

# EXAMINING NEGLECTED ELEMENTS

in **COMBATTING SEXUAL  
EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN**



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Series editor: Mark Capaldi

Editorial assistance from Rebecca Rittenhouse, Sephra Smith and Alexandra Smith

Layout & Designed: Manida Naebklang

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**ECPAT International**

328/1 Phayathai Road Ratchathewi

Bangkok 10400 THAILAND

Tel: +662 215 3388, +662 611 0972 Fax: +662 215 8272

Email: [info@ecpat.net](mailto:info@ecpat.net) Website: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

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# Preface

ECPAT International's 2nd Edition country monitoring reports on the status of action against commercial sexual exploitation have highlighted specifically two contrasting ends of the continuum of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) that until recently, have largely gone unaddressed.

The demand side of commercial sexual exploitation of children has long been invisible and ignored. Whilst a number of agencies such as ECPAT have begun to incorporate a gender approach to research studies on the issue (thus contributing to the expansion of the knowledge base on the profile of perpetrators and motivations underlying their behaviour) it is only in more recent times that the adoption of a "gender lens" is enabling the identification and examination of the various social, cultural, and other conditions that create tolerance for CSEC.

The first article in this ECPAT Journal Series No. 7 details the growing number of studies on social constructs of masculinity and influences leading men to sexual exploitation of girls and boys that have been undertaken, particularly in countries in Latin America and South/South East Asia. As a result, compared to the past, it is now possible to have a deeper understanding of individuals who exploit prostituted and trafficked children and adolescents, of consumers of child abuse materials and those who sexually offend on the Internet, as well as of travelling child sex offenders (commonly defined as "child sex tourists").

Nevertheless, despite these findings, little attention has yet been given to the importance of involving men as key allies to prevent the demand for child sex. This journal's second article looks at how men and boys can also be part of the solution. The experience of many ECPAT group members is that this has led to the development of a number of initiatives to engage the male population in the prevention of CSEC and address the patriarchal norms of gender and sexuality in which CSEC is rooted.

Gender dimensions are also reflected in the third and final article of this journal which looks at the other end of the spectrum and the importance of a protective continuum of care for the child victims of sexual exploitation. ECPAT International's 2nd Edition country monitoring reports on the status of action against commercial sexual exploitation have revealed that the care and protection services needed to ensure the recovery and reintegration of child victims are limited, inadequate and/or unspecialized.

This ECPAT Journal illustrates the importance of a comprehensive framework for tackling the multi-faceted complexities of commercial sexual exploitation of children. Greater attention and resources must be directed at both ends of the problem – to stop the perpetrators and to heal the life-long consequences of the child's victimization.

# Understanding demand for CSEC and the related gender dimensions: A review of the research

By Alessia Altamura

## Introduction

The last two decades have witnessed a growing recognition that sexual exploitation and sexual violence are inextricably linked to gender construction and dynamics, and are therefore better understood and addressed when this perspective is incorporated in policies and programming. Across different contexts, gender has been identified as a critical determining factor for whether or not someone will use or be subjected to any form of violence and sexual exploitation. Research conducted over the world has generally concluded that while sex perpetrators are overwhelmingly (though not exclusively) men, victims are mostly girls and women. For example, according to a 2012 UNODC report, 75% of all trafficked people worldwide are women and girls, with sexual exploitation being the main purpose for human trafficking.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, a recent ECPAT study shedding light on the sexual exploitation of male children and adolescents in Colombia found that 86% of “customers” were men while the rest were women.<sup>2</sup>

While most men may never engage in or condone this behaviour, individuals who have sex with children are a significant driving force behind CSEC, and their role in the perpetuation of the so called “global child sex trade” cannot be neglected. However, focusing on the demand for commercial sex with children encompasses not only placing responsibility on the single exploiters who abuse children through such means, but also understanding the social, cultural and historical constructions that directly or indirectly facilitate, encourage and/or “sanction” this conduct. These elements are often considered as “natural” within a given social context and can remain unquestioned and unchallenged. Nevertheless, they underpin social interactions between adults and children, men and women and different sectors of society and are thus major factors facilitating the adult demand for commercial sex with children.

As research conducted from a *social constructionist perspective*<sup>3</sup> has illustrated, CSEC is rooted in patriarchal norms and practices

<sup>1</sup> UNODC. Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.IV.1). Accessed on 30 January 2013 from: [http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking\\_in\\_Persons\\_2012\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> ECPAT International - Fundación Renacer. Aproximación a la explotación sexual comercial de niños y adolescentes de sexo masculino en Bogotá y Cartagena de Indias. Colombia. 2010. Accessed on 30 January 2013 from: [http://www.ecpat.net/EI/Publications/Care\\_Protection/Libro%20ONG%20Raices.pdf](http://www.ecpat.net/EI/Publications/Care_Protection/Libro%20ONG%20Raices.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> “The social constructionist perspective [...] affirms that masculinities and gender norms are: (1) socially constructed (rather than being biologically driven), (2) vary across historical and local contexts and (3) interact with other factors such as poverty and globalization. In a social constructionist perspective, gender norms emerge from prevailing patterns of hegemony and patriarchy and are in turn reinforced and reconstructed by families, communities and social institutions.” See Ricardo C., Barker, G. Men (2008). Men, Masculinities, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence. Accessed on 30 January 2013 from: <http://www.ecpat.net/WorldCongressIII/PDF/Publications/SexualExploitation-WorkingDraft-July30.pdf>

that support codified gender roles which are in turn reinforced and reproduced by families, communities and social institutions. Around the world, boys are frequently raised to believe that to be “real men” they should always be strong and in control, particularly in their intimate and sexual relationships. Sexual experience, frequently associated with initiation into manhood, may be viewed by men and boys as displays of sexual competence or accomplishment, rather than acts of intimacy. In many social contexts, different standards related to sexuality glorify male sexual prowess while at the same time denying female sexual agency. The nearly global practice of using women’s bodies in pornography or to market consumer products and services as well as the increasing sexualisation of children by the media and the fashion and other industries, all reinforce perceptions that women’s and girls’ bodies are things to be “admired and consumed” by men.<sup>4</sup> The prevailing social norms on masculinity also explain the persisting silence on and lack of attention to the sexual exploitation of boys (see box under section 1.2). Likewise, the traditional view of femininity which portrays women as sexually passive and non-aggressive individuals who are expected to be caring, nurturing, and maternal, has led to the common misconception that women are not perpetrators.

Besides generating unequal gender relations and stereotyped gender roles, patriarchal norms have determined generational hierarchies and inequalities. In most societies, parents and adults who act *in loco parentis* are both allowed and expected to exercise powers over children of a type and degree that would be unthinkable in relation to any other social group. Such powers reflect the fact that childhood is widely viewed as a state of immanence, and children

are imagined as incompetent and unable to realise themselves as individuals.<sup>5</sup> The patriarchal notions of ownership over children’s bodies and sexual entitlement prevalent in much of the world find a justification in this view. As noted in one of the World Congress III thematic papers on the sexual exploitation of children through prostitution, only by taking into consideration the intersecting power relations of gender and generation and by combining this patriarchal analysis with the examination of other inequalities (such as those based on race, class, and sexual orientation) it is possible to have a clear understanding of the demand for sex with children.<sup>6</sup>

This paper therefore aims to map the knowledge-base, including within the ECPAT network, of current research on the demand side of CSEC. This article suggests that studies examining the context-specific and unique social, economic and historical roots behind the demand remain generally limited. In some countries affected by child sex tourism, emphasis continues to be placed on travelling sex offenders thus neglecting or minimising the role that the local demand plays in fostering sexual exploitation and trafficking. The gender dimension of sexual exploitation has certainly been acknowledged but still little is known about the sexual exploitation of boys and female perpetrators, especially the motivations behind their behaviour. This paper ends by recommending the development of a greater understanding of the factors that inhibit and discourage men and boys (as well as women) from sexual exploitation of children across different contexts and cultures so that strategies for engaging men and boys in the prevention and protection of children from this contemporary form of slavery can be realised.

<sup>4</sup> Ricardo C., Barker, G. Men (2008). Men, Masculinities, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence. Accessed on 30 January 2013 from: <http://www.ecpat.net/WorldCongressIII/PDF/Publications/SexualExploitation-WorkingDraft-July30.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> O’Connel-Davidson, J. (2001) The Sex Exploiter, Paper for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Accessed on 30 January 2013 from: [http://www.csecworldcongress.org/PDF/en/Yokohama/Background\\_reading/Theme\\_papers/Theme%20paper%20The%20Sex%20Exploiter.pdf](http://www.csecworldcongress.org/PDF/en/Yokohama/Background_reading/Theme_papers/Theme%20paper%20The%20Sex%20Exploiter.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Ennew, J. (2008) Exploitation of children in prostitution. Thematic Paper for World Congress III Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, November 2008. Accessed on 30 January 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

## Defining the demand: terminological clarifications

Despite the fact that the need to address the demand that fosters CSEC has been emphasised in a number of international legal instruments (such as the OPSC) and international commitments (such as the Stockholm Declaration and Plan of Action and the outcome document of World Congress III in Brazil), there is still no shared understanding of what constitutes demand for sexual exploitation. It has been suggested that there are four components that make-up the demand for sex trafficking: 1) men who buy commercial sex acts; 2) the exploiters who make up the sex industry, 3) the states that create the enabling environment for sex trafficking to exist, and 4) the culture that tolerates or promotes sexual exploitation.<sup>7</sup> This definition appears to be pertinent to understanding the demand for CSEC; yet it should be emphasized that those who purchase commercial sex acts from children and adolescents may also include female perpetrators.

In a recent book on CSEC, ECPAT Sweden has stressed that when dealing with the issue of demand some terminological clarifications should be made. Although perpetrators who are willing to pay for the sexual exploitation of children are often called “buyers”, “clients”, “purchasers” or “customers”, these terms all “alleviate the responsibility from the abuser, the perpetrator, the exploiter and the criminal. By labelling the perpetrators, as described here, it implies that there is a transaction of a service rather than an act of exploitation. By calling the act of exploitation a “service”, one implies that there is a commercial transaction between two contractual partners where both are consenting. However, to give money for sexual interaction with a child is a criminal act of

exploitation, where the perpetrator is the only one responsible and the child is a victim of sexual exploitation, who carries no responsibility at all.”<sup>8</sup>

Whilst recognising that those who profit from CSEC by ensuring that abusers get access to child victims are a constituting element of the demand for CSEC, this paper will use the term “demand” to refer primarily to child sex offenders. In the framework of this analysis on perpetrators, attention will be placed on those cultural factors and, to a lesser extent, state policies or legal measures that impact the request for commercial sex with children.

## Going beyond “pedophilia” as a starting point

For many years, there has been a continued tendency to assume that the demand-side of CSEC consists of pedophiles who are willing and able to pay ever-larger sums of money to get access to more and younger children. The mass-media, with their sensational presentation of sexual abuse against children, have often nurtured a stereotypical view of child sex offenders as deviant old men and this has in turn affected public discourse on the topic. Generalisations about perpetrators of child sexual exploitation are difficult and can be misleading. Research conducted over the years has shown that CSEC is not solely a problem of pedophilia. When looking at those who engage in sex with children, ECPAT has always emphasised that a distinction should be made between pedophiles, preferential offenders and situational offenders (to note that pedophiles can also be included in the broader category of “preferential offenders”). Although the term “pedophile” is frequently used to refer to *all* individuals who use sex services provided by any person below

<sup>7</sup> Hughes, D.M. *The Demand: Where Sex Trafficking Begins*. 2004. Accessed on 30 January 2013 from: [http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/demand\\_for\\_victims.pdf](http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/demand_for_victims.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Karlen, H. (editor) (2011). *The commercial sexual exploitation of children*. ECPAT Sweden.

18 years of age, pedophilia is a clinical diagnostic category that can be applied only to those with a specific and exclusive sexual preference for pre-pubescent children. However, not all pedophiles act on their fantasies and sexually exploit children and not all child sex offenders are pedophiles. Some perpetrators of child sexual exploitation are defined as “preferential offenders.” Unlike pedophiles, they deliberately look for sexual contact mainly with pubescent or adolescent children while still having the capacity to experience sexual attraction for adults. “Situational offenders” don’t display any sexual preference for children and adolescents but sexually exploit children if and when they find themselves in situations where a child is readily or cheaply available for sexual use.<sup>9</sup> Contrary to a common misconception, the majority of men who engage in child sexual exploitation are situational offenders who are not driven by sexual fantasies about children *per se*.<sup>10</sup> Such perpetrators usually abuse children when the opportunity to interact sexually with a person under 18 arises. The motivation behind their behaviours cannot be attributed to a psychosexual disorder but rather to a complex interplay of individual conditions and cultural, social, political and economic factors that altogether shape the consumer demand for CSEC. Recognising this critical concept is a necessary premise for any effort to tackle the problem of child sex offenders. If most perpetrators are not pedophiles or

preferential abusers, there is hope that by adopting a wide-ranging series of short and long-term measures addressing the causes that underpin and reproduce the demand-side of CSEC, this major driving force can be reduced.

The theme paper on the sexual exploiter prepared for the Second World Congress against CSEC also pointed out that there is no single profile of those who solicit sex with children. “Customers” are many and various, with differences of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, wealth and so forth.<sup>11</sup> In Cambodia a recent investigation on local demand by ECPAT Cambodia found that Cambodian men purchasing sex with children under 18 belonged to different age groups and social classes and could be either married or single.<sup>12</sup> The consistent picture from research seems to suggest that while the age of children in prostitution tends to be between 14 and 17, customers are aged between 15 and 60 years.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, most of the studies lead to the conclusion that: a) very few buyers are looking for pre-pubescent children specifically; b) in many settings, buyers seek and have a preference for adolescent girls in prostitution, a practice often facilitated by the lack of legal protection for prostitution of children above the legal age of consent; and c) those engaging in commercial sex can at times be under the age of 18.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> ECPAT International (2008). Questions and Answers about the commercial sexual exploitation of children. 4th edition. Accessed on 5 February 2012 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>10</sup> Commission on Human Rights. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Juan Miguel Petit. E/CN.4/2006/67. 12 January 2006. Accessed on 5 February 2012 from: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G06/101/70/PDF/G0610170.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>11</sup> O’Connell-Davidson, J. (2001) The Sex Exploiter, Paper for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Accessed on 5 February 2012 from: [http://www.csecworldcongress.org/PDF/en/Yokohama/Background\\_reading/Theme\\_papers/Theme%20paper%20The%20Sex%20Exploiter.pdf](http://www.csecworldcongress.org/PDF/en/Yokohama/Background_reading/Theme_papers/Theme%20paper%20The%20Sex%20Exploiter.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Chan, I. (2010). Addressing local demand for commercial sex with children in Cambodia. Accessed on 5 February 2012 from: [http://www.sithi.org/admin/upload/media/\[2010-08-22\]Addressing/ECPAT\\_3\\_1March10\\_Address%20Local%20Demand%20for%20Commercial%20Sex%20With%20Children%20in%20Cambodia.pdf](http://www.sithi.org/admin/upload/media/[2010-08-22]Addressing/ECPAT_3_1March10_Address%20Local%20Demand%20for%20Commercial%20Sex%20With%20Children%20in%20Cambodia.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Ennew, J. (2008) Exploitation of children in prostitution. Thematic Paper for World Congress III Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, November 2008. Accessed on 5 February 2012 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>14</sup> MacLeod et al. (2008). Challenging Men’s Demand for Prostitution in Scotland. Accessed on 5 February 2012 from: <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/ChallengingDemandScotland.pdf>



## What men are looking for when they buy sex from children and adolescents

Men's motivations for buying sex have been increasingly explored and discussed in recent years. According to O'Connell Davis, CSEC and its driving forces, including the demand, should be examined in the broader framework of sexual exploitation of adults and in relation to non-commercial sexual exploitation. This is because in the real world dynamics and patterns behind these violations may be similar and interconnected.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, a number of practitioners take the view that demand for sexual exploitation of children and men's demand for prostitution in general are inextricably linked and should therefore be understood and addressed from this perspective.<sup>16</sup>

While recognising these linkages, a number of research studies based on a gendered approach have focused specifically on those purchasing sex with children, identifying and analysing the distinguishing cultural and historical norms surrounding masculinity and sexuality and the social meanings attached to them. A fairly conclusive example is the investigation on demand for CSEC in four areas of Peru (Cusco, Huancayo, Iquitos and Lima) carried out by ECPAT International and local partners in 2004-2005. As noted by the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, "the research results exemplify problems that

exist in all parts of the world."<sup>17</sup> As noted in the study, interviews with a cross-section of the Peruvian population showed that CSEC is a well-known phenomenon in the country, and that despite the existence of a law criminalising CSEC, this problem is widely tolerated, with perpetrators of such crimes being granted virtual immunity. Some of the reasons for such tolerance identified by the study include the perception of the girls that are victimised through this exploitation as being those from marginalised families. Blame tends to be placed on the families and girls themselves for this situation, rather than on the perpetrators. Accompanying secondary research undertaken by ECPAT on Peru revealed that this dichotomy, between those who it is perceived can be prostituted and those who cannot, dates back to the time of the conquest of Peru by the Spaniards when Andean women, often having been victims of rape by their colonizers, were seen to have been corrupted, therefore becoming legitimate sexual objects. Spanish women in the colony, in contrast, were seen to be pure and "Catholic" and not deemed appropriate for prostitution. The perception of some populations being sexually exploitable, while others being protected from such exploitation, continues today.<sup>18</sup>

The idea that there is a firm and meaningful line of demarcation between 'good' and 'bad' women ('Madonnas' and 'whores') further equips clients with a justification for CSEC. Because they 'agree' to sell their sexuality as a commodity, females in prostitution, women

<sup>15</sup> ILO/IPEC (2007). The demand side of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru. Summary of the results of the investigation. Accessed on 7 February 2013 from: <http://www.ilo.org/ipceinfo/product/searchProduct.do?userType=3&type=normal&selectedLanguages=1200&selectedCountries=220&selectedSortById=4>

<sup>16</sup> Commission on Human Rights. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Juan Miguel Petit. E/CN.4/2006/67. 12 January 2006. Accessed on 5 February 2012 from: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G06/101/70/PDF/G0610170.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>17</sup> Commission on Human Rights. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Juan Miguel Petit. E/CN.4/2006/67. 12 January 2006. Accessed on 5 February 2012 from: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G06/101/70/PDF/G0610170.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>18</sup> ECPAT International, CODENI, IDEIF, REDES, Movimiento el Pozo (2005). Mercancía Sexual: Como hemos creado la demanda para la explotación sexual comercial de niños, niñas y adolescentes en el Perú. Accessed on 5 February 2012 from: [http://white.oit.org.pe/ipcec/documentos/mercancia\\_sexual\\_ecpat.pdf](http://white.oit.org.pe/ipcec/documentos/mercancia_sexual_ecpat.pdf)

or children, are usually considered to have surrendered their right to belong to, or be protected by, the imaginary community of “good, respectable, heterosexuals”. Likewise, the sexual use of a person in prostitution has not traditionally been viewed in the same light as the sexual abuse of an “innocent” child. For most clients, a child’s status as a ‘prostitute’ overrides her/his status as a ‘child’. In this again, “clients” accept and reproduce what is widely socially endorsed.<sup>19</sup>

Another finding of the research is that certain groups in Peru, particularly girls from the jungle regions, are thought to be more sexualised or sexually mature at a younger age and therefore they make more desirable sexual partners. Research shows that child sex exploiters often choose to exploit a child whose racial, ethnic or class identity is “other” than their own. Racism, xenophobia, and classism often allow exploiters to define “others” as “natural” prostitutes, based on socially constructed conceptions of these groups and, again, historical exploitation and marginalisation of such groups that exclude them from social and legal protections afforded to others.

Extensive interviews with commercial sex consumers conducted through ECPAT’s research in Peru also reveal that masculinity is widely associated with sex and with power and control. Younger sexual partners therefore provide a target for expression of such masculinity. Other “clients” reported “feeling younger” when they have sex with young girls. The expression of a preference for younger girls as prostitutes was so widespread among commercial sex consumers interviewed so as to be able to categorise this preference as commonplace. There is indeed a clear distinction made by this group of commercial sex consumers between who they see as children and adolescents. It seems that once a girl

reaches puberty and shows signs of sexual development she becomes identified as a sexual being, available to men and, in fact, serving as a “temptation to their natural desires.” The protection against CSEC afforded to all children under 18 by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child does not seem to be reflected in the consciousness of those adults “consuming” sex from adolescents in Peru.

An ILO/IPEC qualitative study on the demand side of CSEC involving Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru exposed similar findings, corroborating the conclusion that CSEC is an expression of power of men over women, and adults over children. Across all countries involved, masculinity was associated with control and domination whilst femininity was associated with submission and dependency, closely identified with childhood. These characteristics were seen as determined from a biological order and were thus considered “natural” and inherent to men and women. The study highlighted that masculine sexuality was the only one with autonomy, which led to the legitimisation of the constant search for new (and more) sexual experiences on the part of men. The representation that younger people “offered” more sexual satisfaction than “older” people was also dominant, while sexual activity between adults and underage people was often viewed as a pedagogical relationship in which men could ‘transmit knowledge’ to a sexuality that was just developing. From the consumers’ perspective, their sexual desire was felt as an impulsive and uncontrollable need that required immediate satisfaction. Some men did not regard having sex with a person under 18 as an abusive behaviour, rather they viewed adolescents as subjects capable of consenting to paid sex. However, the likelihood of years of imprisonment seemed to have some inhibitory effect on some men. Another finding was that CSEC involves the exercise of economic power. The consumers

<sup>19</sup> O’Connell-Davidson, J. (2001) *The Sex Exploiter*, Paper for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Accessed on 5 February 2012 from: [http://www.csecworldcongress.org/PDF/en/Yokohama/Background\\_reading/Theme\\_papers/Theme%20paper%20The%20Sex%20Exploiter.pdf](http://www.csecworldcongress.org/PDF/en/Yokohama/Background_reading/Theme_papers/Theme%20paper%20The%20Sex%20Exploiter.pdf)

considered themselves benefactors of the adolescents (female/male) because they paid for a service and such payment exempted them from responsibility, legitimising their behaviour.<sup>20</sup>

Existing knowledge on the local demand for sex services in Asia confirms that reasons behind the purchase of sex vary according to the specific cultural and historical context, the prevalent social norms and power dynamics, and other contingent factors, such as the applicable legal and policy framework. In some settings, premarital sex is socially sanctioned and girls' sexual activity may be repressed and controlled through such customs as placing a premium on girls' virginity. A recent ECPAT Cambodia research study found that buyers of sex services from adolescents were often willing to pay an extra cost for virgins due to the nature of social relationships in Cambodia, which do not favour sex before marriage for women and strongly value the woman's virginity. As in other countries of the world, age and beauty also played a role in Cambodian men's choice for a girl. In effect, 78.7% of the respondents in the research study stated that they usually seek "beautiful, fair-skinned, and younger-looking girls."<sup>21</sup> It must also be noted that impunity resulting from weak law enforcement against child sex offenders was identified as another key element facilitating the demand for CSEC in the country. In some countries such as India and China, evidence and studies suggest that the increase in demand for sex services with women and children is the consequence of, among other things, the preference for male

babies and the subsequent paucity of marriageable females. The use of sex-selective abortions has generated a dangerous sex ratio that results in many women and children trafficked for prostitution and marriage. Research on this issue published in 2011 reported interviews with girls abducted in their early teens and forced to have sex with several men in order to initiate them into prostitution.<sup>22</sup>

In Africa, the continent most affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, customers of prostitution may choose to have paid sex with a young girl because this is perceived as safer. A 2011 study by UYDEL, an ECPAT member organisation, emphasised that the increasing demand for younger children in prostitution that the country is experiencing, is due, *inter alia*, to the lower price they charge, as well as to the false belief that having sexual intercourse with children carries less risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. In South Africa and other African countries, prostitution of children may at times be fuelled by the false belief, still common among many men, that having sex with a virgin is a cure for HIV/AIDS (so called "virgin cleansing myth").<sup>23</sup> The same motivations partly explain the phenomenon of cross-generational sex particularly widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to a research study in Zambia, the problem of young girls having sexual relations with older men in exchange for money or other compensation (also known as the "sugar daddy" phenomenon) involves historical factors and is also linked to how men construct their masculinity. Cross-generational sex has indeed existed for centuries in the country, particularly

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<sup>20</sup> ILO/IPEC (2007). The demand side of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru. Summary of the results of the investigation. Accessed on 7 February 2013 from: <http://www.ilo.org/ipceinfo/product/searchProduct.do?userType=3&type=normal&selectedLanguages=1200&selectedCountries=220&selectedSortById=4>

<sup>21</sup> Chan, I. (2010). Addressing local demand for commercial sex with children in Cambodia. Accessed on 5 February 2012 from: [http://www.sithi.org/admin/upload/media/\[2010-08-22\]Addressing/ECPAT\\_3\\_1March10\\_Address%20Local%20Demand%20for%20Commercial%20Sex%20With%20Children%20in%20Cambodia.pdf](http://www.sithi.org/admin/upload/media/[2010-08-22]Addressing/ECPAT_3_1March10_Address%20Local%20Demand%20for%20Commercial%20Sex%20With%20Children%20in%20Cambodia.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Hvistenfahl, M. (2011). Unnatural Selection: Choosing Boys Over Girls, and the Consequences of a World Full of Men.

<sup>23</sup> Gibson, D. "Study: 1.4 million rapes annually in South Africa, world ignores". 3 September 2012. Accessed on 5 February 2013 from: <http://www.examiner.com/article/study-1-4-million-rapes-annually-south-africa-world-ignores>

given the polygamous traditions of many ethnic groups where significant age differences between co-wives and their husband was common. By engaging in paid sex with young girls, the “sugar daddy” conforms to this tradition while at the same time exercising economic power and dominance and expressing his virility by gaining access to multiple sexual partners.<sup>24</sup>

An important finding that has emerged from existing research is the request for paid sex with children and adolescents by particular groups of men, including truck drivers, miners and other men who migrate or are highly mobile in their work.<sup>25, 26</sup>

The role of *military* and police peacekeeping personnel and humanitarian workers in the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in conflict and post-conflict contexts has also been increasingly acknowledged. A 2007 inquiry into the sexual exploitation and abuse of children conducted by Save the Children in Cote D'Ivoire, Haiti and Southern Sudan revealed cases of abuse associated with a sum total of 23 humanitarian, peacekeeping and security organisations.<sup>27</sup> According to O'Connell Davidson,

“personnel who engage in prostitute-use is widely sanctioned by military authorities as one of the few leisure activities open to them, and there is enormous peer pressure to participate in it.”<sup>28</sup> Other authors have highlighted that the limited control that the UN has over individual peacekeepers and the consequent impunity of alleged perpetrators constitutes a major driving force behind this segment of demand.<sup>29</sup>

A final aspect that is emerging from evidence and research is the involvement of clerics and various religious leaders in the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. In Pakistan, for example, several small-scale research studies have shown that Islamic schools, or *madrassas*, are high risk places for children as the prevailing misogyny in teachings, the gender segregation that inhibits contact with women and the lack of segregation of students based on their legal age can all be contributing factors to sexual abuse of children. The research also pointed out that children growing up in this context learn to obey and submit themselves to elders and seniors and therefore have no awareness of their rights.<sup>30</sup> The recent scandal within the Catholic Church has raised important questions

<sup>24</sup> Bajaj, M. (2009). Sugar daddies and the danger of sugar: cross-generational relationships, HIV/AIDS, and secondary schooling in Zambia. Accessed on 7 February 2013 from: [http://www.academia.edu/1588475/Sugar\\_Daddies\\_and\\_the\\_Danger\\_of\\_Sugar--Bajaj](http://www.academia.edu/1588475/Sugar_Daddies_and_the_Danger_of_Sugar--Bajaj)

<sup>25</sup> ECPAT International (2011). Global Monitoring Status of Action against commercial sexual exploitation of children. Pakistan. II edition. Accessed on 7 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>26</sup> Cerqueira-Santos, E. Exploração sexual de crianças e adolescentes: uma análise comparativa entre caminhoneiros clientes e não-clientes do comércio sexual. *Psicol. Reflex. Crit.* [online]. 2008, vol.21, n.3, pp. 446-454. ISSN 0102-7972. Accessed on 7 February 2013 from: [http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0102-79722008000300013&lng=pt&nrm=iso&tlng=pt](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0102-79722008000300013&lng=pt&nrm=iso&tlng=pt)

<sup>27</sup> Save the Children UK (2008). No One To Turn To: The Under-reporting of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Aid workers and Peacekeepers. Accessed on 7 February 2013 from: [http://www.un.org/en/pseataforce/docs/no\\_one\\_to\\_turn\\_under\\_reporting\\_of\\_child\\_sex\\_by\\_aid\\_workers.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/pseataforce/docs/no_one_to_turn_under_reporting_of_child_sex_by_aid_workers.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> O'Connell-Davidson, J. (2001) The Sex Exploiter, Paper for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Accessed on 5 February 2013 from: [http://www.csecworldcongress.org/PDF/en/Yokohama/Background\\_reading/Theme\\_papers/Theme%20paper%20The%20Sex%20Exploiter.pdf](http://www.csecworldcongress.org/PDF/en/Yokohama/Background_reading/Theme_papers/Theme%20paper%20The%20Sex%20Exploiter.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Allais, C. (2011). Sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers: the psychosocial context of behaviour change. Accessed on 7 February 2013 from: [www.ajol.info](http://www.ajol.info)

<sup>30</sup> Moheq, M. “How Child Abuse and Suicide at Taliban Madrassas Are Related”. 10 November 2011. Accessed on 7 February 2013 from: <http://en.rawanonline.com/how-child-abuse-and-suicide-at-taliban-madrassas-are-related/>

as to how to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation by priests. The issues of celibacy and homosexuality within the church have been at the centre of the debate.<sup>31</sup>

## A focus on sexual exploitation of boys: ECPAT research in South Asia and Latin America

As mentioned above, the inclusion of the gender perspective into research studies exploring CSEC has resulted in growing attention devoted to the sexual exploitation of boys and the social and cultural norms that impact this practice. The second edition of the Global Monitoring Report on the status of actions against CSEC published since 2011 by ECPAT has identified the involvement of boys in prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation in all 38 countries examined to date.<sup>32</sup> Although girls are generally more often victimised by CSEC than boys, in some countries, the phenomenon is not as small as commonly perceived and is often associated with the use of the Internet and ICTs.

In many settings, the understanding of sexual exploitation of boys continues to be hindered by a number of recurrent stereotypes. There is a tendency to believe that this practice is limited to more open societies and that those engaging in paid sex with boys are mostly foreigners and men of homosexual orientation. When boys are found to be involved in prostitution or other forms of CSEC, “blaming the victim” is more common as it is perceived that boys have more agency or freedom of choice to become involved in sex work than girls. There is also a stereotyped view of boys as “strong”

individuals who can withstand physical, psychological and social harm, and this in turn contributes to minimising the real impact that commercial sexual exploitation has on them.<sup>33</sup>

Research conducted in recent years by ECPAT and other organisations has highlighted that these misconceptions are again the result of prevailing social norms related to gender construction, masculinity and sexuality. A series of ECPAT studies in South Asia have unanimously concluded that sexual exploitation of boys is more hidden and continues to be under-reported and “socially invisible” due to the stigma attached to same-sex relations (i.e. homophobia). Across the three countries involved, boys were found to not report experiences of sexual exploitation and sexual violence for fear of showing any sign of weakness, or because of confusing feelings about sexual attraction and social sanctions related to homosexual behaviour. In the study in Bangladesh, where 50 boys involved in prostitution were interviewed, 68% of them admitted to having been sexually abused before becoming involved in prostitution; however, none of them reported this abuse. Contrary to a common misconception, the research in South Asia revealed that child sex offenders were primarily men who identified themselves as heterosexual and bi-sexual. The study also found that exploiters were mostly local men and, in cities such as Hyderabad in India, they also included female perpetrators. Motivations behind the purchase of sex services from boys were identified, *inter alia*, in the taboo on premarital sex and in the rigid gender segregation common in these societies which results in the absence of space where men may have access to female sex partners.

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<sup>31</sup> Muldoon, M. “Church abuse scandal not cause by celibacy says study”. 20 May 2011. Accessed on 7 February 2013 from: <http://www.irishcentral.com/news/Church-abuse-scandal-not-cause-by-celibacy-says-study-122308244.html>

<sup>32</sup> The second edition of the Global Monitoring Report on the status of actions against CSEC is available at: [http://www.ecpat.net/EI/index\\_A4A.asp](http://www.ecpat.net/EI/index_A4A.asp)

<sup>33</sup> Altamura, A. Exploring the commercial sexual exploitation of boys. Presentation held during the OSCE/ODIHR Conference on Combating SEC, Vienna, 18-19 October 2007.

In collaboration with local partners, ECPAT has also undertaken research on sexual exploitation of boys in a number of Latin American countries. In Colombia, where the study was based on focus groups discussions with various key informants including victimised boys, a number of factors predisposing boys and male adolescents to commercial sexual exploitation were identified. These encompassed, among others, rejection by the families of their children's homosexuality, social exclusion due to dysfunctional families, absence of a father figure, and sexual abuse in early childhood years, often by a male close to them. Similarly to South Asia, the investigation also highlighted the difficulty for boys to report sexual abuse and exploitation due to cultural aspects linked to male roles and masculinity, discrimination and homophobia in schools.<sup>34</sup> In Guatemala, the research exposed a problem of commercial sexual exploitation of boys in different settings and locations, including in the context of prostitution of women, homosexual and transsexual adults. Besides being motivated by a sexual preference for boys, the demand for paid sex with male children in this country was found to be linked to accessibility and economic convenience. The study also looked at the social perception of CSE of boys, confirming that in a society where machismo is dominant, boys' victimisation goes unnoticed and unaddressed, and even when its occurrence is recognised, there is a common belief that homosexual and transsexual boys engage in paid sex because "they like it".<sup>35</sup> Finally, in Chile the

ECPAT study found that boys were sexually used in traditional and emerging forms of CSE, including through the Internet and new ICTs, by groups of peers, and in connection to drug use and drug trafficking. With regard to child sex offenders, they were found to be both heterosexual women and men who identified themselves as heterosexual and homosexual. Likewise, boys at risk of sexual exploitation were identified as a heterogeneous group of individuals with diverse and emerging sexual identities and orientations. Among homosexual and transsexual boys, the involvement in commercial sexual exploitation was often viewed as a strategy to validate their sexual orientation, thus ignoring the commodification and abuse they were subjected to through this means.<sup>36</sup>

Research conducted by ECPAT and other organisations also suggests that sexual exploitation of boys is facilitated by ineffective legislation. In many countries worldwide, laws do not award protection to boy children, identifying only girls as potential victims. In Pakistan, for example, some of the provisions under the *Prostitution Ordinance* only apply to girls under 16 years, leaving boys unprotected.<sup>37</sup> Another recurring concern is the lack of specialised support services for boys victimised through CSEC. The notions of masculinity and social expectations of boys and men, compounded by the lack of legal protection and sufficient data on the magnitude of the problem, allow assumptions to persist of boys as perpetrators rather than survivors of sexual exploitation,

<sup>34</sup> ECPAT International - Fundación Renacer. Aproximación a la explotación sexual comercial de niños y adolescentes de sexo masculino en Bogotá y Cartagena de Indias. Colombia. 2010. Accessed on 30 January 2013 from: [http://www.ecpat.net/El/Publicaciones/Care\\_Protection/Libro%20ONG%20Raices.pdf](http://www.ecpat.net/El/Publicaciones/Care_Protection/Libro%20ONG%20Raices.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> ONG Raíces – ECPAT International. (2010). Manifestaciones Locales de la Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes en Chile. Dinámicas, Espacios y Género. Accessed on 7 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>36</sup> ECPAT International – Paicabi (2011). Estudio de las Manifestaciones locales de Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niños y Adolescentes, incluyendo la Especificidad de Víctimas Jóvenes Hombres y los Modelos de Atención a Víctimas. Accessed on 7 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>37</sup> ECPAT International (2011). Global Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Pakistan. 2nd Edition. Accessed on 5 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>38</sup> ECPAT International – Paicabi (2011). Estudio de las Manifestaciones locales de Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niños y Adolescentes, incluyendo la Especificidad de Víctimas Jóvenes Hombres y los Modelos de Atención a Víctimas. Accessed on 7 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

affecting available care and treatment services. The ECPAT study on sexual exploitation of boys in Chile found that the social, political and cultural contexts in which interventions are framed may influence access to and quality of assistance for boys, resulting in barriers and social stigmatisation and exclusion.<sup>38</sup>

## The Internet, risky behaviours and online sex offenders

Although conclusive evidence is still lacking, some of the aforementioned research studies suggest that there is often a link between men's consumption of pornography and their purchase of sex services from both women and underage persons. The circulation and use of these materials has seen a dramatic increase in the last two decades mainly as a result of the rapid expansion in media and communication technologies. Accessing mainstream pornography has become easier than in the past and this exposure to violent and sexual materials has influenced the behaviours of both adults and young people. According to some authors, pornography and related sexual media can have a repercussion on sexual violence, sexual attitudes, moral values and sexual activity for children and youth. However, other research has stressed that the harmful effects of violent content are greater for some groups of children, including those with behaviour disorders and young offenders with a history of domestic violence. Whilst not all exposure to pornography is accidental or damaging, concern remains that being exposed to deviant or violent pornographic material may impact the beliefs and attitudes of some young people, and to a lesser extent the

behaviour of a few.<sup>39</sup>

Besides facilitating access and exposure to mainstream pornography, Internet and new ICTs have provided new spaces for the sexual exploitation of children, including for the production and dissemination of child abuse images. A number of investigations conducted in recent years have tried to profile online child sex offenders while at the same time exploring the motivations behind their behaviour. A first conclusion from current knowledge is that on-line child sex perpetrators are largely white, westernised males who come from a variety of socio-demographic backgrounds, and who are more likely to be educated and less likely to have a known offending history. The prevalence of white and westernised perpetrators raises an interesting issue about sexually abusive practices and ethnicity, and whether these offender characteristics result from socio-demographic patterns of Internet use, or whether they reflect differences in ethnicity and pornography or abusive image use.<sup>40</sup> This is an aspect which requires further research. In terms of the gender of offenders, there is some discrepancy among existing investigations, with some reporting no evidence of female on-line sex perpetrators and others revealing a significant yet minority presence of women.<sup>41</sup> Another relevant finding that studies conducted to date have unanimously exposed is that in the case of child pornography-related crimes, most of the offenders are people known to the child victims, such as parents, other relatives and family friends, etc. This suggests that preventive work in this area should necessarily be conducted and targeted to the family context.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Quayle, E. et al (2008). Child pornography and sexual exploitation of children online. This study was commissioned by ECPAT International as a contribution to the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of children and Adolescents. Accessed on 20 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Aiken, M. et al. (2011) Child abuse material and the Internet: Cyberpsychology of online child related sex offending. Accessed on 20 February 2013 from: [www.interpol.int](http://www.interpol.int)

<sup>42</sup> Quayle, E. et al (2008). Child pornography and sexual exploitation of children online. This study was commissioned by ECPAT International as a contribution to the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of children and Adolescents. Accessed on 20 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

With regard to the age of the offenders, a growing concern that evidence and research have raised in recent years is that of young people accessing, producing and possessing child abuse images. A 2004 research study in New Zealand, for example, found that the largest single group of offenders was aged between 15 and 19 years.<sup>43</sup> Whilst it is not possible to generalise, this behaviour appears to be frequently associated with online sexual grooming and “sexting”. A study in the UK on young people possessing child

abuse images found that some of them began using the Internet to explore their sexual orientation. After accessing chatrooms for this purpose, they were contacted by adults who sent them abuse images and communicated with them about the sexual abuse of younger children. Introducing children to different forms of pornography, including illegal material, is part of the grooming process that some abusers use to desensitise the young person to sexualised activities, which may become increasingly abusive.<sup>44</sup>

## Understanding the behaviours of online groomers

A recent study conducted as part of the “European Online Grooming Project”, funded under the European Commission’s Safer Internet Plus Programme, has shed light on the dynamics of sexual offending by online groomers. Based on interviews with convicted online offenders in Belgium, Italy, Norway and the UK, the research identified at least three distinct types of groomers: ‘Distorted Attachment’; ‘Adaptable Offender’; and ‘Hyper-Sexual’.

Distorted Attachment relates to a groomer who believes he is in a romantic and consenting relationship with the young person he is grooming. Unlike what most people think about groomers, this particular offender reveals his identity to the victim and uses no indecent images of children. He spends a great deal of time becoming friendly with his victim before they meet face to face.

An Adaptable Offender uses many identities online, adapting his grooming style to suit his purposes. This offender may or may not use indecent images, but he will view the person he is grooming as being sexually mature. It is not his objective to always meet the young person in real life.<sup>45</sup>

Hyper-Sexual offenders focus on sharing and securing extensive numbers of indecent images of children. This offender will be part of an online network of sexual offenders, but has very little, if no, interest in meeting his victim face to face. According to the research, this type of groomer will likely use various identities or a sexually explicit profile name and photo to make fast contact with a young person.

The study concludes that a vital strategy to prevent online grooming should involve tackling the disinhibition effect of the online environment on groomers and young people, and thereby educating teens about what constitutes appropriate behaviour online.

<sup>43</sup> Mentioned in Quayle, E. et al (2008). Child pornography and sexual exploitation of children online. This study was commissioned by ECPAT International as a contribution to the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of children and Adolescents. Accessed on 20 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Webster, S. et al. (2012). European Online Grooming Project. Final report. Accessed on 20 February 2012 from: <http://www.europeanonlinegroomingproject.com/wp-content/uploads/European-Online-Grooming-Project-Final-Report.pdf>



The so called phenomenon of ‘sexting’ also explains why some child abuse materials are found to be produced, possessed and exchanged by teens. Observed across several countries, this practice has seen an increasing number of young people sending sexually explicit text messages or sexualised photos of themselves, usually via mobile phones, without realising that these images could be distributed broadly or be acquired by adult predators.<sup>46</sup> A youth-led study conducted by ECPAT and local partners in Latin America confirms that “sexting” is one of the several risks faced by children and adolescents in their online interactions. Based on a sample of 1,144 children from 11 to 18 years old, the survey found that the older children interviewed, especially boys, reported engaging in potentially risky online activities more often, including posting sexualised images. This pattern, often associated with watching pornography, was found to be linked to the fact that boys are more commonly seeking approval of their appearance from their peers, without realising that this practice can be dangerous.<sup>47</sup>

Recognising that typologies and underlying motivations for offending behaviour differ, some researchers have tried to analyse the characteristics of online offenders and the reasons behind the different types of offences. Some authors have noted that, while sexual arousal is a primary function for online sex offenders, the Internet functions to help people address some of the more immediate feelings of distress or dissatisfaction in their lives. For those with a sexual interest in children, downloading child pornography and masturbating to such images provides a highly

rewarding or reinforcing context for further emotional avoidance. A number of studies have found that online sexual offending is often associated with child sexual abuse and other childhood difficulties, while other investigations have identified isolation, dominance and depression as characteristics of some sex offenders. A recent review on online child-related sex offending has concluded that “undoubtedly certain factors such as psychiatric disorders, psychological and developmental impairments impact on criminality. Fantasies, cognitive distortions, emotional deficits, sex play, impression management, depression and impulsivity define online offenders and arguably their related use of technology.”<sup>48</sup>

Although researchers have proposed several typologies of Internet-facilitated offenders, there is still little knowledge about the treatment and supervision needs of Internet-related sex offenders, the motivation behind sexual exploitation and, more specifically, sexual exploitation that is non-commercial. Some authors have suggested that typologies of perpetrators include, *inter alia*, individuals who are sexually interested in children, those who are more sexually indiscriminate, those who are curious, and those who opportunistically engage in Internet-facilitated offending (e.g. an adult male who uses the Internet to gain sexual access to adolescents).<sup>49</sup> In light of this diversity, it is crucial that interventions are tailored to the type of offenders, their age and the risk they present. On the other hand, it has been noted that “much of the sexual violence in the lives of children is not regarded as “abusive” by the adults who perpetrate it as a result of patriarchal norms of

<sup>46</sup> ECPAT International (2012). Global Monitoring Status of Action against commercial sexual exploitation of children. Australia. II edition. Accessed on 20 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>47</sup> ECPAT International (2012). Understanding the use of ICTs by children and young people in relation to their risks and vulnerabilities online specific to sexual exploitation - A youth-led study in Latin America. ECPAT member organisations that mobilised the youth in conducting the research included: CHS Alternativo (Perú), ECPAT Guatemala (Guatemala), ECPAT México (México), Gurises Unidos (Uruguay), Instituto REDES (Perú), ONG PAICABI (Chile), Tejiendo Sonrisas (Perú). Accessed on 20 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>48</sup> Aiken, M. et al. (2011). Child abuse material and the Internet: Cyberpsychology of online child related sex offending. Accessed on 20 February 2013 from: [www.interpol.int](http://www.interpol.int)

<sup>49</sup> Mentioned in Quayle, E. et al (2008). Child pornography and sexual exploitation of children online. This study was commissioned by ECPAT International as a contribution to the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of children and Adolescents. Accessed on 20 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

gender and sexuality. As such, a first step in any form of behavioural 'treatment' is to acknowledge the harm of that behaviour, and in the case of child sexual abuse, this necessarily involves a broader effort to challenge harmful norms and set, or reassert, a norm around the unacceptability of such behaviour. This is also true for CSEC in all its manifestations, including online sexual exploitation of children.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

When attempting to understand the demand for CSEC, it is vital to consider the role that gender plays, as it is a critical determining factor for whether someone will use or be subjected to sexual exploitation. CSEC is rooted in patriarchal norms and practices that support codified gender roles which are, in turn, reinforced and reproduced by families, communities and social institutions. Existing knowledge of the demand for sex services confirms that reasons for the commercial sexual exploitation of children vary according to the specific cultural and historical context, the prevalent social norms and power dynamics, and other contingent factors, such as the applicable legal and policy frameworks. In order to conduct a complete analysis of the demand for CSEC, it is therefore, vital to not only identify the perpetrators who exploit children, but also to try and understand the social, cultural and historical constructions that directly or indirectly facilitate and/or encourage this conduct.

Including a gender analysis in the evaluation of the demand for CSEC also allows for further identification of CSEC victims. The misconception that boys are not involved in prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation is the result of prevailing social norms

related to gender construction, masculinity and sexuality. The notion of masculinity and the social expectations of boys and men allow assumptions to persist about boys as perpetrators rather than survivors of sexual exploitation, affecting available care and treatment services.

Much of the time, CSEC is not regarded as abuse or exploitation by the adults who perpetrate it, as a result of patriarchal norms of gender and sexuality. The connection between the construction of normative concepts of masculinity and sexual exploitation and violence in all its forms does not mean that men and boys cannot change attitudes and behaviours related to sexual rights. Initiatives which incorporate a gender dimension by involving deliberate discussions of gender and masculinity are particularly effective. It is therefore imperative that efforts to prevent sexual exploitation of children encourage men and boys (and women and girls) to critically reflect upon, question or change social norms that create and reinforce gender inequality and vulnerability for men and women. It is also not sufficient to engage men in narrow discussions on sexual exploitation and violence, for example by merely informing or "warning" men about legal sanctions. Rather, there is a need for sustained awareness raising efforts aimed at transforming sexuality, manhood and gender relations using a gender transformational approach which should start at an early age.

It is important to engage peer groups, social groups, and entire communities in the questioning, criticism and reconstruction of norms related to masculinity, sexuality and gender relations. Such efforts can range from community-level mobilisation and

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<sup>50</sup> Promundo U.S. (2011). Toward a better future for this generation and the next... A report for the Oak Foundation on male engagement in the protection of children from child sexual abuse. 2011. Accessed on 11 February 2013 from: [http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Regionals\\_update.asp?groupID=6&start=5](http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Regionals_update.asp?groupID=6&start=5)

campaigns to advocacy. For example, it can be particularly effective to engage community leaders or specifically “male” leaders (male religious leaders, men in the command structure in militaries, male celebrities, etc.) in questioning stereotyped views about men, sexual violence and CSEC, as they can be important influences on other men. Women and girls should also be engaged in community-level efforts, as they contribute to and reinforce norms related to masculinity, sexual violence and child sex trafficking.

Additionally, a greater understanding of the factors that inhibit and discourage men and boys (as well as women) from sexual exploitation of children across different contexts and cultures must be developed so that strategies for engaging men and boys in the prevention and protection of children from this contemporary form of slavery can be realised.

# Engaging men and boys in the prevention of CSEC

By Alessia Altamura

## Introduction

While it has become evident that sexual exploitation is a gendered problem, historically, men have remained marginal figures within the discourses of, and debates, on child rights and child protection from this violation. Generally, most of the interventions addressing this issue have revolved on protecting and assisting girls and women or capturing, prosecuting and vilifying the offender. Little attention has been given to the importance of involving men as key allies to prevent such behaviors, and even less to contexts in which men and boys themselves are victims of sexual violence and exploitation. In response to this neglect,<sup>1</sup> in 2011 the Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasized that:

*“Men and boys must be actively encouraged as strategic partners and allies, and along with women and girls, must be provided with opportunities to increase their respect for one another and their understanding of how to stop gender discrimination and its violent manifestations”.*<sup>2</sup>

This paper reports on the increasing engagement of men and boys in initiatives to promote gender equality while also showcasing

examples of programmes to prevent sexual violence and exploitation. Based on existing literature and evidence from around the world and the experience from the ECPAT network, several effective strategies to involve men and boys will be identified and discussed, leading to several important conclusions and recommendations which should be taken into consideration when developing programmes to prevent CSEC.

## How can men and boys be part of the solution?

In 2008, the MenEngage Alliance and Instituto Promundo conducted secondary research for a white paper which studied the connection between the construction of normative concepts of masculinity and sexual exploitation and violence in all its forms. The main recommendations were as follows:

- a) Men and boys can and do change attitudes and behaviors related to sexual rights as a result of well-designed interventions. In this framework, initiatives which incorporate a gender dimension by involving deliberate discussions of gender and masculinity are particularly effective. It is therefore

<sup>1</sup> Ricardo C., Barker, G. Men (2008). Men, Masculinities, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence. Accessed on 30 January 2013 from: <http://www.ecpat.net/WorldCongressIII/PDF/Publications/SexualExploitation-WorkingDraft-July30.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child. General comment No. 13 (2011) The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence. 18 April 2011. Accessed on 30 January 2013 from: [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.GC.13\\_en.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.GC.13_en.pdf)

- imperative that efforts to prevent sexual exploitation of children encourage men and boys (and women and girls) to critically reflect about, question or change social norms that create and reinforce gender inequality and vulnerability for men and women;
- b) It is not sufficient to engage men in narrow discussions on sexual exploitation and violence, for example by merely informing or “warning” men about legal sanctions. Rather, there is a need for sustained awareness raising efforts aimed at transforming sexuality, manhood and gender relations. These programmes should target male and female adolescents in particular;
  - c) Since boys (and girls) are increasingly exposed to pornography and groomed for online and offline sexual exploitation and given that some engage in paid sex and risky behaviours such as sexting, interventions using a gender transformational approach should start at an early age;
  - d) It may be more effective to promote men’s empathy toward women and girls, to build on their potential to treat women with respect and to question hostile attitudes toward women than to focus on sexual violence per se or on telling men what not to do or focusing on guilt and shame. Appealing to a sense of empathy and to men’s potential to treat women as equals and with respect seem to be more effective strategies than simply telling men not to use sexual aggression or sexual violence;
  - e) It is necessary that men and boys have the opportunity to build the communication and negotiation skills necessary to change behaviors. Research and program findings have affirmed the need to increase boys and men’s ability to negotiate with partners, question peer groups and seek services and help;
  - f) It is important to engage peer groups, social groups, and entire communities in the questioning, criticism and reconstruction of norms related to masculinity, sexuality and gender relations. Such efforts can range from community-level mobilization and campaigns to advocacy. For example, it can be particularly effective to engage community leaders or specifically “male” leaders (male religious leaders, men in the command structure in militaries, male celebrities, etc.) in questioning stereotyped views about men, sexual violence and CSEC, as they can be important influences on other men;
  - g) Women and girls should also be engaged in community-level efforts, as they contribute to and reinforce norms related to masculinity, sexual violence and child sex trafficking. All sensitization and education efforts should involve beneficiaries and other stakeholders in the development and evaluation phases in order to ensure that messages and strategies reflect local needs and contexts.<sup>3</sup>

A 2011 report by Promundo U.S. looking at male engagement in the protection of children from sexual abuse, emphasizes that efforts in this area should involve addressing the many ways in which such abuse is structured within the lives of children. According to the

<sup>3</sup> Ricardo C., Barker, G. Men (2008). Men, Masculinities, Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence. Accessed on 30 January 2013 from: <http://www.ecpat.net/WorldCongressIII/PDF/Publications/SexualExploitation-WorkingDraft-July30.pdf>

authors, interventions with men and boys should be developed along multiple axes. This comprehensive and holistic approach should include actions to create political pressure for social change that impact the root causes of sexual abuse of children. Tackling the underlying factors of this violation must also involve changing the social norms of gender and sexuality that enable such abuse, and engaging men in positive ways in children's lives, in part through supporting their caregiving to and parenting of children. Furthermore, addressing the root causes requires a focus on structural prevention; that is, interventions directed toward working with men to change the conditions that allow child sexual abuse to continue. In addition to these preventive efforts, it is also essential to work with men to strengthen systems for child protection.<sup>4</sup> Suggesting that the meaningful involvement of men and boys does not involve only addressing men as perpetrators of child sexual abuse, the report provides a number of insightful suggestions and recommendations on how to increase male engagement in child protection. Although not focused on CSEC, this resource constitutes an inspiring reference document for guiding and enhancing work with men and boys on preventing this specific violation.

## Examples from the ECPAT network

Since its inception, ECPAT has constantly focused on the various contributing factors to CSEC, including demand, especially by targeting potential situational child sex offenders and in particular tourists and travellers. However, it is only in recent years that a more comprehensive approach to the cultural and social factors that lead to social tolerance towards CSEC has been introduced. Working with men and boys on social constructs of masculinity and concentrating on elements that can lead them to CSEC

has increasingly become a key strategy of the organisation. Consequently programmes and projects engaging men and boys as agents of positive social change for increased prevention and protection of children have begun to take shape across different countries and regions.

Recognising that partnerships are essential in this area (especially for an organisation that has just started to incorporate this component into its work), ECPAT has spearheaded efforts to foster strategic collaborations with other stakeholders dedicated to promote equitable power relations through gender transformative work, including UN agencies and civil society actors. An example is the cooperation with the NGO Promundo and the White Ribbon Campaign in the organisation of a thematic meeting for the World Congress III. The *Consultation on Engaging Men and Boys in Ending Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents* took place in Mexico City on 4-5 August 2008, involving 55 stakeholders from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. Using the above mentioned 'White Paper' as a basis for discussion, participants in this gathering had an opportunity to examine elements that shape the social construction of men and boys' perceptions and behaviours in relation to sexuality, distilling aspects that contribute to enabling sexual exploitation and sexual violence against children and women. The consultation produced a number of proposals and recommendations for states and other actors to further pursue this issue in different regions of the world. In addition, ECPAT International has participated in the preparatory phase of the "Partners for Prevention: Working with Boys and Men to Prevent Gender-based Violence" programme, a UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNV regional initiative for Asia and the Pacific that works to reduce violence against women and girls through, inter alia, a public awareness campaign mobilising boys and men. As a

<sup>4</sup> Promundo U.S. (2011). *Toward a better future for this generation and the next... A report for the Oak Foundation on male engagement in the protection of children from child sexual abuse*. 2011.

Steering Committee Member for this programme, in 2007 ECPAT attended planning meetings during which inputs were provided for the future programme and action plan.<sup>5</sup>

ECPAT has adopted diverse and combined strategies to engage men and boys in the prevention of CSEC. Efforts promoted in this area have first of all focused on improving understanding of the socialization of boys and men across different contexts to identify the unique factors that may induce adults to engage in the sexual exploitation of children. Most of the initiatives by the organisation were designed following targeted research and were therefore tailored to the specific environment in which they were implemented. Although programmes engaging men and boys or targeting them for CSEC prevention remain generally isolated and limited within ECPAT, the examples from the network outlined below show that some promising work has been initiated, particularly in Latin America and with the meaningful participation of children and youth. It is noteworthy that these initiatives seem to integrate and corroborate the validity of the recommendations contained in the aforementioned White Paper. At the same time, they demonstrate that most of the work with men and boys has involved addressing the demand and changing the social norms in which CSEC is rooted. As suggested by the 2011 report by Promundo U.S., it is essential that this component be integrated into a broader and more comprehensive approach which recognises the multiple roles that men and boys (and women and girls) can play in addressing the different underlying causes of CSEC.

### a) Awareness raising campaigns addressing the demand and gender stereotypes

One of the main strategies adopted by ECPAT to reduce the demand for sex with children is through awareness raising campaigns targeting child sex offenders. Whilst many of these initiatives have revolved solely around placing responsibility on the perpetrators, some have focused on challenging the mainstream constructions of masculinities and the socially endorsed views of gender that sustain the perpetuation of CSEC. An example is the “No hay excusas” campaign implemented in 2006-2007 by the NGO Raices, a member organisation of ECPAT in Chile. The activity was developed as part of the “Tejiendo Redes Project”, coordinated by ILO/IPEC and carried out in Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru. The campaign, the first of its kind in Chile, was intended to question the justifications that support commercial sex with teenagers and that are often used to place responsibility on the child rather than on child sex offenders (e.g. “this girl is no longer a child”, “I don’t exploit him/her because I pay”, “nobody is forcing them to engage in paid sex”, etc.). An evaluation of this practice has highlighted that the campaign’s success was determined not only by the innovative theme selected but also by the strategic alliances built in this framework, including with the private sector. The use of different means (TV, radio and Internet) and tools (DVDs, stickers, flyers, banner, spots, etc.) to disseminate the campaign’s message were found to be another asset of this model which ensured its

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Regionals\\_update.asp?groupID=6&start=5](http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Regionals_update.asp?groupID=6&start=5)

sustainability and replicability. The initiative shows that to change social attitudes towards CSEC it is crucial to generate reflection about prejudices and stereotypes around this violation. It also confirms that cross-sectoral cooperation and partnership with the media are essential to achieve greater awareness and impact.<sup>6</sup>

#### b) Awareness raising campaigns targeting the general public and specific segments of the demand

An effective approach to demand reduction requires that awareness-raising measures on CSEC involves not only public education for social change but also tailored sensitization for specific groups of men who are known to engage in paid sex with children and adolescents (such as truck drivers, mine workers, military personnel, etc.). From this starting premise, in 2004 ECPAT Belgium launched the “Stopchildprostitution.be” campaign targeting all Belgians travelling abroad: tourists, businessmen, the army on a foreign mission, embassy personnel, development-aid workers and bus and truck drivers. The campaign - which is still active today - is the result of a wide partnership which involved: other NGOs (such as Child Focus and Plan Belgium); the Belgian National Railway Company, FEBETRA - the Federation of Belgian Carriers, and the Federation of the Tourism Industry (FTI) from the private sector; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence from the government side; and finally the Trafficking in Human Beings Department of the Federal Police. The campaign saw the direct engagement of all the participating agencies. Each partner distributed the leaflets and posters among its own ranks. As a result, the materials were placed in train stations, international train lines such as the Thalys and the Eurostar, national and regional airports, Belgian embassies, police offices, tour operators and army

barracks. The campaign was presented at many tourism fairs and appeared in various magazines. A trilingual website and permanent phone number allow people to join the campaign and report any abuse (see <http://www.stopchildprostitution.be/>). The reaction to the campaign was overwhelming. A brief inquiry showed that 75% of the train passengers had noticed the posters in their station. Besides generating more awareness of CSEC among the general public and specific segments of the demand, the campaign has also resulted in an increase in the number of reports. When in 2010 the commitment of all partners to implementing the campaign was renewed, it was noted that the cooperation between NGOs and the private sector, with the active support of the government, is a unique example in Europe.<sup>7</sup>

#### c) Promoting positive role models for young men and boys

Celebrities and male leaders in the political, economic and cultural domains have critical roles to play in promoting a vision of childhood free from sexual exploitation, and in advocating for the social changes that are needed to make this vision a reality. Men can also be positive role models for young men and boys, based on healthy models of masculinity. The “Man to Man” campaign being implemented by Beyond Borders/ECPAT Canada is an example of how this strategy can be effectively utilised. Launched in 2009, the campaign features several high-profile Canadian men taking a stand against CSEC. The initiative intends to stimulate public discussion on the issue of demand and to make the general population aware that this factor is at the root of CSEC. It also targets situational offenders seeking help while also aspiring to see more men involved in combating this violation.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> ILO/IPEC (2007). Buenas Prácticas y Lecciones Aprendidas. Tejiendo Redes contra la Explotación de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes - Chile, Colombia, Paraguay y Perú. Accessed on 13 February 2013 from: [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)

<sup>7</sup> “Steven Vanackere launches ‘Stop Child Prostitution’ campaign”. 3 June 2010. Accessed on 13 February 2013 from: [http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/Newsroom/news/press\\_releases/foreign\\_affairs/2010/06/ni\\_030610\\_vanackere\\_stpo\\_child\\_prostitution\\_campaign.jsp](http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/Newsroom/news/press_releases/foreign_affairs/2010/06/ni_030610_vanackere_stpo_child_prostitution_campaign.jsp)

<sup>8</sup> “Man to man campaign”. Accessed on 13 February 2013 from: <http://www.ungift.org/knowledgehub/en/stories/sept2011/man-to-man.html>



While Phase I of the campaign saw male celebrities speaking out on the Beyond Borders website through a series of head shots and written statements, during Phase II three hard-hitting public service announcements, again involving famous Canadian men, were aired on Canadian television stations.<sup>9</sup> In addition to featuring Canadian stars, the campaign web page ([www.endthedemand.ca](http://www.endthedemand.ca)) includes a number of myths that offenders use to justify the exploitation. For example, that viewing child sexual abuse images is a victimless act. A corresponding fact is displayed along with each myth. There is also a section about seeking help for those who have carried out sexual offences against children or have thoughts about it.<sup>10</sup>

Through a partnership with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, during Phase III the campaign was advertised in various markets across Canada. Besides being highlighted in radio advertisements, it appeared in ads in subway stations, on buses, in airports and in men's washrooms located in clubs and bars.<sup>11</sup> Having realised that men find it hard to discuss the issue of child sexual exploitation, in an effort to ease the discussion Beyond Borders also developed a series of comic strips illustrated by a Winnipeg artist. The strips depict scenarios where there may be a risk of child sexual exploitation, asking men what, if anything, they would do if they found themselves in this situation.<sup>12</sup> The results achieved to date by the Man to Man campaign are positive and promising. Since

the early stages, more men have become willing to speak out. The engagement of well-known Canadian men has encouraged even better known celebrities to come on board. Beyond Borders has also seen growing traffic to its English and French campaign websites as well as an increase in the number of individuals, many of whom are males, who contacted the organisation to volunteer.<sup>13</sup> Finally, the campaign has been particularly successful in harnessing the media to draw attention to an apparent 'social tolerance' towards CSEC.

#### d) Supporting young men in structured reflection on norms

"Young men are an important target group for male engagement strategies on child rights and child protection. Experience from gender equality work with men suggests that adolescence presents a significant opportunity for this work, given that this is a time when identities and attitudes about gender roles and relationships are being formed."<sup>14</sup> While different strategies can be used for reaching out to young men, "group educational activities continue to be one of the most common program approaches with boys, and are, by process and qualitative accounts, useful in promoting critical reflections about the harms of current gender norms and how to challenge them. Evidence [...] confirms that in reasonably well-

<sup>9</sup> "Child sexual exploitation campaign uses celebrities to target men". 26 October 2010. Accessed on 13 February 2013 from: <http://www.newswire.ca/en/story/651799/child-sexual-exploitation-campaign-uses-celebrities-to-target-men>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Beyond Borders/ECPAT Canada Newsletter. Issue 21. Fall 2012. Accessed on 13 February 2013 from: [http://www.beyondborders.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/BBnewsletter\\_fall2012ENGLISHF.pdf](http://www.beyondborders.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/BBnewsletter_fall2012ENGLISHF.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Beyond Borders/ECPAT Canada. "Not Your Child Not Mine Not Anyone's" 2011 President's Progress Report to the Board Submitted at the Annual General Meeting, February 9, 2012 Winnipeg, Manitoba. Accessed on 13 February 2013 from: <http://www.beyondborders.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/Presidents-Report-2011-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Promundo U.S. (2011). Toward a better future for this generation and the next... A report for the Oak Foundation on male engagement in the protection of children from child sexual abuse. 2011. Accessed on 11 February 2013 from: [http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Regionals\\_update.asp?groupID=6&start=5](http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Regionals_update.asp?groupID=6&start=5)

designed studies, such activities can lead to a significant changes in attitudes. [...] Several important lessons have been learned from this work”, the first being the importance of “undertaking extensive baseline work to establish the current situation, priorities for target groups, and to inform the materials and format of the program.”<sup>15</sup>

This is exactly the rationale that justifies ECPAT International’s programme in Peru to build a new masculinity for a community free of sexual violence and exploitation. After conducting research on the demand for sex with children in Peru (see section 1 above), 2007 ECPAT International and the local organizations IDEIF, REDES and CODENI implemented a project that facilitated boy children and male youth to examine, through age sensitive and appropriate methods, the construction of gender as it manifests itself in their environments in order to identify and promote changes in behaviour that infringe or violate the rights of other children, particularly sexually harmful behaviour. The project built on the research findings, which indicated that entrenched conceptions related to gender, youth and sexuality play a crucial part in fostering sexually problematic behaviors that can be harmful to children. Involving high-school student boys from all-boys schools, the initiative consisted of forums with teachers and parents and three-day workshops with the adolescent boys. In the workshops, the boys reflected on their sexual attitudes and practices through educational materials and activities such as role playing. The aim was to promote awareness of the harms and consequences of CSEC, men’s roles in perpetuating sexual exploitation and their potential for being catalysts for change. Boys were encouraged to replicate the workshops and they have now formed a strong youth network of young leaders that is still working to end sexual exploitation in Peru. The workshops were specifically tailored to

the interests and learning specificities of 14 to 16 year old boys. Therefore, they included several dynamic activities and were more participatory than experiential. An important lesson from this activity is that it is important to have a man leading the workshops, since it helps the boys feel more at ease and open up to discuss their perceptions and experiences. According to ECPAT evaluations, 40% of the students have achieved a positive behavioral change; 70% are able to share efficiently what they have learned regarding social norms, sexuality and sexual exploitation; and 90% have discussed the issue with their families.

#### e) Formal and non-formal education on gender norms and CSEC for male and female teenagers

As schools are one of the main loci where education and prevention can reach children at an early stage, it is especially important that specific information on gender norms and their harmful impact on CSEC is systematically delivered to male and female children and adolescents by teachers who have received adequate training on the issue. Recognising the relevance of this strategy, ECPAT International has worked with groups in Uruguay and Peru to design and pilot educational materials for young people to facilitate their critical analysis of concepts related to gender, sexuality and age relations, using a rights based framework. In Uruguay, ECPAT International, in collaboration with the NGO Gurises Unidos, has developed a training manual for high-school teachers to help them address a variety of issues (such as gender, violence and CSEC, youth participation and promoting children’s rights) with their students. The training modules include child-friendly information on these topics, activities for the classroom, videos and discussion guides.<sup>16</sup> Work around gender and sexuality in Uruguay has also

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> ECPAT International- Gurises Unidos (2011). Género, Sexualidad, Violencia y Prevención de la Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes. MANUAL Y GUÍA DE ACTIVIDADES PARA EDUCADORES DE NIVEL SECUNDARIO. Accessed on 18 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

been facilitated by the active involvement of a youth group called 'Crecer Seguro' (Growing up Safely) which was created in 2004 after attending a course on 'Sexuality and Gender' organised by Gurises Unidos. The group promotes sexual and reproductive rights, as well as the prevention of CSEC. Besides challenging sexist, male-oriented and adult-centered stereotypes that contribute to existing taboos as well as misconceptions related to gender-specific roles, aesthetics, beauty, and personal sexual preferences, the group tries to ensure that sexuality issues are discussed at the private and institutional levels. To achieve these objectives, 'Crecer Seguro' works in partnership with other actors, engages in child and youth oriented recreational activities (such as games that are carried out at different social events and at cultural public events), and conducts outreach through educational workshops in schools for youth between the ages of 9 and 15.<sup>17</sup> The group has also contributed to developing the aforementioned training manual for teachers, particularly of the videos and the activities for the classroom.

In Peru, ECPAT partner organisations (CHS and Redes) engaged 40 schools from Huancayo, Lima, Iquitos and Cusco in workshops to sensitise male and female teenagers on how gender and sexuality concepts can either facilitate CSEC or have an impact on the prevention and protection of young people. A variety of training and audiovisual materials were developed by ECPAT groups and piloted in September and October 2010 with 400 teachers and 400 student leaders in the provinces of Junin, Cuzco and Loreto. The final awareness raising materials were also presented to local authorities such as the network of Ombudsmen and the Local Education Units of each municipality. As a result, the trainings and materials were found to be very useful and the Local Education Units agreed to include these to sensitize young people within

secondary schools in Lima, Huancayo, and Satipo from 2011 onwards. The teachers were then trained to facilitate these and they were encouraged and supported to replicate their training with other students and youth peers through micro projects supported by ECPAT International.

Successful educational activities were also implemented in other regions of the world. For example, in Indonesia, the Center for Reproductive Health and Gender Information (PIKIR), a special service unit of the Center for Study and Child Protection (PKPA) which is a member of ECPAT, conducted trainings on peer education, counseling and management. These trainings addressed several topics, including reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, drugs abuse, youth sexuality and relationships, self-development and youth gender perspectives. Through different forms of media that were specifically designed for youth, participants acquired useful and critical knowledge and were empowered to responsibly protect themselves. Peer educators receiving this training played an effective and important role in delivering information about sexuality and gender roles to other young people in these situations. For example, they were able to organize focus group discussions involving school students, focusing, *inter alia*, on youth sexual development and vulnerability to CSEC.<sup>18</sup>

Along with formal awareness raising programmes on gender and CSEC in schools, ECPAT groups have also promoted innovative and promising non-formal educational practices. An example is the Interactive Gender Theatre, which was developed in 2002 as a prevention and advocacy measure by children and youth from the International School of Equal Opportunities (ISEO), one of ECPAT member organisations in Ukraine. The main goal of this initiative was to promote gender equality through new and

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<sup>17</sup> ECPAT International and young people from the ECPAT network (2008). Youth Journal. Accessed on 18 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

effective ways to spread information among young people. The programme intended to educate children and young people about a number of issues affecting their lives, such as children's rights, harmonious and equitable gender relations, the consequences of early sexual activity, CSEC and child trafficking. The theatre's symbolic interactive performances were extremely successful and many children and youth were made aware through this activity, including the many participants performing the plays. As a result, children and youth began to take an interest in combating CSEC and the ISEO Interactive Gender Theatre expanded its branches to other regions in Ukraine. More than 200 children and youth are now involved and twice a year ISEO conducts meetings for all of the Gender Interactive Theatre participants to create a forum for exchange.<sup>19</sup>

#### e) Supporting child protection work with marginalized youth

"Child protection systems face particular challenges in protecting the rights and meeting the needs of young people within socially and economically marginalized communities. [...] Issues of child sexual abuse may be especially hard to talk about openly because of the shame that attaches to the family and the whole community as a result of disclosing the abuse."<sup>20</sup> This is particularly true in the case of boys and girls victimized through commercial sexual exploitation.

In an effort to address these challenges and provide adequate support to a group of children who are particularly discriminated against, ECPAT Brazil implemented a programme targeting young and adolescent transsexuals. The project builds on the findings of a 2008 study which identified a strong link between CSEC and

transsexuality in Fortaleza. Many participants in the investigation described the discrimination they faced and their survival and coping strategies. The study found that many of them were rejected by their families and had low levels of education due to the humiliation they faced in schools. It also revealed that many employers did not accept transsexuals as employees, with the result that engaging in paid sex was the only arena where these young people and adolescents could experiment with their sexuality without facing discrimination. Against this backdrop, ECPAT Brazil initiated a programme to enable victims of CSEC to transform their lives. Involving individuals aged between 16 and 25 years from the most impoverished outskirts of the city, the programme adopted multiple strategies. For example, through the building of interpersonal relationships with adolescent and young transsexuals by social educators, recognizing and respecting the identity assumed by the victim, providing better support services, raising awareness and sensitizing the public about the issue, and influencing the public policies and programmes. A key methodological approach was the involvement of young people as social educators. The whole process from identification of the potential victims through outreach work until social reintegration through the creation of opportunities for financial independence, was all led by these young educators. In the framework of the project, adolescent and young transsexuals were provided with opportunities for "peer counseling" to discuss a variety of issues such as family, sexuality, gender and violence. They were also offered life skills training, along with referrals to healthcare providers and opportunities for social interaction and recreation. To support adolescents in re-building their lives and achieving autonomy, the project worked with educational and professional institutions to provide them with professional and vocational courses (e.g. cook, fashion designer, hairdresser, etc.). Thanks to this programme, in 2010 almost 40% of those involved

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Promundo U.S. (2011). Toward a better future for this generation and the next... A report for the Oak Foundation on male engagement in the protection of children from child sexual abuse. 2011. Accessed on 11 February 2013 from: [http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Regionals\\_update.asp?groupID=66&start=5](http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Regionals_update.asp?groupID=66&start=5)

in this initiative ended up leaving sexual exploitation within the year. While the reason for this vary, most beneficiaries cited the opportunity to generate an income as the most important factor that permitted them to leave the cycle of sexual exploitation.<sup>21</sup>

#### f) Involving the most affected and nurturing their leadership

The aforementioned 2011 report by Promundo on engaging men and boys against child sexual abuse acknowledges the failure of the child protection field to support or even recognize the importance of children's agency, and calls for greater attention to be given to strengthening child participation initiatives, in line with Art. 13 of the CRC. The report also highlights the need to give more attention to building the capacity of children and young people to take leadership in the public debates and policy forums on child sexual abuse and its prevention while at the same time recognizing the role they can play in monitoring the implementation of policies that affect their lives.<sup>22</sup>

As projects mentioned at points d) and e) above clearly illustrate, child and youth participation (CYP) is a key component and a priority within ECPAT's work. Besides being incorporated in programming and other activities, CYP has been institutionalised and integrated in the organisation's governance through the creation of the ECPAT International Child and Youth Advisory Committee. One of the most powerful examples of successful and meaningful involvement of children and adolescents in the fight against CSEC promoted by ECPAT is the Youth Partnership Programme ("YPP"). Built on an earlier successful pilot initiative in South Asia, the programme

involves 11 countries in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe/CIS, and Latin America. The ECPAT YPP works to ensure that all children can enjoy the right to meaningfully participate, particularly in social change and work against CSEC. In doing this, the YPP focuses on reaching out to the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups of children and youth, such as survivors of CSEC and those most at-risk. Through a combination of programme components ranging from sensitisation at community level to participation in the rehabilitation of CSEC survivors, the YPP has helped to empower children and youth in their fight against CSEC. A 2012 independent external evaluation concluded that, through the YPP, hundreds of children and youth directly and thousands indirectly, have been offered opportunities to learn about their rights under the CRC and about CSEC. Furthermore, they have been provided with the tools and situations to raise awareness about abuses and to lead advocacy work with duty bearers at local, national, regional, and international levels. Below are some of the numerous examples of how the YPP has creatively contributed to challenging and changing social norms and beliefs around gender, sexuality and other issues in which CSEC is rooted, and of how the most affected children and young people can become leaders of social change.

#### 1) COMMUNITY DIALOGUES AND MASS MEDIA WORK

The YPP has been particularly effective in promoting community dialogues on sexuality, gender, CSEC and related issues. This type of activity has seen the involvement, inter alia, of different groups of men, including fathers, young boys, teachers, and influential men such as community and religious leaders. A good example in this

<sup>21</sup> ECPAT International and young people (2012). Youth Journal. Youth Partnership Programme. Empowering child survivors and at-risk youth against commercial sexual exploitation. Accessed on 18 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>22</sup> Promundo U.S. (2011). Toward a better future for this generation and the next... A report for the Oak Foundation on male engagement in the protection of children from child sexual abuse. 2011. Accessed on 11 February 2013 from: [http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Regionals\\_update.asp?groupID=6&start=5](http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Regionals_update.asp?groupID=6&start=5)

area is provided by the work of the YPP team in the Gambia where five communities were sensitized around CSEC and its linkages to HIV/AIDS. In order to garner broad support and attention, the team held meetings with members of the Parent Teacher Associations as well as with village heads. As a result of this well-designed preparatory phase, village leaders and council elders attended the programme and many of them also spoke during the sensitization activities organised in this framework. Innovative approaches were used throughout the implementation of the programme. One of the sessions involved showing a film on CSEC and HIV/AIDS and conducting a quiz with the audience on the issues that were raised. Another saw students performing sketches on the same topic. Thanks to this campaign, many people in the communities who had denied the existence of HIV/AIDS changed their minds. Furthermore, many myths and misconceptions around HIV/AIDS and how they may facilitate the demand for CSEC were discussed and addressed for the first time (e.g. “having sex with a child will cure AIDS”, “sex with a child makes you stronger and younger”, etc.).<sup>23</sup>

In an effort to have greater impact and wider reach, community dialogues have also been linked to mass-media work. In the Gambia, for example, the YPP team launched a Radio Programme where they fostered discussions on CSEC, HIV/AIDS, gender and sexuality norms and practices through local radio channels, reaching out to a very wide local audience. Due to these broadcasts in over 30 local provinces, YPP became a household name and was able to raise awareness among a large volume of community based listeners. These radio programmes had a call in provision which allowed the audience to phone in to ask questions and share their feedback. Many of the callers thanked the youth for the information and for raising sensitive issues and provided their support. However, there

were also others who voiced concern that the programme raised false issues as CSEC does not exist within their communities, for promoted sensitive issues which are against their culture and tradition. YPP youth motivators commented that some of the caller changed their views after talking to them but some were firm in their beliefs and the radio programme was not able to influence them in a positive way. The motivators recommended the development of more diverse strategies for changing community attitudes and beliefs as a follow-up.

## 2) CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

One of the main assets of the YPP is the use of creative, innovative and child-friendly methods to promote participation of children and young people in a safe and empowering manner, that does not add to their further victimisation. Activities such as theatre, games, art, etc. have been instrumental in giving voice to children’s views while at the same time enabling an explicit discourse that recognises and address CSEC, sexuality, gender roles and other related issues. In Mexico, for example, this has been done through a board game to raise awareness on these concepts. Rather than just imparting training sessions, Mexican youth developed an educational and interactive tool which gave them the opportunity to engage in dialogue and discuss individual responses as well as to examine various perspectives and beliefs held by themselves and their peers related to issues concerning young people. Following rules similar to Monopoly, the participants in the game were required to travel through different stops which encouraged them to discuss topics such as relationships, family, gender, masculinity, work,

<sup>23</sup> ECPAT International and young people (2012). Youth Journal. Youth Partnership Programme. Empowering child survivors and at-risk youth against commercial sexual exploitation. Accessed on 18 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

studies, drugs, HIV/AIDS and CSEC. The YPP youth have been trained on using this tool to facilitate the discussions effectively and with an objective view focused on the rights of the children. All these materials were used, displayed and shared in 10 marginal communities in Mexico City and 25 rural communities in Oaxaca State. The feedback on the Board game has been tremendous as this is a highly popular medium to engage the young people and also to address critical and sensitive issues affecting young people. This has also allowed them to pose questions, agree or disagree with the responses and have a healthy debate on differing points of view and how it affects their attitudes and behaviors concerning young people, CSEC, relationships, etc.

### 3) YOUTH-LED ADVOCACY FOR POLICY AND LEGAL CHANGES

While the majority of YPP work is focused around prevention and information sharing activities, many young people participating in this programme were also able to engage in lobbying and advocacy. An inspiring experience in this regard is the youth-led advocacy in Ukraine for anti-CSEC legislation changes. Following research by UNICEF and La Strada Ukraine, The ECPAT member group in the country, which identified gaps in Ukrainian legislation against CSEC, children and young people advocated for legal reform by collecting petitions as part of the ECPAT-The Body Shop "Stop sex trafficking of children and young people campaign". Almost 60,000 signatures were collected, half of which came directly from children. The petition called on the Ukrainian government to harmonise child prostitution laws (to note that adults who purchase sex with minors

aged 16 to 18 are not punished under current legislation while such minors are held criminally liable for engaging in prostitution), as well as to create appropriate support services for CSEC survivors. The petition was passed to the Parliament in October 2011 and two months later the MP who accepted it, presented a comprehensive draft law against child prostitution. Regrettably, although the YPP youth in Ukraine contributed to move the debate on CSEC legislation further in the public and political domain, the required legal changes have yet to be enacted.

#### g) Working with men as 'system gate keepers'

"Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of work within child protection systems is still done by women, and remains feminized, men play key gatekeeper roles, especially in relation to the criminal justice system. Gender-based work with (mostly male) police officers and magistrates on their roles in and attitudes toward child sexual abuse is a neglected area of capacity building with child protection systems."<sup>24</sup> Evidence from initiatives to improve the response of the criminal justice system to child sexual abuse and exploitation is limited. However, a review of efforts to address child trafficking for sexual purposes conducted in more than 40 countries by ECPAT International exposed a continuous and alarming lack of specialised training on child-sensitive approaches and CSEC crimes for law enforcers.<sup>25</sup> Bearing in mind the existence of this gap, ECPAT groups have devoted consistent efforts to building the capacities of police officers and judges in combating the different manifestations of CSEC. In addition to a focus on child rights and survivors needs, this work has placed emphasis on the gender dimensions of CSEC in

<sup>24</sup> Promundo U.S. (2011). Toward a better future for this generation and the next... A report for the Oak Foundation on male engagement in the protection of children from child sexual abuse. 2011. Accessed on 11 February 2013 from: [http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Regionals\\_update.asp?groupID=6&start=5](http://www.ecpat.net/ei/Regionals_update.asp?groupID=6&start=5)

<sup>25</sup> ECPAT International (2009). Monitoring State Progress to Protect Children & Young People from Trafficking for Sexual Purposes. Accessed on 19 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

order to improve the responses to both female and male survivors. Nearly all training manuals and training sessions that ECPAT International and ECPAT groups have developed in this area include a reflection on how gender issues impact on CSEC and related law enforcement interventions. For example, as part of the “Training on Rights-Based Investigative Techniques” that ECPAT Philippines has delivered to officers of Boracay Special Tourist Police in 2009 to enhance their skills and knowledge on investigating cases of CSEC, a specific learning module was dedicated to discussing myths and gender stereotyping. The multi-disciplinary training guide on child trafficking for sexual purposes developed by 16 ECPAT European groups in the framework of a project funded by the EU, recognises that one of the basic principles in the care and protection of survivors should be gender sensitivity. This means, *inter alia*, paying attention to the gender of the investigator as not all children feel comfortable in disclosing information to male police officers, thus suggesting that interviews with children should ideally be carried out through a team approach involving both a woman and a man.<sup>26</sup> The “Basic manual for police intervention with children and adolescents victims or at-risk of CSEC” designed by Paniamor and ECPAT International in Costa Rica stresses the role that a patriarchal culture and gender constructions around women and male and female children play in supporting local demand for paid sex with children. The manual also includes a module about stereotypes that are often widespread among police officers. According to this resource material, negative attitudes towards CSEC survivors which should be questioned and changed include, the idea that: a) female teens involved in prostitution should be blamed because they are not “good girls”; b) police officers have a right to obtain sexual favours from children and adolescents in prostitution; and c) a “client” of an underage person involved in

paid sex cannot be prosecuted.<sup>27</sup> Whilst an evaluation of these practices has not been conducted, feedback from participants in the training suggests that such capacity building activities have contributed to generating an improvement in attitudes towards child survivors of sexual exploitation.

#### h) Preventing sexting and other online risks through a gender transformational approach

Existing research studies on risks faced by children and youth in the virtual realm concur that education and sensitisation efforts are an essential component of preventative work in this area. This is particularly required given the limited knowledge and understanding of online threats reported across different regions of the world. For example, a study by ECPAT International to understand the vulnerabilities of children and young people who uses ICTs, in relation to CSEC, conducted in 5 countries of West and East Africa concluded that the level of awareness on online risks amongst children, their parents and teachers is still very low and needs to be addressed with high priority considering the rapid adoption of new technologies in these countries.

In an effort to respond to these challenges, many international agencies have developed targeted resources (such as tutorials, guidebooks, videos, etc.) as well as training for educating and building the capacity of children of various age groups, teachers and parents specifically on online risks. The resources produced by these agencies include using online platforms such as social networks and mobile applications securely, practicing ethical behavior online and detecting and reporting incidents, unethical practices and illegal material online. As an organisation dedicated

<sup>26</sup> ECPAT Europe Law Enforcement Group (2006). Combating the Trafficking in Children for Sexual Purposes: A Training Guide. Accessed on 19 February 2013 from: [http://www.ecpat.net/EI/Publications/Trafficking/Trafficking\\_TrainingGuide\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.ecpat.net/EI/Publications/Trafficking/Trafficking_TrainingGuide_ENG.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> ECPAT International and Fundacion Paniamor (2004). Manual básico para la intervención policial con niñas, niños y adolescentes víctimas o en riesgo de explotación sexual comercial. Accessed on 19 February 2013 from: [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)



to eliminate sexual exploitation of children in both the real and virtual world, ECPAT has also engaged in promoting online safety among children and young people. There are many ECPAT member groups who have targeted “awareness raising” as one of the key areas to help children address online threats. This is mainly done through specific sensitization events or projects aimed at engaging children and young people, their parents and caregivers in schools and communities. In Ukraine, for example, trainings are conducted to build the capacity of students and teachers to identify grooming patterns and the negative consequences of unethical online behavior, including “sexting”. In West Africa the ECPAT Make-IT safe campaign involves cybercafés and schools, allowing children and young people not only to receive peer education on the different aspects of online sexual exploitation, risks and online behavior (such as grooming), but also to advocate for better protection while using cybercafés. In Latin America, ECPAT groups joined a Network of Latin American agencies working on child online safety and carried out education and awareness raising campaign on online safety, which also included organizing a video competition in seven countries sponsored by Google. It is remarkable that many of the children who were involved in these initiatives commented on their improved knowledge and understanding of online risks and reported increased confidence in using Internet and new ICTs.

As noted in the thematic paper on online sexual exploitation of children commissioned by ECPAT for the World Congress III against CSEC (Brazil 2008), considerable work has been done in generating

information and educational materials for young people, teachers and parents. However, few informational or educational tools have been evaluated for their impact on the behaviour of the target groups. Despite the considerable investment in this area, there is still little evidence that such strategies influence behaviour, as opposed to attitudes or level of knowledge.<sup>28</sup> Along with limited evidence base to support the effectiveness of these initiatives in terms of behavior change, it remains unclear whether a gender transformational approach is used in the implementation of such activities. The aforementioned study on sexting commissioned by NSPCC has concluded that “to overcome the culture of silence, adult embarrassment, and a paralysing uncertainty over changing sexual norms, the adults who variously provide for youth – teachers, parents, industry, commerce and others – should develop an explicit discourse that recognises, critiques and redresses the gendered sexual pressures on youth. Sexting may only reveal the tip of the iceberg in terms of these unequal and often coercive sexual pressures, but they also make such pressures visible, available for discussion and so potentially open to resolution.”<sup>29</sup> Teaching young people about the ‘risks’ of sexual self-imaging, of information sharing, and accessing pornography can be seen as a way of addressing a symptom without addressing the underlying causes. There is consequently a need to reframe the discourse around these issues from one that emphasizes personal responsibility and awareness of the ‘risks’ involved in using new ICTs to one that centrally questions gender stereotypes and socially and culturally specific gender injustices and inequities around these practices.

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<sup>28</sup> Quayle, E. et al (2008). Child pornography and sexual exploitation of children online. This study was commissioned by ECPAT International as a contribution to the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of children and Adolescents. Accessed on 20 February 2013 from: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)

<sup>29</sup> Ringrose, Jessica, Gill, Rosalind, Livingstone, Sonia, Harvey, Laura (2012). A qualitative study of children, young people and ‘sexting’: a report prepared for the NSPCC. London: NSPCC. Accessed on 20 February 2013 from: [http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/resourcesforprofessionals/sexualabuse/sexting-research-report\\_wdf89269.pdf](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/resourcesforprofessionals/sexualabuse/sexting-research-report_wdf89269.pdf)

## Conclusion

The increasing knowledge on CSEC accumulated in recent years has enabled an understanding that this is a gendered problem that cannot be solved solely by placing responsibility on men and boys as offenders. The demand that fuels this violation is the expression, *inter alia*, of gender and generational inequalities of power that they themselves can contribute to question and change. By promoting research on this key driving force from a gender perspective, ECPAT and other agencies have shed light on the social, cultural, economic and historical elements that work together to subtly create sexually exploitative behavior against children and adolescents. In this way new avenues for addressing the problem at its source have been identified. As a result of this improved understanding of the demand, ECPAT has increasingly learned that while some men and boys are part of the problem, all can be part of the solution. This has led to the development of a number of initiatives to engage the male population in the prevention of CSEC and address the patriarchal norms of gender and sexuality in which CSEC is rooted. While emphasising the gender dimension, work conducted in this area has always been embedded in the children's rights framework and in a broader system of child protection which recognizes the importance of a protective continuum of care.

Concentrated mostly in the Latin American region, actions promoted by the ECPAT network to date have mainly focused on primary and secondary prevention, while only limited efforts have been spearheaded for engaging men and boys in tertiary prevention. Awareness raising campaigns on the demand have targeted gender stereotypes and specific segments of this population while at the same time proposing positive role models for young men and boys. Considerable attention has been given to encouraging young boys and girls to critically reflect about, question or change social norms

that create and reinforce gender and generational inequalities. This has been done through dedicated workshops for young boys or other formal and non-formal educational activities targeting both girls and boys. A key strength of ECPAT work lies in the meaningful participation of children and young people. By involving CSEC survivors and children at-risk and nurturing their leadership, successful and innovative gender transformative initiatives to discuss CSEC, HIV and norms related to sexuality and gender relations were conducted in different countries. These included community dialogues with the active involvement of religious and community leaders as well as theatre performances, games, radio programmes and other creative activities. The integration of the gender dimension into programming has also allowed work with men as system gatekeepers (especially with law enforcement) as well as with marginalized youth, such as transsexuals engaging in or vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation.

Although experience from the ECPAT network is promising, this review has identified several areas that deserve further attention and investment:

- There is a need for an in depth-mapping of work with men and boys as well as for enhancing evaluation of existing preventive initiatives to address CSEC and related issues such as gender inequality. Regrettably, there is still insufficient evidence base to support the effectiveness of some of the work conducted to date, especially in determining behavior change;
- As already mentioned, there is also a need to reframe the discourse around online safety from one that emphasizes personal responsibility and awareness of the 'risks' involved in using new ICTs to one that centrally questions gender stereotypes and socially and cultural specific gender injustice and inequity around risky behaviours;

- Opportunities for groups to learn from each other (such as Paicabi in Chile and Gurises Unidos) which have successfully incorporated the category of gender into research programmes and interventions, should be created;
- It is recommended that the innovative and creative ways of addressing CSEC and its links to gender dynamics developed by children and young people, be further expanded, especially in countries where CSEC and sexuality are still a taboo subject;
- Recognising the multiple roles that men and boys (and women and girls) can play in addressing the different underlying causes of CSEC (not only demand) will allow the full potential of male engagement in child protection. Research on the multi-faceted strategies for meaningful and successful involvement of men and boys in anti-CSEC work could be developed to inform this comprehensive approach, using as a basis key resource documents produced by other organizations with expertise on this.

# A crucial gap: Addressing the physical and psychological consequences and recovery of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation

By Giulia Patanè

## Introduction

The global phenomenon of the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is one of the worst forms of human rights violation. Although international campaigns against this crime are making great efforts and reaching some targets, realistic estimates on the number of exploited children are hard to obtain. As such, estimates that “two million children are still subjected to prostitution in the global commercial sex trade” are still regularly quoted (US Department of State, 2011). Sex trafficking is, indeed, “one of the most exploitative forms of human trafficking and slavery” (Wickham, 2009).

A child subjected to trafficking and CSE can suffer one of the worst and deepest traumas, both physically and psychologically. Following the traumatic consequences of this exploitation, the victims require support in rebuilding their lives. If the state has not been able to protect the child from the human right violations related to the exploitation, it has the duty to repair this omission. This duty must

include physical, psychological and social recovery, as well as his/her reintegration into a safe and protected environment.

This paper will examine some fundamental aspects that should be considered in dealing with victims of CSEC. The peculiar physical and psychological harms potentially suffered by child victims of commercial sexual exploitation, both in the immediate exit period and in the long term, will be shown. The knowledge of the comprehensive traumatic effects exploited children experience is of primary importance in the development of the necessary responses states should undertake to reduce and, if possible, repair the damage. Therefore, the minimum standards required for complete and efficient are discussed in the second part of the paper. The article will then move its focus to the existing gaps encountered in the actual approach states and NGOs have developed in response to the survivor victims’ needs. Unfortunately, many deficiencies still deeply affect the efficacy of the developed programs. The many international standards constitute mere guidelines to be supplemented with domestic legislation and actions. It is a complex, delicate and challenging task that States owe to their children.

## International legislation and definitions

CSEC is a criminal practice that includes many different forms of child exploitation. This paper will consider two typologies of child rights violations<sup>1</sup>: child trafficking for sexual purpose and child prostitution. For a better understanding of the situation of a child victim of trafficking and exploitation for sexual purposes, it is necessary to define and clarify the phenomena through the framework of the International instruments.

The international standards are traced in the various conventions and additional protocols relating to both minors' protection, and the suppression of trafficking: firstly the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC, 2000) and, secondly, the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (UN Trafficking Protocol, 2000).

With reference to child trafficking, Article 3 of the UN Trafficking Protocol distinguishes the definition of trafficking of children from that of adults. Any case of recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation is considered trafficking, even if no illicit means, such as force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, have been used. The definition of child prostitution as a form of commercial sexual exploitation of children is given by Article 2 letter (b) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Child as "the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration."

Each of these instruments recognizes the need for protection, recovery and reintegration of the victims and States' consequent obligations: Articles 19 and 39 of the CRC, Article 9 of the OPSC, and Article 6 of the UN Trafficking Protocol. The practical realization of these objectives must be guided by fundamental principles, which are: informed consent, non-discrimination, confidentiality and right to privacy, self-determination and participation, individualized treatment and care, comprehensive continuum of care and best interests of the child (IOM, 2007).

## Physical and psychological consequences on the victims

The consequences related to the cited phenomena leave visible and invisible scars on their victims. These are the result of a series of events connected both to the sexual exploitation itself and to the surrounding environment. If traumatic effects can constitute aftermaths even after a single event, a long period of victimization leaves indelible deep signs on the child. CSEC can cause "serious, lifelong, even life-threatening consequences for the physical, psychological, spiritual, emotional and social development and well-being of a child" (ECPAT International, 2008). An effective response aimed at the best possible complete healing and full recovery from the violation, must firstly understand the dynamics that have surrounded the victim in the period before the exit from the trafficking or exploitation (ILO, 2002). Secondly, the knowledge of the most common physical, psychological effects of the trauma on the child constitutes the foundation of a needs-based and concrete response.

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<sup>1</sup> The exclusion of child pornography from the present analysis must be explained. The physical and psychological consequences suffered by any victim of CSEC are similar in all its manifestations. Child pornography, however, has a prominent element that distinguishes it from the other crimes. The abuse suffered by the child victim of pornography is not limited to the time of actual sexual exploitation, but is repeated at each reproduction of the image, which, in the case of using the Internet, may have unlimited scope in time, space and quantities. Specific traumatic effects derive from the potentially millions of abuses suffered by the victim. This peculiar aspect of child pornography positions it as a particular crime/abuse, which necessitate a targeted analysis, both in relation to its specific consequences and, therefore, the required response. This peculiar analysis is not part of this article.

As a predisposing factor, it should also be considered that often victims have suffered from different forms of abuse prior to their actual involvement in the commercial sexual exploitation. Rooted discrimination against girls and violence and exploitation within the home and community, make the child particularly vulnerable (Wickham, 2009). Economic dependencies on their family, their extremely poor living conditions or a violent and aggressive family context can push them to escape and migrate. Many future CSEC victims move alone and in the hope of a better future, relying on themselves or on brokers. Once inside the exploitation environment chance of abuse increase.

## Physical harms

A first series of harmful implications derive from the context that surrounds the child in the illicit environment connected to the trafficking and exploitation. These can include: repeated dislocation, malnutrition, absence of support system, physical confinement, isolation and deprivation of food (Siwach, 2006), inadequate sleeping facilities, dirty clothes, and lack of personal hygiene (Wickham, 2009). Such conditions without adequate medical and psychological care, can easily degenerate into frequent “headaches, stomach pain, lower abdomen pain, skin diseases, body itching, and fatigue” (Crawford in Wickham, 2006), “asthma, and other rheumatic disorders” (Jayasree, 2004).

In these circumstances of deprivation, the dangers related to sexual exploitation constitute a second, series of potential traumatic effects on the child. Physical traumas directly connected to the sexual abuse that children may endure can range from “rectal fissures, lesions, lacerated vaginas, foreign penetration of the anus or vagina, chronic pelvic inflammatory disease, perforated anal and vaginal walls, body mutilation, and a ruptured uterus” (Robinson,

1997), to “being slapped, burned, hanged, and bound” (Robinson, 1997). Recurring pregnancies and related parturitions or abortions “especially followed by immediate sexual activity can overwhelm a female’s body and can sometimes cause permanent damage including future infertility” (Wickham, 2009).

Venereal diseases are obviously common, ranging from ‘minor’ ones, such as pelvic inflammatory diseases, escalating to HIV/AIDS. One ECPAT International research (ECPAT International, 2012) revealed the relation between children’s vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation and HIV infection. HIV infection is, in the vast majority, sexually transmitted, making sexually exploited victims “among the groups most vulnerable to the infection” (CHANGE and Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, 2010). The transmission of the virus can, moreover, be facilitated because of the reduced thickness of the child mucosa linings and the tearing of tissues, easily resulting from a sexual act on children (Fralely, 2005). The exposure of children is higher also because of the victims’ location, frequently at the margins of society and, therefore, rarely identified and targeted as a HIV risk (ECPAT International, 2012).

## Psychological harms

In addition to the physically coercive context, the psychological pressure and trauma suffered have a crucial position, in the analysis of the clinical picture of the victim. Firstly, psychological manipulation is used by traffickers to control the victims and “to make their escape virtually impossible” (Rafferty, 2008), reproducing a context of imprisonment. In addition, the constant pressure felt by children deriving from the surrounding adults and the environment, has severe repercussions on the victims’ psychological and emotional sphere.

Cause	Physical consequences	Psychological consequences
Dislocation, malnutrition, physical confinement, isolation, deprivation of food, inadequate sleeping facilities, lack of hygiene	Headaches, stomach pain, skin diseases, body itching, fatigue	Sense of fear, anxiety, hostility and depression, post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), emotional shut down, maladaptive coping strategies, attachment difficulties, mistrust of adults, antisocial behaviors, and difficulties relating to others, addiction problems,
Sexual Abuse	Venereal diseases, including pelvic inflammatory diseases and HIV/AIDS; rectal fissures, lesions, lacerated vaginas, chronic pelvic inflammatory disease, perforated anal and vaginal walls, body mutilation, and a ruptured uterus; infertility	Feelings of guilt, altered sense of self and self-esteem, fears and anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), shame, powerlessness, self chronic suicidal preoccupation, self-injury, sexualized behavior, role confusion, dependant relationship with the abuser, aggressiveness, flirtatious and sexually provocative behavior

In the long term, the victims' behavior can result in "attachment difficulties, mistrust of adults, antisocial behaviors, and difficulties relating to others" (Rafferty, 2008), social isolation, sense of being different from others, sexualized behavior, role confusion (ECPAT International 2005a), addiction problems, dependent relationship with the abuser, aggressiveness, flirtatious and sexually provocative behavior (ECPAT International, 2009). General difficulties in the recovery and reintegration process may derive from a certain level of rejection of help and support victims except from professionals and social workers (Department of Health Home Office Department for Education and Employment National Assembly for Wales, 2000). The rejection of help can derive from the victims mistrust in adults and general fear or from the adoption of coping mechanisms, like incorrect rationalization, pride in self-sufficiency, self-indulgence and stoicism aptitude (ECPAT International 2005a).

### The necessary comprehensive response

The aforesaid severe physical and psychological consequences of a child victim of trafficking and exploitation for sexual purpose can and must be addressed as soon as possible, to reduce the long term effects this kind of trauma can procure. The awareness and knowledge of the most common consequences the exploited victim suffers once released from exploitation should serve as the basis for the creation and the development of targeted programs. Coordinated and efficient interventions can contribute to safe and successful recovery and successive reintegration. It is particularly important to avoid criminalization and punishment of child victims and provide physical and psychological recovery in an "environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child" (Article 39 CRC).

Any intervention must be based on the recognition of the personhood of the children and “a full understanding of the psychosocial dimensions of the effect of abuse on the child” (ILO, 2002). The family and the socio-economical and cultural forces that have continue to the child's exploitation must be recognized and analyzed, in order to ensure a broad, comprehensive and targeted responsive action. Therefore the needs of the victims and the relative response will vary depending on the unique circumstances of the child (ECPAT International, 2009).

Generally the response can be divided in two phases: an immediate intervention and a long-term program. Primary attention must be dedicated to a complete health screening and care. Once the medical needs of the children are met, a targeted treatment should be started as soon as possible. Appropriate assistance should be provided to children with special needs, like pregnancy (ECPAT International, 2006). Many other and precise goals, however, should be considered. Specifically, and ideally, the intervention should follow different steps: the assurance of a safe and adequate accommodation, physical and health care, legal support, counseling and psychological support, education, vocational training and job placement, development of life skills, necessary cultural and recreational activities (ILO, 2006a), and re-integration, local integration or resettlement (UNICEF, 2006a).

Different actions, therefore, have to be undertaken in the immediate and long-term defense of the victim. This active defense requires the involvement of experts of different disciplines, in such a way that the response to the violation is the most complete possible. The long process can be synthesized in four fundamental services: environment, physical and basic needs protection, health (including health education on personal hygiene, HIV and other STDs, nutrition, sex, and drugs), access to justice, psychological assistance (including creative therapy, group work, counseling), education, vocational training and income generating schemes, and development of social skills (ECPAT International, 2005b). Nothing can be overlooked but at the same time, if not effectively

coordinated, the simultaneous actions aimed at different targets and carried out by different subjects, can be counterproductive. Different objectives are considered as priorities: from fact-finding, legal assistance and short term protection, to recovery and reintegration as well as prevention of the child's re-victimization (ILO and CPCR, 2006).

For this reason a coordinated system of dialogue between the experts of different disciplines involved is necessary. A good practice approach is the ‘multidisciplinary’ or inter agency approach which is built on a network of professionals able to cover both thematically and geographically a broader area and a larger number of children. Each phase of the intervention should be, therefore, addressed by a multidisciplinary team composed of legal, health and social work professionals together with police and community leaders (ECPAT International, 2011).

The professionals’ work should, furthermore, be ‘child-centered’. The success of any intervention, in fact, lies in the identification of each child's characteristics in an approach definable as ‘individual case-based assessment’ (UNICEF, 2006a). An efficient recovery approach should be focused on an assessment based both on the particular victim personality and on/in the surrounding environment (IOM, 2007). The needs of the child, must be addressed within the context of his/her culture (including language, custom, beliefs, social structures, communication patterns, etc.) in a process of ‘indigenization’ (ILO, 2002), and according to the child's age, gender and cultural origin (ECPAT International, 2006).

### MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH:

The Centre for Protection of Children's Rights Foundation (CPCR) is a Thai NGO working for the protection of child victims of abuse, exploitation and neglect. The services



provided include including monitoring, investigation, protection, treatment, reintegration and prevention in a multidisciplinary approach. The CPR consists of four units. One targeted for the provision of services such as investigation, legal support, protection, primary treatment (Child Protection Unit). The second unit is a temporary shelter developed to supply needs and risk assessments, fact-finding, and planning development programs (Gatehouse). Care, treatment, support and education are part of this unit. A specialised Treatment Shelter offers programs on physical and psychological aspects through a rehabilitation approach that involves both governmental and non-governmental organizations, such shelters, schools and hospitals. Lastly, there is the Child and Family Development Unit, based on a preventive approach to build strengthening capacities of children, parents, schools, and communities.

The composition of the multidisciplinary team working within CPR therefore includes medical, both physical and psychological, legal, and social welfare professionals in a holistic cooperation (ILO and CPR, 2006).

The re-integration or integration phases are particularly delicate final steps of the responsive process. Even at this stage, the approach should be holistic and child-centered. The child's natural skills, predisposition and potential must be taken into account in a personalized program. Therefore, the combination of psychological assistance, the improvement of daily life skills and working/training support are fundamental for a gradual mental and material restoration and the development of solid self-confidence. Similarly, the facility of micro finance/micro credit (Salvarai, Jha, 2010) can be decisive for the rebuilding of a new life. Occupational reintegration models, of which SIYB (Start and Improve Your own Business) is an emblematic example, are considered to be particularly effective

approaches (ILO, 2002). The ECPAT Youth Partnership Project for the Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation in South Asia (YPP) is another good practice program designed to develop the skills of young survivor of CSEC, also through the use of the Youth Micro Project Scheme for the support of initiatives led by victims. These programmes have the dual benefit of providing useful training to (often unskilled) victims and helping them in the path of integration in the society through an economic activity. At the basis of these programs is the assumption that economic independence will help the development of self confidence, a concrete self (and family) support network, therefore limiting the necessity to rely on potential exploiters.

## The current gap

Recovery and reintegration play a decisive role in the fundamental duty to protect child victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Although at the standard setting level of universal guidelines much progress has been made and although worldwide many cases can be considered good practice, the gaps and the challenges that this emerging area still have to face are many.

The Global Monitoring Report on the State Progress to Protect Children and Young from Trafficking for Sexual Purpose (ECPAT International 2010), revealed that 60% of the global state services to children at risk or victims of trafficking is limited, inadequate or unspecialized. The remaining 40% providing adequate assistance is mainly supplied by non state organizations. Regrettably, adequately specialized counseling and comprehensive services, including shelters, are offered only by 2% of states that were assessed. This last section of the article will explain the origin of this inadequacy and the main gaps and challenges face by recovery and reintegration through a detailed assessment of the data of second edition ECPAT International Country Monitoring Reports on the status of action against CSEC.

The first set of challenges are related to a certain tendency, especially on the part of governments, to neglect concrete actions on the recovery and reintegration of sexually exploited children. The reasons behind this tendency are twofold. First, recovery and reintegration programs are particularly expensive. This is true both in relation to the immediate cost of personnel and materials and above all, in the long-term maintenance of programs. Highly specialized professionals and structures require a consistent amount of investment, which states tend to avoid. Second, there is a higher predisposition of governments and international organisations to provide efforts “on migration control, security, and prosecution of illegal activities” (Wickham, 2009). In fact, even the positive emphasis placed in the fight against CSEC in some countries has pushed governments and international organizations’ attention and distribution of resources mainly in combating the phenomenon, rather than implementing recovery and reintegration measures (Asquit and Turner, 2008). This is true despite the rhetorical recognition of the importance of the recovery area. The distance between rhetorical discourse and concrete action has been underlined by many social workers in the subject of recovery and reintegration discussed in Asquit and Turner’s (2008) research.

As a result, a second substantive challenge is linked to a general lack of resources (ECPAT International, 2007; ILO, 2002 and 2006; UNICEF, 2008 and 2006b; Wickham, 2009). The ECPAT International Global Monitoring Reports (2011), repeatedly revealed this crucial gap in several countries.<sup>2</sup> When, as often is the case, programs are carried out by small NGOs or women’s groups, difficulties in finding funds are high (Wickham, 2009). This is particularly true with respect to long term funds (Wickham, 2009), which are fundamental for the maintenance of a successful program. This deficiency implies severe consequences in the actual implementation of the ideal.

Gap	Country <sup>3</sup>
Lack of re-sources	Albania (2012), Bulgaria (2013), Colombia (2013), France (2011), Germany (2012), Indonesia (2011), Italy (2011), Mauritania (2007), Moldova (2012), the Netherlands (2011), Poland (2012), Romania (2012), Uganda (2013), Ukraine (2011)
Geographical limitation	Cambodia, 2011; Sweden, 2011; Uganda, 2013. West and Central Africa
Non-specialized programs	Albania (2012), Australia (2012), Austria (2012), Belarus (2011), Bulgaria (2013), Burkina Faso (2012), Cameroon (2013), Colombia (2013), Denmark (2012), Egypt (2008) Estonia (2012), France (2011), Germany (2012), Hong Kong (2010), Italy (2011), Kyrgyzstan (2012), Moldova (2012), Mongolia (2011), New Zealand (2012) Poland, with refer to CSEC (2012), Spain (2012), Uganda (2013), USA (2012), Ukraine (2011)
Lack of specialized professionals	Austria (2012), Bulgaria (2013), Denmark (2012), Estonia (2012), France (2011), Germany (2012), Italy (2011), Mauritania (2007), Moldova (2012), The Netherlands (2011), Norway (2012), Romania (2012), Russia Federation (2012), Singapore (2011), Ukraine (2011), and Vietnam (2011)
Lack of coordination	Canada (2012), Denmark (2012), the Netherlands (2011), Spain (2012), Sweden (2011), USA (2012);

<sup>2</sup> Albania (2012), Bulgaria (2013), Colombia (2013), France (2011), Germany (2012), Indonesia (2011), Italy (2011), Mauritania (2007), Moldova (2012), the Netherlands (2011), Poland (2012), Romania (2012), Uganda (2013), Ukraine (2011)

<sup>3</sup> From ECPAT International Global Monitoring Report Agenda for Action (A4A)

Gap	Country
Child victims not separated from adults	Germany (2012), Japan (2011), Thailand (2011), and Vietnam (2011)
Limited access for boys	Colombia, (2013), Italy (2011), the Netherlands (2012), Thailand (2011)
No victim identification procedure	Japan, (2011), Moldova (2012), South Korea (2012), Taiwan (2011), United Kingdom (2013)
Protection connected with collaboration in prosecution	Norway (2012), Poland (2012), Sweden (2012), USA (Wickham, 2009)

Furthermore, where existent, recovery and reintegration programs for victims of CSEC are geographically limited and localized principally in the countries' capitals (ECPAT International Country Monitoring Reports reports<sup>4</sup>; UNICEF, 2008).

Existing programs also lack specialization on CSEC victims (ECPAT International Country Reports show the deficiency in a large number of countries ).<sup>5</sup> Many programs, in fact are not developed specifically for trafficked or sexually abused children, and offer broad-spectrum services to child and/or adults with difficulties (sometimes simultaneously treating subjects with addiction or children in conflict with the law and CSEC victims – see Austria

ECPAT 2012). A targeted response, conversely, is essential in the development of a valuable recovery, both from the point of view of victims (who will find support from peers with common experiences) and for professionals.

The lack of sufficiently skilled professionals, especially for psychological support, is another main factor undermining the efficacy of the existing services (ILO, 2002 and 2006; ECPAT International, 2007 UNICEF, 2008). In its report to the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, ECPAT International (2007) revealed that “there is an alarming lack of specialized professional care for children vulnerable to or victims of commercial sexual exploitation.” This lack still remains one of the major concerns for many countries, as revealed by numerous ECPAT International Country Monitoring Reports.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, a certain deficiency is present in terms of training material. The existing training materials are merely focused on counseling aspects, omitting other useful services and activities, such as para-social work, art or recreational therapy, development of life skills, activities with peers, etc. (ILO, 2002). The development of specialized training guides by ECPAT International represents an important contribution in filling this gap (see for example ECPAT International 2005a/b *The Psychosocial Rehabilitation of Children who have been Commercially Sexually Exploited, A Training Guide and Self-Study Materials*). However, even these need to be regularly reviewed and updated. For example, ECPAT International's 2005 manual does not cover the recovery needs of children sexually exploited in pornography or on-line.

<sup>4</sup> Cambodia, 2011; Sweden, 2011; Uganda, 2013

<sup>5</sup> Albania (2012), Australia (2012), Austria (2012), Belarus (2011), Bulgaria (2013), Burkina Faso (2012), Cameroon (2013), Colombia (2013), Denmark (2012), Egypt (2008) Estonia (2012), France (2011), Germany (2012), Hong Kong (2010), Italy (2011), Kyrgyzstan (2012), Moldova (2012), Mongolia (2011), New Zealand (2012) Poland, with refer to CSEC (2012), Spain (2012), Uganda (2013), USA (2012), Ukraine (2011)

<sup>6</sup> Austria (2012), Bulgaria (2013), Denmark (2012), Estonia (2012), France (2011), Germany (2012), Italy (2011), Mauritania (2007), Moldova (2012), The Netherlands (2011), Norway (2012), Romania (2012), Russia Federation (2012), Singapore(2011), Ukraine (2011), and Vietnam (2011)

One aspect seriously compromising the activities of recovery and reintegration and in general, the protection of victims of CSEC is a general lack of coordination of programs (ECPAT International A4A Reports<sup>7</sup>; Wickham, 2009). As pointed out above, the most effective approach, a multidisciplinary one, necessarily involves a coordinated network of professionals who, in a process of constant interaction, are able to develop a common agenda of broad coverage. The lack of this essential element is likely to obscure the efforts of individual operators.

The efficiency of recovery and rehabilitation programs also depends on the collection of relevant data, their processing and the subsequent development of action plans which are current and renewed. For the same reason it is also essential to monitor and evaluate the services in order to improve the conditions by reinforcing the strengths and eliminating the weaknesses. Unfortunately, however, many of the current programs appear to be deficient in both data collection systems and in the monitoring evaluation of impact (Asquit and Turner, 2008; ECPAT International 2007; UNICEF, 2008). Similarly poor or no victim identification procedures, especially in relation to trafficking victims, represent an important element affecting the efficiency of protection systems (ECPAT International Country Monitoring Reports<sup>8</sup>).

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, complete recovery and reintegration means the full development of a victim's identity within society. Consequently, the major challenge must be pursued at the community level. Regrettably, nonetheless, stigmatization and social exclusion of victims of CSEC is still hard to remove with deep rooted prejudices in society (ILO, 2002; Istituto degli Innocenti,

2012; ECPAT International 2005a, 2007, 2008; UNICEF 2005, 2006b and 2008; Wickham, 2009). This tendency not only leads to difficult reintegration into the community, but it can also result in an increase of the probability of relapse into the exploitation cycle.

## Conclusions

The most common visible and invisible effects on a child that has been sexually exploited have been analyzed. Once out of the trafficking and exploitation cycle the child has to face the tough challenge of dealing with his/her physical and psychological trauma on the one hand, and readjusting his/her future in the community, on the other. Regaining self confidence and trust in others is one of the most difficult tasks and should be one of the primary objectives of recovery and reintegration programs.

A rights-based approach is built upon the coordination of the different actions necessary for an effective response: from fact-finding and the legal support (designed for a future judicial response to the violation), to the immediate health assistance; from the progression of long-term psychological therapy, to the development of the victim life and work skills, in order to facilitate (re)integration into society. Such an approach (usually referred to as multidisciplinary), requires substantive efforts from governments, stakeholders, professionals and society.

However, the response to date is not very satisfactory. The general tendency to focus more on the prevention and prosecution of CSEC has implied an inadequate allocation of resources in this crucial

<sup>7</sup> Canada (2012), Denmark (2012), the Netherlands (2011), Spain (2012), Sweden (2011), USA (2012);

<sup>8</sup> Japan, (2011), Moldova (2012), South Korea (2012), Taiwan (2011), United Kingdom (2013)

phase of the fight. The lack of resources further implies a wide ranging insufficiency of a limited number of programs which are often non-specialized and located primarily in the capital cities, scarcity of trained professionals, and ineffective coordination, data collection and programs evaluation systems.

In the long road to recovery that the victim has to undertake, the more the child's personality, potential and individual skills are taken

into account, the more a solid and lasting growth can compensate the injustices the victim has suffered. The personalization of the recovery and reintegration support must go hand in hand with the creation of a safe, non-discriminatory and empowering environment. This means that the most crucial challenge, in the end, has to take place in the society and governments and other stakeholders must do more to support this transition.

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## **ECPAT International**

328/1 Phayathai Road  
Ratchathewi, Bangkok  
10400 THAILAND

Tel: +662 215 3388, +662 611 0972

Fax: +662 215 8272

Email: [info@ecpat.net](mailto:info@ecpat.net) | [media@ecpat.net](mailto:media@ecpat.net)

Website: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)