

This Annual Report was compiled by Andrew Beaton with the support of all colleagues at ECPAT International Secretariat.

# ECPAT International Annual Report

July 2022-June 2023.

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# **Charting our Course:**

# Introductory Message from our Executive Director

In a world marked by unprecedented advancements, the sexual exploitation of children stands as a stark reminder of the battles yet to be won. Despite dedicated endeavours by networks like ECPAT International, the issue persists, with recent challenges such as the pandemic further magnifying its scale. Civil societies worldwide remain embattled, with their effectiveness contingent on robust infrastructure and adequate funding, both of which face increasing threats from a shifting global landscape.

With rapid technological progress, new avenues for exploitation have emerged, outpacing protective policy developments, especially in safeguarding our young. However, amid this daunting backdrop, entities such as the European Union have catalysed essential debates on technology-facilitated exploitation, offering platforms for grassroots organisations to champion child protection. ECPAT, with its expansive affiliations from inter-governmental bodies to UN factions, is leading the charge, harnessing decades of expertise and its rich human resource pool.

The past year has been pivotal. From addressing overlooked areas in humanitarian crises to ensuring the private sector's proactive role in child protection, ECPAT continues to redefine its innovative stance. As we delve deeper into this report, reflecting on our collective journey, it is with a resolute spirit that we envisage a future where children worldwide are shielded from exploitation's dark shadows.

In the tapestry of global movements dedicated to child protection, ECPAT International emerges as a luminous thread, weaving narratives of resilience, innovation, and unwavering dedication. As we reflect upon the strides made over the past year, our journey towards eradicating child sexual exploitation reveals stories of impactful research, passionate staff commitment, influential outreach, strategic programme development, the poignant voices of young survivors, responsible financial stewardship, and an ever-evolving network, all converging towards a shared vision.

Central to our mission is the power of research. Our "Disrupting Harm" initiative, a testament to collaboration with leaders like UNICEF and INTERPOL, has been instrumental in bringing survivor insights to the forefront. Through Country Overviews and contributions to key global reports, we have not only fuelled national dialogues but have also transformed research into actionable advocacy, ensuring that each project resonates deeply at the grassroots level.

Yet, it is the human force behind ECPAT that truly drives our momentum. Our diverse global team, with its unique blend of passion and expertise, has propelled ECPAT's vision into tangible results, from advocating significant policy changes to expanding our footprint into new territories like Turkey and Uzbekistan. Our modus operandi lies in turning insights into actions, a sentiment echoed in projects like "Disrupting Harm" and the establishment of trailblazing teams like the Beacon unit in the European Union.

While our internal dynamics lay a sturdy foundation, it is our external engagement that amplifies our reach. 2022 saw us galvanise our outreach and advocacy efforts, bringing pressing issues to the limelight, be it the risks associated with voluntourism or the empowerment of young women in underrepresented regions. Our digital growth, fortified media presence, and dialogue with gaming industry only underscore our commitment to merging traditional and contemporary platforms for advocacy.

From a programme standpoint, we have been at the forefront of spotlighting pressing concerns, whether it is the often-overlooked plight of young boys through the Global Boys Initiative or the engagement with neglected actors in the child protection systems like the transport industry, sport federations or religious seminaries. Our endeavours in the travel and tourism sectors have set benchmarks for child protection, indicating that we are not only identifying issues but also providing tools for change.

Central to our narrative is the echo of children's voices, which reverberate with tales of fortitude, resilience, and resurgence. From the lanes of Nepal to the virtual spaces in Chile, these young voices, coupled with the unwavering support from ECPAT's members, stand as living testimonies to our mission's importance.

Our financial narrative paints a picture of trust, commitment, and collaborative vision. Donors, from individuals to large foundations, have played a pivotal role in fuelling our mission, exemplifying the belief that every contribution, no matter its size, catalyses change.

A panoramic view of our journey would be incomplete without acknowledging our dynamic network development. New allies from Burkina Faso to Zambia have not only expanded our geographical canvas but also infused our mission with fresh perspectives. Despite challenges, our adaptability and thirst for innovation shine through, evident in our strategic initiatives from Latin America to Southeast Asia.

In summation, the past year has been emblematic of ECPAT International's steadfast commitment to crafting a safer world for our children. Each chapter in our annual report unfolds a part of our journey, a journey marked by relentless pursuit, collective action, and an indomitable spirit. As we move forward, we are buoyed by the collective power of our network, partners, and the countless individuals who rally behind our cause. Together, we are not just narrating stories; we are shaping histories, each step echoing our vow to ensure a world free from child sexual exploitation.



Mr. Guillaume Landry Executive Director, ECPAT International



The narratives we unfold in this section are not just stories; they are living testaments to the strength of young souls and the transformative power of grassroots movements. Each tale is an embodiment of the tireless efforts of our ECPAT members, rooted deep in communities around the world. Beyond the work of the secretariat, it is these all-too-often unsung heroes in the field who truly amplify the voices of children and make our mission resonate everywhere.

"It took me a long time to decide whether to share my childhood experience. I was ashamed and scared. But I could help other children avoid being in the same situation, so I decided to speak out"

> a child participant of programs run by The End CSEC (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children) Network Malaysia

# The Nepalese Survivor "Sunita"

(not her real name)

A 14-year-old girl from Nepal, had an experience of being trafficked into sexual exploitation. Hailing from Nepal's Karnali province, Sunita's story offers a poignant narrative that underscores the urgent need to step up antitrafficking efforts. Born into a middle-class family that did not have to struggle with daily expenses, she had successfully completed her Grade 8 education. Driven by her aspirations for quality education, she decided to continue her studies in Nepalguni, a city renowned for its educational standards, as compared to the less developed areas in Karnali. With her family's consent, she planned to reside at her aunt's house while pursuing her education. However, upon her night-time arrival in Nepalguni, she found herself disoriented, unable to recognise her surroundings, leading her to seek assistance from a rickshaw driver. That rickshaw driver

kidnapped her and sold her into sexual exploitation. Heavily drugged and raped 10-15 times a day, Sunita had lost all hope. After a distressing period of unsuccessful searches by both the family and police, Shakti Samuha, a member of the ECPAT movement intervened. Collaborating with law enforcement, they successfully rescued Sunita and another captive from a hotel. Learning of the successful rescue, family expressed immense relief and gratitude; "we nearly left our hope, we used to go police station every day and used to come back home without an answer, now we are very happy."

Sunita's story epitomises the dire need for vigilance against trafficking and the immeasurable value of community and law enforcement working in tandem.

"Memories of my past are that I am a person who dare not speak nor raise my voice because I feel like I'm still a little child. Thanks to the ECPAT Foundation that made me understand my rights and have the courage to stand up and talk about my rights or things that affect me"

#### **Praew**

(not her real name) from Thailand.

A girl from Northern Thailand, was placed in a residential care facility in Chiang Rai when she was just 13. The community she originally resided in faced many risks, including child sexual exploitation, violence, and drug addiction among adults and teenagers. Recognising the situation's urgency, the Empowering Children Project—facilitated by ECPAT Foundation Thailand—stepped in.

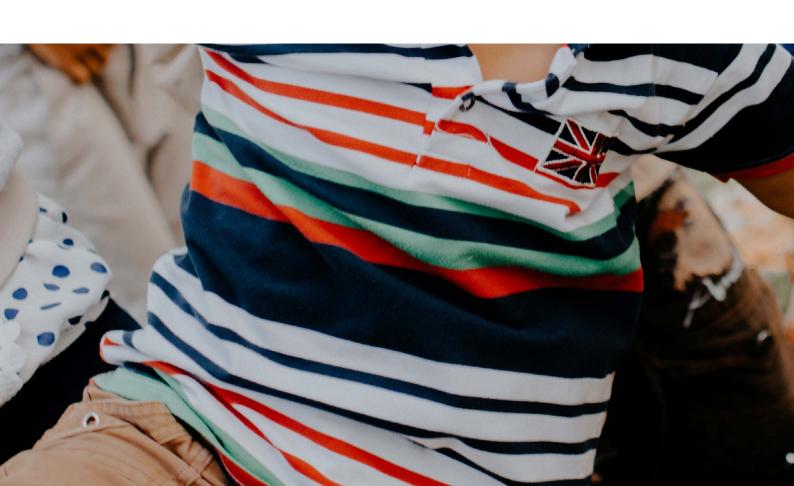
Initially, Praew was a timid young girl who felt overshadowed by her more eloquent peers in the residential facility and was initially reluctant to voice her opinions on matters. Her participation in the Empowering Children Project, however, catalysed a remarkable

transformation. A series of skill-building workshops designed by ECPAT Foundation Thailand equipped Praew with a nuanced understanding of children's rights, self-protection techniques against exploitation, and leadership skills.

Her metamorphosis did not stop there. Over time, Praew became an advocate for child protection, especially in the realm of online activities. Having gained robust knowledge from ECPAT's initiatives, Praew is now a confident young woman who diligently applies privacy settings during her online interactions and educates her peers about the importance of online safety.

# "I gained knowledge that I will use every day. I am so happy and love you guys so much. Once again, thank you, ECPAT Thailand"

a child reflecting on the work of ECPAT Thailand aiming to prevent violence for children in times of disaster.



#### Sofia

(not her real name), A Troubled Journey from Chile.

Growing up in a fractured family in Santiago, Chile, Sofia's (not her real name) childhood was fraught with economic struggles and emotional neglect. A lack of supervision at home, coupled with incessant bullying at school, led her down a distressing road of loneliness and self-harm. Sofia's life took a dark turn when she was exposed to substance abuse and street socialisation, at just 13, Sofia became a victim of Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE), and internal trafficking by 14. Her situation worsened with increased substance misuse.

After being detected as a victim of trafficking, swift action was taken to rescue Sofia and refer her to support services. With the support of

ONG Raíces, an ECPAT member in Chile, Sofia received comprehensive legal, psychological, and medical support. The organisation also played a pivotal role in helping Sofia secure housing, sign up for training programmes, and seek affordable healthcare.

Today, Sofia has commenced her fourth year of secondary school, working towards her dream of becoming a beautician. Her story is a testament to the importance of comprehensive support services, underscoring the need to ensure that no one is left behind in the ongoing battle against child trafficking.

# "They spoke with a smile, gently, softly... They listened, explaining that I was not being arrested and had not done wrong... So, I wasn't so scared"

a child reflecting on how the work of ECPAT member APLE in Cambodia who helped them reach out for justice and recovery.



#### Zoe

(not her real name) from Peru: A Story of Resilience

Zoe's (not her real name) transformative journey from a victim of human trafficking to a resilient individual aspiring for a brighter future is a motivation for us all. Zoe, rescued from human trafficking in 2020, was the beneficiary of multifaceted support services provided by ECPAT member CHS Alternativo. Though reintegration has been a slow and challenging process, Zoe's spirit has never waned. Living in a household barely sustained by her father's sporadic employment as a bricklayer, her ambitions to elevate her circumstances remain unshaken. She has received specialised legal guidance and psychosocial counselling, empowering her. Zoe's participation in carefully designed workshops has further bolstered

her reintegration process, augmenting her employability and entrepreneurial skills. With the aid of financial backing for her academic fees, she is diligently pursuing a Nursing qualification. Balancing academics with the responsibility of caring for her youngest son, Zoe has been actively seeking temporary employment opportunities. Her growing sense of responsibility and unwavering commitment to her life goals bear testament to the efficacy of intervention strategies. As Zoe herself says, "Feeling the support of CHS Alternativo motivates me to envision a future that extends far beyond my present circumstances towards educational attainment, financial independence, and personal growth."

"Every word is important. It should be supportive and embrace differences. Please understand the child from different angles and end stigmatization and stereotypes against children, as every child is different and deserves to be treated well"

> a child participant of programs run by The End CSEC Network Malaysia

Drawing from the grassroots, our ECPAT members have amplified the voices of children, turning their narratives into powerful testaments of resilience and hope. These are not just stories, but guiding lights, illuminating the path we tread in our relentless pursuit. They underscore the profound significance of education, intervention, and sustained advocacy. Grounded in the very communities they serve; these tales reaffirm the pivotal role our members play. As we reflect upon their stories, we are reminded that our mission, echoed by these brave voices, is one of unity and purpose: ensuring a childhood untouched by exploitation.



Over the past year, ECPAT International has achieved momentous progress in its unyielding quest to eradicate the sexual exploitation of children. This journey has been characterised by significant collaborative efforts, innovative approaches, and an unwavering commitment from our diverse team spread across the globe. Whether advocating for policy changes at high-level forums or pioneering new safeguarding technologies, the collective resilience and intellectual vigour displayed have been outstanding.

Our work has thrived on valuable collaborations with various partners, opening new avenues for impactful interventions and creating a constructive collaboration that profoundly resonates within our network. Each achievement serves as both an organisational milestone and reflection of our commitment., reflecting the depth of passion and creativity that fuel our daily efforts. After recent visits to Turkey and Uzbekistan that were instrumental in revitalising member engagement and laying the groundwork for future initiatives in the region, Stana Buchowska, Regional Coordinator Eastern Europe & and Central Asia, aptly puts it "I am deeply honoured by the tapestry of achievements we have woven together."

## **Collaboration and Impact**

This year, the spirit of collaboration has not merely been an undercurrent but a powerful driving force behind our progress at ECPAT International. Together, we have coalesced around shared visions and objectives, finding unique strength in our diverse cultural perspectives and experiences. The synergies we have built have allowed us to learn from diverse cultures and societies, providing a richer context to our work and efforts.

A shining and illustrative example of this collaborative ethos was the training workshop held in Abidjan emerged as a beacon of effective collaboration with knowledgeable and motivated local partners. It became an arena for mutual sharing and understanding, fostering a sense of community and partnership to understand the sexual exploitation of children in

contexts of travel, that transcended boundaries. As Amy Crocker, Head of Child Protection and Technology, astutely reflects, "You learn every day, remain humble, and see the humanity that can break through the power of money and politics."

Yet our collaboration did not stop at one-off meetings and workshops. It was extended, woven into the very fabric of our day-to-day operations, manifesting through strategic partnerships, joint research initiatives, crossborder cooperation, and work with stakeholders from diverse sectors. This broader collaboration has infused our mission with renewed energy and focus, enabling us to achieve more significant and more profound change on a global scale.

A particularly touching and resonant illustration of this comes from Francesco Cecon, Head of the Global Boys Initiative, who emphasises our capacity to translate theory into practice. "I think the main highlights have been seeing how we transformed ground-breaking research into concrete actions," he states. His words underline the tangible change that has stemmed from our collaborative approach, reflecting the passion and purpose that drive our collective efforts.

Our unswerving advocacy for children continues to drive change, evolving in line with the challenges and opportunities that present themselves. The impact of this dedication extends far beyond our immediate network, reaching into communities where our members provide essential services. These efforts

represent a tangible embodiment of our values and goals, a sentiment that Adriana Hidalgo poignantly captures: "We are an organisation that works in a very specialised area; this aspect allows the possibility to give added value to society for a better world for children."

The successes and milestones we have achieved through collaboration are integral to our journey. They remind us that we are part of a global movement, bound by shared beliefs, values, and a relentless commitment to creating a world where children's rights are protected, respected, and fulfilled. Our approach to collaboration has illuminated a path that promises not only sustained progress but also hope for the children we strive to serve.

### **Navigating Change and Fostering Resilience**

This year has presented its share of unique circumstances, yet they have served as catalysts for our team's ingenuity and resilience. Our commitment to our mission has been unwavering, even as we adapted to new modes of operation and collaboration.

A prime illustration of our adaptability is the "Disrupting Harm" project, conducted in partnership with UNICEF Office of Research -Innocenti and Interpol. Far from being a small undertaking, this global initiative demanded coordinated efforts across multiple disciplines and geographical regions. Matteo Russo, our Legal Research Associate, described it as a pinnacle of resourceful collaboration, embodying the innovation that has been a hallmark of our success.

This same resilience permeates all aspects of our work, inspiring us to find pragmatic and empathetic solutions to each challenge. Whether mastering new communication platforms or optimising our resources for maximum impact, our team has consistently demonstrated its ability to not just adapt but excel.

Far from hindering our progress, the experiences of the past year have enriched our collective wisdom. They have solidified our belief in the power of unity, diversity, and purpose, underscoring our unwavering commitment to creating lasting change for children worldwide.

#### **Proudest Achievements**

The achievements of this year are a testament to our relentless commitment and determination. Amongst our proudest accomplishments are the thriving Beacon team in the EU (European Union), the pioneering initiation of the Global Boys Initiative, and the robust reinforcement of ECPAT's relevance within global institutions. Our Regional Coordinator EU, Isaline, has been at the forefront, leading a passionate coalition advocating for child safety online. Her joy and pride were eloquently expressed when she

stated, "I was particularly pleased by the positive feedback from policymakers about the added value of the ECPAT network contribution." Alongside these tangible successes, the words of our own Amy resonate deeply, reflecting our unyielding spirit: "That is where courage begins; courage to speak out, speak loud, and bring evidence to drive the change we want and need to see." Our collective achievements echo far and wide, a reflection of the dedicated effort and commitment to our cause.

#### **Future Vision**

As we look to the future, our vision is clear and focused, filled with hope, promise, and aspiration. We envision a future where ECPAT's mission resonates beyond boundaries and reaches an even grander scale. In Natasha's astute observation, "ECPAT continually seeks its most impactful path, demonstrating the wisdom to pause, reassess, and ensure every action has purpose." Kohnwilai Teppunkoonngam's voice resonates with our collective mission, stating: "A future where ECPAT offers effective recovery and prevention services with the active engagement of affected children." This powerful sentiment

underscores the dual pillars of our work as illustrated in projects like Disrupting Harm: first, the irrefutable right and ability of children to have their voices heard in shaping protective measures and advocating for their best interests; and second, the essential role of collaboration with ECPAT networks and other partners in facilitating children's journeys towards ending sexual exploitation and embarking on a path to recovery. Our roadmap is detailed and deliberate, etched with our collective ambitions and the will to bring about profound, lasting change.

### CONCLUSION

In concluding the extraordinary chapter of ECPAT International this year, we reflect on a story rich in empowerment, dynamic engagement, innovative practices, and a profound impact that reaches everywhere. Ours is not merely a tale of milestones met; it is the story of a community united in purpose, a radiant story of hope of a brighter, safer future for children. Our roadmap, ever evolving and pulsating with fresh ideas, innovative strategies,

and tangible steps, serves as our guiding light towards that future. And in the heart of all we do, a heartfelt message from Isaline rings true, capturing our collective sentiment and unwavering resolve: "Keep it up with the good work! We need a world where children can be safe!" It is a rallying cry and a heartfelt reminder of why we do what we do, and why we must continue to strive, innovate, and care.



In an era marked by sweeping global changes, the commitment to protecting children has never been more critical. ECPAT International stands at the forefront of this pivotal mission, spearheading a variety of robust initiatives designed to usher in a new paradigm of child protection and empowerment. This summary provides a comprehensive overview of four cornerstone programmes, each a testament to ECPAT's audacious vision and actionable change-making.

# **OVERVIEW**

- ▶ Global Boys Initiative: A groundbreaking programme that shatters taboos and catalyses action against the sexual exploitation of boys, fuelled by global to local insights and actionable strategies.
- Child Protection and Technology: This transformative initiative orchestrates multi-sectoral efforts to build a safe and secure digital landscape for children, based on progressive legislative changes and new protective frameworks.
- ▶ Child Protection in Travel and Tourism: Through powerful alliances and innovative approaches, ECPAT is shifting the landscape of child protection within the travel and tourism sector, enhancing enforcement of legal and policy frameworks, private sector engagement and awareness.
- ▶ The Code: Expanding its mandate, The Code has evolved into a comprehensive instrument for engagement of the travel and tourism industry stepping up member due diligence processes, communication, and operational efficiency.

Having set the scene with our overarching vision, let us delve deeper into the first program, the Global Boys Initiative. Its local-global nexus is a pioneering initiative that catalyses meaningful change.

## **Global Boys Initiative**

ECPAT International's Global Boys Initiative (GBI) is a groundbreaking undertaking that has galvanised action to address the oftenignored issue of sexual exploitation and abuse of boys. Rooted in a democratic ethos, ECPAT emphasises listening to local voices to inform global practices, setting a new standard in social impact work. The shift from research to actionable insights has particularly empowered practitioners in their direct work with boys.

Pioneering efforts culminating in our global event in Morocco have shattered cultural taboos and set the stage for future advocacy, while innovative projects in Bolivia and Uruguay have brought heightened national focus to the issue. Notable among these success stories is Lloyd Bock of Namibia, who, inspired by ECPAT's programme, founded Windhoek's first boy and young men-led organisation. This captures the transformative power of ECPAT's programmes on individual lives.

The organisation does not shy away from multi-sectoral collaboration, demonstrated by a pivotal roundtable on child protection in the online gaming environment in London, leading to complex prevention and response strategies. Yet challenges remain—taboos surrounding the subject, concerns that the focus on boys might overshadow gender-based violence issues, and the scarcity of organisations focusing on this area. But ECPAT tackles these challenges head-on, incorporating inclusive and innovative approaches, like exploring how online gaming can serve as a safe space for all children including boys.

ECPAT's future strategy is as ambitious as it is pragmatic. It encompasses outcomes from the Global Boys Summit, new partnerships, and a robust communications blueprint, underpinned by fundraising for pilot initiatives employing gender-sensitive, trauma-informed approaches. The plan embodies the dynamic and nuanced nature of the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse, with room for adaptability to emerging needs and opportunities.

ECPAT's work extends beyond mere advocacy it represents a movement for transformative change that encourages everyone to contribute. Our Global Boys Initiative is not merely a campaign; it is a purposeful journey towards a future where every boy's voice is heard and respected. This initiative serves dual purposes: firstly, it addresses child sexual exploitation and abuse issues by focusing on boys, often an overlooked demographic. Secondly, it aims to challenge and deconstruct harmful gender norms and traditional ideas of masculinity, thereby contributing to the transformation of gender roles and relations within communities. In doing so, the initiative also aspires to reduce all forms of violence, including gender-based violence. As we move forward, the path is clear, and the future beckons—will you join us on this vital journey?

Building on the momentum set by the Global Boys Initiative, our Child Protection and Technology programme takes a similar multifaceted approach but shifts the spotlight onto the digital arena. This is where technology and moral imperatives converge.

## **Child Protection and Technology**

In 2023, ECPAT's Child Protection and Technology program stood as a transformative force from advocating for legislative changes in the EU (European Union), to supporting the establishment of protective frameworks in Southeast Asia and engaging partners across the world to identify gaps in our collective response. This global initiative was not only about technological measures; it was a collaboration of multi-sectoral efforts aimed at understanding the role that technology plays in facilitating harm as well as protecting children in the digital age.

Central to the program was Project Beacon, which exemplified ECPAT's vision by coordinating civil society advocacy. In Europe, ECPAT not only deepened its collaboration with its members at the EU level but also significantly engaged with national members and numerous other civil society organisations. This collective effort has solidified ECPAT's position as an authoritative voice in shaping national and European policies to combat online child exploitation. They also elevated survivors' narratives during a week of action in March, transforming individual experiences into a collective call for change. This goal was also reflected in ECPAT's chairing of the Internet Governance Forum's Dynamic Coalition on Children's rights in the Digital Environment, and in crucial collaborations with corporate partners. Initiatives included a partnership with Scotiabank led to pilot projects that flagged suspicious transactions in Peru, revealing the enormous potential for impact of private sector engagement in child protection.

While the journey had its obstacles in the face of a rapidly expanding and diversifying

response ecosystem, ECPAT navigated them adeptly, seeking collaboration to optimise collective impact. Webinars, expert roundtable sand working groups were deployed to forge efficiency and collaboration, ensuring that internal challenges were turned into opportunities for improvement.

As for the future, ECPAT is poised for sustained advocacy in the EU and beyond, identifying unique contributions to safety and protection in the digital landscape. Research and strategic partnerships signify a long-term commitment to evolve with the challenges and opportunities that come with technological advancements. In 2023, ECPAT continued and expanded the scope of its expert contributions to national, regional, and international processes aimed at creating a safe, secure, and empowering online space for children to thrive.

The program is more than a list of accomplishments; it is a testament to what can be achieved through collective effort. It validates the belief that every child saved from sexual exploitation is a step towards realising our vision of a world free from sexual exploitation of children and every advancement in policy or technology is a promise to future generations. In sum, ECPAT's work in 2023 was not a conclusion but a prologue to a future where technology serves a partner in ensuring the rights of children in the digital environment.

Continuing in this vein of transformative action, our next focus, the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism initiative, examines the intersection between global mobility and child vulnerability. Here, advocacy translates to real-world impact.

#### **Child Protection in Travel and Tourism**

In the past year, ECPAT International has emerged as a transformative force in advancing child protection within the travel and tourism sectors. Through collaborative engagements with key UN bodies, we have contributed significantly to the development of forthcoming UN reports. While not authored by us, these reports, which focus on child protection in the context of travel and tourism, draw extensively from our expertise—particularly in nuanced areas like voluntourism.

Our relentless advocacy efforts are reshaping the legal and policy landscape. The introduction of robust tools, such as our Legal Checklist, has proven indispensable for guiding the governments on how to improve child protection laws and policies. These resources act as vital roadmaps for both governments and the private sector, catalysing the adoption of stronger protective frameworks.

However, law alone cannot suffice. Collaboration and education are imperative. The analysis of the responses from Child Protection Risk Assessment Tool has flagged areas where the travel and tourism sectors lag, underscoring the imperative for ongoing private sector engagement measures. Some forms of unregulated voluntourism, while well-intentioned, can inadvertently put children at risk, including sexual exploitation. To mitigate this, ECPAT has spearheaded critical dialogues and developed comprehensive guidelines to help stakeholders identify and address potential risks. The aim is to engrain child protection

as a foundational ethos in responsible and sustainable tourism practices.

The urgency of our mission has been amplified by the challenges of the post-pandemic, demanding an agile and adaptive approach. Our strategy remains expansive and focused on priority areas. Plans include advocating for fortified legal and policy systems, supporting private sector engagement, and empowering children and local communities, exemplified by our efforts to engage children in building sustainable tourism in Costa Rica and Ecuador. This involves addressing the interplay between digital landscapes and child protection, recognising that technology can be both a threat and a solution.

In conclusion, ECPAT International is committed to creating a world where travel and tourism uplifts communities while ensuring the safety of children. We extend an open invitation for you to join this vital cause. Your contributions, whether financial, practical, or intellectual, can accelerate our collective impact.

The responsibility for child protection in travel and tourism is collective. Together, we can forge a future where children are not just seen but heard, and their rights are respected.

Finally, but by no means least, let us explore The Code, as an initiative adapting to emerging trends, while retaining a travel and tourism industry engagement mission to achieve lasting impact.

#### The Code

The year has been focused on three core areas: improving the understanding of member's needs, enhancing communication, dialogue and consultations between companies and the civil society organisations, and optimising operational efficiency.

We have fortified communication channels amongst corporate members, civil society organisations acting as Local Code Representatives (LCRs), and The Code Secretariat. The Code's operations improvements ensure it serves as a valuable technical tool for its community in an evolving travel and tourism environment.

A consultative approach has yielded an actionable, community-backed plan and resulted in more direct technical support to corporate members, particularly in implementing The Code six pivotal criteria, including the voluntourism policy. Furthermore, global events like ITB Berlin and ITB India provided platforms for advocacy on responsible and sustainable tourism that prioritises child

Looking ahead, our future objectives focus on amplifying the uptake of the voluntourism policy, enriching member resources, covering new sectors and strengthening others such as transportation and geographically expanding our mission. We invite you to join this transformative journey.

#### CONCLUSION .....

As we step into a new era of child protection and advocacy, ECPAT International calls upon each one of you to contribute to this urgent mission. Whether you are a policymaker, a corporate entity, or an individual, your support is invaluable.



This annual report's section on Integrated Outreach and Advocacy stands as a testament to ECPAT International's enduring commitment to its mission: eradicating child sexual exploitation across the globe. It serves not merely as a chronicle of the year's activities but also as an evaluative lens through which stakeholders can examine our accomplishments, challenges, and ongoing initiatives in this critical domain. This exhaustive account reflects the multifaceted nature of our efforts, encompassing a range of strategies from traditional and digital media outputs and grassroots community engagement to high-level policy advocacy, each painstakingly tailored to maximise outcomes.

# COMMUNICATIONS OUTPUTS Ending The Silent Podcast

#### Voluntourism

To commemorate World Tourism Day 2022, we published a special episode delving into the world of voluntourism, why it is harmful to children, and how it increases the risk of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Through interviews with ECPAT members in Sri Lanka and Indonesia, we examined the risks of unregulated tourism on children and share with needs to be done to protect children as part of responsible and sustainable tourism development.

#### She Leads

In this special mini-series, we shone a spotlight on She Leads, a programme dedicated to increasing the sustained influence of girls and young women in decision-making and the transformation of gender norms in formal and informal institutions across Africa and the Middle East. In this series, programme officers and girls and young women discuss how She Leads is working to prevent violence against women and girls.

She Leads is a joint programme of Plan International Netherlands, Defence for Children – ECPAT the Netherlands (DCI-ECPAT), African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), and Terre des Hommes the Netherlands (TdH). Equal Measures 2030 is a technical partner.

#### Impact Metrics

Over the past year, ECPAT International's communications endeavours have culminated in quantifiable and transformative outcomes that go beyond mere statistics. One such strategic decision was to consciously maintain our established presence on Facebook while simultaneously redirecting resources towards growing our footprint on Instagram and LinkedIn to increase community engagement and promote uptake of ECPAT learnings. This calibrated approach bore fruit, manifesting in a 27% growth in our LinkedIn audience and a 12.5% expansion on Instagram without compromising our follower base on Facebook, which also saw a respectable 3% uptick.

In the broader digital landscape, our website attracted a 13.29% increase on the previous year, thereby extending our digital influence. Media mentions of our network skyrocketed, registering a remarkable 108% increase in traditional media and 111% in social media channels. These figures are not merely numbers but potent symbols of our increasing resonance in public discourse.

#### **KEY INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

#### Stakeholder Engagement

Collaboration remains a cornerstone of our operational ethos. As we navigated through legislative landscapes and pivoted towards innovative modes of advocacy, our focus was to cultivate synergistic relationships both within the ECPAT network and with external partners.

### **Global Boys Summit**

The first-ever Global Boys Summit took place in Casablanca, Morocco, bringing together more than 65 practitioners from over 30 countries between June 6-8, 2023. Hosted by ECPAT International and co-organised with ECPAT member AMANE, the Summit aimed to supercharge support for boy survivors and equip practitioners with the best tools for appropriate and quality care.

The uniqueness of the Summit was rooted in its bottom-up approach. By co-developing the agenda with attendees and collaboratively crafting solutions informed by the experiences and knowledge of everyone, it cultivated an environment of equal participation and contribution from all practitioners involved. Through enriching workshops and practical discussions, practitioners transformed their insights, challenges, and ideas into key action points, designed to invigorate action protecting boys at national, regional, and global levels.

Following the Global Boys Summit, an Outcomes Report and Summary Report has been published summarising the key action points for the way forward.







### **Regional Workshops**

Taking a resolute stance against child sexual exploitation in East and Southern Africa, the ECPAT Regional Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, rallied over 80 participants from 32 countries in May 2023.



Uniting policymakers, academics, civil society representatives, and child protection experts, the workshop unearthed shared challenges faced in combatting child sexual exploitation in the region and enabled participants to combine their unique skills to drive regional solutions.

From strengthening grassroots efforts to moving beyond formal justice systems, the workshop underscored the importance of balancing national policies with localised actions that reach communities, families, and children themselves.



An In-Depth Event Review and Action Plan were published, detailing the key outcomes, workshop highlights, and key actions moving forward.

## **ECPAT Network and Horizontal Collaboration**

This year marked a transformative period for our internal communication infrastructure, enhancing our collaborative advocacy capabilities. A few noteworthy events stand out in the calendar. A two-day meeting in October 2022 with our EU (European Union) members focused on synchronising communication and campaign skills. These efforts culminated in collective campaign activities across ECPAT's EU chapters and sustained member engagement in ECLAG's Participatory Group. The afore mentioned Southern and Eastern Africa Regional Workshop in May and hosting the first-ever Global Boys Summit in Morocco in June 2023 are two further examples of where our stakeholder engagement efforts amplified our role as conveners, influencers, and advocates within a global movement and where we proudly facilitated broader and deeper communications within both our network and the broader sector.

## **Advocacy and Policy**

In terms of advocacy, our "Break Free to Fly" campaign, launched in partnership with Meta, is a testament to our blended advocacy approach, combining grassroots mobilisation with policy advocacy. Our unwavering attention to legislative matters, notably the proposed EU Child Sexual Abuse Regulation, underlines our commitment to effecting tangible change. The elevated levels of member engagement in our advocacy campaigns attest to our success in this sector.



#### **NEW PUBLICATIONS AND STUDIES**

## Global Boys Initiative: Case Studies

Following the research conducted on the sexual exploitation and abuse of boys as part of the Global Boys Initiative, we are now focused on the urgent need to develop tools, guidance, and capacity-strengthening instruments to equip service providers with better tools to work with boys in a gender-sensitive and substantial way.

In collaboration with ECPAT members and other civil society organisations, 8 case studies were published documenting the diverse practices and approaches of service providers around the world who support at-risk boys and victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

















## **Country Overviews**

ECPAT International's Country Overviews are instrumental in collating and presenting comprehensive information on the sexual exploitation of children in realms such as travel and tourism, online environments, trafficking, prostitution, and child, early, and forced marriage. These overviews not only chronicle the publicly available data but also assess achievements, challenges, and existing counteractions. They further suggest concrete priority actions to address the

sexual exploitation of children in the targeted nations. This pivotal work underscores ECPAT's commitment to ensuring that our advocacy is both informed and pragmatic, consistently driving towards tangible change.

- Côte d'Ivoire
- **Fcuador**
- Dominican Republic
- Bangladesh

#### **Joint Country Overviews**

In late 2022, ECPAT International joined forces with the Secretariat of the Lanzarote Committee to co-produce three Joint Country Overviews on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in Moldova, Finland, and Italy. The Joint Country Overviews combine ECPAT's longstanding work on Country Overviews with the information retrieved from the Governments by the Lanzarote Committee Secretariat.



This partnership between ECPAT International and the Lanzarote Committee Secretariat enabled us to present compelling information regarding State's compliance with the standards set forth in the Lanzarote Convention, while collating all available data on sexual exploitation and abuse of children in a well-structured and concise report geared towards advocacy and more general and pragmatic use.



### **Disrupting Harm:** Conversations with Young Survivors

About Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse centres the perspectives of young survivors of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. The conversations focus on understanding and interpreting what these young people were subjected to, as well as their ideas concerning the best solutions. Insights and key messages were collected from thirty-three conversations held with female and male young people who had been subjected to online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Kenya, South Africa, Namibia, Malaysia, and Cambodia.

The conversations were conducted by ECPAT International in the framework of the Disrupting Harm project, the largest scale comprehensive research study ever undertaken on the topic of online child sexual exploitation on abuse. Funded by the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, the study focused on 13 countries in Southeast Asia and Southern and East Africa between 2019 and 2022. The study is

a collaboration between ECPAT, INTERPOL, and the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.



Learn about Disrupting Harm.

#### MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

#### Member Highlights from the Global Landscape

Within our diverse movement there is a kaleidoscope of initiatives, hurdles, and accomplishments that our member organisations have navigated in their relentless campaign against the sexual exploitation of children. Here, we offer a window into their work, highlighting the inventive approaches they have adopted and the invaluable wisdom they have garnered in the process.

International Day for Street Children: An Interview with Association Keoogo

Child Trafficking in Peru:

Child Trafficking in Thailand:

An Interview with CHS Alternativo

An Interview with ECPAT Foundation

Child Trafficking in Nepal:

An Interview with Shakti Samuha

### **Introducing Our Newest Members**

In the past year, we have welcomed six organisations to the ECPAT global network. Hailing from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Republic of Cabo Verde, Zambia, and Côte d'Ivoire, these dynamic additions bring with them unique expertise and perspectives in the realm of child protection. Learn more about the organisations below:

#### ACRIDES,

Cape Verde

Established in January 1998, Associação Crianças Desfavorecidas (ACRIDES) is a network organisation based in Cape Verde working to promote the rights and responsibilities of children. With 7 network members, the organisation primarily focuses on education, health, and social protection initiatives conducted at local and national levels.

#### Association Keoogo,

Burkina Faso

Association Keoogo is an organisation based in Ouagadougou aiming to provide protection services to street-living children, women, and other vulnerable groups. The word "Keoogo" is borrowed from the national language Mooré, meaning "initiatory space." In traditional Mossi society, Keoogo refers to the journey from childhood to adulthood and the values transmitted along.

#### Children's Voice,

Democratic Republic of Congo

Founded in 2002, Children's Voice is a non-profit organisation working for the protection of children by defending their rights and ensuring their access to basic services such as education, vocational training, access to justice for the sustainable development of their communities. Children's Voice is based in Goma and operates in six provinces in the east of the country.

#### Communauté Abel

Côte d'Ivoire

Established in 1982, Communauté Abel is an Ivorian non-profit organisation supporting vulnerable children through cultural initiatives, counselling services, educational programmes, and professional training for boys and girls aged 14-21. Communauté Abel is the local branch of the Italian association 'Gruppo Abele Onlus' and is based in Grand Bassam, where it has been operating for more than 40 years.

#### Ubuchingo Defence For Children - Zambia Zambia

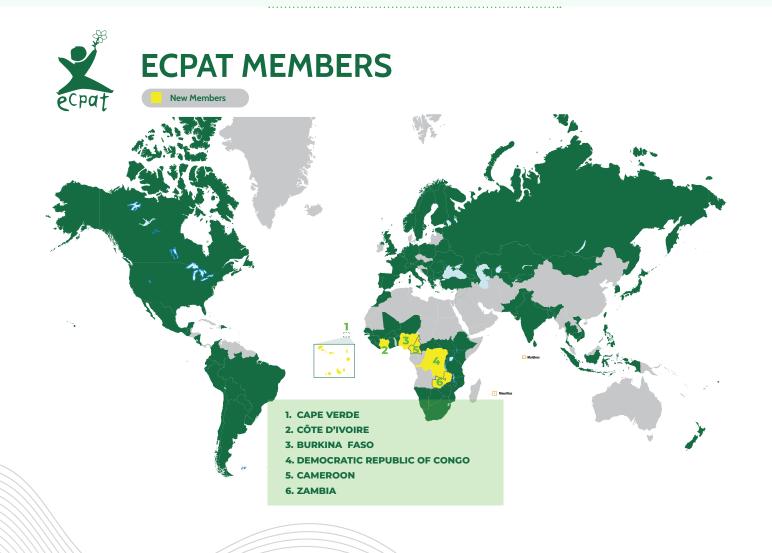
"Ubuchingo" is a word in Bemba, a local Zambian language which translates to 'protection'. In 2009, a few professional women started a small association in Northern Province to speak up against child sexual abuse, which had become a huge problem in their area. The women not only spoke for the girls and young women but also provided legal help and support to the victims. After many years of interventions, the association received an overwhelming response and recognition, and decided to take on a more significant challenge by registering the association. Ubuchingo then joined and became a member of Defence for Children International and became Ubuchingo Defence For Children - Zambia. Ubuchingo's work focuses mainly on justice for children, ending violence against children, and children on the move, including trafficking, disability, child participation and the right to play.

#### **SUSTAIN Cameroon**

Cameroon

SUSTAIN Cameroon is actively engaged in transforming the lives of children trapped in abusive child early and forced marriages, sexual exploitation, trafficking and modern slavery. Through education, training, and economic empowerment programmes, they work to empower survivors, victims and those at risk.

SUSTAIN Cameroon also provides, through training and engaging youth in community service, a voice space for hard-to-reach youths, women, and girls in disadvantaged situations throughout North-West Cameroon. The organisation is focused on building future activists from present-day children and youths.



#### **CHALLENGES AND LEARNINGS**

As we forge ahead, our horizons are replete with untapped opportunities and pressing challenges, both requiring nuanced strategies. The dynamism of the digital landscape offers us unprecedented avenues to sculpt narratives and amplify our advocacy efforts. The potency of storytelling is a remarkable asset. By centring compelling narratives around our frontline workers and network members, we not only humanise our cause but also fortify our influence over public perception.

In the European Union, emerging regulations present both a challenge and an opportunity. While these frameworks hold promise for the prevention of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA), we still grapple with resistance and the uncertainty of the outcomes.

It is crucial to underscore the importance of continued support for our campaign, as these regulations could pave the way for more robust measures against OCSEA across jurisdictions. However, our ambitions are not without their constraints. Financial limitations remain a pertinent obstacle in scaling our advocacy and

communication efforts. Furthermore, there is the social and cultural challenge of countering deeply ingrained 'victim-blaming' narratives, requiring not just communication finesse but also a coordinated, multi-faceted approach.

Amidst these complexities, we are redoubling our efforts and commitment to engage more systematically with children, amplifying their voices and offering them opportunities to participate directly in policy developments. This initiative serves as another cornerstone in our strategy, ensuring that those most affected by our work have an active role in shaping it.

### **BALANCING RESEARCH AND STORYTELLING**

In the ever-evolving landscape of campaigning and advocacy, we recognised the importance of balancing research with stories unfolding on the ground. While data and evidence form the backbone of our work, it is the personal stories that humanise the very issues we strive to address.

Over the past year, we have actively embraced this constructive interaction by highlighting stories from both ECPAT members and child survivors of sexual exploitation. These stories have not only enhanced our work, but also deepened our understanding of the issues we champion.

#### LOOKING AHEAD

As we turn our gaze to the future, it is evident that ECPAT's Outreach and Advocacy mechanisms have undergone a transformative evolution, crystallising into a nuanced strategic framework that is committed to amplifying both awareness and palpable results. Our journey has not been without its obstacles; indeed, we confront myriad challenges ranging from resource limitations to intrinsic structural issues. Yet, it is precisely these challenges that offer us

the most fertile ground for growth, refinement, and recalibration of our approaches. As we traverse this complex landscape, our ultimate triumph resides not merely in amplifying our message but in effecting authentic, grassroots change. This underscores our core ethos, articulating unequivocally that our true success is measured not just in the discourse we shape but in the systemic changes we catalyse.



As we reflect on the year gone by, the achievements of ECPAT International are brought sharply into focus. Through dedication, collaboration, and unwavering commitment, our portfolio of projects has made strides in areas that matter most. From ground-breaking research to influencing global policies, the pages that follow paint a picture of the transformative work that we have embarked upon. This is a testimony to our values, and a glimpse into the progress we have made.

#### **OVERVIEW OF PROJECTS:**

ECPAT International has had a year of remarkable achievements in its fight against child sexual exploitation. Key projects have each contributed to our mission:

- Disrupting Harm:
  - A pioneering project in collaboration with UNICEF and INTERPOL, focused on innovative research methodologies to gather evidence on online child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- ECPAT Country Overviews:

  A series of collaborations with policy makers and ECPAT.
- Child Rights Monitoring:
  Contributions to UN Special Rapporteur's thematic reports and collaborative research.
- Sex Offender Registry Research:
  Systematic investigation into sex offender practices, involving global experts.
- Sexual Exploitation of children in Humanitarian Contexts:
  Groundbreaking research that goes beyond conventional ideas.
- Safeguarding:
  Review and creation of Child Safeguarding and PSEAH (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Sexual Harassment) policies.
- Theory of Change and Results Framework:

  A strategic shift focused on gauging real-world changes and accountability.
- Child Participation Strategy:

  A cultural shift aimed at meaningfully engaging with children while challenging power inequalities.

These initiatives contribute to a multifaceted strategy designed for impact and accountability.

#### **Disrupting Harm:**

The Disrupting Harm 1 project, a collaboration between ECPAT International, UNICEF-Office of Research Innocenti and INTERPOL, concluded in the first half of the fiscal year, is a leap forward in our fight against the sexual exploitation of children. A standout moment was the launch of the Survivors Conversations report, which revealed profound insights from youth survivors of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. One survivor from Moldova hauntingly remarked, "And what are you going to say to the police, that you undressed yourself?" Such heart-wrenching testimonies, combined with inputs from frontline workers and other stakeholders, have only solidified our dedication to the cause.

Another poignant observation from a participant in Colombia stressed the need for open dialogue: "Sexuality is not talked about in the family, parents with their children, at school, teachers. If sexuality is talked about more frequently, children would not see it as sin, as bad, and they would not be deceived so easily." These findings have strengthened our commitment and spurred us to refine and innovate our research methodologies. Through this groundbreaking research, a new trove of data on online child sexual exploitation and abuse is allowing us to greater tailor our approach to make concrete changes.

The successes of Disrupting Harm I has seen us build on these foundations, extending the research reach to 12 additional countries in Latin America, Middle East and North Africa, Central Europe, and South Asia, and amplifying our efforts to confront online child sexual exploitation and abuse. Beyond mere geographical expansion, this project resonates with the core values of ECPAT International. Its potential for global change is not just an aspirational goal but a tangible reality where solid data and evidence informs changes aligning with our comprehensive vision for child protection.

#### **ECPAT Country Overviews:**

Significant collaborations with ECPAT member organisations in Ecuador, Côte d'Ivoire, Bangladesh and the Dominican Republic as well as the Lanzarote Committee Secretariat and governments in Moldova, Finland, and Italy have led to focused efforts on child sexual exploitation. These overviews have also garnered substantial media, policy maker and civil society interest. This work has played a pivotal role in advancing the national dialogues, creating a support network, and sparking the necessary conversations to catalyse national efforts in eradicating child sexual exploitation and abuse.

## **Child Rights Monitoring:**

Our substantial contributions to key reports, such as the UN Special Rapporteur's thematic reports on reparation and voluntourism, have gone beyond conventional advocacy. By pooling expertise from a multitude of ECPAT members and other civil society organisations across various countries and contexts, we are breaking new ground in children's rights in these specific aspects. Addressing the pressing issues of reparation and voluntourism is not merely a challenge; it is a social justice and moral imperative that shapes our daily efforts and strategic outlook, enriched by a diverse tapestry of insights.

# Sex Offender Registry Research:

ECPAT's systematic and nuanced approach to investigating sex offender registry practices has set a benchmark in the field. The collaboration event of global experts and the resulting Technical Considerations document are more than mere formalities; they are a testimony to our commitment to fostering international understanding and adapting practices to local contexts. This research has already had real-world repercussions such as informing policy discussions in places like Costa Rica in collaboration with our ECPAT member, Paniamor.

# Child Sexual Exploitation in Humanitarian Contexts:

Our research into child sexual exploitation in affected by crisis is a significant effort that melds local knowledge with global approaches. Collaborating with ECPAT members in Kenya, Ethiopia and Iraq and focusing on culturally nuanced responses, we have embarked on a path that transcends conventional solutions. This approach not only embodies ECPAT's dedication to understanding complex issues but also serves as a blueprint for how to create meaningful and culturally sensitive responses in humanitarian contexts.

#### Safeguarding:

The meticulous review of the Child Safeguarding Policy and the creation of the PSEAH (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Sexual Harassment) policy goes beyond standard procedure, cementing ECPAT's unwavering commitment to a safe environment. This continual work aligns seamlessly with international best practices and ambitions to inspire stronger measures to protect children and adults within our work. It is not just about compliance; it is about embedding a culture of care and integrity within the very fabric of our organisation and our partners worldwide.

# Theory of Change and Results Framework:

Implementing the Theory of Change and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework is a strategic move essential for assessing our impact. This approach enhances our interventions and strengthens our commitment to accountability. By prioritising continuous improvement, transparency, and responsible stewardship, this work amplifies our mission and vision. This is another example of our commitment to leaning from our world, adapting to changes, and displaying accountability.

## **Child Participation Strategy:**

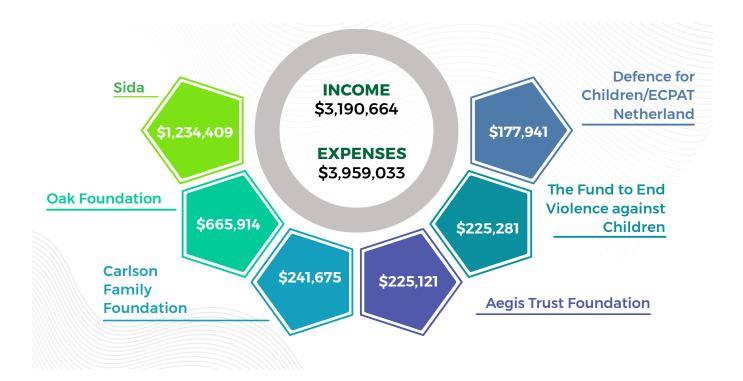
The development of a Child Participation Strategy in collaboration with our ECPAT members, appointment of new leadership, and commitment towards challenging power inequalities and placing children as key actors at the center of our work, represents more than an organisational change; it is a cultural shift. This rights-based approach seeks not merely to include children but to genuinely empower them and give them a space and an audience to influence changes, reflecting a philosophy that transcends the norm. It is a vision for the future where children's voices are not just heard but are central to the decision-making processes. ensuring their rights, needs, and aspirations are at the forefront of all we do.

### **CONCLUSION** ·

As we close this chapter and set our sights on the path ahead, we recognise the collective energy and intellectual prowess that have been invested into these ground-breaking initiatives. While we celebrate our accomplishments, we are also keenly aware of the imperative to not only maintain but to elevate our contributions. With a more extensive and diversified network of collaborations, our mission is poised for a future laden with measurable impact and heightened accountability. Leveraging these assets, we are committed to innovating, adapting, and, most crucially, amplifying the voices of children to take centre stage in our journey ahead. Through our unified resolve, ECPAT International is uniquely positioned to lead in building a safer world for children, grounded in evidence and a culture of continuous improvement.



In the past year, the commitment of our donors, spanning individuals, foundations, and governments, has been nothing short of transformative.



Our expenditure, totalling USD 3,959,033, has been judiciously allocated to programmes that genuinely make a difference. In a year of unparalleled collaboration, we are grateful to all our supporters whose contributions drive meaningful impact. We wish to acknowledge the magnanimity of our major donors, led by Sida with their generous donation of USD 1,234,409, which has been instrumental in amplifying our initiatives. Similarly, the Oak Foundation's contribution of USD 665,914, the Carlson Family Foundation's USD 241,675, Aegis Trust Foundation's USD 225,121, the Fund to End Violence against Children's USD 225,281, and Defence for Children/ECPAT Netherlands' USD 177,941 have been invaluable. While these organisations have provided pivotal financial backing, we recognise and appreciate that every contribution, regardless of size, is integral to our collective endeavour to bring about change. Thank you for making our mission possible.

These financial partnerships not only reinforce the shared vision we have with our donors but also exemplify the power of collective action. They enable us to focus on delivering tangible results, aimed at giving children and young people the opportunities they need to thrive. We express our deepest appreciation for this ongoing support, and for the shared commitment in our ceaseless endeavour to end the sexual exploitation of children. Thank you for standing in solidarity with ECPAT International; your contributions are not just fuelling our operations but are a testament to a united vision for a safer world for children.

Your contributions remain vital to sustaining this momentum of breaking new ground in our collective mission. Your partnership could catalyse the next wave of advancements that bring us closer to our goal—eradicating child sexual exploitation. We invite you to contribute to this transformative journey if you share our commitment to creating a safer world for children.





In the ever-changing landscape of advocacy and action against child sexual exploitation, the strength and adaptability of our network play pivotal roles. In this section we will delve into ECPAT's strides over the past year. From expanding our global reach with new members to recalibrating our governance structures and from embracing innovative strategies to navigating challenges, we remain united in our commitment to safeguard children across the globe. Join us as we share the highlights of our collective journey in 2023.

#### **GLOBAL:**

#### STRENGTHENING TIES AND BUILDING RESILIENCE

In March 2023, ECPAT's 9th International Assembly convened, marking the third time the event was conducted virtually. We witnessed an impressive turnout with 196 registrations from 104 member organisations, spanning 91 countries and 19 time zones. This assembly provided an opportunity for our three main Board Committees (Finance, Governance, and Credentials) to share their visionary roadmaps for the forthcoming year.

We celebrated the addition of six new members to our network since the last Assembly, expanding our influence and reach. These include organisations from diverse regions: Sustain from Cameroon, DCI from Zambia, Keoogo from Burkina Faso, Children's Voices from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Communauté Abel from Côte d'Ivoire, and ACRIDES from the Republic of Cabo Verde. To foster a unified approach to child protection, the Credentials Committee introduced the proposal for establishing Minimum Quality Standards. Leading with 'Child Safeguarding' as a priority, these standards aim to enhance the professionalism, safety, and impact of our collective work. An initial mapping exercise of the safeguarding standards among our members has been conducted, with a focus on providing robust support where needed. A keen emphasis was also laid on refining ECPAT's governance model to make it more adaptive and in compliance with legal requirements for foundations registered in the

Netherlands. This endeavour is reinforced by expert counsel specialising in Dutch Foundation law. Alongside, a new Network Development strategy is in the works, aiming to support ECPAT's new Theory of Change and foster enhanced collaborative initiatives for our collective mission.

# Navigating Change and Embracing Opportunities

ECPAT stands at a crucial juncture, embracing a wave of transformation and innovation. Our collective reflection and active discourse help us evolve, remain pertinent, and enhance our efficiency in the dynamic child protection landscape. However, recent geopolitical factors have presented challenges, with some members facing operational constraints. In response, ECPAT remains proactive, forging pivotal partnerships and engaging in critical dialogues

to facilitate the continuation of essential work in child protection. Our upcoming Network Development strategy will further address these challenges and explore safe collaboration avenues.

Considering the evolving landscape, we also note the generational shift in leadership across many member organisations. While transitions pose challenges, they also bring fresh perspectives and renewed vigour. ECPAT is committed to harnessing this dynamism, ensuring the legacy of our members remains strong, and our collective mission continues to flourish.

As we move forward, our dedication to the cause remains unwavering. With resilience and unity, we aim to create a world where children live free from exploitation.

# Regional Achievements and Highlights

The completion of Phase 1 of the "Disrupting Harm (DH)" project marked a significant milestone, successfully covering 13 nations across Africa and Southeast Asia by September 2022. The momentum continues as we embark on Phase 2, reaching into 11 additional countries spanning Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region.

In Latin America, ECPAT's advocacy efforts achieved notable success. Our recent election as the co-chair of the working group on violence against children for the 'Global Movement for Children' in Latin America and the Caribbean demonstrates our leadership role. We are enthusiastically driving synchronisation among major international organisations, intensifying focus not just on traditional travel but also emerging trends such as 'voluntourism.'

Our involvement in the European Union remains robust. From spearheading efforts to influence EU's draft law on child abuse to hosting crucial consultations in Brussels, our commitment remains unwavering. Efforts have been made to foster collaboration, stimulate national

initiatives, and maintain the momentum of ECPAT's campaign throughout the EU.

Central Asia, a region particularly affected in recent times, witnessed a renewed commitment from ECPAT, as we orchestrated virtual regional consultations and in-person meetings in Toshkent. The emphasis was on reinforcing child safeguarding and launching a unique Access to Justice project tailored for Central Asia. Our engagement in Central and Eastern Europe was extensive and multifaceted. From strategising regional priorities to backing members like La Strada Moldova in enacting significant legal provisions and advocating for child-centric reforms, our impact is evident. The collaboration with ECPAT Luxembourg birthed a transformative 4-year project in South Asia. With a focus on assessing support services for child trafficking survivors, we are ensuring that their voices are at the heart of our interventions.

In Southeast Asia, our strategic partnership with the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Commission has seen us initiating projects centred around knowledge-driven advocacy for preventing child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Our efforts in the MENA region have been dynamic. From training local researchers for data-driven advocacy in Northern Iraq to organising consultations with ECPAT Turkey, we are making strides. In March 2023, a Regional Consultation in Amman set the stage for evaluating child safeguarding processes across the region.

In Africa, our footprint expanded with projects spanning West Africa to Uganda, bringing forth actionable insights from our research and direct engagements with local communities.

As we chart the way forward, the Caribbean and the Pacific are on our horizon, where we aim to address intricate challenges surrounding child exploitation.

## **Promising Horizons**

While the post-pandemic era allowed us to re-establish in-person interactions, fostering a renewed spirit of collaboration, the research findings from the DH project amplified our reach, equipping members globally to address online child exploitation.

A hallmark of our achievements in 2023 was the event in Nairobi, Kenya. This gathering signified a paradigm shift, leveraging local expertise over international consultants, thus enriching research quality and bolstering local action against child exploitation. The emphasis was on proactive solutions, from policy reforms to capacity building. This model, centred on empowerment and actionable insights, sets the tone for our future global engagements, and we are thrilled at the increasing interest from international entities to participate in such transformative exercises.

#### CONCLUSION

In reflecting upon the past year, it is evident that ECPAT's commitment to combatting child sexual exploitation has been unwavering and our progress significant. Through strategic collaborations, data-driven research, and leveraging the strengths of our vast network, we have been able to amplify our impact across diverse regions. Notably, our shift towards engaging local actors has not only enhanced the quality of our research but also empowered communities, reinforcing our belief in a collaborative approach. As we move forward, the successes and learnings from this year set a promising trajectory for our future endeavours. With the continued support of our stakeholders, board, donors, and our vibrant community of practice, we are optimistic about creating an even greater impact in our pursuit to safeguard children globally.

# **Towards a Hopeful Horizon:**

Concluding Remarks from our Executive Director

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As we reflect upon the strides taken by ECPAT International in the past year, it is evident that our mission is not just a goal – it is a collective movement driven by tenacity, innovation, and hope. From the heart-wrenching tales of resilience captured in 'Children's Voices', the meticulous research that brings change on a global scale, to the relentless dedication of our staff and partners, every facet of our organisation has played a pivotal role in our unwavering stand against child sexual exploitation.

Our vast network's expansion across continents, from the Republic of Cabo Verde to New Zealand, signifies not just growth but the strengthening of our global resolve. This is mirrored in our financials, where the support from our donors, both grand and modest, serve as beacons of trust and collective commitment.

Yet, as we proudly chronicle our achievements, we remain acutely aware of the journey ahead. In a world replete with challenges – from shifting digital

landscapes to cultural taboos – the road is neither simple nor short. But it is this very complexity that sharpens our focus and fortifies our determination. For, in the heart of these challenges, lie untapped opportunities – to innovate, collaborate, and drive systemic change.

To the entire ECPAT International community, let this annual report not just be a testament to our past successes but a rallying call for the future. A future where every child, irrespective of geography or circumstance, is afforded the right to

a childhood free from sexual exploitation. As we step into the subsequent year, let us do so with hope in our hearts, unity in our actions, and an unwavering belief in a brighter, safer horizon for all children.

Here is to envisioning and creating a world that respects and protects the innocence of its youngest members. Onwards, towards that hopeful horizon.





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