

Project Proposal Summary Sheet

Project Title: **The Child Online Protection (COP)**

Source of Proposal: ITU

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Brief Description

The “Child Online Protection (COP) Initiative for the Americas Region” is intended to develop a cybersecurity strategy for children and young people, and deliver significant national and societal benefits in the region. This project focuses on five main areas: i) establishment of a general framework for action which coordinates existing efforts and ii) a series of training and prevention initiatives which are focused on children, schools and communities aimed at reducing the risks involved in accessing the Internet. Under the framework of ITU’s COP Initiative, the strategies fall within five work areas: i) Legal measures, ii) Technical and procedural measures, iii) Organizational structures, iv) Capacity Building, and v) International cooperation.

Beneficiary Countries

Countries in the Americas Region

Project Objective(s)

The objective of this project is to *“Emphasize the importance of Child Online Protection (COP) and safety of children and youth, through awareness programmes and establishment of technical measures”*

- Formulating a strategy to enhance national/regional cooperation in online child safety among key public and private actors in the country/region;
- Contributing to the fostering of public policies aimed at improving the protection of children online;
- Promoting the empowerment of young people for full and positive online participation and a safe use of digital tools;
- Fostering a better understanding among caretakers and teachers as well as children and adolescents of the risks involved in Internet-use to minimize harm.

Expected Results

i) Legal Measures: Enhancing public policies in the field of online child safety

“The COP Initiative calls upon all stakeholders to promote the adoption of policies and strategies that will protect children in cyberspace and promote their safer access to all the extraordinary opportunities online resources can provide.” (COP Guidelines for policy makers)

Key members of the ICT industry in a country, governmental institutions dealing with the issue of child and adolescents' online safety as well as representatives of the NGO sector and International Organization based in the country will be invited to join the Inter-institutional Commission. This will ensure an effective cooperation among all sectors involved at national level.

- **Inter-Institutional Commission:** This Commission will serve as leading expert group and, as such, will contribute to the definition of national policies, additional activities and strategies that could complement the deliverable stated in this project.

Provisions will be proposed by the Inter-Institutional Commission on internet safety related issues to look at actions that can be pursued at the national level, and efforts that can be made in conjunction with international entities, such as other UN organizations.

ii) **Technical and Procedural Measures: Fostering the cooperation with the ICT industry leaders**

“Convergence is now an established reality in many countries, and there is no doubt that it is bringing with it a host of new challenges. Cooperation and partnership are the keys to progress. No one sector of the industry has a monopoly on knowledge or wisdom. We can all learn from each other.” (COP Guidelines for industries)

In order to formulate a national and international strategy focusing on child online protection, it is essential that communities, including ICT industry leaders, become more involved and develop innovative industry codes of practice to support the ICT infrastructure in becoming more sustainable, flexible and adaptable for children.

- **Code of Conduct/Practice:** The Inter-institutional Commission will invite participants from different sectors, including broadcast, Internet and mobile, to identify the commonalities for developing a “Code of Conduct” required to regulate the national/regional market. It will evaluate what existing models are already available in other countries. It will develop common rules to create a widely shared approach to protecting children online, to be promoted across whole industries. (i.e. User complaint systems, User friendly Terms and Conditions, Safety information and reporting mechanisms, etc.).
- **Financial coalition against Child Pornography:** The Inter-institutional commission will invite the national/regional financial and banking sector to form an alliance in order to copy the model of financial coalitions against child pornography active in several countries such as the ones implemented in the USA, the UK or in Brazil.
- **Technical tools available to enhance the protection of children online:** There are technical tools that are available to address the risks that young people may face in the Internet. These tools will be a complement to the educational strategies mentioned in the above paragraphs. Some examples are anti-grooming engines, memo sticks, age verification instruments, filter software, spam filter, antivirus software, etc. Some of these tools will be installed in the computer laboratories in primary and high schools depending on technical requirements and funding available.

iii) **Organizational Structure: Establishing report mechanisms and channels**

- **Hotline:** The project will collaborate with ITU's COP Members and other international organizations to establish a national hotline to rapidly and effectively respond to reports of illegal and/or harmful content for children, and also to improve international cooperation in this field.
 - It will utilize a well-established and widely promoted mechanism to provide a readily understood means for reporting illegal content found on the Internet.
 - Internet and/or Content service providers (ISPs) are also invited to join the “International Hotline”, for example, by providing a “Report Abuse Button” in their services to children.
- **Children/Youth International Cyber peers:** In collaboration with ITU's COP Members or any other interested stakeholders in the region, the project will set up an international Youth/Children Peer

Group to encourage young people to voluntarily and actively advise and inform their peers on how to protect themselves on the Internet.

- **Cybersecurity School Peers:** Schools and educators will also be invited to set up their own student patrols in their schools. They could extend their mandate to the community and attend reports of abuse from members of the communities.

iv) **Capacity Building: Implementing educational and awareness-raising strategies**

“Many parents and guardians adhere to the common misconception that their children are safer if they are at home using a computer [...] This is a dangerous misconception because the Internet can take children and young people virtually anywhere in the world [...]” (COP Guidelines for parents, Guardians and Educators).

“Children and young people also need to be aware of some of the potentially negative aspects of the technologies. All threats to children and young people’s well being are a challenge that must be addressed by all stakeholders, including children themselves.” (COP Guidelines for children).

Education and training is critical for parents, guardians and/or educators to help children have a safe and positive experience on the Internet. It is crucial for them to understand what children and young people are actually doing online as opposed to what adults think they are doing.

At the same time, whilst all stakeholders should do whatever they can to make the Internet as safe as it can be for children, the first and best form of defence in protecting children would be empowering them through education and awareness of all potential risks as well as possible solutions.

- **Online tutorials for parents, teachers and children and young people:** The project will provide e-media educations and digital literacy along with the relevant cybersecurity messages. To create a participative online care and safety network, it is essential that communities, especially parents and/or educators, become involved. This platform will be designed to also foster the participation of young people and the construction, together with them, of actions in favour of the community through the promotion of local awareness-building and management networks.
- **Enlisting the aid of the mass media and online social media in promoting awareness messages:** This will develop a series of TV and radio spots which will promote the new online tutorials aimed at informing parents and children about proper and safe uses of the Internet.
- **Children/Youth-Oriented Educational Strategies:** The project will include student-oriented educational strategies designed to build awareness and foster discussion. Through national governmental agencies, a series of pedagogical actions aimed at fostering a safer use of the Internet among children and adolescents will be implemented.
 - The campaign will promote education and training towards various targets, such as students from high schools and primary schools, children and adolescents out of classrooms, national educational advisors and teachers. Also, it will provide for distribution of posters and other message-bearing items urging students to think and talk about safe use of the Internet.
 - For example, a “digital banner on Child Online Protection (COP)” will be used when children turn on their computers or access the Internet.
- **Children/Youth Express - Competitions:** Through social networks or other popular websites, children will be encouraged to participate in express competitions relating to the creative use of digital child-protection technologies.
 - The winning proposals will be published in the form of announcements in virtual locations most frequently visited and sought out by children and young people.

- **Child Online Protection (COP) Expo-Fair:** By bringing together players and stakeholders working in the sphere of online safety on the celebration of the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD, 17 May). This event enables the drawing up of an inventory of initiatives, thereby enhancing the actions undertaken and providing for the promotion of any other actions deemed necessary.

v) International Cooperation: Harness the power of global multistakeholder collaboration

- **Americas Region Child Online Portal:** The project will establish an “Americas Region Child Online Portal” as a project funded by ITU and the countries in the Americas Region and post it on the website of the Americas Region Observatory for Safety and Cybersecurity. It will help the region harness the power of global multistakeholder collaboration by sharing advice and information.

Estimated Start Date

August 2012

Estimated Duration

36 - 60 months

Estimated Budget

USD 2,000,000,000