

# CHILDREN KNOW BETTER

NEPAL CHILD FRIENDLY REPORT

OUR VOICES  
OUR STORIES  
OUR DREAMS  
FOR A SAFER NEPAL



(A child-led research project by ECPAT International and CWIN Nepal)



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**TAKING STOCK:**  
THE EVOLVING CRIME OF  
CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION 





# CONTENTS



<b>Our journey</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Why we did this project</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>How we worked as child researchers</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>What we found out</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>What we know about safety and exploitation</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Staying safe online</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Feeling safe at school</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>How abuse affects us</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Our families and communities</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Breaking the silence</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>What it means to be a boy</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>When we talk to the police</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Our recommendations: What we want adults to do</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Listen to children and let us take part</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Families and communities must care and support</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Safer and happier schools</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>What organisations can do</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Safer internet and online games</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Making justice child-friendly</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>What the government should do</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>In the end...</b>	<b>14</b>

# OUR JOURNEY

The *Children Know Better* project was created so that we could speak for ourselves about our lives, our challenges related to sexual exploitation, and our hopes for change. It gave us the chance to become researchers, to ask questions to our peers and to responsible adults, and to find answers about what really makes us feel safe or unsafe.

In Nepal, the project was led by children from Lalitpur Metropolitan City, working together with CWIN Nepal and ECPAT International. We learned, explored, and shared our voices to help adults understand what children truly go through every day. As child researchers, we wanted to show that our opinions matter. We didn't want others to always speak on our behalf, we wanted to tell our own stories, in our own words.

Through our work, we discovered not just the problems children face, but also the power we have to create solutions when adults listen and work with us. 25 child researchers talked to 169 children and 25 adults, including teachers, parents, police, and community leaders. We learned about children's experiences, their worries, and their dreams for a safer world.



# WHY WE DID THIS PROJECT

In many places, adults make decisions about children's lives without ever asking us what we think. Some children's voices are never heard. Others are silenced when they try to speak up. We wanted to change that. Through the *Children Know Better* project, we became researchers and advocates. We believe children understand their lives better than anyone else. That's why this project is called *Children Know Better*.



# HOW WE WORKED AS CHILD RESEARCHERS

Before starting, we took part in several trainings led by CWIN Nepal. We learned:

- ★ What child rights mean.
- ★ How to stay safe when talking about difficult topics like sexuality.
- ★ How to ask questions and listen with kindness.
- ★ How to respect others' privacy and feelings.

We practiced using tools like drawing, storytelling, and group discussions. These made everyone comfortable and encouraged children (or the ones amongst us - depend how you're planning to talk about children in the report) who felt more shy children to speak freely. We made sure every child participated voluntarily and that they knew they could stop anytime.

We then visited schools and communities in Lalitpur Wards 11, 21, and 22, where we talked to other children about their experiences. We also talked to adults like parents, teachers, police, and leaders, to understand how they see children's safety.

## WHAT WE FOUND OUT

After many interviews, stories, and discussions, we started to see patterns. We realised that children's safety is about more than avoiding harm, it's also about being respected, trusted, and treated equally. Children shared their thoughts about safety at home, school, and in the community. They also talked about online dangers, unfair rules, and fear of speaking out.

We learned that both boys and girls face risks, but in different ways, and that silence and shame often stop children from seeking help.

# WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT SAFETY AND EXPLOITATION

We found that many children don't fully understand what exploitation or abuse means until someone explains it. Some thought only girls could be victims. Others believed that if someone is hurt by a family member, they shouldn't talk about it.

Children said:

- ★ They don't know where to report abuse.
- ★ Many adults ignore or hide such cases.
- ★ They fear punishment or gossip if they speak up.

We realised that children need safe spaces to learn about their rights and talk openly about what hurts them.



# STAYING SAFE ONLINE

Many children in our communities use phones and the internet. We watch videos, play games, and chat with friends. But not everyone knows how to stay safe online. Some children said they got *bad messages* or pictures from strangers. Others were tricked into sharing private photos or information. Children frequently described the digital world as unsafe, sharing experiences and stories related to cybercrime, abuse, and exploitation. One participant shared that *"a girl was raped by her peers after she indicated through social media that she was at home alone"*

Parents often don't know what their children do online or how to protect them.

We want adults to understand that online safety is just as important as safety in real life. Children need guidance, not blame when they report.



# FEELING SAFE AT SCHOOL

Schools should be safe places for children, but not everyone feels that way. Some children said they are teased or bullied by classmates and sexually exploited by teachers. *“there was this one teacher in our school... he used to be touchy with female students and sometimes even with male students [...]”*

*“the principal was reported to have touched female students inappropriately – including pulling bra straps and pinching them”*

Children also said teachers skip topics related to sexuality and reproductive health, leaving them exposed as they do not get the necessary information on the issues related to the topic.

Others said they face harsh punishment or humiliation from teachers. Girls shared that they are sometimes followed or teased on their way to school. We also found that topics about sexuality are often skipped in lessons.

Children want schools where teachers listen, not punish, and where everyone feels safe to speak and learn.



# HOW ABUSE AFFECTS US

Being hurt or mistreated affects how children feel, think, and behave. Some children said they feel scared to go out or trust others. Others said they feel angry or sad all the time. There were also feelings of shame and fear of how others might react.

As one explained, *“children may not speak up due to fear that their family and they themselves might get harmed, especially if the abuser threatens them. After facing something bad once, they may shut down emotionally due to trauma and stress. If they confide in someone and that person dismisses them or shares it with others, trust breaks further. Not all friends are trustworthy”*.

We learned that abuse doesn't just cause physical pain, it affects our confidence, happiness, and dreams. We want more counsellors and safe adults in schools and communities to support children who are going through pain.



# OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Families are supposed to protect children, but not all homes are safe. They shared how children have been sexually abused by relatives where *“a friend from a rural area was almost raped by her own father”* and in some cases parents silence them instead of supporting them to get justice. Others said neighbours sometimes behave in ways that make them uncomfortable.

Children said it’s hard to speak up because of fear, shame, or lack of trust.

We want parents and community leaders to listen, support, and believe children, not blame or silence them.



# BREAKING THE SILENCE

In many places, people don't talk about abuse. Some think it's shameful or a "private" matter. Because of this, children keep quiet even when they are hurt. We learned that silence helps abusers, not children. It's time to break the silence and make it okay for children to ask for help.

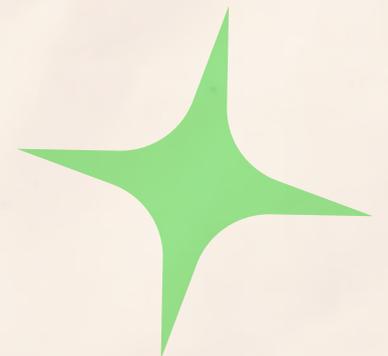
We believe that when adults start listening children will start healing.

## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A BOY

Boys also face pressures that affect their wellbeing. Many are told not to cry or talk about their feelings. Some said they are punished more harshly than girls.

*"If a boy goes through sexual abuse and tries to speak up, people might make fun of him or say he wasn't strong enough to protect himself"*

We want people to understand that boys and girls both need care, kindness, and protection, without judgment or stereotypes.



# WHEN WE TALK TO THE POLICE

Some children said they are scared of the police. Others said officers don't believe them or ask confusing questions. We learned that many police officers don't know how to talk to children or handle child abuse cases properly.

We want the police to be trained to listen and protect children, not to scare them. Every child should feel safe walking into a police station.



# OUR RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT WE WANT ADULTS TO DO

After talking to many children and adults, we found out what needs to change to make every child feel safe, respected, and happy. Here's what we, the child researchers, want families, teachers, leaders, and organisations to do better.

## LISTEN TO CHILDREN AND LET US TAKE PART

- ★ Make child clubs and child rights committees stronger. These spaces help us learn and support each other, but we need more support, funding, and adults who take our ideas seriously.
- ★ Let children help make decisions in schools and communities. We can share great ideas if you include us in planning meetings and projects.
- ★ Train teachers and adults to really listen. When we speak, we want to be heard and respected.

## FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES MUST CARE AND SUPPORT

- ★ Parents should believe us when we share something serious. Please don't call it "nonsense" or "attention-seeking." We need kindness and trust.
- ★ Communities should stop blaming children when bad things happen. No child should be blamed or shamed for being hurt.
- ★ Both girls and boys can face abuse. Boys should not be told to "be strong and quiet." We all need to be able to speak and feel safe.
- ★ Talk about safety and respect openly. Let's talk about growing up, relationships, and our bodies, not in fear or secret.
- ★ Parents should encourage children in reporting the cases.

## SAFER AND HAPPIER SCHOOLS

- ★ Every school should have a safe way for children to report problems, like a complain box or a trusted teacher.
- ★ Schools should check who works with children and make sure all staff respect us.
- ★ Teachers need training on how to talk kindly, keep secrets safe, and help when a child reports abuse.
- ★ We want fun lessons about growing up, friendships, and how to stay safe.

## WHAT ORGANISATIONS CAN DO

- ★ Keep working with us to stop child abuse and make communities safer. We see that your programmes help, but please reach more children.
- ★ Work together; NGOs, schools, and parents should team up instead of doing the same thing separately.
- ★ Help children and parents learn about online safety, like how to avoid scams, and stay safe on social media.

## SAFER INTERNET AND ONLINE GAMES

- ★ Please remove bad ads and “clickbait” videos. Sometimes we see inappropriate things when we’re just trying to play or watch cartoons.
- ★ Games should teach positive messages too. What if games could teach about friendship, emotions, and safety?
- ★ Add easy “report” buttons online. When something bad happens, we should know how to tell someone safely.

## MAKING JUSTICE CHILD-FRIENDLY

- ★ When children report a problem, make it private and safe. We don’t want to feel scared or judged when telling our stories.
- ★ Police and courts should handle child cases quickly and fairly, without waiting for years!
- ★ Treat every child the same. Whether rich or poor, every child deserves justice.
- ★ Train police, judges, and officers on child rights and trauma, so they know how to talk to us kindly.

## WHAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO

- ★ The mayor and local leaders should make child safety a big priority.
- ★ Plan cities with children in mind. Build safe parks, bright streets, install CCTV cameras and help centers for families.
- ★ Make police stations friendly for children, with rooms where we can feel safe.
- ★ Organise fun community trainings using games and activities, not long lectures.

## IN THE END...

**We have ideas. We have solutions. What we need are adults who listen and act.**

**If everyone – families, schools, communities, leaders, and organisations – work together, we can make Nepal a place where every child feels safe, loved, and heard.**





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