

**Forum:** GA3

**Issue:** Combating child sexual exploitation

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## Introduction

According to the Joshua Center on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention, it was estimated that 8 to 31% of girls and 3 to 17.6% of boys have been exposed to child sexual exploitation globally ([Joshua Center on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention](#)). Although the 19th article of the Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that “governments must protect children from violence, abuse and being neglected by anyone who looks after them”, thereby covering sexual exploitation, this fundamental right is being violated extensively around the world. In a time where agendas such as war, climate crisis, and economic problems are discussed proactively, the issue of combating child sexual exploitation is often overlooked. Considering the fact that children are the future leaders of mankind, in addition to the absolute and most obvious necessity to preserve their rights, it is of utmost importance and urgency to seek effective methods to tackle this crisis once and for all.

In order to undertake possible actions in order to combat child sexual exploitation, it is vital to delve deep into three main aspects. First and foremost, it is crucial to not only understand and reinforce existing legal and policy frameworks regarding the child’s safety in all Member States, but also to improve upon them to solve this crisis. Without the proper establishment of legal frameworks and guidelines, Member States cannot be coordinated and assisted towards preventing the occurrence of child sexual abuse. Furthermore, there must be a common understanding of the terms relating to the issue, those which are clearly emphasized in the said frameworks, so that adequate and appropriate action can be taken. Besides this, dealing with the aftermath of child sexual exploitation is a whole another matter that requires immediate attention, keeping in mind that such abuse cases naturally lead to long-term traumas in children. Hence, the reintegration and rehabilitation support for the child victims of sexual exploitation shall be discussed in depth so that efficient measures can be produced for the said cause. Moreover, it is vital that the root causes of child sexual exploitation are addressed and dealt with competently. Therefore, the addressing of the cultural norms, societal attitudes, and socioeconomic disparities that lead to child sexual exploitation must be accomplished. Child sexual exploitation can be combated sufficiently only if these aspects are taken into consideration and engaged with substantially.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Child

A child “means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to

the child, majority is attained earlier” according to the first article of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ([Amnesty International, 1992](#)).

### **Sexual Exploitation**

Sexual exploitation, per the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “is defined as an actual or attempted abuse of someone’s position of vulnerability (such as a person depending on you for survival, food rations, school, books, transport or other services), differential power or trust, to obtain sexual favors, including but not only, by offering money or other social, economic or political advantages” ([UNHCR](#)). Sexual exploitation simply means that it is an action where a person takes advantage of his or her status with regards to power in order to use the vulnerable as a means of sexual pleasure. Child sexual exploitation refers to the term that describes sexual exploitation done to a child, **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse, according to its definition from UNHCR, “means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions”. The definition also states that sexual abuse includes sexual slavery, pornography, child abuse and sexual assault.

### **Sexual Grooming**

Sexual grooming refers to the lead up to conducting acts of sexual abuse where the grooming behavior consists of a someone involved trying to manipulate a child to “gain their trust, build rapport, and exert their power over them”, per the Australian Catholic University ([Australian Catholic University](#)). Grooming behavior, which is something that is commonly seen in the lead up to child sexual exploitation cases, mostly occurs through making physical contact in a sexual nature, giving children unusual amounts of special attention, spending time alone, and referring to the child’s body in an inappropriate and sexual manner.

### **Consent**

In the context of sexual exploitation and abuse, consent refers to the “unambiguous, affirmative and conscious decision by each person to engage in mutually agreed-upon sexual activity”, according to the University of California, Riverside Campus Advocacy, Resources & Education program ([UC Riverside](#)).

### **Rehabilitation**

The 39th article of the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines rehabilitation by stating that the parties agreeing to the convention should adopt appropriate and effective measures in order to promote the physical, physiological, psychological, and social recovery and reintegration of a child victim of any form of exploitation or abuse. The article further states that such a process should be carried out in an environment “which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child” ([Amnesty International, 1992](#)).

## **Background Information**

### **Reinforcement and revision of legal and policy frameworks regarding the child’s safety**

The reinforcement and revision of legal and policy frameworks regarding the child’s safety is a

fundamental thing to complete in order to combat child sexual exploitation to the full extent. Member states must have a consistent, universal understanding of the issue in order to take coordinated, apt measures to solve it. If such common ground is not established, it will simply be impossible to prevent the occurrence of child sexual exploitation fully due to the lack of understanding and participation from various parties. Furthermore, the lack of such an establishment would fail to unify the efforts of Member States so that the issue can be tackled truly. A real life example of this would be the lack of common understanding of maritime limitations of overlapping maritime areas. Since a lot of different Member States have different opinions regarding the topic and refuse to agree upon common terms, such maritime conflicts can't be resolved.

One of the most renowned international documents regarding basic children's rights, which highly includes aspects regarding child's safety and exposition to sexual abuse, is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is an important agreement that a lot of Member States of the UN have promised to implement, in order to preserve children's rights. The convention simply determines and declares the rights that all children are entitled to while clearly emphasizing that governments and parties agreeing to the document are responsible for providing these said rights in their respective countries to their children. ([United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund](#)). Another important document that relates to child sexual abuse is the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that focuses on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The convention emphasizes that the protocol provided is necessary in order to further achieve the articles determined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The convention clearly prohibits the occurrence of such events and encourages Member States to comply with the standards proposed by the convention ([United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2000](#)).

While it is true that such conventions and many more similar documents are present and ratified by numerous international parties and member states, these current documents aren't sufficient. For example, although 196 countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (excluding the United States), it hasn't yet resolved the conflict.. This is because these frameworks aren't thoroughly enforced and have barely any oversight. . A global initiative called "Out of the Shadows" conducted an extensive study that measured how countries are doing to prevent child sexual exploitation. It found out that amongst the 60 countries studied, which contained more than 85% of the world population, even major countries such as China, Russia, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan and so on failed to take effective measures to tackle the crisis, despite signing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The index produced by the study demonstrates that a majority of the countries fail to provide protective legislation resulting in little improvement. The table given below depicts the index and compares countries in their success at tackling child sexual exploitation.

## Overall Rankings of Participating Countries

1	United Kingdom	16	Japan	31	Italy	46	Peru
2	France	17	Guatemala	32	Mongolia	47	Venezuela
3	Sweden	18	Romania	33	Tanzania	48	Sri Lanka
4	Canada	19	Colombia	34	Nigeria	49	Burkina Faso
5	South Africa	20	Jamaica	35	Russia	50	Argentina
6	South Korea	21	El Salvador	36	Morocco	51	Pakistan
7	Australia	22	Kenya	37	Uganda	52	Saudi Arabia
8	Indonesia	23	Thailand	38	Cambodia	53	Ethiopia
9	Türkiye	24	Philippines	39	UAE	54	Côte d'Ivoire
10	Germany	25	Vietnam	40	Mozambique	55	Madagascar
11	Brazil	26	Serbia	41	Egypt	56	Algeria
12	Mexico	27	Rwanda	42	Ghana	57	Dem. Rep. of Congo
13	United States	28	Malaysia	43	Bangladesh	58	Uzbekistan
14	Albania	29	Kazakhstan	44	Angola	59	Niger
15	India	30	China	45	Nepal	60	Cameroon

Table showing the index of success at combating child sexual exploitation ([Out of the Shadows](#))

This occasion is a result of the poor implementation of the action plans written in the articles of constitutions, legislations, and frameworks regarding child sexual exploitation. Given that even countries that signed such conventions struggle to take action, this is a crucial aspect of the issue that should be considered so that the international community can effectively and collaboratively work towards preventing child sexual exploitation.

- You addressed the 'reinforcement' part of the subtopic quite well
- You need to add more about the revision of these frameworks though since this is important
- Please try to phrase your sentences in a more concise manner
- Also try not to repeat things

### Providing reintegration and rehabilitation support for the victims of child sexual exploitation

Dealing with the aftermath of child sexual exploitation is just as significant as providing the legal foundations necessary to adopt measures more accurately. This is because the impact that the occurrence of sexual exploitation has on children is colossal and is often permanent. As a result, it is necessary to make adequate efforts to reintegrate them into society. Per the National Child Trauma Stress Network, an initiative supported by the US Department of Health, University of California, Los Angeles, and Duke, children that are exposed to sexual exploitation and abuse can

display distinct emotional and behavioral problems such as increase in nightmares, anxiety, depression, and a fear of being alone. The conducted research suggests that child sexual abuse can have a significant impact on the physical and mental health of the victim along with its effect on sexual adjustment. The research highlights that “those who have suffered multiple traumas and received little parental support may develop post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety”. The said research concludes that victims who don’t receive proper counseling and rehabilitation services most often suffer these difficulties for longer terms, whereas victims who are supported by attentive and understanding caregivers that apply effective treatment can indeed recover without any long-term effects ([The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)). Furthermore, the World Health Organization puts further emphasis on the necessity of rehabilitation for multiple reasons. The organization states that rehabilitation is one of the main aspects of universal health coverage which helps a child, adult, or an older person to “be as independent as possible in everyday activities”, allowing them to participate in society through educational, work, or recreational means. That being said, rehabilitation is not something that can be easily provided for all people throughout the world. The rehabilitation need is mostly unmet in numerous countries – such as China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Brazil, and so forth ([Sharma, 2020](#)) – wherein more than half of the people don’t have access to the rehabilitation services they are desperately in need of ([World Health Organization, 2023](#)). These facts highlight the urgent need to provide proper rehabilitation and reintegration services to the child victims of sexual exploitation in order to assist them through their mental and physical challenges. Rehabilitation is most typically done through modifying one’s living environment to increase safety and conducting psychological therapies for a person suffering from emotional distress. Rehabilitation is an investment both in individuals and societies that allows people to return to their normal lives, maintain their work, and contribute to society. Rehabilitation is a crucial method of dealing with the aftermath of child sexual exploitation.

### **Addressing the cultural norms and societal attitudes that lead to child sexual exploitation**

Apart from ensuring the devising and enforcement of concentrated legislations and enhancement of rehabilitation services for the sake of reintegration, addressing the cultural norms, societal attitudes, and socioeconomic disparities is another challenging yet crucial aspect that should be considered. This is due to the fact that imposed cultural norms, traditionalist societal attitudes, and socioeconomic instabilities contribute significantly sometimes by initiating such events, making them worthy of investigation.

Firstly, the presence of distinct cultures and societal attitudes that are deeply rooted in different countries lead to the complexity of addressing the impact of culture and society on the given issue. For instance, in some cultures – those especially being existent in the Middle East – girls may deserve to be exposed to abuse if they don’t adhere with the values and traditions imposed by that culture or dress inappropriately relative to that culture’s standards. Second, the level of openness that every culture contains plays an important role in child sexual exploitation as well. In countries such as China, a

society known to be less open and more oppressive, victims of child sexual exploitation most generally don't prefer to disclose any information related to the event due to cultural reasons. Third, the level of education in a country, which is directly correlated with its culture and societal values, may also affect such cases. The violation of children's rights and the direct invasion of sexual safety may be tolerated in places where education levels are subpar and relevant information is obtained through reluctant sources. Such cultural values may indeed affect the legislation frameworks of a country, which relates to the first subtopic of the issue aforementioned. For instance, in Jordan, legal proceedings for child sexual exploitation cases are only initiated if the child victim is dead or severely injured. The familial structure and family members also have a great effect on how victims deal with the occurrence and the aftermath of child sexual exploitation. Child victims may be naturally reluctant to disclose information regarding the abuse case and ask for any help in traditional households with the intent to avoid shame. This is seen from a study of medico-legal cases that revealed that 44.4% of victims said "they will only confess to abuse if pressured by parents because of shame associated with reporting". All these cultural norms and societal attitudes have profoundly detrimental effects and actively contribute to it. ([Shafe, 2014](#)).

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) acts as the main intergovernmental body within the UN responsible for "strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and making recommendations on them". The council serves as an international forum where resolutions upon a wide agenda are adopted and discussed in order to tackle urgent human rights issues. The council receives assistance from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)). The organization constantly monitors Member States' compliance with international human rights frameworks, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and devises special reports in order to demonstrate the global difficulties that are being faced by the international community while trying to tackle the issue.

### Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), also known as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, is responsible for advising the Secretary-General on urgent human rights agenda and orienting the focus of the UN accordingly. The High Commissioner of the office ensures that the proper support and guidelines are provided for projects and activities under the office while assisting the Secretary-General on UN's policies regarding human rights ([Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)).

### United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is an organization that



aims to provide humanitarian assistance to children and preserve the fundamental rights they are entitled to. The organization “works in the world’s toughest places to reach the most disadvantaged children and adolescents – and to protect the rights of every child, everywhere”. The organization is known for its endeavors in providing children assistance in violence, exploitation, health, nutrition, safe water, sanitation, and quality education. The organization is committed to the international frameworks that set the standards for children’s rights and take them as reference in their actions and projects ([United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund](#)). UNICEF, apart from undertaking similar activities like UNHCR and OHCHR, provides official training for social workers, educators, healthcare professionals, and law enforcement agencies in order to help them identify child sexual exploitation cases more quickly.

### African Union

Child sexual exploitation cases are most prevalent in the African continent according to a study conducted in 2009 ([Pereda, 2009](#)). A majority of the countries in the African Union are mostly at the lower sections of the child sexual exploitation index, meaning that they are struggling to tackle child sexual exploitation and suffering from it at a major scale when compared to other countries. There are some key factors why African countries experience child sexual exploitation more than other countries do. These include widespread poverty, lack of education, weak legal reinforcement, and cultural norms. The African Union released a report named “African Union Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse For Peace Support Operations”. The document announces the methods and policies that members of the African Union will adopt in order to mitigate the effects that lead to child sexual exploitation and emerge after the occurrence of child sexual exploitation. The document highlights the proper addressing of child sexual exploitation and the duties that relevant governmental units shall undertake in the case of child sexual exploitation ([African Union](#)).

### Timeline of Events

Date (start - end)	Name	Description
September 26th, 1924	Approval of the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child by the League of Nations	The Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, a document which addresses the necessary means for children’s development in economic freedom and protection from exploitation, is approved by the League of Nations.
December 11th, 1946	Establishment of UNICEF	UNICEF was established by the United Nations.
December 10th,	Publication of the Universal	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a

1948	Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)	crucial international document that determines the rights and freedoms that all people are entitled to, is published by the United Nations General Assembly.
November 20th, 1959	Adoption of the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child by the United Nations	The United Nations unanimously adopted the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child with all 78 Member States in the General Assembly at the time.
December 16th, 1966	Adoption of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	The United Nations General Assembly adopted the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights – an important document that further extends upon the rights and freedoms set by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
November 20th, 1989	Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child	The Convention on the Rights of the Child, an extensive framework for the upholding and development of the rights of the children, is adopted and opened to signature and ratification by the UN.
September 2nd, 1990	Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child	The Convention on the Rights of the Child officially went into force.
May 25th, 2000	Proposal of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	The Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography was proposed by the UN as an extension to the existent Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 26 September 1924
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948
- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, 16 December 1966
- International Conference on Human Rights, 22 April - 13 May 1968
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, 20 November 1989
- Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography



## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Most countries and international organizations have tried to devise legislation and legal frameworks in order to accurately recognize the issue of child sexual exploitation and enact laws specifically aiming to tackle this issue. Many laws about punishing child pornography, child sex trafficking, and sexual abuse have been produced by some governments and integrated into their respective constitutions. Yet there are some pressing problems emerging from this method that shall be taken into consideration. A majority of these legislations are inadequate due to the existent loopholes that allowed child sexual exploitation to persist. For instance, in the United States, legislations about child sexual exploitation differ from state to state since the age of consent varies. Another example is India, where relevant legislation allows exceptions for child sexual exploitation in some regions of the country. Many other countries have loopholes similar to these in their legislations while also failing to have specific definitions regarding the issue. The poor enforcement of these legislations is a significant portion of the problem as well, keeping in mind that numerous law enforcement units cannot implement the objectives of these frameworks internationally. The same issues stand for the international conventions and treaties as well. For such treaties, another issue that should be considered is the lack of agreement upon these conventions. Not all Member States and international agencies sign and ratify such treaties, which leads to the lack of an international consensus upon the issue that is crucial to properly prevent child sexual exploitation.

Besides these, a lot of different governmental bodies and international organizations carried out informative campaigns in order to raise the awareness of people, especially children, about child sexual exploitation through seminars, online interactions, and revisions in the educational curricula. These are especially held by UNICEF both through online platforms and physical seminars in schools in order to disseminate further information about child sexual exploitation and ways through which children can protect themselves from it. Many countries' relevant ministries, such as ministries of justice and education, also conducted similar campaigns in order to inform their citizens about the issue.

## Possible Solutions

### Reinforcement and revision of legal and policy frameworks regarding the child's safety:

In order to assist Member States in devising and reinforcing legal and policy frameworks to combat child sexual exploitation, the ultimate agreement upon important international frameworks regarding children's rights – such as but not limited to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocols, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – should be established. This is because a common understanding of the issue at hand is necessary to resolve it. The signing and ratification of such agreements and frameworks is the only way in which Member States and international agencies can solemnly address child sexual exploitation. This can be achieved through the entertainment of assemblies in order to discuss the content of the aforementioned frameworks and enhance them so as to encourage Member States who haven't agreed upon the agreements to do so. There must be strict

actions taken against nations that do not sign or adhere to these conventions, since simply pressuring them has been ineffective.. Instead, the collaborative and international platform that the UN provides shall be used for negotiations and discussions so that these goals can be achieved. Yet the signing or ratification of these agreements is not enough on its own. The proper implementation of these guidelines by the specific law enforcement units of countries is required. This could be achieved through the advisory of the relevant human rights agencies under the roof of the UN, the provision of necessary financial and administrative resources, and the future auditing of these efforts. This way, the legislations regarding child sexual exploitation can be enforced adequately in a sustainable manner.

#### **Providing reintegration and rehabilitation support for the child victims of sexual exploitation:**

. In order to provide rehabilitation and reintegration support for the victims of child sexual exploitation, there should once again be financial support for Member States' relevant governmental agencies in order to establish effective and efficient rehabilitation facilities. This could be achieved with the assistance of many human rights organizations subservient to the UN – although you are not expected to mention any amounts or sources of financial assistance. The World Health Organization, along with the said human rights organizations, plays a key role in achieving this objective given the alignment of the organization's purpose with the solution method. The assistance and supervision of WHO is critical in forming the said rehabilitation services. These rehabilitation services should include things such as but not limited to physical inspections on the victims' bodies in order to ensure the tackling of physiological impacts, psychological support sessions, cognitive behavioral therapies, and behavioral activation. Furthermore, raising awareness regarding the need of rehabilitation support and its potential benefits is crucial as well so that children and their parents can benefit from these services more attentively.

#### **Addressing the cultural norms and societal attitudes that lead to child sexual exploitation:**

There is only one way to withstand the imposition of oppressive cultural norms and societal attitudes: education. Education can help Member States to challenge the traditionalist and disruptive norms that are rooted in their communities. Raising awareness thus plays a key role. This can be achieved by the proper use of modes of communication, enhancing the curricula in schools, and collaborating with UN agencies in order to reach more people.

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