

ECPAT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2021-2025

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Foreword

ECPAT International's Strategic Framework is the roadmap to achieving our movement's collective ambition for the 2021-2025 period, by engaging the depth of our expertise, the breadth of our on-ground reach, and the scale of our inspired action against the sexual exploitation of children. This Strategic Framework was approved by the ECPAT International Assembly on 20 May 2021.

Over the last three decades, we have grown into the globally recognized leader in the fight against the sexual exploitation of children. We have developed an ever-evolving body of compelling evidence and experience that tells us that:

'With each passing moment, the challenges that we are up against are only growing in scale, scope, and in complexity.'

This strategic framework outlines this context and what needs to be done to make progress towards a world where all children are free from sexual exploitation.

We believe that this challenge is not insurmountable and we are dauntless in our pursuit to achieve our goal.

This is why, ECPAT's new strategic framework reimagines our role in the efforts against the sexual exploitation of children—right from the community level to the global level. Our strategy is the result of inspiring and informed discussions and debates within our movement to chart the most effective way to move forward towards the outcomes for children that we all want to see.

During this strategic period, we will sharpen our focus on making collective impact towards the most important and urgent systemic and social changes. To this end, we will become stronger and more compelling influencers, partners, and experts. We will build evidence and expertise on solutions that work. We will elevate the perspectives of children and collaborate with and hold all stakeholders—governments, businesses, civil society, the public, ourselves—accountable to ensure effective action.

We are well prepared to develop and implement these enhanced approaches.

In the latter half of 2020, in order to become more effective, agile and responsive, ECPAT embarked on a very stringent review all our governance structures, the outcomes of which are expected to be decided during the 2021 International Assembly. This will lead to the implementation of recommendations to adjust our structure, operations, and the way we work together. These will help the entire ECPAT network meet the goals set out in this strategy more efficiently.

This document presents the new ECPAT theory of change, strategic goals, objectives, strategies, and key organizational enablers. Related indicators to streamline priority areas and monitor progress and impact have been included in the results framework, which informs ECPAT's planning, monitoring and reporting systems.

ECPAT And Our Ambition For 2025

Vision and Mission

The vision of ECPAT International (ECPAT) is a world where all children enjoy their fundamental rights free and secure from sexual exploitation.

Our mission is to push for the critical systemic and social changes necessary to end the sexual exploitation of children (SEC), with governments, intergovernmental institutions, the private sector, civil society and the general public, including children themselves.

Executive Summary

For over 30 years, ECPAT has been extraordinary in addressing the sexual exploitation of children at the local level and in pushing (and keeping) related issues in the agendas of decision-makers around the world. However, despite the promotion of children's rights worldwide and the significant progress made over the years, the sexual exploitation of children is still a growing phenomenon. In fact, the vulnerability of children to sexual exploitation continues to increase and become more complex.

In the context of this growth, we recognize that an inclusive approach which involves the active involvement of multiple sectors and stakeholders are required to progress towards the elimination of the sexual exploitation of children by 2030, in line with Targets 5.2, 5.3, 8.7, 8.9 and 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals. As a worldwide movement with the influence, knowledge, and expertise necessary to accelerate progress on these goals, we are driven by our desired **impact to see a world where:**

all children live and thrive with safety, support, and freedom from sexual exploitation.

The experience of children lies at the heart of our work. Therefore, in order to be effective, our theory of change highlights the specific **outcomes for children** that will be prioritized in the next strategic period:

- Responsive, protective, and empowering child protection and safeguarding systems
- Safe, child-friendly & protective public, private, commercial and social environments
- Positive and empowering social and gender norms; and freedom from stigma and shame
- Protective and empowered parents, caregivers, educators, and circles of trust for children
- Physical, mental and emotional well-being and support for all children, in particular those surviving sexual exploitation, and the realization of all children's rights

ECPAT's Strategic Goals for 2021-2025 involve moving away from a 'siloed' approach to the various manifestations of sexual exploitation of children, drastically elevating the way we measure impact and progress, working together to influence collectively, and engaging the most effective stakeholders to prioritize, develop and implement well-evidenced, effective and workable solutions.



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During the next 2021-2025 Strategic Framework period we will implement four network-wide influencing strategies aimed at achieving a total of six objectives under two strategic goals: Systemic Change and Social Change:

Strategic goal 1: Systemic change, which will be achieved by targeting policy makers, law enforcement, business, civil society, and frontline, social and service workers, including physical and mental health practitioners, for the following solutions-based objectives:

1. Increased adoption and implementation of comprehensive legal, policy and regulatory frameworks for addressing the sexual exploitation of children, including its new forms.
2. Increased capacity of law enforcement, courts and accompanying lawyers for the investigation, prosecution and prevention of sexual exploitation of children.
3. Increased private sector regulation, financial commitment, and action for child protection.
4. Increased access to quality, child-friendly and effective protection, response and support systems and services for at-risk children and children who have experienced sexual exploitation.

Strategic goal 2: Social change, which will be achieved by targeting at-risk children, children who have experienced sexual exploitation, parents, educators, general public, and vulnerable, marginalized & migrant communities, for the following solutions-based objectives:

5. Greater awareness, help-seeking and freedom from stigma and shame around sexual exploitation among children, survivors, caregivers and vulnerable communities, through use of preventative education and public information.
6. Greater public visibility and awareness of the problem, through the collection and promotion of disaggregated and representative data at the national level.

To meet these strategic goals, we will develop and implement four network-wide **influencing for change strategies** to monitor and measure our collective impact and to further enhance our efforts. We will strengthen our network's influencing and coordination role, identify and disseminate evidence-based solutions, convene a wide range of stakeholders for effective partnerships and express a bolder voice to amplify the voices and perspectives of children. We will solidify our position as a catalyst and push for advocacy where it counts. All the while ensuring that we build on the foundation of our joint action by ECPAT's members across the globe.

To fuel ECPAT's upcoming ambitions, we acknowledge that substantial inputs and investments are needed. We will make thoughtful and dedicated investments in network strengthening, people, financial sustainability, robust processes and systems, and monitoring and evaluation to ensure strong progress towards our goals.

Introduction To The Strategic Framework

Purpose

The ECPAT International Strategic Framework 2021-2025 provides inspiration and direction to our global movement, comprising all ECPAT members, the ECPAT Board and the ECPAT Secretariat, to maximize our collective impact against the sexual exploitation of children. The framework builds on over 30 years of our experience, our on-ground expertise from over 100 countries¹, our robust and innovative evidence base, and the perspectives of children from around the world, including those who have experienced sexual exploitation or abuse.

The problem of sexual exploitation of children has continued to grow and evolve in complexity and scope. In order to address this mounting challenge, we need to bring together and intensify our efforts to enable positive outcomes for children. This Strategic Framework combines the strengths of our large and diverse membership and moves us towards our common purpose. The framework provides a roadmap for ECPAT to, together with our partners, fight the sexual exploitation of children at the local, national, regional and global levels.

Executive Summary

The Strategic Framework 2021-2025 is jointly developed and co-created through an extensive consultative process spanning a wide range of input sources, stakeholders and concurrent strategic processes - both internal and external to ECPAT.

In-depth interviews generated multi-dimensional situation analysis and strategic insight necessary for the Strategic Framework. These semi-structured interviews were conducted with the ECPAT Board, Secretariat staff, external evaluator, ECPAT Review consultant, donors, external experts, and a wide range of partners. In addition, normative group consultations and workshops with the ECPAT Board and Secretariat staff helped streamline the strategic direction, goals, and key strategies for the Strategic Framework.

The inclusion of a structured ECPAT network survey and a series of regional consultations, covering all ten regions of our presence, ensured that the resultant Strategic Framework is meaningful, relevant, and effective for the achievement of our ambitions at the national and regional level. Strong and active participation from the ECPAT network resulted in 97 responses to the network survey and participation of 88 members in the regional consultation meetings. A thorough desk review of all relevant documents informed the analysis for the Strategic Framework². The analysis and recommendations of a comprehensive external evaluation-carried out in the second half of 2020 and covering the period July 2017 to June 2020 - have informed our strategic thinking and planning.

The results-based approach featured in our 2018-2021 Strategic Framework has been strengthened to decisively reflect ECPAT's strategic goals and objectives for the 2021-2025 period. These objectives now focus on working collaboratively across the entire ECPAT network to create and measure collective impact against the sexual exploitation of children.

Global Context: Trends And Challenges

Violence against children, including sexual exploitation and abuse, affects an estimated one billion children worldwide³ and ECPAT's research has concluded that no country or region is 'immune'.⁴ Sexual violence against children is a growing and increasingly complex crime and there is simply not enough said about it. It is yet to be given sufficient policy and practice attention. It happens to children in all socioeconomic groups, of all educational levels, across all ethnic and cultural groups, and in different geographic settings. However, a range of contextual factors, outlined here, are known to further increase vulnerability.

The Evolving Context for Sexual Exploitation of Children

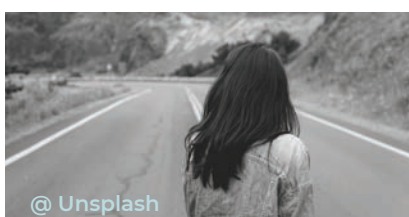
Shifts in defining the sexual exploitation of children

Until recently, we organized our work in five thematic areas. These included:



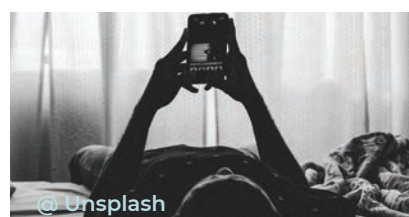
The exploitation of children in prostitution.⁵

1.



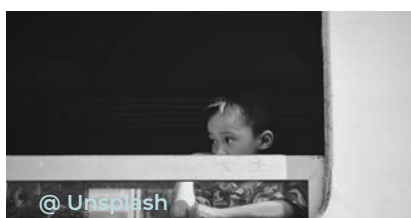
The sale and trafficking of children for sexual purposes.⁶

2.



Online child sexual exploitation.⁷

3.



The sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.⁸

4.



Some forms of child, early and forced marriages.⁹

5.

None of these contexts or forms are isolated and they are becoming increasingly complex and interlinked as a result of drivers like greater mobility of people, evolving digital technology, and rapidly expanding access to communications. Over the recent years, the lines between different contexts and forms of sexual exploitation have become increasingly blurred, and children are commonly victimized in multiple ways.

Blurring lines between our online and offline worlds

Our lives now exist on a continuum that incorporates online and offline domains simultaneously. It can therefore be argued that children are living in a digital world where on/offline distinctions no longer represent separate social spaces.¹⁰ This is certainly the case when considering child sexual abuse and exploitation. The sexual violence we observe in images and videos online are in fact the digital record of the sexual violence children suffer offline – they are tantamount to ‘records of a crime scene’.

Without dedicated action, more and more children will be vulnerable to harm through the medium of information and communication technology. The quickening pace of technological advances are providing the tools for ‘offline’ child sexual abuse to be filmed and shared – bringing an element of exchange that classifies it as exploitation. Therefore, the distinction between child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation is also increasingly interlinked.

Broader Internet penetration and an expanding use of mobile devices have increased opportunities for offenders to misuse technology with an aim to contact, groom, and abuse children and to connect with other perpetrators using tools such as encrypted messaging platforms and peer to peer networks to share information and coordinate their online and offline crimes, tools that make it more challenging for law enforcement to detect these crimes.^{11,12,13}

The growth in social media use, gaming, and child-focused spaces in the digital environment creates opportunities for offenders to access and groom children.^{14,15} Research consistently indicates that children are approached regularly by strangers online. Some samples indicate that as many as 1 in 5 children are solicited sexually online.¹⁶

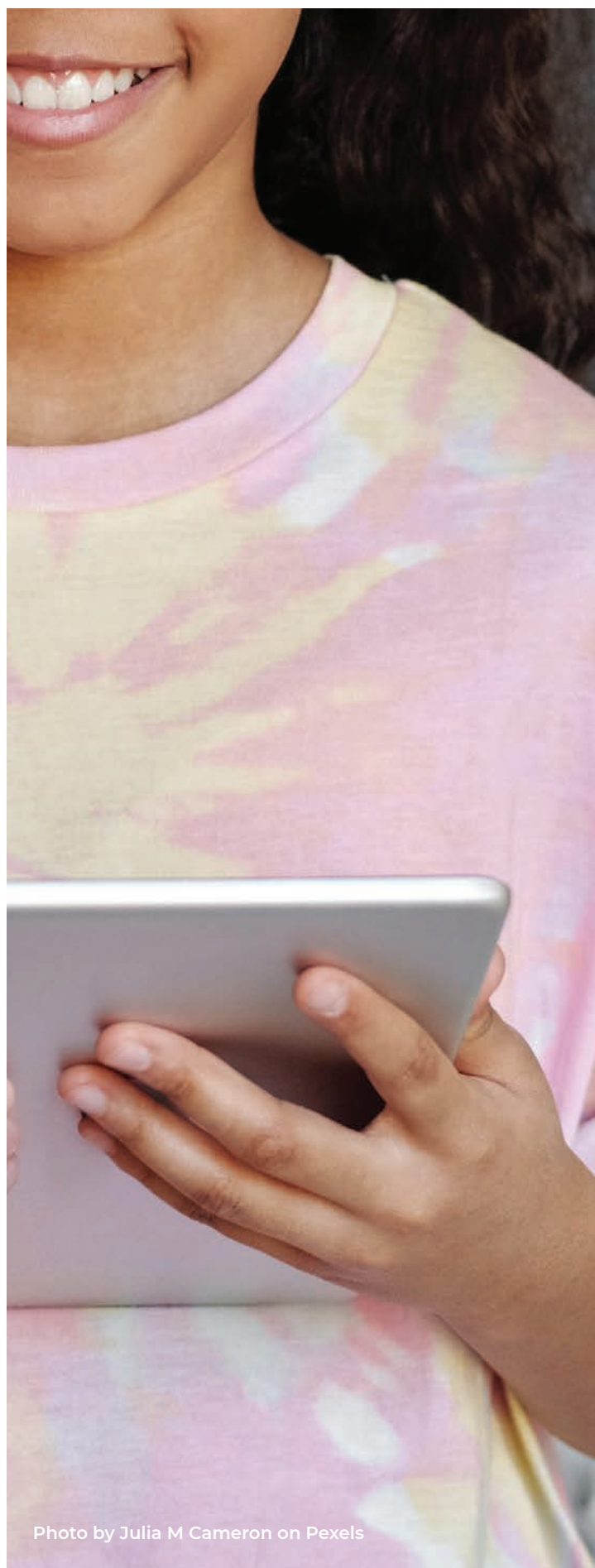


Photo by Julia M Cameron on Pexels

Technology is changing the nature of child sexual exploitation

Until the beginning of the 2000's, technology impacted child sexual exploitation only in the production, possession, and distribution online of child sexual abuse material (CSAM)/child sexual exploitation material (CSEM). However, advances in technology have now expanded the notion of technologically facilitated child sexual exploitation to include an evolving a whole range of practices such as live streaming of child sexual abuse,¹⁷ 'online grooming'¹⁸, and online sexual extortion and coercion.¹⁹ The overall volume of CSAM/CSEM circulating online also continues to grow at unprecedented rates.²⁰ As an indication of the exploding scale of CSAM circulating, the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) - which receives all reports on child sexual abuse images in the US - received 8.2 million reports in 2016. In 2020 that number grew to a staggering 21.7 million reports.²¹

The digital age is challenging and notions of privacy and sexuality are also shifting, particularly among adolescents.^{22,23} Increasingly, law enforcement are reporting that a growing proportion of CSAM/CSEM comprises 'self-generated' sexual content.²⁴ These images may be the result of a grooming process whereby an adult gains the trust of a child online and then convinces them to commit and record sexual acts. These young people are then sometimes coerced into producing and sharing more content in a process known as 'sexual extortion'. However, in many cases young people are also consensually making and sharing images with peers (i.e., user generated sexual content/'sexting'). This type of content may not have immediate negative repercussions but may be acquired by offenders, as it circulates the web.^{25,26}

Similarly, evolving technological innovations present new ways for perpetrators to exploit children.²⁷ In NetClean's 2019 report notes on the emerging technologies that may be misused for the sexual exploitation of children, the increased use of cloud storage and peer to peer networks (P2P), encryption technology, and artificial intelligence are named as mediums for exploitation.²⁸ Offenders are increasingly avoiding sharing CSAM directly and share links to online spaces where the materials can be accessed, making it difficult to trace and convict them.²⁹ Encryption is seen as a major challenge for law enforcement in detecting and investigating CSAM cases as it increases offenders' anonymity.³⁰

Travelling child sex offenders are adapting and changing

Since our inception, over 30 years ago, rapidly advancing technology has also impacted the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism contexts. For example, in recent years, the live-streaming of child sexual abuse has also become an established reality. It is likely that this phenomenon has been accelerated by COVID-19 movement restrictions.³¹ Live-streaming can be facilitated by family members or other adults known to a child, sometimes also participating in the hands-on abuse performed in front of a camera.³² Widespread and accessible micro-financial transactions across borders and encrypted communication platforms help facilitate and finance such crimes.

Although through international travel offenders continue to commit acts of sexual exploitation, the issue is now better understood to also have a domestic and intra-regional aspect. There is no doubt that the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and movement restrictions, had a massive impact on the travel and tourism industry.³³ Post-pandemic tourism restarted with domestic travel, and will increasingly use technology along with new travel and tourism products. As international travel resumes, and the sector as a whole recovers, there is greater need to urge the travel and tourism industry to maintain or make child protection a key priority.

In the past, tourism had been more regulated, for example, with governments implementing stricter measures such as registration for hotels, travel agencies and tour operators that can help prevent sexual exploitation. However, in recent years we have witnessed an increasing

emergence of more informal tourism services like home-stays and longer-term rentals. The misuse of traditional travel and tourism infrastructure for the sexual exploitation of children continues to be documented, but offenders have also moved into less-regulated domains, making their crimes harder to detect. Social media platforms are also misused by perpetrators to identify and groom vulnerable children prior to travelling to meet them – both within their own countries and abroad.

Volunteering has become a popular activity for people travelling to developing countries as a way for tourists to ‘give back’ whilst seeing the world. Some forms of such ‘voluntourism’, despite the best of intentions, can have a range of harmful consequences, including increasing the risks to children of sexual exploitation.³⁴

The exploitation of children in prostitution

ECPAT holds that no child can ever consent to their own exploitation.

Over time, it has been recognized that the use of the term ‘child prostitution’ can lead to misinterpretation as it implies that this form of sexual exploitation of children is merely a sub-type of prostitution.³⁵ It also wrongly suggests that a child could conceivably provide consent to their sexual exploitation.³⁶ It is crucial that moves are made to ensure terminology reflects the fact that any child involved in prostitution is a victim of sexual exploitation.³⁷

The exploitation of children in prostitution often operates on the fringes of adult prostitution, including in establishment-based prostitution settings. Children were, and continue to be sexually exploited in brothels, as well as in settings like massage parlours, nightclubs, dance cafés, clubs and bars. Street-based exploitation is typically less controlled than establishment-based settings, with children living in street situations often faced with limited options but to engage in ‘survival sex’.³⁸

However, like in other areas, the rapidly widespread availability of internet and information and communications technology has dramatically disrupted the older means of sex work, including prostitution. While the above settings continue to endure as contexts where exploitation of children in prostitution occurs, the visibility of children in these settings has also therefore reduced as perpetrators use the Internet, social media, or dating apps to identify children to exploit in private settings without the risks of being identified approaching children in the street or at establishments.³⁹ The online facilitation of exploitation of children in prostitution can also be far more explicit, with websites designed for advertising adult prostitution and escort services (such as ‘Backpage’ shut down in 2018) being used to advertise minors for sexual services.⁴⁰

While debates around the legalization of adult prostitution are a separate argument, it is important to highlight the effect that the criminalization of adult prostitution has on the exploitation of children in prostitution. When adult prostitution is criminalized, and law enforcement pursue those involved in it, prostitution may be forced underground, creating circumstances more dangerous to the children involved.⁴¹ Furthermore, in these circumstances, sex workers that could observe and report sexual exploitation and abuse of children will avoid coming forward to authorities for fear of being prosecuted for prostitution offences themselves.⁴² Even if they do report or seek help, children exploited in prostitution are often subject to “the same dismissive attitude reserved for adults in prostitution.”⁴³

The Evolving Context for Sexual Exploitation of Children

COVID-19 has impacted the problem of sexual exploitation of children and response efforts

There is a serious mismatch between resources needed to combat the sexual exploitation of children and the investments made globally and at national levels. It is obvious that the economic impact of COVID-19 has further exacerbated this worrying trend, putting new strains on economies, with reduced government taxes and other revenues, and budgets diverted to address the health impact of COVID-19. Even before the pandemic started in early 2020 the economic cost of violence against children,— in all its forms—was estimated to be between 2-5% of GDP.⁴⁴ At the same time, global investments in combating violence against children remained very low. Whilst an encouraging 80% of countries worldwide have national plans of action and policies in place to address violence against children, just one-fifth have committed to fully funded these plans.

The above discrepancy between the total GDP costs of violence against children and the lack of sufficient investments and resources makes it both highly necessary and smart to call for action to change this situation.

During 2020, as nations around the world responded to the COVID-19 crisis with lockdown measures and various movement restrictions, it became clear there was an impact too on child sexual exploitation. Socio-economic factors that already set marginalized children were at risk as many families faced exacerbated economic hardship. It is estimated that approximately 90% of students across the world have been affected by school closures – and continue to be – which means that they are cut off from a critical entry point to prevent and respond to violence.⁴⁵ New risks also emerged when children and offenders were forced to stay at home – where much of the sexual exploitation of children is known to take place. Initial surges in contacts to helplines have been reported⁴⁶ as young people began to spend increased time in digital environments (though this indicates increasing reporting of the problem, not necessarily increased amounts of exploitation). Increases in perpetrators sharing child sexual abuse materials were also noted during lockdown periods.⁴⁷

Initially, and perhaps counter-intuitively, police reported to Interpol that they saw decreases in reporting of child sexual abuse and exploitation, but this is likely due to limited opportunities for children to seek help while they are locked down with perpetrators, and that usual child protection mechanisms were limited in their monitoring and investigation abilities. ECPAT members reported similar limitations on their capacity to operate – affecting their ability to respond and provide support to children or investigations.⁴⁸ Lockdown measures have confined children to their homes, sometimes with their perpetrators, no longer able to access school, or care centres and services that can protect them. Those who work to combat the sexual exploitation of children are faced with less capacity, travel restrictions, and limited access to children in need.

As further evidence from the pandemic emerges, it is expected that it will show a period of high vulnerability to sexual exploitation for many children, including both online and offline abuse. Current evidence suggests that this is the case include the documented surges by law enforcement in the circulation of sexual content initially created by children themselves.⁴⁹

Marginalized and ‘on the move’ children are at great risk

Any child is at risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking, however children facing a greater risk tend to be those in vulnerable or marginalized situations. The vulnerability of children is subject

to intersectional layers of systemic and social discrimination across lines of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and even the urban-rural divide. Children faced with discrimination, social rejection or limited access to social investment, infrastructure and support are particularly vulnerable. This includes children in out-of-home care (i.e. an orphanage; foster care or some form of residential care); 'children on the move'⁵⁰ – particularly if unaccompanied by adults; – children in conflict situations; children in situations of poverty or low socio-economic status; ethnic minorities, and transgender children.⁵¹

According to the 2020 UNODC Global TIP report⁵², trafficking for sexual exploitation remains the most detected form of human trafficking. The former UN Special Rapporteur on the sale and the sexual exploitation of children, emphasized that this is just a part of a likely process which results in exploitation in prostitution, the production of child sexual abuse materials, and may happen concurrently with labour exploitation, domestic servitude, forced labour, or child marriage.⁵³ Furthermore, digital technology and the Internet are increasingly being utilized to enable, and as parts of the trafficking and sale of children for sexual exploitation.

However, beyond the factors facilitating vulnerability of children is the 'demand side' of these crimes. The discourse on child protection is almost completely limited to focusing on the vulnerability factors that lead to a child being sold or trafficked for sexual exploitation, without giving due attention to the complex and nuanced profiles of the perpetrators that drive demand.⁵⁴ This side must also be the focus of attention.

Social and gender norms influence child sexual exploitation

General social attitudes – and those of authorities and welfare providers – can erroneously attribute children's active engagement in their own sexual exploitation as conveying consent or complicity. Children may then internalize the supposed responsibility and thus not view themselves as victims. This then limits their likelihood to seek help and may even mean authorities and welfare services don't support them if and when they do. In the worst case scenario, they may also be prosecuted when laws fail to explicitly protect children from being prosecuted for prostitution.⁵⁵

In terms of gender, at very broad levels, boys are expected to be tough and dominant while girls are expected to be submissive and protect their 'purity' and virginity. Taboos around discussing sex and sexuality in many contexts limit opportunities to improve awareness that what is happening to victims is not OK, and limit chances to then create protective strategies. Some of these norms and taboos must be challenged to prevent and respond to the sexual exploitation of children effectively.

Gender norms in many countries continue to limit women and girls' access to key resources, perpetuating gender inequality in the home, school and employment. While in 1995, [the Beijing Declaration](#) attempted to commit the world to achieving gender equality; there is still a long way to go. Women and girls remain significantly more vulnerable to poverty, with 330 million women and girls living on less than US\$1.90 a day, 4.4 million more than men.⁵⁶ Girls face serious barriers to education: 15 million girls will never get the chance to learn to read or write in primary school.⁵⁷ These factors seriously increase girls' vulnerability to engaging in prostitution as they simply reduce all of girls' other options in life.

Further, traditional, patriarchal views on girls' virginity also exacerbate their vulnerability to exploitation in prostitution, with men paying high prices to exploit girls who are virgins in prostitution.^{58,59} For example, the practice of the exploitation of virgin girls in prostitution continues to be a problem in Cambodia,⁶⁰ where men are known to travel to the country to exploit girls in the 'virgin trade', in the belief that having sex with a girl who is a virgin will be enhance their virility.⁶¹

In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness of the gap in the global understanding of how sexual exploitation of children affects boys.⁶² The data in general is paltry.

While many vulnerability factors for sexual exploitation and abuse are common to all genders, boys' access to support is unquestioningly governed by gender norms, constraining their help-seeking behaviour and their ability to seek care.⁶³

Gender norms have informed the development of policies, practices, advocacy and research methodologies that underrepresent or leave out boys and queer-identifying young people. While the impact of sexual exploitation on girls is somewhat better researched and understood, the limited evidence available on boys suggests that in certain contexts, boys are just as heavily impacted, and sometimes more.⁶⁴

Resources and funding for addressing the sexual exploitation of children

The impact of COVID-19 on the funding landscape has been significant, with more uncertainties for the coming years. But even prior to the pandemic, we were already witnessing shifts in donor funding priorities. Education has remained a constant, but in recent years, philanthropists and influencers have been advocating for funding towards climate change including clean tech, and skill development. Much of this has been in response to changing public demand and increased global governance in addressing poverty alleviation. Government aid and funding have largely been responsive to political agendas, both for domestic needs as well as ODA prioritization. The donor funding pool towards ending the sexual exploitation of children have been shrinking gradually, as priorities have changed and/or funds have been allocated to solutions and community level service delivery without addressing the big picture problems. Some larger foundations have revised their grant-making strategy to no longer include gender and children focused priority areas.

The global pandemic has exacerbated the problems related to the successful prevention and elimination of the sexual exploitation and abuse of children. In the past year, as countries grappled with dealing with the pandemic, we have witnessed large rallying efforts by governments, private sector and global philanthropy towards health (tech and research), direct service delivery, and education. While there is no denying that these areas of spending are important, there are fears within the sector that other social issues, including addressing sexual violence against children, will be deprioritized.⁶⁵

Although direct correlations to reduced aid allocations and de-prioritizing funding for combatting the sexual exploitation of children can be made, it is widely assumed that lower overall aid would translate to lesser funds and investments.

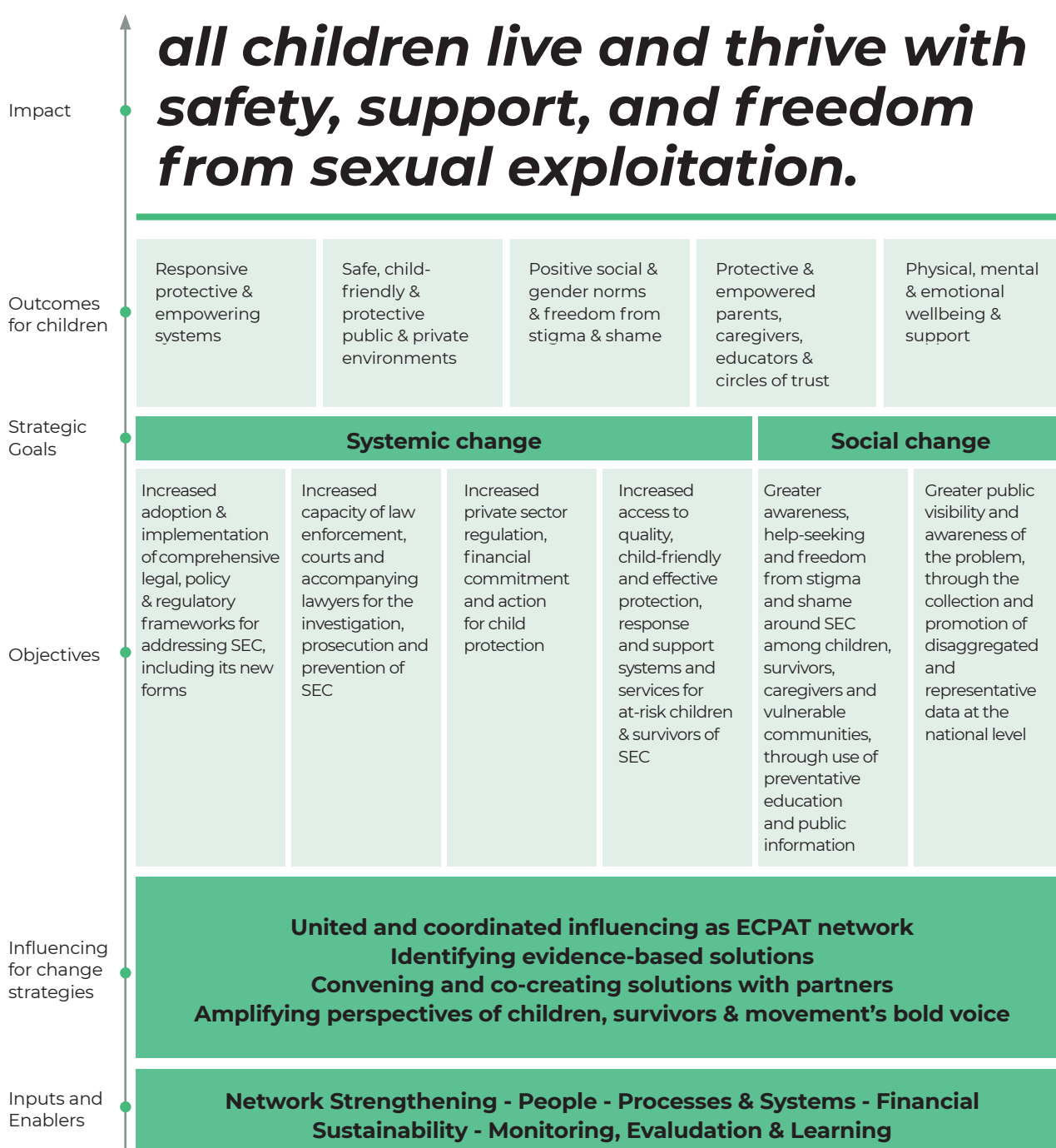
Research and advocacy efforts are central to keeping the overall issue of violence against children, and specifically the sexual exploitation of children, front and centre of policy and decision-making, translating to efforts in addressing sexual violence and exploitation.

ECPAT will continue to monitor this evolving context and has considered these findings in the development of this strategic framework, in order to stay agile in this constantly evolving landscape so that together as a network in over 100 countries, and with our partners, we can continue to make shared progress towards ending the sexual exploitation of children, in line with the SDGs.

Strategic Goals and Objectives 2021-2025

Theory of change diagram

(diagram is updated as of 8 April)



Measuring our collective impact and worldwide action to end the sexual exploitation of children

ECPAT will develop and monitor progress against a clear framework of what countries need to do or have in place in order to more effectively respond to the sexual exploitation of children. This framework includes our strategic goals and objectives, as well as a set of evolving influencing indicators to measure progress collectively agreed by the ECPAT network.

This framework forms the basis of our worldwide action to end the sexual exploitation of children. An important part of our impact measuring efforts will be the establishment of baselines and the development of national action plans that reflect both the national context and current priorities.

ECPAT's influencing will be evidence-based and designed in collaboration across our network to remain measurable at national level and strategically contribute to ECPAT's collective, global agenda.

Our new approach to collective influencing will guide our research, communications, programmatic work, network strengthening and fundraising priorities. Hence, measuring collective impact will be at the heart of this strategic period.



Photo by Robert Collins on Unsplash

Strategic Goal 1: Systemic Change

ECPAT will work towards achieving Systemic Change by implementing the following four objectives:

OBJECTIVE 1: Increased adoption and implementation of comprehensive legal, policy and regulatory frameworks for addressing the sexual exploitation of children, including its new forms.

Legal, policy, and regulatory frameworks provide the essential foundation on which to act against sexual exploitation of children, different types of which need specific legislative and policy responses. The ultimate outcome of this objective is ensuring national contexts where all laws, regulations, and policies are in place to be able to adequately prevent and prosecute different types of child sexual exploitation.

We will pursue specific, purposeful, and results-oriented influencing, research and programmatic actions towards the realization of desired legal, policy, and practice frameworks. We will champion change with decision-makers including parliamentarians, intergovernmental bodies, law enforcement and the private sector to improve and harmonize relevant laws and policies with international standards. We will analyze national legal frameworks on the sexual exploitation of children using ECPAT legal checklists and promote the adaptation of Luxembourg Guidelines and correct terminology in laws, policies, and across the media. ECPAT programmes will improve the capacity of legal professionals to support and represent children who experienced sexual exploitation and prosecute these crimes. As part of our worldwide action, ECPAT will also inspire and engage citizens to demand better laws and policies.

Measures of success and indicators:

Progress and impact of this objective will be measured against indicators for national, regional, and international policy and legal changes, and systems and regulations regarding the sexual exploitation of children.

a.

Number of countries developing new or strengthening existing laws and policies on the sexual exploitation of children

b.

Number of countries developing new or implementing existing national child protection strategies (e.g. National Action Plan, National Referral Mechanism) which adequately address the sexual exploitation of children

c.

Number of countries for which sexual exploitation of children is mentioned in the relevant concluding observations (CRC/OPSC/ACERWC) or working group report (UPR)

Objective 2: Increased capacity of law enforcement, courts and accompanying lawyers for the investigation, prosecution, and prevention of sexual exploitation of children.

By and large, in many countries where laws are in place, law enforcement capacity, resources, follow-up, corruption, understanding and awareness of services and laws, and barriers to access to justice may pose a challenge. Additionally, national law enforcement mechanisms should have the capacity, training and opportunities to collaborate both within national borders and across borders to investigate and prosecute perpetrators. Reporting these crimes will only reap desired results for children who have experienced sexual exploitation when the mechanisms to respond justly are capable and have adequate resources. ECPAT will advocate for this and provide support in designing and running capacity development activities for law enforcement mechanisms.

We will research effective and efficient systems and responses for law enforcement and promote what works around the world. In addition to response approaches, we will also focus on prevention-based, proactive and child rights-based approaches to law enforcement. We will leverage our on-ground presence in 100+ countries to facilitate multi-country collaboration, particularly between countries of origin of perpetrators and children who experienced sexual exploitation on elements stoked by economic disparity, such as the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.

Measures of success and indicators:

Improved capacity of national and international law enforcement agencies to prioritize and intervene effectively against the sexual exploitation of children will be measured to determine progress and impact of the ECPAT network.

a.

Number of countries with law enforcement units and stakeholder groups such as lawyers and judges with special expertise on addressing the sexual exploitation of children

b.

Number of countries with established and effective national databases connected to INTERPOL's ICSE database

c.

Number of cross-sectoral and transnational joint actions against the sexual exploitation of children comprising law enforcement and other stakeholders, including civil society)

Objective 3: Increased private sector regulation, financial commitment and action for child protection.

Private sector engagement is part of ECPAT's multi-stakeholder response, engaging not only business but also intergovernmental bodies, governments, local communities, and with children to create comprehensive protective environments for children. Building on our progress in the travel and tourism sector, we will advocate for binding human rights standards for multiple private sector industries to specifically include children's rights and child protection measures, including in the context of sustainable development.

We will promote the implementation of codes of conduct (national codes and The Code⁶⁶) and preventive mechanisms specific to different professional industries for self-regulation as well as meeting mandates set by government and other regulatory bodies such as tourism authorities, trade associations, chambers of commerce, and national regulatory bodies for online communication platforms and Internet service providers. Our private sector engagement will also entail ensuring that staff in the relevant sectors are trained in skills needed to prevent and respond to suspected instances of sexual exploitation of children, in addition to ensuring that members of mainstream and social media are educated on the appropriate sexual exploitation of children terminology.

Measures of success and indicators:

Progress and impact on this objective will be measured against indicators for improved private sector interventions and policies, and improved capacity to eliminate the sexual exploitation of children in and through their institutions.

a.

Number of companies taking action as members of The Code and/or part of national codes of conduct for child protection in the context of travel and tourism

b.

Actions taken, and laws and regulations for private sector adopted by national governments (and regional mechanisms where applicable) to address the sexual exploitation of children

c.

Number of the sexual exploitation of children prevention and protection measures adopted or implemented by national/regional/ global associations of target private sector industries

Objective 4: Increased access to quality, child-friendly and effective protection, response and support systems and services for at-risk children and children who have experienced the sexual exploitation of children.

In addition to prevention-based systems and frameworks, response-based child protection systems and robust safeguarding systems and policies should be led and owned by national and local governments. ECPAT, in particular the ECPAT members working at the national and local level, will contribute to strengthening the support systems of countries with training, coaching, and other capacity development on the best practice responses to the sexual exploitation of children. Whilst our focus will be on specialist services, these skills and knowledge should be mainstreamed across all areas of frontline services, including those that are community-based or school-based, close to where children can access them.

We will conduct innovative research, amplify existing evidence and collect on-ground successes to inform best-practice training programmes and initiatives for welfare and frontline service staff. A key part of efforts in this area would be to assess knowledge, attitudes and practices related to addressing sexual exploitation of children amongst frontline workers, and conduct training and coaching of specialist as well as generalist welfare and frontline workers. We will pilot and manage model programmes for limited periods to mainstream evidence-based best practices before the programmes are handed over to the national governments (e.g. Child Advocacy Centre model). We will engage with people who experienced sexual exploitation when they were children to define needs-led (rather than resource-led) response and support services, and to advocate for and support the realization of such services.

Measures of success and indicators:

Increased availability, quality and appropriateness of survivor support services (psychological, medical, legal, etc.) and victim-centred approaches will help measure success for this objective.

a.

Number of countries with adequate support services for children who have experienced the sexual exploitation of children (e.g. through Child Advocacy Centres/ Barnahus approaches)

b.

Number of countries with evidence-based capacity building and information for service providers to support children who have experienced the sexual exploitation of children and children at risk for the sexual exploitation of children

c.

Number of countries with victim-centric approach in support and justice systems for children

Strategic Goal 2: Social Change

ECPAT will work towards achieving Social Change by implementing the following two objectives:

Objective 5: Greater awareness, help-seeking and freedom from stigma and shame around the sexual exploitation of children among children, survivors, caregivers and vulnerable communities, through use of preventative education and public information.

The engagement of children within their circles of trust is essential for prevention work. In addition, many national contexts have communities that are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation of children and should be specifically engaged, such as indigenous and/or marginalized communities, migrants, and refugees. Whilst such prevention-based engagement should be the responsibility of governments through existing systems like school curriculum or social welfare, model or example projects help fill gaps, stimulate action, and mainstream interventions.

Therefore, ECPAT will focus on advocating for and supporting the design and implementation of quality, plain-language, evidence-based preventative education and training - for a range of audiences, but particularly for children, caregivers and vulnerable communities. This includes researching, promoting and supporting approaches of disseminating age-appropriate and inclusive sex and sexuality education/reproductive health for every child; promoting help-seeking among children and vulnerable communities about concerns, risks and vulnerabilities related to the sexual exploitation of children; and engaging with survivors to understand how to improve preventative education and implement their recommendations. We will collaborate with governments and others to address push-factors that are known from research to increase vulnerability to the sexual exploitation of children such as economic disparity and economic hardship, which vulnerable groups are particularly prone to. We will also advocate for and support work to reduce the demand side of the sexual exploitation of children (e.g. offender intervention and rehabilitation) on one hand and on the other promote the establishment and quality improvement of reporting mechanisms like hotlines and helplines.

Measures of success and indicators:

Increased public awareness and reduced social stigma relating to help-seeking and the sexual exploitation of children issues as well as increased availability of demystified information about sex and sexuality to prevent shame, stigma and taboo are the main measures of success for this objective.

a.

Number of countries with preventative education initiatives targeting children and vulnerable communities

b.

Number of countries with mandatory sex/reproductive health education and curricula/training addressing the sexual exploitation of children

c.

Public information campaigns on sex and sexuality focused on encouraging help-seeking and eliminating shame, stigma and taboo

Objective 6: Greater public visibility and awareness of the problem, through the collection and promotion of disaggregated and representative data at the national level.

Availability of reliable evidence to inform prevention and response activities makes the problem more visible and the gaps clearer, both necessary to end sexual exploitation of children. ECPAT's focus is to promote governments to take ownership and responsibility of the dire need for data, even though evidence collection is often a gap filled by civil society. We will therefore gather evidence in illustrative projects to stimulate and model action that can then be taken up by the governments themselves.

During this strategic framework period, we will focus on streamlining our evidence gathering approaches by designing practical research methodologies and measurement tools for understanding the sexual exploitation of children; running example/model research projects and then support countries to replicate these studies themselves; and designing and making available evidence-based guidance to help facilitate better quality research (e.g. ethical guidelines). We will stay on top of this rapidly changing problem with research used to direct and underpin our influencing (e.g. live-streaming, gender dimensions, economic disparities between offenders and victims) and work with existing and relevant large-scale research initiatives to ensure sexual exploitation of children indicators are integrated.

Measures of success and indicators:

Progress and impact on this objective will be measured against indicators for availability of national data sets and information made public by governments about child sexual exploitation.

a.

National data sets about the sexual exploitation of children made public by government include information about reported and prosecuted cases of the sexual exploitation of children

b.

National data sets made public by government providing information about the sexual exploitation of children which is disaggregated for gender and age, location, types of abuse, and are collected and made public

c.

Evidence-based public information campaigns on the extent of the problem, prevention and recourse

Influencing Context

The complex and evolving problem of the sexual exploitation of children requires a whole of society approach and joint effort by the most important stakeholders to make positive systemic and social change happen. For ECPAT, this means using powerful research and policy, persuasive advocacy, united campaigning, compelling partnerships, bold communications, and the amplification of the voices and perspectives of children to influence governments, intergovernmental institutions, the private sector, civil society and the general public, including children themselves.

Like the problem of sexual exploitation of children, the influencing landscape has also evolved rapidly in the three decades of our existence. We endeavour to track this landscape and continuously improve our effectiveness in addressing its changing nature. We have observed efforts to win support for the cause of children from decision-makers and the wider public⁶⁷, use of influencing strategies to bring about changes in the structural causes of poverty and injustice⁶⁸ and a variety of actions from public activities and events like demonstrations, marches, mass letter writing initiatives and human rights education.⁶⁹

Challenges and Opportunities

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to mould the world in ways that exacerbate existing challenges, shifting priorities of decision-makers, businesses and societies, creating the need to find new and resilient solutions, and create a more complex environment for influencing work. Possibilities have been severely constrained for persuasive in-person advocacy, whether through formalized meetings or informal and opportunistic engagement moments.⁷⁰ At the same time, there is the challenge of clear and purposeful shifts in priorities in policy-making, resource allocation and public attention away from rights-based matters, including child rights, to more visible issues of public health, education, and economic reconstruction. Policy-makers and advocacy coalitions are busy in unprecedented ways to formulate solutions with speed to this increasingly challenging environment.⁷¹ Whilst influencing itself has become more difficult and competitive as a result of these challenges, there is strong potential, space and expectation for innovative and evidence-generating policy actors such as ECPAT to develop solutions, convene stakeholders, and make concrete recommendations for the way forward.

Long-existing challenges for civil society and public action in particular for rights and access to justice have worsened, due to both politics and pandemic. Personal movement, freedoms and privacy have been severely restricted in and beyond lockdowns, with several countries imposing extended emergency-time restrictions on civil liberties.⁷² Whilst 2020 still saw peoples' movements in countries around the world – Hong Kong, India, Lebanon, United States, Nigeria and several others – much of the momentum generated in 2019 slowed down to an extent because of lockdowns⁷³ and political crackdown on dissent. Organizing, particularly community organizing schemes have become challenging with mandatory lockdowns and the threat of super-spreader events. All this has unfortunately meant that it has become harder to monitor the problem, respond to calls for help,⁷⁴ engage with partners and hold decision-makers accountable. Citizens as well as activists are forced to work from home, maintain social distancing, practice safety, care



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for ill loved ones, home-school their children, all the while find new, digital and distant ways to keep the pressure on to enact change.

According to the CIVICUS Monitor, which tracks civic space in 196 countries, even before the pandemic only three per cent of the world's population lived in countries where the core civic freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression were widely respected, even though they are essential to the health and vitality of civil society.⁷⁵ This shrinking of civil society space has been in parallel with the resurgence of far-right populism, nationalism, surveillance, extra-judicial means of justice, deepening social fissures on the lines of religion, race, ethnicity and others, all underpinned by shrinking space for democratic accountability, dissent and scientific evidence.⁷⁶ Some of these changes are leading to an increase of so called “moral panic” around children's rights and human rights, including attempts to curb or ban sex education. No continent has been left untouched by the alarming rise of the last decade's shift in ideas, ideologies, and political support for the roll-back of fundamental human and constitutional rights. Fortunately, these trends have also helped consolidate social movements for the purpose of upholding and growing people's access to rights, justice and equality, across the socio-economic milieu, such as MeToo, Black Lives Matter, School Strike for Climate, Marriage Equality and others.

However, growing socio-political resonance, engagement and participation of the public has, unfortunately, led to dilution of public attention in a ‘cause’ landscape that is competitive to an unprecedented degree.⁷⁷ Media cycles have become 24/7 all 365 days of the year, adding to an information overload and shortened attention span. Media competition for viewership and subscription has contributed to sensationalization and depiction of violence on a more constant basis, potentially leading to increased desensitization and apathy.⁷⁸ The media space is also increasingly fraught with more independent outlets of varying quality and agenda, contributing to a heftier body of fake news and rumour mills. With the growth of easy and freely available messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, but also Twitter, dissemination of fake news and rumours has also grown, causing serious challenges of

misinformation, mob justice and lowering of community trust.⁷⁹ All these have increased barriers to effective influencing. On the flipside, however, the growing landscape has also offered a tremendous level of opportunity for engagement, amplification, new partnerships and ways to establish entrepreneurial initiatives and alliances between civil society organizations and with concerned members of the public.

Engagement and partnership with the general public for direct action, political pressure, social norms change and casting light on invisible issues has been made possible by the advent and the phenomenal growth of the internet, social media, and multiplied access, thanks to the availability of cheap smartphones. In the digital environment, people can stay informed on issues from around the world, express solidarity, find activist communities, take direct action and play a role in amplifying the reach of campaigns.⁸⁰ This exponential increase in online activity in the past decade has led to an equally rapid increase in the generation, storage, and use of big data, which allows companies, and governments to track people and their behaviour to make near-accurate predictions on relationships, preferences, risk factors, future behaviours and much more. A lot of this information is stored and harvested by large social media corporations, such as Facebook, to help marketers target consumers in smart, data-informed and effective ways.⁸¹ Whilst privacy concerns are abound, this growth of social media marketing has impacted digital influencing in a big way. Organic, content and story-driven tactics of the last decade can no longer hope to generate the same degree of success, without the paid help of social media algorithm-based marketing. Civil society organizations now need not only digital campaigning staff to help increase their influence but also require digital marketing budgets to fuel their campaigns, and subsequently reach their desired audiences.

The growth of social media has also led to a new type of influencer—social media influencers⁸². These are celebrities in their own right, many of them young, with massive online followings, their own areas of focus and presence that is open to partnerships to bring attention to issues like girls' empowerment, mental health, ending violence, bullying and others relevant to their followers.

The past decade has also seen the important and encouraging increase in the visibility of children and young people engaged in issues that matter to them. Driven by conviction, courage and the ability to mobilize other children and adults, we have witnessed social movements and the strong influencing power of Malala Yousafzai, Greta Thunberg, Emma Gonzalez, Mari Copeny, Desmond Napoles and so many more from around the world. Child and youth participation, detailed in article 12 of the UNCRC⁸³, has become a strategy of key focus for many civil society actors engaged in the child rights and protection space. No doubt, children and young people are becoming increasingly important as contributors, partners and even leaders on issues that affect them around the world⁸⁴.

Addressing the new context

Civil society and social movements are using this newly established interconnectedness of the world to their advantage. Although social fissures have been brought to the forefront of social discourse, there is also a new 'wokeness'⁸⁵ with young and old alike discovering thriving global communities that care about the same issues. They are banding together against social problems that extend beyond their own neighbourhoods to the furthest corners of the world. Digital forms of influencing and organizing are particularly adept at maximizing 'people power' to shift systems and societies. Actively managed supporter engagement strategies⁸⁶ are helping civil society to lead people on the journey from readers of information to engagers to supporters and community leaders. At this level, organizations are leveraging the voices and perspectives of these leaders, often young people and children, to highlight critical solutions.⁸⁷

Collaboration, co-creation, and coalition-building between allies of different perspectives, knowledge, networks and circles of influence are making transnational and multi-level influencing not only possible but also far more effective in bringing about widespread awareness, action and change. In the context of shrinking civil society spaces, uniting at the national level with others can help child rights and protection organizations tackle the growing socio-political challenges more powerfully. The most impactful organizations have established strong internal mechanisms and decision-making bodies that help in sharing knowledge, resources and amplifying influence. ECPAT too started as a small grassroots campaign in South East Asia and through partnerships grew into a worldwide movement of civil society actors, governed by the international assembly, working against the sexual exploitation of children across geographies, forms and levels.

The competitive media and issue landscape has also provided space for impressive levels of [creativity, storytelling and powerful imagery](#), helping civil society organizations cut through impersonal statistics and tell human stories that move, inspire and push people towards action. Even at the global level, stories and visuals about the work organizations are doing in countries and in communities have the power to change norms, attitudes, behaviours, values and inspire citizens to increase pressure on decision-makers to act. Stories that put people at the centre help issues move from an environment of apathy to ground-breaking resonance, as they demonstrate hope, resilience, evidence and reality. In this milieu, however, data has also continued to grow in importance as the provider of evidence and substance necessary to persuade, demonstrate scale and provide the scientific balance necessary to differentiate from fake news, rumours and emotionally charged actions across the political spectrum.



Influencing For Change Strategies

ECPAT is first and foremost a global influencing network. We leverage a wide range of systematic efforts, including advocacy and campaigning, at all levels with our Secretariat and members to achieve our strategic objectives and contribute to positive and resilient systemic and social change for children. The diverse work by ECPAT members addresses the sexual exploitation of children, and contributes to the wealth of our collective evidence and data, all forming a solid basis for ECPAT's influencing work. In order for our collective efforts to be successful, it is imperative to identify solutions that reflect and can be adapted to the realities of local and national contexts. The unique structure of ECPAT is deeply embedded in local contexts and allows us to reach and influence decision-makers, partners, media, and the public on national, regional, and at the global level.

Underpinning Strategy: Addressing the sexual exploitation of children in the digital and offline environments

Digital environments play an increasingly pivotal role in children's lives. Indeed, children (under 18) account for an estimated one in three Internet users worldwide, and attention to digital divides between and within countries means that ever more children will benefit from the opportunities afforded by the digital world for learning, play and communication. At the same time, there are clear and identifiable risks for children associated with digital environments, including the risk of sexual exploitation.

Sexual exploitation of children occurring in and through digital environments is inextricably linked to the sexual exploitation of children in the offline world, both in terms of manifestation and impact. And while there are important distinctions, to address one in isolation from the other is increasingly counterproductive. It is therefore crucial to understand and address the linkages between the sexual exploitation of children in digital and offline environments. It means addressing evidence gaps, listening to children and survivors of sexual exploitation, influencing action, leveraging cross-sectoral partnerships and advocating across our network for policy and protection frameworks against the sexual exploitation of children in all environments, including digital environments. All forms of sexual exploitation of children have some level of online dimension. Given its cross-cutting nature, it underpins all efforts by ECPAT to address the sexual exploitation of children. It means applying a holistic but nuanced lens to the sexual exploitation of children in all its forms and its implication across the digital environments.

United and coordinated influencing as ECPAT network

During this strategic period, ECPAT will invest time and resources to capitalize on our unique network structure and focus our collective influencing work on achieving our strategic goals and objectives by monitoring progress against the influencing indicators jointly determined by our network. Through wider network representation at national and international fora and through stronger collaboration between existing ECPAT members, identifying potential new members and together with the Secretariat, we will mainstream these evolving influencing indicators across our network and co-create efforts to drive a multi-level and coordinated push for our collective agenda.

As a global network, we will identify international and national priority areas within our influencing indicator framework in order to inform targeted influencing strategies, building on successful models from within our movement. We will develop tailored messaging towards all our key stakeholders for systemic and social change, including governments, law enforcement organizations, the private sector, civil society, intergovernmental stakeholders, children, parents and caregivers. We will strategically pursue our collective strategic goals and objectives and push for progress against the priority influencing indicators in a united and coordinated way.

We aim to increase our ability to measure and maximize our collective impact in this strategic period, and engage in evidence-based and coordinated influencing to achieve progress. We will engage with relevant advocacy targets in their respective countries (through our national representation), on regional and global levels and when these countries are under review by the relevant human rights mechanisms (as a joint effort between the national membership and the ECPAT Secretariat).

ECPAT will establish a strong coordination and management capacity for movement-wide influencing, which will ensure strengthened capacity, stronger collaboration within our network, effective M&E and bespoke cross-members and cross-functional support.

Beyond our own network, ECPAT's external networks, partnerships, collaboration with cross-sectoral stakeholders as well as our membership of key national, regional and global partnerships and initiatives strategically position us as the leading civil society movement to effectively address the sexual exploitation of children.



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Identifying evidence-based solutions

Objective evidence is critical to informing prevention and response activities that will genuinely address sexual exploitation of children. Over the course of three decades of ECPAT's existence, the body and quality of evidence have grown, and clear advances have been made in improving reporting, and exposing sexual exploitation. The recent release of our set of five summary papers on the manifestations of sexual exploitation of children provides a comprehensive overview of the current evidence and trends. However, these crimes still remain largely hidden and poorly understood in many contexts around the world.

Whilst evidence generation is often a gap filled by civil society, it is governments that should take ownership of the needed data on this topic to inform the best prevention and response activities for children in their jurisdictions. We prioritize our research efforts to develop and improve ethical research methodologies and measurement tools, and run model research projects. This enables us and our partners to stay on top of emerging issues for this rapidly shifting problem and create more effective and relevant solutions to address it. ECPAT and other civil society organizations can then also focus on generating evidence to set examples and stimulate and model actions for governments, leading to more effective interventions. In the process of advocating for improved evidence, we will shed light on this issue through collaborations and research actions in our global network, together with collaborations with expert research, academia and technical organizations.

In this strategic period, we will work to streamline and enhance standards and systematic influencing indicators for measuring progress in preventing and responding to sexual exploitation of children. We will then build on our body of evidence and improve our mechanisms for making this data available publicly. Data is gathered and presented at national level for best practical application by ECPAT members, but by using some consistent core indicators for our influencing we are then able to combine and frame evidence in regional, thematic or global scales for broad, and even global, relevance.

Research fuels ECPAT's collective engine with new data, knowledge and evidence to enable and amplify our role as the global knowledge leader in the efforts against the sexual exploitation of children. In this strategic period, research and evidence generation will continue to contribute to collective influencing and the systematic and consistent impact measurement of actions and efforts against the sexual exploitation of children, in particular to stay on top of this rapidly changing problem with research packaged and disseminated by the network (e.g. live-streaming, gender dimensions, economic disparities between offenders and children who have experienced sexual exploitation). Amplifying our evidence and work in this area will include, in addition to strengthening existing partnerships, collaboration with relevant large-scale research initiatives to ensure the sexual exploitation of children indicators are integrated.

Convening and co-creating solutions with partners

Sexual exploitation of children is a vast, hidden and complex crime that cannot be ended by any single sector working alone, or by any single approach. The strategy to combat the sexual exploitation of children requires comprehensive, child-focused responses and wide-ranging and multi-sectoral partnerships, alliances and collaboration. The power to convene, leverage and co-create solutions within such partnerships is a key organizational strength of ECPAT, given our role in global, regional and national initiatives that harness the collective and transformative power of governments, organizations, communities and children to tackle this gross violation of child rights. In this strategic period, we will expand and consolidate our existing sectoral partnerships and look for, and seize opportunities to link to new partnerships. This strategy includes focused efforts also at the national level by ECPAT members to foster effective partnerships and co-create solutions that work in each context.

We will build on successes resulting from our work with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and key organizations in the sector leading to new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC) Guidelines and Explanatory Report, and convening a global steering committee for the Global Boys' Initiative, to expand our convening and co-creating efforts to onboard new partners, including community organizations and faith-based organizations at the national level, and accelerate progress on ending the sexual exploitation of children.

In this strategic period, we will leverage our partnerships to hold governments, private sector industries and other key actors and decision-makers accountable and increase financial investments in the child rights space. At the national level, private sector engagement will be part of our multi-stakeholder responses to create comprehensive protective environments for children. Acknowledging that the needs of children are often forgotten, ignored or simply not considered, we will aim to generate awareness and knowledge on issues related to the sexual exploitation of children in relation to business, contributing to greater prioritization of children's best interests. Tools such as The Code for the protection of children in the travel and tourism sector will be contextualized and positioned among national codes of conduct and initiatives that contribute to the implementation of the legal frameworks and government-regulated child protection standards, which should be obligatory for all businesses operating in a given country.

We will ensure strategic and substantive alignment between our country level strategies and the international strategy, organized around **the four priority areas** identified in the SECTT Summary Paper to enhance private sector engagement across all relevant sectors:

Evidence-based awareness raising, training and sensitization to encourage behavioral change

1.

Comprehensive and sustainable prevention through proactive engagement of the private sector and other key actors, to create protective environment for children

2.

Robust legal frameworks and effective law enforcement (an online mechanism based on key influencing indicators that will be developed through the new ECPAT website will serve to track progress)

3.

Access to child and gender sensitive justice, protection, comprehensive care, and full recovery.

4.

In this strategic period, and especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a growing need to keep the issue of the sexual exploitation of children on the agenda of governments, civil society, private sector and philanthropy, as the pandemic has influenced political agendas away from addressing sexual violence and exploitation of children. We will strategically convene and co-create advocacy efforts with partners to keep the issue on the agenda of governments through national and/or global aid commitments and ensure that budgetary allocations towards the issue will continue to feature strongly in the national 'build back better' agendas. These efforts will also include leveraging our existing and future alliances, partnerships and platforms such as 'solutions summit series to secure political and financial commitments from global leaders towards addressing violence against children more widely, and specifically as part of post COVID-19 reconstruction.

Amplifying the perspectives of children, survivors and the movement's bold voice

Children's participation is a right, not an opportunity.

“Children who experience sexual exploitation and childhood survivors must be included on a voluntary basis in the design, implementation, and evaluation of all interventions addressing child sexual exploitation aimed at support, rehabilitation, and social inclusion”

- The 2020 survivor's manifest⁸⁸ -

We seek to amplify the perspectives of children who have been affected by sexual exploitation in two ways. On the one hand, through qualitative research driven by the ECPAT Secretariat following research-specific ethical considerations. We commit to increasing possibilities for learning and sharing of knowledge in the network. On the other hand, through firsthand experiences with survivors of child sexual exploitation. Working through many ECPAT members we will engage in initiatives such as running survivor and youth advisory groups, providing direct psycho-social interventions and rehabilitation services, to running child protection centers also in high-risk areas – which are leveraged to involve children's perspectives in organizational decision-making. The engagement of survivors informs and shapes our policies, campaigns, research, and training. This takes place at the community and school level, reaching teachers, caregivers and professional helpers, sensitizing them to be able to recognize affected children and react supportively. Equally, these voices and perspectives are amplified by ECPAT through capacity building and joint projects to address law enforcement, judicial and medical professionals, e.g. through Learning Action Partnerships that unite NGOs, state structures, UN agencies and academia for zero tolerance towards the sexual exploitation of children.

While acknowledging the extraordinary body of expertise within the ECPAT network of incorporating the voices of those we seek to protect, we also know that we need to become better. Children's experiences of sexual abuse and exploitation continues to be under-represented in local, regional, and national efforts. As a consequence, the needs of those children are not fully understood or met, meaning that the remedies, as called for in the Convention of the Rights of the Child and other international instruments, are not being provided. Societal and cultural apprehensions continue to hamper the participation and involvement of children who experienced sexual exploitation. We also continue to observe well-intended efforts of involving survivors that lead to re-traumatization or put children in danger by disclosing their identities or directing unwanted attention to them, which could result in aggressive comments towards them in digital and offline spaces.

While many concerns can be eased by following ethical guidelines and child-appropriate approaches for child participation and safe techniques for engaging children with experiences of sexual exploitation, it does not solve a different problem connected to under-representation of the voices of children who were affected by sexual exploitation. Experience tells us: the vast

majority of child sexual exploitation victims never come forward, make a report, or get in contact with any support service or police. For our collective work to reflect also the voices of those 'invisible' children, ECPAT members will continue to explore multi-faceted solutions. Successful examples include low threshold online chats that allow children to reach out anonymously, using social media, without pressure or fear of disclosure, and peer to peer support among children and youth. At the same time, we will address the root causes of why victims do not come forward, including a lack of safe, confidential child and gender sensitive reporting and complaints procedures.

We recognize the key role of front line service providers and child helplines in supporting children with experiences of sexual exploitation. Seeking to understand and building on the strengths of such services is a priority for amplifying the voices of children who have had these experiences. We will strengthen existing relationships and build new partnerships with child helplines, internet hotlines, support and outreach programmes and other existing survivor groups to access data and information they collect in their interactions with children and use it to strategically guide ECPAT's work.

ECPAT's story is one that started with grassroots action and an unwavering bold and confident voice, demanding urgent changes against the sexual exploitation of children. As our organization has evolved to becoming a leading global voice and network, our successes, impact and demands for change have only become bolder. In the new strategic period, we will leverage and amplify the collective voice and stories of our movement to make a compelling case for children on all platforms that count. Our communication efforts in this period will use the power of our evidence, collect and tell powerful stories that will underpin our collective influencing, inspire people to respond to our calls to action and push for change.



The Organizational Context

ECPAT Network

For children to be effectively protected against sexual exploitation, it requires many stakeholders to play a role. States have the primary obligation to provide strong prevention, protection, support, and reintegration and compensation services for children. The private sector also plays a critical role as businesses have tremendous political influence and enormous social and environmental impact on the communities children live in. The role of civil society is cross-cutting. While they often play an important role in providing frontline services for rehabilitation and reintegration, they are also uniquely positioned to bridge local communities, government, and the private sector.

Therefore, ECPAT is a global civil society network that seeks to advocate for broad, wide scale systemic and societal change in how the sexual exploitation of children is addressed at national, regional, and global levels. Currently comprising 122 civil society organizations and CSO coalitions in 104 countries, our network leads targeted and collective influencing efforts backed up by knowledge, specific research, voices of survivors, and the experience and expertise encompassed within our membership.

Our network is what makes ECPAT unique and makes our collective impact more than the sum of our impact at national level. ECPAT grew out of a campaign in South East Asia in the early 1990s. Our organic structure is brought together by a voluntary spirit fueled by common goals and visions. Our collective effort depends on inspiration rather than on rules and regulations. The ECPAT network is therefore both an enabler of this strategy but equally needs to be enabled by it in order to maximize impact where it counts, at the national level.

ECPAT is currently governed by an International Board of Trustees composed of ten Regional Representatives elected by network members in their respective regions, plus a Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer, elected by the full network membership. ECPAT's global Secretariat is based in Bangkok, with some Regional Coordinators being placed remotely working for and with regional members and partners from within the respective regions. The first year of this Strategic Framework period will see the outcomes of a review of ECPAT's governance structures, including the Board (see under Processes and Systems below). Part of this process will also involve reviewing the organizational structure of the Secretariat – called the ECPAT Review – and defining its future ways of working in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ECPAT Secretariat will lead the process of developing ECPAT's collective influencing indicators with the ECPAT network and provide a global monitoring base for national implementation. This work will be supported by targeted research, programmatic expertise and specific national and international influencing efforts towards ending the sexual exploitation of children.

The Organizational Enablers

Network Strengthening

To make further progress towards ECPAT's collective vision, strategic efforts will be undertaken to further increase the network's strength in the following areas:

- 1 Increased diversity:** As the sexual exploitation of children continues to evolve and increase, we require further specialization for a strengthened and broader network-wide response to new manifestations and new settings of this crime. The diversity of our global network is one of ECPAT's core strengths and we will continue to build, promote and capitalize on this diversity towards our collective success story, guided by collective influencing indicators as well as the primary manifestations of sexual exploitation of children present nationally. Our evolving network structure is driven by quality not quantity, with diversification largely taking place nationally, which helps emphasize ECPAT's role as a knowledge leader on all manifestations of the sexual exploitation of children in a given country.
- 2 Increased collective impact:** The influencing indicators developed collaboratively within our network will provide the strategic centre of gravity for us going forward and guide and reinvigorate network-wide collaboration. We will invest in promoting national dialogues among network members to help identify national priorities out of this set of influencing indicators. We will then develop bespoke national activity plans that reflect current realities and context of members, capitalize on their strengths and more organically fold into their existing annual work plans. Eventually, this will help create the link between national, regional, and international efforts and ensure that the work of ECPAT members makes a clear and measurable contribution to the collective effort of ECPAT as a whole.
- 3 A stronger ECPAT brand:** Our collective success greatly depends on the strength of ECPAT's brand, harmonized communication and high level of consistency in using the visual brand elements like the ECPAT logo. In an increasingly connected world and globalized communication, we will place greater strategic attention to the use and alignment of the ECPAT brand, common language, tone of voice, and visual identity both at national and international level.
- 4 Regionalization:** As the sexual exploitation of children has increasingly developed into a truly global problem that transcends cultures, religions, and national borders, it calls for a well-coordinated global response that is implemented in a harmonized way across countries. Regions are critical for our work as they provide a concrete link between local and global efforts. They can help link international obligations, commitments, and decisions to national efforts with all relevant internal and external stakeholders. Given the strategic importance of regions, ECPAT will sharpen its focus on network engagement as well as advocacy and partnerships. In this, the ECPAT Secretariat will also continue to assess capacity needs that directly enable collective impact and develop strategies to address priority thematic and functional opportunities and skills.

The external Evaluation of ECPAT in the fall of 2020 confirmed a strong association between the levels of member engagement, collaboration and network effectiveness and the availability of Regional Coordinators, who help facilitate, maintain and increase collaboration, communication and exchange within ECPAT. We will expand on both this model as well as the several successful examples of peer-to-peer collaboration and network-wide initiatives led by members without regional or Secretariat coordination. Where possible, Regional Coordinators together with the national network members in their region will lead in identifying national and regional priority areas and the related targeted activities at the national and regional level. Country Scorecards for all countries where ECPAT has network representation will further guide our efforts to develop and strengthen our network.

Regional coordination will also continue to build on our successful collaboration with regional offices of relevant INGOs and UN agencies, regional mechanisms and entities to foster cooperation and political dialogue among their member states. We will grow our success stories - with the African Union, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Grupo de Acción Regional de las Américas (GARA), the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) – with coordinated regional advocacy efforts around specifically identified global and national priority areas. We will maintain and nurture our existing regional advocacy relationships, respond to new opportunities and facilitate inter-regional exchange through targeted regional coordination and influencing. This will require regional coordination or specific alternative solutions where regional coordination is not possible, along with ongoing commitment at all levels of ECPAT.

People

This Strategic Framework builds on decades of experience and commitment from the entire ECPAT network and especially our people. Solidarity amongst all people engaged in the ECPAT network has been key to our success, resilience and commitment over the years.

Culture and inspiring leadership across our entire network will continue to be important in this strategic period, role modelling accountability, integrity, transparency, collaboration, respect and trust, at national and global levels. We acknowledge that diversity of the people who make up our global network, staff and volunteers, is an important organizational value. We commit to investing in our people, at all levels, including in areas such as employment growth and development, financial, administrative and human resources systems and processes, the nurturing of talent and ensuring safety, and well-being for staff. We commit to actively promoting equal opportunity, diversity and development in our staff across the ECPAT network. Furthermore, we commit to nurturing and growing strong connections between people across the network, both facilitated by the ECPAT Secretariat and directly between members.



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Processes and systems

We commit to allocating, within member-level capacity, financial and human resources towards developing national priority actions towards the objectives of the Strategic Framework, as well as (human) resources to actively engage in network activities, support network functions and enable network-wide collaboration.

The Secretariat in its fundraising targets and budget allocations will give priority to sufficiently support core network coordination, facilitation and programming functions, while global programming actions would be prioritized towards actions that most benefit our global network, global outcomes that can support national and local level influencing and thus contribute to progress towards the goals and objectives of the Strategic Framework.

The afore-mentioned ECPAT Review, still ongoing at the time of writing this Strategic Framework – is a network-wide comprehensive exercise to review all ECPAT governance structures. It marks a watershed moment in our history and its importance to our future cannot be overstated. After three decades of incremental changes made to respond to evolving challenges and opportunities, both internally and externally, the ECPAT Review will provide directions to strengthen our continued relevance, capacity for impact, and future sustainability. These depend on defining and aligning with our shared identity - who we are as a network - and ensuring that ECPAT's structures (Assembly, Board, Secretariat), processes (for governance, management, producing outcomes) and the relationships between these elements and within the network as a whole are fit-for-purpose and effective. As such, the recommendations from the review process, covering function (purpose) and form (structures, ways of working, behaviours), result from an extensive process of internal and external engagement, ownership and buy-in. The recommendations most relevant to the entire network will be taken forward over the course of this strategic period.

Financial Sustainability

It is widely acknowledged that much greater political will and financial investment are needed to combat the sexual exploitation of children. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in funds being diverted towards addressing immediate needs in health, economic recovery and poverty reduction, potentially negatively affecting the global and national funds allocations to the children's rights space. As such, the pandemic exacerbates a longer downward trend in the commitment and allocation of funds to the sexual exploitation of children globally. Budget allocation towards child protection will be an ECPAT advocacy target at all levels. Understanding that the overall pool of funding is limited is also an opportunity for the network to leverage its strengths to actively pursue a newer form of advocacy mandate – donor advocacy – at national, regional, and global levels.

Sexual exploitation of children is not black and white. Global issues on migration and displacement, gender equity, education, poverty alleviation, forced labour etc., also need to be accounted for to combat the sexual exploitation of children. A multi-issue approach will help increase access to funds for the entire sector and can potentially reduce project funding as it can help funders and donors to shape their strategies in a more holistic manner.

We will increase our access and reach by partnering with existing donors and other organizations to jointly promote and advocate for increased funding from other areas within their peer group and on other platforms. In order to increase national and international budget for the child rights space, in particular for sexual exploitation of children, we will seek partnerships with donor alliances as another strategy to influence funding priorities. Additionally, ECPAT acknowledges the importance of investing in other income opportunities, such as private sector fundraising, online giving, grants from and relation building with high net worth individuals and foundations, and commits to diversify and grow our income base. This includes investing in the Secretariat's

capacity and process as well as in external networking and tapping into external knowledge sources and relationships.

Both Secretariat and network members will continue to collaborate on projects and initiatives to combat the sexual exploitation of children and jointly seek external funding to implement projects or influencing activities. We will continue to build on positive examples and successes in recent years. Efforts could also be initiated or led by network members in this area.

The ECPAT Secretariat will review its Fundraising Strategy⁸⁹ in 2021, taking into account the ambitions laid down in this Strategic Framework, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL)

ECPAT aspires to be a 'learning network'. While monitoring and evaluation gauge adherence to policy and accountability, learning allows us to measure and improve the effectiveness and impact of our work. In order to assess the 'collective impact' of the network and determine our progress against the framework, learning loops need to be created in order to generate knowledge and know-how, develop expertise, and inform planning.

Implementing such a system in a network will require significant investment of time and money in skill and knowledge development as well as accompanying technology to support the functions. These four years will be used towards piloting a collaborative MEL approach by building upon existing systems used by individual members, investing in presenting the collective findings in a more cohesive way, and scaling up successful and efficient methods. The Secretariat will prioritize investments in network wide measurement, in particular for progress against the strategic objectives.



ECPAT International Results Framework 2021-2025

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Goals	Objectives	Indicators
Strategic goal 1: Systemic change – strategic objectives for systemic change target policy makers and law enforcement; business and civil society; and frontline, social and service workers	Objective 1: Increased adoption and implementation of comprehensive legal, policy and regulatory frameworks for addressing the sexual exploitation of children, including its new forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of countries developing new or strengthening existing laws and policies on the sexual exploitation of children b. Number of countries developing new implementing existing national child protection strategies (e.g. National Action Plan, National Referral Mechanism) which adequately address the sexual exploitation of children c. Number of countries for which sexual exploitation of children is mentioned in the relevant concluding observations (CRC/OPSC/ACERWC) or working group report (UPR)
	Objective 2: : Increased capacity of law enforcement, courts and accompanying lawyers for the investigation, prosecution and prevention of sexual exploitation of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of countries with law enforcement units and stakeholder groups such as lawyers and judges with special expertise on addressing the sexual exploitation of children b. Number of countries with established and effective national databases connected to INTERPOL's ICSE database c. Number of cross-sectoral and transnational joint actions against the sexual exploitation of children comprising law enforcement and other stakeholders, including civil society
	Objective 3: Increased private sector regulation, financial commitment and action for child protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of companies taking action as members of The Code and/or part of national codes of conduct for child protection in the context of travel and tourism. b. Actions taken, and laws and regulations for private sector adopted by national governments (and regional mechanisms where applicable) to address the sexual exploitation of children c. Number of the sexual exploitation of children prevention and protection measures adopted or implemented by national/regional.

	<p>Objective 4: <i>Increased access to quality, child-friendly and effective protection, response and support systems and services for at-risk children and children who have experienced the sexual exploitation of children</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of countries with adequate support services for children who have experienced the sexual exploitation of children (e.g. through Child Advocacy Centres/Barnahus approaches) b. Number of countries with evidence-based capacity building and information for service providers to support children who have experienced the sexual exploitation of children and children at risk for the sexual exploitation of children c. Number of countries with victim-centric systems and access to justice mechanisms for children
<p>Strategic goal 2: Social change - strategic objectives for social change target children and survivors; parents, educators and the general public; and vulnerable, marginalized & migrant communities</p>	<p>Objective 5: <i>Greater awareness, help-seeking and freedom from stigma and shame around the sexual exploitation of children among children, survivors, caregivers and vulnerable communities, through use of preventative education and public information</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of countries with preventative education initiatives targeting children and vulnerable communities b. Number of countries with mandatory sex/reproductive health education and curricula/training addressing the sexual exploitation of children c. Public information campaigns on sex and sexuality focused on encouraging help-seeking and eliminating shame, stigma and taboo
	<p>Objective 6: <i>Greater public visibility and awareness of the problem, through the collection and promotion of disaggregated and representative data at the national level</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. National data sets about the sexual exploitation of children made public by government include information about reported and prosecuted cases of the sexual exploitation of children b. National data sets made public by government providing information about the sexual exploitation of children which is disaggregated for gender and age, location, types of abuse, and are collected and made public c. Evidence-based public information campaigns on the extent of the problem, prevention and recourse

Influencing For Change Strategies

Goal	Objectives	Indicators
Influence to achieve resilient change at international, national and community level	<i>United and coordinated influencing as ECPAT Network</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of network members participating and contributing to ECPAT's collective influencing strategy coordinated by the Secretariat b. Number of country baselines/national results frameworks monitored for progress and impact against agreed influencing indicators
	<i>Identifying evidence-based solutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of network members participating in collection, analysis and use of data and evidence for priority objectives b. Number of references and citations for ECPAT research products c. Number of research initiatives that directly support national, regional and global advocacy and campaigning priorities
	<i>Convening and co-creating with partners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of private sector organizations engaged by ECPAT at national, regional and global level for prevention and response efforts against the sexual exploitation of children b. Number of network members contributing to human rights reports and CSO fora at the national level, to include and keep the sexual exploitation of children on the agenda c. Number of network members leveraging national 'build back better' agendas with civil society to address the dire effects of COVID-19 pandemic on children and societies d. Number of global, regional and national multi-stakeholder partnerships convened by ECPAT to address the sexual exploitation of children
	<i>Amplifying perspectives of children, survivors & movement's bold voice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of ECPAT products, projects and advocacy and campaign initiatives incorporating the perspectives and voices of children and survivors b. Number of people engaged for ECPAT's online campaigning demanding institutional accountability and action against the sexual exploitation of children c. Number of national stories and impact amplified on global communication platforms d. Number of journalists engaged for guidelines on addressing the sexual exploitation of children from a child-focused perspective

Inputs - Enablers

Goal	Objectives	Indicators
Invest in priority organizational enablers to fuel vision 2025	Network strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of countries with ECPAT presence having diverse and multi-issue national coalitions b. Number of network members remotely connected and actively engaged at regional and global level outcomes
	People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of network members implementing staff welfare, safety and safeguarding policies
	Financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of network members implementing multi-issue and multi-stream fundraising strategies b. Number of new income initiatives leveraging donor advocacy, private sector, donor alliances, digital fundraising, legacy and others
	Processes and systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Adoption and implementation of the agreed upon recommendations of the ECPAT Review b. Number of members using organizational digital tools to operate and connect within ECPAT network
	Monitoring, evaluation and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of network members contributing data to ECPAT's organization-wide monitoring, evaluation and learning b. Scorecard system implemented in all regions, resulting in clear data about the membership

Endnotes

- 1 At the start of this strategic period 2021-2025, the ECPAT network comprises a total of 122 member organizations in 104 countries worldwide.
- 2 ECPAT's background, technical, strategic, programme, evaluation and publicly available material. Notable internal documents include the external Global Outcome Evaluation Report covering the period 2017-2020, Network Diagnostic Report, summary papers informing the policy positions of ECPAT on key topics, Terminology Guidelines and the current and previous strategic framework documents.
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