

# **SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION: THE CASE OF JIMMA AND AGARO TOWNS OF OROMIA REGIONAL STATE**

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## **Abstract**

This study was conducted to assess people's awareness, patterns, community responses and factors for child sexual abuse and exploitation in Jimma and Agaro town. Survey, key informant interview and case studies were used to collect the information required for the study. The data collected was analyzed using percentages and case studies under themes developed based on the research objectives. The findings of the study revealed that eighty nine percent of the respondents are aware of the existence of child sexual abuse in their community and more than half of them have identified sexual intercourse with children, child pornography and child genital stimulation as child sexual abuses. Both girls and boys can be exposed to child sexual abuse; however, girls are more vulnerable to child sexual abuses than boys. In terms of their backgrounds, street children, orphans and children of the poor families are mainly vulnerable to child sexual abuse. Children are sexually abused in their home, in the community and in organizations as the findings from the case studies and key informant interviews indicated. Death of parents, family poverty and the subsequent inability to fulfill the necessary basic needs for children; abusers' perception about sexual affairs with children is safe as they think children are free from HIV/AIDS, lack of appropriate care and follow up for children are the major factors for child sexual abuse. Moreover, the fact that the poor families and their girl children are easily cheated by gifts in cash and in kind from abusers also make children of such families more vulnerable to sexual abuses than others. The police and the court have been making efforts to punish the offenders. However, the measures ever taken are not adequate when compared with the injury afflict on the children by the offenders.

Therefore, strengthening the family economic capacity through income generating activities, families' close follow up of the daily safety of their children, reunification of the street children to their families/relatives and introduction of mechanisms to investigate cases of child abuses by the court in order to take balanced corrective measures on offenders are recommended based the findings.

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**Keywords:** Jimma town, Agaro town, child, child sexual abuse, public response

### **Introduction**

Children in the world encounter enormous psychological and socio-economic problems that adversely affect their lives. Among these are different forms of child abuse and exploitation that include physical, emotional, sexual and social maltreatment of children. A particular child abuse is whereby children are sexually abused and exploited which is one of the most serious social problems facing societies today (Martell, 2005: 1).

Although the phenomenon of child sexual abuse and exploitation is not a new occurrence, its recognition was only after 1980s (Bolen, 2002:12). Child sexual abuse and exploitation has immediate and far-reaching effects on the victims (Department of Justice Canada, 2005: 6; Unicef, 2006: viii). Sexually abused children will become vulnerable to a multiple psychological, social, and economic problems in their future lives including engaging in high risk behaviors such as unsafe sexual activities (Flowers, 2001: 144). They are more prone to sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS (Miles and Stephenson, 2000: 12).

Child sexual abuse and exploitation is a global phenomenon as it exists in most cultures irrespective of material wealth and state ideology (Save the Children, 2003: 1). When it comes to the risks of child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE), no child is necessarily safe, regardless of their background. Child sexual abuse and exploitation can take place anywhere (ECPAT International, 2007: 14). Children can be maltreated by individuals, groups, institutions, and socio-cultural systems at large. Today, children are sexually abused by family members, acquaintances, or stranger perpetrators (Flowers, 2001: 144).

Very little research has been done regarding sexual abuse of children in developing countries whereby abuse is almost invariably covert and so compiling accurate figures is nearly impossible. Hence, insufficient data exists on the nature and incidence of child sexual abuse in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, the existing information indicated the pervasiveness of the problem in Africa is as elsewhere. There is a high prevalence of both child sex tourism (CST) and trafficking in children for sexual purposes in Africa

(ECPAT International, 2007: 5). According to the official UNICEF figure, there were approximately 1 million child victims throughout Asia alone (Miles and Stephenson, 2000: 12).

Although the sexual abuse of children is as pervasive in sub-Saharan Africa as it is in other parts of the world, public awareness of child sexual abuse in sub-Saharan Africa is low. This is largely the function of a poorly resourced academic/research sector (Lalor, 2005: 1). A number of studies concluded that child sexual abuse is on increase in Sub-Saharan Africa due to rapid social and cultural changes such as the breakdown of family structures and acceptable traditional sexual norms. In some Sub-Saharan African countries, having sexual intercourse with virgin or younger girls is prescribed as cure for healing some diseases including HIV/AIDS (Lalor, 2005: 9-11).

Ethiopian government also reported that child sexual abuse is a common form of violence perpetuated on children. For instance, out of 214 allegedly abused children under the age of 15 reported to one government hospital (Yekatit Hospital) during a period of one year (from July 2001 to June 2002), 74% suffered from sexual abuse. 93% of these children were female (Ethiopian Government, 2007: 58). Moreover, sexual violence especially on children is under reported due to lack of awareness, taboos about sex and sexuality, a lack of faith in the justice system, and/or stigmatization of victims. As a result, sexually abused children suffer from physical, sexual, psychological and social consequences.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although child sexual abuse is a universal happening, it is still a social construction as the definition and scopes of child sexual abuse, and its conceptualization, are socially constructed phenomena. As a result, to understand child sexual abuse and society's response to it, the socio-cultural context within which it is defined and conceptualized must be understood (Bolen, 2002:11). The legal definition of 'child' may also differ among countries and even within countries for different purposes, and between boys and girls (Unicef, 2001: 8). For example, the dynamics of socialization as well as society's collective history of denial of child sexual abuse and exploitation may contribute to environments in which opportunities for abuse and exploitation can occur (Department of Justice Canada, 2005: 4). In addition, there is wide disparity in terms of community and beliefs about what behaviors and practices are indicative of abuse (Martell, 2005:7).

Although there are no comprehensive studies conducted on CSAE in Ethiopia at the national level, scattered researches have been conducted in different parts of the country. For instance, according to small scale study conducted in Dilla (SNNPR) and Shashemene (Oromia Region) towns (cited

in Ethiopian Government, 2007: 58), 93 out of 198 high school students stated that they were sexually abused. But of these, only 36 (38.7%) reported the incidence to the police, parents, friends and school teachers. According to the respondents, in 44.4% of the cases no measures were taken against the perpetrator of the violence. International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that women and children are trafficked in Ethiopia within the country and across the boarder (IOM, 2004). According to this study, an estimated number of five to ten thousand Ethiopian migrants trafficked to Lebanon alone are engaged in prostitution.

Different researches evidenced that child sexual abuse is pervasive in Addis Ababa (Getnet, 2001). Accordingly, the number of child commercial sex workers in Addis Ababa alone is estimated to be 6000. Traffic in children for sexual exploitation by engaging them in prostitution is also prevalent in Ethiopia. A National study on in-country traffic in women and children shows that 26.8% of children included in the study were victims of trafficking. Although available information on sexual abuse and exploitation of children (SAEC) is limited, the national crime statistics of the Federal Police Commission (unpublished) for the period September 1999 to September 2003, sexual outrage was the most prevalent form constituting 70.85%, 76.15%, 71.3% and 77.91% of reported crimes annually (IOM, 2004). This indicates that sexual norms violation is prevailing of which CSAE is one form.

Maruf Abera et., al . (2001) conducted a research on child abuse with particular focus on labor exploitation in Shebe town of Jimma Zone. Shebe is located 50 km away from Jimma town and 385 km from the capital, Addis Ababa. They found that child labor was widely practiced. They also reported the occurrence of practices of child sexual abuse in the town. The study indicated that sexual abuses were committed on girls who worked as paid domestic workers in the form of rape. However, as the focus of the study was child abuse in the form labor exploitation, the study has not exhausted problems of child sexual abuse and exploitation. The research method employed in this study was also home-based survey limited to children living with their parents or guardians. The study was also limited to a small town in Jimma zone. Therefore, the present research endeavor did not duplicate the same effort.

Dereje Worku et al (2006) studied the prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and its negative outcomes among Jiren high school female students. The study found that the prevalence of CSA (including verbal attacks) was 68.7%. Among the different forms of sexual abuses, verbal harassment, sexual intercourse, and forced kissing account (51.4%), 18.0% and 17.1% respectively. As a result of sexual abuse, the victims were exposed to unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and

psychological effects such as suicide ideation, suicide attempt, and sexual dysfunction. They concluded that CSA is a major contributing factor to the burden of disease among children and adolescents.

The results of the above study clearly showed that CSA became a pressing social problem in Jimma town although the study was delimited to students of a single school. Potential victims of CSA outside the school were not represented in this study. The employed survey method could also obscure some important facts about the situation of child sexual abuse and exploitation. This study, however, attempted to cover a broader study area and population employing both micro and macro level perspectives to understand the situation of child abuse and exploitation in Jimma Zone.

So far, we have seen that there have been efforts made to bridge the knowledge gap on the topic in the country and in the study area. However, still it appears that much more has to be done to fully investigate the issue and verify what have been researched and to explore aspects of the problem that have not been touched. Hence, this research focused on how children are sexually abused in and outside home by any potential abusers.

### **Objectives of the study**

- To assess people's awareness about the practices of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation in the community
- To assess factors that make children exposed to child sexual abuse and exploitation
- To identify categories of children at greater risk of sexual abuse and exploitation
- To assess patterns (where, when, how, victim-offender relationship) of child sexual abuse
- To examine public response to child sexual abuse by identifying gaps in policy and legislation

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Child**

A 'child' is defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as a person under the age of 18. This includes infancy, early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence (CRC, 1996). In this research too, this definition of child will be used.

#### **Child Abuse**

The most widely accepted definition so far, given by David Gil, states that, "child abuse and neglect is any action of commission or omission by individuals, institutions, or society as a whole and any conditions resulting from such acts or inactions which deprive children of their equal

rights and liberties and/or interfere with their optimal development” (Gil, quoted in Daka 1991, 18).

### **Child Sexual Abuse**

The UN (1999) has defined child sexual abuse as contacts or interactions between a child and an older or more knowledgeable child or adult (a stranger, sibling or person in a position of authority, such as a parent or caretaker) when the child is being used as an object of gratification for an older child’s or adult’s sexual needs. These contacts or interactions are carried out against the child using force, trickery, bribes, threats or pressure.

### **Explanatory Model of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation**

There are various sociological theories that explain trafficking of women and children. Sociological theories explain child sexual abuse as a socio-cultural phenomenon hence causality is best understood as a function of societal factors, manifesting at the level of the society and community which are then internalized by families and even the children themselves (Bolen, 2002:8). One of the causal factors of child and women sexual abuse is economic problem. Globalization is another factor which increased the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation (Ebbe, in Ebbe and Das, 2008: 36).

Many factors may play a role in the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth. At the societal level, the dynamics of socialization as well as society’s collective history of denial of child sexual abuse and exploitation may contribute to environments in which opportunities for abuse and exploitation can occur. At the community level, the absence of adequate safety precautions and educational supports in spiritual, cultural, recreational, child care, educational, residential and therapeutic care settings may place children and youth in situations of risk. Inter-generational patterns of abuse within the family, as well as family problems such as substance abuse and inadequate supervision are also considerations. At the individual level, the developmental age and sex of the child may also contribute to risk. People’s experience of child sexual abuse can also be affected by their interpersonal relationships with their potential offenders.

While any child or young person is potentially at risk, the interactions between various risk factors can be complex. These complex interactions between victims and offenders are greatly influenced by the socio-cultural and economic environments in which they grow up. Some children and youth may be more vulnerable due to factors that isolate and marginalize them in their homes and communities, such as poverty, disability, gender and other forms of discrimination (Department of Justice Canada. 2005: 4).

Therefore, this study employed sociological frameworks to understand environmental aspects (social, cultural, economic, historical, legal, policy and global systems) of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE) in the study area. Social Ecological Model (SEM) which gives due recognition to the child-environmental interaction was used as explanatory model in this study. Accordingly, different level sociological perspectives (macro, mezzo and micro) were integrated in understanding, analyzing, and explaining situations of CSAE. In this regard, how the above mentioned macro level conditions affect child treatment in general and CSAE in particular were assessed by putting children in the social settings rather than dealing with them as separate identity. That is, while the study does not totally ignore the importance of individual preferences, feelings, experiences, thoughts, and meanings about each child situation, these all were approached through sociological variables and concepts. Such variables and concepts include cultural practices, value systems/belief systems, gender, poverty, social statuses, employment, age category, and child protection to mention a few.

## **Methods**

The study was conducted in two towns, Jimma and Agaro, of Jimma zone, Oromia National Regional State. Jimma Zone is one of the 17 zones in Oromia and it is located in the South West of the Region and Ethiopia as well. The zone is predominantly inhabited by Islamic religion followers. Jimma Zone is among the known coffee growing areas in the Ethiopia. The administrative city of the zone is Jimma Town which is located at 350 km away from the capital of the country, Addis Ababa. It is the largest city in South Western Ethiopia. The surrounding woredas of Jimma are cash growing areas and Jimma and Agaro towns are the center of trade and commerce in the zone. The two towns were selected based on the severity of child sexual abuse and exploitation as well as their physical size and intensity of socioeconomic and demographic interactions. The leading information was obtained from the zonal offices who closely work with children's Affairs such as Office for Women and Children's Affairs, Office Labor and Social Affairs, Police Department, and Trade and Transport Office.

This study can be mainly classified as descriptive research from the perspective of its purpose because it attempts to describe systematically child sexual abuse and exploitation and provides information about the conditions of sexually abused children (Kumar, 2005: 10). It also describes people's awareness of the problem and structural responses to the problem. The study is also partly explanatory research because it attempts to clarify why and

how child trafficking and CSAE are intertwined. It attempts to explain how different factors affect CSAE.

The study employed qualitative approaches. It is predominantly qualitative because the purpose of the study is primarily to describe situations of sexually abused and exploited children which can be best investigated qualitatively. Open and closed ended questionnaire (survey) was also employed to collect information from the community. Survey method was used to explore the knowledge, attitude and the practice of CSAE through structured questionnaire. Moreover, in-depth interviews and case studies were employed to gather primary information from the key informants. In this way, information was collected from five cases and seven key informants. In so doing, unstructured interview guide was used as a data collection instrument. In all interviews (and other methods too) the potential informants and respondents was provided with full information about the purposes of the study and their consent was asked to give information. The method also helps to study a typical case of a phenomenon, hence, CSAE in this study (Kumar, 2005: 113).

Non-probability sampling design was employed to select respondents for survey research so as to understand their awareness, attitudes and practices related to child sexual abuse and exploitation. Accordingly, 100 respondents were selected from both towns. From the house hold members either of the parents or any adult member (above age 18 if parents absent) were interviewed for the information required. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, tables, graphs and charts. Qualitative data analyzed using thematic analysis and case descriptions.

## Results and Analysis

Data and information collected through questionnaire, interview and cases are presented, analyzed and interpreted in this part. Descriptive statistics such frequencies and percentages are used for quantitative part. Cases of children encountered sexual abuse were explored and described. Information obtained from the key informant interviews was organized and analyzed thematically. The results are presented as follows.

### The socio-demographic background of the respondents, community members

Table 1: Sex and age background of the respondents

Variable	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	63	63
	Female	37	37
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
	18-24	16	16

<b>Age</b>	25-34	24	24
	35-44	20	20
	55-60	18	18
	Above 60	22	22
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

As it is observed from Table 1, 63% of the respondents were males while the 37% were females. In terms of their age, 16% of them were 18-24, 24% of them were 25-34, 18% of them were 55-60 and 22% of them were above 60 years.

Table 2: Religious, educational and occupational backgrounds of respondents

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Religion</b>	Orthodox	33	33
	Protestant	16	16
	Catholic	2	2
	Muslim	49	49
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education</b>	Can't read and write	5	5
	Only read and write	8	8
	1-4	18	18
	5-8	25	25
	9-10	6	6
	11-12	29	29
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Occupation</b>	Self-employed	61	61
	Government employment	26	26
	Others	13	13
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 indicates the religious, educational and occupational background of the respondents. Accordingly, 33% of the respondents were Orthodox religious followers, 16% of them were Protestants, 49% of them were Muslims and the rest 2% were Catholics. When comes to their educational background, 5% of them cannot read and write, 8% of them only read and write, 18% of them were from grade 1-4, 25 % of them were from grade 5-8, 6% of them were 9-10 while the rest 29% of them were from 11-12 grades. Regarding their occupation, 61% of them were self-employed, 26% of them were government employee and 13% of them responded others such as student, soldiers and no occupation.

### **Community awareness about child sexual abuse and exploitation**

One of the objectives of this study was to assess the community knowledge about child sexual abuse and exploitation as well as the types of sexual affairs considered as child sexual abuse. Information collected from the respondents regarding this issue is organized in Table 3.

Table 3: Respondents' awareness about child sexual abuse

Variable	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Aware about child sexual abuse in the community?	Yes	89	89
	No	11	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Affairs considered as child sexual abuse	Pornography	11	12.3
	Sexual intercourse with children	28	31.5
	Child genital contact(stimulation) for sexual purpose	3	3.4
	Mixed response	47	52.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>89*</b>	<b>100</b>

**N.B:** \* indicates the total number could not be equals to 100 (the sample size) because only those who know child abuse were asked to respond the specific question about the types of sexual affairs considered as child sexual abuse and exploitation.

As it is seen from Table 3, 89% of the respondents know about what constitutes child sexual abuse while 11% of them responded that they do not know. Respondents who know child abuse were also asked to identify the types of sexual affairs considered as child sexual abuse and exploitation. Regarding this, 11 (12.3%) of them said pornography i.e showing children films and pictures that create sexual initiation in children, 3(3.4%) of them said child genital stimulation, 28(31.5%) said sexual intercourse with children where as 47(52.8%) of them gave multiple responses such as pornography, sexual intercourse with children as well as child genital arousal as child sexual abuses.

Table 4: Respondents' awareness about the presence of sexually abused children in their community

Variable	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Aware of sexually abused child/ren in your community?	Yes	86	96.6
	No	3	3.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100</b>
Sexually abused children by Sex?	Male	2	2.3
	Female	55	64
	Both sex	29	33.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>86*</b>	<b>100</b>

**N.B:** \* indicates the total number could not be equals to 100 (the sample size) because those who are aware of sexually abused children in their community were asked to respond the second question.

As it is shown in Table 4, 86 (96.6%) of respondents who have knowhow about the practices of child sexual abuse were also aware of the

presence of sexually abused children in their community while 3 (3.4%) of them responded that they were not aware of someone who has become victim of child sexual abuse. Those who were aware of sexually abused children in their community were also asked specific question about the children became victims of the abuse in terms of their sex. Accordingly, 2(2.3%) of them said males, 55(64%) of them said females and 29(33.7%) said both sex; hence, females are mainly the victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation. The information obtained from one of our key informant from Women’s and Children Affairs also confirms this reporting that child sexual abuse and exploitation has become one of the major social problems his office has been confronted. According to the key informant, in 2011/12 alone, 7 sexually abused children were reported to his office. As his report, in earlier time, only females were considered as victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation; however, currently there are also cases of male children sexual abuse reported to his office though females still constitute the major proportion of the cases reported every year.

The zonal policeman working on child related crimes on the districts reported that 3-5 cases of child sexual abuse cases had been reported to his office from each district to their office between 2009 and 2011, all of which were females. However, 2 cases of male child abuse were reported in Jimma town in 2011.

**Family background of the sexually abused children**

The other objective of this research is to identify the family socio-economic background of the children exposed to child sexual abuse and exploitation as well as the factors that increase the abuse of such children. The following table depicts this information.

Table 5: Respondent’s response about the Family’s Socio-economic background of sexually abused children

Variable	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Socio-economic background of sexually abused children	Low	59	68.6
	Middle	5	5.8
	Upper	8	9.3
	All	14	16.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>86*</b>	<b>100</b>

**N.B:** \* indicates the total number could not be equals to 100 (the sample size) because those who are aware of sexually abused children in their community were asked to respond the second question.

According to table 5, 59(68.6%) of the respondents said that children from low (poor) family socio-economic backgrounds are more vulnerable to child sexual abuse and exploitation,5(5.8%) children of the middle class families, 8(9.3%) said children of upper class families while 14(16.3%) said

children of all socio-economic background are exposed to child sexual abuse.

An attempt was also made to identify factors that expose children to child sexual abuse. According to one of the key informants from Women's and Children's Affairs Office of the study sites, lack of supervision and care, is the major factor for children to face child sexual abuse. Another key informant added that the fact that children and the poor families can be easily cheated with small gifts/benefits is another factor for children to be sexually abused.

As further interview with the key informants revealed, those children from low family socio-economic background and whose parents died are more exposed to the problem because of various reasons. First, these children do not have somebody who closely attends them as they do not have families and even if they are alive the poor families pass most of their time on daily labor activities that give them little chance to share love and affection with their children. Second, children from poor family socio-economic background are easily cheated by the various types of gifts provided for them in kind/cash or both by the sexual abusers, which their families can not easily fulfill for these children as they lack economic capacity to do so. Third, the families of the children themselves are also easily cheated unknowingly by the various types of supports provided for them by the potential child abusers. That means according to further detail interview made with the respondents, the abusers do not abuse the children sexually overnight. There are steps that they follow. They approach the poor families of these children by giving them various types of supports in order that the families allow the children to help the potential abusers with domestic activities such as house cleaning, cooking and washing clothes. After a while, there is a situation that these children become sexually abused. The following case study depicts how children of poor families can be affected by child sexual abuse.

Case 1: Etalem is an orphan girl. She was 13 years old. Her father died when she was 7 years and she has two siblings. Her mother was a cooker in one her nearby restaurant. Her mother's meager income was not sufficient to cover the families' basic needs and educational materials of the children. Hence, the mother used Etalem to undertake domestic activities in one bachelor lorry driver home in their neighbor in order to get additional income to support her meager income. The lorry driver was very friendly to Etalem. However, through time, he started to repeatedly ask her by saying that he gives her money and fulfills whatever she wants if she makes sexual intercourse with him. Forced by her stressful poverty situation and the false promise by the lorry driver, Etalem has made sexual intercourse for the first time with the person and lost her virginity. However, the person couldn't

keep the promise to help her after that. He gave her only five thousand birr and warned her not to talk anything about the incident. Her case was reported to the police six months after she made sexual intercourse with the person; however, the person was not prosecuted because there was no evidence as understood from Etalem.

As it is seen from Table 5, few of the respondents also respond that children of the relatively better off families can also be sexually abused. This implies that child sexual abuse is not only limited to parentless children and children from the poor families. The information obtained from key informant interview also supports this evidence. One police man described the sexual abuse of children from of relatively better off families as follows.

*This day the children of the rich families are also exposed sexual abuse. Their abusers are not strangers or somebody whom they do not know. Most of the time, the sexual abuse is committed on the children by somebody whom the children themselves or their families know or trust very well. The abusers are relatives such as their uncles, the son of their uncles or aunts. Such kind of child sexual abuse occurs mainly when the families go somewhere for various affairs such as work leaving their home and their children to these relatives. The key informant also added that the sexual abuse of the children of the better off families is rarely or less report to the police as compared to the sexual abuse of children from the poor families because even if the families know the fact that their child is sexually abused, they do not want to report the case to police because of the fear or the shame associated with it. Moreover, even if the families feel sad about the sexual abuse of their children, they do not want to expose it to police in order not to loss the long relationship family ties they have with their relatives due to such events happen by mistake or the work evil spirit as they perceive.*

The following factual evidence from case study supports how children from relatively better off families can be exposed to child sexual abuse.

*Case 2:* Firehiwot was 14 years old girl, relatively from better off family. She was grade seven students. Her father and mother were merchants. They have textile shop in Jimma town. They always spend their time in their shop leaving Firehiwot and her 20 years uncle, the brother of her mother so that he helps Firehiwot in her study. Meanwhile, Firehiwot and her uncle fall in ‘love’ with each other. After a long time in their sexual relationship, her father caught Firehiwot and her uncle red hand in bed while they were having sexual intercourse with each other. Hence, the father heavily assaulted both the uncle and Firehiwot. Meanwhile, the uncle

reported his being assaulted by Firehiwot's father to the police. While the police was on the process of investigating the case, the uncle and Firehiwot's family were reconciled by family arbitrators and the case was discontinued because of two reasons. First, the family did not want to disclose the fact that their daughter was in sexual relationship with her uncle since they thought that was shameful to themselves and their daughters. Second, they did not lose the strong relationship between them and the uncle's family as information obtained from one of Firehiwot's neighbor.

### **Patterns of child sexual abuse and exploitation**

The study also assessed patterns of child sexual abuse and exploitation. In order to meet this objective, information was collected on where, when, how as well as victims-offenders relationship. The information collected also includes the techniques used by the offenders and the reasons for them to focus on children for sexual affairs. The information obtained from the cases studied and the key informants below more clarifies these issues.

*According to one of the key informant, child sexual abusers want have sexual affairs with children because they believe children are free from HIV/AIDS. Some abusers also think that having sex with children purifies them from some illness such as arthritis. In addition to this, elder abusers think that having sex with a child makes them energetic.*

*Another key informant added that the fact children especially girls from poor families easily be deceived by gifts or things that they cannot easily get in their families also makes the sexual abusers to focus on children. The following information obtained from one of the cases studied confirms this situation.*

*Case 3: " I am 13 years old girl from poor mother and father that make a living through daily labor. My parents cannot fulfill for me all things that I want to have especially clothes. This always makes me offend because I feel inferiority when I compare myself with my classmates. Hence, I started to search the means by which I can escape such misery life. Unfortunately, one day one shop requested me that he supports me financially as well as in kind if I am willing to have sexual relationship with him. I immediately accept his request in order to get what I want. Hence, I started to have sexual affairs with the person. He gives me clothes and some amount of money too."*

Regarding places used by child sexual abusers to abuse children, one of the policeman interviewed described that children are sexually abused in their own homes, on the street, hidden places such as forests and in somebody else's home. According to this key informant, this day children have become sexually abused even in their homes. Such abusers are mainly

relatives whom the children or their families do not suspect for such issue. Relatives such as aunt's or uncle's son are those who sexually abuse girl children when the families left home for various purposes such as work leaving children with them. The key informant has given the following case an example regarding how children can be sexually abused by relatives.

*According to the key informant, there was a 14 years old girl. Her parents frequently go to work leaving her in home with her cousin (the son of her mother's brother an 18 years old boy) so that they study together. Through time, the girl and the boy fall in love with each other. Unfortunately, the girl has become pregnant.*

Another key informant policeman described that children are also exposed for sexual abuse in brokers home, hotels and bars. According to this key informant, *Child trafficking especially the trafficking of young girls from rural areas to urban areas for various purposes such as domestic activities has become common. The traffickers (brokers) make these young girls to stay in their own homes for certain period of time before they pass them to other people for the domestic activities. The brokers use these girls for sexual affairs during their stay with them.* Another key informant from one child care organization in Jimma town further described that children can also be exposed to sexual abuse in child care organizations due to lack of continuous follow up. The following case

*'According to the key informant, his organization provides organizational based care for 12 male orphan children. The children live in the organization and all the necessary care and supports are provided for them there. Of these male children, one of them is abused sexually by the others. The key informant said that the other four male children had found to have anal sexual affairs with this male child. Soon after the identification of such affairs between the children, the organization made an arrangement and separated the children so that they cannot have further contact with each other.'*

Apart from these, the other key informants and the respondents have described that girl children are mainly sexually abused on street, in shops and film houses. One of the rape cases studied in Agaro and presented below is an indication of the phenomena.

*Case 4: 'I am 15 years old. I was born in Bedele (Iluababor zone). My mother was died when I was eight years old. Following the death of my mother, my father married another woman, my step mother. I and my step mother do not always agree with each other. She always nags with me. Even if I accept her orders to do various things and I do it, she doesn't appreciate what I do. One day she ordered me to take about twenty five kilogram maize to grinding mill and I refused to do it. As a consequence, she tried to beat me*

*and I escaped her. Immediately, she reported to my father so that he punishes me. Since I very feared my father’s punishment, I left our home and came to Agaro town at age of 13. When I reached Agaro town, I joined street life since I do not have anywhere to turn. I work and pass the whole day on street. One day a street gang threatened and raped me by force. I did not report the case to anybody because he warned me that he kills me if I disclose the case to anybody.’’*

This study also tried to identify the techniques used by the child sexual abusers.

One of the key informant from Children’s and Women’s Affairs Office described that child sexual abusers use techniques such as offering something which children cannot get in their home. They also use force and threat to sexually abuse children. The following case described how she started sexual affairs for the first time as follows.

*Case 5: I am 14 years old girl. I am grade 7 student. Both my father and mother are not alive. I was brought up by my step sister. Since our father and mother left nothing for us, my step sister faced a lot of ups and down to bring up I and my junior brother. I have nothing to buy school uniforms and educational materials let alone to other things. Meanwhile one of my school classmates introduced me to one rich guy whom she told me that he has an intention to support me in cash as well as in kind. Of course, the person supported me in a number of ways. However, he requested me to give him my virginity. For the time being I was very much disturbed with his request and I wanted to refuse it. But I thought that he interrupts supporting me if I refuse him. After long time contemplation, I accepted his request and engaged in sexual affairs for the first time with the person. I missed my virginity this way. After that I was feeling severe pain for about one week. Still today I am being disturbed when I remember the pain associated my first sexual contact with the person. Since I fear, I did not disclose this issue to my step sister let alone to somebody else.*

### **Public response to child sexual abuse and exploitation**

This study is also intended to examine the societal response to child sexual abuse and exploitation. Regarding this, an attempt is made to identify whether measures have ever taken on child sexual abusers and exploiters or not. Likewise, an effort was made to investigate the types of measures ever taken by the concerned bodies such as communities and government bodies. The result of the finding is presented in table 6 and analyzed as follows.

Table 6: Respondent’s knowledge about measures ever taken on child sexual abusers

Variable	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Know measures ever taken on child sexual abusers?</b>	Yes	74	86
	No	12	14
	<b>Total</b>	86	<b>100</b>

<b>Type of measures ever taken on child sexual abusers</b>	imprisonment	41	55.4
	Death penalty	0	0
	Financial punishment	21	28.4
	Both financial and imprisonment	12	16.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>74*</b>	<b>100</b>

**N.B:** \* indicates the total number could not be equals to 100 (the sample size) because those who know measures ever taken were asked that specific question.

Table 6 above shows that 74(86%) of the respondents know that there are measures ever taken on the child sexual abusers whereas 12(14) % said that they do not know. Those who responded they know measures ever taken were also asked to mention the types of measures taken on them. Regarding this, 41(55.4%) of them said that prison sentence was passed up on the abusers, 21(28.4) % said that financial punishment and 12(16.2%) said that both financial and imprisonment. The measures are taken by the community, the court and the police.

However, some of the respondents also described that the measures ever taken are not adequate when compared with the injury they afflicted on the children they sexually abused. Even there are cases in which offenders are released without any punishment. These respondents insisted that death penalty has to be passed upon such criminals. One of the key informant policemen accepts the fact that both the financial and imprisonment penalty passed over the child sexual abusers are not adequate. But the problem is even if the police bring the suspected abusers to court to take adequate corrective measures, most of the time it is very difficult to get evidence as the child sexual abusers use very subtle technique to abuse children sexually. This complicates the decision making.

## Discussions

This study tries to identify the existence of child sexual abuse in the community. Eighty nine percent of the respondents are aware that children are sexually abused in many ways and more than half of them have identified multiple practices that constitute child sexual abuse. These are having child sexual intercourse with children, child pornography and child genital stimulation. Both girls and boys can be exposed to child sexual abuse; however, in this study it was found that girls are more vulnerable to child sexual abuses than boys. In terms of their backgrounds, street children, children whose parents died and poor are mainly vulnerable to child sexual abuse.

Children are sexually abused in their home, in the community and in the organization as the findings from the case studies and key informant interviews indicated. They are sexually abused mainly by somebody they

know. These findings are similar with Flowers (2001: 144) which argues that today; children are sexually abused by family members, acquaintances, or stranger perpetrators.

The study also found that there are various factors that contributed to child sexual abuse. These are death parents, family poverty and the subsequent inability to fulfill necessary basic needs for children; abusers' perception about sexual affairs with children is safe as they think children are free from HIV/AIDS, lack of appropriate care and follow up for children are the major factors for child sexual abuse. These findings are in line with the explanatory model used in this study.

Concerning this, Ebbe and Das (2008: 36) in their explanatory model of child sexual abuse argue that a numbers of socio-economic factors interlinked from micro, mezzo and macro level contribute to child sexual abuse. According to this model, at the societal level, the dynamics of socialization as well as society's collective history of denial of child sexual abuse and exploitation may contribute to environments in which opportunities for abuse and exploitation can occur. At the community level, the absence of adequate safety precautions and educational supports in spiritual, cultural, recreational, child care, educational, residential and therapeutic care settings place children at risk situation for child sexual abuse. Inter-generational patterns of abuse within the family, as well as family problems such as substance abuse and inadequate supervision are also considerations. At the individual level, the developmental age and sex of the child may also contribute to risk. People's experience of child sexual abuse can also be affected by their interpersonal relationships with their potential offenders.

An attempt is made by the police and the court to punish the offenders. Financial and imprisonment are the two major means by which the court is responding to punish child sexual abusers according to the findings. However, respondent described that the measures ever taken are not adequate when compared with the injury they afflicted on the children they sexually abused. Many offenders are being released even without any punishment. Information from the police also confirms the inadequacy of the measures ever taken. But this is not due to the negligence of the police rather the fact that child sexual abusers commit the offence in subtle and hidden complicates the attempt made to produce evidences and take adequate corrective measures.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

Most of the respondents know the presence of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their community. Although both children from different

socio-economic backgrounds can be exposed to child sexual abuse and exploitation, children of the economically poor parents, street children and children whose parents are died and lacked the necessary care, supervision and basic needs as a consequence are more vulnerable to child sexual abuse and exploitation. The fact that the poor families and their girl children are easily be cheated by gifts in cash and in kind from abusers also make children of such families more vulnerable than others.

In terms of sex, both girls and boys have become the victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation; however, girls are more victims of the problem. Children are sexually abused in their homes, on streets, in organizations and in their neighbors' home while serving as domestic servants.

Children are sexually abused mainly by individuals whom they know very well and who know the background of the children very well too.

Imprisonment and financial punishment measures have been taken on the child sexual offenders by courts. However, the measures ever taken on child sexual offenders do not balance the crime committed on the children. Information from the police indicated that the fact that the child sexual abusers have sexual contacts with children in hidden way creates difficulty to get evidence to bring the offenders to court and take measures that balance the crime they commit on the children.

### **Recommendations**

The following points were recommended based on the findings of the study.

One of the factors that expose children for sexual abuse and exploitation is the poor economic backgrounds of the family. The findings obtained from respondents, key persons interview and case study of the sexually abused children indicated that the majority of the children exposed to this problem are from economically poor families. Especially girl children from poor families are easily deceived by the various types of in kind and cash gifts presented for them by sexual abusers, which their families cannot fulfill for them at home. It is important to strength the family economic capacity through income generating activities based on their needs. Moreover, families should closely follow up the safety of their children daily.

Likewise, unattended children whose parents died and street children are victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation. As information obtained from the case study of the street children indicated, these children want to be re-united with their families but they fear to do so by themselves. Hence, if concerned government and non-governmental organizations re-unite or re-integrate such street dweller children to their families or relatives, it is

possible to minimize their vulnerability of the children to sexual abuses and exploitation. Finally, police and courts have to introduce mechanisms to investigate cases of child abuse in order to take balanced corrective measures on offenders.

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