

# Assessing Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Regarding the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Coastal Kenya

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## Context

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This briefing note presents a summary of methods, findings, and recommendations from a baseline knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) study conducted in coastal Kenya by NORC at the University of Chicago in collaboration with Kantar Public.

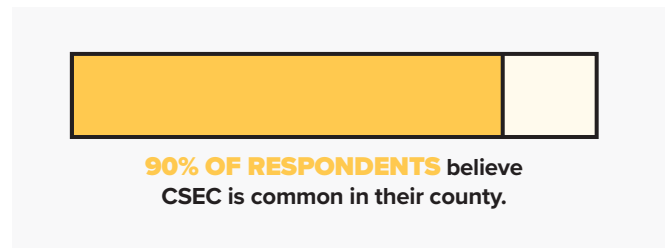
As a part of its partnership with the U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) has launched a series of projects to combat CSEC in Kwale and Kilifi counties. Implemented by Terre des Hommes Netherlands in partnership with Kesho Kenya, the "Building A Future" (BAF) project focuses on implementing community-based prevention methods, formal education for young survivors, skills training and apprenticeships for older survivors, and improving livelihoods for the most vulnerable families. Targeting known sex trafficking hotspots in coastal Kenya, the project works to address both the supply of vulnerable individuals and the enabling environments that allow CSEC to persist.

NORC was contracted by GFEMS to lead an independent impact evaluation to assess whether BAF's package of community interventions is leading to measurable change in community KAP vis-à-vis CSEC in coastal Kenya.

Answers to the evaluation questions are triangulated through a series of data collection activities in communities that are targeted by the BAF program as well as neighboring communities that serve as a comparison group. Data collection activities include Community Leader surveys, Head Teacher/school surveys, and two household surveys, including a household roster and household KAP survey. Data collection instruments were structured around BAF's logical framework and learning agenda and were refined in consultation with GFEMS and Terre des Hommes. Baseline data collection was conducted between February 9 and May 3, 2021 and involved interviewing 2,057 community members, 181 community leaders, and 54 primary school head teachers in Kilifi and Kwale.

## Key Baseline Findings

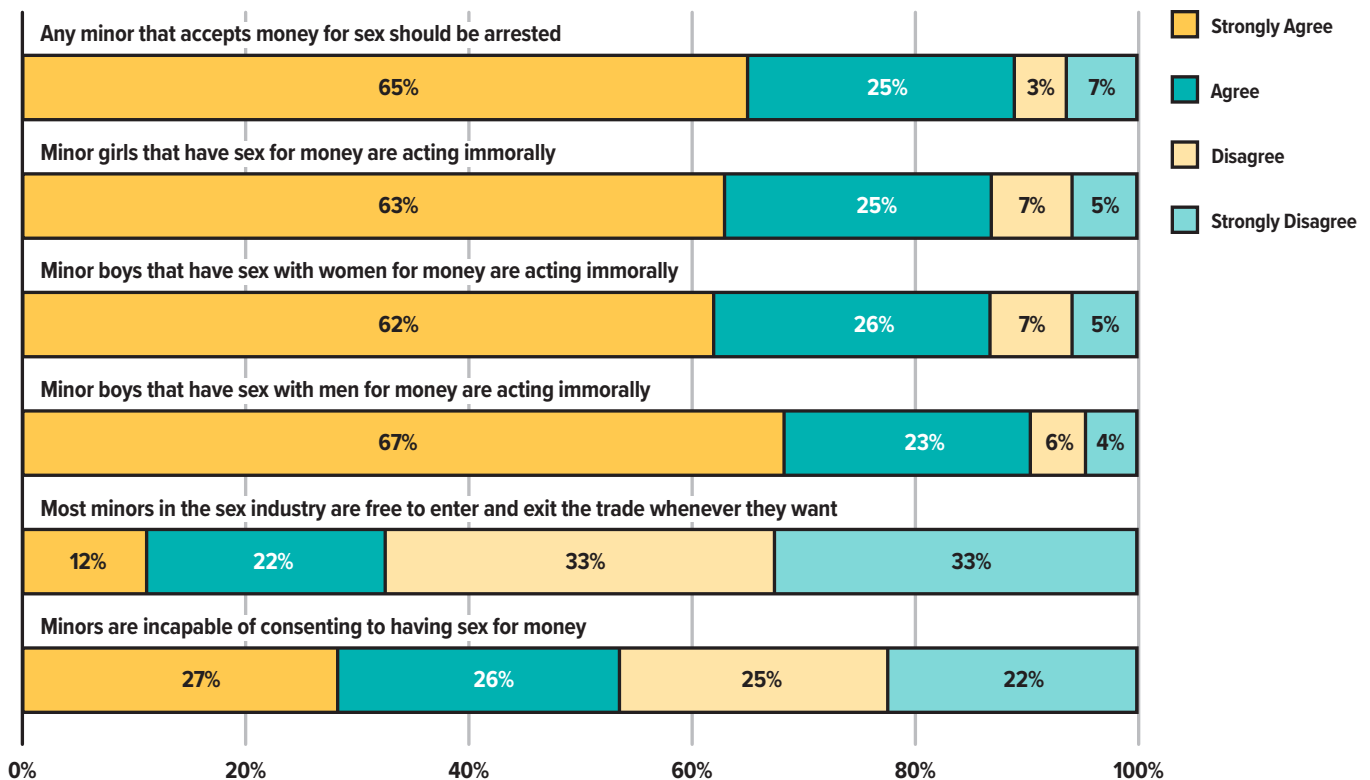
- CSEC is widely viewed as a common problem in Kilifi and Kwale counties, but one that only affects “other” households.** Approximately 90 percent of household respondents said CSEC is common in their county and believe most victims were born and raised in the community. Despite this, very few households acknowledge their own children as being at-risk: only four percent of households said their child(ren) may have been previously subject to CSEC, and just 22 percent felt their children were vulnerable to future victimization.
- While communities are generally opposed to CSEC, victim-blaming is the norm.** The majority of households oppose CSEC, support its criminalization, and advocate for programs and policies that help victims find better opportunities. Despite this, attitudes towards victims suggest widely held views that they bear responsibility for their involvement in the sex trade. Of note, 90 percent of respondents believe that CSEC victims are both behaving immorally and should be arrested for accepting money for



sex. Likewise, one-third of respondents believe that minors in the sex trade are free to exit whenever they want.

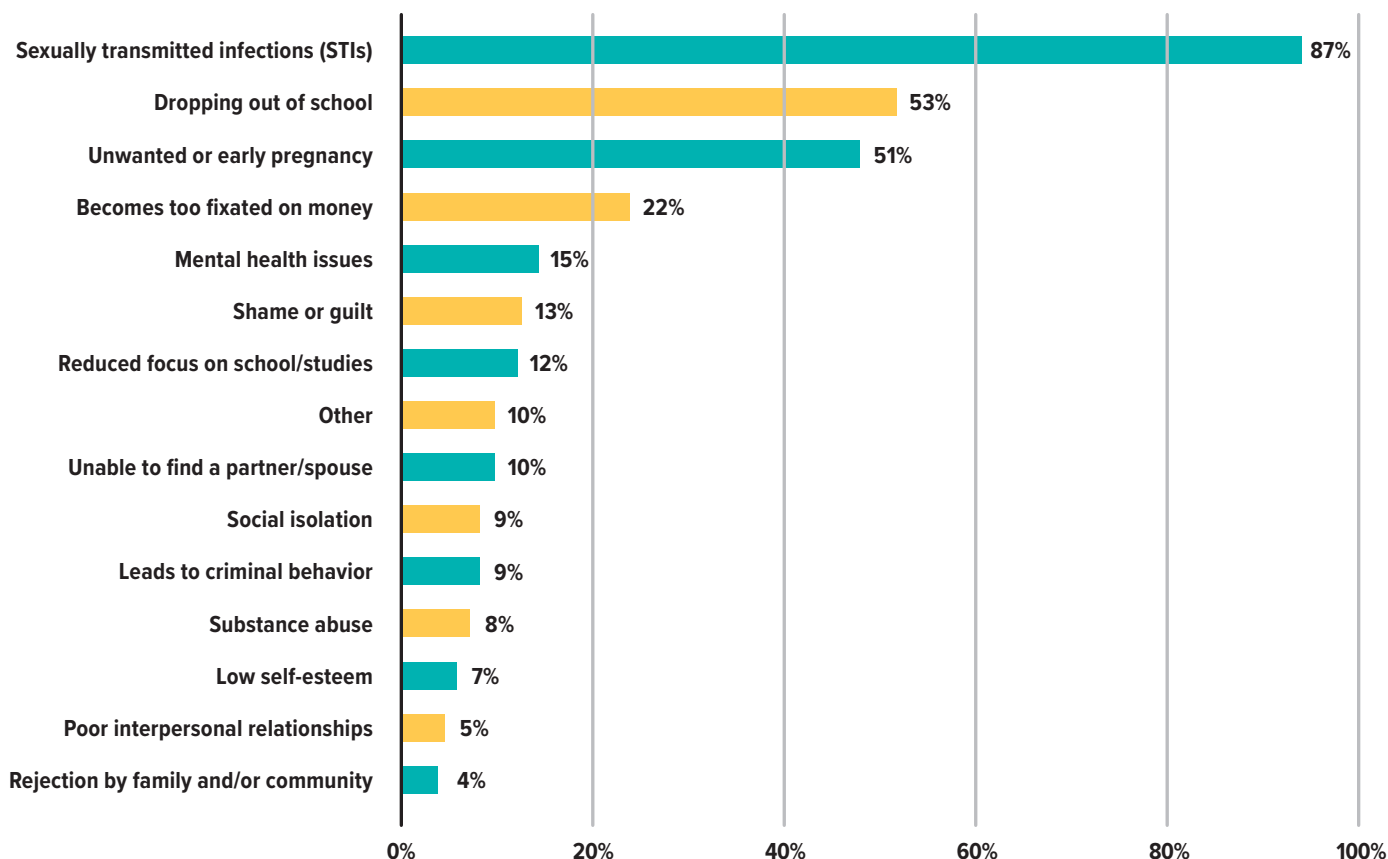
- There is little sensitivity to or awareness of the negative psychosocial effects CSEC has on victims.** While 94 percent of households believe that exchanging sex for money negatively impacts a minor’s well-being, reported negative impacts mostly focused on reproductive health and disruptions to schooling. Respondents were more likely to report “fixation with money” as a negative impact than mental health issues.

Household Beliefs and Attitudes toward CSEC and Persons in the Commercial Sex Industry



Commercial Sexual Exploitation Of Children (CSEC)  
- Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Report

Ways in which CSEC Negatively Impacts Minors' Well-Being (Household Survey)



• Over 90 percent of households said they would be willing to report known CSEC cases, however their knowledge of reporting channels is limited, and mainly focused on local authorities and the police. Very few mentioned other channels such as the Department of Children Services, the

Child Protection Committee, and Childline Kenya, a toll-free, 24-hour helpline established by the Department of Children Services to facilitate the reporting of child abuse. Notably, there is some evidence that households won't report known CSEC cases due to fear of retaliation by local authorities.

### Methodological Approach

We adopted a quasi-experimental approach through which a viable comparison group is constructed using advanced statistical matching techniques. In addition, we will control for time invariant differences between treatment and comparison groups at endline through the use of difference-in-differences statistical analysis, which subtracts off remaining baseline differences between the treatment and comparison units.

Given the large geographic spread and population size of the target areas, it is not logistically possible to draw a simple random sample of households. As such, a two-stage clustered design was needed whereby communities were sampled in the first stage and households were sampled in the second stage.

In terms of the household sample, 99 percent of the target was achieved for the roster survey at baseline. Once a roster was completed, the survey form randomly selected one eligible adult member from each household to complete the KAP survey, which totaled 2,057 individuals.

#### Limitations

The baseline KAP study depended on self-reporting, which may be subject to response bias including social desirability bias and acquiescence bias. In addition, some survey questions may be subject to transmission error borne of respondents reporting on behalf of other household members. Finally, the sample was drawn to be representative of BAF intervention and matched comparison locations (versus Kilifi and Kwale writ large). As such, readers should exercise caution in extrapolating baseline findings to areas that were not included in the evaluation sampling frame.

## Recommendations

The study lends valuable insights into knowledge, attitudes, and practices vis-à-vis CSEC in coastal Kenya which can be used to inform program design, adaptation, and iteration for GFEMS, its subrecipients, and other relevant actors working to combat CSEC in Kenya. Based on baseline findings, the evaluation team recommends the following:

- **Sensitize families to CSEC risk factors and the importance of monitoring vulnerability among children in the household.** Low knowledge of common physical, social, and behavioral risk factors combined with the widespread view that CSEC only affects other households suggests a strong need for sensitization on monitoring CSEC vulnerability at the household level. Program implementers should therefore seek opportunities to integrate direct advocacy with parents/guardians into their existing programming.
- **Help community members see CSEC victims/survivors as children needing care and protection rather than criminals.** Data from the prevalence component of this study—including data on the age of entry into the sex trade and PTSD rates among victims/survivors—could be disseminated to the public alongside information on the negative psychosocial effects CSEC. Educating the public on the negative effects of CSEC may help community members and policymakers become more sensitized towards victims, and therefore more proactive agents of change.
- **Educate community members on CSEC reporting channels other than police and local authorities.**



**DISPEL MISCONCEPTIONS**  
of caregivers about CSEC  
and increase their awareness  
of reporting channels.

**CSEC CAN happen in YOUR home.**

**Children involved in CSEC are victims, not criminals. They experience severe trauma.**

**Many channels like hotlines exist to report CSEC.**

Of particular note, only three percent of respondents in the KAP study knew of Childline Kenya (116). Childline offers an anonymous reporting pathway which may make community members less fearful of retaliation, particularly from local authorities. In addition, helping community members understand the laws and penalties associated with CSEC may encourage reporting and discourage the sexual exploitation of children.



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