Hear the voices of survivors of Sexual Exploitation

As we continue to reflect on the theme of the Day of the African Child “Leave no child behind for Africa’s development”, we need to go a step further and identify the other groups of children that have been left behind in terms of children affected by sexual exploitation.

The voices of children and young people who have been sexually exploited and the perspectives and recommendations of victims and survivors communicate powerfully. The voices of these children and young people, who have been subjected to sexual exploitation, are essential to the prevention of further sexual exploitation of children and young people, and to the monitoring of children’s rights. As such consulting with victims and survivors and bringing their perspectives and recommendations into knowledge generation and strategic decision-making is important. The voices of children and survivors communicate powerfully. The voices of children and survivors are essential to the prevention of further sexual exploitation of children and young people, and to the monitoring of children’s rights. As such consulting with victims and survivors and bringing their perspectives and recommendations into knowledge generation and strategic decision-making is important.

One way of tackling this problem of sexual exploitation of children is through advocacy. As was indicated by Graca Machel (2014) “We have to change how we do things and make it work for children”.

In an effort to make sure that the voices and perspectives of child victims and survivors are heard in Zimbabwe, ZNCWC with funding from Comic Relief through VSO has partnered with the government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to develop a Youth Position Paper. This project is aimed at identifying and facilitating the full reintegration of children into their families and communities. These children should be identified as children in difficult circumstances in need of care as stated in the Children’s Act. Once identified they should be placed in alternate care, and provided with psychological and social support services tailored to their specific psychological and social needs in terms of recovery and reintegration.

As an example of the work of ECPAT International places the victims and survivors of sexual exploitation at the centre of its work in Zimbabwe. ECPAT International claims their rights, influence policy and monitor the SDGs. ECPAT International also need to be treated as advocates who amplify children’s voices, participate in key processes affecting them and their communities, claim their rights, influence policy and monitor the SDGs.

As Graca Machel once said “we worry more about what our children will be tomorrow, forgetting that they are children now”.

We have to address children’s needs in terms of recovery and re-integration. One such group of children are child victims and survivors of sexual exploitation. One such group of children are child victims and survivors of sexual exploitation. Some of the reasons why this group of children has been left behind include their socio-economic status, where they live, what they do for a living, and their health status. This shows that there is a huge need to protect children from sexual exploitation as it creates a Zimbabwe fit for all children.

As concern about the sexual exploitation of children in southern Africa increased in the 1990s, child rights practitioners and programmes Manager at ZNCWC. He can be contacted at maxim@zncwc.co.zw or maximmuringweni@gmail.com. The voices and perspectives of children in sexual exploitation are crucial to tackling the problem of sexual exploitation of children so that we are able to reach their maximum potential in life.

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The nation needs to give child survivors of sexual exploitation a voice and an opportunity to participate in their own development. A ZNCWC study conducted in Bulawayo in 2006 titled Young Women in commercial sexual exploitation along two transport corridors in Zimbabwe: Causes, initiation prevalence showed that (18% (52) of single transport corridor sex workers were at risk of being young and female in a high prevalence setting and were less able to negotiate safe sex, more likely to have higher risk sexual relationships, and more likely to be involved with older sex workers. Sexual exploitation of children is prevalent in HIV and other sensitive cases and is a serious issue in Zimbabwe. In 2009 ZNCWC partnered with the government of Zimbabwe and use of HIV and social services showed that (18% (52) of young women in Bulawayo were aged 18 years or younger in 2009 and researchers reported that they were six times more likely to be involved in sexual exploitation for concern and bring to mind the words of a scholar who said “It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men or women”.

In an effort to make sure that the voices and perspectives of children in sexual exploitation are heard and listened to, ensure that these children actively participate in key processes affecting them and their communities, their active engagement. It has been realised that the voices and perspectives of victims and survivors communicate powerfully. The voices of these children and young people, who have been subjected to sexual exploitation, are essential to the prevention of further sexual exploitation of children and young people, and to the monitoring of children’s rights. As such consulting with victims and survivors and bringing their perspectives and recommendations into knowledge generation and strategic decision-making is important.

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