



Religions for Peace 

Protecting Children from Online Sexual Exploitation

**A GUIDE TO ACTION
FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS
AND COMMUNITIES**



© ECPAT International
and *Religions for Peace*,
June 2016

The statements in this publication are the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the policies or the views of UNICEF.

For more information:

ECPAT International: info@ecpat.org

Religions for Peace: info@rfp.org



ECPAT International

ECPAT is a network of 90 member organisations in 82 countries with one common mission: to end the sexual exploitation of children. ECPAT aims to build collaboration among civil society actors, international agencies, governments and the private sector to form a global movement for protection of children from sexual exploitation. Based on evidence collected by ECPAT members in the field and by world-class researchers, ECPAT advocates at all levels to strengthen national justice and protection systems and increase investment in the fight against sexual exploitation of children. At the heart of ECPAT's work are the voices of children, reflected across the organisation's research agenda, programmes and campaigns. The ECPAT International Secretariat, based in Bangkok Thailand, coordinates research, programmes and high level advocacy, and serves the Network.

ECPAT International
328/1 Phaya Thai Road
Bangkok 10400
Thailand
Website: www.ecpat.org

Religions for Peace

Religions for Peace

Religions for Peace is the largest international coalition bringing together representatives of the world's religious communities who are dedicated to achieving peace. It is a non-sectarian, non-political international organisation that is accredited to the United Nations. *Religions for Peace* has national and regional affiliates in 90 countries and Women of Faith and Interfaith Youth Networks at the global, regional and national levels. It takes an inter-religious approach to mobilising the tremendous potential of religious communities, emphasising how collaboration and coordination among faith groups enhances their overall impact and ability to contribute to peace and development.

Religions for Peace
777 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
United States of America
Website: www.rfp.org

This project was made possible thanks to a partnership with UNICEF.



“ The sacredness of life, honoured in our religious traditions, grounds our belief in the ultimate meaning and value of the child. This sacredness of life compels us to be a voice of conscience. If we fail to protect the child, we deny our humanity, risk our future and betray our beliefs. ”

Religions for Peace Executive Committee Statement
on Commitment to Eliminate Violence against Children

Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Foreword	2
Acronyms	3
Introduction	4
Understanding the Issue	6
Online child sexual exploitation	6
Major threats to children online	6
Understanding the effects of child sexual exploitation on victims	9
Understanding the demand side of child sexual exploitation	11
Access to justice.....	12
The Role of Religious Communities in Addressing Online Child Sexual Exploitation	15
Religious assets	15
Religious obligation to end violence against children.....	16
Inter-religious partnerships	17
Scriptures and teachings about protecting children.....	17
Buddhist perspective	18
Christian perspective.....	20
Hindu perspective.....	22
Islamic perspective	23
Jewish perspective	25
Sikh perspective	27
Other religious perspectives	29
Faith in Action	30
Creating safe and child-friendly places	30
Awareness raising	32
Reporting abuse to relevant authorities.....	33
Advocating	35
Inter-faith action.....	35
Training and staying informed.....	36
Conclusion	36
Annexes	37

Acknowledgements

ECPAT International and *Religions for Peace (RfP)* would like to express their deep gratitude and appreciation to all the experts and religious leaders who provided valuable insights and guidance in the development of this publication.

ECPAT International and *RfP* would also like to thank their respective network members around the world for sharing their knowledge and experiences to be included in this guide.

Deep gratitude also goes to the various partners for their invaluable inputs and feedback, in particular to the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha, Hartford Seminary; Prayer and Action for Children, Arigatou International; Shanti Ashram; UNICEF; and the World Council of Churches.

ECPAT International and *RfP* are most appreciative of the background research and support provided by their staff and advisors throughout the process of developing this guide.

A special appreciation goes to Cat-Dan Lai-Smith, consultant for Lai-Smith Communications, the principal writer of this publication; Jana Jedličková of Hot Ice Creative for her design; to France Charlet, Marie-Laure Lemineur, Supriya Kasaju and Yvonne Nouwen of ECPAT International and Deepika Singh of *Religions for Peace*, for their overall leadership and management of this process; and Clara Sommarin and Anjan Bose, UNICEF Child Protection Section, Programme Division in New York for their technical and editorial support.

Foreword

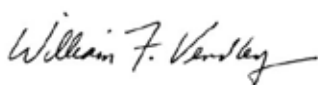
The rapid development of information and communications technologies (ICTs) and the advent of the Internet have introduced an entirely new dimension to the sexual exploitation of children.

We must act now to protect our children in the virtual world. All forms of violence against children, including online sexual exploitation, are unacceptable and a direct assault to the inviolable, inherent dignity of every child.

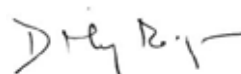
Religious groups and communities represent the most developed, inter-connected form of social organisations in existence, reaching the smallest villages to capital cities and beyond. Due to this unique position, religious leaders and communities are particularly well placed to protect children from online sexual exploitation, to offer care and support to those who suffer such violence, and to work with children, parents, teachers and the larger community, as well as with law enforcement, to prevent and stop this crime. Regardless of their specific traditions, practices or beliefs, all can agree that children are the most precious and vulnerable members of our societies, and deserve our best efforts to protect them.

Major steps have been taken in the past 20 years to build and strengthen civil society and religious engagement in the fight to end the sexual exploitation of children. However, much more needs to be done and therefore, *Religions for Peace (RfP)* and ECPAT International are pleased to present this guide to action to help religious communities harness their strengths to prevent, respond and end online child sexual exploitation.

We hope that this guide provides some basic tools to equip religious leaders and communities to act, advocate, educate, and collaborate both among themselves and with broader initiatives so that each and every child can live without fear, develop their true potential and enjoy the inviolable gift of their human dignity.



Dr. William F. Vendley
Secretary General
Religions for Peace



Ms. Dorothy Rozga
Executive Director
ECPAT International

Acronyms

ICT	Information and communications technology
INHOPE	International Association of Internet Hotlines
CHI	Child Helpline International
CSAM	Child sexual abuse material
CAM	Child abuse material
CEOP	Formerly the Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre (UK)
COP	Child online protection
EI	ECPAT International
FBO	Faith-based organisation
GNRC	Global Network of Religions for Children
ILO	International Labour Organization
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organisation
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NCMEC	National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (USA)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OCSE	Online child sexual exploitation
<i>RFP</i>	<i>Religions for Peace</i>
SEC	Sexual exploitation of children
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WCC	World Council of Churches

Introduction



Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963).

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) and the Internet have become an integral part of modern life, and play an important role in the educational and social development of children. However, they also expose children to new and evolving forms of sexual exploitation.

Child sexual exploitation has soared in recent years as reflected by the ever increasing production and distribution of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) due to the use of more advanced ICTs by perpetrators. According to police reports, the number of CSAM now in circulation is staggering. Practices such as 'sexting' (the self-production and sharing of sexualised messages or images) also place children at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation.

The United Nations, through a deliberate process with Member States and global civil society, has adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000. The Agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 specific targets, designed to tackle global challenges, such as poverty, hunger, lack of education, gender discrimination, conflict and climate change in an integrated way.¹

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) and religious leaders were key players in the process that developed the SDGs. Their participation, as rich and varied as the world's religions themselves, added a powerful moral and ethical dimension to the debates. As a result of their engagement, as well as strong advocacy by the child rights community, the SDGs, unlike their predecessors, address violence against children and identify the sexual exploitation of children (SEC) as one of their core components (see the box on the next page).

The SDGs provide a historic opportunity to prioritise efforts and investments to eliminate online child sexual exploitation (OCSE). "Violence and exploitation and its dehumanising impact on women and girls are a global pandemic," states Dr. Kezevino Aram, Director of Shanti Ashram in India and co-moderator for *Religions for Peace*. "While we know the scale of the problem we also know that we have newer opportunities to address it effectively. The work to implement the Sustainable Development Goals is one such opportunity."

As members of a global movement working to fight this exploitation, ECPAT International and *Religions for Peace (RfP)* know that it is vital to engage with religious leaders and faith-based organisations. Religious leaders are, in turn, uniquely positioned to engage families and communities to address the social, moral and ethical dimensions of child exploitation.

¹ United Nations News Centre (2015), "UN adopts new Global Goals, charting sustainable development for people and planet by 2030", accessed 12 March 2016, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51968#.ViYSRBHovIU>.

We invite you to join us in helping to protect every child from the threat of online sexual exploitation. Please help reverse the tide of violence against children by mobilising your networks in your religious meeting place, your neighbourhood, your organisation, your work and your schools.

This guide to action will help you to get started. It contains facts about the issues, information on the perspectives of different religions on child protection and step-by-step tips to help you engage with others to take action, seek justice and protect the children in your communities and all over the world.



THE NEW 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A COMMITMENT TO PRIORITISE THE FIGHT AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

On 25 September 2015, the UN General Assembly launched the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which outlines a set of Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved in the next 15 years.

Four SDG targets are relevant for combating the sexual exploitation of children:

- 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- 8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.
- 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against and torture of children.²

SDG 8.7, aiming to end the worst forms of child labour, has particular significance as it is expected that it will be achieved within 10 years unlike other targets. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 182, the definition of 'worst forms of child labour' includes:

- all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children;
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances.

These SDG targets, with their specific focus on violence against children, could boost global attention on the need to end all forms of sexual exploitation of children. They create new incentives for governments to tackle the crime and provide an unprecedented opportunity to prioritise comprehensive strategies to address demand.

² United Nations General Assembly (2015), "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", UNDOC, A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015, accessed 12 March 2016, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/L.1&Lang=E.

Understanding the Issue

ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Like the rest of the world, your institutions and communities make regular use of the Internet and the associated ICTs that are now part of our everyday lives. Social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and other channels are often used to communicate and to showcase events, projects, and gatherings online. Social media posts often feature photos or videos of children and families taking an active part in the life of their faith community, and are meant to encourage other users to join in.

This positive and creative use of the Internet is a welcome counterpoint to the misuse of the Internet and related technologies to harm children, but it cannot obscure the threat. Faith communities need to be aware of the risks existing online, especially of online sexual exploitation and abuse, so they can serve their followers to the best of their abilities.

Child sex offenders are very manipulative, convincing and persistent in their efforts to exploit children. They take advantage of the Internet and online tools to access, lure potential victims, produce child sexual abuse materials, upload and disseminate them.

Many parents, community leaders, policymakers and children are not sufficiently aware of the risks. Children from every type of religious, social and economic background can become victims of sexual violence, abuse and exploitation. Even if a child or young person does not have ready access to the Internet, they could nevertheless be approached or lured offline by an offender into sexually exploitative situations, which might also result in sexual abuse materials being produced and distributed over the Internet. The impact of such violence is severe and, for those who have experienced it, likely to be lifelong.

While it is important to build children's awareness of the risks, and their resilience to them, we cannot rely solely on children to protect themselves from online sexual exploitation. It is often very difficult for children to understand what is happening to them and how they are being manipulated. At the same time, denying children access to the Internet, or imposing severe constraints on their time online is not the solution. In fact such an approach can have a negative impact on children's right to participation and to information on issues that matter to them. It is important, therefore, to strike a balance across interventions which protect and empower children while providing opportunities to use digital platforms through well-informed supervision and allowing to look after themselves.

MAJOR THREATS TO CHILDREN ONLINE

Experts have identified at least six areas of global threats that can further expose children to sexual abuse and exploitation online.³ By learning more about them, you can help your leadership team and faith community to guard the children around you. Families also need to learn more about these issues, as well as your youth and children's workers. Everyone has a role to play in protecting your community's children from offenders.

3 Adapted from ECPAT International (2016), "Briefing Paper: Emerging Global Threats Related to the Sexual Exploitation of Children Online", Bangkok: ECPAT International, http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Briefing-Paper_Emerging-global-threats-related-to-the-sexual-exploitation-of-children-online.pdf, and ECPAT International OCSE Manifestation Factsheets (included in the Annexes section of this guide).

The following section describes forms of online child sexual exploitation, as described in the *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*. Full descriptions of these forms are available to print out in [Annex 1](#) of this guide.

1. Child sexual abuse material

Child sexual abuse material (CSAM), the preferred term of choice to "child pornography", refers to the materials depicting acts of sexual abuse and/or focusing on the genitalia of the child. The term "child sexual exploitation material" (CSEM) can be used in a broader sense to encompass all other sexualised material depicting children.⁴ These materials include children of all ages, boys and girls and differ in level of severity of the abuse and acts ranging from children posing sexually to gross assault.

Some abusers target mainly infants and pre-pubescent children. A 2014 review of CSAM material by INHOPE, the International Association of Internet Hotlines, revealed that 7% of the victims were infants, compared to 6% in 2011.⁵

The volume and scale of CSAM on file-sharing platforms such as peer-to-peer networks has reached unprecedented levels. To help understand the scale of this illegal activity, INTERPOL reported that the US National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) received 78,946 reports from the public and 1,027,126 reports from Electronic Service Providers in 2014 linked to the presence of child sexual abuse material online and other related incidents.⁶

The nature of CSAM is also evolving. Once predominantly commercial, this is no longer the case anymore. INHOPE's 2014 data indicates that 91% of child sexual abuse material that they analysed or processed are non-commercial. Instead of being sold or exchanged for financial or other types of measurable gain, they are shared among like-minded individuals at no cost.⁷

2. Computer/ digitally generated child sexual abuse/exploitation material

The term "computer (or digitally) generated child sexual abuse material" encompasses all forms of material representing children involved in sexual activities and/or in a sexualised manner, with the particularity that the material does not depict a real child, but rather an artificially created child, using digital tools. It includes what is sometimes referred to as "virtual child pornography".

3. Online grooming for sexual purposes

Online grooming for sexual purposes means communicating with a child over the Internet with one intention: to establish a relationship with a child to facilitate either online or offline sexual contact. It may include manipulation or incitement to take part in different forms of exploitative or abusive sexual activities, such as performing sexual acts in front of a webcam or the production of child sexual abuse material or self-generated sexual materials. It is to be noted that such activities may not be unlawful in certain jurisdictions.

4 Definition as used in the *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* (2016), accessed 15 June 2016, [www. http://luxembourgguidelines.org/](http://luxembourgguidelines.org/).

5 INHOPE (2015), "Statistics 2014", accessed 12 March 2016, <http://www.inhope.org/tns/resources/statistics-and-infographics/statistics-and-infographics-2014.aspx>.

6 NCMEC quoted in INTERPOL: "size of the problem" (8 July 2015), unpublished.

7 INHOPE (2015), "Statistics 2014".

Rather than using physical violence to coerce a child into sexual acts, perpetrators often rely on being seen as people with more authority and/or power than their victims, and as people who can provide money or goods. However, offenders who do use physical coercion are becoming more violent, sadistic or degrading towards the children they are abusing, according to INTERPOL. They are often more motivated by their control over victims than the pursuit of sexual satisfaction alone.⁸

4. Sexting

Sexting refers to the process by which someone intentionally shares sexually explicit messages, images or self-generated sexualised images of themselves. These images or videos are often shared with other peers. There are also many cases of "unwanted sexting". This refers to the non-consensual aspects of the activity, such as lack of consent in sharing or receiving sexually explicit photos or messages.

Research findings have shown that 88% of self-generated, sexually explicit content of children was taken from its original online location and uploaded to a different Internet site, usually or often without the children themselves being aware.⁹

When children engage in experimental sexual behaviour, such as consensually sharing self-generated images with their friends, it is important to remember that their activities and behaviour are not the *cause* of online sexual exploitation by adults or others. However, it can increase the risk of them becoming a victim of such exploitation. Responsibility for the exploitation always remains with the offender who commits a criminal offence by downloading or sharing images of third parties without their consent. As religious leaders trying to protect children, it is vital to remember that we should never blame the children or make them feel responsible for what happened to the images *after* they were created.

5. Sexual extortion

Sexual extortion, also called "sextortion", is the blackmailing of an adult or a child with the help of (self-generated) images of that person in order to extort sexual favours, money or other benefits from him/her under the threat of sharing the material beyond the consent of the depicted person (e.g. posting images on social media or sending them to family members).

6. Live online child sexual abuse or live streaming of child sexual abuse

In general, offenders watching the sexual abuse of children online gain access through middle parties. Sometimes these intermediaries are a child's family member or people from the child's community, who force or manipulate the child to 'perform' in front of a webcam. An agreement is reached on a time and date when the offender will log in to view the abuse using a platform that supports streaming live content such as Skype. Appointments can be made using chat messages, email or phone, with both parties agreeing on the price the viewer will pay. Very often, this will be paid in small amounts to avoid suspicion.¹⁰

8 CEOP/NCA (2013), "Threat Assessment of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse", quoted in INTERPOL: "size of the problem" (8 July 2015), unpublished.

9 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2015), "Study on the Effects of New Information Technologies on the Abuse and Exploitation of Children", accessed 4 May 2016, https://www.unodc.org/documents/organized-crime/cybercrime/Study_on_the_Effects.pdf.

10 Holmes, Oliver (2016), "How child sexual abuse became a family business in the Philippines", *The Guardian*, 31 May 2016, accessed 4 June 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/31/live-streaming-child-sex-abuse-family-business-philippines>.

In some communities, a level of tolerance or acceptance contributes to crime happening. This abuse might be motivated, in part, by severe poverty, and a limited understanding of the impact of both the sexual abuse of children and the power of the Internet. Live online child sexual abuse can be seen as an easy and quick source of income. When it comes to technology, all that is needed at the victim's end is a device that can connect a camera to the Internet, e.g. a laptop with a built-in webcam or a tablet. The sexual abuse of one child through live streaming can generate revenues as high as \$1,000 a night.¹¹

This particular form of sexual exploitation transcends national borders, as offenders can be located anywhere, even in a different country from their victims. While the phenomenon first received widespread public attention in Southeast Asia, it now appears to be spreading to other regions.¹²

UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE ON VICTIMS¹³

Although evidence shows that the majority of children portrayed on CSAM are girls, both boys and girls, of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds, are vulnerable to all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.¹⁴ "As a society we have to get to the point where we realise that abuse is above all an issue of power, the perversion of power not to do good but to do grievous harm, and to meet some terrible need within the abuser," states Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury. "It is never the fault of the person abused, the survivor. They will bear the damage; theirs will be often a sense of guilt, which they have to work through with counselling and psychological support for years, sometimes for the rest of their lives. It affects them in all sorts of ways too terrible to describe. But it is not their fault."¹⁵

It is crucial to have support systems in place for children who are enduring the appalling impact of sexual exploitation and abuse both online and offline. Many religious groups are well aware of this and provide some assistance, such as professional counselling services tailored to the needs of victims of sexual violence. Given the growth of online exploitation and abuse, such services are needed more than ever.

The online element of sexual exploitation and abuse of children means that there is another dimension we must take into account when discussing the impact on victims. This is particularly true when we talk about CSAM. Simply speaking, CSAM is the evidence that sexual abuse has taken place.

In the short term, child victims of sexual abuse can exhibit regressive behaviours (e.g. thumb-sucking and bedwetting in younger children), sleep disturbances, eating problems, behaviour and/or performance problems at school and an unwillingness to participate in school or social activities.¹⁶

11 Handrahan, Lori (2012), "The Justice Department's Child Porn Problem", *frontpagemag.com*, accessed 12 March 2016, <http://frontpagemag.com/2012/lori-handrahan/the-justice-departments-child-porn-problem/>.

12 ECPAT International (2016), "Briefing Paper: Emerging Global Threats Related to the Sexual Exploitation of Children Online", Bangkok: ECPAT International, accessed 5 May 2016, http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Briefing-Paper_Emerging-global-threats-related-to-the-sexual-exploitation-of-children-online.pdf.

13 The National Center for Victims of Crime (n.d.), "Effects of Child Sexual Abuse on Victims", *victimsofcrime.org*, accessed 12 March 2016, <https://victimsofcrime.org/media/reporting-on-child-sexual-abuse/effects-of-csa-on-the-victim>.

14 INHOPE (2015), "Statistics 2014"; Internet Watch Foundation (2015), "Annual Report 2015", accessed 12 March 2016, https://www.iwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/inline-files/IWF%202015%20Annual%20Report%20Final%20for%20web_1.pdf.

15 Welby, Justin (2014), "Survivors of abuse are never the ones to blame", accessed 12 March 2016, <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/blog.php/21/survivors-of-abuse-are-never-the-ones-to-blame>.

16 American Psychological Association (n.d.), "Understanding and Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect", accessed 12 March 2016, <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/understanding-child-abuse.aspx>.

A child victim may suffer from long-term complications, including emotional and physical symptoms such as immune deficiency, chromosome erosion and missing brain tissue¹⁷ or might even commit suicide. The idea of being visually exposed permanently online, ignoring a child's right to be forgotten can be a traumatic factor for most victims.

According to research, victims may also experience traumatic sexualisation, or the shaping of their sexuality in 'developmentally inappropriate' and 'interpersonally dysfunctional' ways.¹⁸ This type of trauma can also cause an abused child to learn to use sexual behaviour as a tool to gain affection, attention or gifts and privileges. It can also occur when child victims internalise and display the misconceptions, distorted sexual views that have been communicated to them by offenders.

Other possible consequences are that they may feel betrayed by, and unable to trust, any adults because someone they depended on has caused them great harm or failed to protect them. Abused children may also feel powerless because the abuser has repeatedly violated them and forced them to act against their will through manipulation. Abusers may cause victims to feel stigmatised and responsible for their abuse.

Those who have been victims of child sexual abuse are also more likely to be victimised and to experience sexual assault as adults than non-victims. For example, one extensive study in the US has reported that 15% of college or university women had experienced rape or attempted rape since the age of 14, and the likelihood of a recurrence ranges from 15% to 72%.¹⁹

Once material is shared online, it is almost impossible to control its distribution. This adds a layer of complexity to the trauma of child victims. Victims may feel distress, shame, guilt and anger that their pictures or videos remain online, where they can be viewed by not only offenders but also their own friends and relatives. In a US court case, one victim stated, "Unlike other forms of exploitation, this one is never ending. [Every day,] people are trading and sharing videos of me as a little girl being raped in the most sadistic ways... They are being entertained by my shame and pain." When these images and videos of her are being downloaded, the victim states that she is being "exploited again", her "privacy is breached" and her "life feels less and less safe."²⁰ There is a continuum of sexual violence.

When it comes to cases of non-consensual sharing of self-generated sexual images by peers or adults, those portrayed are put at risk of sexual extortion and other risks that could harm them.

17 The USA "Adverse Childhood Experiences" has been replicated in 22 countries. To learn more, please visit the following link: <http://www.acestudy.org/index.html>.

18 Finkelhor, David and Browne, Angela (1985), "The Traumatic Impact of Child Sexual Abuse: A Conceptualization", *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 55, no. 4 (1985), accessed 12 March, http://scholar.google.com/scholar_url?hl=en&q=http://survivorscotland.whitespacers.com/downloads/1292917998-Traumatic%2520Impact%2520of%2520Childhood%2520Sexual%2520Abuse.pdf&sa=X&scisig=AAGBfm000dPBGbMDj8EbP3UfG21JA8WZDQ&oi=scholar.

19 Van Bruggen, Lisa K., Runtz, Marsha G., Kadlec, Helena (2006), "Sexual Revictimization: The Role of Self-Esteem and Dysfunctional Sexual Behaviors", *Child Maltreatment* 11, no. 2 (2006): 131-145, accessed 15 March 2016, <http://web.uvic.ca/psyc/runtz/Revictimization2006.pdf>.

20 US District Court of the Western District of Virginia (2011), "USA v. Lindauer-Memorandum Opinion", Case No 3:10-cr-00023, accessed 12 June 2016, [http://www.vawd.uscourts.gov/OPINIONS/MOON/LINDAUER3.10CR23\[RESTITUTION\].PDF](http://www.vawd.uscourts.gov/OPINIONS/MOON/LINDAUER3.10CR23[RESTITUTION].PDF).

UNDERSTANDING THE DEMAND SIDE OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

As a faith leader, you will be better able to protect children from offenders if you understand the context or circumstances that allow them to commit such heinous crimes.²¹ This section introduces some definitions and a general explanation of what constitutes demand for sex with children.

Direct abusers/exploiters

Direct abusers and exploiters are individuals who engage with children in a sexual way to satisfy sexual or abusive drives, desires and fantasies. Their reward is direct, sexual gratification through the sexual services they seek.

It is important to note that evidence shows that those directly responsible for sexually abusing children are often family members and other caregivers with easy and private physical access to children. Preliminary data from NCMEC revealed that in the most actively traded CSAM series examined, where the child's identity and the identity of the abuser were both known: 32% of the cases depicted a neighbor(s)/family friend(s); 21% depicted a parent/guardian; 11% depicted various other relative(s); 7% depicted the babysitter/coach and 3% depicted the guardian's partner(s). In total, 74% of the child sex offenders portrayed belonged to the child's 'circle of trust'.²² Similar findings have been found by research completed in Canada.²³

Despite the broad range of studies on alleged perpetrators' profiles, research shows that there is no single 'typical' perpetrator. Rather, there is a wide diversity of psychological profiles. Some alleged perpetrators qualify as preferential sex offenders, others as circumstantial or as paedophiles (type of mental disorder). Some suspects maintain contact with children, while others possess collections of pictures to nurture their sexual fantasies but do not have contact directly with children.²⁴

Intermediaries supporting demand

Online and offline, a wide range of intermediaries facilitate sexual contacts between children and offenders. These may be individuals or groups, including traffickers; pimps; brothel owners, '*mamasans*',²⁵ procurers; employers of child workers; corrupt police and government officials; sex tour operators; or modelling agencies. Although they may act as individuals, they sometimes operate as part of a group or of larger criminal networks.

It is important to note that in the online environment, the process that results in the abuse of a child is sometimes more streamlined, immediate and direct, as the offender can be in direct contact with the (potential) victim such as in cases of online grooming for sexual purposes. However, other manifestations of online child sexual exploitation can also involve intermediaries facilitating the abuse (e.g. initiating

21 For more information, view video introduction entitled, "Speak out: Understanding & Fighting the Demand Side of Child Sexual Exploitation" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKJTjrynwZ4&feature=youtu.be>. Further information can be found in the ECPAT briefing paper, "Power, Impunity and Anonymity: Understanding the Forces Driving the Demand for Sexual Exploitation of Children," 2016 at <http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/PowerImpunityandAnonymity.pdf>.

22 National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (2015), "Child Pornography Offending: Analysis of Data from NCMEC" (presentation delivered at 27th Annual Crimes against Children Conference, Dallas, Texas, USA, 10-13 August 2015).

23 Canadian Centre for Child Protection (2016), "Addressing Online Crimes against Children" (presentation delivered at 34th Meeting of the INTERPOL Specialists Group on Crimes against Children, Lyon, France, 14-18 November 2016).

24 American Psychiatric Association (2013), "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5", Washington, D.C, USA, first published in 1952, 5th edition, 2013.

25 In Southeast and East Asia, the term *mamasan* is commonly used to describe a woman who manages the women in bars and brothels. The use of the term is spreading to other regions of the world.

contact or agreeing on price). An example would be the live online child sexual abuse where, for instance, family or community members might serve as intermediaries to facilitate or organise contact between children and offenders.

Underlying factors

There are many underlying factors or drivers for child sexual exploitation both online and offline. These factors, taken separately or in combination, help to create or sustain the sexual exploitation of children. They include:

- discriminatory gender and wider social norms;
- power imbalances and racism;
- poverty and inequality;
- migration;
- humanitarian crises and conflicts;
- a lack of effective legal frameworks and protection mechanisms; and
- media and advertising practices that contribute to tolerance of the sexualisation of children.

Religious and other community leaders can help to prevent and tackle demand for SEC by acknowledging and addressing some of the factors and dynamics that prompt perpetrators to sexually abuse children. Ideally, curbing the demand and limiting opportunities for sexual predators to offend ensures that children's rights are protected *before* those rights have been violated, rather than being invoked *after* the trauma has been caused. More detailed and practical steps and information on how to prevent sexual exploitation of children is available in the 'Faith in Action' section later in this report.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Sexual exploitation of a child online is a gross violation of that child's human rights. A child who is a victim of sexual exploitation is entitled to the full range of human rights under international law. However, for these rights to have meaning, children must be able to engage with state justice systems to hold exploiters accountable and access the remedies they need and deserve.

In reality, child victims are rarely able to access the justice to which they are entitled. This lack of access can stem from weak national laws, ineffective child protection systems or corruption. But it is also true that many child victims are completely unaware of their rights and very often scared, leaving them unable to ask for the help they so desperately need.

Strong responses are needed from different institutions to support victims in their claims for justice, to help them receive care, recovery and reintegration services and obtain compensation. Based on extensive research and interviews with survivors, ECPAT recommends that steps be taken to:

- develop and implement victim-friendly complaint mechanisms to report cases of exploitation;
- ensure criminal justice professionals are trained on the unique challenges and specific needs faced by child-victims of SEC;

- ensure individualised and accessible services for care and recovery, including education and vocational training before and during the process, and until full recovery; and
- ensure that the best interests of child victims are paramount throughout the process of restoring their rights. This includes ensuring their confidentiality, security and allowing them enough time to decide if and how they want to participate in the investigation and prosecution process.

Child victims of sexual exploitation have unique needs and rights that often go unacknowledged by law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, caregivers and other child protection professionals. In order for them to access justice and claim their rights, there has to be an understanding of the rights to which they are entitled. While there are many child-friendly versions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, apart from the child-friendly version of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography²⁶, there are few if any, child-friendly documents that explain, specifically, the rights of child victims of sexual exploitation.

The lack of child friendly documents is why ECPAT has decided to develop a 'Bill of Rights' for child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. Drafted in consultation with children who have experienced sexual exploitation, the document aims to enable children to become active agents in the promotion and protection of their own rights. It will empower them to assert their right to access justice and seek and obtain remedies for rights violations. The 'Bill of Rights' is meant to be adapted to national contexts and shared with child victims and children at high risk of SEC. It can form the basis of discussions with children and youth on what to do in cases of abuse and exploitation. The 'Bill of Rights' has been finalised and is available on [ECPAT's website](#).

As a leader in your community seeking to fight online child sexual exploitation, it is vital to understand that a fair trial and the prosecution of an offender can be a crucial stage in the recovery of a child victim. This is important to keep in mind because justice must take place, no matter what status the offender has within a community.

We need faith leaders to lend their public support to the prosecution of offenders, even those who come from the same religious community, to deter other potential offenders.

²⁶ To access the "Child-friendly version of the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography" (2013), please refer to the following link: http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/document/_994.

Restorative justice

Restorative justice is an approach to justice that focuses on the needs and rights of the victims, the motivations of the offenders and the role of the local community. It includes processes such as victim-offender mediation, circles of support, sentencing or accountability. Such an approach contrasts with more punitive approaches based solely on legal principles and can take place at any stage of the criminal justice process, including after conviction. It can also form an integral part of sentencing, especially with youths. Restorative justice involves the victim and others harmed by the crime directly, “enabling everyone affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward.”²⁷ This method also facilitates a proactive approach to preventing harm as well as ensuring that people are responsible for their choices and actions and can be held accountable for them.

The use of restorative justice in Western countries has grown exponentially over the past two decades as an alternative to traditional criminal justice options.²⁸ Growing evidence has suggested that restorative justice is being used to good effect following sexual abuse. This research has found evidence that under specific conditions, participation in restorative justice programmes improves the well-being of victims and they see it as being satisfying, worthwhile and fair.²⁹ Some of the best practices can be found in models such as Project Restore in New Zealand³⁰, where restorative justice has been used for adult survivors of sexual violence.

“The findings suggest that matters are dealt with more quickly through conferencing than court, more perpetrators agree to stay away from victims, and more perpetrators offer apologies,” says Dr Jane Bolitho, a leading researcher who has been examining the effectiveness of restorative justice relating to child sexual abuse.³¹ To look for more information about restorative justice policies and programmes, visit the Centre for Justice & Reconciliation’s website where you can search for the restorative justice work happening in your region and country.³²

27 Restorative Justice Council (n.d.), "What is restorative justice?", accessed 15 March 2016, <https://www.restorativejustice.org.uk/what-restorative-justice>.

28 Bolitho, Jane and Freeman, Karen (2016), "The Use and Effectiveness of Restorative Justice in Criminal Justice Systems Following Child Sexual Abuse or Comparable Harms", Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: 9, accessed on 4 June 2016, <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/getattachment/9f328928-a343-4c65-b98e-94e3185894c7/Restorative-justice-following-child-sexual-abuse-o>.

29 *Ibid*, 7.

30 For more information on Project Restore, please visit the following link: <http://rpe.co.nz/?s=project+restore>.

31 University of New South Wales (2016), "Restorative justice could help victims of institutional child sex abuse – report", *phys.org*, accessed 19 April 2016, <http://phys.org/news/2016-03-justice-victims-child-sex-abuse.html>.

32 Centre for Justice & Reconciliation (n.d.), "RJ around the World", *restorativejustice.org*, accessed 19 May 2016, <http://restorativejustice.org/restorative-justice/about-restorative-justice/around-the-world/>.

The Role of Religious Communities in Addressing Online Child Sexual Exploitation

“ *Each of our religious traditions affirms the sanctity and promise of the child. If we fail to protect our children, we deny our humanity, risk our future, and betray our beliefs. We declare that it can be otherwise. Together we must find the will to heal and share our world so that our children will be safe to grow to the fullness of life.*

— Declaration on Children and Violent Conflict, *Religions for Peace*

The importance of engagement by religious leaders cannot be underestimated. In Africa, for example, 74% of people identify religious leaders as the group in which they have the greatest trust.³³ Faith-based organisations and religious communities can, therefore, play a crucial role in ending this form of violence against children.

As the leader of a faith community, you have the influence to foster your faith group's commitment to social justice, and have direct experience of seeing this faith in action. This guide aims to help you and other faith leaders in your efforts to protect children from the threat and impact of online sexual exploitation. Even more can be achieved to fight this scourge when religious communities work together through a unified approach that extends beyond individual beliefs and practices.

RELIGIOUS ASSETS

Religious communities around the world possess unique religious assets³⁴ that set them apart and enable them to make unique contributions to address injustices. These assets can also be used to prevent and address online child sexual exploitation.

Spiritual Assets

Religious leaders and communities are able to offer emotional, spiritual and physical support and care for their believers. Followers look to you for direction, support and for resources to help them deal with pain and loss and to celebrate joys and victories.

Moral Assets

As a religious leader, you are uniquely positioned to use your moral stature and influence to encourage mutual understanding and respect for human dignity within your community. You also have significant influence within your community, which can be harnessed to promote behavioural change through both words and actions. You can work to develop widely recognised standards, based on religious teachings, to establish a moral consensus on the need to protect children. Through extensive networks, like those of *RfP*, religious leaders can help mobilise other religious believers to actively support and engage in action to seek justice.

33 BBC Press Office (2005), "World Service/Gallup International Poll Reveals Who Runs Your World", accessed 16 April 2016, www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2005/09_september/15/world.shtml.

34 *Religions for Peace* (2014), adapted from introduction of "The Power of Multi-Religious Cooperation", *RfP Strategic Plan 2014-2018*, Annex II.

Social Assets

Religious entities have social structures (churches, mosques, temples, schools, etc.) in virtually every village, district and city across the world. While their scale may vary, they are often the most developed, inter-connected and localised social structures in existence, from the smallest village to the capital. These social assets, representing significant channels for communication and action, can enable religious believers to function as powerful agents of change in the protection of children and the promotion of collective well-being.

Reach

Collectively, religious communities represent the world's largest movement, including up to 80% of the population in some countries. They reach more people than any other organisation, including those who are the very hardest to reach.

Legitimacy and Influence

Faith leaders are influential and trusted and can help to overcome barriers, shaping new behaviours and social norms, while reducing or curbing suspicious behaviour. The respect and authority you command enables you to speak out for justice and the protection of children.

Transnational Communal Relations

Many religious communities are organised on multiple levels – global, regional, national and local – and this enables you to develop national as well as transnational linkages and strategies to tackle concrete challenges from the global to the grassroots.

RELIGIOUS OBLIGATION TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Faith leaders and their communities are compelled to take action to end violence against children. Roughly five billion people around the world belong to religious communities and they have a huge role to play, as well as vast potential for impact. According to Dr. Susan Bissell, Director of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, “As a religious leader, you possess extraordinary moral authority that can influence thinking, foster dialogue and set priorities and standards for members of your community.”³⁵

Some religious leaders have, however, recognised that religious communities could do more. A *Multi-Religious Commitment to Confront Violence against Children* notes that “Religious communities have not fully upheld their obligations to protect our children from violence. Through omission, denial and silence, we have at times tolerated, perpetuated and ignored the reality of violence against children in homes, families, institutions and communities and not actively confronted the suffering that this violence

³⁵ Statement by Dr. Susan Bissell, Director of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, at the "Forum on Religious Ideals and Reality: Responsibility of Leadership to Prevent Violence against Children" in August 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland. Experts from child focused organisations and representatives from religious communities spoke about the issues and challenges ahead. To view a featured video of the forum, visit <https://youtu.be/Z2VI871TF5Q>.

causes. Even as we have not fully lived up to our responsibilities in this regard, we believe that religious communities must be part of the solution to eradicating violence against children and we commit ourselves to take leadership in our religious communities and the broader society.”³⁶

Ultimately, faith communities like yours have major channels for positive and safe communication, accountability and action to protect children from violence and online sexual exploitation.

We hope that the following sections will help you motivate your community to become a powerful agent of healing and change.

INTER-RELIGIOUS PARTNERSHIPS

Individual religious communities and faith traditions possess a wealth of experiences, influences and a variety of other resources that can be used to value and protect children.

Even more can be achieved when there is a willingness to work alongside those from different religious traditions to tackle the exploitation of children. Inter-religious or multi-faith cooperation can be more powerful – both symbolically and substantively – than the efforts of individual religious groups acting alone.³⁷

Inter-faith partnerships focused on protecting children can broaden the base of shared values and reinforce the principles of child rights because they will be communicated to a larger audience. Partnerships across inter-religious and civil society groups can strengthen or solidify the views of local communities on child rights. Such partnerships can also benefit areas where ethnic or religious issues are a source of conflict or tension. By focusing on the needs and protection of children, multi-faith partnerships can help unite members of a community around this shared priority, even when they may not normally work together.³⁸

Dr. Heidi Hadsell, President of Hartford Seminary and global inter-faith advisor, recommends, “If we’re going to tackle issues like abuse against children, religious leadership needs to talk to each other across our religious traditions honestly. Not just showing each other what’s good in our traditions and in our communities, but [being willing to share] what our real problems are and to work together about that.”³⁹

SCRIPTURES AND TEACHINGS ABOUT PROTECTING CHILDREN

The following is a collection of scriptures and teachings from several faith traditions with a specific focus on children and perspectives on child protection where applicable. Passages have been identified from scriptures/holy texts as standalones, but most are drawn from theological teaching by a faith leader or expert. As a leader of your faith tradition, we acknowledge your theological expertise and recognise that these passages and interpretations are not exhaustive on this topic. We do hope they will inspire you to

36 *Religions for Peace* (2006), "A Multi-Religious Commitment to Confront Violence against Children", *RfP VIII World Assembly in Kyoto, Japan*, 28 August 2006.

37 *Religions for Peace* (2014), "The Power of Multi-Religious Cooperation", *RfP Strategic Plan 2014-2018*, Annex II.

38 United Nations Children's Fund (2012), "Partnering with Religious Communities for Children", accessed 19 April 2016, http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Partnering_with_Religious_Communities_for_Children.pdf.

39 Statement given by Dr. Heidi Hadsell at the "Forum on Religious Ideals and Reality: Responsibility of Leadership to Prevent Violence against Children" in August 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland. To view a featured video of the Forum, visit <https://youtu.be/Z2VI87ITF5Q>.

adapt them to your own teaching, preaching or public messages as you prepare to introduce this issue to your faith community. Alternatively, they could be shared with others for personal reflection and meditation or for small group study sessions.

We hope that the summaries and scriptures from other religious traditions will also be helpful to you and your faith group for planning multi-religious collaborative forums and events.

BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

“ *However many holy words you read, however many you speak, what good will they do you if you do not act on them?*

— Gautama Buddha

Buddhism is a transformative way of life focused on right action, right speech and right thought. Life is seen as traveling on a right path of loving kindness in keeping with the compassionate nature of Buddha, as expressed in the *Gandavyuha Sutra*: “The Great Compassionate Heart is the essence of Buddhahood.”

Buddhist teaching states that everything is linked through 'interdependent origination' or 'dependent rising', also known as the *Pratītyasamutpāda*. This represents the understanding that everyone and everything in life is connected, including *dukkha* (suffering). As a result, Buddhists strive to live in harmony and reach enlightenment through knowledge in order to end suffering.

Buddhists are taught to “face all who suffer, both (themselves) and others, with loving kindness and empathy, to discern the mechanism of suffering, and to walk the path of truth as beings who share one universe.”⁴⁰

These tenets were practiced by the historical figure of Buddha throughout his 45 years of compassionate ministry to all he encountered. His followers across the world have been trying to follow his example ever since. The scholar Warren Matthews writes: “Individuals have a responsibility to the future to live an exemplary life now. In the Buddhist teaching of *karuna*, or compassion, there is a strong social concern. Buddhism has taught compassion for all living creatures, animal life as well as human.”⁴¹

Buddhism and child protection

For Buddhists, this foundation of compassion and love towards others extends naturally towards children. In a description from the *Khadaka Patha*, Metta Sutta offers a vivid illustration of this, saying, “As a mother with her own life guards the life of her own child, let all-embracing thoughts for all that lives be thine.” Thus, Buddhists are mindful of the systems and structures that can cause children to suffer, as well as those that can help protect them.

40 Rev. Okochi, Hidehito (2012), "Reflections from the Buddhist Tradition on How Poverty Affects Children", (report on GNRC's Fourth Forum, Dar es Salaam, 16-18 June 2012), accessed 21 March 2016, <https://gnrc.net/en/what-we-do/gnrc-forums/fourth-forum/reports/3248-reflections-from-the-buddhist-tradition>.

41 Matthews, Warren (1995), "Buddhism: Community and Ethics", in *World Religions*, second edition, Minneapolis/St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 173.

According to Rev. Hidehito Okochi, Chief Priest of Juko-in Temple, all forms of violence against children “can only be overcome by a society, which embraces human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which came into being through deep reflection on the many aspects of human suffering.”⁴²

Buddhist faith in action

Buddhism states that the solution to ending suffering is found in the knowledge of what causes suffering so that something can be done about it. This means taking practical action since all actions and deeds have an impact on the universe (also known as the Law of Karma).

One example concerns Buddhist nuns living out their faith by working to end the suffering of trafficking victims in Nepal.

DhammaMoli is an initiative in Nepal that, inspired by the Buddhist faith, provides shelter and education to young local girls at risk of being trafficked to brothels in India.⁴³

When asked about the spiritual motivation behind their work, one of the founders of *DhammaMoli*, Sister Dhamma Vijaya explained: “The fundamental discourse of Buddhism is loving kindness to all living beings, even your enemies. In short, Buddha has said [in the *Tripitaka* Buddhist scriptures] that one should try, in whatever capacity one can, to help others — and more so, those that cannot take care of themselves. Even if you are able to save one life, that counts towards your achievement of Nirvana.”⁴⁴

The following is a passage from Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (8.126-128):

*“If, for my own sake, I cause harm to others,
I shall be tormented in hellish realms;
But if for the sake of others I cause harm to myself,
I shall acquire all that is magnificent.*

*By holding myself in high esteem
I shall find myself in unpleasant realms, ugly and stupid;
But should this [attitude] be shifted to others
I shall acquire honours in a joyful realm.*

*If I employ others for my own purposes
I myself shall experience servitude,
But if I use myself for the sake of others
I shall experience only lordliness.”*

42 Rev. Okochi, Hidehito (2012), “Reflections from the Buddhist Tradition on How Poverty Affects Children”.

43 For more information on *DhammaMoli*, please visit their website at <http://www.dhammamoli.org/>.

44 In the classical Chinese novel *Journey to the West*, also called in English *Monkey God*, a character named Tripitaka says, “To save one life is better than to build a seven-storeyed pagoda.”

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE



To remain neutral in situations of injustice is to be complicit in that injustice.

— Archbishop Desmond Tutu

The heart of the Christian faith focuses on God’s unconditional love and relational nature. From the very beginning of the Bible, the writer of Genesis describes God as the Creator who has made people in his own image (Genesis 1:27).⁴⁵

Throughout the Bible, there are also repeated calls to God’s people to remember the “widows” and “orphans” who represent a community’s more vulnerable members and to protect them (Luke 18:16).

God wants to ensure that his people follow his example of protecting orphans and children. In a well-known passage of the Gospels, Jesus is speaking to a crowd. When some of his disciples try to prevent the children and their families from approaching him, Jesus reprimands them saying, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs” (Luke 18:16).

Jesus also speaks out forcefully against anyone who might take advantage of children and their trusting nature:

“If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come!” (Matthew 18:6-7, Holy Bible, New International Version)

From these examples, it is evident that, in Christianity, God values children very highly and expects his followers to ensure they are protected.

Christianity and child protection

From its earliest history to today, the Christian church has rejected infanticide, cared for orphans, healed the sick, educated children, and fought for their legal protection. Over the centuries and around the world, Christians of every denomination have built institutions that serve children and young people, such as schools, hospitals and relief agencies. In these and in many other ways, Christians – whether conservative or liberal – have tried to nurture and protect children and act as their advocates.⁴⁶

It is clear that the Christian church cannot be complacent on child protection, given the cases of child sexual abuse within the church that have come to light over the past 15 years. Pope Francis has spoken out publicly against this abuse by describing it as a “grave problem” and stating that one case “is enough for us to be ashamed of ourselves and do what needs to be done.”⁴⁷ The Pope established a committee

⁴⁵ Unless otherwise specified, all Christian biblical scriptures quoted in this section are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

⁴⁶ World Council of Churches (2015), “Principles for Child-friendly Churches”, accessed 20 March 2016, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/events/capacity-building-for-child-friendly-churches>.

⁴⁷ Martín, Inés San (2015), “Pope Francis calls sexual abuse scandals a ‘grave problem’”, *CRUX: Taking the Catholic Pulse*, 13 March 2015, accessed 20 March 2016, <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/03/13/pope-francis-calls-sexual-abuse-scandals-a-grave-problem/>.

in 2014 to combat sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church and offer help to victims.⁴⁸ It is important to note that child sexual abuse has not been limited to the Catholic Church. Offenders often abuse positions of trust and authority, and similar cases have emerged in other faiths and among other Christian denominations. They too recognise the need to do more to protect children within their own communities.⁴⁹

Christian faith in action

Christianity is a faith that requires action. If the Church is to respond faithfully to God's unconditional love, then Christians must join together across denominations to fight the abuse and exploitation of children.

One prime example of the Christian faith in action is the development of *Principles and Tools for Child-Friendly Churches*,⁵⁰ by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and UNICEF. The principles and tools aim to raise awareness of these critical issues and help churches across the world tackle them at local level. Consultations have been taking place around the world to enable the views of children and young people to be heard. This initiative grew from the 'Child Friendly Church Award' scheme launched by the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Across Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, church leaders and congregations have already been transforming their communities through child-friendly church initiatives. Christian leaders have gained a better understanding of the rights and needs of children and are creating opportunities and safe spaces for children to express their ideas, share their worries and suggest solutions. In 2015, 700 children in Kisumu, Kenya led a procession during the World Weekend of Prayer, marching through the city in front of hundreds of people, declaring that: "it is God's desire for children to be loved and protected."⁵¹

Ultimately, the Christian Church can act to protect children and those who have been abused or exploited because Christianity acknowledges the power of Jesus to heal and forgive. This is described in Psalm 147:3, when the writer states, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

48 BBC News (2013), "Pope Francis sets up Vatican child sex abuse committee", *BBC News*, 5 December 2013, accessed 20 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-25235724>.

49 Associated Press (2007), "Data Shed Light on Child Sexual Abuse by Protestant Clergy", *The New York Times*, 16 June 2007, accessed 21 April 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/16/us/16protestant.html?_r=2&.

50 World Council of Churches (2016), "WCC-UNICEF partnership shares two child-friendly versions of the Draft 'Principles for Child-Friendly Churches'", 31 March 2016, accessed 14 April 2016, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/wcc-unicef-partnership-shares-two-child-friendly-versions-of-the-draft-2016principles-for-child-friendly-churches2016>.

51 Viva-admin (2012), "5 ways to make your church more child-friendly", *Viva: together for children blog*, 6 July 2012, accessed 21 April 2016, <http://na.blog.viva.org/index.php/2012/07/06/5-ways-make-church-child-friendly/#sthash.QpMb12Be.dpuf>.

HINDU PERSPECTIVE



The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

— Mahatma Gandhi

Hinduism acknowledges that life contains external and internal forces such as injustice and greed that can cause violence and suffering. This violence can take a physical and forceful form that will hurt or abuse others. It can also take a more mental or emotional form caused by thoughts, desires, words or even inaction, which is described in the following passage in the *Bhagavad Gita* (3.36-41):

“Arjuna: What is the force that binds us to selfish deeds, O Krishna? What power moves us, even against our will, as if forcing us?”

Krishna: It is greed and anger, arising from the state of being, known as passion; these are the appetites and evils, which threaten a person in this life.

Just as a fire is covered by smoke and a mirror is obscured by dust, just as an embryo is enveloped deep within the womb, knowledge is hidden by greed – hidden, Arjuna, by this unquenchable fire for self-satisfaction, the inveterate enemy of the wise.

Greed is found in the senses, mind, and intellect, misleading them and burying wisdom in delusion. Fight with all your strength, Arjuna! Controlling your senses, conquer your enemy, the destroyer of knowledge and realisation.”

Overcoming greed through wisdom, service and taking responsibility for one's own actions lie at the very heart of Hinduism. This passage from the *Bhagavad Gita* (3.10-26) describes the requirement to live selflessly and the rewards for doing so:

“Every selfless act...is born from the eternal, infinite Godhead. God is present in every act of service. All life turns on this law. Whoever violates it, indulging his senses for his own pleasure and ignoring the needs of others, has wasted his life. But those who realise the God within are always satisfied.... Strive constantly to serve the welfare of the world; by devotion to selfless work one attains the supreme goal in life. Do your work with the welfare of others always in mind.... The ignorant work for their own profit, the wise work for the welfare of the world, without thought to themselves.”

Hinduism and child protection

Hindus believe that all human beings are equal and that value is given to everyone and everything. The dignity and value of the human being in the Hindu tradition arises from the equal presence of God in everyone.

“I look upon all creatures equally; none are less dear to me and none more dear” (Bhagavad Gita 9.29).

Hindus are obliged to protect children as a moral and religious duty. They are responsible for ensuring that children have a proper upbringing and for their wellbeing. Hinduism emphasises that children should be loved and should not experience any form of neglect or abuse. According to Dr. Anantanand Rambachan the chief ethical value in the Hindu tradition is non-injury (*ahimsa*). The sexual exploitation

of children on the Internet or through any other means, is a blatant form of violence. Mahatma Gandhi, the great teacher of *ahimsa*, reminded us that the helpless among us are most deserving of our protection from cruelty and abuse. Children are the most vulnerable in our families and communities and our willingness to protect them is, therefore, a test of our commitment to *ahimsa*.⁵²

Hindu faith in action

Hindus believe that suffering can be reduced by the practices of self-control, generosity and compassion towards others. The tradition teaches that we should identify with others in suffering and in joy and, without seeking reward, act to relieve pain and suffering.

According to a prolific author on Indian religions and philosophy, Mr. Jayaram V says: “In Hinduism, causing intentional harm to others in any form is considered sinful, with negative consequences for one’s rebirth. One should avoid intentional harm by all means.”⁵³ This understanding should motivate Hindus to do all they can to help prevent any type of harm or threats to children in their communities. Ultimately, however, Hindus avoid harming others and practice compassion because they recognise God as existing in all.

One example of this is the great work being carried out is an initiative in Bihar, India. *Bharat Sevashram Sangha*, a Hindu religious organisation, works to protect children in Bihar, one of the poorest states in India with high rates of illiteracy, inadequate health care facilities and limited access to social services. Poor children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation by people who lure them to Delhi and other large cities with false promises of education and employment. These children often fall into the hands of child traffickers and are sold into child labour. *Bharat Sevashram Sangha* provides shelter, basic needs and education to these vulnerable children and their families. The organisation is currently providing shelter for more than 200 children, as well as skills training for their parents. Through these child protection efforts and engagement with parents, *Bharat Sevashram Sangha* is able to prevent the exploitation and trafficking of these children.⁵⁴

ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

“*If you see evil, intervene to change the situation, if you cannot, then condemn it with words, and if you cannot even do that, then disapprove it in your heart, which is the least you can do for the faith.*

— Emir Abdelkader El Djezairi⁵⁵

Islam is a religion of revelation in which God calls His followers to submit peacefully (the meaning of 'Muslim') to Him and His will. It has a strong focus on the importance of respect, rights, and responsibilities. The words of the *Quran* and the traditions of the prophet, Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him), contain the rights and responsibilities granted by God to humankind.

“*Surely Allah enjoins justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion. He admonishes you that you may be mindful*” (*Quran* 16:90).

52 Dr. Anantanand Rambachan, Professor, Religion Department, Saint Olaf College.

53 V., Jayaram, "Violence and Abuse in Hinduism", accessed 20 March 2016, http://hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/h_violence.asp.

54 Swami Parameshananda, *Bharat Sevashram Sangha*.

55 Kiser, John W. (2002), "The Monks of Tibhirine: Faith, Love, and Terror in Algeria", New York: St. Martin's, 271.

The principles and rights enshrined in Islam include the rights of children. Their rights are not necessarily guaranteed by the actions of their parents, their communities or even their governments alone. Instead, Muslims believe that God himself guarantees children's rights.⁵⁶

Islam and child protection

Islam views childhood as a period of life that should be viewed with hope and aspiration. According to the *Quran*, children are a gift from Almighty Allah to His faithful servants. In its essence, and by virtue of its rules and regulations, Islam provides children with a protective environment. According to the Prophet Muhammad, "Allah will (on the Day of Reckoning) question each person in a position of responsibility about what he (she) was responsible for (in this life)."⁵⁷

Islam has always placed great emphasis on children and their well-being. All of this can be found in the Quranic verses and in the traditions of the Prophet Mohammed.⁵⁸ Scholars have broken down this Islamic understanding of children and child rights into the following key areas:

- a child's right to health and life
- a child's right to a family, kindred, name, property and inheritance
- a child's right to healthcare and proper nutrition
- a child's right to education and the acquisition of talents
- a child's right to live in security and peace, and enjoy human dignity and protection under the responsibility of the parents
- a child's rights to justice and quality in treatment among his/her siblings
- a child's rights to enjoy her/his childhood
- the caring role of society and the state to support all of these rights and support families incapable of providing appropriate conditions for their children⁵⁹

Islamic faith in action

"A child is a special being entrusted to mankind by God and, therefore, the child must be protected, educated, and well prepared for the sustainable continuation of the human race," states Dr. Din Syamsuddin, Leader of *Muhammadiyah*, Indonesia and President of *RfP* Asia.

One example of Muslim groups putting their faith into action effectively can be seen in the collaborative dialogue project between Muslim communities and local anti-violence agencies in London, Ontario, Canada. The initiative came about after a study found that local Muslim women and their children who were being abused were struggling to access assistance or find safe shelter for themselves and their children.

56 Stacey, Aisha (2013), "What Islam Says About Children (Part 1 of 5): God Guarantees the Rights of Children", *The Religion of Islam*, accessed 4 April 2016, <http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/3584/what-islam-says-about-children-part-1/>.

57 Reported by Al-Tirmidhi in his *Sunan*; *Kitab Al-Jihad* (The Book of Jihad); Chapter "Rulers pertaining to the (rights and responsibilities of the) head of state"; 4/208 narrated on the authority of Anas bin Malik may Allah be pleased with him.

58 Safe Network Hub and NPSCC (2015), "Safeguarding young people in multifaith settings", *NPSCC*, 30 March 2015, accessed 21 March 2016, <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/fighting-for-childhood/news-opinion/safeguarding-children-young-people-faith-settings/>.

59 UNICEF and International Centre for Population Studies and Research, Al-Azhar University (2005), "Children in Islam: Their Care, Development and Protection", accessed 19 March 2016, <http://www.unicef.org/egypt/Egy-homepage-Childrenislamengsum%281%29.pdf>.

The Muslim Family Safety Project is a community-based partnership between local Muslim communities in London and the London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse. The project was launched in February 2004 at the London Muslim Mosque with the participation of over 250 members of the Muslim community and representatives of local agencies. This collaboration has created an environment in which local service providers and the Muslim community can share ideas and perspectives and learn from one another. Project members have been able to talk, develop trust and undergo training in effective family violence prevention and intervention services. Local agencies have learned more about the Islamic perspective on violence, and high-profile events have been held in local mosques with the participation of the Imams.

The main objective was to implement a community outreach plan for the Muslim community to address the issue of gender violence and for service providers to become more sensitive to the needs of the Muslim community.⁶⁰

Indeed, as members of the Islamic community, there is much you can do to protect the vulnerable and maintain justice in your community. As the *Quran* states:

“O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah, even though it be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives — whether he be rich or poor, Allah has a better right over them both. So follow not (your) low desires, lest you deviate. And if you distort or turn away from (truth), surely Allah is ever Aware of what you do” (Al-Nisaa, 4:135).

JEWISH PERSPECTIVE



(A child is) a human being created in the Divine Image affording him or her all human dignity that must be protected from abuse, but precisely his or her vulnerability makes them more deserving of our regard and obliges us with greater responsibility towards them.

– Rabbi David Rosen

At the heart of Judaism is the covenant relationship between God and His chosen people, the Jews. It is through this relationship of loving kindness and faithfulness that Jews can find their purpose and fulfilment as a people.⁶¹ The *Hebrew Bible* describes God in Psalm 145:8-9 as good and compassionate and as caring for everything he has created, including children:

“God is merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and great in grace. God is good to all; His compassion rests on all his creatures.”

This compassion extends especially to the vulnerable in society, and what the *Torah* describes as the “orphans” and the “fatherless.” It is clear, therefore, that Judaism promotes responsibilities towards others, and especially to children.

60 For more information about the Muslim Family Safety Project, including the project's objectives, visit <http://www.lfcc.on.ca/mfsp.html>.

61 Matthews, "Introduction to Judaism", 276.

Judaism and child protection

Followers of Judaism believe that children, like all other people, are human beings created in the Divine Image and, as such, hold a human dignity that must be protected from abuse. In fact, a child's vulnerability makes them more deserving of notice and requires a greater sense of responsibility towards them.

Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee and *RfP* Co-president, states that Judaism affirms that young people are more than the product of an older generation: they also guarantee the future. Rabbi Rosen also says that the sages of the *Talmud* describe children as "the Messiahs of humankind," as a result of their potential.⁶²

This is why the Jewish tradition empathises with Abraham's yearning for his own children as described in Genesis⁶³, and why Jewish communities are extremely family-orientated. Indeed, there is a view in Judaism that it can function without the synagogue and school, but not without the family. As a result, Judaism values children very highly and their lives and well-being are seen as critical for society as a whole.

Clearly, the Jewish Biblical perspective based on the *Hebrew Bible* makes it clear that child victims of violence are like the "ultimate litmus test" of one's own religious values.⁶⁴ This test is based on the extent to which a faith community will respond to the needs of an abused child.

Jewish faith in action

Jews view the world and their faith through the lens of community and their responsibilities towards others because they are answerable to God for their conduct. According to the *Talmud*, "all men are responsible for one another" (*Talmud, Sanhedrin 27b*). This responsibility extends to ensuring that children are safe and protected from abuse.

Rabbi Diana Gerson, Programme Director at the New York Board of Rabbis, shared her thoughts about this at an interfaith forum discussing violence against children. "I have to tell you how many of my colleagues fear making that phone call. When I see a child in distress who's clearly been abused, and we meet as a staff and somebody says, 'Well, I don't think we should get involved in this one.'" She then declared, "We have to make the report, we have to stand up for this child because if no one does, that child will be left to suffer. And if it's not my job, whose job is it?"⁶⁵

The New York Board of Rabbis has addressed this issue through their Domestic Violence Initiative – 'Dayenu! Enough!' – which has trained about 2,500 people in the New York Metro area since initiating its child sexual abuse prevention training in 2007.⁶⁶ They have hosted a free child abuse prevention programme at Temple Emanu-El in Port Richmond, Staten Island in New York for members of the clergy, community leaders, teachers, parents and concerned adults. The Board sees this initiative as an opportunity to provide an important service to the entire community as, they state, they recognise that child abuse could occur in every religious, ethnic and economic group.

62 Rabbi Rosen, David, "The Rights of the Child – Jewish Perspective", accessed 14 April 2016, <http://www.rabbidavidrosen.net/Articles/Judaism/The%20Rights%20of%20the%20Child%20-%20A%20Jewish%20Perspective.doc>.

63 See the Book of Genesis, chapter 12, verse 5.

64 Rabbi Rosen, "The Rights of the Child – Jewish Perspective".

65 Arigatou International and ECPAT International hosted the "Forum on Religious Ideals and Reality: Responsibility of Leadership to Prevent Violence against Children" in August 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland. To view a featured video of the forum, visit <https://youtu.be/Z2Vl87iTF5Q>.

66 Grunlund, Maura (2012), "Preventing sexual abuse is focus of training for clergy, others at Staten Island workshop", *S.I News*, 5 June 2012, accessed 21 March 2016, http://www.silive.com/news/index.ssf/2012/06/preventing_sexual_abuse_is_foc.html.

The temple's leading rabbi has said that it is important to have such events and trainings because he acknowledges that child abuse is far more prevalent than people would like to think. He wants people to learn about the issue, know what to watch out for and what to do when they come across cases of abuse. He also hopes that being alert to abuse can help to prevent it, with community and religious leaders able to respond in a more constructive and positive way. In addition, greater awareness can allow them to offer more effective help to victims.

SIKH PERSPECTIVE⁶⁷

“*Kot brehmand ko tthakur suaami... Almighty God is the Master of millions of universes, the Giver of all beings; Constantly he cherishes and cares for them – but foolishly we recognise not even one of His virtues.*

— Sri Guru Granth Sahib⁶⁸

The Sikh faith emphasises that the light of God dwells in all beings. If we genuinely see this light in every child, woman and man and in all creation, we become morally incapable of abusing or exploiting any other person. The One, all-embracing Creator (*Ik Oankar*) is Eternal Reality (*Sat Nam*) and the source of spiritual attributes given to every human. It is not enough to know or talk about 'Truth' in the abstract; what matters is our ability to walk the way of truth, through our moment-to-moment conduct.

“*Sachoh orai sabh ko, oupar sach aachaar.*”

Truth is higher than everything; but higher still is truthful living.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib⁶⁹

The attributes that characterise the spiritual self include: *daya* (compassion), *sat* (purity, truth and integrity), *santokh* (contentment) *nimarta* (humility), *prem* (love) and *khema* (forgiveness). *Haumai*, the selfish ego, is necessary for survival, but destructive when it is allowed to consume us unchecked. It fuels the 'five thieves' of blind lust, vengefulness, incessant greed, possessive attachment and self-centred arrogance, joined by drives towards exploitation, hypocrisy, manipulation and deceit.

The key thrust of the Sikh faith is to constantly inspire us to overcome our negativity and to mobilise the best within ourselves.

Sikhism and child protection

“*Poota, maata ki aasees...*”

Oh my child, let this hopeful vision be your mother's blessing and advice to you:

May you never for an instant forget the Creator of the universe

May remembrance of the divine always resound within you.

May the Guru be kind to you, that you may love the company of enlightened souls

May your clothes be God's preservation of your dignity and honour.

And may your food be the daily singing of His praises...

— Sri Guru Granth Sahib⁷⁰

67 Bhai Sahib Bhai Mohinder Singh, Chairman, Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha and Trustee of R/P.

68 *Ibid*, 612.

69 *Ibid*, 62.

70 *Ibid*, 496.

Sikh means 'learner'. We are all, at whatever age, 'somebody's child' as well as a 'child of God'. The idea that children arrive in this world with innate attributes and capacities is highlighted in accounts of those Sikh Gurus who, as children, were able to illuminate and transform the narrow-minded or foolish behaviour of adults.

In the womb, Sikh teaching informs us, the child is blessed with a meditative state and protected by an intimate connection to God. There is power too in a mother's hopes for her children and her prayers for the things that will enable them to navigate their way wisely through their lives. Children benefit when this vision is extended through family, community and society at large.

Inadvertently, today's online culture provides an outlet for the darker side of human nature. Parents and communities are required to be more vigilant and systems of social surveillance are on the increase, as we resort to 'police control' to deal with symptoms of deep-rooted problems in the social fabric. In search for solutions and cures, faith teachings work by prevention. They offer a resource to nurture our individual lives as well as the relationships (e.g. those of marriage and family life), that make children feel loved, cared for, listened to and supported and less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Sikh faith in action

"Mithiaa tan nahi paroupkaraa..."

False is the body, which does not do good to others.

— Sri Guru Granth Sahib⁷¹

"Kam krodh kaaiya kou gaalai..."

Obsessed by lust and vengeance, the body disintegrates and wastes away.

— Sri Guru Granth Sahib⁷²

The Sikh ideal of the 'saint-soldier' (*sant sipahi*) stresses courageous action steered by the inward qualities of a saint. The outward identity of the *Khalsa* order (of initiated Sikhs) emphasises: wisdom, value-driven leadership (*dastar* or turban); being attuned to the Creator's presence and divine attributes (*kes* or uncut hair); untangling the mind from self-delusion (the *kangha* or wooden comb); commitment to ethical action (*kara* or metal wristlet); defending goodness and the dignity of all (*kirpan* or noble, sword-like); and the vow of absolute fidelity to one's spouse and to take no part in extra-marital relations or sexual exploitation (*kachhehra* or drawstring undershorts). In historical accounts of invasions involving the abduction of thousands of women and girls, Sikhs have been noted for their relentless efforts to rescue them and return them safely to their families.

Contemporary action by Sikhs includes the 2015 launch of the Safer Sikh Partnership⁷³ to promote 'effective safeguarding practices' to protect children from sexual abuse, grooming and violence, to facilitate collaboration with police services and act on issues considered taboo or highly stigmatised. Sikhs have also provided inter-religious input to develop an educational framework of 24 spiritual and moral dispositions⁷⁴ for schools in Birmingham, UK, as part of a longer term strategy to embed value-led thinking across all aspects of societal life.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 269.

⁷² *Ibid*, 932.

⁷³ Sikh Council UK (2015), "UK Sikhs launch campaign to promote safeguarding and tackle child grooming", *Sikh Siyasat News*, 8 December 2015, accessed 17 March 2016, <http://sikhsiyasat.net/2015/12/08/uk-sikhs-launch-campaign-to-promote-safeguarding-and-tackle-child-grooming/>.

⁷⁴ Faith Makes a Difference: Religious Education in Birmingham, "The 24 Depositions", accessed 17 March 2016, <http://www.faithmakesadifference.co.uk/content/24-depositions>.

OTHER RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES

This section acknowledges the wealth of scriptures and teachings from other religions that focus on social responsibility, avoiding selfishness, excessive desire and greed and wherever possible, thoughts on children.

Bahá'í

“O Thou kind Lord! These lovely children are the handiwork of the fingers of Thy might and the wondrous signs of Thy greatness. O God! Protect these children, graciously assist them to be educated and enable them to render service to the world of humanity. O God! These children are pearls, cause them to be nurtured within the shell of Thy loving-kindness. Thou art the Bountiful, the All-Loving” (Abdu'l-Baha, from Bahá'í Prayer⁷⁵).

Confucianism

“The man of perfect virtue, wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others” (Analects 6.28.2).

Mencius said, “Those who are morally well-adjusted look after those who are not; those who are talented look after those who are not. That is why people are glad to have good fathers and elder brothers. If those who are morally well-adjusted and talented abandon those who are not, then scarcely an inch will separate the good from the depraved” (Mencius IV.B.7).

Jainism

“Right belief, right knowledge, right conduct, these together constitute the path to liberation.” (Tattvarthasutra 1.1.).

“Rendering help to another is the function of all human beings” (Tattvarthasutra 5.21).

Native American Religions: Yamana Eskimo Initiation

“Do not seek to benefit only yourself, but think of other people also. If you yourself have an abundance, do not say, ‘The others do not concern me, I need not bother about them!’ ... If you want to amass everything for yourself, other people will stay away from you and no one will want to be with you. If you should one day fall ill, no one will visit you because, for your part, you did not formerly concern yourself about others.”⁷⁶

Taoism

“The Way of Heaven is to benefit others and not to injure” (Tao Te Ching 81).

75 Quoted from the prayer as provided by Ms. Bani Dugal, Principal Representative to the UN, Baha'í International Community.

76 Myss, Caroline (2004), "Invisible Acts of Power: Personal Choices That Create Miracles", New York: Simon and Schuster.

Faith in Action



Safety and security don't just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear.

— Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa

This section sets out some of the many ways in which your faith community can help to address online sexual exploitation of children in your village, city, country and even throughout the world. These can include immediate changes within your place of worship and programmes to ensure that the place is safe and child-friendly. This section also outlines how to create more awareness and discussion on your faith's perspective on sexual violence. You will find information on how to care for child victims, report abuse, and use your voice to advocate and campaign to help combat online child sexual exploitation. There is more that your community can do by working together with other religious groups in your area and beyond to build awareness and take action against this problem. Through multi-religious action, religious communities can leverage resources to reach more people and leaders, and therefore, better protect children everywhere.

CREATING SAFE AND CHILD-FRIENDLY PLACES⁷⁷

Churches, *gurdwaras*, *madrasas*, temples and all places of worship and religious institutions should be safe places for all children and adolescents and offer help and support to girls and boys who are victims of violence in other settings such as their homes, schools, etc.

One key way in which religious institutions and faith-based organisations can start to protect children and adolescents is to ensure they are safe within their own community. A major part of this is ensuring that children and adolescents know who to ask for help if they have a problem and making them feel comfortable about seeking help and protection.

Religious institutions should ensure that they have up-to-date safeguarding policies and procedures and that these are followed scrupulously. These should include the following elements.⁷⁸

Assess and develop child-safe activities and programmes: All faith groups should review their current activities and programmes, especially those focused on children, to assess potential child protection issues and any online risks to children in consultation with specialised agencies, including CSOs on child online protection. They should also ensure that any new activities and programmes are designed to prevent risks to children, both physically and online.

77 World Council of Churches (2016), "Principles for Child-Friendly Churches" – Explained to 11 to 18-year-old Children and Adolescents", 31 March 2016, accessed on 14 April 2016, <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/the-draft-2016principles-for-child-friendly-churches2016-explained-to-11-to-18-year-old-children-and-adolescents/view>.

78 To obtain useful templates, tools, and checklists to develop any of these guidelines, please see <http://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Child-Safeguarding-Guidance-Document.pdf>.

Ensure child-safe recruitment, monitoring and training: Faith groups should screen all staff and volunteers with great care. As a minimum, this should include two verbal reference checks (one from a person's recent employer), behaviour-based questions for staff who will be working with children and a signed disclosure that a staff member has not been charged with child abuse or exploitation offences. Any selection should also include a criminal background check.

Define a child-friendly and child-safeguarding code of conduct: This Code of Conduct is meant to explain what staff and others should and should not do when working with, or in close proximity to, children in the faith community, including activities that are not child-centred. This Code of Conduct should guide staff, volunteers, as well as children and adolescents on what behaviour is acceptable and what kind of behaviour should be reported. This spans everything from the kind of language used by staff and community members around children and families to rules on physical proximity when working with children and from the use of electronic and digital communication with children and young people to the personal use of social media by staff and community members. In relation to OCSE, this Code should specify guidelines for the use of ICTs, including device usage, image and photo-taking policies and importantly, how to obtain permission for any audio/video recordings or photo-taking of individual child or groups of children during programmes and events hosted or organised by the faith community.

Designate a Child Protection Focal Point: Faith groups should establish a safe way for children and adolescents to let someone know if they witness violence or abuse, or are victims themselves. This could be done by appointing a focal point who could provide confidential support to children and adolescents, particularly those who have been victimised. Similarly, faith groups could appoint fully-vetted and trained child mentors and family mentors to work alongside the community on a more personal basis.

Establish procedures for child-friendly incident reporting: This is a crucial aspect to tackle abuse or exploitation of children. A religious institution or FBO should have clear procedures and guidelines that are accessible and appropriate to the local context (such as an established reporting or referral mechanism) so faith leaders, staff and volunteers can ensure that action is taken when they suspect that a child is being victimised. Religious institutions and FBOs also need to ensure that children are aware of the procedures. These procedures should also be used to report a breach of the Code of Conduct by a staff member or others (see the section on 'Reporting Abuse to Relevant Authorities'). The following suggestions could help in the development of an internal reporting plan or mechanism.

- Ensure that during any internal investigation, the safety and best interest of the child remain paramount at all times.
- Review all internally reported cases, and determine whether a full investigation is necessary, ensuring that the safety of the child remains the primary concern.
- Dismiss any staff member or other person associated with the faith group who is found to have sexually abused or exploited a child.
- Report systematically any allegations or complaints to management and authorities as appropriate, regardless of the nature and severity of the case and requirements of faith community members and partners.

- With a view to protect the child's confidentiality, all information about child protection concerns and reports is to be kept private, discussed only with the Child Safeguarding Focal Point and any other parties designated by them according to reporting requirements.

Take measures to ensure child-safeguarding online and ICT usage: Religious institutions and FBOs should adopt policies to filter and block age-inappropriate content and CSAM, and monitor online usage and behaviour, etc. on computer equipment and ICTs used in their religious community. As previously highlighted, this should include expectations in the Code of Conduct on how staff members and volunteers contact and communicate with children electronically and how they take recordings or photos of events or programmes where children and families are present, as well as setting standards and expectations for their own social media usage.

Faith groups can help teach children and young people about the dangers of online sexual exploitation and online risks. This dialogue could occur during designated meetings or be integrated within child-focused programmes that your community already has in place for children (e.g. Sunday Schools, madrasas, synagogues, etc.). Discussions could touch on the following elements:

- forming an advisory committee for a child-safe faith environment, including the participation of children and adolescents. Such advisory committees provide a space for religious personnel (e.g. clergy, employees and volunteers), children and adolescents and their families or caregivers to discuss the risks of violence against children, including online sexual exploitation;
- empowering children to feel safe by creating a confidential and non-judgmental culture to encourage them to discuss issues around sexual exploitation, and allowing them to participate actively in the development of the faith group's child safeguarding policy;
- helping boys and girls understand that violence and abuse against them and other children is always wrong, and teaching them how to recognise and tell a trusted person (adult or peer) about physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, family violence, bullying, etc.;⁷⁹
- providing emotional, psychological and medical treatment where necessary to respond to abuse; and
- teaching children in your community about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by using child-friendly resources like *The World We Want: A Guide to Goals for Children and Young People*⁸⁰ and other animated films and downloadable comics to help children advocate for the prevention of sexual violence.

79 Download both adult and child-focused resources at "Preventing Exploitation of Children through the Internet and ICTs", ECPAT International Resources, <http://www.ecpat.org/resources/>.

80 These and a variety of other child-friendly resources are all available to download in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, Bengali, Indonesian and Hindi at "Child-friendly learning materials", UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/post2015/index_82235.html.

AWARENESS RAISING

People look to you for moral guidance and advice. As a leader, therefore, you should feel comfortable discussing these issues with your community, be willing to use the information in this guide to break taboos and open up the conversation about how your faith tradition views sexual abuse and exploitation.

You and your faith community can create awareness and help to prevent children from becoming exploited by:

- planning a series of sermons or public talks followed up by small group meetings where both children and adult members can be encouraged to discuss this issue openly and safely;
- helping parents and caregivers understand that violence against children and adolescents is always wrong and by teaching them how to prevent physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, family violence, bullying, and online sexual exploitation⁸¹; and
- opposing traditions followed by families and communities that are harmful to children and adolescents (e.g. child marriage).

Religious communities can also focus on raising awareness to prevent people from becoming offenders. This type of awareness raising could include:

- making sure people who feel they are at risk of offending know where they can find a safe place to share their struggle and seek help. If needed, he/she can refer to external help such as helplines;⁸²
- raising awareness that online child exploitation victimises children, and that viewing CSAM is a crime and has a harmful impact on the real child portrayed in the image(s); and
- creating awareness about criminal action and potential repercussions if apprehended as a deterrence measure (e.g. breaking a culture of silence, establishing reporting mechanisms, communicating about cases in the community). Information could also be disseminated via traditional or digital communications channels such as flyers, booklets, online blogs and social media posts.

REPORTING ABUSE TO RELEVANT AUTHORITIES

By opening up the conversation and educating your followers about the dangers of exploitation, you can encourage children and community members to report any cases of exploitation and abuse. If you or anyone in your faith group is aware of, or concerned about, any potential or immediate danger to a child in your community, you can contact local police or other law enforcement authorities or helpline to speak to third specialised party about it.

81 You can download both adult and child-focused resources at "Preventing Exploitation of Children through the Internet and ICTs", ECPAT International Resources, <http://www.ecpat.org/resources/>.

82 To learn more about Stop It Now! UK and Ireland, a project related to helping users of child sexual abuse material, please visit: <http://get-help.stopitnow.org.uk/en/home>.

The Child Helpline International (CHI) is the global network of 183 members in 142 countries, as of December 2015. It supports the creation of national toll-free child helplines worldwide: A directory of national and regional helplines can be found at <http://www.childhelplineinternational.org/where-we-work/>.

You can also identify and promote any local or national confidential helplines at your place of worship. Telephone helplines for children are a key part of child protection services. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of adults to protect children from abuse.

If you come across or are made aware of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) on the Internet or are concerned about the possible sexual exploitation of a child, the following reporting mechanisms receive and address online reports from the public regarding CSAM, online illegal content, illegal conduct, child trafficking, sexual exploitation of children in prostitution or persons travelling to sexually exploit children.

- INHOPE Hotlines can be accessed to report illegal Internet material including CSAM: <http://inhope.org/gns/report-here.aspx>.
- The Virtual Global Task Force is an international alliance of law enforcement agencies and has a reporting platform: <http://www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com/report-abuse/>.
- The Cybertip Line is run by NCMEC, an American organisation that accepts reports globally: <http://www.missingkids.com/cybertipline/>.
- Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), a UK organisation that actively works to block and remove CSAM, and accepts reports globally: <https://www.iwf.org.uk/>.

A number of resources exist to help adults who suspect or witness cases of online child sexual exploitation respond in an appropriate manner.

- Resources developed by the UK Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP): www.ceop.police.uk.
- Child Online Protection Guidelines developed by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for children, parents and other caregivers, educators, policy makers and for industry (in collaboration with UNICEF) are available in six languages: <http://www.itu.int/en/cop/Pages/guidelines.aspx>.
- Useful tips and resources for concerned adults provided by Stop it Now! A UK-based organisation : <http://www.stopitnow.org/help-guidance>.

Finally, as a leader in your faith community, you may find yourself in a situation where you must confront a follower/community member who is a sex offender or who is at risk of offending. To prevent further exploitation, you must report any criminal behaviour and encourage the offender to recognise their behaviour as abusive or potentially abusive and to seek for help. Similarly, you may become aware of family and friends in your community who have become concerned about an adult displaying worrying

sexual thoughts or behaviour towards a child. You can also encourage members of your community to recognise the signs of abusive behaviour in those close to them and to seek advice by calling the appropriate helpline or law enforcement authorities.

ADVOCATING

Religious leaders and faith communities can help make the rest of the world a safer place for children and adolescents by spreading information on the risks and consequences of sexual violence and by supporting local institutions responsible for the protection of our youngest citizens.

In particular, faith communities can commit to:

- advocating with politicians and governments to create laws and structures to help prevent sexual violence against children and make society safer for them;
- taking part in consultations or meetings organised by your government or local authorities on the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure that addressing and preventing online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) is on the agenda;
- explaining to children and youth how they can campaign against OCSE and sharing their testimonies and recommendations with decision-makers,⁸³ and
- supporting on-going efforts to strengthen legal and policy frameworks (e.g. use of good conduct certificates), implement and increase investments to prevent and fight OCSE, and increase the technical capacity of law enforcement.

INTER-FAITH ACTION

The key to working together successfully with other religious leaders or faith-based communities is to initiate, build and sustain a relationship of mutual respect and trust. By doing so, your community can join with others to combine your vision, resources and experience to help tackle online child sexual exploitation.

The following are several guiding principles to keep in mind when engaging in inter-faith action.

- **Seek impartiality and transparency:** It is important to remain impartial and non-judgmental when engaging with other faith groups. Each tradition has its own deeply held beliefs and traditions that must be respected, even if they differ from your own. Open communication and transparency are essential for effective collaborative action.
- **Build trust and mutual respect:** It is crucial to build mutual trust, given that action against OCSE means dealing with sensitive issues and situations where potentially harmful beliefs and practices are challenged.

⁸³ Specific campaigns are engaging youth in the SDG process. For an example: <http://restlessdevelopment.org/file/follow-up-and-review-how-to-scale-up-ambition-on-youth-led-accountability-for-the-sdgs-pdf>. ECPAT also provides children and young people with platforms to advocate and campaign (more information is available on www.ecpat.org).

- **Find common ground:** Open, frequent and transparent communication should be used to develop a trusting relationship between faith groups. Take time to establish a common message and terms that all sides can use to communicate shared priorities.
- **Determine strategic entry points:** Most faith communities share similar objectives on various social justice issues and could already be engaged with, or at least willing to become involved with the issue of child protection. (See the 'Faith in Action' section on how the major faith groups globally are theologically motivated to tackle issues such as sexual exploitation of children.)

TRAINING AND STAYING INFORMED

This guide provides a very broad overview about online child sexual exploitation. There are more ways for you and your community to get more in-depth knowledge and guidance on how to challenge and prevent such exploitation. This could be done by hosting or attending workshops on child protection and child sexual abuse prevention, as well as through formal and informal education.

Children can be vulnerable to online sexual exploitation everywhere, and we encourage you to use this guide as the basis for discussions and roundtables on how this exploitation can be prevented and addressed in your local community, in your country and across your region.

To keep up to date on the work of ECPAT and *RfP*, register for our newsletters, follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/ecpat) or Twitter (@ECPAT) and read about ECPAT's work on this issue (www.ecpat.org/resources).

Conclusion

It is our sincerest hope that this guide will have provided you with a greater understanding about online child sexual exploitation. We hope it has also given you a clearer realisation of the important role that you and your faith community can play in helping to prevent and end this crime.

Together, we can combine the spiritual maturity, influence, expertise and authority you carry as leaders in your community, with the technical experience gained from policymakers, law enforcement and child-focused experts to ensure this violence stops.

As Mr. Cornelius Williams, Associate Director Child Protection, Programme Division, UNICEF states, "Violence seriously jeopardizes children's growth and development. Religious leaders and faith based communities are uniquely positioned to address violence in society and challenge social norms that are harmful to children, and promote positive, protective norms. UNICEF looks forward to continued collaboration with religious leaders and faith based communities to harness each other's strengths for a joint vision to protect children."

We hope this guide will inspire you to work with other faith leaders and religious communities in your area.

Together we can end online child sexual exploitation.

Annexes

The following factsheets from ECPAT International can be printed out to help your faith community understand more and help prevent the dangers and threats of child sexual exploitation.

- Child Sexual Abuse/ Exploitation Material
- Online Grooming for Sexual Purposes
- Sexting
- Sexual Extortion
- Live Online Child Sexual Abuse or Live Streaming of Child Sexual Abuse

Child Sexual Abuse/ Child Sexual Exploitation Material

DEFINITIONS

Child Sexual Abuse/Exploitation Material*

Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), as the preferred term of choice to "child pornography", refers to materials depicting acts of sexual abuse and/or focusing on the genitalia of the child. The term "child sexual exploitation material" (CSEM) can be used in a broader sense to encompass all other sexualised material depicting children.

These materials include children of all ages, boys and girls, and differ in level of severity of the abuse and acts ranging from children posing sexually to gross assault.

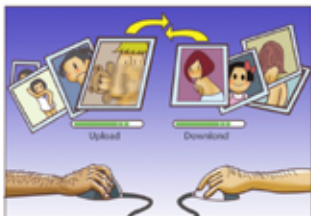
*Definition derived from Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

Computer/ digitally generated CSAM/CSEM*

The term "computer (or digitally) generated child sexual abuse material" encompasses all forms of material representing children involved in sexual activities and/or in a sexualised manner, with the particularity that the production of the material does not involve actual contact abuse of real children but is artificially created using digital tools to appear as if real children were depicted. It includes what is referred to as "virtual child pornography".

Although computer generated CSAM/CSEM does not involve harm to a real child, it is still dangerous because (i) it may be used in grooming children for sexual exploitation; (ii) it sustains a market for child sexual abuse images; and (iii) it enables a culture of tolerance for the sexualisation of children and cultivates demand.

Criminal Offenses



- Producing CSAM/CSEM;
- Obtaining access or procuring;
- (Mere) possessing;
- Offering or making available;
- Importing or exporting;
- Distributing or transmitting;
- Selling.

This is (partly) criminalised by the following legal frameworks:

CRC-OPSC: excludes accessing, mere possession and computer generated CSAM/ CSEM

Budapest Convention: comprehensive including the criminalisation of computer generated CSAM/ CSEM

Lanzarote Convention: comprehensive including the criminalisation of computer generated CSAM/ CSEM

ILO Convention 182: only covers production

AU Cybercrime Convention: comprehensive including the criminalisation of computer generated CSAM/ CSEM

Offenders & Modus Operandi

- Offenders are primarily motivated by their **sexual interest** in children or by **financial gain**;
- They operate **alone** or as part of a **network**;
- They use different **devices, software** and/or the **Internet** to produce, access or share materials;
- They sometimes apply **encryption methods** and may also use hidden online platforms to conceal their conduct and avoid being detected**;
- (Computer generated) CSAM/ CSEM is sometimes used by offenders to **groom or manipulate** children into engaging in sexual activities.

** Please see ECPAT Factsheet: what is Encryption?

What can you do?

- Advocate for stronger legal frameworks that criminalise all conducts related to CSAM/CSEM;
- Advocate for better resources for law enforcement, such as dedicated capacity and tools, to tackle CSAM/ CSEM and identify victims;
- Advocate and cooperate with the private sector, such as Internet Service Providers, to implement policies to disrupt circulation of CSAM/ CSEM;

- Educate and raise awareness about CSAM/ CSEM including online risks and online safety;
- Conduct research and collect relevant information to enhance understanding about the scope and characteristics of CSAM/ CSEM;
- Report CSAM/ CSEM online;
- Provide support and care for victims.

Online Grooming for Sexual Purposes

DEFINITION

Online Grooming for Sexual Purposes*

Online grooming for sexual purposes is the process of establishing/building a relationship with a child through the use of the Internet or other digital technologies to facilitate either online or offline sexual contact with that person.

Acts of grooming are not limited to acts where a physical, in-person meeting has been attempted and/or occurred but also applies to acts conducted online.

*Definition derived from Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

Legal Frameworks

Grooming is criminalised in the Lanzarote Convention.

The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children

against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of children contains article 23 on the solicitation of children or the act of intentionally proposing by an adult, through information and communication technologies, to meet a child who has not reached the minimum age for sexual activities/consent, for engaging in sexual activities with a child or producing 'child pornography', followed by material acts leading to such a meeting.




In addition it criminalises the corruption of children or the act of causing a child to witness sexual abuse or sexual activities (article 22).





Additionally, the African Union Convention on Cybercrime and Data Protection criminalises the act of facilitating or providing access to pornographic material to a minor. Article 29(3)(1)(d) could capture elements of grooming.

Offenders and Modus Operandi

- Offenders are primarily motivated by their **sexual interest** in children or by **financial gain**;
- They operate **alone** or as part of a **network**;
- Offenders can target victims by **assessing** their **vulnerability** (e.g. self-confidence, parental control) or by targeting children randomly;
- **Contact** with a child is generally initiated **online** (e.g. in chatrooms, gaming sites or social media platforms), but offline grooming also occurs;
- Grooming usually involves establishing an **emotional connection** with a child to gain the child's trust (also called long term grooming);
- Offenders can also focus on **quickly gaining leverage** over a victim rather than first establishing a trusting relationship;
- Groomers sometimes also **groom others** such as the child's peers, family and community-at-large;
- **Grooming behaviours** include filling the needs of a child by giving e.g. attention and gifts, psychological coercion, manipulation, 'sexually educating' and desensitising a child;
- They progressively **sexualise the relationship** with the child (either quickly or slowly);
- Groomers often use **isolation, secrecy, blame** to sustain the child's participation and silence.

What can you do?

-  Advocate for stronger legal framework that criminalises the act of (online) grooming for sexual purposes;
-  Advocate for better resources for law enforcement, such as dedicated capacity and tools, to tackle the issue of online grooming;
-  Advocate and cooperate with the private sector, such as Internet Service Providers, to implement measures to provide safe online environments for children;

-  Educate and raise awareness about online grooming;
-  Conduct research and collect relevant information to enhance understanding about the issue of online grooming;
-  Report when you are aware of a situation where a child is targeted by groomers online;
-  Provide support and care for victims.



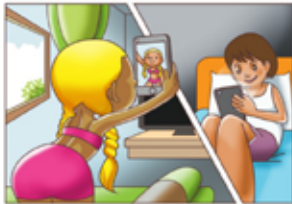
DEFINITION

Sexting*

'Sexting' has been defined as the "self-production of sexual images", or as "the creating, sharing and forwarding of sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images through mobile phones and/or the internet".

It is a frequent practice among young persons and often a consensual activity between peers. There are also many forms of 'unwanted sexting'. This refers to the non-consensual aspects of the activity, such as sharing or receiving unwanted sexually explicit photos or messages.

* Definition derived from Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse



Criminal Offense?

Sexting is not criminalised in any of the relevant regional or international legal frameworks on sexual exploitation of children.

However, in some countries the law may consider sexting between children as violation of 'child pornography' laws because it involves production, offering and distribution of a sexual picture of a minor. The person recording and/or sending sexually explicit messages of a child, could be charged with production and distribution of child sexual abuse/exploitation material. In addition, the person receiving the material could be charged with possession of or accessing child sexual abuse/exploitation material.

In dealing with cases related to sexting, it is crucial to not blame children for self-generation of content that may have put them in an abusive/exploitative situation, or hold the child criminally liable for the production of child sexual abuse material.

While many prosecutors and law enforcement will not prosecute children for engaging in sexting, in some jurisdictions children have in fact been charged with child sexual abuse/exploitation material offenses.

Why and How do Children Engage in Sexting?

- Children themselves generally record and share images at their **own initiative or at the request** of another person;
- Images can be recorded with **different devices**. Often mobile phones are used to produce content that is shared via text, chat or social media platforms online;
- **Content is shared** with a boyfriend or girlfriend, other peers or people they are communicating with online;
- Childrens' **motivation** for sexting can vary, including gratification in a sexual relationship, experimenting, soliciting compliments or attention and affirming a commitment to someone. Their motivation can also be related to **peer pressure**;
- Sexting is problematic as children often do not understand the **potential consequences** of their behavior and do not take measures to hide identifying information;
- Sexting is even more problematic when the content produced involves **criminal or abusive elements** such as adult involvement or lack of consent in sharing it;
- Sexting **makes children vulnerable** to becoming victims of sexual extortion** and cyberbullying and sometimes having their picture copied or used in collections of child sexual abuse/exploitation material.

** Please see ECPAT SECO Manifestations factsheet - Sexual extortion

What can you do?



Educate and raise awareness among children, parents and caregivers about the risks and potential consequences of sexting;



Advocate and cooperate with Internet Service Providers to prevent circulation of sexting content online and advocate with mobile operators to implement appropriate measures for collaboration with authorities when required (e.g. sharing user data on request).



Sexual Extortion

DEFINITION

Sexual Extortion*

Sexual extortion, also called 'sextortion', is the blackmailing of a person with the help of (self-generated) images of that person in order to extort sexual favours, money, or other benefits from her/him under the threat of sharing the material beyond the consent of the depicted person (e.g. posting images on social media).

When carried out against children, sexual extortion involves a process whereby children or young people are coerced into continuing to produce sexual material and/or told to perform distressing acts under threat of exposure to others of the material. In some instances, the abuse spirals so out of control that victims have attempted to self-harm or commit suicide as the only way of escaping it.

*Definition derived from Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.



Criminal Offense

Sexual extortion is not explicitly criminalised in any of the relevant regional or international legal instruments on sexual exploitation of children.

However, article 21(1)(a-b) of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse criminalises the act of causing and coercing children to engage in 'child pornographic performances'. Article 23 of the same Convention covers the act of soliciting children to produce 'child pornography'. The act of engaging in sexual activities with a child is criminalised, where coercion, force or threats are present; when this person abuses a recognised position of trust, authority or influence over the child; or a particularly vulnerable situation of the child.

These articles could be interpreted to capture elements of sexual extortion.





In addition, the conventions that do criminalise the production, procuring, distribution or offering of child sexual abuse/exploitation material - i.e. CoE Convention on Cybercrime; CoE Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse; CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children (OPSC); African Union Cybercrime Convention - contain language that might capture elements of sexual extortion.

Offenders and Characteristics of Sexual Extortion

- Perpetrators often rely on a position of authority or a **perceived imbalance of power** rather than on physical violence or force to coerce a child into sexual favours or money or goods;
- The psychological coercion generally manifests with **threat of withholding certain benefits or threat of undesirable consequences** if demands are not met;
- The sexual component could involve a **perpetrator's demand** for any form of unwanted sexual activity, such as exposing private body parts, posing for sexual photographs, or submitting to sexual or physical abuse during a meeting offline;
- The sexual component can also be reflected in the **methods applied to obtain goods, services or money**. For example perpetrators gain access to self-generated sexual content** or compromising images of a victim and use this material to blackmail for money;
- Sexual extortion can involve the (threat of) dissemination of compromising images online or to peers. This in turn can result in **other negative consequences** like cyber bullying which further victimises or harms the child victim.

** Please see ECPAT SECO Manifestations factsheet - Sexting

What can you do?

-  Advocate for stronger legal frameworks that specifically criminalise sexual extortion;
-  Advocate for better resources for law enforcement to tackle the issue of sexual extortion;
-  Advocate and cooperate with Internet Service Providers to prevent circulation of child sexual abuse/exploitation content online, to limit sexual extortion opportunities for perpetrators;
-  Educate and raise awareness among children, parents and caregivers about the risks and potential consequences of sexual extortion.

Live online child sexual abuse

DEFINITIONS

Live online child sexual abuse*

Live online child sexual abuse involves coercion of a child to participate in sexual activities, alone or with other persons. The sexual activity is, at the same time, transmitted live or 'streamed' over the Internet and watched by others remotely. Often, the persons watching remotely are the persons who have requested and/or ordered the sexual abuse of the child, dictating how the act should be carried out, and those persons may be paying for the abuse to take place.

*Definition derived from Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

Criminal Offense

Live online child sexual abuse is not explicitly criminalised in any of the relevant regional or international legal frameworks on sexual exploitation of children.

However, the Lanzarote Convention criminalises the act of causing and coercing children to engage in 'child pornographic performances' (Art. 21(1)(a-b) as well as knowingly attending 'child pornographic performances' (c). Moreover it criminalises the act of aiding or abetting these actions (Art. 24) which could be applied to people facilitating or encouraging the offense.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children (OPSC) Art. 3(1)(a) criminalises the act of offering, delivering or accepting by whatever means, a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Similarly the ILO Convention 182 Art. 3(b) criminalises the use, procuring or offering of a child for [...] pornographic performances.

These articles could be interpreted to capture acts related to live online child sexual abuse by both offenders and facilitators.

Since live online child sexual abuse involves the act of live streaming of child sexual activities rather than actually recording a picture or video depicting child sexual abuse, it can be difficult to obtain evidence of the abuse and charge offenders for possession, production or dissemination of child sexual abuse/exploitation material.

Offenders and their Modus Operandi

- Offenders watching live sexual abuse of children via e.g. webcam generally gain access through **intermediaries or facilitators**;

- Facilitators are sometimes the child's **family** or **community members** who force the child to perform in front of a webcam and communicate with and elicit (potential) customers;

- The offender and the facilitator or child **agree** on a **time and date** when the abuse will take place and the offender will log on. These appointments are made via chat, e-mail or phone;

- Additionally the parties involved will **agree** on a **price** the offender will pay, usually through common legitimate payment services. The amounts paid are generally small to prevent raising suspicion related to the transactions;

- Different platforms such as Skype or webcam-supported chat sites are being used to **live stream** the abuse over the Internet. This allows offenders to **view** the abuse in real time and/or to **direct** it through the chat or voice function;

- In some communities, there can be a level of **social tolerance** permitting the crime. This is related to several factors such as poverty and a limited understanding of the Internet, the implications for the child - particularly when there is no physical sexual abuse involved - or the illegality of these acts. Live online child sexual abuse can then seem to offer an easy and quick source of income.

What can you do?



Raise awareness and sensitize communities at large about the illegality, impact and risks related to live (streaming of) online child sexual abuse;



Advocate for stronger legal frameworks that specifically criminalise live (streaming of) online child sexual abuse or child pornographic performances;



Advocate for better resources for law enforcement to tackle this issue;



Advocate and cooperate with financial institutions to trace and follow-up on suspicious transactions that could be related to the crime.

