



## **Contribution by Kindernothilfe, Voice of Children (Nepal), and Center for Child Study and Protection (Yayasan PKPA, Indonesia)**

### **AMPLIFYING CHILDREN AND YOUTH'S VOICES IN CO-CREATING SAFE AND INCLUSIVE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT**

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#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this presentation is to effectively communicate the vital recommendations and insights gathered from children and youth groups in Nepal, the Philippines, and Indonesia concerning UN GC 25. By sharing this feedback with the Ministerial Groups and other civil society organizations, we can foster meaningful dialogue and drive impactful change for young people.

#### **Action required**

This document is transmitted to the Council Working Group on child online protection **for information**

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#### **References**

*\*Advocacy Message in PDF as attached*

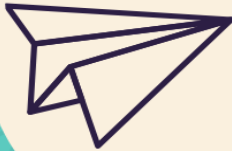
[Link to the Digital Asset, the key messages has been culled out from the Advocacy Message](#)

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## **Background**

Kindernothilfe, Voice of Children Nepal, and Center for Child Study and Protection (Yayasan PKPA) in Indonesia are collaborating and currently implementing the project – Stopping Cybercrime Against Children: More Safety and Protection on the Internet”. The project’s primary goal is to protect the youth from Cybercrime by empowering them with information and making sure that they are actively practicing their rights

Following a series of engaging meetings and dialogues with children from May 2024 from three different countries, they have developed a powerful advocacy message. This message captures their personal experiences in the digital landscape and integrates their insightful feedback on General Comment No. 25, with the goal of amplifying their voices and pushing for meaningful change.



# ADVOCACY MESSAGE

Feedback and Recommendations  
to General Comment 25

Stopping cybercrime against children :  
more safety and protection againsts children

Drafted on November 20, 2024



The Internet has been a fundamental factor in our world since its conception, with its primary purpose being convenience in sharing information, but without actually being critical in our existence. However, with our technology rapidly advancing over the past couple of decades, it has become vital for us to immerse ourselves in the digital environment; the COVID-19 pandemic guaranteed this vitality as we had to rely on the digital world for communication. That being said, it is heavily affecting our lives and the lives of children and adolescents across the globe, with its function being for entertainment, education, and societal functions.

Although the digital environment offers many advantages and opportunities to this audience, it also has many harmful effects. During the 2014 Day of General Discussion on Digital Media and Children's Rights, the *Committee on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) recognized that "States should adopt a national coordinating framework with a clear mandate and sufficient authority to coordinate all activities related to children's rights and digital media and ICTs at cross-sectoral, national, regional and local levels, and facilitate international cooperation." (*Children's Commissioner for England*, 2017). According to the "Global Threat Assessment 2023" report of the *WeProtect Global Alliance* (WPGA), "child sexual exploitation and abuse online is escalating worldwide, in both scale and methods." And despite the alarming 87% increase in reports of child sexual abuse material in three years, analyzed by the *US National Center for Missing and Exploited Children* in 2022, it is still not an accurate count, there being unreported cases. With the positive and negative ramifications in mind, as well as the views of over a thousand children consulted on account of the issue recognized in 2014 taken into consideration ("Our Rights In The Digital World"), the CRC released the principled and authoritative framework entitled "General Comment No. 25" (*5Rights Foundation*, 2021).

On March 2, 2021, "General Comment No. 25" (GC 25) was officially published. Throughout the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) since 1989, the GC 25 was the first legal document to explicitly acknowledge the fundamental rights of children in the digital environment, including, but not limited to, access to information and communication (expression, thought, and association), as well as privacy (*Child Rights Connect*, 2021). The objective of this is as follows:

"In the present general comment, the Committee explains how States parties should implement the Convention in relation to the digital environment and provides guidance on relevant legislative, policy and other measures to ensure full compliance with their obligations under the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto in the light of the opportunities, risks and challenges in promoting, respecting, protecting and fulfilling all children's rights in the digital environment." (*Committee on the Rights of the Child*, 2021).

GC 25 also highlighted the four rights identified in the aforementioned Convention as general principles to be implemented concerning children's rights in the digital context: (1) Non-discrimination, (2) Best interests of the child, (3) Rights to life, survival and development, and (4) Respect for the views of the child.

"Stopping Cybercrime Against Children: More Safety and Protection on the Internet" is a four-year project that commences in 2021. It is co-financed by *Kindernothilfe e.V.* (KNH), a non-government child rights organization founded in Germany, and the *Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development* (BMZ) of the Federal Republic of Germany, with the former also providing project coordination support and management. The project is being implemented in collaboration with non-government organizations from three



nations in Asia: *Pusat Kajian dan Perlindungan Anak* (PKPA) from Indonesia, *Voice of Children* (VOC) from Nepal, and *Foundations for the Development of Agusanons* (FDAI) as well as *Katinlingbanong Pagtagad Alang sa Kauswagan Inc.* (KAPASKI) from the Philippines. Its primary goal is to protect the youth from Cybercrime by empowering them with information and making sure that they are actively practicing their rights. The following are the project's significant target outcomes:

1. Equipped and capacitated child protection actors (government and CSO actors);
2. Improved and implemented laws in the prevention and response to OSAEC and protection of survivors; and
3. Empowered children and youth, and strengthened child-led organizations.

This involvement includes dialogue between the child leaders and key stakeholders at the regional level. Here is the introduction of the group of child activists from Nepal, Indonesia and the Philippines:

**"We are the children and youth leaders from the three countries Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines. We are the children of today's generations, Alpha and Gen Z. We are ambitious and are relentless disruptors of online abuse and exploitation. Yes, we are children, and we are also strong advocates to defend our peers from any kind of abuse. Through this group, we want to amplify our voices towards strong promotion of our rights towards making a safe environment for children in Asia. Empowering our peers to build protective skills online and becoming safe in the digital world is our main agenda."**



Following a series of engaging online meetings with children from May 2024 from three different countries, they have developed a powerful advocacy message. This message captures their personal experiences in the digital landscape and integrates their insightful feedback on General Comment No. 25, with the goal to amplify their voices and push for meaningful change.

The message is as follows:

The digital world is where we can truly express ourselves. Whether it is sharing posts that resonate with us or sharing what we believe in, it's amazing that we have the freedom to let our voices be heard. We can also use the online platform to spread positivity, boosting our friends' confidence with uplifting words. Through the online platform, we can share our organization's advocacies, reach a wide audience, and make an impact.

The digital world opens up so many opportunities to learn and grow. From educational resources to scholarship opportunities, a wealth of information is at our fingertips. Online platforms are super helpful for our education, we can do research, attend classes, join webinars, and even finish school assignments.

In the digital world, we can connect with others, learn new cultures, stay updated with the latest news, and be entertained—all with just a few taps on our screens. It's a space that we can easily access anytime and anywhere!

What's even better? We have been seeing children with disabilities actively participating on social media. Some of them are creating fun TikTok videos and reels; this shows that they are gradually adapting to developments in the digital world.



However, despite our many positive experiences in the digital world, we have also faced many negative ones. Many of our rights in the digital environment have yet to be fulfilled and are violated by others.

#### A. Issue of Right to Privacy

When it comes to our right to privacy in the digital world, things aren't always as safe as they should be. One of the worst things is when children's photos are used without permission, especially in a sexual way, and posted with captions that twist the truth. It gets even scarier when Artificial Intelligence is involved, making it easier for people to manipulate images or spread false information.

There is also the issue of misuse of our personal data, like our phone numbers. Some strangers get hold of our numbers and use them for online loans without us even knowing.

Additionally, some children have had their personal accounts hacked by others. Some people even create fake accounts, using someone else's photo without their consent and posting disgusting stuff like pornographic videos or obscene messages.

#### B. Issue of Right to Information

We face some challenges online in exercising our right to information. One of the biggest problems is clickbait and fake news—there is so much misleading and false information in the digital environment. People spread it by posting or reposting things without checking if they're from a credible source.



There are advertisements that aren't child-friendly. People also share content about online gambling, which is even directed at kids.

What makes things harder is that when something bad happens online, like violence or any uncomfortable situation, most of us don't even know how to report it. There's a lack of information about the steps we can take to protect ourselves or get help.

### C. Issue of Right to Protection

Children haven't received full protection in the digital environment such as:

1. Children still experience online sexual exploitation, like sextortion, where they can be tricked or threatened into doing things they don't want to.
2. Cyberbullying has also become a big issue. There was a child who experienced cyberbullying when the photo she posted on social media was disseminated to an unknown group chat and was subject to cyberbullying. Some of the children even get cyberbullied for unknown reasons. Some social media users act so irresponsibly, leaving hateful and negative comments, especially targeting children and teens.
3. There's phishing—people trying to steal our personal data through shady links or fake messages.
4. Policies on filtering content have gotten weaker. There's barely any protection, and kids can easily stumble upon pornographic sites with almost no barriers.

5. Many digital games children play, such as *Mobile Legends*, aren't child-friendly. They've become spaces where gender discrimination happens, with both girls and boys getting rude, degrading comments about their abilities just because of their gender.
6. Some perpetrators also utilized online banking and money transfers to inflict violence on children.
7. Threats don't just come from strangers online. Sometimes, children face pressure from people they know, like parents or relatives.

#### D. Issue of the Right to Freedom of Expression

Children fear judgment or criticism on social media. Many still lack the confidence to express themselves and share their thoughts.

#### E. Issue of the Right to Health and Well-being

Many children experience social anxiety while using social media. Even though children have tons of theories and resources about mental health at our fingertips, there's a big gap when it comes to platforms specifically addressing children's mental health issues. We need more spaces where we can talk about these issues openly and support each other.

Children from Nepal, Indonesia, and the Philippines also prepared a list of recommendations calling on duty-bearers to take action. The stakeholders concerned are the national governments, local governments, government and non-government organizations, educational institutions, digital platforms, community leaders, and law enforcement.



## For the national agencies:

1. Actively promote the Anti-Cybercrime Law to ensure that community members understand the consequences of disseminating false information.
2. Foster a stronger partnership between the government and social media stakeholders to enhance the ability to trace and identify hackers.
3. Establish a committee specifically against cybercrime.
4. Raise awareness about mental health while simultaneously establishing public and accessible facilities dedicated to children's mental health, providing scholarship grants for child psychologists and guidance counselors, and developing online platforms for virtual consultations to ensure comprehensive support for children's mental well-being
5. Strengthen the enforcement of laws against violence toward children.

## For the Education Sector



6. Develop a comprehensive school curriculum on cyber safety to educate students about online risks and equip them with the necessary skills to navigate the digital world responsibly and safely.
7. Provide capacity-building programs on cyber safety for teachers, parents, and children in schools and public settings. Offer targeted training for teachers, local government units (LGUs), and content creators.
8. Implement mandatory subtitles and sign language in all media to create a friendly environment for Children with Disability.
9. Train teachers and learners in sensitivity to Children with disabilities and in leveraging social media platforms to educate the public about the rights and needs of Children with Disabilities.
10. Establish or strengthen the implementation of child online protection regulations, including developing clear policies by schools and local governments on cyberbullying.
11. Explore alternative educational options before expelling a child for disciplinary reasons. Actively involve students in the creation of school rules to ensure that their perspectives are considered, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.

## For the Private Sector, ICT and Government policy Body.



12. We should tighten the regulations for children's age verification, including double verification processes before children can create social media accounts.
13. Establish easily accessible hotlines that will have reach in the rural areas for reporting and complaint services, including integration with social media platforms, and ensure that information about these services is widely disseminated to all users
14. Personal data should be stored in a national database to enhance data security.
15. Strict filtering, evaluation, and monitoring of social media content, including removing inappropriate ads and videos that are unsuitable for children and restricting access to irrelevant apps.
16. Provide all individuals with easy and inclusive access to technology to promote equal opportunities.

## For the Office UN SRSG



17. The Office of UN SRSG continues engaging children and youth in dialogue on the main issues affecting them.
18. For the Office of UNSRSG to lobby the national governmental bodies to consider the recommendations articulated in this Advocacy message
19. The Office of the UNSRSG lobbies for the national government to ensure that children and youth are involved in feedback processes at the community level and that spaces for Dialogue with them are available and accessible.

With all that being said, these children and youth activists are presenting this advocacy message as a call to action to aid the duty-bearers of General Comment No. 25 and be the voice for their peers.

## References

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