

# CASE STUDY

**A CALL FOR NUANCED, CONTEXTUALISED  
AND COORDINATED RESPONSES  
TO COMPLEX MANIFESTATIONS OF  
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN  
HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS**

# Ethiopia



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# Introduction

Globally, children suffer various forms of violence that can have long-term consequences, and data from 2016 estimated that one billion children aged 2-17 years had experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse in the past year.<sup>1</sup> Sexual violence affects children in all settings around the globe – no matter their gender, ethnicity, class, religion, educational level, or geographic location.<sup>2</sup> With the advent of information and communication technologies, opportunities to sexually exploit children have been further increased.

The numerous global challenges of armed conflicts,<sup>3</sup> mass displacement and migration,<sup>4</sup> climate change and the insufficient measures to address their root causes and drivers such as deepening economic inequalities, structural and systematic discrimination, harmful social norms, and a general lack of impunity for the perpetrators continue to exacerbate the conditions that further expose children to sexual violence and exploitation.<sup>5</sup> Children in these crisis contexts with overlapping marginalised identities, such as gender, disability, refugee status, and religious and ethnic minorities face heightened risks and barriers to accessing care.

To gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics and manifestations of child sexual exploitation in humanitarian settings, ECPAT International commissioned a [Sexual Exploitation of Children in Humanitarian Contexts - Global Research](#). Three country contexts have been selected as case studies to further understand these dynamics: (1) Ethiopia and the internally displaced population from Northern Ethiopia; (2) Kenya and the refugee communities in Nairobi and Kakuma Refugee Camp; and (3) the Kurdistan region of Iraq and the internally displaced people and refugee communities.

This case study presents the various manifestations of child sexual exploitation identified in Ethiopia including the drivers leading to child sexual exploitation and the ways that organisations, communities, and children respond. It should be read in conjunction with the [global report](#) which documents the common perceptions, narratives, biases, norms and beliefs associated with child sexual exploitation in the context of a crisis; the current framings and understanding of sexual exploitation of children in the humanitarian sector; and the way that humanitarian aid systems, actors, and structures may impact the identification, response, access to service and prevention of child sexual exploitation.

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1 Hillis et al. (2016, Mar). [Global prevalence of past-year violence against children: a systematic review and minimum estimates](#). (This figure is an estimate and continues to be commonly featured in various publications to illustrate the scale of violence against children. For example, this figure is still referred to by the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and INSPIRE Working.)

2 *Ibid.*

3 Defined by the International Committee of the Red Cross (2008): “Resort to armed force between two or more States, or protracted armed confrontations occurring between governmental armed forces and the forces of one or more armed groups, or between such organized groups arising in the territory of a State which reaches a minimum level of intensity.” Cited in United Nations Children’s Fund. (2020). [Action to end child sexual abuse and exploitation: A review of the evidence](#). UNICEF, New York.; According to [Global Conflict Tracker](#), there are 27 currents as of 15 December 2023.

4 Defined by IOM (2004): “A process of moving, either across an international border or within a State. It is a population movement encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition, and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people, and economic migrants.” Cited in United Nations Children’s Fund. (2020). [Action to end child sexual abuse and exploitation: A review of the evidence](#). UNICEF, New York.

5 *Ibid.*

# Overview

This case study is one of the three countries of ECPAT's multi-country study on sexual exploitation of children in humanitarian settings. It was developed by ECPAT International in collaboration with ECPAT's member [Emmanuel Development Association \(EDA\)](#) - an Ethiopian-based aid organisation that is committed to improving the lives of children, youth, women, and families – conducted the in-country research.

The Ethiopia case study focused on learning about the internally displaced people, who are displaced from the Oromia region due to their ethnic background and conflict in Northern Ethiopia, and their experiences with sexual exploitation of children. Beginning in November 2020, Ethiopia's northern region of Tigray was at the centre of civil conflict and violence involving ethno-regional militias, the federal government, and the Eritrean military.<sup>6</sup> A peace agreement was signed in 2022 between Tigrayan forces and the Ethiopian government that ended the two-year-long crisis, but violence and conflict in the Oromia region have continued. Since August 2023, a state of emergency has been declared in the Amhara region because of the outbreak of military confrontation between the Federal Army and the Fano armed groups which has displaced many children and women and exacerbated the region's humanitarian context. Conflict and violence have led to more than two million internal displacements, a 60% increase from the 5.1 million recorded in 2021. Based on the latest available figures, the number of people living in displacement reached almost 3.9 million<sup>7</sup> and over 60% of them are children.<sup>8</sup>

The research covered three geographic focus areas – Addis Ababa-Akaki Kality sub-city, Amhara region of North Wollo Zone, and Debre Birhan:

- 1. Addis Ababa-Akaki Kality sub-city**, one of the 11 sub-cities where many displaced people are living and in which there are lots of reported child abuse cases.
- 2. North Wollo Zone** - Woldia town—the capital of North Wollo Zone—had been the centre and home of the internally displaced people from Tigray and surrounding areas.
- 3. Debre Birhan**, the capital city of the North Shoa Zone of the Amhara Region. In Debre Birhan region, there are three internally displaced people camps: Woinshet, China, and the newest one, Bakelo. An estimated 30,000 internally displaced people are living in these camps, and more than half of them are children, for the last two years.

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6 Council on Foreign Relations. (2023, December). [Conflict in Ethiopia](#). Center for Preventive Action.

7 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). [Country Profile: Ethiopia](#).

8 UNICEF Ethiopia. [Child protection](#).

The research team interviewed a total of 18 key informants and conducted two focus group discussions. The key informants included representatives from local non-governmental organisations, international non-governmental organisations, government offices (health, children, women), transport companies, women's associations, and Community Care Coalitions (CCC). Key informants also included a sex worker, a hospital psychiatrist, community/*iddir* leaders, law enforcement, and internally displaced people. The full interview transcripts were translated from Amharic to English and analysed by the consultant, and the ECPAT research team with the in-country researchers.

This case study is a summary of the key findings from in-country qualitative research, which includes key informant interviews. This case study is not an exhaustive country overview and analysis.

# Country Legislation about Child Sexual Exploitation

Article 36(1) of the Ethiopian Constitution firmly establishes the fundamental right of every child not to be subjected to exploitative practices.<sup>9</sup> In alignment with this constitutional mandate, the Government of Ethiopia has enacted various laws to safeguard this inherent right. One such legislative measure is Proclamation No. 1178/2020 on the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Persons.<sup>10</sup>

This proclamation includes provisions specifically designed to address the situation of trafficked child victims, particularly those subjected to sexual exploitation. Notably, Article 24(1) of the proclamation underscores the entitlement of victims to crucial information regarding the protection and support available to them, as well as updates on the status of their case throughout the investigative and prosecutorial processes.<sup>11</sup>

The Ethiopian Criminal Code carries out penalties for sexual offences against children. A male adult engaging in sexual intercourse with a female child aged 13 to 18 is punished with a prison sentence of 3 to 15 years,<sup>12</sup> while a woman who engages in the same act with a male child is punished with imprisonment not exceeding 7 years.<sup>13</sup> The penalty increases to 13 to 25 years if the victim is under 13, while women would benefit from lenient punishments for the commission of the same offence.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, performing a homosexual act on a child in Ethiopia is criminalised with 3 to 15 years imprisonment for victims aged 13 to 18, and 15 to 25 years for those under 13. Additionally, if a woman performs such an act on a female minor, she faces a maximum of 10 years imprisonment.<sup>15</sup>

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9 Government of Ethiopia. (1995). *Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*, Article 36.

10 Government of Ethiopia (2020). *Proclamation No. 1178/2020 on Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Persons*.

11 *Ibid.* Article 24 (1).

12 Government of Ethiopia (2004). *Criminal Code*, Article 626(1).

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.* Article 627.

15 *Ibid.* Article 631.

# Main Difficulties and Challenges for Communities in Ethiopia

All key informants noted that due to the conflict and violence which has resulted in internal displacement, an ongoing humanitarian crisis, economic instability, and continued political unrest, internally displaced people communities are experiencing high levels of insecurity, including:

- Overall insecurity – lack of peace, safety, and continued violence
- Political insecurity (and violence)
- Economic and job insecurity
- Food insecurity (including inflation)
- Physical health insecurity (partly due to poor hygiene and sanitation)
- Mental health insecurity (due to crisis, displacement, and violence)
- Shelter insecurity
- Social and familial insecurity (rise of separation and divorce)
- Community disintegration (expansion of bars and prostitution market)

“... if we didn't have this [political] instability, we wouldn't have the economic problems and all these problems.”

- Ethiopia, KI

Overall, internally displaced people families face more challenges than the host communities due to loss of family resources, assets, and a home; increased lack of basic needs; and injury and death of heads of household. Service provider institutions and infrastructure have been damaged by the conflict and looting.

“Lack of food is one of the major difficulties that families are facing in our community. Due to this, many children are forced to perform different activities that are dangerous for their wellbeing and that are not appropriate for children. Many families are not able to buy food for their children and themselves due to the high cost of the items.”

“The possibility of finding job opportunities in the city is the biggest challenge for many families and individuals. Hundreds and thousands of displaced communities flooded into the city, making job opportunities very difficult. This has negatively impacted children since the families have become unable to cover the entire family's expenses. Due to this, many children are forced to do whatever they can to support themselves and their families.”

- Ethiopia, Key Informants



# Shifting Expectations on the Role of Children Due to the Crisis?

The impact of the conflict in Ethiopia on children is visible at many levels and the key informant interviews showed signs that the crisis has significantly increased the expectations on children within families. Traditionally, children were expected to contribute to family chores (for girls) and small businesses (like agriculture, in rural areas for boys). Yet, before the crisis, “*children were expected to go to schools and study and get jobs after they graduated.*” Now, children must take on significant responsibilities to support their families’ survival strategies by performing income-generating activities; resulting in school dropouts but at times also an increase in crime and violence endured by the children. Boys are engaging in economic activities such as shoe polishing, car washing, begging and other forms of daily labour in construction or other sectors. Girls are working as housemaids and domestic workers as well as being sexually exploited in prostitution and working in bars and hotels. Communities are also seeing a rise in child marriage both in terms of alleviating their economic burden but also to protect girls from further sexual violence and exploitation. Boys are also reported to be recruited as child soldiers to earn money for their own survival.

*“Most of us are displaced from the Oromia region, where we had a stable life and businesses to support our families. We have been living there for many years, and our children attended school without any haste. But now we are working for survival, and the support from the camp is not sufficient and does not cover all our needs, so children are forced to work inside and outside the camp. Mainly boys are working outside of the camp by carrying, selling some goods, and washing cars, and girls are working as limited household staff. The crisis basically affected women and children and exposed them to different abuses. For instance, before a year, there were girls in the camp, but we don’t know where they are, and there are rumours that they are in Addis and other towns working as prostitutes for survival.”*

*- Ethiopia, KI (IDP)*

Key informants consistently reported that economic independence is one of the markers of transitioning from childhood to adulthood, along with puberty, marital status or independent living. The crisis impacting on the shifting roles of children within families is likely to also impact on the perceptions of protection needs of children who are working within the communities.

# Impact on Children's Wellbeing

All the insecurities are having a direct and adverse impact on children and their wellbeing. Since the conflict, internally displaced people communities are experiencing an increase in child malnutrition, child mental health problems (including post-traumatic stress disorder), orphanhood and consequently the rise of child-headed households, children living and working on the streets (*"children exposed to street life"*), forced recruitment of children into armed forces or armed groups, or the threat of it, child marriage, and child migration (illegal and legal). Children's educational outcomes have been severely impacted by the conflict and key informants reflected on the rise of behavioural problems at school, denial of education of children without families, and increase in school dropouts (often due to children taking on more work). These push and pull factors and drivers are resulting in children engaging in dangerous and exploitative activities such as petty street crime (mostly boys) and sexual exploitation in prostitution (mostly girls).

*"Because of the internal conflict, the children in the IDPs who came from the Wolga (Oromia region) area have lost their parents. Due to this, most families have become child headed where the older child is responsible for the rest of the brothers and sisters to take care of the family like their parents do. The crisis has brought psychological, social, and mental problems and a huge burden of responsibility on children, particularly young girls. For example, girls who are at the age of 14 go for collecting firewood from the forest where she doesn't know the place and to sell it to the host communities and support their families."*

*- Ethiopia, KI*

*"The absence or inadequate availability of [services] greatly affected the physical, emotional, psychological, and health situation of the community, and when it comes to children, it is obvious that it affected the current and future lives of the children in all aspects. What do you expect tomorrow if these children do not get a better education? They will end up prostitutes, he said. A person who is hungry can do whatever is asked, and we can't talk about dignity."*

*- Ethiopia, KI*

# The Rise of Sexual Exploitation of Children

Key informants all reflected on the fact that the conflict and resulting economic, political, and social insecurities are key driving factors in the rise of economic and sexual exploitation of children in Ethiopia. The fact that families are struggling to meet their basic needs (food insecurity has been recurrently referred to as a main challenge for internally displaced people) as well as the breakdown of the social fabric resulting in a rise of exploitative practices that were not as common before the crisis. The key informants reflected on the following ways that children are being exploited:

- Child labour (including domestic work and girls and boys being exposed to sexual exploitation as a result);
- Sexual exploitation in prostitution – mostly concerning girls, but key informants unanimously referred to cases of sexual exploitation of girls (or survival sex), for money, food, protection, or promise of a job, particularly in the capital city of Addis Ababa;
- Migration and exposure to sexual exploitation – children, mostly girls, are travelling to the Middle East and Gulf States to earn money to support their families and are sexually exploited en route or when in exploitative domestic work situations. Trafficking and promises of jobs are grooming techniques used by the exploiters;
- Girls working in bars and hotels are exposed to sexual exploitation by their employers who use them to attract clients;
- Abduction and sexual exploitation and abuse of “thousands” of children (mostly girls but also boys) by rebel group and government forces (*“for the girls it’s a way of getting protection from the armed groups”*);
- Technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation – some cases have been reported in the Addis Ababa community about children using social media and being *‘trapped by sexual exploiters’*, but data is lacking in this regard particularly for internally displaced people.

*“To support the family’s income, children find themselves involved in sexual activities.”*  
- Ethiopia, KI

*“Many girls and adult women were raped by armed groups during the conflict. Once they are exposed to sexual exploitation, there is a tendency to enter commercial sex work. Many girls want to change their place and migrate to the Middle East since they don’t feel comfortable living within the community. In relation to this, girls faced more sexual exploitation during their journey and in the destination countries.”*

- Ethiopia, KI

# Which Children are in Particularly Vulnerable Situations to Sexual Exploitation?

The key informants noted the following children are in particularly vulnerable situations to sexual exploitation: girls (13-18 years of age, although there are cases as young as 11); orphaned children and child-headed households; girls from poor families; children from displaced communities are more vulnerable; children with disabilities (particularly mental); and university students. Some cases of boys are reported but in much smaller proportions and the negative societal perceptions around child sexual exploitation are extremely high.

The children who have experienced sexual exploitation and violence face strong stigma, marginalisation, humiliation, trauma, discrimination, social rejection, deteriorating mental health, and isolation from families and friends, often leading the girls to leave their communities and end up in vulnerable situations.

"IDPs are very vulnerable. If something bad happens, they blame them. 'Tefenakay' means refugee in Amharic and it's a bad word in the host community."

- Ethiopia, KI

"Sexual exploitation is rampant in our area, as is rape, and children in poverty are tricked into having free sex. Especially for women, children, children of poor families, and children of displaced families, the problem is worst. Children with this problem described above show despairing, anxious behaviour, and some of them are addicted to substance abuse."

- Ethiopia, KI

These children often experience early pregnancy and drop out of school. The children and young people are blamed by the community as they are branded as being 'immoral' and 'deceivers.'

"Survivors are being blamed by the community if they are found victims of sexual exploitation because many community members still believe that sexual exploitation happens with the consent of the affected person, and they are considered deceivers."

- Ethiopia, KI

# Who are the Perpetrators and Intermediaries?

The sexual exploitation of children is facilitated by intermediaries or middlepersons who are individuals that hold power and resources – ‘*men with power*’ – including hotel and bar owners, recruiters, Bajaj (rickshaw) drivers, and community members.

The perpetrators, which often overlap with the intermediaries, are also individuals with power and influence - rich, older men; hotel and bar owners; taxi drivers; government officials; civil servants; armed forces/soldiers; university staff; daily labourers (including those working in humanitarian camps); truck drivers; guards in internally displaced people camps; and Bajaj drivers.

One key informant referred to social media being used as a way for perpetrators to get in contact with children while another also referred to the Internet, but more as exposing children to inappropriate sexual materials. *“In relation to technology, illegal sexual videos are released through websites so that children watch these videos through smartphones, and in return, they get motivated to try it practically.”* - Ethiopia, KI

*“The money girls earn goes to intermediaries and hotels, and the remaining money goes to families. They are victims of sexual exploitation without any return, which leaves them hopeless to the end.”*

- Ethiopia, KI

*“During the crisis, young children are forced to work in small bars, alcohol drinking houses, and shops too, and they are forced to sleep with the customers. The income is split with the owner of the shop or bar.”*

- Ethiopia, KI

*“It is very common that mostly girls are recruited by illegal brokers to go to the Arab countries for work via Djibouti and Somalia to the Arab countries. During their journeys, most of the girls became victims of sexual and physical abuse, and some girls were also taken as hostages to get money from their families or to kill and rape them.”*

- Ethiopia, KI

# Government and Non-Governmental Humanitarian Support for Children and Families

Key informants noted that there are some medical, child protection, livelihood, food, and basic support services provided by non-governmental and government entities to support children and families while legal support is mostly provided by governmental entities. However, there are no specialised support services for child sexual exploitation and there is a large gap in specialised mental health and psychosocial support services according to key informants. The existing providers and frontline workers in the referral pathway (police, health care workers) have limited capacity and training and lack the needed skills (counselling, investigative, mental health) or resources to support child sexual exploitation cases. In general, these cases are passed on to humanitarian organisations to respond and the community and the government lack the ownership to address the problem and raise awareness regarding the issue. Some key informants reported that although the community structures called the Community Coalition Committee are often the first to receive the cases and collaborate with humanitarian organisations to provide support, their action is often quite limited, although recognised as very important.

*“Children who are victims of sexual exploitation report it to their families or friends at first, and some report it to their teachers if the abuse is on school premises. The families take the cases to the legal bodies and sometimes to the Iddir or community association.”*

*- Ethiopia, KI*

There are no systems to identify victims or the provision of outreach services and there are very few specialised support services for sexual exploitation of children.

*“In my opinion, the government does not pay any attention, and internally displaced people problems are not its priority due to the conflict and the many internally displaced people in different parts of the country.”*

*- Ethiopia, KI*

“There is no concerned body to seriously implement prevention of sexual exploitation of children. That is why there is sexual exploitation of children in many areas of the country. The government should provide the children with the necessary services like food, medical care, and others to prevent them from going to prostitution, where they will be sexually exploited. The families’ support is also minimal to prevent their children from sexual exploitation, and the families should be supported economically so that they might not push the children into prostitution.”

- Ethiopia, KI

While several key informants highlighted the work of humanitarian aid organisations in the provision of services, several informants also pointed out the limitations and gaps in the humanitarian system and services in relation to sexual exploitation of children. Several highlighted that there is minimal focus on preventing and responding to child sexual exploitation (such as sexual and reproductive health services for children and adolescents; child mental health and trauma services; gender-based violence management services); with the focus being largely focused on the provision of basic food and shelter services. If there are available services, they are focused primarily on adults or a narrow focus on girls, rather than all children, considering different specific needs for different genders.

“We [internally displaced people] don’t have the capacity to address these problems, we are relying on the humanitarian support of different non-governmental organisations and some religious institutions, where they occasionally provide us with food, and there are some people who beg at the gates of the church for money to buy food and clothes. There are some non-governmental organisations that provide us some cash assistance, but compared with the problem, it’s not sufficient. We want to integrate with the host communities if our livelihood is facilitated by the government or any other stakeholder.”

- Ethiopia, KI

“Humanitarian organisations don’t support much since they have their own planned project activities and that may not be focused on those (exploitation) risks.”

- Ethiopia, KI

*“The UN and international non-governmental organisations are more focused on food provision than the sexual exploitation of children.”*

*- Ethiopia, KI*

Key informants highlighted that the internally displaced people camps also pose specific security risks and service gaps and challenges which can exacerbate the conditions and lead to more sexual exploitation of children. Poor lighting in camps and damaged shelter infrastructure make it easy for traffickers to enter the camps at night and take away children (resulting in girls being sexually exploited and boys exploited in labour). Services for children are provided via their parents/guardians with no independent services to help children directly. In addition, the general shortage of food, water and sanitation services, lack of dignity kits, and poor shelter can also lead to children going outside of the camp to access these services, which can result in children being trafficked, abused, and exploited.

Several key informants noted that overall, there is a lack of effective coordination mechanisms between humanitarian organisations and under the lead of the government, leading to duplication and inadequate number and variety of services.

*“The organisations work individually, and there is no coordination among the humanitarian organisations to respond to the sexual exploitation crisis collaboratively.”*

*- Ethiopia, KI*

*“Most of the humanitarian support usually comes after the crisis has already happened... Most humanitarian organisations prefer not to work in the cities, and they are always in the conflict-affected areas, which are far from the capital city.”*

*- Ethiopia, KI*

*“The services provided by the humanitarian actors are not adequate and not well adapted to preventing the sexual exploitation of children. The humanitarian responses are highly focused on distribution of food and non-food items and some protection activities. But their interventions lack prevention activities to protect the children from sexual exploitation.”*

*- Ethiopia, KI*

*“No capacity building training for humanitarian staffs, volunteers, and the government staffs on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.”*

*- Ethiopia, KI*



# Challenges in Reporting

If children do decide to report, they go to their friends, peers, and families; someone who has already gained the children's trust. Considering the attached stigma and discrimination as well as the overall lack of confidence in the system, families rarely report the cases. If the children want to report, they feel that there is *"no place for children to report when they have problems."* One key informant shared an example of a girl who was raped and was bleeding *"but she was too embarrassed to tell her family or friends about the situation."*

*"Most of the cases don't get reported due to lack of confidence in police and law enforcement agencies. Process is lengthy, which embarrasses family. The best way to report is to humanitarian workers and sometimes get better result."*

*- Ethiopia, KI*

*"There is a tendency to report abuse cases to non-governmental organisation staff, especially those working on gender-based violence and child protection. I have never heard of anyone who is a perpetrator of abuse penalised by law, but I know of one guard suspended from his duty."*

*- Ethiopia, KI*

Families primarily seek services or report via tribal, religious, and social reconciliation mechanisms; rather than formal legal services which have too many processes and laws which are rarely implemented.

*"If the case is reported to the Iddir or community-based organisation and the perpetrator is found within the association, he or she obliged to take his penalty as ordered by the association members. Most of the time the perpetrator will be cancelled from the lists of association. Due to these organisations having many members, they don't try to do it within the community since they will be exposed by the community which is also shameful to the person and his families if found guilty of any sexual harassment or exploitation."*

*- Ethiopia, KI*

Due to stigma associated with sexual exploitation, many children (mostly girls) are forced to leave their community or immigrate abroad illegally to cope and escape social pressure and shame for the child and their family. Child marriage is viewed as a coping mechanism both to reduce the risk of sexual exploitation and violence as well as a response to it.

# Recommendations for Next Steps

Key informants outlined several recommendations of key actions that humanitarian and non-humanitarian stakeholders can do not as a single strategy but as a collective, holistic strategy, to prevent and respond to the growing sexual exploitation of children in Ethiopia:

- Collaboration among different bodies, including government sector offices and the community, is needed to get the identified cases the appropriate judgments. Many cases are left unidentified, some without appropriate judgment or court decisions.
- Economic empowerment of families is the main cause of this problem. There should be economic options for families with a large family size or children.
- Community awareness on child protection and prevention of sexual exploitation.
- Implementation of legal actions against the perpetrators.
- Strengthening social structures that can deal with such issues, and there is a lot to do.

The following strategy should be designed and in place at different levels:

- **At home (open discussion with children):** at the household-level families should give more attention to the issue of sexual exploitation. Families should take time with their children to discuss about different topics including sexual matters openly. This will give the children confidence to ask their parents about sexual exploitation and understand it well before potential issues arise.
- **In schools (establish clubs as a co-curricular activity):** teachers and other school communities should give attention to sexual exploration and the issue should be included in the education curriculum. If school systems give more emphasis to sexual exploitation, there will be a room for the children to learn about sexual exploitation and prevention mechanisms. For example, if the schools could establish a club that deals with children's sexual exploitation as a co-curricular activity there will be better awareness among the children and the other school communities.
- **At the country level (political stability):** positive and supportive political view is mandatory to minimise the effect of sexual exploitation in the country. Most of the conflict crisis in Ethiopia is political. If the political situation was stable, there would not have been all these crises including: displacement of people, loss of properties, loss of parents, and economic crisis, which are the main causes and contributing factors for the sexual exploitation of children.

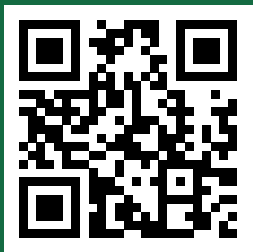
In addition, there should also be:

- 1. Awareness and Education:** Raise awareness about child sexual exploitation risks, across levels, from families to communities and schools; and challenging harmful narratives around consent and victim-blaming.
- 2. Community Engagement:** Involve community members, leaders, and elders in discussions and initiatives to combat child sexual exploitation and to collaborate with the government to end sexual violence.
- 3. Legal Measures:** Advocate for stronger legal frameworks that protect children's rights, and special legal protection of children in times of crisis, as well as stronger refugee legal frameworks. Legal empowerment and support services are necessary.
- 4. Stronger Accountability for Perpetrators:** Holds perpetrators accountable and ensure prosecution.
- 5. Education Services:** out of school support; girls clubs.
- 6. Training in Child Sexual Exploitation for Government and Other Services Providers:** to identify and respond to cases but also to work together.
- 7. Support Services:** Establish safe spaces/shelter, legal assistance, counselling, and survivor-centred support services for children who have been sexually exploited. Mental health services are key and currently missing.
- 8. Preventive Measures:** Comprehensive sex education is necessary and should be integrated into schools' curricula and discussed at home; awareness campaigns; safe reporting mechanisms.
- 9. Livelihood Opportunities:** Provide income-generating and economic strengthening activities (including cash transfers) for parents and guardians and children/young people.
- 10. Reporting Mechanisms:** Create channels for reporting child sexual exploitation cases, ensuring confidentiality and protection for whistleblowers; consider the disclosure patterns of child victims.
- 11. Stronger Collaboration Mechanisms between organisations, between public and private sectors:** with a focus on also **engaging with the private sector, including the transport sector** where many young girls are transported to different places by brokers; or the entertainment sector.
- 12. Peacebuilding and Political Stability**

Ultimately, according to the key informants interviewed, for them the paramount and urgent need was for continued political stability. By achieving political stability, and in turn relative peace, this would reduce the stress and fears, uncertainties, socio-economic problems that are driving or exacerbating the conditions and vulnerabilities that may lead to child sexual exploitation and other children's rights violations:

*"I don't think it is possible to stop and prevent children from sexual exploitation unless our country is peaceful. As we spoke, there is a fresh conflict erupting in the Amhara region, and we are afraid it will spread into our area and make our lives more difficult. Whenever this kind of crisis arises, children are more likely to be affected by the crisis, so peace is key, and all the stakeholders, especially government bodies of law enforcement, are responsible for this."*

*- Ethiopia, KI*



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