



REPORT

GLOBAL BOYS SUMMIT

FORGING COLLECTIVE SOLUTIONS AND RESPONSES TOWARDS THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE OF BOYS



GLOBAL
BOYS
INITIATIVE



This event was made possible by funding from the Carlson Family Foundation.

The views expressed herein are solely those of ECPAT International. Support does not constitute endorsement of the opinions expressed.

This publication is based on the notes of the event undertaken by ECPAT International with the kind collaboration of participants of the Summit, as part of the Global Boys Initiative.

From ECPAT International:

Zahra Beg, Francesco Cecon,
Sendrine Constant, Guillaume Landry,
Natasha D'Cruz, Andrew Beaton.

Design and layout by:

Manida Naebklang

Suggested citation:

ECPAT International. (2023).

GLOBAL BOYS SUMMIT REPORT

Forging collective solutions and responses towards the sexual exploitation and abuse of boys. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

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Cover illustration:

The illustrations on the cover of this report depict moments and participants in the Global Boys Summit.

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THE FIRST EVER GLOBAL BOYS SUMMIT



The inaugural Global Boys Summit, a unique platform for **practitioners¹ from around the world to collaborate and exchange ideas on supporting boys at risk and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse**, took place in Casablanca, Morocco, from 6 to 8 June 2023. Hosted by ECPAT International and co-organised with [AMANE](#), a Moroccan non-governmental child-rights organisation and ECPAT member focusing on combatting sexual violence, the Summit marked a significant milestone for **developing collective action and providing diverse perspectives** on this crucial issue.



With representation from almost thirty countries², including the Americas, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Pacific, the Summit united over 60 practitioners and organisations aiming to end the cycle of failing boys exposed to sexual exploitation and abuse.

- ¹ Practitioners hereafter in this report refer to frontline workers (police, education, healthcare, justice, teachers, social services), policymakers, international actors, agencies etc.
- ² Canada, United States of America, Colombia, Bolivia, Uruguay, South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine, Albania, Hungary, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Portugal, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, South Korea, Ireland, and Australia.

The Global Boys Summit was a **ground-breaking** event as it represented a unique opportunity for practitioners to come together and join forces in looking for solutions to develop adequate interventions and support boys. Participants engaged in identifying challenges and distilling promising practices to work with boys through **a series of structured workshops** (informed by a matrix analysing the common and emerging practices resulting from the Global Boys Initiative case studies³).

The Summit was **an empowering exercise for many participants**. It provided an opportunity to exchange ideas, experiences and challenges and work towards a common movement for more adapted responses for boys, as well as meeting like-minded organisations and individuals who share similar challenges and frustrations. The **bottom-up approach to the development of the Summit** challenged the global North – global South relationships and offered opportunities for more equal relationships. This was also key for the success of the workshops, as it allowed participants to co-create solutions for the way forward based on their own experiences and knowledge.

The Global Boys Summit provided a platform for practitioners and organisations to consolidate all the learnings from ECPAT International's [Global Boys Initiative](#) with insights and experiences from different organisations and practitioners.

The first day of the Global Boys Summit focused on identifying gender norms, bias and masculinity that impact boys by taking stock of practitioners' experiences in addressing stigmas and combatting negative perceptions that affect boys at risk and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse. The second day centred on drawing from practitioners' experiences to address these issues by examining ways to build and establish safe spaces and protective environments at local, national and regional levels. The final day of the Summit was an

opportunity to elevate the discussion and develop concrete joint action to address the sexual exploitation and abuse of boys. The gaps, bottlenecks, challenges and promising practices identified during the first two days were used by the practitioners to **co-design collective solutions to ensure that the issue of sexual abuse and exploitation of boys is mainstreamed in the global child protection sector**.

Over the course of the Summit, sharing sessions served as a fruitful platform for participants and organisations to exchange invaluable experiences and practices that could be adapted and replicated in various contexts. Furthermore, these sessions also facilitated the identification of critical gaps in support services that need addressing.

Based on the key considerations and challenges as well as the emerging practices, the Global Boys Summit highlighted **key action points that can be integrated in the wider child protection sector** to integrate and mainstream boys at risk or survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Success in this respect would be that boys, as well as their peers, caregivers and families, have access to and know that there are **available services where they can be listened to, believed and safely supported in case they have a concern or have experienced situations of sexual abuse and exploitation**. Ensuring that service providers have the right skillset and tools to do so, and refer to guidance and models in their work, is therefore essential to turn the tide and make a concrete difference in the life of boys exposed to sexual exploitation.

Building on the gaps in support services identified in the framework of the Global Boys Initiative, the Summit explored how to better support boys across various contexts and communities. **Providing guidance and training to service providers represents the first step in the fight against the sexual exploitation and abuse of boys**.

³ A [matrix](#) was presented to participants with eight case studies of the Global Boys Initiative exploring common emerging practices in working directly with boys: Bolivia, Colombia, The United Kingdom, Namibia, Morocco, Thailand, South Korea, Cambodia

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES AND IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS: KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM PARTICIPANTS



In order for boys to be adequately protected against sexual exploitation and abuse, it is essential to take into account the current key challenges that affect the way boys experience prevention and response services in view of their trajectories.

This accountability to boys is necessary for the construction of actions that capture the ways boys are distinctively affected by sexual exploitation, thereby influencing the way prevention strategies, targeted advocacy and designing of programmatic tools and models are shaped.

The following sections present **key takeaways from participants that have an impact on boys** and their ability to access protection services, including gender norms, intersectionality factors and neglect, as well as **practices that participants confirmed to be well adapted and effective when working with boys** and that should be leveraged.

1

Gender Norms & Lack of Empathy

2

Challenges in Creating Safe Spaces & Trust

3

Complex Cases, Intersectionality & Cross-Cutting Issues

4

Lacks Within Family Support Networks

GENDER NORMS AND LACK OF EMPATHY TOWARDS BOYS

How does this affect boys?

- Boys are greatly affected by various **taboos, norms and pressures** that prevent them from seeking help or protecting themselves and others;
- Boys encounter traditional gender norms, which can be linked globally to harmful stereotypes because perpetrators “assert” their masculinity and victims are perceived to be “feminised” by their abuse. With traditional gender norms, **boys may be hesitant to seek help or disclose experiences of sexual violence due to societal expectations** that boys should be strong and therefore cannot be victims of sexual abuse;
- Boys live among families, communities, schools, sports, faith-based and traditional spaces where **sexuality is often not discussed, and sexual exploitation is not perceived as a potential problem that boys could experience**. Therefore, disclosure of sexual victimisation is not even envisaged by their environment;
- **There is a stigma associated with reporting a case** and discussing the experience of sexual exploitation and abuse. These harmful stereotypes are also present against individuals who do not fit into traditional gender categories and perpetuate harmful behaviours and attitudes towards children of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

Why is this issue a challenge for service provision?

- Boy survivors have time and again said one of the aspects that matter the most to them is the way adults behave when they reach out. Acknowledging vulnerabilities and disclosing sexual abuse is very challenging for most boys, and **the skills and attributes of adults in the circle of trust (including caregivers) of the child are determining factors for preventing the opportunity to safely disclose and seek support in case of sexual exploitation of boys**;
- Generalised lack of empathy or social biases among frontline workers appears to constitute a central barrier for boys that limits reporting and subsequently access to support services;
- **Stereotypical misconceptions and beliefs about sexuality and gender identity** particularly affects the provision of support services to children of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, as the attitudes of practitioners might lead to further victimisation. It is necessary that practitioners provide an accepting, inclusive and affirming environment for children of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity or expression to disclose what has happened to them, so that they can feel accepted and not invisible.

What common practices best support boys?

- **Equipping those surrounding boys, including peers, caregivers, families, communities and practitioners with skills and knowledge on how to react and support boys with preventive strategies.** By being equipped, this includes changing mind-sets, challenging negative perceptions and biases, behaviour change strategies as well as tools, models, guidance, and checklists that help practitioners approach boys in the right way;
- Adopting protective strategies against sexual exploitation of boys through response services. This consists of training that should allow them to have the knowledge, skills and attributes to adapt the intervention to boys;
- Challenging traditional gender norms as well as promoting healthy relationships based on respect and equality by creating an inclusive and affirming space, which also recognises diverse gender identities and

expressions. **Harmful gender stereotypes and norms need to be deconstructed through educational awareness-raising initiatives and critical reflection of current practices within the whole society.** For example, there must be parallel awareness-raising work and fundamental social norm and attitude changes with caregivers and practitioners about gender norms, while at the same time working with boys themselves to be empowered and feel safe enough to speak about sexual exploitation;

- Focusing on the influence of the community and the internal dynamics of family settings as this is a space of socialisation where boys learn about traditional gender norms and will then replicate them, if not challenged. For example, **the stigma within the family that is attached to what is deemed 'feminine' or 'masculine' must be addressed to create an environment where boys can explore aspects of their sexuality and their gender identity that are not traditionally associated with masculinity.**



CHALLENGES IN CREATING SAFE SPACES AND TRUST

How does this affect boys?

Boys require safe spaces, which are not just physical but include emotional safety, psychological safety, spiritual safety, environmental safety, digital safety and safety within relationships. Through these safe spaces, practitioners can build trust and establish more equal power dynamics with those at risk and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse. However, boys generally lack safe spaces due to gender norms and social stigma.

Why is this issue a challenge for service provision?

- The absence of safe spaces limits disclosure/seeking help and even less reporting, which isolates boys in their victimhood to cope alone with their experience, potentially also resulting in harmful behaviour turned towards themselves or others. It is important to change this because boys state that they need safe spaces which are inclusive, open and honest, where they feel comfortable enough to seek help and not be judged;
- While recognising that disclosure of abuse and exploitation is difficult for anyone, it is clear that gender norms regarding male vulnerability present a particularly challenging barrier for disclosure and victim identification related to boys. The topic of vulnerability or victimisation of boys is not addressed in capacity building and rarely discussed with frontline workers;
- It is the responsibility of practitioners to create safe spaces for boys to disclose, reach out, report and – if appropriate and safe – press charges against perpetrators.

What common practices best support boys?

- Building soft skills to create safe spaces with boys among relevant practitioners. A trust-based relationship requires **being consistent, timely, non-judgemental and without conscious bias, which avoids reinforcing harmful gender norms.** For example, service providers can adopt communication techniques such as non-verbal sharing and confidentiality to ensure that boys feel welcomed and comfortable. These skills should be developed and nurtured early among practitioners through relevant curricula of training and skills which are necessary for practitioners involved in managing these cases;
- **Promoting boys' access to services. Practitioners should be equipped with centring the discussion about boys. They can do this by being trauma-informed, gender-sensitive and aware of their conscious and unconscious bias.** For example, ensuring that their body language is suitable as well as adapting language to ensure that boys feel comfortable and safe with practitioners;
- Adopting trauma-informed services so that boys' immediate expressed needs can be supported, such as providing clothing, nutrition and medical attention in a controlled physical safe space;
- **Providing accessible and gender and culturally appropriate services and resources to support the emotional and psychological well-being of boys.** Perceived comforting behaviours, such as touching or hugging, might not be appropriate in some contexts, or may even represent a trigger for some boys who suffered sexual abuse

and exploitation. Therapeutic touch practices therefore need to be adapted to each context and boys must have a role in expressing their level of comfort in the implementation of these practices;

- Considering what language boys use so that practitioners can reach them where they are by adapting their language. **Language is constantly evolving, and one should be aware of which language is preferred depending on the context, such as specific cultural environments;**

- Ensuring practitioners are adequately supported and provided with professional supervision and care so that they can remain available for responding to the complex needs of boy victims/ survivors of sexual exploitation of children and their vulnerable contexts;

- Adopting a human-centred approach with cross-sector collaboration from both boys and practitioners.

COMPLEX CASES, INTERSECTIONALITY AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

How does this affect boys?

Most boys who have experienced sexual exploitation and abuse are isolated in their specific experiences. There cannot be one approach that practitioners use with all boys, as each individual is unique. Boy survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse will have different specific trajectories rooted in intersectionality. This includes socioeconomic status, citizenship, race, age, sexual orientation, and disability, as they are often exposed to more than one form of adverse childhood experiences.

Why is this issue a challenge for service provision?

- **If service providers are too risk-averse and lack the adequate skills and support to work with more complex issues, then boys might end up being excluded due to the lack of tailored services,** especially if only the cases that are perceived easier to deal with

and boys who fit concepts of the perfect victim, are supported;

- Addressing violence in institutions where boys are and responding to violent behaviour such as substance abuse, radicalisation and gang-like behaviour resulting from intersectional issues is not properly integrated in responses and accounted for, despite the fact that this behaviour is often associated with sexual exploitation and abuse of boys;

- **These complex cases, which do not have adequate services and/or that are widely available, means that boys are not well supported due to the intersectional issues potentially resulting in or being a driver of the sexual exploitation of children.** As a consequence, these boys, often without caregivers or citizenship, **can slip through the gaps of social services;**

What common practices best support boys?

- Accounting for the specific intersectionalities and cultural contexts that boys belong to enables practitioners to support boys' specific trajectories with child-centred individualised solutions;
- **Adapting the provision of protection services to consider and address the complexities of the experiences of boy survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse** and how these complexities are intertwined with expectations to comply with gender roles and ideas of masculinity;
- **Adopting a multidisciplinary approach with practitioners involved to provide a holistic approach towards the boys when it comes to prevention and response;**

➤ **Strengthening the ability of child protection practitioners** to actively identify cases of boy survivors through their work. Service providers working with boys in conflict with the law or dealing with issues related to drug and substance abuse are particularly relevant to involve in capacity-strengthening interventions that aim at identifying any underlying issues of sexual abuse and exploitation;

➤ Considering the unique cultural backgrounds and contexts of boys when designing and/or providing sex education, so that they can discuss issues of homosexuality. This also includes training service providers to adopt a gender-informed lens, and also **analysing gender dynamics within the family and wider community**. This is particularly sensitive to consider in countries where homosexuality is criminalised.

LACKS WITHIN FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORKS

How does this affect boys?

Boy survivors struggle to share their experiences of sexual exploitation and abuse with their families and caregivers, stemming from the fear of potential stigmatisation or punishment by their own families. **Caregivers and families themselves might also experience difficult circumstances that hinder their ability to properly support boys.** Consequently, these factors create additional obstacles for boys to receive timely protection services, which may negatively impact their mental and emotional health and well-being.

Why is this issue a challenge for service provision?

It is important to recognise the central role families play in supporting children, and the responsibility of the state to strengthen the

family environment. However, strengthening family support networks is a challenge for service provision as it requires trauma-sensitive care to understand the problems that families are facing.

In this sense, there is a noticeable gap in child protection issues at the state level, which is why there should be more of a focus on families in need of support or are more vulnerable and beyond their role towards children as a caregiving support network. Boys can be supported through strengthening support networks, by working with families. This ensures that families and caregivers can also represent safe spaces as trusted responsible adults who also provide protection for boys at risk and boy survivors. In addition, research indicates that boys often tend to turn to their peers as their primary source of confiding and seeking help. However, boys, and children in general,

do not always feel sufficiently supported in safely reporting their issues and concerns. Hence, it is essential for families to play a more extensive role beyond being a source of reporting and safe space, but to also play a critical role in prevention.

What common practices best support boys?

- Ensuring boys' safety and well-being is promoted among families;
- Being sensitive to boys' behaviours and emotions. It is important for families and caregivers to be sensitised to issues of boys at risk and survivors and understand their reactions and behaviours;
- **Providing a safe space for families on how to navigate their own trauma;**
- **Cultivate empathy for caregivers and raise awareness about the sexual exploitation of boys in a sensitive manner, ensuring they do not feel blamed or accused, as this may lead to anger and consequently hinder open conversations on how to protect their children;**
- Facilitating intergenerational dialogue among parents and boys through role reversals to better understand each other's individual experiences and trajectories. It is important to educate parents and caregivers about gender norms and positive masculinity to promote a deeper understanding of their children's experiences as well as their human rights;
- Encouraging and equipping caregivers and families to initiate difficult conversations with boys about gender biases, roles within families, sex education and sexual abuse. This could include developing awareness-raising interventions within families to combat how they, and even the wider communities, react to issues of sexual

exploitation and abuse of boys through punishment;

- Empowering families and caregivers through awareness-raising on positive parenting and managing stress within the family. Families may be experiencing stress at home, which impacts their ability to support their children effectively. Hence, **strategies to support boys should include strengthening families** through initiatives such as assisting them in setting up businesses, rebuilding relationships with children or providing them with social service support;
- **Supporting child peer-to-peer support and child participatory groups**, ensuring that children can also safely report potential sexual abuse and exploitation concerns (in parallel to the work conducted with families and caregivers) and receive access to support services.



TAKING ACTION: THE COLLECTIVE WAY FORWARD TO END THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE OF BOYS



SERVICE PROVIDER SUPPORT: ENSURING BOYS CAN ACCESS GENDER-SENSITIVE AND QUALITY CARE

Ensuring that services are adapted to boys and integrating a strong gender approach represent an important opportunity to challenge and transform harmful gender norms, stereotypes and relationships, ultimately contributing to the broader fight against gender-based violence.

Whilst a boy might be identified as having physical or mental health issues, relevant professionals may not have the necessary skills or training to link the symptoms to harm created by sexual exploitation and abuse. As a result, they may fail to refer the child for appropriate recovery and reintegration services. This not only affect boys, but also frontline workers and service providers, who often feel unprepared or uncomfortable when dealing with cases involving boys. Failing to understand boys' lived experiences and consequent reactions puts the frontline workers in a situation of frustration and discomfort, adding to the emotional burden inherent in working on complex child protection problems.

THE KEY PRIORITIES OF STRENGTHENING SERVICES INCLUDE:

- **Promoting a holistic multi-disciplinary approach within the child protection sector that is survivor-centred to support boys at risk or survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse.** This can be carried out initially through the participation of children, including from boy survivors and children with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, in decision-making processes to design, inform and monitor prevention and response programmes. Service providers must balance standard efficient methodologies while also adopting holistic boy-centred services, especially with limited resources available;
- **Developing soft skills of practitioners, which are then translated into designing competency-based trainings and skills for others involved in child protection case management.** For example, approaches to establishing trust include active listening, showing empathy, acceptance, transparency (even when making mistakes), accountability and self-disclosure that is regulated and intentional;
- Adopting an approach that focuses on **the specific individual experiences and trajectories of boys rather than a one-size-fits-all resource-based approach;**
- **Considering adapted communication methods for supporting boys at risk and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse,** including direct messaging with boys both face-to-face and online to establish trust-based relationships.

CREATING A GLOBAL COALITION: STRENGTHENING THE VOICE

The Global Boys Summit brought together practitioners and organisations dedicated to supporting boys at risk and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse. Harnessing local, national, regional, and international interventions, we recognised the potential to form a robust global coalition, enhancing advocacy and enabling decisive action.

The coalition's primary goal is to encourage systemic integration of boys' issues into the broader discourse on sexual abuse and exploitation within the child protection sector. This coalition aims to connect local initiatives with global advocacy efforts, creating a two-way information flow that benefits both spheres of action and draws upon the resources and capabilities of diverse organisations and stakeholders.

Moreover, the coalition will lay the ground work for a comprehensive knowledge base by establishing an information-sharing hub, fostering collaboration and exchange of best practices among child protection actors.

Significantly, the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse is a universal issue, affecting all children regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, or gender expression. Prioritising gender-sensitive and quality care for boys provides an opportunity to challenge harmful stereotypes, promoting the transformation of gender roles and relations in a positive direction.



THE KEY PRIORITIES OF THE GLOBAL COALITION ARE:

- **Creating a global manifesto that outlines key messages, purposes, and objectives of the coalition in supporting boys within the broader child protection sector and the fight against gender-based violence.** The manifesto is a key document which could be used to engage stakeholders such as the UN and government actors to influence legal and policy processes;
- Creating a **plan of action** to gather members into the coalition to advocate for issues at local, national, regional and international levels. Ensure that the coalition fosters a space that is inclusive, participatory and involves members in the construction of the action plan that is in line with their resources, scope of work and priorities;
- Conducting a **stakeholder mapping exercise** to identify existing stakeholders, gaps and how to expand the network;
- Promoting clear messaging that child rights and child protection organisations are working towards the collective outcome of gender equality and supporting children's rights. To comply with child rights, **it is a responsibility for organisations to work with boys and to contribute to fighting against gender-based violence** by challenging harmful gender norms and ideas of masculinity, and by transforming relationships amongst children and adults;
- Strengthening a message of hope and determination through position papers, such as the global manifesto, and a unified approach from the global coalition when it comes to working with boys at risk or survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse. To mobilise stakeholders, **it is important to use clear and consistent terminology that is accessible to galvanise people into participatory action for prevention, response and rehabilitation;**
- Delivering a coordinated global awareness-raising intervention and mobilising members of the coalition in promoting campaigns such as, for example, the [Blue Umbrella Day campaign](#) on the 16th of April.

MOBILISING FOR THE CAUSE:

CLARIFYING AND MAINSTREAMING THE MESSAGE

Identifying allies and who should be influenced to mobilise for the cause on how to support to boys includes galvanising people into participatory action for prevention, response and rehabilitation. These key identified allies include boys, family/support networks, community-based organisations, local institutions (e.g., judicial, law enforcement, education, schools), media (including social media), national and state governments, regional and international bodies (e.g., United Nations, African Union, European Union), and donors.

There is a need for the private sector to be included as an actor and acknowledge responsibility for involvement in sexual exploitation and abuse of boys, for example by coordinating shared goals and a diverse and targeted approach globally and across sectors to maximise influence. Private sector actors can include tourism, sports, construction, mining, agricultural, transport, health, education and media, inter alia. There were calls to advocate with the private sector, for example through supporting existing technology coalitions.

Mobilising for the cause includes advocating intergovernmental bodies to support boys, such as United Nations bodies, the International Labour Organisation, and the International Monetary Fund (inter alia). For example, in research capacities, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child can be approached to amend existing policies to integrate a gender lens, assess country overviews, draft model recommendations and engage in conversations on how to support boys and collaborate with organisations to report on this issue. For the UN Population Fund Agency's gender-based violence projects, boys and children with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or expression can also be included to make programmes more inclusive. In terms of

development programmes, supporting boys can be included as a safeguarding policy social condition.

Using media to mobilise for awareness-raising about boys at risk or survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse among diverse communities. The media can be utilised to identify allies who are working in a similar field or ambassadors that want to advocate on behalf of boys. When speaking to media, it is important to make sure that the narrative is controlled which can take place with guidelines for survivors. It is crucial to consider concerns about media engagement due to unsympathetic narratives of boy survivors and their personal experiences as stories being misquoted or mistranslated. This can lead to severe negative repercussions on both staff and local organisations, especially in places where the issue is taboo; freedom of speech is limited and especially if organisations are closed down and there are no services available to support boys thereafter.



THE KEY PRIORITIES IN TERMS OF MOBILISATION AND ENGAGEMENT MOVING FORWARD ARE:

- Identifying missing groups that work towards the collective goal of supporting boys including women-led organisations/networks, child-rights organisations, LGBTQI+ organisations, medical associations, judicial policy makers and engaging with government (nationally and bilaterally);
- **Developing survivor-centred accessible consistent messages that are clear and inclusive of all identities, with a focus on marginalised groups;**
- Considering various forms of media (e.g., journalists, TV news, social media, community-based art/murals and spokespersons), community-based organisations and civil society organisations to platform boy survivor stories and share resources;
- Considering suitable approaches for countries that are already working on sexual exploitation of children which have existing entry points compared to those that do not. At the same time, neglected regions/countries cannot be excluded;
- **Creating a global mapping of private sector policy and practice relating to sexual exploitation and abuse of boys** to learn about the company and its values and how they can be influenced;
- Engaging with the private sector to create online safe spaces and regulating bodies due to the increase of Internet proliferation;
- **Creating a digital library of guidelines on media outreach and training resources for co-creating content, allowing survivors to raise awareness and contribute to media content while protecting themselves from secondary traumatisation.** For example, establishing a journalistic code of conduct on how to report sexual exploitation and abuse of boys.

FUNDING: SENSITISING THE DONOR COMMUNITY TO THE CAUSE WITH A CHILD-RIGHTS APPROACH

Securing adequate funding is of paramount importance, serving as the lifeline for efforts aimed at supporting boys at risk and those who have survived abuse. Not only does it provide crucial resources for their support, but it also enables rigorous monitoring of initiatives, fuels further research, and fortifies the global coalition's operations. Moreover, donors, in their unique position, have the opportunity to become vocal advocates for the cause, elevating awareness and mobilising action to protect boys around the globe.

Practitioners agreed that funding is missing, and **donors must be identified from multiple levels** (e.g., international, national, private sector) for key initiatives that support boys. International agencies that could

be approached include the United States Agency for International Development, UNICEF and the European Union, inter alia, and national actors consisting of government, survivors and the corporate sector. While practitioners have networks, expertise and experience of survivors, the prioritisation of supporting boys is missing at present with limited funding for this issue.

Studies, evaluations, assessments and boy survivors' voices can be presented to tackle the lack of policies and common agenda needed on the international, regional and national level to support boys. Practitioners agreed that project proposals are not inclusive enough and do not specifically reference boys, which means they are neglected.

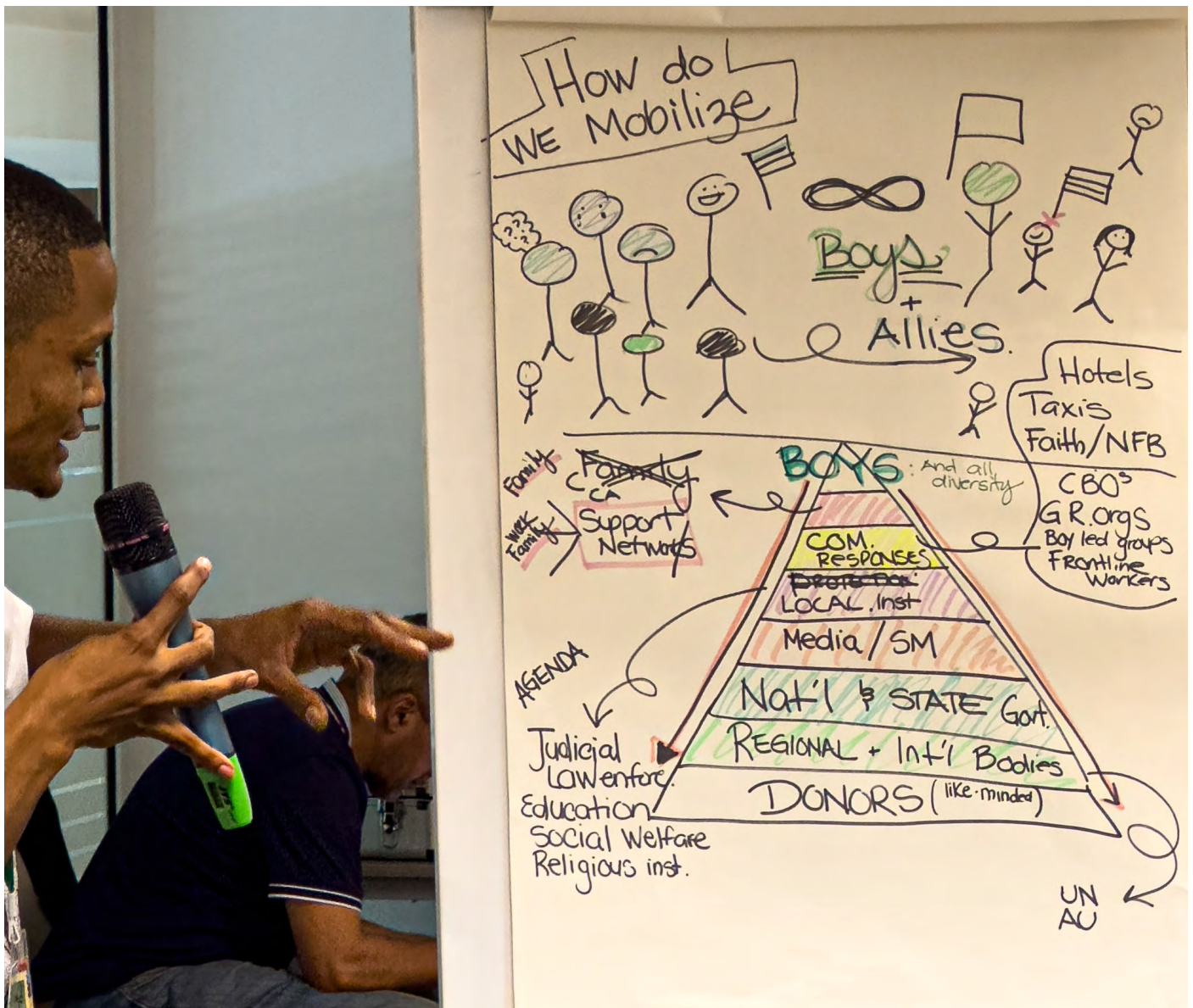
THE KEY PRIORITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FUNDING STRATEGY IS:

- ➔ **Identifying specific funding gaps, which includes mapping existing and potential donors and thus creating a database and donor strategy to identify who can be influenced.**

FURTHER RESEARCH: EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE AND EVIDENCE ON THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE ISSUE

While there are calls for child participation and survivor-led research, it is important to consider how to ethically and safely engage with boy survivors to conduct research. As research on boys is underfunded and there is a lack of data, it makes it difficult to prioritise how to support boys within programmes. Participants discussed how donors do not incorporate boys within their agendas. Instead, people are categorised into arbitrary boxes based on goals and systems, which does not include boys and those of diverse gender identities.

Existing and new data is needed to increase credibility, efficiency and insight on how to support boys. Data collection around sexual abuse and exploitation against boys will lead to a deeper understanding of which areas need support with more effective prevention and response interventions.



THE KEY PRIORITIES ON WHICH TO CONDUCT RESEARCH TO REINFORCE EVIDENCE AND DATA ARE:

- Considering survivor-led research that is ethical and safely engages boy survivors that includes active participation, visual consent forms, allowing boys the decision-making role of who they want to participate in research and financial remuneration for contributions;
- Adopting feminist research methodologies, which can be linked to exploring masculinities, particularly hyper masculinities as a potential trauma response to sexual abuse and how this is manifested in different contexts. While there are elements of trauma that are universal, **it is also important to consider working with and how to support survivors with issues including mental health, neurodivergence (e.g., dissociative disorders and multiple personalities), disability and correlation with vulnerability to boys at risk or survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation;**
- Researching potential topics such as boys' perceptions on law enforcement, impact of porn on sexual abuse and exploitation of boys (according to boys), how often survivors end up in an anti-abuse environment and how to support boys who conduct harmful sexual behaviours toward others, because of their own lived experiences of abuse and exploitation;
- Deepening knowledge and understanding on the experiences of children with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and expression in accessing protection and support services, as well as on measures to ensure safety in countries where homosexuality is punished by law;
- Researching the impact of children's exposure to pornography and its links with dynamics of sexual exploitation and abuse. It is essential that the harmfulness of pornography is explained to boys though this is difficult to establish given it is considered part of 'man's culture' if a boy watches pornography as opposed to not engaging in viewing that content. At the same time, participants reviewed how the use of technology is particularly important as some boys who are addicted to viewing pornography might use the Internet to look up for support information online.

CONCLUSION

Often, boys are situated within contexts where sexual violence is under-acknowledged, rendering them vulnerable and unsupported in their experiences. This underlines our responsibility to secure suitable, tailored support services that resonate with their specific journeys.

The ECPAT International Global Boys Summit encapsulated a series of enriching workshops and practical discussions that dug deep into the imperative themes associated with safeguarding boys at risk and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse. Participants pinpointed successful strategies to combat stigma and destructive gender norms, addressed intricate family and community dynamics associated with exploitation and abuse, and collectively outlined actionable steps for the path ahead.

The singular strength of the Global Boys

Summit lies in its grounding in the shared experiences of practitioners working directly with boys. The summit facilitated a space for global practitioners to come together, identifying, exchanging, and building upon promising practices, leading to the **creation of tangible measures designed to invigorate action supporting boys at national, regional, and global tiers in the coming years.**

Above all, the Global Boys Summit inspired a sense of dynamism and determination. It catalysed practitioners to form alliances, fostering an environment of understanding and mutual support. This camaraderie will be instrumental in raising the profile of the conversation around the sexual exploitation and abuse of boys, thereby prompting the formulation of more attuned strategies to **amplify the representation of boys within the global child protection sector.**



328/1 Phaya Thai Road,
Ratchathewi, Bangkok,
10400, Thailand

Telephone: +662 215 3388
Email: info@ecpat.org
Website: www.ecpat.org

For more information :

