**Council Working Group
on child online protection**
Twenty-second meeting – From 12 (p.m.) to 13 February 2025

Contribution by WeProtect Global Alliance

UPDATE ON ONLINE FACILITATED CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE FOLLOWING THE 2024 WeProtect GLOBAL ALLIANCE SUMMIT

Purpose

Highlight necessary actions required by specific sectors to tackle online facilitated child sexual abuse following the 2024 WeProtect Global Alliance Summit in Abu Dhabi December 2024. These will be contextualised by youth driven insights from our work with children and youth as part our #MyVoice#MyFuture Campaign.

Action required

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

Follow up from the Alliance 2024 Summit – 'Future Focus' core points

1 **Recognise a growing global crisis:** Child sexual exploitation and abuse online is a heinous and escalating global issue, compounded by emerging technologies that pose new opportunities for offenders and new risks to children. Victims and survivors suffer life-long impacts, highlighting the urgent need for action.

2. Acknowledge progress and challenges: Notable strides have been made, including advancements at the Ministerial Conference to End Violence Against Children in Colombia, Sixth Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children and critical resolutions at the United Nations General Assembly and other regional bodies, alongside laudable national and transnational achievements by Alliance members and other stakeholders. However, we also recognise that the pace of change must accelerate to outpace the evolving threats.

3 Commend countries that have implemented measures in line with international frameworks, laws and standards, and have promoted public policies with the specific aim of addressing violence against children, and we urge all governments to follow suit.

4 **Call for deeper collaboration and commitment:** In 2023, over 300 million children were estimated to be victims of online abuse and exploitation. Only through unified efforts can we create safer digital environments. We recognise that Governments, private sector leaders, civil society organisations, and all stakeholders must continue to align strategies and pool resources to safeguard children globally.

What is decided is needed from governments moving forward:

1   Strengthen cooperation

2   Enhance awareness and prevention

3   Implement future-proof and technology-neutral legislation

4   Address harmful norms and challenges

5   Empower children and survivors

6   Work to holistically strengthen child protection systems

7   Coordinate and enforce

What is decided is needed from private industry moving forward:

1   Support safety by design

2   Invest in children's digital safety

3   Favour collaborative approaches to development of best practice

4   Leverage technology for good

5   Support updated policy, legislation and regulations strengthened to protect children

What is decided is needed from CSOs moving forward:

1   Support and amplify the voices of children and survivors

2   Advance data and research

The full Call to Action, with individual pledge commitments can be found here:
https://www.weprotect.org/wp-content/uploads/WPGA-Global-Summit-Call-to-Action-December-2024-Abu-Dhabi.pdf

Adding to this, as participation Manager for the Alliance I thought it necessary and vital to bring the voice of children and youth on what is needed in terms of 'Future Focus' on tackling online facilitated abuse, children's digital rights and online safety issues:

The #MyVoiceMyFuture campaign, aims to take the 'Future Focus' theme and ground answer two main questions through child and youth participation. We began this work in consultation with 85 children and young people ages 13-25 across 9 countries.

Firstly, how do young people think and feel the 'right to participate extends to the digital world'; What should their rights look like? How do we make the internet and digital spaces more child and youth friendly?

Secondly, what emerging priorities and concerns do young people have around online-facilitated child sexual abuse and online safety - what does a safe digital world of the future look like for them?

We worked with 5 child youth organisations to breakdown these key questions, hear from children and young people around the world, and ensure we could bring early insights of their priorities and concerns around their digital to you at this Summit. Thank you to all the partners, children and young people who contributed to these deep, insightful and eye-opening conversations with 85 children and young people across 10 countries.

So what did we learn from these children and young people?

Firstly, they showed us what their digital world consists of a diverse ecosystem of virtual spaces that feel real and real life consequences like; Social Media Island, Gaming zone, Productivity Mountain and Communication Valley. A while there is fun and creativity to be found in these places, they worry about the role of bad actors, and feel the power imbalances of how children and adults get to exist in these spaces.

Children and young people have a number of concerns about their digital safety, many which are emerging threats and make them feel unsafe. Namely Artificial Intelligence as we've heard a lot about across this Summit, but they also worry about not being to control what content they are exposed to, and the growing existence of predators.

To tackle this and make the internet more child and youth friendly, they ask that we consider both safety and privacy *equally*. They want to be empowered to explore, whilst they are protected. And they want the access to this protection to be easy and simplified.

And this goes hand in hand with respecting their digital rights, many which we currently do not consider as official rights. Such as a right to balance screen time, having agency over how and when they are introduced to technology, not having this forced on or withheld from them.

They want to be included in policy development and law making – playing an active role in ensuring that these are not just a list of "Do's and don'ts"; but collaborative commitments that take their real life experiences into consideration.

With all this combined, children and young people believe we can work with them to create digital experiences that value both creative freedom and community safety. They want tools that allow users to control their online experiences more effectively. And they emphasise that delivering them a safe digital world is not just the responsibility of one actor –they hold us all equally responsible.

So we will leave you a quote from one of the young people in our explorations who said:

> "I hope the internet does not lose its spark. There are so many things you can explore and learn from. I want the specialness of the internet having its freedom while being protected."

The #MyVoiceMyFuture campaign development has begun, we will be doing more analysis from polling we've done with additional young people and undergo a campaign co-design and youth lead process to bring these insights in to call to action driven by youth advocates globally. If you would like to support this work, please email delali@weprotectga.org.

Focus on the Future

An update on online facilitated child sexual abuse following the 2024 WeProtect Global Alliance Summit

Call to Action following the WeProtect 2024 Global Summit
4-5 December, 2024 Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

A Focus on the Future requires:

Recognising a growing global crisis: Child sexual exploitation and abuse online is a heinous and escalating global issue, compounded by emerging technologies that pose new opportunities for offenders and new risks to children. Victims and survivors suffer life-long impacts, highlighting the urgent need for action.

Acknowledging progress and challenges: Notable strides have been made, including advancements at the Ministerial Conference to End Violence Against Children in Colombia, Sixth Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children and critical resolutions at the United Nations General Assembly and other regional bodies, alongside laudable national and transnational achievements by Alliance members and other stakeholders. However, we also recognise that the pace of change must accelerate to outpace the evolving threats.

Commend countries that have implemented measures in line with international frameworks, laws and standards, and have promoted public policies with the specific aim of addressing violence against children, and we urge all governments to follow suit.

Call for deeper collaboration and commitment: In 2023, over 300 million children were estimated to be victims of online abuse and exploitation. Only through unified efforts can we create safer digital environments. We recognise that Governments, private sector leaders, civil society organisations, and all stakeholders must continue to align strategies and pool resources to safeguard children globally.

Governments:

1. Strengthen cooperation e.g. Sign and ratify the Council of Europe Lanzarote Convention or implement similar legislation.

2. Enhance awareness and prevention e.g. Invest in evidence-based prevention strategies, such as those consistent with the WeProtect Global Alliance Model National Response to end child sexual exploitation and abuse online or INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children framework.

3. Implement future-proof and technology neutral legislation e.g. Criminalise emerging threats such as AI-generated abuse, sextortion, and deepfakes.

4. Address harmful norms and challenges e.g. Cultivate safe environments for children by addressing harmful norms that perpetuate

Governments:

5. Empower children and survivors e.g. Foster meaningful child participation in policymaking to ensure their voices shape solutions and inform decision making.

6. Work to holistically strengthen child protection systems e.g. Build on existing child protection systems to ensure that they are inclusive and have in place legal and policy frameworks, governance and coordination structures, a continuum of services for survivors, minimum standards and oversight mechanisms, resources, mechanisms for child participation and community engagement and data collection and monitoring systems, to both prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children both offline and online.

7. Coordinate and enforce e.g. Strengthen cross-sector responses at a country and global level using tools such as the WeProtect Model National Response framework.

Private Industry:

1. **Support safety by design e.g.** Embed child safety knowledge across engineering, policy, and product teams.

2. **Invest in children's digital safety e.g.** Proactively work to address risks amplified by payment platforms and banking tech, such as sextortion and deepfake abuse.

3. **Favour collaborative approaches to development of best practice e.g.** Share best practice with industry peers, civil society and government regulators, to avoid siloed discussions around solutions to combat online child safety risks.

4. **Leverage technology for good e.g.** Create and leverage human-led AI solutions to combat the scale and pace of online threats.

5. **Support updated policy, legislation and regulations strengthened to protect children e.g.** Cooperate with take down procedures and short notice periods

Civil Society Organisations:

- **Support and amplify the voices of children and survivors e.g.** Continue to work with children, survivors, educators and carers to ensure understanding of the effects and trends relating to online child exploitation is up to date and accurate.

- **Advance data and research e.g.** Continue to collect data and conduct research on the prevalence of child sexual exploitation and abuse online and its impacts to inform evidence-based interventions.

Together, we will continue to drive systemic change, leveraging innovation, collaboration, and compassion to ensure a safer digital future for all children.

The full Call to Action, with individual pledge commitments can be found here:

www.weprotect.org/2024-global-summit/

#MyVoice#MyFuture

A digital rights campaign – early insights from young people across the world

A world where children are **safer** online.

weprotect.org

The consultation

85

children & young people aged 13-22 years

Countries represented:
Australia, Poland, Ghana, Canada, Nepal, Madagascar, Uganda, Kenya and Colombia

Collaborating Organisations:
The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, Australian E-Safety Commissioner, Mtoto News, OneChild Canada and Red Papaz

How they see the digital

A Diverse Ecosystem

Messaging, gaming, e-learning, shopping, streaming – different zones like gaming, productivity and social media

Positive vs Negative

Fun and creative spaces vs harmful spaces like black markets and toxic practices

Power Imbalances

Viewing online harms as battles, with adults sometimes crossing into youth spaces with bad intentions

What do youth-friendly digital spaces look like?

Safe and Private
Strict content filters, zero tolerance for harmful content, protection of personal information

Empowering Exploration
Creative spaces for collaboration, digital literacy programmes for responsible use of platforms

Simplified Access
User-friendly platforms with clear guidance, realistic promises, shorter terms and conditions

Feeling concerned & unsafe

" Some countries just won't make the legislation or take the issue seriously then where does that leave children?

Tracking & hidden cameras

Privacy vs security debate

Identity theft & fake accounts

Digital literacy & tech reliance

Features you can't remove

Digital literacy & tech reliance

Algorithms and AI

Stalking, graphic & sexual content

Predators and groomers

Exposure to mature content

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What they see as their digital rights

" **If you want protection, there needs to be some sacrifice of freedom. But as a young person, I should have the right to explore and discover things.**

Protection, Privacy and Agency

Extending informed consent to digital spaces, control over personal data, legal support against digital harm. Protection not at the expense of privacy.

Expression and Equality

Right to share opinions, build communities, access education without discrimination or judgement

Digital Wellbeing

Balance screen time, ensure digital safety, safeguard personal content with proper authorisations

They want inclusion in decisions

" A lot of laws developed for young people are not developed for young people eg the current bans on social media for under 16s – young people were not consulted enough. Young people should be in the room while the laws are being drafted and developed, not just at the consultation stage.

Inclusive Laws and Policies

Not just 'Do's' and 'Don't's' young people must be involved in creating digital laws and rules that impact them.

Tailored Solutions

Separate apps and spaces for children and adults, clear guidance and honest platform explainers.

Education Focus

Prioritise digital literacy, e-learning and informed introduction to technology to minimise risks.

Creating a safer future

Prevention and Support

Use CSAM detection tech, monitor alternative terms, encourage trusted adults to help manage social media, concerns about AI to be addressed.

Collaboration and Accountability

Everyone actor take responsibility – stronger laws, clearer rules, better platforms to protect young people, Schools should help kids safely explore tech, betters ways to track harmful people online

User Empowerment

A balanced ecosystem prioritizes both creative freedom and community safety. Enhanced tools that allow users to control their online experiences more effectively.

"

I hope the internet doesn't lose its spark. There are so many things you can explore and learn from. I want the specialness of the internet having its freedom while being protected. **- Youth Advocate, Canada**

Thank you

weprotect
Global Alliance

To engage on and support the #MyVoice#MyFuture

campaign please email delali@weprotectga.org

or pledge your support at

https://www.weprotect.org/resources/campaigns/my-

voice-my-future/

weprotect.org