RISE Learning Network

Promoting Learning on Recovery and (Re)Integration from Child Sexual Exploitation

ECPAT FRANCE

"When they consider you, they give you importance, you feel accepted"

CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF REINTEGRATION IN MADAGASCAR:

HOW GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN EXPERIENCE REINTEGRATION AFTER SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

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Arimanana Narindra - Research Coordinator and Author

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FOREWORD

The research is part of a wider project, the RISE Learning Network,[1] which aims to promote and facilitate learning on Recovery and Reintegration (R&R) approaches that improve outcomes for children and adolescents affected by sexual exploitation (CSE). It is a project implemented by Family for Every Child, a global alliance of national civil society organisations in collaboration with Retrak and the International Centre: researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking at Bedfordshire University.

The sexual exploitation of children is a global yet still largely hidden problem. It has devastating long-term impacts on children's physical, mental and reproductive health and social wellbeing, as well as their education and ability later to find work and safe relationships in supportive communities. It can leave them stigmatised, ostracised, without support or choices and vulnerable to further exploitation. Improving outcomes for children affected by CSE requires a holistic, flexible and individualised response.

This research is the second of three learning projects co-ordinated by the RISE Learning Network and aims to engage with young people affected by sexual violence to explore their views and recommendations on what makes for effective and lasting recovery and reintegration in order to strengthen policy and practice. The themes identified for the learning project were informed by a thematic report on reintegration 'Connecting the Dots: supporting the recovery and reintegration of children affected by sexual exploitation' by Claire Cody (May 2017) which, effectively, acted as a literature review for the learning project.

This research is also part of the PARLE program, run by ECPAT France in Madagascar and aims at raising children's voices so that they will be heard by authorities and all the actors who take care of children.

ECPAT is an international network[2], which has 109 associations in 96 countries, fighting against Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). ECPAT France[3] is taking action against CSE in France, Madagascar and more than a dozen countries on the African continent. ECPAT France has worked in Madagascar since 2012 and is involved in prevention, protection and advocacy activities.

[1] https://riselearningnetwork.org/about/
[2] https://www.ecpat.org/
[3] https://ecpat-france.fr/en/home/

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SUMMARY

This research aims to promote and facilitate learning on recovery and reintegration approaches that improve outcomes for children and adolescents affected by sexual exploitation. This project engages with girls and young women affected by Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) to explore their views and recommendations on what makes for effective and lasting recovery and reintegration, with the aim of strengthening policy and practice in this area.

This research uses an innovative participatory research method whereby young people who had experienced sexual exploitation and are former beneficiaries of a reintegration program, acted as 'youth researchers' and undertook research activities with their peers. This included co-facilitating focus group discussions with adult facilitators and "sense-checking" of initial analysis.

Reintegrated children have endured certain hardships (stigma and discrimination) that create psychological and emotional troubles to them and feelings of hopelessness. However, thanks to the support of all, especially the support of NGOs like ECPAT France, some of them have not given up and have ambition in their lives.

The research questions for this project are:

- **How do children and young people, who have been sexually exploited, experience reintegration in the community?**
- **What are the key issues that reintegration services need to consider when enabling the reintegration of children, who have experienced sexual exploitation, into communities?**

As the learning project was interested in getting an in-depth picture of reintegrated children's experiences, the sample group consisted of 14 children and young people who took part in five group discussions of 2-3 hours over the course of 2 weeks.

During the research, we worked on three major themes that guided our discussions with the participants' reintegration experience. Our findings, therefore, relate to these three themes.

Theme One: Experiences of stigma and discrimination

Girls and young women reported stigma as being labelled as 'prostitutes' by community members who then discriminated against them by excluding them and talking about them behind their backs. Girls and young women felt they had brought dishonour to their families, to their husbands. Their exploitation was seen simply as 'bad behaviour' by parents who were often seen as to blame. However, girls and young women were particularly hard on themselves, through self-stigma the girls and young women normalised the belief that they were to blame for their own exploitation. Despite this, some were able to see positives in their situation and were motivated to work hard and look to the future.

Theme Two: Experiences of acceptance and belonging

Belonging was experienced by girls and young women in its most simple form of being talked to and listened to. However, girls and young women also felt respect from others when they were earning an income. Additionally, undertaking common activities (such as cleaning and social actions) with community members helped girls to feel that they were not rejected and are among the community's members. But it was a connection to the church community that appears to help the reintegrated girls in this study to build relationships, reach their goals, to have a positive attitude and improve their status.

Theme Three: Experiences of support and protection strategies

Although family, teachers and community officials were reported as being supportive to girls and young women it was social workers and peers who were pivotal in the girls and young women's reintegration journey. Girls and young women reported a strong bond and a deep understanding between themselves and peers who have been sexually exploited. Social workers offered emotional and practical support so that girls and young women could change their situation. Girls and young women mentioned a particularly important protection strategy - building self-worth - which enabled them to have a better understanding of their qualities and capacities, an ability to manage their feelings, find solutions to their problems and have a positive attitude that ultimately enabled them to reach their goals.

To conclude, girls and young women connected their stigma of being labelled as 'prostitutes' and 'delinquents' with a feeling of shame and dishonour from their families who saw their experience of being a victim of sexual abuse simply as 'bad behaviour'. Girls and young women primarily experienced discrimination as rejection and being criticised or gossiped about behind their back; however, young women who are married with children were particularly prone to self-stigmatisation – seeing the community's rejection of them as an acceptable and normal situation. The rejection and criticism the girls and young women experienced means they tend to bear their problems alone and resulted in feelings of hopelessness. Consequently, to escape, some girls dreamed of a 'safe and beautiful' place where no-one knows their past.

Many girls and young women said that prayer helped them to deal with their problems and the church community appears to be a place where they receive encouragement and good advice that they do not see in their daily lives. In addition, programs that build their self-esteem appeared to be key to girls' and young women's reintegration where they no longer blame themselves for their own abuse.

Acceptance was defined by the research participants as 'having good relationships' which meant being included in community projects and respected which they connected to earning a good income. Support from peers who had been sexually exploited was closely connected to the concept of acceptance. Support from officials and NGO personal was quite practical, including extra lessons, help with school fees, counselling and income generating activities. Girls and young women also talked about acceptance and belonging as 'feeling safe' and said that they feel safe when people consider them as a family or community member – being invited to family weddings or community meetings. Although mothers provided the majority of psychological and material support, girls and young women said that support from friends, family and community enabled them to experience belonging and acceptance because they no longer had to bear their problems alone.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Child/Children	In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), in this report the term 'child' or 'children' refers to a person or persons under the age of 18
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	A child is a victim of sexual exploitation when she/he takes part in a sexual activity in exchange for something (e.g. gain or benefit, or even the promise of such) from a third party, the perpetrator, or by the child her/himself. (ECPAT International - Inter-Agency Working Group, 2016)
Recovery and Reintegration	The term 'recovery and reintegration' is widely used to describe the process following a child's exit from sexual exploitation. Reintegration is defined as the process of movement of minority groups of a society into the mainstream of the society. The action or process of integrating someone back into society. (Oxford English Dictionary). The process of a separated child making what is anticipated to be a permanent transition back to his or her family and community (usually of origin), in order to receive protection and care and to find a sense of belonging and purpose in all spheres of life. (Guidelines on Children's Reintegration, 2016) https://riselearningnetwork.org/resource/introducing-the-guidelines-on-childrens-reintegration/
Stigma	A mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person (Oxford English Dictionary).
Discrimination	The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people (Oxford English Dictionary).

RESEARCH METHODS

Participatory research methods are a relatively new concept, promoted in research on and with children as a tool to explain the culture of childhood and children's social relationships[4]. Participatory research involves a degree of collaboration between those who are normally solely the 'subjects' of research and those undertaking research. Participatory research is defined as research where the people whose lives are being studied are involved in collecting and analysing the data[5].

Research Team

The research team was composed of two adult researchers and four youth researchers. Their respective roles were distinct but complementary and changed according to the stage of research.

In this research project, adult researchers were mainly staff from the ECPAT France team in Madagascar. Youth Researchers were similar to the sample group in that they had experienced sexual exploitation and had been through a reintegration program – many of the youth researchers were former beneficiaries of the NGO running the research.

Youth Researchers were involved in all stages of the research project: identifying and refining the "themes" for the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), co-facilitating all themed FGDs and undertaking 'sense-checking' of initial analysis. They will also be involved in dissemination activities.

Adult researchers	Youth researchers
DATA COLLECTION	
▪ Attend research training on data collection ▪ Plan the data collection: review FGD themes, key-questions and facilitation plans for FGDs ▪ Organize consent meetings with research participants and parents ▪ Co-facilitate FGD sessions ▪ Responsible for child protection ▪ Organize de-briefing session after each FGD ▪ Responsible for documentation of FGDs	▪ Attend research training on data collection ▪ Refine themes for FGDs ▪ Co-facilitate FGD sessions ▪ Deliver participatory energizers, icebreakers etc. during FGDs
DATA ANALYSIS	
▪ Make transcriptions of all the FGDs ▪ Undertake level 1 and 2 analysis: coding and categorization of data ▪ Develop key findings (level 3 analysis) ▪ Facilitate workshop with youth researchers to 'sense-check' key-findings and develop recommendations	▪ Validate level 1 and 2 analysis: coding and categories ▪ Undertake 'sense-checking' of key-findings

[4] (Prout & James, 1997), (Mayall, 2004)
[5] (Beazley & Ennew, 2006)

▪ Research Participants and Sampling

The research made use of purposive sampling[6] where researchers actively selected the most productive sample to answer the research questions, utilizing a criterion sampling system[7].

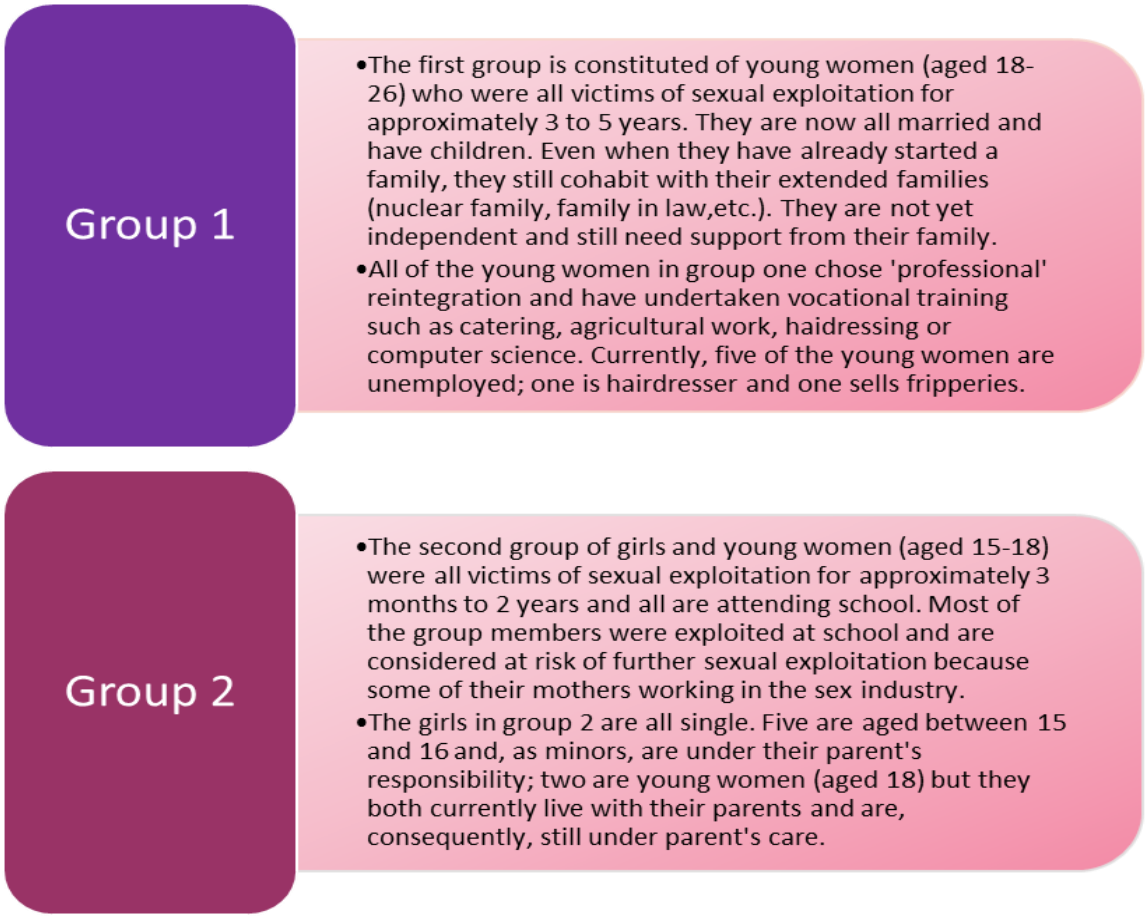
The main criteria for children and young people in the sample were:

- they have experienced sexual abuse or exploitation
- they are former or current beneficiaries of ECPAT's reintegration program
- they are aged between 15 and 26 years old
- they voluntarily consent and agree to take part in the study
- they are female

The different steps of identification were:

- Consultation of the database of beneficiaries of ECPAT France since 2009
- Selection of participants
- Home visit of potential participants
- Consent meetings with potential participants

Risk assessments were made for all research participants during the process of selection and resulted in the following sample of a total of **14 girls and young women**, seven participants in each group:



[6] (Marshall, 1996)
[7] (Given, 2008)

- **Research Sites**

For Madagascar, the research was conducted in a single location, which is the capital, Antananarivo. Antananarivo has a cosmopolitan population and hosts a large number of the Malagasy population, most of whom are young. In addition, there are contrasts and inequalities from the economic and social point of view because there are certainly areas qualified as "low" neighbourhoods where disadvantaged families are concentrated and where most beneficiaries of ECPAT France participating in this research reside (80% of participants). These places are characterized by large families, a high rate of out-of-school children and poverty.

Data Collection Methods

- **Research Questions**

There were two research questions for the study:

- **How do children and young people (who have been sexually exploited) experience reintegration in the community?**
- **What are the key issues that reintegration services need to consider when enabling the reintegration of children (who have experienced sexual exploitation) into communities?**

- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)**

Focus group discussions are known to be useful for exploring information about which people have a common understanding. For this study, the key common denominators were that all the research participants had been beneficiaries of a reintegration program (after having experienced sexual abuse or exploitation), were of the same sex (female) and were aged between 15 and 26 years old.

In total, four FGDs were held with seven girls and young women in each of the two discussion groups.

Each focus group discussion lasted approximately two hours and was held in Antananarivo at the ECPAT France office. All FGDs were digitally recorded and facilitated by a youth researcher and an adult researcher with another adult researcher acting as note taker for the discussion.

The first FGD was a 'getting to know you' discussion to create trust and understanding between research participants and researchers as well as provide background data on the research participants (their stories of reintegration). The three subsequent FGDs focused on different themes of reintegration; these themes were identified by youth researchers during training on data collection in May 2018 and were as follows:

Safety and support | **Stigma and discrimination** | **Acceptance**

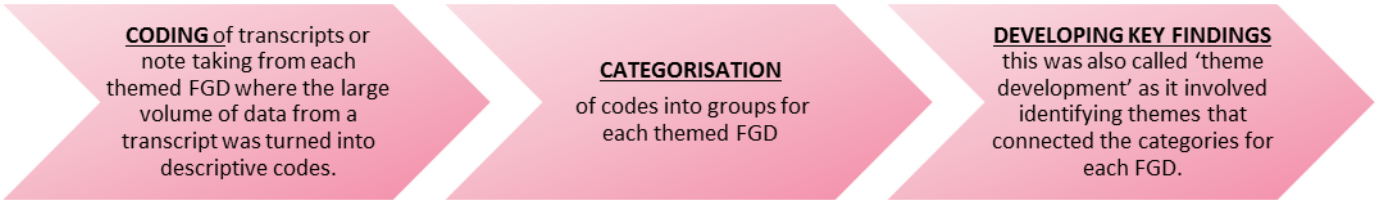
In addition, a workshop was organised with research participants on 'Recommendations for Practice' where research participants developed recommendations on how to improve services for other reintegrated children and young people.

- **Using Creative Tools**

Working with children requires methods that facilitate trust and an atmosphere where children feel relaxed and comfortable. In this research, creative and participatory techniques, such as drawing, dance and movement were used in data collection and in workshops to identify recommendations with research participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was undertaken in three stages for the themed FGDs. Consequently, analysis of each FGD was undertaken separately:



Coding, categorisation and development of initial key findings were undertaken by adult researchers. Youth researchers were involved in analysis through a specific workshop where adult researchers presented the initial analysis (codes, categories and any themes or key findings that were emerging from the data) and youth researchers undertook 'sense-checking' of initial findings whereby they reviewed the findings with adult researchers to check on the meanings of key concepts, phrases or words in the specific context of their peers (children and young people who are reintegrated after sexual exploitation).

Testing

As part of a process of adapting the tools, the research team proceeded to test the data collection tools, in particular the FGD facilitation plan. For reasons of practicability, it was not possible to pre-test the tool with the youth who have exactly the same profile as the participants. However, an in-house workshop was organized to test the data collection methods and the facilitation plan was adapted based on feedback from the team, paying particular attention to the Malagasy context and to feedback from the young researchers who have a similar profile to the research participants.

Limitations

Training of youth researchers was undertaken who co-facilitated three FGDs with research participants from another site, Majunga (a city on the northwest coast of Madagascar, known for its sex tourism industry) but, unfortunately due to a break-in at the office in Majunga, the computer holding the data from these FGDs was stolen and the data was lost. It should be noted that, according to the ethical guidelines for this project, the data was kept in locked files so would not be accessible. This second research site is, therefore, not included in the research report.

The small sample group for this research (14) is not representative of children reintegrated after sexual exploitation in Madagascar.

Ethics

Research ethics are concerned with respecting research participants throughout the project, partly by using agreed standards. Ethics standards are also designed to protect researchers and their institutions as well as the good name of research[8]. The ethics strategy for this study detailed the ethical issues that the research team were expecting to face during the course of the research project, outlining the key ethical issues and the research team's agreed response. Training on research ethics was undertaken in May 2018 with researchers and included some testing of the ethical tools. Consequently, some new tools were developed (such as a Code of Conduct for researchers) and the ethical strategy and tools were adapted accordingly. The ethics strategy was used systematically throughout the study – particularly in data collection where a trained counsellor was on-hand should children want support.

Please note that, accordingly, all names of research participants in this report have been anonymised by use of pseudonyms.

[8] (Alderson & Morrow, 2011)

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Statistically, Madagascar does not have official data on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) as well as children in care in this domain. Despite that, ECPAT France in Madagascar has already led research about online sexual exploitation in 2016, which explored how the youth use the internet and how abusers approach young people. In Madagascar, CSE takes various forms, which differ between the capital and the coastal regions. In the capital, CSE takes place by the side of roads or public places, in bars, discotheques or nightclubs, and in the massage rooms; some children are exploited by older men known as “sugar daddies”. In many of the coastal towns, the major form of CSE is sexual tourism as Madagascar is very popular with tourists.

Faced with this situation, various local and international organizations such as NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) are joining forces in the fight against the sexual exploitation of children. For example, "VONJY" centre (meaning "rescue" or "refuge") which is based in Antananarivo and in Toamasina offers boys and girls who are victims of child sexual exploitation care, free of charge, in a single place which includes medical care by doctors; psychosocial care by social workers and judicial support by the officers of the judicial police. ECPAT France is also working in Madagascar. ECPAT is an international network fighting child sexual exploitation. ECPAT works with other NGOs in Madagascar for the reintegration of victims such as Manda and ManaoDe, which take care of street children, SOS Village d’Enfants, and Tsinjo (Yamuna). Apart from ECPAT, there are also some associations and community workers in the villages that act in several areas including raising awareness to fight CSE and providing information to the youth about the dangers of CSE.

In the context of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children, legal dispositions and political documents have been elaborated by the Madagascar Government. At the international level, Madagascar ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on 19 March 1991. With respect to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Child (ACRWC), Madagascar submitted its Initial Report on the application of this Charter in 2014. This was followed by the Alternate Report for the African Committee of Experts on Human Rights and Child Welfare by Malagasy Civil Society Organizations in September 2014. Article 27 outlines the protections for children against sexual exploitation, and stipulates that "States Parties to the Charter undertake to protect the child against any form of exploitation or sexual abuse".

Concerning national texts, Madagascar had its Constitution adopted on December 11th 2010: in its preamble, it declares "endorsing the Conventions on the Rights of the Child ...” meaning that these conventions are integrated in the formulation of Malagasy law and are applicable to Madagascar. Article 137 of the Constitution recognizes the primacy of ratified international instruments over national laws in stating that “[t]reaties or agreements regularly ratified or approved have their publication an authority superior to that of the laws ...’’

Madagascar has four national laws on children’s rights and the sexual exploitation of children that include combatting cybercrime and children in conflict with the law and provisions within the Penal Code to combat trafficking in human beings and sexual tourism.

KEY FINDINGS

Key findings consist of identifying the main conclusions for each focus group discussion according to the various questions addressed during the discussion. Please note that all names of research participants have been changed to pseudonyms in this report. For this research, we have identified three key findings, which are developed successively.

Experiences of stigma and discrimination

- **Stigma and discrimination from friends and community**

Girls and young women in the research reported that they were stigmatised and labelled as 'prostitutes' by community members and friends (neighbours) who then discriminated against them by rejecting them and talking about them behind their back:

> *"People in our neighbourhood like to meddle in my life and I do not like that thing. After, they gossip with their friends" Tanjona, 25 years old, married with a child.*

Neighbours gossip about them; they do not allow them to participate in community activities as they perceive the girls and young women as 'prostitutes' or 'delinquents':

> *"Community is sometimes hypocrites. If you are unemployed, they gossip you; if you have occupation, they approach you" Sahala, 25 years old, married with a child*.
>
> *"About community's trust, they never trust you even if you are already changed" Tanjona, 25 years old, married with a child.*

Friends stigmatize them by giving them stigmatized names: those names always come back when there are small conflicts between them. Chantal, 18 years old and married with a child reports that her friends say *"You're just a bum, a prostitute, a crab"*; likewise, 25-year-old Tanjona says the following:

> *"No one trusts you even if you have already changed because they always find your dark part. Stereotypes spread around the community and it emphasizes the discrimination made by society. For example, when we are going here for this research, along the way, people stare at us and have afterthoughts about us. It means that stigma and discrimination are always present everywhere we go."*

Tanjona goes on to explain how the stigma she experiences from being sexually exploited translates as 'dishonour' and a 'lack of dignity' and how, sadly, she is then discriminated by her family, community and even her husband who rejects and isolates her:

> *"I was victim of discrimination made by family (my parents, my siblings and the extended family). If they organize an event, they do not inform me ever because I dishonour the family. If there is a family meeting, I am scolded in front of everyone. It is always like that… Family members try to hide me because I dishonour them. So, I decided to live my own life and to let life goes on but it increases my problems. Everyone ignores me; I do not know where to live because my family rejects me. Consequently, I date with a delinquent [now her husband] because what I have in mind is to find where I can live and to find how I can get some food. Unfortunately, my husband rejects me too because he knows from society that I am victim of child sexual exploitation. So, I do not have my dignity nor in my family or in the community."*

Many of the girls and young women stated that they are victims of discrimination from their families because parents are ashamed of the girls' sexual experience, which they see simply as 'bad behaviour' rather than exploitation. In turn, parents are discriminated by the community who see the girls 'bad behaviour' and think that the parents do not educate their children properly and that is the reason why their children became deviant. As a Malagasy proverb says: *"Zaza ratsy taizan'izay Ray aman-dreniny mihitsy"* translated literally "Children poorly educated by their parents."

Girls and young women said that their parents often do not trust them or their motivation to move on with their lives as, Victoria, 15 years old explains:

> *"I was victim of discrimination made by father. He does not accept that I join ECPAT because he thinks that if I go to ECPAT, there is a special motivation and not really the activities. He said that I follow one boy here and that is why I go here every time when I do not go to school"* *Victoria, 15 years old, 7th class.*

Girls and young women reported that only the children who are the community leaders' relatives benefit from income generating activities if opportunities are offered to children. According to research participants, this form of discrimination has bad repercussions on their reintegration because due to their vulnerability and their negative reputation in society, they are seen as 'bad people'. Hence, they and their families are sometimes considered perpetrators of crimes or offenses within the society.

In addition, girls and young women, in our discussions, said that some community leaders ignored their needs while at the same time discriminating against them, in one case, flirting with them instead of helping them.

- **Self-stigma**

Young women and girls also reported that they stigmatized themselves, especially the young women who are married with children. They are conscious of their perceived faults (disobedience to parents, alcoholism, drug taking, gambling, etc.) and thought that because of this kind of behaviour that they have adopted, the community's rejection of them is a normal situation. They reported that they do not study well, so they failed their exams; they do not focus on their future and do not trust God's mercy because they have already done bad things and do not deserve it:

> *"It's a normal situation if I'm rejected by the community because I did something wrong and I do not have any value"* *Viviane, 20 years old, married with a child*.

Girls and young women have also spoken about the effects of stigma and discrimination on their lives.

- **Negative effects of discrimination**

The discrimination experienced by young women who were married, particularly from their parents and husbands, had a negative effect on their lives, creating hopelessness and pushing them back into risky behaviour:

> *"I love lottery because I have no activity to do. I go to the bar, I sell sex there because I can find many customers in that place and I can have more income to satisfy my needs (food, clothes…). When I and my husband were separated, I joined the bar to have fun, to forget my worries and to make money"* *Tanjona, 25 years old, married with a child*.

Participants who are already married with children said they needed more support because only their family members accept and understand them. Most of the time, they bear alone their problems because their married life is not stable and their husbands are not aware of their responsibilities as fathers.

Consequently, the young women have to resolve their problems themselves and as a solution they approach NGOs like ECPAT France in Madagascar. As mothers, they feel a responsibility to take care of their children and make an effort to search for money.

- **Positive effects of discrimination**

On the contrary, girls and young women who were studying said that their experience of stigma and discrimination had a positive effect on their lives. Despite the discrimination they face, they think about their life ambitions, which pushes them to work harder in their alternative income generating activities such as becoming a food seller, seller of clothing or hairdresser. Their mentality and behaviour changed as they preferred to have an independent life:

> *"Despite the discrimination I had, I try to live my life, not to depend on anyone" Princia, 16 years old, 4th class.*

In addition, they looked for some persuasive strategies to fight against stigma and discrimination: they convinced people to host them because they are able to do good things and they have talents too.

Although the main cause of stigma and discrimination is the girls' and young women's experience of sexual exploitation, they also experience wider forms of stigma and discrimination based on their low economic situation, based on their parent's status (as separated parents), based on their level of education or based on social status (as orphans).

Since the majority of research participants came from underprivileged families, their families are almost all victims of discrimination by extended family members based on their standard of living:

> *"My father's family does not love me anymore because we are poor and my father is already dead" Princia, 16 years old, 4th class.*

Experiences of acceptance and belonging

Having good relationships is the main sign of belonging and acceptance according to the girls and young women in our discussions. And, building a good relationship requires the efforts of themselves and the social workers.

Acceptance was defined by the research participants as "having good relationships", which includes the following notions:

- **Being included/belonging to the group**

Girls and young women reported that if people talk to them and listen to them, it means that they belong to the group, that they have their place and that they want the relationship to be maintained:

> *"Sometimes, people do not listen to you or do not look at you anymore. It hurts! But when they consider you, they give you importance, you feel accepted" Onja, 20 years old, married with a child.*

According to the girls and young women if people do not allow them to take part in some activities, it means that they do not trust them, that they are not belonging to the group:

> *"Taking part in different activities is really a sign of acceptance and belonging because there was a moment and even until they do not trust me and they do not allow me to participate in activities like a family meeting yet this is not a big party. Everyone is invited, but me I'm not invited", Tanjona, 25 years old, married with a child*.

- **Being loved and respected**

Girls and young women reported that in a loving relationship, there is no hypocrisy; instead, there is mutual consideration and love:

> *"Me and Chantal, we are real friends. And if I say being accepted by friends, the relationship must be a relationship between sisters. No hypocrisy and help each other especially in hard times"* *Onja, 20 years old, married with a child*.

Girls and young women reported that if people give them respect, it means that they have their value and their dignity; they connect respect with earning an income:

> *"When I work, everyone respects me and comes to visit me; I feel accepted in this case"* *Sento, 26 years old, married with a child*.

- **Getting a good job**

According to the girls and young women, their reintegration depends on their efforts and, in particular finding a way of earning an income or getting a job, which will give them respect from others:

> *"I make efforts to integrate myself into the community. I work hard and look for money so that I become like others"* *Mijoro, 23 years old, married with a child.*

- **Acceptance and belonging to a church community**

In the research in Madagascar, we noticed a special importance given to prayers and the church community. Girls and young women in both groups said that prayer helps them to deal with life problems such as discrimination, financial problems and stigma:

> *"During the discrimination that I have encountered, I did not behave badly. I put my life in God's hands because I am Christian"* *Sento, 26 years old, divorced with a child.*

As all the research participants were Christians, they appeared to have a strong belief in God. All participants mentioned that they went to the church at least once a week, with one girl mentioning that she goes there every day. They pray and participate in all the cultural and religious activities and this allows them to build relationships with others, to increase their trust in God and to show everyone that they have changed their lives. The girls and young women stated that only God controls everything. He can change and even judge impossible cases. He does miracles, therefore, with God in their lives, there is no discouragement; He can do things greater than they ask for:

> *"I strongly believe in God and His miracle"* *Sento, 26 years old, divorced with children.*

Prayer and a connection to the church community appears to help the reintegrated girls in this study to reach their goals, to have a positive attitude and improve their status. They also said that although their neighbourhood is usually dangerous, in the temple of God, they feel safe and receive a good education, encouragement, and good advice that they did not have in their daily lives. They are convinced that religion does not influence young people to do bad things and many things in the world are beyond their control:

> *"I choose Temple of God as safe place because there is nothing bad there. People who are there are very welcoming, they do not do discrimination; they allow me to participate in all activities. They gave me advice"* *Irinah, 18 years old, in senior high school.*

- **Belonging through helping each other and doing common activities**

Girls and young women said they feel safe if people consider them as a family and community member and if they can participate in community activities. Family events include weddings, funerals and family meetings:

> "We visit our family when there is a party or funerals; we like each other" *Saholy, 16 years old, 1st class.*

Doing common activities helped children to feel that they are not rejected and they are among the community's members. With neighbours, they have cleaning and social actions:

> "Social action, if there is funeral or if someone got sickness. Also, I do cleaning with them" *Mijoro, 23 years old, married with a child.*

With friends, they study together, make jokes, walk around together, look for a job and take pictures together:

> *"I have two friends (girl and boy). We write poems, we send messages (we talk with friends and the big family via message, we wonder about news, how they are doing), no conflicts" Princia, 16 years old, 4th class.*

Helping each other facilitates children to experience safety because they do not bear alone their problems. They received many kinds of supports from different groups of people. For example, if some people are getting sick or hospitalized, their neighbours have to help them according to their needs. They received advice and encouragement from neighbours and friends; they got financial, psychological and material support from family.

Experiences of support and protection strategies

Reintegrated girls experienced support from community leaders, teachers, family and NGOs that enabled them to feel safe. In addition, girls made personal efforts to have a peaceful life; as strategies, they protected themselves and avoided going to dangerous places in the community.

- **Support from community leaders**

Half of the research participants reported being treated well by community leaders who they identified as elected officials and the police (usually men, aged between 40 and 60 years old). The girls and young women defined 'being treated well' as officials supporting them in their personal development and their reintegration, allowing them to participate in community projects such as a vaccination programs and health awareness campaigns. As girls and young women are from disadvantaged families, community leaders gave them the opportunity to participate in state-sponsored income activities such as cleaning up the canals. Community leaders also facilitated birth registration for their children or other official documents the young women needed. Young women who are married with children of their own found that the official papers really helped them to complete the administrative processes required for work or marriage. They do not have to go back and forth to get those documents:

> *"If I have to prepare administrative paper, I just go to the office, stand in line and wait for my turn. I finish it once, no need to come back" Chantal, 18 years old, married with a child.*

A minority of participants reported that community leaders are not so supportive when they cannot see a direct interest for them or their community.

- **Support from family**

According to the discussions we had with them, girls received more support from their families, rather than within the community: nearly two thirds of girls got advice from their families because family members are emotionally closer to them than neighbours. Girls reported that nuclear family members such as parents or siblings are more supportive than extended family members as they do not reject them even if they make mistakes. When asked about who accepts them most, 15-year-old *Mahatony e*xplains her answer:

> *"I choose my mum because she always loves me even if I do something bad. She gives me advice and never scolds or rejects me."*

- **Support from peers**

Young women who are already married expressed that they are not able to develop friendships or intimate relationships with others. They stated that only those who have been sexually exploited can understand them. They reported that there is a strong bond between themselves and their friends who have been sexually exploited due to their shared experience of exploitation and marginalization and because of having similar living arrangements:

> *"I do not develop a friendship with other people except those who have the same case as me because they listen to me and understand me" Tanjona, 25 years old, married with a child.*

> "*The psychological support that my friends give me relieves my suffering and allows me to say that I am not rejected by them, that I belong to their group, that I am not different" Viviane, 20 years old, married with a child.*

The girls reported that they told each other their secrets and did not trust others. This type of treatment makes it difficult for reintegration because girls and young women do not trust people anymore.

- **Support from teachers**

Research participants, who are attending school, reported that teachers help them to solve their problems at school, including lack of school fees and school supplies. Some teachers continue to teach girls even when they have not paid their school fees and give lessons to them if needed:

> *"Yes, I like our teacher of life and earth science, a gentleman, he teaches well. Sometimes if I cannot attend class, he gives me lesson and try to explain what I missed" Saholy, 16 years old, 1st year of high school.*

This kind of support facilitates the reintegration of children into school because, in principle, students who do not pay the fees at the right time should leave school, but thanks to the teachers' extra support, they can continue their studies in spite of this problem. As the girls are often discriminated at school, teachers can play the role of peacemaker to avoid it:

> *"I speak to my teacher if I argue with my classmates and it is her responsibility to build peace" Victoria, 15 years old, 7th class.*

Girls reported that teachers explain the lesson in detail so they can understand like the other pupils because, in general, reintegrated children have low levels of education. Also, teachers, as educators, remind parents of their responsibility to their children:

> *"If I have problem at school, I go to the office and talk to the supervisor, for example about the school-fees; they summon my parents and seek solutions together" Irinah, 18 years old, in senior high school.*

- **Support from social workers**

The girls and young women said that social workers helped them to improve their lives: they changed their behaviour through education, counselling and training provided by social workers. Research participants reported that, as a result, family members trust that their daughters have really changed because they have income-generating activities or are busy with a training program. Before, family members were ashamed of the girls and young women but thanks to this process, their success is a pride for the family. As a result, the girls and young women have their dignity and value. Family and community members give them respect.

Social workers give advice and affection as *Tanjona* explains when asked to choose a person who accepts her most:

> *"I choose our educator as accepting person because she is very welcome and gives me affection; she can replace my mother. When I talked something to her, I cried but she is very empathic and she feels what I bear. She became very close to me. The things that I never got from my mum, she gives it to me. And when I had problems, I always come to her."*

Protection strategies

- **Building self-worth**

Girls and young women, who were attending school, participated in programs to build their self-esteem and reported feelings of self-love and self-worth so that they do not blame themselves for being sexually exploited and for having no dignity:

> "*Thanks to the program on self-esteem, I know my personality and I know others. I can develop relationship with them" Saholy, 16 years old, 1st year in high school.*

Consequently, they know themselves better, in particular their qualities and capacities, and can develop their talents. They can develop stronger friendships and are able to give advice to their friends. They develop goals for their lives and adopt a positive attitude that enables them to reach their goals (for example, to get a diploma). They are able to manage their feelings, find solutions to their problems themselves and are able to keep self-control even during complex situations:

> *"Thanks to the self-esteem program, I can master my feelings" Princia, 16 years old, 4th class.*

- **Avoidance**

Girls and young women from both groups said they adopted strategies to protect themselves. They avoid going to places that can be dangerous for them or young people in general (in the corridors, bars, railways, ghettos, undergrowth, public places, secret places where people cultivate drugs, etc.). In these places, there is a lot of abuse and delinquency and many of the persons who are there are boys or young men who, they report, emotionally, sexually and physically abuse girls by kissing them or touching the intimate parts of their bodies. In addition, girls and young women avoid going to these places because if they go, the police can accuse them of doing something wrong and finally arrest them; they are treated as badly as their aggressors. Most of the research participants underline that if they go to these 'bad' places, they will be influenced by someone's bad behaviour.

- **Finding a safe place to have a peaceful life**

To have a peaceful life, far from discrimination and stigma, girls and young women sought a safe and beautiful place to relieve their suffering from discrimination and stigma. They think that there is no discrimination and stigma in this place because no one there knows their past or history, so there is less risk of being stigmatized:

> *"I choose Majunga as safe place because the people who are there are very welcoming and do not discriminate. They do not know anything about me: my past and all of my life. They taught me a lot of things because I went there for work. I did not feel marginalized anymore. Everyone is kind and helps me to progress in life. Not like what I saw here in Tana [Antananarivo]"* *Tanjona, 25 years old, married with a child.*

CONCLUSION

Girls and young women explained that they are stigmatised by their experience of sexual abuse and exploitation by being labelled as prostitutes and delinquents - their families translated these labels as 'dishonour' and a 'lack of dignity'. Consequently, many of the girls and young women reported that their parents seemed to be ashamed of them, and saw their experience of being a victim of sexual abuse simply as 'bad behaviour'.

In some situations, girls and young women said they experienced wider forms of stigma and discrimination based on their economic situation, their parent's status (as separated), their level of education or their status as an 'orphan' - which may be connected with the fact that many of the girls have been rejected by their family. In addition, young women who are married with children were particularly prone to self-stigmatisation – seeing the community's rejection of them as an acceptable and normal situation.

The rejection and criticism the girls and young women experienced means they tended to bear their problems alone and resulted in feelings of hopelessness and, in some cases, pushed them back into risky behaviour. Alternatively, to escape, some girls dreamt of a 'safe and beautiful' place where no-one knows their past. Many girls and young women said that prayer helped them to deal with their problems and church communities made the girls and young women feel safe. The church community was a place where they felt they receive encouragement and good advice that they did not see in their daily lives.

In addition, programs that build their self-esteem appear to be key to girls' and young women's reintegration where they report that through feelings of self-love and self-worth they no longer blame themselves for their own abuse. For some girls and young women, their experience of discrimination galvanised them to be more ambitious, pushing them to work harder in their income generating activities.

Acceptance was defined by the research participants as "having good relationships" which meant being included, being loved (by peers) and being respected, which they connected to earning a good income. Having good relationships also appeared to be connected to the support received by the girls and young women from community leaders that enabled them to participate in community projects such as a vaccination programs, health awareness campaigns or income generating community activities. Support from peers who had been sexually exploited was closely connected to the concept of acceptance as the girls and young women talked about this group as the only ones who could understand them.

Support from officials and NGO personnel was quite practical. It included teachers giving extra time or lessons to the girls who had fallen behind in their studies or continuing to teach them even when they had not paid their school fees. Social workers helped them to improve their lives and change their behaviour, offering counselling and training on income generation activities. And also, community leaders, such as elected officials and police, facilitated birth registration for their children or other official documents the young women needed.

Girls and young women also talked about acceptance and belonging as 'feeling safe' and said that they feel safe if people consider them as a family or community member. This appeared to be achieved when girls and young women took part in community activities such as cleaning or social action campaigns, neighbours would start to give them advice and encouragement. With family, the girls and young women explained that they felt accepted when they were invited to family weddings, funerals or meetings and that it was family, parents and siblings in general, but particularly mothers, who provide the majority of psychological and material support. Girls and young women said that this support – from friends, family and community enabled them to experience 'safety' (and acceptance) because they did not bear their problems alone.

CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

A workshop with research participants identified a number of challenges that need to be overcome to improve and facilitate children's reintegration. Recommendations have been formulated for each stakeholder according to the challenges mentioned by the participants. It should be noted that during the recommendations workshop, we also tried to identify what actions should be taken for each challenge.

CHALLENGE 1 Problems at school: lack of school fees, school supplies and discrimination at school

Reintegration programs, in collaboration with parents, should include regular payment of school fees and provide school supplies to reintegrated children.

Reintegration programs should include provision of dietary supplements to fight against undernourishment, particularly for children or youth in vocational training.

Reintegration providers should intervene, talking to teachers and school directors, to fight against discriminatory practice at school.

Reintegration services should mobilize community leaders in order that they run sensitization programs with parents of reintegrated children to reinforce the importance of sending their children to school.

CHALLENGE 2 Lack of support from family regarding stigma and discrimination

Reintegration practitioners should make home visits to inform the victims' families about their rights and dignity and how to avoid discrimination, and also to explain how the reintegration program works, in particular how families can support children with their education.

Reintegration practitioners should run workshops on education and parenthood for parents.

CHALLENGE 3 Behavioural challenges faced by victims of child sexual exploitation

Reintegration practitioners should give psychological support to the victims of child sexual exploitation.

Reintegration practitioners should provide for children's care by giving advice, encouraging them, giving affection and trusting them, listening to them, giving them responsibility and letting them participate in all relevant activities.

Reintegration practitioners should supervise children in their daily activities and conduct follow-ups after reintegration (home visit, etc.).

Reintegration programs should include moral education, self-esteem programs, and life skills programs to help victims to build good relationships between themselves, educators, and others.

State parties should help reintegration practitioners by introducing/enforcing standards of reintegration practice for child sexual exploitation victims.

Reintegration practitioners should organize multidisciplinary meetings in order to discuss about cases and provide adequate services.

CHALLENGE 4

Stereotypes, social prejudgment lead to social mistrust, stigma and discrimination from communities and self-stigma

Sensitization programs and campaigns (Radio or TV) should be organized at school and in communities to fight against discrimination and stigma of victims of child sexual abuse. Those programs should inform community leaders and the general population about child sexual exploitation and change their perceptions about it.

Reintegration practitioners should encourage child victims to be involved in reintegration programs by participating in events on sensitization and sharing their own experiences with their peers, through creative and adapted tools (dance, testimonies, etc).

Reintegration practitioners should advise victims not to focus on their past but to think about their future, not to self-stigmatize because they have already received support and education, and to follow self-esteem programs in order to be able to formulate and pursue new goals in their lives.

CHALLENGE 5

Difficulties in finding a job

Reintegration practitioners should orient children in order that they can choose a project suitable for them, and been accompanied during their training. Practitioners should have regular supervision with children and young people on vocational training courses to follow up their training evolution, their needs, and all the problems they can face.

Reintegration practitioners should also help the youth to look for a safe and good place to set up their business or find a job. They should help children and young people to sign a contract, according to the social law and underline the importance of respecting confidentiality of the child's story with employers (to avoid stigma and discrimination and prejudgment and emphasize equal treatment of all workers).

Reintegration practitioners should propose income generating activities to reintegrated children: give them funds to set up a business because most of them did not participate in school reintegration but rather professional reintegration.

Reintegration practitioners should supervise children in their income generating activities for three years after the projects are set up, keep in contact with the young people and define respective engagements (for example contracts with employers/clients). Practitioners should follow-up on funding or materials provided in order to check their utilization; they can also provide budget management trainings. Micro-credit projects could be a really good opportunity for the youth.

Reintegration practitioners should follow up, once the youth is in a job or a business, and they should help them financially for the first three months.

Reintegration practitioners should train the staff members at the place of work of reintegrated children and young people about discrimination and stigma; Training could also include children's rights/human dignity/ laws about child labour - reserve 2 hours per month during the period of the children's training. The training workshop should be facilitated by the director of the company and the ECPAT team.

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