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**Submission from ECPAT International and ECPAT International Child and Youth Advisory Council (EICYAC) for:**

**The Day of the General Discussion:  
Resources for the Rights of the Child: Responsibility of the States**

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***The use of resources to the “maximum extent” and its’ relationship to the participation rights of children***

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***Introduction***

Article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) requires States to take all measures for implementation of the social, economic and cultural rights of children. Measures taken are to reflect the maximum extent of their available resources. During the Day of General Discussion of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2006, special focus was given on the child’s rights to express views in various settings (Articles 12, 13 and 15) and to become active participants in decision making processes in these settings. In the context of Article 4, this means a responsibility for children’s participation in resource allocation and accessibility within the community, school, associations and indeed, the political arena.

A State’s budget allocation is therefore a visible measure of the priority and value given to specific rights of children as it maps out in financial terms the areas of action which the State will promote. Confronted with limited resources, budget allocations are made based on real and perceived economic and social needs and pressures. While a rights based approach would include measures that enable the stakeholders, including children, to input, monitor and utilise budgetary allocations as well as to assess how budget allocations might compromise or threaten the realization of children’s economic, social and cultural rights, such mechanisms are largely lacking. The lack of participation of civil society and children in economic and budget procedures that can influence budgetary allocations in a positive way to promote children’s rights as well as to hold governments accountable for the spending choices they make, has proved detrimental for children and is denying them their rights .

Despite the recognition of growing poverty and economic disparity with its negative impact on children across regions, there has been lack of engagement to address the inadequate availability of resources for children including more bold measures that would create opportunities for children to access resources for social action as well as avenues for safe economic participation. This is especially relevant in relation to vulnerable and exploited children, separated and orphaned children or children who

are working or heading their own households. In this connection, there is a concern that vulnerable children are not only being denied safe and relevant earning opportunities, without which there is an increased risk to exploitation, but also that in addition they lack the resources needed to take up, social, civic, or cultural initiatives that allow them to contribute to their societies. For the millions of children without parental care, there is further concern that they will be denied their rightful inheritance or will lack access to services and resources to support their needs and that of their dependents

Children have continuously highlighted the need to access resources for social action initiatives and called to be given safe livelihood options. They have asked for channels to be created to give them opportunities to learn about the world of work, to be mentored and to work in protected work environments so as to prepare for future participation in society. Nevertheless, these avenues remain closed in many societies, even for older children. The lack of a comprehensive response is creating more vulnerability for children, increasing their social and economic marginalization and building enormous pressure on them to access resources through informal or unsafe means which increases their risk to abuse and exploitation.

ECPAT International promotes and actively supports the participation of children and youth in work against commercial sexual exploitation. The practical experience of working with children against CSEC has reinforced our belief in the importance of children's participation in efforts against commercial sexual exploitation of children. Over the years children have participated in the programmes and projects of ECPAT. Our experience in this regard, particularly of working on counter action initiatives with children that have survived sexual exploitation, has demonstrated that children's participation enriches our ongoing work but that it also brings new ideas, and proposals for social change in their communities and also at higher levels. In this regard we have learned that it is important to create avenues for the realization of these initiatives as well as for the access to the resources that they need to implement their social action projects.

ECPAT has thus supported a number of children's initiatives against CSEC. Through experimentation and refinement of the measures and criteria for consideration of proposed activities the vulnerable and exploited children that are actively working to protect other children in their communities from the risks and violations of CSEC, have been able to submit proposals for action work in their communities and among their peers and to assess the viability of these proposals so as to access resources for their implementation. Young people, especially those that have been victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, who participate in designing and implementing these projects build their sense of resilience and empowerment whilst at the same time, promoting social mobilization to fight against commercial sexual exploitation of children.

As child survivors of CSEC have generally sought to take action within their local environments so as to reach other children and their peers, the scope of the projects have reflected a modest need for resources. A key strategy for ECPAT to support these initiatives therefore has been the use of Micro Project schemes as small grants made directly to vulnerable children and youth for their project proposals. As will be seen below, these small financial investments in children's initiatives have made a

significant impact in building their capacity to play an active role in protecting other children from abuse and exploitation as well as to accelerate their recovery and sense of empowerment as social actors within their communities.

### ***Why are Micro Project Schemes important in work against CSEC?***

***ECPAT's work with children and youth that have survived commercial sexual exploitation, has demonstrated that Micro Projects can provide innovative channels for disadvantaged children/youth to re-engage safely in their societies and contribute significantly to their personal recovery as well as to their community creating conditions for the realization of their other basic rights.***

ECPAT International utilizes Micro Project Schemes as an important mechanism for providing young people opportunities to build their experience and capacity to engage in social action for protection of children from sexual exploitation. By giving vulnerable and exploited young people access to small grants while providing other forms of psycho-social support, children have been able to pursue opportunities and initiatives that are usually lacking in their lives. The process of participation in these Micro Projects has been found to enhance their resiliency and to help develop competencies and responsibilities including for decision making, to execute ideas, work in teams, and make positive impact on the life of their peers or the larger community.

These small grant initiatives have significant implications for young people as they have shown to have the potential to mobilize a deep momentum at the personal level, community level and with other children. These have also been instrumental in combating the sense of discrimination, isolation, victimization, and lack of self worth that child survivors can often grapple with as they struggle toward social recovery and reintegration. While Micro Project Schemes have been used as measures for meeting the basic needs of vulnerable children/youth our experience has shown that they can also and facilitate the active engagement of child survivors and vulnerable children within their environment while providing a framework through which this participation and safely take place. Where they themselves take the lead in claiming their rights and engage in social action including in initiatives for the protection of others against exploitation and abuse, this can be a powerful mechanism for recovery and empowerment. Such self administered small scale grant in effect work as catalysts for the realization of social, cultural and civil rights of these disadvantaged groups of young people.

### ***How does a Micro Project Scheme work?***

***Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) entitles ALL children to equal rights and opportunities to play an active role in the fulfillment of their rights.***

The use of Micro Project Schemes to support youth social action in particular action against CSEC is based on the belief that children and young people have the necessary knowledge and ideas on improving their lives but often lack resources to

be able to implement ideas into action. It also supports the young people's right to participation in all decisions affecting their lives.

The Micro Projects (usually in the range of USD 1,000 – 2,000) are allocated to children/youth for them to develop and implement the activities that they deem important. These activities are based on identified priorities which also meet criteria that have been agreed. Micro Project Schemes are awarded through a process of proposal submission and approval. All young people affiliated to the ECPAT network are eligible to apply.

The ECPAT International Children and Youth Advisory Committee (EICYAC) is an integral part of the ECPAT International governance structure. The Advisory Committee inputs to all aspects of ECPAT's work and also works with Micro Project funds to implement their own projects. Members can seek/develop joint proposals in partnership with other children and youth groups within the ECPAT network. This helps to mobilize young people in raising awareness about the CSEC, enhance their capacities to formulate child friendly protection and prevention mechanisms and demand higher accountability and follow-up on commitments from the NGOs, Governments and other stakeholders.

Similarly, through the South Asia Youth Partnership Project (YPP) ECPAT provides grants for Micro Project Schemes to child victims of CSEC and trafficking or to groups of children who are either survivors or at high risk of CSEC and trafficking. Grant activities have included drama, sports and arts projects as well as projects for development of youth targeted awareness-raising materials and other creative initiatives that are relevant and improve the lives of children. These types of initiatives provide opportunities and motivation for young people to actively participate in projects that contribute towards their personal development, community action and increase the cohesiveness and team building with other children. .

The main objectives of the Micro Project Schemes are therefore to:

- Provide access to small grants to young people for them to design and implement child focused projects according to their own priority areas;
- Maximize the potential of these Micro Project Schemes for the realization of other social, cultural and civil rights of these young people;
- Facilitate opportunities and choices for young people to take responsibilities, form partnerships and make important contributions in improving their own lives, of their peers and members of their communities;

**Examples** of activities funded through Micro Projects include:

- **FM Radio Programme organized by local youth, including survivors and vulnerable children, to promote a society free from CSEC & Trafficking**  
Key objectives of the youth radio programme include: Creating a supportive environment for speaking out against trafficking and sexual exploitation of children and youth through role play, sharing information in local languages, providing messages of encouragement for survivors and at-risk youth including people with disabilities, encouraging respect and positive attitudes towards

survivors, sharing information about the risks and consequences of CSEC including health related issues and social problems and inviting experts/resource persons to speak about relevant issues on the programme.

- **Open Air Drama, Video Show & Photo Exhibition against CSEC**

YPP Youth have worked on short drama scripts, exhibiting related pictures, posters, pamphlets etc. and produced a video documentary about trafficking and sexual exploitation of children under this Micro Project in an effort to increase community awareness of these issues. This project was also designed to build the capacity and self esteem/confidence of survivors to work together to combat such problems in rural areas. The group also organizes debates and other educational activities in schools where survivors of sexual exploitation and many vulnerable youth study.

- **Make- IT-Safe Campaign among Youth in Nairobi, Kenya**

Young people launched and implemented the Make-IT-Safe Campaign in Nairobi, aimed at creating awareness about violence against children on cyberspace and encouraged people to strengthen their commitment against Cyberspace violence by signing the petition. The campaign targeted children, youth, parents, the religious leaders, community representatives, students in school as well as cyber cafes. This campaign was successful in raising awareness among the young people and the general public about the dangers of Cyberspace violence and also gaining positive feedback from selected Cyber Cafes to work towards ensuring their businesses are safe from exploitation and abuse of children on-line.

### ***How do Micro Project Schemes really benefit young people?***

Quotes from young people active in the ECPAT Micro Project Schemes:

***“I never imagined that I would be doing puppet shows and performing on stage. What makes me feel really proud is that this was solely our idea and we are having so much fun doing it.”***

***“The experience from this Micro Project shows that youth can participate actively at all levels of an organization; both in decision making and in the implementation of projects. It makes the work of the organization more effective and empowers the youth involved.”***

***“The Micro Project is the element that I like most. Through it we have been able to create our own proposals, sign MOUs and be responsible for implementing the project. All this makes us feel respected and worthy. Micro Projects also give us an opportunity to work together as a team.”***

## **Conclusion**

Micro Project Schemes have been effective as a mechanism that promotes active participation and empowerment of young people. Through their involvement in these projects, young people have been able to better access services for victims of CSEC, increase their resilience and reinforce the recovery process from abuse and exploitation. They have been able to form friendships and find mentors who help them to develop their confidence and skills for effective implementation of their initiatives which overall aids the process of reintegration into their communities.

Micro Project Schemes have also been effective in building the capacities of young people to design and implement child friendly prevention and protection programs within families, communities, schools and shelters that enable the realization of their social, cultural and economic rights.

In addition these projects have helped to promote democratic values and understanding of children as right holders. Through their experiences and learning from these projects young people have been successful in overcoming their own personal challenges and conducted advocacy work the community, national and international levels.

Lastly, Micro Projects have increased the awareness and capacities of young people to analyze, evaluate and demand higher standards of accountability from their duty bearers.

## ***Recommendations to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Day of the General Discussion (DGD):***

- Increase budget allocation to children in the national budgets, especially the allocations to child protection.
- Systematic and sustained mechanisms and processes for young people to influence budget allocations and access these resources at the local, national and organizational levels.
- States and other duty bearers recognize their responsibilities in mobilizing resources for use by children and young people through mechanisms that enable children access to schemes such as Micro Project Schemes and in providing an enabling environment for their effective participation.
- Greater commitment and focus on the economic and social participation of young people in a protected environment without compromising their other basic rights.
- Greater international cooperation in upholding the global commitments such as in creating the “Global Fund for Child/Youth Initiative against Commercial Sexual Exploitation which was part of the Youth Appeal at the Second World Congress against the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Yokohama in 2001.