunging young girls into extreme poverty and increasing their risk of being forced to enter the commercial sex trade in order to survive.¹⁷² Ample literature and evidence demonstrate the link between child marriage and future involvement in commercial sex in African countries.

In Ethiopia, research has established that the majority of victims of child prostitution in Addis Ababa were married before reaching the age of 15.¹⁷³ In Mauritania, some women and girls who entered into forced marriages facilitated by domestic brokers or travel agencies were subsequently exploited as sex slaves overseas.¹⁷⁴ In Niger, a small number of girls in forced marriages may be prostituted by their “husbands,” and a larger number are exploited in the sex trade after fleeing their nominal marriages.¹⁷⁵ In South Africa, the tradition of *ukuthwala* – the abduction and forced marriage of girls as young as 12 to adult men – is still practiced in some remote villages in the Eastern and Western Cape provinces, leaving girl victims vulnerable to forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation. In 2013, South Africa prosecuted its first *ukuthwala* case.¹⁷⁶

Given the established links between early/child marriage and commercial sexual exploitation of children, strong efforts are needed to curb this harmful social practice, as part of a comprehensive strategy against CSEC.

Linkages between HIV/AIDS and CSEC

According to a 2011 joint progress report by WHO, UNICEF and UNAIDS on the global response to HIV and AIDS, an estimated 17.1 million children under the age of 18 have lost one or both parents to AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and millions more have been affected. The vast majority of those infected are adults in the prime of life, whose income and roles, especially as parents, are critical to the survival of their families. Their death has led to an exponential rise in rates of poverty, homelessness, school dropout, stigmatisation and discrimination among

affected children. The disease has eroded family and community support networks once available to children, increasing their vulnerability to violence, abuse or exploitation.¹⁷⁷

This situation was also highlighted by Mr. Benjamin Waburoko from ECPAT member group in Uganda, the Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN). In a presentation at the 2013 Regional Consultation in Addis Ababa, he described the strong correlation between the HIV pandemic and CSEC in African countries.

It is well known that having lost the benefit of adult protection, and burdened with the responsibility of caring for the other members of the family, children and young people orphaned by AIDS are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. As indicated by an ECPAT multi-country study conducted in 2006-7 in six African countries, the stigmatisation of AIDS affected children has a negative impact on their self-image and contributes towards them becoming involved in commercial sex as a source of livelihood.

In some African countries, some men still believe that having sex with young girls (who are presumably virgins or have had few partners) will either protect them from contracting HIV/AIDS and other diseases (such as malaria), or cure them.¹⁷⁸

Contrary to these misconceptions, research has demonstrated that sexual exploitation significantly increases children’s vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Children and teenagers exploited in prostitution are at greater risk of contracting and transmitting HIV. Their bodies are more fragile, and thus more likely to be injured during sex. These injuries increase the risk of getting infected or spreading the disease. CSEC victims are also powerless to negotiate safe sex. Taking advantage of the fact that a child engaged in prostitution is weaker and less assertive than an adult sex worker, the perpetrators usually pressure the child into not using condoms. They invariably offer more money in return (which is difficult to refuse given the children’s desperate circumstances) and also provide inaccurate

information regarding the importance of safe sex.¹⁷⁹ Sometimes exploiters/traffickers coerce children into sex without condoms.

... research has demonstrated that sexual exploitation significantly increases children's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

Whilst children engaging in prostitution are extremely vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS, their access to knowledge and HIV services remains problematic. The above-mentioned multi-country study found that children in situations of, or at high risk for, sexual exploitation have very poor knowledge of HIV/AIDS and how to protect against infection; they also believe that regular customers carry less risk. Moreover they tend to have limited access to information, testing, condoms or treatment services for HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases. Children involved in commercial sex reported that they rarely accessed social services and other forms of support due to their fear of being exposed and discriminated against.¹⁸⁰

A study recently conducted by ECPAT in Togo (and Nepal) based on a sample of 320 children and youth at risk of, or already involved in, commercial sexual exploitation, identified a low rate (9%) of HIV testing for young Togolese (15-to-25 years old). Although it was not possible to ascertain HIV prevalence among the group (the Government of Togo denied permission to use the rapid oral test), the findings suggest a highly vulnerable population of children. Children in Togo reported being employed in sexually hazardous jobs. In a cohort of children aged 15-18, nearly half (49%) reported having had a sexual relationship and more than one-third reported that their first sexual encounter involved penetrative sex. Nearly half of the sample in Togo reported that their first sexual encounter took place before the age of 15 years. These findings suggest a probable link to relatively high levels of HIV infection among the youth population. The report concluded with a number of recommendations, including: a) strengthen efforts to get children tested through

improved access to free counselling and testing services; b) use testing services to prevent HIV infection by educating children about safe sex and identifying a concerned adult or young person who can be a mentor or support to these otherwise marginalised and often isolated children; c) make children in situations of, or at high risk for, sexual exploitation a priority in HIV/AIDS programmes.¹⁸¹

A 2011 UNICEF report aimed at informing the development of appropriate responses for children affected by HIV and AIDS confirmed that girls orphaned by HIV/AIDS in Africa are more likely to drop out of school and be more sexually active than their non-orphaned peers, placing them at higher risk for infection.

The study also corroborated the finding that key population groups at higher risk of HIV infection – such as children exploited through commercial sex and adolescent males who have sex with other males – encounter significant obstacles to accessing accurate information on HIV and critical services, commodities, protection and support, despite their heightened risk of infection. Services from which these children may be excluded include sexual and reproductive health services, HIV testing and risk and harm-reduction counselling. In addition to facing stigma and discrimination, the criminalisation of children involved in commercial sex, as well as of same-sex relations, in a number of countries across Africa were found to be significant legal barriers hindering access to testing, treatment, prevention and care for CSEC survivors. The report recognised the importance of a “systems approach” to child protection and recommended increased investment in national and community social welfare and child protection systems to improve the quality and coverage of support for children vulnerable or affected by HIV/AIDS, their families, and their households.¹⁸² In this sense, efforts to strengthen child protection systems in Sub-Saharan Africa spearheaded in recent years by UNICEF, major child rights NGOs and other key stakeholders should be considered as an important contribution to fulfilling this recommendation (see below, “Coordination”).¹⁸³

SECTION 3. ADDRESSING CSEC IN AFRICA: PROGRESS, GAPS AND CHALLENGES



“We need to tackle CSEC in the framework of a systems approach. This requires a move away from small-scale, isolated projects, towards considering the child and family in a long-term, holistic fashion. The systems approach allows stakeholders to simultaneously attend to the complex economic, social, demographic, political, environmental, and community factors affecting child well-being, and recognises the role of child protection in supporting social and economic development.”

Dr. Shimelis Tsegaye Tesemma, African Child Policy Forum, presentation at “Regional Consultation on Action to Stop the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Africa”, Addis Ababa, 1-2 Aug, 2013.

The Overview presented above confirms that children in Africa face numerous challenges to realising their right to be protected from sexual exploitation. To tackle these concerns, government bodies, NGOs, UN agencies and other stakeholders have launched a number of initiatives throughout the region. At the national level, some specialised programmes and interventions were developed targeting specific groups of children and addressing different types of violations, including CSEC. However, as acknowledged by participants in ECPAT’s three regional consultations, it is increasingly understood that while issue-focused actions can be effective in serving the specific cohort of children targeted, they may also lead to a fragmented and unsustainable child protection response. Protecting children from sexual exploitation through a systems approach has become imperative and has already led to successful work on building child protection systems to successful work on building and strengthening child protection systems in several African countries¹⁸⁴ (see sub-section on “Coordination and Cooperation at national and local level”), as well as to the development of broader and more comprehensive policies and programmes that also impact on children subjected or vulnerable to CSE.

The section below provides a comprehensive analysis of the different actions to address CSEC

in Africa put in place in recent years by various entities, with a specific focus on National Plans of Action, Coordination and Cooperation, Prevention, Legal context, and Child and Youth Participation. Capturing observations, contributions and recommendations given by experts and participants at the 2013 and 2014 Addis Ababa Consultations and 2014 Ouagadougou sub-regional meeting, the following review assesses progress achieved in each of these areas, outlines the outstanding challenges and obstacles hindering child protection from sexual exploitation in the region and identifies a set of priorities and concerted strategies for more accelerated impact. As recommended during the consultation processes, the review fully recognises the need to tackle CSEC in the framework of a systems approach to child protection.

NATIONAL PLANS OF ACTION¹⁸⁵

National Plans of Action (NPAs) are the first tangible indication of a country’s commitment to ending the sexual exploitation of children. NPAs are multidisciplinary documents intended to provide a working plan to augment action against commercial sexual exploitation of children on all levels of society. More specifically NPAs ensure that all aspects of child exploitation and abuse are addressed through concrete strategies, programmes and activities; outline specific actions a country will take and who will be responsible for them; establish a timeframe and provide indicators to monitor progress; and provide information on the allocation of resources and estimated costs.

Currently, there appears to be a shift towards a systemic approach to child protection in Africa, which is mirrored in the limited number of countries that have adopted specific National Plans of Action (NPAs) and/or policies to prevent and counteract CSEC. A preliminary mapping indicates that NPAs on sexual abuse and exploitation presently exist in the Central African Republic, Guinea and Kenya. In

Tanzania, an NPA to combat CSEC was developed at the initiative of the ECPAT group with support from Oak Foundation, but was not approved by the Cabinet because it was determined that the government did not have sufficient funds to implement it. Likewise, in Uganda a new *National Plan of Action on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation* (valid for the period 2011-2015) was designed jointly by governmental and non-governmental representatives (including UCRNN) following a long consultation process. However it has not yet been approved or given a budget allocation.

Few examples of comprehensive NPAs against CSEC can be found in Africa, but there have been consistent efforts to address child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, through *ad hoc* national strategies. Current NPAs against this manifestation of CSEC exist in Benin, Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon and Togo; in Cameroon and Chad strategies were drafted but have not yet been adopted by the government. Measures aimed at reducing child trafficking were also incorporated into broader plans to eliminate trafficking in persons and adopted, *inter alia*, by the Central African Republic, Madagascar and Senegal. With regard to plans targeting other specific CSEC manifestations, it is worth mentioning that in Mauritius, the Government has approved the 'Child Safety Online Action Plan', which aims to prevent sexual exploitation of children on the Internet by strengthening the legal framework and raising awareness among parents and children. In 2011 the Government of Egypt announced that an action plan on pornography and prostitution was being formulated, to be incorporated into both the National Plan of Action against Trafficking and the new ten-year National Plan of Action for Children, both under elaboration at that time.

In addition, an increasing number of countries have begun to integrate measures targeting at risk and/or sexually exploited children into other broader policy frameworks, such as those addressing violence against children (VAC), worst forms of child labour,

etc. Angola and Burkina Faso adopted national plans to address VAC intended, among other goals, to deter sexual exploitation and trafficking. Tunisia also has an NPA against VAC, while in Chad and Ethiopia similar plans are awaiting approval. In Côte d'Ivoire and Morocco general national strategies/plans on children tackle trafficking, sexual exploitation and child labour, among other issues. Togo's National Child Protection Policy (2011-2015), aimed at incorporating a comprehensive strategy and plan to fight against child trafficking, pornography and prostitution, has not yet been adopted. Several countries have NPAs in place to stop the worst forms of child labour. Whilst in Madagascar, Niger and Uganda, NPAs appear to also deal with child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, it is not clear whether in Botswana, Cape Verde, Eritrea, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, NPAs against worst forms of child labour will incorporate, or have an impact on, CSEC.

In addition to these strategies and plans, it is important to note that specific factors and circumstances that allow children to be commercially sexually exploited are also being addressed through other sectoral interventions. For example, Sierra Leone has an NPA dedicated to street children and Botswana, Guinea and Namibia have NPAs against gender-based violence. Many countries (such as Uganda and Zimbabwe) have developed NPAs targeting vulnerable and orphaned children, and the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan are implementing UN-backed action plans to eliminate the use of child soldiers in their armed forces.

Gaps/challenges

The drive to develop National Action Plans against CSEC and other violations of children's rights attests to the increased commitment by African countries to ensure child protection, but a number of areas of concern must still be considered when looking specifically at children who are victims of or exposed to sexual exploitation. As noted by the

Committee on the Rights of the Child in a review of some African countries' efforts to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols,

...not all issues and offences covered under the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC) are targeted in NPAs that were not designed specifically to focus on CSEC. This means that when more broad-ranging plans are adopted, CSEC frequently receives only cursory attention.

The result of this lack of mainstreaming is that in many African countries initiatives implemented as part of current strategies focus only on a few of the many issues related to CSEC, often omitting and ignoring important components and evolving challenges (e.g. increased risk of online sexual exploitation that African children are presently facing or problems of emerging child sex tourism destinations).

Regardless of the scope of NPAs, several constraints appear to hinder their implementation, effectiveness and impact:

- Lack of or low budget allocation, including limited financial support from development partners and inadequate human and technical resources, constitute major gaps in many countries;
- The existence of several different NPAs can lead to overlapping, and a failure to make the best use of available resources;
- NPAs often lack monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to regularly assess progress achieved and identify possible deficiencies;
- Coordination among actors involved is often limited, leading to lack of clarity about responsible agencies and timeframes;

- Finally, meaningful child and youth participation (including of child survivors) in the design, monitoring and evaluation of policies on CSEC is lacking and CSO involvement in these processes should be further enhanced.

Priority area:

Mainstreaming CSEC into NPAs

In line with the Rio Declaration and Plan of Action, it is critical that countries across the Africa region develop and implement comprehensive NPAs on the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, or prioritise and integrate CSEC into relevant policy frameworks (such as national development plans, national VAC plans, national child protection plans, NPAs on education, HIV/AIDS, etc.). It is nonetheless essential that the holistic and systemic approach to child protection that many governments are now adopting does not dilute attention to CSEC or lead to non-implementation of previously agreed commitments and plans.

The gaps identified in the current policy frameworks to address CSEC show that ECPAT groups in the region should continue to engage, both directly and indirectly, in support of the development and implementation of such plans through their local activities and programmes, and to monitor follow-up to ensure that implementation is an integral part of the national development agenda.

“Advocacy by national organisations is constrained by many political, legal and institutional challenges. Therefore, we need to use Pan-African organisations and international ones like ECPAT for advocacy purposes.”

Dr. Assefa Bekele, Distinguished Fellow and Founder, African Child Policy Forum.

Strategies:

- Using the ECPAT global monitoring reports, ECPAT groups and ECPAT International should conduct a detailed mapping and in-depth analysis of current National Plans relevant for combating CSEC to assess whether this specific violation of children's rights has been mainstreamed in them;
- ECPAT International should develop specific guidelines on how this mainstreaming of CSEC issues into NPAs can be effectively achieved, as well as an advocacy toolkit looking at this key component (e.g. effective implementation and monitoring of NPAs, reaching out in a systematic way; how to put CSEC on the national agenda, etc.);
- Based on the guidelines and advocacy toolkit, capacity building of ECPAT groups and relevant stakeholders should be conducted;
- As part of their advocacy strategy, ECPAT groups should engage with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to ensure that states adopt and implement NPAs that address and prioritise CSEC issues;
- ECPAT International and the ECPAT network in Africa should ensure that children and young people are actively involved in all advocacy activities aimed at mainstreaming CSEC into NPAs.

COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

Coordination and cooperation are crucial for an efficient and effective fight against CSEC. In accordance with the Stockholm Declaration, close interaction and cooperation between government and non-government sectors is necessary to effectively plan, implement and evaluate measures to combat

CSEC. At an international level, effective cooperation is required between countries and international organisations, including regional organisations, to ensure that a concerted and coordinated approach is taken in eliminating CSEC.

Coordination and Cooperation at national and local level

The African region has seen a proliferation of initiatives to foster efficient cooperation among all stakeholders involved in child protection at the national and local levels.

The ECPAT Network is actively engaged in fostering collaboration against CSEC within Africa and across sub-regions, including combined projects in 15 countries. This joint work involves: initiating research projects, co-financing operations, exchanging good practices, networking, developing resources, civil society strengthening and joint programming between destinations and sending countries.

A major endeavour currently being undertaken by a number of national governments, in collaboration with a coalition of organisations (e.g., ACPF, Plan International, Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative, Regional Inter-Agency Task Team Task Team - RIATT, Save the Children International, Terre des Hommes, UNICEF, World Vision International and others), involves the strengthening of national child protection systems. In addition to conducting a mapping of national systems in several countries of West and Central Africa (Benin, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and others) and using this new evidence to influence advocacy, strategic planning and programming, UNICEF, the ACPF and other major child rights organisations also joined forces to support national efforts by creating a new platform for learning, exchange and innovations around systems-strengthening in sub-

Saharan Africa. Key contributions to date include the production of the first policy and programming resource guide for strengthening national child protection systems, development of a working paper on strengthening national child protection systems in sub-Saharan Africa and a number of events.¹⁸⁶ Based on this methodology, work on developing and strengthening child protection systems is also currently being conducted in 13 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa.¹⁸⁷

In addition to increased collaboration on behalf of child protection systems in general, further cooperation has been established focused specially on child labour and child trafficking. Coordination mechanisms have been devised to oversee and facilitate implementation of the various NPAs adopted in recent years (on child sexual abuse and exploitation, human/child trafficking, violence against children, child labour, gender-based violence, etc.), often with branches and offices at district and local levels. The various committees, task-forces and other multi-stakeholder mechanisms may include government institutions, local administrations, UN agencies, NGOs, CSOs, development partners, faith-based organisations, the media, etc. In some countries, the role of coordinating the development, follow up and implementation of strategies and policies to protect children from sexual exploitation falls under the responsibility of a single national child protection agency (such as the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in Egypt).¹⁸⁸ In others, multiple child rights bodies deal with CSEC (for example, in Togo).¹⁸⁹

Online sexual exploitation of children has emerged as a growing, pressing issue; partnerships and coordinating mechanisms to counteract this CSEC manifestation are gradually being developed.

In Egypt a working group focusing on protecting children from online sexual exploitation is active under the Ministry of Communication.¹⁹⁰ The Nigerian Child Online Protection (NCOP) initiative,

led by a Technical Working Group, is mandated to protect children and young people from being exposed to child abuse materials on the Internet. NCOP collaborates with several government agencies, including the Nigerian Communications Commission and the National Information Technology Development Agency.¹⁹¹ The Ghanaian government, under the auspices of the National Information Technology Agency, recently established a national Computer Incident Response Team to bolster the country's cyber-security capabilities. CERT-GH (Ghana's Computer Emergency Response Team), the designated agency, will be located at the National Data Centre and tasked with developing a coordinated response, resolution and mitigation of cyber-security incidents/threats against the country, including an online protection portal facility for children.¹⁹² The scheme, funded by the Government of Ghana, is part of a co-operation agreement with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) concluded in 2013. It is being implemented with assistance from the International Multilateral Partnership against Cyber Threats, a United Nations-backed cyber security alliance and ITU partner, of which Ghana is a member.¹⁹³

The Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA) and UNICEF Zambia signed a one-year partnership agreement in 2013 aimed at addressing online child protection and other cyber-security issues. A joint work-plan is expected to be developed under the agreement to "advance areas of collaboration that will ensure that ZICTA ICT policies have a child-focus, are child-friendly and incorporate children's voices and are informed by research on children's use of ICTs."¹⁹⁴ The partnership will include representatives from government, the private sector and NGOs, who will meet regularly to exchange updates and identify entry points for collaboration in the field of ICT and children's rights.¹⁹⁵

However, very limited efforts have been directed at enhancing referral and coordination of assistance to child victims.

To counter the lack of effort, South Africa's Department of Social Development, in consultation with civil society, has developed the *Guidelines for the Prevention and Response to Child Exploitation*. Considered as an essential tool to provide an organised response to child exploitation, including CSEC and child trafficking, the guidelines acknowledge the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration and propose structures at national, provincial and local levels to facilitate collaboration in service delivery.¹⁹⁶

Gaps/challenges:

Notwithstanding some positive developments, coordination and cooperation for addressing CSEC and related child protection issues seems to pose a persistent challenge for concerned stakeholders across the African region. Some recurring constraints include:

- Difficulty of ascertaining the impact that different mechanisms established to ensure coordination on various children's rights violations are having specifically on CSEC issues, and ultimately on children vulnerable to or victimised by CSEC. There is, however, some evidence that not all CSEC manifestations are addressed by these mechanisms (especially child pornography and sexual exploitation of children in tourism);
- Functioning of existing coordinating bodies is hindered by lack of technical capacity, financial and human resources (including frequent staff turnover), as well as by other factors, such as corruption;
- In practice, lack of coordination among various government entities dealing with CSEC issues results in unclear division of tasks and overlapping responsibilities; more coordination is also needed between central government bodies and regional, municipal and local administrations;
- Whilst in some countries collaboration between governments and NGOs, CSOs and religious organisations has been established, in others it

is still very limited, especially in relation to small NGOs. Likewise, involvement of community members, especially children, remains sporadic, if not absent;

- In most African countries challenges persist in regard to data collection, particularly due to inadequate child protection indicators, lack of commonly agreed-upon definitions and disaggregated information on vulnerable children and related gaps.

Priority area:

Enhancing coordination and cooperation among stakeholders for the establishment of comprehensive child protection systems that address CSEC.

The present analysis points to several areas in the field of coordination and cooperation requiring further action that could potentially be targeted by ECPAT Networks in the region through their national advocacy work. Whilst recognising the need to further extend work on building child protection systems to the whole region, it is also necessary to assess and evaluate how children affected or exposed to sexual exploitation are benefiting from efforts to strengthen child protection systems currently being spearheaded in many African countries. Based on this analysis, ECPAT should engage to ensure that CSEC is duly addressed through these initiatives.

Strategies:

- ECPAT International should develop an advocacy toolkit (see also sub-section on "National Plans of Action") looking *inter alia* at how to address and prioritise CSEC within child protection systems. This component of the toolkit should be used to build capacity of ECPAT groups on the concept of child protection systems, their characteristics, strategies to develop and strengthen them, etc. and should also outline specific measures that such systems must put in place to ensure an appropriate response for preventing and combating CSEC.

- Based on the toolkit, and in collaboration with other major child rights NGOs with significant experience in this field, ECPAT should conduct training sessions for its member organisations to enable them to become active advocates for including CSEC within the child protection systems approach.

Regional and International coordination and cooperation, including regional policies and programmes

Africa has powerful regional and sub-regional entities, such as the **African Union (AU)** and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), capable of making a strong contribution to the promotion of children's rights and child protection. Most initiatives and strategies relevant for combating CSEC implemented to date have focused on child trafficking for sexual and other purposes; other manifestations of child sexual exploitation have received limited attention.

As recalled by Dr. Benyam Dawit Mezmur, Chair of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, in his presentation at the Regional Consultation in Addis Ababa in August 2013, the AU has made a number of commitments that are relevant for combating CSEC, including: the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (see section below on the "Legal Context" for more details); the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; the Protocol on the Rights of Women; and the Renewed Call for Accelerated Action (2012). Additionally, the AU has developed policies and programmes to address trafficking in persons, especially of women and children, as well as sexual exploitation. In an effort to enhance regional coordination, the AU and the European Union adopted the *Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children* in November 2006 in Tripoli, Libya. The Ouagadougou Action Plan provides specific recommendations to be implemented by RECs and member states based on a three-pronged strategy: prevent trafficking, protect victims of trafficking and

prosecute those involved in the crime of trafficking. The increasing phenomenon of child sex tourism and other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse of women and children are also taken seriously in this plan of action.

The AU launched the African Union Commission's Initiative against Trafficking (AU.COMMIT) in June 2009. The campaign seeks to put the fight against trafficking in persons as a priority on the development agenda of the continent.

It also encourages African States to utilise the Ouagadougou Action Plan as a reference to develop and reform their policies, laws and interventions on trafficking in persons, and calls for increased partnerships with civil society, sub-regional groups and international organisations (such as the IOM and UNODC). In line with the three main strategies of the Ouagadougou Plan of Action, the AU.COMMIT Campaign was designed to be implemented in three phases, focusing in 2009-2010 on preventing and responding to trafficking, in 2010-2011 on protection of victims and in 2011-2012 on prosecution of traffickers. A number of activities in collaboration with regional economic communities, member states and several United Nations agencies were implemented as part of this initiative through 2012, including, *inter alia*, production of television spots, distribution of copies of the Ouagadougou Action Plan, of T-shirts with the slogan "AU.COMMIT: Stop Trafficking" and other awareness-raising materials.¹⁹⁷ In addition to this initiative, over the last two decades the AU has prioritised children's programmes, especially through its Plan of Action Towards Africa Fit for Children (first adopted in 2001) and the subsequent Call for Accelerated Action on the Implementation of this Plan, including work in the area of child protection (such as on mitigating and ultimately eliminating harmful traditional practices).¹⁹⁸

As part of its programming to eliminate harmful traditional practices, the AU recently launched a two-year campaign to "End Child Marriage" (29

May 2014) at AU Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.¹⁹⁹ The campaign focuses on 10 countries with documented high prevalence of such practices.²⁰⁰

UNFPA household surveys completed between 2000 and 2011 indicate that “of the 41 countries with a child marriage prevalence rate of 30% or more, 30 are located in Africa. The practice is most severe in West and Central Africa, where two girls out of five are married before age 18.”²⁰¹

After the initial two-year cycle ends, the campaign is expected to continue in a different set of African countries where child marriage is prevalent. It is anticipated that this campaign will give greater political visibility to the issue and garner broad support to end this detrimental practice.²⁰²

Additionally, during its 23rd Session in April 2014, the ACERWC adopted the Addis Ababa Declaration on Ending Child Marriage in Africa, which urges “Member States to combat child marriage through setting the minimum age for marriage at 18 years for both girls and boys without exception, including establishing an effective mechanism for registration of birth, marriage and termination of marriage.”²⁰³ AU members were further called upon to take the necessary legislative and policy action against child marriage.²⁰⁴ The AU campaign to end child marriage, coupled with the Addis Ababa Declaration, comprise key regional developments for galvanising support to end this harmful practice on the continent.²⁰⁵

In addition, as part of efforts to better protect African children affected by armed conflict, the Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission and the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict signed an agreement in September 2013 to strengthen protection mechanisms, in close partnership with UNICEF. Areas of collaboration include assigning UN child protection specialists to the AU Peace and Security department and “the development of improved and harmonised training

programs on child protection for troop-contributing countries to African Union Peace Missions.”²⁰⁶

Regional economic commissions have also undertaken multilateral initiatives to combat trafficking in persons, including child trafficking. ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) proclaimed its commitment against trafficking by adopting the ‘Declaration on the Fight against Trafficking in Persons’ in 2001 and an initial ‘ECOWAS Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons’ covering 2002-03. Since then, subsequent plans of action have been adopted every triennium, the latest for the period 2008-2011. The plans focus on formulating and implementing legislation, protective and preventive measures, cooperation, training and capacity building, as well as creating a structure for monitoring and evaluation.

With the adoption of the initial plan of action, the ECOWAS Commission was mandated to present proposals for controlling trafficking in persons in the sub-region, with special attention to children. An Anti-Trafficking Unit was subsequently set up within the Commission’s legal department to serve as a focal point for counter-trafficking issues and to monitor and coordinate implementation of the plan of action. In 2006, the unit became a full-fledged unit under the Social Affairs Division of the Department of Humanitarian and Social Affairs of the ECOWAS Commission, consisting of a Unit Coordinator, one Regional Advisor (Anglophone) based in Abuja, and a second (Francophone) based in Dakar and an administrative assistant. In the area of legal and institutional frameworks, ECOWAS has developed a number of tools to assist member states, including: a checklist for member states’ compliance with the Palermo Protocol; elements of an effective national plan of action; and a model national task force and national focal points.

To build capacity, ECOWAS collaborated with the IOM to develop a ‘Training Manual on Trafficking in Persons’, along with training courses for national groups based on the manual. In the area of

protection, ECOWAS adopted in 2010 a 'Regional Policy on Protection and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Persons in West Africa' as well as 'Guidelines on witness protection, support and assistance'. It has also developed standard operating procedures for the protection of trafficked persons and tools (such as a 'Manual on Cooperation and Networking for ECOWAS Member States' and a 'Model Bilateral Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Legal Assistance in Protecting Children from Trans-border Trafficking'). More recently, ECOWAS adopted a 'Child Policy and Child Protection Framework' as well as the *Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour and Its Worst Forms* – endorsed during the Conference of Ministers of Labour and Social Welfare held in December 2012 in Dakar, Senegal, and based on ECOWAS policies on children, employment and the fight against human trafficking.

ECOWAS' 2012 action plan calls for concrete strategies to eliminate child labour and the creation of a regional framework for child protection. The goal is to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in West Africa by 2015 while working towards the complete eradication over the long term.²⁰⁷

Following these efforts, the **Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)** joined with ECOWAS to form a bi-regional plan for 2006-2008 containing a multilateral agreement and a resolution against trafficking in persons. The plan affirms ECOWAS's initial Plan of Action, extending anti-trafficking efforts to the Central African region and placing emphasis on ratification and implementation of relevant international instruments to combat trafficking. Furthermore, the plan lays out seven strategies to address priority areas: prevention and awareness raising, legal framework and policy development, collection and analysis of information, training and specialised capacity building, victim assistance and protection, travel and identity documents, monitoring and evaluation of implementation. The Plan of Action also calls on member states to

set up direct communication between their border control agencies; ECCAS is in the process of setting up joint anti-trafficking offices at borders to identify trafficked persons.²⁰⁸

The **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** has promoted several initiatives to counteract human trafficking. The 10-year SADC *Strategic Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, adopted in 2009*, recognises the particular vulnerability of children to trafficking.

Besides requiring member states to develop comprehensive, harmonised legislation and policies to address trafficking of women and children, the SADC anti-trafficking plan calls for interventions that place child rights and well-being at the centre.²⁰⁹

The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008) also contains specific provisions on trafficking. It states that by 2015 all state parties shall enact and adopt specific legislative provisions to prevent human trafficking; put in place protection for victims; establish bilateral and multilateral agreements to run joint actions against human trafficking among origin, transit and destination countries; ensure capacity-building and awareness-raising and implement other actions. The obligation of member states to protect children, particularly girls, from economic exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence, including sexual abuse, receives special emphasis.²¹⁰

The **East African Community (EAC)** conducted its first-ever Child Rights Conference in September 2012. Issues of child protection and participation were highlighted, and it was stressed that child trafficking was one of the major issues to be addressed with regard to children's rights. Recommendations included: formulate a harmonised EAC Child Policy, increase child participation by establishing National Children Parliaments and an EAC Assembly for Children, strengthen birth registration systems,

ensure that vulnerable children have access to integrated services, and strengthen national child protection systems. During the Conference, the EAC adopted the *Bujumbura Declaration on Child Rights and Wellbeing in the East African Community* and partner states committed to strengthening collaboration, cooperation and coordination on issues affecting children within the EAC. As individual governments, they also committed to collaborating with other stakeholders, such as UN agencies, international development partners and CSOs to, among other things, conduct comprehensive research to inform regional policies and provide advice and resources to the EAC in relation to addressing existing obstacles to child protection. However, CSEC was not specifically mentioned.²¹¹

The **International Conference on the Great Lakes Region**, an inter-governmental organisation, bringing together 11 countries, adopted in 2006 a 'Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region'. Under the humanitarian and social issues pillar, the Pact includes a specific *Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children*, which addresses different forms of sexual violence, including sexual exploitation, trafficking and prostitution. To operationalise the *Sexual Violence Protocol*, a priority project entitled 'Prevention and fight against sexual exploitation, abuse and gender-based violence and assistance to the victims' was developed, although full implementation has yet to be achieved, mainly due to financial and other constraints. As part of this initiative, a series of seminars on sexual and gender-based violence was held in Goma in 2008, resulting in the *Goma Declaration Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Region*. The Declaration identifies 50 specific actions to be taken against sexual violence by member states at the national and regional levels, as well as by international partners.²¹²

Efforts by African states to boost concerted responses against child trafficking have been renewed on various occasions, leading to the endorsement of a

number of *multilateral agreements and other sub-regional commitments*. In 2005 the Governments of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo signed a Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Child Trafficking in West Africa. The agreement appropriately emphasises the protection of child victims as its key priority and calls on state parties to implement a number of actions, including: preparing and executing plans of action, regional and national programmes, mobilising the resources needed to implement such programmes and allow proper functioning of bodies combating child trafficking, as well as exchanging detailed information on the identity of child victims and traffickers.²¹³ However, although permanent commissions to ensure follow-up of this agreement were established at both the regional and national level, no information about the implementation of this tool in state parties is available.²¹⁴

Efforts by African states, particularly to boost a concerted response to the trafficking of children, have been renewed on various occasions, leading to the endorsement of a number of multilateral agreements and other sub-regional commitments.

Another relevant commitment to combat child trafficking was made by participants in the Regional Conference "Towards enhanced parliamentary action to combat the trafficking of children for purposes of labour exploitation in West and Central Africa" that took place in Cotonou, Benin, on 26-28 May, 2010. Organised as part of a joint project by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Sahel and West Africa Club, the gathering was attended by parliamentarians from Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, the African Parliamentary Union, the ECOWAS Parliament and other actors.²¹⁵ The conference concluded with the adoption of "The Declaration of Cotonou", which lays the groundwork for concerted action and stronger regional initiatives to eradicate child

trafficking, outlining a roadmap that includes short- and medium-term common strategies. Although the document focuses on ending child trafficking for purposes of labour exploitation, it also contains references to sexual exploitation of children.

The Cotonou Declaration recognises the need to monitor “children’s access to new information technologies in order to prevent them from contacting traffickers and other sexual predators”, while also requiring parliamentary collaboration with all stakeholders, including the tourism sector, especially with a view to inform them about the code of conduct for the protection of children from sexual exploitation.²¹⁶

Based on this roadmap, concrete national activities have been organised in Benin, Burkina Faso, Gabon and Togo as part of the reforms inspired by the Declaration and set out in a plan of action.²¹⁷

Several bilateral agreements were concluded on combating child trafficking, with the aim of intercepting traffickers and facilitating the repatriation of children. In West and Central Africa, examples include bilateral agreements between Burkina Faso and Mali, Côte d’Ivoire and Mali and Benin and the Democratic Republic of Congo. As the main country of origin for African trafficking victims, Nigeria has also signed bilateral agreements with several countries, including Benin, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Niger and the UK. These agreements have led to the rescue of many child victims and the dismantling of several international criminal trafficking networks. In Southern Africa, in 2012 the Government of Zambia increased its partnerships with neighbouring countries by concluding anti-trafficking cooperation memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with Angola, Namibia,²¹⁸ Zimbabwe and Botswana, and had plans to sign similar agreements with the DRC, Malawi and Mozambique.²¹⁹

UN agencies, development agencies, international NGOs and CSOs have also actively contributed to

fostering cooperation against child trafficking and CSEC by supporting and/or implementing multi-country programmes. For example, the ILO has been implementing the programme ‘Towards the Elimination of the worst forms of Child Labour’ in all the countries of the Southern African Customs Union, namely Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. The first phase (referred to as TECL I) ran from 2004 to June 2008; the second phase (TECL II) started in March 2009 and lasted three years. In the framework of this initiative, a report entitled “Child Trafficking in SADC Countries: The Need for a Regional Response” was published in 2008.²²⁰ The programme has also facilitated the sharing of information, lessons learned and good practices among participating countries, including by organising sub-regional conferences and developing a website and newsletter devoted to child labour.²²¹ The United States Department of Labor funded a four-year project (‘KURET’) in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. Implemented by World Vision in partnership with the International Rescue Committee and the Academy for Educational Development, the project succeeded in preventing and rescuing over 32,000 children from involvement in exploitative labour and activities, including CSEC, through the provision of educational services.²²²

With regard to child safety online, an effort worth mentioning is the African Children Cyber Safety Initiative (ACCSI) created during the 2009 ‘Children and Young People Online Protection Forum’ organised by the African Information Security Association, with a mandate to advance the cause of safe online culture for children and young people in Africa. ACCSI has organised several awareness-raising events to enhance child protection in cyberspace, involving sister NGOs and industry operators, educators and schools, and targeting students and young people from rural communities. In the area of online child protection African governments such as Egypt and South Africa, along with ICT companies and civil society organisations, have joined the ‘Child Online Protection’ initiative, an international collaborative network for action led by the ITU and involving other UN agencies

and partners, including ECPAT International. The initiative was launched in 2008 to promote the online protection of children worldwide by providing guidance on safe online behaviour.²²³ The ITU also organised a regional workshop on “Legal Aspects of Child Online Protection in the Arab Region” held in Algeria in June 2012²²⁴ and is planning a pan-African summit to aid development of policies and practices for child online protection in the African context.²²⁵

Civil society networks to enhance regional cooperation against child trafficking exist in many parts of Africa. One example is the Southern Africa Network against Trafficking and Abuse of Children (SANTAC), which brings together international organisations and NGOs from several countries in Southern Africa. SANTAC’s mission is to build synergies amongst institutions to fight against all manifestations of child abuse, in particular CSEC, child labour and trafficking of children for any purpose, through lobby and advocacy, protection, law reform, rehabilitation and care services for victims.

SANTAC has implemented a number of activities to address CSEC. In June 2010, the network organised a conference on “Child-friendly Tourism” in Maputo, Mozambique, to discuss sexual exploitation of children in tourism. Bringing together representatives from five SADC governments, the private sector, international organisations, NGOs and youth representatives, the conference concluded with a Regional Commitment and Action Plan against CSEC. The Plan calls for the creation of a Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (Code), local Code representatives in each of the countries involved, with guidance from Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa, and also requires public awareness-raising and training for the tourism industry and other actors on child sex tourism.²²⁶

The ECPAT network has actively engaged to foster collaboration against CSEC within Africa and across

regions. These include combined projects in 15 countries (eight without ECPAT representation) in collaboration with 18 partners, including five ECPAT affiliate groups (in Benin, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana and Zambia). The main areas of work are research, co-financing of operations, exchanging good practices, networking, resource development, civil society strengthening and joint programming between countries of origin and destination for trafficking.

Gaps/challenges:

Establishing effective regional and international cooperation remains problematic in Africa. This mapping and the Regional Consultations and meetings identified several areas of concern requiring urgent attention:

- Whilst it is positive that several regional and sub-regional policies addressing aspects of CSEC have been adopted, it remains unclear whether these commitments have been duly implemented and if child victims of, or those vulnerable to, sexual exploitation have indeed been reached;
- Whilst human trafficking, including child sex trafficking, has attracted most cooperation efforts in the region, actions to address other interrelated cross-border crimes (such as online child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children in tourism) were not prioritised;
- Cooperation at the regional level, in terms of sharing of information, expertise and good practices is still not well developed;
- Multilateral, regional and bilateral agreements for the prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution and punishment of those responsible for acts of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents remain insufficient; similarly, few programmes exist to assist child victims in their physical and psychological recovery including, as appropriate, safe repatriation;

- Regional and international law enforcement collaboration needs to be enhanced (such as with Interpol), along with increased coordination of measures to curb and stop the involvement of organised crime in CSEC and bring persons and/or legal entities responsible for this form of organised crime to justice;
- Financial, technical and other assistance provided through existing multilateral, regional, bilateral and other programmes for addressing the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is still limited;
- In relation to ECPAT programmes, coordination and synergy between initiatives in the North and South are not fully functioning, which may lead to duplication of efforts and wasted resources.

Priority area 1:

Fostering and enhancing coordination and collaboration at regional and sub-regional levels.

Although several regional and sub-regional institutions have engaged to address aspects of CSEC, ECPAT has not yet developed strategic partnerships with these bodies. Participants in the Regional Consultations in Addis Ababa emphasised that the first priority for ECPAT in the region is to enhance its visibility and position itself to play a key role in fostering cooperation and coordination at national, regional and sub-regional levels; in addition to the AU, links should be built with sub-regional entities and organisations, including the various regional economic communities.

Strategies:

- To maximise its impact in the region, ECPAT should develop a regional strategy to address CSEC in Africa, in consultation with national and affiliate ECPAT groups, the AU, ACERWC and other experts. As discussed at the 2013 Addis Ababa Regional Consultation, the Regional Strategy should include the following actions at regional, sub-regional and national levels:

a) *Advocacy* (links with African Union, RECs, and national governments, NPA development/implementation, legal framework); b) *Research* on CSEC and documentation of good practices; c) *Capacity building* (ECPAT Groups, law enforcement and judiciaries, media etc.); d) *Communication/awareness-raising*;

- Based on the recommended regional strategy, ECPAT has already established a regional presence in Addis Ababa, hosted by the African Child Policy Forum, with two experienced staff; this regional presence is expected to become a full-fledged office in the future. Given that this is where the AU and other regional entities are based, the new ECPAT International Coordination Office for Africa is carrying out several tasks including:

- Working with groups and other national, regional and sub-regional actors to ensure the implementation of the formulated Regional Strategy;
- Supporting lobbying and advocacy about CSEC;
- Coordinating information-sharing on CSEC in the region;
- Building the capacity of national and affiliate members to lobby and advocate for CSEC in a professional manner;
- Facilitating cooperation and partnership among ECPAT members within and across regions for advocacy, research, sharing of good practices and impact-oriented programmes;
- Supporting partnerships and resource mobilisation to implement the developed regional strategy.

Priority area 2:

Consolidating collaboration and cooperation at a global level.

There is a need for greater clarity and synergy between ECPAT groups in Europe, member organisations in Africa and the ECPAT Secretariat on strategies and activities in the region to promote cohesion and cumulative impact on ECPAT's response to CSEC. To extend and deliver on its missions, it is essential for ECPAT to consolidate collaboration and cooperation among ECPAT members within and across regions for advocacy, research, sharing of good practices and impact-oriented programming.

Strategies:

- Collaboration between ECPAT member groups in Africa, Europe and North America should be strengthened to address the cross-border and trans-regional nature of CSEC through joint projects that impact both in the North and in the South. This calls for investment in innovative pilot projects;
- Opportunities for South-South learning should be created or expanded;
- In relation to project delivery, ECPAT needs to clearly define several elements related to global cooperation (such as: why establish such collaboration, what should be its extent, expected impact, risks and challenges, etc.).

PREVENTION

Effective CSEC prevention requires multi-faceted strategies and policies that simultaneously address the different elements of the problem. These strategies should target both vulnerable children and those who engage in sexual activities with children, while also addressing the root causes of CSEC, including demand, poverty and lack of education. Long-term prevention strategies include improving the status of children most vulnerable to CSEC by implementing policies to reduce poverty and social inequality and improving access to education, health and social services. Effective

short- to medium-term strategies include awareness-raising campaigns and education and training initiatives for the general public, vulnerable groups and government officials. The resources, expertise and influence of the private sector, particularly the tourism and IT industries, should also be applied to prevention measures, in particular in awareness-raising activities. Further, information, education and outreach programmes should be directed at those engaging in the commercial sexual exploitation of children (e.g., users of children forced into prostitution) to promote changes in social norms and behaviour and reduce the demand for child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Awareness raising, education and training

Numerous awareness-raising activities have taken place across the African region. Reaching out to different target groups (including vulnerable and exploited children, parents, care-givers, educators, government officials, communities, religious leaders, the general public, policy makers and the media), such activities have taken the form of public dialogues and community-level awareness seminars, production/dissemination of information and other materials (t-shirts, posters, comic strips for children, handbooks, etc.), radio and television announcements and campaigns. Education and training initiatives were also held, involving mainly government officials (police officers, judges, social workers and other professionals working with child survivors), media, communities and children and young people.

A review of awareness-raising, education and training efforts promoted in recent years suggests that:

- Most initiatives addressed child trafficking for sexual exploitation; other manifestations of CSEC have received less attention;

- Although limited in scope and number, examples of activities focused on online child safety have begun to emerge (e.g. in Benin, Egypt, Ghana, Madagascar and Zambia), and sexual exploitation of children through ICTs is sometimes addressed in this framework. In South Africa, for instance, the Film and Publication Board conducted a campaign in 2010 to empower children, parents, care-givers, educators and the general public on protecting children against child pornography, exposure to pornography and other undesirable content, using various media, outreach activations, awareness campaigns, school visits and new social-networking media platforms.²²⁷ Similarly, in Ghana the grassroots, child-focused NGO 'J Initiative' has actively advocated for children's online safety using various media and outreach tools to sensitise parents, political leaders and relevant stakeholders on the issue. Recently, the NGO collaborated with World Vision Ghana to advocate for the cyber-security of children at a stakeholders' roundtable meeting under the theme 'Online Safety of Ghanaian Children (Before Digital Migration)'. Stakeholders agreed to adopt World Vision's 'Keeping Children Safe Online' tool kit, designed to educate children, parents and teachers, and to reach out to policymakers and other stakeholders on the issue;²²⁸
- Protection of children from online risks, including sexual exploitation, is also the main focus of the Make IT safe campaign, a global initiative launched by ECPAT International to empower children and youth to promote the issue of Internet safety. The campaign currently involves several countries in Eastern and Southern Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa and Zambia), and has led to such activities as workshops and discussions to educate ICT teachers, Internet cafés owners and others;
- With support from the Oak Foundation, research, training and awareness-raising on child sex tourism were undertaken by ECPAT groups in East Africa (see box below);
- Some efforts were spearheaded to raise awareness and inform vulnerable groups about HIV/AIDS and its linkages with CSEC, especially cross-generational sex (see, for example, "Fataki" campaign in Tanzania²²⁹ and the "Saying NO to sugar daddies" campaign in Uganda);²³⁰
- A significant number of education and capacity-building initiatives were aimed at informing target populations about child protection laws (including new legislation addressing CSEC crimes) and promoting a child rights culture;
- The media is playing a greater role and children and young people have become actors of change in some countries, rather than being mere recipients of actions. In Burkina Faso, a network of communicators and journalists against child trafficking was established to raise awareness in different villages.²³¹ Under UNICEF's Child Protection and Empowerment programme in Zambia, 65 journalists from both mainstream and community media were trained to act as change agents through the mass media in 2010.²³² As part of the Youth Partnership Project implemented by ECPAT International and local partners, youth-led activities were conducted in the Gambia, Togo and Uganda to inform community leaders, students, teachers and other target groups about CSEC and HIV/AIDS, child sex trafficking and other practices associated with CSEC (e.g. early marriage);²³³
- Initiatives to integrate information on CSEC into school curricula took place in some countries. Ethiopia's primary school textbooks, for example, reportedly include information on child trafficking.²³⁴ In Egypt, the Internet Safety curriculum was introduced to students in grade 3, middle school and secondary school;²³⁵
- Examples of private sector involvement in actions to address CSEC include awareness-raising and education, with a focus on Internet safety. In Nigeria, Microsoft partnered with Paradigm Initiative Nigeria to launch the 'Microsoft Internet Safety, Security & Privacy Initiative for Nigeria', with the aim of teaching

safe behaviours to youth and encouraging them to turn away from cybercrime.²³⁶ Similarly, in Kenya Microsoft East Africa Limited, the Kenyan government and the advocacy group Cradle Children's Foundation have teamed up to inform parents and protect children against Internet abuse.²³⁷

Hotlines to report online child sexual exploitation and codes of conduct

Whilst sexual exploitation of children through ICTs is becoming rife all over Africa, the only hotline for reporting illegal online content, including materials containing child sexual abuse and exploitation, is in South Africa. In addition to allowing anonymous reporting, Internet hotlines inform and educate the public about how to combat this crime and protect children.²³⁸ The ITU's Child On-line Protection (ITU-COP) programme (of which ECPAT International is an active partner) also works with international partners, such as the Internet Watch Foundation, to build the capacity of African member states to set up Internet reporting portals, as part of the ITU regional capacity-building programme. A training workshop was held in Cameroon in April 2013, also involving The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Mauritius and Sierra Leone.

The first lady of Nigeria, Dame Patience Jonathan, was appointed to serve as the ITU Child Online Protection champion, which is expected to drive more attention and action on this issue within Africa.²³⁹

Also, as part of this COP Initiative endeavour, ITU is partnering with the African Child Online Protection Education & Awareness Centre and Facebook to run a pilot exercise in training community activists and others in key safety messages and tools. The e-safety pilot programme will initially focus on Ethiopia, promoting the "smart, safe, and responsible use of digital technologies in schools" in cooperation with teachers/educators.²⁴⁰ 15,000 children have been reached through the online awareness raising programs of this pilot project.²⁴¹ The Initiative is

expected to expand continentally and "should enable ITU and its international partners to reach out to all stakeholders, to better understand the issues and mobilise support for sustainable pan-African Child Online Protection."²⁴²

The *Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism* does not appear to have been adopted by countries that are popular tourist destinations. The only exceptions are South Africa, where Code implementation is being facilitated by Fair Trade and Tourism South Africa, a leading non-profit organisation that promotes equitable and sustainable tourism development in the country,²⁴³ and Kenya.²⁴⁴ In The Gambia, although the tourism industry has not yet officially signed the Code of Conduct, the Child Protection Alliance (an ECPAT affiliate) organised capacity-building seminars in cooperation with The Gambia Tourism Board, focusing on children rights, the Tourism Act and the Code of Conduct. The initiative was implemented in the framework of the project "Promotion of the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation in Tourism" involving five countries and coordinated by ECPAT Netherlands. In Cameroon, the government has reportedly adopted the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, and training sessions on sexual exploitation of children in tourism were also organised for personnel from the Ministry of Tourism and the tourism industry (travel agents, hotel staff, etc.).²⁴⁵

As part of the above-mentioned "Make-IT Safe" campaign, ECPAT International in collaboration with local partners is promoting the implementation of a Code of Conduct for Safe Internet Use in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. A regional workshop was organised in October 2010 to train staff from participating cybercafés and mobile phone networks on the implementation of this Code and to enhance their understanding of online risks faced by children and young people.

A Code of Conduct for teaching and administrative staff in schools, explicitly prohibiting sexual abuse,

exploitation and violence, was adopted in some countries (such as Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, Niger and Senegal in West and Central Africa and Kenya and South Africa²⁴⁶ in Eastern²⁴⁷ and Southern Africa)²⁴⁸ in an effort to address recurring incidents of school-based violence against children.

“Oak Foundation provided support to sub-regional ECPAT networks in East Africa, comprised of Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The initial grant was implemented from 2008 to 2011 with formal MoUs with selected ECPAT member organisations. There were two broad objectives for the grant; 1) focusing on research and awareness-raising on CSEC and 2) support to develop and implement NPAs against CSEC. Each of the implementing countries shared its own strategies for awareness-raising, ranging from community meetings, media and multi-stakeholder consultations, etc. The research focused on the issue of Child Sex Tourism in each of these countries, including demand and supply chains. Following the research, Kenya developed its Code of Conduct to Protect Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Industry; Ethiopia included the protection of children from sexual exploitation in the National Code of Ethics; Tanzania developed a National Plan of Action on CSEC (which was not presented to the Cabinet) and further conducted awareness-raising trainings with travel and tourism industry representatives and Uganda facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogues on protecting children from CST.”

Ms. Blain Teketel, Oak Foundation, presentation at ECPAT’s “Regional Consultation on Action to Stop the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Africa”, Addis Ababa, 1-2 August, 2013.

Support mechanisms for children at risk of sexual exploitation and vulnerability reduction strategies

Various mechanisms were put in place and measures adopted to reduce the likelihood that children become involved in commercial sexual exploitation. These include:

- Creation of village committees to combat sexual violence, trafficking and the worst forms of child labour and reach out to the most vulnerable children (e.g., Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Tanzania and Uganda). The committees' role is mainly to monitor, report and follow up on child rights violations, including CSEC;
- Victim empowerment programmes, including life skills and vocational training, targeting children vulnerable or child victims of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking, mainly run by local NGOs, often in partnership with UN agencies and government departments (e.g. Nigeria, South Africa, Togo and Zambia);
- Interventions that target orphans and children at risk from HIV/AIDS, particularly in countries with high prevalence rates (e.g. Uganda and South Africa);
- Development of income-generating activities for children at risk and their families (e.g. Togo) and implementation of child grant schemes (e.g. South Africa) and other social assistance programmes to reduce child poverty;
- Initiatives to improve birth registration systems (e.g. Nigeria) and measures to support school attendance (e.g. Tanzania), especially for girls.

Challenges/gaps:

Despite the preventive initiatives implemented to date, a number of shortcomings and constraints remain:

- CSEC prevention has not been prioritised by African governments; most activities are being conducted by NGOs, UN agencies and other actors;
- Ongoing paucity of research on CSEC, especially on emerging manifestations such as online sexual exploitation of children. Limited knowledge-building efforts result in insufficient awareness of these issues, as well as in the lack of a strong evidence base to inform preventive actions.
- Existing initiatives are limited, often localised and not sustained, with insufficient participation by key stakeholders, particularly the private sector (especially the tourism and ICT industry) and children and young people (including child survivors of CSE);
- Lack of evaluation of current strategies and measures, making it impossible to assess their impact, especially on children vulnerable or subjected to sexual exploitation, and ultimately to learn from evidence-based interventions;
- Traditional behaviour and practices related to child sexual exploitation (such as child marriage) persist due to a lack of effective strategies to counteract deep-rooted cultural beliefs, social norms and practices;
- Essential tools to address and prevent online sexual abuse of children (such as hotlines) and promote initiatives to prevent child sex tourism (such as the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism) have received limited attention. Where codes of conduct exist (such as for school staff and cyber cafés), there are often no monitoring mechanisms to ensure implementation.

Moreover very little is known about how Internet service and content providers and mobile operators are taking action to prevent access to child sexual abuse materials through their networks;

- Measures to address the demand that fosters the sexual exploitation of children are lacking.

Priority area 1:

Setting standards for research and expanding the knowledge base on CSEC.

As highlighted by experts and participants in the 2013 Regional Consultation in Addis Ababa, it is important to identify areas and opportunities for ECPAT groups to engage in ending CSEC in Africa. A first key priority is to expand the existing knowledge base on CSEC, including by linking to other agencies and research on broader child protection issues.

Strategies:

- Based on a manual currently being developed by ECPAT on how to produce reliable, verifiable research on CSEC, groups should conduct comprehensive research on emerging and complex CSEC-related issues that have not been examined to date. Thematic areas should include sexual exploitation of children in virtual environments, demand for sex with children (including travelling sex offenders) and sexual exploitation of children in emergencies;
- When expanding research, ECPAT groups should ensure meaningful participation of children and young people and collaborate with universities and international/bilateral/multinational organisations. ECPAT should also be aware of existing and upcoming prevalence studies on violence against children, including the 2014 ACPF African Report on Violence against Children, to ensure that CSEC is put on the agenda and duly investigated.

Priority area 2:

Enhancing primary prevention by empowering vulnerable families, building safe schools and working with the media.

There is an urgent need for ECPAT to promote impact-oriented interventions aimed at reducing the vulnerability of families, giving due weight to the African way of life to increase chances of acceptability and success, therefore ensuring cultural appropriateness. At the same time it is essential to empower children to make informed decisions about their lives through appropriate education in schools, as well as to increase public awareness of CSEC by working with the media.

Strategies:

- The ECPAT Network should initiate community conversations to equip parents with skills and information on CSEC. It should also support economic strengthening programmes, tapping into existing interventions (e.g., social protection safety nets) or linking with other organisations that are involved in this;
- ECPAT should engage to empower teachers with skills in positive discipline and child protection from various rights violations, including CSEC. School children should also be empowered to be resilient through education on children's rights and responsibilities (using also the African Charter), as well as through age-appropriate sex education that includes messages on CSEC. In this framework, attention should be paid to the emerging issue of child safety online and prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation through ICTs. When promoting efforts to build safe schools, ECPAT International and the ECPAT Network in Africa should ensure active involvement of children and young people (especially those at risk and survivors) as peer educators and motivators;
- ECPAT should raise awareness and build capacity of the media on CSEC issues and engage with local movie/music producers to encourage their involvement in preventing CSEC.

Priority area 3:

Involving the private sector and strengthening accountability and responsibility for protecting children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism and through ICTs.

ECPAT has a long history of brokering effective partnerships for action on ICT safety. Regrettably, while in other regions ECPAT has been a leader in collaboration with the private sector – particularly in the travel and tourism industry – in Africa successful alliances with the business sector are yet to be established. In addition to engaging with travel and tourism companies, there is a need to promote innovative partnerships with ICT firms. Partners could also include the financial entities that accept payment online for services, Internet service providers, mobile phone companies, Internet cafes and hotels, which can play a role in blocking or filtering access to child pornography.

Strategies:

- In countries where sexual exploitation in tourism is rampant (e.g. Kenya, Senegal and Tanzania), ECPAT groups should work closely with the travel and tourism industry to promote the adoption and implementation of the *Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism*. Awareness-raising initiatives and relevant training targeting staff of tourism companies, tourism departments, law enforcement officers, tourism school representatives, etc. should also be conducted;
- In collaboration with strategic partners (such as Internet Watch Foundation, INHOPE, police and ECPAT groups in the North with relevant experience and expertise), ECPAT should advocate for and support the establishment of:
 - a) Internet hotlines/helplines to report incidents

of child sexual abuse and exploitation and to provide support to child victims; b) systems to block and filter access to child pornography or delete such illegal materials; c) alliances with the financial sector (banks, providers of financial services, etc.) with the aim of stopping transactions for the purchase of child abuse materials.

THE LEGAL CONTEXT

1. International legal framework

Status of ratification of relevant international legal instruments

Most African countries have signed and ratified relevant international legal instruments addressing commercial sexual exploitation of children and trafficking in persons, including children. For example, ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour was ratified by all African countries except Eritrea. The *Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* (OPSC) was ratified by 45 African states and the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* (Trafficking Protocol) was ratified by 45 governments. As of 19 November 2014, countries that have not ratified include: Comoros, Congo, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda.

Regarding the *Optional Protocol to the CRC on a communications procedure* (OP3 CRC), Gabon was one of the two first countries (with Thailand), to ratify this Protocol, on 25 September 2012. The OP3 CRC, which entered into force in April 2014, has been ratified by 14 countries (as of 19 November 2014). ECPAT International and other international and national child rights NGOs have joined the *International Coalition for the OP3 CRC on a communications procedure*, which is committed to achieve rapid ratification and entry into force of the new Protocol.

Association Burkinabe Pour la Survie de l'Enfant, ECPAT's affiliate group in Burkina Faso, has joined the Coalition and is promoting and advocating for ratification of the OP3 CRC in Burkina Faso. The coalition provides its members with periodic information about advocacy opportunities and targets and new advocacy material to promote the OP3 CRC.

Priority area 1:

Enhancing the legal framework by advocating for ratification of international legal instruments relevant for combating CSEC and monitoring the implementation of commitments.

Ratifying international legal instruments that provide strong protection of children from sexual exploitation is a duty that all African States need to fulfil as a matter of priority. Keeping countries accountable for their commitments towards children is one of the main responsibilities of civil society organisations like ECPAT.

Strategies:

- ECPAT member organisations in Cameroon, Ghana and Zambia should actively engage in advocacy work towards the ratification of the OPSC by their respective governments;
- ECPAT's member organisation in Uganda should contribute to lobbying initiatives aimed at promoting government ratification of the Trafficking Protocol;
- Like the affiliate in Burkina Faso, other ECPAT member organisations in Africa should join the international Coalition for the OP3 CRC, in order to receive technical support and guidance on advocacy for ratification of the new Optional Protocol in their respective countries. ECPAT member organisations in Africa should urge their government to follow the example of Gabon, which ratified the OP3 CRC;

- In countries where the relevant international legal instruments were not ratified and where ECPAT does not have a presence, ECPAT International should join regional or national advocacy initiatives aimed at promoting the ratification of the OP3 CRC;
- Using Country Monitoring Reports, ECPAT member organisations and ECPAT International should continue to engage in the development, submission and follow-up of Universal Periodic Review contributions, as well as of Alternative Reports on implementation of the OPSC and CRC.

2. Regional legal framework

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Brief overview

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, also known as the Children's Charter)²⁴⁹ was adopted in 1990 by the Organisation of African Unity (replaced in 2002 by the African Union). The ACRWC is the first African regional treaty on children's rights. ACRWC Article 27 prohibits all forms of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, specifically criminalising child prostitution and child pornography.

Charter Article 29 prohibits the sale and trafficking of children for any purposes, while Article 21 provides children with a specific legal protections against harmful traditional and cultural practices affecting their welfare, dignity, normal growth and development (which are not specified), as well as the practice of child betrothal and marriage. Article 21 is very important as it specifically criminalises harmful traditional and cultural practices not prohibited under the CRC or any other international treaty. However, the ACRWC fails to define specific measures for addressing the recovery and rehabilitation of child CSEC victims.

Status of ratification of the ACRWC

The Charter has been signed by 45 states,²⁵⁰ signed and ratified by 41 states, and neither signed nor ratified by nine states: Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sao Tome & Principe, Somalia, South Sudan and Tunisia.²⁵¹

Monitoring implementation of the ACRWC: a brief overview of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

The ACRWC provides for the establishment of an African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child within the AU to monitor the implementation of the Charter by member states.

The Committee of Experts is mandated to collect and document information, give its views and make recommendations to governments and to formulate principles and rules aimed at protecting the rights and welfare of children in Africa. The ACRWC's mandate also includes interpretation of provisions of the Charter at the request of a State Party, an institution of the AU or any other person or institution recognised by the AU or any state party. In addition, the Committee can receive communications and conduct investigations on any issue falling within the ambit of the Charter.

Within two years of entry into force of the ACRWC, states parties must submit reports to the Committee on the measures they have adopted to give effect to its provisions and on progress achieved in the enjoyment of these rights. Thereafter, reports must be made every three years. The ACRWC *Guidelines for Initial Reports of States Parties* stipulates that State reports may include information found in reports submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. However, the guidelines must also 'highlight the areas of rights that are specific to the Children's Charter'.

The Committee has reviewed initial reports on ACRWC implementation from several countries,

including: Burkina Faso (2009), Cameroon (2011), Egypt (2008), Kenya (2009), Mali (2009), Niger (2011), Nigeria (2008), Rwanda (2010), Senegal (2011), Tanzania (2009) Togo (2011) and Uganda (2010).

The Committee made recommendations to several reviewed states specifically addressing the need to strengthen the protection of children against CSEC. For instance, in its Concluding Recommendations on the Burkina Faso report, the Committee urged the government of Burkina Faso to enact adequate criminal provisions to address CSEC-related crimes and measures to care for and protect CSEC victims.²⁵²

In its Concluding Recommendations on the Republic of Tanzania report on the status of implementation of the ACRWC,²⁵³ the Committee called for more research on trafficking in children, including for sexual purposes, and urged the government to ensure effective implementation of the legal framework addressing CSEC and trafficking.

The First Extraordinary Session of the ACERWC took place from 7-11 October 2014, during which the Committee considered State Parties reports from Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Mozambique and South Africa.²⁵⁴ The nature of measures instituted by the concerned State Parties to protect children against CSE and address vulnerability factors featured substantially in queries from Committee members on the reports, in particular with regard to the issue of CSE in travel and tourism (Kenya and South Africa), child marriage (South Africa) and street children and international adoptions (Ethiopia).

Involvement of civil society in the ACERWC's work

Since 2007 civil society organisations have had the opportunity to closely collaborate with the ACERWC by applying for Observer Status. According to Section IV of the *Criteria for granting observer status in the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Associations*, NGOs enjoying Observer Status

may be invited to participate in meetings of the Committee and attend closed sessions to consider issues that concern them. Observers may also make statements on the invitation of the Chairperson, answer questions asked by ACERWC members and request the inclusion of issues of particular interest to them on the agenda of the meeting. NGOs that are granted Observer Status are obliged to submit analytic reports on their activities to the ACERWC every two years. Criteria and application procedure for NGOs are explained in Sections I and II of the *Criteria for granting observer status in the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Associations*. However, NGOs do not need Observer Status to be able to submit alternative reports on ACRWC implementation or to submit communications.

In 2009 the Civil Society Forum on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was established to provide an advocacy platform for African child rights NGOs to engage with the ACERWC. The Forum, held twice a year prior to sessions of the ACERWC, brings together CSOs (with Observer Status) working on child rights and welfare issues across Africa, child rights experts and AU representatives to deliberate on the critical issues affecting African children and make recommendations for consideration by the ACERWC.²⁵⁵ The Child Protection Alliance, ECPAT's affiliate in The Gambia, and CLOSE, the ECPAT affiliate in Benin, are both members of the Civil Society Forum on the ACRWC and have participated in several meetings.

Submission of alternative reports on the implementation of the ACRWC

Rule 69 of the ACERWC Rules of Procedures stipulates that the Committee may invite the RECs, the AU, specialised agencies, United Nations organs, NGOs and CSOs to submit reports on the implementation of the Children's Charter and/or to provide expert advice in areas falling within the scope of their activities. Relying on information from other sources

than the State reports provides the Committee with a more comprehensive overview of the status of ACERWC implementation. The potential for NGOs to submit alternative reports represents a very good opportunity to bring key CSEC issues and the voice of children and young people to the attention of the state under review through a regional human rights monitoring mechanism with strong moral authority. Even though no specific guidelines on the format and content of NGO reports have been issued, NGOs should use the format developed for alternative reports submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. NGOs may also be invited to attend pre-session Working Groups, during which they can make oral presentations; even though they are not allowed to take the floor during the plenary session, by attending they have the opportunity to meet and interact with Committee members, as well as to provide them with updates and suggestions regarding questions to be asked and recommendations to be made during the review.

Submission of communications to the ACERWC

Article 44 of the ACERWC defines the term “communication” as “any correspondence or any complaint from a State, individual or NGO denouncing acts that are prejudicial to the right or rights of the child shall be considered as communication”. According to Article 44(1), NGOs can submit communications relating to any matter covered by the ACERWC. It is very important that NGOs submit such communications, as the moral authority attached to the Committee’s jurisprudence, even though very limited (ACERWC has considered one of the two communications it has received to date), can have an impact on the government about which the communication was lodged.

Priority area 2:

Engaging with ACERWC and monitoring implementation of the ACERWC to strengthen protection of children from sexual exploitation at regional level.

During the 2013 Regional Consultation in Addis Ababa, Dr. Benyam Dawit Mezmur, Chair of the ACERWC, strongly reaffirmed the commitment of the institution that he chairs to contribute to the fight against CSEC, including by joining and supporting the work that ECPAT plans to conduct in Africa in the coming years. ECPAT needs to take maximum advantage of this collaboration and use all the opportunities that this regional mechanism offers to prioritise and advance the anti-CSEC agenda among African states.

Strategies:

- ECPAT Groups in Africa should apply for Observer Status in the ACERWC (to engage with and participate in the work of the Committee);²⁵⁶
- They should also contact the ACERWC to be invited to submit alternative reports when their countries’ reports are to be reviewed by this body;
- The ECPAT network in the region should invite members of the Committee to their countries (special events; talk about the work of the Committee, etc.);
- ECPAT’s International Secretariat should provide technical support to ECPAT Groups in Africa in the preparation of alternative reports, following the guidelines developed by the ACERWC.

Regional and sub-regional legal initiatives dealing with “Child Pornography” through ICTs in Africa.

African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data

During the 23rd Ordinary Session of the Summit of the AU held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in June 2014, the summit’s Assembly comprising Heads of State of the AU adopted the ‘African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data’, establishing the first regional framework against cyber-crime, including “child pornography.”²⁵⁷ The AU Convention goes beyond OPSC standards, as it criminalises “virtual” child pornography (Article 1)

and the “mere possession” of child pornography in a computer system (Article 29(3)).²⁵⁸

However, the Convention does not include certain requirements described in the OPSC. In particular, it does not include “any representation” within the definition of child pornography, nor does it criminalise certain conducts such as “selling” and “distributing” child pornography. Also, it is worth noting that the Draft AU Convention does not take into consideration best international standards to combat the sexual exploitation of children online, such as grooming, knowingly viewing or accessing child pornography, or the obligation of Internet service providers to report cases of child pornography

The Convention will enter into force 30 days after receipt of the 15th instrument of ratification by the AU. In support of the ratification and early implementation of the Convention, there are plans to establish a Cyber Security Unit within the AU. The AU further aims to develop and distribute toolkits to facilitate ratification as well as organise and/or participate in workshops for capacity building and promotion of heightened awareness to aid in the formulation of national cyber-security legislation in each AU member state.²⁵⁹

Sub- regional model legislation on cybercrime: SADC, ECOWAS, ECCAS/ EMCAC

The ITU and European Union have been supporting the harmonisation of ICT policies and legislation in sub-Saharan Africa through the ‘Harmonisation of ICT Policies in sub-Saharan Africa’ (HIPPSA) project, launched in Addis Ababa in 2008 with the participation of 30 beneficiary countries.²⁶⁰ Some of the regional outcomes of this collaboration are sub-regional assessments, indicators, training materials and, notably, cyber-security “model legislation” with leading African international organisations.²⁶¹

In this regard, harmonised model legislation on cybercrime in the framework of the ITU was concluded in 2013 with the Southern African

Development Community,²⁶² the Economic Community of West African States,²⁶³ and the Economic Community of Central African States/ Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (ECCAS EMCAC).²⁶⁴ This model legislation treats the crime of “child pornography” in a more progressive manner than the OPSC, as it includes both “virtual” child pornography and “mere possession” of child pornography in a computer system as offences.²⁶⁵ These aspects are in line with the above-mentioned progressive standards of the AU Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data; however, some provisions of these sub-regional model laws go further and include several other progressive regulations.

For example, the SADC model legislation criminalises “knowingly obtaining access through ICTs to child pornography,” and “procuring child pornography through a computer system for oneself or for another person.”²⁶⁶ In addition, the ECCAS EMCAC model legislation includes “grooming” (the solicitation of children for sexual purposes through ICTs), regardless of the presence of sexual activities (which is considered an aggravating factor).²⁶⁷

3. National legal framework - compliance of domestic legal frameworks addressing CSEC with international legal instruments

Child Prostitution

The OPSC Article 2 (b) defines child prostitution as: “the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration”.

Although 42 African countries have legislation specifically addressing child prostitution, only 14 provide a definition of child prostitution, and not all of these are consistent with Article 2 of the OPSC. The OPSC requires all State Parties to ensure that their legislation criminalises the offering, obtaining, procuring or providing of a child for child prostitution, or the attempt of the same (Article 3.1(c)). Only 12 African countries prohibit all of these acts.

Prostitution is illegal in most African countries, legal provisions related to child prostitution often form a subsection of the country's penal code relating to adults, so that offences involving minors are considered to be an "aggravating factor" and lead to a stronger penalty. Serious concerns are raised when child prostitution is only addressed in the context of general criminal law, rather than recognised as a child protection issue defining the child involved in prostitution as a victim in need of support services. There is also no consensus among laws in the region regarding the age of children to be protected from child prostitution. Some countries, such as Burundi and Cameroon, use 21 as the age of majority; most others, including Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo, have set the age of majority at 18, whereas in Cape Verde and Zimbabwe minors are defined as being under 16 years of age.

Almost no African countries explicitly exempt children from punishment for prostitution-related crimes. One exception is Cote d'Ivoire, where the Law Pertaining to the Prohibition of Child Trafficking and the Worst Forms of Child Labour²⁶⁸ provides a definition of sexual exploitation of the child as *sexual acts in exchange for remuneration*,²⁶⁹ which could equally be applied to child prostitution. Another exception is found in Ethiopia, where Article 661 of the Criminal Code states that child victims of "sexual outrage crimes" are not liable for punishment, but it is not clear if this term includes CSEC-related child prostitution.

Child Pornography/Child Sexual Abuse Materials

Few African states have adopted national legislation on child pornography in full compliance with OPSC international standards. While a number of countries are not party to this treaty (including States which have signed it but not ratified it, like Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya and Zambia),²⁷⁰ others, despite being parties to this treaty, have not yet harmonised their national laws with the Optional Protocol.

Child pornography is defined in Protocol Article 2(c) as:

"Any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes".

Many State Parties to the OPSC²⁷¹ have not approved national legislation defining child pornography, as required by their international obligations; this is the case for Ethiopia, The Gambia, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, among others. Other African States, however, despite being party to the OPSC, have not defined "child pornography" in complete compliance with the Protocol. One example is Nigeria's Cybercrime Bill, whose article 14 does not include "any representation," "by whatever means," or "the representation of the sexual parts of the child for primarily sexual purposes," as required by the OPSC.²⁷¹ Often, states that have not adopted a definition of child pornography apply "obscenity laws", which criminalise "indecent" or "obscene" materials or publications instead of child pornography. The Gambia,²⁷² Ethiopia²⁷³ and Tanzania²⁷⁴ are some examples of this practice. It is worth noting that terms like "obscene" or "indecent" are inadequate, given that their broad and subjective nature makes it difficult to effectively investigate and prosecute child pornography.

Nonetheless, some African States, such as South Africa, have model legislation in which the definition of child pornography is in full compliance with OPSC standards.²⁷⁵

OPSC (Articles 3.1 & 3.2) requires each State Party to ensure that the following activities, or attempt at these activities, are fully covered under its criminal or penal law: "Producing, distributing, disseminating, importing, exporting, offering, selling, or possessing child pornography." Few African states consider these conducts as a criminal offence. It is possible to distinguish some patterns in this regard: (i) states that criminalise only certain OPSC conducts related to child pornography (Uganda,²⁷⁶ South Africa,²⁷⁷ Ghana,²⁷⁸ Nigeria,²⁷⁹ The Gambia,²⁸⁰ or Cameroon,²⁸¹);

(ii) states that criminalise pornography, instead of child pornography (for instance, Zambia)²⁸² and (iii) states that criminalise OPSC conducts but in reference to “obscene/indecent” materials rather than “child pornography” (examples include Tanzania²⁸³ and Zambia).²⁸⁴

The trend in African countries appears to be to define child pornography according to the standards of the Council of Europe Cyber Crime Convention (Budapest Convention). Relevant cases are Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon (and Kenya’s upcoming Cybercrime and Computer Crimes Bill).²⁸⁵ Accordingly, these states consider “virtual” child pornography (“realistic” images) and a person “appearing” to be a child punishable conducts. On other occasions, “virtual” child pornography is punished under different terminology, for instance South Africa’s criminalisation of “any image, however created”²⁸⁶ or The Gambia’s punishment of certain conducts regarding indecent “pseudo-photos.”²⁸⁷

Certain African states have incorporated international standards that go beyond the OPSC to protect children against sexual exploitation online This protection addresses offences such as the “mere possession” of child pornography, “grooming,” or “knowingly accessing/viewing” child pornography.”

Such provisions are in accordance with progressive international standards such as those contained in the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention).

The “mere possession” of child pornography is criminalised in Ghana,²⁸⁸ Nigeria,²⁸⁹ South Africa²⁹⁰ and Uganda,²⁹¹ while other African states, like Zambia, prohibit the possession of “pornography,” instead of “child pornography.”²⁹² A number of countries sanction the possession of “obscene,” “indecent,” “paedophile” materials, resulting in difficulties inherent to the broad nature of this

offence. This is the case in Cameroon,²⁹³ Ethiopia²⁹⁴ and the Gambia²⁹⁵ among others. On the whole, most African states do not consider the simple possession of child pornography as a crime in their domestic legal systems.

However, the grooming of children for sexual purposes is covered by several national legal systems. While some African countries require that the offence of grooming be followed by the commission of sexual acts (e.g., Nigeria),²⁹⁶ others do not make a similar requirement (e.g., South Africa²⁹⁷ and the model legislation for the ECCAS/EMCAC concluded in the framework of the ITU).²⁹⁸ Despite not protecting children directly, several African states criminalise “harassment,” including the proposal of indecent acts or sexual harassment, which may be used by some judges to protect child victims against sexual solicitation through ICTs (Kenya,²⁹⁹ Tanzania³⁰⁰ and Uganda³⁰¹ have this kind of legislation). For the time being, most African states have no legislation to protect children against solicitation for sexual purposes via ICTs.

Knowingly accessing/viewing child pornography is probably the offence that appears least frequently in African domestic legal systems, with some exceptions, such as Egypt’s Child Law³⁰² or South Africa’s Films and Publications Act.³⁰³

The need to engage ISPs in the implementation of laws to eliminate the sexual exploitation of children online is reflected in occasional progressive legislation in Africa; the best example is South Africa’s Films and Publications Act, which establishes an obligation by ISPs to report cases of child pornography to the police.³⁰⁴ Other countries establish a “general” obligation (for every person) to report suspected cases of child abuse (for instance Gambia,³⁰⁵ or Mozambique).³⁰⁶ However, most African countries do not require ISPs to report child abuse to the police, including states that, despite having regulated the activity of ISPs, do not establish reporting obligations for them (e.g., Ghana,³⁰⁷ Tanzania,³⁰⁸ Uganda³⁰⁹ and Zambia³¹⁰).

ECPAT International considers that adopting a regional legal framework is fundamental to tackling the sexual exploitation of children online in Africa. Such a framework should go beyond OPSC standards and incorporate best international practice to address the different forms of child sexual abuse through ICTs, including: the mere possession of child pornography, virtual child pornography, the solicitation of children for sexual purposes (grooming), knowingly accessing/viewing child pornography and the obligation of ISPs to report cases of child sexual abuse to the police.

Child Trafficking for Sexual Purposes

Most African countries have separate legislation specific to child trafficking, with the exception of Equatorial Guinea, Libya, Morocco, Somalia, Tunisia and Zimbabwe.³¹¹ In Equatorial Guinea child trafficking is referred to in general human trafficking legislation. In Libya the Criminal Code is awaiting implementation of draft amendments seeking to criminalise trafficking in persons; but currently the Criminal Code only prohibits trafficking of women and sexual exploitation in general.³¹²

In some cases, even where specific legislation exists there is a problem of definition, such as in Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, Eritrea, Mozambique, Rwanda and Tunisia, where child trafficking is not defined. This can be problematic when investigators or prosecutors attempt to identify and prosecute trafficking offences. In 29 African countries the definition of child trafficking includes cases in which the child “consents”. However, in the remaining countries this is not explicitly stated, which leaves it unclear whether children who gave “consent” would be protected by the law.

In 22 countries the definition of child trafficking includes *any means used*, whereas in many others the means are specified. For example in Djibouti, the DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, Liberia and Zambia child

trafficking is described as involving means such as force, deception, violence or coercion, which implies that these means are a prerequisite to fulfil the definition of trafficking. Specifying the means used does not comply with the Protocol, which requires that the definition explicitly state that child trafficking encompasses *any means used*.

In Angola legislation only addresses child trafficking for the purposes of prostitution, and does not include other forms of sexual exploitation. Elsewhere, including Botswana, although child trafficking is prohibited, the term is not defined and there is no mention of related activities, such as recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring or reception of the child for purposes of exploitation. Also in Burundi, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda and South Sudan not all related activities are prohibited.

Extraterritorial legislation in relation to the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism

Extraterritorial legislation addressing CSEC offences is in place in 29 African countries; in some countries it is difficult to ascertain whether such legislation exists due to problems with public availability of legislation.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends that double criminality should not be a prerequisite for conviction under extraterritorial legislation, although this is not stated in the OPSC. Double criminality means that the offence must be prohibited in both the home country of the perpetrator and in the jurisdiction where the offence took place. In countries where the criminal or penal code has a prerequisite for double criminality, a national can travel to another country with a less child-friendly legal framework to engage in child sex tourism without any consequence. The perpetrator can rely on the defence that the child sexual exploitation that would be a crime in his or her own country was not illegal in the jurisdiction where it took place. In 18 of the countries that have extraterritorial legislation addressing CSEC

offences in place, there is no requirement for double criminality.³¹³ Eleven African countries have a double criminality requirement;³¹⁴ i.e. an offence must be prohibited under both the law of the offender's home country and in the jurisdiction where the crime took place.

Four countries (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Djibouti and Togo) make prosecution conditional upon the filing of a complaint by the victim or a formal request of the state of which the victim is a national. However this is not a requirement in the other 25 countries with extraterritorial legislation in place. Although the Protocol does not deal with this issue, such a requirement generally hinders the judicial process, allowing for bribery or intimidation of victims and their families, or simply creating too many hurdles for the victim to overcome in order to pursue a conviction.

Priority area 3:

Strengthening the legal framework by supporting harmonisation of domestic legislation with international legal instruments.

One of the critical elements needed to enhance counteraction of CSEC is ensuring harmonisation of the national legal framework with international legal instruments relevant for combating CSEC. As pointed out by experts during the 2013 Regional Consultation in Addis Ababa, the lack of legislative harmonisation is a major obstacle towards effective prosecution and protection efforts, impeding efforts by regional and international co-operation between all state authorities involved in the fight against a crime, CSEC, that is by definition borderless.

"There are a number of aspects on legal protection that would require harmonisation, including the definition of a "child" and the need to establish a minimum age for marriage, sexual consent, and lodging complaints."

Dr. Benyam Dawit Mezmur, Chair of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, presentation at ECPAT's "Regional Consultation on Action to Stop the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Africa", Addis Ababa, 1-2 August, 2013.

Strategies:

- As part of the advocacy toolkit that the ECPAT International Secretariat plans to develop to support the Network's work in this area, specific strategies will be identified and outlined to maximise the potential for national-level advocacy on legal reform. Ideally, training on this issue will be provided to groups in Africa;
- On the basis of this capacity building, and using the Global Monitoring Reports as a supporting resource material, ECPAT groups should conduct an in-depth analysis of the legal framework in their countries and then advocate for and promote legal reform for CSEC-related offences, so that the various legal loopholes identified above can be closed.

4. Law enforcement training and access to child-friendly justice for child victims of sexual exploitation

African states have made only limited progress in ensuring that the rights and best interests of children subjected to sexual exploitation are upheld and protected within the justice system. Regrettably, provisions for child-friendly measures before, during and after criminal investigations and proceedings concerning child victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation have been adopted in just a few countries. In Uganda, for example, the *Prevention*

of *Trafficking in Persons Act 2009* introduced specific provisions for trials concerning trafficking in persons, stipulating that related proceedings are to be conducted *in camera* and without media presence, especially where children or allegations of sexual exploitation are involved.³¹⁵ South Africa also implemented various protective mechanisms to make testifying more child-friendly for victims of sexual offences and children involved in proceedings related to care and protection. Children testifying in the criminal court in sexual abuse matters are protected by the use of an intermediary and close-circuit television, which allows the child to testify in a separate room, avoiding direct confrontation with the accused and facilitating examination and cross-examination in a child-friendly manner that minimises secondary trauma.³¹⁶

In Namibia, Section 158A of the Criminal Procedure Act was added through legislative amendment in 2003 and defines vulnerable witnesses, including children under 18 and/or persons against whom an offence of a sexual or indecent nature has been committed. On application by any party, including the witness, the court may order that special arrangements be made for the giving of evidence by the vulnerable witness, such as rearranging furniture in the courtroom, the presence of a support person, and/or giving evidence in a separate room via electronic media.

To support implementation of new provisions for protection, in 2007 the High Court of Namibia launched the 'Vulnerable Witness Project' in Windhoek, which entails the opening of a specially designed and well-equipped courtroom hearing cases involving vulnerable witnesses, which includes close-circuit cameras. Kenya has also made legal advances in the area of child-friendly justice.³¹⁷ The Kenyan parliament passed a Victim Protection Bill in August 2014, providing greater support

to victims of crime, including provision of a place of safety, food, medical treatment, psychosocial care and police protection.

Kenya's new law contains specific child victim protection provisions and also establishes a fund to assist victims.³¹⁸ Although Kenya passed the Counter Trafficking in Persons Act in 2012, there have been very few convictions to date due to the general reluctance of victims to give evidence, because of the trauma they endured.³¹⁹ The law has been welcomed by victims' advocates, such as the child rights NGO The Cradle, which provides legal aid to children in Kenyan courts. Under the new law, it is anticipated that when victims are able to access adequate care and protection during and after criminal proceedings, the process of evidence collection and corroboration will be facilitated, resulting in higher rates of prosecution and conviction of traffickers. The new law further gives victims' lawyers the right to address the court, which will also strengthen the prosecution's case. Previously, victims' lawyers could only participate in court as silent observers, and prosecutions were led by police officers.³²⁰

To facilitate reporting of crimes and protection of victims, specialised police units to tackle human trafficking cases and violation of children's rights (including sexual abuse and exploitation), have been set up in a number of African countries.

In Lesotho, the mounted Police Service established the Child and Gender Protection unit, which provides a user-friendly reporting environment and ensures confidentiality for child victims who come to the police station to report sexual offences; it also acquired mobile offices separate from the police station, to facilitate more confidential and child-friendly interviews, which also encourages reporting of offences.³²¹

In Uganda, the police Child and Family Protection Unit is tasked with investigating all cases related to abuse of children and women, including sexual abuse, rape, child labour, indecent assault and trafficking. The Unit is also responsible for raising awareness about these violations and delivering legal counselling to children and women victims of abuse.³²² Several Family Support Units attached to police stations have also been established in Sierra Leone.³²³ In some African countries there are specialised anti-trafficking police units (e.g. Egypt,³²⁴ Ghana³²⁵ and Nigeria³²⁶). The investigation of child pornography has not yet been prioritised by law enforcement in the region, except for South Africa's specialised Cyber Crime Police Unit, responsible for computer forensic examination, including the investigation of child abuse materials.³²⁷

Collaboration between UN agencies and NGOs (including ECPAT member organisations in the region) has resulted in training across Africa to build capacities of law enforcement officials of different ranks (police officers, border guards, customs officers, peacekeeping troops, the judiciary, etc.) on early identification, investigation and prosecution of cases of human/child trafficking and, to a lesser extent, child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as on victims' protection and children's rights. Initial attempts to incorporate capacity building on these topics in the regular training for law enforcement have additionally been made in some countries. In Zambia, for example, specific anti-trafficking training is included in all law enforcement courses at the police training academy, covering the 2008 Anti-Trafficking Act, investigation techniques, identification of victims, and protection of victims and witnesses.³²⁸ According to the Government of Tanzania, training on child rights is offered at all Tanzanian Police Academies and is integrated into a general human rights course.³²⁹

Notwithstanding these initiatives, African countries continue to face common challenges in terms of protection of child survivors in the justice system. Child-sensitive investigation procedures

in accordance with international standards are still lacking in most countries, and where they exist they are not systematically utilised by law enforcement. There is also a lack of free legal aid and protection programmes for child victims and witnesses, leaving them vulnerable to threats and intimidation from perpetrators and discouraging the filing of complaints and court appearances. In the African context, sometimes cases get resolved through "compromise", in which offenders pay child survivors and their families to avoid legal action. Whilst the positive values and restorative intention of such practices should be examined, there is a risk for girls of being treated as 'belongings' that, when damaged, can be paid for. Several constraints hinder the effectiveness of existing police child protection units. In addition to often being understaffed or affected by high staff turnover and shortage of financial resources, they are usually not present across the whole national territory, and training for police staff operating within these units remains insufficient. This is also the case for other personnel who come into contact with vulnerable children and survivors. The end result is that child victims are often not identified, and thus treated as perpetrators of crimes rather than individuals in need of protection.

Priority area 4:

Enhancing capacities of ECPAT groups to deliver multi-stakeholder training on CSEC and advocating for protection of child survivors in the justice system.

Strategies:

- The Secretariat should conduct training for ECPAT groups to enable them to train relevant stakeholders (social workers, law enforcement, health professionals, etc.) on different CSEC manifestations, focusing on prevention, protection/legal framework and recovery/reintegration; particular emphasis should be placed on identification and rescue of child survivors, as well as on child-sensitive approaches before, during and after criminal proceedings;

- As part of the harmonisation of domestic legislation in African countries with international legal instruments proposed above (see Priority area 3), a specific section should be devoted to accessing child-friendly justice for child survivors, highlighting gaps and suggesting recommendations for action. Relevant advocacy work on this key issue should then be conducted by ECPAT groups in the region.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Child sexual exploitation has far-reaching emotional and physical implications that can permanently affect both the development and wellbeing of a child. This highlights the need for support services that help with the recovery and reintegration of child survivors of CSE. Further, research indicates that child victims of exploitation have distinct support needs from adults.³³⁰ Therefore, strategies for the recovery and reintegration of victims of CSE should contain both immediate and long-term policies for child-specific support in order to enhance child protection and wellbeing. Immediate support services could include medical and psychological care and the provision of adequate shelter and legal assistance. Long-term assistance for child victims might include a return to the family or community when possible, reintegration into the education system of the respective state and concrete plans for social and economic rehabilitation.

An overview of support services available to children in Africa suggests that while there has been a general improvement in accessibility to services in the past decade, support available to children who have been sexually exploited is highly inadequate.³³¹ Support for some vulnerable children is being provided by a variety of government, community and non-governmental organisations, but reports

indicate that this assistance generally reaches only a small percentage of those who need it.³³² While each country in Africa makes its own decisions regarding the types of support services it can provide, depending on the availability of funding and staffing, level of need and socio-economic situation of the specific nation, certain common issues surface across the region.

Analysis of the second edition of ECPAT's Global Monitoring Reports indicates that states in sub-Saharan Africa are placing greater priority on support services and allocating more resources for rehabilitation and reintegration of children who have suffered abuse – although the degree of support offered varies considerably among countries.

Though not specific to CSEC, varying forms of support services for children who have been abused are reportedly available in many countries, including: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia. A 2008 report demonstrates that regionally, however, the medical, psychological and legal needs of child victims in sub-Saharan Africa are not being adequately addressed.³³³

On the positive side, the strengthening of child protection systems promoted by UNICEF and child rights NGOs suggests great potential in the coming years for strengthening support services for child victims. South Africa was hailed as an example of good practice due to increased “investment in a new and comprehensive approach to provide support services, family counselling, and child and youth care centres, under the leadership of the South African Minister of Social Development and the guidance of the new Children’s Act.”³³⁴

An important development in victim support services in recent years was the establishment of specialised “One Stop” centres/clinics, which have been beneficial in offering combined medical, counselling and legal services to patients at one

single location. These centres can be found in South Africa ('Thuthuzela Care Centres'),³³⁵ Malawi³³⁶ and Zambia.³³⁷ Their aim is to reduce the trauma of sexual violence for children and adults and prevent secondary victimisation of those who have been exploited. However, the effectiveness of these "one stop shops" has been contested in recent reports, due to a lack of follow-up procedures.³³⁸ This suggests the need for continued efforts to enhance support initiatives across the region.

Reliable information on available child support services in North Africa is more difficult to obtain, due to the particularly taboo and clandestine nature of CSEC issues, which leaves many victims without necessary recourse for recovery and reintegration and may result in re-victimisation. ECPAT and UNICEF reports indicate that CSEC, its consequences and the possibilities for support and assistance for victims, remain issues that have not been sufficiently addressed by states in the sub-region.³³⁹ While limited, regional improvements in the acknowledgement of sexual exploitation and in support services have been reported; for example, the 2013 US Trafficking in Persons Report states that Morocco established telephone hotline assistance programme for victims of trafficking and those at risk of suffering exploitation.³⁴⁰ Telephone hotline services for children at risk were also identified in Benin,³⁴¹ Cameroon,³⁴² South Africa, Cote D'Ivoire³⁴³ and Ghana,³⁴⁴ although statistics on the number of children who are able to effectively use these services are absent.

Across Africa, ECPAT Country Monitoring Reports point to a general lack of gender-specific support services, especially for boys, as well as of specialised assistance tailored to meet the specific support needs of children subjected to different forms of CSE. Furthermore, both sub-Saharan and North Africa have a shortage of professionals with field-level experience on CSEC (social workers, judges, doctors, teachers, law enforcement).³⁴⁵

NGOs appear to play a significant role in the provision of services for CSEC victims in Africa.

Services provided by NGOs include the delivery of professional assistance, community counselling, medical, legal and financial support.³⁴⁶ The African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect is a notable actor that provides services (such as vocational training and psychosocial support) in several countries, including Ethiopia and Kenya. Also, the Liberian NGO More Than Me "works with community leaders to identify girl [victims of] sex trafficking and those at highest risk of exploitation."³⁴⁷ It also supports girls' school attendance by offering tuition assistance and providing school lunches.³⁴⁸

Public authorities have also developed programmes to assist CSEC victims, specifically victims of trafficking. For example, The National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons provides support services in Nigeria via its Counselling and Rehabilitation Department,³⁴⁹ and the Government of Sudan has established a child protection unit, tasked with the provision of legal aid and medical services for child victims of violence and exploitation.³⁵⁰ Governments in the DRC and Botswana have formed numerous partnerships within communities, including with local NGOs, to protect children from CSE and assist victims.³⁵¹

While NGOs are taking important initiatives in addressing support and protection gaps for child victims, in many cases African governments have come to rely too heavily on NGOs to provide direct assistance to CSEC and trafficking victims.³⁵² This overreliance results in unpredictability and weak sustainability, as the availability of resources and facilities often depend on project-based funding.³⁵³ Further, reports indicate that NGO services are often delivered by volunteers, raising issues about the quality of services provided and accountability of service providers.³⁵⁴

In this connection, it is important to mention that to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation of children within children's organisations, ECPAT International, in collaboration with ECPAT UK and UNICEF Thailand, has developed an innovative "Child

Safe Organisations (CSO) Framework and Training Toolkit” to promote child protection policies. Using the toolkit, training for grassroots organisations working with and for children is currently being conducted in four African countries (Benin, the Gambia, Ghana and Zambia). An evaluation of this initiative recently conducted by ECPAT International highlights some innovative examples of good practice (such as children’s involvement, which improves the quality, effectiveness and validity of the policy; collaboration with relevant local agencies, especially government agencies, which can help create a more effective referral network). The evaluation also highlights certain gaps and recommendations for improvement which, if followed, will ensure that organisations can adopt even better internal child protection mechanisms for safeguarding children.

Gaps/challenges:

- Limited capacity, resources and political commitment represent the most significant challenges to the provision of support services for CSEC victims across the continent. A shortage of personnel trained in the area of CSEC affects integration and rehabilitation services, hampering counselling and support services to victims;³⁵⁵
- Insufficient resources and funding has led to a lack of long-term support services for victims, which require more resources than short-term solutions. For example, ECPAT reported in Ethiopia³⁵⁶ and Benin³⁵⁷ that support services comprise only immediate policies, with a lack of follow up, and even these are generally scarce;
- Hindering the provision of these services is a lack of legal frameworks. The majority of African countries do not have specific legal parameters that distil and guide support services for victims of CSEC. A few countries, such as Ghana and Tanzania, have legislation that guides services to some extent, but a consistent gap remains at the highest policy level, in terms of an overarching

framework that defines the state’s relationship to children and identifies its obligations to provide support services to child victims. National legislation does not adequately address the issue of support services for victims of CSEC;

- Most African countries also lack official coordinating mechanisms to identify victims and refer them to appropriate authorities; as a result many victims slip through the cracks and do not receive essential rehabilitation services;
- Another reported challenge is legal systems that are often hostile to an abused child: child-friendly courts are rare, most prosecutors are not familiar with CSE and doctors are often unwilling to give expert opinion in court.³⁵⁸ This has led to a lack of trust in law enforcement and judicial agencies in numerous countries across the continent, hindering child victims from obtaining justice;
- Many child victims are unable to access support services or report abuse due to fear of stigmatisation related to CSEC. This suggests a lack of community awareness about CSEC that prevents children from reaching the help they need.

Priority areas and strategies:

Caring for victims of sexual abuse and exploitation presents a challenge that has yet to be taken on in Africa. Age- and gender-sensitive support services that meet minimum care standards and are tailored to the special needs of CSEC survivors are urgently required. To ensure successful long-term recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration of child survivors – and thereby reduce the chances that they will be re-victimised – quality care must be provided by trained professionals through a holistic and integrated approach entailing comprehensive referral and support systems that involves all concerned stakeholders, including families, communities, and children and young people. In this framework, particular emphasis should also be placed on developing alternative care models based on international standards adopted by the UN,

as well as on ensuring effective follow-up of CSEC survivors through sustainable strategies.

ECPAT groups should consider the strategies described below to enhance the delivery of efficient, high-quality support services to CSEC survivors in the region:

Priority Area 1:

Enhancing comprehensive referral mechanisms for CSEC survivors through a multi-stakeholder approach.

Strategies:

- ECPAT groups should work to identify, adopt and reinforce a multi-sector referral mechanism that links to relevant reporting services at national and regional levels, to demonstrate and promote more comprehensive support systems, services and channels for complaints for children victimised in sexual exploitation. Efforts in this area might include organising visits to ECPAT groups in the region and concluding MoUs among network members;
- As recommended above (“legal context”), the Secretariat should conduct training for ECPAT groups that assists them to train relevant stakeholders (social workers, psychologists, law enforcement and other professionals coming into contact with children), with a focus on child-friendly procedures during investigation and prosecution, identification, recovery, reintegration and safe return of child survivors. It is important to note that ECPAT groups in Europe have extensive experience in conducting multi-stakeholder training on CSEC (including Training of Trainers), and therefore could potentially be involved in the design and implementation of this activity.

Priority Area 2:

Advocating for the creation of referral services for CSEC survivors and improved access by making their availability known and reducing stigma

Strategies:

- ECPAT groups should advocate for the provision of specialised age- and gender-sensitive referral services for CSEC survivors and take steps to ensure that children and youth and the general population are made aware of available support services in their respective regions and communities, through radio/TV talks, production and distribution of information materials, etc;
- This work should ideally be combined with community engagement and education efforts to reduce stigmatisation and victim-blaming of CSEC survivors.

Priority Area 3:

Building child-safe organisations.

Strategies:

Considering that across Africa services are mainly provided by NGOs, ECPAT International’s training guide for Child Safe Organisations should be extended to African countries where ECPAT has membership, to ensure that all ECPAT organisations in the region have operational child protection policies.

Priority area 4:

Promoting awareness of and supporting implementation of UN Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children.

Strategies:

- The Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, unanimously welcomed by the UN in 2009, have become an important tool for decision-makers and service providers in the child care sector to address the special vulnerabilities of children deprived of their family, including those vulnerable or subjected to sexual exploitation. Considering their importance, the Secretariat should join other organisations (such as UNICEF, Save the Children and SOS Village) in advocating for their implementation. Based on existing resource materials developed by various agencies, the Secretariat should disseminate and promote the guidelines within member organisations in Africa and provide training. As a follow-up, groups should advocate with governments and all those who work directly or indirectly with children in care to make them aware of the guidelines and engage for their implementation.

Priority area 5:

Ensuring effective follow-up of services provided to child victims.

Strategies:

- ECPAT groups should work to ensure that child survivors are assisted and followed up throughout the entire process – from their identification as victims until they achieve social reintegration and beyond. This work should involve drafting a follow-up plan, training staff in charge of the follow-up, producing a report and conducting an evaluation.

CHILD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Child and youth participation is a particularly important CSEC prevention tool. As children are the victims of CSEC crimes, their participation in prevention methods is highly effective in awareness-raising and experience-sharing with their peers.³⁵⁹ Further, children's and young people's participation is one of the four main principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, along with survival, development and protection.³⁶⁰ Article 12(1) of the CRC guarantees children's right to express their own views in all matters affecting them.³⁶¹

Research demonstrates considerable improvement in efforts to engage children in many processes and child protection initiatives across the African region.³⁶² A review by the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Inter-Agency Task Team on Children and AIDS (RIATT-ESA) of child and youth participation activities in that sub-region shows that over the last five years increased efforts have been made to create spaces for young people's opinions to be heard and to influence public decision-making.³⁶³ While each country in Africa has a distinct approach to child and youth participation, depending on factors such as existing social structures and available resources, certain recent trends in child and youth participation can be identified.

The RIATT report states that across the continent, African children are becoming more involved in: national policy design, programme design and implementation and participation in advocacy initiatives.³⁶⁴ Important examples are reported in Zimbabwe, where children participated in writing Zimbabwe's National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children and Youth,³⁶⁵ and South Africa, where young people were engaged, through the Dikwankwetla project, in commenting on the new South African Children's Bill.³⁶⁶

Meanwhile, in Cameroon, Egypt, Malawi, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Tunisia and Zambia conferences, summits and children's parliaments have proved to be "effective avenues where children make their voice heard on policy and legislative issues affecting their wellbeing".³⁶⁷ RIATT reports that two countries in particular stand out for child participation initiatives. In Uganda, children are fully involved in research projects to inform and effect policy change, while in Mozambique children are involved in law reform processes.³⁶⁸ These recent improvements are commendable and illustrate a concerted effort on the part of certain African states to engage children in processes that affect their lives and safety.

Available literature indicates that over the past decade, numerous children's parliaments have been instituted in sub-Saharan countries including: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe. In North Africa, children's parliaments are effective in: Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia, to varying degrees.³⁶⁹ While this is a positive development, illustrating an innovative way for children to voice their concerns and be involved in political processes related to their rights, the AfricaWide Movement for Children reports that the impact of these children's parliaments, in terms of effective child participation, has remained limited.³⁷⁰ Further, in some countries, including the Republic of Congo and the DRC, these parliaments are not yet operational, existing only on paper.³⁷¹ In countries such as Senegal³⁷² and Ghana³⁷³, youth parliaments face challenges relating to their status, composition, structure, functioning and autonomy, which has limited children's contributions.³⁷⁴ Further, the recent ECPAT global monitoring report on Nigeria raises the issue of whether children's parliaments are fully representative of the country's child population. Nigeria's Children's Parliament is comprised of the children of elites, and thus does not give a voice to the most vulnerable children.³⁷⁵

A situational overview reveals that NGOs, not governments, are primarily responsible for enhancing the participation of children in programmes that impact their welfare. These programmes include the provision of tutorial and training services, involving young people in experience-sharing fora and expanding children's access to information services.³⁷⁶ NGOs that work to involve children and youth in child rights processes, including ECPAT member groups in the region, have been reported in numerous sub-Saharan Africa countries, including: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Zimbabwe. In North Africa, Save the Children Sweden and the International NGO Council on Violence against Children have played a prominent role, focusing on violence and abuse against children, education and child participation.³⁷⁷ While it is encouraging that NGOs have stepped in to address the absence of child participation initiatives in certain states, studies indicate that this may lead to issues regarding programme sustainability, as NGOs' efforts are often project-based and dependent on donor funding. This highlights the need for increased government involvement in child and youth participation efforts.

"Under the Youth Partnership Programme (YPP), young people played various roles such as active involvement in the direct project implementation as Youth Motivators and Peer Supporters. They also raised awareness and lobbied against CSEC at community and national levels using culture and gender sensitive methodology and mediums. The YPP participants shared information with their peers in other parts of Africa and around the world, and learned from each other's experiences and good practice. They also befriended and provided individualised support to their peers from becoming trapped into sexual exploitation. Through child and youth participation in this programme we have learned several lessons:

children who are trained and educated about issues affecting their lives can become their own better advocates; the involvement of children gives an organization's advocacy efforts credibility and legitimacy; there is a need for appropriate support mechanisms (including protection mechanisms) along with the opportunities to participate to ensure meaningful participation of children in all aspects of the programme."

Ms. Amie Jobe, ECPAT EICYAC Africa Representative, presentation at ECPAT's "Regional Consultation on Action to Stop the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Africa", Addis Ababa, 1-2 August, 2013.

The second edition of ECPAT Global Monitoring Reports on Africa illustrate that child and youth involvement in North and sub-Saharan Africa often fails to expressly address CSEC. This highlights a missed opportunity in terms of reducing child vulnerability from sexual exploitation, as this specific area of participation could have an impact on protecting children "from abuse and exploitation as well as accelerating their recovery and sense of empowerment as social actors."³⁷⁸ While limited and often scattered, some participation initiatives have sought to address sexual exploitation (e.g., in Ghana,³⁷⁹ Tanzania³⁸⁰ and Zimbabwe.³⁸¹) As illustrated during the 2013 Regional Consultation in Addis Ababa, ECPAT has spearheaded consistent efforts to ensure the meaningful participation of children and young people in work against CSEC. Besides involving them in projects such as the Make-IT-safe campaign and the joint ECPAT/The Body Shop "Stop Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People" campaign, in Cameroon, the Gambia and Togo, several youth-led activities to raise awareness about CSEC were conducted as part of the Global Youth Partnership Programme, an initiative promoted by ECPAT International to ensure that all children can enjoy the right to meaningful participation, particularly in social change and work against

CSEC. Youth-led research on the use of ICTs and children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation was also conducted in five African countries (see "Child abuse materials and sexual exploitation of children online"). Despite these examples, efforts to engage children in programmes that may have a bearing on preventing CSEC have generally been insufficient.

Gaps/challenges:

Although significant positive developments in regard to child and youth participation have occurred in recent years, challenges remain in terms of meaningfully engaging children in efforts to prevent commercial sexual exploitation (and related child protection issues) across Africa. Although each country has identified unique challenges that must be addressed, certain common issues were identified:

- Certain cultural and social traditions serve as a serious hindrance to effective child participation. For example, it is reported in Equatorial Guinea and Zambia³⁸² that traditional practices hinder the right of children (particularly girls) to express their views in matters concerning them and to be heard in judicial and administrative proceedings.³⁸³ In Angola, traditional norms do not allow children to express their views in the family, schools, other institutions or the community.³⁸⁴ Also, in the Gambia, Ghana, Mali and Togo, cultural/traditional norms dictate that children should not offer opinions or express opinions on matters that concern them;³⁸⁵
- The value of young people's participation is reportedly viewed with scepticism in the region,³⁸⁶ raising issues in terms of trusting child and youth input. While many promises are made in the context of engaging children in child rights initiatives,³⁸⁷ reports indicate a minimum level of adoption of children's views by adult decision-makers;³⁸⁸

- Across the continent, a significant constraint to the realisation of children's right to participation is the wide variation in the understanding and articulation of the concept of child participation by various actors;³⁸⁹
- A key challenge relates to ethics, and the need to make sure that children's emotional well-being and confidentiality is protected in these processes.³⁹⁰
- ECPAT's International Secretariat should continue to seek and allocate adequate funding for child and youth participation activities in the region;
- The YPP project should be further expanded and documentation of region- and culture-specific models of good practice that emerge from this and other initiatives to promote the active involvement of children and young people should be strengthened;

Priority area:

Supporting meaningful participation by children and young people.

Despite commendable efforts by ECPAT over the years to build a solid base for child and youth participation in the region, there is a need to enhance processes and mechanisms for promoting meaningful participation and empowering children and young people as key social actors in addressing issues impacting on child rights to protection from CSE, focusing in particular on at-risk and experiential children and young people.

Strategies:

- ECPAT's International Secretariat and member organisations in Africa should provide support to children and youth, in particular those at-risk of sexual exploitation and CSEC survivors, to ensure their systematic engagement with relevant human rights mechanisms (including ACERWC), participation in policy discussion events at all levels (international, regional and national) and in the design and implementation of peer-to-peer initiatives and youth-led advocacy, research and awareness-raising activities.



SECTION 4. THE ECPAT NETWORK IN AFRICA

The ECPAT network in Africa is active in a small portion of the entire region. Of 55 African countries, membership organisations are present only in 15. As illustrated by Cleophas Mally of WAO-Afrique (ECPAT member organisation in Togo), in his presentation at the 2013 Regional Consultation, the Network in the region has historically encountered challenges in working against CSEC in Africa, especially from 1995 to 2000, when governments were not ready to acknowledge it as a problem and thought that focusing on CSEC would damage their country's reputation. Furthermore, many local CSOs were, and still are, working on several child rights issues, devoting only limited attention to CSEC. Some of the ECPAT strategies that were implemented during that initial phase involved awareness-raising and strengthening the capacities of the CSOs to work on CSEC, including data collection/evidence-gathering, etc. Following the World Congresses (Stockholm 1996, Yokohama 2001 and Rio de Janeiro 2008), there was also a push to develop NPAs against CSEC as a signal of a government's commitment to address CSEC in the country. Due to the denial and sensitivity of the issue, CSOs in some countries had to focus on child labour, trafficking and abuse rather than CSEC. Efforts to mobilise different stakeholders also took place, but with varying degree of success, especially in West Africa, where there was a need for more African people to come on board to stress that CSEC, particularly sexual exploitation of children in tourism, was not just an issue in Asia and Europe but also a problem in Africa.

Despite these difficulties, the ECPAT network has achieved several important results over the years.

A Membership Survey offered key examples of successful work against CSEC conducted by the ECPAT network in Africa, such as: groups' involvement in alternative reporting to the UN CRC Committee and Human Rights Council Reporting mechanisms (on the CRC, OPSC and UPR reporting); provision of information and expertise (on research, advocacy, capacity building on CSEC, etc.); good practices, lessons learned and methodologies shared through the network and with other partner organisations; successful model on child and youth participation (Youth Partnership Programme); groups' expertise on legal reform and success in raising awareness about CSEC at the local and national levels.

Whilst past achievements are commendable, it is critical that as ECPAT moves forward in Africa, more attention be paid to overcoming the remaining constraints and gaps affecting the network. In addition to the absence of regional advocacy efforts and the ECPAT network's limited coverage in Africa, challenges to be addressed in the coming years include: prioritising CSEC among competing agendas, overcoming difficulties in raising funds for work on CSEC (also due to problems of accountability within organisations) and ensuring greater transparency, coordination and collaboration among ECPAT groups for impact-oriented interventions against CSEC. Also, given the composition of the membership in Africa, where most member organisations are coalitions, there is a need for a tailored strategy to support groups in mainstreaming CSEC within their own local networks and demonstrating their leadership against this issue at the national level through effective advocacy and programming.



SECTION 5. CONCLUSION

This brief overview of the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Africa raises grave concerns. A combination of economic, social, cultural and political factors, coupled with a growing tourism industry, conflict situations, HIV and AIDS, technological advances and emergency situations are all contributing to the rise in CSEC in Africa and its various manifestations.

Despite a paucity of CSEC data and statistics, available studies and indicators show that at least in areas such as sexual exploitation of children in tourism and through ICTs the phenomenon may be worsening, despite the efforts of governments, civil society, INGOs, UN agencies, international aid agencies and others.

CSEC is taking a devastating toll on some of Africa's children. As illustrated throughout this review and confirmed during the regional consultations and meetings, several constraints serve to hinder protection of children from this violation in the region. But there are also numerous opportunities that ECPAT groups and the Secretariat can take advantage

of to enhance the impact and effectiveness of their work in the region. The preceding analysis shows that member organisations could play a leading role in advancing child protection from sexual exploitation in Africa, particularly by helping to address the main gaps in areas such as prevention, policy and legal framework, coordination and cooperation, recovery and reintegration, and child and youth participation. This work cannot be conducted in isolation, and will require consistent efforts from all concerned stakeholders, including governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations, human rights institutions, donor agencies, the private sector, law enforcement and legal community, media, religious leaders, parliamentarians, researchers and academics, civil society and children and adolescents. ECPAT has already taken steps to develop a plan to address this situation with a response at the scale required and, in collaboration with high-level experts, will continue to spearhead efforts to ensure that commitments made to end CSEC in Africa translate into tangible actions and measurable results.

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