CHILD ONLINE SAFETY

End Violence
Against Children

Introduction

The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children was launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2016 with one goal: to catalyse and support action to end all forms of violence against children by 2030. The partnership has over 360 partners from every continent, all of whom bring diverse perspectives, expertise, networks and ideas to the global effort to protect children and adolescents.

Members of the End Violence Partnership include civil society organisations, governments, foundations, corporations, academic institutions, faith communities and UN agencies. Two simple beliefs unite us all:

every child deserves to grow up without violence, and only by working together will we achieve that.

The End Violence Fund is a vehicle for change on the ground. Recognising the growing threat of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), and with funding from the UK Home Office, in 2016, End Violence began supporting strategies to keep children safe online. In three years, we have invested $32 million in 37 initiatives, expanding our reach to over 30 countries and attracting new donors in the process.

We invest in innovative solutions that can be scaled; generate new knowledge and share learning; bring online child sexual exploitation and abuse to the forefront of high-level conversations; convene and connect organisations across sectors to strengthen their individual and collaborative efforts; and work with governments and the public to raise awareness of child online safety.

The reach of the End Violence partnership is growing. Together, we will create a world where every child grows up free from violence — both on and offline.

Today, the online window of the Fund is made possible by the continued support of the UK Home Office, along with Human Dignity Foundation and the Oak Foundation.

Context

Today's children are more interconnected than ever before. With **over four billion Internet users across the world**, the limits of children's experiences are no longer bound by their bedroom doors, their classroom walls, or the borders of their nation.[1] Unfortunately, the same can be said for the rest of the world — including those seeking to harm children. Though the Internet is a web of knowledge, opportunities and connectivity, it was not designed with children's safety in mind. One in every three Internet users is a child, giving adults unprecedented and uncontrolled access to children across the globe.[2]

As the Internet's reach grows, every day, the number of children at risk of online sexual exploitation and abuse multiplies.

Online child sexual exploitation and abuse

Children's experiences occur in two worlds — **the physical and the digital** — but more often than not, **those worlds blend into one**. The same goes with online violence, as abuse does not begin or end online. Rather, **the Internet is often used as a pathway to commit physical, sexual and emotional violence**. Abusers can contact children anytime, anywhere, making it very difficult for their victims to escape abuse and exploitation.
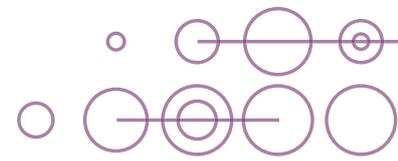
Even worse, the Internet allows abusive material — including photos and videos — to live in the digital world forever. As a result, these materials can follow children for the rest of their lives. No matter how much they try to rebuild and recover, these children know that somewhere in the world, someone is watching them at their most vulnerable. These images and videos can fall into anyone's hands, leaving children exposed to not just their surrounding communities, but their future friends, families, teachers, and colleagues.

Knowing that an image of your suffering is being shared or sold online is hard enough. But for survivors, fearing that they could be identified — or even recognized — as an adult is terrifying.

- an analyst from Internet Watch Foundation,
a grantee of the End Violence Fund

What is online child sexual
exploitation and abuse?

Online child sexual exploitation and abuse comes in many forms. An adult may take photos or videos of sexual acts involving children, using them for self-pleasure, financial gain, or dissemination on online platforms. These materials can also be used to blackmail children, perpetuating a cycle of more sexual exploitation and abuse. In 2017, the Canadian platform Project Arachnid found **5.1 million web pages around the world that were hosting child sexual abuse materials.** The group now identifies 100,000 unique images every month.

In addition, **child abuse is regularly live-streamed**, creating exploitative, harmful conditions on either side of the screen. While a perpetrator rapes, assaults or debases a child, another is encouraging that abuse by watching it in real-time. Perpetrators can now pay for a child's abuse to be livestreamed to them, and for that child to be raped and abused according to their preferences. Child abuse has become a feature of perpetrators' on-demand entertainment, and both individuals, no matter their physical location, should be held responsible. This form of abuse mostly affects children living in poverty – and in most cases, an adult well-known to the child is the one facilitating that abuse in exchange for money.

Another form of online violence revolves around **grooming, or when an adult targets a child and gains their trust.** By doing so, the adult can isolate that child to gain control over them, making it easy to extract sexually explicit videos or images. Those materials can then be used by the adult to intimidate the child into paying money, offering favors, sending more explicit content, or meeting in real-life – a situation that often leads to more physical or sexual abuse, this time in person.
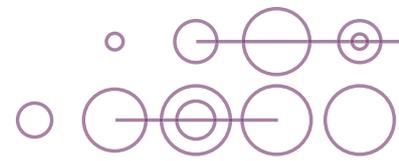
Malicious or unintentional sharing of a child's sexual images can also take place between peers, especially if they are leaked to an unintended audience. These types of activities are usually referred to as **sexting, sextortion, sexual harassment or revenge porn.**

Victims of online child sexual exploitation and abuse fall into all age groups – but they are increasingly getting younger. Research from ECPAT and INTERPOL in 2018 indicated that most children featured in online child sexual abuse materials are those who have not yet undergone puberty. The report also found that younger children were more likely to suffer severe abuse, including torture, violent rape or sadism.[3] This includes infants who are only days, weeks or a few months old.

The demand for these materials is increasing: the WePROTECT Global Alliance found that one Internet forum dedicated to the abuse of infants and toddlers had over 18,000 registered members. A similar forum was found to receive more than 23 million visitors, and the United States Department of Justice reports that an aggregate 1.9 million users are registered across nine sites, all dedicated to this type of very young child sexual abuse material.[4]

How does it affect children?

Online child sexual exploitation and abuse is perhaps the **worst manifestation of what can happen when children enter the digital world unprotected.** Though online child sexual exploitation is a relatively new phenomenon, traditional forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse are not – and their impacts are well-documented. Children who experience sexual abuse are more likely to be **socially isolated, suffer from mental health problems, and attempt and commit suicide.** They are also more likely to develop alcohol or drug dependencies. These outcomes impact every aspect of a child's life, including their ability to develop into productive adults.

Violence affects the chemistry of a child's brain: faced with violence, children often enter survival mode. Once they do, hormones associated with a fight-or-flight response are triggered inside children's brains. These hormones can fracture the development of neural connections in the brain, inhibiting physical growth and decreasing children's ability to learn. Those who experience violence in childhood are more likely to be re-victimised later in life – and they are also more likely to perpetuate a cycle of violence onto the next generation.[5]

The impacts of online child sexual exploitation and abuse also extend into the **economic sphere.** There is a wealth of research on the direct and indirect costs on child violence, including expenditure by health care systems that treat children for short- and long-term injuries; the costs associated with treating psychological and behavioural problems that arise from violence in childhood; the upkeep of social welfare systems involved with monitoring, preventing and responding to cases of violence against children; and the costs associated with finding, persecuting and jailing perpetrators of child violence through the criminal justice system.

Along with the more immediate impact, **violence in childhood can result in a lifetime of missed opportunity**, as research shows that adults exposed to violence in childhood have lower levels of education, employment and earning potential. In 2014, the Copenhagen Consensus found that the global cost of violence against children reached at least $3.7 trillion a year – 4.3 per cent of the world's GDP.[6]

We must act now

With **175,000 children going online for the first time every day**, today's children are more interconnected than ever before. As progress is made towards 100 per cent Internet connectivity worldwide, **children's safety and protection online are becoming ever more critical.**

The number of reported photos and images received by the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children has grown nearly tenfold in three years, from 1.1 million in 2014 to 10.2 million in 2017. This number accounts for just the open web, which is publicly accessible to all. The same number almost doubled the following year, with 18.4 million reports received by the end of 2018. Meanwhile, law enforcement agencies across the world are struggling to keep

up with the volume of content, activity and digital innovation, and legislation is not keeping pace with innovations in technology and its misuse.

The expansion of the Dark Web, which is only accessible through specialised software, is another facilitator of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. From 2013 to 2018, **the number of Dark Web users increased from one to four million.** Users of the Dark Web can remain anonymous and, for the most part, untraceable. Because of this, many of the worst forms of child abuse happen through the Dark Web. More than 80 per cent of Internet traffic on the Dark Web is generated by visits to websites that offer child-abuse material, according to a study of "hidden service" websites conducted by the University of Portsmouth.[7]

The dangers that exist for children online are real and significant. But **solutions are emerging.** Across the world, **organisations and governments are acting to end online child sexual exploitation and abuse** – but we need to **come together** with proven solutions, coordinated commitment, and increased investment to address online violence before it spirals even further out of control.

Action by the End Violence Partnership

Investing in programmes that work

Since its inception in 2016, the End Violence Fund has invested $32 million in 37 projects focused on preventing and eliminating online child sexual exploitation and abuse (see map on page 8). The first three rounds of the Fund's investments were used to build the foundations of an integrated response. Throughout this period, End Violence has worked with key partners in this field to expand the network of actors tackling violence against children, including the WePROTECT Global Alliance, the ITU Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, Child Dignity Alliance, Interfaith Alliance and others.

Over the last three years, we have invested in our partners working with governments, civil society organisations and international organisations to:

- **Rescue victims of child sexual exploitation and abuse.** The International Justice Mission has worked with local authorities in the Philippines to strengthen the law enforcement and judicial response to the live-streaming of child abuse. As a result, the organisation has rescued 123 children from online sexual exploitation.

- **Create reporting hotlines and helplines for children and adults to report child sexual abuse material and access support anytime, anywhere.** World Vision Vietnam trained operators and counsellors in the Da Nang Centre for Social Work to better protect children's safety online. World Vision Vietnam strengthened the centre's child helpline and increased social workers' ability to handle cases of online sexual exploitation and abuse. After just five months of operation, the helpline responded to 1,014 calls.

- **Educate children, families and communities about the risks and strategies for staying safe on the Internet.** ChildFund Australia trained over 8,700 Vietnamese adolescents on online safety. After these trainings, 91 per cent of attendees demonstrated increased knowledge and skills.

- **Partner with the information, communications and technology sector to strengthen online safety nets for children.** UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific has engaged industry partners to block and remove online child sexual exploitation and abuse content. At the same time, the agency is increasing accountability among these actors to take a stand for children.

- **Boost law enforcement's ability to handle – and prosecute – cases of online violence, keeping children safe from re-victimisation in the process.** Thorn has trained over 1,000 law enforcement officers to use technology to handle cases of exploitation on the Dark Web. As a result, the group played a key role in rescuing 847 children and arresting 447 offenders.

- **Establish and support national Child Protection Units working to identify and handle cases of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.** UNICEF Kenya has supported the establishment of the Anti-Human Trafficking and Child Protection Unit, which is now being expanded from Nairobi to Mombasa. Kenya is now linked to INTERPOL's International Child Sexual Exploitation Database and can receive and process reports from the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children.

- **Push legislative reforms at the national and international levels to keep children safe online.** In Rwanda, the University of East London partnered with 5Rights Foundation and the University of Rwanda to support Rwanda's government in its development of a Child Online Protection Policy and implementation plan. The Government approved the policy in June 2019 and established a cross-sectoral coordinating body to oversee and guide the implementation.

- **Generate knowledge, data and evidence.** To respond to the limited evidence-base on this issue, the End Violence Fund is supporting a groundbreaking multi-country study called Disrupting Harm, which aims to better inform national prevention and response strategies. This study is working to collect evidence on the scale, nature and context of online child sexual exploitation and abuse in 14 countries in Southeast Asia and Africa.

The future of the End Violence Fund

In September 2019, the End Violence Fund launched a $13 million open call for solutions focused on leveraging new and existing technologies. These technologies include artificial intelligence, machine learning, data science, blockchain, virtual reality and other innovative solutions that have the potential to enhance detection and response to online violence, or those that can prevent known and emerging threats of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. In addition, the Fund has reserved $3 million for invitation-only strategic opportunities.

ONLINE GRANT PORTFOLIO

Total Funding Committed
$ 32,169,491

End Violence Against Children

Legend:
- 🏛 Organization
- ▤ Project
- ⏱ Duration
- $ Amount funded

Global — UNICEF Child Protection, Programme Division, UNICEF Headquarters — UNICEF Global Programme to build capacity to address online child sexual exploitation — Mar. 2018 - Feb. 2020 — $ 999,430

Global — World Health Organization — What works to prevent and respond to child online abuse — May 2018 - Apr. 2021 — $ 306,020

Global — The Marie Collins Foundation — The Global Protection Online Network — Mar. 2019 - Feb. 2022 — $ 839,062

Regional — Council of Europe — End online child sexual exploitation and abuse @Europe (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine) — July 2018 - Dec. 2020 — $ 1,000,000

Regional — UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) — Strengthening regional commitment and collaboration to end online child sexual abuse and exploitation in East Asia and the Pacific — Dec. 2016 - Apr. 2020 — $ 722,250

Mongolia — UNICEF Mongolia — Adopting Model National Response in preventing and tackling CSEA in Mongolia — Mar. 2018 - Feb. 2020 — $ 471,000

Vietnam — ChildFund Australia — Swipe safe: Helping young people make the most of the online world — July 2017 - June 2020 — $ 513,547

Vietnam — World Vision International in Vietnam — Tackling online child sexual exploitation in Vietnam — Mar. 2018 - Feb. 2021 — $ 680,951

Philippines — International Justice Mission — Ending online sexual exploitation of children in Cebu — Jan. 2017 - Dec. 2019 — $ 999,752

Philippines — Plan International UK — Cyber-safe spaces for children and youth in the cities of Manila and Quezon City — June 2017 - May 2020 — $ 1,000,000

Jordan — UNICEF Jordan — Targeting online sexual exploitation of children in Jordan — Jan. 2017 - Dec. 2019 — $ 999,380

State of Palestine — The Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution — Safe online environment for children — Mar. 2018 - Feb. 2021 — $ 504,797

Sri Lanka — Save the Children Denmark — Developing a National Action Plan tackling the online sexual exploitation of children in Sri Lanka whilst providing remedial act — Mar. 2018 - Nov. 2020 — $ 417,638

Regional — South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children — Strategic response to online child sexual exploitation — Aug. 2017 - Nov. 2019 — $ 295,695

Kenya — UNICEF Kenya — Development and implementation of a National Plan of Action to prevent and respond to online child abuse and exploitation — Mar. 2018 - Feb. 2021 — $ 994,931

Tanzania — UNICEF Tanzania — Preventing and responding to online CSEA — Mar. 2018 - Feb. 2021 — $ 952,300

Madagascar — UNICEF Madagascar — Strengthening the national protection system to prevent and respond to online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Madagascar — Mar. 2018 - Jan. 2021 — $ 999,916

Rwanda — University of East London — Rwanda Child Online Protection Policy and Implementation Plan — Nov. 2018 - July 2019 — $ 186,094

Global — UNICEF Innocenti — Investigating Online Violence Against Children — Feb. 2019 - Mar. 2021 — $ 2,462,070

South Africa — UNICEF South Africa — Strengthening children's online safety in South Africa — May 2018 - Apr. 2021 — $ 999,615

Namibia — UNICEF Namibia — End violence - Tackling online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Namibia — Dec. 2016 - Dec. 2019 — $ 630,551

Bosnia and Herzegovina — Bosnia and Herzegovina Child Protection Consortium: UNICEF BiH, Save the Children, International Forum of Solidarity (EMMAUS) — End Violence Against Children: Preventing and tackling online CSEA in Bosnia & Herzegovina — Feb. 2018 - Jan. 2021 — $ 999,939

Albania — UNICEF Albania — Safer and better internet for children and youth in Albania — May 2017 - Apr. 2020 — $ 999,915

Dominican Republic — UNICEF DR with PLAN DR — Protection for every child against sexual exploitation and abuse — Mar. 2018 - Sept. 2021 — $ 999,312

Uganda — UNICEF Uganda — Children in Uganda are safe online — Dec. 2016 - Dec. 2020 — $ 977,777

Ghana — UNICEF Ghana — Protecting children from cyber predators: A safe online future for all children in Ghana — June 2018 - May 2021 — $ 999,380

Global — INTERPOL — National Assessments of Online CSEA — Feb. 2019 - Mar. 2021 — $ 1,675,402

Peru — Capital Humano y Social (CHS) Alternativo — Intersectoral and interdisciplinary collaboration to prevent and respond to the reality of online child sexual exploitation in Peru — June 2017 - June 2020 — $ 825,440

Global — International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children in partnership with Child Helpline International — Implementing the MNR: collaborative approach to combat CSEA in five countries (initially Zambia, Peru, Philippines, Romania) — Mar. 2018 - June 2020 — $ 855,406

Peru — Save the Children Sweden — Combating online exploitation and sexual abuse of children and adolescents in Peru — July 2017 - June 2020 — $ 369,147

Colombia — Red PaPaz — Capacity building for the protection of children against online sexual exploitation in Colombia — July 2017 - Dec. 2019 — $ 995,636

Global — Thorn — Bringing Light to the Dark Web — May. 2018 - Apr. 2021 — $ 700,000

Costa Rica — PANIAMOR Foundation — Costa Rica says NO to online child sexual exploitation and abuse — July 2017 - June 2020 — $ 998,409

Mexico — Oficina de defensoria de los derechos de la infancia — Effective legal representation of child victims of online sexual exploitation — Jan. 2017 - Sep. 2019 — $ 317,606

Global — Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) — IWF reporting portal project for 30 least developed countries (initially Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique) — July 2017 - June 2021 — $ 448,875

Global — New Venture Fund — Communication and Advocacy Support for Ignite Philanthropy: Inspiring the End to Violence against Girls and Boys — Dec. 2018 - Nov. 2021 — $ 594,000

Global — ECPAT International — Online CSEA-National Assessments-Contextual Research — Feb. 2019 - Mar. 2021 — $ 2,438,246

Sharing solutions and facilitating collaboration

The Fund feeds into our ecosystem as a partnership, providing a source of solutions from which we learn, adapt and replicate. Such solutions – along with the related challenges and opportunities – are shared both within the End Violence partnership and beyond, supporting the overall movement to end all forms of violence against children.

We are increasing our community's understanding of online child sexual exploitation and abuse by spreading information about technologies, opportunities, and threats related to the fight for children's safety online. At the same time, we are helping our partners integrate this area of work into existing child protection frameworks.

End Violence is also raising the profile of child online safety and the urgency to address the problem. To do so, we are identifying linkages with and between new partners and areas of work and targeting key audiences with easy-to-understand, evidence-based messaging. We are also engaging with major players in the technology field, ensuring that in their business decisions, children are considered first – not as an afterthought.

Amplifying the issue and reaching new audiences

End Violence is increasingly contributing to global policy discussions on child online safety with governments, the technology industry, regulators, security agencies and others, on issues including:

- **Connectivity and safety:** We bring a unique perspective from the field and make broader links with violence against children in multiple forums, including through membership of the Internet Policy and Governance (ITU) and the UNESCO Broadband Commission's working group on child online safety.

- **Privacy, security and protection:** As the discussions around regulations, responsibility and the need for privacy are evolving, End Violence is championing children's rights as paramount in business decisions that will impact on the ability to protect children from online harm.

- **Frontier tech and human rights:** We are a member of a newly convened, diverse group of stakeholders working on developing global guidance on artificial intelligence and children's rights. As part of this engagement, we are looking into the principles, policies and mechanisms within new and frontier technology, and ensuring they do not exacerbate harmful norms, inequalities and outcomes that drive violence against children.

Advocacy highlight: influencing change through the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development

The Broadband Commission works to expand broadband access to accelerate progress against the Sustainable Development Goals. By 2025, the Commission plans to see the Internet reach 75 per cent of the world's population, along with related increases in digital proficiency, financial services, and more. To ensure children's safety is part of these plans, the Commission created a child online safety working group, to which End Violence was invited to provide technical expertise. As a result of this work, on 1 October 2019, the Broadband Commission launched a report on child safety online, along with the Child Online Safety Universal Declaration. The latter encourages private, public and non-governmental entities to demonstrate their commitment to online safety by committing to five child-focused guidelines.

The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, with its demonstrated convening capacity, neutrality, and global reach, could play a role in creating a platform for all stakeholders to engage and take action to make children safe online and situate this within the broader agenda focused on ending all forms of violence.

- Broadband Commission Report, October 2019

Take action

No matter your affiliation, we all have an essential role to play to ensure child online safety. Here are some important things you can do to protect children today:
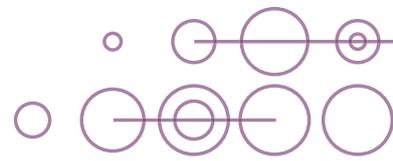
Integrate digital skills education into both life skills and education programming
Around the world, civil society organisations and non-governmental groups are implementing education programmes for children of all ages. We urge practitioners and Ministries of Education to integrate digital skills into those programmes, teaching them not only to navigate the Internet but to protect themselves from digital risks.

Push for child online safety strategies, wherever and however possible
We call upon corporations, individuals and private companies – specifically those within the technology sector – to integrate child safety strategies into every digital innovation. To start, governments and companies can sign up to the WePROTECT Statement of Action, which will help them adapt WePROTECT's Model National Response. This model helps coordinate responses between national entities and systems to better protect children online.

Raise awareness to online child sexual exploitation and abuse with your friends, classmates, colleagues, customers, congregations and networks. This is particularly important for those in the technology industry, as they can integrate awareness-raising materials into their products and deter abusers in the process. We also urge individuals to use the power of the Internet to crush the violence inside of it: use social media to share our message and your own.

Invest in the End Violence Fund
We are committed to continuing to support strong, evidence-based initiatives that make change – but we need the contributions of generous partners to do so. If you would like to invest alongside others in evidence-based solutions that target children on the ground, please consider supporting the End Violence Fund, an efficient and proven pooled-fund mechanism.

Join the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children
The partnership is a platform for collaboration, learning, amplification and facilitation – and we are always looking for more countries, organisations, corporations and agencies to join our cause. Please visit end-violence.org/membership-application to apply to become a member. For daily and monthly updates, follow us on social media and subscribe to our newsletter.

Become a pathfinding country
If you are a representative of a national government, you can also get involved by becoming one of our pathfinding countries, which aim to raise awareness, stimulate leadership commitment, and galvanise action to end violence against children. Learn more about pathfinding by visiting endviolence-org/pathfinding-countries.

Footnotes:
1. "Digital 2019: Global Internet Use Accerelates." We are Social, 30 January 2019.
https://wearesocial.com/blog/2019/01/digital-2019-global-internet-use-accelerates.
2. "Children in a Digital World." UNICEF, 2017.
3. "Towards a Global Indicator on Unidentified Victims in Child Sexual Exploitation Material." ECPAT International and INTERPOL, 2018.
4. "Global Threat Assessment." WePROTECT Global Alliance, 2018.
5. "Child Maltreatment and Education Outcomes." Our World in Data, 17 December 2017.
6. "The Economic Costs of Violence Against Children." UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, 13 July 2015.
7. "Study claims for than 80% of 'dark net' traffic is to child abuse sites." The Guardian, 31 December 2014.

12

Together, we can and must end online child sexual exploitation and abuse

Universal Internet access is predicted by, at the very latest, 2050. That expansion will bring about unprecedented opportunities and incredible connections, leading to the development of communities across the globe. However, to truly harness the benefits of the Internet, we need to protect its most vulnerable users – children.

Together, we can and must ensure universal connection and universal protection go hand-in-hand. Let's make every child safe online, wherever they may live.

Please join us.