APPROACHES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN ADVOCACY

ON CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

ECPAT

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

ECPAT International is the world's largest influencing network fully dedicated to ending the sexual exploitation of children, with a membership of 125 civil society organisations in 104 countries. In 2024 ECPAT International published a new child and youth participation strategy to help guide its work over the next five years. The strategy seeks to lay out ECPAT International's commitments to supporting the meaningful engagement of children (and young people) in addressing child sexual exploitation.

Within the strategy ECPAT outlines priorities which include:

» Multiplying spaces and opportunities for children and young people working with the Secretariat and with our members to inform our work and feed in ideas and priorities for shaping new research, advocacy and campaigning strategies.

» Drawing on the secretariat's and ECPAT members' experiences, skills and knowledge to support young activists to enhance their skills and capacities to support their own initiatives and advocacy efforts in addressing child sexual exploitation.

The child and youth participation strategy also recognises that if ECPAT International wishes to advocate for others to strengthen their mechanisms and processes to involve children and young people safely and ethically, they also need to generate evidence to illustrate the value and benefits of children and young people's participation.

We like the description of advocacy as 'speaking truth to power', because it is focussed on challenging people in power to change their beliefs and actions by communicating the real-life experience of those who are demanding the change.

1.2 HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This document has been written by Helen Veitch and Claire Cody. It aims to help ECPAT Secretariat and Members, and any other civil society organizations (CSOs) plan participatory advocacy activities with children and young people, including those with lived experience of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Consequently, in this document '**facilitating organisations**' refers to organisations who are facilitating participatory advocacy on CSEA such as ECPAT Secretariat, ECPAT Members or other CSOs. This document has been written for staff within facilitating organisations who are supporting children or young people to take an active role in advocacy on CSEA to use as a basis for planning participatory advocacy work.

As there are many detailed toolkits on participatory advocacy, this document does not seek to replicate these. Instead, it provides **prompting questions** for ECPAT Secretariat, Members and other CSOs to discuss and a **range of options** to consider depending on their contexts. It also provides links to appropriate tools or workshop sessions that can be adapted and used with children and young people – which can be found in the accompanying document Tools for Participatory Advocacy.

The document also links, where appropriate, to a two of core components for participatory work with children and young people which consist of tools, session plans and guidance for facilitating organisations to use in other types of participatory work with children and young people:

1. Core Component Creating a Safe Environment

2. ECPAT Using the 9 BR for effective and ethical participation as a planning tool

Two additional toolkits/guides have been developed to support ECPAT's child participation strategy and connect to many of the activities suggested in this document.

1. The GREATER Model (work with adults)

2. Methodology and Toolkit for Participatory Assessments with Children

This document is based on the findings from a literature review, discussions with youth advocates and on the experience of the two authors where we found that adolescent children (teenagers) are much more likely to want to engage in advocacy on sexual abuse and exploitation than younger children. This is because adolescence is a period when children are approaching adulthood and are therefore negotiating and/or challenging adult power over children. Adolescence is also a period when children are exploring their sexuality. As a result, the document focuses on older children and young people (13–25-year-olds) rather than younger children (and we use the term 'young people' or 'youth' to refer to them). In addition, the document focuses on the engagement of young people with 'lived experience of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA)' in advocacy activities who we refer to as 'lived experience young people'. Please see the key definitions (1.4) for more information.

This document covers the following activities involved in planning and implementing advocacy campaigns.

Section 2 Exploratory Phase:

This section is based on learning from the literature review which found that because of the sensitive nature of the issue of CSEA it is important to start participatory advocacy with an 'exploratory' phase where adults from facilitating organisations map, assess and consider the environment they are working in before initiating activities with children and young people. Consequently, this section outlines how adults from facilitating organisations can be engaged in the following preparatory activities:

» Reflecting on where the idea for participatory advocacy comes from

» Assessing evidence

» Assessing the existing advocacy environment and participatory practice

» Assessing risks and benefits of participatory advocacy

Section 3 Framework for Creating a Safe Environment:

This framework is based on a new approach to safeguarding known as 'survivor-informed safeguarding for campaigning' that complements safeguarding policies and procedures. The section outlines key principles that can be used when safeguarding children and young people who are campaigning on CSEA. Although the framework does not provide detailed guidance for facilitating organisations, some related tools and exercises have been outlined in the Core Component on Creating a Safe Environment as suggestions.

Section 4 Options for Youth Engagement in Advocacy:

This section uses the advocacy cycle as a basis to outline key issues for facilitating organisations to consider when engaging children and young people in each stage of the advocacy cycle as follows:

4.1   Set-up and recruitment of youth advocates

4.2   Research and analysis with youth advocates

4.3   Awareness raising and mobilisation by youth advocates

4.4   Advocacy actions by youth advocates

4.5   Learning and review by youth advocates

1.3 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE REVIEW

In developing this document, the authors undertook a review of existing literature in order to identify a spectrum of different options and approaches for how children and young people, including young people with lived experience of CSEA may engage in participatory advocacy to address CSEA and related harms[1]. Through considering the different stages of the participatory advocacy cycle, the review summarised learning about 'how' children and young people, including young survivors, can be involved in these different stages and the observations and lessons that have been learnt about their engagement during these different stages.

A number of learning points were identified through the review that related to each stage of the participatory advocacy cycle, and 'cross cutting' areas of learning that were relevant across all stages. These lessons led to recommendations which have informed the approach to participatory advocacy outlined in this document. This includes:

Setting up: There are different approaches and choices to be taken when identifying and recruiting young people into advocacy activities. The set-up phase is critical when working with young people on, readiness, group composition, representation and inclusion of members. It is also important to plan how the project will be communicated, and 'framed' for young people, parents, carers and gatekeepers. At the start it is important to think about how the group will be supported, engagement maintained, how transitions and endings for the group will be managed and how the overall learning from the process will be captured. Consequently, rather than rushing into something, building in an exploratory phase to consider and reflect on some of these elements is critical.

Research and Analysis: There are different options for how children and young people may engage in the 'research and analysis' phase and these should make best use of young people's experience, interests and knowledge. Even if children and young people don't carry out primary research, they may be able to collaborate with others to undertake 'elements' of the research or connect with those who have undertaken research previously on the topics being explored. Children and young people may feel ill equipped to carry out certain types of research or find it emotionally challenging. This means that if young people are undertaking research, mechanisms, processes, training and ethical guidelines and safety plans are developed to support and protect young people involved in the research process. It is worth taking the time to consider the varied ways that children and young people could connect with research and engage in analysis while recognising that this may not always require that children and young people undertake primary research.

Advocacy planning: Although challenging to identify reports on this stage for advocacy on CSEA, existing documentation suggests that young people's involvement in advocacy projects can lead to better targeted messages and services and can add clarity and legitimacy to organisations' own advocacy work. This is the phase where children and young people can shape the focus of, and narrative surrounding, planned advocacy actions. Facilitating organisations should be prepared for this phase to be potentially challenging, particularly if

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1 The review was not systematic in nature but served as a starting point to identify relevant literature and learning related to the involvement of children and young people, including young people with lived experience of CSEA, in the different stages and phases within the advocacy cycle; with a specific focus on actions to address CSEA and related harms.

youth advocates wish to explore, or create messages that challenge the 'status quo' or are in opposition to the organisation's traditional approach. As with all phases, open communication is important and there should be opportunities for everyone to share worries or concerns.

Mobilisation and action: In doing advocacy work, it is important to understand who needs to be mobilised or organised in order to achieve the advocacy goal e.g. is it teachers, parents, young people, community leaders, social workers or businesses. In this document we are using mobilising to mean *engaging or organising others (often allies such as other children/ young people or supportive adults) to build support for a campaign issue.* Although there are many examples of young people engaging in peer-to-peer education around topics such as sexual and reproductive health rights, or 'raising awareness' about CSEA, we found little documentation around how young people can 'mobilise' other children and young people to take action as a group on the issue of CSEA. However, we have found that mobilising on the topic of CSEA often involves an initial 'awareness raising' stage to discuss children's rights in general and the more specific 'taboo' or sensitive topics such as sexual violence, particularly when seeking to mobilise other children and young people. As mobilising is a key component of creating change, ECPAT should ensure that learning around the phase of mobilisation is documented and shared with others.

Action: Young people's involvement in advocacy actions, particularly those with lived experience, can enhance the legitimacy and credibility of advocacy. However, there are risks in engaging in public actions due to the 'taboo' nature of the topic of sexual abuse and exploitation which increases the likelihood of stigmatisation, resistance, threats and dangers, both online and offline (notable in the wider context where we are witnessing a contracting space for all activism). This means carefully considering the language and messaging of advocacy on issues surrounding CSEA and undertaking regular collaborative risk assessments involving both facilitating adults and youth advocates to identify and map the range of risks and take ongoing steps to mitigate these.

In addition, learning from others who have supported youth activism, there is pressure from the media to focus on the 'testimonies' or personal stories of abuse of an individual child or young person. It is therefore important to pressures to platform individuals and find ways to profile, elevate and acknowledge the work of all children and young people not just individuals.

Learning and review: Learning is often focussed on how children and young people have benefitted by being involved in a project rather than on how their involvement, and the participatory approach, has enhanced the advocacy goal. Evidencing the impact of participatory advocacy on decision-makers can be harder to document. This means ECPAT should embed a strong MEL element to evidence, learn and adapt its practice on participatory advocacy. It should also support reflexive spaces to facilitate knowledge exchange and documentation of the 'process' not just the outcome.

Cross cutting elements: Across all phases the learning pointed to the importance of recognising time demands on young people, the potential for resistance or lack of interest from community members and other stakeholder groups, and the costs and intensive resources often required by facilitating organisations in supporting participatory youth advocacy. It is evident that acknowledging the potential for risks and trauma, particularly for those with lived experience, and the importance of attending to the wellbeing and safeguarding of youth advocates is critical and is an ongoing element that requires regular communication with those involved. It is also evident that it may not be possible, or of interest to youth advocates to be involved in every stage of the participatory advocacy cycle. Given for young survivors there may be additional potential for harm - for example, engaging in certain public facing actions - facilitating organisations should remain flexible in how they support youth advocates and be willing to 'step in' to lead certain tasks and activities where necessary.

1.4 KEY DEFINITIONS

Although there is a central Glossary for all the terms used by ECPAT in its participatory work, the key terms for this document are defined as follows.

Participatory Advocacy

In this document, we use a model of participation developed by Lansdown (2018) that focuses on adolescent participation and develops further the popular categorisation of child participation as either consultative, collaborative or child-led (Lansdown & O'Kane, 2014)[2].

Consultative participation
- adult initiated;
- adult led and managed;
- lacking possibility for adolescents to control outcomes;
- recognizing the added value that adolescents' perspective, knowledge and experience can contribute.

Collaborative Participation
- adult initiated;
- involving partnership with adolescents;
- enabling adolescents to influence or challenge both process and outcome;
- allowing for increasing levels of self-directed action by adolescents over a period of time.

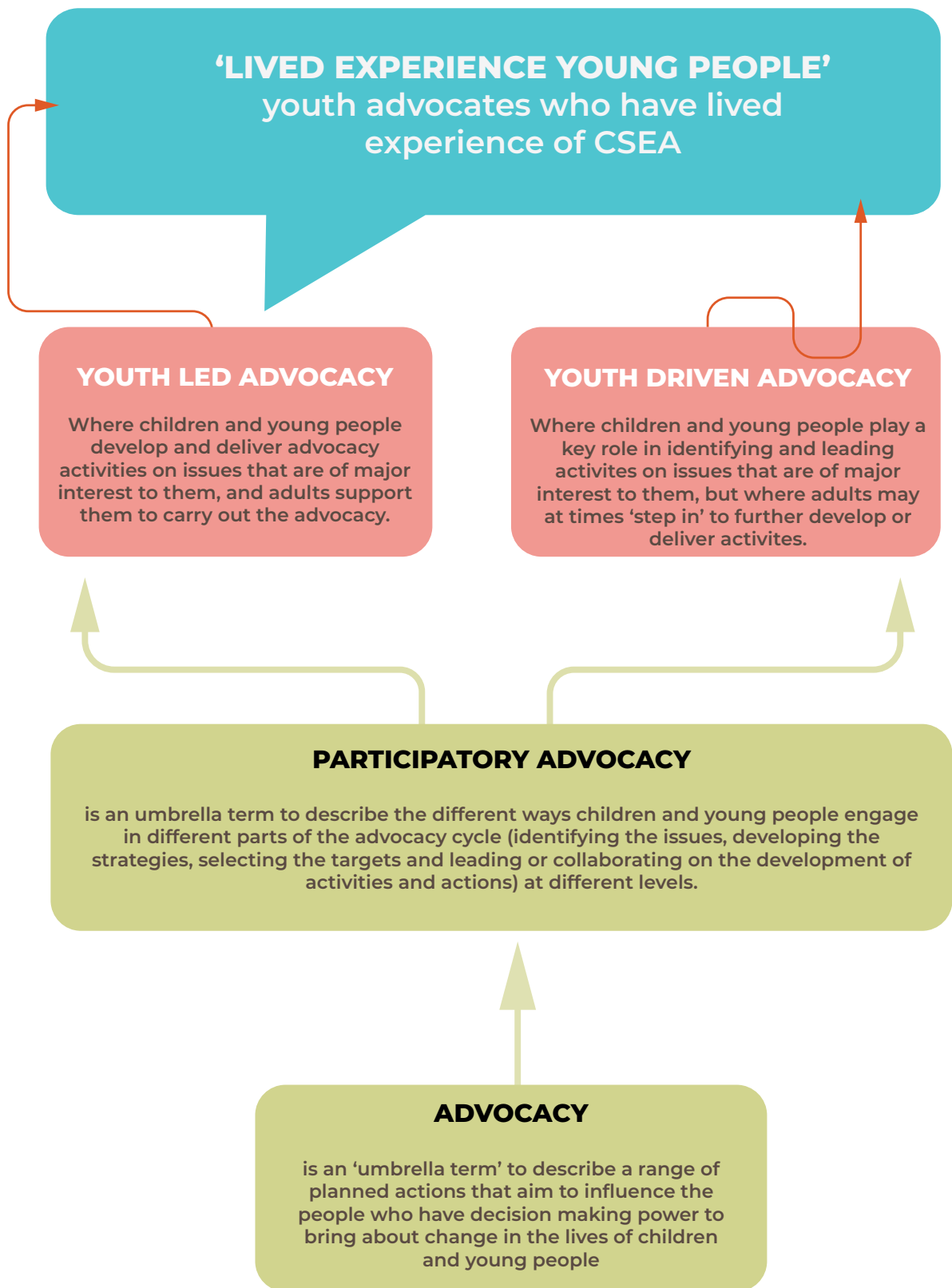**No participation or unethical participation**

In most societies, the majority of adolescents have little or no opportunity to express their views.

Adolescent-led Participation
- the issues of concern being identified by adolescents themselves;
- adults serving as facilitators rather than leaders;
- adolescents controlling the process and the outcomes.

The model of consultative, collaborative and led is helpful in thinking about the role of children and young people in participatory advocacy. However, it is worth noting that different types of participatory practice may operate at the same time in a participatory project. For example, where young people are involved in identifying the issue of concern, wish to 'lead' but are unable, for whatever reason, to 'lead' all activities adult supporters/facilitators 'step in' and collaborate with young people at certain points to progress the work.

Defining participatory advocacy: Because of these differences, we have used different terminology for the types of participatory advocacy we are promoting in this document. Although youth-led advocacy is the same as the model, youth-driven advocacy incorporates both consultative and collaborative participatory practice. Similar to the Lansdown model, in this document we have focused on youth rather than children as, from our experience, the period of late childhood and early adulthood (adolescence) is when boundaries between childhood and adulthood are being tested and advocacy comes quite naturally. This fits with the age range for ECPAT's participatory advocacy which is 13-25 year olds. Consequently, we use the terms 'youth' and 'young people' in this document. In addition, although the term 'survivors' is problematic for many people, we have used survivors when others have used this term, but more generally we are using the term 'lived experience young people' to mean young people who have lived experiences of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation'.

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2   More recently, work by WeProtect added an additional level to this model, that of 'co-production'.

'LIVED EXPERIENCE YOUNG PEOPLE'
youth advocates who have lived experience of CSEA

YOUTH LED ADVOCACY

Where children and young people develop and deliver advocacy activities on issues that are of major interest to them, and adults support them to carry out the advocacy.

YOUTH DRIVEN ADVOCACY

Where children and young people play a key role in identifying and leading activites on issues that are of major interest to them, but where adults may at times 'step in' to further develop or deliver activites.

PARTICIPATORY ADVOCACY

is an umbrella term to describe the different ways children and young people engage in different parts of the advocacy cycle (identifying the issues, developing the strategies, selecting the targets and leading or collaborating on the development of activities and actions) at different levels.

ADVOCACY

is an 'umbrella term' to describe a range of planned actions that aim to influence the people who have decision making power to bring about change in the lives of children and young people

The Advocacy Cycle: Advocacy is often presented as a cycle - this is because advocacy plans often include several 'campaigns' undertaken over 3-5 years, and learning from the first advocacy campaign informs the next campaign. The following diagram illustrates the stages we have identified for engaging young people in all aspects of the advocacy cycle, starting with set-up and recruitment and moving around to learning and review. All stages of the advocacy cycle should be informed by considerations for safeguarding and the wellbeing of the young people engaged.

Advocacy Targets: are people in the position to bring about the change youth advocates want; targets will be specific groups of people and will be dependent on the change youth advocates are calling for - they are often 'decision-makers' in children's lives. Advocacy targets could include some duty bearers, such as community leaders, school leaders, local healthcare or social workers or local police. Advocacy targets can also include higher level individuals in positions of power (who are 'decision-makers' for a much wider group of children and young people), such as politicians, leaders of professional bodies, policymakers, religious leaders, government ministers or civil servants.

Influentials: are people in a position to influence the advocacy targets (so can be similar to the list of examples for advocacy targets). But, sometimes, an 'influential' has a personal relationship with your advocacy target such as being their spouse, a relative or a friend.

Allies: are people who support youth advocates' advocacy campaigns such as staff at other NGOs (or their beneficiaries), other children and young people (peers of youth advocates). Allies can also be duty bearers of children and young people such as parents, teachers or employers.

Mobilisation: for this document we use 'mobilisation' to mean engaging or organising others (such as other children and young people or allies) to build support for a campaign issue.

The importance of local level advocacy: from the literature review and evaluations of participatory advocacy we have learned that national level advocacy (with national level decision-makers such as government ministries) is much more effective if young people

have already been involved in local level advocacy with duty bearers (such as parents/carers, employers, teachers, community leaders). This is because awareness raising about rights violations and advocacy with duty bearers at local levels is often more directly meaningful for the young people involved - they can see the impact of their advocacy efforts immediately (changes in attitudes and behaviour from parents or community members etc.). In addition, once young people have experienced the impact of their advocacy efforts with duty bearers at a local level, they are motivated (and more experienced in advocacy!) to target higher level decision-makers at national or international levels who will be able to create change for more children and young people.

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL ADVOCACY

NATIONAL LEVEL ADVOCACY

Youth advocates build their experience of doing advocacy

LOCAL LEVEL ADVOCACY

Youth advocates see changes in duty bearers

2. EXPLORATORY PHASE

Why should we do this? Learning from the literature review highlighted the importance of adults from facilitating organisations having the opportunity to think carefully and consider a range of aspects before introducing or initiating activities with children and young people. Undertaking advocacy on a sensitive issue such as CSEA, particularly advocacy that involves and supports young people to inform, influence and lead activities, means that it is important that facilitating organisations reflect on some key questions before committing to these activities.

The exploratory phase can be used to:

a) reflect on where the idea for participatory advocacy comes from

b) map and assess existing evidence on the advocacy topic

c) map and assess relevant advocacy initiatives and existing participatory practice

d) assess the risks and benefits of the type of participatory advocacy

These reflections and assessments will help facilitating organisations to strengthen and refine their plans for participatory advocacy and identify staffing and resourcing needs.

2.1 INITIAL REFLECTION EXERCISE

Why should we do this? It is important for staff from facilitating organisations to reflect on where the idea for an advocacy campaign has come from as this will shape the role of the facilitating organisation as well as the timelines and resources needed to undertake participatory advocacy.

For example, children and young people may be meeting as part of youth councils, advisory committees or children's forums and through these spaces they identify a specific concern or issue that they feel needs to be actioned (a campaign issue). In this case, when young people themselves identify an advocacy issue they want to take action on, the facilitating organisation may take an 'accompanying' or 'supporting' role to the group of young people – who lead on most of the decision-making for the campaign.

If, however, an organisation is already running an advocacy campaign, and they decide they want to involve children and young people in this campaign, the facilitating organisation may need to take an 'organising' role in relation to the group of young people – and focus their energies on the set-up stage of the advocacy cycle i.e. identify and recruit a group of youth advocates, allocate more time to set up a safe space for the young people to get to know each other.

The key reflection question: **Where has the idea to undertake participatory advocacy come from?**

Guiding questions for a brief discussion with staff who will be involved in the participatory advocacy initiative:

» Has there been a request from young people themselves to advocate on a specific issue?

» Is the interest in advocacy connected to perceived benefits for young people or to strengthen an existing advocacy campaign?

» Have opportunities arisen for advocacy, such as an event, that the group wants to take advantage of?

» What experience is there of participatory work with children and young people and how will this feed into participatory advocacy?

» How can participatory advocacy be continued beyond the current project?

The answers to these overarching questions can be turned into a diagram or mind-map and will inform the assessment phase where the same questions will be explored in more detail.

ASSESSMENTS

Overall, the assessment phase will be undertaken by adults from facilitating organisations, it will not involve children or young people (unless young people are on the staff team of the facilitating organisation). This is because the assessments will inform how and when children and young people are engaged in the advocacy cycle.

Assessment will be guided by a series of questions to explore three areas, 1) assessment of evidence 2) assessment of advocacy and participation and 3) assessment of risks and benefits.

2.2 ASSESSMENT OF EVIDENCE

Why should we do this? Due to the power-imbalances between adults and children, adults' expertise or experience is seen as more credible than children's or young people's. Consequently, youth advocacy needs to be underpinned by a strong evidence base, and youth advocates will need a good understanding of this evidence - this may mean they undertake their own research or analysis, or that they have opportunities to connect with relevant researchers to explore their research findings.

Key questions to ask:

» Which evidence is relevant to our topic? This should include any policy or literature reviews/mapping undertaken

» Which evidence has been most influential? For example, which evidence has been quoted most by advocacy targets?

» Is there any evidence generated by young people? If so, can youth advocates connect with youth researchers to discuss their findings?

» Can young people or youth advocates undertake further primary or secondary analysis of evidence? (See section 4.2 in this document for ideas about how this could be done)

How to undertake an assessment of evidence: Staff from facilitating organisations can undertake an assessment of evidence through the following options:

» Map relevant research/studies or reports published in the past 5-10 years to identify research findings/evidence that supports your advocacy campaign and whether there are any gaps in evidence (to support your campaign).

» Map relevant policy reviews/analysis undertaken in the past five years (often these can be found in the literature review section of a research report). If no policy review has been made in the past five years, you may need to undertake your own policy review.

» Map which research or analysis activities make best use of children and young people's experience, interests and knowledge, and which activities make use of adults' experience or knowledge.

» Hold informal interviews, small group discussions or webinars with key stakeholders to collate further data and fill any gaps in evidence.

» Identify if there has been any participatory research on relevant topics

» Identify any gaps in the data.

Get in touch with local academics and ask for help to locate relevant research

How to assess options for youth advocates to connect to evidence: staff from facilitating organisations can use the following questions to help assess the options for youth advocates (the young people you are proposing to engage in advocacy) to connect to evidence.

» How can youth advocates connect with youth researchers? For example, some youth researchers may want to become 'advocates' and join the advocacy project.

» Is it worthwhile for youth advocates (or other children and young people) to undertake primary research – is there a key gap in the data that can be filled through primary research by young people?

» If there is no participatory research (which is quite likely as it is quite rare!), how can youth advocates undertake secondary analysis of evidence/data from (adult-led) research/studies?

EXAMPLE:

A youth-led study involving girls and young women with lived experience of the 'sex trade'

This study was developed and conducted by girls ages 12-23 in the 'sex trade' and street economy in Chicago in the USA. The group met initially for three months in weekly research meetings to discuss what topics they wanted to include in their research. Learning questions included:

1) What kinds of institutional and individual violence are girls in the sex trade experiencing?

2) How are they resistant to this violence?

3) How are they resilient to this violence?

4) How can we unite and fight back?

The aim of the research was for the young women to understand (1) what effect harm reduction was having on the groups' 'outreach contacts' (2) who their 'allies' were as a harm reduction-based, youth-led social justice project and (3) how girls respond to other girls in positions of leadership.

The methods included the group undertaking a literature review, facilitating several focus groups with Young Women's Empowerment Project (YWEP) leadership and membership, and collecting over 300 surveys from outreach contacts across Chicago and Illinois.

The group then used the research to identify potential campaign ideas. Actions were developed including developing a political education curriculum to train members and forming a 'youth activist krew' who met weekly to develop a new campaign.

Source: Young Women's Empowerment Project (2009)

2.3 ASSESSMENT OF ADVOCACY AND PARTICIPATION

Why should we do this? Most advocacy on CSEA is undertaken by adults on behalf of children and young people. Participatory advocacy is unusual (particularly on the issue of CSEA) and is rarely evaluated so we know very little about how effective participatory advocacy is. For example, we know very little about when it is most impactful or valuable to engage young people in advocacy. Before setting up a participatory advocacy initiative, it is important to understand the advocacy environment that you are working in. Facilitating organisations may have experience of advocacy or experience of participatory work (or even experience of participatory advocacy). Either way, it is important to map two areas a) the advocacy environment and b) participatory practice in your contexts - and assess how the participatory advocacy you would like to undertake builds on or links to existing practice on advocacy and participation.

Mapping participatory advocacy

To map participatory advocacy, start by mapping advocacy campaigns on the same or similar topics in your context, note down the key characteristics of the campaign such as:

WHO   Which organisations or individuals ran the campaign?

WHAT   What was their key advocacy ask (the change they were seeking)?

WHERE   Who were their key advocacy targets (the decision-makers who can make this change)?

WHEN   How long did the campaign last (is it still ongoing)?

HOW   How successful was the campaign (did the advocacy targets make the changes being asked for, how were any challenges overcome)?

To map participatory practice with children and/or young people who have lived experience of CSEA in your context, note down the key characteristics of the participatory work such as:

WHO   Which organisations are supporting participatory practice with children and/or young people who have lived experience of CSEA?

WHAT   What kind of activities are being undertaken with children and young people who have lived experience of CSEA? (Are children and/or young people undertaking awareness raising or advocacy on CSEA?)

WHEN   How long are these participatory activities continuing for? Are they permanent structures like 'advisory boards' or 'children's parliaments' or temporary projects/initiatives - when do these initiatives end?

HOW   How successful is this participatory practice? Has there been an evaluation of the practice or can learning be shared with your organisation? How open are supporting organisations to collaborating with others? How were challenges overcome?

Don't forget survivor groups: It may also be useful to map the survivor groups on CSEA in your context. Survivor groups are often groups of adult women but many of those involved in survivor groups may have experience of sexual abuse or exploitation during their childhood. You can use the who, what, when, how questions above to map survivor groups. You may also want to explore if survivor groups are open to collaborate with others – in particular, if they are open to working with children or young people?

Try Tool 6: Organisational Self-Assessment on Participatory Practice in the accompanying document Tools for Participatory Advocacy which supports organisations to assess organisational knowledge, attitudes, skills and understanding of participatory approaches.

Use the following tables to help you map and assess the type of participatory practice for participatory advocacy. These tables have been developed in reference to the model[3] used in the definitions section of this report on participatory practice, which outlines three 'types' of participatory practice a) consultative, b) collaborative (youth driven) or c) youth-led.

In your mapping and assessment of participatory practice, it is important to note that youth-led activities are not necessarily 'better' than youth-driven or consultative participatory practice. This is often dependent on the contexts you are working in (see mapping above) e.g. whether you are working with 'lived experience young people' or whether the advocacy topic is contentious/challenges social norms. We have found that youth advocates engage in different types of participatory practice at different stages of the advocacy cycle. At some points collaborating with facilitating adults and at other points leading (or making the key decisions). This is often due to the different risks associated with each element of advocacy work. For example, it may be deemed 'safe' for young people to lead on the strategic planning of an advocacy campaign but 'unsafe' for them to lead on certain advocacy actions or deliver the messages to advocacy targets themselves.

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Mapping Participatory Advocacy

	Planning Advocacy	Mobilising	Action	MEL	Resourcing Considerations
CONSULTATIVE ADVOCACY **Young People provide inputs:**	Young people share their views and ideas. Young people help to collect information to inform the initiative.	Young people give advice on how to raise awareness and mobilise allies.	Young people inform the implementation of actions e.g. they provide feedback on materials that have been produced.	Young people help to collect information on the progress of advocacy e.g. they provide feedback about their experiences of being involved and the changes they have seen or experienced.	Possible in medium timeframes (1 year advocacy cycle/ campaign) Requires staff time to plan and organise meetings and workshops with young people. Requires staff time to keep in contact with young people and feedback at regular points progress from the initiative. Requires provision of therapeutic/ wellbeing support for youth advocates and facilitating staff.

EXAMPLES OF CONSULTATIVE ADVOCACY :

Advisory groups of young people are a good way of consulting with young people during each stage of the advocacy cycle. They can complement youth-driven or youth-led advocacy, taking the pressure off a group of youth advocates by undertaking some of the tasks. Youth advisory groups can be used when young people do not want to do any public facing work or they don't have enough time available to participate as a 'youth advocate' – they could be used, for example, to work with a younger age group of children. They are particularly useful if they engage children and young people who have lived experience of the campaign topic. Advisory groups can be consulted by facilitating organisations to gain advice from children and young people on elements of planning, such as 'sense-checking' evidence on the campaign topic or gaining feedback on whether key messages for mobilising children use relevant language.

	Planning Advocacy	Mobilising	Action	MEL	Resourcing Considerations
YOUTH DRIVEN ADVOCACY **Young People are equal partners with adults:**	Young people, provide significant input at the planning stage e.g. deciding on the campaign topic, when, where and how advocacy activities should take place in collaboration with adults.	Young people co-facilitate awareness raising and/or mobilising activities with adults.	Young people co-deliver advocacy actions with adults and have some decision-making responsibility.	Young people have influence on how monitoring is done and are involved in analysis and conclusions.	Possible in longer timeframes (6-12 months for set-up, 2-5 year campaign) Requires a dedicated member of staff to organise regular meetings over a number of months/ years with young people e.g. weekly meetings for the set-up phase, monthly meetings thereafter. Requires staff with participatory facilitation skills, a good understanding of CSEA in the country context, knowledge of the advocacy cycle and experience of running advocacy campaigns and/ or co-delivering activities with young people. Requires staff to be able to 'step in' to lead certain elements of the advocacy cycle and comfortable with young people making many of the decisions. Requires provision of therapeutic/wellbeing support for youth advocates and facilitating staff.

EXAMPLES OF YOUTH DRIVEN ADVOCACY:

Youth-driven advocacy is, perhaps, the most common form of participatory advocacy and works particularly well when facilitating organisations are working with an existing youth group who have identified a campaign topic they want to take action on (so set-up activities are not required). The young people from this group become 'youth advocates' and can be involved in planning and delivering their own advocacy campaign. It is also helpful if facilitating organisations have experience of advocacy so that they can support youth advocates' skills development in advocacy. Often, participatory campaigns will essentially be collaborative or youth-driven with facilitating organisations taking on a 'supportive' role or undertaking specific tasks that the youth advocates don't have time or expertise to do themselves. This is combined with youth-led advocacy for some elements of the advocacy cycle or key decisions in the planning phase.

	Planning Advocacy	Mobilising	Action	MEL	Resourcing Considerations
YOUTH LED ADVOCACY **Young People play a leading role (adults provide support):**	Young people decide on the advocacy objective and have substantial influence in all aspects of the planning stage	Young people lead and design awareness raising and mobilising activities with support from adults.	Young people lead advocacy actions with support from adults.	Young people substantially shape the monitoring & learning processes with support from adults	Requires greater flexibility and longer timeframes i.e. youth-led campaigns are developed out of long-term (5-10 year) participatory advocacy campaigns. Requires expertise within the staff team to facilitate sessions with young people so they understand the topic of CSEA and related issues, to understand what advocacy is, what is involved, the processes involved. Requires participatory approaches to be embedded into the organisation for a number of years (or facilitating organisations are supporting a youth-led organisation). Requires substantial experience of advocacy on a similar topic (children's rights) and/or experience of youth-driven advocacy. Requires support from staff in 'accompanying' young people and supporting them to critically reflect around key issues at particular stages such as safeguarding, wellbeing, risks, support needs

EXAMPLES OF YOUTH-LED ADVOCACY:

It is relatively rare to find examples of children and/or young people leading a whole advocacy initiative (i.e. youth-led groups undertake their own advocacy campaigns) in the children's rights or child protection sector. There are examples of wholly youth-led advocacy and activism in feminist organising, where facilitating organisations are essentially donors - who provide core funding to young feminist groups – such as FRIDA Young Feminist Fund (FRIDA | Young Feminist Fund). In these cases, facilitating organisations often provide funds for 'accompaniment' grants to youth-led organisations who can access expertise they may not have within their group.

Consequently, examples of youth-led advocacy tend to be focused on responsibility for specific elements of advocacy work (such as mobilisation of peers or delivery of actions) or key decisions in planning phases. Youth-led advocacy is more common when a youth-group has been running for years (so has a process for younger members to join and older members to leave) and they have already undertaken campaigns in collaboration with adult campaigning groups (youth-driven advocacy).

Key questions to ask on advocacy: Once you have mapped which advocacy campaigns exist, explore the following questions:

- » How have allies and advocacy targets responded to the issue of CSEA? Also, how have allies and advocacy targets responded to youth advocates (in general, not necessarily for campaigns on CSEA)?

- » What successes (policy changes) has youth-led advocacy had in your context?

- » At what stage in the advocacy cycle is it most effective to engage young people? And which type of engagement will be most effective (i.e. consultative, youth-led or youth-driven) for each stage? (see tables above for reference)

- » How can advocacy activities by young people be sustained beyond the project deadline? For example, can youth advocates join another youth campaigning group or can they be recruited from an existing group of young people who are already being supported?

Key questions to ask on participatory practice: Once you have mapped what participatory practice exists, explore the following questions:

- » How can we complement or build these practices into our plans for participatory advocacy?

- » What participatory mechanisms (permanent structures such as children's advisory groups) or initiatives (temporary activities) already exist? Can we link advocacy activities to the children and young people engaged in these mechanisms or initiatives?

- » How can learning on participatory practice be shared with partners or allies?

- » How can we sustain or institutionalise the participatory approaches or mechanisms we develop for youth advocacy – past the end date of this project? Are there other organisations (particularly ECPAT members) working similarly with children on these issues? Is it useful to partner with these organisations, build campaigning coalitions or working groups across organisations or even regionally across countries?

- » **And don't forget! Ask the ECPAT Secretariat how they can support you to facilitate collaborative campaigning.**

Options for assessing the effectiveness of youth advocacy

As an initial step facilitating organisations will need to undertake mapping in the following areas:

- » Map relevant advocacy campaigns i.e. campaigns that are as similar as possible to your proposed campaign. If advocacy is directed at national level decision-makers, mapping should only include campaigns in your country's context.

- » Map relevant youth-led or youth-centred advocacy campaigns

> As youth-led advocacy is quite unusual, you may need to look at a broader range of children's rights issues than just campaigns on sexual violence i.e. explore youth-led advocacy on climate change or feminist campaigns on Gender Based Violence as these are two areas where, globally, we found youth-led advocacy.

After mapping, analyse any connections or opportunities for advocacy.

» Identify if others locally or nationally are bringing children and young people together to advocate for their rights? Are there opportunities to collaborate or join forces with these groups of children and young people? For example, by building a coalition of organisations facilitating child and youth advocacy.

» Analyse relevant campaigns to identify in what circumstances young people were able to influence decision-makers. This may involve talking to those who organised activities – explore:

- At what stage in the advocacy cycle were young people engaged?

- What types of participatory advocacy were most effective?

- What tips or learning can be shared

EXAMPLE:

Realist evaluation to develop programme theories on participatory advocacy

In a realist evaluation of child-led advocacy in the Adult Entertainment Sector (AES) in Nepal the following (realist) evaluation question was used:

'How, for whom and under what circumstances does engaging in advocacy activities enable children (as a group) to influence decision-makers?'

Three programme theories were developed from this evaluation of child-led advocacy:

1. When children (working in AES) who fear discrimination when speaking in public about their rights engage in Action Research which is facilitated to support a safe (non-judgemental) space and builds their skills, their confidence levels improve.

2. When children working in AES who have gained confidence through Action Research are supported by facilitators to organise awareness raising activities with peers and decision-makers increase their levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy which leads to them organising community dialogues with decision-makers.

3. When decision-makers witness children challenging dominant frames (by actively organising and leading community dialogues and developing evidence-based recommendations) they see the value of consulting with children who have lived experience of child labour when reviewing policies and practices on child labour.

Source: See Section 4: Veitch,*H. Findings from an Evaluation of Child-Led Advocacy in CLARISSA* in Apgar et. al. Evaluating CLARISSA, Evidence, Learning and Practice. Institute of Development Studies, 2024

2.4 ASSESSMENT OF RISKS AND BENEFITS

Why should we do this? Sexuality and sexual violence are taboo subjects in most societies, consequently raising the issue of CSEA in the public domain is fraught with risk. Many advocates on sexual violence have experienced negative consequences as a result of their advocacy such as harassment, vilification or victim blaming. Consequently, regular assessment of the risks involved and the development of plans to mitigate these risks is a fundamental step in the development of any advocacy campaign on CSEA.

Traditionally, the presence of risk has meant that children and young people, particularly those with lived experience of CSEA, are often side-lined from opportunities to inform and influence decision-making around policies and programmes to prevent and respond to CSEA. It has been argued that as children and young people, including young survivors are 'vulnerable' the focus should be on protection as opposed to supporting their right to participate in such activities. However, emerging evidence[4] challenges this idea and argues that participation can be protective in a range of ways.

The potential for positive and negative outcomes co-exist in participatory activities. Therefore, rather than only focussing on the potential for harm, it is important to recognise how children and young people can benefit from types of engagement that respect and acknowledge their expertise, resources and ideas and exposes them to opportunities to improve their knowledge, capacities, relationships and sense of self-esteem and confidence. It is also important to monitor and assess risk and benefits at various stages of the process and ensure plans are in place to respond to and mitigate harm on an ongoing basis.

Considerations for assessing risks and benefits

Assessing Risks: before young people are engaged in the project it's important to undertake detailed planning and risk assessment (of the project as a whole), and identify resources needed to run a safe project, such as:

- » Completing an initial project risk assessment that anticipates possible challenges and ways of responding to identified risks. Although risk assessment should be an ongoing process (and one which youth advocates themselves should be involved in) it's still important to do initial work on this as it may determine who the project seeks to involve.

- » See Risk Register Template in Core Component Creating a Safe Environment

- » Identify and link with support networks. Recognising that no one individual or organisation has all the answers is important. Building relationships and alliances with other organisations means access to different types of support for youth advocates if required.

- » Creating a safe context for the project. Where and when the project will take place is an important consideration to promote inclusion and safety. If it's hard for young people to get to or it takes place in a potentially stigmatising space then it will have significant consequences for the project.

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4   Hamilton et al, 2019; Cody et al, 2024

See the next section A Framework for Creating a Safe Environment to find out more about how mitigations for key risks (for participatory advocacy on CSEA) can be incorporated into a new safeguarding framework called 'survivor-informed safeguarding for campaigning'.

See Core Component on Creating a Safe Environment for more detailed information, tools and exercises on 'survivor-informed safeguarding for campaigning'.

Assessing benefits: The benefits of participatory advocacy can be assessed alongside risks. Emerging evidence indicates that there are a range of potential benefits when young people with lived experience of CSEA engage in participatory activities. The table below outlines some of the areas where experts agree that it is possible for participatory approaches to improve outcomes for young people who have experienced CSEA, enhance the relationships between young people and professionals and support wider society[5].

For young people	The relationships between young people and professionals	Wider society
Increase confidence, knowledge and skills	Offer unique knowledge	Break 'taboo' and silencing
Build friendships/peer support, minimise isolation	Help young people understand decisions	Lead to new Ideas
Reduce blame and shame and increase understanding of emotions	Lead to care plans that meet needs	Encourage change
Build 'Critical consciousness'	Promote trust	Increase creditility
Build positive identities		Promote accountability
Counter disempowerment		
Contribute to recovery		
They recognise they are not 'the only one'		

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5   See practitioner briefings by Cody and Soares (2023).

3. FRAMEWORK FOR CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

This framework has been developed by Children Unite[6] in response to a review of safeguarding policy and practice for those campaigning on childhood sexual abuse, in particular, for 'survivors' (those with lived experience of childhood sexual abuse) who are undertaking advocacy or campaigning activities. Consequently, the term 'survivors' is used alongside the term 'lived experience young people' to mean the same group of young people (those with lived experience of CSEA – this includes those who may not have disclosed this abuse or exploitation to facilitating organisations).

This framework complements safeguarding policies and procedures, it outlines key principles that can be used when safeguarding children and young people who are campaigning on CSEA. Although the framework does not provide detailed guidance for facilitating organisations, some related tools and exercises have been outlined in the Core Component on Creating a Safe Environment as suggestions. It is recommended that these tools and exercises are adapted to local contexts and piloted before use.

3.1 ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE IN ADVOCACY

A 2022 review of safeguarding and child protection policy and practice found that very little policy or practice incorporated the campaigning environment for children and young people. Consequently, a new approach to safeguarding was developed by Children Unite, called 'survivor-informed safeguarding for campaigning'. This approach promotes safe and empowering practices, complements existing safeguarding policy and practice and ultimately aims to contribute to the healing process for those with lived experience of CSEA (survivors).
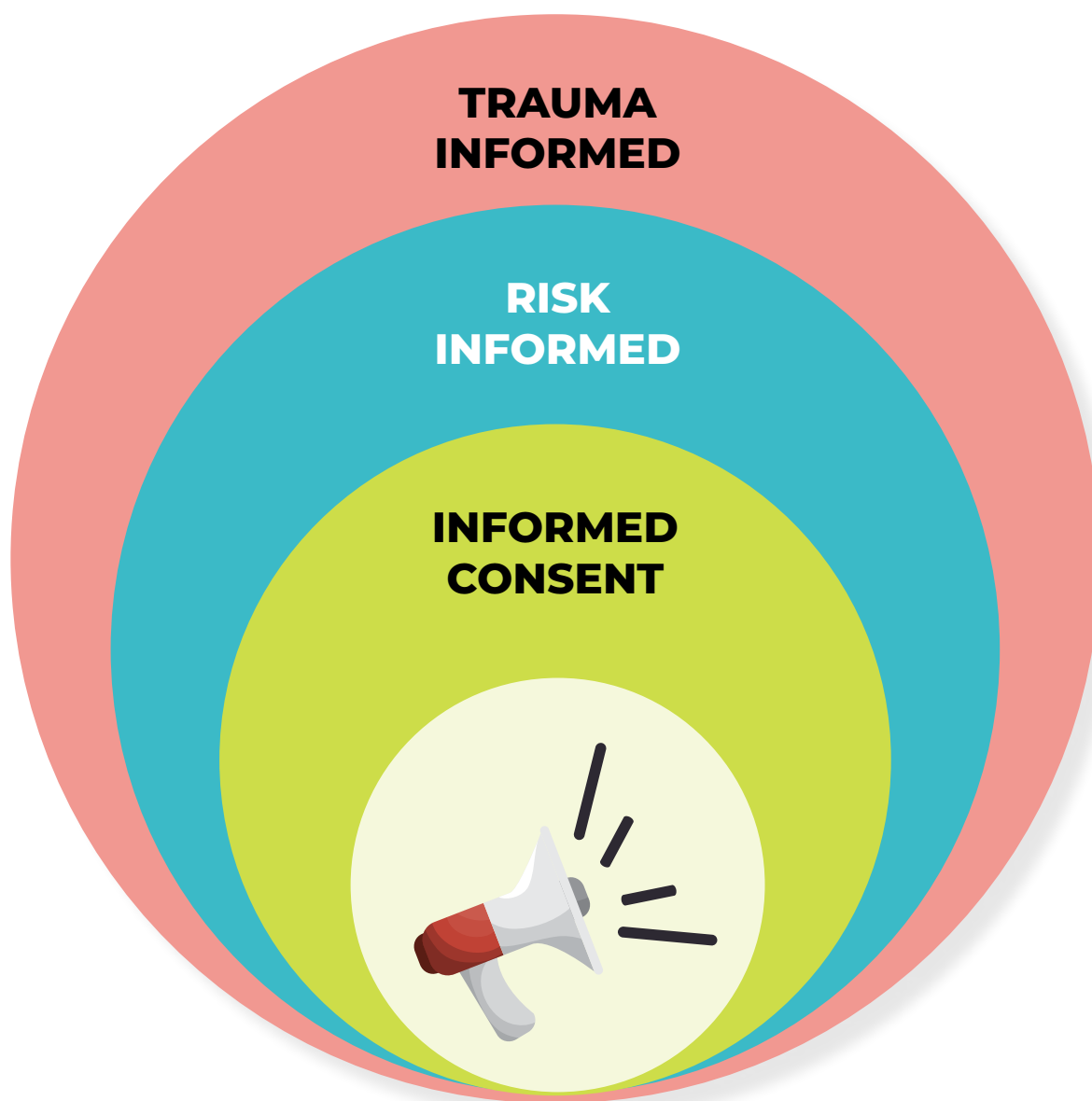
The framework which complements existing safeguarding policies with procedures for the advocacy environment, is informed by trauma theory (trauma-informed) and by survivors themselves.

Key principles of survivor-informed safeguarding:

- » Survivors are identified as the experts rather than organisational staff
- » Safeguards are informed by survivors. They are tailored to survivors' needs and to their recovery or healing process and are regularly reviewed with survivors.
- » Trauma is accepted. Safeguarding does not seek to completely avoid trauma but encourages self-awareness around wellbeing and burnout for organisational staff and survivors.
- » Safeguarding is not viewed as a compliance checklist but a continuous process.
- » Procedures and processes recognise the need to be holistic, do not use a 'one size fits all' and therefore need to be adapted to every context (and informed by survivors).

Survivor-informed safeguarding for campaigning consists of three continuous elements that take place before, during and after campaigning activities, providing as safe an environment as possible for lived experience young people to operate in:

1. **Trauma-informed:** using trauma-informed approaches is about accepting that different forms of trauma exist for lived experience young people as well as for campaign staff and campaign audiences. Making use of trauma-informed approaches enables organisations to mitigate and respond to trauma when it arises. This is achieved by focusing on wellbeing, and connecting lived experience young people involved in campaigning activities with appropriate support services.

2. **Risk-informed:** in order for campaigning activity to be safe for lived experience young people, all risks associated with campaigning (for example the risk of re-traumatisation) as well as the development of mitigation strategies (or response plans) are informed by them and their support networks. Risks and mitigation strategies are carefully managed and are regularly re-visited through reflective practices.

3. **Informed consent:** to be truly *informed* and *voluntary*, 'consent' is a continuous conversation with lived experience young people where they understand the risks of their involvement in campaigning activities and feel comfortable withdrawing their engagement when it supports their wellbeing and self-care. (This can be a permanent or temporary withdrawal).

As illustrated, in survivor-informed safeguarding, the survivor campaigner / lived experience young person (represented by the a megaphone) is at the centre of safeguarding, they are surrounded by practices that create as safe an environment as possible in the campaigning environment 1) trauma-informed approaches 2) regular risk-informed safeguarding and 3) and continuous informed consent.

3.2 TRAUMA-INFORMED SAFEGUARDING
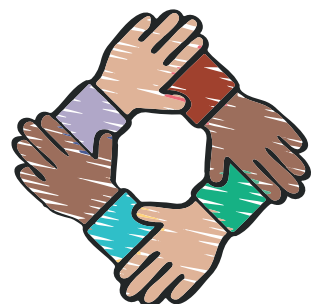
Taking a trauma informed approach is about:

» accepting that trauma exists for lived experience young people, campaign staff and campaign audiences.

» using trauma-informed approaches so that you can respond to trauma when it arises.

» providing services and focusing on wellbeing

In order to understand how trauma operates and to provide appropriate support services to youth advocates, particularly lived experience young people and to staff, the following practices or adaptations can be made to facilitating organisations' safeguarding/child protection practice.

» Allocate a sufficient budget for provision of specialist services, such as therapeutic care or legal advice.

» Understand how trauma operates - staff acknowledge the impact of traumatic experiences for lived experience young people as well as those that support them and are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of trauma and actively seek to avoid re-traumatisation. This may require staff to undertake training on trauma.

» Develop inclusive practice - recognise that lived experience young people may also experience discrimination or stigma because of a range of other identities they have such as their sexual orientation, gender, racial/ethnic group or disability and that appropriate services should be provided by facilitating organisations.

» For lived experience young people, implementing trauma-informed safeguarding may also include:

- Identifying what support already exists (i.e. have they had therapy?)
- Identifying 'safe people' (this could be a family member, friend or a 'professional')

See Tool 2 Individual Needs Assessment in the Core Component on Creating a Safe Environment

» Organisational practice should recognise that staff can also experience trauma and offer support to staff such as self-care 'days' or workshops/discussions on self-care, therapy sessions or flexible working patterns to allow staff to take breaks from their work without feeling they are letting anyone down.

» Content of campaign materials or external communications needs to take account of those who might experience trauma which can include those who have never had an experience of CSEA or those who have experienced CSEA as well as those who have sexually abused others. (See tips for content design in section 4.5)

3.3 RISK INFORMED SAFEGUARDING

Being risk-informed is about:

» Engaging lived experience young people in identifying risks and developing mitigation plans (or response plans) through involving them in risk assessment processes.

» Regularly revisiting risk and mitigation plans - risk assessment is not a one-off activity but a continuous process

» Accepting that not all risks can be avoided (this connects to being trauma-informed)

» Mapping resources and considering existing support mechanisms that lived experience young people may already be using

» Using reflective practice, for example, holding debrief sessions with lived experience young people after every campaigning activity

» Regularly updating a risk register and using it to plan, monitor and evaluate safeguarding

3.4 CONTINUOUS INFORMED CONSENT

Continuously informed consent is about:

» Continuously checking-in on consent with lived experience young people (gaining consent is not a one-off activity) i.e. as new opportunities arise or things change for young people they need to be informed and give their consent (for their participation, for their 'image' or story to be used etc.)

» Dialogue or conversations with lived experience young people - this can help combat a key tension regarding consent - balancing confidentiality/privacy issues with young people's identity as an 'advocate or campaigner'. Dialogue can be used as follows:

- To discuss the impact of using their real name, image, etc.
- To manage expectations i.e. what can realistically be achieved through their campaigning activity
- To clarify what they've signed up to, for example, provide a job description and hold a discussion on incentives/pay for their expertise
- To undertake a wellbeing check-in

» Recognising advocacy as part of the long-term recovery process for lived experience young people. This means they can 'drop out' of some activities or 'take a break' from advocacy but still be connected to advocacy activities and take part in a different activity at a future time.

The sign of a good consent process would be when a lived experience young person feels perfectly comfortable withdrawing from a campaign activity (temporarily or permanently) - because they know that this decision has been made as part of their wellbeing and self-care.

> When gaining initial consent from young people to take part in advocacy activities, give enough information about plans to enable young people to give their initial consent and be honest about unknowns. Due to the evolving and organic way that participatory projects develop, it will not be possible to outline at the start of the project the details about every activity or event, or to communicate the range of potential benefits and risks. Participatory projects involve uncertainties, and it is important that young people are made aware of this and the scope they have to own and determine certain elements of what will happen. This is why the principle of ongoing consent, and regularly checking-in with young people, is critical in these processes to ensure that young people know they can opt-in and opt-out of certain activities.

3.5 CONNECTING TO EXISTING SAFEGUARDING POLICY & PRACTICE

The 'survivor-informed safeguarding for campaigning' approach complements existing safeguarding or child protection policies and procedures, consequently, facilitating organisations will need to have in place robust policies and procedures on child protection/safeguarding. If facilitating organisations are working with 'youth' i.e. those over the age of 18 years old, vulnerable adult safeguarding policies and procedures will be relevant too. Another area of safeguarding relevant to advocacy is digital safety.

It is recommended that staff supporting youth advocacy are trained/briefed on the safeguarding policy and procedures for the facilitating organisation by those responsible for safeguarding/child protection (such as designated safeguarding officer or a safeguarding focal point). As a minimum, facilitators of youth advocacy should be able to identify/recognise a safeguarding issue and know how to respond to it.

See FRIDA Young Feminist Funds' Policy on Feminist Safeguarding as an example of a safeguarding policy that has been developed for the youth activist environment.

Also, see Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub which supports organisations in the humanitarian and development sectors to strengthen their safeguarding policy and practice against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH). By offering a wide range of free tools, training and advice in over 10 languages, RSH enables people and organisations

to reduce the risk of harm. This platform is open access, but it prioritises the needs of smaller civil society organisations.

See also Child Safeguarding - ECPAT which presents the ECPAT International safeguarding framework with related resources. ECPAT members should approach the ECPAT Secretariat for access to additional resources from within the network.

4.

OPTIONS FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN ADVOCACY

This section of the document uses the advocacy cycle as a basis to outline key issues for facilitating organisations to consider when engaging children and young people in each stage of the advocacy cycle.

4.1 SET UP & SELECTION OF YOUTH ADVOCATES

Why should we do this? We recognise that advocacy activities may be initiated in different ways. However, the review found that it is more common for organisations to decide a priority issue they wish to advocate on, and from this point identify and 'recruit' or 'select' groups of young people to work as youth advocates on the issue. This means the 'set-up' of advocacy projects is a significant phase of the advocacy cycle and, in many cases, will involve the 'set-up' of a group of youth advocates. In this phase of the advocacy cycle it may be useful to review the following resources:

Core Component on Getting to Know Each Other

Core Component on Creating a Safe Environment – particularly section 1. Project Set-up and section 2. Selecting Children and Young People

One key area of difference is whether facilitating organisations are working with an existing group of young people who know each other and have worked together before or whether you are setting up a new group of young people to work specifically on this advocacy project. Consequently, facilitating organisations can use the following process to consider the set-up processes for each scenario.

Key question: are you engaging young people in advocacy who are part of an existing group or initiative?

NO – we are setting up a new group of young people to undertake advocacy activities

» **DEVELOP A TRANSPARENT SELECTION PROCESS:** Build-in time to undertake a fair and transparent selection or recruitment process for young people to take on the role of 'youth advocate'. Youth advocates could be selected by their peers (as a representative) through a voting system or by an existing group/committee of young people. Or they may be selected by groups of adults (similar to the recruitment process for a job). Either way it is important that facilitating organisations are transparent about who will be the final decision-makers. The selection process may involve developing procedures such as selection criteria, voting systems or job descriptions for the role of 'youth advocate'.

• See Tool 1 Example Selection Guidelines in Tools for Participatory Advocacy – this uses a job recruitment model where adults select youth researchers through an application and interview process.

» **DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUTH ADVOCATES' SUPPORT NETWORK:** Allow time to build trust with those supporting youth advocates such as family members or loved ones and those acting as gatekeepers (those who can grant 'access' to young people). Gatekeepers are often parents or care givers, but they can also be employers, teachers or community leaders depending on the context.

• This can be done through engagement activities with youth advocates' supporters and/or gatekeepers such as inviting them to general events (so that they get to know your work) or specific meetings to discuss the advocacy project and the role of 'youth advocate' (see consent conversations below).

» **ADDRESS CONSENT:** Gaining consent (for youth advocates to participate in the advocacy project) from parents, caregivers or gatekeepers is often a legal requirement if you are working with youth advocates that are aged under 18 years old. Consider the following options:

- **Consent Conversations:** set-up one-to-one or group conversations with parents, carers or gatekeepers to explain the activities, time commitments and any reimbursement of costs for youth advocates. In these conversations, give parents, carers or gatekeepers an opportunity to ask questions and discuss any concerns they have with the role of 'youth advocate' and the activities they will be involved in. Provide written information that explains the role of youth advocate and the advocacy initiative for parents, carers or gatekeepers to take away with them. Give parents, carers or gatekeepers some time to think about the role and discuss with 'their' young people before they sign consent forms.

- **Role-play or video:** As advocacy is used for many different activities, when explaining 'advocacy' to parents, carers or gatekeepers, facilitating organisations can use role-play or short films to show them the kinds of advocacy activities their young people will be undertaking as part of the project. For example, role playing a lobbying discussion (between a youth advocate and an advocacy target) or showing a video of youth advocates speaking at a panel discussion.

- **Develop written materials** for potential youth advocates and their parents/carers/gatekeepers that explain the aims of the project, the role of 'youth advocate' and how facilitating organisations will support the wellbeing or safeguarding of youth advocates

  > **See Tool 3:** Example Consent Pack *(for potential youth advocates)* in the Core Component on Creating a Safe Environment which was used in a participatory advocacy project on sexual violence against boys and young men.

» **BUILD TRUST BETWEEN YOUTH ADVOCATES:** See Core Component Creating a Safe Environment to find out how to build trust among groups of young people. Activities address the following key issues:

- **Trust-building Activities:** games and ideas to help the group get to know each other

- **Developing a Group Agreement:** in all group work with young people, it is important to set some ground rules around how things will be handled and managed within the group.

- **Addressing Confidentiality:** when working in groups it is important that young people understand that, even if ground rules are made that young people don't share what others have said in the room, this cannot be guaranteed in group settings. Confidentiality is particularly important for young people who, as advocates, may be presenting themselves as a 'survivor' or an 'expert by experience' in the public domain (i.e. with the media or key advocacy targets).

- **Discussing hopes and fears:** this activity can be used by facilitating organisations to identify where expectations of youth advocates may need to be managed and can act as a pre-curser to a risk assessment

In addition:

» **EXPLORE GROUP DIVERSITY:** by looking at the different benefits and challenges of bringing together groups of children who hold similar or different experiences, identities and characteristics. Facilitating organisations should consider the different options and prioritise group members' levels of comfort, recognising that the topics covered may be challenging and therefore group members must feel 'safe' to discuss these in the group.

- It is particularly important to consider bringing together mixed or separate groups of children and young people regarding a) gender with further considerations for sexual identity (LGBTQ+) and b) lived experience of CSEA.

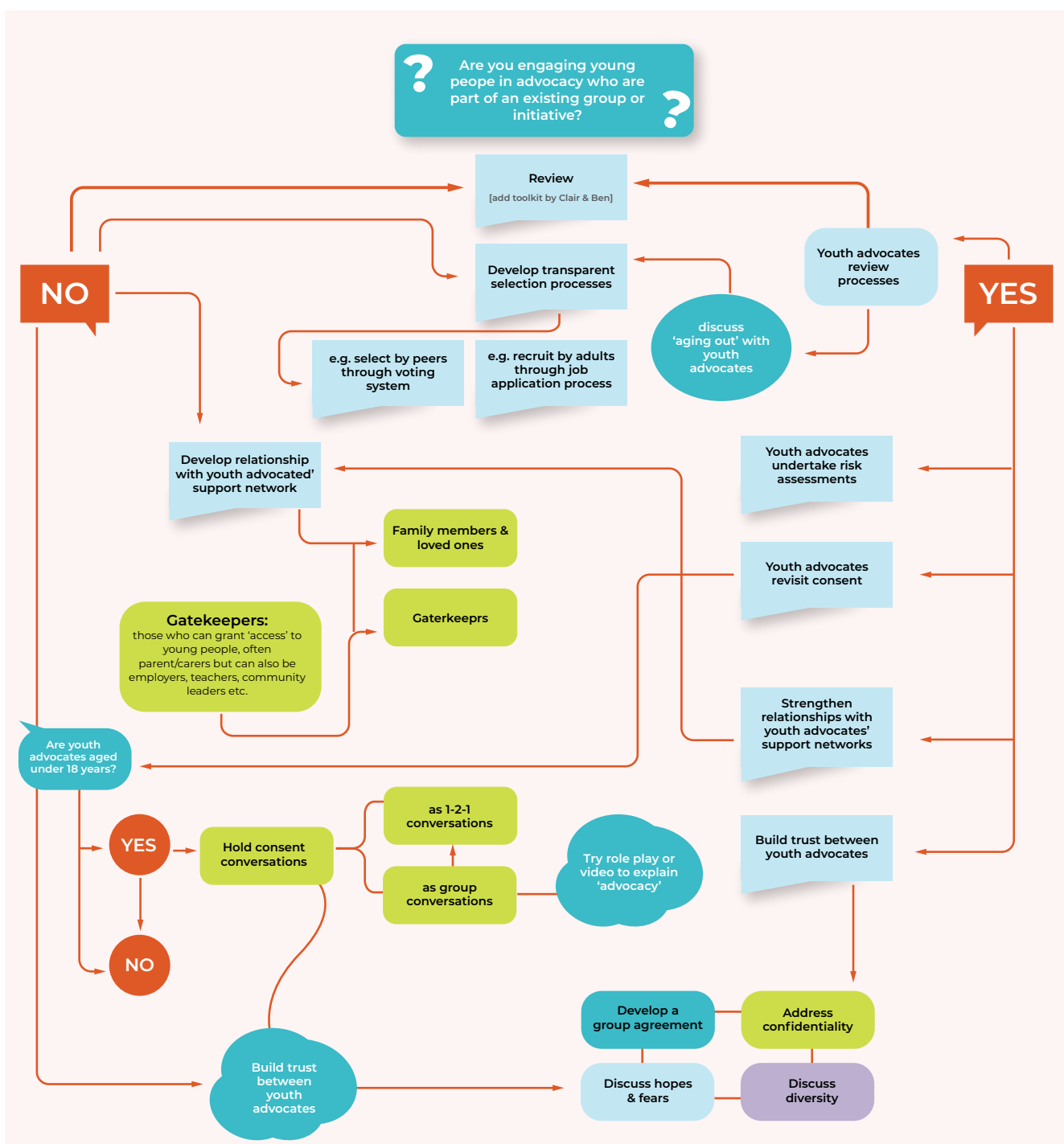**YES – we are involving an existing group of young people in advocacy activities**

Because you have already been working with an existing group of young people you can involve them in reviewing and refining or adapting many of the activities mentioned in the considerations above. Facilitating organisations may also want to explore the following with the existing group of young people:

» **Undertake risk assessments** of the specific activities they will take part in as youth advocates. Try one of the following options to discuss risks and mitigation plans with young people – in the Core Component on Creating a Safe Environment:

- Tool 9: World's Worst...which helps a group of young people collaboratively anticipate risks and develop a response plan for a project
- Tool 8: Scenario Planning which helps young people collaboratively anticipate risks and develop a response plan for a specific element of the advocacy project

» **Revisit consent** with young people, exploring the differences between this advocacy project and any previous work with the existing group of young people. Explain that to be truly informed and voluntary, 'consent' will be a continuous conversation with youth advocates where they understand the risks of their involvement in participatory activities and feel comfortable withdrawing their engagement when it supports their wellbeing and self-care (this can be a permanent or temporary withdrawal).

» **Ask the existing group of young people to review and revise selection processes** (such as information packs, selection criteria and/or consent forms/processes) and discuss framing and terminology to help identify potentially difficult language (e.g. triggering, patronising, victim blaming etc.). This is particularly important when working with lived experience young people.

» **Discuss 'aging out'** (when young people become too old to take part in activities – they no longer fit 'age criteria') with the existing group of young people to develop strategies for managing this.

- For example, in one group of youth advocates in Tanzania, members that were too old to take part in activities took on a mentoring role for new members, inducting them into the group.

Please see the following decision tree that summarises the different considerations for setting up a new group of young people or working with an existing group of young people.

Fig 1: Decision Tree on Setting Up Participatory Advocacy

The importance of 'framing'

The topic of sex is often taboo in many societies, talking about forms of sexual violence such as CSEA is even more challenging and therefore needs to be introduced sensitively. It is important to consider the naming and framing of the initiative at the set up stage. As facilitators working in your context, you will know the young people, parents, community members and it may be helpful to think about:

- How can you balance and maximise opportunities for participation whilst being honest and transparent about the aims and content that is likely to be covered? e.g. if you explain that the initiative is just about CSEA parents and carers may refuse to let their children participate. If you introduce the topic more sensitively and explain why this initiative is important and the potential value and opportunities for young people who take part, this may be helpful for parents, carers and young people themselves to understand the rationale and broader aims of the initiative. Could you organise an information session where people can come and hear more about the project at the start?

- In order to minimise risks of young people being stigmatised by being associated with a project on CSEA could you use more general language? Could this project be framed as a project on 'health and wellbeing' or 'child rights' more generally? This is of particular significance if you are working with young people with lived experience of CSEA who may later be involved in public events and activities.

- If you choose not to explicitly share that the project has a focus on CSEA, how will you deal with potential complaints / negative reactions from parents / carers or community members if they hear or come to know that the young people are discussing aspects related to sex and abuse? Practitioners have shared how they have received complaints and faced anger and frustration from family members and communities when they have found out that there have been discussions related to sex whilst their children have been involved in wider programmes around child protection. How can this be minimised, and staff members supported if these incidents occur?

Think Box: TRANSPARENT AND INFORMATIVE

One of the nine requirements for effective participatory practice is that engagement and processes should be transparent and informative. This means that youth advocates need to understand the background and context to the work, who is supporting it and why and what might be involved before they provide initial consent. It is also important to be clear that, as this is a participatory initiative, the facilitating organisation does not know what exactly will happen, what topics will be discussed, and activities undertaken as young people will be involved in making decisions along the way. Open communication is key. If there are certain decisions that have already been taken / made or certain activities that need to be undertaken due to funding requirements, this should be explained up front. Where possible, it is also useful to discuss and agree near the start how decisions will be made and who has the final 'say' if there is disagreement among young people or between young people and facilitating staff. For example, youth advocates and facilitating organisations may disagree on the language to be used in a campaign.

Think Box: INCLUSIVE

One of the nine requirements for effective participatory practice is that engagement and processes should be inclusive. This means that every young person should have an equal opportunity to participate and systems and structures supporting participation are created in ways that do not discriminate against young people based on age, sex, gender, religion, disability or ethnic/social origin.

This requirement needs to be considered throughout the cycle, but it is particularly relevant when setting up a group. There is a need to balance considerations of inclusivity with other requirements such as safety, respect and relevance. For example, when discussing sensitive issues such as CSEA, some young people may not feel comfortable discussing these issues, particularly if they have lived experience of CSEA, with

Think Box: INCLUSIVE *(continue)*

members of the opposite sex. These feelings should be respected. The majority of examples of participatory group work with lived experience young people have involved all female groups for this reason. However, this then excludes opportunities for male survivors to take part. Where possible, organisations should consider whether they can support different groups or whether young people are happy to engage in mixed groups. One aspect to consider when bringing groups together is the "not the only one principle". This means that no one member should feel like they are different in some way to the rest of the group and should share at least some common characteristic with at least one other member in the group.

There are different views about the benefits of having groups of young people that include those with lived experience of the issue and other young people who may be interested and passionate about the issue but do not have direct experience. This structure may be less exposing or stigmatising for those with lived experience of CSEA when engaging in public activities, but it may also lead to different dynamics within the group itself. It is also worth considering the requirement of 'relevance' here. If for example the advocacy is focussing on improving support services for young people with lived experience of CSEA, those young people who have not received such services will be unable to draw on their own knowledge or experiences to inform the process.

The principle of inclusivity is also important when only a small number of a wider group can take part in a specific activity or opportunity. The wider group should be supported to reflect on the principle of inclusivity in selecting members to represent the wider group.

For more information on the nine requirements for child and youth participation see the planning tool.

4.2 RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Why should we do this? Advocacy aims to inform and facilitate change. Therefore, a key part of advocacy work revolves around fully understanding the issue so that key message and 'asks' can be identified. If advocacy activities and campaigns are not based on evidence, it can be a lot easier for audiences to question or reject calls for change. This is particularly important if youth advocates are seeking to influence policy.

Involving children and young people in the research and analysis phase is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is helpful if children and young people understand the issue from a variety of perspectives. Even if young people have lived experience of the issue, it will be important that they understand the wider context, how many other young people are impacted? What are others' experiences of accessing services etc? It is unfair to ask young people to come up with ideas or recommendations to solve a problem if they do not fully understand the scope and complexities. Therefore, enabling young people to engage with the evidence, or to get involved in generating their own evidence, is critical. It may also be the case that when youth advocates are presented with the evidence, they may draw different conclusions or identify different issues to further explore based on their positioning as young people. In addition, if youth advocates will take a role talking to others, or speaking at events or meetings, it can help build their confidence when they have key 'facts' to draw from.

We recognise that advocacy activities may be initiated in different ways. However, the review found that it is more common for organisations to decide a priority issue they wish to advocate on, and from this point identify and 'recruit' or 'select' groups of young people to work as youth advocates on the issue. This means the 'set-up' of advocacy projects is a significant phase of the advocacy cycle and, in many cases, will involve the 'set-up' of a group of youth advocates. In this phase of the advocacy cycle it may be useful to review the following resources:
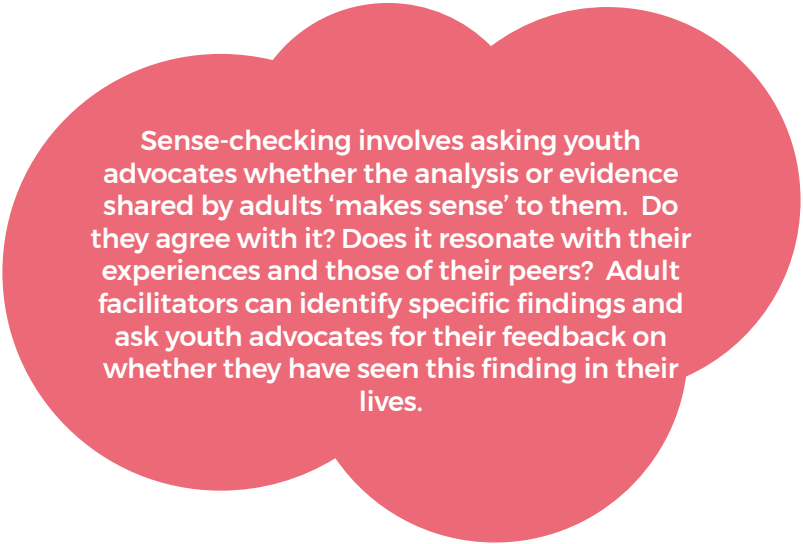
» The previous assessment of evidence should help identify any gaps in evidence on the campaign topic and what kind of research or analysis could be undertaken to support campaigning and advocacy on the topic.

» Previous mapping should identify which research or analysis activities make best use of children and young people's experience, interests and knowledge, and which activities make use of adults' experience or knowledge.

• For example, we found that although policy analysis or legal reviews are best undertaken by adults, discussing and 'sense-checking' findings from this analysis with youth advocates is a great way for youth advocates to understand policy from their perspective. See below for options.

» Assess the risks and benefits to young people of engaging in different types of research and analysis activities

Options for involving young people in research or analysis

» Validate or 'sense-check' research findings from a larger ongoing research project that is currently underway.

» Review a research report and do their own analysis to identify what, from the report, might be the key issues and actions for children and young people.

» Undertake their own 'desk' research on the campaign topic. For example, using different sources to understand what research already exists about the topic they are interested in. This may include talking to different 'experts', internet searches, library searches etc.

» Meet with researchers, including youth researchers, who have been involved in previous studies on the campaign topic to understand more about the problems and findings.

» Join a research advisory group for a piece of research that is being implemented on the campaign topic.

» Initiate their own primary research project to gather missing data on the campaign topic.

How youth advocates can 'sense-check' policy analysis or legal reviews:

» contract a local researcher to carry out a review and present to youth advocates for discussion.

» arrange for policy or legal experts to meet with youth advocates to explain the policy context.

» produce a child-friendly version of an existing policy document to discuss with youth advocates.

Sense-checking involves asking youth advocates whether the analysis or evidence shared by adults 'makes sense' to them. Do they agree with it? Does it resonate with their experiences and those of their peers? Adult facilitators can identify specific findings and ask youth advocates for their feedback on whether they have seen this finding in their lives.

Engaging young people in primary research is a substantial commitment that takes time and requires an investment of facilitating organisations' resources. Please see ECPAT's training manual on participatory research for more information.

EXAMPLE:

Youth Participatory Action Research to inform advocacy to improve the criminal justice system towards young survivors in Albania

The 'Small Steps' research project was initiated by a group of young women who had previous engaged in advocacy work because decision-makers did not take their advocacy messages seriously due to the lack of evidence.
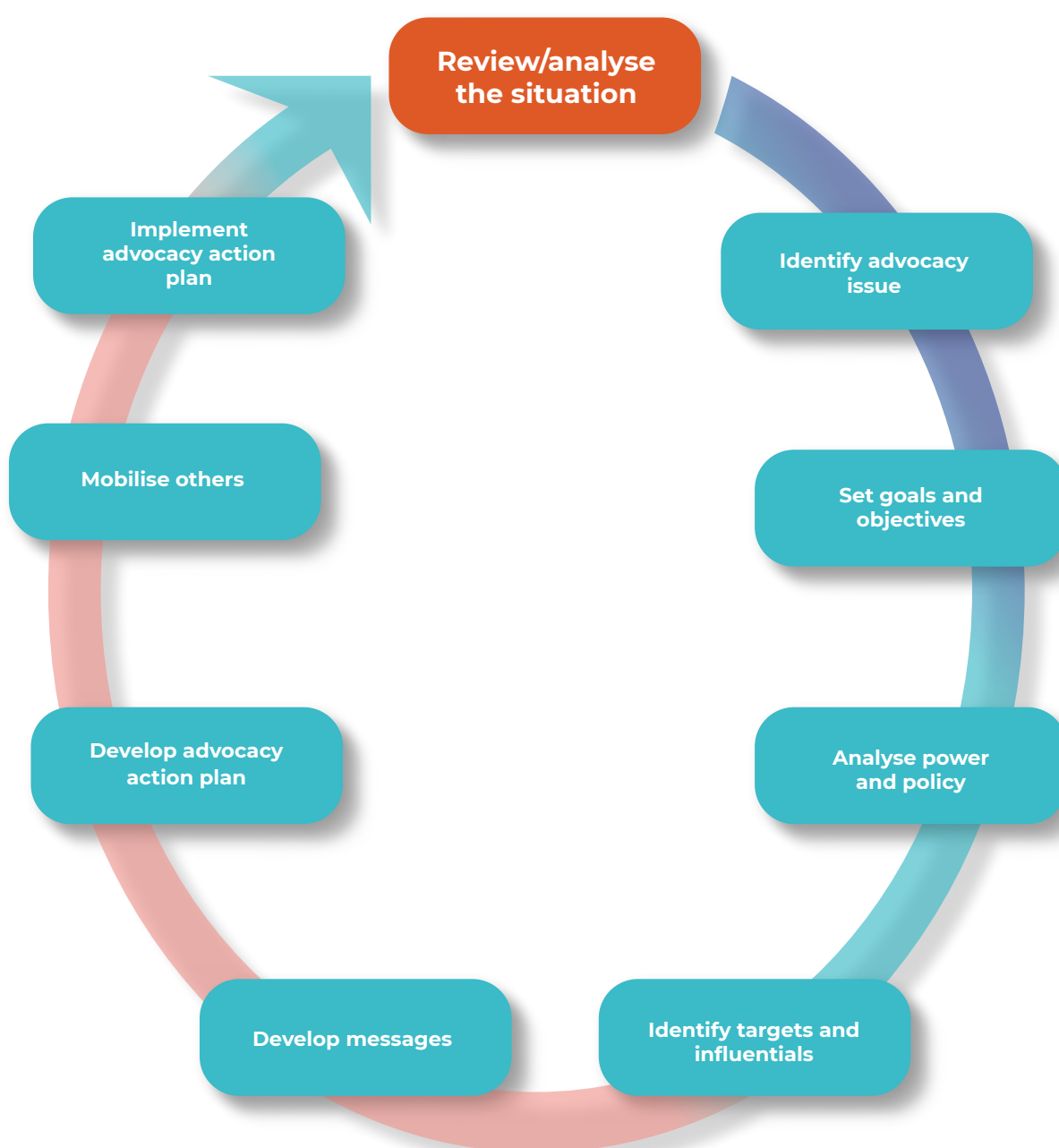
Six young women aged 17-26 who were being supported by Different & Equal, a frontline service provider in Albania were recruited into the project with the aim of developing their skills to become young researchers. The group engaged in a 7 month long intensive research training programme learning about participatory action research, methods, rigor, and ethics. Over the process of a year, the group were supported by an academic researcher, project coordinator and two facilitators from the organisation to design and implement a study to explore the perspectives and experiences of young people going through the criminal justice and victim protection systems. The peer researchers collected data from 12 young people through a face-to-face peer survey, analysed the evidence and wrote the final report.

Source: Small Steps Collaboration, 2020

4.3 ADVOCACY PLANNING AND DESIGN

Why should we do this? There are a multitude of potential benefits for young people when they are supported to inform and influence the planning and design of different activities and resources (to develop useful skills and new knowledge). Young people can challenge mainstream messaging and framing of issues that may have been developed without a clear understanding of the contexts that young people are navigating. This means that opportunities may be missed for mobilising other young people and developing sound plans.

Advocacy planning and design involves the following processes that are commonly presented as an advocacy cycle - this is because advocacy plans often include several 'campaigns' undertaken over 3-5 years. Advocacy actions in one campaign are reviewed and inform the next campaign.

Although it may not always feel like it, advocacy is a systematic process with distinct steps and activities as outlined in the diagram above – the 'advocacy cycle'. Most advocacy toolkits use a similar cyclical process to plan advocacy campaigns. There are some great toolkits on planning advocacy campaigns with children and young people (see below). However, in general, these toolkits do not focus on the topic of CSEA.

As a result, the next three sections of this document (planning, mobilisation and action) will focus on the adaptations or considerations needed when involving young people, particularly those with lived experience of CSEA in planning, mobilising and undertaking advocacy actions on CSEA.

Adaptations and considerations focus on three elements that are connected to safeguarding of youth advocates as this has been one of the biggest barriers in undertaking participatory advocacy on CSEC:

a) The sensitive nature of the advocacy topic (CSEA) and the fact that it is a gendered and 'taboo' subject (i.e. not talked about) in most societies. This means advocacy campaigns need to be sensitive to social norms on sexual abuse and, for example, use appropriate terminology in campaign messaging.

b) The high likelihood that all those (young people and adults) engaged in advocacy planning, mobilising and action will be directly or indirectly affected by sexual abuse or exploitation. Some may identify as 'survivors' or 'experts by experience' of sexual abuse, others may have lived experience of childhood sexual abuse but may not want to publicly 'identify' as a survivor. And other people may not have disclosed (or identified) that they have experienced sexual abuse or exploitation.

c) Advocacy campaigns need to be planned and implemented using trauma-informed approaches where it is accepted that different forms of trauma exist for lived experience young people as well as for campaign staff and campaign audiences. Making use of trauma-informed approaches enables organisations to mitigate and respond to trauma when it arises. This is achieved by focusing on wellbeing and connecting those involved in campaigning activities with appropriate support services.

Considerations for planning and design of advocacy campaigns with young people:

» Address social norms around sexuality and childhood. Run activities with young people to understand and think critically about the different forms of sexual violence that exist in their contexts; the meaning of consent to sexual activity and how a person's ability to give consent may be restricted or constrained.

» It is particularly important to explore misconceptions, harmful attitudes and behaviours related to sexual violence in your context that might be held by both adult facilitators and young people designing advocacy campaigns.

  • The social and gender norms that exist in young people's social spheres and cultures will influence their opinion on what constitutes sexual violence. Social norms may normalise some sexual acts that are actually criminal offences in many countries, for example, social norms on masculinity and a 'machismo' culture that serve to deny the existence of the sexual abuse of boys and young men.

Be vigilant for 'victim blaming' during discussions on social norms. Young people (and adults) will often blame the victim for an experience of sexual violence - perhaps based on what they were wearing; the 'type' of person they are; that they appeared to want it (or were wanting to be paid for sex). It is important that these opinions are challenged but this should be done sensitively and diplomatically, and in no way should young people feel condemned for holding these opinions. They are simply reflecting common views, myths and misconceptions in general society and media. BUT, if these views are not challenged, we are sending a message to others (who may have had some of these experiences of sexual violence) that the myths are acceptable. We should be stating our position very clearly and explicitly: that sexual violence is the fault and responsibility of the perpetrator and not the person who has experienced it.

Useful tools to address gender and stereotypes

Collage Activity - focussing on gender: This activity provides an avenue into discussing how boys and girls and men and women are represented in society and the potential impact of this on how gender impacts behaviours and responses in the context of CSEA (see **Activity 15** Having our Say Too Resource Set https://photovoice.org/having-our-say-too/#resources)

True or False - myths and legend: This activity is a team based activity and is intended to explore stereotypes around child sexual exploitation. It explores myths around who is impacted and has a specific focus on the sexual violence of boys and young men. (see **Activity** 19 Having our Say Too Resource Set https://photovoice.org/having-our-say-too/#resources)

» Facilitating organisations should be open to the possibility that the advocacy campaign developed by young people may challenge current social norms on childhood, on children's sexuality or on sexual abuse - i.e. the campaign challenges the existing 'status quo' and could be in opposition to the facilitating organisations' approaches to tackling CSEA. Consequently, once the campaign aim has been identified (see advocacy toolkits), young people planning advocacy activities and adult facilitators may need to understand and discuss the social norms around the specific issue of child sexual abuse the campaign is focusing on.

» Consider how to involve lived experience young people in the planning & design stage of advocacy. This could be by engaging with them throughout the whole design and implementation process (see example: Our Voices Too below) or by involving them in aspects of the planning process. Here are some options:

• Hold consultations, workshops or focus group discussions with lived experience young people to gain their recommendations for policy change.

- Set up an advisory group of lived experience young people who can be consulted and give advice throughout the planning and implementation of advocacy activities. For example, they could advise on appropriate (non-triggering) language to be used in awareness raising/mobilising with young people or they could 'test' campaign materials/messaging to ensure no inappropriate or triggering language is used.

EXAMPLE involving children and young people in the design of advocacy

In the Our Voices Too advocacy project, youth advocates were selected in Albania, Serbia and Moldova who had lived experience of sexual violence and took part in regular workshops to design an advocacy campaign on CSEC in their respective countries over a period of 2-4 months. Adults (from facilitating NGOs) ran the workshops and stepped in to undertake certain aspects of the design (such as a policy review or power mapping). Youth Advocates all chose to target 'professionals' i.e. police officers, social workers, lawyers, teachers who they felt needed to have a more positive attitude towards 'victims' of CSEC. Campaign activities were designed by youth advocates and ranged from face-to-face workshops between youth advocates and professionals to youth advocates commissioning a short film for use with professionals.

» The language used in advocacy actions and campaigns is important as it can lead to stigma for those involved. Children and young people should be involved in framing and labelling the work so that they feel comfortable being connected to actions or advocacy undertaken as part of the project/ initiative.

» Although children and young people are often framed as experts in the use of digital and online communication, if online actions are being developed, supporting children and young people to think about how to keep safe online while campaigning is a critical element in supporting their participation. See Core Component on Creating a Safe Environment and **Safeguarding for Online Actions** in section 4. 5 Advocacy Action of this document

Tips on challenging social patterns that justify and minimise CSAE

Those working in the field of sexual violence as practitioners, counsellors and researchers have recognised the importance of, where possible, finding ways to counter and challenge harmful norms and patterns that exist in societies that perpetuate CSEA and other forms of abuse. If through discussions you find that myths and beliefs about sex, gender and violence are being shared, you may find opportunities to unpick and explore that in the moment. There are a number of ways to do this:

1. Ensure you clearly name forms of sexual abuse as abuse: "this newspaper talks about 'child prostitution', but this is child sexual exploitation a form of child sexual abuse'

2. Provide opportunities to critically explore stereotypes, myths and language that fuels victim-blaming myths: "why do you think that messaging often tells girls and women they need to protect themselves rather than messaging to perpetrators that they shouldn't harm girls and women, or messages for boys and young men to 'protect themselves' and not walk home by themselves?'

3. If young people use self-blaming language about themselves, pause to challenge that: "you said the boy in the story was stupid to go with the older man, but he was not, it wasn't his fault, he did nothing to cause this."

4. Identify victim-blaming myths and language in ourselves as facilitators and discuss this as a team. We are all impacted by social norms and may harbour beliefs that we need to explore in ourselves.

Source: Pietsch, 2014

4.4 AWARENESS RAISING AND MOBILISATION

Why should we do this? Because the issue of child sexual abuse is a sensitive or taboo subject in almost all societies, an initial stage of awareness raising (on children's rights and on CSEA) with children and young people, allies and even with advocacy targets may be required before it is possible to start mobilising. In the review we found that once children and young people became aware of their rights (in particular, rights violations perpetrated against themselves and/or their peers) they wanted to engage in advocacy and campaigning activities. Mobilisation is about engaging or organising others (such as other children and young people or supportive adults) to build support for a campaign issue.

Considerations for awareness raising and mobilising on rights violations for children

»   From previous assessment of advocacy (point 2.3) facilitating organisations will have identified if awareness raising activities on children's rights are required with a) children and young people, b) adult allies and/or c) advocacy targets.

»   If awareness raising on CSEA is required, this activity may require longer timeframes (and resources) to introduce the topic sensitively.

Evidence from an evaluation of the CLARISSA project, which involved action research with children working in the adult entertainment sector in Nepal, illustrates that at the outset children experienced multiple barriers to undertaking advocacy actions. Children reported feeling fear of stigma, discrimination and judgement because of their work in the sector and this therefore was a key barrier for them in speaking publicly about their lives:

'So that others won't know what is happening with us. We can't share it with others because others will judge us. We fear what they will think of us.'

(17 year old male member of an action research group).

Additionally, the evaluation found a tendency for children to want to share any learning (about their rights etc.) with other children first, and then to share with duty bearers or other groups of key stakeholders.

Source: Section 4: Veitch, H. Findings from an Evaluation of Child-Led Advocacy in CLARISSA. In Apgar et. al. 2024

» Although there is evidence about the benefits of peer-to-peer awareness raising and mobilising, young people may not always feel comfortable discussing issues related to sex with adults. Consequently, awareness raising and mobilising on CSEA with adult allies may need to be undertaken by adults (other allies) on behalf of young people.

» Awareness raising through dialogue and discussion can build 'critical consciousness' and enable individuals and groups to recognize and connect personal experiences with the political, which can act as a catalyst, igniting mobilisation.

» Before expecting children and young people to engage in actions addressing CSEA, with other children and young people, it is important to create spaces for dialogue on sex and relationships in general – this needs to come first and can take time and lead to tensions in families and communities.

See example activities in Tools for Participatory Advocacy that have been used with youth advocates campaigning on sexual violence against boys and young men in Latin America[7]:

Group Discussion: What is sexual violence? aims to prompt young people to start thinking critically about sexual violence and for facilitators to gauge their initial understanding of the topic.

Scenario Cards on Sexual Violence aims to increase young people's understanding of the different kinds of sexual violence that are relevant to boys, including some that may seem less obvious and to help young people reflect on key components of sexual violence against boys.

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7   Source Family for Every Child

4.5 ADVOCACY ACTION

Why should we do this? This is the phase of the advocacy cycle that most commonly involves young people in actions aiming to influence advocacy targets (decision-makers), such as lobbying, protests or media work. In most cases, young people's role in advocacy actions is restricted to 'telling their story of victimhood' rather than promoting recommendations for change. This can be avoided, however, by involving young people in the planning and mobilising phases of the advocacy cycle (see sections 4.3 and 4.4) where they can decide how young people could be involved in action. In the action phase of the advocacy cycle, this guidance focuses on the engagement of young people in activities to influence advocacy targets[8], particularly those with lived experience of CSEA.

Reminder: in this document we define **advocacy targets** as those who can bring about the change being called for, these people are usually **decision-makers** in positions of power, such as policymakers, government personnel or community leaders.

Reminder of areas for key considerations

a) The sensitive nature of the advocacy topic (CSEA) and the fact that it is a gendered and 'taboo' subject (i.e. not talked about) in most societies. This means advocacy campaigns need to be sensitive to social norms on sexual abuse and, for example, use appropriate terminology in campaign messaging.

b) The high likelihood that all those (young people and adults) engaged in advocacy planning, mobilising and action will be directly or indirectly affected by sexual abuse. Some may identify as 'survivors' or 'experts by experience' of sexual abuse, others may have lived experience of childhood sexual abuse but may not want to publicly 'identify' as a survivor. And other people may not have disclosed (or identified) that they have experienced sexual abuse.

c) Advocacy campaigns need to be planned and implemented using trauma-informed approaches where it is accepted that different forms of trauma exist for lived experience young people as well as for campaign staff and campaign audiences. Making use of trauma-informed approaches enables organisations to mitigate and respond to trauma when it arises. This is achieved by focusing on wellbeing, and connecting those involved in campaigning activities with appropriate support services.

Considerations for campaign actions:

As most of the considerations concern 'safeguarding' of young people who are advocating for an issue that is highly stigmatised please refer to the section 3 of this document which outlines a Framework for Creating a Safe Environment, also the Core Component on Creating a Safe Environment (for more detailed tools and exercises).

» Campaign messages may need to use different terminology for different advocacy target groups.

» Campaign titles, slogans or branding may need to focus on the general welfare or rights of children rather than specifically mention CSEA.

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8   Although, it should be noted, in the planning phase, young people may decide that specific groups of adults are better placed to influence key targets than young people are.

» **Campaign imagery:** due to the high stigma around CSEA in all societies, facilitating organisations should **not identify children in campaign materials.** This means not showing children's faces in photographs (including stock or library photographs), even when they have given consent. Creative ways can be found to represent children, such as the use of illustrations or photographic filters. (This strategy also aligns with ECPAT's safeguarding policy). For example, in Family for Every Child's Blue Umbrella Day Campaign (on sexual violence against boys) blue umbrellas and balloons were used in photographs to obscure children's identities. (see example photo)

» Check-out the Overexposed campaign developed by Chance for Childhood which aims to reframe thinking and create better practices and policies around child-centred imagery and storytelling. Chance for Childhood has taken the decision to remove identifiable features of children from imagery and video footage, this will include removing children's faces from all fundraising campaigns.

» When young people with lived experience of CSEA are speaking at public events that bring groups of people together (professionals or community members etc.) facilitating organisations can prepare audiences by explaining in advance any codes of conduct or rules that have been developed to protect young people from harassment or backlash by audience members.

» For advocacy with local and national level government stakeholders it is useful for youth advocates to develop recommendations (see example below) that are based on participatory research or consultations with children and young people who have lived experiences of the campaign issue.

EXAMPLE: The Impact of Children's Recommendations

In 2023, youth advocates in Nepal, who had lived experiences of working in the adult entertainment sector, developed 14 recommendations for local level advocacy targets (metropolitan mayors) that were based on their lived experience and participatory action research. In an advocacy event where the recommendations were presented by youth advocates to the Deputy Mayor of Kathmandu, she highlighted that many of the recommendations were very detailed and critically analysed, that they were valid and should not be compromised. She promised to include the recommendations in upcoming plans and priorities for the municipality.

In February 2024, an opportunity to speak to members of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child about child labour presented itself and youth advocates prioritised five key recommendations from the 14. Four of the five recommendations challenged a dominant narrative/social norm on child labour (i.e. children should be in education rather than in labour)

The discussion between working children and UN Committee Members was a follow-up to previous roundtable discussion on child labour where one Committee Member defended the dominant narrative on child labour – refusing to accept that working children should combine working with studying:

> 'He (a working child) shared that children are responsible to meet their economic needs. This I cannot accept. The responsibilities of the governments are very clear under the Convention. I don't think 14, 13, 12, 11 year old children should have to provide for themselves without being able to study.'

The same Committee Member participated in the 2024 discussion where this issue was raised again as a key recommendation from working children. After an in-depth discussion Committee Members conceded:

> 'In an ideal world, we do not want any child working. We want children to be focusing on their education, leisure and the like, but this is not the reality we are in. The Committee understands that these children need to work to survive.'

In addition, Committee Members agreed to send letters to the government of Nepal confirming their support of the children's recommendations on child labour.

Source: Section 4: Veitch,H. Findings from an Evaluation of Child-Led Advocacy in CLARISSA. In Apgar et. al. 2024

The problem with the 'exceptional girl'

Those supporting and studying youth advocacy and activism have drawn attention to the problems of focussing on one individual as the 'poster child' for a particular issue or cause. The 'Malala Effect' refers to the myriad problems of focussing on one individual 'empowered girl' and how this can lead to pressure from the media and others to profile individuals publicly, This can be demotivating to other young people who are not in the spotlight but who are doing great work to inform change It can also undervalue the critical role that others, including young people, adults and communities play 'behind the scenes' in creating change.

When considering this in the context of working with young survivors, thought needs to be given to the potential for backlash and harm both online and offline. This comic strip 'public identity disclosure' explores some of the considerations it may be helpful to discuss with young people. Source: Locke, J. (2023) Beyond Heroes and Hostility: Greta Thunberg, Vanessa Nakate, and The Transnational Politics of Girl Power. Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, VOL. 31, NO. 2, 117–127 https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2023.2206673S

EXAMPLE: Youth Advocates can develop messages but don't always have to be the ones delivering the messages

The 'Our Voices Too' Youth Advocacy project ran from 2018-2020 and was coordinated by the Safer Young Lives Research Centre at the University of Bedfordshire in the UK.

As part of the 'Our Voices Too' project, the centre worked in partnership with three national NGOs in Europe: Different & Equal in Albania; the National Center for Child Abuse Prevention (NCCAP) in Moldova and ATINA in Serbia. Facilitators from each organisation worked together with Youth Advocates, young women who had lived experience of sexual violence, who designed, organised and facilitated a number of advocacy activities addressing the sexual violence of children and young people in their countries.

The group of Youth Advocates in Moldova worked together to write a script for a short film entitled 'Letter to the Judge' (see **https://www. youtube.com/watch?v=Dw-BhWfkeDo**). The young women drew on their combined experiences of how their experiences of sexual abuse were ignored and disbelieved by the police, judiciary, teachers, doctors and others in their community The script is written from the perspective of a young woman who is writing a letter to the judge that was involved in her legal case as a 12 year old girl. She explains the impact of not being heard or believed and the longer term impact. She explains how she finally found someone who took notice of her, listened to her and believed her and how she hopes now, as a mother, things have changed for other children and young people.

In addition to writing the script, the young women were involved in selecting the film company that produced the film and hired actors to perform in the short video. The film was launched at a high-level event to 40 professionals in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection in Moldova and his since been used in training by the facilitating organisation.

Managing Campaign Content

The content of campaign materials or external communications needs to take account of those who might experience trauma which can include those who have never had an experience of sexual violence or those who have experienced sexual abuse as well as those who have sexually abused others.

Triggering is when people read, see or hear something that causes them emotional distress, typically as a result of arousing feelings or memories associated with a particular traumatic experience.

Tips for content design

» Clearly identify key audiences for all materials or communications so that language, voice and tone of the content created can be adapted to the audience. For example, produce 'survivor' versions of some materials or communications that have been co-created or reviewed by those with lived experience of the issue being highlighted.

» Ensure there are trigger warnings on campaign materials and that relevant services are signposted where people can access legal, medical or therapeutic services should they need them.

» Involve lived experience young people in co-creating campaign materials, communications and messages, and test campaign messages with key audiences to discover if they are triggering. It is important that young people involved are compensated appropriately for their expertise and treated as equal partners with staff in the co-creation process.

Ethical Storytelling

Ethical story producer and advocate, Brigitte Perenyi, was seven years old when she had her own story told by a nonprofit. She recognises that in some ways it helped her but in others, it did her harm. Now she advocates for the safety of others like herself and in 2017 she re-told her childhood story, using an ethical storytelling approach she now promotes to others:

"The producers and editors of the film were able to help me develop a clear vision of what was possible, they patiently listened to my ideas and taught me what parts might work and why others just didn't. I needed to learn from their experience so the film could have an impact and they needed to respect my boundaries of what I was willing to share publicly with the world. I learned that you need both of those things to tell a story that gives dignity, power and safety to the person telling it."

Check-out Brigitte's website here for more information.

Online campaigns and events

Social media and online activism have enabled grassroots actions to be amplified and to gain significant traction. Well known examples, such as 'Fridays for Future strikes' are just one of many that demonstrate how small, local actions can spark global movements, captivating millions of children and young people all over the world to take actions such as strikes or protests. Hashtag movements or 'hactivism', such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter use the online space to organise and mobilise at a much faster pace than can be achieved offline. Online activism is seen as a more inclusive space in comparison to traditional activism as this space can provide authentic accounts and narratives that may otherwise never make it into mainstream media.

While social media has many benefits, digital activism and advocacy should complement, not replace, real world activism. For example, 'hashtag activism' should not remain in one sphere but translate into protests and demonstrations on the street and in other spaces.

See Tools for Participatory Advocacy for some Do's and Don'ts of Using Social Media for Campaigning

> **The country context for advocacy matters**
>
> **The activities and levels of engagement that children and young people can engage in will be dependent on a range of factors. For example, in thinking about climate advocacy and action, Vanessa Nakate, the Ugandan activist notes how she was unable to engage in 'Thunberg style' protests and the first 'strike' in Uganda was in fact framed as an event to 'raise awareness' and lasted for only one day - gender norms and expectations and restrictions in Uganda as opposed to Sweden tempered what was achievable and safe for young activists in this context.**
>
> *Source: Locke, 2023*

Safeguarding Considerations for Online Actions

Many facilitating organisations may have a strong social media presence that use this medium to support their work on promoting children's rights. In addition, some facilitating organisations may operate as virtual workplaces, carrying out various online processes such as completing forms or holding management meetings.

» For online actions, such as social media campaigns, in risk assessments explore how to prevent the potential for harassment, bullying and surveillance of youth advocates when they are online.

» Facilitating organisations will need to have digital security policies and/or social media policies that enable the safeguarding of youth advocates while also amplifying the voices and perspectives of youth advocates. This may involve, for example, facilitating organisations posting about collective actions led by youth advocates, rather than the personal actions of individual advocates.

» As it is accepted that many staff from facilitating organisations may have personal social media accounts as well as 'organisational' social media accounts, the following tips from a Feminist Safeguarding Policy developed by FRIDA Young Feminist Fund (a virtual organisation) may be useful:

- Never directly post images or stories about children who are engaged with [facilitating organisation] on your personal social media accounts. Consent is given to [facilitating organisation] as an organisation and not to the individual for personal use.

- Never accept contact requests or engage with children you have met through [facilitating organisation] via personal social media.

- Always think twice about what you post/share on your personal social media accounts and what implications this may have for [facilitating organisation].

- Never upload or post any racist, defamatory, obscene, or abusive content.

- If posting about any group or partner's work on personal social media, due diligence should be done regarding political environments and volatile contexts. Staff should bear full responsibility for not 'outing' any group working underground or pushed to go underground after an event.

» Canned messages can be created to respond to negative comments or to those disclosing abuse at online events:

- For example, in response to negative comments: ***"Thank you for sharing your opinion however we stand with survivors", "There are no excuses for sexual abuse, we stand with survivors"***

- For example, for those disclosing abuse: ***"Thank you for your courage and for sharing your experience for more information please DM (direct message) us or contact (add signposting service details)"***

» **Data security:** facilitating organisations should securely collect, use, transmit, manage and store data - this may involve:[9]

- Digital/electronic information is password protected and has two factor authentication enabled.

- Data is stored and hosted on clouds and external hard drives using the highest security standards, including password protected access and encryption.

- Privacy policies are in compliance with data protection regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). And covers data retention, website privacy and security, See https://gdpr-info.eu/art-8-gdpr/

- Authorised access is only given to staff that require the data in order to perform their duties. Unauthorised access is investigated immediately, and appropriate action taken

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9. Adapted from Frida Young Feminist Funds' Feminist Safeguarding Policy

- A written agreement is in place to control and authorise the release of information on children (data, images) to partner organisations, the Internet, the public domain or any third party. The sign-off includes a written assessment of the need/benefit of sharing information and is balanced against potential risks.

- Copyright and ownership issues for digital data, photos, stories and other digital assets are clearly defined and explained both to those collecting data and those providing it during contracting and/or at the point of requesting informed consent

- Loss of data on children (e.g. lost laptops, pen drives, etc.) is immediately reported to the appropriate personnel within facilitating organisations – such as the safeguarding lead.

- Staff at facilitating organisations are committed to use safe digital platforms and messaging apps that have end-to-end encryption.

- Spaces are created for youth advocates and staff to learn about data management and digital security.

4.6 LEARNING AND REVIEW

Why should we do this? As advocacy is a dynamic process it is important to embed learning into the advocacy cycle - particularly during awareness raising and mobilisation activities, and while implementing advocacy actions. This learning will be used to revise elements of the planning stage, advocacy strategies with specific target groups, messaging etc. Data from learning and review can also be used to help build the evidence base on participatory advocacy, for example to show the 'added value' of engaging children and young people in advocacy planning, mobilisation or action in funding proposals to potential donors of participatory advocacy.

Monitoring

Monitoring advocacy action is essential to respond to unpredictable changes and take advantage of opportunities. Monitoring tools should be simple, timely, accessible, and based on a simple monitoring framework. Monitoring allows campaigns to respond to what they learn. Facilitating organisations need to monitor both the advocacy PROCESS and its RESULTS – progress towards achieving longer term change.

Why monitor advocacy?

» To track progress of advocacy actions and determine if your strategy is successful

» To document the process so you can learn from experience to improve the impact of your future advocacy work

» To demonstrate the results to donors, supporters, policymakers and other stakeholders.

» To identify and deal with problems as they arise

» To respond quickly to changes in the advocacy environment or unpredicted events

Keep monitoring or learning tools simple, for example, maintain an attendance log of events and give regular updates for all concerned (particularly if you are working collaboratively with others).

Options for monitoring and learning tools:

» Develop a simple framework showing your expected short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes.

» Develop 'advocacy milestones' - markers on the way to achieving your objective, for example, introducing an agenda item on your advocacy issue in a meeting of advocacy targets or influentials. Outcomes from specific events can often be milestones. Use milestones and indicators to show progress on the way.

» Regularly review progress – find evidence to suggest that you are (or are not) making progress and record expected and unexpected outcomes.

» Develop reflexive spaces to facilitate knowledge or practice exchange and documentation of the 'process' not just the outcome. This can be achieved through dialogue and discussion to capture the 'learning' from children and young people involved in participatory processes, their parents and carers and wider communities, and from frontline practitioners supporting these processes about the tensions, complexities and discussing their recommendations.

» Hold 'after action reviews' once a key advocacy event or activity has taken place bring all those involved in the activity together to discuss the challenges and how they were overcome, and whether advocacy plans or messaging need to be changed.

Document all discussions!

Allocate someone as a note-taker (or record discussions, with permission from everyone present) for all key discussions (with youth advocates, allies and particularly with advocacy targets). Documenting the advocacy process enables you to keep track of what happens, to communicate with other stakeholders and to use for evaluation later.

» Hold short debrief meetings with youth advocates immediately after all advocacy events. Ensure debriefs are well documented (either record them or identify a note-taker) and discuss what went well, what didn't go well and what needs to change for next time, regarding:

- how advocacy targets/influentials/allies appeared to respond to the 'advocacy ask' (the change advocates were asking for) and;
- youth advocates wellbeing or concerns during the event.

In the accompanying document Tools for Participatory Advocacy, see an example of a **Participatory Mini-MEL Workshop** that was used for a participatory advocacy project.

The participatory mini-MEL workshop aims to:

» assess the scope and quality of the children's participation from their perspective on (1) themselves and (2) on the advocacy activities/programme

» explore the pathways of their engagement in advocacy

» understand the outcomes of children's participation

The workshop uses four activities **1) a Timeline 2) Feeling Dice, 3) Circles of Influence** and **4)** an **H Assessment**

Feedback from Youth Advocates

Getting youth advocates' views on the activities they have taken part in provides facilitators with feedback on what is working and what isn't working and gives you the opportunity to address any issues that arise. It also sends a message that their input and views are valued and acted upon.

» Feedback should be addressed as soon as possible. It can be done individually or as a group at the next meeting of youth advocates. Facilitators should explain how comments have been addressed – or why they have not been addressed.

Acknowledging youth advocates: For many lived experience young people, education or training experiences have been disrupted. As a result, they may have few qualifications or evidence of their skills and knowledge. Opportunities to record, acknowledge (and where possible accredit) youth advocate's contributions to a project like this are valuable. There are lots of ways of doing this: certificates; written references; list of skills and knowledge acquired. This is equally important for those who leave a project suddenly or early.

See the section on **Feedback Tools** in Tools for Participatory Advocacy for some ideas on how to gain feedback from youth advocates. Exercises include the **Mood Meter** the **Evaluation Person**, the **Graffiti Wall** and **Suggestion Box.**

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