

ECPAT International

ANNUAL REPORT

July 2024 - June 2025



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ECPAT International Annual Report
July 2024-June 2025.

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Executive Summary:

Driving Systemic Change for Child Protection in a Challenging World

Amidst a complex and challenging global landscape in 2024–2025, ECPAT International delivered a transformative impact. Our commitment to evidence-based action, cross-sector collaboration, and centring the voices of children and survivors has driven significant breakthroughs in policy, industry engagement, and network empowerment. Our advocacy and technical expertise shaped four new international and regional frameworks, including the landmark United Nations Convention against Cybercrime and EU and regional legislation reforms. This year, policy and law-making entities adopted over 350 of our recommendations, underscoring our role as a trusted policy leader.

Key System-Level Shifts and Breakthrough Outcomes:

1

PIONEERING INDUSTRY-WIDE SAFEGUARDS:

Recognising that protection must extend beyond traditional sectors, ECPAT forged groundbreaking partnerships to embed child safeguarding in new industries. We established a pioneering alliance with Scotiabank Canada through the KAWAQ project, integrating child protection into financial compliance. Our Global Boys Initiative led to gender-sensitive safety guidance in the gaming sector and new partnerships with companies like GamerSafer and Discord. In travel and tourism, we welcomed 45 new Code members and launched an industry wide cooperation on regulating the issue of voluntourism with children. We also influenced the World Bank and ILO to address child sexual exploitation risks in large infrastructure projects.

2

CENTRING CHILDREN AND SURVIVORS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE:

At ECPAT, our work is fundamentally rooted in the lived experiences of children and survivors. This year, 6,000+ caregivers, 480 children, and eight young women advocates directly informed digital safety advocacy, influencing online policy and survivor-centred research. Recommendations from survivors now directly inform our global advocacy and programme design. As one survivor powerfully articulated, “Reading this report felt like someone was sitting beside me, listening closely and writing my story with care. For the first time, I felt seen—not invisible. My voice, our voices, matter.” Through initiatives like “[Children Know Better](#)” and “[She Leads](#),” we have supported young people to lead and co-create solutions.

3

TRANSFORMING GLOBAL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS:

ECPAT has driven critical legislative reforms worldwide. Our influence on the UN Convention against Cybercrime secured robust provisions against child sexual abuse material and online grooming for all children under 18. In the EU, our recommendations were adopted in the recast Directive on child sexual abuse. We also saw significant national law reforms in countries like Malaysia and Thailand, including the crucial shift from “child pornography” to “child sexual abuse material.”

Our commitment to evidence-based action is reflected in the nine new country-level research publications and global toolkits we produced, which fuel our advocacy and capacity-development efforts.

The strength of our global network is paramount. Our 2025 Member's Survey revealed exceptional satisfaction: 94% of members reported significant growth in technical capacity, 89% saw a substantial increase in credibility, and 60% strengthened their ability to influence policy. This collective power, amplified by over 400 new supporters, ensures our movement continues to expand its reach and impact.

Our digital presence is a powerful engine for our mission. In the last year, our LinkedIn community has grown to 24,167 followers, with 6,506 new followers joining our network and our content generating over 1.5 million impressions.

This growing digital footprint demonstrates our ability to reach and influence a global audience of professionals, partners, and supporters. Our website welcomed over 72,000 visitors, who downloaded our reports and resources more than 2,700 times, cementing our role as a trusted source of knowledge. Furthermore, our advocacy campaigns translate online interest into tangible action. For example, our Timeless Justice campaign, aimed at ending statutes of limitations for sexual crimes against children, drew 4,500 site visitors, with an impressive 1 in 4 taking direct action to sign the petition in solidarity.

ECPAT International remains focused, principled, and united as we look ahead. We are deeply grateful to our members, partners, and donors for their enduring trust and collaboration, which enables us to make a tangible difference in the lives of millions of children vulnerable to or victimised by sexual exploitation.

ECPAT DIGITAL PRESENCE

LINKEDIN
COMMUNITY
HAS GROWN TO

24,167

NEW FOLLOWERS

6,506

IMPRESSIONS

1.5 ML



WEBSITE VISITORS

72,000



DOWNLOADED
OUR REPORTS
AND RESOURCES
MORE THAN

2,700
TIMES

Foreword by Cornelius Williams

Chair

This past year reaffirmed a critical reality: sexual exploitation of children is increasing across all settings, whether online, while travelling, during times of crisis, or in day-to-day life. Meanwhile, digital platforms are increasingly misused to harm children, as regulation fails to keep pace. With protective systems under pressure and political commitment faltering, those who exploit children are acting with greater impunity. This is not a situation we can accept. It demands urgency, clarity, and collective action.

These threats do not exist in isolation. They are layered with a growing wave of political polarisation, which is reshaping how children's rights are discussed and acted upon. In many contexts, efforts to dismantle comprehensive sexuality and relationships education, restrict civil society, and weaken inclusive child protection systems are gaining ground. These trends not only reduce access to vital services, but they also systematically exclude the children who need them most: survivors, migrant children, and those from marginalised communities. As international frameworks erode and consensus fractures, the global resolve to end sexual exploitation is weakening just when stronger protections are most urgently needed.

A sharp retreat in international aid further complicates this fragile landscape. Cuts to core and multi-year funding, especially from long-standing donors, are eroding national protection systems and constraining the ability of civil society to sustain survivor-led responses. As threats grow more complex, funding becomes more fragmented, short-term, and conditional.

In this context, ECPAT has acted with clarity and focus. Over the past year, we supported member-led advocacy, engaged with private sector partners, piloted survivor-informed research, and strengthened safeguarding across the network. These actions reflect our commitment to systems-level change grounded in evidence, equity, and solidarity.

As we shape our 2026–2030 Strategic Framework, we are guided by a clear imperative: to elevate survivor leadership, advance digital accountability, and reinforce protection systems across all regions. At the same time, we recognise and are inspired by the growing number of communities pushing back, building safeguards, reclaiming space, and standing up for children's rights. We thank our members, partners, and donors for their enduring trust and collaboration.



Foreword by Guillaume Landry

Executive Director

Civil society engagement in the fight against sexual exploitation of children cannot be taken for granted. We see activists in Latin America being threatened because criminal rings are increasingly taking control of this type of crime and consider them as an obstacle to their control over victims. We see NGOs in Central Asia having to adapt their message and restrict their action because of the shrinking space embedded in new governmental regulations and laws. This shrinking space also manifests in the control exerted on how CSOs access funding, like in South Asia. The funding crisis is pushing many organisations toward closure in Africa. Reactionary and politicised groups are increasingly targeting civil society organisations because of intense opposition to sexuality and relationship education, regulations of technology and online privacy control in Europe and North America. Wars impair the work to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation of children in the Middle East, while hostility to migrants makes the work of civil society organisations even more difficult in addressing protection issues with children on the move.

But there are beacons of light.

I was so inspired to see our members take the floor and powerfully demonstrate how civil society organisations innovate every day to

make a difference for the children they aim to protect, like during the WeProtect Summit in Abu Dhabi last December.

The partnerships that allowed ECPAT to document the experience of Venezuelan survivors of child sexual exploitation across Latin America allows all of us now to have the evidence to shed light on how we can better respond to the crisis and address the specific dynamics of sexual exploitation of children in humanitarian contexts.

The newly established Global Alliance on the Protection of Boys from Sexual Violence, convened by ECPAT, challenges how we are all operating, developing ownership to better integrate appropriate ways to include boys in addressing sexual exploitation.

We published case studies that are so inspiring on how organisations in Palestine, Pakistan, France and the United States are working in a way that better protects boys against sexual exploitation and now see how this inspired others to follow suit.

The updated Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse have seen record endorsement by a broad interagency group who commit to the work in a way that words

matter, including in the way we can avoid victim-blaming terms and depict perpetration without alluding to the victims as responsible for the crime they suffered.

The piloting of an advocacy campaign to regulate voluntourism with children in Sri Lanka, Cambodia and the Philippines has also drawn a lot of attention, with country case studies that were featured in the Global Case study. This was also complemented by the inspiring and energetic involvement of many tourism schools worldwide, with whom we published the first core competencies framework for professionals working in travel and tourism on child protection.

This is what motivates us. The power of collective action. Having concluded the series of eight regional workshops that gathered 550 participants from 143 countries, including 260 CSOs, we have witnessed firsthand and repeatedly that the general adversity faced by NGOs worldwide is galvanising action. It makes it even more worthwhile to continue this combat and innovate to put an end to the sexual exploitation of children. Count on us to hold the entire sector accountable for what makes a difference in the lives of millions of children vulnerable to or victimised by this crime.

“

This is what motivates us. The power of collective action.

”



Mr. Guillaume Landry
Executive Director,
ECPAT International



Innovating to Prevent Harm:

Adapting to Emerging Trends and Contexts

In a rapidly evolving world where new technologies and global movements present opportunities and risks, ECPAT International is at the forefront of innovation, developing forward-thinking responses to prevent harm. This section highlights our commitment to driving systemic change, demonstrating responsiveness to emerging threats, and fostering crucial cross-sector engagement, particularly in hard-to-regulate industries. Our pioneering efforts include engaging 45 new travel and tourism companies in The Code and launching an industry-first partnership with Booking.com to establish safer voluntourism practices. Furthermore, two new joint initiatives with global tourism education institutions and the Bank Information Centre are actively raising the bar for private sector action and accountability, ensuring children are protected even where few are watching.

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NEW TRAVEL AND
TOURISM COMPANIES
IN THE CODE

PIONEERING FINANCIAL SECTOR ACTION

ECPAT International has pioneered a crucial new front in the fight against child sexual exploitation in Latin America, recognising the vital, yet previously underexplored role of financial institutions. These entities, positioned at the heart of the digital ecosystem, are uniquely capable of facilitating transactions, verifying identities, and flagging suspicious behaviour. These critical functions in safeguarding children are essential where informal economies and digital vulnerabilities create significant risks.

Our groundbreaking KAWAQ project exemplifies this strategic vision. Through a pioneering alliance with Scotiabank Canada, we have opened a powerful new front in close collaboration with our Peruvian

member CHS Alternativo, Scotiabank Peru, and the Peruvian Financial Intelligence Unit (UIF). This partnership explicitly leverages banking systems to strengthen detection, prevention, and referral mechanisms, directly disrupting financial flows linked to abuse and exploitation.

This initiative has yielded concrete advancements, including significant enhancements to red flagging protocols, specialised internal training for financial professionals, and the development of sector-specific safeguarding guidance. It has fostered vital cross-sector dialogues, integrating the financial sector into mandatory reporting and broader national child protection strategies. This collaboration has set a powerful precedent by strategically embedding child protection within established financial compliance, fraud prevention, and ESG

(Environmental, Social, and Governance) frameworks. It has transformed financial institutions from passive observers into active, indispensable stakeholders within national response systems, laying robust groundwork for future engagement with other regional actors and regulators, and paving the way for systemic, lasting change.

On 17 June, ECPAT International was asked to lead a session at the Police Board of WeProtect to galvanise more concerted actions on how to involve the financial sector in the fight against sexual exploitation of children, leading to a technical working group being set up to enhance advocacy and further engage with the financial community in a meaningful way.

We supported cross-regional learnings through collaboration with ECPAT Indonesia and their project on misuse of financial technology to harm children, by presenting and hosting sessions at the ASEAN ICT forum to protect children online. We highlighted the critical role financial actors can play in disrupting and preventing sexual exploitation of children and the opportunity to cooperate with civil society and government financial authorities.

PIONEERING CHILD SAFETY IN THE GLOBAL GAMING LANDSCAPE

Online games have transcended simple entertainment, becoming a vast global platform connecting billions of players, with [over 90% of young people](#) from Gen Z and Gen Alpha actively engaged. While gaming platforms typically include safety measures, these often employ generic, age- and gender-neutral approaches, failing to address the unique, gendered experiences of children online. This oversight creates mounting risks, from exposure to harmful content to

encounters with offenders seeking to exploit young users. For adolescent boys, these risks are compounded by societal pressures to suppress vulnerability and solve problems independently.

ECPAT International, through its Global Boys Initiative, is forging a new path with the gaming industry to strengthen gender-responsive child safety and game design in online environments. We are moving beyond conventional reporting channels and policy clauses, actively addressing the root causes of harmful online behaviours, such as rigid gender stereotypes, toxic masculinity, and a culture of shame and silence. We co-design data-driven, industry-tailored solutions by engaging game developers, tech providers, and trust and safety professionals. Our work aims to influence safety systems and harness the immense potential of games to create narratives and games that promote healthy expressions of masculinity, encouraging help-seeking behaviours among all children.

A key output of this initiative is the [Guidance on Gender-Sensitive Game Safety and Design](#). This practical resource empowers game creators and tech developers to design more gender-inclusive game elements, specifically challenging rigid masculine norms and fostering help-seeking behaviours among adolescent boys.



Following the successful launch of this Guidance at the Trust & Safety Convention 2025, we have initiated strategic partnerships with leading companies like GamerSafer and Discord. These collaborations involve piloting solutions directly on gaming platforms, implementing recommendations from the Guidance across various areas, including new resources for game creators, specialised training for gaming companies, enhancement of existing game features, and further research into gender dynamics within gaming.

BRIDGING TOURISM AND TECH TO STRENGTHEN CHILD PROTECTION STANDARDS

As technology reshapes the global travel and tourism industry, it presents unprecedented opportunities and escalating risks for child safety. While travellers enjoy seamless digital experiences, these very tools are increasingly exploited by those who seek to harm children. At ECPAT International, we are proactively leading the charge to confront these emerging threats, partnering with the global travel and tourism sector to directly address how technology is being misused to facilitate child sexual exploitation.

Our foundational initiative, The Code (The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism), has been rigorously evaluated to track its outcomes in selected countries and continuously adapted to address new offending modalities and risks arising from evolving trends. This proactive approach ensures our strategies remain targeted and engage the industry to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation of children, as part of a holistic approach to sustainable travel and tourism development. These threats include the production of child sexual abuse

material in hotels and short-term rentals, the misuse of ridesharing and transport apps to move children to or by offenders, or online booking platforms being misused to bypass formal industry safeguards designed to protect children. The critical intersection of technology, travel, and child sexual exploitation demands a unified, sector-wide response.



over
340

businesses joining our global
child protection efforts

ECPAT International is building this essential response through a comprehensive, whole-sector approach. We are proud to have a growing movement of [over 340 businesses](#) joining our global child protection efforts, alongside our strategic engagement with the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) through its Standards for Sustainability in Tourism. We convene industry leaders and child protection experts to co-create solutions rooted in real-world impact. We are diligently identifying and closing loopholes, strengthening child protection standards, and ensuring children's voices are heard and acted upon where the digital and physical worlds converge.

EXPANDING GLOBAL MOMENTUM FOR CHILD PROTECTION IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM

As global travel and tourism rapidly expand, ECPAT International is building on a worldwide commitment to protect children. While this industry is a powerful engine for economic growth and cultural exchange, it also presents significant risks, underscoring the critical role every sector must play in preventing and responding to the sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

Building on a growing global movement to embed child protection at the heart of sustainable development, ECPAT launched an innovative model to create truly [child-safe tourism destinations](#). Successfully piloted in southern Thailand, this initiative brought together tourism authorities, businesses, local communities, and, crucially, empowered children and youth as changemakers. The result is a scalable, collaborative framework, ready for replication across diverse countries and regions, demonstrating our commitment to tangible, replicable impact.

A significant focus of ECPAT's work has been to translate policy into practice by directly addressing the risks posed by unregulated voluntourism, where well-intentioned travel programs can inadvertently place children in harm's way. Our Global Case Study on Voluntourism with Children provides governments, businesses, and organisations in origin and destination countries with concrete examples and actionable entry points. This ensures that all forms of volunteering in tourism adhere to the highest child protection standards. As we look ahead to the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development in 2026, this work is particularly timely, ensuring that programs

designed to help do not unintentionally create risks but offer genuine opportunities for children in local communities.

ECPAT International also actively empowers the next generation of tourism leaders, recognising them as key actors of change towards sustainable development. Our Core Competencies Framework for Tourism Education Professionals equips educators with the tools to integrate child protection into worldwide tourism curricula. Developed in consultation with students and endorsed by partners in 16 countries, this framework ensures that tomorrow's tourism professionals graduate with the ethical foundation, knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to build a sustainable, child-safe tourism sector.

By expanding these proven models and approaches to more destinations, ECPAT International is strengthening global safeguards and empowering communities to protect children as an integral part of worldwide meaningful and sustainable tourism development.

PROTECTING CHILDREN WHERE FEW ARE WATCHING: TACKLING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN THE INFORMAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM SECTOR

While significant strides have been made in engaging the formal travel and tourism industry in child protection, a critical and often overlooked challenge persists: the informal sector. This vast, largely unregulated space, encompassing small, community-based services, informal accommodations, local guides, and sharing economy platforms, presents heightened risks for children, precisely because it operates beyond traditional regulatory oversight.

Moreover, the parents and caregivers who sustain this informal economy often lack access to fundamental social security, health insurance, and legal protections. This systemic vulnerability leaves entire families and communities susceptible to exploitation, poverty, and economic shocks, directly undermining their capacity to ensure their children's safety, while witnessing at the same time a global movement towards decentralisation of tourism, whereby more travellers are seeking opportunity to spend time in more remote locations where infrastructures and protection mechanisms are less developed and resilient.

ECPAT International is actively closing this critical gap. Our landmark [Global Report on the Role of the Informal Sector and the Sharing Economy](#), developed in collaboration with the Down to Zero Alliance, illuminates

children's profound vulnerabilities in unregulated environments. Through rigorous analysis, compelling real-world case examples, and actionable recommendations, we expose how informal tourism services and sharing platforms can be misused and showcase successful, innovative strategies for engaging informal actors in child protection efforts.

Working hand-in-hand with local partners on the ground, ECPAT provides actionable tools to governments, communities, and businesses, transforming these overlooked risks into powerful opportunities for prevention. Our strategic imperative is to extend protection throughout the entire supply and value chains of the formal industry, ensuring that safeguards are strengthened precisely where vulnerabilities are highest and the need is most urgent.





Generating Knowledge to Drive Global and National Change

At ECPAT International, our research is not an end in itself; it is a powerful catalyst for policy and service reform, designed to drive tangible change at both global and national levels. This year, our commitment to evidence-based action yielded significant results: we published fourty thematic research documents,” including pioneering briefs on technology-facilitated sexual exploitation, safeguarding, gendered online harm, and new participatory action research directly with children and survivors. Our rigorous research and advocacy efforts were referenced in 40 major global and industry reports, including crucial UN mandates and the World Travel and Tourism Council’s 2025 report, underscoring our growing influence. Furthermore, two new research projects were meticulously reviewed and improved to centre the voices of survivors and children, setting new ethical standards in participatory research and ensuring our work is always grounded in lived experience.

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MAJOR GLOBAL AND
INDUSTRY REPORTS

Disrupting Harm: DRIVING GLOBAL CHANGE FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

ECPAT International, INTERPOL, and UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight are leading the second iteration of the Disrupting Harm research project across 12 countries. The foundational insights from the first phase of this project are already yielding significant advancements in combating technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse worldwide, strengthening legal frameworks, fostering coordinated national responses, and enhancing child-centred justice systems.

A significant outcome has been the progressive legislative reforms in Malaysia and Thailand. These nations have updated their legal provisions to more accurately define and criminalise critical forms of technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse,

including grooming, live-streaming of child sexual abuse, sexual extortion, cyberbullying, and the possession or distribution of child sexual abuse material. Notably, Malaysia’s replacement of “child pornography” with “child sexual abuse material” marks a profound step forward, recognising the true criminal nature and severity of these offences, rather than minimising the gravity of the abuse. Similarly, Thailand’s landmark 2025 Penal Code amendments, approved by the Thai Cabinet and now in final legislative stages, introduce comprehensive offences related to online harms, including increased penalties for conduct related to child sexual abuse material and dedicated offences for online grooming and sexual extortion, a direct result of sustained advocacy rooted in Disrupting Harm research findings. At the systems level, the robust evidence generated through Disrupting Harm has directly supported the development and implementation of national strategies and

multisectoral cooperation frameworks. Kenya's National Plan of Action (2022–2026) exemplifies a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach, integrating prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnerships. Parallel initiatives in Thailand and Malaysia underscore a growing political will to reduce re-traumatisation in justice processes and invest in systems that are truly centred on children and survivors.

ECPAT has developed three thematic briefs based on Disrupting Harm's findings and insights from regional workshops with ECPAT network members and civil society partners globally to deepen understanding further and inform targeted action. These briefs explore crucial topics, informing civil society engagement on issues such as challenging harmful gender norms, advocating for comprehensive sexuality and relationship education, and addressing overlooked vulnerabilities in rural communities. ECPAT is transforming evidence into tangible action through this comprehensive approach, creating a safer world for children.

PROTECTING CHILDREN IN CRISIS: SHAPING NEW RESPONSE MODELS FOR HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

In 2024, ECPAT International released a pivotal new report on the sexual exploitation of children in humanitarian contexts, featuring critical case studies from Ethiopia, the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Kenya, and Venezuela. This comprehensive analysis illuminated the profound complexities and systemic failures in current responses, highlighting how children in highly vulnerable situations face various forms of sexual exploitation, not only by humanitarian actors but also within communities and across borders.

Our findings underscore the urgent need for adapted, nuanced responses that fully account for gender and other identities. We emphasise approaches that respect all children's rights, recognising them as active agents of change rather than mere aid recipients. This means tailoring interventions to their specific needs and building safe environments that actively disrupt opportunities for offending. We achieve this by forging strategic partnerships across diverse sectors, including vital engagement with private sector actors.

Building on this evidence, ECPAT is now actively working with children on the move, those affected by crises in Greece and Latin America, particularly in the context of the Venezuelan crisis. Our collaborative efforts with these children, including victims and survivors of sexual exploitation, aim to meticulously document and understand the drivers of vulnerability and the protective factors at both individual and systemic levels. This direct engagement ensures that our proposed new response models are firmly rooted in robust evidence and, most importantly, in children's authentic voices and lived experiences. Our ultimate goal is to ensure quality programming and the full integration of child sexual exploitation prevention and response into all humanitarian efforts, creating lasting safeguards for the most vulnerable.

TACKLING TECHNOLOGY- FACILITATED CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION ACROSS WEST AFRICA

In West Africa, children increasingly integrate digital technologies into their daily lives. However, the vital systems designed to protect them from online harm have critically lagged. Across Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Niger, the risks of technology-

facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse are escalating. This urgent situation has been exacerbated by a severe absence of reliable data and understanding, which has long hindered effective responses.

ECPAT International is directly addressing this critical gap through Project Ensemble. This groundbreaking initiative undertook a comprehensive research effort in its second year, gathering crucial insights from over 170 children, 80 caregivers, and 39 key informants. The robust findings painted a stark picture: prevention efforts were minimal and uncoordinated, the private tech sector was largely absent from child protection initiatives, and existing legal and policy frameworks were outdated. Crucially, the research also revealed a powerful underlying momentum: an apparent demand from children for clearer information and safer online spaces.

This compelling evidence catalyses each country's tangible policy and advocacy

outcomes. Four national consultations, held in late 2024, successfully convened local decision-makers and civil society organisations around these research findings. This engagement prompted concrete commitments to update legislation, scale up online child protection strategies, and actively engage the private tech sector in joint, systemic solutions.

Project Ensemble is a three-year initiative led by ECPAT International, ECPAT France, ECPAT Luxembourg, and our dedicated national partners: Monde Des Enfants (Guinea); SOS Violences Sexuelles and Communauté Abel (Côte d'Ivoire); Association Burkinabè pour la Survie de l'Enfance and KEOOGO (Burkina Faso); and Association Nigérienne pour le Traitement de la Délinquance et la Prévention du Crime (Niger). Through this powerful collaboration, ECPAT transforms critical understanding into decisive action, building a safer digital future for children across West Africa.

2 YEARS HIGHLIGHT **PROJECT ENSEMBLE'S RESEARCH**



170+

CHILDREN
CONSULTED



80

CAREGIVERS
INTERVIEWED



39

KEY INFORMANTS
INTERVIEWED

REDEFINING THE LANGUAGE OF PROTECTION: A FOUNDATION FOR IMPACT

Words matter. Inconsistent language use can lead to unclear laws and policies, hinder the development of efficient programmes and data collections, and produce solutions that don't operate as well as they should.

The Second Edition of the [Terminology Guidelines](#), launched in April 2025, are a big step towards improving the protection of children through child and survivor-centred, blame-free, and accurate language. The Guidelines have been updated to:



The Second Edition of the Terminology Guidelines resulted from more than a year of intensive consultation with a global interagency working group led by ECPAT International, which is comprised of 40 entities, including civil society, UN agencies, international organisations, and law enforcement. Crucially, the Second Edition incorporates new insights and was enriched by consultations with children, adults, and young people, including those who have been subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation, across six countries. Their comments were invaluable in ensuring the language was ethical and respectful, thus avoiding victim-blaming or stigmatising expressions.

I tried talking to my mum about sex, but she told me she is not having this conversation with me.

Young survivor | Namibia

- » Identify children as victims of crime rather than participants, and avoid language that suggests permission, blame, or shame.
- » Expanded terminology related to technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- » Reducing misrepresentation by distinguishing between adult perpetrators and children who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour.
- » Addressing intersectional factors, such as gender identity, for accurate and inclusive language.



PREVENTING HARM AND SHIFTING NARRATIVES: A TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH TO CHILD PROTECTION

As ECPAT's global scoping study and in-depth case studies from Indonesia and the Philippines have powerfully demonstrated, "we cannot arrest our way out of this crisis." Traditional police-led prevention efforts, often confined to community awareness activities, are simply not enough. To effectively prevent the sexual exploitation of children, a fundamental and urgent shift in approach is critically needed.

This transformation means moving policing from reactive enforcement to proactive protection; from punitive mindsets to prevention-focused strategies; from operating in isolation to working in deep collaboration; and from acting on assumptions to grounding every action in robust evidence.

This essential shift demands bold political will, sustained investment, and an unwavering

commitment to continuous learning and institutional change. ECPAT International and our Down To Zero Alliance partners are directly addressing these challenges. We have developed [a scenario-based prevention toolkit](#), uniquely informed by survivor experiences and comprehensive data, designed to dismantle persistent myths and biases that hinder justice and discourage reporting. Harmful misconceptions, such as the belief that retribution implies consent, that boys cannot be victims, or that online abuse is less severe, continue to perpetuate harm and undermine victim protection. Alongside this, we have launched a large-scale campaign specifically to challenge victim-blaming narratives and fundamentally reshape public and institutional understanding of child sexual exploitation.

To protect children, law enforcement and all relevant stakeholders must expand their roles beyond investigation, embracing early intervention and actively contributing to a more profound, societal transformation that safeguards every child.



Shifting Policy and Power: Strategic Advocacy and Influence

ECPAT International is a driving force in shaping global and national policy, leveraging strategic advocacy to achieve profound institutional reform and strengthen legal frameworks for child protection. This year, our technical inputs were adopted by four new UN, interagency, and regional bodies, ensuring international conventions and guidelines now reflect child-rights and survivor-centred language. Our influence extended significantly in the EU, with over 350 recommendations reflected in the recast Directive on child sexual abuse. These concrete achievements include influencing national laws and policies and global regulation of the issue of voluntourism with children, the launch of the Global Alliance for the Protection of Boys from Sexual Violence (GAPB) Manifesto on boys' protection, new laws and policy reforms, and ECPAT's impactful advocacy on World Bank and ILO regional platforms, demonstrating our commitment to translating evidence into systemic change.

DRIVING CHANGE THROUGH STRATEGIC CAMPAIGNS: CHALLENGING MYTHS AND ADVANCING JUSTICE

ECPAT International is committed to driving systemic change through targeted, evidence-based campaigns that challenge harmful narratives and push for critical legislative reform. This year, we launched two pivotal initiatives that exemplify this commitment.

In June 2025, ECPAT, in collaboration with Down to Zero Alliance members, launched a new campaign to **bust pervasive myths regarding the sexual exploitation of children**. This initiative aims to reframe understandings and responses, grounding them in evidence and the lived realities of children, by challenging stereotypes and engaging diverse stakeholders.

Complementing this, from January to May 2025, ECPAT executed a focused digital advocacy campaign to **remove statutes of limitations (SOLs) for crimes involving the sexual abuse of children**. This campaign, primarily on LinkedIn, showed the most substantial traction in Asia, with Nepal and Indonesia demonstrating significant engagement.





Initially, we focused on engaging ECPAT members for the removal of statutes of limitations advocacy, but capacity and desire for more local-led efforts led us to expand our strategy. We are working more closely with other child protection and child rights organisations, including co-developing a joint open letter and strengthening regional partnerships. Our pivot to the European Union saw a crucial policy win in June, as lawmakers voted to abolish the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse. Our advocacy included direct meetings with the

European Commission, Members of European Parliament, Permanent Representations, and a civil society convening in Leiden, Netherlands. This concentrated effort led to the European Parliament adopting a strong position for the statutes of limitations abolition, with key Members of European Parliament and some Member States supporting our recommendations. These strategic shifts are positioning us to drive greater impact and maintain pressure for legislative reform, ensuring justice for child survivors.

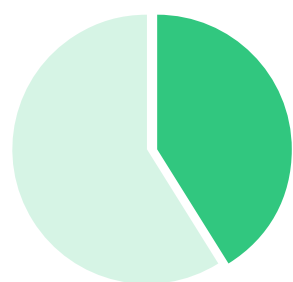
PLACING CHILD PROTECTION AT THE HEART OF EU DIGITAL POLICY

ECPAT International has emerged as a leading voice in shaping how the European Union protects children online, pioneering critical advancements in digital safety. Through [Project Beacon](#), we have worked closely with civil society partners, engaged directly with key

ADVOCACY RESULTS



Our advocacy has delivered tangible, impactful results:



NEARLY HALF
OF THE MORE THAN
740
SUGGESTED CHANGES

To one of the EU's key child protection laws, currently under negotiation



Directly ensure justice for victims



Provide stronger tools to prevent abuse across the entire European Union

policymakers, and raised significant awareness in the media. This concerted effort has successfully shifted the focus of new EU legislation to truly prioritise children's rights.

Our advocacy has delivered tangible, impactful results: nearly half of the more than 740 suggested changes to one of the EU's key child protection laws, currently under negotiation, directly ensure justice for victims and provide stronger tools to prevent abuse across the entire European Union.

Project Beacon's success extends beyond policy gains; it has fundamentally redefined how ECPAT and its partners advocate for children's online protection. The initiative fostered trust-based partnerships, championed survivor-informed messaging, and prioritised approaches rooted in dignity and participation. Our efforts, including over 30 high-level EU meetings, impactful digital campaigns, and a petition garnering more than 500,000 signatures, have decisively shifted the political landscape surrounding technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation. Crucially, our work is grounded in the lived experiences of over 6,000 children and caregivers across Europe, ensuring that legislation truly responds to the real needs of child protection, not merely political agendas.

A pivotal outcome of this advocacy was the direct inclusion of ECPAT's recommendations in the European Parliament's position on the recast of the 2011 Directive on child sexual abuse. This landmark legislation, currently in negotiation, aims to address new and emerging digital threats to children. ECPAT's input has secured stronger provisions on prevention and protection, centred on the survivor's best interests in legal proceedings, improved access to justice through the abolition of limitation periods, and established a strengthened, more protective definition of consent.

While negotiations continue and some advances may face challenges, the Parliament

is entering this process with a robust, child-rights-based mandate. Thanks to the Beacon initiative, children's voices and lived experiences are now directly shaping the future of EU online safety legislation, creating a lasting legacy of protection.

INFLUENCING THE UN CONVENTION AGAINST CYBERCRIME: A GLOBAL MANDATE FOR CHILD PROTECTION

The new **United Nations Convention against Cybercrime**, adopted in December 2024 by the General Assembly, marks a landmark achievement in international efforts to address technology-facilitated crimes, including those committed against children. This Convention provides a comprehensive legal framework, empowering countries worldwide to criminalise and cooperate on various offences perpetrated through digital technologies.

Articles 14, 15, and 16 are especially critical to ECPAT's mission and the broader child protection sector. These provisions mandate the criminalisation of offences related to child sexual abuse material, online grooming of children for sexual purposes, and the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images (of both adults and children). Significantly, these provisions apply to all children below 18 years of age, representing a crucial step forward compared to existing regional treaties that often only protect children below the age of sexual consent for crimes like grooming. ECPAT International, in close collaboration with PACT-USA, played a pivotal and active role throughout the Convention's negotiation. We submitted technical inputs and proposed language specifically for these articles,

ensuring they reflect the most robust child protection standards. This included

advocating tirelessly for accurate and child-rights-based terminology, such as the use of “child sexual abuse material” instead of the misleading “child pornography”, a direct alignment with the **Second Edition of the Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse**.

The successful adoption of these provisions reflects a growing and influential global consensus: technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse demands coordinated, rights-based responses. The Convention now serves as both an indispensable tool for national legal reform and a vital platform for holding governments accountable in implementing effective, survivor-centred responses, driving systemic change for children worldwide

ENSURING EQUAL LEGAL PROTECTION FOR ALL CHILDREN: ADVOCATING FOR INCLUSIVE CONSENT LAWS

The age of sexual consent is the legally defined age at which a person can agree to sexual activity. This varies significantly and critically across jurisdictions, and in some countries, these laws may differ by gender or even fail to provide an age of sexual consent for boys. This alarming legal gap leaves boys potentially unprotected or less protected against sexual abuse and exploitation, often resulting in reduced penalties or impunity for perpetrators of these crimes.

These legal shortcomings are not merely technical oversights; they are deeply influenced by, and perpetuate, harmful social and gender norms that heighten boys’ vulnerabilities and silence their needs. ECPAT International is directly confronting this systemic issue. We have meticulously collected and analysed data on sexual consent legislation across 158 countries, with a specific focus on whether these crucial provisions apply equally to both girls and boys.

The powerful results of this comprehensive analysis provide a clear series of actionable recommendations for the ECPAT network and other civil society organisations. These recommendations empower advocates to champion the equal application of these laws at the national level for children of all genders. Our work is designed to drive fundamental change, ensuring that every child, regardless of their gender identity, can access the full legal support and justice they inherently deserve.





Amplifying Networks and Local Leadership

ECPAT International is deeply committed to strengthening systems and fostering community-level sustainability by empowering local leadership and expanding our global network. This year, we significantly advanced our localisation efforts and collective power, demonstrating our dedication to long-term impact. Over the past 18 months, a remarkable 550 participants, including 260 CSOs, joined eight regional ECPAT workshops, strengthening communities of practice across 143 countries. We also established or expanded 13 joint projects and alliances with non-ECPAT partners, including new safeguarding and infrastructure partnerships in Africa and Latin America. Our commitment to local ownership is further evidenced by 40 research co-produced with national partners across all regions during this period. The success spans from high satisfaction of members with engagement and resources, with over 86% and many prioritising learning, joint projects, and regional exchanges as the most valuable forms of collaboration, also attributing programmatic or systems-level change to the credibility, tools, or relationships accessed through the network.

STRENGTHENING OUR GLOBAL NETWORK: A FOUNDATION FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

In 2024–2025, ECPAT International significantly strengthened its global network engagement through two landmark initiatives for learning and accountability: the first Annual ECPAT Membership Survey and the inaugural Assembly of ECPAT Organisations. Both saw exceptional participation and engagement across all regions, demonstrating our network's truly global and deeply committed nature. The Membership Survey reached 75 organisations in 68 countries, with a remarkable 56% response rate.

The survey results highlight ECPAT's profound added value for our members,

translating directly into enhanced impact for children worldwide. A remarkable 94% reported significant improvement in access to technical tools and guidance. ECPAT Guatemala expressed, **"We are very grateful for all the support received, especially in the capacity building of our staff and the opportunity to participate in different training."** Similarly, ALFeLa (East Timor) noted, **"ECPAT's technical training and tools were instrumental in developing our internal safeguarding policies."** Furthermore, 89% cited a marked increase in their organisation's credibility, with NADA (Algeria) affirming, **"Our affiliation with ECPAT increased our visibility and credibility with donors, government agencies, and other partners."** This enhanced profile enables greater collective action, as 87% noted increased participation in joint projects and research. ACRIDES (Cape Verde), **"Being part of**

ECPAT enabled us to establish links with organisations from other countries and continents, strengthening our network and advocacy.” Despite persistent funding and political challenges, our network’s resilience shines: 60% of members strengthened their ability to influence policy, and 41% contributed more effectively to systems change, with ECPAT Austria stating, **“The network gives us the tools and voice to advocate more effectively at national and international levels.”** Beyond these measurable outcomes, members consistently praised the invaluable opportunities for learning, the ready availability of resources, and the profound sense of belonging to a truly global movement for change. This annual survey will continue to serve as a critical feedback loop, directly informing ECPAT International’s plans and strategies, and ensuring that the voices of our dedicated members directly shape the network’s direction and collective impact.

The **ECPAT Assembly** marked a pivotal moment, serving as the first opportunity

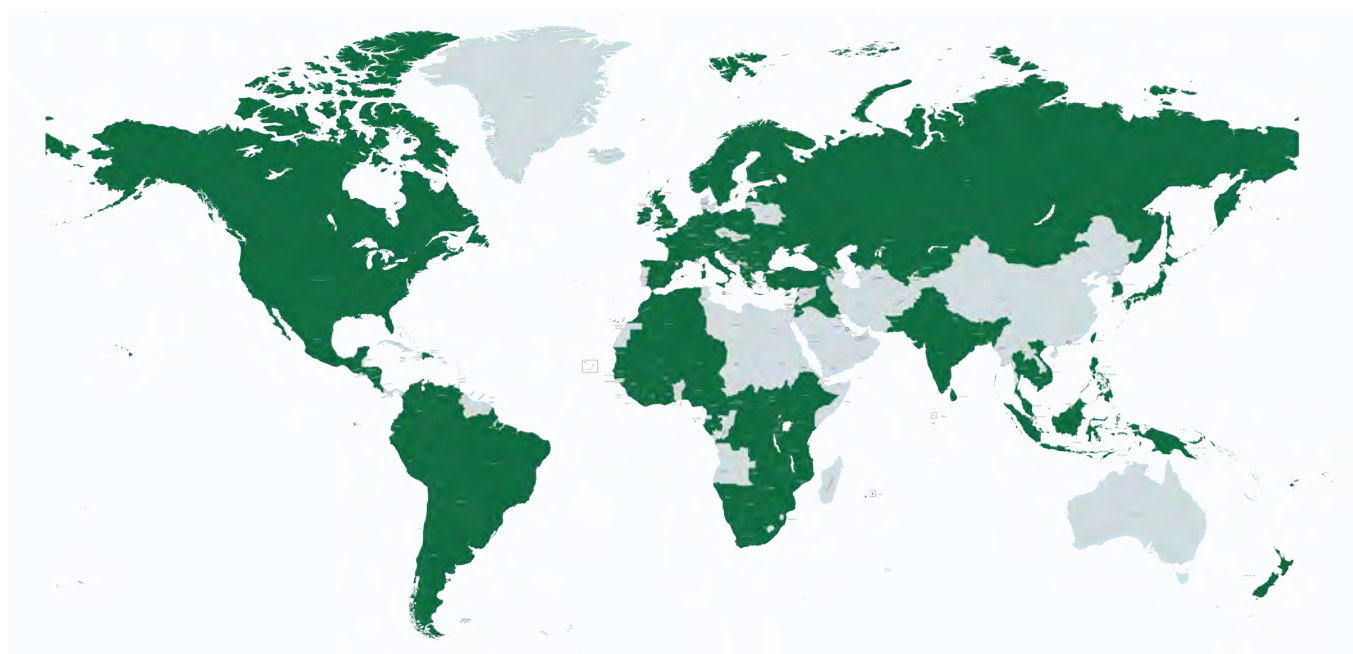
for members to engage directly in the priorities for our next global strategy. The turnout was exceptional, with more than 200 representatives joining the ECPAT team, the Supervisory Board, and the Membership Representative Committee for active discussions in online sessions over two days. This was also a successful year in significantly increasing ECPAT International’s reach and presence in new countries and regions. A streamlined affiliation process, coupled with regional civil society consultations across all areas, generated substantial interest in joining the movement to end the sexual exploitation of children. This year, we proudly welcomed 18 new members from 12 new countries, bringing our total to 142 ECPAT organisations across 115 countries. Together with the strong engagement in the Assembly and the overwhelmingly positive feedback from the membership survey, this inspiring growth reflects the continued relevance and vital impact of the only truly global grassroots civil society movement dedicated to ending the sexual exploitation of children.

welcomed
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142
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countries



LAUNCHING THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR THE PROTECTION OF BOYS FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

In light of the increasing global attention to boys and sexual violence against them, the [Global Alliance for the Protection of Boys from Sexual Violence](#) (GAPB) serves as a reference for all interested stakeholders to understand the issue and advocate for the protection of boys with the right tools and strategies. The GAPB brings together coordinated messaging and advocacy to understand these issues better and frame them as opportunities to transform harmful gender norms and unequal power structures that primarily affect women and children. ECPAT International convenes the GAPB and connects organisations across multiple countries, guided strategically by a Steering Committee including All Survivors Project, Equimundo, Family for Every Child, Save the Children, and Women's Refugee Commission.

More actors are recognising the realities of sexual violence that many boys face in diverse contexts such as conflict and humanitarian zones, migration routes, online spaces, institutions, and communities. However, visibility alone is insufficient because the real challenge lies in responding meaningfully and inclusively, guided by intersectional feminist and child rights principles. Therefore, the GAPB seeks to advocate for the protection of boys while questioning masculinity and patriarchal frameworks that make boys invisible, while continuing to contribute to gender-based violence against women and girls.

The GAPB's significant 2025 milestone is the launch of its Manifesto, the first global framework to establish shared principles, guidance, and priorities on sexual violence against boys. Drawing on lived experience, research, and practice, it provides practical support for actors across sectors, including child protection, gender justice, education, and humanitarian response, to understand, advocate and communicate on the issue in informed, ethical, and transformative ways.

The development of the Manifesto embodies the GAPB's collaborative spirit. It was shaped through consultations with experts, practitioners, researchers, and advocates from diverse regions and sectors, using conversations, written feedback, and an online global roundtable to ensure a wide range of perspectives. This inclusive process fostered dialogue on challenges and opportunities, building shared understanding grounded in practical realities and reaffirming the connection between addressing sexual violence against boys and wider efforts for gender equity and human rights.

The GAPB's innovation lies in linking sexual violence against boys to broader movements for gender equality and systemic change. This approach moves beyond issue-specific responses toward transforming the root systems that allow violence and inequality to persist, highlighting that addressing sexual violence against boys is integral to advancing gender justice.

UNITING REGIONAL VOICES: ECPAT'S REGIONAL WORKSHOPS AND BOTTOM-UP STRATEGY

Belonging to the network makes it possible to share experiences with colleagues from other countries, which allows us to continue strengthening our work.

Fundación Munasim Kullakita / Bolivia

A significant achievement for the year was organising a series of regional civil society consultations across South Asia, Europe, and Central Asia, culminating in workshops across all regions over the last 18 months.

ECPAT convened our entire membership, alongside other vital child protection organisations, to take stock of the current status and collaboratively map the future direction of our global efforts. We organised eight regional workshops, involving 550 participants from 143 countries, including 260 civil society organisations. These dialogues produced a wealth of invaluable information, bringing the direct experience and realities of local civil society to the forefront of the fight against child sexual exploitation.

This bottom-up approach ensures our strategies are deeply rooted in real-world needs and local expertise. Regional initiatives and projects continue to be implemented with our members and partners across three main areas of intervention: evidence generation, capacity development, and advocacy and policy reform. These collaborative efforts significantly extend the reach and impact of local civil society movements committed to tackling the global challenge of ending child sexual exploitation.



Specific regional initiatives demonstrate this powerful synergy:

- » The **Down-To-Zero Alliance** actively lobbies ASEAN and the private sector to protect children in Asia from online sexual exploitation, and drives regional action to protect children in Latin America from sexual exploitation in the travel and tourism sector.
- » The **Ensemble project** in West Africa generates crucial knowledge and builds local capacity on emerging manifestations of child sexual exploitation in the region.
- » The **SheLeads project** in East Africa supports and empowers young women and girls to take decisive action against sexual exploitation.
- » The **civil society action project** in the MENA region convenes and mobilises civil society to take action against the exploitation of children.
- » The **Beacon project** in Europe brings together more than 70 agencies to jointly advocate for stronger EU-level legislation to protect children online.
- » The **Access to Justice initiative** in South and Central Asia builds knowledge and capacity on how to improve services for survivors of sexual exploitation.

ECPAT ensures local voices drive global solutions through these vital regional platforms, fostering a collaborative and impactful movement.

STRENGTHENING GLOBAL SAFEGUARDS: INTEGRATING BEST PRACTICES THROUGH SOUTH-SOUTH COLLABORATION

In 2024, ECPAT International launched a vital child safeguarding peer mentorship programme in Africa, a pioneering initiative to strengthen safeguarding systems among our member organisations. This programme began with a dynamic regional workshop in Nairobi, where 12 ECPAT members collaboratively developed mentoring plans, exchanged best practices, and deepened their understanding of safeguarding across the entire programme cycle. This intensive workshop was preceded by a comprehensive six-part webinar series and a six-month paired mentorship process, where mentors directly supported peers in improving safeguarding policies, enhancing reporting mechanisms, and refining risk assessments. By June 2024, 80% of mentees had made substantive progress, including critical staff training, significant policy upgrades, and strengthened partnerships with national child protection agencies.

ECPAT strategically integrated safeguarding into five broader regional workshops across Africa, Europe, the Americas, South Asia, and Central Asia to expand and deepen this crucial impact. We further delivered 14 multilingual safeguarding webinars, specifically targeting members who required tailored support. These webinars, available in English, Spanish, and French, were complemented by dedicated coaching sessions for safeguarding focal points and specialised training for staff and managers. ECPAT also developed age-appropriate resources to ensure that vital safeguarding messages directly reached children and young people, empowering them with knowledge.

ECPAT also significantly enhanced its safeguarding infrastructure and accessibility. We launched a [dedicated safeguarding webpage](#), a multilingual explainer video, and a centralised reporting email to bolster transparency and accountability across our operations. Key policy documents, including a comprehensive safeguarding checklist and an annexe focused on protecting children online, were updated. Through all these project activities, safeguarding messages were consistently shared directly with children, reinforcing ECPAT's unwavering commitment to ensuring that every aspect of its work upholds children's safety, rights, and dignity across all regions.

PIONEERING PARTNERSHIPS: PROTECTING CHILDREN IN GLOBAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND BEYOND

ECPAT International is strategically forging vital alliances to embed child protection within some of the world's largest and most influential sectors. This year's significant achievement involved our collaboration with the **Bank Information Centre (BIC)**, a key watchdog for development finance. At our Regional Workshops in Bangkok and San José, BIC's Global Children's Rights Focal Point actively engaged with civil society organisations (CSOs), building crucial ties. This collaboration aims to enrich BIC's network of partners, enabling more robust monitoring and reporting on how World Bank-funded projects implement their commitments regarding children's rights on the ground, particularly in the fight against child sexual exploitation.

Due to these discussions, new partnerships have already commenced between BIC and CSOs in Gabon, The Gambia, Guinea, and

Bolivia, demonstrating immediate, tangible impact.

Our influence extends to the highest levels of global finance. ECPAT was granted a pivotal platform at a regional meeting of the **World Bank in South Asia**. Here, we directly addressed the critical risks related to child sexual exploitation within large infrastructure projects, including the mining and tourism industries. We presented innovative models designed to bring greater accountability to the implementation measures of third parties involved in these vast undertakings. This marked a historic moment, as it was the first time a dedicated intervention on child sexual exploitation was heard in such a prominent World Bank forum, underscoring ECPAT's unique ability to drive critical conversations.

Furthermore, ECPAT presented on the progress and persistent challenges in addressing forced labour across Asia and the Pacific, with a crucial emphasis on the use of technologies and emerging trends regarding child sexual exploitation. This presentation, delivered at a regional meeting of the **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**, was the only one on the agenda. It served as a groundbreaking occasion for the ILO to shed light on how the fight against child sexual exploitation is a multifaceted issue that must actively engage unions and be integrated into national action plans.

Through these pioneering partnerships and strategic engagements, ECPAT International is not only raising awareness. Still, it is actively embedding child protection standards into the operational frameworks of global financial and labour institutions, driving systemic change where it is most needed.





Children and Survivors at the Centre

At ECPAT International, proper protection begins by placing children and survivors at the heart of our work, transforming them from beneficiaries into influential leaders and co-creators of change. This year, we launched eight new advocacy tools and campaigns that unequivocally centre their voices, including the impactful She Leads multimedia package, the insightful VOICE advocacy reports, Children Know Better's participatory manuals, and youth-informed videos. Our commitment to this participatory approach is evident in the direct engagement of children and caregivers, alongside young women advocates, who directly shaped digital safety advocacy, online policy, and survivor-centred research, significantly advancing their rights and leadership. Survivor-led recommendations and child-led insights now directly inform our frontline advocacy, training, and program design globally, ensuring our efforts are always grounded in lived experience and ethical best practice.

AMPLIFYING CHILDREN'S VOICES: DRIVING DIGITAL SAFETY ADVOCACY

The [VOICE project](#), a pivotal initiative led by ECPAT International in collaboration with Eurochild and Terre des Hommes Netherlands on behalf of the Down to Zero Alliance, has fundamentally reshaped digital safety policy in the EU. Through groundbreaking participatory research, we engaged an extraordinary **480 children and over 6,000 caregivers across 15 countries**, ensuring that policy is directly informed by the lived experiences of those it aims to protect. Grounded firmly in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, this project meticulously explored both the opportunities and the inherent risks children face in digital spaces, including the pervasive threat of sexual abuse and exploitation.

The resulting report, "[Speaking Up For Change: Children's and Caregivers' Voices for Safer Online Experiences](#)," delivers a powerful message: there is an urgent need for robust safety measures that effectively detect, report, remove, and prevent child sexual abuse online. Our research revealed that children often feel primarily responsible for their safety, relying on self-censorship and platform tools like reporting or blocking. However, they expressed significant uncertainty about the effectiveness of these tools and a critical lack of information on how to use them and their consequences. While most caregivers believed they were aware of their children's online activities, children themselves reported rarely sharing their experiences, underscoring their call for truly child-centred safety measures.

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

in **15** countries



480
children



6,000
caregivers

These compelling findings have directly informed [executive summaries](#) and advocacy papers, which ECPAT members and civil society organisations are actively utilising across the EU to drive forward critical child safety legislation online.

In April 2024, the project culminated in a high-level event at the Institute of Natural Sciences in Brussels—a deliberate choice to create a child-friendly and inclusive setting. This impactful hybrid event convened over 200 participants, including the **Vice-President of the European Commission, Members of the European Parliament, leading tech industry figures, civil society actors, and, most importantly, children themselves.** [Widely covered by Euronews](#), this event marked a critical step forward in raising global awareness around the child sexual abuse crisis and ensuring that children’s perspectives are not just heard, but actively integrated into policy-making in Europe and beyond.

AMPLIFYING YOUNG SURVIVOR VOICES TO INFORM ACTION

I think that what has been good (about participating) is that they listened to us and respected our opinion, our right to be informed (of the findings), and also that a response leading to a solution is coming out.

These profound words from a survivor of the trafficking of children for sexual purposes in Nepal powerfully embody ECPAT International's unwavering commitment to centring the voices of child and youth survivors. We believe their experiences are paramount in shaping the systems designed to protect them. ECPAT significantly strengthened our **“Conversations with Survivors”** approach this year, a survivor-centred methodology that creates safe, trauma-informed spaces. These spaces are designed not only to support survivors in reflecting on their past, but crucially, to acknowledge them as the protagonists of their futures, empowering them to drive change.

This “Conversations with Survivors” approach was meticulously adapted to two distinct and culturally relevant contexts, demonstrating our commitment to tailored, impactful interventions. In Latin America, it was implemented with Venezuelan children and young adults on the move across Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, as part of a vital project addressing the sexual exploitation of children in migration. Concurrently, in South Asia, the methodology was carefully tailored to engage survivors of trafficking for sexual purposes during childhood in Bangladesh, Nepal, and India.

Survivors shared, on their terms, how they perceive the system is helping or failing them. They consistently emphasised the profound importance of being heard with dignity, receiving transparent and honest information, and engaging with professionals who recognise them not merely as victims of the past, but as individuals with agency, aspirations, and the power to shape their own lives. These invaluable voices are now directly shaping our work: what survivors said they truly need will serve as the foundational evidence for actionable recommendations, directly informing our advocacy strategies, frontline training materials, and

programmatic adaptations at national and regional levels, ensuring our efforts are truly survivor-led and impactful.

CHILDREN KNOW BETTER:
SUPPORTING YOUNG LEADERS
IN CHILD PROTECTION

“
As girls, boys and
adolescents, we like to learn,
and when it comes to our
rights it is more interesting.
However, the lack of
information and few spaces
for participation that are
fun means that there is not
much interest on the part of
children and adolescents.”

In 2024–2025, ECPAT International made significant strides in fundamentally transforming the landscape of child

participation through the **Children Know Better** project in Nepal and Bangladesh. This pioneering, child-led initiative, grounded in participatory action research (PAR) with children, empowers young people to take the lead in identifying, analysing, and actively responding to the complex issues of child sexual exploitation within their communities. Through this project, children are not merely contributing as data collectors and researchers; they have powerfully stepped into roles as analysts, advocates, and influencers. Their unique perspectives continue to directly inform local strategies and boldly challenge long-held assumptions about children’s capacities in research, protection, and prevention efforts. Child leaders played a central and truly transformative role in the Children Know Better project, moving beyond mere participation to take genuine ownership of the entire research process. They were actively involved in shaping the study’s direction, selecting key research questions, identifying appropriate data collection methods, designing tools, and determining how to reach their peers effectively. Their leadership ensured the research was deeply rooted in lived realities and addressed the issues that matter most to children. By leading this process, these young leaders not only strengthened their confidence, skills, and agency but also powerfully

demonstrated the immense value of trusting young people as credible and indispensable actors in efforts to prevent and respond to child sexual exploitation.

To support and embed this profound transformation in participation, we launched two key tools:

- » **The GREATER Model:** This adult-focused framework guides organisations and individuals in creating environments where children's participation is genuinely respected, influential, and impactful.
- » **The PARC Manual:** A practical, interactive training guide on participatory action research with children and young people, equipping them with essential research skills, ethical guidance, and the confidence to lead peer-to-peer data collection and advocacy.

Together, these innovative tools have supported our broader strategic shift: from viewing participation as a mere principle to embracing it as a transformative practice, firmly anchored in power-sharing, ethical inclusion, and intergenerational collaboration.

As we move into 2025–2026, the invaluable insights gleaned from Children Know Better will be used to shape ECPAT's global child participation framework, strengthen our partnerships with youth-led movements, and build robust accountability mechanisms that ensure children's views are not only heard but consistently acted upon, driving lasting change.



SHE LEADS: EMPOWERING GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN TO DRIVE CHANGE

In 2024–2025, ECPAT International, through the transformative **She Leads Programme**, empowered girls and young women (GYW) to take bold strides in shaping policies and practices around child sexual exploitation (CSE) that directly impact their lives. This initiative, rooted in the principles of rights, agency, and leadership, focused on both high-level advocacy and critical youth-led research on online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA).

ECPAT facilitated the direct participation of eight girls and young women in two pivotal advocacy platforms: the WeProtect Global Summit in Abu Dhabi and the Regional Workshop for Central, North, and West Africa in Dakar. At these high-profile events, the GYW shared perspectives informed by their lived experiences and national consultations, contributing significantly to rich policy discussions on digital safety, OCSEA, and child protection. They actively led sessions, presented their findings, and held bilateral meetings with global and regional decision-makers, profoundly strengthening the recognition of youth leadership in protection efforts.

As an integral part of She Leads, a dedicated cohort of young women from across Africa conducted a groundbreaking youth-led assessment on online sexual exploitation, abuse, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence. This vital research explored how digital harm disproportionately affects girls, examined critical gaps in existing protection mechanisms, and emphasised the urgent need for child- and gender-

responsive policies. The compelling findings from this assessment have been instrumental in shaping the powerful advocacy messages delivered at global and regional forums.

To further amplify these crucial voices and insights, ECPAT International collaborated closely with She Leads GYW to co-create a powerful multimedia advocacy package. This process was intentionally participatory from start to finish, ensuring that girls and young women were not only consulted but deeply involved as co-designers and message shapers. Through a series of creative workshops and reflection sessions, GYW articulated the narratives, visuals, and priorities that mattered most to them, rooted in their lived experiences and advocacy goals. The final advocacy package includes over 20 visually striking infographics created with direct input from GYW, alongside three compelling videos: one making the case for why child and youth participation is critical, another directed at civil society organisations (CSOs) on how to support young voices better, and a third targeting the technology sector to address its role in protecting children online. This comprehensive package amplifies the voices of girls and young women and provides practical tools to influence systemic change across sectors.

Together, the research and advocacy efforts of She Leads participants powerfully exemplify the transformative impact of centring girls' voices in addressing child sexual exploitation. Their contributions influence change at every level, from community awareness to international policy, and lay the essential groundwork for more inclusive, responsive, and accountable systems that truly protect children.

Our Financials



Total income

5,149,438

Total expenditure

5,001,133

Our Contributors

Oak Foundation

USD **1,340,654**

Sida

USD **1,122,783**

**Defense for children/
ECPAT netherlands**

USD **1,122,783**

Aegis Charitable Trust

USD **224,883**

Irish Aid

USD **183,480**

**Carlson Family
Foundation**

USD **178,538**



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