

ECPAT International Child Participation Newsletter

Children and youth voices in Action!



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Introduction

Welcome to ECPAT International Child Participation Newsletter, where children's voices take center stage!

This newsletter is a space dedicated to empowering young minds, amplifying their ideas, and celebrating their contributions.

We believe that every child has the right to be heard and we have the responsibility to listen, and through this platform, we highlight their thoughts, recommendations, creativity, and actions that shape their communities and the world.

Whether it's sharing stories, expressing opinions, or leading change, this is a place where children's participation truly matters. Stay tuned for inspiring stories, exciting opportunities, and ways to support child-led initiatives!

If you have inspiring work by or with children and young people that you would like to showcase, please contact us - danielm@ecpat.org



Keeping Children Safe is Our Priority

At ECPAT, we are fully committed to keeping children safe in everything we do! Our Child Safeguarding Policy guides how we protect children, make sure our staff and partners follow safe practices, and work to create child-safe and child-friendly environments in all our projects.

All ECPAT staff receive special training on child safeguarding and put it into action through risk assessments, safe recruitment, and working closely with partners to keep children protected.

To spread this culture of safeguarding even further, we are creating fun and educational materials, including a child safeguarding video to help children, caregivers, and communities understand their rights and how to stay safe. .



We have also launched a [child safeguarding webpage](#) where you can explore our commitments, resources, and best practices from around the world.

Because at ECPAT, keeping children safe isn't just a rule—it's a promise! See our child-friendly commitment and our resources in English, French, Spanish and Russian

Children's Voices Leading the Way



ECPAT International is excited to launch our **Child Participation Strategy**—a big step toward making sure kids' ideas, opinions, and voices are heard, valued, and acted upon! This strategy gives children real opportunities to share their thoughts, help design solutions to protect kids from harm and be a part of important decisions.

And guess what? **Children helped create this strategy too!** 🎨📖

A total of 75 children from 5 countries shared their ideas to shape it, making sure it truly reflects what young people need and want.

With this strategy, we're making sure that children are not just heard, but also make a real difference!

To make sure children understand our plan, we've created a fun and easy-to-read version of the Strategy—just for you! 📖✨

ECPAT has created child-friendly versions of important documents, policies, and strategies! These resources are designed just for you—so you can learn, explore, and be part of the change!

Check them out under 'Child-Friendly Resources' at the link below! 😊
Read more about the Strategy and child friendly resources here
[Child and Youth Participation - ECPAT](#)

Children Know Better Project - Empowering Children to Lead and Create Change!

We launched an exciting new project in Nepal and Bangladesh with our partners CWIN and ACD to help children take the lead in making a real difference! This project will give kids the skills and confidence to design, evaluate, and improve programs that impact their lives.

Through fun and interactive sessions, children will learn how to gather and analyze information from their peers, share ideas, and create solutions that truly work. More importantly, they'll show the world that when kids are included in decision-making, amazing things happen!

This project will also help adults see the value of listening to children, understand their opinions, and include them in important decisions. We hope to prove that when children's voices are heard, real change can happen—not just in this project, but in many other areas, including efforts to protect children from harm.

Together, we're building a future where children are leaders, changemakers, and partners in creating a better world! 🌍🌟



See the [Literature review of existing child and youth informed approaches to advocacy and Training Manual on Participatory Action Research with Children](#) developed by ECPAT as part of the project

VOICE Report – Speaking Up for Change: Children’s and Caregivers’ Voices for Safer Online Experiences

Making the Internet Safer for Children! 🌍💻🌟

In today’s digital world, keeping children safe online is more important than ever!

The VOICE project, led by ECPAT International, Eurochild, and Terre des Hommes Netherlands, worked with children and caregivers from 15 countries to understand what kids need to stay safe online.

While the internet is a great place to learn and have fun, it also comes with risks like cyberbullying and harmful content—which can violate children’s rights.

That’s why the VOICE Report –“Speaking Up for Change”– highlights why children’s ideas and experiences matter in creating better online safety rules.



Together, we can make the internet a safer and happier place for everyone!

Read the child-friendly report here: [Voice Child Friendly Report](#)

She Leads - Girls in Africa Speak Up on Online Safety!



Have you ever felt unsafe online or worried about how technology can be used to harm people? You're not alone! A group of amazing girls and young women from across the Southern and Western regions of Africa came together to investigate online sexual exploitation and abuse (OSEA), and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

They worked hard to gather stories, experiences, and ideas from other young people—because who better to talk about these issues than the ones facing them?

This report is more than just research—it's a powerful statement from girls and young women demanding a safer, fairer, and more respectful online world.

Their findings show what needs to change and how young people, adults, and decision-makers can work together to make the internet a safer space for everyone.



Read more about their findings and recommendations [HERE](#).

The Power of youth voices in Action - She Leads Girls and Young Women at the WeProtect Summit and Dakar Regional Workshop



ECPAT International supported 8 girls and young women from the She Leads Programme to attend and participate in two key regional and global events.

The She Leads programme fights for the rights, leadership and agency of girls and young women (GYW). It is an initiative for and by girls and young women: because they have the right to speak and decide for themselves.

The girls and young women participated in the WeProtect Global Summit in Abu Dhabi - UAE, and the Regional Workshop for Central, North and West Africa in Dakar - Senegal.

The participation of the GYW was designed to generate rich and insightful information with clear messages for policy and practice. The focus of the sessions was to secure the GYW's views and feelings on how a new system can best support children and young people in the rapidly evolving world, especially with regards to online sexual exploitation.

The sessions enabled the She Leads GYW to raise their voices about their immediate needs and future priorities, with a specific focus on sexual exploitation informed by the findings from their research and national consultations.

Watch their powerful presentation of call to action at [Child and Youth Participation - ECPAT](#) under She Leads section.

The Fire Side Chat side-event!

One of the most exciting moments at the summit was the interactive fireside chat – a special session moderated by the incredible girls and young women themselves! This was their chance to share the powerful findings from their youth-led research on online sexual exploitation and abuse (OSEA) and engage directly with top decision-makers.

With 13 key participants, including Microsoft, IJM, the Government of Ghana, Tdh Netherlands, and ECPAT members, the session tackled important topics like:

1. How different types of sexual exploitation and abuse affect children and young people
2. Shocking trends and statistics on OSEA, especially in Africa
3. Why children and young people must be involved in designing safer digital spaces

The girls made it clear – young people's voices matter! They called on decision-makers to listen, act, and make online spaces safer for everyone. This was more than just a discussion – it was a powerful step toward change!

A Global Expert Advisory Group on Child Participation!



ECPAT has created a Global Expert Advisory Group on Child Participation—a team of child rights experts, activists, academics, and young people, including survivors—all working together to make sure children’s voices are heard and valued!

This group is a **safe space** where members **share ideas, experiences, and solutions** to break down barriers that stop children from participating in important decisions. They focus on **protecting children from sexual exploitation and abuse**, while also finding ways to help young people **speak up and influence change** on big issues like child safety and justice.

By working together, they are helping to **transform policies, challenge harmful narratives, and create real opportunities** for children and youth to lead the way

Stay tuned for outputs from the group!

Children Leading Change: A Look at Last Year's Participation

Last year was a powerful demonstration of how children and young people are shaping decisions, driving advocacy, and leading research!

Across multiple projects, consultations, and global events, their voices were at the center of important conversations.



1. Consultations & Advocacy

- **75 children from 5 countries** contributed to shaping the **Child Participation Strategy**.
- **140 girls and young women from 7 countries** shared their insights through national consultations, which were presented at the **Dakar Regional Workshop**.
- **85 children from 7 countries** participated in national consultations to inform advocacy at the **WeProtect Global Summit**.
- We engaged **105 children and young people from 8 countries** to provide input in the **Terminology Guidelines Revision**.

2. Research & Co-Creation

- **50 children and 10 youth facilitators** in Nepal & Bangladesh are leading the implementation of “Children Know Better” project, which entails conducting child-led research to inform child-led advocacy.
- **483 children from 15 countries** contributed to the **VOICE Study** on child protection issues.
- **16 young women** have been co-creating multimedia advocacy tools under the **She Leads** project.
- **96 children** from 3 countries participated in **Irish Aid 2** research activities.
- **12 children and young people** helped in stakeholder analysis and website redesign.

3. Representation at Global & Regional Events

- We facilitated **4 girls and young women** to attend the **Dakar Regional Workshop**.
- **4 girls and young women** participated in the **WeProtect Global Summit** in Abu Dhabi courtesy of **ECPAT International**.
- **2 children** represented their peers at the **UN General Assembly (Nov 2023)** under the **SECTT/GIZ** project.

4. Youth Leadership & Advisory Roles

- **3 youth representatives** joined the **Expert Advisory Group on Child Participation**, ensuring young people have a say in decision-making at the highest levels.

#FocusOnTheFuture

GLOBAL 20 SUMMIT 24



Young Changemakers Spotlight! ✨

Meet the bold, brilliant, and unstoppable children and young people who are making a difference! 🚀 ✨ In this segment, we celebrate young leaders, activists, and advocates who are standing up, speaking out, and taking action to create real change in their communities and beyond.

From fighting for children's rights to making sure young voices are heard in big decisions, these changemakers are proving that age is just a number when it comes to making an impact!

Meet **Felicity Feleke** from Ethiopia, a fearless advocate and a true force to be reckoned with! As a fourth-year law student, she is passionate about justice, equality, and amplifying the voices of girls and young women. Her dedication to change has earned her a place on the She Leads Pan African Advisory Board, where she works to ensure that girls and young women have a seat at the table in key decision making spaces.

From fighting for gender equality to inspiring young people to stand up for their rights, Felicity is proving that when girls lead, the world listens!

She has taken the voices of girls and young women from local communities to the global stage!

🌍 ✨ Whether at national conferences, regional dialogues, or international summits, she fearlessly speaks up, represents, and advocates for change.

Her mission? To ensure that girls and young women are heard, valued, and included in the decisions that shape their lives!

🚀 Most recently, Felicity was among the delegation facilitated by ECPAT International under She Leads Programme to take the voices of African girls and young women to the WeProtect Global Summit in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

MyVoice#MyFuture – youth film

Felicity

SheLeads GYW Youth Advocate Network



Felicity's Poem at the WeProtect Summit.

My voice, my future, my right, my tomorrow
I was born in an age of cyberspace and screens,
I am Gen Z, Gen Alpha, I am even texting in my dreams.
I almost speak in binary, in the code of machines,
Where likes and algorithms are scripting my scenes.
Yet shadows loom, monsters cloaked in disguise,
Benefiting from and hiding behind anonymity's guise.
They follow my steps, their hunger precise.
So vast, so silent, killing me at once.

Every child deserves to dream and go far,
Our innocence, protected, our future a star.
No child should ever carry this painful lasting scar,
End CSEA—it's now time to raise the bar.

Exploitation thrives where silence grows,
We all must act now before it overflows!
So no more silence, no more disguise,
Hear my voice, see the fire in my eyes.
I speak for the past, for all that's been lost.
I speak for the future, for what our silence could cost.

A justice, delayed, is a justice denied,
Until this violence ends, we refuse to hide,
Because It's unacceptable to put our safety aside.
To not consider our voice, in the laws that you mold
To be another number in a statistics, our story untold,
A voice unheard, left out in the cold.

We're not just survivors; we're leaders who fight.
Our stories are powerful, and our futures are bright.
But we are not just the future; we are also the now.
So hear us, include us—this is our collective vow.

Give us a seat at the table—it's about our rights and our future.
Your laws must reflect our voices, to not just be a suture.
It is our reality; we face this danger.
Anything for us, without us, is a step in the wrong direction.
Our lived experiences must shape your perception.
Only through our collective effort can we ensure prevention

**Thank you, and watch out
for the next edition in June!**

**In case you have an
inspiring story by a child or
young person that you feel
should be highlighted,
please reach out to
danielm@ecpat.org
by early May.**



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