

**Innocenti Working Paper**

**CHILDREN'S AND ADOLESCENTS'  
PARTICIPATION AND PROTECTION  
FROM SEXUAL ABUSE AND  
EXPLOITATION**

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This paper presents an overview of government commitments concerning children's and adolescents' participation in the fight against sexual abuse and exploitation; children's and adolescents' own recommendations to end sexual abuse and exploitation of children; and inspiring case studies that provide concrete recommendations for strengthening children's and adolescents' involvement in child protection. An earlier version of this paper was presented as a contribution to deliberations at the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. This study has been undertaken with guidance and contributions from the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, UNICEF Adolescent Development and Participation Unit and child participation and protection practitioners from a range of organizations in different parts of the world.

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## **.Children’s and Adolescents’ Participation and Protection from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation**

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**Summary:** At the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Stockholm, 1996), governments of 119 countries, together with UN agencies, NGOs and other organizations and individuals, adopted a Declaration and Agenda for Action that committed them to:

- a) Promote the participation of children, including child victims, young people, their families, peers and others who are potential helpers of children so that they are able to express their views and to take action to prevent and protect children from commercial sexual exploitation and to assist child victims to be reintegrated into society; and
- b) Identify or establish and support networks of children and young people as advocates of child rights, and include children, according to their evolving capacity, in developing and implementing government and other programmes concerning them.

The 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Yokohama, 2001) followed up on efforts to strengthen the commitments made in Stockholm. It also included regional commitments, statements and declarations. World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents takes place in Rio de Janeiro from 25 to 28 November 2008, and it aims to promote a broader agenda on children’s civil rights and children’s active role as citizens.

Child protection is a focus of research, policy and programming in UNICEF as well as other UN agencies, NGOs and governments. Results of this work have helped a range of partners identify and reach the most vulnerable children and protect all children from abuse and exploitation. Together with partners, UNICEF has promoted children’s participation in a number of ways. Examples include the UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children in 2006 and its follow up, as well as UNICEF’s engagement with the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its deliberations over the decision to develop a General Comment on article 12, which will address the right to be heard. A ‘Day of General Discussion on the Rights of the Child to be Heard’ was held by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2006. These efforts support government decisions and actions to be informed by children’s and adolescents’ realities and recommendations.

This paper presents an overview of government commitments to strengthen participation by children and adolescents to protect them from sexual abuse and exploitation. It also considers concrete recommendations for strengthening young people’s involvement in their own protection, based on their recommendations about what is needed to realize the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action. Other useful inputs include case studies that offer new perspectives on children’s and adolescents’ participation to combat sexual exploitation and abuse.

The paper provides recommendations for further research, policy development and programming intended to support advocacy and practice developments with and by children and adolescents. These are aimed at furthering achievement of their protection and participation rights during and after World Congress III. The paper calls for governments, UN agencies and NGOs to promote children’s civil rights and recognize their agency and the diversity of childhood experiences. It highlights the importance of strengthening child protection systems, developing and strengthening child-led groups and networks, and creating processes and mechanisms for children to access information, express their views, participate in practice and policy matters concerning them and gain feedback. It further

highlights the need for better implementation of international standards that recognize and promote children's participation and encourage special efforts to address discrimination and involve the most marginalized girls and boys.

**Keywords:** Child participation, children's agency, child protection, child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children, child rights, children and adolescents involvement in child protection, children's actions, children's and adolescents' recommendations, children's civil rights, implementation of international standards, World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents.

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Lastly but most importantly, we recognize and appreciate the immense contributions made by children and adolescents in different parts of the world. This publication brings together rich experiences, insights and recommendations from girls, boys, young men and young women from diverse backgrounds who are actively engaged in the fight against sexual abuse and exploitation. We hope this publication will help increase the support provided to children and adolescents as active citizens in the fight against sexual abuse and exploitation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“...the whole world still has a gigantic question to answer: When shall we have a world in which life is based on a sense of caring, sharing, true love and the protection of all societies and individuals from all forms of abuse, discrimination and exploitation? A world free from commercial sexual exploitation of children.”*

*– Statement by children and young people at the 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Yokohama, 2001*

Child protection – which aims to protect children and adolescents from violence, abuse and exploitation – is a focus of research, policy and programming in UNICEF as well as other UN agencies, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Together with partners, UNICEF has also promoted child and adolescent agency and participation. These efforts combine to support governmental decisions and actions on child protection that are increasingly informed by children’s and adolescents’ realities and recommendations. The research undertaken for this paper illustrates the difficulty of accessing good examples of government-led initiatives to strengthen children’s participation to protect them from sexual abuse and exploitation. This report therefore highlights the gap in many parts of the world between what is said and what is done with regard to children’s participation and government efforts to act upon children and adolescent’s recommendations paper. There is still a need for support to governments so that they can place children’s and adolescent’s participation more clearly and systematically on their agendas.

### 1.1 The Role of Participation in Protection

Child rights experts have come to recognize that participation by children and adolescents can play an important role in protecting them from abuse, violence and exploitation, including sexual exploitation,<sup>1</sup> and that adults play a key role in helping children protect themselves. Participation builds upon children’s resilience, and it can help survivors recover. Through their participation, girls and boys – survivors of sexual exploitation and those at risk – can highlight the violations they experience and, as agents of change, take action to prevent and address abuse and exploitation. They can therefore be effective advocates for realizing their protection rights.

Participation also offers opportunities to strengthen children’s and adolescents’ capacities to address discrimination and access the means to improve their lives and the lives of those around them. In addition, consulting with children and adolescents and taking their views into account is important to ensure that relevant policies and other measures are child friendly, adequate and appropriate for children and adolescents. Child participation is a right, a general

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<sup>1</sup> ECPAT International. ‘Ensuring Meaningful Child and Youth Participation in the Fight against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: The ECPAT experience’, Bangkok, 2007; International Save the Children Alliance, ‘Act Now! Some highlights from children’s participation in the regional consultations for the UN Secretary-General’s Study on Violence against Children’, 2005; Committee on the Rights of the Child, ‘Day of General Discussion on the Right to Be Heard’, 2006;

principle of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and a part of the general measures of implementation of the CRC (see box 2 in section 1.2).

This working paper brings together and analyses the global and regional commitments made by governments in relation to child and adolescent participation in the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse. It also presents young people's own recommendations and case studies illustrating their participation in policy making and programming initiatives on child protection since the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Stockholm, 1996).

This paper also includes concrete recommendations for strengthening children's and adolescents' involvement in their protection. These recommendations are based on what children and adolescents have said should be done to fulfil the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action from the first Congress and on the case studies. The recommendations, perspectives and analysis brought together in this paper are meant to support advocacy and practice developments with and by children and adolescents to further the realization of their participation and protection rights during and following World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (Rio de Janeiro, 25-28 November 2008).

Agreement is emerging that simply focusing on child participation in consultations, projects or programmes – which tends to involve limited numbers of children – is not enough. Instead an approach is needed that supports broader efforts by state governments, UN agencies, NGOs and others to act upon their responsibilities to fulfil children's civil rights. These include the rights to a name and nationality, identity, information, expression, participation in decision making, association and justice. This shift in focus has been pushed to the fore by recent groundbreaking publications on children's citizenship, programme work supporting children to be active citizens and the recommendations from the Committee on the Rights of the Child's Day of General Discussion on the Right of the Child to Be Heard (2002)<sup>2</sup>. All of these advances are culminating with the Rio de Janeiro meeting, which provides a golden opportunity to promote a broader agenda on children's civil rights and children's role as active citizens. These can significantly enhance their participation and self protection.

The audience for this paper is governments, UN agencies and NGOs concerned with child protection and child and adolescent participation. This includes organizations and initiatives led by children. In particular, the paper targets policy makers, practitioners and activists who are trying to reach and involve the most vulnerable children and adolescents so they can become empowered to better protect themselves from abuse and exploitation. It is also intended for the children and adolescents who are working towards realization of their rights to health, safety, protection and freedom from harm.

The paper is structured as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation, 'Children as Active Citizens: A policy and programme guide. Commitments and obligations for children's civil rights and civic engagement in East Asia and the Pacific', Bangkok, 2008; O'Kane, C., 'Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for social change', Save the Children South and Central Asia, 2003; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Day of General Discussion on the Right to Be Heard', 2006;



- Chapter 1 introduces the concept of children’s participation. It looks at approaches to participation and outlines a rationale for promoting children’s civil rights and children’s active role as citizens in relation to child protection.
- Chapter 2 addresses the global and regional commitments made by governments to systematically promote and report on participation by children and adolescents in the fight against sexual abuse and exploitation. It also reflects on progress made since the 1996 Stockholm Congress.
- Chapter 3 brings together children’s and adolescents’ recommendations from key global and regional processes on sexual abuse and exploitation. They are categorized under the five main headings of the Stockholm Declaration for Action: coordination and cooperation; prevention; protection; and recovery and reintegration and child participation.
- Chapter 4 presents case studies from around the world to showcase the role of children and adolescents in promoting implementation of government commitments as well as broader prevention and action initiatives that aim to protect children and adolescents from sexual abuse and exploitation, including trafficking.
- Chapter 5 presents 10 critical issues and related recommendations that build on the analysis in the first four sections. These are aimed at enhancing children’s and adolescents’ involvement in child protection. These recommendations emphasize the importance of promoting children’s civil rights and recognizing children’s agency and the diversity of childhood experiences. They also highlight the importance of strengthening child protection systems, developing and strengthening child-led groups and networks, and creating continuing processes and mechanisms for young people to access information, express their views, participate in practice and policy matters concerning them, and gain feedback. The issues and recommendations further highlight the need for implementation of international standards in a way that promotes children’s participation as well as special efforts to address discrimination and to involve the most marginalized girls and boys.
- Annexes provide recommendations made by children and adolescents in a number of recent forums and the text of some of their key statements.

***Definition of children and adolescents:*** In accordance with the CRC, ‘children’ refers to everyone under the age of 18 years. However, in this publication the term ‘children and adolescents’ is also explicitly used to explore the participation of younger children (under 12 years) and adolescents (12 to 18 years). The terms ‘young people’ and ‘youth’ are used in line with the context being described. In general, ‘young people’ refers to children under 18 years, while ‘youth’ often encompasses a wider age range that varies according to context.

***Methodology and limitations:*** The research for this working paper was undertaken through desk reviews of materials on participation by children and adolescents in relation to abuse and sexual exploitation and of global and regional government commitments linked to this

participation. Recommendations made by children and adolescents based on their participation in child protection initiatives were also compiled. Reports reviewed included statements and recommendations prepared by young people during, in preparation for, or as a follow-up to each of the three world congresses. Analyses of children's recommendations from other relevant regional and global processes were also integrated. These included children's and adolescents' recommendations on sexual abuse and exploitation from the UN Special Session on Children (2002), United Nations Study on Violence against Children (2006), Junior 8 Summits (2008), the Graca Machel Study and Machel Strategic Review, and Internet forums such as UNICEF's Voices of Youth. Also integrated are key findings from recent focus group discussions with adolescents on commercial sexual exploitation, facilitated by World Vision.

In addition the paper made use of case studies sponsored by organizations including UNICEF, Enda Third World, ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) and Save the Children. They were chosen to illustrate actions taken by children and adolescents to increase government commitments to them, as well as broader partnership initiatives between children and adults to prevent and address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, including trafficking.

A steering group of two child protection/participation advisers, one from the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre and one from the UNICEF Adolescent Development and Participation office, provided guidance to the consultants. They also facilitated communication with UNICEF regional and country offices and with other organizations. In addition the consultants drew upon their own professional networks to identify and follow up on potential case study materials.

A reference group was established to review the initial draft of the working paper. It comprised representatives from the organizations contributing to the case studies and other key children's participation and child protection practitioners.

It proved difficult to acquire comprehensive information from all regions on the scope and impact of government commitments to child and adolescent participation in the fight against sexual abuse and exploitation. In its global monitoring reports, ECPAT has also concluded that such information is not consistently available. This gap may reflect weaknesses in government implementation of commitments concerning children's participation and/or reporting challenges.

It has not been possible to assess any increase in government commitment at country level, given the heavy emphasis on action at global level. However, some governments have adopted laws and policies to institutionalize children's participation as a protection mechanism for preventing and responding to sexual exploitation.

Many of the case studies cover projects implemented primarily by NGOs. The case studies may not be universally representative or replicable, and the findings are based on assessments by those involved in implementation, rather than on evaluations or broader impact assessments. They often are limited to describing processes; they do not always provide information on the impact at a national or community level or on the children and adolescents

involved. It was difficult to access good examples of government-led initiatives on children's participation in combating sexual abuse and exploitation. Such examples are needed to show how governments can support the involvement of children in public decision making and policy making in a more institutionalized way.

Many national and regional consultations involving children and adolescents were taking place during 2008 in preparation for World Congress III, and significant efforts were made to include their outcomes and recommendations in this working paper. A simple reporting format was designed incorporating the five main headings from the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action, with an additional heading relating to monitoring and follow up. It was widely distributed to all partners involved in children's and adolescents' preparations in forums planned for 2008. Recommendations from these forums that were received in time were integrated into the working paper.<sup>3</sup>

The right to be heard in any judicial or administrative proceeding affecting them (article 12.2) is an important aspect of child participation, but this topic is not in the scope of this paper.

## **1.2 Promoting Civil Rights and Protection**

### **The Concept of Participation: Article 12**

Children's participation is a human right, articulated in article 12 of the CRC. It is also a process and a means of accessing and securing other rights to survival, protection and development (box 1). These rights apply to all children and adolescents in all contexts, and they are especially important in situations where girls or boys face risk of sexual abuse or exploitation. The experience of participation can build capacity for active citizenship, good governance and sustainable development of communities.<sup>4</sup> When children, especially the most marginalized, have opportunities to express their views, access information, form associations, participate in decisions that affect them and take action to fulfil their rights, they are often more able to protect themselves, claim their rights and hold adults accountable.<sup>5</sup>

However, child participation should not be seen in isolation. It is related to participation as a human right for empowering and engaging children, families and communities. The mobilization and participation of children and communities is important for claiming child rights and addressing social norms that perpetuate acceptance of discrimination, violence, abuse, exploitation and the non-participation of children.

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<sup>3</sup> Recommendations by children and adolescents from regional forums that took place in the East Asia and Pacific and South Asia regions have been incorporated.

<sup>4</sup> O'Kane, C., 'Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for social change', Save the Children South and Central Asia, 2003; Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation, 'Children as Active Citizens: A policy and programme guide. Commitments and obligations for children's civil rights and civic engagement in East Asia and the Pacific'. Bangkok, 2008; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Day of General Discussion on the Right to Be Heard', 2006

<sup>5</sup> O'Kane, C., 'Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for social change', Save the Children South and Central Asia, 2003; Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation, 'Children as Active Citizens: A policy and programme guide. Commitments and obligations for children's civil rights and civic engagement in East Asia and the Pacific'. Bangkok, 2008; Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Day of General Discussion on the Right to Be Heard', 2006

Participation can therefore help to transform adult-child power relations and end the ‘silent status’ of children and adolescents, which has for so long led to girls and boys being marginalized, exploited and abused. It helps adults understand the realities children face from their perspective and recognize the contributions that girls and boys make to their families, communities and societies. Decisions influenced by children are often more effective and sustainable, and they protect children better.

In 2001 the Innocenti Insight *Promoting children’s participation in democratic decision-making* emphasized the importance of child and adolescent participation.<sup>6</sup> It made a strong case for listening to children and adolescents, outlining the implications of adults’ failure to listen to them and challenging many of the arguments levelled against children’s participation. The study highlighted how excluding children and adolescents from participation in political processes frequently imposes two-fold discrimination on them. First, it represents a denial of the fundamental right to be listened to and taken seriously in decisions that affect them in legislation, policy and resource allocation, as required by article 12 of the CRC. Second, as a result of this exclusion, it subsequently denies them the right to influence the exercise of other rights.

The Insight points out that article 12 is both a substantive right and a procedural right.<sup>7</sup> As a substantive right, it says that children are entitled to be actors in their own lives and to participate in the decisions that affect them. But, just as for adults, democratic participation is not an end in itself. It is the means for achieving justice, influencing outcomes and exposing abuses of power. In this way it is a procedural right enabling children to challenge abuses or neglect of their rights and take action to promote and protect those rights. It enables children to contribute to respect for their best interests.

Paragraph 1 of article 12 of the CRC establishes the right of every child capable of forming his or her own views to express those views freely in all matters affecting them. It requires these views to be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. Paragraph 2 states that children have the right to be heard in any judicial or administrative proceedings affecting them.

**Box 1. Article 12 and links with other civil rights**

1. States parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Article 12, together with the right to freedom of expression (article 13), the rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (article 14) and freedom of association (article 15), children’s rights to privacy (16) and children’s access to appropriate information (17), underlines children’s status as individuals with fundamental civil rights. In addition, the CRC

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<sup>6</sup> Innocenti Insight, ‘Promoting children’s participation in democratic decision-making’ (Gerison Lansdown), Florence, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 2

places article 12 clearly with its other three general principles: the right to non-discrimination (article 2), the best interests of the child (article 3) and the right to survival and development (article 6).<sup>8</sup>

It is important to recognize that children's right to participation is both a right of the child and also one of the general measures of implementation of the CRC (box 2).<sup>9</sup> When a State ratifies the CRC, it takes an obligation under international law to implement it – to make the rights of children a reality. Article 4 requires States parties to take “all appropriate, legislative, administrative and other measures” for implementing the rights. In addition the Committee on the Rights of the Child has identified a wide range of measures that are needed for effective implementation.<sup>10</sup>

### **Box 2. General Measures of Implementation<sup>11</sup>**

These measures are aimed at helping States parties in their efforts to implement the CRC.

- The process of law reform calls on States parties to ensure compatibility with the CRC of existing and new legislation and judicial practice.
- Independent national institutions for children's rights need to be developed, such as children's ombudsperson offices, child rights commissioners and focal points in national human rights institutions;
- Comprehensive national agendas or strategies for implementation of the CRC are needed; their relationship to the follow-up process to the World Summit for Children and UN General Assembly Special Session on Children is important;
- Children's rights-focused permanent institutions and structures within government are required to ensure coordination and pursue implementation;
- Allocation of resources to children “to the maximum extent of their availability is key in States parties' efforts to ensure implementation;
- Systematic monitoring of the implementation of the CRC is needed, through effective child-related data collection, analysis, evaluation and dissemination;
- Education, training and awareness-raising on children's rights need to be promoted;
- The involvement of civil society, including children is critical if there is to be progress on implementation;
- International cooperation.

### **Meaningful and Inclusive Participation**

In recent years principles and standards for meaningful participation have been developed as a prerequisite for effective, ethical and meaningful implementation of article 12 (box 3).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> UNICEF, 'Implementation Handbook for the Convention of the Rights of the Child', revised third edition, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Day of General Discussion on the Right to Be Heard', 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 5 (CRC/GC/2003/5).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Innocenti Insight, 'Promoting children's participation in democratic decision-making' (Gerison Lansdown), Florence, 2001.

### **Box 3. Practice Standards in Children's Participation**

These practice standards were developed for promoting children's participation by Save the Children<sup>13</sup>:

**Standard 1: An ethical approach:** Transparency, honesty and accountability – Adult organizations and workers are committed to ethical participatory practice and to the primacy of children's best interests.

**Standard 2: Children's participation is relevant and voluntary** – Children participate in processes and address issues that affect them, either directly or indirectly, and have the choice as to whether to participate or not.

**Standard 3: A child-friendly, enabling environment** – Children experience a safe, welcoming and encouraging environment for their participation.

**Standard 4: Equality of opportunity** – Child participation work challenges and does not reinforce existing patterns of discrimination and exclusion. It encourages those groups of children who typically suffer discrimination and who are often excluded from activities to be involved in participatory processes.

**Standard 5: Staff are effective and confident** – Adult staff and managers involved in supporting/facilitating children's participation are trained and supported to do their jobs to a high standard.

**Standard 6: Participation promotes the safety and protection of children** – Child protection policies and procedures form an essential part of participatory work with children.

**Standard 7: Ensuring follow-up and evaluation** – Respect for children's involvement is indicated by a commitment to provide feedback and/or follow-up and to evaluate the quality and impact of children's participation.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child stresses the importance of addressing discrimination of vulnerable and marginalized groups of children to ensure that all children enjoy the right to participation. Vulnerable children include children affected by poverty or armed conflict, very young children, children without parental care (including children in institutions), children with disabilities, children living with HIV or AIDS, refugee and displaced children, stateless children, children living on the street, working children, children in conflict with the law and children belonging to indigenous and minority groups.<sup>14</sup>

In particular, the Committee notes the need to combat certain traditional and cultural attitudes that fail to recognize the rights of the child to participate in society – and calls for promotion of a social climate conducive to children's participation in order for the right to be realized. It also urges States parties to pay special attention to the rights of girls, as sexist stereotypes

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<sup>13</sup> Save the Children Alliance 2005

<sup>14</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Day of General Discussion on the Right to be Heard', 2006.

and patriarchal values undermine and severely limit their enjoyment of the right described in article 12.<sup>15</sup>

Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities obliges States to support children with disabilities by providing the necessary assistance and equipment to ensure realization of their right to express their views and their right to have their views taken seriously.

Young children are especially at risk of discrimination because they are relatively powerless and depend on others for realization of their rights. Young children, especially girls, are also vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. The Committee on the Rights of the Child therefore asks States parties to take all appropriate measures to promote the active involvement of parents, professionals and responsible authorities in creating opportunities for young children to progressively exercise their rights within their daily activities in relevant settings, including by providing training in the necessary skills. The Committee further highlights that this requires adults to adopt a child-centred attitude, listening to young children and respecting their individual views. Adults must also show patience and creativity by adapting their expectations and ways of communications.<sup>16</sup> The Innocenti Insight ‘The evolving capacities of the child’ (2005) is useful for practitioners, as it recognizes that children acquire competencies at different ages in different environments, cultures and circumstances. It also recognizes that their capacities can differ according to the nature of the right being exercised. The Insight suggests that perhaps the most critical challenge is to create a better dialogue between adults and children about how the adult world can meet its responsibilities to fulfil, respect and protect children’s rights in accordance with their evolving capacities.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child also recognizes the vulnerability – including risks of sexual and economic exploitation – of children who are infected or affected by HIV. The Committee notes, “Interventions have been found to benefit children most when they are actively involved in assessing the needs, devising solutions, shaping strategies and carrying them out rather than being seen as objects for whom decisions are made.”<sup>17</sup>

The right of unaccompanied or separated children to have their views heard and taken into account is also recognized by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.<sup>18</sup> The right to all relevant information, such as entitlements, services available, asylum process, family tracing and the situation in their country of origin, is also mentioned. Children’s views in relation to guardianship care and accommodation arrangement and legal representations should also be taken into account.<sup>19</sup>

The Committee on the Rights of the Child also encourages establishment of human rights institutions or children’s ombudspersons or commissioners in all countries. It emphasizes that such institutions play a key role in promoting respect for the views of children and must

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comments No. 7, ‘Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood’ (CRC/C/GC/2005).

<sup>17</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 3, ‘HIV/AIDS and the Rights of the Child’ (CRC/GC/2003/3).

<sup>18</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 6, ‘Unaccompanied and Separated Children Outside their Country of Origin’ (CRC/GC/2005/6).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

ensure that they have direct contact with children and provide them with appropriate opportunities to raise their concerns.<sup>20</sup>

In its concluding observations<sup>21</sup> the Committee on the Rights of the Child often welcomes State Parties' initiatives to promote children's participation through establishment of children's parliaments, councils, associations and projects. At the same time it raises concerns that the society in general pays little attention to the views of children. The respect for children's views within the family, school, other institutions and within the government is often limited and needs to be addressed.

The Committee often urges States to consider what impact children's views are having on policy development and highlights that this general principle should be reflected in all laws, judicial and administrative decisions, policies and programmes. It should also be implemented in the family, school, community and all institutions attended by and working with children.<sup>22</sup>

The right to receive and impart information is seen as a prerequisite for realizing the participation of children. The Committee therefore often urges State Parties to develop child-friendly material in relation to all matters affecting children. The Committee also recommends community-based skills training for parents, teachers and other professionals working with children. This will encourage children to express their views and provide them with proper information and guidance.

In addition, the Concluding Observations often include recommendations to ensure that children are heard in legal and administrative proceedings and that State Parties undertake reviews of the extent to which children's views are taken into consideration and their impact on court decisions and policy making.

### **The Evolution of Participation**

Children's participation at the international level only began in the 1990s, and early efforts were described as 'experimental'.<sup>23</sup> When the first World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children took place in 1996, it was the first time that governments, UN agencies, non-governmental agencies and adolescents had come together for a global meeting on this topic. Just 17 adolescents participated. At the end of 1996, the First International Meeting of Working Children took place in Kundapur (India) – the first time that movements of working children from West Africa, South Asia and Latin America had come together in a global meeting. This meeting resulted in a 10-point platform of proposals for heads of state, decision makers, NGOs and working children.<sup>24</sup>

As we move into the 21st century, efforts are increasing to embed, institutionalize and sustain the meaningful, quality participation of children and adolescents in policy and practice decisions to enhance realization of their rights. Children's and adolescent's participation is

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<sup>20</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 2, 'The Role of Independent National Human Rights Institutions' (CRC/GC/2002/2).

<sup>21</sup> Comments by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the State Parties' CRC reports.

<sup>22</sup> UNICEF Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, revised third edition, 2007

<sup>23</sup> Innocenti Insight, 'Promoting children's participation in democratic decision-making' (Gerison Lansdown), Florence, 2001.

<sup>24</sup> Kundapur Declaration, Working Children's Movement, Kundapur (India), December 1996.



increasingly on the agenda of organizations and agencies. Their active participation is creating considerable resource material for involving children and adolescents,<sup>25</sup> for organizational strategies on children's participation<sup>26</sup> and for development of principles and standards in children's participation.

The second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Yokohama, 2001) reviewed developments since the 1996 meeting. A total of 161 countries had committed themselves to the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action, aimed at following up the process of strengthening commitments to protect children and adolescents from sexual exploitation and abuse. Nearly 100 adolescents participated actively in the second Congress, including, for the first time, young survivors of commercial sexual exploitation (sometimes referred to as 'experiential youth'). The voices of children and adolescents were heard during this Congress, which resulted in their own declaration, the Yokohama Youth Appeal.<sup>27</sup>

Since then, the focus on children's and adolescent's participation has gained momentum, in the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children and the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. The movement of working children and adolescents has also expanded and strengthened from local to international levels in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Many more consultations and initiatives have been organized with children and adolescents locally and nationally. These include efforts to support and strengthen their participation in programmes and projects to end sexual exploitation, including participation in the development of national plans of action (NPAs).

In the lead-up to World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, young people's participation has been identified as "crucial to the deliberations and outcomes of the Congress, to motivate and further support children and adolescent participation to fight sexual exploitation and institutionalize these processes at the local and national levels."<sup>28</sup> However, despite the explicit focus on children's and adolescent's participation from Stockholm to Yokohama and beyond, the reality of embedding and institutionalizing children's participation in countries and regions across the world is yet to be firmly established.

Research by UNICEF IRC on children's participation in legal and administrative procedures covering 52 countries highlights that only a few countries have incorporated the right to be heard into their constitutions (Ecuador, Finland, Poland, South Africa). Most norms recognizing the right to be heard in legal and/or administrative procedures are expressed in broad, general terms and are found in children's codes or comprehensive laws on children. For example the Ecuadorian children's code of 2002 recognizes the right of children to be heard and to have their views taken into account in "all matters affecting them". It also contains a safeguard against abuse of the 'best interest' principle, which "may not be invoked... without previously

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<sup>25</sup> See References at the end of this document.

<sup>26</sup> For example, ECPAT International, 'Ensuring Meaningful Child and Youth Participation in the Fight against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: The ECPAT experience', Bangkok, 2007; Save the Children Norway, 'Framework to Increase Quality in Work in Child Participation', Mozambique, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> 'Final Appeal of Children and Young People', Yokohama, 2001.

<sup>28</sup> Final draft concept note, 'Children and Adolescent Participation in World Congress III', CAPC, 23 June 2008.

listening to the opinion of any child who is able to express one”. This legislation is important for children who are victims and witnesses of sexual abuse and exploitation. A small number of states have undertaken studies that quantify the extent to which children are actually heard and their views taken into account. Only in a few countries (Sweden, for example) have the views of children on this issue been collected and analysed.

### **Children’s Civil Rights and Active Citizenship**

Weaknesses in the scope and quality of children’s and adolescent’s participation provide the impetus for moving towards a new paradigm focusing on children’s civil rights and active citizenship. It has been argued that emphasizing exclusive or time-bound forms of participation that focuses on a few select children leaves untouched the civil rights situation of the great majority of children.<sup>29</sup> This shift in focus is based on the premise that it is much easier to define clear government responsibilities for children’s civil rights than for children’s participation. Civil rights can also be integrated into existing programmes to protect children from abuse, exploitation and violence in ways that ensure greater government investments for children. Such investments are vital to fund continuing processes and mechanisms aimed at ensuring that all girls and boys have access to information about their rights, how to protect themselves from abuse and exploitation and how to obtain support, as well as opportunities to express their views, form associations, influence decisions and take action for their rights. Feedback and complaints mechanisms are also required.

In a policy and practice guide, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Children’s Participation in East Asia and the Pacific suggests, “To advance beyond entry points for children’s participation, it is important to define the social, legal, economic and political dimensions of children’s citizenship, and to develop a practical and long-term agenda for governments to take action that reach all children. At the same time, without the involvement of committed and informed communities, the effects of government support for children’s active citizenship may be limited.”<sup>30</sup>

New and stronger partnerships between governments, UN agencies, international and national NGOs, and community-based and child-led organizations are needed to increase realization of children’s civil rights. Examples of good practice demonstrate the benefits of broader efforts to inform, mobilize and engage with large numbers of marginalized children as civil actors and partners. One example is the inspiring successes of the working children’s movement in West Africa described in section 4. Fulfilment of civil rights can help children protect themselves, claim their rights and hold governments and other adult actors accountable for their commitments. Given the diversity of childhood experiences and the reality that many impoverished children can rely only on themselves and perhaps their peers, such self-protection strategies are crucial.

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<sup>29</sup> Personal communication, Joachim Theis, Chief of Child Protection, UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office, August 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Inter-Agency Working Group on Children’s Participation, ‘Children as Active Citizens: A policy and programme guide. Commitments and obligations for children’s civil rights and civic engagement in East Asia and the Pacific’. pg. 8, Bangkok, 2008.

In 2006 the Committee on the Rights of the Child held a General Discussion on the Right of the Child to be Heard.<sup>31</sup> The event brought together member of the Committee, UN agencies, NGOs, governments, children and other interested experts to identify priority issues, share good practices and issue recommendations, which included:<sup>32</sup>

- Introduction of legislation to ensure that article 12 is reflected in relevant laws, regulations and administrative instructions, resulting in the institutionalization of children's participation in government decision making;
- Capacity building of all public officials who influence government policy and implement programmes that involve children's issues in order to promote awareness of children's rights and the obligation of taking their views into account;
- Provision of accessible and appropriate information to children about their rights and how to exercise them;
- Mechanisms to enable children to express their views, including through independent human right institutions and children's ombudspersons;
- Ensure that the views, needs and concerns of child victims of sexual abuse or other violent crimes are presented and considered in proceedings where their personal interests are affected.
- Independent institutions where children can easily access complaints mechanism and advisory services;
- Direct involvement of children in monitoring the rights in the Convention.

The Committee called on States to comply with their obligations to ensure that children's participation is taken into account in resource allocation and that mechanisms to facilitate their participation are institutionalized as a tool for implementation. The Committee also called for States parties to clearly designate which authority has the key responsibility for implementation of children's rights and to ensure that this entity establishes direct contact with organizations led by children and youth in order to engage them.<sup>33</sup> In addition the Committee reaffirmed its intention to develop a General Comment on article 12 to explore in detail how the right should be implemented consistently in all settings.

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<sup>31</sup> Every year the Committee, the body responsible for monitoring implementation of the CRC, organizes a discussion day on a children's rights theme. The aim is to advise states on how to implement the right(s) under discussion.

<sup>32</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'Day of General Discussion on the Right of the Child to be Heard', 2006.

<sup>33</sup> 'Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child', revised third edition, 2007.

## 2. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL COMMITMENTS

### 2.1 Overview of Government Commitments since 1996

*“Experience demonstrates that the level of responsibility and role that a government takes to set and uphold standards of protection, like the lead taken for protecting children’s rights, determines the nature, quantity and quality of what the country achieves for its children.”*

*– Foreword, Global Monitoring Report (2007) on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, ECPAT International*

The Declaration and Agenda for Action adopted at the First World Congress specified five areas for action: prevention; protection; recovery and reintegration; coordination and cooperation; and child participation. All actions were to be guided by the CRC, including respect for the views of the child. It called for children’s participation as follows:

- a) Promote the participation of children, including child victims, young people, their families, peers and others who are potential helpers of children so that they are able to express their views and to take action to prevent and protect children from commercial sexual exploitation and to assist child victims to be reintegrated into society;
- b) Identify or establish and support networks of children and young people as advocates of child rights, and include children, according to their evolving capacity, in developing and implementing government and other programmes concerning them.

It is significant that the outcome document identified children’s participation as a key area for action by calling for greater government commitments to it and greater allocation of resources (human and financial) as well as changes in government and institutional practices. It was also recognized that participation is integral to effective practice in the other four action areas.

In a youth panel held during the Stockholm Congress, young people “called upon all the governments and all the adults to change their wrong attitudes towards us children and for everyone to recognize the abilities of the children and youth and to let us participate in all undertakings that are supposed to help us children.”<sup>34</sup>

The outcome document of the second World Congress also acknowledged the need for “...greater participation by children and young people in promoting and protecting their rights, notably through young people’s networks and forums, and the involvement of young people as peer communicators and counsellors...” It also reiterated government commitments to work in partnership with children “...through initiatives interlinking the young people themselves...”

More specific commitments to support children’s participation and partnerships with children and adolescents were articulated in many of the regional declarations and strategies developed during the lead-up to the second World Congress. Child and adolescent representatives were

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<sup>34</sup> Stockholm Congress Panel Report, Youth Panel, World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Stockholm, August 1996.

actively involved in regional preparations in Asia, Europe and Latin America, and it is in these regions that the commitment to children's participation is most clearly articulated.

For instance, at the Inter-American Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children (Montevideo, 7-9 November 2001), a document titled 'Commitment to a Strategy against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Other Forms of Sexual Violence against Children and Adolescents in the Latin American-Caribbean Region' included these commitments:

- To empower "children and adolescents in order to guarantee a full participation as advocates of their own rights is decisive for the prevention and protection of child sexual exploitation" (p. 2).
- To "recognize and reaffirm that participation of children and adolescents is a key element in the fight to eradicate commercial and non-commercial sexual exploitation, thus to urge the strengthening of organizations of children and adolescents and other adequate empowerment forms and participation systems guaranteeing their full citizenship" (p. 5).

The 'South Asia Strategy' was developed at a consultation in Dhaka (4-6 November 2001). A section titled 'Creating partnerships with children and young adults' includes emphasis on:

- Enabling inclusion of children and young adults in regional, national and local networks, task forces and community-level processes, and including children and young adults as equal partners in research and design of policies, programmes and projects;
- Enhancing capacities of children and adults by learning from children's experiences;
- Sensitizing adults by having them work with children so they understand child rights and children's capabilities to participate in decisions that affect their lives. This also involves supporting children to develop strategies and initiate follow-up actions with children and adults in their communities;
- Informing children about sexual exploitation and abuse, such as by preparing and disseminating child-friendly versions of information materials and building awareness by incorporating sex education into school curricula.

Participants at a meeting in Bangkok (16-18 October 2001) agreed to the 'Regional Commitment and Action Plan of the East Asia and Pacific Region against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children'. It included these specific commitments:

- By 2004, identify or establish independent child/young people's committees that advise government on relevant legislation and issues;
- Build the capacity of children, young people and adults to ensure that children and young people can participate meaningfully in planning, implementing and evaluating relevant government policies and programmes;
- Ensure the participation of children and young people in research on commercial sexual exploitation of children, and conduct research on their views about actions against it;
- Allocate resources, to the maximum extent possible, to support children's/young people's participation initiatives on prevention, protection, cooperation and recovery/reintegration at local, provincial, national, regional and international levels.

### **The Challenge of Reporting**

Despite such an explicit focus on participation by children and adolescents in official documents associated with the Stockholm and Yokohama meetings, some regions have little

information on the scope, quality and impact of their participation in combating sexual abuse and exploitation.

ECPAT's 'Global Monitoring Reports' highlight the lack of information concerning the status of children's participation. Using the Stockholm Agenda for Action as a framework, ECPAT worked collaboratively with countries to help develop their monitoring reports. The aim was to ensure the reports would provide a baseline of information on actions taken and gaps remaining to address commercial sexual exploitation of children in each country. The ultimate objective was to enable more systematic assessment of progress on implementation of commitments.

Preparatory work involved a review of the literature for each country where ECPAT works. A number of tools were prepared, including a guide to relevant research to assist researchers and ensure consistency in gathering, interpreting and analysing information from different sources and regions. However, initial research revealed a lack of information on children's participation as well as on recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration. It was therefore decided to focus the monitoring reports only on those areas of the Agenda for Action for which verifiable information could be obtained. Thus, the ECPAT reports cover coordination and cooperation, prevention and protection. Where information was available on the other two areas it has been included under the country or in the regional overview.

Children's and adolescent's participation is not yet firmly established in many countries and regions (boxes 4 and 5). Although efforts are under way, weaknesses have been acknowledged by adults, children and adolescents in supporting genuine, inclusive, sustainable participation processes. In many countries and regions weaknesses also remain in systematic monitoring and reporting on children's participation processes and impact.

#### **Box 4. Assessing young people's participation in East Asia and the Pacific**

During the mid-term review in the East Asia and Pacific region following the Yokohama Congress (Bangkok, November 2004), institutionalizing young people's participation was identified as a critical challenge. According to the regional overview little progress had been made in creating structures to support the effective participation of children and youth on issues that concerned them, including commercial sexual exploitation. With few exceptions – one being the participatory anti-trafficking work with children in the Greater Mekong sub-region – children and youth were rarely consulted during development of policies and programmes concerning them. When they received opportunities to participate, they were generally brought into the process in a haphazard and token manner.<sup>35</sup>

This reinforced the analysis made by children and young people during their preparatory forum. Their report of the Bangkok review said, "Although countries had involved children and youth in various settings, the young delegates felt that governments had not considered their involvement a priority, nor had they made a sufficient effort to involve young people in the fight against commercial sexual exploitation of children. Many countries had not yet established Young Persons' Advisory Committees, as delineated in the Regional Commitment and Action Plan . . . In some countries where consultative committees involving

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<sup>35</sup> 'Report on the Post-Yokohama Mid-term Review of the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Commitment and Action Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children', 8 -10 November 2004, Bangkok, p. 12.

children had been established, young people had to struggle in order to make themselves heard.”<sup>36</sup>

Child and youth participation was identified as a priority by many countries in the region. Recommendations included establishing local advisory committees to encourage more inclusive child and adolescent participation, especially in rural areas.

During the mid-term review process in Europe and Central Asia (Ljubljana, June 2005), weaknesses were also identified in developing and implementing national plans of action with the active involvement of children and adolescents. A working group specifically looked at this issue and concluded that “joint youth-adult partnerships are to be encouraged to develop, implement and monitor the implementation of National Plans of Action ... Young people should be regularly consulted ... and regular financial support to groups should be provided by governments to children and networks of young people. Survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse should be systematically included in the process and their opinion should be taken into account by all partners.”<sup>37</sup>

Despite these obvious and ongoing challenges, some progress is being made. Some countries and regions are partnering actively with children and adolescents to develop practices and policies and support initiatives led by them that strengthen the fight against sexual abuse and exploitation.

#### **Box 5. Assessing young people’s participation in South Asia**

A report released at the mid-term review in South Asia (September 2004) noted that “The children and young people of the region have been active and determined in their actions, and governments, NGOs and agencies have recognized this by consulting with them and including them in consultations and programmes. Some specific mechanisms, such as Children’s Clubs, have formalized the participation of children and young people. In some countries there is a National Children’s Task Force or another mechanism for regular consultation with children. Importantly, children have been involved – or have led – awareness raising actions, media initiatives and peer outreach and counselling actions. Child-friendly materials have in some cases contributed to these actions.”<sup>38</sup>

As part of preparations for World Congress III, a regional preparatory consultation took place in Kathmandu in August 2008, organized by the South Asia Forum, a regional ministerial-level coordinating body representing eight countries.<sup>39</sup> It was preceded by a two-day Children’s Forum attended by 18 young people (15 girls and 3 boys) aged 14 to 18, from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. They shared views and experiences, identified gaps and formulated recommendations that were presented to the participating governments. Children’s representatives also contributed to the opening and closing sessions and served as experts on panels. As a result, the recommendations included a focus on institutionalizing meaningful child and adolescent participation at all levels, as well as ensuring that children’s participation is integrated into all policies and projects, with government budgets.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Preventing and Combating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Children: Yokohama Review for Europe and Central Asia, 8-9 July 2005, Ljubljana (Slovenia), p. 14.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Promises Renewed, Promises Reinforced’, South Asia Regional Mid-term Review of the Yokohama Global Commitment, Colombo, 29 September-1 October 2004, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> The South Asia Forum, ‘Regional Preparatory Consultation for World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents – DRAFT Recommendations’, Kathmandu, 27-29 August 2008.

Lessons learned from inspiring case studies can also be used to inform and scale up quality processes for child and adolescent participation in diverse settings, as will be illustrated further in section 4.

## **2.2 Other Relevant Global Instruments and Processes**

Various international instruments address protection of children and adolescents against sexual abuse and exploitation and reinforce State obligations to realize article 12 of the CRC. For example, ILO Convention 182 (1999) emphasizes the importance of taking into account the views of children and adolescents directly affected by the worst forms of child labour. Article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000) and the UN Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (2005) further recognize the need to take into account the needs and views of children and adolescents. This promotes a child-sensitive approach to protection.

The ILO's commitment to children's participation is articulated in its global report (2006) on child labour, which highlights the importance of children's participation in tackling the worst forms of child labour, including sexual exploitation. The report states the case for ensuring that children's voices are heard in the process of mainstreaming child labour issues into national development frameworks and budget discussions.<sup>40</sup>

### **The UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children**

The message of the Secretary-General's study could not have been stronger: "No violence against children is justifiable. All violence is preventable." The study revealed shocking evidence of the scale of violence against children worldwide. Launched on 11 October 2006 in the UN General Assembly, its preparation involved governments, international organizations, civil society groups, research institutions and children across the world.

Children's participation in the study showed again the value of children's views and their contributions on matters of relevance and importance to them. Children and young people took on many roles during the study: They were advisors, documenters, advocates, respondents, researchers and facilitators as well as active participants during national, regional and global consultations. At each level (from local to global) they made clear recommendations about how to stop the violence. They also had the opportunity to demonstrate the actions they have taken to stop violence against children.

Among the important outcomes of children's involvement in the study was their participation in the many interlinked national and regional initiatives, activities and events, including the nine regional consultations held in 2005. Children were also active participants in case studies, research, advocacy, development of innovative child-friendly publications and documentation of children's voices and recommendations. The Secretary-General's report reflects recommendations made by children during the process.

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<sup>40</sup> International Labour Organization, Geneva, 'Report of the Director-General: The End of Child Labour: Within reach', Global report under the follow up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, ILO Conference, 95<sup>th</sup> Session, 2006.



The study provided another opportunity to address the sexual abuse and exploitation of girls and boys and to strengthen commitment and actions against it. The study found that sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is increasing and recommended providing child-friendly assistance and legal, health and social services. There was explicit recognition of children's necessary role in efforts to address violence against them and to better protect themselves, and calls for governments and others to make sure they are involved.

Ensuring the participation of children is one of the study's 12 overarching recommendations. Recommendation 7 calls for States to "actively engage with children and respect their views in all aspects of prevention, response and monitoring of violence against them, taking into account article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children's organizations and child-led initiatives to address violence guided by the best interest of the child should be supported and encouraged."<sup>41</sup> Governments are asked specifically to report on this, as well as the other 11 overarching recommendations. In the coming years this will provide an opportunity to develop and monitor structures to ensure children's participation in follow-up to the study. It will also highlight good examples of government practice in taking children seriously and reveal the sustainability of these efforts and the possibilities for scaling them up.

### **Mid-term Review of the UN Special Session on Children**

In December 2007 was the mid-term review of the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children – A World Fit for Children +5. In the Declaration adopted at the close of the session, the 140 governments declared that "as we welcome the voices and views of children, including adolescents, heard at the commemorative plenary meeting, we strive to strengthen their participation in the decisions that affect them, in accordance with their age and maturity."<sup>42</sup> This reaffirmed the commitment to realize article 12 made by State Parties during the Special Session.

### **Machel Study 10-Year Strategic Review on Children Affected by Armed Conflict**

At the time of the 1996 Graca Machel study 'The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children', uncertainty existed about the practice of children's participation in humanitarian endeavors, specifically in conflict-affected settings. Although a focus on children's participation was not explicit in the Machel Report,<sup>43</sup> the potential of such an approach to programming was indicated in various sections of the report. For instance, in paragraph 9 adolescents were recognized as "the greatest resource in rebuilding war-affected communities. Their active participation in community-based relief, recovery and reconstruction programmes will strengthen and sustain these initiatives while increasing adolescents' sense of purpose, self-esteem and identity."

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<sup>41</sup> Report of the Independent Expert for the UN Study on Violence against Children, General Assembly, 61<sup>st</sup> Session, October 2006 (A/61/299).

<sup>42</sup> UN General Assembly, 'A World Fit for Children +5 Declaration', 12 December 2007, paragraph 5.

<sup>43</sup> UN Report 'The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children', 2006 A/51/306.

Ten years later a strategic review of the Machel study<sup>44</sup> emphasized concerns about increased gender-based violence, rape, sexual violence, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation facing girls and boys in conflict situations – including sexual abuse and exploitation of children – particularly exploitation of girls by humanitarian workers. The importance of children’s and adolescents’ participation has also been highlighted. This has included an emphasis on their participation in justice processes, inclusion of children’s priorities in peace processes and support for children’s participation in conflict resolution and peace building. To increase participation of children and adolescents the Machel Strategic review recommends (recommendation 14i) that “Member States should make a greater commitment to address obstacles to the participation of young people in decision-making, and to actively promote their engagement in national-and-local-level governance, peace processes, and justice, truth and reconciliation processes”.

### **Questionnaire on Government Actions to Support Participation**

Despite government commitments to children and children’s participation, significant challenges remain. A questionnaire was distributed to governments by the General Rapporteur for World Congress III, administrated by UNICEF IRC, asking for information on developments between 2001 and 2008 in implementing measures to protect children from sexual exploitation. Respondents were also asked to indicate the gaps and challenges in most urgent need of energy and resources.

The 73 responses received (as of 4 November 2008) include many examples of legal reform and development of children’s acts and NPAs for children. They also describe new services being provided to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse . Children’s participation has been a heading in National Plans of Action in terms of encouraging it in planning, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects relating to child sexual exploitation (Mongolia). Some countries also include children’s participation as a specific target in action plans to reduce poverty (Mozambique). Children are also often one of the actors referred to in initiatives to mobilize civil society.

Recent laws, policies and programmes in many countries support realization of children’s civil rights, such as the right to information, and for child-friendly procedures. A number of countries highlighted provision of child-friendly information on topics relating to child rights, HIV and AIDS, sexuality, sexual abuse and exploitation (Belgium, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Serbia). In some countries children are involved in producing those messages (Mozambique). Other countries gave examples of how they have promoted the rights of child victims and witnesses of crime. Such actions include providing information about their rights and assistance available to them through initiatives to build the capacity of judicial professionals on child rights and through development of laws and policies sensitive to victims of crime (Canada, United States). Establishment of telephone hotlines for children who have experienced or witnessed violence or abuse was also reported from some countries (Kazakhstan).

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<sup>44</sup> ‘Machel Study 10-year Strategic Review: Children and conflict in a changing world’. UN documents A/62/228 and A/51/306.

The government of Finland described legislative developments to monitor the implementation of children's rights. A Youth Act that came into force in 2006 requires the government to develop a Youth Policy every four years. The first policy was developed in 2007, following preparation of a handbook on child impact assessments in 2006. The handbook is intended to help local and central policymakers and authorities identify the best interests of children. The handbook enables them to anticipate the direct and indirect impacts on children of decisions and programmes. Direct impact include items such as participation and equality, while the indirect impacts cover ... The handbook points out that approximately 1 per cent of the total budget of a project should be reserved for anticipating child impacts Other examples include development of implementation guidelines and support to consultations and community-based activities.

Children's participation guidelines have been adopted to promote children's involvement in programmes to prevent and respond to child trafficking (Kenya). Support to children's participation in meetings and other forum so they can raise the issue of sexual abuse and exploitation is reported from some countries (Philippines). Other examples include information on support for children's participation in community-based prevention programmes (Paraguay, Philippines).

Empowering initiatives for girls and boys from minority groups were also mentioned by some governments. These include provision of life skills, educational opportunities, outreach services, peer programming and parental education to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation (Canada).

Many countries highlighted that more has to be done to ensure children's active participation to more effectively prevent and address sexual abuse and exploitation. The government of Fiji, for example, mentioned that children could become advocates of child rights and participate in developing and implementing programmes concerning children by governments and other agencies, according to their evolving capacity.

The proposed shift to a focus on children's civil rights is needed to support more systematic efforts to institutionalize children's participation at all levels of relevant government decision making. This includes legislative reform, policy making, planning, data collection and resource allocation.

The participation of children and adolescents in World Congress III aims "to facilitate children and adolescents to contribute to the formulation of measurable targets against sexual exploitation with governments, planners, policy makers, civil society organizations, young people's organizations and networks". It also aims "to ensure follow-up mechanisms with wider groups of policy makers, civil society organizations, children and adolescents back in their countries/regions and to see follow-up institutionalized in relevant organizations, children and adolescent networks and projects".<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Final Draft Concept Note, 'Adolescent Participation in the World Congress III', CAPC, 23 June 2008.

Not all countries have responded to the questionnaire, and it had no specific question relating to child participation. It is unlikely that the questionnaire included all the developments that have taken place to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation since the Yokohama Congress.

### **Young People's Participation in World Congress III**

Participation by children and adolescents in World Congress III is considered part of a process of securing global commitments on follow-up mechanisms such as:

- Sharing outcomes and commitments, including with a wider group of children and adolescents;
- Implementing recommendations from the regional preparatory consultations and World Congress III;
- Setting concrete targets and indicators for implementing, reporting on and monitoring commitments to young people's participation, including for allocation of resources (such as to implement a global fund for children's and adolescent's participation, an idea recommended by young people);<sup>46</sup>
- Development and implementation of child-friendly mechanisms for young people's participation in policy decision making at national and regional levels, which can enhance realization of their right to protection against sexual exploitation;
- Children's and adolescent's participation in all government procedures for reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on topics linked to sexual exploitation, such as the Optional Protocol on the sale of children.

Establishing clear global commitments to systematically follow up on efforts to enhance children's and adolescent's participation during and after World Congress III will be critically important. Such commitments can help promote the civil rights of children and their active participation in child protection. It can also further empower them to fight against their abuse, exploitation and marginalization in society.

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<sup>46</sup> See section 3; a fund for child- and youth-led initiatives was highlighted in Yokohama and reiterated by children and adolescents during the mid-term review in Ljubljana in 2005.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

*“The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child must be used as a guiding tool for all legislation, plans of action, and services related to fight against commercial sexual exploitation of children. We believe that, if children’s rights to survival, development, protection and participation are not ensured, we can NEVER eliminate commercial sexual exploitation of children.”*

*– Final Appeal of Children and Young People, 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Yokohama, 2001*

Children and adolescents have many thoughtful ideas for addressing sexual abuse and exploitation. They have expressed them at a variety of regional and global consultations, including the world congresses in Stockholm and Yokohama, regional processes leading up to the Yokohama meeting, the mid-term reviews following the Yokohama meeting and regional and global consultations leading up to the Rio de Janeiro meeting. These include the regional consultations in South Asia and East Asia and the Pacific, consultations facilitated by World Vision with children and adolescents in various countries in August 2008, and an International Youth Advisory Congress on Online Safety and Security in London in July 2008.

Young people have also provided insights and recommendations during processes concerned with the UN Special Session on Children (2002) and its mid-term review (2007); the UN Study on Violence against Children (2003 to 2006); gatherings of children and adolescents from countries involved in the G8 summits (the Junior 8, known as the J8); the UN Disability Convention; the Graça Machel Study 10-year Strategic Review; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and the Mekong Children/Youth Forums (2004 and 2007) in East Asia. This section reflects these contributions as well as views shared by children and adolescents through key Internet forums such as UNICEF’s Voices of Youth and ECPAT initiatives for meaningful children’s and youth participation in combating commercial sexual exploitation of children. The recommendations are presented under the five headings in the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action:

- Child participation
- Coordination and cooperation
- Prevention
- Protection
- Recovery and Reintegration

Many of the recommendations are presented verbatim; in others the language has been edited or summarized to avoid repetition. The main sources reviewed to compile these recommendations are shown in annex 1. Original versions of key statements by children and adolescents made at regional and global events relating to the world congresses are included in annex 2.

#### 3.1. Enhancing Children’s Participation

*“Usually when we children talk about participation and making our views heard, most adults see it as a passport to disrespect ... The adults have forgotten that the world is dynamic and things we know now they didn’t at our age and might still not*

*know. We have to move from the stage where children are to be seen and not heard to a stage where children should have a voice in decision making in matters that affect him or her.”*

*– Voices of Youth, ‘What Young People are Saying’, June 2003, No 5*

### **Awareness and Access to Information**

More efforts are needed to inform children and adolescents about their rights and enable them to access information (child-, adolescent- and diversity friendly) on matters that concern them, including on sexual abuse and exploitation. Materials should be developed that are appropriate for children and adolescents in different contexts, including those with disabilities. Young people should play a major role in preparing these materials, which should include leaflets and posters, CDs, videos and audio tapes and should be widely disseminated through television, radio and the Internet. Information should be available at schools, supermarkets, hospitals and bus and train stations, so that all people are aware of the issues.

Local NGOs can support children’s and adolescent’s participation by raising awareness of children’s rights and the importance of their participation among parents, teachers, local leaders and government officials. NGOs can help facilitate meaningful participation by supporting implementation of programmes related to sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking.

Children’s and adolescents’ knowledge about commercial sexual exploitation of children and child rights in general should be strengthened, and they should be encouraged to take part in awareness-raising campaigns in schools and communities. Awareness-raising involving children, adolescents, parents, teachers and other relevant groups should include a focus on child exploitation, including trafficking. It should explore the root causes of exploitation, tricks used by traffickers, protective legislation and how girls, boys and communities can better protect themselves.

A Worldwide Day of Action in the struggle against commercial sexual exploitation of children should be observed. Children, adolescents and adults could organize awareness and action initiatives on this day throughout the world.

### **Involvement in All Issues of Concern**

Children’s participation in decision making on matters affecting them – in families, schools, institutions, communities and national policy and practice developments – should be actively supported. Parents, teachers, people from the community and government officials should be sensitized and prepared to take girls’ and boys’ views seriously.

Children and adolescents throughout the world have consistently advocated the importance of actively listening to their voices, and particularly to those of victims and survivors of sexual exploitation. This enhances understanding of their views, needs and experiences, which in turn is useful for informing and influencing programme and policy developments to better protect and fulfil their rights. Children’s and adolescents’ views and suggestions must be listened to seriously and acted upon sensitively.

Children and young people who are affected by armed conflict contributed to the Machel study 10-year strategic view. One young person emphasized that “We want more opportunities to take part in making decisions that affect us. We ask that you empower us and our organizations – our youth councils, networks, groups and organizations, children’s parliaments and other youth-driven groups – to be able to participate in a way that counts in all decisions that affect us. We do not want to be called in when you have already made the decisions. We want to work hand in hand with you.”<sup>47</sup>

In the UN Special Session on Children and the Children’s Forum (2002) young people issued their own statement, ‘A World Fit for Us’. It brought attention to the importance of active participation of children, calling for “raised awareness and respect among people of all ages about every child’s right to full and meaningful participation, in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child” and for “children [to be] actively involved in decision making at all levels and in planning, monitoring and evaluating all matters affecting the rights of the child.”

### **Non-discrimination**

Children and adolescents have emphasized the importance of non-discrimination and inclusive opportunities to participate during various consultations. For example, in their Final Recommendations at the Mekong Youth Forum (2007), youth delegates said that “All children and youth should be given the opportunity to participate in activities without discrimination or distinctions made between rich and poor, educated and uneducated, male and female, children and youth, victims, disabled and people of different religions. Governments, parents, and international organizations should provide financial and technical support for children’s participation.”

### **Capacity Building**

The importance of capacity building for adults was emphasized as a ‘cross-cutting issue’ by adolescents involved in the South Asia children’s forum in preparation for World Congress III. They suggested that people working with and for children should be aware of and trained in child rights issues and child-friendly behaviours.<sup>48</sup>

Capacity building of girls and boys from different backgrounds (based on age, disability/ability, ethnicity, caste, socio-economic class, religion) should be supported to strengthen their knowledge, skills and confidence to work against sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking. Girls and boys from different parts of a country should have access to capacity building on child rights, life skills education, peer education and peer counselling. Children and adolescents could then train others in their communities and take action through their own initiatives.

### **Support for Networking**

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<sup>47</sup> Machel Study 10-Year Strategic Review: Children and conflict in a changing world, October 2007; ‘Will you Listen? Young Voices from Conflict Zones’ (a companion document), p. 21.

<sup>48</sup> Children’s Forum Recommendations, Summary for the South Asia Forum Regional Preparatory Consultation for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, 24-27 August 2008, Kathmandu.

Networking among organizations and through initiatives led by young people should be actively supported to encourage information sharing and joint training and advocacy. In the East Asia and Pacific region the young delegates to the post-Yokohama mid-term review in Bangkok advocated for establishment of a regional youth network on commercial sexual exploitation, with support for coordination and development across countries. The youth delegates urged ESCAP<sup>49</sup> to ensure that children and youth were involved in project formulation and to establish regular consultation mechanisms for the region, including creation of a youth section. They asked Save the Children to continue its support of children's forums at national and regional levels. Save the Children was also requested to aid capacity building of government agencies so they can involve children and carry out research on violence and commercial sexual exploitation of children, leading to programmes and advocacy for appropriate policies and practices.<sup>50</sup>

Children and adolescents in diverse settings have also consistently requested support to form their own groups and organizations so they can organize awareness and action initiatives to prevent and address sexual abuse, exploitation and other forms of violence.

### **Respect for Children as Partners**

Children and adolescents should be engaged as partners. The capacities, skills, insights and potential of girls and boys (including those with disabilities) and of initiatives and organizations led by children and youth should be recognized and actively supported. Opportunities should be provided for children and adolescents to regularly share their views and experiences and to plan action in partnership with responsible adults.

Children and adolescents consulted by World Vision called on adults to respect and include them as equal participants and partners in combating commercial sexual exploitation of children.<sup>51</sup>

At the UN Special Session on Children, children and adolescents pledged an equal partnership in this fight for children's rights promising to support actions taken by adults but asking in turn for adult commitment and support to the actions they take.<sup>52</sup>

Governments should recognize the expertise of child and youth organizations, such as by supporting peer education. Governments must provide opportunities for and facilitate peer education on relevant child rights issues, including trafficking and sexual exploitation and abuse. Governments should also facilitate sharing good experiences and enable study exchanges.

### **Sustaining Participation**

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<sup>49</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

<sup>50</sup> Report on the Post-Yokohama Mid-term Review of the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Commitment and Action Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, 8-10 November 2004, Bangkok, p. 40.

<sup>51</sup> World Vision, 'Focus Group Discussion with Youth on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children' (draft), August 2008.

<sup>52</sup> 'A World Fit for Us', Children's Statement, UN Special Session on Children, 2002.



Initiatives on child and adolescent participation should move beyond short-term projects to longer term programming that focuses on making personal and organizational changes that directly influence the lives of all children and adolescents, including those affected by or at risk of sexual abuse or exploitation.

A ‘cross-cutting’ suggestion from adolescents at the 2008 regional Children’s Forum in South Asia was “child participation should be integrated in all policies and programmes, and budgetary allocations should be ensured by governments and international agencies to secure sustainability.”<sup>53</sup>

Governments need to be more proactive in facilitating child and adolescent participation. They should incorporate such participation in national plans of action and expand platforms to promote children’s and adolescent’s involvement and influence, including formation of committees and task forces and use of technologies such as Internet forums.

Children and adolescents in various regions have called for establishment of committees and task forces involving children and adolescents at local, district and national levels. Such structures provide “a formalized channel through which children and youth could provide inputs to the Governments and advocate for the enactment of policies and programmes that protect child rights.” During the South Asia mid-term review children and adolescents suggested “the formation of a ‘National Children’s Task Force’ funded by the Government and represented by young people from all sectors and all lifestyles (rural, urban, school-going, out of school, disabled, child labourers, children forced into prostitution, children growing up in brothels, HIV-affected children, etc.) to ensure the participation of children in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of NPAs on sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking and other child rights commitments.”<sup>54</sup>

During the mid-term review in the East Asia and Pacific region children and adolescents recommended localizing advisory committees “to facilitate access by more young people, especially those in rural areas.” Children’s representatives from the Mekong Children’s Forum 2004 also highlighted the importance of parent involvement in such committees. A youth delegate explained that one youth group in the Philippines, Young People against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, engaged in discussions with local politicians, aimed at mobilizing resources for development activities in villages.<sup>55</sup>

Children and adolescents have also advocated for continuing representation in local governance structures to raise their concerns. This would also ensure adult-child partnerships in acting to protect girls and boys from violations of their rights.

In a recent preparatory meeting (Bangkok, August 2008) for World Congress III, children and young people called for children’s representatives to “be involved in the formulation of laws, reporting and monitoring of international treaties and laws (for example, the CRC and its

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<sup>53</sup> Children’s Forum Recommendations Summary for the South Asia Forum Regional Preparatory Consultation for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, 24-27 August 2008, Kathmandu, Nepal.

<sup>54</sup> Statement by children and young people, as part of the South Asia Regional Mid-term Review of the Yokohama Global Commitment 2001, Colombo, 2004.

<sup>55</sup> Report on the Post-Yokohama Mid-term Review of the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Commitment and Action Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, 8-10 November 2004, Bangkok.

Optional Protocol on commercial sexual exploitation of children)” and to participate in all meetings related to that topic.<sup>56</sup>

### **Resources for Participation**

Governments must ensure that sufficient budgets are allocated to fulfil recommendations based on promises made at the Yokohama and Stockholm meetings.

The Final Appeal of Children and Young People in Yokohama suggested that government support for “children and young people’s participation in terms of funding, legislation, and human resource development brings us one step closer to finding solutions that are more effective, more appropriate, and more sustainable.” The creation of a fund was requested to support child and adolescent participation and initiatives to address child sexual abuse and exploitation (box 6).

#### **Box 6. A fund for initiatives led by children and youth**

First highlighted at the Yokohama Congress, the need for a fund was reiterated by children and adolescents during the mid-term review in Ljubljana in 2005. They suggested that country focal points should be responsible for supporting the fund to finance initiatives led by children and youth and to accelerate implementation of national plans of action in partnership with them. Young people envisage this fund being co-created and co-managed by youth and adults at all decision-making levels. Governments and international agencies would contribute to the fund, which would have a simple, clear and youth-friendly structure and application mechanism. The young people urged the Council of Europe to look at the feasibility of initiating such a fund at a European level.

As a follow up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress, ECPAT International undertook some steps to implement a Micro Project Scheme as a mechanism for providing young people with opportunities to build their capacity to engage in social action.<sup>57</sup> Young people who are vulnerable or have been exploited receive small grants to design and implement child-focused projects according to their priorities. These grants also aim to help young people form partnerships and take actions to improve their lives as well as those of their peers and communities. Participating in these projects has helped young victims of sexual exploitation access better services, increase their resilience and reinforce their recovery. ECPAT has promoted the Micro Project Scheme as an initial component of the Global Fund.

As part of the Machel Study Strategic Review process (2006-2007) children and adolescents also highlighted that “the biggest constraint for many youth organizations is lack of resources. Although young people can accomplish great things through volunteering and innovative use of resources, funding is required to build sustainable organizations and to create programmes that reach and involve marginalized youth.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Children and Young People’s Preparatory Meeting for the East Asia and Pacific Preparatory Meeting for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children, 14-16 August 2008, Children’s and Young People’s Recommendations.

<sup>57</sup> ECPAT International, Micro Projects Guidelines (undated).

<sup>58</sup> ‘Machel Study 10-Year Strategic Review: Children and conflict in a changing world’, chapter 7.

### **3.2. Coordination and Cooperation**

#### **Government Structures and Support Mechanisms**

Children and adolescents recognize that efforts to protect them will benefit from sharing knowledge, raising resources and improving skills among government officials, NGOs, businesses, the media, community groups, religious organizations and children's groups. They therefore advocate for cooperation across sectors.

To ensure more effective development, implementation and monitoring of national plans of action, technical assistance should be provided by international bodies and agencies. State governments and local and international NGOs should work collaboratively at all levels in partnership with children and adolescents.

Governments should establish strategies to ensure that action plans are implemented and monitored at the community level with the active involvement of children, adolescents and adults. Participation of young people should also be supported at national and regional levels. It is important to avoid exclusion because of ethnic, religious or other differences.

Children and adolescents want to participate actively in monitoring bodies to ensure effective implementation of NPAs.

Special government structures and task forces that work to combat sexual abuse and exploitation should be established. These structures should be available and accessible on a national scale. They should have mechanisms for regular consultation with parents as well as children's committees and community leaders.

During the UN Study on Violence against Children, children and adolescents advocated for the establishment of an ombudsperson (an individual or an institution) in their countries to support children's human rights.

Governments should support NGOs working on sexual exploitation and abuse of children as well as other children's issues and should approve licenses for them to operate.

#### **Planning and Policies**

In their final appeal at the Yokohama Congress, children and adolescents called for "better harmonization of national legislations in line with international treaties, and cooperation between law enforcement agencies at all levels, as well as strict enforcement, monitoring and evaluation of these laws."

Countries should adopt bilateral and multilateral agreements on commercial sexual exploitation of children. Cross-border law enforcement should be strengthened to stop child

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trafficking. During the mid-term review in Colombo (2004) children and adolescents suggested establishing a special regional police to monitor sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.

### **Society's Responsibility to Protect Children**

Everyone in the community and society must take responsibility to protect all children from sexual abuse and exploitation. During focus group discussions with over 100 children and adolescents from different parts of the world organized by World Vision in August 2008,<sup>59</sup> children emphasized the importance of cooperation and action by a range of actors, including friends, parents, teachers, police, social workers and government officials.

As part of the Machel study 10-year strategic review, children and adolescents emphasized the importance of community-based approaches, given the important role the community plays in caring for children affected by conflict. They emphasized the importance of children and young people having a dialogue with elders in the community.<sup>60</sup>

### **Role of the Media**

The media have a crucial role to play in eradicating commercial sexual exploitation of children. Media personnel should endeavour to provide air time, print space and cyberspace to educate the public about sexual exploitation and related issues and facilitate effective participation by children and adolescents. For example, as suggested by adolescents in South Asia, governments should mobilize the media to advocate for birth and marriage registration so that children can be protected from early and forced marriages and from trafficking.<sup>61</sup>

Children and young people also emphasize the importance of media practices that promote and protect children's rights and privacy and avoid sensationalizing their concerns.<sup>62</sup> Children and adolescents should be portrayed in a way that promotes their self-esteem, and the media should be educated about the importance of depicting positive stories of survivors.

## **3.3. Prevention**

### **Education and Life Skills**

The Final Appeal of Children and Young People at Yokohama stated that "Education, life skills development, awareness raising and advocacy about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and commercial sexual exploitation of children for all sexes and age groups should be one of the most important components of all prevention efforts."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> World Vision. 'Focus Group Discussions with Youth on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children' (draft), September 2008.

<sup>60</sup> Machel Study op. cit.

<sup>61</sup> Children's Forum Recommendations Summary for the South Asia Forum Regional Preparatory Consultation for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, 24-27 August 2008, Kathmandu.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. and Save the Children, 'Contribution to End Violence against Children in the Communities and on the Streets', 2006

<sup>63</sup> Final Appeal of Children and Young People in Yokhama, 2001.

The importance of education in combating and preventing commercial sexual exploitation of children has been highlighted in almost every consultation with children. They see it as key to preventing HIV and AIDS, protecting children from abuse and supporting their participation. All girls and boys (including those with disabilities) should have access to quality, free, inclusive education. Child-friendly schools should be developed where girls and boys feel safe and are eager to learn.

Representatives from the Mekong Child/Youth Forums emphasized the need for governments to supply more and better teachers in remote areas as well as scholarships for low-income children, even if they do not have nationality in their country of residence. In addition, non-formal literacy programmes and training to learn marketable vocational skills should be available to children and women in communities where the risk of trafficking is high, and especially for victims of trafficking.

A statement from child and adolescent representatives at the Ljubljana meeting (2005) said they recognized “that commercial sexual exploitation of children is surrounded by shame, silence and taboo in all societies.” Therefore, they wanted the topic to be a mandatory component of national school curricula in all European and Central Asian countries.<sup>64</sup> The importance of integrating such issues, including child trafficking, into school curricula, especially for children aged 6 to 12 years, was also highlighted during the mid-term review in East Asia and the Pacific, as well as the Children’s Forum in South Asia in August 2008. The importance of supporting child-led and youth-led peer support programmes in schools was also emphasized there.<sup>65</sup>

Life skills education and peer education should be provided to children and adolescents so that they can better protect themselves and their peers.

### **Awareness Raising and Parent Education**

Broader awareness-raising programmes on child sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking should be organized at the community level, involving parents, teachers and community and religious elders, as well as children and adolescents. Information on laws on commercial sexual exploitation of children should be consistently disseminated to communities, and they should be encouraged to take action to prevent it and protect their children from it.

Children and young people involved in the South Asia Regional Consultation of ECPAT’s Youth Partnership Project (December 2007) recommended working with youth “to design effective and appropriate local, national and international advocacy campaigns that promote the child protection message to local communities and national level policy makers.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Youth Statement, Yokohama Mid-term Review, Ljubljana, 2005.

<sup>65</sup> Children’s Forum Recommendations Summary for the South Asia Forum Regional Preparatory Consultation for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, 24-27 August 2008, Kathmandu.

<sup>66</sup> ECPAT International Youth Partnership Project, ‘Youth Recommendations for Involving Experiential and Vulnerable Youth in Peer Support and Advocacy against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children’, South Asia Regional Consultation, December 2007.

Awareness-raising campaigns are needed, targeting children, parents, teachers, government officials and others to prevent and address child pornography on the Internet and in videos, DVDs, films and magazines.

Parents should take good care of their children and communicate better. Parents should show interest in how their children are and in what they are doing – they should talk to them, listen to them and help them solve the difficulties they face to make children feel safe. Parents should also be better informed about child rights and the risks affecting girls and boys so they can better protect their children. This includes educating parents about how to block dangerous sites on the Internet and how to influence their children positively before they learn violence from television and video games.

### **Support for Families**

During consultations for the UN Study on Violence against Children, children and adolescents emphasized the importance of offering social assistance, including social workers and psychologists who can monitor children's welfare, to families experiencing violence or at risk of it. Families should be supported to change their behaviour so they can care for and protect their children and avoid violence within the family. Children in families that continue to use violence should be helped to live with other families.

Governments should recognize the importance of early childhood development programmes and support them.

Governments should support poverty reduction strategies and economic opportunities for the most marginalized families and children. Recommendations from the Mekong consultations emphasized the importance of government action to implement policies and measures that promote social and economic development. Such efforts include controlling prices and inflation, providing credit for the poor and implementing hunger alleviation and poverty reduction programmes to improve living standards, especially for victims of trafficking and families at risk. A system should be set up to support poor families so parents can stay with their children instead of going away to work. Life skills education and livelihoods skills training should be provided, particularly to female-headed families. Life skills training and bank loans should also be provided to out-of-school adolescents to help them create their own enterprises.

The children of sex workers should be supported to keep them from being forced into prostitution.

### **Support for Children's Centres and Clubs**

Centres and clubs for children and adolescents should be supported so they have spaces to meet and take part in activities that channel their energy and creativity in positive directions. They should also receive help to change risky habits. This should include life skills activities that help in solving problems and resolving conflicts peacefully.

## **Addressing Diversity**

Programmes that aim to combat sexual abuse and exploitation should be sensitive to cultural, political and economic differences, as well as individual differences. Positive cultural, traditional and religious beliefs and practices should be used in combating abuse and exploitation, and harmful practices that make children and adolescents vulnerable should be eliminated.

In the Final Appeal at the Yokohama Congress, children and adolescents highlighted the “need to address gender issues in commercial sexual exploitation of children, because the way we raise boys and girls in our communities creates male-dominant societies that allow the commercial sexual exploitation of both girls and boys, including children who identify as homosexuals, transgendered or transsexual.”<sup>67</sup>

## **Monitoring and Reporting**

Structures for community-based monitoring and response to child protection issues involving adults, children and adolescents should be established and given resources to prevent exploitation, abuse and violence and protect girls and boys from it. Child protection systems should be established to help children in all places, especially where trafficking is a big problem – not only in cities but also in rural areas. Children and people from the community should work collaboratively with governments to increase anti-trafficking vigilance in border areas.

In preparations for World Congress III children and adolescents from East Asia and the Pacific emphasized the need to increase monitoring of tourists at country entry points and in communities to prevent and address child sex tourism. Police capacity should be strengthened to increase availability of accurate information and to help the police undertake effective investigations into the background of tourists.<sup>68</sup>

## **Capacity Building for Professionals**

Capacity building on dealing with child sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking should be provided to concerned professionals including police, doctors, nurses and relevant government officials. This will help them identify and respond sensitively to children and adolescents who are at risk of or who experience such abuse or exploitation.

## **Tackling Corruption**

During the mid-term review in Yokohama children and young people in both South Asia and East Asia and the Pacific emphasized the need for governments and communities to seriously fight corruption. It is a barrier to eliminating commercial sexual exploitation of children and

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<sup>67</sup>. UNICEF [http://www.unicef.or.jp/kenri/ken\\_bod5-3.htm](http://www.unicef.or.jp/kenri/ken_bod5-3.htm), accessed on 9 February . Final Appeal of Children and Young People, Yokohama, 2001

<sup>68</sup> Children and Young People’s Preparatory Meeting for the East Asia and Pacific Preparatory Meeting for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children, 14-16 August 2008, Children’s and Young People’s Recommendations.

contributes to its growth.<sup>69</sup> Children and adolescents participating in consultations with World Vision also called for serious action on corruption.<sup>70</sup>

### **3.4. Protection**

#### **Legislation and Policies**

Ensure implementation of laws and policies and monitor their impact on girls and boys. Laws, policies and activities must be effective and must be properly implemented and respected by all. In addition they should be carefully assessed to make sure they are really helping children and adolescents.

Governments must create and/or update laws and policies to protect girls and boys from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation, including child sexual abuse, early marriage, sexual exploitation and trafficking. Laws, policy and activities must be based on good research that reveals the real situation and the views of girls and boys.

All children born in the country must be officially registered as soon as possible to allow them access to all public services. In addition, government agencies must provide special identification for those whose nationality is not recognized and for foreign victims of trafficking who want to remain in the country so they can receive public care.

In recognition of increasing cross-border migration, governments of all countries, both origin and destination, need to have workable agreements and policies in place to ensure the rights of all migrants. This should include access to legal documents and laws that protect migrants. All governments need to establish an organization or office responsible for aiding migrants. It should include establish information centres in cities and remote areas to provide information for migrant children and youth (of legal working age) about safe migration and job opportunities. Governments need to take action immediately in situations of abuse and exploitation.

Efforts must be made to ensure that exploiters are the ones punished, not children and adolescents who have been exploited. Young people from South Asia have suggested that adults found guilty of sexual exploitation and trafficking should receive a life sentence, and it should apply to all people who offend, including the police. Young offenders should be given an opportunity to improve through rehabilitation.

Destination countries should have strict laws to deal with people who traffic children and adolescents into their countries. Laws that strictly punish traffickers must be enforced, which will help prevent others from trafficking. Traffickers who are in jail must be rehabilitated to prevent them from repeating their crimes.

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<sup>69</sup> Report on the Post-Yokohama Mid-term Review of the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Commitment and Action Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. 8-10 November 2004, Bangkok.

<sup>70</sup> World Vision, 'Focus Group Discussions with Youth on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children', (draft) September 2008.



States should ratify the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child pornography and child prostitution. This will enable effective cooperation in the fight against sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. Structures and mechanisms are needed to encourage children and adolescents to participate in developing policies related to combating sexual exploitation, such as the Optional Protocol and national plans of action.

Governments should pass laws outlawing early marriage. They should also monitor marriages between foreigners and young girls.

### **Accessible and Child-friendly Services**

The judicial system needs to be reformed so children do not feel threatened and intimidated when reporting abuse. Governments must establish special units to help children and young people. For example, every police station should have a Children's Desk to deal with children's issues, and the police should be trained in child rights.

During the UN Study on Violence against Children, children from various regions requested the establishment of children's telephone helplines/hotlines with free access numbers to help break the wall of silence.<sup>71</sup> Hotline counsellors should be trained professionals, social workers or volunteers trained on violence and exploitation of children and adolescents, including sexual abuse and trafficking. Collaboration with local authorities and NGOs should help referral and prompt follow-up. Wherever possible, international anti-trafficking hotlines should also be set up and should have the same number.

States are urged to develop child-friendly law enforcement and judicial procedures, which should deal with cases as fast as possible. In particular, child-friendly judicial procedures are needed in sexual abuse cases to protect children's rights. During the South Asia mid-term review children and adolescents suggested that special police and courts should be established in each country to deal with sexual exploitation. These courts should exist at all levels (local, district and higher) and should be child friendly.

Governments should provide services and justice to child victims of commercial sexual exploitation. The need for training of professionals is continuous. To avoid re-victimizing young victims during judicial procedures, it is essential that all involved in the process receive special training on children's rights and in particular on sexual exploitation and abuse.

### **Government Support for Community-based Care**

Government policies and practices should promote and support care and protection of children in their own families and communities. Where families cannot support them, alternative family- and community-based care options should be prioritized. Care in

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<sup>71</sup> Save the Children, 'Save the Children's Contribution to End Violence against Children in the Home and Family: Sharing good practice and key recommendations', 2006; 'Save the Children's Contribution to End Violence against Children in the Communities and on the Streets: Sharing good practice and key recommendations', 2006.

institutions should be a last resort and should be for the shortest possible time. Children and adolescents should be diverted from the formal justice system.

During the Children's Forum in South Asia a recommendation was made to improve the quality of care at rehabilitation homes/centres. It also called for children and youth to participate in committees supervising care and protection services.

### **Access to Information**

Child-friendly information and peer education initiatives are needed that inform boys and girls about sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS. Sexually active girls and boys need to know where to get condoms and how to use them. Girls and boys need help in developing enough confidence to insist that condoms are used.

Child victims are entitled to information and explanations about all procedures, including medical examinations.

### **Monitoring**

Children and adolescents involved in the J8 summit in St Petersburg (July 2006) called for all countries that have ratified the CRC to set up a team to fight child abuse. They called on the G8 countries to help countries needing financial aid.

Governments should put systems in place to control and manage media (print, electronic, Internet and cell phones) to protect children from pornography.

Mechanisms should be created to more effectively monitor government implementation of child rights conventions and treaties.

Specific recommendations made by children and adolescent representatives at the International Youth Advisory Congress on Online Safety and Security are included in a case study in section 4.

## **3.5. Recovery and Reintegration**

### **Services for Child Victims**

Victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse have equal rights and should not face discrimination. Governments must improve the process to return them to their countries while considering survivors' feelings, safety and need for emotional support. Society must be prepared to accept and give opportunities to survivors of sexual exploitation.

Those who experience commercial sexual exploitation need long-term, comprehensive and accessible services.

Structures and procedures should be established to promptly and sensitively respond to victims' urgent needs, including social assistance, free health care, rehabilitation, preparation

for reintegration, the option of a residence permit in cases of trafficking across borders and provision of shelters offering specialized services to meet their unique needs.

Governments should improve the services provided to child victims. This includes increasing the number of shelters and programmes that help rebuild lives; training staff to have a positive attitude and equipping them with the skills to work with child victims; providing counselling, non-formal education and vocational training; and ensuring a safe return home if it is in the child's best interests.

Children and young people involved in the South Asia Regional Consultation of ECPAT's Youth Partnership Project recommended working "with young people living in shelters to identify ways that they can have a positive impact on their immediate surroundings, including through the creation of libraries, game areas and youth clubs." In addition, they asked for "training for youth to support the shelter or drop-in-centre staff to provide orientation for newcomers to adjust and settle in to their new environment."<sup>72</sup>

Participants in the mid-term review for Europe and Central Asia emphasized the need for a change in attitudes towards victims and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation of children. For example, educational programmes should have a positive approach towards sexuality and should be sensitive to different age groups.

Children and youth in ECPAT's Youth Partnership Project called for "encouraging young people to transform negative self images and change adverse public perceptions by focusing on their positive roles as peer supporters, youth advocates and community leaders."<sup>73</sup>

Special measures should be developed to support young people who are infected with HIV and affected by sexual exploitation, abuse or trafficking. There should be no discrimination of children with HIV or AIDs. Children should not be separated from their families or excluded from their schools or communities.

### **Ensuring Participation in Decision Making**

The active participation of children affected by sexual abuse and exploitation in all decisions affecting them and in society as a whole should be encouraged. This includes having them serve as advocates to protect other children and adolescents from trafficking. Survivors should be approached with an emphasis on their resilience. Affected young people may be trained as mentors to help their peers.

Children who are living in care should have a care plan to ensure planning for their future. Children and adolescents should participate in developing their care plan, and it should be regularly reviewed and updated.

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<sup>72</sup> ECPAT International Youth Partnership Project. 'Youth Recommendations for Involving Experiential and Vulnerable Youth in Peer Support and Advocacy against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children', South Asia Regional Consultation, December 2007.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

## **Building Community Support**

Governments should allocate resources to establish community-based recovery and reintegration programmes. For example, children and adolescents facing sexual and other abuse should be able to get counselling and other support in their community. Access to education and/or vocational skills training should also be available for survivors of sexual exploitation or trafficking.

ECPAT's Youth Partnership Project suggests that training in drama, poetry and puppetry should be provided "to enable survivors to express themselves through art and other creative mediums which build self confidence through public presentations to outside organizations, local schools and communities." In addition, such activities encourage "positive partnerships with trusted police officials and local government leaders through joint meetings designed to share ideas about how to better combat commercial sexual exploitation of children and help reduce youth apprehension of authority figures."<sup>74</sup>

Family tracing is needed. Families and communities should be prepared for the return and reintegration of survivors of trafficking through social inclusion programmes, which help reduce stigma.

The decision to return home after having been exploited must be voluntary. Before the child or adolescent returns to the community a family assessment should be prepared to make sure the returnee will be safe, cared for and treated without discrimination. A plan should be made for each returnee, covering access to education, health and psychosocial support as well as vocational training if desired. A system should be in place to monitor and follow up on care and protection. If the family cannot welcome the child home, the community must find another safe place for him or her. Institutional care should be a last resort.

Child care and protection systems should be strengthened to aid prevention, family support and care of children in their own communities. Accessible services should be provided to improve the prospects of preventing and effectively responding to violence against children and adolescents. Services should be based on broad and targeted social policies, programmes and poverty reduction strategies.

Young people in diverse contexts have consistently developed practical and workable recommendations for governments to better address sexual abuse and exploitation. They have emphasized the importance of listening to them and taking their recommendations seriously (Box 7). For example, in a closing speech at the East Asia and Pacific region mid-term review (Bangkok, November 2004), child and youth representatives expressed the hope that their recommendations "would not just be heard, but also would be implemented by government delegates." They also called upon governments to ensure that "planning and programme implementation would be genuinely responsive to the needs of children and youth."

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

**Box 7. Ten key points from children concerning sexual abuse<sup>75</sup>**

The following points, which come from girls and boys, emerged from analysis of research on sexual abuse undertaken with children in 13 countries. These messages informed the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children:

1. Sexual abuse is bad and should not happen.
2. Tell them to stop – it is hard to disclose.
3. It is too difficult to get out of sexual exploitation and exit the sex trade.
4. Listen to me and believe what I tell you.
5. Talk to me and be there if I need you.
6. I need to feel safe and protected and decide how my case is to be handled.
7. Love me, support me – we know what we need.
8. Help me get things straight.
9. Let my abuser face up to what he or she has done.
10. Don't put a label on me and let me go on with my life.

And as highlighted in the Mekong Children's Recommendations (2004): "We want to see results. We want governments to take serious action against trafficking. We will follow up and examine the activities of governments. We want governments to publish their promises and reports in the mass media: Internet, radio, newspapers, television."<sup>76</sup>

Unfortunately, there has been little response from governments, which need to increase their accountability to children and adolescents. They need to find more systematic ways to involve girls and boys – particularly the most marginalized – as partners in processes and mechanisms to monitor and implement government commitments to children and adolescents.

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<sup>75</sup> International Save the Children Alliance, 'Global Submission to the UN Study: Listen and Speak Out Against Sexual Abuse of Girls and Boys', 2005.

<sup>76</sup> Our Voices, Our Views: The Mekong Children's Forum on human trafficking', written by child participants with help from Save the Children UK and the International Labour Organization, October 2004.

## 4. CASE STUDIES OF PROTECTION THROUGH PARTICIPATION

This section presents case studies and shorter case examples of children's and adolescent's involvement in protecting themselves from sexual exploitation and abuse. The case studies also address how young people are promoting implementation of government commitments and broader pledges. In addition they illustrate actions taken by children and adolescents in partnership with adults to address sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking. The case studies highlight processes that have led to concrete results and changes – for example, government accountability, civil society engagement, advancement of children's participation – as well as the challenges faced. The case studies cover:

- Promoting children's participation to combat human trafficking in the greater Mekong sub-region of East Asia;
- Involvement of children in developing government national plans of action to combat sexual abuse and exploitation in Bangladesh;
- The African Movement of Working Children and Youth, a network of child-led organizations working to combat child abuse, exploitation and trafficking;
- Save the Children's Child Trafficking Response Program supporting at-risk and trafficked children in Albania and Romania;
- Key findings from research on children's and adolescent's participation in addressing violence, including sexual violence in Latin America.

The case examples cover:

- ECPAT's experience with meaningful child participation
- ECPAT's Youth Partnership Project
- Children's participation in Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- Adolescents working as researchers on sexual exploitation in Eastern Europe
- Addressing commercial sexual exploitation of children in Honduras
- Children's ombudspersons
- Empowering Adolescents in the Middle East and North Africa
- Breaking the silence around child sexual abuse in Lebanon
- Youth leadership in North America
- Working with boys on gender issues
- An international youth congress on online safety and security

### 4.1 East Asia

#### **Case Study: Combating Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region**

Human trafficking, including child trafficking, is a serious problem in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region, which includes Cambodia, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. Child trafficking is often considered in the larger context of 'children on the move', or migration. Children migrate alongside adults, sometimes moving with them, sometimes moving alone. More attention needs to be paid to the diversity of children's experiences and their own agency in determining when, where and why they migrate.<sup>77</sup> Children's migration is especially complex because of their vulnerabilities and the

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<sup>77</sup> Save the Children, 2008 'Children's Migrations: Diversities, exploitation, participation and protection in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region of South East Asia'.

lack of protection mechanisms. However, the links between children's migration and trafficking need careful disentangling.

Innovative and collaborative initiatives and forums to promote and sustain child and adolescent participation to combat human trafficking have been under way since 2004. Agencies supporting the sub-regional initiative include Save the Children UK, International Labour Organization, World Vision, the UK Department for International Development, the UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub- region and many local partners.

A commitment to participatory action planning with children at local and national levels has contributed to stronger protection systems in communities and countries. For example, in Cambodia a local NGO partner (Children and Love Association) has supported children to form peer educator groups, youth coordination committees and children's clubs. Members of these groups regularly discuss protection issues affecting girls and boys. Members have been trained to carry out baseline surveys, raise awareness and take action on children's rights, trafficking, abuse and other child-related issues in their communities. Adults – including parents, monks, teachers, village leaders and local officials – have also been encouraged to set up child protection networks and work collaboratively with the children's groups through monthly meetings.

The views, experiences and recommendations of children and adolescents have also been amplified through the organization of national and sub-regional child and youth forums. They provide an opportunity for young people aged 10 to 19 years to speak out about child trafficking, share their experiences and develop recommendations on how to address the problem with government officials, representatives of UN agencies and NGOs, and the media. The forums have been strategically timed so they can influence the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking process.

The first meeting, the Mekong Children's Forum on Human Trafficking, was organized in 2004. It paid careful attention to ethical, safe, meaningful participation informed by practice standards on children's participation and protection codes of conduct.<sup>78</sup> All the child representatives (five from each country<sup>79</sup>) came from areas where trafficking is a day-to-day threat. However, lessons learned from the event revealed a need to further increase the participation of the most marginalized and affected children.

The collective voice of children and adolescents was strong and authoritative. They presented 43 recommendations and called on governments to get results. It was the first time children from throughout the Mekong region had met face to face with their government representatives on this issue. The officials were clearly impressed by the children and responded to questions about how they could act upon their recommendations. For example, an official from Cambodia stated, "We will really consider your needs and recommendations. Most important, we have to think about how we can integrate these recommendations into the COMMIT regional Plan of Action."

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<sup>78</sup> ILO and Save the Children UK, 'Making History: People, process and participation: Mekong Children's Forum on Human Trafficking', 2005, and 'Our Voices, Our Views: A report on the Mekong Children's Forum in Human Trafficking', Bangkok, 11-17 October 2004 (report written by the child participants).

<sup>79</sup> Though children from Myanmar were unfortunately unable to participate in the first Mekong Children's Forum, they participated in local and national level preparatory processes, and a letter from them was shared with children attending the forum.

The second gathering, the Mekong Youth Forum on Human Trafficking, took place in September 2007. It built upon a series of national forums through which young people examined the work being done to prevent human trafficking and developed recommendations to improve policy and approaches. These recommendations were presented to high-level government officials.<sup>80</sup> Representatives – who were aged 13 to 19 and came from affected communities or those at risk in each country – then came together to develop collective recommendations. They focused on six priority areas: Participation of young people; victim protection; education; mainstreaming of prevention methods; rights to nationality and citizenship; and migration and the special risks faced by migrant workers and their families.<sup>81</sup> A commitment to process, collaboration and learning from the process led to practice improvements and new advocacy initiatives – such as a round-table discussion on protecting migrant children in 2008.<sup>82</sup>

### **Case Example: ECPAT’s Experience with Meaningful Child Participation<sup>83</sup>**

ECPAT International has a history of progressive efforts to encourage child and youth participation. In 1996, the International Young People’s Project was initiated in collaboration with ECPAT Philippines to implement the children’s recommendations from the Stockholm Congress. The second World Congress provided more opportunities for participation by child survivors of sexual exploitation. These successful initiatives led to the formation of the ECPAT International Child and Youth Advisory Committee and election of a youth representative to the ECPAT International management board in 2001. Since then a child and youth participation officer has been recruited to ensure focus and commitment to promoting child and youth participation, especially among survivors of sexual exploitation.

A child and youth participation policy was developed, and participation was given a strong focus in ECPAT’s 2005-2009 work plan. In addition, a survey of current and future child and youth participation initiatives in the ECPAT network was undertaken. Key findings from the survey were highlighted in the 2007 ECPAT report on ensuring meaningful child and youth participation. It included these examples of actions in East Asia and Pacific:

- Child and youth mobilization through children’s clubs, working children’s organizations and children’s parliaments;
- Radio programmes by and for children in the Philippines and Thailand to raise awareness on commercial sexual exploitation of children;
- Government collaboration with young people and NGOs to set up systems and structures for children’s participation, such as through the National Framework for Children’s Participation in the Philippines;
- Involving children in drafting the National Plan of Action against commercial sexual exploitation of children in Cambodia;

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<sup>80</sup> See <[www.mekongyouthforum.com](http://www.mekongyouthforum.com)>.

<sup>81</sup> See Mekong Youth Forum Recommendations in annex 2.

<sup>82</sup> For example, see recent report by Save the Children UK (2008) ‘Protecting Migrant Children: A regional roundtable discussion’, 5-6 June 2008, Bangkok; ‘Save the Children Cross-border Project against Trafficking and Exploitation of Migrant and Vulnerable Children in the Mekong Sub-region’, Bangkok 2008.

<sup>83</sup> ECPAT International. ‘Ensuring Meaningful Child and Youth Participation in the Fight against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: The ECPAT experience’, Bangkok 2007.



- Extensive participation of children from various provinces in developing the Mongolian National Programme of Action for the Development and Protection of Children for 2002-2010.
- Children's representation in regional initiatives including the East Asia and the Pacific Ministerial Consultations; contributions to the Regional Consultation on the UN Study on Violence against Children; and organization of their own Mekong Children's Forum (described in the case study above) to provide inputs into the COMMIT process for law enforcement and protection of trafficking victims;
- Young people's input into the Child Wise Inter-Governmental Regional Task Force Meeting on Child Sex Tourism;
- Development and application of minimum standards to improve the quality of children's participation in regional consultations through the work of the East Asia and the Pacific Inter-Agency Group.<sup>84</sup>

The survey found these key challenges:

- Difficulties implementing child protection policies while working with children in participatory ways;
- Uneven levels of child and youth participation and organization within the region and fragmented coordination among children's groups;
- Lack of capacity in working on strategies and policies among child/youth groups;
- Lack of child participation in reporting on the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Pornography and Child Prostitution.

## 4.2 South Asia

### Case Study: Developing National Plans of Action in Bangladesh

Since signing the Stockholm Declaration in 1996, the Government of Bangladesh has demonstrated commitment to addressing child sexual abuse and exploitation through the development and implementation of NPAs.<sup>85</sup> It has sought to consult and involve children in the process. This case study highlights important considerations regarding ethical consultation processes. However, more systematic monitoring and follow up is needed to ensure children's meaningful participation and accountability practices, especially as successive NPAs for children have been developed in Bangladesh.

**The Context:** Bangladesh, one of the most densely populated countries in the world, is overwhelmingly rural but is urbanizing rapidly. Poverty, lack of economic opportunities, illiteracy, lack of birth registration and cultural values that discourage children from voicing their concerns have contributed to sexual abuse and exploitation of girls and boys. The stigma of sexual abuse for both girls and boys and the tendency to blame the victim/survivor rather than bring the perpetrators to justice contributes to silence, lack of reporting and cover-up. Early marriage of girls is against the law but continues to be prevalent in many areas. Sexual exploitation of girls and boys also takes place in registered brothels and in the streets, parks and railway stations in towns. Among those brought up in brothels, many girls frequently end up as sex workers, while boys tend towards facilitating contacts between customers and sex

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<sup>84</sup> H. Veitch, 'Protocol on Children's Participation at the Regional Consultation for the UN Study on Violence Against Children', Interagency Regional Steering Committee for the UN Study on Violence against Children, Bangkok, 2005.

<sup>85</sup> 'Promises Renewed, Promises Reinforced: South Asia Regional Mid-Term Review of the Yokohama Global Commitment 2001', Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2004.

workers. Other children brought to brothels include victims of trafficking or other forms of violence.

Weak implementation of laws contributes to violations of children's protection rights. Greater political will is needed, particularly for ministerial action. More systematic action is needed at community level to address a range of child protection issues, including sexual abuse and exploitation.

***Consulting and Involving Children in NPA Processes:*** Children have participated in developing action plans, including the National Plan of Action Against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (2001-2002) and the National Plan of Action for Children (2004-2009). In preparing for the Yokohama Congress, the government received support from an inter-agency core group to develop the former plan, which included broad consultations. Development of the plan involved the following stages:<sup>86</sup>

- Preparation of a background paper, 'Good practices and priorities to combat sexual exploitation and abuse of children in Bangladesh';
- Eight one-day consultations with child victims/survivors of brothel- or street-based sexual exploitation and trafficking and with children vulnerable to sexual abuse. A total of 90 children (girls and boys in separate groups aged 9 to 17) shared their experiences and views and most importantly their recommendations for tackling these problems. They also gave feedback on salient points from a previously published paper based on consultations with children;<sup>87</sup>
- Three sub-national consultations prior to drafting the plan and one national consultation in Dhaka based on the first draft, during which children's views and ideas were shared.

Consultants supported by Save the Children Alliance, UNICEF and the Department of Women's Affairs worked with groups of children in their own communities. These were conducted adhering to ethical principles<sup>88</sup> including informed voluntary participation, protection of children's identity and provision of psychosocial support during and after the consultations through NGO partnerships. This was especially important considering the sensitivity of the issues.

Inputs from the children and adolescents ultimately had a profound influence on the content of the NPA, which was organized under seven themes: prevention; protection; recovery and reintegration; perpetrators; child participation; HIV and AIDS, sexually transmitted infections and substance abuse; and coordination and monitoring. Child representatives participated in the regional consultation in Dhaka (November 2001), and two girls who had taken part in the children's consultations attended the second World Congress as part of the government delegation.

The NPA was approved by the government in February 2002, after which an implementing and monitoring committee and sub-committees were established. The sub-committee on participation supported the development and dissemination of a simplified Bangla version of the plan in all 64 districts. They also supported feedback and further consultations with

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<sup>86</sup> 'Report on Sub-national and National Consultations for National Plan of Action against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking', Bangladesh, by R. Kabir, October 2001.

<sup>87</sup> 'Report of Findings from Consultations with Children on Sexual Abuse and Exploitation', R. Kabir, Dhaka, November 2001.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

children (especially survivors and at-risk groups) to gain children's ideas for better implementation of the plan.<sup>89</sup> Children's resilience, resourcefulness and strengths – especially of the most disadvantaged groups – were prominent as girls and boys identified their potential roles in implementation. The experience also emphasized the importance of adult-child partnerships at a range of levels.

One important suggestion that was taken up was establishment of a National Children's Task Force to support better implementation and monitoring of the NPA. In September 2003, the Department of Women's Affairs organized an additional national consultation with children, which enabled the formation of the task force, with support from UNICEF and Save the Children. A total of 169 children (aged 11 to 18) from 29 districts throughout the country participated in the consultation. The task force was subsequently formed with 20 core members and 16 rotating advisory committee members.

Children were also meaningfully involved in developing the NPA for Children. Girls and boys of different ages and backgrounds participated in local, district and national consultations, and children were also represented in government drafting committees. Their views influenced the development of the NPA.

However, despite the initial commitments to ethical participatory processes and the establishment of structures that are crucial to meaningful children's participation, the level of government implementation, monitoring and follow-up of NPA commitments remains disappointing.

### **Case Example: ECPAT's Youth Partnership Project<sup>90</sup>**

The Youth Partnership Project for child survivors of sexual abuse or exploitation in South Asia is a unique initiative that links Bangladesh, India and Nepal in fighting sexual exploitation. The first phase of the project, started in January 2005, is being coordinated by the ECPAT International Secretariat in collaboration with local organizations such as Aparajeyo-Bangladesh, Sanlaap in India and Maiti in Nepal.

In each country, children and young people take responsibility for raising awareness or supporting their peers in their communities or organizations. This helps build their resilience, accelerating their own recovery and sense of empowerment. It also mobilizes communities to fight against sexual violence and exploitation.

Regular communication and visits are organized to facilitate learning and sharing of good practices. An 'action booklet' and guidelines help in implementing peer support programmes and youth-led micro projects.<sup>91</sup> Frequent discussions take place on cross-border issues among children and young people, along with partner organizations and project officials.

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<sup>89</sup> 'Consultations with Children on Implementation of the National Plan of Action against the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children including Trafficking', R. Kabir. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs/UNICEF/Save the Children Alliance. November 2002.

<sup>90</sup> ECPAT International. 'Ensuring Meaningful Child and Youth Participation in the Fight against Commercial Sexual Exploitation: The ECPAT experience', Bangkok, 2007.

<sup>91</sup> ECPAT International, 'Youth Partnership Project for Child Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Good Practices for Working with Experiential and At Risk Youth', 2007.

Peer support programmes, participation in advocacy initiatives and leadership development training are helping youth overcome discrimination and personal challenges. They are taking more responsibility for protecting themselves and advocating for protection of all children.

Discrimination and stigma are often one of the biggest challenges faced by young survivors of exploitation (as well as other groups of marginalized children). However, experience has shown how these children and young people benefit when they have an opportunity to support each other in a safe environment and to gain confidence about expressing their views and telling their stories. They start to take on new roles in their communities, helping to raise awareness, supporting others and mobilizing action. In doing so they challenge in positive ways the stereotypes and prejudices that people hold against them. It is clear that participation can be a powerful tool to build the resilience of individuals and address discrimination.

However, these experiences have also reinforced some of ECPAT's key lessons learned about safety and protection of these young people: the need for robust child protection policies and procedures and for organizations supporting children to have clear responsibility to address the consequences, follow-up and obligations of their participation.

### **4.3 Africa**

#### **Case Study: Supporting the African Movement of Working Children and Youth<sup>92</sup>**

The African Movement of Working Children and Youth, a child-led movement founded in 1994, currently has associations in 126 cities and villages in 21 countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Referred to as AMWCY, it has almost 150,000 members, including housemaids, apprentices and independent working girls and boys, some of whom are extremely marginalized.

AMWCY has elaborated 12 desired rights of children that guide the movement and help it fight child exploitation, harmful working conditions and child trafficking. One of these, the right to remain in the village (no 'exodus' to other places in search of work), was proposed by rural, migrant domestic workers. It has led to several initiatives over the years to discourage the exodus of children and young people from their communities and to limit the risks attached to exodus. The movement also works to prevent child trafficking and undertakes an anti-trafficking campaign. AMWCY also supports education and literacy, health care, freedom of expression, safe working conditions and the right of children to develop safely in their own communities.

**Context:** Two issues facilitate the exodus of young people from their communities. One is the expectation in some rural areas that adolescents should experience it as part of their personal development and to improve their economic situation before marriage; the second is the tradition of 'entrusting' a child to a relative or richer family, which can result in mistreatment by the 'entrusted' family and abandonment by the original family. The baby boom in the second half of the 1980s and the 1990s has also raised the current population of adolescents and further encouraged their mobility. Combined with worsening poverty among both rural and urban populations, the vulnerability of adolescents, especially younger ones, has increased.

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<sup>92</sup> Adapted from information provided by the African Movement of Working Children and Youth, ENDA Jeunesse Action, Save the Children Sweden regional office in West Africa.

**Legal Framework:** All countries in the region that are part of this initiative have ratified relevant international conventions (Convention on the Rights of the Child, ILO Conventions 138 and 182). They have signed bilateral and multilateral agreements on trafficking and adopted a regional plan of action. However, a significant gap remains between ratifying international conventions and, incorporating them into national legislation and implementing and enforcing them at the local level. Establishing a comprehensive legal framework and system to protect children and prevent their abuse and exploitation is constrained by a number of factors. They include the coexistence (sometimes conflict) of international laws with other national, customary and religious laws; the importance of cultural, religious and traditional values; the weaknesses of the judicial and police systems; and the corresponding weakness of social services and subsequent limited access to justice for people.

### ***Achievements***

- A project to strengthen action against early exodus and child trafficking was established in 2004 by AMWCY associations in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger, supported by AMWCY's main partners (Enda Third World, Plan, Save the Children Sweden and UNICEF). The project has since been extended to Guinea, Senegal and Togo.
- AMWCY has undertaken activities to prevent exodus in 150 villages, establishing regular contacts with traditional authorities and information forums on the risks of early exodus. Children and young people have been supported in villages to develop solutions, including improving school conditions and attendance, developing income-generating activities, improving leisure opportunities and introducing or improving birth registration. Efforts have also been made to engage parents, as generational conflict is considered among the root causes of exodus.
- Young people who decide to move within their country or migrate abroad are helped with information and contacts, and they are also helped to stay in touch with their home villages. These actions are intended to reduce children's isolation and vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. Talks and informal listening points are established in transport stations, markets and other areas where migrants gather. These activities have been initiated in 64 locations.
- Assistance is provided to children who wish to return home, using AMWCY's network and formal networks linked to NGOs and other actors.
- Governments have offered support to AMWCY initiatives. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire the ministries of Justice and Social Affairs support communication initiatives and AMWCY conferences in towns and villages to discuss early exodus and child trafficking. A bilateral agreement on child trafficking between Mali and Senegal has been improved by inclusion of amendments aimed at increasing respect for children's rights.
- An assessment was conducted in 2007. Reflection on lessons learned led to a refined vision and action plan, contained in the Bamako Declaration (19 October 2007).<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> [www.enda.sn/eja](http://www.enda.sn/eja)

- Regional lobbying and partnerships have brought the perspectives of children in exodus and exposed to trafficking to regional forums such as the Regional Working Group against Trafficking, of which AMWCY is a full member.
- AMWCY has contributed to development of a concept plan for reducing children's mobility risk by the Regional Working Group against Trafficking in Persons, which highlights the difference between voluntary migration for work and exploitive/forced migration for trafficking. AMWCY also contributed to the strategic plan against trafficking of the Economic Community of West African States, which has led to inclusion of children and civil society participation in its new action plan.

**Challenges:** AMWCY's voluntary nature and non-professional constituency limits its capacity to follow up systematically and document its actions. Its access to financial resources is limited and constrains action. Initially there was some distrust of AMWCY, which was sometimes perceived as an external actor. However, its strong links with local organizations representing women, religious groups and workers as well as community and traditional groups and with government authorities are helping it overcome this perception.

**Conclusions:** Key to AMWCY's sustainability is its structure as a child-led organization based on a large and well-organized network of associations in villages and towns across sub-Saharan Africa. Crucial to its success is its ability to stay in contact with children and young people in exodus. AMWCY's familiarity with its target population eases access to information and strengthens relationships with concerned communities. Despite its informal approach, the movement is well organized. Encouraging active participation by victims makes them less vulnerable and helps realize child rights.

#### **Case Example: Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission<sup>94</sup>**

During 10 years of civil war, the children of Sierra Leone were deliberately and routinely targeted for violence and abuse, and they witnessed unimaginable horrors. Boys and girls were abducted and forcibly recruited as child soldiers and were raped, mutilated, forced into sex work and sexually exploited. In 1999 the Lomé Peace Accord was signed between the government and the Revolutionary United Front. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Sierra Leone originated from the peace agreement and was established by an act of Parliament in February 2000.

Formation of the commission has been identified as a significant step towards healing and reconciliation for all – victims, witnesses, perpetrators and families – and the participation of children has been lauded.<sup>95</sup> Sierra Leone's commission was unique in the attention it gave to the experiences of children affected by the armed conflict. It aimed to involve them throughout the process, and child-friendly procedures were adopted to encourage that. According to Section 6 (2) (b) of the act establishing it, the commission gave "special attention to the subject of sexual violence and to the experiences of women and children within the armed conflict." The commission sought to build children's confidence and restore their sense of justice and their belief in the social and political order while also establishing a mechanism of accountability for crimes committed against them.

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<sup>94</sup> UNICEF, 2004, 'Adolescent Programming Experiences during Conflict and Post Conflict: Case studies; Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2007, 'Draft Study: Children and adolescents in transitional justice processes in Sierra Leone'.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

The challenge was to develop child-friendly procedures to ensure protection of participants, help them feel safe when recounting their experiences and avoid further trauma. UNICEF, together with other UN agencies and the Child Protection Network (formed of national and international NGOs and government counterparts), helped develop the procedures. They included special hearings for children, closed sessions, a safe environment for interviews, withholding the identity of child witnesses and participation of staff trained in psychosocial support for children.

The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission engaged children by:

- Taking 300 confidential statements from children in every district of the country;
- Facilitating the participation of child witnesses in district hearings;
- Organizing a two-day thematic hearing on children in Freetown;
- Inviting the Sierra Leone Children's Forum Network to prepare a written submission to the Commission;
- Supporting children's contributions to the official child-friendly version of the Commission's final report;
- Involving the Voices of Children radio programme in disseminating information during the truth and reconciliation process;
- Supporting opportunities for children's representatives from a Children's Forum Network to meet with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts and with the President of Sierra Leone.

#### 4.4 Europe

##### **Case Study: Responding to Child Trafficking in Albania and Romania**

Since 2002 Save the Children has implemented a Regional Child Trafficking Response Programme in South Eastern Europe. During its initial phase anti-trafficking projects were piloted with at-risk and trafficked children in seven countries/entities<sup>96</sup> – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo (Serbia), Montenegro, Romania and Serbia. A second phase, initiated in 2006, supported a comprehensive regional research programme, based in communities and involving children. A third phase, being planned, will build on the findings from the earlier research.<sup>97</sup>

##### ***Achievements***

- ***Youth-run centres in Albania:*** As a result of a consultation with children and adolescents across Albania, Save the Children helped establish youth-run centres in two economically depressed towns (Kucova and Cerrik) with high vulnerability to trafficking and some of the highest unemployment rates in the country. The centres, which aim to provide life skills and other support, are run by a board of young people aged 14 to 18, with the help of paid coordinators and community advisory boards. The young people determine the rules of operation and plan their activities. These are aimed at involving young people in addressing important community issues and implementing service projects that engage community partners, public officials, the media and other young people. Members of the

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<sup>96</sup> At the same time Serbia and Montenegro was one country.

<sup>97</sup> Save the Children, 'Children Speak Out: Trafficking risk and resilience in Southeast Europe, Albania Report', 2007.

community, teachers, parents and local government representatives strongly support the centres, which have built the capacities of organizations, community leaders and parents.

The two municipalities have signed a formal agreement to take over full responsibility for centre operations, including staff salaries and other costs. Thus the youth centres will be locally owned and sustainable without the support of Save the Children.

An evaluation in June 2008 revealed that young people from Kucova have benefited from the centre's recreation opportunities, training, computers and other activities. The evaluation concluded that these activities have helped with skills development, leading to these accomplishments:

- Following a presentation on youth issues to the municipal authority by seven young people, two young people were appointed to the mayor's advisory committee.
- A group of nine young women developed community projects through a programme aimed at empowering them to lead change. They lobbied the municipal authority to provide a budget to the youth centre for such projects.
- The same group of young women went to the education director with complaints about teachers selling exam passes and hiring themselves out as private tutors.
- Girls organized a big concert for the Day for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women. They also ran a campaign (This Hand Will Never Hurt You) asking men and boys to commit to not hurting women.

“Given the lack of statistics on trafficking, there is no concrete evidence of a decrease in trafficking from the Kucova and Cerrik areas, but these activities serve to strengthen preventive measures and empower children and young people.

***Youth-run Centres in Romania:*** A similar programme was developed in four locations in Romania (Bucharest, Galati, Iasi and Timisoara), reaching a number of children at risk of trafficking. Fifteen children aged 12 to 18 who had been trafficked were interviewed in transit centres in Bucharest and Iasi and were offered support by teams from counselling centres. Activities aimed at preventing trafficking, including performance art and cinema, were organized in cooperation with child protection networks. The aim was to inform children about trafficking and develop their abilities to take decisions and change their attitude towards children who have been trafficked. More than 5,000 girls and boys aged 13 to 18 participated.

Training sessions were held to inform young volunteers with Save the Children Romania about the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. They subsequently carried out information campaigns in schools.

### ***Results from Research on Risk and Resiliency***

Recent research in Albania shows that a child's risk of involvement in trafficking is influenced by a range of issues, including macroeconomic, political and cultural factors; relationships between children and parents, peers and others; and individual factors such as age, gender and ethnicity. It also focuses on children's agency and how children make decisions when negotiating the risks around them.



The research highlights the distinction between work, migration and trafficking and highlights the importance of understanding children's perspectives on trafficking and the factors that protect them. It also emphasizes the need to focus on children's resilience as much as on risk factors; understanding why some children exposed to risks are trafficked while others are not will inform understanding of vulnerability and lead to better targeting of interventions.

Strong social support systems were shown to increase resilience and protection from trafficking and other risks, as well as to offer a degree of protection from other stresses, such as family violence and poverty. However, it is important to emphasize that the lack of an overall protective environment or system increases the risks children face. The project also found that migration for work may increase children's risk of trafficking.

Key recommendations emerging from this research are the need for:

- A holistic child protection response that addresses the range of risks and vulnerabilities children face in their homes and communities;
- Better-targeted messages about safe migration;
- Attention to racism and marginalization;
- Safer and more accessible schools;
- Safe public spaces for children, including youth centres;
- Informal education and life skills classes, especially for children who need to combine education with work;
- Further support for children's participation to help define problems and identify possible solutions.

A child-friendly version of the research report has been developed and will be distributed to young people in the target age group (12 to 18) through channels such as the Children's Parliament and education authorities in all Save the Children project areas in Albania as well as partner organizations working with minority children.

### ***Issues for Follow-up***

In Romania, children's recommendations provided input for an action plan to implement the National Strategy for the Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings (2006-2010). In 2006, Save the Children Romania's annual Children's Forum focused on human trafficking, emphasizing child trafficking. Sixty children and young people participated, most of whom were involved in trafficking prevention activities. They met with representatives from institutions working on human trafficking.<sup>98</sup> The forum recommended development of information programmes on child trafficking for rural and urban areas, aimed at enhancing people's trust in the police. Children demanded accountability, requesting that every public institution with relevant responsibilities submit an annual report and that the authorities publicize what measures are being taken to address child rights violations.

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<sup>98</sup> They included UNICEF; Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family; National Authority for Child Protection and Adoptions; Directorate General for Combating Organised Crime and Anti-Drug; International Organization for Migration and the International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour.

In Albania, the legal framework to protect women and children from violence is weak. In January 2008 the government started preparing its new Strategy against Trafficking in Human Beings and an accompanying national plan of action. To date children have not participated directly. However, organizations involved in the drafting process, such as Save the Children, Terre des Hommes and other members of Albania's coalition against child trafficking, are working to keep children's voices and opinions at the centre of the debate. Young people from 'voice 16 +', a youth-led group supported by Save the Children, participated in a conference organized in June 2008 by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Children on the status of the implementation of the National Strategy for Children.

### **Case Example: Adolescents as Researchers on Sexual Exploitation in Eastern Europe**

For a project on sexual exploitation in Eastern Europe, 60 adolescents under age 18 from six countries were given the opportunity to participate as researchers. The project was aimed at gathering baseline data on the awareness and extent of sexual abuse and the available services and developing training and advocacy materials and strategies to challenge sexual abuse of children and adolescents. The young people participated in developing a survey, determining the methodology to be used locally, conducting the research, analysing the data and producing recommendations for future action.

More than 5,700 survey responses were returned, producing a wealth of information for building strategies to address sexual exploitation. Initially some partner organizations resisted the approach, feeling that adolescents lacked the competence and expertise to undertake research in such a sensitive and complex field. To test their concerns, a pilot study was undertaken, first using adult professional researchers and then the adolescents. The adolescents elicited more comprehensive responses, in large part because the children being surveyed felt more at ease with their own generation when responding on issues of sexual exploitation and abuse.

## **4.5 Latin America**

### **Case Study: Promoting Meaningful Participation of Children Exposed to Violence<sup>99</sup>**

Participation is a key strategy in all activities supported by Save the Children Sweden. In the course of its work in Latin America, gaps were detected in participation of children at risk of or affected by violence. Save the Children therefore recognized the importance of supporting these children and making their issues more visible. A consultant was hired to review the literature on the 'state of the art' to answer the following questions:

- 1) How can girls, boys and adolescents exercise their right to participation in strategies to prevent all forms of violence?
- 2) How can boys and girls who have suffered violence participate in designing strategies and interventions while avoiding exposure to risks, re-victimization and stigma?

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<sup>99</sup> Save the Children Sweden, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Promoción de la Participación Protagónica y Significativa de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes expuestos a Violencia*.(draft) ('Promoting the protagonist and meaningful participation of children and adolescents exposed to violence'), 2008.

The first phase of the study aimed to develop a conceptual framework for participation of children at risk of violence, with a focus on physical and humiliating punishment, abuse, sexual exploitation and armed violence. Then information was compiled from the region and globally to analyse the participation of children and adolescents exposed to violence. This was focused on determining the gaps and challenges from a child rights perspective. A second phase will emphasize developing a methodology and instruments to promote children's participation in programmes and projects aimed at preventing violence.

During the compilation exercise it became evident that there was a lack of information combining the participation of young people with their protection against violence. Therefore it was decided to organize workshops to gather first-hand information. Children and adolescents exposed to organized armed violence were gathered at several meetings and workshops: during an international seminar held in Rio de Janeiro, two workshops in Lima with local organizations (la Comisión contra el Castigo and Renacer) and workshops in Bogotá and Cartagena with the participation of ECPAT International through the NGO "Renacer". The young participants commented on the conceptual framework and the obstacles to participation.

The findings highlight how participation in projects by children and adolescents exposed to abuse and sexual exploitation has helped them learn about and value themselves. For example, girls and boys participating in a theatre project were able to break the silence around abuse and sexual exploitation and learn about transforming their lives. They also developed leadership skills and were informed about prevention and complaints mechanisms. Theatre allows indirect communication of messages, which makes it useful both for psychological recovery and for advocacy. It also proved useful in encouraging others to get involved in their organization.

Children and adolescents also succeeded in involving parents and teachers to combat abuse and sexual exploitation. Through student councils and with the help of NGOs, young people have run awareness-raising campaigns inside and outside schools. These have involved sharing their experiences of sexual exploitation with their peers and collective planning to prevent it. The young people have gained the support of their families, who participate in actions to prevent and identify cases of commercial sexual exploitation.

Through their own organizations, children and adolescents have also engaged in community-level social and political advocacy in defence of their rights, mostly in partnership with adult civil society groups. They have taken this advocacy to national and international levels. As a result they have influenced laws and policies on prevention and contributed to participation mechanisms for younger children at high risk of sexual exploitation.

Girls have organized themselves to create safe neighbourhoods, working with families, other adults and local authorities. They have advocated to change sexist attitudes among adolescent boys and to set up complaint boxes to denounce abuse and sexual exploitation. The girls' participation in these activities empowered them to play an active role in protecting themselves and to avoid early marriage. This work has helped children and adolescents talk with adults about how to prevent abuse and exploitation and the best way of helping children reveal it and express their feelings, fears and problems. Child-led organizations working with the media, police and legal authorities have been effective in preventing and denouncing abuse and sexual exploitation. The study therefore emphasizes the role of child-led organizations as a mechanism for genuine participation. The group experience is viewed as a key mechanism for breaking the cycle of violence.

The study also analysed obstacles to participation by children and adolescents exposed to violence. These include lack of adequate information, knowledge and skills to participate meaningfully and effectively, but these can be overcome through empowerment strategies. External obstacles include inadequate laws, rules and procedures encouraging participation in developing public policies and using communication channels to express opinions. These can be dealt with through advocacy. The study highlights the obstacle of uneven power relations between adults and children and between different groups of children due to the age-old reluctance of those who hold power to let it go.

Living under the threat or reality of violence has significant consequences on children's daily lives and subsequently on their opportunities to participate. Factors that impede participation include loyalty to the family unit, taboos, fear, shame and failure to recognize violence as abuse because it is such an intrinsic part of the child's life.

The study also argues the importance of instigating social change in order to break down the stigma and discrimination experienced by exploited children and transform it into community support. This includes educating communities and promoting equal relationships across gender and generations.

The study's recommendations include the following:

- Children and adolescents need to develop their own agenda and seek support from adults to realize their own programmes (as opposed to including children's opinions in adult programmes).
- Adults and children need to share power, ensuring both have access to resources, knowledge and the means of communication.
- Participation structures are needed that empower children and promote their protection without exposing them to greater risk.
- A defined role of supporting adults is key to ensuring their protection through participation.
- Children's right to participate in public discussions and decision making needs to be effected through laws and public policy.
- Participation needs to be meaningful.

### **Case Example: Addressing Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Honduras**

In Honduras the legal framework, institutions and local mechanisms for dealing with commercial sexual exploitation are generally seen as weak, one of the factors associated with exploitation of children and adolescents there and in neighbouring Guatemala. In response, Save the Children UK sponsored a programme that supported creation of legal and operational frameworks. The effort involved a broad range of actors, from community promoters and municipal child defenders to the president of the Supreme Court. Children and adolescents participated primarily at the municipal level.

An inter-institutional commission was established at national level to develop an action plan against commercial sexual exploitation. It also drafted penal code reforms and lobbied for their acceptance. The national police were supported to create a programme to teach officers about child sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking. At the local level the programme

focused on strengthening municipal children's defenders in the capital, Tegucigalpa, the north coast (Atlantida) and impoverished and remote municipalities in the west.

The programme resulted in placing the issue on the national agenda, and a framework for addressing commercial sexual exploitation was established. The Penal Code was modernized, which led to creation of a sexual exploitation and trafficking division within the national preventative police and training on the issue at all levels of the police academy.

The Honduran Tourism Institute also got involved, learning from the experiences of other countries in Central America that have engaged in similar programmes. Also critical was creation of opportunities for community and children's participation. This has increased community vigilance with regard to sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, with participation by children and adolescents. Protection networks were formed and children joined them. They were trained to identify cases of sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation and how to respond to suspected cases, including how to assist children. The boys and girls became advocates for prevention of these abuses in their communities. The programme relied heavily on participatory recreation-based processes to educate, empower and motivate young participants.

This case shows the important role that communities, including children and adolescents, have to play in making local justice and protection systems work for the benefit of children. Communities that prioritize child protection can be catalysts for addressing the issue at all levels of government, and children's participation was key to raising the issue locally. But parents also need to participate in the process to ensure its effectiveness.

### **Case Example: Children's Ombudspersons**

In Latin America children are involved in the office of the ombudsperson in several countries. For example, the office of the *Procuraduría para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Niñez* in Guatemala promoted a consultation on public policies for children that involved 5,000 children and adolescents aged 11 to 18. The Office of the *Procuraduría* works closely with local volunteer associations, most of which are composed of children and adolescents.

In Nicaragua, the office of the *Procuraduría* has created a Council of Adolescent Advisors to discuss law reforms and to advise on establishing key priorities for the Office. Venezuela has more than 400 *defensorías estudiantiles* (student bodies), which handle complaints and investigate matters affecting children's right to education. Young people participate in these bodies.

## **4.6 Middle East**

### **Case Example: Adolescents in Partnership with the Media and Municipal Governments**

The UNICEF regional office for the Middle East and North Africa has developed a framework for rights-based programming with adolescents to strengthen existing initiatives and launch new ones aimed at their development, protection and participation.<sup>100</sup> The new

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<sup>100</sup> UNICEF MENA Regional Office. 'A Framework for Rights-Based Programming with Adolescents: Promoting development, protection and participation', October 2006.

framework aims to engage with adolescents as partners, focusing on their assets, skills and capacities and empowering them to influence decisions that affect them. The framework also provides guidelines and programming tools.

For example, work with the media has provided an opportunity for advocacy in respect of adolescents' rights while encouraging their participation through communicating about their lives. In some countries UNICEF has developed partnerships with NGOs, the media, international organizations and the private sector to develop television programmes that give young people a voice. Efforts have been made to build teams of young reporters to report on youth issues. Media forums have been established to develop networks of journalists who report responsibly on youth issues. In a number of countries, these improved partnerships with the media have increased the quality of reporting and the coverage of issues such as abuse, neglect, trafficking, exploitation and early marriage. Through Voices of Youth, a number of countries facilitated over 250 young people to participate in an online chat on issues related to the UN Study on Violence.

Another promising example is establishment of child municipal councils in major cities in the West Bank and Gaza (Occupied Palestinian Territory).<sup>101</sup> As part of a child-friendly cities initiative, hundreds of young people aged 12 to 17 have been elected to these councils and are working with mayors and other city officials as well as parents, teachers, school officials and neighbourhood committees to take positive action in their communities. The councils are all the more remarkable given the military occupation, which restricts personal freedom, and the prevalence of violence. Despite their daily challenges they face, the youth are working to improve their communities and have energized their peers through projects that increase children's protection and give them access to safe play, sports and psychosocial support.

### **Case Example: Breaking the Silence around Child Sexual Abuse in Lebanon**

Kafa (which means 'enough') is a local NGO working on violence and exploitation in Lebanon. It has undertaken research to assess the prevalence of child sexual abuse. The project explores knowledge and attitudes and identifies the barriers to seeking help. It has been undertaken in the context of the "July 2006 Conflict" which displaced much of the population in the south and the Beirut suburbs. Many families had to stay in overcrowded places with strangers, which increases the risk of child sexual abuse.

In 2007, over 1,000 children aged 9 to 12 from camps for displaced persons and summer camps participated in the study, mainly by responding to a questionnaire. In addition, around 250 school children were involved in five awareness-raising sessions on sexual abuse.

The study led to follow-up work with 15 children identified as directly affected by sexual abuse. Some of the field researchers are also organizing sessions on child rights with both children and parents. Broader follow-up is being planned, including development of a pilot toolkit and training manual for educators and social workers, capacity building and awareness sessions for children in schools using the toolkit, and work with government authorities to develop appropriate policies.

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<sup>101</sup> UNICEF MENA, 'Children's Municipal Councils in the Occupied Palestinian Territory', 2005.

Through the Ministry of Social Affairs, the government has indicated its willingness to adopt a national strategy on child sexual abuse – a clear and positive outcome of the project. It will be important to ensure support for children’s meaningful and effective involvement in developing, implementing and monitoring such a strategy.

#### 4.7 North America

##### Case Example: Youth Leadership in the United States and Canada

In the United States there is growing interest and youth leadership to fight commercial sexual exploitation of children,<sup>102</sup> a key part of which involves recruiting young survivors of exploitation for leadership. One example is Girls Education and Mentoring Services, run by child and adolescent survivors, provides advice to and mentors girls to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation and to support survivors in different parts of the country. The group convened the first National Summit of Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth in New York in 2003.

In Canada, Beyond Borders (part of ECPAT International) works with young people in universities and schools to raise awareness about commercial sexual exploitation of children. At the invitation of the Canadian government, young people’s representatives also participate in the government’s committee to address the sexual exploitation of children.

#### 4.8 Multi-country Examples

##### Case Example: Working with Boys<sup>103</sup>

In recent years Save the Children has increasingly supported work with boys and men to address gender inequality, discrimination, violence and HIV and AIDs. Examples include:

- A project to support the establishment and operations of boys’ groups in two vulnerable communities in Addis Ababa, **Ethiopia**. The aim was to promote gender equality as a way to tackle the threat of HIV and AIDS and gender violence. The boys have been encouraged to speak out about how they feel about these issues and have gained self-confidence in expressing themselves. With new knowledge and skills, they can act as agents of change in their communities and have fostered tolerance and respect towards other members of the group. Recommendations to strengthen the groups include expanding understanding of the power relations between girls and boys; involving more out-of-school children and younger children; increasing access to age-appropriate materials about the issues; and strengthening partnerships between the boys groups’ and relevant authorities and other duty bearers.
- In **Nicaragua** interactive sessions have been organized with groups of adolescent males. The sessions seek to promote changes in how they define masculinity, encouraging them to overcome violent attitudes and behaviours and to become more tender and able to express their emotions. Each group of 10 to 15 boys participates in 10 group sessions.

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<sup>102</sup> ECPAT International. ‘Ensuring Meaningful Child and Youth Participation in the Fight against Commercial Sexual Exploitation: The ECPAT experience’, Bangkok, 2007.

<sup>103</sup> Save the Children, ‘Boys for Change: Moving towards gender equality’, Save the Children Sweden, 2007.

- In **India** a grass-roots campaign, Men’s Action to Stop Violence Against Women (MASVAW), has been initiated by a network of individuals and organizations in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal. The campaign offers a chance for boys and men to speak out in opposition to violence against women and gender inequality through rallies, campaigns, public debates and workshops. The group serves as a watchdog, working with the police, doctors, lawyers and the media, as well as with boys and men in universities and schools. The issues raised are often sensitive, so MASVAW invests resources to develop and adapt appropriate and innovative tools for working with different age groups. The most popular is a traditional game, snakes and ladders, used to introduce discussions on gender and violence. In over a hundred villages ‘watch’ groups have been organized to intervene in violent situations, provide support to victims and work to make schools and colleges violence-free zones.

**Case Example: International Youth Advisory Congress on Online Safety and Security<sup>104</sup>**

*“I have always been told not to talk to strangers that I meet on the street, but nobody told me not to talk to strangers on the Internet.” (boy)*

*“Restrictions alone do not work. Freedom to use the Internet in combinations with information on the risk and other protection measures is the best combination.” (boy)*

*“Young people listen to other young people; therefore youth should be involved in developing safety messages on the Internet.” (girl)*

*-- Views of girls and boys expressed during the Congress*

The first International Youth Advisory Congress on online safety and security took place in the United Kingdom 16-21 July 2008. It brought together 148 girls and boys aged 14 to 17 from 19 countries to share their experiences and recommendations. The congress was organized by the UK Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, supported by the Virtual Task Force, an international alliance of law enforcement agencies addressing child sexual exploitation.

In preparation for the congress, 764 children and adolescents aged 11 to 17 from different parts of the world participated in an online poll. Some of the findings were:

- Almost 40 per cent of the respondents said they rarely speak about what they do online with their parents/guardians, because they don’t seem to take an interest.
- 73 per cent said they have access to the Internet whenever they want, with no restrictions on what they view.
- 44 per cent had come across images or content they thought were inappropriate for their age.

Participants in the congress met with representatives from governments, industry, law enforcement, education and media. A creative discussion on online security took place, and

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<sup>104</sup> A complete summary of the youth delegates’ recommendations can be found at [www.iyac.net/corporate/press.htm](http://www.iyac.net/corporate/press.htm)



the adolescents gave concrete suggestions for improving it. The young people presented a number of recommendations at the conclusion of the meeting, including:

- Showing of films on online safety on television, on the sides of buses, on billboards and in online pop-ups;
- A mandatory and universal browser-based ‘report abuse’ button on the toolbar of every browser and on all social networking sites. It would require only two clicks to report a problem, without even leaving the web page;
- An international industry advisory panel on online safety, made up of youth and industry leaders, to report current issues in their countries to government authorities
- Pressure from governments for the media and the online industry to promote safety;
- Proactive education of teachers, elected officials, parents and other adults to enhance their understanding of online safety issues so they can pass on their wisdom to other adults and young people;
- Replacement of the term ‘child pornography’ in the CRC with ‘child abuse images’;
- Expansion of the interpretation of article 6 in the CRC (relating to survival and development) to cover both the online and offline ‘worlds’;
- A global youth advisory congress online forum accessible to registered users, where individuals can post their views, opinions and experiences.

The congress was the beginning of a process that will result in a Children’s and Young Persons’ Online Charter. It will be used as the basis for a submission to the UN in preparation for the Omnibus Resolution on the Rights of the Child, to be adopted by the General Assembly in 2009.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*“It is our right to be acknowledged as full citizens and given the chance to perform our citizenship role as adults do. At least we should be heard when adults make decisions about us.”*

– Boy, member of Child Club, Sri Lanka<sup>105</sup>

During the Stockholm Congress in 1996 members of a youth panel presented their most important hope to the government representatives, NGOs and individuals. It was “that your actions shall be as large as your promises.” They went on to ask:

- Can you fight the problems of today so that they won’t be repeated tomorrow?
- And can you give us the better world that we all dream about?

And they pledged:

- If you support us today, we will be able to support your grandchildren tomorrow.<sup>106</sup>

Five years later in Yokohama the young people declared: “...the importance of the participation of children and young people cannot be overemphasized, with particular reference to the experiential young people who really are the experts on the issue at hand. This is therefore a giant step in the right direction ... However, there is still the need for the voices of the children and young people here today, and of those who cannot be here physically, to be fully considered and incorporated in all agendas for action.”<sup>107</sup>

More than a decade after Stockholm, what answers will be given to children and adolescents? Have their recommendations been taken on board? Have governments, UN agencies and NGOs acted on their promises? Have governments become accountable, both in their actions and in their feedback to children and adolescents?

Efforts to consult with children and adolescents may have increased in scope and quality over the past decade. However, it is clear that the wishes of children and adolescents articulated above have not yet been fully realized. It is also apparent that most governments have much to do to increase their accountability to children.

Therefore, **it is imperative that the agenda to promote children’s civil rights and active citizenship is taken forward.** Greater and more systematic efforts are needed by adult duty bearers, including governments, to support and institutionalize child and adolescent participation in decision-making processes structures and policies at all levels. Particularly needed are special efforts to involve the most marginalized children and adolescents.

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<sup>105</sup> O’Kane, C. Children and Young People as Citizens: Partners for Social Change, Save the Children Alliance South and Central Asia, Kathmandu, 2003.

<sup>106</sup> Stockholm Congress Panel Report, ‘Youth Panel, 1st World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children’, August 1996.

<sup>107</sup> ‘Statement by Children and Young People’, 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children’, Yokohama, Japan, 2001.

This final section draws upon recommendations from children and adolescents shared in previous chapters and lessons learned from the case studies to explore 10 critical issues and outline some key recommendations for further research, policy developments and programming. These recommendations are intended to strengthen young people's involvement in child protection, with a focus on efforts to prevent and protect children and adolescents from all forms of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking.

The 10 critical issues are:

- 1) Recognizing girls and boys as citizens and promoting a longer term agenda of children's civil rights;
- 2) Recognizing the diversity of childhood experience and the complex issues relating to children's and adolescents' agency and experiences of work, migration, exploitation and trafficking
- 3) Establishing comprehensive legal frameworks and child protection systems at national and community levels;
- 4) Formulating processes and structures for participation and partnerships to empower children and adolescents and to prepare adults to seek and act upon the views and suggestions of children and adolescents;
- 5) Supporting safe, ethical, inclusive participation guided by practice standards and child protection codes of conduct;
- 6) Supporting children and youth to lead groups, networks and forums for sharing experiences and advocating collectively at all levels;
- 7) Establishing funds for initiatives led by children and adolescents;
- 8) Increasing accountability to children and adolescents by strengthening commitments by governments, the United Nations, NGOs and other duty bearers to follow up, report, monitor and evaluate their participation in combating sexual exploitation;
- 9) Increasing the development and dissemination of information, tools and materials that are accessible to children and adolescents and sensitive to diversity;
- 10) Supporting participatory research with girls and boys in diverse contexts to inform programmes and policies.

### **5.1 Critical Issue 1: Recognizing girls and boys as citizens and promoting a longer term agenda of children's civil rights.**

As highlighted throughout this report, moving beyond entry points for children's participation requires more effort by governments, UN agencies, NGOs and civil society actors. Children are citizens from their moment of birth, and duty bearers need to engage with them as citizens with civil rights.<sup>108</sup> Citizenship rights encompass civil, political, social and economic rights. Citizenship practice is the active exercise of rights through democratic action and civic responsibility. It can be furthered through organizations led by children and youth, social movements and inclusive governance structures. Recognition is growing that people do not suddenly become 'responsible' citizens on reaching a certain age; citizenship must be learned

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<sup>108</sup> Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation, 'Children as Active Citizens: A policy and programme guide. Commitments and obligations for children's civil rights and civic engagement in East Asia and the Pacific', Bangkok, 2008.

through the daily experience of family, community and school life and through opportunities to engage in civil society and participate in developing policies and actions.

The case studies illustrate how the denial of their civil rights contributes to children's abuse, exploitation and marginalization. For example:

- Children who lack proof of birth registration cannot prove their age, and this makes them more susceptible to early child marriage, exploitive forms of child labour, child trafficking and recruitment into fighting forces. Lack of birth registration or other identity papers also compounds the difficulties in accessing basic services that are their right.
- Adult abusers often use their power to prevent children from speaking up or expressing their concerns. This reinforces the silence that allows continuation of abuse, particularly sexual abuse.
- Lack of access to information interferes with realizing rights; some children may not know their rights are being violated while others may not know where to turn for help.
- Exclusion of children from development of policies and practices may lead to inappropriate or inaccessible services, particularly the protection services needed by the most marginalized girls and boys.

In contrast, promoting and protecting civil rights leads to a more just society in which all people, including children and adolescents, are more aware of their rights. Girls and boys with access to information have more opportunities to use their energy, creativity and enthusiasm to protect themselves and to participate in developing safe and protective communities and countries. Children and adolescents should also have access to reporting and complaint mechanisms. These help deter abusers and strengthen efforts to ensure justice for children. Creating mechanisms for children's expression and participation leads to practices and policies that are in the best interests of children. Support for children's associations increases children's collective power and their ability to protect themselves from abuse and exploitation, as clearly illustrated by the case study of the working children's movement in West Africa and the research in Latin America.

Longer term, systematic efforts are needed to promote active citizenship among children and adolescents and to transform adult-child relations for effective implementation of children's civil rights. Such efforts will help the fight against sexual abuse and exploitation of children and adolescents. Publications such as 'Children as Active Citizens' policy and programming guide<sup>109</sup> help support such efforts. A handbook prepared by the Inter- Agency Working Group on Children's Participation in East Asia and the Pacific for the promotion of children's civil rights and citizenship

### ***Recommendations***

1. State governments, UN agencies, NGOs and community-based organizations, including those led by children and youth, should identify obstacles (political, legal, economic, social, institutional and cultural) that prevent fulfilment of children's citizenship rights and should develop and implement longer term strategies to overcome them.

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<sup>109</sup> Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation, 'Children as Active Citizens: A policy and programme guide. Commitments and obligations for children's civil rights and civic engagement in East Asia and the Pacific', Bangkok, 2008.

2. State governments should undertake concrete practice and policy efforts to:
  - Register all children at birth;
  - Provide all children with access to information and effective complaint mechanisms;
  - Listen to children and establish formal mechanisms that enable them to express their opinions, especially on matters that affect their daily lives and futures;
  - Teach children about citizenship rights and responsibilities;
  - Ensure that children have access to justice and that special measures are in place to protect them in the justice system.
3. Civic rights education should be integrated into formal and non-formal education curricula for children and adolescents and should be tailored to each age group.
4. In collaboration with UN agencies, NGOs and community-based organizations, including those led by children and youth, governments should set indicators and benchmarks for children's active citizenship and should monitor progress.

**5.2 Critical Issue 2: Recognizing the diversity of childhood experience and the complex issues relating to children's and adolescents' agency and experiences of work, migration, exploitation and trafficking.**

The case studies in this publication highlight the importance and benefits of understanding the diversity of children's and adolescents' experience and agency. In particular, there is a need to better understand their experiences in each context and to discover the particular factors that influence decision making among children, adolescents and families, such as concerning child work and migration for work. As illustrated in the West Africa, Mekong and South East Europe case studies, the differences and links between migration for work and child trafficking need careful analysis. Labelling and counting children who migrate for work as trafficking cases needs to be avoided. Instead a more nuanced, realistic assessment is needed, along with efforts to understand the complexities of people's lives. This is critical to develop appropriate and effective prevention, protection and recovery strategies that are in the best interests of the child. In a forthcoming publication,<sup>110</sup> Save the Children UK introduces a new framework 'children on the move' to improve analysis and responses to the protection needs of children who move away from their communities.

A recent publication<sup>111</sup> from the Greater Mekong sub-region further shows that boys and girls migrate at different ages for different reasons, further highlighting the dynamism of migration. Children and adolescents may migrate several times during their childhood, to a range of places, where they may face a great diversity of work and non-work activities and problems. This means that protection responses, while based on core principles, must be adaptable to circumstances, responding to the specific concerns of both migrant and non-migrant children and adolescents.<sup>112</sup> Prevention activities aimed at reducing migration for work and strong messages and practices that support safe migration have both been important aspects of participatory child protection actions in West Africa, Albania and the Mekong region.

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<sup>110</sup> Save the Children UK, 'Away from Home: Protecting and supporting children on the move', London, 2008.

<sup>111</sup> West, A. 'Children's Migration: Diversities, exploitation, participation and protection in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region of South East Asia, Save the Children, 2008.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

The impact of poverty on the lives of children, adolescents and their family members also needs to be better understood and addressed. The children's recommendations in section 3 demonstrate that more investment in social protection mechanisms is required at the national level to address poverty and inequality. Also needing more attention are job opportunities for parents and caregivers and livelihood skills training for adolescent girls and boys.

Better understanding of and attention to inter-generational relationships and communication among children, adolescents, adults and elderly members of the community are also needed to address and prevent child migration, trafficking and forms of exploitation and abuse. For example, both the South East Europe and West Africa case studies indicate that generational problems are causes for children and adolescents to leave home.

Cultural roles, traditions and values can both protect children and adolescents and put them more at risk, such as the 'entrustment' practice in West Africa. Efforts should build on positive traditional practices that help care for and protect girls and boys, and they should challenge and address practices that place children and adolescents at risk.

### ***Recommendations***

1. National governments, UN agencies and NGOs should support more participatory research and situation assessments with marginalized children and adolescents. These would be a starting point to better understand the diversity of childhood experiences and children's and adolescents' agency and risk, resilience and protection factors. This will inform the development of more effective child protection policies and practices.
2. More research and policy debate involving children and adolescents is needed to explore and understand the differences and links between child migration and child trafficking. This will inform prevention, protection and recovery strategies serving the best interests of the child.
3. Dialogue among elders, adults, adolescents and children and joint action planning should be encouraged. This will increase respect for everyone's opinion and support social and cultural practices that care for and protect girls and boys.

### **5.3 Critical Issue 3: Establishing comprehensive legal frameworks and child protection systems at national and community levels.**

The lack of a comprehensive legal framework and system to protect children and adolescents from neglect, abuse, discrimination, exploitation and violence at national and community levels has been emphasized in many of the case studies. It was also a key finding from the UN Study on Violence against Children. Weak implementation of laws, national laws that conflict with CRC principles, and confusion between 'official' and customary law also compound difficulties in creating a protective environment.

One form of abuse often makes a child or adolescent more vulnerable to others and to exploitation. This reality indicates the need for more comprehensive legal frameworks and national plans of action addressing a range of protection issues. For example, the link

between experiencing sexual abuse and girls' vulnerability to sexual exploitation led to lobbying by the South Asia delegation to include a focus on sexual abuse (including within the family) at the second World Congress. Previously the focus had been limited to commercial sexual exploitation.

Integrated approaches to child protection that engage all relevant sectors and ministries and encompass social welfare, social protection, livelihoods, food security, health, education, justice and external affairs are required to prevent and protect children and respond to issues, including sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking. Effective national child protection systems that support and are coordinated with community-based systems must be established. Clear leadership and well-defined roles are required at each level. The participation of all stakeholders – including girls, boys, parents, caregivers, community leaders, religious elders and government officials – are fundamental to developing, implementing and monitoring effective child protection systems at each level. Special efforts must be made to involve the most marginalized girls, boys, parents and caregivers; this will help ensure the credibility and effectiveness of protection systems. Recommendations shared here build upon those made during and following the UN Study on Violence against Children.<sup>113</sup>

### ***Recommendations***

1. National governments should establish mechanisms for listening and responding to girls and boys at all levels to ensure their active role in developing the practices and policies affecting them. Actions by children and adolescents to address abuse and exploitation should also be supported.
2. National governments should develop country-wide child protection systems and allocate sufficient resources (human and financial) to undertake a wider range of measures to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation against children and adolescents. These should include educational and media campaigns and provision of appropriate legal, medical and psychosocial services.
3. National governments should develop comprehensive legal frameworks that prohibit all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation against children and adolescents, including sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking in all settings.
4. National governments should support the development of community-based protection systems and ensure they receive sufficient human and financial resources. Formal protection systems should build upon and strengthen informal community mechanisms through child and community participation guided by the principle of children's best interests.

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<sup>113</sup> For example, see Save the Children, 'Why effective national child protection systems are needed. Save the Children's key recommendations in response to the UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children', 2006.

#### **5.4 Critical Issue 4: Formulating processes and structures for participation and partnerships to empower children and adolescents and to prepare adults to seek and act upon the views and suggestions of children and adolescents.**

This report has highlighted the gap in many parts of the world between rhetoric and practice with regard to children's participation and government efforts to act upon children's and adolescents' recommendations. Helping governments develop a longer term agenda on citizenship and civil rights for young people is a key strategy to support more meaningful, inclusive and sustainable participation.

Particularly needed are mechanisms that support young people's representation and participation in national and local governance, school governance and family decision making. For example, children and adolescents have emphasized the importance of involving them in committees or task forces at all levels to ensure their participation in national plans of action processes. More efforts are needed to ensure their meaningful involvement in each stage of developing, implementing and monitoring NPAs and other relevant strategies. This needs to be combined with special efforts to involve the most affected and marginalized girls and boys. Greater efforts are also needed to help support children and adolescents report violations through the reporting mechanisms of the CRC and its optional protocols.

Adults (government officials, teachers, community and religious elders, parents, journalists) need better preparation to share power and information and work respectfully with children and adolescents. They also need to act promptly and seriously on what girls and boys say. Children and adolescents need to be empowered to organize themselves, speak up and address discrimination among themselves. Fair and inclusive representation systems are needed to encourage their participation.

#### ***Key Recommendations***

1. National governments, supported by the United Nations and NGOs, should establish processes and structures to institutionalize meaningful child and adolescent participation in developing policies and practices that affect them. In particular, to ensure their involvement in developing, implementing and monitoring NPAs, committees with children, adolescents and adults should be established at all levels. This includes children's involvement in informing and influencing the work of children's ombudspersons.
2. National governments, supported by the United Nations and NGOs, should provide more support for children to report on the optional protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child pornography and child prostitution.
3. More efforts are needed to build the capacity of adults (government officials, teachers, religious and community elders, NGO staff, parents, journalists) to encourage, respect and act upon the views of children and adolescents and to empower girls and boys (especially the most marginalized) to speak up, organize and fight for inclusive and fair representation and participation.



### **5.5 Critical Issue 5: Supporting safe, ethical, inclusive participation guided by practice standards and child protection codes of conduct.**

Unequal power relations between and among adults, adolescents and children may result in some children being excluded from participation opportunities due to discrimination on the basis of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, caste, economic situation, level of education, HIV status, etc. In addition lack of power may increase the risk of participation for children and adolescents. Careful efforts with adults, adolescents and children are therefore needed to identify and address discrimination and the risks of participation. Examples from South Asia and Southeast Asia showed the importance of working with adults to create an enabling environment for ethical, safe, inclusive participation. Adherence to practice standards on children's participation, such as those described in box 3 is necessary in every participation initiative. Applying codes of conduct and policies to safeguard children and adolescents is also crucial. A sample of guidelines for encouraging child participation is provided in box 3.

#### ***Key Recommendations***

1. National governments, UN agencies and NGOs should implement and monitor practice standards, codes of conduct and child protection policies in all child participation initiatives.
2. Professionals working with children, including government officials, UN and NGO staff, need capacity building to ensure they can implement and monitor safe, ethical, inclusive participation practices with children and adolescents.

### **5.6 Critical Issue 6: Supporting children and youth to lead groups, networks and forums for sharing experiences and advocating collectively at all levels.**

To widen the scope, quality and impact of children's participation it is important to support the formation, strengthening and networking of groups and forums led by them. Such groups provide an opportunity for girls and boys to regularly share their views, listen to others, analyse their situation and plan actions. As illustrated by many of the case examples, such activities help children and adolescents develop friendships, gain confidence, develop life skills and challenge discrimination. These opportunities also lead to empowerment, inclusion and unity (especially important for marginalized children), as vividly illustrated by the West Africa and Mekong case examples. Collective efforts increase the ability of children and adolescents to protect and promote their rights.

Participating in these groups also teaches children and adolescents how to apply democratic principles and helps them build a strong civil society. In addition such groups encourage youth to participate more meaningfully in influencing policy and practice developments and decision-making processes. Groups led by children and young people are therefore one of the obvious starting points for creating opportunities to engage with decision-makers in governance structures, including those responsible for implementing and monitoring commitments to address sexual abuse and exploitation.

Child- and youth-led groups and networks allow for more representative election processes, often required for participating in policy and programming debates and decision-making

forums. Representatives of these groups can legitimately claim to represent a wider group of children and adolescents. This was illustrated in the case study on the Mekong Children's Forum. Establishing specific groups to represent more marginalized young people – such as among working children, children with disabilities, children who have been sexually exploited – strengthens their collective voice and raises their status as social actors.

### ***Key Recommendations***

1. National governments, UN agencies, NGOs and community-based groups should support the formation and strengthening of inclusive child- and youth-led groups, networks and forums for collective advocacy and representation at all levels.
2. To ensure inclusion and fair representation, children and adolescents should be encouraged to identify and challenge established patterns of discrimination and exclusion based on factors such as age, gender, class, religion and ethnicity in their organizations and society at large.
3. Capacity building for girls and boys should focus on both the individual, to enhance personal development and life skills, and the group, to strengthen inclusion and democratic action among child-led groups.

### **5.7 Critical Issue 7: Establishing funds for initiatives led by children and adolescents.**

Children and adolescent representatives at the second World Congress and in the regional mid-term review in Central Europe and Asia (2005) highlighted the importance of creating a fund to support child and adolescent participation and initiatives to prevent and address child sexual abuse and exploitation. In particular, young people urged the Council of Europe to assess the feasibility of initiating such a fund. As described in box 6, ECPAT has promoted a micro-project scheme as an initial component of a global fund. It would provide resources for children and young people to implement activities against sexual exploitation of children. Schemes like this one need to be reviewed to identify lessons learned. Building on successes, similar initiatives should be replicated and scaled up to increase access to funds that support initiatives by children and adolescents, especially the most marginalized, to combat sexual abuse and exploitation. Opportunities for children and adolescent to manage such a fund at a global, regional or national level should also be explored.

### ***Key Recommendation***

1. Building on ECPAT's experience and in collaboration with NGOs, national governments should explore the feasibility of establishing, disbursing and monitoring global, regional or national level funds for use by children and adolescents. This effort should focus on marginalized children and adolescents in child- and youth-led groups.

### **5.8 Critical Issue 8: The need to increase accountability to children and adolescents by strengthening commitments by governments, the United Nations, NGOs and other duty bearers to follow up, report, monitor and evaluate their participation in combating sexual exploitation.**

Despite the fact that children's participation was one of five key areas for action in the Stockholm Agenda in 1996, reports are still lacking in many countries and regions on the processes and outcomes of children's participation in combating sexual abuse and trafficking. Lack of reporting also indicates a lack of follow up and feedback to children and adolescents. It highlights significant gaps in the accountability to children and adolescents by governments, the United Nations, NGOs and other actors. The lack of reporting also indicates weaknesses in monitoring and evaluating children's participation.

### ***Key Recommendations***

1. National governments, UN agencies and NGOs must increase efforts to follow up, report on and provide feedback to children and adolescents about efforts taken to address their recommendations for ending sexual abuse and exploitation.
2. The development and use of systems, processes and tools for monitoring and evaluating the process and outcomes of children's participation – its scope, quality and impact – should be increased by all actors. Participatory monitoring and evaluation methods involving girls and boys of different ages and from diverse backgrounds should be encouraged.
3. National governments' and other actors' accountability and feedback mechanisms to children and adolescents should be strengthened by involving young people in processes and committees and disseminating child-friendly information and feedback.
4. National governments and other actors should establish reporting and complaint mechanisms that are accessible and easy to use, and they should make sure children and adolescents are aware of and know how to use them.
5. National governments should ensure access to child-friendly justice systems and victim support and reporting mechanisms.

### **5.9 Critical Issue 9: Increasing the development and dissemination of information, tools and materials that are accessible to children and adolescents and sensitive to diversity.**

Many girls and boys remain unaware of their rights on key protection issues, including sexual abuse, exploitation, trafficking and the dangers associated with migration. Children and adolescents also lack information about national plans, policies and programmes that affect them and about how to protect themselves. Information is power. It can help protect young people from abuse and exploitation and enable them to make choices and decisions that are in their best interests.

In collaboration with children and adolescents, strategies should be further developed to produce and more widely disseminate such information. The examples from West Africa and South East Europe illustrate the effectiveness of peer-led protection approaches. As illustrated in the case examples from South Asia and Southeast Asia, child-friendly versions of NPAs can be developed. Effective use of media such as radio, television, newspapers and cartoons

can help disseminate information to children and adolescents in creative ways. Support for children’s participation in media initiatives is also an effective way to disseminate information and amplify children’s advocacy messages. Special efforts may be needed to ensure that information is accessible to girls and boys of different ages and situations. This means being sensitive to languages and to forms of communication that serve children with special needs, such as those with disabilities.

### ***Key Recommendations***

1. National governments, UN agencies and NGOs should increase the development and dissemination of information accessible to children and adolescents and sensitive to diversity on (1) child rights and protection issues including sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking – what it is and how children can be better protected; (2) national policies and practices; and (3) local services and effective complaint mechanisms accessible and responsive to children and adolescents.
2. All actors should provide more human and financial resources to support children’s participation in print and broadcast media initiatives to increase awareness of sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children and adolescents and actions to end it.

### **5.10 Critical Issue 10: Supporting participatory research with girls and boys in diverse contexts to inform programmes and policies.**

Recognizing the diversity of children’s and adolescents’ experiences and the complexity of protection issues in different contexts suggests the need to increase support for participatory research with girls and boys on sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking. This will enhance local knowledge, which in turn can lead to more effective programmes and policies.

Participatory research with children, including child-led research, should be supported in diverse locations, including those affected by insecurity and conflict (box 8). Groups led by children and youth need capacity building, and NGOs should be supported in participatory research.

#### **Box 8. Exploitation of children in emergencies<sup>114</sup>**

Research was conducted with children and adults in countries affected by conflict (Cote D’Ivoire, Haiti and Southern Sudan) by Save the Children UK in 2007 to find out more about the sexual abuse and exploitation of children by aid workers and peacekeepers. The research included focus group discussions with 129 girls and 121 boys aged 10 to 17, as well as 36 men and 54 women. Some detailed individual interviews were also conducted. Each focus group contained an average of 10 people; children and adults met in separate groups according to age and gender. Every effort was taken to protect the identity and security of all research participants, and special techniques were used to increase participation by marginalized children. Clear child protection guidelines were followed.

<sup>114</sup> C. Csaky, ‘No One to Turn To: The under-reporting of child sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers and peace keepers’, Save the Children UK, London, 2008.

The research suggests that boys and girls continue to experience significant levels of abuse in emergencies. Much of it goes unreported, despite some measures by the humanitarian community to establish reporting and response mechanisms. Breaking the silence surrounding this problem is essential, as the research suggests that children and their families are not speaking out because of a mix of stigma, fear, ignorance and powerlessness. In addition, it appears that international agencies are not yet perceived as responding effectively to allegations at the grass roots. As a result, victims and others cannot see the point of reporting abuse.

Practice standards in children's participation should always be applied (box 9). Child-led and youth-led action and advocacy initiatives that help girls and boys present and act upon their findings and recommendations should also be supported.

### ***Key Recommendations***

1. National governments, UN agencies and NGOs should support participatory research on sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking among girls and boys (especially the most marginalized) in diverse locations.
2. Child-led and youth-led action and advocacy initiatives should be actively supported to ensure that practice and policy developments are informed by the knowledge gained.

### **Box 9. Guidelines for promoting children's participation in programming and research**

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'Youth Statement: Yokohama Mid-term Review: Combating sexual exploitation of children', Europe and Central Asia, 8-9 July 2005, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1. Key Documents Reviewed to Consolidate Children and Adolescents' Recommendations

	Document	Included in Annex 2
1.	Stockholm Congress Panel Report: Youth Panel, 1 <sup>st</sup> World Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, August, 1996	Yes
2.	Declaration and Agenda for Action, adopted at the World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Stockholm, 27-31 August 1996.	No
3.	Rights for Disabled Children, Tackling the Future, Kathmandu, 2001.	No
4.	Final Appeal of Children and Young People, Yokohama, 2001.	Yes
5.	Panel 3 Presentation of Children and Young People. The Children and Young People's Voice on Moving Forward, Yokohama, 2001.	No
6.	Children's Forum report, New York, 5-7 May 2002: Report on the Meeting of Under-18 delegates to the UN Special Session on Children.	No
7.	Listen to Children and Young People's Recommendations against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, A Presentation of Children and Young People's Progress Report made during the Post-Yokohama Mid-term Review of the East Asia and Pacific region in Bangkok, 8-10 November 2004.	Yes
8.	Children and Young People's Statement, South Asia, Mid-term Review, Colombo, 27-28 September 2004	Yes
9.	Youth Statement, Europe and Central Asia Mid-term Review, Ljubljana, 8-9 July 2005	Yes
10.	Report on the Post-Yokohama Mid-term Review of the East Asia and the Pacific Regional Commitment and Action Plan against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, 8-10 November 2004, Bangkok.	No
11.	Yokohama Commitments – Promises Kept, Promises Forgotten. South Asia Implementation of the Yokohama Global Commitments.	No
12.	Promises Renewed, Promises Reinforced: South Asia Regional Mid Term Review of the Yokohama Global Commitment 2001, Colombo, 2004.	No
13.	Yokohama Review combating sexual exploitation of children. Europe and Central Asia, 8-9 July 2005, Ljubljana, Slovenia.	No
14.	Our Voices, Our Views: A report on the Mekong Children's Forum in Human Trafficking, Bangkok, 11-17 October 2004. Report written by the child participants.	No
15.	The Mekong Children's Recommendations on Human Trafficking, 2004.	Yes
16.	Making History: People, Process and Participation: Mekong Children's Forum on Human Trafficking. ILO and Save the Children UK, 2005	No
17.	Save the Children's Contribution to end Violence Against Children in the Home and Family: Sharing Good Practice and Key Recommendations, 2006.	No
18.	Save the Children's Contribution to end Violence Against Children in the Communities and on the Streets: Sharing Good Practice and Key Recommendations, 2006.	No
19.	Save the Children's Contribution to end Violence Against Children in Schools and Educational Settings: Sharing Good Practice and Key Recommendations, 2006.	No
20.	Save the Children's Contribution to end Violence Against Children in Work Settings: Sharing Good Practice and Key Recommendations, 2006.	No
21.	Save the Children's Contribution to end Violence Against Children in Institutional Settings: Sharing Good Practice and Key Recommendations, 2006.	No

22.	UNICEF's Voices of Youth website	No
23.	Statement made by young people at the UN Ad Hoc Committee negotiating the text of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, January 2006.	No
24.	ECPAT International, 'Ensuring Meaningful Child and Youth Participation in the Fight against Commercial Sexual Exploitation: The ECPAT experience', 2007	
25.	Statement from children with and without disabilities participating in a consultative workshop in Sanaa (Yemen) 29-30 October 2007	No
26.	Final Recommendations, Mekong Youth Forum on Human Trafficking, 2007	Yes
27.	ECPAT International Youth Partnership Project, 'Youth Recommendations for Involving Experiential and Vulnerable Youth in Peer Support and Advocacy against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children', South Asia Regional Consultation, December 2007	Yes
28.	World Fit for Children +5, Opening Statement from the Children's Forum to the United Nations General Assembly Plenary Session on the Commemorative Event of the Special Session/World Fit for Children +5, 11 December 2007	No
29.	Junior 8 Summit, 'Build On – A compilation from the C8 in 2005 to the J8 in 2007', General information and outcome documents produced by the participants	No
30.	Junior 8 Summit, 'Chitose Declaration', Chitose (Japan), 6 July 2008	No
31.	International Youth Advisory Congress, 'Key Recommendations', 2008	Yes
32.	Children and Young People's Preparatory Meeting for the East Asia and Pacific Preparatory Meeting for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children, 'Children's and Young People's Recommendations', 14-16 August 2008	Yes
33.	South Asia Forum Regional Preparatory Consultation for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, 'Children's Forum Recommendations Summary', 24-27 August 2008, Kathmandu	Yes
34.	'World Vision Focus Group Discussions with Youth on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children', draft, September 2008	No

## **Annex 2. Key Regional and Global Statements by Children and Adolescents**

This annex includes the original versions of key statements made by children and adolescents regionally and globally in the fight against sexual abuse and exploitation, including:

- Stockholm Congress Panel Report, Youth Panel, first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, August 1996.
- Final Appeal of Children and Young People, 2<sup>nd</sup> World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Yokohama, 2001.
- Mekong Children's Recommendations on Human Trafficking, 2004.
- 'Listen to Children and Young People's Recommendations against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children', children and young people's progress report, presented during the Post-Yokohama Mid-term Review of the East Asia and Pacific region, Bangkok, 8-10 November 2004.
- Statement by children and young people, part of the South Asia Regional Mid-term Review of the Yokohama Global Commitment 2001, Colombo, 2004.
- Mekong Children's Forum on Human Trafficking, 2004 Recommendations.
- Youth Statement, Yokohama Mid-term Review, Ljubljana, 2005.
- Mekong Youth Forum on Human Trafficking, Final Recommendations, 2007.
- International Youth Advisory Congress, 'Key Recommendations on online safety and security', 2008.
- South Asia Regional Consultation, ECPAT International Youth Partnership Project, 'Youth Recommendations for Involving Experiential & Vulnerable Youth in Peer Support and Advocacy against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children', December 2007.
- Children's and Young People's Recommendations, Children and Young People's Preparatory Meeting for the EAP Preparatory Meeting for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children, Bangkok, 14-16 August 2008.
- Children's Forum Recommendations Summary for the South Asia Forum Regional Preparatory Consultation for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, Kathmandu, 24-27 August 2008.



**STOCKHOLM CONGRESS PANEL REPORT: YOUTH PANEL, 1<sup>ST</sup> WORLD CONGRESS ON COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN, AUGUST, 1996.**

Your Majesty the Queen,  
Mr Rapporteur General,

To all the chronologically advanced delegates and to you, my fellow young people, good afternoon.

Six months ago, I received a phone call asking if I wanted to participate in a workshop for children where we will be consulted so that the adults who would be going to the regional consultation for this World Congress would be prepared to bring the thoughts of children. I was excited about it and so I went. We had lots of fun and games, and lots of discussions too. Before the workshop ended, all of us children participants wrote down 3-4 names of those whom we think could voice out the children's thoughts and ideas effectively and who do we think would be successful in their own fields, say 10 years from now. Little did we know that the winners would be sent to the Bangkok consultation. The same experience also happened to the Brazilian youth delegates; they were elected by their fellow youth leaders. Then we became part of the planning at national level and then next came the regional level. We went to the Asia Pacific regional consultation in Bangkok, Thailand, and presented the Philippine situation through a theatre presentation and we participated in all the workshops. We were so happy because we felt appreciated and respected by the adult.

And then, eight days ago, we arrived here in Stockholm and met the other youth delegates. We had a workshop the very next day to prepare for yesterday's youth panel. It was both fun and frustrating working with the other youth. Of course we all had different ideas and different ways of saying it but, in the end, we all understood each other and came out with yesterday's panel. During the workshop we surfaced our expectations for the whole Congress and these were: that we will learn a lot about the experience of others; that we can share our ideas; that the adults will listen to us and that something concrete will come out of this Congress and of course that all this be coupled with fun.

Yesterday's youth panel was a shining moment for all of us. This was what we've been waiting for. We presented several issues but in all of those we called upon all the governments and all the adults to change their wrong attitudes towards us children and for everyone to recognize the abilities of the children and youth and to let us participate in all undertakings that are supposed to help us children. We all think that the youth panel was successful; most of our expectations were met. If only you'd seen the traces of relief and happiness in my friends' faces, you wouldn't help but smile too. Everyone felt great, happy and glad that something beautiful came out, even if we had short time for preparations. Actually we were having some problems before in putting all these things together and most of us wanted to go back home, and everybody was always tired. But last night was different. We were all happy at the dinner prepared by the Red Cross Youth for us, where we ate Mexican food and danced some Samba. I feel like that was the only time since the Congress started that everyone had genuine and real fun. You should have heard how everybody sang happy tunes as we walked down the road that would lead us to our home here in Sweden. So anyway, we would just like to thank you all for listening to what we had to say. But we do hope you do more than listen. We posed a lot of challenges to you yesterday and we do hope that you would face them all. I would like to end here and give the floor to my fellow youth

delegate, Vio, to tell you more about our hopes after the World Congress: We, the youth delegation, have gathered here to deal with the darkest problem that is spreading worldwide. We have been given a word in this world. We valued and used this opportunity to protect other children like us. We address these to you as government representatives, NGOs and individuals. *Listen* to what children have to say, and *believe them*.

The entire youth delegation has one important hope for the close future: that your actions shall be as large as your promises.

We thank you for uniting the youth around the world. Because of you we, the children, have bound together as a force defending our rights. We represent the future, and the future is prepared to fight the world's darkness.

Our question for you is:

**Can you fight the problems of today so that they won't be repeated tomorrow?**

**And can you give us the better world that we all dream about?**

**If you support us today, we will be able to support your grandchildren tomorrow.**

## **Final Appeal of Children and Young People, Yokohama, 2001**

At the end of the 2nd World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, the whole world still has a gigantic question to answer: when shall we have a world in which life is based on a sense of caring, sharing, true love and the protection of all societies and individuals from all forms of abuse, discrimination and exploitation? A world free from commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The importance of the participation of children and young people cannot be overemphasized, with particular reference to the experiential young people who really are the experts on the issue at hand. This is therefore a giant step in the right direction for those who feel they know it better. However, there is still the need for the voices of the children and young people present here today, and of those who cannot be here physically, to be fully considered and incorporated in all agendas for action.

As mentioned by many speakers, those affected directly or indirectly are waiting to hear, see and believe in what actions we are going to take as we leave those very comfortable chairs we are currently sitting on. Where do we go from here? It need not be a question for pondering for anyone now. We expect that every one is leaving Yokohama with a clear sense of direction as to how we, together, are going to make this world a better place to live.

As the Congress is declared closed, as we leave this room, as we hug each other, as we shake hands, as we pack our luggage, as we depart for our various destinations in the planes and cars, as we arrive, as we report to our governments, NGOs and agencies, as we draw our budgets, as we plan our activities, as we implement, monitor, evaluate and re-plan, please, for the sake of the children and young people of the world – consider the following points:

1. Education, life skills development, awareness raising and advocacy about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and CSEC for all sexes and age groups should be one of the most important components of all prevention efforts.
2. Government support for children and young people's participation in terms of funding, legislation, and human resource development brings us one step closer to finding solutions that are more effective, more appropriate, and more sustainable.
3. There is a need to address gender issues in CSEC, because the way we raise boys and girls in our communities creates male-dominant societies that allow the commercial sexual exploitation of both girls and boys, including children who identify as homosexuals, transgendered or transsexual.
4. Governments and communities must begin to seriously fight corruption, as it is not only a barrier in our struggle to eliminate CSEC but is also a contributing factor to the continued growth of CSEC.
5. Multi-sectoral cooperation in the fight against CSEC is invaluable. The sharing of knowledge, resources and skills of government agencies, NGOs, community organizations, children and young people's organizations allows us to increase our reach and multiply our strength.

6. The causes of CSEC are multiple and have an interactive and dynamic relationship. Decisions and actions are better informed by comprehensive research efforts especially on the demand factors (people who buy sex from children).
7. Efforts must be made to ensure that exploiters are the ones punished, not children and young people who have been exploited.
8. There is a need for better harmonization of national legislations in line with international treaties, and cooperation between law enforcement agencies at all levels, as well as strict enforcement, monitoring and evaluation of these laws.
9. The media have a crucial role to play in the eradication of CSEC. Media personnel should endeavour to make provisions for airtime, print space or Cyberspace that would educate the general public about CSEC and related issues, and facilitate the effective participation of young people.
10. Positive cultural, traditional and religious values should be used in the fight against CSEC, and the practices that are harmful or that make children vulnerable to CSEC are eliminated.
11. Our cultures are wellsprings of creative ideas and effective means for fighting CSEC. Programmes that aim to combat CSEC should be made with the consideration of this cultural, political and economic diversity, as well as individual differences.
12. There is a need for relevant, long-term, comprehensive and accessible services for those who experience commercial sexual exploitation and who need exiting points and healing.
13. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child must be used as a guiding tool for all legislation, plans of action, and services related to fight against CSEC. We believe that if children's rights to survival, development, protection and participation are not ensured, we can NEVER eliminate CSEC.

This appeal is on behalf of all the children and young people of the world to governments and agencies all over the world, including those who could not be here with us; and we expect the governments and agencies to exhibit their political will to implement the commitments to fight CSEC.

**We commit** ourselves to share the outcomes with other countries, NGOs, other young people and children that are not present here.

**We promise** to exert efforts to build a network of children and young people across the globe, and initiate a fund to facilitate the implementation of CSEC-related activities worldwide.

As we finally **appeal** for the recognition of the above points, **we encourage** all parties to donate to the fund and consider the possibilities of observing a day in recognition of the worldwide struggle against CSEC.

Thank you for your attentive listening.

## **The Mekong Children's Recommendations on Human Trafficking 2004**

### **Introduction**

Children are the future of every country, and the ones who can ensure a country's sustainable development. However, trafficking of children severely violates their rights. In the Greater Mekong Sub-region, there is a serious problem of human trafficking, which can be seen both within countries and across borders. Moreover, the phenomenon of trafficking is on the rise. Many children have no certainty in their daily lives, or are even at great risk of being trafficked. Victims of trafficking suffer tortures. For instance, they are likely to be exploited, forced to do hard work, enter the sex industry etc. These factors will have very bad impact on the development of the children's physical and psychological health, as well as on their intelligence and emotions.

In our view, there are several main causes of child trafficking, such as: poverty; lack of employment opportunities; low level of education; children's limited awareness of self-protection; sometimes, parents cannot protect their children very well; in addition, there is not enough cooperation among countries. There are many other reasons that add to the problem. We strongly hope every child can be properly protected and be kept away from trafficking. We hope all the children can enjoy their naïve smiles, and there is a happy and colourful world for them to live in.

### **Why we are sending this message**

We have come here to let all the governments of the countries of the Greater Mekong Sub-region hear our voices and know our real needs in relation to trafficking in children. We ask for full support from the governments of the countries of the Greater Mekong Sub-region on implementation of various activities to combat trafficking.

### **Our Recommendations**

#### **Social and economic development**

- Governments should have policies and measures to promote social and economic development, such as controlling prices and inflation, credit for the poor, etc.
- Further implement hunger alleviation and poverty reduction programmes to improve the living standards of the people, especially for victims of trafficking and families at high risk.
- Governments should mobilize all human and financial resources to combat human trafficking.
- Governments and local authorities should have policies and measures to give appropriate support for children to find suitable jobs to start their careers.

#### **Laws and policies**

- We want laws to protect children's rights.
- Establish institutions that can provide legal assistance to protect the rights of children.
- Punish traffickers and illegal agents severely.
- There should be international cooperation to combat illegal agents involved in cross-border labour migration.
- Give more power to officials, but also control them.
- Crack down on corruption and bribery.
- Forbid drug and alcohol abuse by officials at border checkpoints.

- Do not seize returnees' wages and property at checkpoints when they come back of their own choice.
- Close down karaoke bars linked to sex services.
- Supplement national laws, and make them more effective.

### **Child Labour**

- Take action against the involvement of children in hard work and labour exploitation.
- Punish severely people who use child labour.
- Allow children to do part-time work that is clearly defined in terms of time, forms and working conditions.
- Governments should be more concerned about children in poverty.

### **Child Rights and the Family**

- We want adults to understand children.
- Adults should give children opportunities to participate in useful activities that do not have bad effects on children, especially participation in combating trafficking.
- Governments should take children's rights more seriously.
- Governments should grant nationality to all children born in their country.
- Families should pay close attention to taking care of their children.
- Governments should take care and control media that have a bad influence on children.
- Governments should support any organizations who provide welfare in children's best interests.

### **Advocacy and Awareness Raising**

- Strengthen advocacy on trafficking issues, especially trafficking in children and women.
- Governments must provide opportunities for, and facilitate, peer education on relevant child rights issues, including trafficking.
- An international Anti-trafficking Day should be designated.
- Set up parents' committees in communities to talk about possible problems children can face when they migrate.
- Raise awareness among all community members – including teachers, children, adults and parents – on women and children trafficking issues: the root causes, tricks used by traffickers, legislation, children's rights, etc.
- Materials and media about trafficking issues, produced by children themselves, should be available at all levels where children and relevant adults can easily access them. These media could include: leaflets, posters, CDs and VCDs, audio tapes, TV, radio and internet.
- Awareness raising about trafficking should be incorporated into primary and secondary school curricula.
- Governments should facilitate sharing good experiences and enable study exchange.

### **Education**

- Governments should provide opportunities for free, quality education to all children – in particular children at high risk of trafficking and victims of trafficking.
- Provide scholarships to poor children without discrimination, even if they do not have nationality in the country where they are residing.
- All people, in particular children and women at high risk and victims of trafficking, should have access to marketable vocational training and specific skills training.
- Provide non-formal education literacy programmes in communities for children and women at high risk or victims of trafficking.

**Victim Support**

- Victims of trafficking must have equal rights with other people, with no discrimination.
- Society must be prepared to accept and give opportunities to victims of trafficking.
- Rescue centres and taskforces must be established to find the victims and rescue them quickly.
- Governments must prepare better the return process while considering victims' feelings, safety and need for mental support.
- Victims should be taken care of and be given good advice. Ensure that they have access to health care.
- Victims must be provided with both education and vocational training programmes, and they must have access to health services free of charge.
- Victims should be able to take part in information dissemination about trafficking.

**We want to see results.** We want governments to take serious action against trafficking. We will follow up and examine the activities of governments.

We want governments to publish their promises and reports in the mass media: internet, radio, newspapers, television.

We may need to meet you again to learn the progress you have made in your actions – after one year at national level and after two years at regional level.

We thank you and hope you will give special consideration to our requests. We would also like to thank the governments and international organizations that have supported us to be part of anti-human trafficking activities.

We hope that our proposals will really happen, and that our guests in this room will cooperate seriously.

**Youth Recommendations for Involving Experiential & Vulnerable Youth in Peer Support and Advocacy against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. South Asia Regional Consultation, ECPAT International Youth Partnership Project, December 2007**

- Create opportunities to interact with other young survivors through interactive activities that help them realize that they aren't alone and begin to develop new and positive relationships.
- Encourage young people to transform negative self-images and change adverse public perceptions by focusing on their positive roles as peer supporters, youth advocates and community leaders.
- Offer training in drama, poetry and puppetry to enable survivors to express themselves through art and other creative mediums, which build self-confidence through public presentations to outside organizations, local schools and communities.
- Build leadership skills by entrusting young people with the responsibility for project planning and implementation while providing adequate support and training.
- Create opportunities for young people to volunteer in community awareness campaigns by offering peer support to other children in need. Many youth involved with the project have expressed their future wish to become teachers, counselors and social workers.
- Offer opportunities for youth to directly support project management and implement activities that build future life skills.
- Incorporate cultural activities that build upon young people's talents to effectively present information during public awareness initiatives in ways that appeal to local communities.
- Work with young people living in shelters to identify ways that they can have a positive impact on their immediate surroundings, including through the creation of libraries, game areas and youth clubs.
- Provide training for youth to support the shelter or drop-in-center staff to provide orientation for newcomers to adjust and settle in to their new environment.
- Encourage youth to build positive relationships based on friendship and trust rather than force and intimidation through cooperative goal-oriented activities.
- Build positive partnerships with trusted police officials and local government leaders through joint meetings designed to share ideas about how to better combat CSEC and help reduce youth apprehension of authority figures.
- Where appropriate and safe, provide identity cards or other materials that associate youth with the project while conducting outreach in targeted areas.



- Work with youth to design effective and appropriate local, national and international advocacy campaigns that promote the child protection message to local communities and national-level policymakers.
- Ensure that all programs and activities are based on established guidelines for good care and child protection.

## **Listen to Children and Young People's Recommendations against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children**

A Presentation of Children and Young People's Progress Report made during the Post-Yokohama Mid-term Review of the East Asia and Pacific region, Bangkok, 8-10 November 2004.

The presentation by the child and youth delegates recognized the progress and achievements made by Governments and NGOs in the region to fight against the commercial sexual exploitation of children, reflecting on the same 10 priority commitments selected from the Regional Commitment and Action Plan. The young delegates appealed to government representatives from across the region to urgently take even further action and to always serve the best interests of the child in all policies and programmes. The young delegates made the following assessments and recommendations according to the five key areas of the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action:

### **1. Child and youth participation**

Although countries had involved children and youth in various settings, the young delegates felt that Governments had not considered their involvement a priority, nor had they made a sufficient to involve young people in the fight against CSEC. Many countries had not yet established Young Persons' Advisory Committees, as delineated in the Regional Commitment and Action Plan. Those were needed in order to provide a formalized channel through which children and youth could provide inputs to governments and advocate for the enactment of policies and programmes that protected child rights. In some countries where consultative committees involving children had been established, young people had to struggle in order to make themselves heard.

The child and youth delegates proposed the following:

- Advisory committees should be localized to facilitate access by more young people, especially those in rural areas;
- Young people should be more involved in awareness-raising campaigns;
- Governments should be more proactive in facilitating child and youth participation and should expand platforms to promote their involvement, for example through Internet forums.

### **2. Coordination and cooperation**

Although many Governments had established mechanisms for cooperation and coordination among various sectors, the young people stated that their peers had not been involved in those actions, such as in the NPA development or in subcommittees dedicated to child protection issues. Young people in remote areas were especially left out. The child and youth delegates further noted that Governments often did not have a systematic process to follow up with implementation of the declarations and agreements that they had signed.

With regard to the cross-border trafficking of children, inter-coordination in the Greater Mekong Subregion had been outstanding. However, that ground-breaking approach needed to be expanded into other areas and subregions. Furthermore, one of the main challenges which

remained was for more countries to effectively decriminalize child victims, rather than penalizing them.

The child and youth delegates proposed the following:

- Cross-border law enforcement should be strengthened to stop the trafficking of children;
- Countries should adopt bilateral and multilateral agreements on CSEC;
- Governments should establish strategies to ensure action plans at the community level;
- Participation of young people in regional initiatives should be ensured and children should not be excluded because of national or political differences.

### **3. Prevention**

The children and young people appreciated the efforts of some countries in promoting access to education and information on CSEC for children. However, awareness-raising activities were still insufficient in many countries, especially at the community level. The child and youth delegates proposed the following:

- CSEC issues should be integrated into school curricula, especially for children aged 6-12 years;
- Information on laws on CSEC should be consistently disseminated to local communities, which should be encouraged to take action to prevent and protect their children from CSEC;
- Awareness-raising programmes on CSEC should be developed at the community level;
- Resources must be allocated to set up child protection units at the community level;
- Governments should provide support for NGOs working on CSEC and/or children's issues, and should approve licences for them to operate.

### **4. Protection**

The young people appreciated that all countries in the region had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, some countries had not yet ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO Convention No. 182, also known as the Worst Forms of Children Labour Convention, 1999), and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and other international treaties on protecting children. The child and youth delegates expressed their hope that all Governments would effectively implement all international treaties and conventions related to child protection, and also establish monitoring mechanisms for implementation.

The young delegates also expressed their appreciation that Governments had revised laws and policies to better protect children. However, they expressed concern that many children were often not aware of those laws, and that law enforcement in the region remained weak. The delegates cited bribery and corruption among officials as main reasons behind ineffective law enforcement.

The child and youth delegates proposed the following:

- Mechanisms should be created and applied for monitoring whether Governments that signed treaties were actually implementing them;
- Governments should monitor marriages between foreigners and children/young girls;
- Children should be protected from programmes that deceived them into believing that they would receive direct benefits;

- Governments should provide services and justice to victims of CSEC, as well as train law enforcement officers on the fair treatment of victims;
- Governments must work to eliminate corruption;
- Governments must establish special units where children and young people could turn to for help.

## **5. Recovery and reintegration**

The young people appreciated that most countries had improved recovery and reintegration services for victims through the provision of food, health care, psychosocial counselling, safe shelter and vocational training. However, such programmes had not been accessible by all victims. Few countries had established a system to monitor and follow up on those recovery and reintegration activities. Often, staff responsible for overseeing recovery and reintegration programmes did not have the relevant expertise and training.

The child and youth delegates proposed the following:

- Governments should allocate resources for establishing community-based recovery and reintegration programmes;
- Governments should improve the services provided to child victims, including an increase in the number of safe shelters, training staff to have a positive attitude and the skills to work with child victims, providing non-formal education and vocational training, and ensuring a safe return home;
- The establishment of proper family tracing, as well as preparation for families through social inclusion programmes before rescued child victims were returned home in order to reduce the stigmatization they often faced.

## **Statement by children and young people, as part of the South Asia Regional Mid Term Review of the Yokohama Global Commitment 2001, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2004.**

We the South Asian children (16 girls and 8 boys) participating from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka met for 2 days from 27th – 28th September, 2004 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to share and discuss our experiences, achievements, gaps and challenges related to sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking. This consultation resulted in the following priority recommendations to be initiated in 2005 and then, monitored and evaluated by end of 2006.

### **OVERALL RECOMMENDATION**

Strengthen and support the participation of girls and boys from different background (age, abilities, ethnicity, caste, class, religion etc.), and build their capacity to work against sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking. **Ensure that sufficient budgets are allocated to these recommendations that are based on previous promises that were made in Yokohama.** We ourselves need to strengthen our partnership with adults to create supportive spaces and opportunities for active and effective participation.

### **SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS PREVENTION**

Each country to initiate a pilot project - identify the MOST severely hit area/village (only ONE per country) and in this area ensure:

- **50% School enrolment** (through setting up schools in convenient distance which are providing quality education)
- Creation of opportunities through ensuring that **50% of the targeted population is economically self reliant** (by providing life skills education and livelihoods skills training, particularly to females headed families, and to provide life skills training and bank loans to out of school children and vulnerable children for creation of their own enterprises).
- **Awareness raising** on child sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking and the consequences of trafficking to **parents**.
- **Capacity building** for the following groups on how to deal with child sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking and Trafficking: **Police, doctors, nurses and concerned government officials**.

### **PROTECTION**

- **Special police and courts** particularly for children affected by sexual exploitation in each country. These courts should exist at all levels (local, district and higher) and be **child centred and friendly**. E.g. 5 judges in each case before these courts to help prevent corruption, such as the bribing of judges. At least three of five judges should agree on the decisions that are made.
- Ensure penalty of life sentence for adults found guilty of sexual exploitation and trafficking and it should apply to all people who offend, including police. Young offenders should be given an opportunity to improve through rehabilitation.
- Children should be protected during court proceedings and should not be exposed to the media but the abuser should be shown in the media.

- The children of sex workers at risk children should be provided with safe homes/spaces to prevent these children from being forced into prostitution.
- Many countries have their own laws, so destination countries should have strict laws to deal with traffickers and abusers who traffic children into their countries.

## **PARTICIPATION**

- The formation of a National Children’s Task Force funded by the Government and represented by young people from all sectors and all lifestyles (rural, urban, school-going, out of school, disabled, child labourers, children forced into prostitution, children growing up in brothels, HIV affected children, etc.) to ensure the participation of children in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of NPAs on sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking and other child rights commitments.
- Young Peoples participation in local governance: By involving NGOs in the facilitation of children’s participation. This will raise the children’s issues and reinforce better implementation of programmes related to sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking.
- Developing capacities of girls and boys through life-skills education facilitated by peer educators. A number of children will be brought from different areas, representing different issues, and will meet on a national level for capacity building given by NGOs, the Government, and other children. These children would become peer leaders and could then return to their areas and train other young people.

## **RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION**

- Child friendly and supportive counselling should be provided to the affected children. Children should not be threatened and they should be provided with quality education.
- Proper monitoring of recovery intuitions should be made on a regular basis. Institutions should maintain good relations with parents (of affected child) and communities to improve the quality of work with children. Special measure to deal with HIV/AIDS positive young people affected by child sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking
- Affected children should be given training to allow them to help other children to act as mentors on recovering mechanisms and focus on resilience.

## **COOPERATION AND COORDINATION\**

- To strengthen sharing of information, material and experiences between countries, between children, between governments. Firstly to share the NPAs.
- Establishment of a special regional police to monitor sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.

**For all the above activities ensure that it gets done – monitoring body in place with active participation of children.**

## YOUTH STATEMENT

### Yokohama Mid-Term Review, Ljubljana, 2005

**Recalling** the final youth appeal in Yokohama, we, the young people at the Ljubljana Mid-Term Review want to raise the following issues and urge governments and agencies to follow up our suggestions.

We, the young people want to **restate** the importance of education in order to combat and prevent Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

We **recognize** that Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children is surrounded by shame, silence and taboo in all societies, and therefore want the topic of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children to be a mandatory component of national school curricula in all European and Central Asian countries. We **emphasize** that a change in attitudes towards victims and survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, is important for educational programs to not only have a problem-orientated approach, but also a balanced and positive approach towards sexuality, and to be sensitive towards different age groups of children.

We **urge** governments to consider the expertise of NGOs and youth organizations and to invite them to assist in educational programs, for example through peer to peer education.

We, the young people, **appeal** to the governments to:

- **Actively listen** to the voices of victims and survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, which will lead to a better understanding of the needs of survivors and also be vital for improving the prevention of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children;
- **Establish** structures and procedures to respond to the urgent needs of new victims; including but not limited to proper social assistance, rehabilitation and preparation for reintegration, the option of a residence permit in cases of trafficking across borders and the provision of shelters offering specialized services to meet their unique needs;

We, the young people have ideas and expertise within Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children issues, but often lack resources.

We, the young people at this conference want to **reiterate** the final appeal made by the youth at the Yokohama Congress for an international Fund to provide resources for youth participation programs to combat Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. We envision that resources from this Fund will be used in programs designated by youth and for youth.

We **envision** this Fund being co-created and co-managed by youth and with youth at all decision-making levels.

We **envision** that governments and agencies will contribute to this Fund by supporting these programs and that governments will benefit from active participation in the programs they sponsor by gaining a clearer understanding of the problem of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and learning and following up on the results of the programs.

We **envision** that the Fund has a simple, clear and youth-friendly structure and application mechanism.

We **urge** Europe and Central Asia to take the lead on this Yokohama commitment.

We again **urge** the governments of Europe and Central Asia to make this Fund a reality and we **urge** the Council of Europe to look at the feasibility of initiating such a Fund at a European level.

To facilitate the above and enable effective and meaningful child and youth participation, we request the Council of Europe to assist, and all present governments to:

- **Identify** a lead government agency in every country to serve as a responsible and accountable focal point to coordinate all initiatives against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and also encourage youth participation in these activities.

The focal point will be responsible and accountable for the development and implementation of the national plans of action, with an explicit mandate to involve youth in these activities, **liaising** with youth organisations working against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

The focal point will also be responsible for supporting the Fund suggested by the young persons of Yokohama and restated by the young persons at Ljubljana to accelerate the implementation of the national plans of action.

In a partnership between children, youth and adults, we must take action now to stop Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. Child and youth participation works, and is vital in the struggle against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children! Help us inform children about Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, give survivors a voice and appropriate care, support youth initiatives through the fund and appoint focal points responsible for coordinating government efforts and together we can eliminate Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.





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## FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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### **Victim Protection**

According to our discussion and observations, we see that inadequate systems are in place to help victims report their trafficking experiences. Most victims are unaware of where and how they can get assistance. In some cases we've seen that victims faced discrimination when they returned to their communities. There are also people returning, on their own, to their homes (who haven't been 'rescued' or returned by authorities) and who do not even realize they had been victimized. We also think there is not enough prosecution of traffickers.

#### **So we have come up with some recommendations on victim protection as follows:**

1. Enforce specific laws that strictly punish traffickers. In particular, those who employ domestic workers and beat them, and those who employ young people for exploitation must be punished and the communities must be informed on these laws and penalties. This will help prevent others from trafficking children. Traffickers who are in jail must be rehabilitated and educated so that they would not repeat their crimes.
2. Victims need more ways to report the abuses and receive help and this can be done through mass media campaigns, setting up hotlines at hospitals<sup>115</sup> and within communities, and through establishing collaboration systems with local authorities, NGOs, and relevant departments. International anti-trafficking hotlines should also be set up and share the same number (if possible).
3. The decision to return home must be voluntary.

#### *For those **returning** to their communities:*

- a. There has to be a family assessment before the victim returns to make sure that it is safe for the victim to come back.
- b. Family should welcome victims without any discrimination.
- c. Encourage victims to participate in activities so that, they can re-gain their sense of value and belonging in the community
- d. Provide Psychological support to the victims.
- e. Provide vocational skills and support according to their needs and find market for their products.
- f. There has to be a system to monitor and follow-up the victims after their return. Governments must clearly identify which agencies are responsible for this.
- g. If for some reason, the family cannot welcome the victim, the community must find another safe place for him/her.

#### *For those **who cannot return** to their own communities and families:*

- h. Governments in areas where they like to stay must provide job opportunities for them.

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<sup>115</sup> Hotline for hospitals will be used by staff to report to authorities on cases that they discover from among their patients.

### **Government must allocate the resources to support these:**

4. Establish child protection networks in village, commune, and provincial under collaboration with local authority and all people in all levels
5. Enforce specific laws that strictly punish traffickers. This will also prevent others from trafficking children . Those who use domestic workers and beat them, those who employ young people for exploitation must be punished and the communities must be informed on these laws. Traffickers who are in jail must be rehabilitated and educated so that they would not repeat their crimes.
6. Information materials regarding trafficking, identifying victims, and how victims could get help must be made available for young people in local languages in the destination and in places of origin. The material must say that “Victims are not offenders.”.

### **Prevention**

As young people living in this region, we realize that everyone needs to be involved in child protection and prevention of trafficking. Children with no protection are vulnerable to trafficking. We have also learned that society, communities, families, and schools are not aware of our rights. Sometimes, even we ourselves are not familiar with those rights because we don't have enough access to information. We do not see enough information posted in places where we might look, and the anti-trafficking materials that we do see we often don't like – nor understand. There are tens of thousands of children living in the countryside who have *never* seen information or materials on anti-trafficking. In their hometowns, there is no financial or human resources to help them learn to protect themselves from trafficking. Meanwhile in both the cities and in the countryside, there are thousands of children with no parental care. They are vulnerable to trafficking.

### **On this basis, we strongly feel that better prevention work means:**

1. Advocacy on child rights and anti-trafficking shouldn't only be targeted at children but also adults
2. If only we had more financial and human support, we as young people could better deliver information on anti-trafficking to other children.
3. In addition, if we can get more involved in developing advocacy materials on children's rights, we'll like those materials better.
4. Parents should learn how to be better parents through schools and other means, including media.
5. A system should be set up to support poor families so that parents can stay united with their children instead of going away to work.
6. More social resources should be allocated to the most marginalized children and to care for children without parents to make sure that they are properly looked after.
7. Child protection systems should be established to help children in all places, especially where trafficking is a big problem – not only in the cities but also in the rural areas.
8. Better awareness raising and information sharing<sup>116</sup> within the community about trafficking including the real stories of victims' stories if the victims are willing to do so and through their friends. Education/information materials on human trafficking must be available at schools, supermarkets, stations, and hospitals, so that all people are aware of the issue.
9. More materials should be translated to local (and minority) languages.

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<sup>116</sup> This could be through workshops, radio, TV, and other forms of mass media. Six countries should cooperate together, set up creative symbol or body gesture to mean I need help, like “SOS” when they are trafficked.

10. Governments in our 6 countries should organized more international activities like MYF regularly and invite the victims (if they are willing) to tell their stories to us to prevent other children from being trafficked.

### **Participation**

Since trafficking affects the lives of many children and young people, better solutions to the problem of human trafficking could be found and implemented through the direct participation of children and youth. However, there is not enough understanding and support from government, community and parents on children's participation. In general, children do not have enough opportunity to participate and children and young people also can lack the confidence to participate.

There are other factors that need to be addressed to make participation fairer for all young people such as on-going discrimination between educated and uneducated children, rich and poor children, those from rural areas versus urban areas, as well as gender-based discrimination. All of these affect the opportunities available for participation.

#### ***Our recommendations:***

1. All children and youth should be given the opportunity to participate in activities without discrimination between the rich and the poor, educated and uneducated, male and female, children and youths, victims, disabled, and people of different religions. Government, parents, and international organizations to provide financial and technical support for children's participation.<sup>117</sup>
2. Children and youth should participate in planning, implementation, and monitoring of activities against human trafficking.
3. Provide space for children to share their opinions and their experiences on human trafficking and child participation with other children and young people and also with responsible adults. Provide victims with opportunities to voluntarily share information with other people as a specific part of this participation effort.

### **Education**

Trafficked victims, poor children, migrant children, stateless children, working children, and children in remote areas don't have a chance to access education and therefore they become vulnerable groups. Girls should also have just as much chance to attend school as boys. Physical abuse and neglect, bullying, as well as discrimination are still problems in schools. These issues can lead to students not wanting to attend school.

Quality of education in remote areas is not equal to the quality in urban areas. We lack teachers in remote areas due to lack of incentives offered to the teachers. There is lack of information on child trafficking and child protection in schools. There are still parents who don't send children to school, and ask them to work to earn money for the families. Therefore, these children also become vulnerable to trafficking.

#### ***We recommend:***

1. All children must have a formal education and access to non-formal education to help protect themselves from being trafficked.
2. Raise awareness of school teachers (and students) on child protection issues, child rights, and trafficking. There should be more strict punishment to prevent teachers (and other students) from abusing children and discriminating against them.
3. Governments need to supply more, and better quality, teachers in remote areas. This should include increased incentives for urban teachers to work in these remote areas. Meanwhile

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<sup>117</sup> Activities such as community activities for children and youth, youth clubs, camping activities, and forums.

Governments should encourage and support villagers to become teachers. We should encourage students to go back to their schools and become teachers after graduation.

4. There should be participatory extra-curricular activities to equip children with knowledge and skills on child trafficking and child protection. Sharing experiences from trafficked victims should be done in school.
5. We should help parents understand that sending their children to school can prevent them from being trafficked and can improve their prospects for the future.
6. Governments should build more schools and provide free basic education (including school materials) and, when necessary, provide financial assistance to poor children to ensure everyone can go to school.
7. Parents and their communities should encourage children to continue their studies and participate in activities regarding child rights, health education, reproductive health, anti-trafficking, etc.

### **Migration**

Because of reasons such as poverty, lack of job opportunities, lack of protection in schools and within families, or not enough land to farm in order to sustain a living, many people – including children – are migrating without the proper documents, both inside the country and to neighboring countries.

There are either no laws or limited laws that relate to protection of migrant children. Due to unsafe migration and a lack of information available to young people about the destination, children and youth become very vulnerable. There are language barriers and lack of social support for migrant people working at these destinations and migrant people in these places are exploited by employers due to lack of documents.

#### ***Our recommendations:***

1. The Governments of all countries, both origin and destination, need to have workable agreements and policies in place to ensure the rights of all migrants (for example access to legal documents, laws that protect migrants, etc) and to take action immediately in situations of abuse and exploitation. The Governments of all countries need to establish an organization/ office which is responsible for providing support to the migrants.
2. There should be no discrimination against migrants. Child protection systems for migrant children must be established in destination areas.
3. Governments and International NGOs should create job opportunities for young people within their own communities/countries so that migration for work does not become their only choice.
4. Set up job information centers in both cities and remote areas to provide information for migrant children and youth (of legal working age) about safe migration and also about available job opportunities.
5. Government should make efforts to advocate and implement labour law and get employers to understand it and respect it.
6. Illegal employment agencies should be prohibited and certain departments should be identified to monitor the activities of legal employment agencies.

### **Nationality**

Children and youth without nationality are at higher risk of being trafficked because they have limited access to protection, they often have no access to basic services such as education, health care or legal help, and they have no right to vote.

#### ***We recommend:***

1. Officially register all children born in the country as soon as possible to allow them access to all public services.
2. Government agencies must provide special identification for those whose nationality is not recognized, and for the victims of trafficking, who want to remain in the country where they are at present in order that they can rely on receiving basic public care.
3. The destination countries and countries of origin should have more discussion to achieve an agreement on how to identify the migrants' nationalities.
4. Governments to provide equal access to education and educational certificates to all children even if their nationalities are in question.



21 July 2008

## **INTERNATIONAL YOUTH ADVISORY CONGRESS: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The first International Youth Advisory Congress (IYAC) on online safety and security was launched in London on Thursday 17th July.

The Congress saw more than 140 delegates - aged between 14-17 years - from countries as diverse as the USA, Australia, Egypt, Argentina, India, Poland and Namibia, coming face-to-face and working with those responsible for internet safety and security: representatives from government, industry, law enforcement and the media. It gives young people - specially chosen to represent their countries - the chance to shape the internet and online environment for children and young adults across the world.

The initiative is being led by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre - the UK's dedicated organisation for tackling the sexual abuse of children - and is supported by the Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT), an international alliance of law enforcement agencies focused on tackling child sexual exploitation.

On Monday 21st July, the young delegates presented the Congress outcomes to the sector representatives.

The presentations gave an early insight into the themes that will be taken forward for submission to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They included the following points:

### **MEDIA**

- Media should use their influence to advertise existing internet safety films and data. Sensationalist reporting to attract public attention is justified as long as it is followed up with accurate and responsible information.
- At IYAC, many effective online safety films from across the world have been reviewed. It would be in the best interests of children and young people for broadcasters and advertisers to show these existing films on television, on the sides of buses, on billboards and in online pop-ups. This would reach a huge and relevant audience, who would otherwise remain unaware.
- The media should involve young people in reporting online safety: today's youth are tomorrow's leaders.

### **INDUSTRY**

- Delegates called for a mandatory and universal browser-based 'report abuse' button embedded on the toolbar of each browser and on all social networking sites. This should require only two clicks to report any problem, without even leaving the webpage. Additionally, an easy-to-access tutorial about internet safety should be built into browsers.
- Delegates asked that IP addresses should be shown with every message put on line (chat rooms, messenger etc) to provide greater accountability for online activities.

- Delegates called for the setting up of international online safety Industry Advisory Panels, made up of youth and industry leaders to represent current issues in their countries to government authorities.
- Competition can lead to better products but if the industry sector does not work collectively with education, young people, government, the media and others we will not be able to safeguard the future of young people.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

Delegates looked at sex offender registration issues, comparing the systems in the US, UK and Australia and recommended that:

- All convicted sex offenders should be registered and required to report regularly to law enforcement
- Personal information about child sex offenders should not be released to the public unless they go missing and need to be relocated (the delegates felt that Megan's Law in the US is ineffective, suggesting that it results in a greater number of child sex offenders going missing)
- For those convicted sex offenders that have failed to report, their personal information should be released

Virtual Global Taskforce:

- The delegates have called for a world-wide Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT) with mandatory participation for all countries.
- At present the Virtual Global Taskforce participation (comprising the UK, USA, Italy, Canada, Australia and Interpol) is not enough. Delegates concluded that it doesn't matter whether a child lives in Zimbabwe, or Afghanistan, or Italy, or New Zealand. The internet is available on an international scale and children and young people are entitled to online safety protection wherever they are.
- Minimum standards of training should be provided by the VGT for all law enforcement agencies globally so that every single young person, regardless of residence, has access to the same level of protection.
- Delegates condemned the fact that currently an online predator can be prosecuted in one country but ignored in another.

## GOVERNMENT

- It should be mandatory for browsers and websites to carry the 'Report Abuse' button - small, unobtrusive, powerful (see above)
- Governments need to use their collective powers to put pressure on the media and on industry to promote online safety issues as part of their social responsibility programmes.
- Governments should implement trans-border agreements between nations to promote online safety

## EDUCATION

- There should be a global homepage on browsers which carries internet safety guidelines. This would open every time someone logs onto the internet, meaning the online safety guidelines would be readily available to every child internet user worldwide.
- Young people might all speak different languages but they have one thing in common – they all use the internet. The internet is the future and young people want to ensure that it is a safe one for them and for future generations.
- As the internet is a worldwide resource, young people across the world should be given online safety education classes.
- Every child is entitled to an education and online safety education is vital in today’s society. We think that the UN needs to listen to our views and to value the importance of online safety education.
- Delegates want teachers, governments, parents and other adults to be confident in their understanding of online safety issues in a way that means they are able to pass on their wisdom to other adults and young people.

#### UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)

- Delegates called for the term 'child pornography' in the UNCRC to be replaced with 'child abuse images'.
- Delegates have suggested that Article 12 in the UNCRC should refer to both the online and offline world.
- Delegates recommended the launch of a global IYAC online forum accessible to registered users. This would be used to post ideas and report their individual views, opinions, and experiences. It would be a place for international citizens to bounce thoughts and theories off each other. This forum would reflect these thoughts and feelings and therefore should be taken seriously by media, government, industry and law enforcement worldwide which is definitely in the best interests of children in a global community.



**Children and Young People's Preparatory Meeting for the EAP Preparatory Meeting for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children  
14-16 August 2008**

**Children's and Young People's Recommendations**

**Child Sex Tourism (CST)**

*Prevention*

1. Participation of communities, victims and people at risk in national processes to combat CST through regular meetings at national and provincial level on causes of CST, intervention, reporting systems and enforcement of laws.
2. The community should watch/monitor tourists at national level including at entry points and community level and raise awareness of all incoming tourists on the issue of CST.

*Recovery and Reintegration*

1. Reporting and protection systems are set up or strengthened to prevent as well as deal with cases and punish offenders at local level.
2. The police capacity should be strengthened to receive accurate information, investigate tourists' background and link offenders to the wider network.

**Child Pornography**

*Prevention*

1. Organize campaigns and trainings aimed at awareness raising on the issue of child pornography on the internet, videos, DVDs and real pictures of children or cartoons showing child pornography; targeted at parents, children, teachers and governments.

*Recovery and Reintegration*

2. Child Friendly Systems should be set up where victims of pornography can report cases of abuse without being afraid of government authorities. Reporting structures already exist within some NGOs but child pornography is not reported much.
3. Children who have been victimized should not hide their abuse or feel isolated, and should not be treated as criminals. They should have access to counseling and recovery programs as well as correction programs on bringing about behavior change for young offenders.
4. Peer to peer programs should be set up in order to raise awareness and prevent exploitation related to child pornography in schools and communities.

*Protection*

5. Develop laws where it does not exist and where there are laws, they must be enforced fully and strict punishments against offenders should be done by the government.
6. Government should put systems in place to control and manage different media (print, electronic, internet and cell phones) that use and show pornography including regulating cyber cafes.

**Child Prostitution**

*Prevention*

1. Governments must ensure that all children have access to compulsory and free education and that CSEC is included in the school curriculum.
2. Governments, parents, communities, and children should understand, respect and fulfill child rights including the right to protection from CSEC.
3. Child protection networks ensuring safety of children should exist in all communities.

#### ***Recovery and Reintegration***

4. Governments must provide vocational training programs and reintegration programs so that children receive adequate care and recovery services that helps child victims and families.

#### ***Protection***

5. Policymakers should ensure that laws protect both boys and girls from child prostitution and these laws are enforced without corruption.
6. There should be an EAP unified law/policy on CSEC and an agency to oversee that policies are being implemented. Governments should ensure that national and regional laws are being implemented and monitored at the local level.
7. Governments should recognize and encourage child participation. Children's representatives should be involved in the formulation of laws, reporting and monitoring of international treaties and laws (e.g. CRC and its Optional Protocol on CSEC) and participate in all meetings at different levels related to CSEC.

### **Child Trafficking**

#### ***Prevention***

1. Governments should provide vocational training and small microcredit programs for at-risk parents and children so as to eliminate poverty.
2. Governments should provide free education (formal and non formal) for all children, especially for poor children so as to support children to access information and become aware of CSEC.

#### ***Reintegration***

1. Governments should have integrated programs for their safe rehabilitation (shelter homes that provide children services that cater to both their physical and mental needs such as counseling, medical, vocational etc.) and reintegration (community awareness and acceptance).
2. There should be no discrimination for children infected with HIV/AIDS. Children should not be isolated in schools and the community and should be given free treatment. Children with HIV/AIDS must be considered the same as every one else and they should not be separated from their parents.

#### ***Protection***

1. Governments should ensure that the laws are enforced to protect both boys and girls against trafficking for sexual purposes and also raise awareness on laws at different levels.
2. Governments should promote child participation at different levels in policy/programs, monitoring, and campaigns related to CSEC.

## **Children's Forum Recommendations Summary for the South Asia Forum Regional Preparatory Consultation for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents**

24-27 August 2008

Kathmandu, Nepal

The South Asia Forum (SAF) regional preparatory consultation for the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents was convened at the Ministerial level by the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare of the Government of Nepal on behalf of the South Asia Forum (a regional Ministerial-level coordinating body of eight South Asia countries) in partnership with the South Asia Coordinating Group on Action against Violence against Women and Children (SACG), which is currently chaired by ECPAT International. The South Asia Regional Consultation had over 150 participants comprising of high-level government officials from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, UN Agencies, NGOs, experts and children and young people.

The Regional Consultation focused on the development of a common understanding on the concepts, challenges and progress in addressing SAF/SACG priority issues (such as child marriage, child trafficking and physical and psychological punishment) and their linkages to sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. A collective formulation of the goals and targets identified will be forwarded to the World Congress III against sexual exploitation of children with the endorsement of the SAARC governments and the SAARC Secretariat.

Prior to the SAF Regional Consultation, a two-day Children's Forum was organized for 18 children (15 girls and 3 boys), 14-18 years of age, from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The main objectives of the children's participation was to provide an opportunity for children and young people to discuss the nature and scope of sexual exploitation in the region and to share models of effective children's participation to address these issues. The children's forum also identified gaps and formulated recommendations, which were presented to participating governments at the Regional Preparatory Consultation. In addition, at the SAF Regional Consultation, children and adolescents gave presentations at the opening and closing sessions, participated as experts in panels and also shared their recommendations in each of the thematic areas of the Regional Consultation. The children's recommendations from the SAF Regional Consultation are as follows:

### **Cross-Cutting Recommendations**

- People working with and for children should be aware of and trained in child rights issues and child-friendly behaviors.
- Child participation should be integrated in all policies and programmes, and budgetary allocations should be ensured by governments and international agencies to secure sustainability.

### **Theme 1: Recommendations from Children on Forms of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and its New Dimensions**

- Governments should enact laws against child pornography, child sex tourism and child marriage, ensure their effective implementation and include children and youth in raising awareness on these issues.
- Governments should incorporate information on CSEC into academic curricula, including providing free education and educational materials, as well as support child- and youth-led peer support programmes in schools.
- Governments should conduct research on CSEC to collect data on the number of children involved and other relevant information, involving children where appropriate. Follow-up actions should be taken by governments based on the research findings.

- Government should work in partnership with non-governmental organizations to provide comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programs, with the involvement of children and youth.
- The quality of care at existing rehabilitation homes/centers should be improved and new homes/centers should be established where they do not exist.
- Children and youth should participate in committees supervising care and protection services.

### **Theme 2: Recommendations from Children on Legal Framework, Accountability and Law Enforcement Relating to Sexual Exploitation**

- Governments should enact laws against child pornography, child sex tourism and child marriage, ensure their effective implementation and include children and youth in raising awareness on these issues.
- Legislation should include strict punishment for traffickers.
- Governments should enact policies and interventions to encourage families to accept rescued children, as well as provide incentives for families to ensure that children remain with their families.
  - Governments should encourage local communities to form vigilance committees in all villages.
- Governments should support youth advocacy groups and consult children and youth in all matters that affect them, including formulating legal frameworks for prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration.
  - Child pornography and obscenity should be prohibited from television, movies and all forms of media.
- The quality of care at existing rehabilitation homes/centres should be improved and new homes/centres should be established where they do not exist.
- Children and youth should participate in committees supervising care and protection services.
- Government should mobilize media to ensure birth and marriage registration so that children can be protected from early and forced marriages and from trafficking.

### **Theme 3: Recommendations from Children on Strategies and Goals for Regional and International Cooperation**

- The media should be informed and educated on the importance of depicting positive stories of survivors.
- Governments should work with local communities and children to increase anti-trafficking vigilance activities in border areas.
- Children and youth, including survivors, should work with police at border check points to identify traffickers.
- SAARC Governments should work in partnership with non-governmental organizations to provide comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programs, with the involvement of children and youth.
- SAARC Governments should encourage media to produce information, education and communication materials based on success stories of CSEC survivors in order to enable and encourage survivors to regain their self confidence, reintegrate into societies and raise public awareness on the issue.