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Children as experts

A handbook for conducting surveys of and with children

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Background

ECPAT launched a project in autumn 2019 to develop new methods to gather information and insights from children. The goal was to create both qualitative and quantitative methods to make it possible for children to participate in all parts of the survey process and not just as survey respondents. We focused on children's vulnerability and exposure to sexual offences on the internet – an area where there are knowledge gaps and where we assumed that adults often lack insights into children's activities and experiences. The choice of this theme made it clear that we need to invite children to participate as experts as they own the knowledge we lack and can add new perspectives and issues to explore.

Our idea was to create a knowledge base in the spring of 2020 through interviews and focus groups. However, at the early stages of this process Sweden was affected by the pandemic and this made it impossible to meet children in person. ECPAT decided to develop a tool to allow us to gather children's opinions digitally based on the interviews we had already conducted.

This method was inspired by so-called vignette-based focus groups, where children have an opportunity to think about sensitive issues based on fictitious stories, rather than talk about their own experiences. The children's task was to identify where a line was crossed; where someone in the story had acted in a way that was not OK. The goal was to gather around a hundred responses that could form the basis for our continued work on the project. But instead, 6,500 children responded to an average of two stories each. This huge response was the result of an information campaign that we launched in social media channels in connection with the study to inform people about the project. The children very generously shared their thoughts and experiences around each story. This gave us an opportunity to identify patterns in the responses and to combine these into specific lines of reasoning.

"Our hope for this handbook is that we will inspire others to take new approaches to surveys aimed at children."

The large response we received to the 2020 survey provided deeper insights and created a foundation for future surveys. The fact that our survey generated so much engagement among children made us raise our level of ambition and include children as participants in all parts of the survey process and at an earlier stage than was originally planned. This has resulted in a rapid increase in the number of children participating in subsequent surveys. In both 2021 and 2022 around 13,000 children took part.

Each year the survey has provided greater insights into how children experience sexual vulnerability on the internet, but has also given us an understanding of the interplay between this vulnerability and positive interactions, sexual exploration and new digital opportunities. This knowledge has been key in the development of our dedicated helpline for children and for understanding the consequences for children who have been exposed to sexual offences online.

The survey has also helped us find new ways for children to share their experiences and their knowledge. The results from our survey have been presented in reports, seminars and video content aimed at children. Since there is a significant lack of knowledge in this area, several of the reports have been translated into English and this has generated international interest in both the results and in our methods.

Our hope for this handbook is that we will inspire others to take new approaches to surveys aimed at children. It is important to actively invite children into both the creation and analysis processes, and also to use methods that generate engagement and a willingness to participate in surveys.

We hope that the methods and tools we have developed will help others to create new types of material and data to make it possible to see patterns in children's behaviour and attitudes, while also gaining insights into how children think.

Children's participation

ECPAT's approach to children's participation is based on the idea that children are the experts in their own situation and that by working with them we can gain new and unique knowledge. Our point of departure is to make children active co-creators of our surveys and analysis.

A survey that is created with the participation of children and based on their experiences will generate more engagement among the children participating in it. It also produces results that are more relevant and where the children themselves present solutions to the challenges they face. In each survey for children, they should be invited in at an early stage and given actual opportunities to influence the content.

In ECPAT's surveys children have contributed stories that other children can relate to – both in terms of language and content. They have also provided nuance and developed and challenged the stories in the survey by providing many extended open-ended responses. In our 2022 survey children provided 5,500 open-ended responses, which is equivalent to almost 300 pages of text in which they share their thoughts about the stories and the response alternatives. Many of these responses in turn contained new stories about children's exposure to sexual offences and sexual exploitation on the internet.

At ECPAT we believe it is important for children to participate in interpreting and analysing experiences from our surveys and the new stories that are contributed. We therefore form analysis groups consisting of children who, in a process facilitated by an ECPAT researcher, analyse the survey results. We believe that this helps us gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of the results and allows us to be sure that the results are relevant and reflect the children's real life.

"A survey that is created with children and based on their experiences will generate more engagement among the children participating in it."

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ECPAT's process for children's participation in surveys:

Interviews

Stories are collected containing children's own experiences of sexual exploitation on the internet. This allows us to create credible stories and understand the experiences of the individual child. As a rule, the children interviewed must have had specific experiences and be recruited based on this.

Focus groups

Groups of 3–7 children are invited to comment on and discuss stories and talk about their reactions to them. It varies as to whether they need to have had specific experiences or not. This provides a basis for understanding how an experience or a phenomenon is interpreted by a child who is not directly affected.

Analysis groups

Here the children are given an opportunity to analyse the survey results based on their own understanding of quotes and/or statistics. This often takes place in workshops with groups of 3–7 children.

The children must have some connection to the issue but do not always need to have had a direct experience as this is not requested.

Open-ended responses

The children are given the opportunity to anonymously comment, provide nuance or reject set response alternatives, or talk about their own experiences. This is at the end of each story in the questionnaire.

Group chats

A group chat is linked to one deeper dive topic at a time and is open to children who have responded to the specific deeper dive topic.

With the help of the ECPAT facilitator and/or together with other children, they discuss the topic for deeper exploration.

Analysis groups

We arrange meetings on a regular basis with children who are given a chance to comment on how the survey is experienced from different perspectives and how the material is presented to children. Children are recruited for the task to represent different perspectives.

Own story

The children are given an opportunity to anonymously share experiences that they believe can be useful to ECPAT in its work. This is at the end of the questionnaire.

Would you like to read more about children's participation?

To a deeper dive

Important considerations

- **Consider in advance** why you want children to participate.

- **Inform the child** about how the information they share will be used.

- **Be clear from the start** about what children can and will influence in the survey. Participation without any real influence defeats the purpose.

- **Select children with relevant experience** of the issues you would like responses to. Children as experts means they are experts in their *own situation* – not that individual children can speak to every issue just because they are children.

- **Be humble** and use methods that give the child a chance to share their knowledge. Children as experts means that they have knowledge that adults lack.

- **Build trust** by being clear and honest with the child. Many children are suspicious of the adult world and sceptical when offered a chance to have a real influence.

- **Distinguish between children as participants in a survey and those who help to design, test and analyse it.** Children in the latter category do a job and they should be compensated for it based on the amount of time they spend.

- **If you encounter children in vulnerable situations you need a plan to be able to guide them to relevant support if needed.**

An iterative method
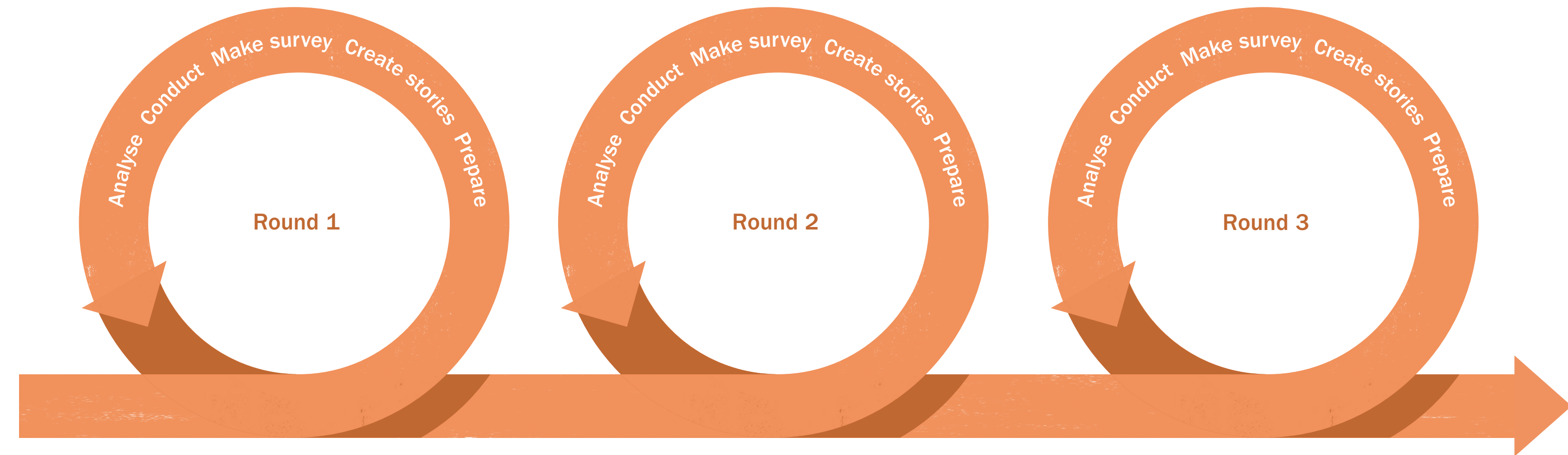
The inspiration for the iterative process comes from design methodology. The advantage of an iterative method is that each new product – in this case the survey – is seen as a prototype and not as an end-product. In this way, every new round brings new lessons to be learnt to improve the survey and how to adapt it to the target group.

When we launched the project to develop new methods to gather knowledge and insights from children we wanted to achieve the following objectives:

- Create innovative methods and new ways of obtaining knowledge from children.

- Gather knowledge that has both depth (the knowledge would show how children think) and breadth (a large number of children would participate).

- Allow the children to participate in the entire process in a meaningful way.

During the process it became clear that it would be beneficial to integrate different methods and approaches in one and the same process, rather than to separate them from each other. The knowledge was created gradually as each new survey provided us with experiences that we could use to improve our processes and expand our communication within the organisation's various areas of operation.

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Thanks to the iterative approach our work evolved into developing various prototypes – vignette-based questionnaires, analysis groups for children and a chat function to reach specific groups of children – to form a cohesive process.

The mix of methods, combined with the wealth of data and material we received, enabled us to use the material in various ways, for example in reports, as knowledge support for our helpline for children, in our parent helpline and in information materials for children.

One important insight gained from our project is the importance of allowing the knowledge to grow gradually in order to identify weaknesses and build on strengths in our methods. The story-based questionnaire was initially a temporary solution because we were unable to meet children in person during the pandemic. However, it proved to be an important tool to generate engagement among children. The information and the digital channels we have used to reach out with the survey have taught us how to reach children with important information.

Among other things, it has helped children to find our helpline if they have been the victim of a sexual offence.

We are convinced that we can learn from our successes as well as our failures. Only through transparency in our process can we ensure our results are credible.

"One important insight gained from our project is the importance of allowing the knowledge to grow gradually in order to identify weaknesses and build on strengths in our methods."

Would you like to read more about an iterative method?

To a deeper dive

Important considerations

- **Don't be afraid of trying new solutions.** One important aspect of a development process is being open to test new approaches to delve deeper into the analysis.

- **Don't be afraid of failure.** In an iterative process, failure – or at least less successful innovation – is impossible to avoid. Implement new solutions gradually in order to identify what works and what does not.

- **Pay attention.** When you discover that something works well in one part of the survey, it may be worth testing it in other areas as well. Sometimes solutions are created by chance.

- **Regard each survey as a prototype.** Each new survey will bring new insights. It is important to realise that the goal is not to just repeat the same survey because it worked well, but to find ways to improve on it.

- **Listen to the children.** It is important to include the children in all parts of the process because they can often see things that adults miss and can describe why a certain structure worked or not.

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Creating stories

Story example

"The meeting"

Oliver gets a snap in which Astrid is dancing with her friends. Astrid says she's 15 but Oliver teases her and tells her she looks younger. Oliver is 16. They've chatted for a while and Oliver thinks that Astrid is cute but he's not in love with her. Astrid often writes that she likes Oliver. At the weekend Oliver is going to be home alone while his parents visit his grandad who has been ill.

Astrid comes over to Oliver's place and they watch a film and drink some of his mother's cider. Oliver undresses Astrid and she seems to be OK with it but she doesn't say much and afterwards she wants to go home. When Oliver wakes up in the morning he sees a text from Astrid in which she writes that she's 12 years old. He gets a stomach ache.

Response 1: I think Oliver should have realised she was lying about her age. There are lots of young kids on Snapchat.

Response 2: What Oliver did is not OK and is illegal. I think that he should try to talk to his friends about what happened.

Response 3: I think Astrid should have known better than to hang out with a boy who is 16. It's partly her fault.

Response 4: Oliver should talk to his parents. They're sure to be able to help him.

Response 5: I think that Oliver should send Astrid a text, If they talk by a text and everything feels OK, Oliver has nothing to worry about.

To create the stories for our first story-based survey we used interviews with children who had experienced sexual exploitation on the internet. The interviews were held at an early stage in our project and we assumed that similar interviews would need to be conducted on a continual basis to create and update stories in future surveys. However, when the results from the surveys came in we realised that many children had chosen to share their own experiences of sexual exploitation on the internet.

"The children started to comment on the importance of the survey, the credibility of the stories, and to say thank you for having the chance to participate."

These stories deepened our knowledge and enabled us to create new stories and correct old ones. The children were also generous in sharing their thoughts about the stories. The open-ended responses combined with the number of children responding exceeded our most optimistic expectations and showed the children's engagement and desire to contribute to our learning process.

Instead of the relatively simple question in the 2020 survey, which was about where children drew the line in an event, we now took the children's responses and for a deeper dive in the survey. Now we were able to use the children's past free-text responses as a basis and to ask the respondents which statement they agreed with the most.

In 2021 and 2022 we studied children's attitudes to their own and others' vulnerability on the internet. This generated more engagement among children. We received open-ended responses and the average response length increased as well. The number of children participating grew and they started to comment on the importance of the survey, the credibility of the stories, and to say thank you having the chance to participate.

When we create stories, it is important to use the children's own terminology and expressions. There are few things that reduce credibility – and therefore also children's engagement – as much as when the adult world's language is mixed into the stories. Words such as naked photos are almost exclusively used by adults. Children instead use terms such as nudes, ass pics, dick pics and tit pics to describe the nuances of this phenomenon. It is also important to understand how and which apps children are using and to ensure that these are described in a credible way. Both language and which apps are used changes more quickly among children than among adults. It is therefore important to constantly adjust the existing stories.

In 2022 we started to create several versions of certain stories by changing, for example, the gender or sexual orientation of the actors. The reason for this was our hypothesis that children's attitudes and suggestions changed based on these differences.

Would you like to read more
about creating stories?

To a deeper dive

Important considerations

- **Think about which children you want to participate.** Which experiences are relevant? Which of children's details (such as age, gender or socioeconomic circumstances) can affect the stories we create?

- **Inform the child of the purpose of participating and how the information will be used.** Make sure that the child has understood.

- **Be clear about the fact that it is the child who controls the conversation** and decides how much they want to tell. It is often a good idea to practice allowing the child to say "no" or "I don't know". Children often want to please and do the right thing – especially the younger ones.

- **Be open.** Adults are often surprised by what the children have to say and their feelings about things. It is important for the child not to perceive the adult as distant or indifferent.

- **Let the child finish what they have to say.** Be careful when asking follow-up questions or assuming how the child experienced an event. Let the child give their account at their own pace and then ask open questions about what the child thinks.

- **Children describe things in different ways.** Some children aren't as verbal as others so show patience and work together to find alternative ways to express feelings and describe events, such as drawing or using modelling clay. It is particularly important if the child has a different native language or finds oral communication difficult for some reason. Sometimes it may be easier to describe difficult things if we don't need to use words.
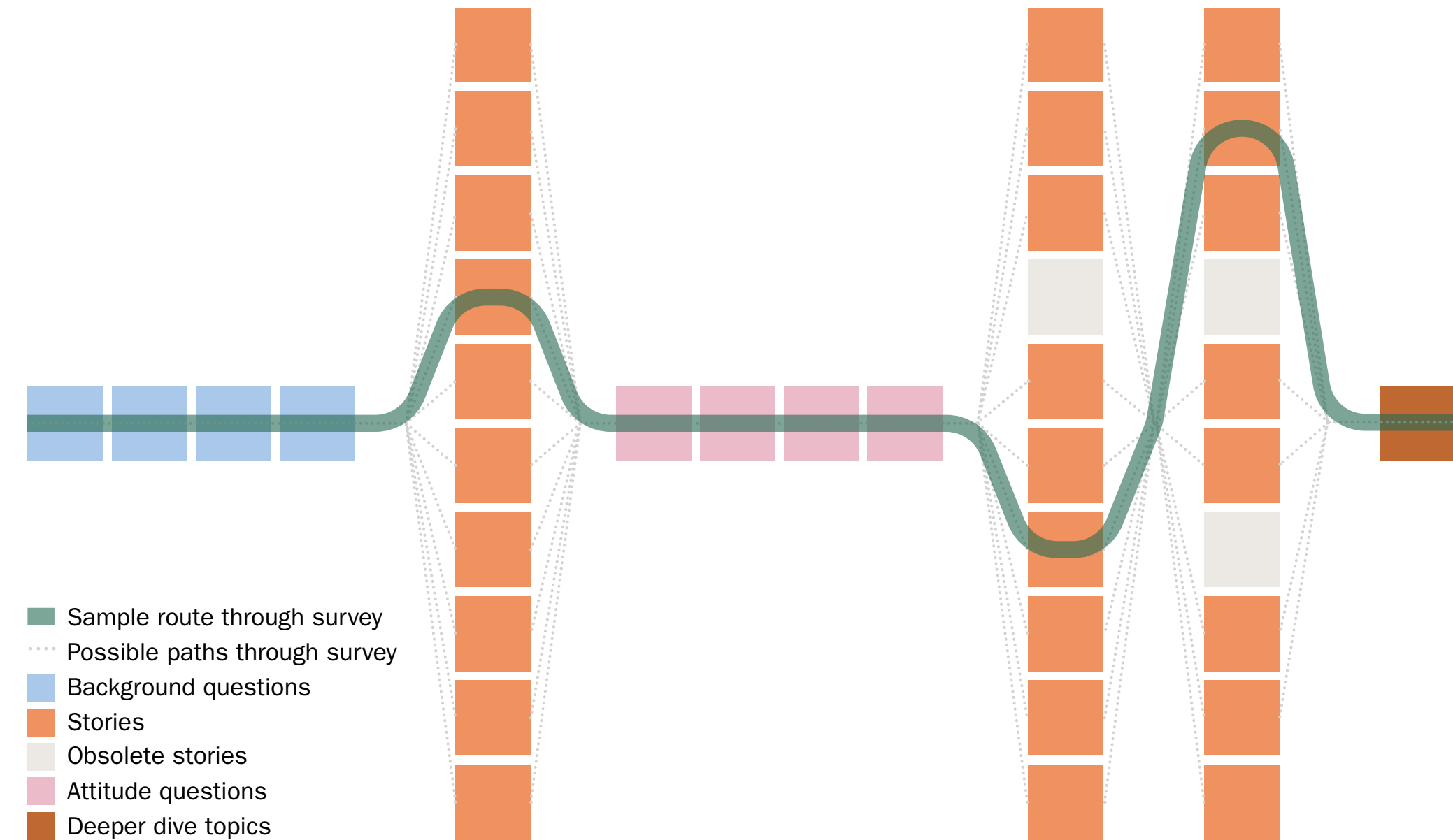
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Creating stories

When we wrote the stories that are at the centre of ECPAT's survey we needed to make some decisions about its design. This required allowing the children to share their opinions on what a questionnaire should look like to generate engagement and willingness to take part.

Things that the children clearly wanted were for it to be voluntary, fast to fill out, and provide space for them to explain and justify their responses. The children said they did not like graduated scales, questions they didn't understand the purpose of and long explanations attached to a question. Another opinion that emerged was that they often perceived adults' questions as too cautious – as if the adults were afraid of asking about things that they felt uncomfortable with. The view that certain questions were excluded for the wrong reasons created distance from the children's side and a sense that the adult world wasn't interested in what the children saw as real problems.

The children's opinions played a significant role in how we designed the survey. Our survey contained very few background variables at the beginning and three attitude questions after the first story. Other than that the survey consisted of questions linked to the stories. Directly linked to each story was a question about whether the child or a friend had experienced something similar to the situation described in the story. There was also space for them to comment freely on the story in an open-ended response.

Sample route through survey
Possible paths through survey
Background questions
Stories
Obsolete stories
Attitude questions
Deeper dive topics

"The view that certain questions were excluded for the wrong reasons created distance from the children's side and a sense that the adult world wasn't interested in what the children saw as real problems."

So as not to limit our knowledge to three stories, we created a library of stories – eleven for older children and six for younger ones. Each participant was given stories at random for them to respond to. Each individual child was able to respond to a maximum of three stories. Limiting the number of stories meant that completing the survey was relatively quick for the children, but we still received around 1,500 responses per story in 2021 and 2022.

In 2021 we also created an opportunity for children to respond to one of three deeper dive topics or share their own story at the end of the questionnaire. The deeper dive topics were either linked to the themes that came up in previous surveys and where we wanted to learn more, or to areas relating to the support we provide to the children we encounter through our helpline Ditt ECPAT.

In 2022, in connection with the deeper dive part, we added the option to chat with a researcher working on the survey at ECPAT if the child wanted to expand on their explanation or describe their experiences. Both of these changes have provided us with more knowledge, but we made it clear that this was a deeper dive and we also made it easy for them to opt out of this part. We wanted to make sure that the children participating would feel that they were doing it voluntarily and because they were interested.

Even though the children's engagement was clear in their free-text responses, in preparation for our next survey we intend to hold new work-shops to review design, presentation and content, and also make possible improvements. Surveys that require children's participation and engagement must be continually changed and deepened. Children's realities evolve and the survey must evolve to reflect this.

Important considerations

- **Consider which background variables you really need.** It is easy to want to have a lot, but the more variables the children need to respond to the more of them will stop before finishing the survey. Just ask about things you really think you will use.

- **Be inclusive in your background variables** and make sure that all children have an alternative that makes sense to them. It is, for example, important to remember that a child may have same-sex parents or may not live with either of parent.

- **Use language that is clear and easy to understand.** Avoid long definitions if possible.

- **Use graduated scales sparingly** – if at all.

- **Be generous with the option to provide an open-ended response.** Children often want to provide more nuance in their responses or explain why they answered in a certain way. This is important information that gives us a deeper understanding of what the children's responses mean.

- **Don't be afraid to ask.** Children want to be able to share difficult things if they are part of their reality. At the same time it is important to be careful about asking for details, for example about an assault, as this might be perceived as an invasion of privacy. If children want to share details they will do so in the open-ended responses.

- **Use stories instead of questions** as they make it easier for the child to relate to the topic and to understand what is being asked of them.

- **Think carefully about how you design the questionnaire.** Children are clear about the fact that they don't like long surveys. If the number of participants is large enough, not all questions need to be answered by all of the children.

- **Design the questionnaire so that you can use all of the responses** – regardless of how many stories the children have responded to.

- **Allow children to participate in the process** of making the questionnaire interesting and engaging. Engagement improves the quality of your data and gets the children to talk to other children about the survey.

- **Be prepared to change the survey.** It is important to be able to compare surveys over time, but even more important for children to feel that the survey reflects their own experiences.

"It is important to be able to compare surveys over time, but even more important for children to feel that the survey reflects their own experiences."

First page

Background questions

Story

More about the story

More about the child

The images show extracts of what the children see when they participate in the survey.

First the children learn about the purpose of the survey, its structure and how they can find support through ECPAT's helpline if they have been exposed to sexual exploitation. This information is repeated at the end of the survey.

Once the child has agreed to participate they come to the background questions and then the first story will be selected at random for them. When they have chosen a response alternative (or have indicated that none is applicable) they will be asked if they or someone they know has had a similar experience. There is also space here for them to add their own comments or explain their choices. After the story the child will see questions about their attitudes to the internet, sex and relationships.

A second and third story will then be randomly selected for them and they will be able to choose one of three more in-depth stories or share their own experience.

The child can end the survey at any time. The only compulsory question is the one about their age as this determines which story the child will be given to respond to.

Would you like to read more about creating the survey?

To a deeper dive

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![ECPAT logo]

Sparking children's interest

As ECPAT wanted children to participate because they were interested in doing so, we chose to recruit them through the digital platforms where we knew they were present. Over the years we have run information campaigns on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok. The platforms have changed as children have moved away primarily from Facebook and are increasingly present on TikTok.

The information was in the form of short animations with wording taken from interviews and past surveys. A lot of emphasis was placed on having a broad appeal so that as many children as possible would feel represented and that we are reaching out to them. We noticed that almost half of the children who clicked to continue to the survey took part in it.

One lesson we have learnt from our efforts to reach children with information is that it is important to be on the right platforms and at the right time. This requires both knowledge and a clear budget for the purpose. It is also important that children can quickly understand what the survey is about and that the sender is credible. In our case we also included information about Ditt ECPAT – our dedicated helpline for children and youth.

Would you like to read more
about sparking children's interest?

> **To a deeper dive**

TRANSLATION:
Your ex is sharing your pictures.
What do you do?
Take the test

TRANSLATION:
He's asking for a nude pic?
What do you do?
Take the test

TRANSLATION:
Your partner gets a dic pic from an ex.
What do you do?
Take the test

Examples of content for social media information campaigns.

Important considerations

- **Accepting self-recruitment for surveys.** This involves a challenge when it comes to interpreting the material, but we know that random selection where response rates are low – and declining – brings similar challenges.

- **Be sure to have a budget** that makes it possible to reach the children in the digital platforms where they are.

- **Find out which platforms the children you want to reach are on** and when they are the most active.

- **Write a short message** that quickly sparks curiosity and interest.

- **Add on information about the survey when the child clicks to learn more.** This information must be clear, age appropriate, accurate and give the children all the information they need to decide whether they want to participate or not.

- **If your focus is on sensitive issues,** there should be information linked to the survey about where the child can go to receive support.

- **Trust your own survey.** If children are interested in the survey they will talk about it and attract new participants. This is an important recruitment tool.

Analysing the material

The survey generated extremely rich and comprehensive data. It consisted of data that could be coded, structured and visualised using quantitative methods as well as hundreds of pages of open-ended responses. Many of the open-ended responses were directly linked to responses to the stories and could therefore not be analysed separately. The quantitative material, such as the breakdown of different response alternatives, was filled with content through the open-ended responses, which allowed for deeper analysis of the children's reasoning.

Due to the quantity of the data it was important to have a clear plan for how and in which order it would be analysed. Before the content could be analysed we needed to be sure that there were no systematic differences in how the children responded to the stories depending on how they interacted with the survey. This applied, for example, to the number of stories they responded to or if and how the children who continued to the deeper dive questions were different from the children who did not. It was not until this was established that we understood how we should process the material.

The overall issue of children's exposure to sexual exploitation on the internet was always a point of departure for us. But it was also too broad and too general for us to make use of the wealth of information and the possibilities it provided.

If we had only focused on that, we would have been disregarding the time and energy the children had put into

responding to the survey. In ECPAT's survey we did not find any significant differences in how children responded to stories based on how many they responded to. However, among the children who went on to the deeper dive section, we identified slightly more vulnerability among boys. This difference can be explained by the fact that more boys who identify as LGBTQI+ chose to proceed to the deeper dive section and that this group is on average more vulnerable than boys who do not identify as LGBTQI+.

"Due to the quantity of the data it was important to have a clear plan for how and in which order it would be analysed."

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Each survey highlights different perspectives on our question to see how different groups experience and think about their own and others' vulnerability. We identify particularly vulnerable groups and find themes that are unexplored or barely covered. These areas can either be identified while analysing the data from the current survey or based on those identified as potential areas in past surveys.

When we used the open-ended responses to fill patterns in the quantitative data with content, we also paid attention to the fact that children who chose to provide an open-ended response were not necessarily representative of all children. Girls and older children, for example, responded more often and to some extent had different reasons for doing so than boys and younger children. Children with strong opinions about a story were more likely to give an open-ended response than children who didn't feel as strongly about it. The open-ended responses were therefore not necessarily representative of the whole cohort of participating children. The open-ended responses did, however, provide examples of the children's reasoning and reflections on the experiences of individual children. This was important in order to understand how various types of sexual exposure can affect individual children.

Important considerations

- **It is essential to have the right skills to code and structure both the qualitative and quantitative data.** This is largely a task that will not be visible later on, but that is done so that those who analyse the data will have an overall picture of the content.

- **Be cautious about data cleansing** – for example removing, above all, joke responses. Data cleansing is an important step to guarantee the quality of the data, but things that may be perceived as disturbing or "wrong" are often children's legitimate opinions. Check specific responses that have too many extremes, or responses that contradicted the responses to the background questions we ask.

- **Invest in the necessary software.** Microsoft Excel can be used for many things by experienced users, but statistics software such as R, SPSS, STATA or SAS is almost always preferable and especially if the survey will include many participants.

- **Quantitative visualisations are important** in order to quickly get to the content in the quantitative section. Try to keep these as clean and clear as possible if they are to be presented to others.

- **Code the qualitative material by theme** and indicate the age and gender of the child if possible right next to the quote and open-ended response. Pay extra attention to responses that are different from the majority as these may contain important information and are easy to miss because of our own expectations.

- **Remember to sort the open-ended responses** that contain multiple themes in all of the relevant categories.

- **Gather all responses within a theme** and briefly summarise the content of the children's response. This is important for subsequent sections of the survey and to create new perspectives on the material.

- **Try to understand the quantitative data through the qualitative responses.** Sometimes children interpret a response alternative in a different way than adults expect them to. Sometimes children's responses help us to find nuance in or gain a deeper understanding of the quantitative responses.

- **Don't expect to be able to report all the data on one occasion or using one method.** This type of data is very rich.

Children as analysts

Right from the start of ECPAT's project the goal was to have children participate in analysing the material we collected. This was implemented as the final part of the project at the beginning of 2022 due to the pandemic and the fact that we needed a carefully prepared model to assure the children that their participation was meaningful. So far ECPAT has only had children participating as analysts on one occasion. This took part using analysis groups – a type of focus group with children who already knew each other and therefore felt comfortable discussing various topics.

"It is the children's analysis that provides the framework for how adults interpret and understand the material."

The analysis groups consisted of three to five teenagers who were given the chance to analyse and reflect on how the children in the survey described what they did when they sent nude photos to each other. The question was about how the children judged behaviour at the intersection of digital interactions and sex, and how this affected their understanding of what was a sexual offence and what was not. The teenagers were presented with thirteen quotes in which children described how and why they

had sent nude pictures to each other. Each of the children in the analysis group placed the quotes in their own four-field matrix and graded the behaviour as OK or not OK, and whether they regarded the behaviour as risky or safe. Once they had placed a quote sticker in the matrix they compared their matrix with those of the other children and then discussed the similarities and differences in their judgements. Facilitators from ECPAT led the discussion and made sure that a respectful tone was maintained. They also followed up on what the children said using follow-up questions and problematisations.

Unlike in focus groups, the goal here was to understand, interpret and analyse the reasoning of other children. It is the children's analysis that provides the framework for how adults interpret and understand the material. This links back to seeing the child as an expert in practice and that, in addition to talking about their situation, children can also suggest solutions and provide relevant interpretations. It is, however, the responsibility of the adults to create a safe space and to support the children in their analysis process.

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Children as analysts

Step 1

The children in the analysis group read thirteen quotes that we have selected from the open-ended responses in the survey. All quotes are about why children send nude photos and are selected to reflect a representative sample of the children's responses.
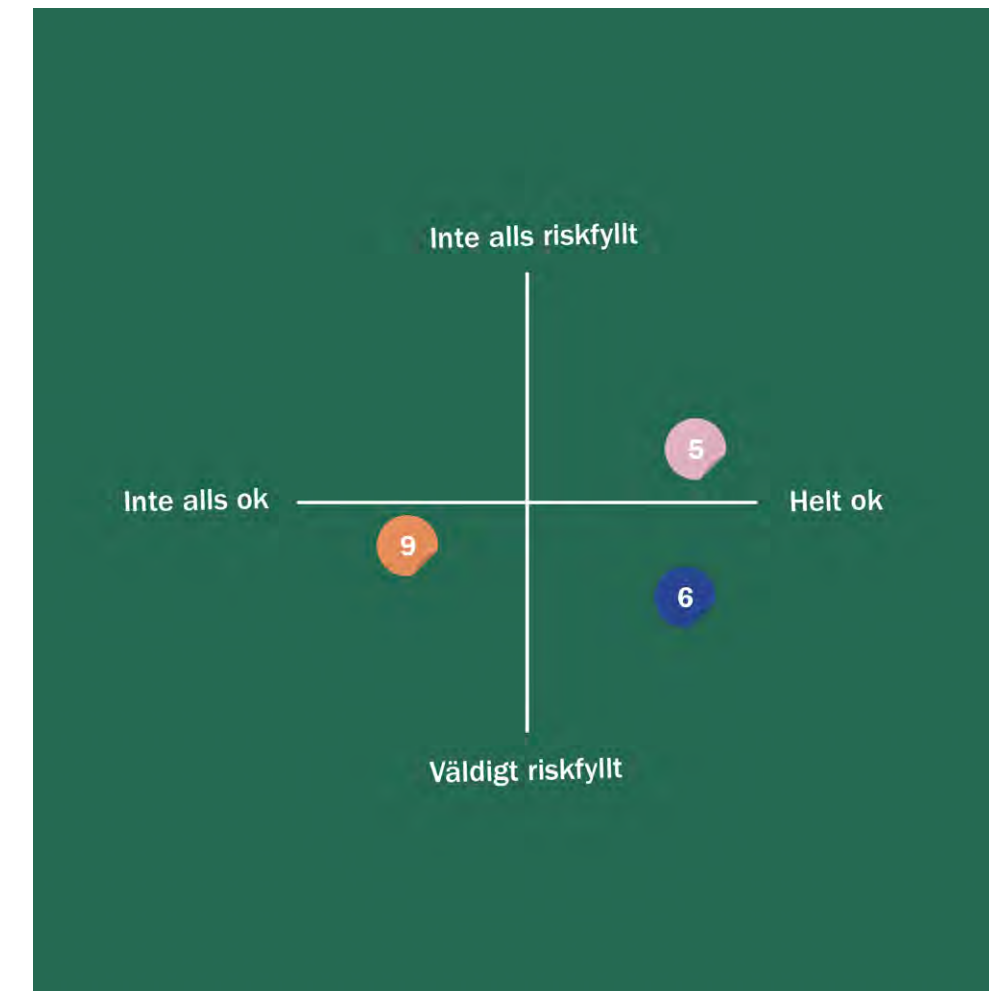
Step 2

Each child is given a sheet of paper that is divided into a four-field matrix. They also receive stickers with numbers corresponding to the quotes. The children judge the behaviour in the quote by placing the sticker in their four-field matrix. After each quote we compare how the children have judged the behaviour in the quote. This serves as a starting point for a discussion within the analysis group that is recorded and transcribed.
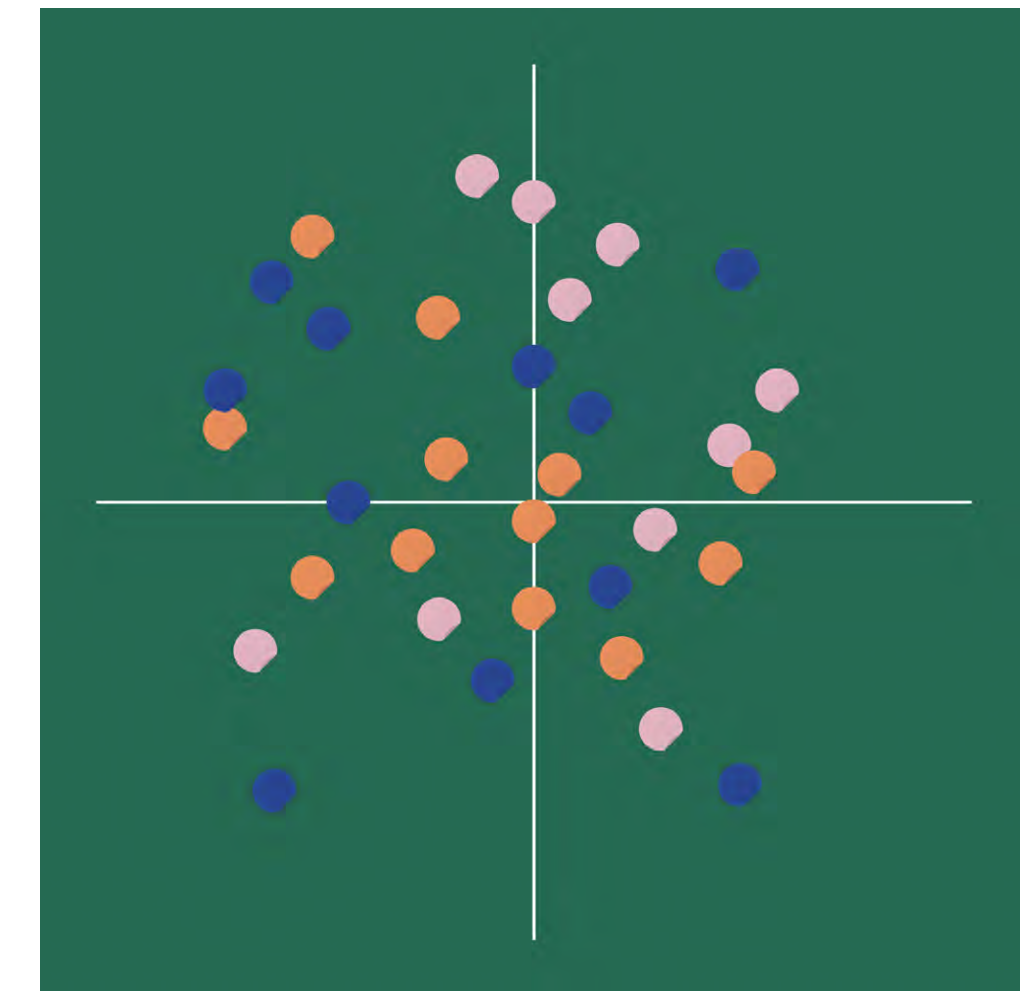
Step 3

After the children have completed their analysis it is combined into one four-field matrix. This joint matrix provides a quick visual overview of how the children in the group have interpreted the material. It also makes it easy to see similarities and differences between the children.

The adults can supplement the children's analysis with their knowledge, collect background material from past surveys and establish a legal and theoretical framework. During this process it is important for the adult be very respectful of the children's analysis and careful not to reinterpret or exclude things the children have said because they don't fit in.

When we included children as analysts we started with a question that was relevant to all children and where even those without specific experience could participate. This allowed us to create a safe space for the group of children. This is not always possible and ECPAT is currently working on creating more tools for this, for example anonymous chat groups. We are also further developing a process for how we can work with individual children. In some cases it can be difficult to include children as analysts where an issue is sensitive in nature and where children without a certain experience may find the material hard to analyse. This is not to say that children with the right support would not be able to be analysts, but that the adults lack the skills to identify what needs to be done in these cases. If it is not possible, protecting the child always takes precedence and the analysis will have to be carried out without children.

Would you like to read more about children as analysts?

To a deeper dive

Important considerations

- **Carefully consider which children you want to include in your analysis groups.** Do they need to have had a specific experience or is that not important? What should the group's composition be in terms of age and gender?

- **Think about what you want the group's composition to be.** Children who know each other may feel safer, but this can also make it harder for them to express a different attitude to the others. The level of homogeneity – for example in age or gender – also affects the dynamic in the group. Children quite often want to divide themselves into groups and it's important to consider whether this is the best option.

- **Create groups of the right size.** It is important to have a group that is small enough for everyone to have a say, but large enough for the discussion to include different perspectives and dynamics between the children. As a rule of thumb, a group of four to six children is a good size.

- **Give the children accurate and age-appropriate information** about what the analysis group is expected to contribute and how this will be used. The sooner the children gets this information, the easier it will be for them to decide if they want to participate or not.

- **Ensure that the group meets at a location where everyone can feel safe.** Starting the meeting by sharing some refreshment that children enjoy can help to promote a good atmosphere.

- **The adult is the facilitator not part of the conversation.** The adults facilitating the conversation should not share their own opinions with the children or support a particular point of view that an individual child expresses. Inform the children about this before the exercises begin.

- **Different types of exercises and a mix of materials can help the children to express their opinions.** This could be trigger material that launches a discussion or exercises that allow the children to express their opinions without words using pen and paper or a creating a collage etc.

- **Children who participate and contribute their time and knowledge should be compensated.** This compensation should be more than, for example, a couple of cinema tickets. It is, however, important not to let the children know about this in advance as this could result in children who are not comfortable with the process, participating in it anyway just to receive the compensation.

Presenting and evaluating materials

A particular challenge for ECPAT has been how to present the material from our surveys. The data is extremely rich and there may be a desire to reach different target groups with different types of material. Also, we may want to change the way we analyse and combine the qualitative material from certain questions.

In many cases ECPAT has chosen to visualise the children's responses using traditional quantitative diagrams and also state what percentage of children have chosen to respond in a certain way. When we talk about groups of children as a whole we do not generalise the statistics from the survey. We do, however, feel confident talking about patterns, trends and levels in more general terms.

One reason that we have chosen to generalise at this more superficial level was the very high number of children taking part in the survey. In the 15–17 age category participation was equivalent to close to 2 percent of the total population. This is a very high number, and based on our background variables, the children (other than a slight predominance of girls) were representative.

In our focus groups and analysis groups of individuals who were not selected for having experienced sexual exploitation we received further confirmation in that the children recognise the real-life description expressed by the survey. We also saw that what the children describe as vulnerability in the survey largely corresponded to what children were telling us in our helpline.

Finally, our results were in line with other qualitative and quantitative reports, papers and articles – both from a content perspective and in the correlations. If anything in our results deviated it was that children in our survey reported higher vulnerability than children in many other survey reports. This is likely linked to how the questions were posed and that the stories gave the children a greater understanding of what was being asked.

Sometimes it is not necessary to use visualisations when we present material. Having many open-ended responses that contain very personal stories and descriptions allows us to understand and study the experiences, behaviours and attitudes of the children who take part in the survey. Thanks to these stories, we have deepened our understanding of how vulnerability manifests itself for individual children and which strategies certain children use to protect themselves, as well other knowledge that is important for our work supporting children. Children's stories do not need to be generalisable to be relevant and to increase our understanding of the questions we want to ask.
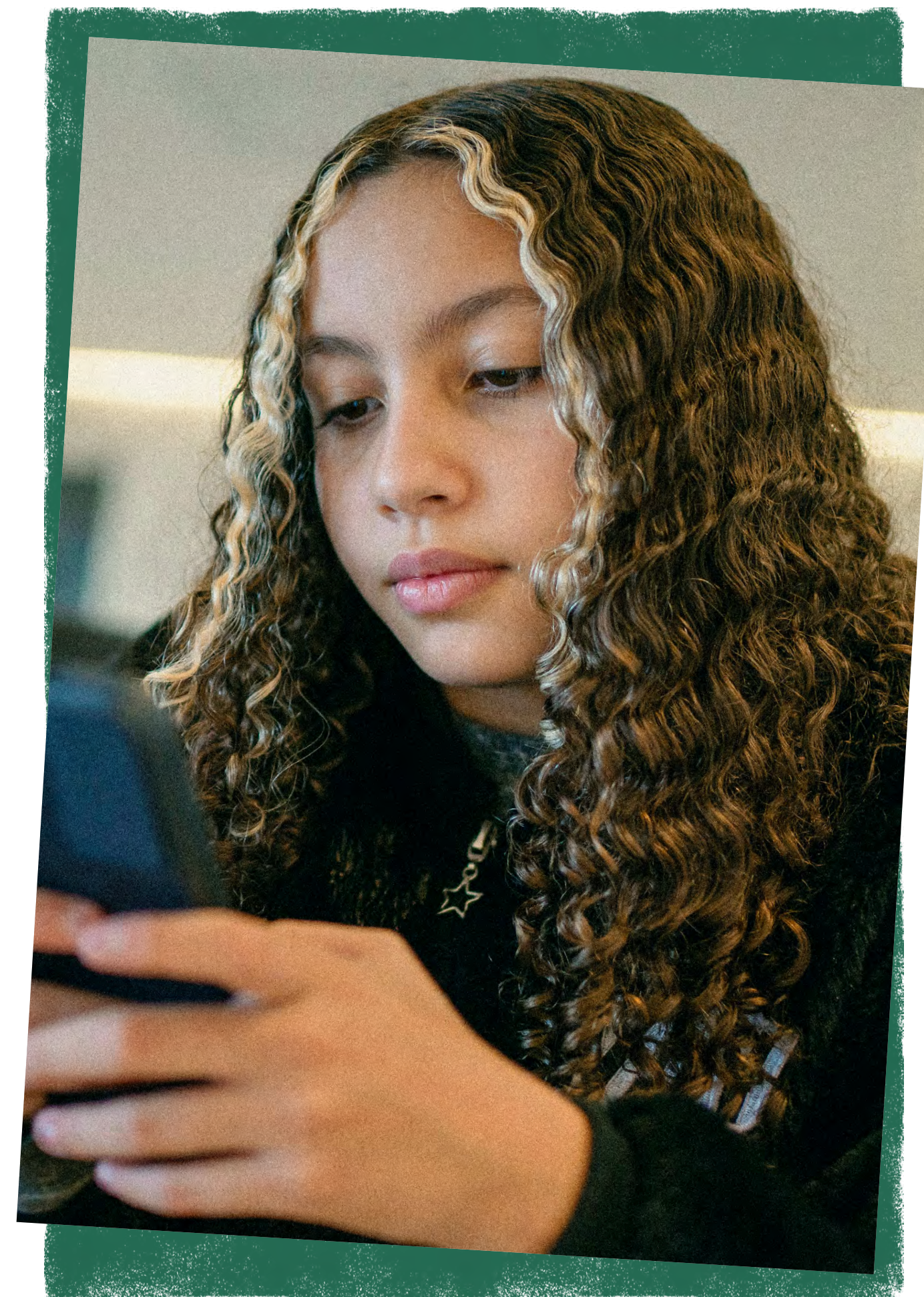
Another way to approach the material is to use all of the open-ended responses together to gain a broader understanding of how children experience sexual exploration and sexual exploitation on the internet. This method allows us to understand the context around creating, sending and the non-consensual spreading of sexualised material on the internet. In the larger body of material, correlations and narratives emerge that are not clear if we look at the question thematically or based on groups of children. Instead the children's various experiences and reflections create a patchwork of how they relate to sexualised material depending on the context.

Approaching the material based on a holistic perspective reveals the complex web of relationships, norms and consequences encompassed by the question but that many traditional methods are not able to provide answers to.

Would you like to read more about presenting and evaluating materials?

To a deeper dive

Important considerations

- **Let the question determine which data is relevant.** Different questions mean that different parts of the material are relevant. Be clear about which strengths and weaknesses that exist in the data you present. Always be transparent about weaknesses.

- **Despite the large number of participants the results cannot be generalised** uncritically due to how the selection was made. Be clear about the fact that the statistics apply to the children who participated in the survey, and think about what justification exists for generalising into patterns and trends among children in general.

- **The qualitative material must be handled carefully** because it is impossible to know how representative the children who provide open-ended responses are of the cohort that responded to the survey. They can give a deeper understanding of the quantitative material, but they do not necessarily provide a full picture of what the children are thinking.

- **Be aware of and report opinions and statements that are at odds with what other children are saying** and also the conclusions that those processing the material regard as important. No material is without contradictions and when conflicting information is presented, it increases the credibility of the sender.

- **Trust your material.** At a general level the results should be able to be supported by past research or theoretical models. However, the objective of producing new knowledge and providing nuance or challenging past results can be a strength.

- **Don't be afraid to experiment with different ways to approach the material.** It is unusual for quantitative and qualitative data to be so closely connected and for children who participated in analysis groups to provide additional knowledge.

- **Always report how you processed the data.** It can often be a good idea to create a technical report in which you summarise how you processed data and what choices you made.

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Feedback to children

In surveys aimed at children it is important to bear in mind right from the start how the feedback process will work. Not all of the children participating will necessarily want feedback. They will above all want to provide knowledge aimed at adults, but asking children to contributetheir time and knowledge without offering them the chance to see the results is unnecessary and disrespectful.

At ECPAT we have concluded that it is relatively rare for children to search for and read reports. We have therefore looked for other channels to reach them. We used much of the knowledge that we have received through the survey to make short videos that we put online for children seeking information and support within ECPAT's focus areas. We have also produced material for teachers that are largely based on our results. Finally, information about the support helpline comes in part from what we have learnt from the survey. This knowledge is shared with counsellors in the helpline and it is an important means of improving the support provided to children who get in touch.

We provide more comprehensive feedback to children in the analysis groups if they want it. They can see how their voices are presented in the report and are given a chance to correct any errors. They are also asked if they want to see the finished product and they receive the contact details of those who wrote the report in case they have any questions.

At the same time we are constantly working with children on how they would like to receive feedback. We hope that in future we can produce additional materials specifically for children because we believe this would be valuable. There is a great deal of silence around sexual exploitation of children on the internet among children as well. Many vulnerable or exploited children and youth feel alone in their experience.
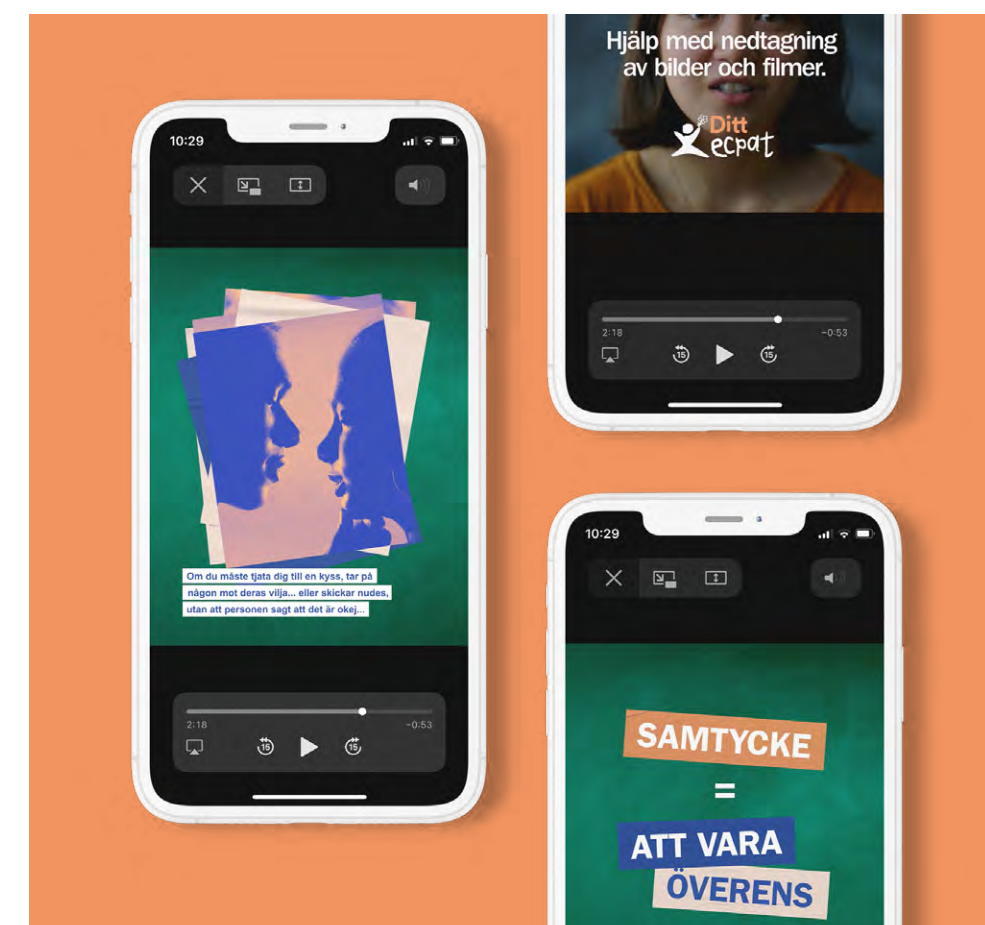
The ways in which ECPAT has provided feedback to children include through videos using actors and thematic mini reports.

Would you like to read more about providing feedback to children?

To a deeper dive

Important considerations

- **Start thinking about whether and why you will provide feedback to the children early on.** In many cases children can at an early stage receive feedback on how their contributions are being used. This shows that you value their efforts.

- **Remember that children want to receive information in different ways than adults.** Many children prefer video content rather than reports. Printed materials for children need to be age appropriate.

- **Children who have been more active in contributing information should be allowed to review the material before it is printed.** They should also have a chance to see the finished product.

- **Use the results to increase the interface with children** who need support or information, if this is part of what your organisation does.

Summary

For three years ECPAT has worked on producing a process for the survey "Nude Online" (Nude på nätet) in which we have used quantitative and qualitative methods alternately to understand children's experiences of sexual exploitation on the internet.

One crucial aspect has been to include children as participants throughout the process because we see children as experts and bearers of knowledge that adults lack.

The active participation and engagement of children has been crucial for the success of our method and the unique knowledge our surveys have generated. The first advice for anyone wanting to conduct surveys aimed at children is therefore to create a plan for children's meaningful participation in as many parts of the process as possible. This is especially important in the areas where children rarely participate, such as designing the questionnaire or analysing the results.

Another vital lesson – linked to the first one – is that surveys aimed at children should ensure that the children themselves perceive the survey as meaningful and interesting. Create stories that children can identify with and use the same terminology that children use. Provide many opportunities for open-ended responses and ask the difficult questions in a direct way that makes children feel respected and sparks their interest and engagement. Engagement increases both the number of children participating and their generosity in the responses. It is also important to ensure that information about the survey sparks their interest and willingness to participate.

A third lesson is to apply an iterative process and not separate the qualitative and quantitative parts of the survey. Even in cases where a survey is carried out on one occasion, each step provides opportunities for learning, and the various parts can support each other. The qualitative material can fill the quantitative parts with content, nuance and depth. The quantitative parts help us to see the phenomenon at an aggregated level. Utilise the richness of the material that is produced.

Finally, it is important not to forget that a survey also requires a broad range of skills among those who are conducting it. There must be someone who can interview or facilitate focus groups of children, create stories, design questionnaires and analyse the material using both qualitative and quantitative methods in a credible and transparent way. Similarly, it is important to present the material in a way that is both correct and emphasises the children's contributions.

Would you like to know more about ECPAT's work and what we are doing to stop the sexual exploitation of children? Read more at ecpat.se.

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Deeper dives

The purpose of this deeper dive section is to create a deeper understanding of how we created the survey, as well as the assumptions we made and the limitations we set. This section is more theoretical and is aimed at those who want to use ECPAT's experiences to create a survey aimed at and in cooperation with children.

The goal is not to encourage anyone to make a copy of our survey. We want to share our experiences to make it easy for those who want to create a survey for children that respects children's right to participate and, based on children's engagement, generate data that is both broad and deep.

One area that we would like to emphasise is the need for the right skills within the organisation that will conduct a survey aimed at children. Those creating both the qualitative and quantitative sections of the survey need to understand the strengths and weaknesses in the methods and the data produced. Those managing the survey must also be used to interviewing and running workshops with children, comprehend survey structures and have an understanding

of the strengths and weaknesses of different types of sampling. These skills are particularly important as the structure of our surveys requires a departure from traditional surveys and these departures in turn require an understanding of both why they are made and how they impact the results.

We want to once again emphasise the importance of providing information and feedback to children. Children who have participated in other surveys make it clear when they don't understand what their participation is contributing to. When children are generous in sharing their knowledge with us, it is only fair that they should be able to see our results.

A survey aimed at children but that does not allow children to see the results in their own channels is a survey that does not respect the fact that they are the ones who have done the most important work in the survey.

Children's participation Deeper dive

The first item in Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child establishes that "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."

Despite this declaration on the child's right to participate, there is often confusion about why and in what manner children are to be allowed to participate in various processes. This is especially clear in the case of surveys where children's participation as respondents is automatically regarded as a path to participation and a possibility to have their voices heard. This view of participation, where children respond to questions defined by adults and where adults analyse the children's responses, is an imperfect and sometimes problematic view of child participation. It underestimates children's ability to identify important themes and analyse material that is created and that affects them.

One reason why child participation does not happen to a greater extent and that it depends on the goodwill of adults, is that children lack a clear voice and clear representatives in the public debate. Other groups who are fighting the fact that their voices are marginalised have in recent decades – and often with the slogan "Nothing about us without us!" – put forward their demands for full participation in decisions, policies and studies that affect them. In the area of children's rights, children seldom express the same demands and this means that organisations focusing on this all too often see the participation of children as difficult and unnecessary.

ECPAT's perspective on children's participation is that children are experts in their own situation and they have knowledge that adults lack. Children have specific knowledge on certain issues and it should never be assumed that individual children represent children in general. Based on this perspective it is important to include them in all parts of the survey process and to give them clear information about where and in which way they will be given a chance to have an influence. The goal is to work with children to create surveys that are relevant and engaging for them and, in the next step, also analyse the results together with them. We are convinced that this helps to improve surveys and provide a deeper understanding of children's lives and desires.

Knowledge about children that is not generated together with children is an inadequate form of knowledge that often proves to be wrong or ineffective.

"ECPAT's perspective on children's participation is that children are experts in their own situation and they have knowledge that adults lack."

Back to An iterative method

An iterative method Deeper dive

When we started the project, our point of departure was that existing methods for gathering knowledge from children were inadequate in several ways. Qualitative methods are often about a desire to generalise based on a few voices, and it is difficult to reach vulnerable groups to get their perspective on issues that affect them. There is also a tendency to let individual children represent the whole group without recognising that they, just like adults, are a heterogeneous group with different perspectives. In terms of quantitative surveys, there is a declining response rate, a widespread survey fatigue at schools and a sense that surveys are too often based on questions from the adult world with no understanding of children's experiences and priorities. Lack of participation, inaccessible language and little space for nuance all lower children's level of interest in participating and sharing their experiences and knowledge.

When creating new methods aimed at children, the focus should be on allowing the children to be participants, and allowing them to feel engaged and that their participation is meaningful. To achieve this, we at ECPAT apply design methodology. What distinguishes design methodology is that it is user-focused, iterative and promotes a holistic perspective.

In our case this means that the various parts of the survey create a whole where all parts must interact, and that children are invited to take part in as many parts of the process as possible. Children are our users who work with us to create a process and a design that encourages them to share their knowledge and allows them to feel that it is meaningful. The iterative approach means that every new round is part of an exploration and is seen as a prototype that can be improved.

"Every new round is part of an exploration and is seen as a prototype that can be improved."

After three years' work we are now convinced that in many cases our model and our methods work better and produce better data from children than traditional methods. We also believe that it is an effective model to guarantee meaningful child participation in how we examine and interpret their experiences and life situations. It makes the results even more applicable to those who really want to understand and improve the situation for children and the challenges they face.

Back to Creating stories

Creating stories Deeper dive

Using stories in a survey is different in many ways from the original qualitative surveys where children in a focus group get to reflect on the stories. The main difference is that in a focus group, children interact with each other and the stories can therefore contain more complex issues. In a focus group it is also possible to follow up on statements that are unclear.

When the questions are presented in a digital forum without someone leading the survey process, children can end their participation if the material is not engaging or if they feel it is hard to get through the survey. The stories should therefore be kept brief and the problem addressed needs to focus on an event or interaction. In ECPAT's case this could mean that we choose not to describe someone who uses threats to obtain nude pictures and then distributes them – even if this is something that children may have experienced. This type of story could open up to criticism of the threatening behaviour, of the distribution of photos, or of both and it would be difficult to separate them from each other.

Despite this reduction in complexity we still need to open up for different response alternatives. This in turn requires the stories to be both close enough to the children's daily lives and be open for different interpretations by different children. To achieve this, the interviews used as

a basis for the stories need to be carefully analysed and tested on children to ensure that the story is sufficiently meaningful.

One interview – one perspective – is often not sufficient to create an understanding of how children interpret a problem. Initially it is therefore necessary to collect relatively comprehensive data from children with similar experiences but with different responses. Based on this, we can create a first story and test it with children who do not have specific experiences to see how they react and if the response alternatives are still sufficient to cover the children's reasoning. Then the story and the response alternatives can be revised until the children's reasoning is covered by the response alternatives and new tests of the stories do not create new reasoning.

"The stories must therefore be kept brief and the problem addressed needs to focus on an event or interaction."

Regardless of how well the story is revised, new perspectives will emerge and children will want to justify and provide nuance on why they responded as they did. It is therefore important to have open-ended responses linked to the stories to offer this possibility.

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Back to Creating the survey

Creating the survey Deeper dive

The structure of a survey where not all partici-pants are responding to the same stories and no participant responds to more than one subset of the stories, requires some assumptions to be made at an early stage.

This can be illustrated with an example:

- If we assume that 10,000 children respond to an average of two stories each in a survey, that means we have 20,000 stories respon-ded to.
- If we are interested in gender differences and that half of the respondents are girls and half boys, we have 10,000 stories responded to by each gender.
- If there are two stories, this means 10,000 responses to each story and 5,000 by each gender.
- If the survey instead has four stories and the children are randomly divided between them, each story will have around 5,000 responses and 2,500 from each gender.
- If there are 10 stories, each story has around 1,000 responses and 500 from each gender, and so on.

Problems can arise if we want to survey a group that makes up a relatively small part of the po-pulation. We can then either reduce the number of stories so that this group is still sufficiently large to analyse, or we can – as ECPAT has done

in the case of children who identify as non-binary – reduce the number of stories that this group can be randomly selected for. The latter means that we will have no responses to several questions from the group in question, but at the same time we will be able to draw more safe conclusions from the stories that the children have actually responded to.

"Problems can arise if we want to survey a group that makes up a relatively small part of the population."

As the children chose how many stories they want to respond to it is important to emphasise that background variables must come before the first story. When background variables are picked up later on it is difficult to know what the selection looks like for those who responded to one story compared to those who responded to more.

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Sparking children's interest Deeper dive

In quantitative methods, so-called simple random selection is seen as the most correct and the only method that guarantees the possibility to generalise. Simple random selection means that participants in a study are selected randomly from a population where all individuals have the same likelihood of being selected.

In certain cases stratified selection is applied where individuals, based on certain characteristics, are assigned a different weight than individuals without those characteristics. Cluster selection is where selection takes place in multiple steps, for example by creating a random selection of schools and then only recruiting students (or in some cases classes) from the selected schools. In rough terms we can say that this increases the likelihood of the participants in the survey being representative.

The problem with random selection is that even if the selection itself is random, it doesn't necessarily mean that those responding to the survey are. Two problems identified are declining response rates (it is common for surveys aimed at children to have only around a 30 percent response rate) and schools deciding not to take part in surveys that are not compulsory. To a certain extent this bias can be corrected by weighting responses based on known variables in the population in relation to their frequency among participants. But even with weighting, this is a correction that is partial and how representative the participants are remains unknown.

This does not mean that non-random selection based on self-recruitment – the method ECPAT has chosen – is better from a purely methodological standpoint. It is likely that the children reached by information about the survey through friends or social media and who choose to participate differ systematically from the children who either are not reached by the information or choose not to participate. With the very large number of participants in our surveys – in 2021 and 2022 around 13,000 children in ages 10–17 – we consider it reasonable to draw certain conclusions on patterns in children's experiences of sexual exploitation on the internet. This opinion is reinforced by the fact that the children, based on the background variables we can control against the population, seem to be more representative than participants in many surveys that use random selection. Our analysis groups, where we aim for heterogeneity, also give us an indication that children recognise the stories and can often relate what is described in them to events in their own lives.

It is, however, always important to be careful not to ignore the risk of children who participate not reflecting children in general. This applies to all surveys where children share their experiences.

Back to Analysing the material

Analysing the material Deeper dive

The first part of the analysis involves starting to understand the material and ensure the quality of the data collected. This takes time but it is extremely important. It is crucial for the work ahead that enough time is allocated to do this properly.

Data cleansing is where data is reviewed and cleansed of responses that cannot be used for some reason. It may be that certain participants have not filled out enough of the survey for it to be usable – in our case, participants who have not responded to at least one story. Another part involves cleansing data of responses that have clearly not been provided in a serious manner. The person cleansing the data needs to be very cautious and to give the data the benefit of the doubt. It is also important not to mix frivolous open-ended responses with frivolous responses that need to be cleansed from the data. Even if an open-ended response such as "If animals don't want to be eaten, why are they made of food?" does not add anything on the issue of sexual abuse on the internet, this doesn't mean that the other responses are not serious ones. Removing a participant must always be preceded by looking at the whole picture and must always be done case by case. It is of added importance to look at people who in the background variables section have responded in an "extreme" way to multiple variables, for example that they are 10 years

old, non-binary, do not live with their parents, have a neuropsychiatric disorder diagnosis and were born outside Sweden to parents born in Sweden. This is not to say that people who meet all of these do not exist, but that it is a combination that requires taking a closer look at the material. Although there are few responses of this nature – in our surveys we remove less than 1 percent of responses – it is an important process as these responses could otherwise affect small groups disproportionately and result in a risk of drawing the wrong conclusions about them.

The next stage, which is partly integrated into the first, is to look for skewed data through sensitivity analysis. In ECPAT's case this involves questions such as:

- Are children who do not respond to a story but who respond to the background variables systematically different from children who respond to at least one story?

- Do people who respond to one story respond systematically in a different way to those who respond to three?

- Do children who respond to questions about being exposed to crime systematically have more or fewer experiences of exposure than those who do not?

In cases where there are systematic differences, these either need to be corrected using weighting or reported in another way. In many cases it is sufficient to write a technical report that can be shared if requested.

"The person cleansing the data needs to be very cautious and to give the data the benefit of the doubt."

Finally, it is important to control for covariance between the different variables examined as there is otherwise a risk that the connection in the data will be misunderstood. In our case we see, for example, that an increased risk of exposure to crime depends on gender identity and whether someone identifies as LGBTQI+. But a larger percentage of girls identify as LGBTQI+, which is also a factor that affects how people respond to different stories. To clarify which parts are directly correlated with a certain response, a deeper analysis of the data is needed, where the strength in all correlations is controlled in the same model. These models are seldom presented in reports as they may be difficult to interpret, but this does not make it any less im-

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portant to examine them as part of the analysis process.

It is important to be very careful to present correlations as causal links. Even in cases that seem obvious – such as that a girl/woman gender identity increases the likelihood of receiving unwanted nude pictures – it should not be taken for granted that this is correct. In general there is no reverse causation, where gender identity would be impacted by someone receiving unwanted nude pictures (which is rare even though there is anecdotal evidence suggesting that a correlation between sexual harassment on the internet and non-binary gender identity exists in some cases). There are, on the other hand, intermediate variables. We know, for example, that girls spend more time and are more active on social media, which could lead to an increased exposure to harassment.

Once our analysis has provided us with a description of what the data says based on the questions included when the survey was created, we can proceed to the open-ended responses. These open-ended responses can fill the quantitative data with content – although it should be taken into account that many children do not write open-ended responses. Responses that describe a child's own exposure or vulnerability show what it can mean for the individual child. Also, strategies to avoid exposure can be described with more nuance, and attitudes to victims and perpetrators can come across more clearly.

At this stage between the qualitative and the quantitative, it is important to be aware of a number of factors:

- The open-ended responses are selective. Not all children provide responses and some provide more information than others. It is hard to know which children generally write a lot and which ones are taciturn or quiet, and if there is a systematic difference between these groups in terms of strategies and attitudes.

- The children who respond do not all have the same experiences, and one aspect of the analysis involves identifying differences and conflicting information in children's responses. Reasoning that stands out, even if this is not common, is in this part of the analysis just as important as where many children think along the same lines. The broader the material the greater the likelihood that children's ways of thinking and explaining things can be described in a fair and nuanced way.

- This part of the analysis involves a systematisation of the open-ended response material, not an interpretation of it. It is therefore important to thematise the material in a way that is as neutral as possible and not to separate it into desired and problematic responses.

- The open-ended responses form the bases for the analysis carried out in cooperation with children. It may be difficult for children to discuss and analyse statistical patterns, but an open-ended response where other children share their thoughts on an issue is something they can relate to. Sorting the material thematically also makes it easier to generate data that is representative for the survey for children.

At the end of the first part of the analysis it is important to structure the material around questions to continue with. This involves taking the quantitative results and linking them to the open-ended responses. This connection is important in order to include the children in the subsequent parts of the analysis.

Children as analysts Deeper dive

The most important thing to remember when working with children as analysts is that they should be treated as colleagues rather than as just sources of information. This means that, based on their understanding of the world, their task is to discuss how other children have responded, not to talk about their own experiences. This needs to be clear in the information they receive and in how the adults present the material. It is important for them to feel safe in the situation and to understand that their work will impact the reporting process. To the greatest extent possible, they are to be allowed to see the material in as unedited a state as possible and to discuss it based on a few clear and open questions. It is important for the children participating to know that the conversation is being recorded and that they will receive information on how the material will be used. Always ask the children if they want to review in advance how their quotes will be used in your work, and give them enough time to answer.

The children should be given access to material that is as broad as possible so that the analysis can be applied broadly. To the extent possible, visual and tactile materials can be used to initiate a discussion.

The task of the adults present is to facilitate the discussion but not to be active participants. In preparation for this part of the analysis it is important to know what is required of the children and it is therefore necessary to have a discussion guide. This should contain questions to help the children examine the material from different perspectives, but also follow-up questions if the conversation with the children comes to a standstill. It is not usually possible to create the follow-up questions in detail as they will often refer back to what the children discussed and will ask them to explain their thinking. It could also be relevant to compare two different positions to understand if they are mutually exclusive or just describe a phenomenon from two different perspectives. Sometimes, however, there are questions that are important to answer and that may not necessarily come up in the conversation. In these cases the question can be posed directly, either at the end or in connection with a specific quote where there is a natural connection. Go through the material with all of the facilitators to ensure that everyone has understood the process.

Throughout the discussion it is important to pay attention to the atmosphere in the group and, as far as possible, to document it. It is a good idea to create materials that document the atmosphere and level of engagement. In certain groups there is a clear desire to reach consensus, while other groups are more open to having different opinions. One strong voice can also affect the group. It is the task of the adult facilitator to gu-arantee that everyone gets a chance to talk and that the tone of the conversation between the children is respectful.

"The most important thing to remember when working with children as analysts is that they should be treated as colleagues rather than as just sources of information."

Remember that this is the children's analysis and that it should, to the extent possible, be presented without interpretation. It is possible to deepen and clarify the children's analysis by contextualising and framing it theoretically, but this must be done with respect for the children's voices. It is not the adult's task – neither in the conversation nor in the reporting process – to judge or interpret the children's analysis.

Presenting and evaluating materials Deeper dive

A very important aspect of presenting materials is to consider which data is being presented and which methods have been used to analyse it. Here, transparency is of the utmost importance so that the recipient can themselves evaluate the material they receive. All too often, organisations become used to presenting reports and surveys without at the same time explaining how the data was collected and analysed. Even if it may be OK in the short term to present surprising conclusions without describing how they were arrived at, it is not constructive in the long term. A lack of transparency opens the reporting up for criticism of both the results and the organisation as a whole.

It is often effective to present the material with the help of diagrams and graphs. This type of visualisation allows the recipient to quickly get an idea of what is being communicated. The text can serve to provide a deeper understanding. A rule of thumb is for all visualisations to be as clean as possible and to only communicate one thing.Inaccurate or confusing diagrams negatively impact credibility and could irritate the recipient, which reduces credibility in general. Similarly, infographics should be checked carefully so that they actually communicate the data correctly and in a way that is easy to understand.

In certain cases only the qualitative part of the material is used and it is then important not to be tempted to generalise these results to the quantitative material. Open-ended responses serve as an illustration of what individual children are thinking when they respond in a certain way, but this doesn't necessarily mean that the responses of individual children can be generalised as representative of all children who have responded in a certain way.

If children participate as analysts, it is important for their analysis to form the framework of the presentation and that their voices come to the fore without being interpreted. It is easy for adults to believe that they know better than children and that they can communicate what children have said to other adults, but this can distort the results. Where the material has been systematised after the analysis process, it is therefore very important that this is done in a way that brings the children's voices to the fore and not adapted too much for the intended recipient.

When conducting target group analysis of the results, it is important to consider how the material is packaged. It is easy to think in terms of reports when summarising results, but some-

times videos, podcasts or presentations work better. These alternative ways of presenting results are often more accessible and easier to distribute.

Finally, it is reasonable to expect things to be questioned when using new methods. Be open about what you know and can state, but also be open about things you do not have an answer for yet.

Back to Feedback to children

Feedback to children Deeper dive

A recurring cardinal sin with respect to surveys about children's experiences is not letting the children see the survey results. It is hard to understand the reason for this omission – that those conducting the survey of children hope that their work will benefit children but do not provide the children with information about their conclusions. Children both want and are able to take in survey results – directly or indirectly – and not using this as the basic premise is to underestimate children yet again. A lack of feedback also affects children's willingness to participate in the future.

It is important that the feedback is provided in a way so that children want to take it in and that it is communicated in the channels the children themselves use. This often means that the results are not packaged as a result of a survey. In ECPAT's case, much of our feedback to children is in the form of education materials, information campaigns and digital products that are based on what we have learnt from the survey in combination with information on areas where children often lack knowledge, such as legal aspects or where they can get help. We are communicating to children that we have listened and learnt things about them, and that we also know that children sometimes need knowledge and support from the adult world on their own terms. The objective of feedback is an on-going dialogue where we invite children to participate.

"We are communicating to children that we have listened and learnt things about them, and that we also know that children sometimes need knowledge and support from the adult world on their own terms. The objective of feedback is an ongoing dialogue where we invite children to participate."

This is especially clear in our support helpline, Ditt ECPAT, for which the survey has been an important source of knowledge on children's lives and how children want to be treated whether receiving information or support. Essentially all aspects of our support activities are created by actively involving children and inviting them to take part in a way so that we can show them we understand them and want to help.

Over the past two years we have seen our support activities expand significantly and more and more children are turning to us. The knowledge we have gained from children has been invaluable in making this growth possible.

ECPAT