COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ICMEC'S MULTISECTORAL RESPONSE AND CAPACITY ASSESSMENTS (MRCS)

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International Centre™
FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN

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① Introduction

The global fight against Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) requires that the different actors involved have tools and models that allow them to understand, evaluate, and optimize the response capacities of the countries and the articulation of these capacities at the inter-sectoral, regional, and international levels.

This paper aims to conduct a Comparative Analysis of the Multisectoral Response and Capacity Assessments (MRC) that were conducted by ICMEC's National Capacity Development program in 11 countries and 3 different regions of the world between December 2021 and March 2024.

REGION	AFRICA	LATIN AMERICA	EURASIA
COUNTRY	1. Kenya 2. Uganda	3. Colombia 4. Ecuador 5. El Salvador 6. Guatemala 7. Honduras 8. Trinidad	9. Indonesia 10. Moldova 11. Romania

Table 1. Countries and regions in which ICMEC has conducted MRC studies

This analysis seeks to identify patterns and gaps, prioritize recommendations, and suggest improvements that, in addition to strengthening global and regional strategies, optimize the support that ICMEC provides to the different countries for the development of capacities to respond to CSEA and strategically guide the actions of the Regional Capacity Building (RCB) team.

⬈ National Response Model (NRM)

It is a framework developed by the WeProtect Global Alliance that aims to support countries and organizations globally in the prevention and mitigation of online CSEA. This model recognizes that this approach cannot be done in isolation and that joint and coordinated capacity building is required to ensure a comprehensive and effective national response.

The model, which is structured around 7 sectors, groups 20 capacities whose development is necessary to achieve a comprehensive national response (See image 1).

Additionally, the MNR uses a Maturity Framework that evaluates the capacities of the countries, assigning maturity levels (from 1 to 4) according to the degree of development and effectiveness of the protection measures implemented to guarantee the comprehensive protection of children from online CSEA.

Image 1. National Response Model (NRM). (WeProtect Global Alliance, 2023).

Multisectoral Response and Capacity (MRC) Studies

Conducted by the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC), they are assessments that aim to analyze in detail the capacity of countries to respond to CSEA online. The MRC studies use the MNR sector and capacity framework to identify gaps and provide short-, medium- and long-term recommendations that could be implemented by the different actors involved in each country to improve national response capacities.

Preventing and tackling child sexual exploitation and abuse
A Model National Response

WeProtect GLOBAL ALLIANCE

Relevance in the fight against exploitation and online CSEA

The relevance of the MRC studies lies in their ability to provide a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of the level of development of the response capabilities of countries in which ICMEC has some level of action or influence. These tools enable the NCB team:

Identify gaps:

identify areas where countries need to strengthen their capacities, providing a roadmap for improvement.

Prioritize actions:

identify and prioritize gaps to guide countries on how to focus their resources and efforts on urgent areas or those that can generate the greatest impact.

Foster collaboration:

using WeProtect's MNR framework as a basis, they promote collaboration between different stakeholders to develop comprehensive and effective solutions.

Assessing progress:

they provide information on the current state of capacity development and become a starting point for measuring countries' progress.
Raise awareness: sensitize stakeholders to the importance of protecting

Raise awareness:

sensitize stakeholders to the importance of protecting children from CSEA online, promoting greater commitment and action.

② Methodology

Instruments

The MRC documents from the 11 countries were analyzed based on four criteria and using two instruments as shown in Table 2.

SOURCE	National Response Model Maturity Framework (WeProtect, 2023)	NCB Team		
MRC Component	**Capabilities**	**Gaps**	**Gaps**	**Recommendations**
Variable	**Maturity**: How developed is the capacity?	**Priority Level:** What is the level of urgency to resolve the gap?	**ICMEC presence**: What is the level of ICMEC presence in the country to address the gap?	**Realistic Level of Change**: What is the realistic level of achievable change?
Criteria	**CONSTRUCTION(1)**: Initial stage where basic capabilities are being established. **IMPROVEMENT (2)**: Development and strengthening of existing capacities. **INTEGRATION (3)**: Capabilities fully integrated into national practices. **MATURITY (4)**: Robust and effective capabilities with established mechanisms for prevention, protection, and prosecution.	**GOOD (1)**: The gap is minimal, and the situation is good concerning child safety. **ACCEPTABLE (2)**: The gap is acceptable and does not require urgent attention. **NEUTRAL (3)**: The gap has a neutral impact and does not represent an immediate risk. **HARMFUL (4)**: The breach is harmful and needs to be addressed as soon as possible to avoid negative effects. **URGENT (5)**: The breach is extremely urgent and requires immediate attention to protect the safety of children.	**ABSENT (1)**: ICMEC is absent and has no incountry presence to address the gap. **WEAK (2)**: ICMEC has a weak presence and limited capacity to address the gap. **REGULAR (3)**: ICMEC has a regular presence and a moderate capacity to address the gap. **WIDE (4)**: ICMEC has a significant presence and strong capacity to address the gap.	**NULL (1)**: It is not realistic to achieve change in this area. **LOW (2)**: It is unrealistic to achieve change in this area. **MODERATE (3)**: It is moderately realistic to achieve change in this area. **HIGH (4)**: It is highly realistic to achieve change in this area. **VERY HIGH (5)**: It is very realistic to achieve change in this area.

Table 2. Instruments, categories, and analysis criteria

For the analysis of capacities, the National Response Model Maturity Framework developed by WeProtect (2023) was used, while for the analysis of gaps and recommendations, an instrument was developed together with the Regional Program Officers of the NCF team. This instrument allowed NCB team members in each country to evaluate, based on standardized criteria, the different gaps and recommendations included in the CRMs based on their level of experience and knowledge of the country. The information collected through these instruments was systematized and codified for subsequent analysis.

Data Collection

- **Analysis of MRC Documents:**

  MRC reports from 11 countries were reviewed, assessing the capabilities according to the WeProtect Model Maturity Criteria (WeProtect Global Alliance, 2022). In this analysis, the matrices and criteria of the WeProtect Maturity Model were used to categorize and systematize the data.

- **Assessment of Gaps and Recommendations:**

  The NCB team analyzed the gaps and recommendations included in the MRC studies, using the assessment tool developed specifically for this purpose. NCB members in each country evaluated the different gaps and recommendations based on their level of experience and knowledge of the local context.
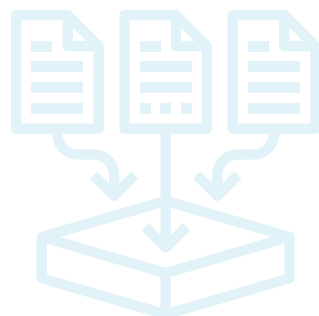
Analysis and Comparison Methodology

Based on the coded information, different analyses were carried out to evaluate and compare the countries' capacities, gaps, and recommendations:

1. **Calculation of Averages (M) and Standard Deviations (SD)** for each variable (Maturity, Priority Level, Presence of ICMEC, and Realistic Level of Change) by sector, region, and country. The above identifies the areas with greater variability and which sectors require greater attention.
2. **Correlation analysis (r)** between variables to identify if there were significant relationships to understand how the different capabilities and gaps interact, and how the presence of ICMEC in the countries influences the possibility of implementing changes.
3. **Data visualization** through scatter plots and heat maps to visualize the relationships between variables and facilitate the interpretation of results.

③ Global Analysis

Maturity in the development of capabilities

The analysis of this variable is based on the National Response Model Maturity Framework (WeProtect Global Alliance, 2022). (WeProtect Global Alliance, 2022).. This Framework allows the classification of the maturity level of capabilities into four levels (see Table 2): Build (1), Enhancement (2), Integration (3) and Maturity (4). The key findings and comparisons based on the data obtained are presented below:

Maturity by sector and capacity

	GLOBAL	
SECTOR	**M**	**SD**
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND GOVERNANCE	2,32	0,57
CRIMINAL JUSTICE	1,82	0,69
VICTIM SUPPORT	1,91	0,60
SOCIETY AND CULTURE	1,87	0,67
INDUSTRY	1,73	0,63
RESEARCH AND DATA	2,14	0,83

Table 3. Sector Maturity Analysis - Global

The mean and standard deviation analysis at the global level indicates that the sector with the highest level of maturity and whose development remains most consistent across countries is Policy, Legislation, and Governance (M=2.32, SD=0.57), followed by Research and Data. However, the latter has the highest level of variability across countries (M=2.14, SD=0.83). In contrast, the Industry sector has the lowest level of maturity with relatively low variability between countries (M=1.73, SD=0.63) followed by the Criminal Justice sector (M=1.82, SD=0.69).

When analyzing the maturity of each capability at the global level, it is found that in the Policy, Legislation, and Governance sector the capability with the highest level of maturity is Legislation number 2 (M=2.55, SD=0.52), while in the Research and Data sector, it is capability number 19 (M=2.55, SD=0.82).

| CAPACITY	GLOBAL	
	M	SD
1. Leadership	2,09	0,54
2. Legislation	2,55	0,52
3. Dedication of law enforcement	1,91	0,30
4. Judiciary and Prosecutor's Office	2,00	0,00
5. Offender management process	1,91	0,54
6. Access to the image database	2,09	0,70
7. End-to-end assistance	2,00	0,00
8. Child protection personnel	2,00	0,00
9. Compensation, remedies, and complaint mechanisms	2,00	0,00
10. Child helpline	2,27	0,47
11. Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Hotline	2,27	0,79
12. Educational Programs	2,00	0,00
13. Children's participation	1,91	0,30
14. Prevention and offender support systems	1,91	0,30
15. Informed and ethical reporting in the media.	2,00	0,00
16. Recall procedures and information	1,91	0,30
17. Development of innovative solutions	1,91	0,30
18. Responsible business conduct	1,91	0,30
19. Research and data	2,55	0,82
20. Universally Accepted Terminology	1,91	0,30

Table 4. Capability Maturity Analysis
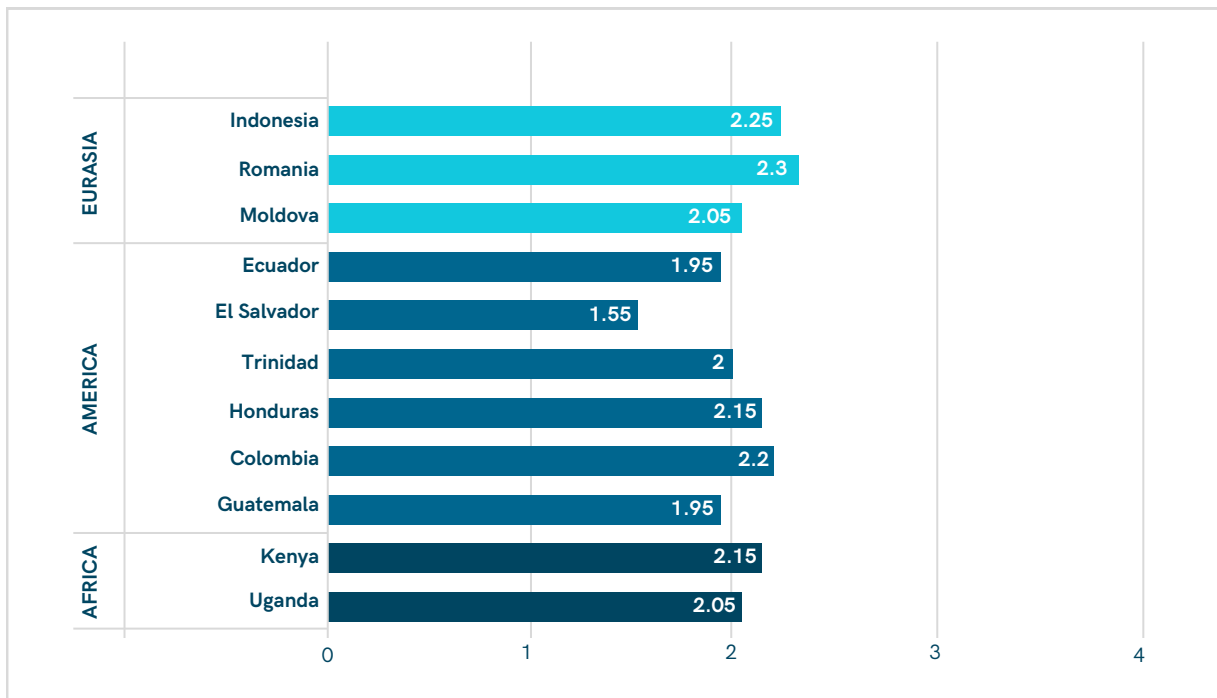
Figure 1. Maturity Analysis by Country

As part of the global maturity analysis, the following aspects are highlighted:

1 Higher levels of maturity:

Romania, Indonesia, and Colombia have the highest averages (M=2.29, 2.25 and 2.20 respectively). Although these countries show strengths in several capacities, indicative of significant efforts and progress in the implementation of their response capacities, their average score remains in the improvement category. These results indicate that the efforts that these countries have been making should be strengthened and that some of the strategies advanced could serve as a model for others. Romania, Indonesia, and Colombia have the highest averages (M=2.29, 2.25 and 2.20 respectively). Although these countries show strengths in several capacities, indicative of significant efforts and progress in the implementation of their response capacities, their average score remains in the improvement category. These results indicate that the efforts that these countries have been making should be strengthened and that some of the strategies advanced could serve as a model for others.

2 Consistent Maturity:

Countries such as Uganda (M=2.04), Kenya (M=2.15), Honduras (M=2.15) and Moldova (M=2.04) show moderate development in their capabilities concerning the other countries in the sample indicating a trend of progress towards integration and maturity of their capabilities.

3 **Greater challenges in capacity building:** ·····································

El Salvador and Guatemala have the lowest averages (M=1.55 and 1.95 respectively), indicating significant challenges and a greater need for support. The low variability in these countries suggests that capacities are consistently limited in multiple capacities.

4 **Regional Variability:** ·····································

Latin American countries show a high variability in their capacity development. This may suggest that strategies to support capacity building in this region need to be adjusted to address the specific needs of each country.

5 **Areas of greatest and least progress:** ·····································

Each country's assessment highlights specific areas of greatest progress, such as Legislation and Research and Data or Child Helpline and Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline capacities. Likewise, in most countries, law enforcement commitment, child participation, offender management, and industry sector capacities have lower levels of progress.

Priority Level, ICMEC Presence, and Realistic Level of Change and Realistic Level of Change

The analysis of these variables is based on the instrument developed together with the NCB Team. This instrument allows the classification of the gaps and recommendations included in the MRC Studies as follows (see Table 2):

- **Priority Level:** allows the gaps detected to be classified into five priority levels: Urgent (5), Harmful (4), Neutral (3), Acceptable (2), and Good (1).
- **Presence of ICMEC:** Allows indicating the presence of ICMEC in the country concerning addressing the gaps according to the following categories: Absent (1), Weak (2), Regular (3), and Extensive (4).
- **Realistic Level of Change:** Allows estimating the potential for change concerning the recommendations in 5 levels: None (1), Low (2), Moderate (3), High (4), and Very High (5).

SECTOR	PRIORITY LEVEL		PRESENCE OF ICMEC		REALISTIC CHANGE	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
POLICY, LEGISLATION AND GOVERNANCE	2,52	1,98	2,16	1,08	3,09	0,74
CRIMINAL JUSTICE	2,32	1,90	1,87	1,07	2,78	0,78
VICTIM SUPPORT	2,57	2,05	1,73	0,61	3,08	0,73
SOCIETY AND CULTURE	2,29	1,72	1,70	0,72	2,91	0,80
INDUSTRY	2,64	1,81	1,44	0,76	2,31	1,10
RESEARCH AND DATA	2,34	2,02	2,08	1,06	3,07	1,07

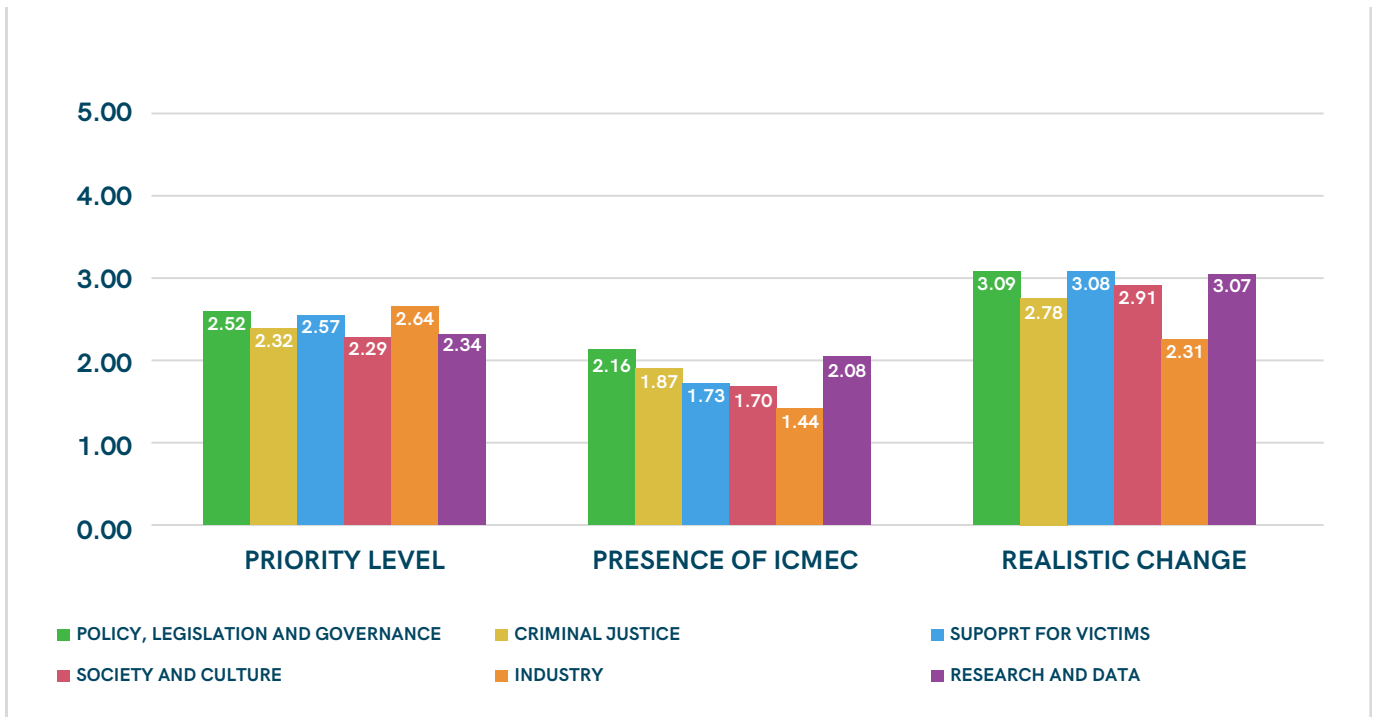Table 3. Gap analysis and recommendations - Global
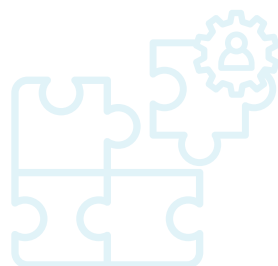
Figure 2. Gap analysis and recommendations - Global

The following is a detailed interpretation of the overall data regarding the gaps and recommendations made for each sector:

Policy, Legislation, and Governance:

The gaps in this sector are considered medium priority (M=2.52, SD=1.98), suggesting that, although not extremely urgent, they require significant attention. The Presence of ICMEC is moderate (M=2.16, SD=1.08), indicating that the organization provides reasonable support, but there is room for expansion. Finally, the realistic possibility of change is considered high (M=3.09, SD=0.74), indicating that implementation of the recommendations in this sector is feasible.

Criminal Justice:

In this sector the gaps have a medium-low priority (M=2.32, SD=1.90), suggesting that the perceived need for intervention is moderate. For its part, the Presence of ICMEC is perceived as low, (M=1.87, SD=1.07) indicating the possibility of expanding support in this sector. Finally, the realistic possibility of change is moderate (M=2.78, SD=0.78) so implementing the recommendations of this sector may require additional efforts to address specific challenges in each country.

Victim Support:

The gaps in this sector are medium-high priority (M=2.57, SD=2.05), which reflects that improving Victim Support is an urgent need. In this sector the Presence of ICMEC is perceived as low (M=1.73, SD=0.61), the need to strengthen support in this sector is highlighted as the realistic possibility of change is high (M=3.08, SD=0.73), suggesting that, with adequate support, significant improvements could be implemented in this sector.

Society and Culture:

The gaps in this sector have a medium priority (M=2.29, SD=1.72), indicating a moderate need for intervention. Given that ICMEC Presence is perceived as low (M=1.70, SD=0.72) and that the possibility of change is perceived as moderately feasible (M=2.91, SD=0.80) capacity building in this sector could also benefit from further support.

Industry:

The gaps in the Industry sector are of medium-high priority (M=2.64, SD=1.81), reflecting an important need to expand the capabilities of this sector. Regarding the Presence of ICMEC, this is perceived as very low (M=1.44, SD=0.76) as is the perceived possibility of change (M=2.31, SD=1.10), posing significant challenges in the implementation of the recommendations in this sector.

Research and Data:

The perceived priority of gaps in this sector is moderate (M=2.34, SD=2.02), as is the Presence of ICMEC (M=2.08, SD=1.06). However, the realistic possibility of change is perceived as high (M=3.07, SD=1.07) suggesting that progress in developing these capabilities is feasible.

The overall gap analysis and recommendations highlight that:

- The sectors with the highest priority gaps, based on the mean Priority Level, are Industry, Victim Support, and Policy, Legislation, and Governance.
- With ICMEC's current presence, it would be more effective to intervene in Policy, Legislation and Governance, Research and Data, and Criminal Justice. In this last sector, although the presence is low, it could be beneficial to focus on considering that even a small increase in presence and support could generate notable advances in capacity building.
- Considering the perception of real change, the sectors where change is most feasible are Policy, Legislation and Governance, Victim Support, and Research and Data.

When analyzing the gaps detected in the different MRC documents according to the ICMEC Priority Level and Presence reported by the different members of the NCB team, the following was found:

- **Priority Level:** The most urgent and damaging gaps are in the Victim Support and Criminal Justice sectors. This indicates a pressing need for intervention and resources for these sectors, especially in countries with limited infrastructure.
- **ICMEC Presence:** ICMEC's presence is most significant in the Policy, Legislation and Governance, and Research and Data sectors. This indicates that ICMEC already has an active role in these areas, although there is still the opportunity to increase its impact in critical sectors such as Victim Support and Criminal Justice.

Concerning the analysis of the recommendations about the level of expected change assigned to them by the NCB Team, the highest level of expected change at the global level is in the following sectors:

- **Policy, Legislation, and Governance:** This sector shows a high probability of realistic change (M=3.09). Given the potential impact and feasibility of interventions, recommendations in this sector should focus on updating and strengthening legislative frameworks and public policies.
- **Victim Support:** With a high level of expected change (M=3.08), it is crucial to implement comprehensive support programs that include medical, psychological,
- and legal services. Improved infrastructure and specialized training are necessary steps to achieve significant change.
- **Research and Data:** This sector also shows a high level of expected change (M=3.07). It is recommended that data management systems and analytical capacity be strengthened to improve the effectiveness of evidence-based responses.

Finally, a Pearson correlation of the maturity level of the different capabilities with the reported ICMEC presence in the countries and the level of expected change was found to be as follows:

- **Maturity vs. ICMEC Presence:** A weak positive correlation (r=0.30) This suggests that as ICMEC Presence increases, there is a slight tendency for the level of maturity to also increase, but this relationship is not strong which may be due to the inherent multi-causality of capability development. This finding may suggest that increasing ICMEC Presence may be an effective strategy for improving maturity in various sectors.

- **Maturity vs. Realistic Level of Change:** The positive correlation (r=0.22) indicates that there is a weak positive correlation between maturity level and realistic change. This indicates that as the potential for realistic change increases, there is a slight tendency for the maturity level to increase, but again, this relationship is not strong. This could reinforce the importance of concentrating efforts on recommendations with higher realistic change scores to maximize the impact of interventions.

The following is the regional analysis according to the sectoral average of gaps, recommendations, and maturity assessments in the different countries:
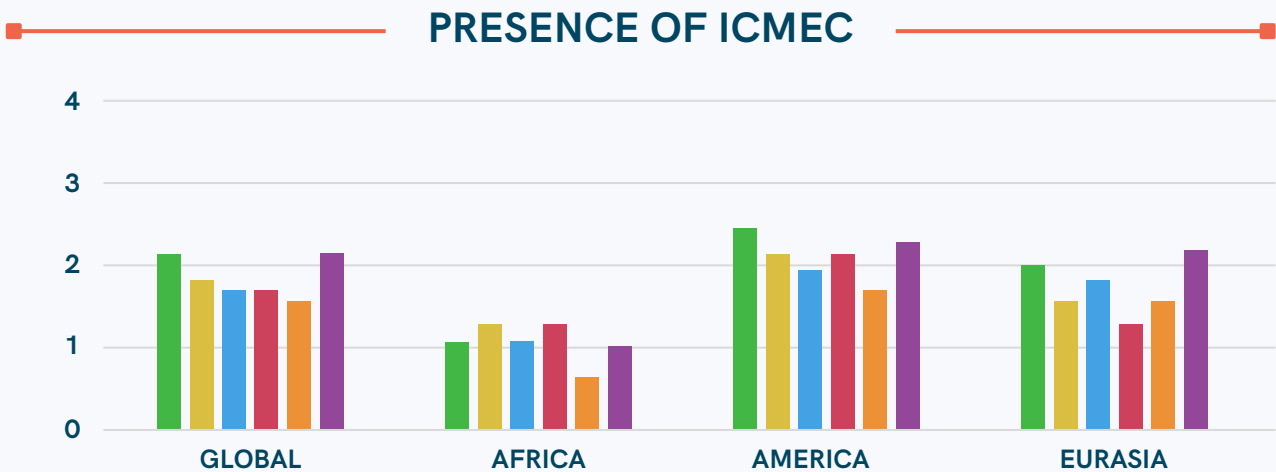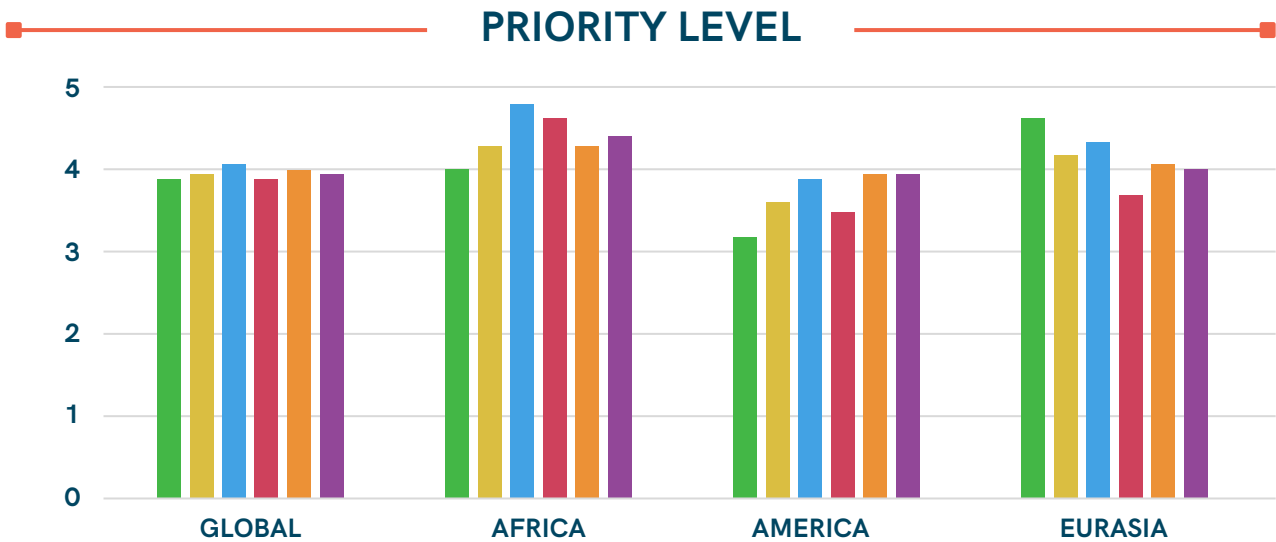
PRIORITY LEVEL

PRESENCE OF ICMEC

- ■ POLICY, LEGISLATION AND GOVERNANCE
- ■ CRIMINAL JUSTICE
- ■ SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS
- ■ SOCIETY AND CULTURE
- ■ INDUSTRY
- ■ RESEARCH AND DATA

REALISTIC LEVEL OF CHANGE
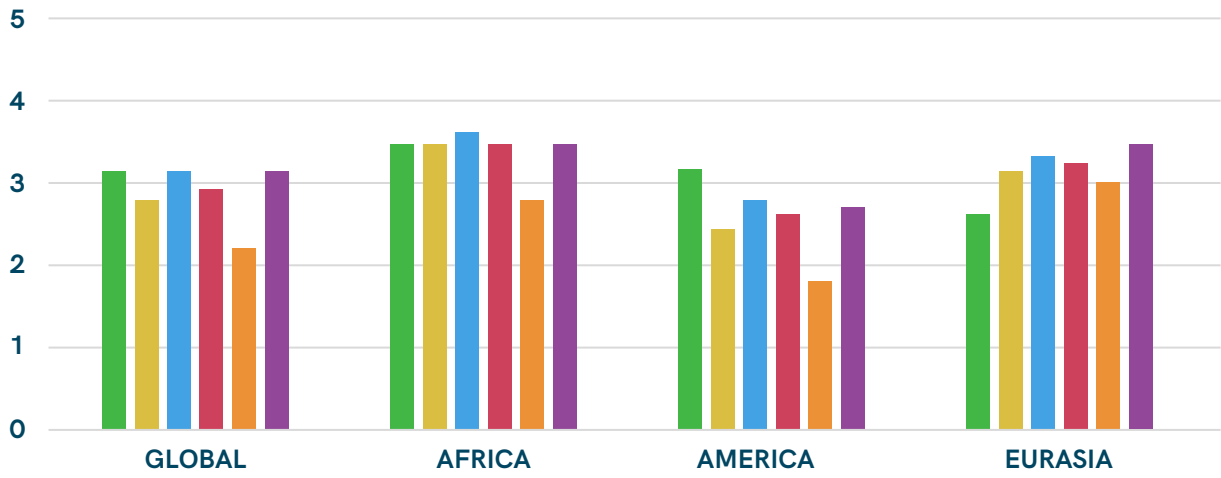
MATURITY
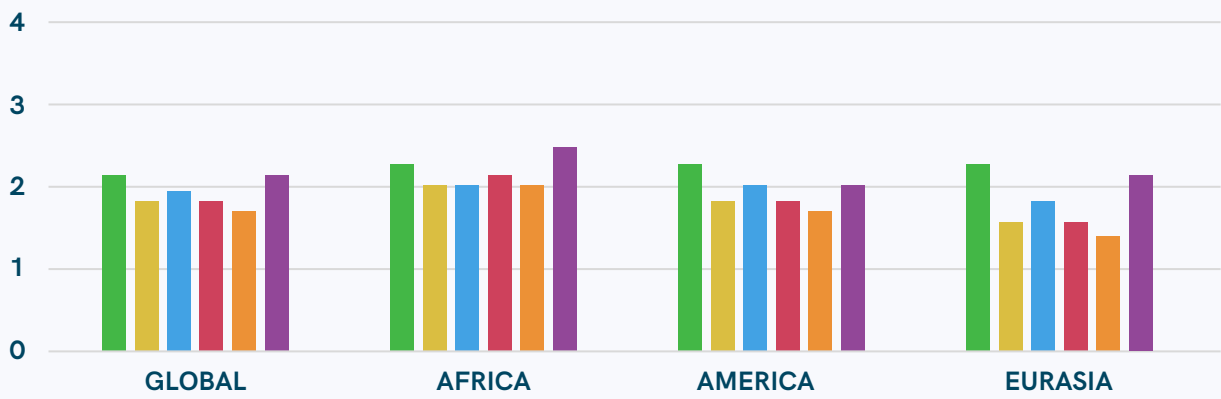
- ■ POLICY, LEGISLATION AND GOVERNANCE
- ■ CRIMINAL JUSTICE
- ■ SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS
- ■ SOCIETY AND CULTURE
- ■ INDUSTRY
- ■ RESEARCH AND DATA

Gap analysis, recommendations, and maturity - Regional

Africa (Kenya and Uganda)

GENERAL ANALYSIS IN THE DIFFERENT AREAS

1 Priority level:

The Priority Level in the different gaps has a high rating (M=4.37, SD=0.40). The highest-rated gaps are in the Victim Support sector (M=4.67, SD=0.19) and the lowest-rated gaps are in the Industry sector (M=4.25, SD=1.06).

2 Presence of ICMEC:

Presence of ICMEC is perceived as low in most sectors (M=1.03, SD=0.18). The sectors with the highest and lowest ratings are Criminal Justice (M=1.19, SD=0.27) and Industry (M=0.75, SD=0.00) respectively.

3 Realistic Level of Change:

The perception of realistic change concerning the recommendations is moderate to high in most sectors (M=3.42, SD=0.76). The highest-rated sector is Policy, Legislation, and Governance (M=3.51, SD=0.37) and the lowest-rated sector is Industry (M=2.88, SD=0.88)

4 Maturity:

The level of maturity varies among the different sectors, but in general, it is in a stage of development and strengthening (M=2.14, SD=0.25), rather than in a fully mature phase. The sectors with the highest and lowest ratings are Research and Data (M=2.50, SD=0.00) and Industry and Victim Support (both M=2.00, SD=0.00) respectively.

COMMON CHALLENGES:

1 **Multisectoral Coordination:** ....

Although both Kenya and Uganda have multisectoral national committees, achieving effective coordination among the different actors remains a challenge that can lead to fragmented and less effective responses.

2 **Limited Resources:** ....

The lack of adequate financial, human, and technical resources limits the capacity of both countries to effectively implement child protection programs and policies. Although this challenge has been addressed through international cooperation initiatives, there is still a need to support the long-term sustainability of implemented programs and policies.

3 **Training and Awareness Raising:** ....

The need for continuous and specialized training for professionals working in child protection is a common challenge. The lack of adequate training significantly affects the quality of services provided and the response capacity of both countries.

4 **Cultural Norms and Public Awareness:** ....

Cultural resistance and lack of public education about children's rights and the seriousness of CSEA hinder the implementation of prevention and protection programs

5 **Technological Infrastructure:** ....

The lack of adequate technological infrastructure, such as robust data systems and access to advanced technologies for investigation and protection, limits the ability of both countries to effectively monitor and respond to cases of CSEA.

SUCCESS STORIES AND BEST PRACTICES:

Among the good practices found in the MRC reports of Kenya and Uganda, the following are highlighted:

1 **Establishment of multisectoral national committees**

Both countries have established such committees whose purpose is to coordinate child protection policies and programs, integrating representatives from various government agencies and civil society organizations to coordinate child protection policies and programs.

2 **Development of comprehensive support services for victims.**

Both countries have implemented services that include medical, psychological, and legal care, coordinated at the national level to ensure a timely and effective response to the needs of victims; in the case of Uganda, these are integrated and specialized services, accessible and responsive to diverse needs. Within this component, we highlight the existence of helplines, which are a crucial element for the identification and management of cases.

America (Guatemala, Colombia, Honduras, Trinidad, El Salvador, Ecuador)

GENERAL ANALYSIS IN THE DIFFERENT AREAS

1 **Priority level:**

The Priority Level of the different gaps is generally high (M=3.61, SD=0.55). The sector with the highest rating is Industry (M=3.88, SD=0.54) and the sector with the lowest rating is Policy, Legislation and Governance (M=3.24, SD=0.51).

2 **Presence of ICMEC:**

Presence of ICMEC is perceived as weak in most sectors
(M=2.17, SD=0.68). The sector with the highest rating is Policy, Legislation, and Governance (M=2.61, SD=0.62), while the sector with the lowest rating is Industry (M=1.67, SD=0.75).

3 **Realistic Level of Change:**

The perception of realistic change is moderate to high in most sectors (M=2.56, SD=0.87). The sector with the highest rating is Policy, Legislation and Governance (M=3.17, SD=0.53) and the sector with the lowest rating is Industry (M=1.76, SD=1.08).

4 **Maturity:**

The level of maturity varies among the different sectors, but in general, it is in a stage of development and strengthening (M=1.97, SD=0.36). The sector with the highest rating is Policy, Legislation, and Governance (M=2.17, SD=0.26), while the sector with the lowest rating is Industry (M=1.83, SD=0.41).

COMMON CHALLENGES:

1 **Insufficient inter-institutional coordination:**

Although countries such as Guatemala and Honduras have implemented coordinated strategies to improve the response to CSEA, in other countries inter-institutional coordination continues to be a challenge. The lack of an integrated approach and the absence of effective communication between different sectors and levels of government hinder the implementation of child protection policies and programs.

2 **Limited resources and training:**

Most countries face limitations in terms of human and financial resources. This includes a lack of trained personnel to handle CSEA cases and insufficient funding for ongoing and specialized training programs. The limited capacity of law enforcement and the judicial sector to respond effectively to these cases is a constant concern in the different countries of the region.

3 **Inadequate or unimplemented legal framework:**

Although laws exist to combat CSEA, in many cases these laws are not effectively implemented or are not aligned with international standards. Failure to update laws to address new forms of exploitation through emerging technologies is another significant challenge.

4 Low ICMEC Presence:

ICMEC presence in many countries in the region is perceived as low. It is important to analyze whether this perceived low presence corresponds to the material reality of the country or whether it reflects specific challenges in identifying and prioritizing gaps. If necessary, providing additional support to country managers to help them prioritize and address gaps effectively could contribute to better-addressing gaps.

5 Lack of evidence-based policies:

This is a significant challenge in many countries in the region where the lack of robust data collection and analysis systems hinders the formulation of effective policies and programs. Without accurate and up-to-date data, it is difficult to identify trends, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and adjust strategies in an informed manner. This lack of evidence limits the ability of governments to make informed and proactive decisions.

6 Inadequate victim support systems:

Support services for victims of CSEA are often insufficient, fragmented, or not accessible at the national level. The lack of comprehensive services including medical, psychological, and legal support impedes a full and sustainable recovery for victims.

7 Challenges in public awareness and education:

Public education and awareness of CSEA remains insufficient. The lack of systematic educational programs and awareness campaigns limits prevention and case reporting. Community sensitization and training of professionals working with children are areas that require continued attention.

8 Limited child participation:

The participation of children in the formulation and evaluation of policies and programs is limited. The lack of formal and meaningful mechanisms to include the voices of young people in decisions that affect their safety and well-being is a recurrent challenge in the region.

SUCCESS STORIES AND BEST PRACTICES:

In the Americas region, different countries have implemented successful initiatives and good practices that have proven to be effective in the fight against CSEA. Some of the most outstanding approaches according to the MRC documents and maturity criteria are presented below:

1 Inter-institutional coordination and international collaboration:

Effective coordination among multiple actors has proven to be an important practice in the region. In Guatemala, the "Coordinadora Interinstitucional contra la Trata" and the "Comisión Intersectorial de Tecnologías de Información y Comunicación" exemplify how cooperation between government institutions, NGOs, and international agencies can significantly improve the capacity to respond to online CSEA. Similarly, in Colombia, participation in global initiatives such as WeProtect and collaboration with ICMEC have contributed to strengthening and developing the country's capacities.

2 Continuous and specialized training:

The implementation of continuous training programs for professionals is another noteworthy practice in the region. Countries such as El Salvador and Ecuador have established ongoing training for health professionals, educators, and frontline workers, focusing on the protection of children from online CSEA. These programs ensure that professionals are always up to date with best practices and methodologies.

3 Continuous improvement from evidence-based policies:

Although the lack of evidence-based policies is a common challenge in the region, some countries have managed to implement successful practices in this area. Colombia, with the National Strategy for the Prevention of Violence against Children, and Guatemala through its Public Policy against Sexual Violence 2019-2029 are examples where it is possible to collect and analyze available data and use this information to develop more effective policies.

4 **Victim Support Services:**

In the region, countries such as Honduras and Ecuador have implemented support services that include safe shelter, specialized medical and psychological care, as well as rehabilitation and resocialization services. These services ensure that victims receive the necessary support throughout the judicial process, providing a safe and stable environment that facilitates their recovery. These comprehensive practices not only help victims recover but also strengthen the child protection system.

5 **Industry Participation and Social Responsibility:**

Although the industry sector is one of the least mature in the region, there are examples of how the industry can play a key role in preventing and responding to CSEA. In Colombia, the technology industry has actively collaborated with initiatives such as the "Te Protejo" report line to block and eliminate CSEA, while in Ecuador, companies such as Telefónica/MOVISTAR have collaborated with the IWF to identify and block this type of content and promote the safe use of the Internet.

Eurasia (Moldova, Romania, Indonesia)

GENERAL ANALYSIS IN THE DIFFERENT AREAS

1   Priority Level:

The Priority Level of the different gaps has a high rating (M=4.15, SD=0.55). The sector with the highest rating is Policy, Legislation and Governance (M=4.60, SD=0.69) and the sector with the lowest rating is Society and Culture (M=3.64, SD=0.63).

2   ICMEC Presence:

ICMEC Presence is perceived as weak in most sectors, with a mean of (M=1.68, SD=1.19). The sectors with the highest and lowest ratings are Research and Data (M=2.11, SD=1.64) and Society and Culture (M=1.19, SD=0.43), respectively.

3   Realistic Level of Change:

The perception of realistic change is moderate in most sectors (M=3.14, SD=0.80). The sector with the highest rating is Research and Data (M=3.56, SD=1.35) and the sector with the lowest rating is Policy, Legislation and Governance (M=2.67, SD=1.22).

4   Maturity:

The level of maturity varies among the different sectors, but in general it is in a stage of development and strengthening (M=2.26, SD=0.34). The sectors with the highest and lowest ratings are Policy, Legislation, and Governance (M=2.67, SD=0.58) and Industry (M=2.00, SD=0.00), respectively.

COMMON CHALLENGES:

1 **Lack of coordination and inadequate legal frameworks:** ·······················

Although countries have made efforts to improve coordination among different actors, the lack of an integrated approach and effective communication mechanisms remains a significant challenge. The implementation of child protection policies and programs is hampered by the lack of clear and coordinated national entities, coupled with legal frameworks that are not fully aligned with international standards.

2 **Limited training and resources:** ··

Despite some initiatives to improve the training of personnel involved in child protection, limited specialized training for authorities, the judicial system, and victim support professionals continues to be a problem. The lack of adequate financial and human resources limits the effectiveness of existing programs and the implementation of new approaches, which affects the capacity to respond to CSEA.

3 **Insufficient Victim Support and Protection Systems:** ·····················

Victim support services are fragmented and lack adequate integration. Specialized services are not available at the national level to comprehensively address the needs of victims of CSEA, leaving many victims without the necessary assistance.

4 **Lack of technological infrastructure and data systems:** ·················

Despite some technological advances, infrastructure and technical support for addressing CSEA crimes online is limited. The lack of nationally coordinated data systems and limited access to international databases, such as Interpol's ICSE database, hinder effective investigation and response.

SUCCESS STORIES AND BEST PRACTICES:

1 Comprehensive victim support:

The implementation of the Barnahus model in Moldova has helped provide a friendly and safe environment for child and adolescent victims and witnesses of violence. This model brings together relevant services in one place to offer a coordinated and effective response, avoiding re-victimization during investigations and court proceedings and ensuring that victims receive the comprehensive support they need.

2 Adoption of hotlines (INHOPE):

The case of Moldova shows how its linkage to INHOPE facilitated the availability of a national hotline managed by local organizations. Through this channel, information on child safety is provided online and a reliable channel for reporting incidents of CSEA, improving response and care capacity.

3 National strategies aligned with international frameworks:

The "Safe Kids, Safe Romania" strategy 2022-2027 seeks to align child digital safety with the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and other framework documents adopted at the European and national levels. This approach allows for better coordination of efforts and implementation of more effective policies for child protection.

4 Cooperation between industry and civil society:

Companies such as Telekom Romania, Orange Romania, and Digi/RCS-RDS have implemented corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs focused on online child protection. Initiatives such as the "Telefonul Copilului" helpline and the "Ora de Net" program. These types of initiatives demonstrate that collaboration between the private sector and civil society organizations dedicated to child protection is possible and contributes to improving the safety of children in the digital environment.

5 National articulation with a multi-sectoral approach:

In Indonesia, child protection capacity building is provided through the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) which provides the structure and leadership for national coordination and implementation of child protection policies and the ID-COP initiative that promotes cross-sectoral collaboration to protect children online. These combined leadership and operational efforts expand protection from CSEA.

⑤ Conclusions

Policy, Legislation, and Governance Sector: ⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯⋯

The CRM studies identified the main gaps and the need for updating national legislation to prevent and mitigate CSEA. In general, these are related to:

→ **Africa:** Kenya needs to update its legislation to include protection in the digital environment and improve coordination between existing laws. Uganda requires a greater focus on the effective implementation of its laws and the development of specific legislation to address online CSEA.

→ **Americas:** In this region, the lack of robust systems for data collection and analysis is a common challenge that mainly affects the ability to formulate evidence-based policies and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Improving interagency coordination and data collection will be crucial to closing the gaps in this sector in the region.

→ **Eurasia:** Moldova and Romania need to further align their laws with international standards, especially with online child protection. Indonesia needs to focus on and strengthen its legislation to address online CSEA. This involves clearly defining the offenses, establishing specific laws, implementing preventive and protective measures, developing international cooperation mechanisms, and ensuring adequate sanctions for perpetrators along with support programs for victims.

Some strategies that ICMEC could pursue or begin to implement to address these needs include:

- Make specific recommendations or offer technical assistance to legislators for the drafting or modification of laws, ensuring that they are aligned with international standards.
- Advance the development of models, guidelines, or operational protocols so that child protection laws can be effectively implemented at the national and local levels. This could include implementation or procedural manuals or clear guidelines and accompaniment for those responsible for implementing laws and policies.
- Train those responsible for implementing laws and policies at the national and local levels to ensure that they fully understand the new legislative frameworks and their obligations under these frameworks.
- Promote the creation of national intersectoral committees or strengthen or actively link up with existing initiatives in the countries.
- Develop specific digital platforms or support the delivery of existing digital platforms to the countries, aimed at collaborating and exchanging information among the different stakeholders involved.
- Systematize MRC studies as monitoring and evaluation systems to measure the effectiveness of ICMEC's support to the different countries and to evaluate the progress or setbacks of policies and programs to protect against CSEA.
- Publish periodic reports on the status of implementation of policies and laws, identifying areas for improvement and best practices.

Criminal Justice Sector:

→ **Africa:** in this region, criminal justice challenges include a lack of adequate training, insufficient resources for investigation, and lack of inter-institutional coordination.

→ **Americas:** common gaps and needs in the criminal justice sector include a lack of inter-institutional coordination, insufficient resources and specialized personnel, and shortcomings in data collection and analysis.

→ **Eurasia:** Moldova has insufficient training, limited resources, and a lack of interagency collaboration. Romania needs to update its legislation, improve technological infrastructure, and strengthen victim protection. Indonesia faces challenges in clarifying legal definitions, the need for specialized training, and international cooperation.

Some strategies that ICMEC could pursue or begin to implement to address these needs include:

- Provide technical assistance and specialized equipment for the collection and analysis of evidence in cases of CSEA.
- Advise and support countries in the creation and strengthening of specialized units within the police and other security agencies.
- Develop and adopt clear and standardized protocols for the investigation and prosecution of CSEA cases.
- Implement protection measures for victims and witnesses throughout the judicial process.

Victim Support Sector:

→ **Africa:** Kenya needs to improve access to and coordination of comprehensive victim support services, as well as better training of professionals. Uganda needs to invest in care infrastructure, increase awareness and accessibility, and expand psychological support services.

→ **Americas:** the main challenges in this sector include the lack of comprehensive services, insufficient resources, lack of sustainable programs, limited infrastructure, and deficiencies in inter-institutional coordination.

→ **Eurasia:** Moldova lacks integrated services, training for Victim Support staff, and limited financial resources. Romania faces limitations in access to specialized services, victim protection and safety, and coordination between protection agencies. Indonesia needs to improve the availability of services, develop effective rehabilitation programs, and increase awareness and education about available support services.

Some strategies that ICMEC could pursue or begin to implement to address these needs include:

- Create or strengthen comprehensive support centers that provide medical, psychological, and legal services for victims in one location.
- Encourage the creation of psychological support programs and telepsychology services to reach victims in remote areas.
- Promote the development of educational programs and awareness campaigns for the community and professionals to recognize signs of CSEA and the importance of early intervention.
- Advise protection authorities on best practices for the implementation of protection measures throughout the judicial and rehabilitation process.
- Develop effective rehabilitation programs that address the physical, emotional, and social needs of victims, facilitating their reintegration into society.

Society and Culture Sector:

→ **Africa:** the main challenge in this sector focuses on social norms that validate violence against children, such as child marriages, initiation practices, gender inequalities, resistance to change, and social acceptance of violence.

→ **Americas:** the main gaps in this sector include the lack of awareness programs or campaigns, limited community participation, limited integration of the issue in the media (Trinidad and Tobago), and insufficient involvement of civil society organizations (El Salvador).

→ **Eurasia:** The main challenges in this sector in the region include social norms that validate violence against children, lack of education and public awareness, limited community involvement, limited media participation (Romania), access to information, and strengthening family and community support (Indonesia).

Some strategies that ICMEC could pursue or begin to implement to address these needs include:

- Develop and promote awareness campaigns at the national and regional levels to increase awareness of CSEA.
- Implement educational programs and workshops in schools to teach children about their rights and how to recognize and report situations of CSEA.
- Collaborate with the media to disseminate ethical and informed messages on the prevention of CSEA.
- Provide training to health, education, and social service professionals on how to identify and respond to cases of CSEA.
- Promote the creation of community support networks involving local leaders, community organizations, and parent groups to promote a safe environment for children.

Industry Sector:

In this sector, the different regions share the same challenges, which include lack of specific regulations and adequate industry compliance, limited technical capacity to develop child protection technologies, and insufficient collaboration between industry and other stakeholders. In addition, many companies have not adopted effective social responsibility policies and lack awareness and training programs on CSEA. It is also crucial to invest in technological infrastructure for the detection and prevention of these crimes.

Some strategies that ICMEC could pursue or begin to implement to address these needs include:

- Develop and update specific regulations addressing child protection in digital and industry.
- Offer technical training programs to companies to develop and improve their child protection technologies.
- Promote the implementation of social responsibility policies that include specific measures for child protection.
- Create digital platforms to facilitate collaboration and information sharing between industry, governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders involved in child protection.
- Promote investment in technological infrastructure for the detection and prevention of crimes against children.

Research and Monitoring Sector:

In this sector, the lack of robust and coordinated systems for data collection and analysis, the need for standardized indicators and evaluation and monitoring methods, and insufficient inter-institutional collaboration and data integration are needs that are repeated in different countries and regions. The following are additional and more region-specific needs:

→ **Africa:** in this region, the lack of adequate technological infrastructure and trained personnel limits the ability to conduct thorough investigations and effectively monitor the situation of CSEA online.

→ **Americas:** there is a lack of continuous and coordinated research that produces an up-to-date and reliable picture of threats and responses. This translates into a lack of evidence-based policies and programs and a lack of regular monitoring and evaluation of the strategies implemented.

→ **Eurasia:** Countries face challenges in accessing international databases and integrating their national data systems, which hinders an effective, evidence-based response. In addition, there is a lack of financial and technical resources to develop and maintain advanced monitoring and tracking technologies.

Some strategies that ICMEC could pursue or begin to implement to address these needs include:

- Develop and implement data management systems that allow for the collection, storage, and analysis of data related to the AESNNA.
- Facilitate agreements that allow countries to access relevant international databases and improve evidence-based response capacity.
- Assist countries in integrating their national data systems to ensure a more coordinated and effective response.
- Encourage collaborative research projects involving multiple countries and regions to obtain a global and coordinated view of NAAHS-related threats and responses.
- Conduct research and analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of monitoring systems and policies implemented, providing evidence-based recommendations for improving child protection strategies.
- Promote the creation of national and regional databases that facilitate access to and integration of data from different sources, ensuring a complete and updated view of the situation.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Continuous and Specialized Training Programs:

Applicable to the following sectors: Criminal Justice, Victim Support, and Investigation and Monitoring. It is related to offering continuous and specialized training programs to authorities, professionals working with victims, and personnel in charge of investigation and monitoring.

2 Development and Strengthening of Digital Platforms:

Applicable to the Victim Support, Industry, and Research and Monitoring sectors, this involves developing or improving digital platforms to facilitate inter-agency coordination and information sharing. These platforms should be secure and enable collaboration between industry, governments, NGOs, and other relevant actors.

3 Investment in Technological Infrastructure:

Applicable to the Criminal Justice, Industry, and Investigation and Monitoring sectors, it is related to promoting collaboration with governments and international organizations to invest in the technological infrastructure (software and equipment) necessary for the incorporation and use of advanced case management systems, data analysis, and child protection technologies.

4 Creation of Collaborative Networks:

Applicable to the sectors of Victim Support, Society and Culture, and Research and Monitoring, it seeks to foster the creation of collaborative networks among governmental, non-governmental, and private sector organizations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of support services and research. These networks should facilitate the coordination and exchange of best practices, the production of new knowledge in the field, and the development of technological tools for research and monitoring.

5 Development of Standardized Indicators and Evaluation Methods:

Applicable to the Criminal Justice and Research and Monitoring sectors, it relates to collaboration with experts and international organizations to develop standardized performance indicators and evaluation methods that allow for the effective monitoring of strategies and policies implemented for the prevention and mitigation of CSEA.

6 **Publication of Periodic Reports and Studies:** ·····························

Applicable to the Criminal Justice and Research and Monitoring sectors, this involves publishing periodic reports and studies that present the main research findings, providing a solid basis for the formulation of effective policies and programs.

7 **Facilitation of International Cooperation Agreements:** ·····························

Applicable to the Criminal Justice and Investigation and Monitoring sectors. It is aimed at facilitating the establishment and strengthening of international cooperation agreements for the investigation and prosecution of transnational crimes related to CSEA.

⇗ Appendices

List of Acronyms

- **CSEA:** Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
- **ICMEC:** International Center for Missing & Exploited Children
- **INHOPE:** International Association of Internet Hotlines
- **KPPPA:** Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Indonesia)
- **MNR:** National Response Model
- **MRC:** Multisectoral Response and Capacity Studies
- **NCB:** National Capacity Building
- **NGO:** Non-Governmental Organization
- **CSR:** Corporate Social Responsibility
- **EU:** European Union

Glossary of terms

- **Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA):** Any form of sexual abuse and exploitation of children under 18, including the production and distribution of child sexual abuse material.
- **National Capacity Building (NCB):** ICMEC team in charge of implementing efforts and strategies aimed at strengthening the capacity of countries to respond to child sexual abuse and exploitation.
- **Helpline:** Service that helps and support to child and adolescent victims of CSEA.
- Hotline: Service that allows reporting and receiving support on cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- **National Response Model Maturity Framework (WeProtect):** A tool that assesses countries' capacities to respond to CSEA, assigning maturity levels according to the degree of development and effectiveness of protection measures.
- **National Response Model (NRM):** Framework developed by the WeProtect Global Alliance to support countries in the prevention and mitigation of online CSEA.
- **Realistic Level of Change:** A measure developed by the ICMEC NCB Team to assess the possibility of implementing effective changes in the response to CSEA.
- **Child Participation:** Inclusion of the voices and opinions of children in the formulation and evaluation of policies and programs.
- **ICMEC Presence:** A measure developed by the ICMEC NCB Team to assess the level of ICMEC activity and support in each country.

MRC reports analyzed

- *Kenya's MRC Assessment for Preventing and Combating Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.*
  https://cdn.icmec.org/wpcontent/uploads/2023/05/Multisectoral-Responses-and-Capacities-Assessment-MRC-for-the-Development-of-an-Intersectoral-Response-for-the-Prevention-Search-and-Location-of-Missing-Children-Kenya.-V2-1.pdf

- *Uganda's MRC Assessment for the Prevention, Investigation, and Assistance to Victims of Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.*
  https://cdn.icmec.org/wpcontent/uploads/2023/12/ICMEC_MRC_Uganda-2023.pdf

- *Guatemala's MRC Assessment for the prevention, investigation, and assistance to victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.* https://cdn.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Combined-MRC-AssessmentGuatemala_English.pdf

- *Colombia's MRC Assessment for the prevention, investigation, and assistance to victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.*
  https://cdn.icmec.org/wpcontent/uploads/2023/04/English-MRC-Assessment-2.pdf

- *Honduras' MRC Assessment for the prevention, investigation, and assistance to victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.*
  https://cdn.icmec.org/wpcontent/uploads/2022/12/MRC-Assessment-MC-Honduras.pdf

- *Trinidad & Tobago's MRC Assessment for the Prevention, Investigation, and Care of Victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse on the Internet.*
  https://cdn.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/3.-Final-Assessment-Design-MRC-Trinidad-and-Tobago-2023-1.pdf

- *El Salvador's MRC Assessment for the prevention, investigation, and assistance to victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.* https://cdn.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/MRC-El-Salvador-English2023.pdf

- *Ecuador's MRC Assessment for the prevention, investigation, and assistance to victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.*
  https://cdn.icmec.org/wpcontent/uploads/2024/03/ICMEC-MRC-Ecuador-Spanish.pdf

- *Moldova's MRC Assessment for the Prevention, Investigation, and Assistance to Victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.*
  https://cdn.icmec.org/wpcontent/uploads/2023/12/Moldova-CSEA_MRC_-English-Updated.pdf

- *Romania's MRC Assessment for the Prevention, Investigation, and Assistance to Victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation.*
  https://cdn.icmec.org/wpcontent/uploads/2024/06/ICMEC-MRC-ROMANIA-Updated.pdf

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- WeProtect Global Alliance (2023). *Preventing and Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA): A Model National Response.* https://bit.ly/MNRWeProtect

MRC ASSESSMENT
NATIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

International Centre ™
FOR MISSING & EXPLOITED CHILDREN

**Comparative analysis of ICMEC's
Multisectoral Response and Capacity Assessments (MRCs)**

June 2024