



Research Report

Forum: UNICEF

Issue of: Combating child prostitution to protect children from sexual exploitation, trafficking and violence

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INTRODUCTION

The exploitation of children in prostitution is a severe violation of children's rights and is regarded as one of the most appalling forms of child abuse throughout the world. Child prostitution involves the commercial sexual exploitation of children, where minors are pressured, manipulated or even forced into engaging in sexual activities, in exchange for money, goods or other "rewards". This issue does not limit itself to any single country or region. In many cases, children are also trafficked across borders, making it impossible to pin the issue to a single area of effect.

It is truly "... a global emergency, which requires a concerted global response. Millions of children worldwide continue to be the victims of such crimes." As stated by UN experts on the first World Day for the Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence.

The underlying causes of the exploitation of children in prostitution are complex and frequently associated with but not limited to social injustice, poverty, and illiteracy. Children from low-income families are more at risk because they may be lured with less difficulty, due to the prospect of financial gain or forced by traffickers who take advantage of their desperate situation. The continuation of this crime is also influenced by societal factors such as but not limited to cultural norms, gender inequality, and insufficient legal frameworks.

When being sexually exploited children are at a high risk of getting sexually transmitted illnesses, including HIV/AIDS, and may sustain injuries and chronic health problems because of frequent exploitation. On a psychological level, the trauma can result in serious mental health conditions like anxiety, PTSD, and suicide thoughts. The psychological harm inflicted may also make it more difficult for them to integrate into society and build healthy relationships later in life.

Efforts to combat the exploitation of children in prostitution have been ongoing for decades, with various organizations and governments working tirelessly. NGOs play a crucial role in advocacy, rescue operations, and rehabilitation of victims, while national governments are responsible for enacting and enforcing laws to protect children. The United Nations has been at the forefront, with conventions such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Palermo Protocol providing a legal framework for member states to combat trafficking and exploitation. Despite these efforts, due to the closeted nature of the exploitation of children in prostitution, together with corruption and inadequate enforcement of laws, significant challenges remain. Moreover, the rise of the internet and digital platforms has created new possibilities for traffickers to exploit children, making it imperative to also adapt strategies to address online exploitation. By working together, UNICEF will hopefully be able to find and create adequate measures to help safeguard the future of our children and keep them safe from sexual exploitation and its consequences.

Definitions of Key Terms

Child Prostitution: Often criticized for implying consent, this term is increasingly replaced by “sexual exploitation of children in prostitution” to emphasize that children cannot consent to their exploitation.

Sexual Exploitation of Children (SEC): This refers to the abuse of a child for sexual purposes in exchange for money, goods, or other benefits. It includes grooming, sexting, pornography, and trafficking for sexual purposes.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC): CSEC is a subset of SEC, focussing particularly on the transactional, commercial aspect of the Sexual Exploitation of Children. Defined by the ILO as one of the worst forms of child labor, it includes child prostitution, pornography, sex tourism, and trafficking.

Trafficking: The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. This can include sexual exploitation, forced labor, and other forms of abuse.

Grooming: The process by which an offender builds a relationship, trust, and emotional connection with a child to manipulate, exploit, and abuse them.

Sexting: The sending or receiving of sexually explicit messages or images, typically via mobile devices. When involving children, it can be a form of sexual exploitation.

Survival Sex: When children engage in sexual activities in exchange for necessities such as food, shelter, or clothing. This is a form of exploitation driven by the child’s need to survive.

Transactional Sex: Sexual activities exchanged for benefits like educational opportunities or social status. It differs from survival sex in that it may involve more complex social dynamics.

PTSD: Abbreviation for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a mental health disorder caused by a distressing event. Symptoms of PTSD include: Negative thoughts, Sleep Issues, Avoidance, Flashbacks and many more.

General overview

Child prostitution, a severe form of child sexual exploitation, involves the abuse of children for sexual purposes in exchange for money, goods, or other benefits. This issue is intertwined with trafficking and violence, posing significant threats to children's rights and well-being globally.

The issue of child prostitution and sexual exploitation has deep historical roots, often linked to broader social issues such as poverty, conflict, and gender inequality. Early efforts to combat this problem can be traced back to the early 20th century. During this period, various child protection laws and international agreements began to form.

One of the earliest international efforts was the 1921 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, established by the League of Nations. This convention aimed to address the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation, marking one of the first and most important steps toward international cooperation on this issue.

After World War II, the newly formed United Nations took a more active role in addressing child exploitation. The 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery included provisions against child exploitation, recognizing the need for a global response.

A major milestone in the fight against child prostitution and sexual exploitation was the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989. The CRC is a comprehensive framework that outlines the rights of children and the responsibilities of states to protect these rights. It includes specific provisions to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Building on the CRC, more recently the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography was adopted in 2000. This protocol urges states to criminalize these practices and take measures to protect and rehabilitate victims. The same year, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) was adopted. This protocol supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and focuses on preventing trafficking, protecting victims, and prosecuting offenders.

In the meantime, many countries have enacted national laws to combat child prostitution and trafficking. For example, the United States passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000, which provides tools to combat trafficking in persons both domestically and internationally. The TVPA established the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and created the annual Trafficking in Persons Report, which assesses global efforts to combat trafficking. Aside from national governments, non-governmental organizations have also played a crucial role in the solving of this issue. ECPAT International, founded in 1990, is a global network dedicated to ending the sexual exploitation of children. Initially focused on combating child sex tourism in Asia, ECPAT has expanded its efforts worldwide, advocating for stronger legal frameworks and providing support to victims.

The rise of digital technologies has introduced new challenges in the fight against child prostitution and sexual exploitation. Online grooming, live streaming of abuse, and the distribution of child sexual abuse material have become significant concerns. In response, tech companies, law enforcement agencies, and NGOs have developed monitoring and reporting mechanisms to detect and prevent online exploitation.

However, the recent COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated vulnerabilities, with increased online activity and economic hardships leading to higher risks of exploitation. Lockdowns and school closures have left many children isolated and more susceptible to online predators. The pandemic has also strained resources for child protection services, making it more challenging to identify and support victims.

In recent times, local NGOs and community organizations work to raise awareness, providing support to victims, and addressing the root causes of exploitation, such as poverty and lack of education. Advances in technology are being leveraged to combat online exploitation, with tech companies increasingly collaborating with law enforcement and NGOs to develop solutions that detect and prevent online child sexual abuse.

The consequences of child prostitution are far-reaching, having effects on not only the economy and organizations, but much more importantly, individuals. We have listed a few of the important areas of impact here:

- **Physical and Mental Health of victims:** Victims often suffer from severe physical injuries, sexually transmitted infections, and long-term psychological trauma, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The physical abuse can lead to chronic health issues, while the psychological impact can result in lifelong mental health challenges.
- **Social and Economic Impact:** Exploited children are often deprived of education and opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalization. This impacts communities and economies, as these children are unable to contribute productively to society. The stigma associated with exploitation can also lead to social ostracization and further economic hardship
- **Cultural and Regional Variations:** The prevalence and nature of child prostitution vary across regions. In some cultures, traditional practices and gender norms exacerbate vulnerabilities. For instance, in parts of Southeast Asia, sex tourism significantly contributes to the exploitation of children. In conflict zones, children are often trafficked and exploited by armed groups.
- **Impact on Organizations:** NGOs, international bodies, and law enforcement agencies face significant challenges in addressing this issue. They must navigate complex legal and social landscapes, often with limited resources. Coordination between these entities is crucial for effective intervention and support for victims.

Major parties involved

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund): UNICEF works globally to protect children from exploitation and abuse. It provides support to victims, advocates for stronger legal frameworks, and implements programs to prevent child exploitation.

OHCHR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights):

OHCHR monitors and reports on human rights violations, including those related to child exploitation and trafficking.

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees): UNHCR protects children in refugee situations who are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

ILO (International Labour Organization): ILO addresses the worst forms of child labor, including child prostitution and trafficking. The ILO sets international labor standards and works with countries to eliminate child labor and exploitation.

Committee on the Rights of the Child: Monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

INTERPOL: Provides support to law enforcement agencies worldwide in combating child exploitation and trafficking.

European Union: Through various directives and policies, the EU works to combat child trafficking and exploitation within its member states. The EU provides funding, sets legal standards, and coordinates efforts among member states to address child exploitation.

ECPAT International: A global network dedicated to ending the sexual exploitation of children. ECPAT conducts research, advocates for policy changes, and provides support to victims of child exploitation.

Save the Children: Works to protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence.

World Vision: Focuses on child protection and advocacy to prevent and respond to child exploitation and trafficking. World Vision provides education, support services, and advocacy to protect children from exploitation.

Timeline of Key Events

1921: International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children - Established by the League of Nations to address trafficking for sexual exploitation.

1948: Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Adopted by the United Nations, affirming the rights of all individuals, including children, to be free from exploitation and abuse.

1979: International Year of the Child - Declared by the United Nations to focus global attention on issues affecting children, including exploitation.

1989: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) - Comprehensive framework for protecting children's rights, including protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

1990: ECPAT International Founded - A global network dedicated to ending the sexual exploitation of children.

1990: Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children - Established by the Commission on Human Rights to address the sale, sexual exploitation, and sexual abuse of children.

1993: World Congress on Human Rights - Held in Vienna, emphasizing the need to protect children from sexual exploitation.

1996: First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children - Held in Stockholm, leading to the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action.

1999: ILO Convention No. 182 - Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, including child prostitution.

2000: Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography - Urges states to criminalize these practices and protect victims.

2000: Palermo Protocol - Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

2000: Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) - Passed in the United States, providing tools to combat trafficking in persons both domestically and internationally.

2001: Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children - Held in Yokohama, Japan, reinforcing commitments made in Stockholm.

2008: Third World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents - Held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, focusing on new challenges such as online exploitation.

2010: Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) - Entered into force, providing comprehensive measures to protect children.

2014: Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism - Launched by ECPAT International to address the growing issue of child sex tourism.

2019: Guidelines regarding the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the CRC - Adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to combat child sexual exploitation and pornography.

2020: COVID-19 - The pandemic increased vulnerabilities, with higher risks of online exploitation due to increased internet use and economic hardships.

2022: World Day for the Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence - Proclaimed by the UN General Assembly to be celebrated annually on November 18.

2023: Renewal of the Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Sale, Sexual Exploitation, and Sexual Abuse of Children - Extended by the Human Rights Council to continue addressing these issues.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Many previous attempts to solve this issue have already been mentioned throughout this Research report. For your convenience, the major attempts and/or already passed treaties on the topic will be listed here again:

International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children - One of the first international agreements aimed at addressing trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Affirmed the rights of all individuals, including children, to be free from exploitation and abuse.

Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery - Included provisions against child exploitation.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) - Provided a comprehensive framework for protecting children's rights, including protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography - Urged states to criminalize these practices and protect victims.

Palermo Protocol - Supplement to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, focusing on preventing trafficking, protecting victims, and prosecuting offenders

ECPAT International Founded - A global network dedicated to ending the sexual exploitation of children.

Save the Children and **World Vision** - Implement programs to prevent exploitation, support victims, and advocate for stronger child protection laws.

Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism - Launched by ECPAT International to address the growing issue of child sex tourism.

World Day for the Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence - Proclaimed by the UN General Assembly to be celebrated annually on November 18.

Possible solutions

“Solving” child prostitution is not a simple task. Many solutions have been tried in the past to combat this issue, some of which have succeeded and some of which haven’t. When looking for new solutions we must try and tackle the root causes of the problem such as but not limited to poverty, social (in)equalities and other areas of conflict. As child prostitution often involves the trafficking of children across borders of member states, so strengthening the cooperation between member states would also be of essence.

Above all, it is imperative that we do not forget those who have been affected by child prostitution and its consequences in the past. Not addressing those already affected by this issue will lead to a never-ending cycle of conflict.

Further Readings

As a note for further readings: We believe firstly it would be important for delegates to be aware of all aforementioned treaties and international agreements made between countries. This will be able to form a foundation of knowledge for you to build on. We would recommend the following:

[Preventing-Responding-to-Child-Sexual-Abuse-Exploitation-Evidence-Review.pdf](#)

Whilst it may seem trivial, the following checklist might help one in their research on one’s country:

[Microsoft Word - HRC49-A-HRC49-51-ANNEX 1 Checklist-FINAL for webpage.docx](#)

More informative sources:

[25YearsMandate.pdf](#)

UNICEF Handbook on the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child prostitution and Child Pornography:

[untitled](#)

[Working effectively to address child sexual exploitation: Evidence Scope \(2017\) | Research in Practice](#)

For further research we would like to refer delegates to the bibliography.

Bibliography

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[About the Campaign | Stand up for human rights | UN Human Rights](#)

[Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

[CIO.GAL/143/07](#)

[Committee on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

[Convention C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 \(No. 182\)](#)

[CSAE-Brief-v3.pdf](#)

[ECPAT International.pdf](#)

[ECPAT-Summary-paper-on-Sexual-Exploitation-of-Children-in-Prostitution-2020.pdf](#)

[INTERPOL | The International Criminal Police Organization](#)

[Leave No Child Behind in the Fight Against Human Trafficking | International Labour Organization](#)

[Lanzarote Convention: 1680794e97](#)

[No country is free from child sexual abuse, exploitation, UN's top rights forum hears | UN News](#)

[Our History - ECPAT](#)

[Protecting children from sexual exploitation and abuse | UNICEF](#)

[Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime | OHCHR](#)

[Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children | OHCHR](#)

[Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse | Save the Children's Resource Centre](#)

[Trafficking victim's acts: Human Trafficking | Key Legislation](#)

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)

[UNTC Specifically: Ch. VII 3p.pdf](#)

[World Day for the Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence | United Nations](#)