



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



## *Support, Safety and Acceptance*

# **CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF REINTEGRATION IN UGANDA: HOW GIRLS AND BOYS EXPERIENCE REINTEGRATION AFTER SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.**

March 2019

**Doreen Nassiwa - Research Coordinator and Author**

This research in Uganda was co-financed by



# CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	3
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	4
SUMMARY .....	5
GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND TERMS .....	6
RESEARCH METHODS.....	7
Research Team.....	7
Data Collection Methods.....	9
Data Analysis Methods.....	10
Ethics.....	10
COUNTRY CONTEXT .....	11
KEY FINDINGS .....	11
Experiences of Stigma and Discrimination .....	12
Support, Safety and Acceptance.....	14
CONCLUSION .....	16
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE YOUTH PARTICIPANTS .....	18
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	20

# FOREWORD

The research is part of a wider project, the RISE Learning Network,<sup>1</sup> 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). RISE is a project implemented by Family for Every Child, a global alliance of national civil society organisations working to improve the care and protection of children, Retrak, an international NGO working with street-connected children, and the International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking, University of Bedfordshire (supporting the project in an advisory role), supported by Oak Foundation and Terre des Hommes Netherlands.

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 learning project coordinated 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 partnership with UYDEL<sup>2</sup> in Uganda, 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 France is part of the ECPAT international network<sup>3</sup>, which has 109 associations in 96 countries, fighting against Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). ECPAT France<sup>4</sup> is taking action against CSE in France, and more than ten countries in Africa. In Uganda, ECPAT France has been collaborating with UYDEL to develop activities on prevention, protection and advocacy since 2008.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://riselearningnetwork.org/about/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.uydel.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ecpat.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://ecpat-france.fr/en/home/>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On behalf of the research study team, the management of Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL) would wish to thank warmly all of those who together or separately contributed to the study. It has not been easy to do justice to the wealth of information, commentary, insight and analyses provided by all concerned in such a short time of the study. The study team greatly benefited from the experiences, technical knowledge and leadership of different stakeholders who worked hard to make this study a reality. UYDEL owes a debt of gratitude to all who actively participated in various ways in the planning processes, data collection, data analysis and report writing. It may therefore seem unfair to single anyone out for special mention, as we are deeply indebted to all of them for their constant help and support, which enabled the team to complete the study. However, the following must be mentioned, as they seemed to materialize and smooth the way at each important stage and time.

We would like to convey our sincere thanks to all those that have made the compilation of this consultation report a success. Our thanks go to Mr. Rogers Kasirye the Executive Director of Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL) for his technical assistance.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the ECPAT France team: Ms. Audrey Rochette, Ms. Emilie Vallat, Ms. Chloé Bauray and Ms. Guillemette Vuillard for funding this RISE learning project and the continuous support they provided during the research.

We are also grateful to Ms. Helen Veitch for editorial support and Ms. Jade Tachie-Menson and Ms. Lopa Bhattacharjee of the RISE Learning Network and Family for Every Child for designing the guide, conducting the virtual learning course in the guidelines and providing technical and financial support to the UYDEL consultation team.

We are grateful to the UYDEL consultation team: Ms. Anna Nabulya, the Consultation Coordinator; Ms. Doreen Nassiwa, Research Coordinator; Mr. Moses Kinobi and Ms. Jennifer Akot, Adult Researchers; Youth Researchers, Asraf Nsubuga, Shalom Gyaviira, Nakajubi Justine, Namujju Harriet, and Mugala Jaliat; and Protection Coordinator, Diana Namwanje.

# 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 young people 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.

The 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 for them and feelings of hopelessness. However, thanks to the support of all, especially the support of NGOs like UYDEL, some of them have not given up and have ambition in their lives.

The research explored two main questions:

- ❖ 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 **26 children and young people** who took part in three focus group discussions of 2-3 hours over the course of six weeks.

The key findings identified two themes. In the first theme, the young women and men explore their experiences of **stigma and discrimination**, talking about stigma as being labelled as badly behaved and promiscuous and describing discrimination as gossip and exclusion, which results in a lack of trust, respect and consideration between them and the others around them, causing reintegrated young people to drop out of school and their communities and many girls and young women being forced out of their jobs due to sexual harassment. Many of the young people talked about the need to prove that they were 'reformed characters' which appeared to be contingent on them being accepted by friends, family and the community, and opportunities opening up to them.

In the second theme of '**support, safety and acceptance**', these three terms were intertwined, with successful reintegration appearing to be closely linked to feeling safe, particularly for boys and young men. The concept of 'safety' was often more akin to 'acceptance' for young people. In addition, the majority of the young people mentioned that they had received support from their family members or spouses and connected the provision of support with being 'trusted', 'respected' and ultimately 'accepted'. The workplace was a particularly important environment; a number of young people mentioned that when they suffered discrimination from family, they focused on work to forget their problems and that the cooperation they experienced at work or in the community created respect, helped to build trust, and enabled them to feel 'safe', accepted and supported by those around them.

## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND TERMS

<b>Child</b>	In Uganda, constitutionally a child refers to a person below the age of 18 years.
<b>Child Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSE)</b>	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)
<b>Reintegration</b>	<p>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).</p> <p>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)</p> <p><a href="https://riselearningnetwork.org/resource/introducing-the-guidelines-on-childrens-reintegration/">https://riselearningnetwork.org/resource/introducing-the-guidelines-on-childrens-reintegration/</a></p>
<b>Reintegration (as defined by Youth Researchers)</b>	Youth researchers defined reintegration as a process of transition where young people are taken back to the community, restored, united and accepted as members of the society who are willing to change their own lives.
<b>Stigma</b>	A mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person (Oxford English Dictionary)
<b>Discrimination</b>	The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people (Oxford English Dictionary)
<b>Adult researchers (AR)</b>	In Uganda, they are researchers and employees of UYDEL who planned the data collection through reviewing and refining themes, key questions and facilitation plans for the three focus group discussions with the youth researchers and participants.
<b>Youth researchers (YR)</b>	These are a group of reintegrated young people from UYDEL who, together with the adult researchers, co-facilitated the group discussions with 8-10 young participants and also took part in ‘sense checking’ the initial findings.
<b>Research participants (YP)</b>	Research participants are young people who are victims of sexual exploitation and have already completed their reintegration process with UYDEL. Their ages are between 18 to 24 years old.
<b>Child Protection Coordinator</b>	The child protection coordinator is an employee of UYDEL; she was to connect any child protection concerns during the research project to the child protection procedures of UYDEL.
<b>UYDEL</b>	Uganda Youth Development Link
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Government Organizations

# 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 (Prout & James, 1997; Mayall, 2004). 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 analyzing the data (Beazley & Ennew, 2006).

## Research Team

The research team was composed of a research coordinator, adult researchers and youth researchers.

The Research Coordinator was Doreen Nassiwa; her role was the lead researcher and co-coordinator of the project. She is also the author of this report.

The Adult Researchers were Moses Kinobi and Jennifer Akot. They participated in data collection by co-facilitating the focus group discussions (FGDs) and undertook the role of note-taker during FGDs. In addition, Adult Researchers undertook transcriptions and analysis of the data.

The Youth Researchers were Asraf Nsubuga, Shalom Gyaviira, Nakajubi Justine, Namujju Harriet, and Mugala Jaliat who co-facilitated the FGDs and undertook sense checking of initial findings with their peers. 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 UYDEL). Youth Researchers were involved in all stages of the research project: identifying and refining the 'themes' for the FGDs, co-facilitating all themed FGDs, co-facilitating a workshop to identify recommendations from research participants and undertaking 'sense-checking' of initial analysis. They will also be involved in dissemination activities.

Research Participants: A total of **26 research participants** took part in this research aged between 18 and 25 years old, males and females. All research participants had been reintegrated for a minimum of 6 months.

### ▪ Identification of research participants and sampling

The research made use of purposive sampling (Marshall, 1996) where researchers actively selected the most productive sample to answer the research questions, utilizing a criterion sampling system (Given, 2008). 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 a reintegration program;
- they are aged between 18 and 25 years old;
- they voluntarily consent and agree to take part in the study.

UYDEL identified 3 groups of research participants, each time with the same process:

- Consultation of the UYDEL database or alumni records between 2014 and 2017;
- Definition of the target groups' criteria in terms of sex, age, and having been successfully reintegrated;
- Mobilization of participants who were taken through the risk assessment.

A total of 18 young women and 8 young men were selected. All the research participants have experience of sexual exploitation. All are former beneficiaries of UYDEL programs who have been reintegrated for a year. The participants consented voluntarily, seeking permission from employers to attend the research for the agreed days. During the day of the discussions, the youth had to re-confirm consent of their involvement in the discussion, which they all did by signing the consent forms.



#### ▪ Research sites

Research participants came from urban slum areas in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda.



## 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, and were aged between 18 and 25 years old.

From these overarching research questions, a further four sub-questions were developed for the focus group discussions.

- Getting to Know You: What are children and young people's experiences of reintegration?
- Safety and Support: How do reintegrated children and young people experience safety and support in the community?
- Stigma and Discrimination: How do reintegrated children and young people understand and experience stigma and discrimination?
- Acceptance: How do reintegrated children and young people understand and experience 'acceptance'?

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, as follows:

Safety and  
support

Stigma and  
discrimination

Acceptance

Each focus group discussion lasted approximately two hours. 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.

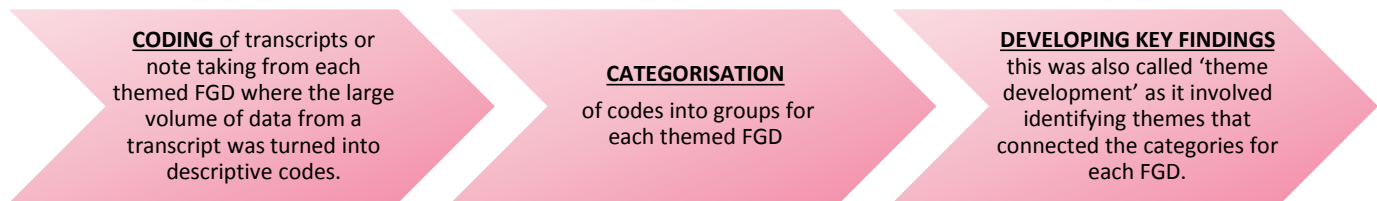
In addition, a workshop was organised with research participants on 'Recommendations for Practice' where research participants developed recommendations on how to improve services for other reintegrated children and young people.

## ▪ Using Creative Methods

Working with children requires methodologies that facilitate trust and an atmosphere where children feel relaxed and comfortable. In this research, creative and participatory techniques were used in data collection and in workshops to identify recommendations with research participants, such as group discussions, priority ranking, energizers, presentation, drawings and feedback.

## Data Analysis Methods

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).

## 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 (Alderson & Morrow, 2011). 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-June 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 young people want support.

Consent was gained from all participants at least 1-2 weeks before the FGDs. Consent was also gained from the research participants concerning the use of their information in the research report by the note taker and after each session, the note taker always checked if participants were comfortable or wanted to remove anything from the information presented.

The use of the local language (Luganda) made it easy for the participants to share information in the simplest and most comfortable way. For ethical reasons, it was decided that all the quotes from the participants in this report would be anonymized through use of pseudonyms.

## COUNTRY CONTEXT

Uganda is a landlocked country located in East Africa with a population of approximately 41.4 million people of which 22.8 million are children. Uganda currently hosts the third largest refugee population in the world, two-thirds of which are children. Displacement is one of the factors leading to children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Other circumstances associated with heightened risks for children are poverty, gender inequalities and lack of adequate education due to school drop-out and pressure to financially support the family.<sup>5</sup>

In Uganda, exploitation of children in prostitution is on the rise, especially in urban centers and fishing communities. There are also a growing number of boys engaging in prostitution in Uganda. Some children are exploited by bar owners and lodges, while others are promised work in hotels, where they end up being sold to men.

Some research on child sexual abuse online shows that Ugandan children are at risk of online child sexual exploitation and the media reports anecdotal evidence on cases.

Early marriage continues to be a problem in Uganda, especially in rural areas. These marriages involve the payment in cash or in-kind in exchange for young girls and are therefore examples of commercial sexual exploitation.

Uganda continues to be a source, transit and destination country for children subject to trafficking for sexual purposes. The risk of sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism is high, especially in light of expanding tourism in Africa and the significant proportion of travel and tourism in Uganda taking place through orphanage voluntourism programs.

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 form safe relationships in supportive communities. It can leave them stigmatized, ostracized, without support or choices and vulnerable to further exploitation. Truthfully speaking, few studies in Uganda have looked at how young people who are sexually abused experience reintegration which makes this study unusual as it goes ahead to explore experiences of reintegration among sexually exploited young people.

### ***Relevant Legislation in Uganda***

Uganda has ratified several international treaties regarding child protection, including the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, and the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. It acceded to the Optional Protocol of the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (OPSC) and has signed, but not ratified, the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in persons, especially women and Children (Trafficking Protocol). At the regional level, Uganda has ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Uganda has a robust national-level legal, policy, and research framework to address sexual exploitation of children and the key drivers of children's vulnerability. A specific National Action Plan on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation has been drafted and it is due to be finalised and approved by the end of 2019.

## KEY FINDINGS

---

<sup>5</sup> All the documentation on the country context was based on the ECPAT International report "*Country overview: A report on the scale, scope and context of the sexual exploitation of children*", April 2019

Key findings fell under two main themes, 'experiences of stigma and discrimination' which also explored the impact of stigma and discrimination and identified a need to prove changed behavior. The second theme 'support, safety and acceptance' explored the connections between these three terms, the importance of employment and of cooperation.

*Please note that all names given to research participants are pseudonyms to protect their identity.*

## Experiences of Stigma and Discrimination

During the focus group discussions with young men, they said they experienced stigma (a negative stereotype) as being labelled by community members as 'bayaye', which denotes that someone has got multiple sexual partners, goes to nightclubs, and uses alcohol and drugs. The boys and young men were, therefore, seen as 'badly behaved' and 'promiscuous' due to their previous engagement in karaoke, dancing and going to nightclubs, and having multiple sexual partners:

*"When I went back, people in the community, they stigmatized me. They said that, "he is back to spoil our children" because we had a dancing group where we could perform certain dances". (Edmond, aged 18)*

This implies that when the young men are reintegrated into their communities, the people still picture them as they were, before they were reintegrated (when they were being exploited). They do not see these boys and young men as 'victims' but as 'badly behaved'; their exploitation is seen as promiscuity.

Similarly, the majority of the young women, during the focus group discussions, revealed that they had been stigmatized by friends, relatives, step parents and employers as 'promiscuous', having multiple sexual partners - although they did not say this directly during discussions:

*"I went to the village after UYDEL program and faced criticism by people in the village because they thought that I would not succeed in life". (Martha, aged 21)*

The majority of the young women revealed that they hate others gossiping about them and people who don't maintain their confidentiality. This makes them feel insecure forcing them to want to stay alone.

*"I stay alone and I am comfortable; I don't like the fact that they talk about me, accusing me of having many men and drinking alcohol". (Carol, aged 21)*

Half the young women disclosed that they have been discriminated by their step-mothers who isolated and gossiped about them because of this stigma. For example, *"during the community local meetings at my village, I was prohibited from being a participant because they heard that I was once a sex worker and was studying in an NGO that supports sex workers."* (Martha, aged 21)

*"Since I was not her biological child, she could always gossip about me with other women in the community. She always told them that I will never change my behavior."* (Loyce, aged 19)

In addition, girls and young women talked about the suffering from stigma that was attached to the NGO which is known to work with sexual abuse victims.

*"People in the community would always say that we go to an NGO that supports commercial sex workers and said that we are among them."* (Martha, aged 21)

## ▪ **Impact of stigma and discrimination**

Young men reported that being stigmatized by the community members hurt them so much. Half of the young men in discussions reported that they were afraid of entering their homes due to the previous picture of them that is conceived by the community members. They felt they were placed in a dilemma of deciding whether to be reintegrated in their community of origin or a new community:

*“I could even fear entering home during the day due to the fear that people could see me. I would wait when all the neighbors are indoors and enter my home.”* (Luke, aged 24)

Many reintegrated young people appeared to face hardships in fitting in with their communities thus impeding their opportunities to thrive independently in their communities. Due to stigma and discrimination, reintegrated children tended to lose trust in the people around them, which prohibited them from seeking the support they need:

*“I was stigmatized and discriminated after realizing that my paternal Auntie had shared my personal information to her friends; I lost trust in me from seeking support from her.”* (Edson, aged 24)

Many young people are forced to drop out of school due to the economic hardships that exist in their homes. But in addition, many young men felt that they received a lack of respect and consideration towards them from their parents who withdrew them from school as they thought it was a waste of money to pay for their school fees:

*“I stopped school because my parents refused to give me fees and I would like to go back to school if I get a chance.”* (Michael, aged 20)

Some of the young women revealed that discrimination at the workplace, for example, in beauty salons, carpentry workshops and restaurants, was characterized by sexual harassment, where they were either offered employment in return for sexual favours or, if they were already in employment, were forced to leave because of their refusal to sleep with their boss:

*“My boss discriminated me because I refused to fall in love with him so I had to leave the job.”* (Diana, aged 23)

## ▪ **A need to prove changed behavior**

Because both boys and girls were seen as ‘bad’ or ‘immoral’ young people, promiscuous and involved in illegal activities such as drug taking (for the boys), many of the young people talked about the need to prove that they were ‘reformed characters’ to the community and that they had changed their behavior. For example, after being reintegrated they became friends with young people in the community who they felt promoted good morals. Once the community could see that the young people were reformed characters, opportunities appeared to open up for them:

*“They also saw that I was a changed man and also gave me job opportunities. They also market for my services; they wish me well which is an indicator to me that they accepted me.”* (Edson, aged 24)

Feeling accepted by family and community instigates a sense of hope and belonging among reintegrated young people:

*“My father takes me to be a reformed person to my other siblings and he treats me with respect.”* (Raymond, aged 19)

The discussions revealed that in some cases, due to their parent’s observance of a change in behavior, young women were able to go back to school:

*“I went back to school; the school is not in my community and I am pursuing a course in nursery teaching.”*  
(Sandra, aged 22).

## Support, Safety and Acceptance

The majority of young people live in slum areas which are very congested and they stated that there are many unsafe places in these areas where children are exposed to violence:

*“Bars and gyms are bad places because young men drink alcohol and get drunk, while at the gym, young men learn boxing and encourage violence.”* (Michael, aged 20)

Successful reintegration appears to be closely linked to feeling safe, particularly for boys and young men. Many of the reintegrated young men wished to be safe and were fearful of going back to the communities where their perpetrators still lived. Some had been forced out of these communities.

*“After reintegration, I thought of getting a job in another area than my village because I felt insecure to stay in that same village I used to stay.”* (William, aged 20)

The concept of ‘safety’, therefore, was often more akin to ‘acceptance’ in the way that children and young people talked about it. The majority of the research participants mentioned that sports activities made them feel ‘safe’ with friends. This indicates that during sports activities, such as football and netball, the young people are able to interact with others thus creating acceptance and friendship.

*“I always go at GOAL [an NGO] and play netball with my friends and when I am with them, I feel safe.”*  
(Peace, aged 20)

In addition, young people used ‘safety’ to describe acceptance of themselves and acceptance by others, in particular those who support them:

*“I feel safe at my workshop, whenever I open and sit. I have worked hard to achieve my job because it is where I earn; I have made friends there. I feel safe alone or with my friends and with people who support me.”* (Bernard, aged 22)

From the focus group discussions with the young men, they revealed that, initially, they did not speak to their parents or other relatives about their experiences; but, after some time, they sought advice from their parents or relatives. For example, the young men felt comfortable sharing with their fathers and this, they felt, bridged a gap between themselves and their family members:

*“At first, I would not seek for advice and help from my father; but after reintegration, I found it very easy to talk to and seek for help from my father.”* (Matthew, aged 18)

The majority of the young men and women, during the focus group discussions, mentioned that they had received support from their family members including their elder sisters and brothers and connected the provision of support with being ‘trusted’, ‘respected’ and ultimately ‘accepted’:

*“They trusted me and respected me even though I am young; my sister even supported me even when I was still at UYDEL until now.”* (Esther, aged 21)

In addition, young women connected acceptance with the support they received from their husbands because their husbands would set up businesses for them:

*“My husband at least supported me to start the business of a salon and we do everything together.”*  
(Rose, aged 23)

### ▪ **Importance of Work**

For reintegrated young people, the workplace was an important environment. Some young people ignored the stigma and discrimination they faced from their families and decided to focus on their jobs:

*“I was stigmatized and discriminated but didn’t care about that because I was focused on how to look for jobs.”* (Matthew, aged 18)

*“My stepmother stigmatized me most and this was traumatizing because she gossiped about me, so what I did was to ignore all that was said and now I am working so she is proud of me.”* (Loyce, aged 19)

Young people also mentioned that cooperation and discipline at work creates respect among friends and work colleagues and is important for client relationships at work. Additionally, they revealed that when their boss or a mentor constructively reacts to their mistakes while at the workplace, it makes them feel good thus improving their performance at the workplace:

*“I work in Kampala and that’s where the workshop is located; we are three partners and what brings us together is that we have different categories of junior and senior electricians. So, when we earn an income, we pay ourselves accordingly.”* (William, aged 20)

*“Different people like employers and those in the same field of electronics stigmatized me. I got mentors to encourage me and right now, those who criticized me look for me to repair their equipment.”*  
(Lillian, aged 21)

This means that people in the community who support children with positive thinking and encouragement do an important job for the successful reintegration of survivors of sexual exploitation. In some cases, this positive thinking and encouragement connects to a determination within the young people to work hard:

*“I endured and worked hard in order to attract customers for them also to bring others to my salon.”*  
(Angella, aged 24)

*“I work with others. Employees are hard-working; for example, we don’t quarrel, and we work together and don’t boss around.”* (Peace, aged 20)

### ▪ **Cooperation**

Cooperation with others helped to build trust among the young men and the community members, which promotes their safety and support. The young men and women mentioned that cooperation involves collaboration and being on good terms with others.

During the focus group discussion, the majority of the young women revealed that working together with other people in the community promotes safety and support. To them, being on good terms with others meant trust and being safe:

*“I work with my boss, another young woman, in the salon. We work as a team and cooperated like cleaning the place; we do it in turns.”* (Prossy, aged 19)

This implies that cooperation and working as a team at the workplace creates friendship thus promoting safety at the workplace:

*“Being disciplined and cooperation is what brings us together as community members.”* (Hendrick, aged 22)



## CONCLUSION

The key findings identified two themes. In the first theme, the young women and men explored their experiences of stigma and discrimination. They talked about stigma as being labelled as badly behaved and promiscuous and described discrimination as gossip and exclusion. In addition, they explained that they experienced discrimination because of their involvement with an NGO that is known to support sexually exploited children. The impact of stigma and discrimination appears to result in a lack of trust, respect and consideration between them and the others around them, causing young people to drop out of school, to leave their communities and not being able to ask for support. Many girls and young women experienced sexual harassment by employers, which forced them out of their workplaces. Many of the young people talked about the need to prove that they were 'reformed characters' to the community and that they had changed their behavior. Once they had proved this, they felt accepted by friends, family and the community, and opportunities, such as school attendance or paid work, appeared to open up to them.

In the second theme of 'support, safety and acceptance', these three terms were intertwined with successful reintegration appearing to be closely linked to feeling safe, particularly for boys and young men. The concept of 'safety', was often more akin to 'acceptance' in the way that young people talked about it; they used 'safety' to describe self-acceptance as well as the acceptance of others. In addition, the majority of the young men and women mentioned that they had received support from their family members (which for the young women included husbands) and connected the provision of support with being 'trusted', 'respected' and ultimately 'accepted'. The workplace was a particularly important environment, partly because many of the young men and women were working with their peers (young people on the reintegration program) whom they trusted. A number of young people mentioned that when they suffered discrimination from family members, they focused on work to forget their problems and that the cooperation and discipline they experienced at work created respect both from their employers and their clients. In addition, cooperation with community members and work colleagues helped to build trust and enabled them to feel safe, accepted and supported by those around them.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

*Workshops were held with youth participants who made the following recommendations:*

## Recommendations regarding challenges of stigma and discrimination

- The capacity of communities should be strengthened in order to protect children and enhance awareness on the special needs of children recovering from sexual exploitation and to avoid prolonged psychosocial consequences, re-victimisation and re-traumatisation.
- Youth-friendly services should be introduced at health centers. Doctors and caretakers who provide services to child sexual exploitation victims should be sensitized to avoid discriminating against the child and to respect the confidentiality of their patients.
- Parents and community leaders should be aware and sensitized on what is child sexual exploitation (effects on the children, etc.) and child rights.
- Follow-ups should be done for young people who have been reintegrated to check if they are accepted, and not treated badly in their current places, and not re-victimized.

## Recommendations regarding services provided to child sexual exploitation victims

A child victim of sexual exploitation should receive services that help them to have a successful reintegration. Governments are responsible for child protection, and some NGOs and public institutions are operating those services.

- Participants advice that we should ensure that children who have been subjected to any manifestation of sexual exploitation receive adequate services in order to fully recover and reintegrate into their communities.
- They advice to develop the capacities and resilience of children during and after humanitarian situations through, inter alia, developing peer support systems and education programs.

Youth participants provided some specific advice:

- Reintegration child care professionals should support the young people with internship placements at organizations to empower them get job opportunities within those organizations.
- Reintegration child care professionals should provide young people with materials or tools to use when studying or training and also to those who graduate after.

- Reintegration child care professionals should encourage young people to join saving groups and educate them on job creation as this will help the youth's development.
- Reintegration child care professionals should provide counselling to the youth and advice on parenthood.
- Reintegration child care professionals should encourage parents and guardians in helping their child to chose an orientation
- Hospital bills should be reduced so that people can afford it. Many young people cannot afford the fees at hospitals.
- Reintegration child care professionals need to put places or centers for youths during their free time like sports.

### Recommendations regarding prevention activities

- Child and youth participation should be facilitated, prior to, during and after humanitarian situations; this will increase the effectiveness of targeted prevention efforts and protection responses to sexual exploitation of children.
- Reintegration child care professionals should involve local council leaders in the organization of education shows for the youth so that they can learn ways of sensitization and awareness concerning child sexual exploitation.
- Education trainings or workshops for the carers/parents of the youth should be organized such that they are sensitized about child sexual exploitation.
- Parents should be advised to pay their children's school fees since this contributes to children being in school.
- Rules on bars and times for operating needs to be regulated closely because this is one of the risky behaviors that leads young people to be exploited; this applies to our Ugandan law.
- Existing laws on drinking age should be respected.

### Recommendations regarding safety and prosecution

- Cameras and lights should be put in corridors to help avoid exploitation of children. If these cameras are put up, then the offenders can be seen clearly and punished so that the number of youth exploited reduces.
- Government should ensure that national investigators are properly equipped to handle cases involving child sexual exploitation, such as prior experience with children, adequate training, and experience with crimes of a sexual nature.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alderson, P and Morrow, V (2011), *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People. A Practical Handbook*, London, SAGE Publications.
- Beckett H, Holmes, D and Walker, J (February 2017), *Research in Practice*, The International Centre-Research Child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking, University of Bedfordshire
- Beazley, H., & Ennew, J. (2006). Participatory Methods and Approaches: Tackling the Two Tyrannies. Dans V. Desai, & R. Potter, *Doing Development Research*. London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Cody, C. (2017) *Connecting the Dots: Supporting the Recovery and Reintegration of Children Affected by Sexual Exploitation Thematic Report*, Bangkok, ECPAT International, International Centre: researching child sexual exploitation, violence and trafficking, University of Bedfordshire.
- ECPAT International (2016). *Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism – Regional Report – Sub-Saharan Africa*, Bangkok, ECPAT International.
- ECPAT International (2017). *Online Child Sexual Exploitation – A Common Understanding*, Bangkok, ECPAT International.
- Given, L. M. (2008). *The Sage Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research* (Vol. 2). CA: Sage Publications
- Interagency Working Group (2016). *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*. Luxembourg, Interagency Working Group.
- Human Rights Council (2011), *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Najat Maala M'jid*, [Human Rights Council](#).
- Marshall, M. (1996). Sampling for Qualitative Research. *Family Practice – an International Journal*, 13, 522-525.
- Mayall, B. (2004). Sociologies of Childhood. (M. Holborn, Ed.) *Developments in Sociology. An Annual Review*, 20, 43.
- Prout, J., & James, A. (1997). *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*.
- Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL) (2011). *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Uganda. A critical review of efforts to address CSEC 2005–2011*. Kampala, UYDEL
- ECPAT International (2019). *Country overview: A report on the scale, scope and context of the sexual exploitation of children, Uganda*, ECPAT International