

ECPAT INTERNATIONAL

GLOBAL BOYS SUMMIT



SUMMARY REPORT

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



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

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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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INTRODUCTION

Too often, boys are situated in environments where sexual violence is under acknowledged, leaving them vulnerable and unsupported to navigate their struggles. Harmful gender stereotypes, a lack of safe spaces to share their experiences, and limited family support networks further complicate their journeys towards accessing help they have the right to.

Driven by the mission to boost support services for at-risk boys and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse, the inaugural Global Boys Summit took place in Casablanca, Morocco from June 6-8, 2023. This landmark event,

hosted by [ECPAT International](#) and co-organised with ECPAT member [AMANE](#), brought together more than 65 practitioners from 30 countries.

The Summit represented a unique opportunity for practitioners from around the world to learn, collaborate and exchange diverse perspectives on this critical issue. Pooling their collective experiences and expertise, participants at the Global Boys Summit transformed their shared insights, challenges, and ideas into key action points, designed to invigorate action supporting boys at national, regional, and global tiers in the years to come.

CHALLENGES

CURRENT CHALLENGES FACED BY PRACTITIONERS WHEN SUPPORTING BOYS

For boys to be adequately protected against sexual exploitation and abuse, it is essential to consider the key challenges that affect the way boys experience prevention and response services in view of their unique situations. Participants drew from their experiences to identify the challenges that prevent boys' ability to access protection services.

GENDER NORMS, LACK OF EMPATHY TOWARDS BOYS

- Harmful stereotypes and societal expectations that dictate how boys should behave may discourage them from seeking help or disclosing experiences of sexual violence;
- In certain environments and communities, sexuality is not often discussed, and sexual exploitation is not recognised as a problem affecting boys.

COMPLEX CASES, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

- Socioeconomic status, citizenship, race, age, sexual orientation, and disability can shape how boy survivors navigate life. Without the skills to support more complex cases, boys might end up being excluded due to the lack of tailored services.

CHALLENGES IN CREATING SAFE SPACES AND TRUST WITH BOYS

- Boys require safe spaces, which are not limited to physical safety but include emotional, psychological, spiritual, environmental, digital safety, as well as and safety within relationships;
- Boys often lack these safe spaces to open up and seek help, leading to isolation and coping alone with their experiences. This isolation can sometimes lead to harmful behaviours directed at themselves or others.

LACK OF FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORKS

- Due to fears of potential stigmatisation or punishment from their own families and caregivers, boy survivors may struggle to disclose sexual violence;
- Families and caregivers themselves might also experience difficult circumstances that hinder their ability to properly support boys.

ACTIONS

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

Drawing from the identified challenges and obstacles, participants formulated key action points that serve as a roadmap to equip practitioners with the best tools for appropriate and quality care for boys.

GENDER-SENSITIVE AND QUALITY CARE

- Adopting an approach that focuses on the unique individual experiences of boys, as opposed to a one-size-fits-all strategy;
- Developing the soft skills of practitioners to encompass active listening, empathy, acceptance, transparency, and accountability.

CREATING A GLOBAL COALITION

- Encouraging systemic integration of boys' issues into the broader discourse on sexual exploitation and abuse within the child protection sector;
- Creating a coordinated plan of action to advocate for issues at local, national, regional, and international levels.

EXPANDING RESEARCH

- Expanding research on the sexual exploitation and abuse of boys is essential to better pinpoint areas that require enhanced prevention and response efforts;
- Conducting safe and ethical research is crucial to uphold the well-being and rights of boys involved, such as using survivor-led research and consent forms.

MAINSTREAMING THE ISSUE

- Developing survivor-centred accessible consistent messages that are clear and inclusive of all identities, with a focus on marginalised groups;
- Leveraging various media forms such as community-based art, social media, and TV news to amplify the stories of boy survivors.

CONCLUSION

While services for at-risk boys and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse exist, they fall short in meeting the unique needs and circumstances of these individuals. 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.

The Global Boys Summit emerged as a beacon of progress, where global practitioners united to not only exchange ideas, experiences,

and challenges, but also to pioneer solutions that ensure that the issue of sexual abuse and exploitation of boys is mainstreamed in the global child protection sector.

Ultimately, we envision a future where boys, their peers, caregivers, and families can readily access and be informed of available services. Within these services, they would be listened to, validated, and safely supported—especially for those who may have experienced situations of sexual abuse and exploitation.

Together, we can end the sexual exploitation and abuse of boys.



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