

**PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND RECOVERY OF CHILDREN  
FROM COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The sexual abuse of children and young people through commercial exploitation, is a fundamental violation of their rights. It is a universal and complex problem, which defies both simplistic analysis and easy answers. It encompasses a range of abusers, different forms of abuse, and varies in the type and degree of impact on the victim. The recognition of this abuse as a universal phenomenon has been positive, but clarity about incidence or trends is less forthcoming. There are continuing concerns around divergence in terminology and the poor quality of much of the research aimed at establishing both incidence and impact.

Since the First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, in 1996, which served to focus attention on the issue, there has been a substantial increase in activities designed to counter a potential increase in the incidence of abuse, and its negative impact on children and young people. Interventions have increased through specific targeted projects, and most significantly through an increased recognition that sexually abused and exploited children are frequently the same children who are facing a range of difficulties. They are the displaced and refugee children, street children, children in hazardous labour etc. An inclusive approach, one that incorporates these interventions into programmes for these multiply disadvantaged group, is a positive way to enhance access to services, and reduce the marginalisation and segregation experienced by abused and exploited children. Despite this, opportunities for reaching children at risk or experiencing sexual abuse, are still being underused, particularly through those organisations addressing the threat and impact of HIV/AIDS, and drug addiction.

Rather than highlighting or focussing on the particular needs of sexually exploited children, many services explicitly choose to adopt an holistic approach, operating in ways that are consistent with key principles and approaches for working with all children. These include work that is based on children's rights, supporting their participation, and incorporating activities that encourage or strengthen resilience. They try to reduce isolation and alienation. They support alternative survival strategies that allow children to exit the sex trade. They use cultural differences when this is positive, but confront traditional practices that maintain this abuse. Service providers learn from each other and are supported by networks. At a macro-level legislative, political and social systems need to support efforts on an individual or community basis.

Whether or not this increased awareness and growth of services has been accompanied by a comparable level of positive change for the beneficiaries, children and young people at risk or already abused through commercial sexual exploitation, is less certain. The lack of evidence is the result of a shortage of programme and project evaluation. The expansion of prevention, protection and recovery measures, should be based on transferring good practice and positively learning from mistakes; thus evaluation is critical. In the absence of evaluation of the impact of most projects, it is possible to generate certain practice standards, against which projects' performance can, in principle, be reviewed. Standards, derived from international instruments, practice guidance, children and young people's views, plus evidence from research, are proposed in this Paper. By referring to them, it is possible to identify elements of good practice, and highlight ways in which standards are translated into practical activities, citing examples from around the World. These include interventions with children abused in commercial and non-commercial settings, as their reactions are known to be similar in many circumstances, and there is value in sharing ideas and expertise.

There are relatively few examples of evaluations that focus on the impact of services. By referring to some examples of evaluations that incorporate children's own assessment, the potential of such exercises is highlighted. They have personal experience from which to assess services - have they been instrumental in achieving positive change, has their quality of life improved, do they see new opportunities for their future?

Looking forward to the next World Congress, what is its potential impact? From the perspective of those practitioners working directly with children and young people, it will be evaluated on the basis of answers to certain fundamental questions. Has it re-focussed world attention on the issue of the sexual abuse and exploitation of children? Has it raised the awareness of the impact of this abuse on these children? Has it generated sufficient input and information about new approaches to inform and refocus projects? Have organisations been encouraged and supported to record, assess and publicise their work, to ensure that learning and practice examples are derived from all continents? Were organisations made to review the impact of their work? Has it encouraged and listened to what young people have to say about the problem and response strategies? From the young peoples' perspective, will prevention, protection and recovery programmes increase and generate positive changes for those most at risk? If the Second World Congress can achieve the objectives implicit in these questions, it will have contributed significantly to improving services that enhance prevention, encourage better protection and support the recovery and reintegration of children and young people. The overall impact is one that should benefit us all.

## 1. Introduction

The sexual abuse of children and young people through commercial exploitation, is a fundamental violation of their rights. It is a universal and complex problem, which defies both simplistic analysis and easy answers. It encompasses a range of abusers, different forms of abuse, and varies in the type and degree of impact on the victim.

Since the First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, in 1996, which served to focus attention on the issue, there has been a substantial increase in activities designed to counter a greater incidence of abuse, and its negative impact on children and young people. This paper highlights some of these initiatives, including interventions from a range of key players; inter-governmental bodies, governments, non-governmental organisations, and community-based groups.

The number of interventions has increased since 1996. At that time there were relatively few organisations specifically working on this issue. Many other organisations working with children considered particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, failed to recognise that some at least of their target children had been sexually abused or exploited, or that they were at risk of being abused. The standard response to enquiries about activities aimed at countering or reducing such risks, was that “they didn’t have that problem”.

Whether or not the increased awareness and growth of services, has been accompanied by a comparable level of positive change for the beneficiaries, children and young people at risk or already abused through commercial sexual exploitation, is less certain. The lack of evidence is the result of a shortage of programme and project evaluations that highlight impact rather than process.

It is important when reflecting on projects, for there to be some recognition of good or poor practice. Even without sufficient project evaluations that offer evidence of outcomes and effective programmes, it is possible to generate certain expectations or standards, against which projects’ performance can, in principle, be assessed. These standards can be derived from international instruments, practice guidance, children and young people’s views, and evidence from research. This Paper proposes certain standards, and reflects on practice consistent with them. It is important to note that programmes that comply cannot simply be assumed to be effective in creating positive change. Confirmation demands an impact or outcome evaluation. However, at least by referring to standards, it is possible to start identifying elements of apparently good practice, highlighting ways in which standards are translated into practical activities.

## 2. Terminology

Before getting into the substance of the paper, it is important to establish some clarity on the terminology currently in use. It may not always be possible to achieve consensus, but terms should be clear, their meaning transparent or explained, as a precursor to broadening understanding and clarity about the subject. The definition of the problem ... “constitutes the grounds for both consensus and disagreement”.<sup>1</sup> Defining terms is particularly important when it comes to sharing ideas across national and professional boundaries. If we are to learn from each other, we need to have a common terminology, which accurately reflects the complexity of the issue and promotes a better understanding of the concepts. Each component of the subject, “the Child”, “Sexual Abuse”, and Sexual Exploitation” requires further explanation.

Regarding defining the term child, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is clear - a child is any person under the age of 18<sup>2</sup>. The dilemma in relation to sexual abuse and exploitation, often centres on the debate around age of consent to sexual activity. Clearly not all sexual activity with or by a young person under the age of 18, in all contexts, in all cultures, is deemed abuse. While this is a valid debate it can also obscure a fundamental aspect of the protection of children, whereby a young person cannot “consent” to abuse. Thus, if we are clear about what constitutes abuse through sexual exploitation, then it is irrelevant that the young person is of an age at which they can legally consent to sexual activity of certain kinds.

It has been suggested that the proviso contained in Article 1 of the Convention – “unless majority is attained earlier”, should be interpreted as an empowering and enabling one, such that children under 18 can claim the benefits of adulthood if granted by national law while still able to claim the protection afforded by the Convention<sup>3</sup>.

One implication of the age question, is that the debate on sexual abuse and exploitation often centres on the youngest children. The danger of this approach is that older children and young people are considered to have less need of protection. In many instances this generates the view that they are responsible for their own experiences of abuse.

The reverse of this is also true; children’s needs and issues can be hidden through being subsumed within the general category of people, men and women, facing specific problems. While it is often appropriate that they should access services through projects serving this population, this should not be to the detriment of their rights as children. Groups campaigning for women in prostitution often fail to disconnect the situation of children from that of the women<sup>4</sup>; though they do often accept that there are differences. Children have even less economic and social power and even fewer rights; they are less likely to be believed, and have less ability to make a complaint<sup>5</sup>.

Commercial sexual exploitation is perhaps the most extreme form of sexual abuse. Defining all the elements is thus helpful in establishing a framework, through which there can be greater clarity about what commercial sexual exploitation means. Abuse means treatment which causes actual harm, or places the child at risk of such harm. It includes both ill-treatment and failure to act to protect, acts of commission and omission. Sexual abuse covers a range of activities, certainly not just penetrative sex. An all encompassing definition might be “anyone under 18 years of age is sexually abused when one or more older person(s) involves the child in any activity for the purpose of their own sexual arousal. This might involve intercourse, touching, exposure of sexual organs, showing pornographic material, or talking about sexual things in an erotic way”. It generally refers to an older child or adult who takes advantage of a power imbalance in order to abuse the child. Sexual abuse involves a great variety of behaviour, and though all are a violation of a child’s right to privacy and ownership over one’s body, not every case has identical consequences, for the victim or perpetrator.<sup>6</sup>

Sexual abuse is not synonymous with sexual violence, for though there is considerable overlap, the abuser or exploiter does not always or necessarily use force, but can manipulate, coerce and pressurise the child to comply.

It is important to make some distinction between those who directly abuse a child sexually, and those who indirectly benefit from their sexual exploitation<sup>7</sup>. However, it can be argued that both are child abusers. This is clarified if we change our language, and describe a child who is sexually exploited as one who is abused through sexual exploitation. Such unequivocal phrasing can be helpful in firmly establishing both elements of abuse, direct and indirect, as fundamental violations of children’s rights.

**Sexual exploitation.** The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child prostitution and Child Pornography, offers definitions for the three inter-related types of exploitation generally included under the overall heading of commercial sexual

exploitation. **The sale of children** is any act or transaction whereby a child is transferred by any person(s) to another for remuneration or any other consideration; **child prostitution** means the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration; **child pornography** is any reproduction by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes.

The commercial or non-commercial aspects of this are not always easily separated, as the element of “consideration” included within these definitions can reflect a wide range of forms of economic and non-economic dependence. In addition, the relationship between both aspects of sexual abuse is frequently demonstrated in research with adults engaged in prostitution. Findings suggest that a majority were previously victims of non-commercial sexual abuse.<sup>8</sup> Any discussion of prevention and recovery strategies need to reflect this entry route, and be both broad ranging and inclusive.

Addressing the issue through the Optional Protocol links the issue to broader child labour provisions. This tends to transfer the emphasis from the sex element to the exploitation aspect. While there are undoubtedly some benefits internationally and nationally from alliances between child labour and sexual exploitation, to reduce sexual exploitation to just one form of unacceptable child labour, limits rather than expands the perspective; “it is precisely the exploitative use of sexuality which underlies many of the impacts of sexual exploitation”<sup>9</sup>. The implications of this have become apparent in the increasing use of the term “child sex worker”, which “blunts the implications of the extreme humiliation, violence and degradation inflicted upon the young victims”<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Data

Data on incidence of abuse is another issue beset with problems. Lack of consistency and clarity in the use of language and absence of precise definitions means that much of the data generated from research is not comparable, geographically or over time. When research refers to the incidence of sexual abuse and/or sexual exploitation, does it include reports of all forms of such abuse – touching or verbal harassment, alongside and undifferentiated from the most extreme forms of sexual violence? Without clarity about what is included, interpretation of such statistics in terms of impact on children becomes impossible.

Numbers are an important part of our understanding. They inform and direct our analysis of the situation, and are an important part of any campaign – “they endow it with urgency and an overwhelming sense of importance”<sup>11</sup>. It has been suggested that the quality of much of the data on incidence, is the product of highly suspect research. “In general terms the available global discourse on this theme is characterised by a poor understanding and use of qualitative information, lack of attention to research techniques, the reproduction of myths and unsubstantiated facts, as well as the use of assumptions and campaigning imperatives in place of established bodies of theory.”<sup>12</sup> Numbers are cited in a circular fashion, “until a body of knowledge is assumed to have been created”<sup>13</sup>. The concerns about lack of data which can be dis-aggregated by age, ethnic origin, and socio-economic circumstances, are reflected in the call for such information in virtually all of the recommendations to countries emanating from the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>14</sup>

Efforts have been made to undertake more situational analyses, to generate better and more consistent and comparable data, in various regions<sup>15</sup>. Such studies if conducted with rigour, can identify trends and changes over time, which is crucial in promoting the development of

appropriate response strategies. The ILO-IPEC surveys, using a rapid assessment methodology, have generated useful disaggregated data, which over time, can establish trends. Experience and attitudes can be surveyed, and again provide evidence of change.<sup>16</sup> Countries that adopted the Declaration and Agenda for Action at Stockholm, committed to producing national plans based on their specific needs and resources. While less than half (50 out of a potential 124 signatories), have started this process to date, existing or developing National Plans offer at least the potential for a more systematic assessment of the problem and the identification of gaps in service provision.

However there also continues to be poor quality reporting, which simply repeats statistics, the origin and details of which are at best uncertain. New research often replicates the mistakes of the past, including a lack of expertise in research methods, use of biased data, skewed samples, no control groups, small samples subjected to quantitative analysis, a poor understanding and use of qualitative data and inappropriately generalised findings. Analysis is hampered by a lack of data presented within a cultural context and by shifting global patterns<sup>17</sup>. Reports are often internally inconsistent, and confusing<sup>18</sup>.

Does it matter? “Unclear and arbitrary knowledge about the reality of these children’s lives, has been the basis from which organisations have chosen to intervene in the lives of children with problems”<sup>19</sup>. The alternative, an accurate and comprehensive situational analysis, which offers insights both into the problem, its particular manifestation and incidence, and resources and strengths within communities, would surely offer better guidance for planning of services and monitoring of impact. In addition, lack of information, can support lack of action; the failure to monitor the effects of economic and social changes on the most vulnerable has been cited as both a cause and a symptom of the lack of political priority afforded to this task. To ensure that children benefit from the protection international conventions have been designed to give, practical indicators are needed, based on reliable statistical data relevant to regional, national and local situations.

#### **4. Developing Standards**

Turning from terminology and data, to services, it is not possible to simply equate more services with better outcomes for children and young people. In trying to develop an understanding of what constitutes good and effective practice, reference is made to various instruments that offer guidance, or standards against which actions can be gauged. These include:

- **The Convention on the Rights of the Child;**
- **The Agenda for Action and Declaration** from the First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, which highlighted co-operation, prevention, protection, recovery and participation as key elements in promoting improved services and reducing the incidence of abuse; and
- Subsequent **Youth Declarations**, particularly the Report from the international Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth “Out From the Shadows”<sup>20</sup> and the International Young People’s Participation Project.<sup>21</sup>

In addition I have incorporated the collective insights about effective practice, derived from the projects involved in the Right to Happiness programme<sup>22</sup> which both preceded the First World Congress and subsequently developed into a series of follow up projects.

Together these can be interpreted to provide a loose framework of standards or practice criteria, against which programmes can be assessed. This process would clearly be superseded by a transparent evaluation process incorporated into projects, to establish impact against a set of clear objectives. Successful projects would be those that achieve positive change within the context of limited resources. In reality, information about outcomes of projects, measured in terms of preventing the sexual abuse of children and young people, protecting them, or aiding their recovery and reintegration, is particularly scarce. [See section on evaluation below]. As a consequence, this exercise of reviewing projects against certain proposed standards, has to focus on the processes and approaches, rather than outcomes.

A small sample of the vast array of interventions of a range of players, government, intergovernmental bodies, NGOs and communities and families, are cited as examples, which are reviewed in terms of their coincidence with these standards for practice, highlighting apparent convergence or divergence with the recommendations. The marked lack of evidence from many parts of the World, is in part due to a lack of documentation.

## **5. Proposed Standards**

### **5.1. Services reflect and promote children's rights.**

This broad statement is one that could be seen to be so general that it offers little guidance. However, it is based on the view that the Convention on the Rights of the Child encompasses clear statements of principle that offer practical guidance. It is relevant for all work with children, including those abused through sexual exploitation. The applicability is not confined to selected Articles, for instance those specifically relating to the recognition and responses to this form of abuse.

**5.1a** It highlights the **priority to be given to children in all interventions**, not just those that specify children as their target. It requires that all interventions consider and include within their evaluation, their impact on children's overall well-being. Presented as the application of the principle of "the best interests of the child", it is also important to recognise that this often evolves into ensuring the least harm option, the "least detrimental" alternative for many children<sup>23</sup>.

**5.1b Children should have access to services, which recognise their developmental stage.** This recognises children's particular needs, but also reflects the skills needed by those working with children and young people, highlighted by many of the NGOs cited below. These skills, including communication skills, conveying acceptance, and accessibility among others, are often in short supply. This is especially true in relation to those working with the most marginalised children, promoting their access to , for they are often the groups most vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation.

**5.1c Services need to be responsive – reflecting differing needs, different strengths, and different environments.**

A range of interventions are needed, based on assessed need, resources, reflecting evidence of effectiveness and the views of those using the services. Strategies need to reflect differences in communities, children's experience, age, etc. These should be consistent with key elements of the Convention, including the right to family-based care whenever possible, alongside the right to protection from harm. Collectively, interventions need to address all aspects of prevention, protection and recovery as envisaged under the Agenda for Action

### **5.1d Maintaining hope for the future.**

Despite the difficulties expressed, with many of the agencies reporting feeling overwhelmed by the issue, (by the scale of the problem, by the extreme vulnerability of the children involved, by the lack of political will to address the issue, by the power of vested interests, by abusive traditional practices, etc) - they also reported that their programmes were having a positive impact on children and young people. While it is important to recognise the possible degree of trauma associated with this abuse, it is equally important to highlight children's resilience<sup>24</sup>, and the positive impact of strategies and service interventions. Simply focussing on long term psychopathology can be counter-productive. It can promote a sense of determinism, that leads to assumptions from which policy and programming can be derived. These include the mistaken assumption that this trauma inevitably creates life-long negative consequences from which the child will never recover; that abused children inevitably become abusers, or that the sole solution is intensive individual therapy, when this is often un-implementable, unavailable and/or inappropriate.

**5.1e Services need to confer respect, dignity, and acceptance** .The manner in which services are delivered is extremely important, and applies not just to those delivering professional services; it applies equally to the delivery of basic nurturing services, by ancillary or support staff. It is a fundamental component of countering the negative views of parts of society, frequently internalised by the children themselves.

**5.1f Participation** – children need to have opportunities for meaningful participation in programmes. This standard, reflecting Article 12 of the Convention, the Agenda for Action and the Youth Declarations, is particularly highlighted by young people; “youth participation is an essential instrument in the fight against sexual exploitation of children and youth. We do not believe this problem can be eradicated without out full involvement ..... in decision making, development and implementation of strategies against the commercial sexual exploitation of children.”<sup>25</sup> Young people's participation needs to be a feature of all programmes; the extent will vary with developmental stage and the issues to be addressed, but evidence suggests that programmes benefit by including young people as fully as possible – from design, planning to evaluation and follow up phases<sup>26</sup>. For young people who have never experienced opportunities for expressing their own ideas, or making their own choices; it is a crucial element in building self esteem. Participation is not just a Right; it is also pragmatic, for through their involvement, young people promote a better match between services and needs. It is fundamental to making full use of available resources, including those of the young people themselves.

## **5.2 Multi-disciplinary and integrated approaches**

### **5.2a Working from a multi-disciplinary perspective.**

The issue is too complex to be addressed from a single or simple perspective. The young people represented in the Out From the Shadows report highlight the need for **inter-sectoral and integrated approaches** to healing, recovery and reintegration, that look at the child holistically and address the range of needs. No one group has the expertise to address all the issues for children who have been abused through sexual exploitation. Teachers, social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, youth workers, doctors, nurses and more, have been involved. In practice, this should be reflected in training that is multi-disciplinary, that promotes and supports joined up action, and facilitates networks that maintain a broad ranging perspective.

5.2b This links with an **inclusive model for practice** –an approach which recognises that a wide range of organisations work with children who have been or are at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation. Those groups self-defining as serving victims of sexual abuse often fail to reach large numbers of young people. Children at risk of abuse or who have already experienced abuse are very often multiply disadvantaged. They are the children in institutions, living on the streets,

children without family support, children out of school, children in hazardous forms of labour. An organisation working with any of these children will be working with some children who have been sexually abused. In practical terms, this means that all those working with these children, need to be aware of the reality of sexual abuse, and the factors that make these children vulnerable to further abuse and sexual exploitation. They need expertise in identifying the signs and symptoms of abuse, and the skills to work sensitively and constructively or identify and support access to other service providers. This needs to be seen as one of their mainstream programmes.

### **5.3 Promoting resilience.**

Ideas derived from the engineering term, resilience, have been developed into a broader concept that can usefully be applied to the analysis and responses of children facing extreme difficulties. It encourages a focus that includes identifying and supporting individual and family strengths, rather than an exclusive concentration on damage to the individual or community. It recognises those factors that promote resilience, acceptance, support networks, a sense of coherence and meaning in life, alongside skills and self-esteem. These are inter-related concepts; they are aspects of assessment, but more importantly, the ideas can also direct programmes and specific interventions. Activities that foster resilience can help children and families to overcome extreme difficulties, and sustain that change over the longer term. The International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE) have done significant work developing the concept, and encouraging its application in practice, through training and project support.<sup>27</sup>

**5.3a Building on the strengths** of children, families and communities. Programmes that treat them simply as recipients, as beneficiaries, and fail to incorporate their strengths, can have a negative impact, by undermining the very groups they are aiming to support.

**5.3b Building capacity.** This can be applied at local, national and individual levels. The ultimate aim is to move children and young people from dependence on outside help, to encourage interdependence. Building young people's capacity so that they can represent themselves and defend their own rights is one element. It means providing them with the tools, including information, and supporting the development of lifelong self-sustaining skills. To do this, projects must update and upgrade their own capacities, incorporating lessons learned into programming and compiling and disseminating good practice examples. This **development of local expertise** is essential, for while importing experts may be acceptable and appropriate in the short term, it cannot be sustained; and programmes based wholly on ideas imported from outside frequently fail to understand or incorporate positive cultural influences and traditions.

**5.3c. Community connections** – sexually exploited young people talk about their isolation, about being socially marginalised, and a lack of healthy connections with family and community. One component that fosters resilience is a supportive network, often one that will remain beyond the availability of the professional network. “Programmes which help young people to establish healthy relationships with themselves, their spirituality, their families, their communities and their culture, support young people in their journey of social change”<sup>28</sup>. When we, as service providers have moved on with our lives, children need the support of their communities, on a long-term basis.

**5.4 Creating real exit or alternative opportunities for children.** The Agenda for Action highlights the importance of developing sustainable and realistic alternative or exit strategies. These must include supporting skills and training that will allow children and young people to have choices for their future. This ability to earn a sufficient income is critically important, but in isolation, may not be enough; many jobs cannot compete with the earnings potential of the sex industry. Exit opportunities also need to address valuing, self-esteem, and life-enhancing future

opportunities. Crucially, the idea of having a future in which they have some control, may be totally novel for many of these children.

## **5.5 Awareness and advocacy.**

**5.5a** This is an essential component for encouraging action and promoting social change. Advocacy activities at the individual, community, national, and international levels hold communities and countries accountable for the well-being of all their children. The Agenda for Action has a series of proposals, centred around the idea of generating information about rights, about sexual abuse and exploitation and its impact, and possible responses. The aim would be to engage the key players at all levels, so that the local, national and global agenda responds appropriately and continues to include this concern.

**5.5b. Building networks;** this is envisaged within the Agenda for Action as a cornerstone of ensuring increased co-operation, effective learning, and the means of creating a louder voice for change, and mutual support. It is thus both part of the strategy for generating more public awareness and a component of promoting the exchange of good ideas.

**5.6 Transferability** of approaches is important as a means of accelerating progress; it requires good documentation, and compiling and disseminating the information generated. It was one of the key recommendations in the Out From the Shadows Report<sup>29</sup>, but should be applied with caution. It can be mis-interpreted as offering certain approaches as a universal solution; what is important is an effective and accessible exchange of material and ideas that illustrate both the rationale, the methodology and the impact of different interventions. Differences in cultural and social contexts, and in economic and professional resources will result in different approaches being applied. These should not be interpreted as implying any ranking of approaches, with the best solutions being seen as synonymous with those requiring the highest level of professional or financial inputs. The advancement of highly professional or clinical inputs, rather than community based alternatives, can effectively restrict the expansion of services. Transferability then has to be seen within a context of choices of strategies and interventions. Specific programmes need to reflect and use cultural and traditional differences in a positive way. There is **no simple blueprint**

**5.7 Enhancing or inhibiting context** within which services and approaches are developed is important, in either facilitating or impeding their potential impact. This particularly relates to the legal context, which is being addressed in another Theme Paper<sup>30</sup>. However, a crucial element of an enhancing environment, is the recognition of sexual abuse and exploitation of children as a **universal phenomenon**. This is a liberating concept. It promotes a more honest and thorough assessment of the situation, rather than the denials, or the skewed picture that highlights only one aspect of this abuse, leaving other aspects under-identified and under-tackled. By confronting the reality, that this abuse is taking place, and that in most instances, the majority of abusers of children are a country's own nationals, real and effective solutions can be sought that should include addressing basic issues of marginalisation and disempowerment.

## 6. Good practice?

The following efforts to evaluate and review programmes, projects or individual services or approaches, in terms of their compliance with these proposed standards, is inevitably, both very limited and highly selective. Programmes are omitted or included on the basis of personal experience, available and accessible information, and the limits determined by the length of this paper. In each category, selected projects are discussed in relation to one or more of the standards. Good practice examples may reflect just parts of an overall programme, at a particular point in time. Conversely, practice that appears inconsistent with the proposed standards, may also be limited in terms of time, and represent only certain parts of an organisation's activities. Other efforts at identifying what constitutes good practice are cited, and included within the later discussion on evaluation.

The following sections are ordered according to the Agenda for Action format - **Prevention, Protection and Recovery**. Many projects span more than one aspect, and in most, activities are expected to have an impact at different levels – for instance work focussed on raising general awareness of the issue, to prevent abuse, is also aimed at reducing isolation and stigma for individuals already victimised, and thus support their recovery. The process and problems associated with evaluation are discussed; clearly “good practice” is not just activity that is designed to comply with certain principles. It is essentially about activities and inputs that achieve positive change.

One critical aspect that supports or limits organisational freedom to implement “good practice” within their programme, is the role of funders, which is briefly discussed below.

## 7. Prevention Programmes.

### 7.1 Focus on Children's Rights.

Many programmes start from the assumption that promoting children's rights, trying to make them a reality for children and their families, will enhance an individual or community's ability to prevent or avoid sexual abuse and exploitation. Disseminating information and promoting a respect for children and their rights are regarded as central to human development and integral to any civilised society. It is assumed that this approach will also promote an understanding of what constitutes a violation of those rights. Examples from many different parts of the World, would suggest that publicising Rights, with children themselves, with decision makers, law enforcers, families, and professionals working with children, is an important step in ensuring greater respect for children and their needs, and establishing some mechanism, formal or informal, for these to be given due consideration<sup>31</sup>.

Children and young people themselves have indicated that knowing more about their rights has increased their confidence and self-assurance.<sup>32</sup> Programmes focus on different elements of the Convention, and use different approaches to incorporate these rights into the everyday lives of children.<sup>33</sup> A lot of projects have developed material that informs children directly, in language and through pictorial representations that are accessible. Specific clubs that publicise and promote children's rights, often through peer educators, have been developed; whether or not these attract young people, and their precise impact are often not clear from the project literature.

In some areas there have been concerns that a focus on rights to empower children, could in itself create inter-generational conflict. World Vision, Cambodia, has reviewed the impact of introducing information about children's rights into their children's clubs<sup>34</sup> The concerns have

proved unfounded so far. Feedback from parents highlighted improved relationships, more respectful attitudes and increased co-operation. In terms of methodology, the model adopted has been one that focuses on participation by children, in delivering as well as receiving the messages. This in itself promotes and demonstrates a child rights based approach. It also puts into practice the pragmatic view that children are more open and receptive to such information when it is delivered by their peers.

In terms of impact on young people, CWIN have been involved in delivering projects with children living in difficult circumstances in Nepal, for some years. Their work, interpreting and promoting children's rights, equipping young people with information and support, has created a group of young people who are clearly empowered. Their ability to act as advocates, supporters and activists for children's rights was clearly demonstrated through their involvement in a recent workshop in Nepal.<sup>35</sup> There, they not only represented their organisation on equal terms with adult delegates, they demonstrated knowledge about their rights, and about the impact of violations. This was an invaluable source of information and insights for other programme developers, and policy makers.

There are some indications nationally and internationally, of an assumption that the issue of children's rights has been adequately tackled, and that we can move on to the next issue.<sup>36</sup> This is not universally so. A recent survey, conducted by children and young people, with over 5000 children in 5 countries in Eastern Europe, (a development of the Right to Happiness project of the International Catholic Child Bureau), indicated significant gaps in knowledge and understanding about the content and scope of the Convention. Though most were aware of the Convention, and certain rights, few understood the implications for them as young citizens of countries that were signatories. More importantly, many young people were unaware of key parts of the Convention, and interpreted much of it in a manner that diminished or undermined their rights substantially. What was particularly relevant in the context of sexual abuse, was almost a complete absence of explicit reference to the right to physical integrity and a sense of control over one's own body, and that having this compromised was both a violation and abusive. The survey response indicated that in relation to sexual abuse and exploitation, many children perceived only the most extreme attacks, probably those involving violence, as acts that would be deemed abusive.<sup>37</sup>

In fact there is little information substantiating a direct relationship between simply knowing about rights and abuse, and a measurable reduction in threats of, or actual sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Child focussed prevention programmes – those that inform children about sexual abuse as a violation of their rights, started in the USA and have become increasingly widespread. Studies have indicated that such programmes do increase knowledge among the immediate recipients. However limited research on this issue has also shown that such knowledge in itself, does not apparently reduce the incidence of sexual abuse.<sup>38</sup> It has also suggested that children who have gone through a prevention programme might actually be disadvantaged; there is an indication that they experience higher levels of physical injury in sexual victimisation attempts.<sup>39</sup> Finkelhor's study indicated increased levels of anxiety in children after these programmes.<sup>40</sup> There is little information about whether these negative implications are relevant for some of the most vulnerable children, including those with disabilities, those living in institutions etc, but given possible increased isolation from alternative sources of information to balance the messages received, this might be assumed. As a result of concerns about the negative consequences, it has been suggested that such programmes should only be justified if a clear link with reductions in abuse could be identified. In the absence of such data, serious doubt must be cast on the efficacy and ethics of continuing to expand these child-focussed programmes; "we are doing children a disservice if we let them imagine they can prevent abuse. The only real prevention is through setting up systems which create layers of obstacles to perpetrators ..."<sup>41</sup>

Some programmes continue to advocate working directly with the child as the primary focus of prevention work; the Safe Child Programme, supported by the Women's World Summit Foundation, suggests that the best overall defense children have against abuse is a sense of their own abilities. This programme offers guidance that seeks to give children ideas and practical skills for responding in unsafe situations.<sup>42</sup> It is important that the impact of such strategies is assessed, across the range of cultures in which it is being promoted. The indications are that these information projects need to target a range of groups, including teachers and parents, and not focus solely on the children.

There is relatively little research on impact of these specific programmes aimed at preventing sexual abuse. Recent efforts by the Save the Children Alliance, focussing on Europe, concludes that they can be characterised as being of short duration, with little sharing of learning derived from experience, with few tools and little effort aimed at evaluation of impact.<sup>43</sup> Delivering the messages within a broader context, clearly establishing adults' responsibilities for protection and prevention, and revising and redesigning the content in line with feedback from children themselves, may go some way to countering this.

Focussing on children's rights to participate addresses two distinct elements of prevention. Children themselves have questioned the viability of producing effective strategies without their direct input. Projects that consult have a better understanding of children's reality, about gaps in provision and ideas for new programmes. The information from children generated through the BICE research project<sup>44</sup>, is being used to develop responsive services, including the development of information designed by and for children, addressing their concerns, and channeled through their chosen media. Children's insights into police attitudes and behaviour, were used to establish the need for better training of police and new facilities. It was subsequently specifically included in training material, and informed the development of child friendly police units in Addis Ababa.<sup>45</sup>

In addition, respect for these participation rights may be an important factor in protecting children. This results from the development of increased confidence, enhanced co-operation and respect by young people for themselves and others, better motivation, the development of new skills, and, for some, the experience of leadership.<sup>46</sup>

## **7.2 Multi-disciplinary and integrated prevention programmes**

There has been an expansion of activity, particularly cross agency and multi-disciplinary work aimed at those considered to be particularly vulnerable or at risk of abuse through sexual exploitation. There are positive examples of increased recognition of the need to tackle the issue explicitly within a range of programmes, including those targeting street children, children in refugee camps (particularly separated children), children and young people in institutions, and those in difficult working environments.

The ARC (Action for the Rights of Children) programme is aimed at ensuring that all those working directly with vulnerable young people, are fully aware of a range of critical issues, including sexual abuse and exploitation, and are equipped to promote both prevention and response actions as part of their overall range of interventions. This started in 1997, through a co-operation between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Save the Children Alliance. It is made up of a compendium of guidelines, with case studies and training outlines. The rationale underlying this approach centres on the recognition that "responses to the needs of children and adolescents are addressed through a multi-sectoral approach. There are multiple and complex factors that inter-relate to affect the well-being of children and adolescents. Alerting staff to some of these complex relationships is one of the objectives ..."<sup>47</sup>. It incorporates an age and gender perspective, to ensure all sectors of any community are equally protected and supported. It promotes a participatory approach, that both highlights the importance of using community resources, and encourages the development of the community as

the primary source of prevention and protection. The initiative has been joined by UNICEF and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and should generate more action to address sexual abuse and exploitation as a component of organisational mainstream programming. The initial round of piloting has been well received, by staff and communities within which it has been implemented, but it is too early to comment on the impact in reducing incidence of abuse of abuse.

The ARC initiative supports the idea that work to prevent abuse could and should be integrated into a range of interventions with children and young people, particularly those who are hard to reach. It should be possible to link with the outreach and information programmes aimed at raising awareness and addressing HIV and AIDS, within communities.<sup>48</sup> Their efforts to reach even those parts of communities that play little part in many mainstream services would offer a vector through which awareness of abuse and exploitation could be channeled. This would include poor rural communities, children out of school or in work among others; children that have been identified as being at high risk of being abused and exploited.

The material on best practices, developed by UNAIDS,<sup>49</sup> aims to impact on a range of disciplines and professions. The network that has been created through this work provide an obvious avenue to address issues associated with vulnerability to abuse and exploitation itself, rather than simply as a factor which increases risk of infection. The material highlights attempts to successfully challenge social norms that increase the risk of HIV infection. It includes efforts to address gender marginalisation, and in India for example, develops responses with women in communities, to counter male attitudes that heighten risks. The development of such projects that stimulate and support behavioural change to reduce risk and vulnerability, can offer important insights to those working to reduce the sexual exploitation of children and/or reduce the health risks associated with prostitution.

Young people involved in prostitution are often also drug users. The evidence suggests additional opportunities to reach young people other than through services specifically focussed on sexual abuse. This group frequently access the health services for reasons and services unconnected with prostitution, but the window within which it might be possible to target this group, with information and services that help them avoid becoming involved in prostitution is relatively short. Such opportunities are often missed it seems, in part because of a poor understanding of the links between drug use and the means by which this is supported, among health professionals.<sup>50</sup>

### **7.3 Promoting resilience**

Resilience suggests that certain personal, and possibly collective, attributes, can contribute to prevention of abuse, by reducing vulnerability. There are few prevention projects to date that explicitly use this framework to structure activities and assess impact. There are though projects which explicitly seek to support children's attachment to significant adults, offer access to education and skills, promote valuing and acceptance of children and young people, and offer routes to children, and those caring for children, to develop more confidence and self-esteem. All of these desired outcomes have been shown to be factors that contribute to individual resilience, and possibly community resilience or strength.

Emphasising the importance of healthy and sustainable attachments is clearly also associated with the idea of ensuring children and young people are and feel connected to their communities; isolation and alienation are both associated with the impact of sexual abuse and exploitation, and identified as specific risk factors.<sup>51</sup> Involvement in prostitution is associated with running away, homelessness and loneliness. "Young people in prostitution often lack relationships of kinship or friendship rooted in a geographical place, that can serve as a source of support and solace."<sup>52</sup>

Strengthening community resources, including mobilising young people within their own communities, is a strategy for prevention of abuse. An example where this is being concretely and positively developed as a strategy is in the ARC programme. It assumes people are experienced collectively, that people are highly resourceful and aims to maximise these resources. “ By ensuring that communities are engaged in the process of identifying needs, planning and decision making, their sense of ownership should help to ensure sustainability”<sup>53</sup> The programme includes materials that both develop and promote the concept, and offer strategies and guidance for stimulating positive change. At times, this highlights the need to avoid destroying or undermining existing strengths. It is an approach that has a broad potential application, beyond refugee communities.

#### **7.4 Creating Alternate Opportunities**

Many children and young people resort to selling sex as an economic necessity, be they in the USA, Europe, Africa or Asia.<sup>54</sup> A UK based project estimated that within 6 weeks of starting to live on the streets, even in one of the more affluent countries with welfare safety nets, most young people will resort to crime, drugs and /or prostitution.<sup>55</sup> Clearly, poverty, absolute or relative, is a factor in heightening the risk of children being abused through sexual exploitation. Recognising this demands a re-evaluation of preventive strategies, that explores how all children can be offered real choices through the development of vocational training, and education opportunities to develop skills that are needed and offer prospects of long term economic self sufficiency.

In Northern Thailand, economic problems were seen as a major force in propelling young people into prostitution. Efforts to prevent more children becoming involved have employed a range of strategies; including looking longer term to develop education and skills that create new income generation opportunities. This has included expanding access to education, through targeted scholarships or education support for the families considered at highest risk, for example through the SE-Ma Life Development project. It claims to have assisted 17000 girls. “Poverty is not just a lack of access to resources; it is also an absence of choice.”<sup>56</sup>

Other programmes, including the ECPAT -Taksvarkki project, have supported the developed of income generating activities, through credit schemes, vocational training, alongside an information and awareness raising campaign to encourage responsible decision making.<sup>57</sup>

The PEACE / BICE project in Sri Lanka, focusses on communities that combine poverty, poor access to resources including education and credit, and high risks associated with tourism. The project activities began by engaging these communities in identifying needs, and raising their awareness of the risks. The solutions centred on developing very practical support, aimed inter alia at increasing educational opportunity and the development of small scale sustainable economic enterprises within the community. These were identified within the communities as activities offering opportunities for sustainable and reasonable income generation. The combined result has been that children in these communities have apparently been protected from becoming involved with the sex exploiters associated with the tourist industry.<sup>58</sup>

These small scale interventions, targeting communities whose children are at highest risk, are one very small part of the jigsaw of interventions, needed at both a micro and macro-economic level, to address the structural economic and political realities, if real and sustainable change is to be achieved. Critically this needs to include partnerships with the private sector that creates economic growth and opportunity. Anti-poverty measures at local, national and international levels, are a crucial part of breaking the cycle of disadvantage, and creating the circumstances whereby children’s rights to “survival, health, development and protection through access to .... health, nutrition, education, and protection against neglect, abuse and exploitation”<sup>59</sup> can be assured.

## **7.5 Public awareness and advocacy**

Over the past five years there has been some creative developments aimed at improved primary prevention through enhanced public awareness. In 1996, Paniamor, an NGO in Costa Rica, highlighted the potential of a broad community mobilisation campaign, using as a starting point, an accurate and rigorous analysis of local issues. This was the basis of a programme aimed at raising awareness, targeting key social actors who would subsequently play a decisive role in changing public attitudes. They would be the group to spearhead development across all fields of activity; policy making, service delivery, community empowerment etc. The quality of the initial information that informed the subsequent work, was exceptional, and provided clear, unambiguous direction to the project.<sup>60</sup>

Efforts to raise awareness of the reality of sexual abuse and exploitation range from drama presentations in local communities, to the Global March. Several projects have identified the taboos associated with the subject as an obstacle to effective prevention. Breaking the Silence, a consortium of concerned organisations in Bangladesh, have focussed activities on bringing the issue into the public and political domain.<sup>61</sup>

In Brasil, partnerships between NGOs and State organisations have been instrumental in increasing co-ordinated activity to address the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse. In Sao Paulo, organisations are encouraged to commit to themselves to an agreement, which combines calls for increased social mobilisation against sexual abuse, the application of existing laws to address the problem, plus training and the further joint development of effective strategies among a range of partners.<sup>62</sup>

Behavioural change comes from increased awareness, through a focus on both the issue and its impact. "Prevention should be implemented through social action and general policies involving the families, schools and professionals, and should focus on clients not just as possible victims, but as possible abusers as well"<sup>63</sup>

Specific information might be targeted at key groups. Barnardos in the UK have developed an information pack, delivered through schools, addressing "Things we don't talk about". This highlights not just the reality of abuse through sexual exploitation, but makes children more aware of possible strategies used by exploiters; isolation, befriending, creating dependence. This looks at reducing vulnerability by encouraging young people to start to explore the issue of abusive and potentially dangerous relationships. The material is based on the insights derived from the organisation's direct work with children involved in prostitution.<sup>64</sup>

## **7.6 Transferability**

It is important to short cut the developmental process, to ensure that children can be protected from sexual abuse as quickly as possible. However, it is also important to take account of the specific circumstances, both of the problem and of the resources available to address them. A project implemented by the Training and Research Support Centre in Zimbabwe, TARSC highlights both elements; specifically addressing harmful traditions, or abuse of these traditions, but using strengths and traditional sources of authority to counter them. The organisation was aware of the potentially harmful traditional practices that have been cited in the past to involve children in sexual acts. TARSC worked with the Traditional Healers Association to highlight these practices as contrary both to civil and traditional law. They produced information leaflets using the authority of the traditional healers to publicise and counter this abuse.<sup>65</sup> It is the approach, working with key actors, highlighting negative traditional practices, and developing systems to disseminate the information, that is highly transferable; not the specific issues addressed through this route.

Transferability in practice depends on accessible information about programmes, and their impact. Documentation and exchange of information has improved over the past 5 years, through both improved communication technology, and support for systems for data gathering and dissemination, notably the Focal Point in Geneva<sup>66</sup> and regionally. Limited resources impose restrictions on the scope of information maintained through these systems. There is no capacity to develop detailed, qualitative information on projects that might be included in their database, that would describe their methodologies, innovative practice or impact etc. It should be possible to develop a format that would generate information on activities against agreed criteria. However it is still far from automatic for projects to systematically document activities, their rationale, and their impact, even for their own use, let alone for broader publication. Whether or not projects become models of good practice for others is still all too often a matter of chance.

## 7.7 Context

The broad context within which programmes are implemented, can either support or undermine efforts. In terms of the legislative framework, the general perception is frequently of laws that offer protection for children, but which, in many areas are violated with impunity. Lack of knowledge, no access to the Courts, and/or corruption within the law enforcement services are all cited as factors that severely undermine prevention programmes. One project aiming to redress some of these impediments is being implemented in Nepal by the Center for Legal Research and Resource Development, supported by UNICEF.<sup>67</sup> It aims to expand knowledge of the legal system, improving vulnerable communities' access to the law, and supporting them to utilise the framework to protect children and young women from the risk of trafficking. They have devised a training curriculum for grassroots female para-legal advisers, women living within high risk communities. The impact of the programme, not just in terms of the development of a substantial community based networks of committed and well informed personnel, has been to raise awareness of trafficking, and the reality of the abusive situations experienced by many of the young women who have left these communities. This has been instrumental in generating a stronger commitment to counter exploitation of women and girls, encouraging “ a sense of responsibility in the local people...”<sup>68</sup>

Two other areas of prevention work also need to be briefly considered; therapy as prevention, and punishment as a deterrent.

Working with victim is seen by some as a strategy for preventing future abuse. Certainly many perpetrators were formerly victims of sexual abuse. Many of them began to sexually abuse other children when they were still children themselves. As a result, it must be assumed that early intervention with victims might reduce the pathological damage which is a factor in their subsequent offending. However, it is difficult to be quite so deterministic; certain anomalies are apparent in these arguments. While the majority of known victims are female, the majority of perpetrators are male. Research on the issue tends to lack adequate controls, and the study group may represent a very selective sample of both victims and perpetrators. It is also an element in therapeutic work that can cause further anguish for the victim, and further increase their sense of worthlessness.

Punishing or treating offenders is also part of a strategy to prevent further abuse. In a survey of children in Ethiopia<sup>69</sup>, the majority were of the opinion that lenient sentences trivialised their experience of abuse and failed to deter future offenders. By contrast, the Johns' programme in California<sup>70</sup>, is reported to be successful in reducing demand, by raising awareness among men buying sexual services, about the reality of life for those involved in prostitution. Understanding and responding to the abuser is the subject of Dr. O'Connell Davison's paper, *The Sex Exploiter*.<sup>71</sup>

## **8. Protection programmes**

This section focuses on the work that is done to reduce the impact of sexual abuse, by developing systems for investigation that avoid secondary trauma for the victims. Practice examples include those directed at children who have been sexually abused in non-commercial contexts, as many of their issues are similar to those for sexually exploited children.<sup>72</sup>

### **8.1 Child Rights Focus**

The Convention explicitly notes that children need stability and security of emotional attachments, and that in most instances these will be assured through supporting parents in caring for their own children<sup>73</sup>. The absence of family support services in many countries is a matter for a wider discussion. However, in the context of sexual abuse, responses to disclosures of abuse need to balance the child's right to protection with their need for stability. This might be delivered through removal of the alleged perpetrator, rather than the child. Children who cannot be cared for safely at home, need alternative care which supports healthy attachments, provides safety and offers emotional support. In many countries the child's placement away from home is a first response, with the result that the child frequently feels that he or she is being punished for being a victim of abuse.<sup>74</sup> There is ample evidence to suggest that children cared for away from home are at greater risk of sexual abuse and more vulnerable to sexual exploitation.<sup>75</sup>

Some of the problems can be countered by rigorous staff selection procedures<sup>76</sup>. Projects have looked at the feasibility of national and international databases of people unsuitable for employment with children.<sup>77</sup> It requires a well developed system for recording convictions, and concerns, with good communications, internally and internationally. It also requires clarity and agreement about offences that are deemed to be of concern. It could offer additional protection, but transferring this system to a country without the infrastructure would be virtually impossible; partial information would be counter-productive, by producing misplaced confidence in incomplete databases. Other systems include monitoring and inspection of services provided for children, including the independent inspection of child care and residential facilities. Even small scale pilots can highlight issues and generate the momentum for reform, through explicit identification of abuse or the lack of safeguards. Monitoring work undertaken by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee in residential units throughout the country has contributed to increased awareness of the risks of sexual abuse within institutions in Bulgaria<sup>78</sup>. Independent advocates for children can offer children support and an avenue through which to raise concerns<sup>79</sup>.

In some areas, the impact of increased awareness of abuse of children, has resulted in more children being placed in institutions<sup>80</sup>, as the only resource available for either families or the welfare services. Efforts at "gate-keeping", through judicial, administrative and professional screening of potential admissions, have been initiated in many areas. However, in the absence of alternative resources, including support for families and fostering, these institutions will continue to be used, and children who have experienced abuse, will continue to be denied their right to individualised, family-based care, and exposed to the heightened risk of further abuse.

### **8.2 Multi-disciplinary and integrated approaches**

The ARC programme tries to ensure that those who come into contact with children who have been abused, are equipped to respond in a supportive and appropriate way, regardless of professional label. The project recognises that UNHCR staff will often be the first official contact with groups of people who have experienced extreme forms of abuse. It notes that "children and adolescents are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse during flight, while in exile, and in the process of voluntary repatriation and reintegration."<sup>81</sup> The training material highlights the need

for all personnel to understand something of the issue, so that their responses are sensitive and appropriate, and do not increase the trauma for the victim.

The investigation of abuse will generally be the responsibility of the police, and prosecuting authorities. Insensitive interviewing, including disbelief, minimising events, and systems that require a child to repeat their story to many different individuals, have been linked to both secondary trauma, and low reporting of incidents of sexual abuse in the first place. There are many examples of excellent work with police and prosecutors, to improve the system for children and young people.

In Zimbabwe, this drive to improve investigative processes has resulted in Victim Friendly Units within the Police, and the appointment of a police officer whose role is to support the child throughout the process. Specialist medical facilities are used when geographically accessible. Issues around immediate safety are addressed with the child and family. Court proceedings can be preceded by familiarisation visits, and post-proceedings counselling when needed. The cases involving children who have experienced abuse should be fast tracked through the system.<sup>82</sup>

In the Philippines, one of the strategies identified to enhance protection for children is the development of Quick Reaction Teams. These are organised in various regions to respond to reported cases, with professionals drawn from a range of agencies and professions. It is able to integrate and co-ordinate the responses, from immediate rescue, and prosecution, to recovery and reintegration services. It should be a way of ensuring that the child's needs remain at the centre of all interventions.<sup>83</sup>

In Cambodia, organisations working through the social and welfare sectors to enhance protection, recognised that their efforts would be fruitless without improved law enforcement. The comprehensive programme developed to address this involved several stages - raising awareness of the issue of abuse and exploitation among the police and judiciary, the development of operating procedures and systems for investigative work, training with all levels of personnel, and the development of specialist units. The aim is the development of systems that investigate allegations of abuse, in ways that are appropriate for children who are victims, fair, transparent and respectful.<sup>84</sup>

When there is lack of evidence against a perpetrator, this should not result in a lack of action to protect the child. Sexual abuse of children, in both commercial and non-commercial settings, is often difficult to prove. Children as witnesses of their own abuse, may not be believed in the absence of medical evidence or independent corroboration. In many cases, this creates a dilemma for those working with the child; the guiding principle is clearly the best interests of the child, but taking action to protect the child in the face of opposition, or hostility, may not be easy. This might be resolved through the development of systems for working openly with families and professionals to develop protection strategies.<sup>85</sup> It can be helped through multi-agency fora, with systems that support better risk assessments and decision making.<sup>86</sup> It may be in the development of legal instruments that recognise the dilemma, and provide for civil actions in which the evidential standards are different.

Critically, children who are involved in prostitution, as well as those who are sexually abused in non-commercial contexts, should be recognised as victims of abuse. It is frequently reported that these children are considered to be responsible for their own experiences, and thus are excluded from any child protection services. NGOs in Chile have reported that an abuser can claim in his defence that the child was working as a prostitute.<sup>87</sup>

### **8.3 Creating Exit Opportunities**

Exiting prostitution in the context of protection, needs to review systems for minimising associated damaging consequences. Young people involved in prostitution frequently come into

conflict with legal systems where such activity or its constituent elements are prohibited. Exit opportunities in this context, thus refers to strategies to avoid damage to children resulting from any involvement with the criminal justice system.

The First Offender Prostitution Programme was established in California by Standing Against Global Exploitation (SAGE) in 1995. Girls are referred to the programme, with the aim of helping them permanently exit the criminal justice system, and rebuild their lives free from sexual exploitation.<sup>88</sup> It involves accurate assessments of a range of factors, including health, psychological wellbeing, education, skills etc. which are used to develop support services that address the range of needs and support effective alternatives for these young women. It recognises the critical importance of addressing both emotional and economic factors that render a young person vulnerable to returning to prostitution.

The Prostitution Intervention Project is a similar project, in Hawaii, developed by Sisters Offering Support, and offered as an alternative sentence for adults and young people. It tries to assist participants to exit prostitution by addressing the issues that keep them trapped, offering peer support and constructive alternatives. They claim a high level of success, with 60% of those completing the programme exiting prostitution. Without information about the follow up period, such a figure is somewhat ambiguous, but the project certainly offers a positive alternative to other sentencing strategies.<sup>89</sup>

In the UK recent guidance from Government has stressed that young people involved in prostitution, should be regarded as children in need, vulnerable young people requiring support.<sup>90</sup> This change in policy is the result of a sustained and well-researched campaign by NGOs, with Barnardos at the forefront, developed from practice-based experience and expertise. The new approach is one requiring better multi-agency awareness and recognition of the problem, joint planning, with the child, and the development of a package of services that respond to economic, emotional and practical needs and support the child's exit from prostitution, over time. It recognises the difficulties of this work, but is realistic in reflecting that the criminalisation of young people has been counter productive, through an increased financial imperative to sell sex to pay fines, or by reducing options for employment because of these convictions.

#### **8.4 Building networks**

Networks to protect children who have experienced abuse, are particularly important when children have been trafficked for sexual purposes. Links between projects at either end of the trafficking chain are essential if children are to be successfully reintegrated without additional trauma. This would involve ensuring both sides of the chain had good information on the child, their experiences and their home environment. Efforts to understand and address the issue across regions have been made; for example through the medium of the United Nations inter-agency Trafficking in Women and Children Project, the European Union's Daphne programme, and the ILO's Central and West Africa framework against trafficking. A separate Theme Paper is addressing the issue of trafficking.<sup>91</sup>

### **9. Recovery programmes**

Programmes aimed at supporting the recovery of children and young people who have experienced abuse, need to recognise both the impact of the event or experiences, on the individual, together with his or her strengths and the resources within any existing support networks. This dual focus is one that is consistent with a number of the proposed standards for

service delivery. It would promote a range of rights, looking at the child holistically, and employing a range of expertise to meet different needs. It would also recognise strengths and promote resilience, build and support sustainable links with communities, and support real opportunities that will equip the child educationally and/or vocationally to allow him or her to exit the sex industry.

In looking at projects that are promoting recovery from abuse, reference will be made to those addressing sexual abuse in both commercial and non-commercial settings. Again, it has been suggested that the symptoms exhibited by children involved in prostitution are similar to those reported by children who have been sexually abused in other, non-commercial situations.<sup>92</sup> It is thus important that lessons learnt in therapeutic work with a range of sexually abused children are transferred and used to speed up the service responses for children abused through sexual exploitation.

### 9.1 Child Rights Focus

“State parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social re-integration of a child victim of ... exploitation or abuse... Such recovery and re-integration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.”<sup>93</sup> This is the mandate against which all recovery strategies and activities should be measured.

Over the past 5 years, there has been an expansion of programmes seeking to address the impact of sexual abuse and exploitation, through a range of provision. These frequently include a counseling component, though what this includes varies considerably from one project to the next. It usually involves some elements of “seeking and sharing information, and identifying and releasing associated feelings and emotions.”<sup>94</sup> It is invariably included within therapeutic programmes, but often with little specific information about expected impact, or the means to identify outcomes. Work on determining what works in terms of therapeutic interventions has indicated that it is effective, producing better outcomes for individuals. However studies have also suggested that the precise nature of the therapeutic intervention is less significant. The common factors which influence outcomes appear to relate, in order of importance, to individual characteristics, the relationship between client and therapist, increased hope and therapeutic technique.<sup>95</sup>

One of the few projects in a developing country, that has undertaken an assessment of the effectiveness of counseling as an agent for positive change in work with sexually exploited children, is the Neava Thmey Centre, one of the projects supported by World Vision Cambodia. The methodology employed for the evaluation included interviews with family members, staff interviews and observation within the Centre. Counseling was offered within a context of a residential centre, which also provided food, shelter, safety and concerned and caring staff. It offered vocational training, and supported reintegration with families. The evaluative research identified a number of concrete changes in the young women who had received counseling, in ways that were seen as culturally appropriate and that would support and promote personal growth and reintegration. A caring attitude from counselors, demonstrated within the counseling relationship, but also in other forms of interaction and contact with the young people, was identified as most helpful. There are certain questions about the findings, particularly in relation to isolating the impact of counseling from other programme components. There is no information about young women who left the project prematurely, and who perhaps found the counseling less beneficial. However, in spite of these reservations, it is a very useful report, which offers guidance for future programme development, based on concrete data.<sup>96</sup>

The Boys Clinic in Stockholm conducted a systematic evaluation of their client group; this gives detailed information about the range of abusive experiences and impacts associated with sexual

abuse, which informed programme developments.<sup>97</sup> These varied with, inter alia, the age of the perpetrator and their relationship with the victim. The majority of children who have been sexually abused display one or more typical symptoms; 35% of their sample had five or more symptoms. This has particular significance for training those working with young people, to help them be more alert to signs of abuse. However, what was also apparent was that for some of these children, the sexual abuse was not the only traumatic experience they have had to confront. For some it was not even the most serious. This needs to be reflected in the interventions offered. It highlights the importance of ensuring that the therapist is fully aware and guided by the child's view of their experience.

A study at the Tavistock Clinic in London, focuses on the outcomes of therapeutic interventions.<sup>98</sup> The findings were based on a comparison of symptoms experienced by a group of children who had experienced sexual abuse, before starting therapeutic work and two years on. Around 80% of those who were symptomatic at the start showed marked improvement. All of the young people in the study were affected by attachment disorders and experienced some difficulty if cognitive functioning. The one consistent factor that helped the child to benefit from their treatment was the existence of even one supportive relationship; without this, the therapeutic input failed to achieve positive change.

### **Gender Issues**

The Boys' Clinic also offers insights into the significance of gender. They have established a model for working with boys, as well as raising awareness of boys as victims of sexual abuse. In many areas, the term child is synonymous with the girl child. Boys who are exploited can be invisible and thus denied access to services. We know relatively little about the lives of young men involved in prostitution, in many countries; the extent, their sexual orientation etc.<sup>99</sup>

There are indications of an increased number of young people who are transgender or transvestite, who are involved in selling sex.<sup>100</sup> Very little is known about their circumstances, specific needs and ways in which services could be made accessible and appropriate for them. However, rather than seeing this group as totally distinct in terms of needs, it is important to recognise them as children, and structure work and offer services that derive from common basic principles and standards.

The particular needs of children who have been made the subject of pornographic images, through which the original abuse is both compounded and magnified are little researched or documented. Belsey has suggested a number of symptoms including emotional withdrawal, anti-social behaviour, mood swings, depression, fear and anxiety. Again, they are consistent with the findings from work with other sexually abused young people, and would suggest the applicability of the range of therapeutic work previously tried with this group. However, further research is needed to establish the impact of the ongoing abuse by people viewing the image, coupled with the fear of it being seen by friends or family.<sup>101</sup>

## **9.2 Multi-disciplinary and integrated approaches**

Effective multi-disciplinary work requires good communication and a shared understanding of the issue. In its idealised version, it involves a recognition and valuing of different expertise and potential roles and interventions. It is supported by joint training, and the development of multi-disciplinary teams. It uses the added value potential of joint working, professional consultation and support, to offer better assessments, a wider range of possible services, and concrete choices and alternatives for the client.<sup>102</sup> Too often in reality, such teams can operate with the professionals functioning in a parallel manner, rather than as an integrated unit.

### ***Building networks and developing capacity***

Really effective networks often result from shared training and/or seminars. These can bring together practitioners and/or policy makers around a common interest, identify expertise and skills gaps, and generate better communication. This is particularly effective in generating awareness of the issue of sexual abuse and exploitation if such meetings bring together representatives from organisations that come to the problem from a range of different starting points. Networks that support linkages between groups working with street children, children in institutions, refugee communities, working children etc can generate strategies that effectively address the impact of sexual abuse and exploitation within all of these diverse groups. DCI, World Vision and Casa Alianza organised a Latin America wide consultation aimed at increasing awareness of the issue and identifying gaps in the implementation of the Agenda for Action across the region.<sup>103</sup>

There are a number of new initiatives, to develop local or regional networks to develop combined, co-operative and co-ordinated strategies, which develop through shared training and use of common material. They start from the premise that a range of resources, professional and non-professional can contribute. The ARC series of manuals have already been referred to, and are currently being expanded from initial pilots into a global programme. The ESCAP training material also offers good information and guidance, with some positive examples of training manuals and guidance for practitioners<sup>104</sup>. ECPAT have developed an excellent training guide, offering practical guidance, aimed at equipping those who are caring for children who have been abused through sexual exploitation. It reflects the pivotal role of this group who are in direct contact with children; they are required “to fulfill many of the child’s needs and take on many roles sometimes with few resources and little training”<sup>105</sup>.

It seems that several training initiatives have been or are being developed in isolation. The possible duplication, and hence misuse of scarce resources slows down the potential improvement in practice that is expected to result from this material. Many of these are being produced within different parts of the UN system within which it would be hoped that a shared philosophy would engender co-operation and information exchange, to short cut the development process and expand the information base. In reality, there appears to be little cross-referencing to other material.

### **9.3 Promoting resilience**

A range of personal and social factors are positively associated with recovery.<sup>106</sup> These include children having a positive view of themselves, and a perception that they have some control and an ability to protect themselves in the future. This may be supported by specific therapeutic intervention. It can result simply from children experiencing respect. Many of the children in the NGO Group research project<sup>107</sup> contrasted their positive experience with service providers, in which they were shown affection, respect and accorded some dignity, with their negative experiences with the public at large, and frequently, with those in authority. They noted the impact of feeling blamed, stigmatised and ostracised. Their self-esteem was so low that they concurred with the public view of themselves as worthless; “I wanted to die”; “I felt dirty and unable to do anything to change it “. Criticisms of services in one area, Russia (albeit from a very small sample), highlighted the lack of respect and sensitivity from professionals, and their perceived indifference. These children and young people gained the impression that they did not merit respect. It confirmed their negative views about themselves, reinforced their sense of powerlessness, and mitigated against them fully accessing available services.

In contrast, much of the work that helps a child regain, or establish for the first time, that sense of worth, is almost incidental to the professional therapeutic input. It results from attending to basic needs, from being shown warmth and affection, from being treated with respect, and being

believed etc. The message from children is the same from Addis Ababa to Bradford,<sup>108</sup> and critically must be heard, if other therapeutic services are to be effective.

Children need to address what has happened to them, to clarify that the abuse was not their responsibility, and to establish some positive meaning for themselves. The Boys Clinic in Stockholm adopts an active approach with the children with whom they work; their view is that the sexual abuse will not be addressed spontaneously in therapy because of the associated resistance, guilt and fear. Other projects respond simply to the child's own agenda; further work on assessing the impact of these different approaches would be useful.

### ***Community Connections***

Meeting children's needs for safety may demand temporary shelter away from the environment in which they have been abused. However, there is substantial evidence that institutional care, children cared for outside of a family setting, does not generally promote and support a child's development. Children become detached from community networks, both formal and informal. They lack supports and a sense of belonging. Children themselves have identified the absence of someone who is there for them, who is interested and committed to them, as one of the consequences of institutional care<sup>109</sup>. This undermines children's resilience and increases their vulnerability to abuse and exploitation.

Successful rehabilitation and reintegration are more likely where there is family support, backed up by the presence of a wider support network, including schools, friends, legal structures that support the child, plus opportunities for constructive activity. Conversely, their absence makes reintegration much more difficult.

Getting children back into their communities is frequently one of the stated goals of programmes, but one that is infrequently achieved. The difficulties of supporting individuals and communities in changing attitudes, addressing the blame and stigma commonly associated with young people who have become engaged in the sex industry, cannot be underestimated. Children and young people are changed by their experiences. At times, it is all too easy to accept compromise solutions. Changing attitudes requires explanation and education. Absence of this preparation in some communities, can in practice mean that families are reluctant to receive them home, and children are fearful of the reception they will receive.<sup>110</sup> Children needing ongoing counseling sometimes have to face a choice between therapy and return to family,<sup>111</sup> when this is only available in specialist units. Alternate models of delivering the services needed, particularly apparent in projects that have developed effective outreach services, have demonstrably been able to meet many of the needs of even the most traumatised children. The GUSCO / World Vision programme in Northern Uganda is an outstanding example, in which children who had been abducted, sexually abused and required to participate in horrific violence, are supported and very often successfully return to their family.<sup>112</sup>

## **9.4 Creating Exit Opportunities**

Working with children who have become involved in selling sex is rarely easy. Providing them with the skills and opportunity to find alternative ways of earning sufficient money, is particularly difficult in some parts of the World, but is clearly a pre-requisite if they are going exit the industry. In addition to the practical impact, helping young people develop marketable skills and work opportunities has been identified as a major source of self-esteem and sense of worth by young people themselves<sup>113</sup>. It gives them some controls over their future and the incentive to develop positive plans. Nanban, a project working with abused and exploited children in South India, worked with the children to identify their ideas for future employment, which would provide a better income than some of the traditional vocational training outlets, and facilitate their becoming self-sufficient. In response the project includes training young women as auto-rickshaw drivers. It includes a credit system that allows these young people to purchase their own vehicles,

and move into independence in which they are confident, financially self-sufficient, and looking at the future positively.<sup>114</sup>

These positive examples can be contrasted with many projects in which the long term planning, and analysis of the economic realities has been deficient. Research on local demand for specific services or skills, and an awareness of factors promoting employability including literacy and computer skills, need to be integral to effective planning. The role of the private sector in supporting the development of sound, sustainable income generating projects is dealt with elsewhere<sup>115</sup>.

### **9.5 Public awareness and advocacy**

Public awareness of sexual abuse is not immediately part of a recovery strategy; it is though inextricably linked in terms of support networks, public perception and a child's self-esteem. Changing public opinion requires more than sensationalised media reports of individual incidents. The information needs to promote an approach that recognises children involved in prostitution as victims of abuse, who need help and support rather than stigmatisation and criminalisation. It needs to reflect childhood as a stage during which all young people below the age of 18 merit consideration and protection.

### **9.6 Transferability**

If other projects are to incorporate lessons learnt in one area into their own work, then a simple description of an approach or strategy is insufficient. There needs to be some illustration of impact, of successes and problems or mistakes, to guide future developments. Documentation of goals, activities and outcomes, incorporated as part of the minimum requirements of management and funders alike, would produce an enormous richness of material, from which others could benefit. It requires transparency about goals, actions and actual achievements, with mistakes and failures as useful as successes, in terms of future development.

In relation to recovery programmes, while the ultimate goal of the project may be getting the child out of the sex trade, and his or her successful return to a supportive family, in practice, it will be necessary to distinguish between ultimate success, and steps along the way. Children and staff need to see small changes that increase safety, as positives, and indicators of effective interventions. These might include a child developing more confidence, one who is able to insist on the use of condoms by clients, being less subject to physical ailments, reduced dependency on drugs, etc.<sup>116</sup> These are all important changes, possibly interim steps towards the ultimate goal. Many children will find it difficult to make these fundamental changes to their lives. It is sometimes hard for them to commit to an uncertain future and leave behind some of the material advantages and excitement of their current life. Programmes that discount lesser change as failure do themselves and the children a disservice.

## **10. Evaluation**

Implicit in much of the material above, is a concern at the absence or inadequacy of evaluation of projects and programmes in this field. Evaluation is about "trying to establish that what we do makes a difference in the direction which we intended."<sup>117</sup> It is easy at times to hide behind the obvious difficulties of identifying causal links between activity and change in such complex phenomena as quality of life, interim improvements in lifestyle, children and communities feeling

empowered. There is a growing body of expertise that is seeking to address these very issues, but as yet there appears to be little evidence that it is being employed within many of the projects working in this field.<sup>118</sup> Evaluations are frequently focussed on identifying compliance with contract, which creates pressure for simplistic positive statements, or merges and confuses process with outcome. As a result, this often focuses on easily measured performance indicators, which may have little correlation with changes in the quality of life of the target population. There is obvious merit in separating evaluations that have different purposes, to encourage a review of essential outcomes, while generating required data for funding organisations.

There are a few examples of evaluations which address the issue of what difference the project has actually made to the children or community beneficiaries. In the Street and Working Children project in Yangon, Myanmar, World Vision opted for an evaluation strategy that would also enhance the participation of the children. With support and training, the children developed tools for gathering information, through interviewing stakeholders, and subsequently analysing the gathered data. The exercise was time consuming and encountered difficulties in engaging a few of the key actors. However, their initial findings highlighted the positive results for young people resulting from key components of the project. They were able to define the behavioural change in young people as a result of better information. They could identify the need for additional services and for more work with families.<sup>119</sup> Through such concrete results the value of engaging young people in the process can be demonstrated.<sup>120</sup>

Another initiative asked projects to evaluate and report their activities in terms of their promotion or support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article by Article.<sup>121</sup> The initial exercise created considerable debate within the organisations concerned; it was often the first time when they had been required to identify the link between activities and the over-arching, but apparently remote framework of the Convention. One direct outcome of the exercise is apparently, an increased and explicit reference to the Convention as practice guidance.

Few projects incorporate user-defined outcomes into their assessment / evaluation. One small-scale research project, to inform this Paper, has been only partially successful in terms of the number of projects and children involved. The research involved obtaining information from children and young people who had been sexually exploited and received services, about vulnerability, incidence of sexual exploitation, and the impact of services. Understandably the process has been slowed by very necessary debates with those concerned to protect children; how children should be identified, who could conduct group discussions, and interviews etc. It was essential to use researchers who were not part of the service organisation, but they needed to be able to communicate and develop some rapport and trust with the young people. At this stage responses have been received from groups in Russia, Ethiopia and Bangladesh.<sup>122</sup>

The young people in Russia who provided information highlighted a lack of services, and lack of warmth and respect from many service providers. "As to the hotlines, we tried to call but they were always busy ... Even if you get through, ... you feel these people are not really interested."<sup>123</sup> They had major concerns about their right to confidential treatment being respected. They advocated increased services for offenders... "no-one is born to be a rapist ... something should be done to help them."<sup>124</sup> They commented on the need for city planning and the urban infrastructure to be improved with children and young people's safety in mind, with better lighting on the streets and in the courtyards.

The young people in Bangladesh had very little knowledge about their rights; and assumed that only the most extreme violations, such as they had experienced, constituted abuse. The factors they identified as heightening risk of abuse were poverty and separation from their parents. Many were grateful of the services, including shelter, which offered them a safe environment, where basic needs were met. However they were concerned that they still had little control over their own lives; they were waiting for legal proceedings to be completed, or for further enquiries to be made. They saw these restrictions as punitive. They identified assistance with education, training

and jobs as especially helpful, and wanted more opportunities. Their perception of services seemed to be closely associated with the attitudes of the people caring for them; generally they were described as being kind.

The Ethiopian children identified factors which resulted in their rights being threatened; “..children run away from rural areas because of arranged and early marriage and end up on the street and in prostitution.”<sup>125</sup> They thought girls were especially disadvantaged in rural areas, and this needed to be addressed to prevent them running away to the cities, where they were especially vulnerable to being exploited. They advocated targeted prevention and information campaigns, that promoted improved parenting, reduced early marriage, and supported better education. They spoke about the risks faced by children working as prostitutes on the streets; being raped, men refusing to use condoms, refusing to pay them after they had agreed to sex. They commented that some men preferred children “because they think they are free of HIV/AIDS...”<sup>126</sup> Their awareness of different sources of support and protection was good; though clearly as service users they were a selected group, and possibly not representative of the wider community of vulnerable children.

There were differences of opinion about whether or not the incidence of abuse was increasing or decreasing, and whether prevention strategies had been effective. Some suggested that family disruption and confrontation between children and their parents was a factor in increasing the numbers on the street. They saw that involvement in prostitution was an almost inevitable next step. “Girls start begging, but get frustrated and start prostitution.”<sup>127</sup> For others working on the streets late at night as hawkers, made them vulnerable to violence and sexual assault.

Many felt that lax laws and lenient sentences encouraged abusers, and commented that this needed to be addressed by the government.

The children believed intervention projects had made a difference for them. The services had given them certain opportunities and they identified concrete outcomes for themselves; altering their behaviour in ways that they saw as culturally appropriate, developing more self confidence, reducing aggression, getting medical treatment, and reducing their dependence on alcohol or drugs. It offered vocational training and the possibility of finding alternate work. It gave some the chance to start up small businesses. They spoke positively about the attitude of staff, who were described as loving, patient and positive, which had been central in both encouraging them and developing their own sense of worth. This was contrasted with the general public ....”they didn’t even consider us human beings.”<sup>128</sup> They offered good suggestions about expanding projects to include more outreach work in rural areas; more prevention, work with families and radio campaigns. They suggested more work and training options to keep children engaged in projects longer so that they could be convinced of the need to change. Many of them wanted to work with other young people, as they recognised that their own experiences gave them insights and understanding that could benefit other children.

One interesting and important initiative is being developed by Child Watch International.<sup>129</sup> The project is assessing the impact of participation on decision making within organisations, on the children themselves, on the institutions fostering participation, and on families and communities. It should provide some answers to the question raised by children encouraged to participate; “What difference will it make?”

## **11. Role of funders**

One factor identified at the start of this paper, as critically influencing the sort of projects being implemented, is decisions made by funders. There is little analysis of funding support, but it

would be useful to review funding sources, to look for any underlying strategies adopted by these organisations or individuals<sup>130</sup>. This work could identify whether or not the projects selected for support explicitly or implicitly comply with all or some of the proposed standards. What are the expectations of funders in terms of performance monitoring, and evaluation? Are certain approaches consistently supported. Are other elements consistently denied support? Are funders in general reluctant to support activities that are a consolidation of practice, develop baseline data, or support organisational development? It has been suggested that these elements of a project, essential but time consuming with few immediately tangible results, are rarely supported. Competition for funds is also blamed for poor horizontal networking, which thus reduces the possibility of joint planning, to meet agreed objectives, and reviewing impact beyond a single agency's activities.

In situations in which there are rarely enough resources, funding organisations make explicit choices between programmes to be supported. At times this is by default, by limiting the spread of knowledge about funding possibilities. It can be based on individual preferences or the impact of lobbying. There is little evidence of funding organisations undertaking a cost benefit analysis, looking at costs per beneficiary. Targeting substantial funds on projects that reach very few young people, while leaving thousands untouched by their activities, may not be an effective use of scarce resources.

## **12. Concluding thoughts**

In conclusion, it is apparent that over the past five years there has been a significant increase in services addressing the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. There has been some recognition that children experience some of the same reactions, whether they are abused in commercial or non-commercial settings; as a result, insights and experiences from both can be used constructively to better inform those working with these children. There has been a substantial number of initiatives to raise awareness of sexual abuse and exploitation within organisations working with children who are in difficult circumstances; there appears to be an increased recognition that abused and exploited children are refugee children, children in hazardous work, street children etc. This should increase access to appropriate services without further marginalisation and segregation. However, it also appears that some opportunities for reaching abused or vulnerable children are still being underused, particularly through those organisations addressing the threat and impact of HIV/AIDS, and drug addiction.

Rather than highlighting the unique needs of sexually exploited children, many organisations are recognising the central importance of developing services that incorporate approaches consistent with key principles for working with children. These include work that is based on children's rights, supporting their participation, and adopting an holistic approach. They incorporate activities that encourage or strengthen resilience. They try to reduce isolation and alienation. They encourage and support alternative survival strategies that allow children to exit the sex trade. They need to use cultural differences when this is positive, but confront traditional practices that maintain this abuse. Service providers learn from each other and are supported by networks. At a macro-level legislative, political and social systems need to support efforts on an individual or community basis.

This Paper attempts to articulate clear and non-contentious standards based on various international instruments. These are then used to identify practical examples that demonstrate approaches that comply with one or more of the proposed standards.

Efforts to speed up the process of developing new services that are effective, demands some assessment of impact of the existing practice. New programmes should incorporate lessons from current practice. Clearly just increasing the number of services does not automatically lead to better outcomes for children and communities. Efforts at evaluating the impact of services and strategies, in terms of positive change for the beneficiaries, have been very limited, but are not impossible. Progress made in other fields, including social development programmes, could usefully be applied in this sphere.

Looking forward to the next World Congress, and its potential impact, the different perspectives of all interested parties needs to be considered. From the perspective of practitioners working directly with children and young people, it will probably be evaluated on the basis of answers to certain fundamental questions. Has it re-focused world attention on the issue of the sexual abuse and exploitation of children? Has it raised the awareness of the impact of this abuse on these children? Has it generated sufficient input and information about new approaches to inform and refocus projects? Were organisations made to think again about the impact of their work? Has it generated new commitments from those with the power to influence the legal and economic framework within which they operate? Will funding increase? From the perspective of young people, their questions might include the following. Has the Congress encouraged young people to express their views, and listened to what they have to say about the problem, and response strategies? Will interventions reflect good practice? Will financial, legal and social recognition and support be committed to the issue? If the Second World Congress can achieve these implied objectives, it will have contributed significantly to improving services. In turn these services can enhance prevention, encourage better protection and support the recovery and reintegration of children and young people. The overall impact is one that should benefit us all.

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<sup>1</sup> Kelly, L., Wingfield R., Burton S., Regan L. (1995) *Splintered Lives*. Page 4

<sup>2</sup> Article 1, Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by UN General Assembly 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Well argued in *Action for the Rights of Children Resource Pack; Abuse and Exploitation*; April 2001. Page 4

<sup>4</sup> For examples, see some of the publications from the La Strada country programmes.

<sup>5</sup> Adams N., Carter C., Carter S., Lopez-Jones N. and Mitchell C., (1997); “Demystifying child prostitution”; in Barrett D. ed. – *Child Prostitution in Britain; Dilemmas and practical responses*. p127

<sup>6</sup> *Secrets that Destroy; Five European Seminars on Child sexual Abuse and Exploitation*; (1999).  
Save The Children Alliance

<sup>7</sup> O’Connell Davidson J.; (2001) Theme Paper for the Second World Congress; *The Sex Exploiter*.

<sup>8</sup> An example is research conducted by Standing Against Global Exploitation; details available through <http://www.sageinc.org>

<sup>9</sup> Kelly et al (1995) p14. *op.cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Sackstein H. (2000); “Reality turned upside down”; available through Focal Point website <http://www.focalpointngo.org>

<sup>11</sup> Ennew J. (1996); *Children and Prostitution*; available through [ww.childwatch.uio.no/projects/monitoring/index](http://ww.childwatch.uio.no/projects/monitoring/index)

<sup>12</sup> Ennew J. (1996) *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Ennew J. (1996) *ibid.* page 3

<sup>14</sup> Recommendations from the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child; further information available from <http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu2/6/crc.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Examples include *The Protection Project*, 2001; IOM, ILO, UNICEF, ECPAT, ESCAP have all published studies, available through respective websites

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<sup>16</sup> The Eurobarometer pioneered by the European Commission uses wide ranging public opinion questionnaires.

<sup>17</sup> Examples are cited by ECPAT – USA available through <http://www.dreamwater.net/ecpatusa/csec.html>

<sup>18</sup> An example of confusing data is evident in some of the reports included in the ECPAT (2000) report; Report of Regional consultation “Best practices in Implementing the Stockholm Agenda for Action ; Bangkok.

<sup>19</sup> Glauser, 1990, p.144 quoted in Ennew, J. (1996) *op.cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Goulet L. (2001) *Out From the Shadows; Good Practices in Working with Sexually Exploited Youth in the Americas*; available from [http://www.uvic.ca/icrd/pub\\_resources.html](http://www.uvic.ca/icrd/pub_resources.html)

<sup>21</sup> ECPAT International Young People’s Participation Project; details from <http://www.ecpatiyp.org>

<sup>22</sup> Warburton J. and Camacho de la Cruz, T. (1996) *A Right to Happiness*; available from <http://www.focalpointngo.org>

<sup>23</sup> Goldstein J., Freud A., Solnit A. (1973) *Beyond the Best Interests of the Child*.

<sup>24</sup> Vanistendael S. (1995); *Growth in the Muddle of Life; Resilience: Building on people’s strengths*. International Catholic Child Bureau.

<sup>25</sup> Manila Youth Declaration, ECPAT International Young People’s Participation Project

<sup>26</sup> World Vision Cambodia and Myanmar have produced information about impact of increased child participation; contact details from <http://www.worldvision.org.uk>. See also Boyden J. and Ennew J. (1997) *Children in Focus – A Manual for Participatory Research*.

<sup>27</sup> Vanistendael S. (1995) *op.cit.*

<sup>28</sup> Goulet L.. (2001) *op.cit.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Van Bueren G. (2001) Theme Paper for Second World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

<sup>31</sup> New legislation incorporating children’s rights into national law eg Bulgaria, Kenya, and Uganda

<sup>32</sup> Goulet L. *op.cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Creative examples from among others, Indian NGOs who have used cards, T-shirts and cartoons to promote understanding of children’s rights.

<sup>34</sup> World Vision Cambodia, contact details from [www.worldvision.org.uk](http://www.worldvision.org.uk)

<sup>35</sup> Report of Workshop on Positive Approaches for Prevention of Sexual Abuse and trafficking of Children (July 2000); available through Caritas Nepal and BICE Geneva.

<sup>36</sup> Many projects have spoken of difficulties in getting funding to re-address the issue of children’s rights, on an ongoing basis.

<sup>37</sup> BICE – *The Baltics and CIS project (2000-2001)* report due for publication 2001. Will be available through BICE, Geneva

<sup>38</sup> Holman K. (2000) *Report of Expert Seminar on “Child Sexual Abuse – Prevention Programmes. What is the effect of prevention work?”* Save The Children Alliance; contact details from <http://www.savethechildren.net>, or <http://www.rb.se>

<sup>39</sup> Mossige S. (2000); “Evaluating a programme”, included within Holman K (2000) *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Finkelhor cited in Mossige (2000) *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Cross M. in Holman K. (2000) *ibid.* p36

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- <sup>42</sup> Safe Child Programme; details available from Women’s World Summit Foundation, Geneva ; <http://www.woman.ch>
- <sup>43</sup> Holman K. (2000) *op.cit.*
- <sup>44</sup> BICE – The Baltics and CIS project 2000-2001 *op.cit.*
- <sup>45</sup> Forum for Street Children Ethiopia; contact details [fsce@telecom.net.et](mailto:fsce@telecom.net.et)
- <sup>46</sup> EG. World Vision Cambodia; From the Field; and World Vision Cambodia report on independent evaluation of the CEDC Prevention Project; contact details available from [www.worldvision.org.uk](http://www.worldvision.org.uk)
- <sup>47</sup> Action for the Rights of Children ( 2000), UNHCR and Save the Children Alliance p.1; material available from UNHCR website; <http://www.unhcr.ch/issues/children/arc/main.htm>
- <sup>48</sup> Example - Save the Children Uganda programme; for contact details <http://www.savethechildren.net>
- <sup>49</sup> UNAIDS (1999) *Gender and HIV/AIDS: Taking Stock of Research and Programmes.* [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)
- <sup>50</sup> Barrett D. (1997) *op.cit.*
- <sup>51</sup> Examples of isolation and alienation, and responses to this, can be found in Goulet L. (2001), *op.cit.*
- <sup>52</sup> Pitts J. “Causes of Youth prostitution, New Forms of Practice and Political Responses.” In Barrett D. (1997) *op.cit.* p150
- <sup>53</sup> Action for the Rights of Children (2001), “Community Mobilisation.” p15 available from UNHCR website cited above
- <sup>54</sup> Examples in Goulet L. (2001) *op.cit.* ; see also Standing Against Global Exploitation (SAGE) contact details cited above.
- <sup>55</sup> Barrett D. (1997) *op.cit.*
- <sup>56</sup> SE MA Life Development project, Ministry of Education, Thailand. Summary available on <http://www.asem.org/documents/thailand/goodpractice.htm>
- <sup>57</sup> ECPAT Taksvarkki Project, refer to website [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)
- <sup>58</sup> PEACE/ BICE project Sri Lanka; summarised in *A Manual for the development of a Community Programme for Prevention of and recovery from Child Sexual Abuse in Sri Lanka 2001*, available from BICE Geneva
- <sup>59</sup> Kathmandu *Understanding; Investing in Children.* May 2001. Statement of the South Asia High Level Meeting on Investing in Children; part of the preparation for the UN General Assembly Special Session.
- <sup>60</sup> Paniamor Foundation, Costa Rica
- <sup>61</sup> Breaking the Silence Consortium, Bangladesh, details available from UNICEF, Bangladesh
- <sup>62</sup> World Vision, Brasil; *Movement Against Violence and the Sexual Abuse of Children.*
- <sup>63</sup> Vision and Reality; the promotion of Good Practices for the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children in the European Union; Save the Children Alliance; contact details available from [www.savethechildren.net](http://www.savethechildren.net)
- <sup>64</sup> Barnardos (2001) “Things We Don’t Talk About”, an education training pack. Details from <http://www.barnardos.org.uk>
- <sup>65</sup> Training Research Support Centre, Child and Law project. Harare, Zimbabwe.
- <sup>66</sup> Focal Point; contact at <http://www.focalpointngo.org>
- <sup>67</sup> Centre for Legal Research and Resource Development ; CeLRRd Bulletin June 1999; p.10.
- <sup>68</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>69</sup> NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child; Geneva, research undertaken in 2001, co-ordinated by J. Warburton; further details available from BICE or World Vision Geneva
- <sup>70</sup> Standing Against Global Exploitation; details available through <http://www.sageinc.org>

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- <sup>71</sup> O’Connell Davidson J. (2001); Theme paper for the Second world Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children; *The Sex Exploiter*.
- <sup>72</sup> See *Secrets that Destroy* and *Vision and Reality*, Save the Children Alliance; contact details available from [www.savethechildren.net](http://www.savethechildren.net)
- <sup>73</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, The Preamble, and Articles 5 and 9
- <sup>74</sup> This is particularly apparent in many countries in CEE/CIS region; see UNICEF country situation reports.
- <sup>75</sup> Details available from [www.doh.gov.uk/lostincare](http://www.doh.gov.uk/lostincare) ; and [www.doh.gov.uk/pdfs/sechildren](http://www.doh.gov.uk/pdfs/sechildren)
- <sup>76</sup> See for example the Protection of Children Act 200 UK; details available from [www.doh.gov.uk](http://www.doh.gov.uk)
- <sup>77</sup> One of the projects supported through the DAPHNE Programme in 1997-8, information available from [http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice\\_home/project/daphne](http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/project/daphne)
- <sup>78</sup> See for example an innovative project undertaken by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Sofia, Bulgaria
- <sup>79</sup> Research undertaken in the UK by NSPCC and NCH Action for Children. Material available from [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- <sup>80</sup> See UNICEF Situation Reports for, inter alia, Bugaria, Latvia
- <sup>81</sup> *Action for the Rights of Children* (2000) p5 available from UNHCR website cited above
- <sup>82</sup> Material available through TARSC *op.cit.*
- <sup>83</sup> Philippines Quick Response Teams; summary available from <http://www.asem.org/documents/philippines/spreadsheets/protectiveserv.htm>
- <sup>84</sup> World Vision Cambodia; *Law Enforcement Against Sexual Exploitation of Children*
- <sup>85</sup> See for example Marsh P., Crow G (1997) *Family Group Conferences in Child Welfare*
- <sup>86</sup> *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (1999), details available from <http://www.doh.gov.uk/qulaity5>
- <sup>87</sup> GAN, Chile, cited in *A Right to Happiness*, 1996, *op.cit.*
- <sup>88</sup> SAGE First Offender Programme; contact details *op.cit.*
- <sup>89</sup> Prostitution Intervention Program. Honolulu, USA
- <sup>90</sup> *Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution*; details available from [www.doh.gov.uk/scg/qualitycp](http://www.doh.gov.uk/scg/qualitycp)
- <sup>91</sup> Theme paper for Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children ; Trafficking
- <sup>92</sup> See Save the Children Alliance material *op.cit.*
- <sup>93</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 39
- <sup>94</sup> Warburton J. and Camacho de la Cruz T. (1996); *op. cit.*, p33; available from <http://www.focalpointngo.org>
- <sup>95</sup> Asay T.P. and Lambert M.J., 1999; “The Empirical Case for the Common Factors in therapy: Quantitative Findings”, in Hubble, Duncan and Miller (Editors), *The Heart and Soul of Change; What Works in Therapy*. American Psychological Association.
- <sup>96</sup> World Vision Cambodia, Neava Thmey Centre; contact details from [www.worldvision.org.uk](http://www.worldvision.org.uk)
- <sup>97</sup> Svensson B. (1998) ; *101 Boys A study of Sexual Abuse*.
- <sup>98</sup> Report of a presentation by Dr. J. Trowell, included in *Secrets That Destroy*, Save The Children Alliance, pages 21-22; *op.cit.*
- <sup>99</sup> Barnardos (2001); *No Son of Mine!* <http://www.barnardos.org.uk>
- <sup>100</sup> Information kindly provided by ECPAT International programme staff

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- <sup>101</sup> Carr J. 2001 , Theme Paper for Second World Congress against Commercial sexual Exploitation; *Child Pornography*
- <sup>102</sup> Good examples of integrated services include being developed at inter alia; Tartu Centre, and the Tallinn Centre, Estonia, and the Latvia Centre Against Abuse
- <sup>103</sup> Regional Consultation took place in San Jose, Costa Rica, in February 2001.
- <sup>104</sup> ESCAP; details available from <http://www.escap-hrd.org/sae/main.htm>
- <sup>105</sup> Dalaney S. and Cotterill (2001) *ECPAT training guide; The Psychosocial Rehabilitation of Children who have been commercially sexually exploited.* p.3
- <sup>106</sup> Vanistendael S. (1995) *op.cit.*
- <sup>107</sup> NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child; research project (2001); unpublished report; *op.cit.*
- <sup>108</sup> Examples from Forum for Street Children in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa ( [fsce@telecom.net.et](mailto:fsce@telecom.net.et) ); Barnardos Streets and Lanes project, UK, <http://www.barnardos.org.uk>; inter alia;
- <sup>109</sup> *Lost in Care* report, *op.cit.*
- <sup>110</sup> NGOs in Nepal and Bangladesh have reported incidents of violence towards individuals and families and more general concerns about family and community preparedness to receive children back, after they have been trafficked.
- <sup>111</sup> ESCAP (2000); *Sexually Abused and Exploited Children and Youth in the Greater Mekong Subregion.*
- <sup>112</sup> GUSCO / World Vision, Gulu, Uganda
- <sup>113</sup> Goulet L. (2001) *op.cit.*
- <sup>114</sup> NANBAN, Madurai, India, contact details available from BICE Geneva
- <sup>115</sup> Hecht M.E. (2001) Theme paper for the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children; *The Role and Involvement of the Private Sector*
- <sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>117</sup> Jansen F.M. in Holman K. (2000) *op.cit.* p 19
- <sup>118</sup> Examples include UK DFID supported programme looking at impact of advocacy; INTRAC, the International Non-Governmental Organisation Training and Research Centre, work looking at empowerment. Other examples available from M and E News available from [www.MandE.co.uk](http://www.MandE.co.uk)
- <sup>119</sup> World Vision Myanmar, contact details from [www.worldvision.org.uk](http://www.worldvision.org.uk)
- <sup>120</sup> Examples of positive impact of the participatory approach in Boyden J. and Ennew J. (1997) ; *Children in Focus – a manual for Participatory Research with Children.*
- <sup>121</sup> UNICEF/ NGO Committee for Children in CEE/CIS *Protecting the Rights of Children Deprived or at Risk of being Deprived of Parental care: Documentation and Self-Assessment of Positive Initiatives.*
- <sup>122</sup> NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child; research project, unpublished report; 2001 *op.cit.*
- <sup>123</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>124</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>125</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>126</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>127</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>128</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>129</sup> ChildWatch International, [www.childwatch.uio](http://www.childwatch.uio)

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<sup>130</sup> An interesting review of sources of funding for child welfare organisations is provided in *Funding Guide for Child Welfare NGOs in Europe and Across the World*, produced by European Forum For Child Welfare (EFCW), in 1999; available from <http://www.efcw.org>