

**Briefing on perceptions of frontline welfare workers on the sexual exploitation of children in the Pacific
Submission**

for the Universal Periodic Review of the human rights situation in Kiribati

Submitted by
ECPAT International

Bangkok, Thailand on 18th July 2019

to the **Human Rights Council**
35th session (January 2020)
UPR third cycle 2017 – 2021



ECPAT International
Special consultative status

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ECPAT International is a global network of civil society organisations working for the eradication of all forms of sexual exploitation of children. For the past 29 years, ECPAT has acted as the international watchdog, monitoring States' response to sexual exploitation of children, and advocating for robust international measures to protect children from sexual exploitation. ECPAT International currently has 109 network members operating in 96 countries.

1. The present submission is a brief summary of the findings of a recent research conducted by ECPAT International and aimed at offering a snapshot of the context of sexual exploitation of children (SEC) in the Pacific and key issues affecting children’s vulnerability, ability to access support services, and frontline worker’s ability to provide support to them.¹
2. The scope of this briefing is limited to SEC and its different manifestations, including exploitation of children in prostitution,² online child sexual exploitation (OCSE), child sexual abuse materials (CSAM),³ trafficking of children for sexual purposes and sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism (SECTT)⁴ and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).
3. In June 2019, ECPAT undertook a survey of 84 welfare workers in seven Pacific countries, including responses from seven i-Kiribati welfare workers. The sexual exploitation of children in the Pacific region has received very limited attention and virtually no primary data is available. While exploratory and limited, the results for the survey provided immensely important data on the possible extent and level of awareness of the problem. Data presented here is related to the full sample (from all 7 Pacific countries) but often aligned with trends seen globally.
4. Overwhelmingly perpetrators were male (90%) though up to 32% of facilitators of abuse were women. Typically (70%), the perpetrators were from the family or ‘circle of trust’ of the child; “Most children were victims of rape by relatives and people known as friends of the victims’ family.” As many as 32% of the total cases that workers were seeing involved boys as victims.
5. Stigmatization and the taboo nature of sex were major barriers, that while not specific to the region, may be exacerbated by social and cultural norms. Unwillingness to discuss the issue also represented vulnerabilities for children and 67% of respondents identified that general public awareness about SEC was ‘poor’.

The need for governments to urgently fund support services, and scale up police training and resourcing to respond was consistent.

¹ ECPAT International. (2019, June). [Perceptions of frontline welfare workers on the sexual exploitation of children in the Pacific](#), Bangkok:ECPAT.

² ECPAT prefers the term ‘*exploitation of children in prostitution*’ instead of ‘*child prostitution*’ in line with the recently widely adopted Terminology Guidelines. ECPAT International (2016), “[Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, adopted by the Interagency Working Group in Luxembourg, 28 January 2016](#)”, Bangkok: ECPAT, 29.

³ ECPAT prefers the term ‘child sexual exploitation material’ or ‘child sexual abuse material’ over the often in legal context still used ‘child pornography’ in line with the recently widely adopted Terminology Guidelines. *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.