DISRUPTING HARM IN CAMBODIA

**Evidence on online child
sexual exploitation and abuse**

Warning:

Disrupting Harm addresses the complex and sensitive topic of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. At times in the report, some distressing details are recounted, including using the direct words of survivors themselves. Some readers, especially those with lived experiences of sexual violence, may find parts of the report difficult to read. You are encouraged to monitor your responses and engage with the report in ways that are comfortable. Please seek psychological support for acute distress.

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FOREWORD BY THE CAMBODIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CHILDREN

Cambodia has made great strides in social and economic recovery, which, over the past two decades, has achieved steady economic growth and is integrating itself into the region and the world, giving Cambodia many opportunities to build and develop the country. At the same time, the Royal Government has launched the Rectangular Strategy Phase 4 by allocating additional resources to health, education, social and other sectors to promote human resource development, including child development, with an aim to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for 2016–2030. In the meantime, Cambodia is ready to participate in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which mainly focuses on technology that the world is effectively using for political, economic and social sectors.

Advances in information technology, such as internet and digital communication devices, have spurred the growth of political, economic and social work, which has brought Cambodia closer to countries in the region and the world, especially making it easier for children to communicate, research and participate in digital environment for lives and rights of children. Improper use of internet and digital technology has created online child sexual exploitation, a new form that is spreading around the world, including in Cambodia.

By recognising the challenges and impacts of online child sexual exploitation, the Royal Government of Cambodia has decided to become a signatory to the WeProtect Declaration in Abu Dhabi in 2015 in connection with activities to prevent online child abuse and exploitation and has become a member of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (Path Finding Country) on September 12, 2019. In addition, the Head of the Royal Government of Cambodia participated in the adoption of the Declaration in the Summit on November 2, 2019, with an aim to call on all ASEAN Member States to use high standards to protect all children in ASEAN from online sexual exploitation and abuse. In addition, the Cambodia National Council for Children has released an initial situational analysis on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) in Cambodia and has developed an action plan to prevent and respond to online child sexual exploitation (2021–2025), which encourages activities to prevent violence and online child sexual exploitation, complementing the implementation of the Royal Government of Cambodia's National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children.

The General Secretariat of the Cambodia National Council for Children has led the OCSE Inter-Ministerial Technical Working Group to review and comment on the Draft Report on "Disrupting Harm in Cambodia: Evidence on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse". This report provides comprehensive evidences of risks that children face online, how the risks occur, how these risks interact with other forms of violence, and what can be done to prevent and reduce them. These findings will provide a crucial evidence base for Cambodia to take further steps to ensure that the internet is safe for children.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to ministries, institutions, national and international non-governmental organisations and stakeholders for their inputs during the study and research, and the OCSE Inter-Ministerial Technical Working Group for reviewing and improving this report, making it more comprehensive. I would also like to thank UNICEF Cambodia and APLE Cambodia for their coordination and technical and financial supports to the OCSE Inter-Ministerial Technical Working Group. The General Secretariat of the Cambodia National Council for Children would like to support the results of this research report.

Phnom Penh, 29 June 2022

Secretary General

Nhep Sopheap

Secretary General
Nheb Sopheap

NOTE BY THE END VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP

Our online lives are advancing constantly. The internet and rapidly evolving digital communication tools are bringing people everywhere closer together. Children are increasingly conversant with and dependent on these technologies, and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the shift online of many aspects of children's lives.

The internet can be a powerful tool for children to connect, explore, learn and engage in creative and empowering ways. The importance of the digital environment to children's lives and rights has been emphasised by the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child in General Comment No. 25 adopted in 2021. The General Comment also stresses the fact that spending time online inevitably brings unacceptable risks and threats of harm, some of which children also encounter in other settings and some of which are unique to the online context.

One of the risks is the misuse of the internet and digital technologies for the purpose of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Online grooming, sharing of child sexual abuse material and live-streaming of child abuse are crimes against children that need an urgent, multi-sectoral and global response. These crimes are usually recorded in the form of digital images or videos, which are very often distributed and perpetually reshared online, victimising children over and over again. As risks of harm continue to evolve and grow exponentially, prevention and protection have become more difficult for governments, public officials and providers of public services to children, but also for parents and caregivers trying to keep-up with their children's use of technology.

With progress being made towards universal internet connectivity, it is ever more pressing to invest in children's safety and protection online. Governments around the world are increasingly acknowledging the threat of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and some countries have taken steps to introduce the necessary legislation and put preventive measures in place. At the same time, the pressure is mounting on the technology industry to put the safety of children at the heart of design and development processes, rather than treating it as an afterthought. Such safety by design must be informed by evidence on the occurrence of OCSEA; *Disrupting Harm* makes a significant contribution to that evidence.

The Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, through its Safe Online initiative, invested seven million US$ in the *Disrupting Harm* project. *Disrupting Harm* uses a holistic and innovative methodology and approach to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the context, threats and children's perspectives on online child sexual exploitation and abuse. This unprecedented project draws on the research expertise of ECPAT, INTERPOL, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, and their networks. The three global partners were supported by ECPAT member organisations, the INTERPOL National Central Bureaus and the UNICEF Country and Regional Offices. It is intended that the now developed and tested methodology be applied to additional countries around the world.

Disrupting Harm represents the most comprehensive and large-scale research project ever undertaken on online child sexual exploitation and abuse at a national level and has resulted in 13 country reports and a series of unique 'Data Insights'. It provides the comprehensive evidence of the risks children face online, how they develop, how they interlink with other forms of violence and what can be done to prevent and reduce them.

The findings will serve governments, industry, policy makers, and communities to take the right measures to ensure the internet is safe for children. This includes informing national prevention and response strategies, expanding the reach of *Disrupting Harm* to other countries and regions, and building new data and knowledge partnerships around it.

Disrupting harm to children is everyone's responsibility.

Dr Howard Taylor
Executive Director
End Violence Partnership

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Funded by the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, through its Safe Online initiative, ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti worked in partnership to design and implement *Disrupting Harm* – a research project on online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA). This unique partnership brings a multidisciplinary approach to a complex issue in order to see all sides of the problem. OCSEA refers to situations that involve digital or communication technologies *at some point* during the continuum of abuse or exploitation; it can occur fully online or through a mix of online and in-person interactions between offenders and children. The *Disrupting Harm* research was conducted in six Southeast Asian countries, including Cambodia, and seven Eastern and Southern African countries. Data was synthesised from nine different research activities to generate each national report. These tell the story of the threat and present clear recommendations for action.

Internet use

The nationally representative household survey indicated that more than 80% of children in Cambodia aged 12 to 17 were internet users, meaning that they had used the internet within the past three months. Internet use was shown to be more prevalent among older children (14–17) than younger children (12–13) and there was no difference between genders. Internet use was slightly more prevalent among urban children (86%) than rural children (80%).

Survey data from internet-using children (n = 992) and their caregivers (n = 992) indicated that more children used the internet than their caregivers. Just 61% of caregivers were internet users and only 42% accessed the internet daily, as compared to 77% of internet-using children. Thirty-nine percent of caregivers reported never going online, and 19% did so infrequently. This discrepancy has implications, as caregivers are vital in helping children to navigate their lives online, spot risks and prevent them from coming to harm.

Overwhelmingly, children reported using smartphones (99%) to go online, and they often shared them with someone else. The majority (87%) of internet-using children in Cambodia mentioned barriers such as poor signal or slow connection. Furthermore, 27% said that their caregivers restricted their online access. The most popular online activities among children were using social media (79%) and watching videos (79%).

Risky online behaviours and perceptions

Some of the children surveyed had engaged in potentially risky behaviour in the previous year. Approximately 9% had met someone in person whom they had first got to know online. The majority (75%) of those who did this reported that they were happy or excited by the outcome. The experiences of most internet-using children in Cambodia and other countries in which the *Disrupting Harm* study was conducted seem to indicate that the risk of harm from engaging with someone unknown online is relatively low. This may simply be how young people sometimes make new friends. However, all children should be informed about the possible risks, and taught how to engage responsibly and to take safety precautions, such as informing a trusted adult or only meeting in public places.

Furthermore, 9% of internet-using children in Cambodia reported that they had shared naked images or videos of themselves online. While some children shared these images with individuals that were unknown to them, such images were most frequently shared among peers and close friends because children were in love, flirting or having fun. Regardless of the initial circumstances, the risk of such content being on-shared without permission remains and can have dire implications. In a proportion of cases, however, children shared sexual content because of threats (7%) or pressure (8%).

Children's experiences of online sexual exploitation and abuse

In the *Disrupting Harm* household survey, children were also asked whether they had been subjected to different forms of OCSEA in the year prior to data collection. Under the *Disrupting Harm* study, OCSEA is defined as situations that involve digital or communication technologies at some point during the continuum of the sexual exploitation or abuse of a child. In the past year alone, 11% internet users aged 12–17 in Cambodia were subjected to clear examples of online sexual exploitation and abuse that included blackmailing children into engaging in sexual activities, sharing their sexual images without permission or coercing them into engaging in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts. Scaled to the population of internet-using children in Cambodia, this represents an estimated 160,000 children. It is also likely that the true figures are even higher given that children may be reluctant to speak openly about such a sensitive subject.

These experiences occurred both online and in person, but all were facilitated by digital technology. Instances of OCSEA identified in the household survey frequently involved the use of social media, with the most common platform being Facebook (including Facebook Messenger), followed by TikTok and YouTube.

Younger children aged 12–13 more often experienced different forms of OCSEA than their older counterparts. Gender differences were noted in the sample of internet-using children in Cambodia. Boys reported being impacted by OCSEA at almost twice the rate of girls.

Among the internet-using children surveyed, the majority of requests for sexual content, which can indicate grooming attempts, were refused by children; however, a few complied. From the household survey, 29% of internet-using children complied with requests to talk about sex, whilst 14% said that they had complied with requests to share an image or video of their private parts. Meanwhile, 6% of internet-using children aged 15–17 reported having accepted money or gifts in exchange for sexual images or videos of themselves.

Offenders of online sexual exploitation and abuse

Consistent with the evidence concerning violence against children offline, people who were already known to the child were most commonly responsible for the OCSEA-related offences identified in the household survey. These were often a family member, adult friends, peers or a romantic partner. People previously unknown to the child were responsible for approximately one in five instances of the OCSEA-related offences identified in the household survey. These findings have significant implications for prevention efforts, as many activities focus on the threat of harm from strangers rather than people the child already knows. This should also be a consideration for response systems, as it can be much more difficult for victims to seek help if they are emotionally and/or economically dependent on abusers.

Disclosure and reporting of online sexual exploitation and abuse

In the household survey, the majority of the children that experienced OCSEA disclosed what happened to someone. Children most frequently confided in a friend, a male caregiver or a sibling. The research found that very few such instances were reported via formal reporting mechanisms like the police, hotlines or social services. Between 0% and 3% of children who were subjected to different forms of OCSEA formally reported.

The research found that some OCSEA remains undisclosed. For experiences such as unwelcome requests to discuss sex or send sexual content, as many as 23% of children did not tell anyone about the incident. The main reason for not disclosing was a lack of awareness about where to go or whom to tell. Fear and shame, discomfort in openly discussing sex and sexuality and the sensitivity of disclosing abuse perpetrated by a family member were other factors that underpinned children's reluctance to disclose.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Law enforcement

National statistics on OCSEA crimes were not provided by the country's law enforcement agencies, and thus were not included or analysed in this report.

Within the Cambodian Police Force, there are two key units responsible for investigating OCSEA crimes, i.e., the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department and the Anti-Cybercrime Department. Both units comprise judicial police officers; however, the specific responsibilities and procedures for responding to OCSEA crimes are not clear and do not clearly fit within the mandate of a single entity. Broadly speaking, the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department is responsible for cases of child sexual exploitation. The Anti-Cybercrime Department covers cases involving all forms of cybercrime, and thus it engages in cases that include OCSEA in some instances to support the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department.

Cambodian law enforcement's capacity to respond to OCSEA crimes is hindered by limited training, and a limited capacity in terms of personnel and equipment to effectively collect and analyse digital evidence.

The number of reports of suspected OCSEA reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (known as CyberTips) related to Cambodia increased by 261% between 2017 and 2019. The possession, manufacture and distribution of child sexual abuse materials accounted for almost all of Cambodia's CyberTips in this period.

The frontline social service providers survey indicated that workers assessed law enforcement's awareness of OCSEA and its response as fair or good. Some good examples of child-friendly procedures being applied by police and in court were identified, although the young people and their caregivers interviewed for *Disrupting Harm* also noted a need for improvements in this area.

With regard to international collaboration, it was found that the Cambodian National Police most commonly collaborated with international law enforcement agencies concerning issues of the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism, such as a number of recorded instances in which international offenders were prevented from entering the country.

Experiences of victims in the justice system

Interviews with six children and their caregivers about their experiences of accessing the justice system for OCSEA were conducted. Several challenges were identified during their journey through the justice system. Four out of six children reported that police conducted interviews that did not fully account for privacy and confidentiality. Interactions with police and court officials also left some young people and their caregivers feeling unsupported.

While some children appreciated the opportunity to select their preferred police officer, not all were granted this opportunity. They also reported that they had to retell their story repeatedly. Some caregivers expressed concern about being excluded from elements of the justice process and being unable to provide adequate support to their children. Ultimately, none of the families interviewed for *Disrupting Harm* proceeded to court, which the children attributed to such things as a lack of willingness or capacity from law enforcement to proceed and, in one instance, the family informally settling a case outside the justice system.

Since 2008, Cambodia has had legislative provisions to ensure child-friendly courts; however, the legal professionals interviewed for *Disrupting Harm* noted that these were not consistently implemented. Concerns have also been raised regarding the potential to re-traumatise victims throughout the judicial process, and the typically long duration of such processes. Children who had the close support of non-governmental organisations were most likely to have a positive experience.

Social support services for victims

In Cambodia, non-governmental organisations are pivotal in supporting many child victims of sexual exploitation and these organisations are able to provide a wide array of services, including medical care, shelter, counselling, legal support and emotional support. Frontline workers generally rated the availability and quality of legal and psychological services offered to child victims as good or excellent, reintegration services as fair or good and medical services as poor or fair. The concentration of support services in urban areas, the cost and quality of services and their ability to address the needs of all victims (not just girls) were identified as the key barriers to OCSEA victims accessing support.

Coordination and cooperation

In Cambodia, there is evidence that both government and civil society organisations are willing to cooperate to address the emerging challenge of OCSEA. Greater collaboration between government and non-government organisations with Internet service providers would potentially strengthen prevention and response efforts. The recent launch of the National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia 2021–2025 presents an opportunity for all stakeholders to enhance collaborative efforts and pioneer new approaches to addressing OCSEA.

A range of promising initiatives driven by government and civil society are already underway in Cambodia, and while significant challenges exist, it is clear that there is growing momentum and commitment to ensure that children in Cambodia are protected from OCSEA.

Insights

The report concludes by highlighting six key insights from the research:

1. In the past year, 11% of internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia were subjected to clear examples of online sexual exploitation and abuse that included being blackmailed into engaging in sexual activities, having their sexual images shared without permission or being coerced into engaging in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts. Scaled to the national population, this represents an estimated 160,000 children who may have been subjected to any of these harms in the span of a single year. Boys reported such experiences almost twice as often as girls.

2. According to the household survey, most offenders of OCSEA were people already known to the child. These were often family members, adult friends, peers or romantic partners. People previously unknown to the child were responsible for approximately one in five instances of the OCSEA-related offences identified in the household survey.

3. Children mainly experienced OCSEA through the major social media platforms, with the most common platforms being Facebook/Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp.

4. Children who were subjected to OCSEA crimes tended to confide in people within their interpersonal networks, particularly their friends, male caregivers and siblings. Helplines and the police were almost never avenues through which children sought help.

5. A range of promising initiatives driven by government and civil society are already underway in Cambodia; however, significant challenges still exist. The growing momentum and commitment to ensure that children in Cambodia are protected from OCSEA should be used to increase awareness and improve the skills and resources with which law enforcement, justice and social support workers can respond.

6. While the launch and ongoing implementation of the OCSEA Plan of Action is an important step, other legislation, policies and standards still need to be enacted in Cambodia.

The report ends with a detailed map for action to be taken by government, law enforcement, justice and social services sectors and those working within them, by communities, teachers and caregivers, and by digital platforms and service providers. The recommendations are too detailed to be recounted in the Executive Summary but can be found on of this report.

DISRUPTING HARM METHODS

As with all the settings in which children live and grow, the online environment may expose them to risks of sexual exploitation and abuse. However, the scarcity of available evidence makes it difficult to grasp the nature of the harm caused or to make constructive recommendations on public policies for prevention and response. Informed by the 2018 WeProtect Global Alliance Threat Assessment[1] and a desire to understand and deepen the impact of its existing investments, the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, through its Safe Online initiative, decided to invest in research to strengthen the evidence base on OCSEA, with a particular focus on 13 countries across Eastern and Southern Africa and Southeast Asia.

The countries of focus in the Southeast Asian region are Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. The countries of focus in the Eastern and Southern Africa region are Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

ECPAT, INTERPOL and UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti worked in collaboration to design and implement the *Disrupting Harm* project. The three organisations engaged extensive data collection for nine unique research activities from early 2020 through until early 2021 and focused on the three-year period of 2017–2019. During the analysis phase, data from all the research activities was triangulated and resulted in a series of 13 country reports. The analysis for Cambodia was finalised in September 2021.

Aside from the scope and capacity for cross-country comparisons, the project is also unique as it brings together the specific and complementary expertise of three global networks: ECPAT, INTERPOL and UNICEF.

The desired outcome of this report is to provide a baseline and evidence for Cambodian policy makers to tackle and prevent online child sexual exploitation and abuse and strengthen support to children. In addition, the findings and recommendations are expected to be relevant to a broader global audience. The recommendations made in the report are aligned with the WeProtect Model National Response[2] and contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[3]

Summary of methods used by ECPAT International in Cambodia

Interviews with government representatives
Interviews were conducted between May and June 2020 with a total of nine senior national government representatives[4] with mandates that include OCSEA. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, some interviews were conducted in person and some virtually. More information on the methodology can be found here, while the preliminary report of this data can be found here. Attributions to data from these respondents have ID numbers beginning with RA1 throughout the report.[5]

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1. WeProtect Global Alliance (2018). Global Threat Assessment 2018: Working together to end the sexual exploitation of children online. London: WeProtect Global Alliance.
2. WeProtect Global Alliance (2016). Preventing and Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A model national response. London: WeProtect Global Alliance.
3. United Nations. (n.d.) Sustainable Development Goals. See: Goals 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2.
4. Participants represented: Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Ministry of Interior – Cambodia National Police, Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Interior – National Committee for Counter Trafficking, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Justice, Telecommunication of Regulator of Cambodia and the Cambodia National Council for Children, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation.
5. The format RA1-CA-01-A is used for IDs. 'RA1' indicates the research activity, 'CA' denotes Cambodia, '01' is the participant number and 'A' indicates the participant when interviews included more than one person.

Analysis of non-law enforcement data and consultations

A range of non-law enforcement stakeholders can provide data and insights concerning the nature and scale of OCSEA. Data was obtained from INHOPE[6], the Internet Watch Foundation[7] and Child Helpline International.[8] Qualitative insights were provided by a number of global technology platforms. Where relevant, this information supplements the analysis contributed by INTERPOL.

Frontline social service providers' survey

A non-probability convenience sample of 50 client-facing frontline workers in Cambodia, including outreach youth workers, social workers, case managers, psychologists, and some health and legal professionals directly working with children's cases, participated in a survey administered online between March and July 2020. This research activity aimed to explore the scope and context of OCSEA as it is observed by those working the social support frontline to prevent and respond to it. More information on the methodology can be found here, while the preliminary summary report of this data can be found here. Attributions to data from these respondents have ID numbers beginning with RA3 throughout the report.

Access to Justice interviews with OCSEA victims[9] and their caregivers

Six interviews were conducted between March and August 2020 with young people (three female and three male) aged between 17 and 23, who had accessed the legal system for OCSEA cases. The caregivers of three of the young people were also interviewed. The young people and caregivers decided themselves whether to be interviewed separately or jointly. This research activity aimed to provide a better understanding of how and to what extent child victims of OCSEA can access justice and remedies in Cambodia. The participants came from two provinces, namely, Siem Reap and Phnom Penh. All interviews were held in person, in the presence of social work staff from non-governmental organisations.

It should be noted that the local research team reached out to more than 40 organisations whose mandate would potentially indicate the provision of support for children impacted by OCSEA, for the purpose of identifying possible samples. Formal responses indicated, however, that no cases of OCSEA were handled by the majority of these organisations. The research team noted a discrepancy in this information since almost a third of frontline workers participating in the survey for *Disrupting Harm* indicated they worked with OCSEA cases. Not providing a connection to victims and caregivers for the research does not, however, indicate a lack or absence of cases of OCSEA handled by these organisations or occurring in Cambodia. Other challenges in identifying children who had accessed the legal system for OCSEA cases included children being under the age criteria, staff from non-governmental organisations being unable to find or contact children they had worked with or caregivers not wanting their children to participate in the research.

More information on the methodology can be found here, while the preliminary summary report of this data can be found here. Attributions to data from these respondents have ID numbers beginning with RA4 throughout the report; 'child' or 'caregiver' is also included in the ID numbers to indicate the interviews with children or caregivers.

Access to Justice interviews with justice professionals

Interviews with ten criminal justice professionals were conducted between June and October 2020. The sample included government and non-government respondents who had experience with OCSEA criminal cases.[10] More information on the methodology can be found here, while the preliminary summary report of the data can be found here. Attributions to data from these respondents have ID numbers beginning with RA4 throughout the report. Note that the suffix 'justice' is also included in the ID numbers to indicate the interviews with justice professionals.

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6. A global network of 46 member hotlines. INHOPE supports the network in combating child sexual abuse material. For more information see: https://www.inhope.org/EN.
7. UK-based organisation working to remove online child sexual abuse content hosted anywhere in the world. For more information see: https://www.iwf.org.uk/.
8. Child Helpline International collects knowledge and data from child helpline members, partners and external sources. For more information see: https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/about/.
9. The term OCSEA victims refers to their role as victim in the criminal justice process.
10. Participants represented: the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights, APLE Cambodia, Child Protection Unit Cambodia, Terre des Hommes Netherlands, M'Lop Tapang, Hagar Cambodia, Phnom Penh Municipal Court.

Literature review and legal analysis

A literature review was undertaken to inform the research teams prior to primary data collection. A comprehensive analysis of the legislation, policy and systems addressing OCSEA in Cambodia was conducted and finalised in June 2020. More information on the methodology can be found here, while the full report on the legal analysis can be found here.

Conversations with OCSEA survivors[11]

Unstructured, one-on-one conversations led by trauma-informed expert practitioners were arranged with 33 young survivors of OCSEA in five *Disrupting Harm* countries (nine girls in Kenya, five boys and seven girls in Cambodia, seven girls in Namibia, four girls in Malaysia and one boy in South Africa). Although they were not held in all countries, these conversations are meant to underline the common themes and issues in all 13 *Disrupting Harm* countries. Participants were aged between 16 and 24 but had all been subjected to OCSEA as children. The survivor conversations were analysed collectively for all countries and lessons are incorporated into all the national reports. The Cambodia report presents data from the 12 survivor conversations in Cambodia.

More information on the methodology can be found here. The report presenting the analysis of all 33 survivor conversations will be released separately in late 2022. Attributions to data from these respondents have ID numbers beginning with RA5 throughout the report.

Summary of methods used in Cambodia by INTERPOL

Quantitative case data analysis

Data was sought on OCSEA cases from law enforcement authorities via the INTERPOL National Central Bureau in each country. Data was also obtained from the mandated reports of U.S.-based technology companies to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and from a number of other partner organisations with a view to deepening the understanding of relevant offences committed in the country, offender and victim behaviour, crime enablers and vulnerabilities. Crime data for Cambodia for the three years from 2017 to 2019 was not provided by the national law enforcement bodies in Cambodia.

Qualitative capacity assessments

In addition to seeking data on OCSEA cases, INTERPOL requested data on the capacity of the national law enforcement authorities to respond to this type of crime and interviewed serving officers. Emphasis was placed on human resources, access to specialist equipment and training, investigative procedures, the use of tools for international cooperation, achievements and challenges. Attributions to data from this activity have ID numbers beginning with RA8 throughout the report.

More information on INTERPOL's methodologies can be found here.

Summary of methods used in Cambodia by UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti

Household survey of internet-using children and their caregivers

In order to understand children's use of the internet and the risks and opportunities they face online, specifically, OCSEA, a nationally representative household survey was conducted face-to-face with 992 internet-using children while adhering to the COVID 19-related restrictions and procedures in force in the country at the time. The target population for the survey was children aged 12–17 in Cambodia who had used the internet in the three months prior. Additionally, one parent or caregiver of each child was interviewed. The term 'household survey' is used throughout the report to indicate findings that come from this specific research activity. The survey sample was composed of 518 (52%) boys and 474 (48%) girls. The age breakdown is as follows: 311 (31%) 12–13-year-olds, 339 (34%) 14–15-year-olds and 342 (35%) 16–17-year-olds were surveyed.

To achieve a nationally representative random sample, the survey used random probability sampling with national coverage. In Cambodia, the fieldwork coverage was 100%. Coverage is defined as the proportion of the total population that had a chance of being included in the survey sample, meaning that the fieldwork would cover the area where they lived if sampled.

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11. The term OCSEA survivor refers to children who were victimised but may no longer identify with the term victim as they are on the path of healing.

The sampling followed a three-stage random probability clustered sample design to select 100 primary sampling units. The primary sampling unit considered in Cambodia was a village (1,090 people). The primary sampling unit list (sampling frame) was based on the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2017 frame provided by the National Institute of Statistics. As the first stage, approximately 30% of the provinces in the country were sampled before primary sampling units were sampled. The reason for including this stage was to yield a sample that was slightly more clustered, given that the fieldwork was based in the selected provinces only. The number of primary sampling units to sample per selected province was allocated proportionately based on the total number of primary sampling units for the province. The required number of primary sampling units was systematically randomly sampled with probability proportional to size. This ensured that the national distribution by level of urbanity was achieved.

In each primary sampling unit, interviewers selected addresses in the field using random walk procedures and attempted contact at the selected addresses to screen for members of the survey population using a screening question developed for this purpose. One child and one caregiver were selected within each eligible household using random methods.

In every household visited, data was collected on the number, gender and internet use in the past three months of 12–17-year-old children in the household. This allowed us to estimate internet penetration rates for all 12–17-year-olds in Cambodia.

The fieldwork took place between 11 October and 31 December 2020. Data collection was coordinated by Ipsos MORI and carried out by Indochina Research Ltd, a local Ipsos partner, on behalf of UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.

A more detailed explanation of the methodological approach and the specific methods used for analysis of the household survey data can be found here.

Ethical approval

UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti and ECPAT International's research components were reviewed by the Health Media Lab Institutional Review Board. In addition, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti's research component was reviewed and approved by the Cambodia National Council for Children and the Ministry of Interior. ECPAT's components were reviewed and approved by the Cambodian National Ethics Committee for Health Research.

INTERPOL assessed both the threat of OCSEA and the capacity of law enforcement to counter this threat. Both assessments entailed interviews with law enforcement in relevant units dealing with the crime area, and relevant police units and national agencies that handle police data. INTERPOL did not have contact with children or victims. Nevertheless, to ensure proper ethical conduct and research standards, the INTERPOL team completed an online course on Responsible Conduct of Research from the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative. Furthermore, all research activities were implemented in accordance with INTERPOL's Code of Conduct.

National review

Throughout the drafting process of the *Disrupting Harm in Cambodia* report, the research team worked closely with the Technical Working Group of Cambodia National Council for Children. A detailed final review of the report by the Technical Working Group of Cambodia National Council for Children took place on 16 May 2022 in Kampot.

Figure 1: *Disrupting Harm* methods in Cambodia.

Survivor conversations n = 7					

PHASE 2

| Household survey data from children and parents n = 992 | Government duty-bearer Interviews n = 9 | Survey of frontline service providers n = 50 | Access to justice interviews with professionals n = 10 / Access to justice interviews with children n=6 | Non-law enforcement data analysis | Law enforcement capacity assessment n=9 / Country threat assessment |

PHASE 1

Desk review of relevant documents

Legal analysis

ABOUT ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Child sexual abuse refers to various sexual activities perpetrated against children (persons under 18), regardless of whether or not the children are aware that what is happening to them is neither normal nor acceptable. It can be committed by adults or peers and usually involves an individual or group taking advantage of an imbalance of power. It can be committed without explicit force, with offenders frequently using authority, power, manipulation or deception.[12]

Child sexual exploitation involves the same abusive actions. However, an additional element of a threat or of exchange for something (e.g., money, shelter, material goods, immaterial things like protection or a relationship), or even the mere promise of such, must also be present.[13]

> **_Online child sexual exploitation and abuse_ (OCSEA)** refers to situations involving _digital, internet_ and _communication technologies_ at some point during the continuum of abuse or exploitation. OCSEA can occur fully online or through a mix of online and in-person interactions between offenders and children.

Labelling child sexual exploitation and abuse as exclusively 'online' or 'offline' does not help us to understand, prevent or respond to the issue, nor is it the intention of _Disrupting Harm_ to create such an artificial divide. Children can be abused or exploited while they spend time in the digital environment, but equally, offenders can use digital technology to facilitate their actions, e.g., to document and share images of in-person abuse and exploitation or to groom children to meet them in person.

Disrupting Harm also focuses on how technology _facilitates_ child sexual exploitation and abuse and contributes evidence needed to understand the role digital technology plays in perpetrating sexual violence against children.

Any characterisation of OCSEA must recognise that the boundaries between online and offline behaviour and actions are increasingly blurred[14] and that responses need to consider the whole spectrum of activities in which digital technologies may play a part. This characterisation is particularly important to keep in mind as children increasingly see their online and offline worlds as entwined and simultaneous.[15]

For _Disrupting Harm_, OCSEA was defined specifically to include child sexual exploitation and abuse that involves the following:

- Production, possession, or sharing of **child sexual abuse material (CSAM):** Photos, videos, audios or other recordings, or any other representation of real or digitally generated child sexual abuse or sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes.[16]

- **Live-streaming of child sexual abuse:** Child sexual abuse that is perpetrated and viewed simultaneously in real time via communication tools, video conferencing tools and/or chat applications. In most cases, the offender requesting the abuse in exchange for payment or other material benefits is physically in a different location from the child(ren) and the facilitators of the abuse.

- **Online grooming of children for sexual purposes:** Engagement with a child via technology with the intent of sexually abusing or exploiting the child.

12. Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2016). Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Bangkok: ECPAT International. 18.

13. Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2016). Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Bangkok: ECPAT International. 24.

14. May-Chahal, C., & Palmer, C. (2018). Rapid Evidence Assessment: Characteristics and vulnerabilities of victims of online-facilitated child sexual abuse and exploitation. Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. UK: Lancaster University.

15. Stoilova, M., Livingstone, S., Khazbak, R. (2021). Investigating Risks and Opportunities for Children in a Digital World: A rapid review of the evidence on children's internet use and outcomes. Innocenti Discussion Papers no. 2021-01, Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.

16. Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2016). Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Bangkok: ECPAT International. 40.
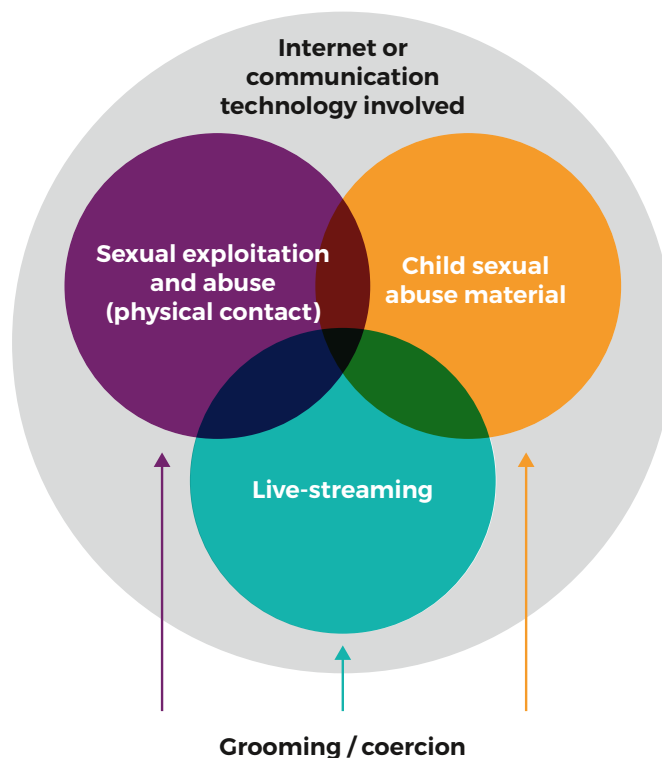
While international legal instruments[17] criminalising grooming indicate that this must take place with intent to meet the child in person, it has become increasingly common for offenders to sexually abuse children online by, for example, manipulating them into self-generating and sharing CSAM through digital technologies, without necessarily having the intention of meeting them and abusing them in person.

The *Disrupting Harm* reports also address other phenomena that contribute to understanding the contexts and socio-cultural environments in which OCSEA occurs.

- **The sharing of self-generated sexual content involving children**[18] can lead to or be part of OCSEA, even if this content is initially produced and shared voluntarily between peers, as it can be passed on without permission or obtained through deception or coercion.

- **Sexual extortion of children**[19] refers to the use of blackmail or threats to extract sexual content or other benefits (e.g., money) from the child, often using sexual content of the child that has previously been obtained as leverage.

- **Sexual harassment of a child**[20] and **unwanted exposure of a child to sexual content**[21] re other phenomena which *can* constitute or enable OCSEA in some instances. For example, offenders can deliberately expose children to sexual content as part of grooming to desensitize them to sexual acts. However, for the purposes of evidence-based policy and programme development, it is important to acknowledge that there are differences between voluntary viewing of sexual content by children and viewing that is forced or coerced. The former is not included in the definition of OCSEA used in the *Disrupting Harm* study.

Figure 2: Framing the main forms of online child sexual exploitation and abuse explored by *Disrupting Harm*.

Internet or communication technology involved

Sexual exploitation and abuse (physical contact)

Child sexual abuse material

Live-streaming

Grooming / coercion

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17. The only two legally binding international instruments containing an obligation to criminalise the grooming of children for sexual purposes are: Council of Europe. (2007). Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Council of Europe Treaty Series – No. 201. Article 23; and European Parliament and Council. (2011). Directive 2011/92/EU on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA. Article 6.

18. Cooper, K., Quayle, E., Jonsson, L. & Svedin, C.G. (2016). Adolescents and self-taken sexual images: A review of the literature. Computers in Human Behavior, vol. 55, 706–716.

19. Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2016). Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Bangkok: ECPAT International. 52.

20. Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2016). Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Bangkok: ECPAT International. 21.

21. Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2016). Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Bangkok: ECPAT International. 44.

ABOUT CAMBODIA – DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERNET USAGE

Despite increasing connectivity around the world, few countries regularly update their formal internet use statistics or disaggregate them for their child populations. This presents a challenge in understanding how young people's lives are impacted by digital technologies, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The infographic below summarises the latest available data on internet access and social media use in Cambodia. Some of this data was gathered directly through the *Disrupting Harm* nationally representative household survey of internet-using 12–17-year-olds.

The data below provide an important backdrop for understanding the various facets of children's internet use. However, methodological limitations that affected the data quality for some secondary sources should be kept in mind. Relying on purposive or other non-probability sampling techniques means that the data cannot be considered representative of the population in question. In other cases, variations in the data collection methods and definitions of internet use pose a challenge for cross-country comparisons.

POPULATION TOTAL 2019

Country data:

16,524,000[22]

UN data (2020):

16,719,000[23]

FEMALE POPULATION 2019

Country data:

7,869,912[24]

UN data (2020):

8,557,000[25]

MALE POPULATION 2019
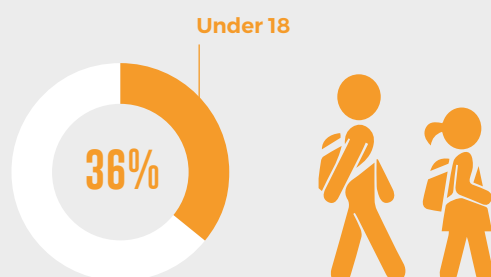
Country data:

7,418,577[26]

UN data (2020):

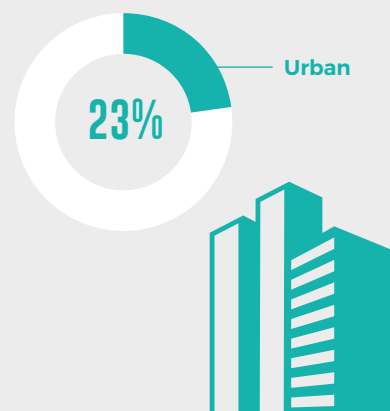**8,162,000**[27]

POPULATION UNDER 18 2020

UN data:

6,051,000[28]

Under 18

36%

URBAN POPULATION 2018: 23%[29]

2030 prospective: 29%[30]

Urban

23%

MEDIAN AGE 2020[31]

26

Estimate

GDP PER CAPITA 2019 (US$)

$1,643[32]

22. National Institute of Statistics. (2019). General Population Census of the Kingdom of Cambodia 2019.
23. United Nations Population Division. (2019). World Population Prospects 2019.
24. National Institute of Statistics. (2019). General Population Census of the Kingdom of Cambodia 2019.
25. United Nations Population Division. (2019). World Population Prospects 2019.
26. National Institute of Statistics. (2019). General Population Census of the Kingdom of Cambodia 2019.
27. United Nations Population Division. (2019). World Population Prospects 2019.
28. UNICEF. (2021). The State of the World's Children 2021. UNICEF, New York.
29. United Nations Population Division. (2018). World Population Prospects 2019 File 1: Population of Urban and Rural Areas at Mid-Year (thousands) and Percentage Urban, 2018.
30. United Nations Population Division. (2019). World Population Prospects 2019.
31. United Nations Population Division. (2019). World Population Prospects 2019 File POP/5: Median age by region, subregion and country, 1950-2100 (years).
32. The World Bank. (n.d.) GDP per capita (current US$) - Cambodia.

ABOUT CAMBODIA – DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERNET USAGE

POVERTY RATES (2014)
HEADCOUNT RATIO AT NATIONAL POVERTY LINES[33] (% OF POPULATION)

14%
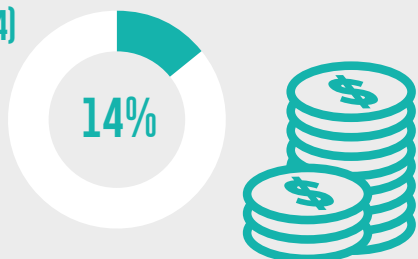
LANGUAGE[34]

KHMER

INTERNET SUBSCRIPTION/PENETRATION RATES 2018: 40.5%[35]

40.5%

INTERNET USE AMONG CAREGIVERS OF INTERNET-USING CHILDREN

61%

Source: Disrupting Harm data

n = 992 caregivers of internet-using children.

2020 INTERNET PENETRATION RATES AMONG 12–17-YEAR-OLDS

Source: Disrupting Harm data

Total	81%
12–13 Years	72%
14–15 Years	84%
16–17 Years	91%
Girls	80%
Boys	81%
Rural	80%
Urban	86%
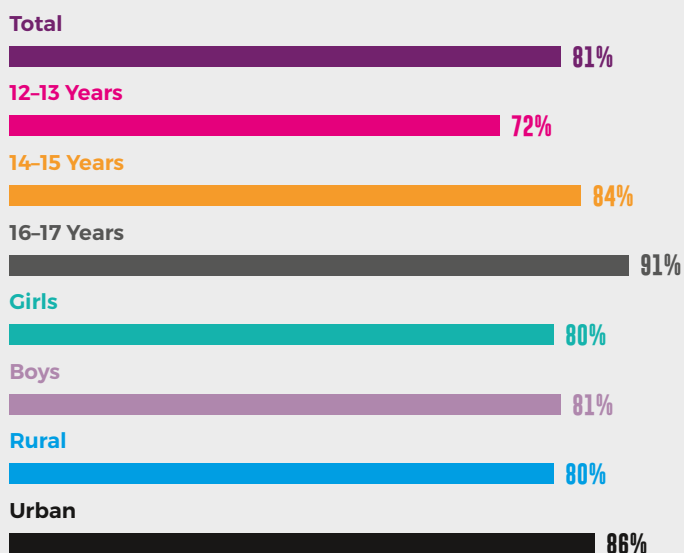
n = 2,439 households.

MOST POPULAR DEVICE TO ACCESS THE INTERNET AMONG 12–17-YEAR-OLDS*

Source: Disrupting Harm data

Computer 2%

Mobile 99%
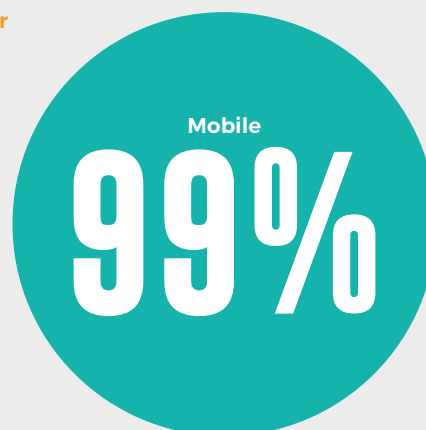
n = 995 internet-using children.   *Multiple choice question

33. World Bank. (n.d.). Poverty & Equity Data Portal.
34. Government of Cambodia. (1993). Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Article 5.
35. International Telecommunications Union. (2020). Country ICT data: Percentage of Individuals Using the Internet.

ABOUT CAMBODIA – DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERNET USAGE

MOST POPULAR PLACE TO ACCESS THE INTERNET AMONG 12–17-YEAR-OLDS*

Mall
7%

Internet café
14%

School
33%

Other
40%

Home
100%
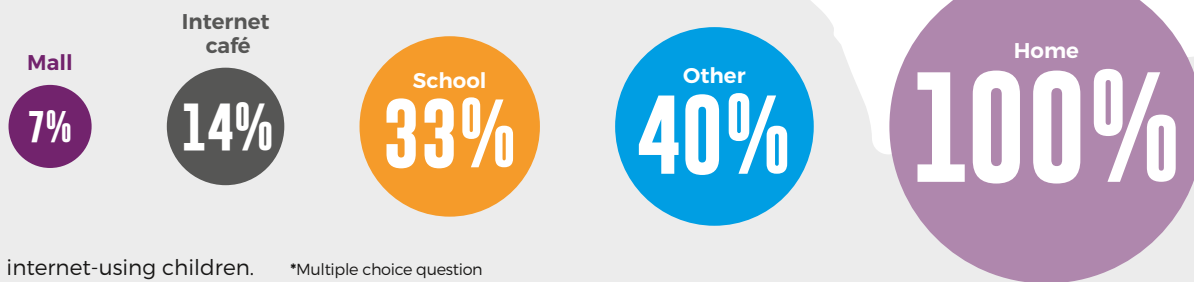
n = 992 internet-using children.   *Multiple choice question

FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE AMONG 12–17-YEAR-OLDS

Legend:
- Less than once a month
- At least monthly
- At least weekly
- Once a day or more
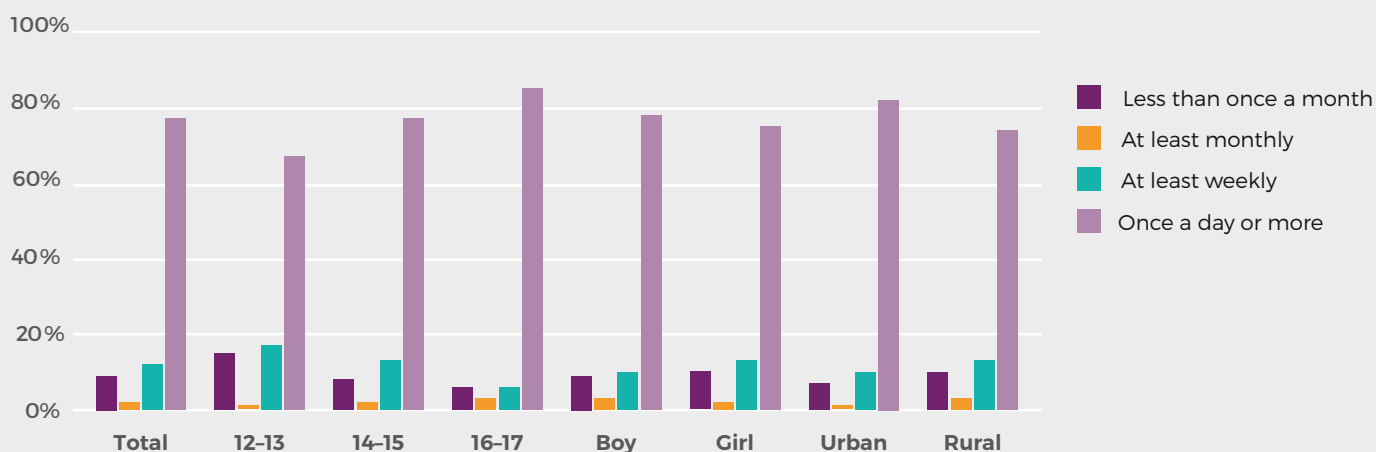
Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia from the Disrupting Harm study. n = 992.

FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE AMONG CAREGIVERS OF INTERNET-USING CHILDREN

At least weekly
6%

At least monthly
1%

Less than once a month
12%

42%
At least once a day

39%
Never
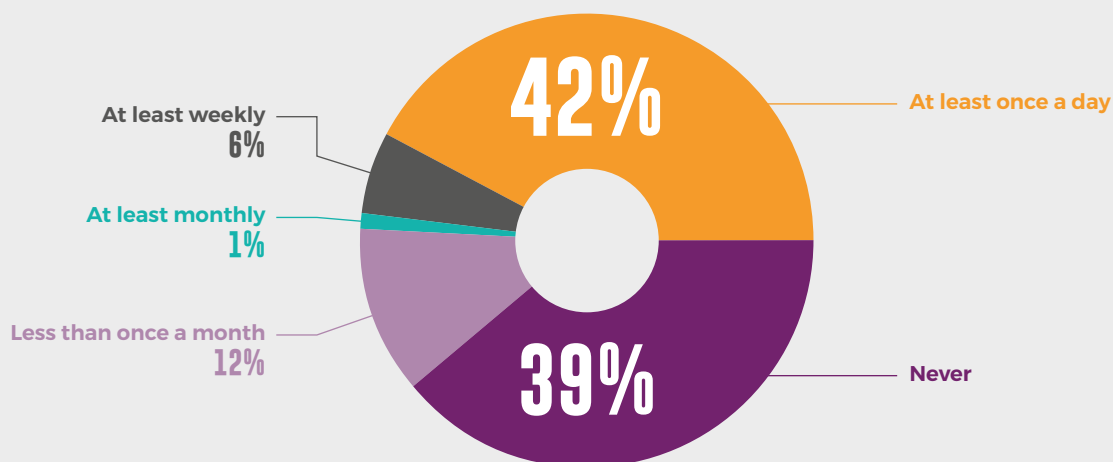
n = 992 caregivers of internet-using children.

ABOUT CAMBODIA – DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTERNET USAGE

CHILDREN WHO USE SOCIAL MEDIA ON A WEEKLY BASIS

Source: Disrupting Harm data

Total	12-13	14-15	16-17	Boys	Girls
79%	71%	80%	86%	77%	82%
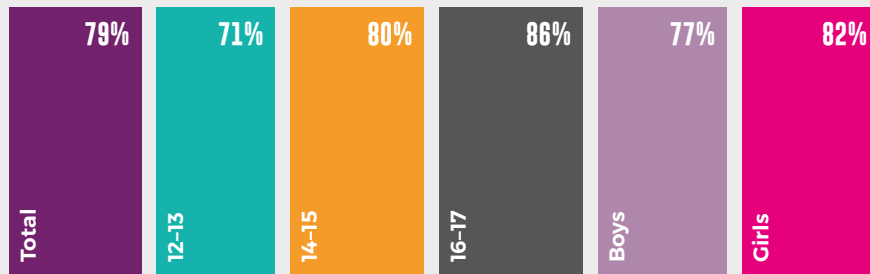
n = 992 internet-using children aged 12–17.

CHILDREN WHO USE INSTANT MESSAGING APPS ON A WEEKLY BASIS

Source: Disrupting Harm data

Total	12-13	14-15	16-17	Boys	Girls
51%	34%	51%	66%	46%	56%
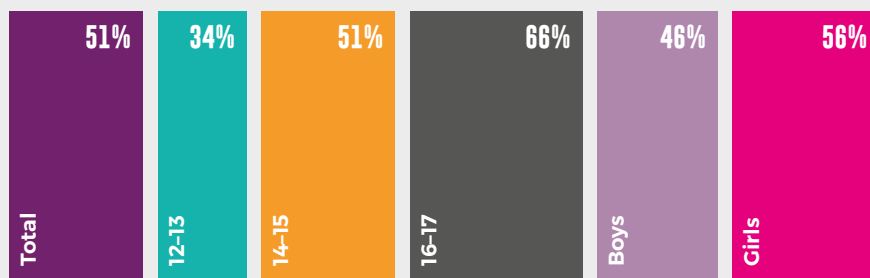
n = 992 internet-using children aged 12–17.

ICT DEVELOPMENT INDEX RANKING (ITU) 2017

24/34[36] Asia & Pacific

128/176 World
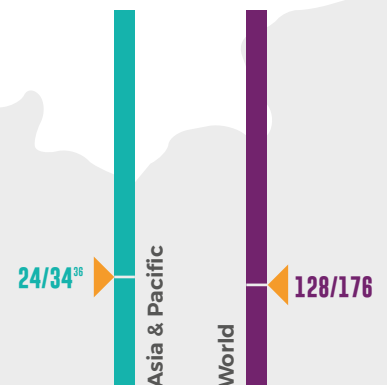
GLOBAL CYBERSECURITY INDEX RANKING 2018[37]

27/38[37] Asia & Pacific

131/175 World

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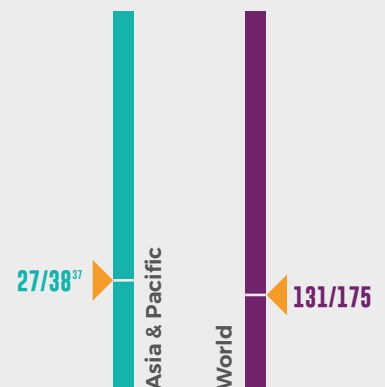
36. International Telecommunication Union. (2017). ICT Development Index 2017.
37. The Global Cybersecurity Index measures the commitment of countries to cybersecurity based on the implementation of legal instruments and the level of technical and organisational measures taken to reinforce international cooperation and cybersecurity.
38. International Telecommunication Union. (2019). Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2018.

OVERVIEW OF LEGISLATION AND POLICY

The legal analysis conducted for *Disrupting Harm* found that the most relevant piece of Cambodian legislation on sexual exploitation in general, which also encompass OCSEA crimes, is the 2007 Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation.[39] Additionally, the Criminal Code criminalises certain offences related to OCSEA.[40]

The Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation provides a limited definition of child sexual abuse material (CSAM)[41] and criminalises certain conduct associated with such material.[42] It is worth noting that this law also prohibits the distribution, possession and production with intent to distribute pornography (including pornographic material depicting adults).[43]

The Criminal Code also contains a provision that criminalises sexual harassment,[44] although not specifically online nor against children. The penalty for this crime (imprisonment from six days to three months and a fine of between KHR10,000 and KHR500,000, approximately the equivalent of between US$2.50 and US$125)[45] does not reflect the grave nature of the crime, especially when committed against children.

Although Cambodian legislation does not explicitly criminalise online grooming of children for sexual purposes as a standalone offence, the Criminal Code does criminalise "the arrangement, by an adult, of meetings involving indecent exposure or sexual relations at which minors are present or participate."[46]

Crucially, neither the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation nor the Criminal Code criminalise – explicitly or implicitly – online sexual extortion and the live-streaming of child sexual abuse.

A representative from the Ministry of Interior – Cambodia National Police suggested that there is no need for new laws as they believed existing legislation was sufficient, suggesting that the biggest challenge was effective implementation of existing legislation. (RA1-CA-03-A) This point was corroborated by a representative from the Ministry of Women's Affairs who noted: *"Our legislation might have some loopholes because this is a new issue, and our laws are old. Currently, the Ministry of Justice is working on law reviews in hopes to amend the criminal and civil codes. Moreover, some people, even some government officials, often do not pay adequate attention to these laws yet."* (RA1-CA-05-A)

The Government of Cambodia is currently reviewing a Draft Cybercrime Law, initiated in 2012, which will more comprehensively define CSAM and criminalise various CSAM-related offences committed online and/or through the use of a computer system or other digital device.[47]

With respect to the applicability of the provisions of law criminalising OCSEA, the Criminal Code and the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation extend the jurisdiction of the courts to offences punishable under the Act committed by Cambodian nationals abroad or when the victim is a national of Cambodia.[48,49] However, for the OCSEA crimes included in the Criminal Code, this extraterritorial jurisdiction is only applicable if the act in question constitutes an offence in both Cambodia and the country in which it was committed (principle of double criminality).

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39. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, Royal Kram NS/RKM/0208/005.
40. Government of Cambodia. (2009). Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia.
41. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, Royal Kram NS/RKM/0208/005, Article 40.
42. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, Royal Kram NS/RKM/0208/005, Article 41.
43. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, Royal Kram NS/RKM/0208/005, Article 39.
44. Government of Cambodia. (2009). Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Article 250.
45. Government of Cambodia. (2009). Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Article 250.
46. Government of Cambodia. (2009). Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Article 346.
47. Government of Cambodia – Working Group of Council of Ministers. (Undated). Cybercrime Law Draft V.1, Article 27.
48. Government of Cambodia. (2009). Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Article 19 and 20.
49. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation , Royal Kram NS/RKM/0208/005, Article 3.

The main policy relating to OCSEA in Cambodia is the National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia 2021–2025. This Action Plan was launched on 14 July 2021 and has six strategic priorities that focus on areas such as policy and governance, the criminal justice system, rehabilitation of OCSEA victims and awareness raising of OCSEA.[50]

There are two other policies in Cambodia that include intended activities related to OCSEA. The first is the Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children 2017–2021, which includes activities related to OCSEA, such as education programmes, media and communication strategies and enhancing the legislative framework.[51] One representative from the Ministry for Women's Affairs noted that no mid-term review was conducted. (RA1-CA-05-A) The second is the Information and Communication Technology Development Policy 2016–2020,[52] which included a target to improve child online safety by 2020.

The government representatives interviewed mentioned that the biggest challenge to the implementation of the Action Plan was the limited government budget.

As a result, financial support from partner organisations was the only way in which anything could be undertaken. Research conducted as part of *Disrupting Harm* also found that not all senior government officials were aware of this five-year action plan. A representative of the Telecommunication Regulator of Cambodia stated: *"I'm unaware of this action plan, and neither have I received any information about the execution status or its results."* (RA1-CA-09-A) Whilst an evaluation has not been undertaken, a representative from the Cambodia National Council for Children noted: *"The Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation and the Cambodian National Council for Children have completed many activities as stipulated in the plan, paying particular attention to service provision, monitoring and the evaluation of the implementation by the Ministry."* (RA1-CA-10-A)

Regarding the implementation of the Information and Communication Technology Development Policy 2016–2020, the Director of Information Security noted that the target to improve child online safety by 2020 had not been met: *"I suspect this might have to be extended because we've not achieved the target yet. Therefore, it needs to be extended."* (RA1-CA-04-A)

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50. Cambodia National Council for Children (2021). Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation 2021–2015.
51. The Steering Committee on Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children. (2017). Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children 2017-2021.
52. Government of Cambodia. (2016). ICT Development Policy 2016-2020.

1. CHILDREN ONLINE IN CAMBODIA

The main focus of the *Disrupting Harm* report series is to present the perspectives of young people, government representatives, service providers and others around the sexual exploitation and abuse of children facilitated or committed through digital technologies. However, it is important to situate these offences within the wider context of children's internet use in Cambodia. This first chapter, therefore, presents a brief overview of children's internet access and the activities enjoyed by the majority of children online before going on to describe the occurrence of riskier online activities and the ways in which these are perceived by internet-using children and their caregivers.

1.1 INTERNET ACCESS AND BARRIERS

Internet access

The sampling data from the *Disrupting Harm* household survey of 12–17-year-old children (n = 2439) indicates that 81% of children in Cambodia were internet users.[53,54] The percentage of internet users increased with age from 72% among children aged 12–13 to 84% among children aged 14–15 and 91% among those aged 16–17. No gender or location (urban/rural) difference in internet access was observed.

Frequency of internet use

Among a primary sample of internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia (n = 992), 77% reported going online at least once a day. Similar to most countries around the world,[55] older children (14–17) were more frequent users than younger children (12–13). No gender difference was observed in frequency of internet use (see Figure 3). Children living in urban areas (82%) reported using the internet more frequently than children in rural areas (74%).

Caregiver internet use

Among the caregivers surveyed, 42% reported using the internet every day. Caregivers aged 50 and above were far less likely to be internet users than younger caregivers. Female caregivers also reported using the internet somewhat less frequently than male caregivers. As many caregivers in Cambodia have online experience (61%), they can play an important role in guiding their children's use of the internet. Nevertheless, 39% of the caregivers surveyed had never used the internet.

Device for internet use

As in most other countries, smartphones were by far the most popular devices used by 12–17-year-olds to go online, likely due to their relatively low cost and portability.[56] Nearly all (99%) of the children surveyed in Cambodia were using smartphones to go online. Only 2% were using computers, while none were using tablets or other digital devices.

Among internet-using children that used mobile phones, 41% shared the device with someone else. Mobile phones were mostly shared with a caregiver (33%), followed by siblings (12%) and friends (2%). Sharing of mobile phones was highest among 12–13-year-olds (64%) as compared to 14–15-year-olds (43%) and 16–17-year-olds (20%). Mobile phone sharing was slightly more common among girls (43%) than boys (39%).

Place of internet use

As observed in other countries,[57] most (91%) internet-using children in Cambodia accessed the internet from home and 79% reported doing so on a daily basis. Internet use at school was reported by 33% of the internet-using children surveyed; this low figure could be attributed to COVID-19-related school closures in Cambodia. Few children (14%) used internet cafés or malls (8%) to go online. Forty percent of children said that they go online from some other place. This figure could reflect places not captured in the household survey, such as the street, a friend's house, or the park.

Barriers to access and use of the internet

Up to 87% of internet-using children in Cambodia face barriers in accessing the internet (see Figure 5). Slow connection or poor signal where they live was the most-commonly cited barrier, with up to 50% of children reporting that this prevented them from going online when they wanted or needed to. This affected older children (14–17) and children living in rural areas in higher proportions. Parental restriction was the second most commonly cited barrier to children going online – especially younger children aged 12–13 and boys. High data and internet costs and sharing devices with someone else were other notable barriers identified by children – especially younger ones aged 12–13. This is consistent with the *Disrupting Harm* survey data on sharing of mobile phones, which was highest among younger children aged 12–13 (64%), dropping among those aged 14–15 (43%) and 16–17 (20%).

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53. While conducting the random walk to identify eligible children to partake in the main survey, data was also collected from every household visited about the number of 12–17-year-old children living there, their gender, age, and whether they had used the internet in the past three months. This allowed us to estimate internet penetration rates for all 12–17-year-old children in Cambodia. n = 2,439 households.

54. The question used to determine whether a 12–17-year-old was an internet user: Has [PERSON] used the internet in the last three months? This could include using a mobile phone, tablet, or computer to send or receive messages, use apps like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, send emails, browse, chat with friends and family, upload or download files, or anything else that you usually do on the internet.

55. See data from Global Kids Online.

56. Livingstone, S., Kardefelt Winther, D., & Saeed, M. (2019). Global Kids Online Comparative Report. Innocenti Research Report. UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence.

57. Smahel, D., MacHackova, H., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Olafsson, K., Livingstone, S., & Hasebrink, U. (2020). EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries. London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

Figure 3: Frequency of children's internet use (%).

	Less than once a month	At least monthly	At least weekly	Once a day or more
Total	9	2	12	77
12–13	15	1	17	67
14–15	8	2	13	77
16–17	6	3	6	85
Boy	9	3	10	78
Girl	10	2	13	75
Urban	7	1	10	82
Rural	10	3	13	74

■ Less than once a month   ■ At least monthly   ■ At least weekly   ■ Once a day or more
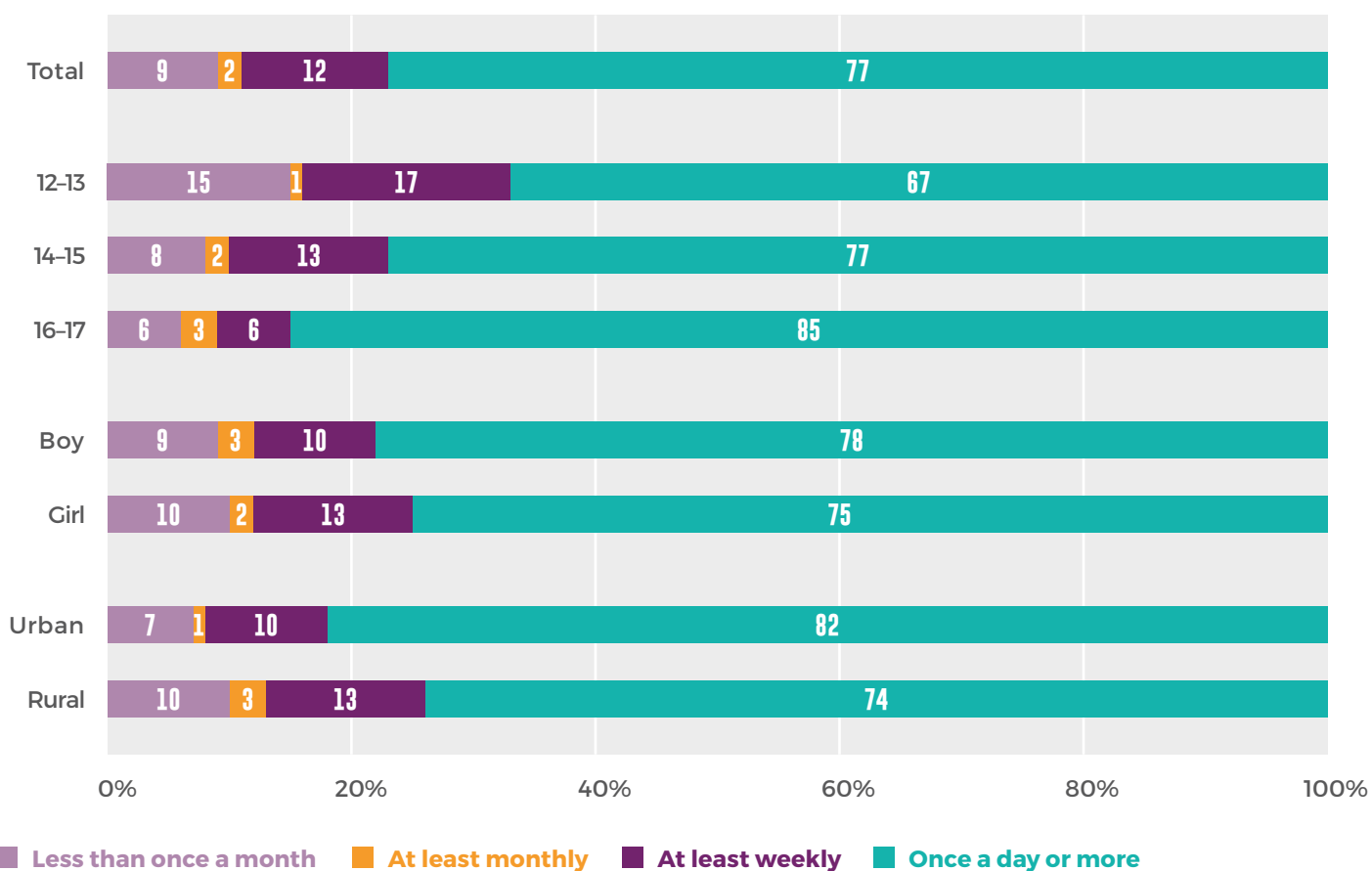
Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia. n = 992.

Figure 4: Frequency of caregivers' internet use (%).

	Never	Less than once a month	At least monthly	At least weekly	Once a day or more
Total	39	12	1	6	42
< 29	13	6	2	5	74
30–39	29	15	3	9	44
40–49	45	16	1	5	34
50+	67	9		2	21
Men	33	15	1	5	47
Women	43	11	2	6	39

■ Never   ■ Less than once a month   ■ At least monthly   ■ At least weekly   ■ Once a day or more

Base: Caregivers of Internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia. n = 995.

Figure 5: Barriers to access for internet-using children.

- Always have access: 13%
- Slow connection or poor signal where I live: 50%
- Caregivers did not allow them: 27%
- Paying for internet/data is too expensive: 17%
- The device they use to go online is being used by someone else: 12%
- Teachers did not allow them: 11%
- There is limited electricity where I live: 7%
- Other barriers: 6%
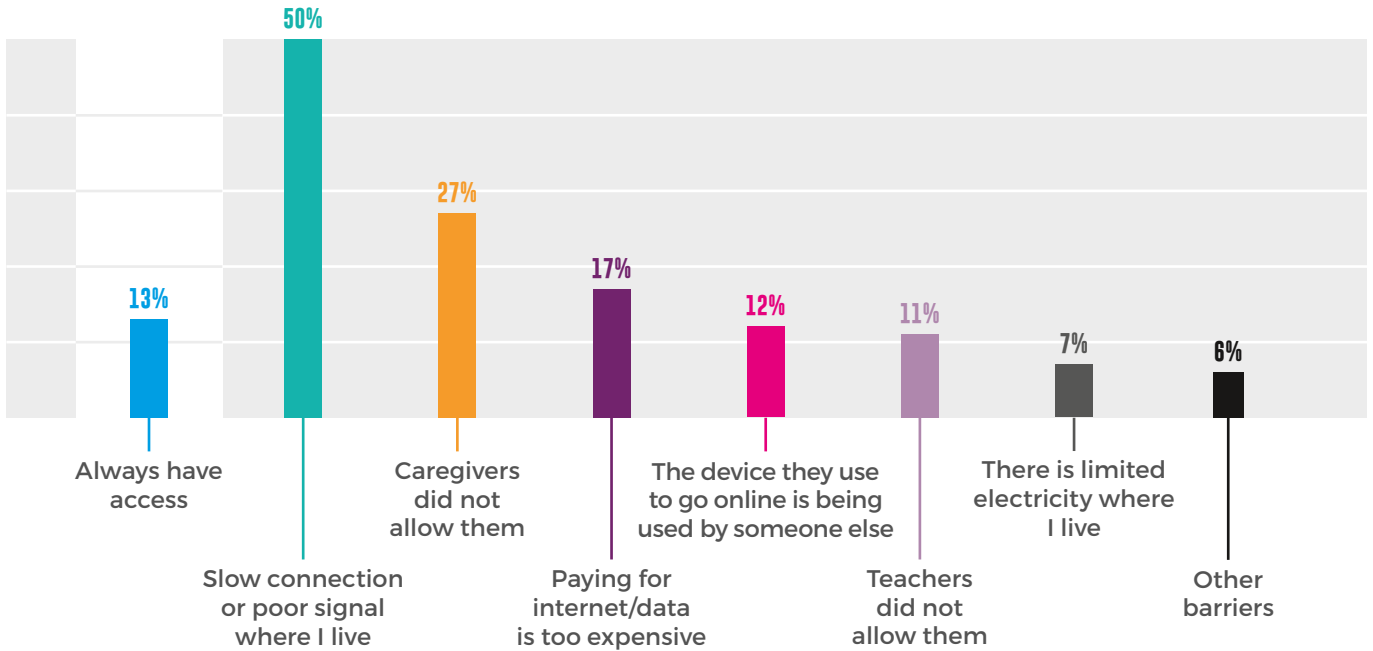
Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia. n = 992.

> " Slow connection or poor signal is the most-commonly cited barrier preventing children from going online. Parental restriction is the second most commonly cited barrier – especially by younger children aged 12–13. "

1.2 CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES ONLINE

The most popular online activities among the children surveyed in Cambodia were entertainment activities, namely, using social media (79%) and watching videos (79%). These were followed by using instant messaging (51%) and talking to family and friends that live far away (50%). Older children aged 14–17 generally engaged in a wider range of online activities than younger children aged 12–13. As in other countries,[58] playing online games was far more common among boys (66%) than girls (16%). More girls than boys reported using social media and instant messaging, and going online for school work. It is worth considering that these categories are not intended to be mutually exclusive, for example, a child could go online to watch a video as part of their school work. Nonetheless, Figure 6 provides a greater understanding of how 12–17-year-olds in Cambodia use the internet and the activities they enjoy.

Figure 6: Activities children engage in online at least once a week.

Children's online activities	Total	12–13	14–15	16–17	Boy	Girl
Used social media	79%	71%	80%	86%	77%	82%
Watched videos	79%	73%	77%	86%	79%	79%
Used instant messaging	51%	34%	51%	66%	46%	56%
Talked to family or friends who live far away	50%	43%	47%	59%	46%	54%
Watched a livestream	48%	42%	47%	57%	51%	46%
Played online games	42%	40%	43%	42%	66%	16%
School work	39%	28%	42%	48%	34%	45%
Searched for new information	32%	21%	32%	43%	31%	34%
Looked for news	30%	21%	27%	42%	35%	25%
Followed celebrities and public figures on social media	29%	24%	28%	35%	29%	30%
Looked for information about work or study opportunities	22%	17%	23%	25%	20%	24%
Looked for information or events in local neighbourhood	16%	10%	11%	26%	19%	13%
Looked for health information	14%	13%	11%	19%	16%	12%
Participated on a website where people share their interests	13%	10%	13%	15%	14%	12%
Created their own video or music	11%	9%	12%	12%	15%	7%
Sought emotional support	5%	3%	4%	9%	7%	4%
Discussed political or social problems	4%	5%	4%	5%	7%	2%
Created a blog or website	4%	4%	2%	5%	4%	3%

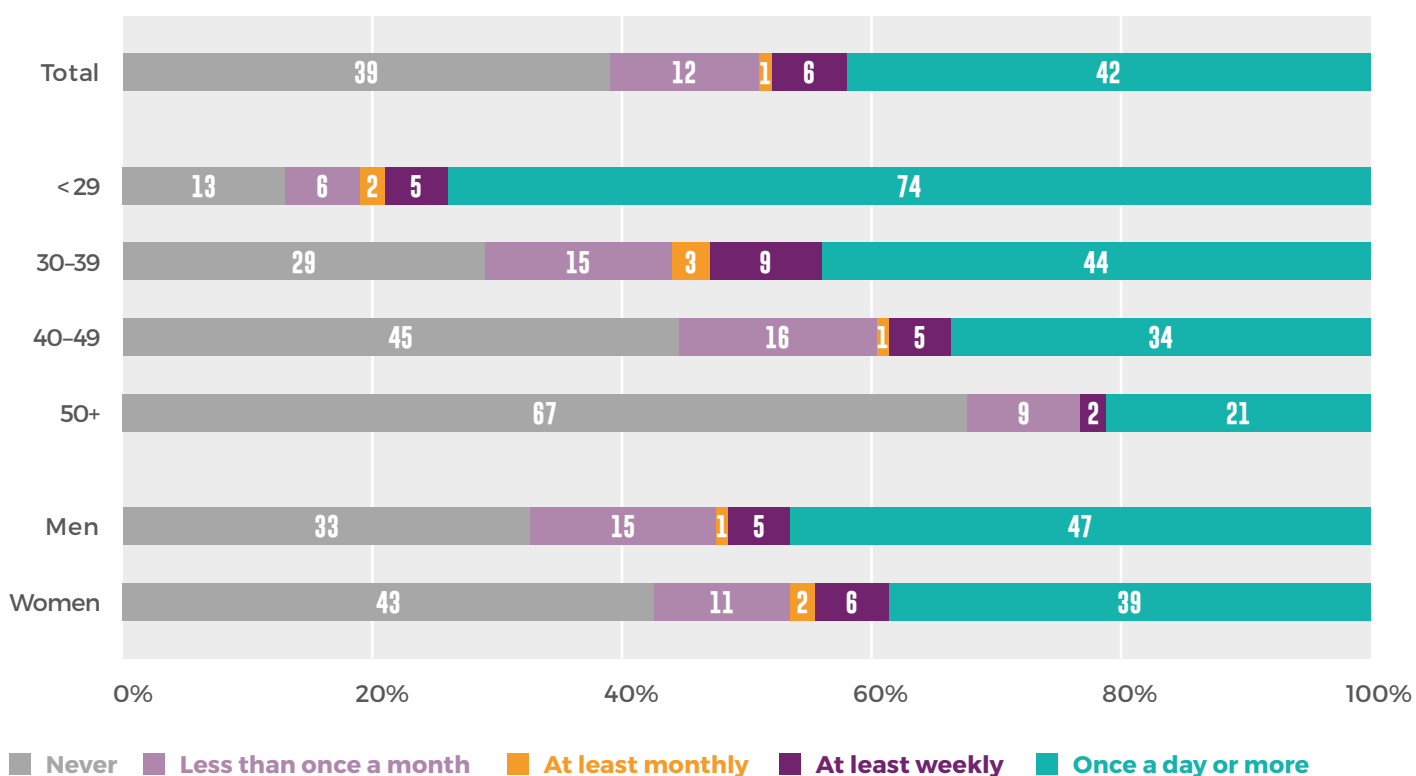Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia. n = 992.

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58. Smahel, D., MacHackova, H., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Olafsson, K., Livingstone, S., & Hasebrink, U. (2020). EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries. London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

1.3 PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF RISKY ONLINE ACTIVITIES

Discussions of the online risks for children often hinge upon adult-centric perceptions. To ensure children's perceptions are understood, they and their caregivers were asked about their engagement in, and perceptions of, various online risky activities. Children and caregivers were asked whether the online activities presented below were 'very risky', 'a little risky', or 'not risky at all' for children.

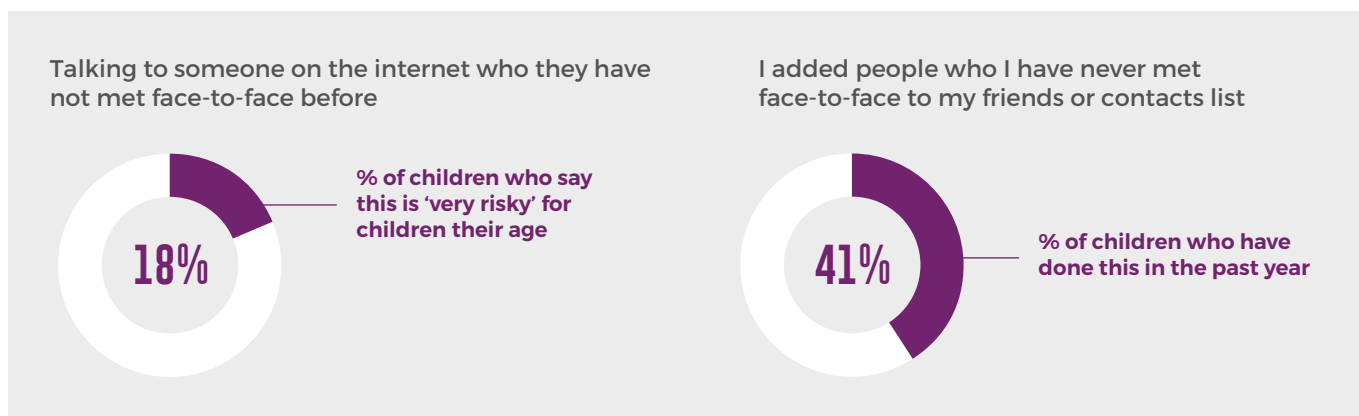### 1.3.1 Contact with strangers online and in person

Communicating with strangers online

A common concern around children's online use is that children will meet people who are unknown to them online and then decide to meet them offline, which can be risky and could lead to harm. Children and caregivers were asked to rate the level of risk for children 'talking to someone on the internet who they have not met face-to-face before.' Among caregivers, 37% said that talking to strangers online was very risky for children. In contrast, only 18% of internet-using children thought this behaviour was very risky for children their age. While most children recognised that interacting with strangers online carries *some* level of risk, a notable proportion (37%) felt that there was no risk at all, suggesting that such connections are not usually harmful and may simply be a way in which young people now make new friends. In practice, children do engage with people online that they have never met face-to-face, with 57% of the children surveyed indicating that they looked for new friends or contacts on the internet and 41% having added people they had never met before to their contact lists.

A similar pattern was observed in response to questions around the risks associated with sharing personal information online. From the household survey, 51% of caregivers and 29% of children held the opinion that sending personal information to someone they had never met face-to-face was very risky (see Figure 8). On the other hand, 31% of children believed that sharing personal information with someone they had never met face-to-face was not very risky. In practice, 17% of the internet-using children surveyed had shared their personal information with someone they had never met face-to-face at some point in the previous year.

The government representatives interviewed identified the evolving nature of technology as a challenge in terms of potential exposure to risk, with one interviewee stating: *"Nowadays, children use many new applications. They can set their account to a public or private account and connect with others. They can view and send pictures and information as well as communicate with each other, so it's very hard to manage even for us, parents, teacher or the authority."* (RA1-CA-06-A)

Figure 7: Level of risk attributed by children to speaking to someone unknown online.

Talking to someone on the internet who they have not met face-to-face before

18%

% of children who say this is 'very risky' for children their age

I added people who I have never met face-to-face to my friends or contacts list

41%

% of children who have done this in the past year

Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia. n = 992

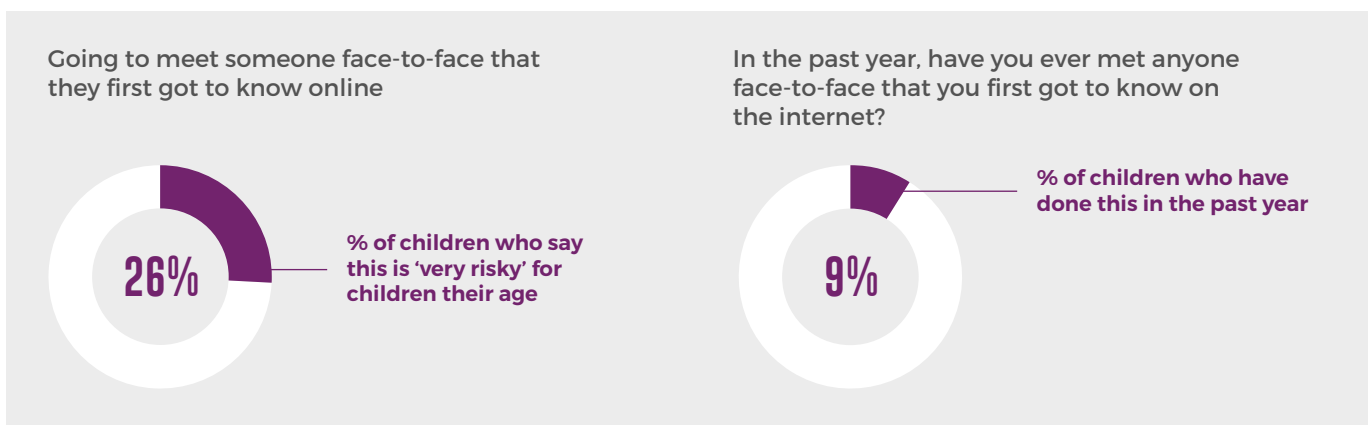## Figure 8: Level of risk attributed by children to sharing personal information with unknown people online.

Sending personal information (e.g., their full name, address or phone number) to someone they have never met face-to-face

29% — % of children who say this is 'very risky' for children their age

I sent my personal information (e.g., my full name, address or phone number) to someone I have never met face-to-face

17% — % of children who have done this in the past year

Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia. n = 992

Meeting someone in person following an online interaction

In the household survey, children and caregivers were asked about the level of risk they associate with children meeting someone face-to-face whom they first got to know online. From the survey, 47% of caregivers and 26% of children thought that meeting someone in person that they had first met online was very risky for children.

More girls (29%) than boys (22%) regarded this as a very risky behaviour. However, 34% of the children viewed this behaviour as not risky at all. In practice, 9% of the children surveyed had met someone in person whom they had first met online in the previous year. These were most commonly older children aged 14–15 (11%) and 16–17 (12%) rather than younger children aged 12–13 (3%).

Figure 9: Level of risk attributed by children to meeting someone in person who they first met online.

Going to meet someone face-to-face that they first got to know online

26% — % of children who say this is 'very risky' for children their age

In the past year, have you ever met anyone face-to-face that you first got to know on the internet?

9% — % of children who have done this in the past year

Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia. n = 992

Among those children who had face-to-face encounters with people they had first met online, the majority (75%) were happy or excited about the experience (see Figure 10). Research undertaken across more than 30 countries around the world has produced similar findings.[59] The experiences of most internet-using children in Cambodia and other countries in which the Disrupting Harm study was conducted seem to indicate that the risk of harm from engaging with someone unknown online is relatively low. This may simply be how young people sometimes make new friends. However, all children should be informed about the possible risks, and taught how to engage responsibly and to take safety precautions, such as informing a trusted adult or only meeting in public places.

> **9% of the children surveyed had met someone in person whom they had first met online in the previous year. The majority of these children (75%) were happy or excited about the experience.**

Figure 10: How children felt the last time they met someone face-to-face whom they had first got to know on the internet.

- Happy — 49%
- Excited — 26%
- Fearful — 18%
- Other — 16%
- Proud — 9%
- Sad — 7%
- Thoughtful — 3%
- Anxious — 3%
- Don't know — 2%
- Prefer not to say — 2%
- Depressed — 1%
- Angry — 1%
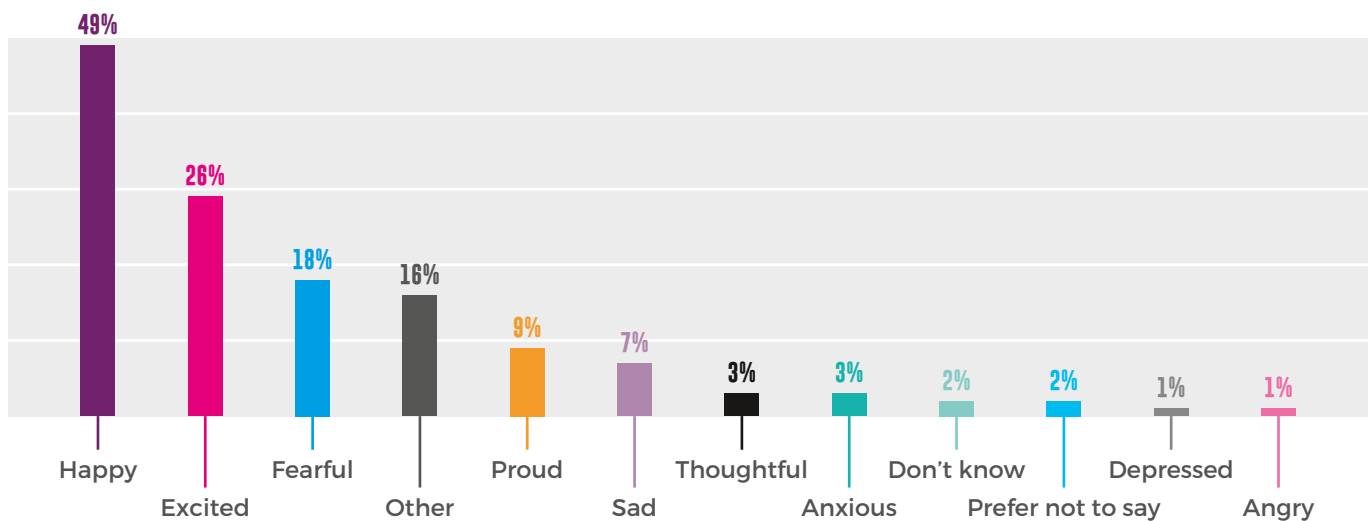
Base: Children who, within the past year, have met someone face-to-face who they first got to know on the internet. n = 92

59. Smahel, D., MacHackova, H., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Olafsson, K., Livingstone, S., & Hasebrink, U. (2020). EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries. London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

Empowering Caregivers to Guide their Children's Internet Use

When faced with common public perceptions that technology and the internet simplistically equate to an increased vulnerability to OCSEA – a view shared by all frontline workers in Cambodia surveyed for *Disrupting Harm* – caregivers might instinctively react by restricting their children's internet use in a bid to protect them. In the household survey, 29% of caregivers said that they would restrict their child's internet access if their child was bothered by something online. As noted earlier, parental restrictions were the second biggest barrier (27%) to internet use among children in Cambodia, especially among younger children aged 12–13 (42%).

This approach might reduce children's exposure to online risks in the short term, but it also reduces their digital skills and familiarity with the online environment in the longer term. On the other hand, *supportive engagement and mediation* by adults has been associated with the development of positive skills for children in other countries.[60] More positive and helpful forms of support provided by caregivers could include engaging in activities together, talking to children about their internet use and educating them about the risks that exist online and how best to avoid them. Caregivers are, therefore, an important line of defence in protecting children from online harms.

Caregivers' awareness of online risks and their grasp of basic digital skills are crucial in ensuring their children are well equipped to stay safe online. Among the internet-using caregivers surveyed, only 18% knew how to check if a website can be trusted, 20% knew how to change privacy settings, and 33% knew how to report harmful content on social media. Only 37% of internet-using caregivers believed they knew more about the internet than their child. In terms of supportive internet mediation, 45% of the children noted that their caregivers sometimes or often suggested ways to use the internet safely, 41% said that they engaged in online activities together with their caregivers and 33% said that their caregivers helped when something bothers them online.

Parents and caregivers should be supported to provide as much guidance as possible and this can be reinforced by other entities such as schools or specialised organisations.

1.3.2. Seeing sexual images online

Among caregivers surveyed, 57% considered seeing sexual images or videos online to be very risky for children. This perception was shared by 33% of the children surveyed (see Figure 11); both of these percentages are higher than for those who considered it very risky to meet an online acquaintance face-to-face. This concern around children seeing sexual images or videos may be related to the general discomfort of discussing sex or sexuality issues in Cambodia (see chapter 2.5.1).
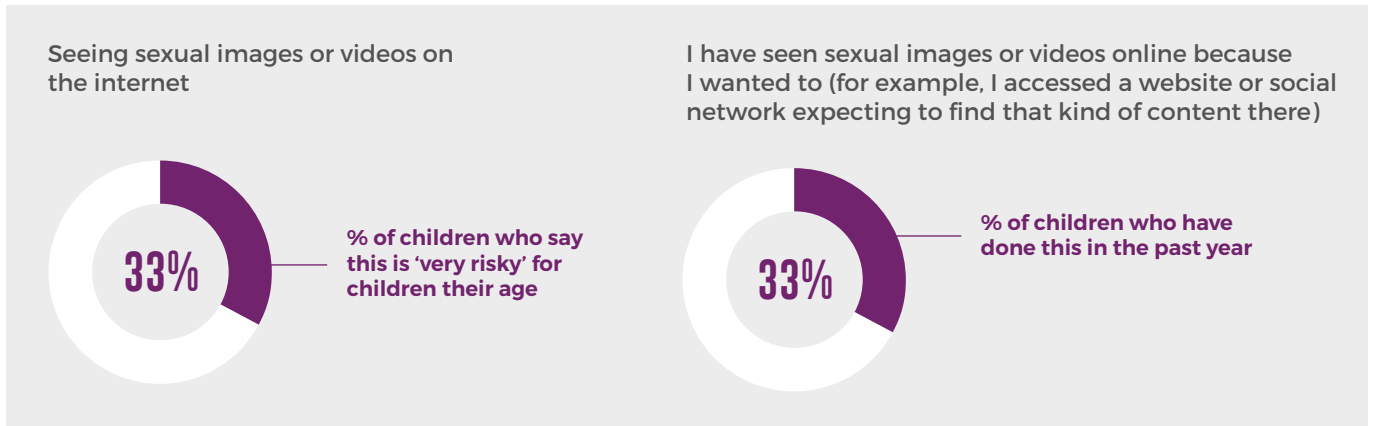
"We are afraid they [children] have access to harmful content [photos and videos online] and their parents are not aware of the advanced technology, so they do not have any idea of whether their children are using it safely or not." (RA1-CA-09-A)

In practice, 24% of the internet-using children surveyed said that they had intentionally seen sexual images or videos online at least once in the past year. This was higher among older children aged 16–17 (27%) than among the 14–15-year-olds (23%) and 12–13-year-olds (23%) and among boys (28%) than girls (21%).

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60. Livingstone, S., Kardefelt Winther, D., & Saeed, M. (2019). Global Kids Online Comparative Report. Innocenti Research Report. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.

Figure 11: Level of risk attributed by children of seeing sexual images or videos online.

Seeing sexual images or videos on
the internet

33%

% of children who say
this is 'very risky' for
children their age

I have seen sexual images or videos online because
I wanted to (for example, I accessed a website or social
network expecting to find that kind of content there)

33%

% of children who have
done this in the past year

Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia. n = 992

It is possible that children under report seeing such images because it is a sensitive and private issue. On the other hand, 33% of the children said that they had sometimes or often seen sexual images or videos online *by accident*. More older children aged 16–17 (39%) and 14–15 (34%) than younger children aged 12–13 (27%) had these accidental experiences. No gender difference was observed in the case of seeing sexual images online accidentally. Half of the children (50%) who had seen sexual images or videos online by accident came across this content on social media (social media posts: 35%; direct messages: 15%). Other places included online advertisements (25%) and when using search engines (3%).
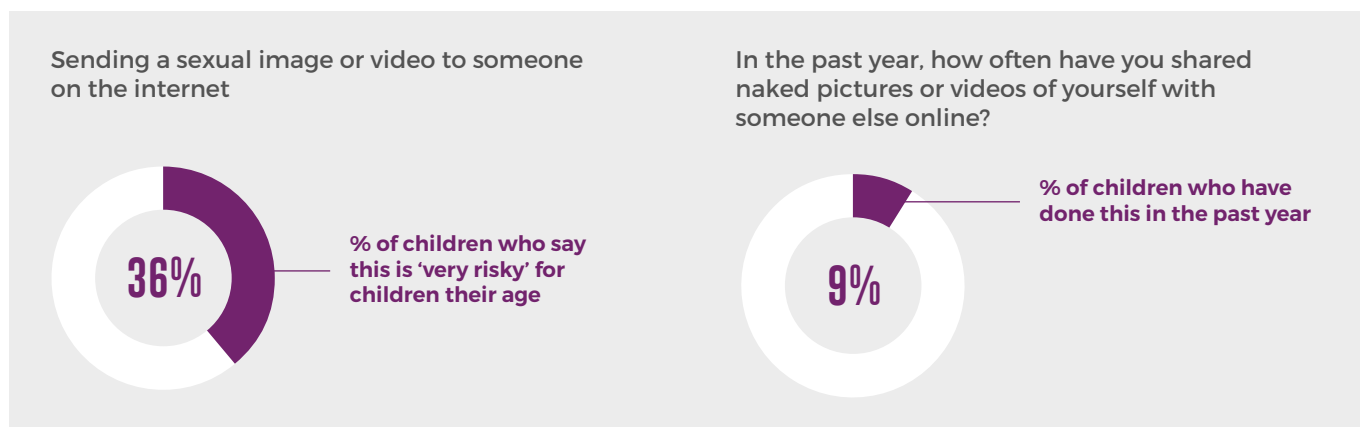
1.3.3 Making and sharing self-generated sexual content

In the household survey, respondents were presented with a range of online activities and asked to rate how risky each activity is. From the survey, 66% of caregivers and 45% of the internet-using children believed that it is wrong for a person to take naked images or videos of themselves. Sending a sexual image or video to someone online was considered very risky by as many as 59% of caregivers and 36% of children. Conversely, just a small number (7%) of caregivers and a larger proportion (29%) of children, thought it was not risky at all.

In practice, 7% of children reported having taken naked pictures or videos of themselves in the past year, while 6% percent of children had allowed someone else to take naked pictures or videos of them. More boys than girls engaged in these behaviours. For instance, 9% of boys took naked pictures of themselves as compared to 5% of girls, and 8% of boys allowed someone else to take naked images of them as compared to 4% of girls. In addition, 9% of the children in the household survey (87 children) said they had shared naked pictures or videos of themselves online in the past year. More boys than girls shared such images (boys 11%, girls 6%). The most common reason given by those children who had shared sexual images or videos of themselves was because they were 'flirting and having fun' (see Figure 13). A proportion of the younger children – all aged 12 to 15 years old – had shared self-generated sexual content because they were 'threatened' (7%), 'under pressure from friends' (8%) or did it 'in exchange for money or gifts' (3%).

Among children that shared naked images of themselves, the majority either did not say who they shared such content with (32%) or shared the images with someone unknown to them (31%). Another 17% shared with a current or former romantic partner, and 10% with someone they had first met online who was a contact of a friend or family member.

Figure 12: Level of risk attributed by children of sharing sexual content online.

Sending a sexual image or video to someone on the internet

36%

% of children who say this is 'very risky' for children their age

In the past year, how often have you shared naked pictures or videos of yourself with someone else online?

9%

% of children who have done this in the past year

Base: Internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia. n = 992

Figure 13: Reasons given by children for sharing naked images or videos of themselves.

Children's online activities	Total	12–13	14–15	16–17	Boy	Girl
Flirting or having fun	33%	29%	36%	33%	31%	35%
Do not know	26%	15%	19%	48%	23%	32%
Trusted the other person	16%	26%	12%	11%	18%	13%
In love	13%	11%	21%	4%	15%	6%
Pressured to share the pictures or videos by their friends	8%	11%	12%		4%	13%
Threatened	7%	7%	12%		11%	
Worried that I would lose the person if I did not share	6%	4%	6%	4%	5%	6%
Wanted the attention of the person	6%	11%	6%		9%	
Prefer not to say	5%	4%	9%		5%	3%
Did not think there was anything wrong with sharing the pictures or videos	3%		9%		4%	3%
Offered money or gifts in exchange for the pictures or videos	3%	4%	6%		5%	

Base: Children who have shared naked images or videos of themselves in the past year. n = 87.

The Rise in Self-Generated Sexual Content Involving Young People

The increasing use of technology is leading to shifts in notions of privacy and sexuality among children in some parts of the world, particularly adolescents.[61] Forms of behaviour that are increasingly normative to young people can be bewildering for adults who grew up in a different time. For instance, chatting and video live-streaming is common, whether among small private groups of friends or large, anonymous public audiences. While much of this does not result in immediate harm, producing and sharing self-generated sexual content using these tools is also increasing and bringing significant risks.[62]

The sharing of self-generated sexual content by children is complex and includes a range of different experiences, risks, and harms. As the *Disrupting Harm* data shows, some self-generated content is shared with others because children are in love or having fun. Globally, such exchanges are increasingly becoming part of young people's sexual experiences.[63] However, the data also shows that the creation and sharing of self-generated sexual content can be coerced through threats or peer pressure (see chapter 2.2).

While coercion can clearly be seen as a crime and lead to harm, there can be negative consequences for children sharing any sexual content, including cases in which the sharing is not coerced. Material shared willingly may not cause harm at first, but there remains a risk if it is later shared beyond the control of the person who created it.

Figure 14: Mapping the consequences of sharing self-generated sexual material involving young people.

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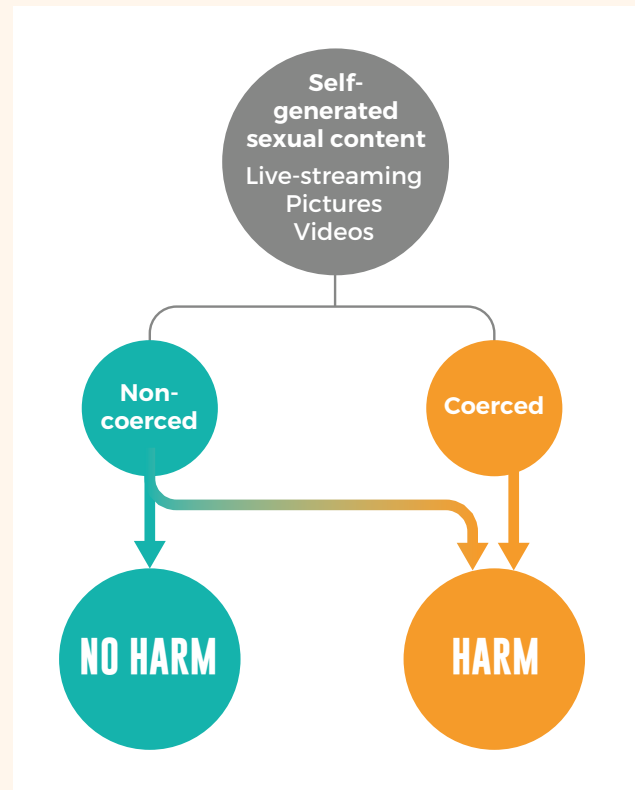
61. Livingstone, S. & Mason, J. (2015). Sexual Rights and Sexual Risks among Youth Online: A review of existing knowledge regarding children and young people's developing sexuality in relation to new media environments. London: European NGO Alliance for Child Safety Online.
62. Thorn & Benson Strategy Group. (2020). Self-Generated Child Sexual Abuse Material: Attitudes and Experiences.
63. Internet Watch Foundation. (2021). The Annual Report 2020.

Once it exists, such content can also be obtained deceptively or using coercion and be perpetually circulated by offenders (see Figure 14).[64,65] Interviews with young people from Cambodia demonstrated an awareness of what might happen if images are shared without permission: *"I was worried. I was afraid they would take those photos to upload and share. Share them with others to look at."* (RA5-CA-08) These fears about sharing were associated with considerable distress: *"So I stopped thinking about it, but the idea of suicide had become the master already."* (RA5-CA-07)

In Cambodia, a substantial proportion of 12–17-year-olds seem to be aware that producing and sharing sexual content can carry risks for children. However, close to one in ten children had engaged in such behaviour in the previous year. To ensure that children are empowered to stay safe online, discussions around these kinds of activities and the possible risks that they entail should be central to discourse with children about their internet use at home, at school and at the community level.

Seeking help if others share their sexual content may also be difficult for children, partly owing to a culture of victim-blaming. In Cambodia, the household survey showed that a large majority of caregivers (66%) and children (46%) believed that, should a self-generated image or video be shared further, it is the victim's fault. When self-generated content is shared without permission, reluctance or inability to seek help may further compound harm for children.

64. EUROPOL. (2019, 9 October). Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment 2019.
65. Bracket Foundation. (2019). Artificial Intelligence: Combating Online Sexual Abuse of Children.

1.4 KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR ONLINE SAFETY

The majority of children surveyed demonstrated a level of awareness about online risks. Moreover, a good level confidence was reported among the children surveyed in their ability to keep themselves safe online. According to the household survey, 57% (particularly older children) were confident in their ability to judge which images of themselves or their friends to share online and 59% felt confident to know when to remove people from their contact lists. Evidently these are subjective evaluations of their own competence and should be interpreted with caution. It is also notable that 52% of the internet-using children surveyed had never received any explicit information on how to stay safe online.

In terms of digital skills and knowledge, only about a third of children indicated that they knew how to change their privacy settings (32%) or how to report harmful content on social media (34%). Older children aged 16–17 were twice as likely to report they knew how to operate these safety features in comparison to younger children aged 12–13.

While the Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children 2017–2021 included developing education programmes aimed at building children's online safety skills, little evidence was found on the activities being undertaken (due to a lack of capacity and resources).

2. ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN CAMBODIA

Following on from children's perceptions of, and participation in, various risky online practices, this chapter turns to the threat of online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Cambodia. The chapter draws on a variety of sources – including law enforcement data, mandated reports from U.S.-based technology companies to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) related to Cambodia, surveys with frontline workers and conversations with children themselves, as well as the household survey – in order to create a well-rounded presentation of the nature of these crimes against children.

This chapter presents national law enforcement data related to OCSEA (chapter 2.1), followed by estimates of the occurrence of certain instances of OCSEA based on children's self-reported experiences (chapter 2.2 and 2.3). The purpose of these estimates is not to provide a conclusive picture of the prevalence of OCSEA. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the existing administrative data, such as that kept by law enforcement authorities, rarely delineates or classifies OCSEA elements. Secondly, with respect to the household survey, one would expect a degree of under-reporting due to privacy concerns, hesitation to discuss sex and sexuality and fear of legal self-incrimination, as some practices are criminalised. Furthermore, in households in which sexual abuse occurs, it is less likely that researchers would be given permission to talk to children. Finally, many estimates are based on an analysis of sub-samples of the household survey data, which are small because OCSEA is still a rarely reported phenomenon. These smaller sub-samples result in a larger margin of error.

While the *Disrupting Harm* team is confident in the data and the quality of the sample obtained, the challenges of researching these specific and sensitive phenomena, particularly with children, means the loss of a certain amount of precision in the final estimate. For these reasons, it is suggested that the reader interprets the findings in this chapter as *a good approximation* of the instances of OCSEA in Cambodia and the extent to which internet-using 12–17-year-old children in Cambodia are subjected to OCSEA.

2.1 LAW ENFORCEMENT DATA

The analysis in this chapter draws on qualitative and quantitative data from law enforcement authorities and several partner organisations, with a view to understanding the relevant offences, offender and victim behaviours, crime enablers and vulnerabilities.

Figure 15: CyberTips concerning suspected child sexual exploitation in Cambodia.

	2017	2018	2019	% Change 2017 to 2019	% Change 2018 to 2019
Cambodia	25,309	131,900	91,458	261%	-31%
Global total	10,214,753	18,462,424	16,987,361	66%	-8%
Cambodia % of Global total	0.25%	0.71%	0.54%		

Base: CyberTip data provided by NCMEC.

2.1.1 Recorded OCSEA offences

Unfortunately, data regarding crimes related to OCSEA was not provided by the national law enforcement bodies approached by INTERPOL for *Disrupting Harm*. Upon detailed discussion with those interviewed from the Cambodian National Police, it appears that there is no mechanism of systematic data collection nor archiving system pertaining to OCSEA cases. The mandate of the police units is not specific to OCSEA, and instead encompasses cybersecurity issues more broadly. This results in cases being charged and recorded as crimes that are not categorised as OCSEA specifically. There are elements of online and offline CSEA, including human trafficking and smuggling, subsumed in the offences that are reported to the units (the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection and Anti-Cybercrime departments). Whether a criminal offence or not, law enforcement must forward their cases to the prosecution.

2.1.2 International OCSEA detections and referrals

Trends in CyberTips

On behalf of Cambodian law enforcement, data was requested for *Disrupting Harm* from the United States National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) about reports concerning suspected child sexual exploitation (known as CyberTips) in Cambodia for the years 2017 to 2019.

United States federal law requires that 'electronic service providers' (i.e., technology companies) based in the United States report instances of suspected child exploitation on their platforms to NCMEC's CyberTipline. NCMEC triages these reports and passes the CyberTips on to the national law enforcement units of the relevant countries for action.

However, for providers not based in the United States, this reporting is voluntary. As not all platforms notify suspected child exploitation to NCMEC, the data below does not encompass a number of platforms popular in the *Disrupting Harm* focus countries.

In Cambodia, NCMEC Cybertips are received through the United States Homeland Security Investigations Liaison Officer to the Cambodian Department of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department.

The number of Cybertips for Cambodia increased by 261% between 2017 and 2019 (Figure 15), with an increase of 421% between 2017 and 2018 followed by a reduction of 31% in 2019. This reduction was greater than that for the combined global CyberTips (8%).

Types of OCSEA offences

The CyberTips analysis revealed that the possession, manufacture and distribution of CSAM (referred to in United States legislation as 'child pornography'[66]) accounted for almost all of the CyberTips for Cambodia between 2017 and 2019[67]. None of them were tagged as Priority 1, indicating a child in imminent danger.

Nearly all NCMEC CyberTips for Cambodia in the period 2017 to 2019 had electronic service providers as their source. A total of 37 electronic service providers submitted at least one report of suspected child exploitation for Cambodia in the reporting period (Figure 16). This would indicate some diversity in the platforms used by OCSEA offenders.

Figure 16: CyberTips concerning suspected child sexual exploitation in Cambodia, top 20 reporting electronic service providers.

Reporting Electronic Service Provider	2017	2018	2019
Facebook	24,790	131,122	90,596
Google	328	416	467
Instagram Inc.	29	144	132
Twitter /Vine.co	66	106	112
Microsoft Online Operations	2	25	95
Tumblr	26	25	14
Pinterest.Inc	2	9	10
Imgur LLC	3	1	5
Discord Inc.			4
Dropbox Inc.	2		2
Multi Media LLC/Z Medianow LLC/Chaturbate			2
Smug Mug Flickr		2	2
Snapchat		3	2
Vimeo LLC		4	2
Digital Ocean		1	1
Linked In Corporation			1
Omeagle.com LLC	1		1
Roblox			1
Tagged.com			1
Tinder Inc.			1

Base: CyberTip data provided by NCMEC, sorted by 2019 counts, null results removed.

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66. The terminology used in this column reflects classification by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in line with U.S. legislation. *Disrupting Harm* advocates the use of the term Child Sexual Abuse Material, in line with the Luxembourg Guidelines.
67. CyberTips under this category may reference more than one file of CSAM. For example, some reporting electronic service providers include more files per report, as opposed to one image per report and multiple reports per suspect.

Figure 17: CyberTips concerning suspected child sexual exploitation in Cambodia – number of unique upload IP addresses by year.[68]

	2017	2018	2019	% Change 2017–2019	% Change 2018–2019
Cambodia Unique Upload IP Addresses	8,058	16,594	19,023	136%	15%
Total Cambodia Reports	25,309	131,900	91,458	261%	–31%
Reports per Unique IP Address	3.14	7.95	4.81	53%	–40%

Base: CyberTip data provided by NCMEC.

Facebook was responsible for the vast majority of CyberTips submitted to NCMEC between 2017 and 2019. An increase of 265% can be seen for Facebook CyberTips regarding Cambodia between 2017 and 2019, and a reduction of 31% between 2018 and 2019. Although the volumes are considerably smaller, several other providers exhibit trends characterised by persistent increases over the period.

The variety of platforms among the reporting electronic service providers potentially reflects the nature of suspected OCSEA offending. CyberTips in Cambodia indicate that a number of image hosting and video chat platforms, including those which enable[69] payments (e.g., Omeagle.com), are reporting cases of OCSEA to NCMEC. This indicates the presence of OCSEA offenders with a considerable level of technical sophistication and specialist interest. Platforms specialising in live-streaming adult sexual activity (such as Chaturbate), which is often paid for in tokens, provide a possibility for OCSEA with a commercial element.

Number of IP addresses reported
An Internet Protocol (IP) address is assigned to each individual device on a specific network at a specific time. NCMEC data for Cambodia also allows for the high-level analysis of unique IP addresses used to engage in suspected child exploitation.

The higher number of reports than unique IP addresses (Figure 17) suggests a tendency for offenders to upload multiple items of CSAM in a detected session, generating multiple reports with the same upload IP address. Since this number is an average, it is reasonable to assume that some suspect IPs have been linked to more reports, and some less. At a general level, this rate is higher for Cambodia than for other countries within the scope of *Disrupting Harm*, peaking in 2018 at an average of just under eight reports per unique IP address.

Moreover, it would not be impossible for a report to contain more than one upload IP address. This may reflect more than one instance of suspected child sexual exploitation, as would be the case for manual reports that collate multiple events for a single suspect.

CSAM access and distribution accounted for almost all the CyberTips for Cambodia. Although the modern method of sharing CSAM via social media is overwhelmingly the most common, traditional peer-to-peer sharing persists.

Data from the Child Rescue Collation on peer-to-peer distribution of CSAM from 9 June 2019 to 8 June 2020 is depicted below. The data for Cambodia is shown alongside that for other *Disrupting Harm* focus countries in Southeast Asia for comparison (see Figure 18).

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68. Note: The same IP address may be counted in more than one year, and a report can contain more than one unique IP address. Technical measures by ISPs including the dynamic assignment of IP addresses and the sharing of IP version 4 addresses across a large number of devices can also have an impact on the number of unique IP addresses logged.
69. Randomised Video Chats operate via an app or website and allow an internet user to connect with another random internet user anywhere in the world for a video-based interaction.

Figure 18. CSAM distribution and downloading from *Disrupting Harm* focus countries, observed on peer-to-peer file-sharing networks by the Child Rescue Coalition.

	IP Addresses	Globally Unique Identifiers[70]
Cambodia	**1319**	**95**
Indonesia	1124	202
Malaysia	2754	558
Philippines	1971	1446
Thailand	3049	609
Vietnam	925	141

Base: Data supplied by Child Rescue Coalition for the period of 9 June 2019 to 8 June 2020.

During the reporting period, offenders in Cambodia had a tendency to delete the software after each use or from time to time, reinstalling when they want to share and download again. The high discrepancy may indicate the use of dynamic IP addresses by offenders.

Distribution on peer-to-peer networks is less of an 'entry level' activity than distribution on mainstream social media platforms; users are required to download specialist software and to actively upload and search for CSAM, often by file names shared in offender networks. Moreover, the capture of multiple IP addresses per installation of file-sharing software, represented by the number of globally unique identifiers in the above figure, indicates that the average Cambodian offender engaged in multiple sessions of CSAM distribution in the period sampled. These observations point to more persistent OCSEA offending by some individuals based in Cambodia.

Web searches for CSAM

Research was conducted on Google Trends with a view to identifying the levels of interest in CSAM in Cambodia.[71] In the first instance, a sample of 20 terms[72] selected by the INTERPOL Crimes Against Children team served as keywords and phrases for a specialist interest in CSAM. The terms were selected based on specialist knowledge of CSAM-related file names, offender queries and slang or jargon used within the offender community. Queries on searches in Cambodia for the period from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2019 returned a result of 'not enough data' for each of these 20 terms.

Returns of 'not enough data' equate with a relative popularity score of zero, indicating a comparatively low level of interest in that term (rather than no search results at all) within the geographical and time limits set.[73] When compared to the results of global searches for the same terms and to searches made in other countries in the same time frame, this suggests that specialist CSAM search terms may be used less in Cambodia than they are in some other countries. While it may also be argued that more sophisticated CSAM searchers are less likely to search on the open web, the relative popularity of some of the terms in the INTERPOL sample in other countries would suggest that open web searches are still used for CSAM discovery.

Although individuals in Cambodia looking for CSAM may search in languages other than English, there is no information on the use of search terms in local languages or slang. Law enforcement authorities could fill this gap by reviewing OCSEA investigations in Cambodia with a view to identifying additional terms and search strings used by offenders. The results cited above, nevertheless, appear to demonstrate that there is an appetite for CSAM in Cambodia, and that the open web is used to discover it.

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70. A Globally Unique Identifier is a 128-bit number created by the Windows operating system or another Windows application to uniquely identify specific components, hardware, software, files, user accounts, database entries and other items.
71. Google Trends (trends.google.com) is a publicly available tool that returns results on the popularity of search terms and strings relative to others within set parameters. Rather than displaying total search volumes, the tool calculates a score (in a range of 1 to 100) based on a search term or string's proportion to all searches on all terms/strings. Data points are divided by total searches in the geographical and time parameters set, to achieve relative popularity. While Google Trends draws on only a sample of Google searches, the dataset is deemed by the company to be representative given the billions of searches processed per day. For more information on data and scoring, see: FAQ about Google Trends data.
72. English language terms were selected because local dialects rendered sporadic results. These universal specialist terms were identified by INTERPOL Crimes Against Children team. In order to maintain uniformity in all DH reports, vernacular terms were not used unless otherwise provided by the law enforcement. In the case of Thailand, law enforcement did not provide any such terms.
73. Ramadanti, D. (2020). Telling stories with Google Trends using Pytrends in Python.

CSAM hosting

Cambodia has not been identified as a hosting country for images and videos assessed as illegal by INHOPE member hotlines contributing to the ICCAM platform.[74] Moreover, the Internet Watch Foundation actioned zero reports concerning confirmed CSAM hosting in Cambodia between 2017 and 2019. Since data pertaining to ICCAM is limited to submissions from INHOPE member hotlines,[75] and since the Internet Watch Foundation operates primarily as the United Kingdom's CSAM hotline, this should not be taken as evidence of an absence of CSAM hosting in the country.

2.1.3 Links to travel and tourism

Cambodia's economic growth resulting from tourism[76] and investments in business has influenced the nature of child sexual exploitation, making Cambodia one of the most popular destinations in the region for travelling child sex offenders.[77] Significant income disparities between middle-income tourists and local children put children at risk of sexual exploitation.[78] The literature shows that some of the commonly acknowledged contexts in which sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism happens include community offending, volunteerism, visiting foreign teachers, compensated dating and through businesses operating with large-scale economic investment, i.e., special economic zones.[79]

It has been observed, however, that street-based sexual exploitation in which offenders target children physically in the street has declined over the past years.[80] While this may be from increased law enforcement attention, and the successful delivery of prevention, surveillance and protection programmes, it may also be explained by global trends, whereby technology and a deregulated travel industry has made it easier for offenders to access children in more hidden ways and their crimes are harder to detect.[81,82]

A 2020 study found that authorities are facing challenges adapting to the ever-evolving nature of sexual abuse of children in travel and tourism. Public perceptions on the topic also influence many to expect offenders to be western males, yet TukTuk drivers, young people and tour guides noted in the research that demand is frequently from Asian visitors[83] (for more information on offenders see chapter 2.4.2)

The Angel Watch Center of United States Homeland Security Investigations provides referrals to officials in destination countries on convicted United States child sex offenders who have confirmed scheduled travel. In 2017, there were 11 referrals and nine entry denials for Cambodia. The following year saw 20 referrals and 16 entry denials. In 2019, the number dropped to six referrals and three entry denials. Confirmed entry denials indicate positive coordination between Cambodia's Bureau of Immigration and the specialised Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department.

74. ICCAM refers to 'I see Child Abuse Material.' ICCAM enables the secure exchange of illegal material particularly portraying child sexual abuse between hotlines located in different jurisdictions, with the aim of quickly removing it from the internet. ICCAM also provides a service to hotlines worldwide to classify images and videos according to international standards (INTERPOL's criteria) as well as national laws – all in one system.

75. INHOPE hotlines operate in 42 countries across all continents. https://www.inhope.org/EN/the-facts.

76. According to 2017 data, 32.4% of Cambodia's GDP comes from tourism – the highest among ASEAN member states. Source: OECD. (2018). Economic Outlook For Southeast Asia, China And India 2019: Towards Smart Urban Transportation. Structural Policy Country Notes

77. ECPAT International. (2017). Regional Overview: Sexual Exploitation of Children in Southeast Asia. ECPAT International.

78. ECPAT International. (2021). Summary Paper on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism.

79. ECPAT. (2017). Regional Overview: Sexual Exploitation of Children in Southeast Asia. ECPAT International.

80. Borgström, J., Larsson, C. (2020). Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism. The Cambodian Case.

81. Borgström, J., Larsson, C. (2020). Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism. The Cambodian Case.

82. ECPAT International. (2020). Summary Paper on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Prostitution. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

83. Terre des Hommes. (2020). The evolution of SECTT in Northwest Cambodia: Situation Analysis of the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism in Poipet and Siem Reap.

2.2 CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN CAMBODIA

Under the *Disrupting Harm* project, OCSEA was defined specifically to include CSAM, live-streaming of child sexual abuse and online grooming of children for sexual purposes. These concepts are used here to organise and present the results of the research. In addition, it is recognised that the ways in which children are subjected to OCSEA are far more complex and nuanced, and that the experiences or offences in question can occur in combination or in sequence. Moreover, as explored in "*The Continuum of Online and Offline Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*" chapter on page 65, OCSEA does not only occur in the digital environment; digital technology can also be used as a tool to facilitate or record *in-person* sexual exploitation and abuse.

The *Disrupting Harm* household survey of 12–17-year-old internet users measured children's exposure to various manifestations of OCSEA, which are presented individually below. When taken together, the data reveals that, in the past year alone, an estimated 11% of internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia were victims of clear examples of online sexual exploitation and abuse. This aggregate statistic encompasses four indicators of OCSEA that children were subjected to in the past year:

1. Someone offered you money or gifts in return for sexual images or videos.
2. Someone offered you money or gifts online to meet them in person to do something sexual.
3. Someone shared sexual images of you without your consent.
4. Someone threatened or blackmailed you online to engage in sexual activities.

According to *Disrupting Harm* estimates, when scaled to the population of internet-using children in this age group, this represents an estimated 160,000 children in Cambodia who were subjected to at least one of these harms in the span of a single year. It is worth considering that the survey only included internet users and those who live at home, meaning that more vulnerable child populations, such as children engaged in migration or children in street situations, may not be represented in these figures.

2.2.1 Online grooming

Disrupting Harm defines online grooming as engaging a child via technology with the intent of sexually abusing or exploiting the child. This may occur either completely online or through a combination of online and in person interactions.

Online grooming is a complex process, which is often fluid and difficult to detect, especially where it involves a slow building of trust between the offender and the child over an extended period of time. The child is often 'prepared' for sexual abuse and made to engage in sexual acts online or in person by means of deceit, coercion or threats. However, online grooming can also be or appear abrupt, with an offender suddenly requesting or pressuring a child to share sexual content of themselves or to engage in sexual acts, including via extortion.

The following chapter focuses primarily on children's experiences of various facets of online grooming as captured in the household survey of internet-using 12–17-year-olds. Recognising that sexual exploitation and abuse of children can happen in many different ways and places, most data points below allow for multiple responses and may add up to over 100%.

Legislation on grooming

Although Cambodian legislation does not explicitly criminalise online grooming of children for sexual purposes as a standalone offence, the Criminal Code does criminalise "the arrangement, by an adult, of meetings involving indecent exposure or sexual relations at which minors are present or participate."[84]

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84. Government of Cambodia. (2009). Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Article 346.

Although criminalising one of the possible outcomes of the grooming process – the engagement in sexual acts during a meeting in person – this provision fails to criminalise the process of building trust between the offender and the child as well as situations in which the sexual abuse happens online, for example, if a child is asked to send sexual content to an offender via online platforms.

Potential grooming – children asked to talk about sex

In the household survey of internet-using children in Cambodia, children were asked if they had been subjected to certain behaviours in the past year that could be an indication of grooming. Those children who had experienced possible instances of grooming were then asked follow-up questions about *the last time* this happened to them: how they felt, whether it occurred online or offline (or both), who did it to them, and whether they told anyone about it. Because relatively few children said that they had been subjected to possible grooming, many of these follow-up questions involve small sub-samples. In such cases, when the sample is smaller than 50, absolute numbers are presented instead of percentages to avoid misrepresentation of the data. Recognising that sexual exploitation and abuse of children can happen in many different ways and places, most data points below allow for multiple responses and may add up to over 100%. Finally, differences between age groups, boys and girls, and urban and rural areas are only reported when they are five percentage points or more.

Among the 992 internet-using children in Cambodia, 9% (89 children) had received unwanted requests to talk about sex or sexual acts within the past year. More boys (11%) as compared to girls (7%) reported that this had happened to them, with no variation according to age. Depending on the context, these experiences could mean varying levels of harm for a child. For example, a child being asked to talk about sex by a boyfriend or girlfriend but not wanting to engage at that moment might not face serious harm from this interaction. Conversely, these experiences could also indicate malicious instances of attempted grooming, and are thus described as instances of potential (versus actual) grooming.

Online or offline: Of the 89 children in the household survey who had received unwanted requests to talk about sex within the past year, 37% received the most recent request online – mainly via social media and a smaller proportion via an online gaming platform. For the children who said that they had received requests on social media, these mainly came through Facebook or Facebook Messenger. In total, just over 3% (31) of children in the Cambodian household survey had received online unwanted requests to talk about sex in the past year. Notably, 32% reported having received requests to talk about sex in a face-to-face encounter and 24% reported that they did not know how the request was made, while 9% preferred not to say.

Because asking a child to talk about sex can happen without the involvement of technology, only the 31 children who said that this had happened on social media or on an online gaming platform were included in the subsequent analysis, as they represent potential OCSEA cases.

How children felt and responded: Only five of the 31 children that received unwanted requests to talk about sex online said that this did not affect them; the rest of the children felt negatively about it, citing feelings of guilt, embarrassment and fear. In response, just over half (19 children) refused the request. Some of the children stopped using the internet for a period, while others ignored the problem, blocked the offender or deleted any messages from them. One survivor stated: *"Sometimes I played chat and someone called and showed his genitals, I blocked that person."* (RA5-CA-11)

Concerningly, nine of the 31 children, particularly younger children aged 12–13 and girls, complied with requests to talk about sex. Other children either tried to get the other person to leave them alone or changed their privacy settings. Only one child reported what happened online.

Offenders: In reference to the most recent incident in the past year, children most often received unwanted requests to talk about sex online from a family member. This was followed by a friend that was also a child, an adult friend or acquaintance, and a current or former romantic partner. About one in three of the children reported that the request had been made by someone unknown to them.
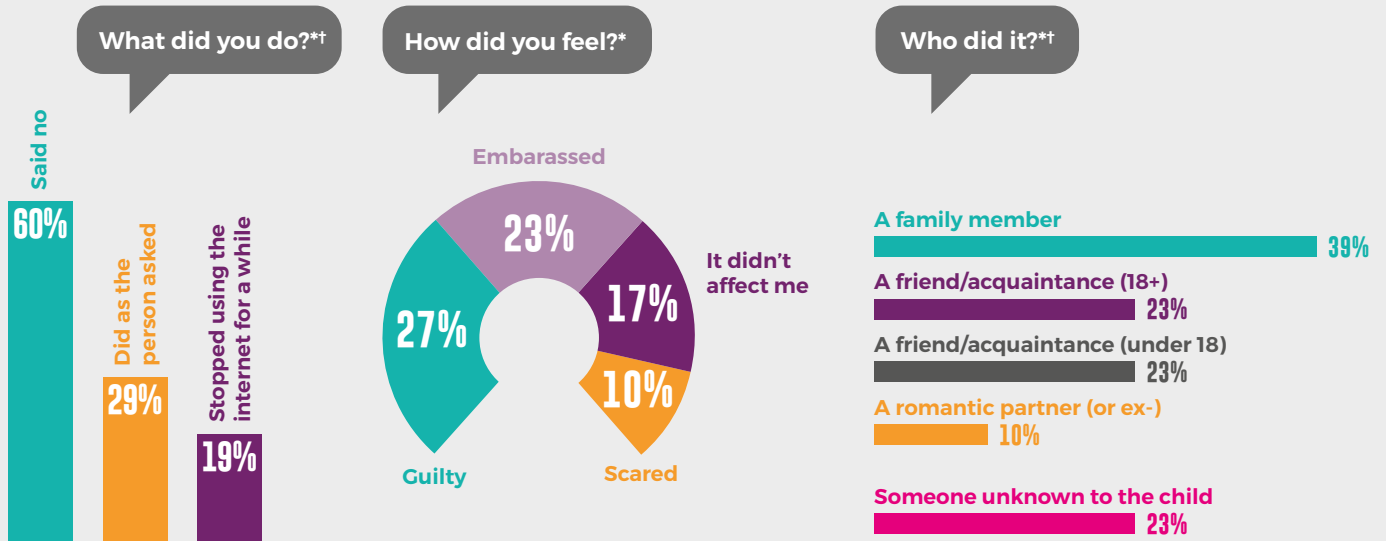
IN THE PAST YEAR
I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO TALK ABOUT SEX WHEN I DID NOT WANT TO
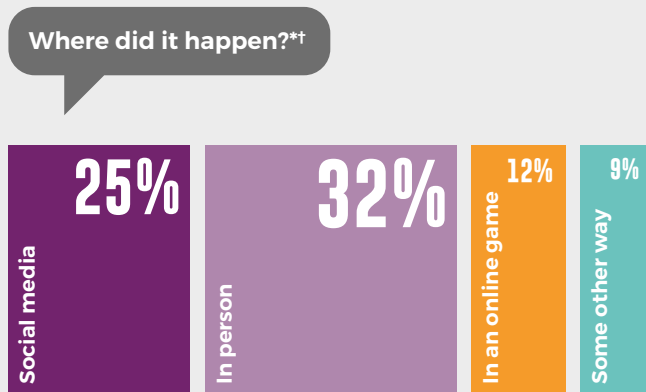
YES 9%
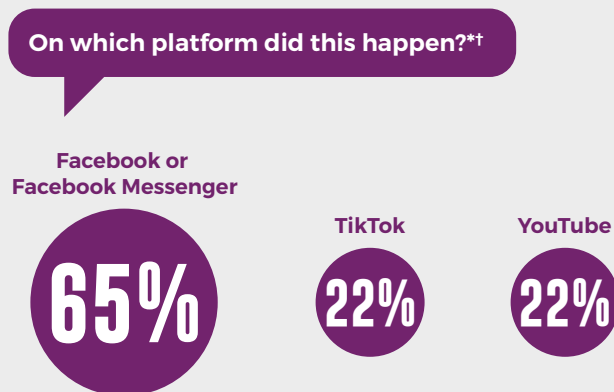
Base: Internet using children 12–17
n = 992 children
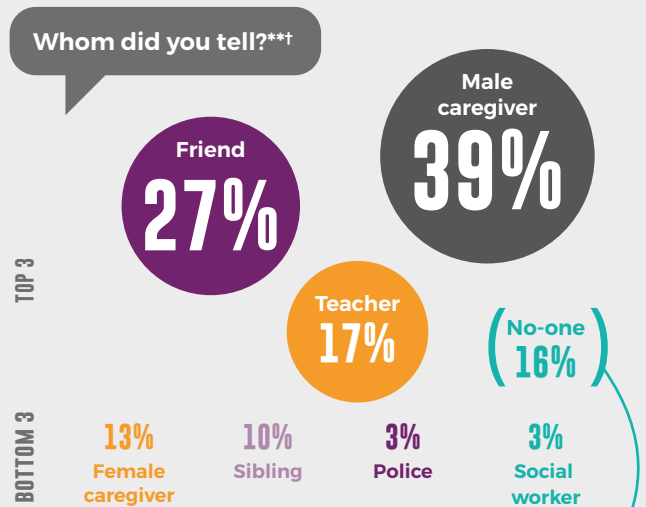
THE LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED ONLINE...

What did you do?*†

- Said no **60%**
- Did as the person asked **29%**
- Stopped using the internet for a while **19%**

How did you feel?*

- Embarassed **23%**
- It didn't affect me **17%**
- Scared **10%**
- Guilty **27%**

Who did it?*†

- A family member **39%**
- A friend/acquaintance (18+) **23%**
- A friend/acquaintance (under 18) **23%**
- A romantic partner (or ex-) **10%**
- Someone unknown to the child **23%**

n = 31 internet-using children aged 12–17 who received unwanted requests *online* to talk about sex in the past year.

Where did it happen?*†

- Social media **25%**
- In person **32%**
- In an online game **12%**
- Some other way **9%**

n = 89 internet-using children aged 12–17 who received unwanted requests to talk about sex in the past year.

On which platform did this happen?*†

- Facebook or Facebook Messenger **65%**
- TikTok **22%**
- YouTube **22%**

n = 22 internet-using children aged 12–17 who *most recently* received unwanted requests *via social media* to talk about sex.

Whom did you tell?†**

TOP 3
- Male caregiver **39%**
- Friend **27%**
- Teacher **17%**
- No-one **16%**

BOTTOM 3
- Female caregiver **13%**
- Sibling **10%**
- Police **3%**
- Social worker **3%**

n = 31 internet-using children aged 12–17 who received unwanted requests *online* to talk about sex in the past year.

Why did you not tell anyone?*†

- I felt embarassed **80%**
- I did not think anyone would believe me **20%**
- I was worried I would get into trouble **20%**

n = 5 internet-using children aged 12–17 who *did not tell anyone* the last time they received unwanted requests *online* to talk about sex.

*These figures represent the most common responses selected by children.
**These figures represent the most and least common responses selected by children.
†Multiple choice question

Source: Disrupting Harm data

Disclosure: Among the 31 children who received unwanted requests to talk about sex online, the majority disclosed to either a male caregiver (12 children) or a friend (eight children). A few children disclosed to a teacher (five children) and to a female caregiver (four children), and even fewer formally reported to either a social worker (one child) or to the police (one child). Five children – all boys – did not tell anyone about what had happened to them, mostly because they felt embarrassed, ashamed or felt that it would be too emotionally difficult to explain.

Potential grooming – children asked to share sexual images or videos

Some offenders have the intention of manipulating children into self-generating and sharing sexual images or videos through digital technologies, whether or not they also intend to meet the child in person. In 2015, amid concerns about this issue, the Lanzarote Committee, which is in charge of overseeing the implementation of the Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, issued an opinion regarding this. The Committee recommended that states should extend the crime of grooming for sexual purposes to include "cases when the sexual abuse is not the result of a meeting in person but is committed online."[85]

The children who took part in the household survey were asked if, in the past year, they had received a request "for a photo or video showing their private parts when they did not want to." While this data could capture relatively harmless sharing of such images among peers, it could also point to attempts to manipulate children into self-generating and sharing sexual images or videos through digital technologies. Within the previous year, 9% (88 children) of the internet-using children surveyed in Cambodia had received unwanted requests for a photo or video showing their private parts. No age difference was observed among the children that reported these experiences. More boys (12%) than girls (5%) reported receiving such requests.

Online or offline: Of the 88 children who had received unwanted requests for images or video of their private parts in the past year, the majority (43%) of requests had been made online either via social media or during online gaming. Requests made via social media mainly came through Facebook or Facebook Messenger. Notably, 33% indicated that the requests happened in person while 20% did not know how the request was made, and 8% preferred not to say.

How children felt and responded: The 88 children who had been asked to send sexual content were most likely to report feeling embarrassed or guilty. One in six children said that they were not affected at all by the requests. In response to these requests, half refused to do as requested, while 14% – mostly younger children aged 12–13 and girls – did as the offender asked. The remaining children either tried to get the other person to leave them alone, ignored it, deleted the messages, reported, changed their privacy settings, stopped using the internet for a while or blocked the person from contacting them.

Offenders: Regarding the most recent incident in the past year, children had most often received unwanted requests to share a sexual image or video of themselves from a family member (40%). This was followed by an adult friend or a friend that was also a child. Close to one in five received the unwanted online request from someone unknown to them. Notably, 11% – more often older children aged 16–17 – preferred not to say who the offender was.

Disclosure: Many of the 88 children who had received unwanted requests to share sexual images or videos of themselves told someone what had happened to them. The most common people that children disclosed to, included a sibling or a male caregiver, followed by a friend or a female caregiver. Boys more often disclosed to a male caregiver (boys 24%; girls 8%) and girls more often disclosed to a female caregiver (boys 4%; girls 13%). Few children disclosed to a teacher (3%) or formally reported the incident to the police (3%), to a helpline (1%) or to a social worker (1%). However, close to one in five children did not disclose or report the incident to anyone, mainly because they did not know where to go or whom to tell.

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85. Council of Europe's Lanzarote Committee. (2015). Opinion on Article 23 of the Lanzarote Convention and its explanatory note. Para 20.

IN THE PAST YEAR
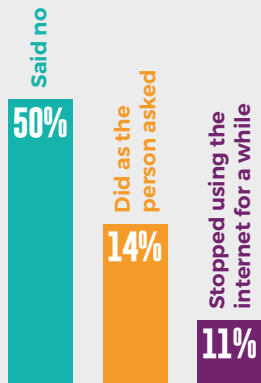# I WAS ASKED FOR A PHOTO OR VIDEO SHOWING MY PRIVATE PARTS WHEN I DID NOT WANT TO

YES 9%
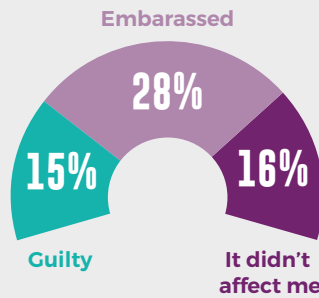
Base: Internet using children 12–17
n = 992 children
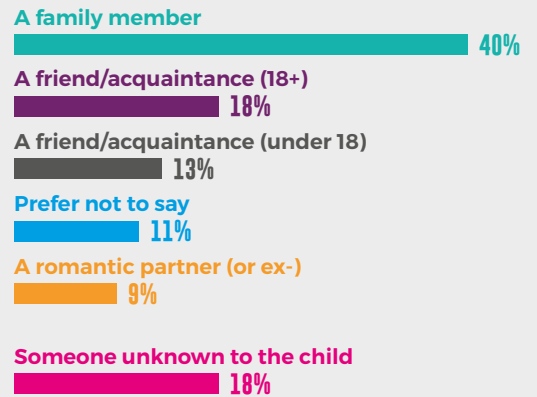
THE LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED

What did you do?*†

- Said no **50%**
- Did as the person asked **14%**
- Stopped using the internet for a while **11%**

How did you feel?*

- Embarassed **28%**
- Guilty **15%**
- It didn't affect me **16%**

Who did it?*†

- A family member **40%**
- A friend/acquaintance (18+) **18%**
- A friend/acquaintance (under 18) **13%**
- Prefer not to say **11%**
- A romantic partner (or ex-) **9%**
- Someone unknown to the child **18%**

n = 88 internet-using children aged 12–17 who received unwanted requests for sexual images in the past year.

Where did it happen?*†

- Social media **23%**
- In person **31%**
- In an online game **20%**
- Some other way **1%**

n = 88 internet-using children aged 12–17 who received unwanted requests for sexual images in the past year.

On which platform did this happen?*†

- Facebook or Facebook Messenger **81%**
- Twitter **10%**
- TikTok **10%**

n = 20 internet-using children aged 12–17 who *most recently* received unwanted requests for sexual images *via social media*.

Whom did you tell?**†

TOP 3
- Friend **19%**
- Male caregiver **20%**
- Sibling **23%**

BOTTOM 3
- Teacher **3%**
- Police **3%**
- Other adult **3%**
- Social worker **1%**
- No-one **18%**
- Helpline **1%**

n = 88 internet-using children aged 12–17 who received unwanted requests for sexual images in the past year.

Why did you not tell anyone?*†

- I did not know whom to tell **89%**
- I felt embarassed **19%**
- I was worried I would get into trouble **13%**

n = 16 internet-using children aged 12–17 *who did not tell anyone* the last time they received unwanted requests for sexual images.

*These figures represent the most common responses selected by children.
**These figures represent the most and least common responses selected by children.
†Multiple choice question

Source: Disrupting Harm data

Offering children money or gifts for sexual images or videos

The offer of money or gifts to a child in return for sexual images or videos constitutes evidence of grooming with the aim of obtaining CSAM. Six percent (60 children) of the 992 children who participated in the household survey reported having been offered money or gifts in return for sexual images or videos in the past year. This was more common among children aged 12–15 (9%) than those aged 16–17 (2%), and twice as common among boys (8%) than girls (4%).

Online or offline: Among the 60 children who disclosed that they had been offered money or gifts in return for sexual images or videos in the past year, this request had been made online in 32% of cases – mostly via social media or during online gaming. The most common platforms for such requests were Facebook or Facebook Messenger, followed by TikTok, YouTube and Instagram. Close to one in four children said that the request had been made in person, while one in four did not know how the offer was made.

Offenders: For 35% of the 60 children who had been offered gifts or money in exchange for self-generated sexual content, a family member had made the offer on the most recent occasion. For some children, offers had been made by a friend that was also a child, an adult friend, or a romantic partner. Notably, 15% preferred not to say who had made the offer, and 15% reported that the offer had been made by someone unknown to them.

Disclosure: When asked about the last time they had been offered money or gifts for sexual images or videos, children most often disclosed what had happened to a friend, followed by a male caregiver or a sibling. A very small percentage of children disclosed what had happened to a teacher or a trusted adult, and only one child made a formal report to the police. Notably, close to one in four children did not disclose to anyone, mainly because they did not know where to go or whom to tell.

This was also evidenced in the survivor conversations: *"I just never talk about those feelings at my house because no-one asks how I am. They just ask bits and pieces. I tell you that because there's not really anyone who knows. I haven't even told my friends, because at the time I disconnected from all my friends. They don't know so they didn't know because I didn't talk to them."* (RA5-CA-07) One young person noted: *"I just hid it inside."* (RA5-CA-05)

Offering children money or gifts for sexual acts

Grooming of children online for the purpose of meeting in person to engage in sexual activities is a real threat. From the household survey, 6% (59 children) said that they had been offered money or gifts to meet someone in person to do something sexual within the past year. Younger children aged 12–13 (10%) received such offers more often than their older counterparts aged 14–17 (14–15: 5%; 16–17: 3%); moreover, more boys (8%) than girls (4%) received such offers. Similar to other findings, these numbers may be under-reported as children may not feel comfortable or safe enough to disclose their experiences of abuse and exploitation, even in an anonymised survey.

Online or offline? Of the 59 children who said that they had been offered money or gifts to meet in person to engage in sexual activities in the past year, 51% of offers had been made online – mainly via social media. This suggests that 3% (30 children) in the Cambodia household survey were offered money or gifts online to meet in person to engage in sexual activities. As shown in the graphic on page 53, offers via social media were most often made on Facebook or Facebook Messenger. Other platforms cited included Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok. Notably, 24% received the offer during a face-to-face encounter with the person, while 10% preferred not to say how the offer was made.

Because offering children money or gifts for sexual acts in person can happen entirely in person (without the involvement of technology), for the following data points, only the children (n = 30) who confirmed that they had received offers of money or gifts *via an online channel*, i.e., on social media and/or in an online game, to meet in person for sexual acts represent cases of OCSEA.
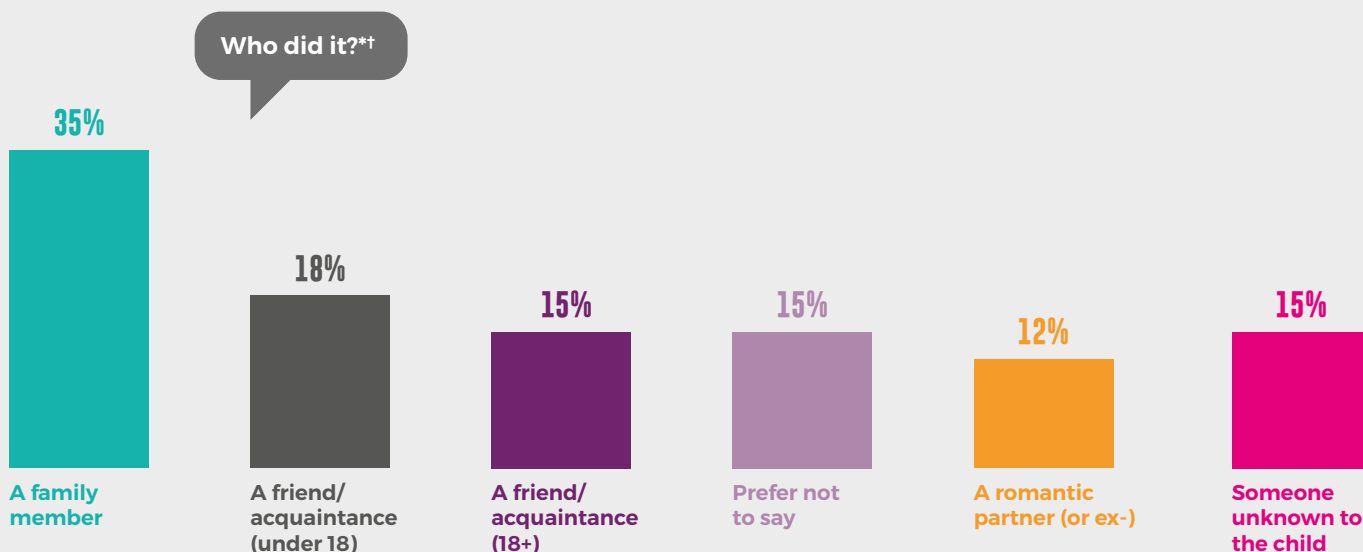
IN THE PAST YEAR
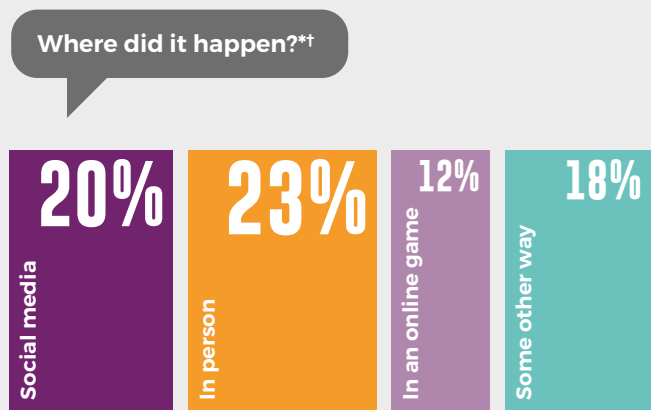# I WAS OFFERED MONEY OR GIFTS IN RETURN FOR SEXUAL IMAGES OR VIDEOS

YES 6%

THE LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED...

Who did it?*†

35% A family member

18% A friend/ acquaintance (under 18)

15% A friend/ acquaintance (18+)

15% Prefer not to say

12% A romantic partner (or ex-)

15% Someone unknown to the child

n = 60 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were offered money or gifts for sexual images or videos.

Where did it happen?*†

20% Social media

23% In person

12% In an online game

18% Some other way

n = 60 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were offered money or gifts for sexual images or videos.

On which platform did this happen?*†

Facebook or Facebook Messenger **67%**

TikTok **25%**

YouTube **17%**
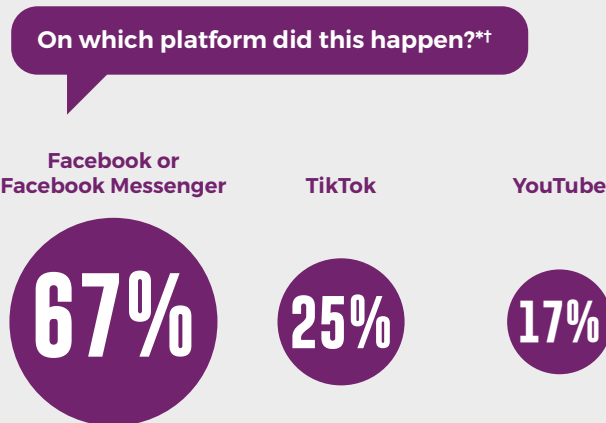
n = 12 internet-using children aged 12–17 who *most recently* were offered money or gifts *via social media* in exchange for sexual images or videos.
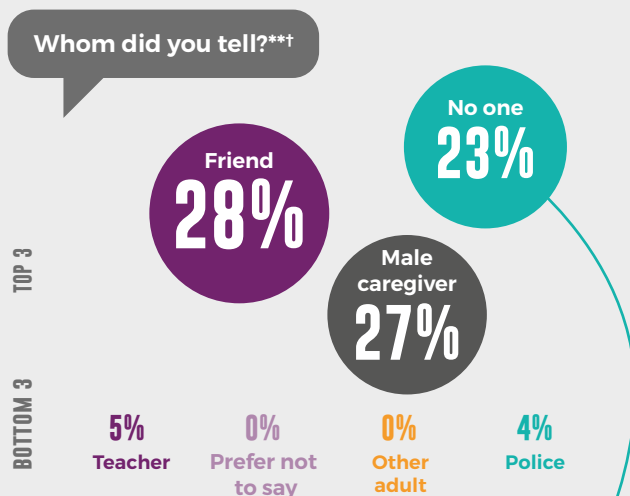
Whom did you tell?†**

TOP 3

Friend **28%**

No one **23%**

Male caregiver **27%**

BOTTOM 3

5% Teacher

0% Prefer not to say

0% Other adult

4% Police

n = 60 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were offered money or gifts for sexual images or videos.

Why did you not tell anyone?*†

I did not know whom to tell **64%**

I did not think it was serious **21%**

I was worried I would get into trouble **20%**
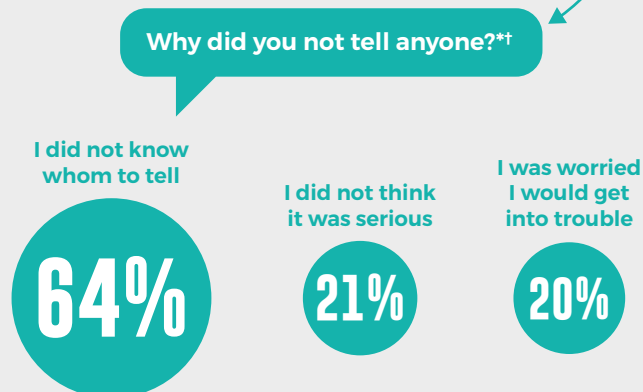
n = 14 internet-using children aged 12–17 who *did not tell anyone* the last time they were offered money or gifts for sexual images or videos.

*These figures represent the most common responses selected by children.
**These figures represent the most and least common responses selected by children.
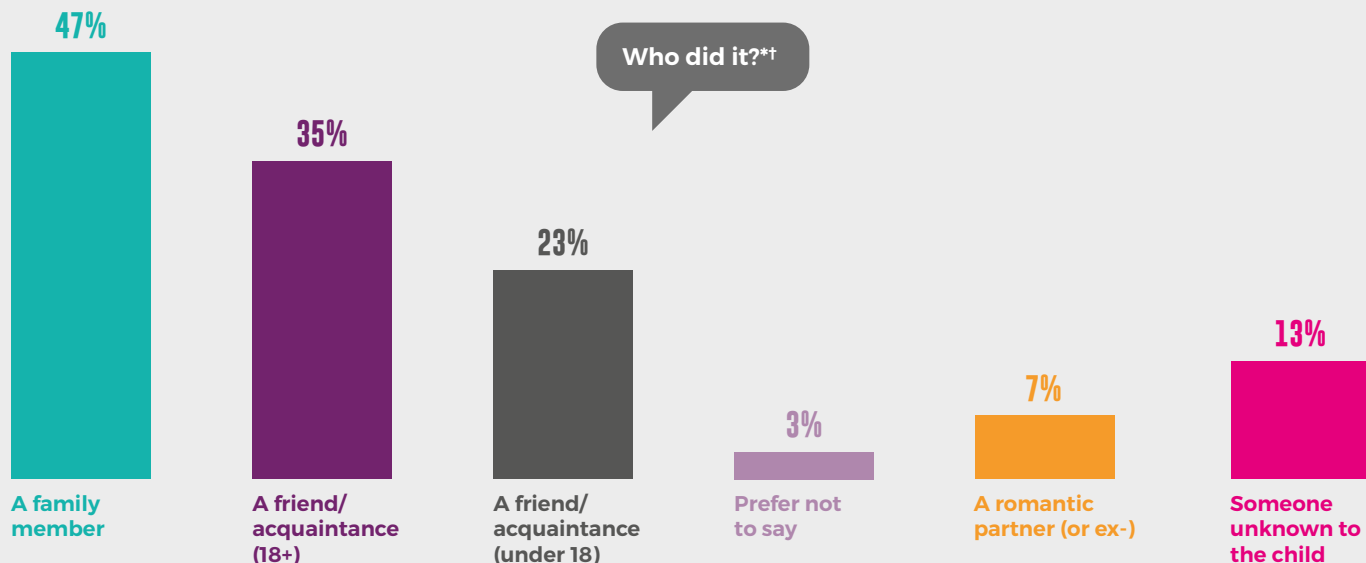†Multiple choice question

IN THE PAST YEAR
I WAS OFFERED MONEY OR GIFTS TO MEET IN PERSON TO DO SOMETHING SEXUAL

YES 6%

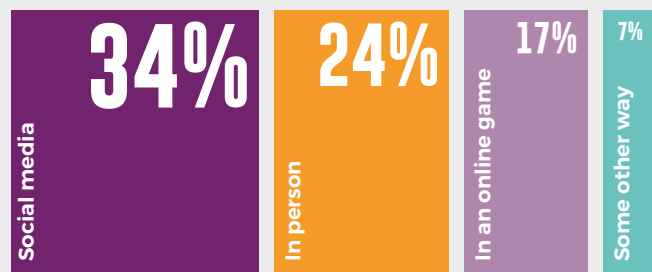Base: Internet using children 12–17
**n = 992 children**

THE LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED ONLINE...

Who did it?*†**

- 47% **A family member**
- 35% **A friend/ acquaintance (18+)**
- 23% **A friend/ acquaintance (under 18)**
- 3% **Prefer not to say**
- 7% **A romantic partner (or ex-)**
- 13% **Someone unknown to the child**

n = 30 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were offered money or gifts *online* for in-person sexual acts in the past year.

Where did it happen?*†**

- **34%** Social media
- **24%** In person
- **17%** In an online game
- **7%** Some other way

n = 59 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were offered money or gifts for in-person sexual acts in the past year.

On which platform did this happen?*†**

- **Facebook or Facebook Messenger** 50%
- **Snapchat** 15%
- **Twitter** 10%
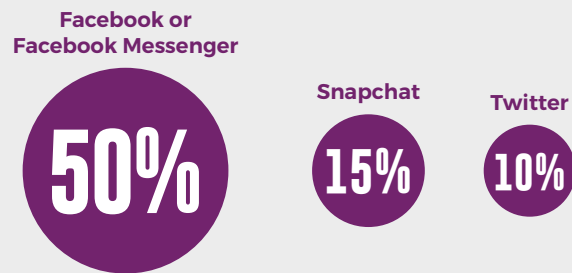
n = 20 internet-using children aged 12–17 who *most recently* received offers of money or gifts for in-person sexual acts *via social media.*
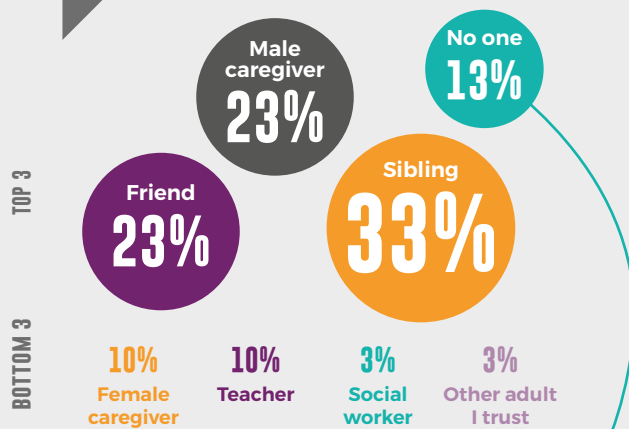
Whom did you tell?**†**

TOP 3
- **Male caregiver** 23%
- **No one** 13%
- **Friend** 23%
- **Sibling** 33%

BOTTOM 3
- 10% **Female caregiver**
- 10% **Teacher**
- 3% **Social worker**
- 3% **Other adult I trust**

n = 30 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were offered money or gifts *online* for in-person sexual acts in the past year.

Why did you not tell anyone?*†**

- **57%** I did not know whom to tell
- **29%** I felt I did something wrong
- **14%** I was worried I would get into trouble
- **14%** Prefer not to say

n = 7 internet-using children aged 12–17 who *did not tell anyone* the last time they were offered money or gifts *online* for in-person sexual acts.

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*These figures represent the most common responses selected by children.
**These figures represent the most and least common responses selected by children.
†Multiple choice question

Source: Disrupting Harm data

Offenders: When the 30 children were asked who made the most recent offer they received online, nearly half (14 children) said that it came from a family member. This was followed by an adult friend (11 children) or friend that was also a child. One in eight children received the offer from someone unknown to them.

Disclosure: The majority of the 30 children that were offered money or gifts to meet in person to engage in sexual activities online disclosed it to someone – mostly to a sibling or a friend. Few children disclosed to caregivers or teachers. Consistent with the data for other forms of OCSEA, children generally avoided formal reporting mechanisms, relying instead on their interpersonal support networks. Notably, seven of the 30 children did not tell anyone what had occurred, mainly because they did not know where to go or whom to tell.

Sexual extortion

Sexual extortion is sometimes used in the grooming process. In some instances, offenders have already obtained sexual images of children and threaten to publicly publish or share them with their friends or members of their families as a way of coercing them into sharing more images or engaging in other kinds of sexual activities. Such threats can also be used to extort money. In Cambodia, neither the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation nor the Criminal Code criminalise – implicitly or explicitly – online sexual extortion. One young survivor said of the offender:

"So, he shared all my information. He screenshot all my friends, and after that, he tried to demand photos from me. After he demanded photos from me, I said I wouldn't send any. No, no way. That's when he started to use threats. He screenshot my whole friends list. He said if I don't send photos to him, all the friends on my list would get all the photos he had received." (RA5-CA-07)

In the household survey, 5% (53 children) of the 992 internet-using children surveyed in Cambodia said that they had been threatened or blackmailed into engaging in sexual activities at least once in the past year. More children aged 12–15 (8%) than older children aged 16–17 (3%) were targeted, as were boys (7%) in comparison to girls (4%). It is not known what kind of threats were used, for example, if previously obtained sexual images were used to extort money or to engage in further sexual activities, as specific follow-up questions were not asked.

Online or offline? Among the 53 children who reported instances of sexual extortion, 40% indicated that the threat was made online, while 15% reported this happened in person. This suggests that just 2% (21 children) of all children in the Cambodia household survey experienced online sexual extortion. Offenders more often made such threats via social media than through an online game. Among children who were targeted on social media, a majority disclosed that this happened on Facebook (or Facebook Messenger). Again, because children can be blackmailed or threatened into engaging in sexual activities entirely in person (without the involvement of technology), only the 21 children who said that they were threatened or blackmailed into engaging in sexual activities *online*, i.e., via social media or an online gaming platform, were included in the subsequent analysis.

Offenders: Among the 21 children who had been coerced online, the most common offender the last time that it occurred was a friend that was also a child. The household survey data also found that of the 992 internet-using children surveyed, 8% revealed that they had pressured someone their age to send a sexual image or video.

Disclosure: Of the 21 children who were blackmailed or threatened online into engaging in sexual activities, all but one child disclosed the incident to someone else. Children most often disclosed to a friend, followed by caregivers. Fewer children disclosed to siblings, a teacher or a trusted adult. No formal reports were made by children to either the police, a social worker or a helpline.
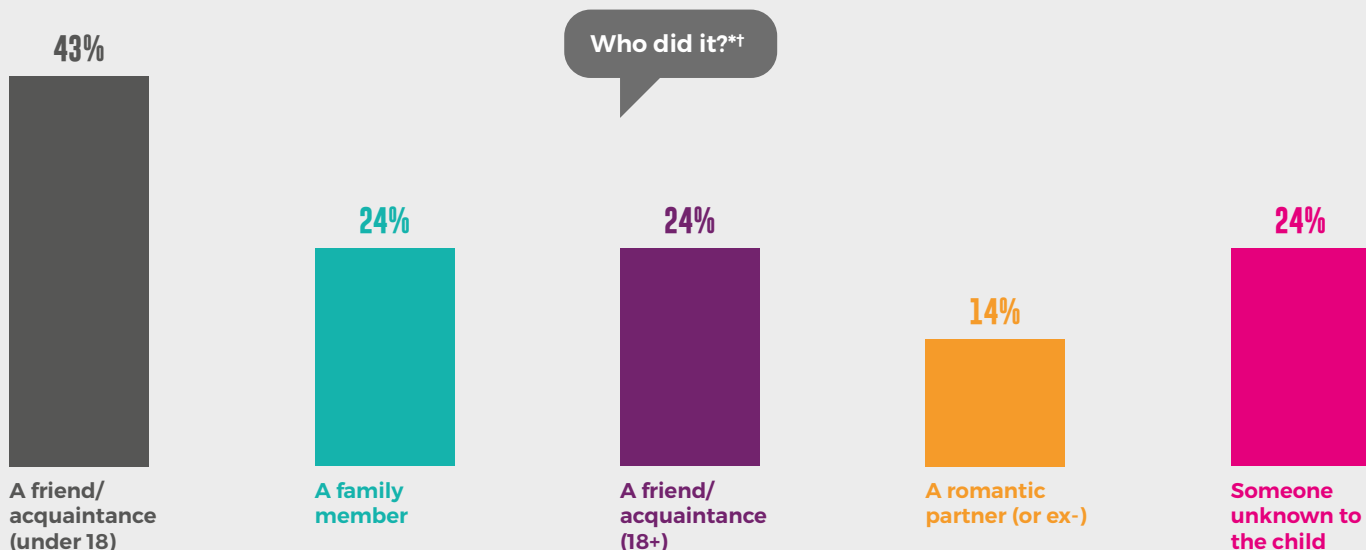
OCSEA

IN THE PAST YEAR
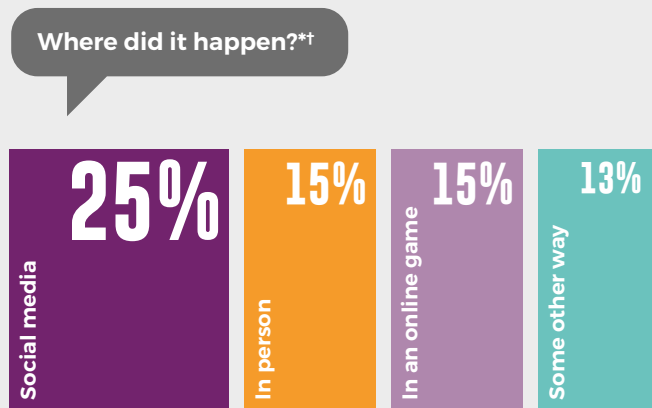# SOMEONE THREATENED OR BLACKMAILED ME TO ENGAGE IN SEXUAL ACTIVITIES

YES 5%

Base: Internet using children 12–17
n = 992 children

## THE LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED ONLINE...

Who did it?*†

43%
A friend/ acquaintance (under 18)

24%
A family member

24%
A friend/ acquaintance (18+)

14%
A romantic partner (or ex-)

24%
Someone unknown to the child

n = 21 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were threatened or blackmailed *online* to engage in sexual acts in the past year.

Where did it happen?*†

25% Social media
15% In person
15% In an online game
13% Some other way

n = 53 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were threatened or blackmailed to engage in sexual acts in the past year.

On which platform did this happen?*†

Facebook or Facebook Messenger
77%

YouTube
8%

Twitter
8%
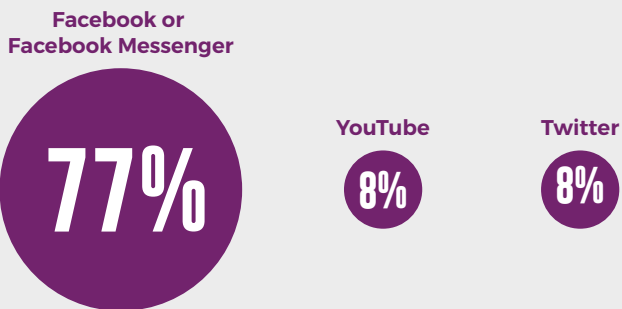
n = 13 internet-using children aged 12–17 who *most recently* received threats or were blackmailed *via social media*.
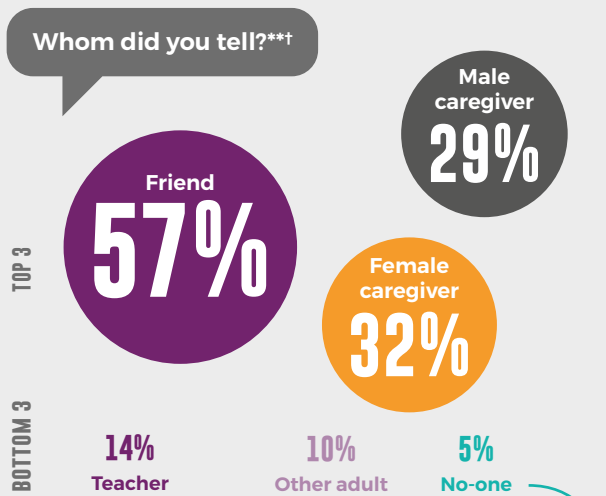
Whom did you tell?†**

Male caregiver 29%

TOP 3
Friend **57%**

Female caregiver 32%

BOTTOM 3
14% Teacher
10% Other adult
5% No-one

n = 21 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were threatened or blackmailed *online* to engage in sexual acts in the past year.

Why did you not tell anyone?*†

I did not know whom to tell
100%

n = 1 internet-using child aged 12–17 who *did not tell anyone* the last time they were threatened or blackmailed *online* to engage in sexual activities.

*These figures represent the most common responses selected by children.
**These figures represent the most and least common responses selected by children.
†Multiple choice question

Source: Disrupting Harm data

Why Might Children in Cambodia Disclose Instances of Abuse More Often to Male Caregivers as Compared to Female Caregivers?

The fact that children disclose their abuse more often to male than female caregivers in Cambodia is a unique finding across the *Disrupting Harm* countries. The survey further indicates that for some OCSEA manifestations, more girls than boys report to a male caregiver. For example, in cases of sexual extortion, 50% of girls disclosed to male caregivers, while only 28% of boys chose to do so.

In addition to children's preference to disclose experiences of OCSEA to male caregivers rather than to female caregivers, the household survey data indicates that this preference is often stark for girls. For instance, 33% of girls who received an unwanted request to talk about sex online told their male caregiver about the incident, while not one girl told a female caregiver. Similarly, when offered money or gifts in exchange for sexual acts, none of the girls who received such an offer told a female caregiver, while 20% disclosed to a male caregiver. In comparison, more boys than girls told a caregiver (either male or female) about their experiences, while girls most often disclosed to their peers. In terms of age groups, children aged 16–17 were generally less likely to disclose to a caregiver than younger children.

While not explicitly explored in the current research, some of the findings from the household survey, interviews with OCSEA survivors and insights from previously conducted studies might explain why children in Cambodia disclose more often to male caregivers.

First, the household survey showed that female caregivers use the internet somewhat less frequently than male caregivers. Since male caregivers are more familiar with the internet, children may feel that it is easier to explain what happened to them and how the digital technology/internet facilitated their abuse. Male caregivers also more frequently (25%) reported that they would seek help or advice on what to do if their child experienced something online that bothered or upset them as compared to female caregivers (19%).

Furthermore, OCSEA survivors echoed the preference for confiding in a male caregiver over a female caregiver. One young survivor said: *"If I tell my mom, I would feel ashamed of myself."* (RA5-CA-09) Social and gender norms strongly influence expected behaviours, particularly regarding sexual issues, and especially for girls and women.[86] This context may have the effect of discouraging disclosures to female caregivers that conflict with these entrenched expectations.

Finally, findings from the 2013 Violence Against Children study in Cambodia showed that among 13–17-year-olds who experienced physical violence from a parent, caregiver or other adult relative, the majority reported that the offender was a parent, and more frequently mothers.[87]

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86. ECPAT International. (2018). ECPAT Country Overview: Cambodia, Bangkok: ECPAT International. 7.
87. UNICEF. (2013) Findings from Cambodia's violence against children survey 2013, Phnom Penh: UNICEF.

2.2.2 CSAM and live-streaming of child sexual abuse

The Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation defines CSAM as "a visible material such as a photograph or videotape, including a material in electronic form, depicting a minor's naked figure which excites or stimulates sexual desire."[88] The reference to excitement or stimulation of sexual desire can lead to impunity for crimes against children due to the difficulty of proving these circumstances at the time of the commission of the crime. Moreover, this definition fails to cover non-visual CSAM such as audio, drawn and written material, computer-/digitally generated CSAM including realistic images of non-existent children and CSAM that depicts a person appearing to be a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct. The Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation prohibits distribution, possession and production with intent to distribute CSAM.[89] However, knowingly obtaining access to and possessing CSAM are not considered offences if there is no intent to distribute it further.

In response to a question regarding the appropriateness of the existing legislation, a representative from the Telecommunication Regulator of Cambodia noted: *"I do not see that the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation needs amendment yet. This law is already clear and complete and built in accordance with standards and principles of the relevant international laws. The article according to the definition of child pornography is clearly defined. So far, I have not received any information or proposal for amending any articles of this law."* (RA1-CA-09-A) In contrast, a government representative interviewed believed that the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation did not adequately address OCSEA saying: *"We seem to have many laws already in place; however, there are not specific and sufficient articles to address OCSEA."* (RA1-CA-10-A)

Although the Cambodian legislation does not include any provisions criminalising the live-streaming of child sexual abuse, a representative from the Cambodia National Police indicated that live-streaming of child sexual abuse can be considered under 'the distribution of CSAM' criminalised by the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, and those found guilty of this offence may be prosecuted. (RA1-CA-03-A) It appears that this has not yet been tested given that *Disrupting Harm* did not identify any cases that have been investigated to date in Cambodia in relation to live-streaming offences.

According to the Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children 2017–2021, the Ministry of Justice was asked to expand the definition of CSAM under the law to mirror the definition contained in the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and to amend the law to criminalise all forms of possession of CSAM.[90] In addition, the Ministry is tasked with introducing new legal provisions in the draft Cybercrime Law to protect children from online sexual exploitation, including sexual extortion, online grooming and the live-streaming of child sexual abuse and in the Criminal Code to criminalise acts of non-physical sexual abuse and grooming.[91]

As of November 2021, the draft Cybercrime Law remains under review. The most recent publicly available draft provides a wider – although not comprehensive – definition of CSAM and explicitly criminalises CSAM-related conduct committed online; however, it does not refer to any other OCSEA crime.[92]

The live-streaming of child sexual exploitation and abuse is particularly hard to detect. Any application with a live-streaming function, such as Facebook, Viber or Skype, may be used. In the household survey, children who had experienced OCSEA often reported being targeted on applications offering live-streaming functions, with Facebook being the platform most often cited by respondents.

88. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, Royal Kram NS/RKM/0208/005, Article 40.
89. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, Royal Kram NS/RKM/0208/005, Article 41.
90. Government of Cambodia. (2017). Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017-2021), 24.
91. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, Royal Kram NS/RKM/0208/005, Article 41.
92. Government of Cambodia – Working Group of Council of Ministers. (Undated). Cybercrime Law Draft V.1, Article 27.

How Technological Development has Influenced OCSEA

The wide availability of faster and cheaper internet access has led to the increasing use of video tools in communications. Video chat and live-streaming tools have rapidly gained popularity and are changing the ways that we engage with each other, particularly for young people. Live-streaming is increasingly used both among small private groups and for 'broadcasts' to large, public, unknown audiences. In Cambodia, 48% of internet users aged 12–17 reported watching live-streams at least every week. More boys (51%) than girls (46%) reported watching live-streams. Moreover, 57% of 16–17-year-olds reported watching live-streams every week, as compared to 42% of the youngest respondents aged 12–13.

While watching live-streams in most cases does not result in harm and can have many benefits, the misuse of such tools is creating new ways of perpetrating OCSEA, including the following:

Offenders broadcasting child sexual abuse: Live-streaming tools can be used to transmit sexual abuse of children instantaneously to one or more viewers, so that they can watch it while it is taking place.

Remote viewers may even be able to request and direct the abuse, and financial transactions can occur alongside it or even within the same platforms.

Streaming platforms do not retain shared content; they only retain the metadata concerning access to their services. This means that when the streaming stops, the CSAM vanishes, unless the offender deliberately records it. This creates specific challenges for investigators, prosecutors and courts, especially as the existing legislative definitions of CSAM and methods of investigation and prosecution are not always up to date.

Self-generated sexual content involving children: As noted in chapter 1.3.3, the rise in self-generated sexual content, both coerced and non-coerced, also includes content transmitted via live-streaming. This content poses complex challenges. Even if initially produced without any coercion, this content may still make its way into circulation, whether through being passed on without permission or nefarious means, such as hacking. Governments and support services everywhere are grappling with how to address these issues.

Children's experiences of non-consensual sharing of sexual images

From the household survey, 7% (72) of the internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia stated that someone had shared sexual images of them without their permission in the past year. While no gender differences were observed, more younger children aged 12–13 were affected than those aged 14–17.

Sexual images of children, particularly those shared online, can be circulated widely and viewed repeatedly all over the world, resulting in a continuous sense of shame and fear of being recognised for the victims. When these images or videos capture instances of severe sexual abuse, the trauma associated with those in-person experiences can also be repeatedly reactivated by the sharing of the content.

Disrupting Harm did not seek to obtain specific data from children pertaining to severe sexual abuse, mainly because our ethical and methodological approach required us only to capture what children shared on their own terms, rather than seeking out and delving into specific forms of abuse. This is not to say that victims of such acts were not part of our samples, but instead that this was not disclosed.

Online or offline? Among the 72 children who said that sexual images of them had been shared without their permission, 37% said that this took place online via social media or through an online game in similar proportions. Of those children who reported that this sharing occurred via social media, the most common platform used was Facebook or Facebook Messenger. Almost a third of children said that their images had been shared in person. This could include, for instance, the naked picture of a child being shared among peers in the classroom, while everyone is physically present rather than on social media.
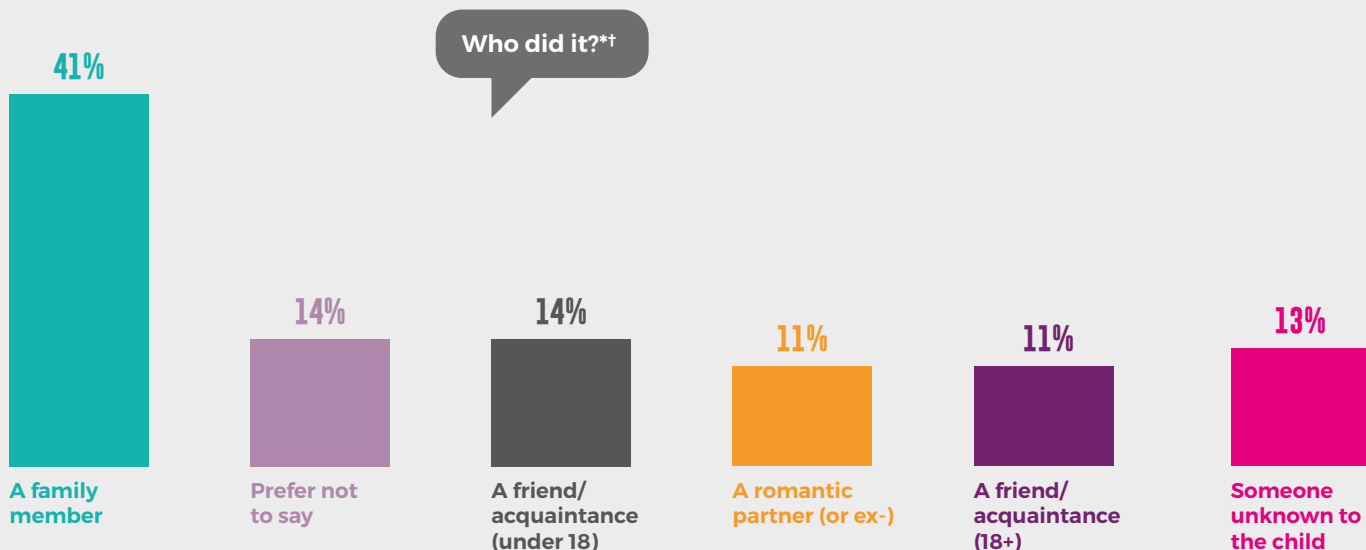
IN THE PAST YEAR
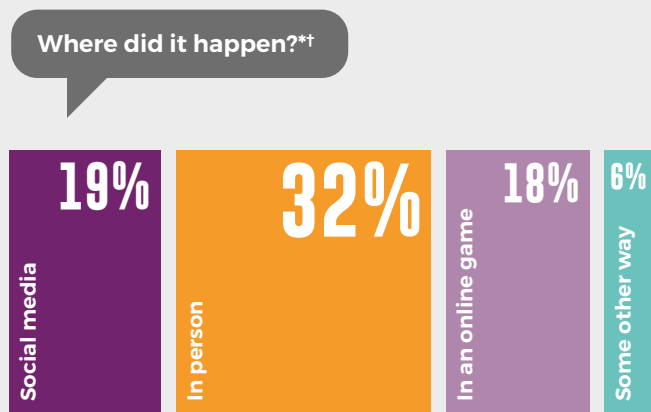# SOMEONE SHARED SEXUAL IMAGES OF ME WITHOUT MY CONSENT

YES 7%
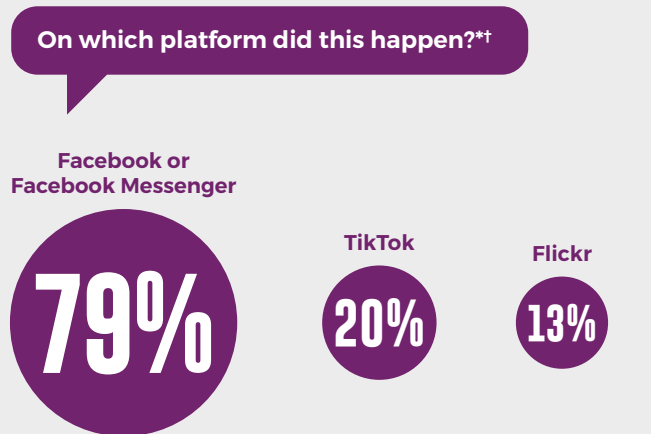
Base: Internet using children 12–17
n = 992 children
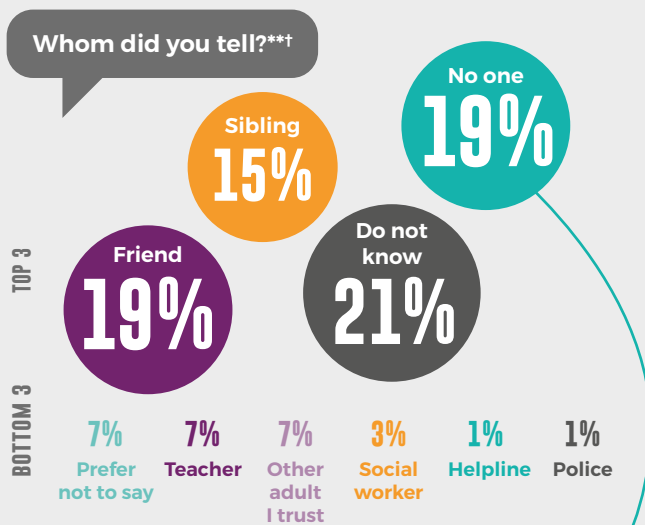
THE LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED...

Who did it?*†

41%	14%	14%	11%	11%	13%
A family member	Prefer not to say	A friend/ acquaintance (under 18)	A romantic partner (or ex-)	A friend/ acquaintance (18+)	Someone unknown to the child

n = 72 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were subjected to verbal sexual harassment in the past year.

Where did it happen?*†

19%	32%	18%	6%
Social media	In person	In an online game	Some other way

n = 72 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were subjected to verbal sexual harassment in the past year.

On which platform did this happen?*†

Facebook or Facebook Messenger
79%

TikTok
20%

Flickr
13%

n = 14 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were *most recently* subjected to verbal sexual harassment *via social media.*

Whom did you tell?†**

Sibling 15%

No one 19%

TOP 3

Friend 19%

Do not know 21%

BOTTOM 3

7%	7%	7%	3%	1%	1%
Prefer not to say	Teacher	Other adult I trust	Social worker	Helpline	Police

n = 72 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were subjected to verbal sexual harassment in the past year.

Why did you not tell anyone?*†

I did not know whom to tell
60%

I felt embarrassed
29%

Do not know
14%

n = 14 internet-using children aged 12–17 who *did not tell anyone* the last time they were subjected to verbal sexual harassment.

*These figures represent the most common responses selected by children.
**These figures represent the most and least common responses selected by children.
†Multiple choice question

Source: Disrupting Harm data

Offenders: For the majority of the 72 children, offenders were known to children, with family members being cited by 41% of children. Adult friends, friends that were children and current or former romantic partners were cited by about one in ten. Only 13% reported that their images or videos had been shared by someone unknown to them. Notably, 14% of children preferred not to say who had shared these images.

Disclosure: Almost one in five children told no one about the incident, mainly because they did not know where to go or whom to tell. A further 21% preferred not to mention who they had confided in. Of the children who disclosed the incident, a majority turned to their interpersonal networks, with common confidants being a friend, a sibling, or a caregiver. Fewer children disclosed to a teacher, while formal reports to a social worker, a hotline or to the police were seldom made.

Accepting money or gifts in exchange for sexual images or videos

When children create sexual content in exchange for something, this constitutes child sexual exploitation, irrespective of whether they are coerced or actively engage in this activity.[93] This chapter of the report considers instances in which money or gifts were exchanged for sexual content, regardless of how the process was initiated.

> **16 of 520 children aged 15–17 accepted money or gifts in exchange for sexual images or videos of themselves in the past year.**

Given the sensitivity of this topic, only the 15–17-year-old respondents in the household survey were asked whether they had accepted money or gifts in exchange for sexual images or videos of themselves. Among the 520 respondents, 16 children (3%) said they had done this in the past year. Some children may have been hesitant to reveal their involvement in such activities – even in an anonymised survey – thus the true figure could be even higher.

While the practice of exchanging money or gifts for sexual activities is not new, the use of digital technologies – including by children and young people – to self-produce and send images or videos in return for money or other material incentives is an emerging global trend. This practice also dramatically increases the risk of further sharing without permission. In a 2015 study into emerging trends in the online production of sexual content by the Internet Watch Foundation and Microsoft, 90% of the youth-generated sexual images and videos assessed were 'harvested' from the original upload location and redistributed on third party websites.[94]

Gaps still remain concerning this form of OCSEA. Understanding the intricacies around children's motivations to engage in this practice, their understanding of the risks involved and how they are first introduced to this practice are important questions that require further study.

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93. ECPAT International. (2020). Summary Paper on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Prostitution. Bangkok: ECPAT International.
94. Internet Watch Foundation & Microsoft. (2015). Emerging Patterns and Trends Report #1 Online-Produced Sexual Content.

"They Took Pictures of Me"

Conversations with OCSEA survivors in Cambodia for *Disrupting Harm* indicated that offenders were gathering sexual images of Cambodian children, both without permission and by exchanging payment, for distribution online. Five young males from Cambodia had been photographed while swimming in a local pond and offered money: *"In the middle of the day, when we were swimming and playing, he came and took photos. He took photos of us playing, just normal"* (RA5-CA-01) and *"He took photos when I was swimming, swimming with my friends. We swam. He rode a bicycle and took photos, rode a bicycle taking photos. He took photos, we didn't know, he took photos, we'd never heard of that. He finished taking photos, gave me money and then rode away."* (RA5-CA-03)

The man involved was not a member of their community: *"The foreigner came and saw us swim, like that, sometimes others went, said what he wanted us to do, sometimes we didn't know… he gave money."* (RA5-CA-02) These young people may have wondered about the motives of the man: *"We did talk to each other and brought up why he took photos like that. But we didn't know. We didn't know why he took photos, or understand… we didn't know that taking photos like that made us… made us… sometimes we thought a lot, is it wrong or right?"* (RA5-CA-02) However, after his arrest they were left with a different understanding of what the photos may have been used for: *"They took my pictures to make porn photos."* (RA5-CA-01)

Case Study
Trading in CSAM

In March 2020, a case was identified by the Anti-Cybercrime Department in Cambodia involving an 18-year-old Cambodian suspect who, in August 2019, had purchased 24 videos depicting young, nude female children online. The intelligence analysis indicated that the victims were from Europe and Asia. One child was identified as Chinese from the script in the videos. The victims appeared to have been trained to perform in order to produce CSAM. The victims were not related, and it appeared to be non-contact sexual abuse.

The offender was selling the material in the form of a collection of images and videos with a certain price attached to each album. The offender used Telegram and Facebook Messenger to purchase and distribute the videos. Interested buyers were directed to transfer payment via Wing: a Cambodian mobile banking provider. Telegram was used to communicate with a group of clients who were interested in the purchase. The offender was convicted in 2020 and imprisoned for four years. The offender was charged with possession and distribution of CSAM. The Anti-Cybercrime Department worked with the electronic services providers, social media platforms and Wing to terminate and close the group and attempts to identify other suspects are still ongoing. The victims depicted in the material have not been identified.

2.3 OTHER EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN THAT MAY BE LINKED TO ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

In addition to the examples of OCSEA already presented, children may be subject to other experiences online that can be harmful, such as sexual harassment or unwanted exposure to sexualised content. Moreover, these experiences could, in some instances, contribute to the desensitisation of children so that they become more likely to engage in sexual talk or sexual acts, for example, during a grooming process.

2.3.1 Sexual harassment

Although not specifically related to children or the online context, the Criminal Code criminalises sexual harassment, which is defined as the "abuse by one person of the authority conferred by his or her functions against another person for the purpose of applying pressure repeatedly in order to obtain sexual favours."[95] The penalty for this crime (imprisonment from six days to three months and a fine of between KHR10,000 and KHR500,000, approximately the equivalent of between US$2.50 and US$125)[96] does not reflect its grave nature, especially when committed against children.

According to the household survey, almost 16% of internet-using children (154 children) in Cambodia had, within the past year, been subject to sexual comments about them that made them feel uncomfortable, including jokes, stories or comments about the child's body, appearance or sexual activities. More boys (17%) than girls (14%) were subjected to these comments, and so were children aged 12–15 (17%) as compared to 16–17-year-olds (13%). Whilst 27% of children reported that the sexual comments about them did not affect them, a majority of children were negatively impacted and commonly felt embarrassed, distressed or angry at this treatment.

Online or offline? Forty-five percent of the reported instances of sexual harassment were made online, mainly via social media and most commonly on Facebook or Facebook Messenger. Almost one in six children said that the harassment had occurred in a face-to-face encounter.

Offenders: When the 154 children who had been subject to sexual harassment, either online or offline, in the past year were asked about the identity of the offender, a third of children identified a family member. Other individuals known to the children, including a romantic partner, an adult friend or a friend that was also a child, were cited as offenders. More than a quarter of children indicated that someone unknown to them was responsible for the harassment. Nineteen percent of children were not comfortable disclosing the identity of the offender.

Disclosure: Almost a third of children who had experienced sexual harassment kept the matter entirely to themselves, mostly because they did not know where to go or whom to tell. The majority of children confided in someone from their circle of trust, commonly citing friends, caregivers or siblings as confidants. Again, very few formally reported the incident to the police, a social worker or a helpline (1%).

2.3.2 Receiving unwanted sexual images

In the household survey sample, 161 children (16%) had been sent unwanted sexual images in the past year. This was relatively more common for older children aged 14–15 (16%) and 16–17 (18%) than 12–13-year-olds (14%). There were, however, no gender differences observed among children that received unwanted sexual images. When asked about the last time they had received unwanted sexual images, 47% of children said that it occurred online, mainly via social media and most commonly on Facebook (or Facebook Messenger). About one in ten children indicated that they had received the unwanted sexual images in a face-to-face encounter.

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95. Government of Cambodia. (2009). Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Article 250.
96. Government of Cambodia. (2009). Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Article 250.

IN THE PAST YEAR
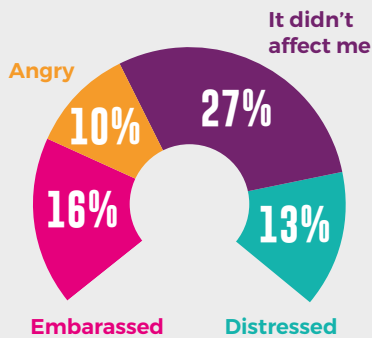# SOMEONE MADE SEXUAL COMMENTS ABOUT ME THAT MADE ME FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE

YES 16%
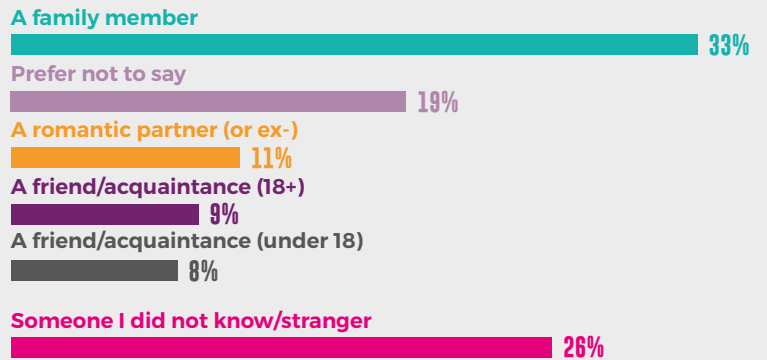
Base: Internet using children 12–17
n = 992 children
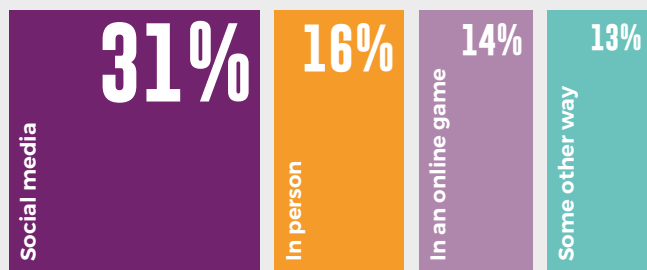
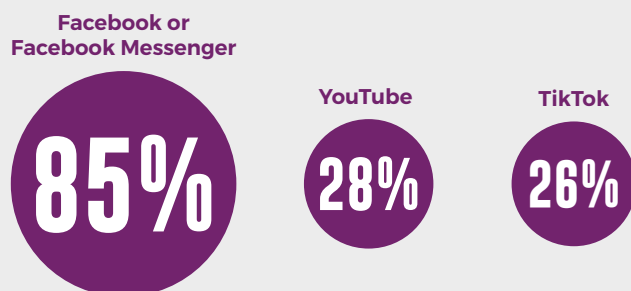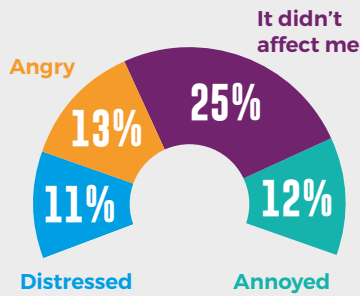## THE LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED...

How did you feel?*

- It didn't affect me **27%**
- Angry **10%**
- Embarassed **16%**
- Distressed **13%**

Who did it?*†

A family member	33%
Prefer not to say	19%
A romantic partner (or ex-)	11%
A friend/acquaintance (18+)	9%
A friend/acquaintance (under 18)	8%
Someone I did not know/stranger	26%

n = 154 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were subjected to verbal sexual harassment in the past year.

Where did it happen?*†

Social media	In person	In an online game	Some other way
31%	**16%**	**14%**	**13%**

n = 154 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were subjected to verbal sexual harassment in the past year.

On which platform did this happen?*†

Facebook or Facebook Messenger	YouTube	TikTok
85%	**28%**	**26%**

n = 47 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were *most recently* subjected to verbal sexual harassment *via social media.*

Whom did you tell?**†

TOP 3
- Friend **19%**
- Male caregiver **17%**
- No one **31%**

BOTTOM 3
Teacher	Other adult I trust	Police	Social worker	Helpline
5%	3%	3%	1%	1%

n = 154 internet-using children aged 12–17 who were subjected to verbal sexual harassment in the past year.

Why did you not tell anyone?*†

I did not know whom to tell	I felt embarrassed	I felt that I did something wrong
56%	**8%**	**8%**

n = 48 internet-using children aged 12–17 who *did not tell anyone* the last time they were subjected to verbal sexual harassment.

*These figures represent the most common responses selected by children.
**These figures represent the most and least common responses selected by children.
†Multiple choice question

Source: Disrupting Harm data

IN THE PAST YEAR
SOMEONE SENT ME SEXUAL IMAGES I DID NOT WANT

YES 16%

Base: Internet using children 12–17
n = 992 children

THE LAST TIME THIS HAPPENED...

How did you feel?*

- **Angry** 13%
- **It didn't affect me** 25%
- **Distressed** 11%
- **Annoyed** 12%

Who did it?*†

A family member	29%
Prefer not to say	16%
A friend/acquaintance (under 18)	13%
A friend/acquaintance (18+)	7%
A romantic partner (or ex-)	6%
Someone I did not know/stranger	39%

n = 161 internet-using children aged 12–17 who received unwanted sexual images in the past year.

Where did it happen?*†

- **Social media** 36%
- **In person** 11%
- **In an online game** 11%
- **Some other way** 16%

n = 161 internet-using children aged 12–17 who received unwanted sexual images in the past year.

On which platform did this happen?*†

- **Facebook or Facebook Messenger** 83%
- **TikTok** 12%
- **YouTube** 10%

n = 58 internet-using children aged 12–17 who *most recently* received unwanted sexual images *via social media*.

Whom did you tell?*†

TOP 3
- **Male caregiver** 16%
- **No-one** 32%
- **Sibling** 12%
- **Friend** 16%

BOTTOM 3
- 8% **Female caregiver**
- 8% **Teacher**
- 4% **Prefer not to say**
- 2% **Social worker**
- 2% **Police**

n = 161 internet-using children aged 12–17 who received unwanted sexual images in the past year.

Why did you not tell anyone?*†

- **I was worried I would get into trouble** 46%
- **I felt embarassed** 15%
- **I did not think anything would be done** 11%

n = 52 internet-using children aged 12–17 who *did not tell anyone* the last time they received unwanted sexual images.

*These figures represent the most common responses selected by children.
**These figures represent the most and least common responses selected by children.
†Multiple choice question

Source: Disrupting Harm data

2.3 OTHER EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN THAT MAY BE LINKED TO ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

A quarter of these children stated that the receipt of these images did not affect them. Among those who expressed a negative response to receiving such images, the most common feelings were anger, annoyance and distress. The majority of children cited individuals known to them as offenders, with unwanted images being received most commonly from a family member, followed by a friend that was also a child. Close to two in five children received unwanted sexual images from someone unknown to them.

This is the only instance, among all those explored in the *Disrupting Harm* study, in which someone unknown to the child was the identified offender in such a large proportion of cases.

Almost a third of children told no one what had happened, mainly because they did not know where to go or whom to tell. Children who disclosed to someone were most likely to confide in a male caregiver or a friend, and to an equal extent. Again, very few made a formal report, either through a social worker or to the police.

The Continuum of Online and Offline Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

The *Disrupting Harm* data reveals that strictly categorising child sexual exploitation and abuse as 'online' or 'offline' does not accurately reflect the realities of sexual violence that children are experiencing.

Disrupting Harm explores and presents data about:

- Sexual exploitation and abuse that takes place exclusively in the online environment.
- Sexual exploitation and abuse that takes place offline but is facilitated by online digital technologies.
- Sexual exploitation and abuse that is committed offline and then moves online through sharing images or videos of the abuse.

The research findings illustrate that, whilst all instances of OCSEA are characterised by an online element, the abuse and exploitation can, and often does, occur at multiple points along the continuum between online and offline. This abuse and exploitation can move between being online and offline at different points in time.

For instance, an offender may use the online environment to connect with, convince and/or coerce a child to share self-generated sexual content, which may be later shared more broadly in the online environment. An offender may use the online environment to groom a child with the intention of later meeting face-to-face to engage in sexual abuse or exploitation in an offline environment.

An offender may engage with and subsequently abuse or exploit a child in an offline environment but may use online tools to communicate with the child, to coerce the child and to capture sexually explicit images or videos (and potentially to share the sexual content within the online environment). These are only a few examples of the dynamic nature of OCSEA and the characteristic fluidity of movement between online and offline sexual abuse and exploitation.

Interviews and survey data gathered from a range of stakeholders across government, the legal system, and among frontline social service workers suggests that, from a systemic perspective, OCSEA is not well understood and is commonly perceived as a 'new kind of abuse' that requires an entirely different response. *"Authorities' understanding [of OCSEA] is limited."* (RA3-CA-10-A) However, when frontline workers were asked to identify the factors that impact children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation more broadly and OCSEA, they typically selected several of the same factors, including access and exposure to pornography, increased access to technology and the internet and being left behind by a parent/guardian who has migrated for work. One of the respondents noted: *"[Vulnerability to] online sexual exploitation is the same as the vulnerability of children to sexual exploitation in general: children living in ethnic areas, people who use the internet more, children who live on the streets, etc."* (RA3-CA-44-A)

2.3 OTHER EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN THAT MAY BE LINKED TO ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

One of the government representatives interviewed claimed that watching pornography encouraged children to try what they see in the images themselves. (RA1-CA-03-A) Unfortunately, the inference of causality between watching pornography and becoming a victim of OCSEA commonly results in victim-blaming and a subsequent lack of support provided to children seen to be complicit in their own harm. It should be noted that the perspectives presented here are based on subjective interpretations.

Data from across the *Disrupting Harm* countries consistently shows that a proportion of children subjected to OCSEA were also exposed to an instance of in-person sexual, physical or emotional abuse. This may indicate that OCSEA is an extension of existing abuse already experienced by the child, or that there are a common set of vulnerabilities that make children who experience violence offline more likely to also experience violence online, and/or vice versa.

2.4 INSIGHTS ABOUT VICTIMS AND OFFENDERS

No crime data was provided by the national law enforcement. However, this chapter is informed by findings from the household survey, data shared by the Cambodian CSAM hotline (see also chapter 3.1.3), the survey of frontline social support workers, and interviews with government representatives, children and their caregivers.

2.4.1 Victims

Among internet-using 12–17-year-olds, more boys than girls reported being subjected to all forms of OCSEA investigated in the household survey. Data from the Cambodian CSAM hotline (Figure 19) indicated that, while more reports received by the hotline involved girls (38%), the number of reports involving boys (27%) was not much lower. Moreover, while there was a sizeable increase in reports involving girls between 2017 and 2018, cases involving boys increased substantially between 2018 and 2019.

Figure 19. Breakdown of reports submitted to the CSAM hotline in Cambodia 2017–2019 by the gender of the child or children in the CSAM reported.

Gender	2017	2018	2019	Grand Total
Female	113	998	984	2,095
Male		79	1,412	1,491
Both[97]		137	544	681
N/A	542	294	414	1,250
Not Determined	48			48
Grand Total	**703**	**1,508**	**3,354**	**5,565**

Base: CSAM Reports to APLE's CSAM hotline 2017–2019, n = 5,565.

The hotline data indicates that approximately 12% of reports to the Cambodian CSAM hotline concerned both girls and boys over the period 2017–2019 (meaning a single report was made about CSAM involving both girls and boys).

The CSAM hotline data also provides a valuable insight into the fact that CSAM is impacting children of all ages (Figure 20). While it should be noted that individuals may be more likely to feel compelled to report instances of CSAM involving younger children as compared to older children, the data paints a troubling picture. During the three-year period from 2017 to 2019, the largest proportion of reports concerned prepubescent children (29%). In this age category, reports were most likely to concern girls (68%), with a further 30% of reports concerning both girls and boys, and 12% of reports concerning just boys. CSAM involving toddlers comprised 23% of all reports over the three-year period. The vast majority of these reports concerned boys (88%), followed by both material involving boys and girls (6%) and just girls (6%).

Figure 20. Breakdown of reports submitted to the CSAM hotline in Cambodia 2017–2019 by victim ages group in the CSAM reported.

Gender	2017	2018	2019	Grand Total
Infant			140	140
Toddler		38	1,263	1,301
Prepubescent	7	405	1,201	1,613
Pubescent		728	336	1,064
N/A	696	294	414	1,404
Not categorised		43		43
Grand Total	**703**	**1,508**	**3,354**	**5,565**

Base: CSAM Reports to APLE's CSAM hotline 2017–2019, n = 5,565.

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97. The category 'Both' is presumed to denote reports of material in which both boys and girls are apparent.

Pubescent children were identified as victims in 19% of reports. Among pubescent children, girls were over-represented, comprising 77% of reports. No reports were recording concerning pubescent boys over the three-year period. This is in contrast with the data from the *Disrupting Harm* household survey collected among pubescent children (aged 12–17), which found that boys were often twice as likely to report experiences of OCSEA as compared to girls. Finally, 2% of reports to the CSAM hotline between 2017 and 2019 concerned infant children (all boys).

The household survey shows that, whereas no age differences were found among children that received unwanted requests to speak about sex and images online, more younger children aged 12–13 than the older 16–17-year-olds reported to have experienced sexual extortion, non-consensual sharing of their sexual images and having been offered money online for sexual images or to meet in person to do something sexual.

The household survey data also shows that boys tended to be targeted through a more diverse range of platforms than girls. In comparison to boys, girls were most often targeted on a fewer number of platforms. More girls than boys were targeted on popular platforms only (sometimes on Facebook exclusively and sometimes in combination with other known platforms such as Snapchat or WhatsApp, depending on the type of OCSEA). More boys (especially younger ones) than girls were solicited on lesser-known platforms such as live.me or Periscope. This may, in part, result from the type of activities children engage in on the internet, such as online gaming, which is far more popular among boys than girls.

2.4.2 Offenders

Similar to other *Disrupting Harm* countries, the offenders for OCSEA were most often someone known to the child; however, people unknown to the child still accounted for about one in four offenders. Children in Cambodia who reported forms of OCSEA most often identified the offender as a family member, followed by friends (adults or children). Frontline workers indicated that foreigners or adult community members were the most common offenders in the OCSEA cases they had worked on.

As mentioned in chapter 2.1.3, public perceptions in this regard influence many to expect offenders of child sexual abuse and exploitation to be foreigners (especially western males).[98,99] Cases involving travelling child sex offenders tend to draw significant media coverage and deflect attention away from local offenders. Furthermore, as a result of discomfort around openly discussing sex and sexual offences, it may be more palatable for a community to react to child abuse when an offender is an outsider, rather than from a victim's own community. Previous research showed that nearly half of offenders arrested for sexual abuse of children in Cambodia between 2003 and 2019 were Cambodian nationals.[100] A representative from a local non-governmental organisation, M'Lop Tapang noted: *"In some cases, the offender is a relative of the victim such as the stepfather, uncle, etc."* (RA4-CA-06-A) This supports the findings of the household survey.

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98. ECPAT International. (2018). Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism.
99. World Vision and Save the Children. (2009). Sex Offenders without Borders: An Investigation into sexual abuse and exploitation of children in Thailand, Cambodia and Burma in relation to travel and tourism.
100. Borgström, J., Larsson, C. (2020). Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism. The Cambodian Case.

Case Study
Abuse of Power

A 38-year-old Buddhist monk was allegedly storing CSAM depicting two girls, aged six and 15, who lived nearby the pagoda. The children, who lived with their grandmother while the parents were away working in Thailand, were enticed with food and access to mobile phones to play games. The monk was invited to conduct religious ceremonies for the community and he was revered by and received money from the community. The grandmother was working in the pagoda helping with cleaning. It is believed the images were captured when the children were aged four and 13, when they regularly visited the pagoda with their grandmother. The children also frequented the pagoda to collect rice cakes and other food items, providing the monk with opportunities to produce CSAM.

Intelligence obtained from the material led to the identification of the monk as the producer. During the subsequent investigation and interrogation, law enforcement officers were informed that the elder sibling was asked to photograph the younger sibling. No contact sexual abuse was recorded in the images and did not appear to have occurred in person.

The two children were referred to a non-governmental organisation for counselling and rehabilitation. The Cambodian Anti-Cybercrime Department was required to seek authorisation from the Commissioner General of the Cambodian National Police and approval from the Ministry of Religion to take the monk into custody. At the time of writing, the prosecution was still pending as the court was unable to conduct hearings due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The offender remains in a correctional centre.

2.5 BARRIERS TO CHILDREN SPEAKING TO ADULTS ABOUT ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

According to the household survey data, children in Cambodia relied more on their interpersonal networks for help. Household survey data shows that those who reported being subjected to different forms of OCSEA mostly confided in someone from their interpersonal network, especially a friend, a male caregiver or a sibling. Across all forms of OCSEA investigated, very few children (0%–5%) made a formal report to a social worker, police or a helpline.

A notable proportion of children (about one in five) who experienced OCSEA did not report what had happened to anyone. Children were least likely to disclose instances of being offered money or gifts in exchange for images or to engage in sexual activity, instances of sexual harassment or instances of receiving unwanted sexual images. Among internet-using children who had experienced OCSEA, more boys than girls disclosed what had happened. For instance, 60% of girls did not tell anyone about being offered money or gifts for sexual acts as compared to just 16% of boys. As noted earlier, rigid gender norms may indeed increase feelings of shame and embarrassment for girls experiencing OCSEA.

2.5.1 Reasons for not disclosing

Data from the household survey, interviews with children who have been through the justice system, the survey of frontline workers, and interviews with government representatives all contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of why children in Cambodia might not disclose their OCSEA experiences. In this chapter, the key barriers emerging from the *Disrupting Harm* research in Cambodia are explored.

Lack of knowledge on reporting mechanisms

Very few (0%–6%) children who experienced OCSEA reported it through formal reporting mechanisms. Not knowing where to go or whom to tell was by far the most commonly cited barrier to reporting instances of OCSEA identified by children in the household survey. This finding was also noted from frontline workers, 40 of whom indicated that people did not know the reporting mechanisms (Figure 21).

A caregiver noted: *"I do want to disseminate information about this issue, so that it's more open than before, because vulnerable children don't know about it, so they don't know about who can help them. Disseminating information about that so that it's open and they can be brave to get out of the things that are happening, that they are experiencing.* (RA4-CA-09-Parent) It is also possible that children were not confident in the reporting processes or justice system.

Furthermore, 43 of the 50 frontline workers stated that a basic lack of knowledge of the risks of OCSEA among caregivers could be impeding reporting. A case intake specialist interviewed noted: *"In Cambodia, we have a low education level in the society. Hence, people do not understand well the legal process that is involved, including the complaint process."* (RA4-CA-08-A) This suggests a need for awareness raising among the general population as a measure to improve reporting and, as a result, access to justice and support for victims of OCSEA.

Shame, stigma and victim-blaming

The fact that about 20% of children subjected to OCSEA do not tell anyone, particularly an adult, can be attributed, in part, to stigma around sexual experiences.[101] The household survey showed that the second most common reason for not disclosing OCSEA experiences was feelings of embarrassment, shame or fear that it would be too emotionally difficult to explain. Thirty-five of the 50 frontline workers surveyed believed that stigma from the community is a key factor influencing reporting of OCSEA in Cambodia (see Figure 21). Normative concerns and stigma around sex and sexuality might play a significant role in decision-making around reporting abuse.

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101. ECPAT International. (2018). ECPAT Country Overview: Cambodia. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

Figure 21. Social and cultural barriers to reporting OCSEA.

Barrier	Percentage
Low knowledge of the risks from caregivers	86%
People do not know the mechanism for reporting	80%
Poor quality of service for reporting	72%
No hotline or helpline	70%
Stigma from the community if a known victim	70%
Cannot trust services to be confidential	68%
Taboo to discuss sex and sexuality	68%
People know it happens but tolerate it	66%
Low status of children means no rights to report	58%
Police do not accept report	42%
Victim is punished	42%
Expected roles for men and women	40%
Other	16%

Base: Frontline welfare workers, n = 50.

One frontline worker noted: *"It is like a culture not to talk about sex. The percentage of unreported sexual abuse cases is high because sometimes children are scared or shy to talk about this and when the case has happened, they are blocked to speak out because of this culture."* (RA3-CA-14-A)

One young survivor noted the feelings of shame about the images being shared and the humiliation of knowing that others within their community would have seen their sexual images: *"The people at home had blamed me already. When there's a story like that already, you have to stand in front of the community, even stand in front of the people who received your photos. How are you supposed to resolve it with them?"* (RA5-CA-07) A representative from the Ministry of Women's Affairs explained how caregivers sometimes blame their children if they admit to facing difficulties: *"Some children are blamed by their parents when they tell them about any problem, so if they face many more problems, they will just keep it to themselves. So, this lesson is very important and helps children to understand what kind of person to tell and what kind of person not to tell."* (RA1-CA-05-A)

Ethnographic research undertaken in Cambodia also revealed that some Cambodians believe that a child has been abused because either the offender or the child has a 'bad foundation' (*samnaaŋ mɨn lʔaa*) in either this life or a previous life. This 'bad foundation' is believed to be caused by the bad deed of a parent or ancestor. This particular research also noted that female caregivers whose daughters has been raped by their fathers blamed it on their own 'bad building'.[102] This should be considered in the context of reporting of OCSEA. This perception of 'bad building' or 'bad foundations' and links to bad deeds of family members or ancestors may be sufficiently shameful and stigma-laden as to discourage children from reporting, or to prevent caregivers and other confidants from encouraging a child to make a report.

102. Eisenbruch, M. (2019). 'His body is human, but he has a tiracchana heart': An ethnographic study of the epigenesis of child abuse in Cambodia, Child Abuse & Neglect, 88, 129–143.

Prohibitive social norms around sex and children rights

Eighty percent of the frontline social service workers surveyed stated that taboos around discussing sex and sexuality and high levels of physical violence against children were the societal factors with the biggest influence on the vulnerability of children to OCSEA. One frontline worker noted: *"Social factors prohibit talk[ing] about sex with children and youths. That makes children unaware of the impact and risks of sexual abuse."* (RA3-CA-47-A) The low status of children in society and stigma from the community, along with expected roles for men and women, were also suggested as factors rendering children in Cambodia vulnerable to OCSEA.

Previous research into children's rights in Cambodia found that, even though children's rights appear to be undervalued, the strong cultural emphasis on safeguarding family reputation, and the expectation that children respect both hierarchical and patriarchal structures within a family, can supersede, and thus compromise, a child's right to protection from sexual abuse.[103]

Among boys who were offered gifts or money in exchange for sexual images/videos and did not tell anyone, 22% feared disclosure would cause trouble for their family, while 11% were actively discouraged from reporting by family members. These pressures act in unison with an enduring discomfort to discuss sex and sexuality.[104]

Offenders as family members

As indicated by the household survey, across all types of OCSEA investigated, children most often identified a family member as the offender. This has important implications for children's willingness to disclose their experiences of OCSEA and thus to make a formal report. Similar assertions were made by frontline workers when reflecting on the OCSEA cases they had been involved in.

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103. Gourley, S. (2009). The Middle Way: Bridging the Gap between Cambodian Culture and Children's Rights.
104. First Step Cambodia. (2019). Caring For Boys Affected by Sexual Violence.

3. RESPONDING TO ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN CAMBODIA

This chapter presents evidence about the current response mechanisms to OCSEA in Cambodia. This includes formal reporting options and responses by police and the court system. It considers the contributions that government, civil society and the internet and technology industry make to combating OCSEA in Cambodia. This chapter also draws on the testimonies of six young people who sought justice through the justice system (referenced as RA4-CA-XX-child) and their caregivers. Much of the data in this chapter is drawn from qualitative interviews, and responses may not reflect the full range of experiences of those accessing the response mechanisms to OCSEA in Cambodia.

3.1 FORMAL REPORTING MECHANISMS

As documented in the previous chapter, very few children report cases of OCSEA via formal reporting mechanisms, such as the police or hotlines. Similarly, many caregivers indicated they would hesitate to report OCSEA to the police. In the household survey of 992 caregivers, 67% said that, hypothetically speaking, they would tell the police if their child experienced abuse; however, many others said they would not report due to concerns about negative consequences, fear of repercussions or because they would feel ashamed. In the frontline workers' survey, 72% of respondents suggested that OCSEA cases are not being reported because the quality of reporting mechanisms is perceived as poor and 68% said services are not trusted.

Interviews with justice professionals also suggested that non-governmental organisations were most trusted as they are more responsive, capable and better equipped in terms of resources and expertise. Child victims and their families reported being hesitant to seek services directly from the authorities without support. A child protection specialist from Action Pour Les Enfants (APLE) noted that children can be frightened when dealing with police. (RA4-J-CA-01-A) Some caregivers also raised concerns about corruption among the authorities responsible for receiving reports and investigating cases, citing a lack of trust in authorities and thus a reluctance to encourage their children to make a formal report.

Current national legislation, however, does not establish a system for receiving and addressing reports, including protection mechanisms for those who report OCSEA offences. The Code of Criminal Procedure includes three articles on the initiation of criminal actions or complaints by prosecution and victims,[105] but it does not include any provision on the presentation of an anonymous complaint as sufficient evidence to open an investigation. This means that no formal action can be undertaken unless the person reporting a case of OCSEA discloses their identity.

3.1.1 Police

The General Commissariat of the Cambodian National Police hosts two helpline numbers through which it receives calls on all forms of abuse, 24 hours per day. No data was provided by law enforcement on the number of calls related to OCSEA. Interviews with law enforcement representatives indicated that, with regard to OCSEA, the most common ways by which children come to the attention of police are either when caregivers, non-governmental organisations or the Commune Committees for Women and Children[106] file a report directly with the police.

Interviews with government representatives corroborated the household survey data suggesting that child victims do not usually report their cases directly to the police, with a child protection specialist from APLE noting: *"A small amount of the child victims go directly to the police and the majority of them [those reporting] go through the non-governmental organisation or anyone that they trust. Then, the organisation will assist and help them reach the police."* (RA4-CA-01-A)

This was echoed by a Vice Prosecutor from the Municipal Court who stated: *"In most of the child sexual abuse cases, victims have a non-governmental organisation facilitating a complaint-filing process with the police."* (RA4-CA-10-A)

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105. Government of Cambodia. (2007). Code of Criminal Procedure of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Articles 4–6.
106. Commune Committees for Women and Children are advisory bodies to the local Commune Councils, which monitor issues related to children and women. They can file a report to the police regarding child abuse in the community and also act as a referral mechanism to child protection services. They provide support to children during the justice process.

Through interviews with government representatives, it was understood that the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications sometimes refers cases to the police after receiving reports regarding CSAM. The Director of Information Security shared the follow insight: *"We [the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications] would first trace where the website was hosted. My department would need to verify where the site was being hosted, in our country or another country. If in our country, it would be easy. I would just contact the police and they would act and remove it."* (RA1-CA-04-A)

While the number of OCSEA cases reported to the police in Cambodia is unknown, data emerging from the CSAM hotline (Figure 22) suggests that, out of 470 reports referred to the police, 78% resulted in an investigation being opened, 9% in content being removed, 9% in a site being blocked, and in 5% of cases no action was taken. While it is unknown whether opening an investigation led to further action, the data suggests that, to some extent, the police are acting upon the reports.

It is interesting to note that for four of the young people interviewed, they themselves did not make a report, but they were identified from investigations into an offender. For these four young people, the involvement of the police was unexpected, and they reported feeling a sense of confusion and fear that they were in trouble. (RA8-CA)

"

Interviews with law enforcement indicated that cases of OCSEA were most commonly reported through caregivers, non-governmental organisations and Commune Committees for Women and Children.

"

Child Hotlines and Helplines – What is the Difference?

There are several channels through which children and adults can report cases of OCSEA. These include CSAM hotlines and child helplines. CSAM hotlines focus on working with the industry and law enforcement agencies to take down content, and they more often use a web-only format rather than phone numbers. The child helplines tend to respond to a broader range of child protection concerns, although some may focus specifically on online child sexual exploitation and abuse. Some helplines provide immediate crisis support, referrals and/or ongoing counselling and case management services.

3.1.2 National helpline – Cambodia Child Helpline

Since 2009, the Cambodia Child Helpline has provided professional phone counselling and information services for children. It is registered under the Ministry of Interior and operates 24 hours per day, toll free.[107] The majority of calls relate to educational issues, relationship matters, family matters and psycho-social mental health.[108] Only one case was recorded related to online child sexual exploitation and abuse and one to cyberbullying in 2018.[109,110] Child Helpline Cambodia reported to Child Helpline International that they received two contacts in 2019 concerning OCSEA, both of which related to online sexual abuse of boys.

3.1.3 CSAM hotline – Internet Hotline Cambodia

The Internet Hotline Cambodia, run by APLE, was established in 2015 to collect, disseminate and investigate reports from the public, law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organisations regarding potential child sexual exploitation activities and material online.[111] The hotline is a member of INHOPE, a network of 47 hotlines worldwide that aims to quickly remove CSAM from the internet.[112]

107. Child Helpline Cambodia.
108. Child Helpline Cambodia. (2019). Annual Report.
109. Child Helpline Cambodia. (2019). Annual Report.
110. Cambodia National Council for Children. (2019). Initial Situational Analysis on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) in Cambodia.
111. Internet Hotline Cambodia.
112. INHOPE.

3.1 FORMAL REPORTING MECHANISMS

Once a CSAM report is received, an analyst determines the legality and classifies the content.[113] When the material is classified as illegal, a notice/takedown is sent to the Anti-Cybercrime Department, other INHOPE hotlines or Internet service providers to co-ordinate notice and takedown actions.[114] Internet Hotline Cambodia also hosts an online learning centre, where children and youths, parents/caregivers and professionals can find resources and tools with which to recognise the risks and prevent online harm.[115]

Between 2017 and 2019, the hotline received a total of 5,565 reports (Figure 22). Of these reports, 60% were images and 26% videos.

Figure 23 shows that the most common report was distribution of CSAM (39% of all reports). Thirty-two percent of CSAM-related reports were later identified by analysts as 'doubtful CSAM' – meaning that the content, whilst not technically illegal in the country of origin, may be classified as illegal in Cambodia.

Figure 24 depicts the actions taken by recipient organisations once a case from the hotline was referred to them. The majority (60%) of the 5,565 reports received between 2017 and 2019 were referred directly to hosting/domain owners and most were removed. Twenty-three percent of reports were referred to INHOPE for action. INHOPE successfully actioned 80% of these referred reports via content removal (42%) and the site being blocked (38%). Just 8% of referred reports were delegated to Cambodian law enforcement for action and, of these, 9% resulted in content removal, 9% resulted in the site being blocked and 78% of reports resulted in an investigation being opened.

Figure 22. Reports to the CSAM hotline in Cambodia 2017–2019.

Gender	2017	2018	2019	Total
Reports	703	1,508	3,354	5,565

Base: CSAM Reports to APLE's CSAM hotline 2017–2019, n = 5,565.

Figure 23. Types of CSAM reported to the CSAM hotline.
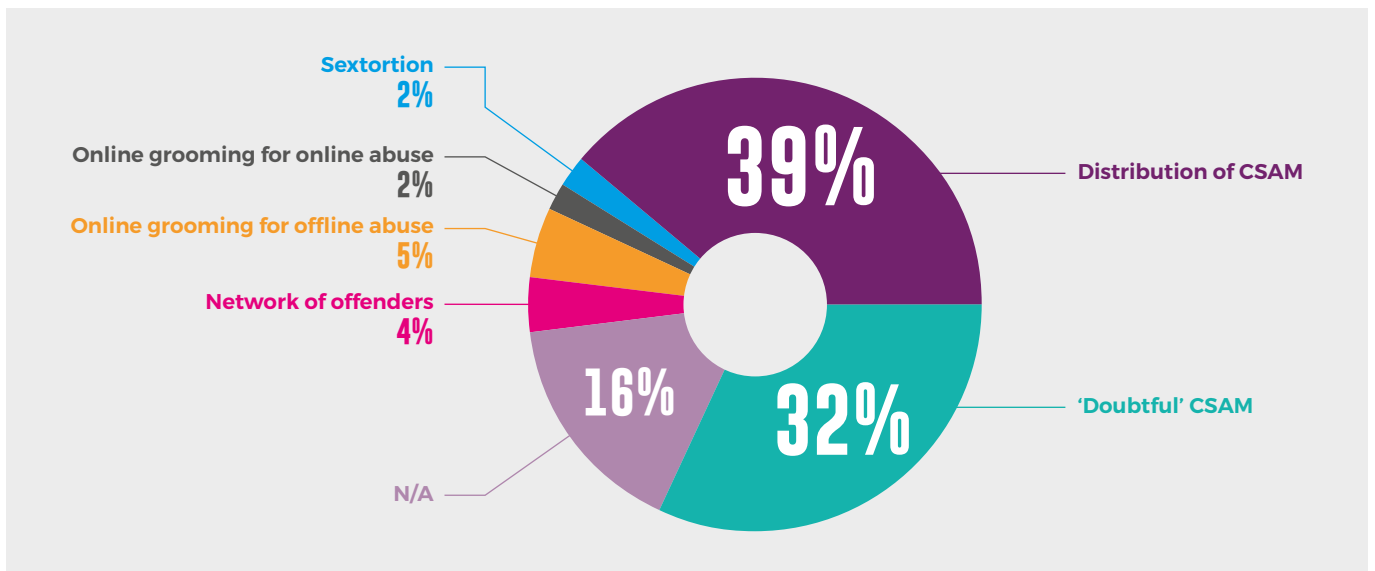
Base: CSAM Reports to APLE's CSAM hotline 2017–2019, n = 5,565.

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113. APLE. (2019). Impact Report 2019.
114.   Internet Hotline Cambodia.
115. APLE Cambodia. (n,d). Online Courses.

Figure 24: Action taken by recipient organisations after referrals from the CSAM hotline 2017–2019.

Action Taken	2017	2018	2019	Grand Total
Hosting/Domain Owner	**459**	**909**	**1,958**	**3,326**
Content not removed	0	38	71	109
Content removed	380	573	1,887	2,840
No action taken	79	298	0	377
INHOPE	**109**	**204**	**982**	**1,295**
Content not removed	0	0	137	137
Content removed	53	106	389	548
No action taken	19	98	0	117
Site blocked	37	0	456	493
Law Enforcement	**135**	**128**	**207**	**470**
Content removed	41	0	0	41
Investigation opened	31	128	207	366
No action taken	23	0	0	23
Site blocked	40	0	0	40
N/A	**0**	**130**	**207**	**337**
N/A	0	130	207	337
Non-Actionable	**0**	**137**	**0**	**137**
No action taken	0	137	0	137
Grand Total	**703**	**1,508**	**3,354**	**5,565**

Base: CSAM Reports to APLE's CSAM hotline 2017–2019, n = 5,565.

> " Besides collecting, disseminating and investigating reports, Internet Hotline Cambodia hosts an online learning centre, where one can find resources and tools to recognise risks and prevent online harm. "

3.2 LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE

This chapter focuses on local law enforcement's capabilities to prevent and respond to cases of OCSEA in Cambodia and is primarily based on the interviews conducted by INTERPOL with law enforcement units. The findings included in this chapter are complemented by data from interviews with government representatives, frontline social support workers and children and caregivers who sought justice. It should be noted that language difficulties proved a significant barrier in communication between local law enforcement personnel and the INTERPOL research team. This was mitigated by the support of APLE staff who assisted with language interpretation for the interviews. The presence of APLE staff may have inadvertently influenced some of the responses of law enforcement, which should be noted in relation to the findings. (RA8-CA)

3.2.1 The law enforcers

There are two main units in the Cambodia National Police (under the Ministry of Interior) responsible for investigating crimes against children: The Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department and the Anti-Cybercrime Department. Typically, the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department is the first to receive cases of child exploitation. Once it is clear that the case has a technological element, it is passed on to the Anti-Cybercrime Department for further investigation. Both units comprise judicial police officers and carry mandates over OCSEA; however, the specific responsibilities and procedures for responding to OCSEA cases are not clear and generally do not sit within the mandate of a single entity.

Interviews with law enforcement representatives revealed that there is substantive coordination and cooperation between these two units. (RA8-CA) A representative from the Cambodia National Council for Children explained: *"We witnessed that the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department and the Cybercrime Department always collaborate throughout their investigation processes, especially cases involving sexual crimes against children. For instance, when a sexual crime is linked with production or distribution of child pornography on the internet, the two departments are set to cooperate, resting on their respective role and expertise."* (RA1-CA-10-A)

Organisational Structure and Resources

The Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department

A definite number of officers was not provided to INTERPOL during the course of data collection; however, through a series of iterative discussions with the technical working group and other data sources, it was shared that there are 25 Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Offices at the municipality/province level, with hundreds of officers working on trafficking and child abuse cases generally. The human resource allocation and mapping indicates a robust organisational structure, but discussions on the country-level capacity of law enforcement agencies pivoted around the challenges faced, the need for further capacity building on OCSEA and operational support.

The Anti-Cybercrime Department

The unit addresses all types of cybercrime, not specifically OCSEA. Interviewees from the Anti-Cybercrime Department stated that law enforcement officers work in groups known as offices, and there were only four anti-cybercrime offices among 25 municipalities/provinces, working to coordinate cases. (RA1-CA-03-A) At the time of data collection, two or three officers were reported to be working in close collaboration with the Department of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department on investigations related to OCSEA cases.

Awareness of OCSEA

INTERPOL's interviews with law enforcers in Cambodia indicated that they are aware of the problem of OCSEA. However, a representative from the Cambodia National Council for Children stated: *"I think the understanding of different forms of criminal offences relating to OCSEA among police and court officials is still limited."* (RA1-CA-10-A) The 2019 research by the Council for Children also notes this.[116] Frontline social support workers also described law enforcement OCSEA awareness as fair (44%) or good (32%) (See Figure 25).

Figure 25. Frontline workers' perceptions of local law enforcement awareness and response to OCSEA.
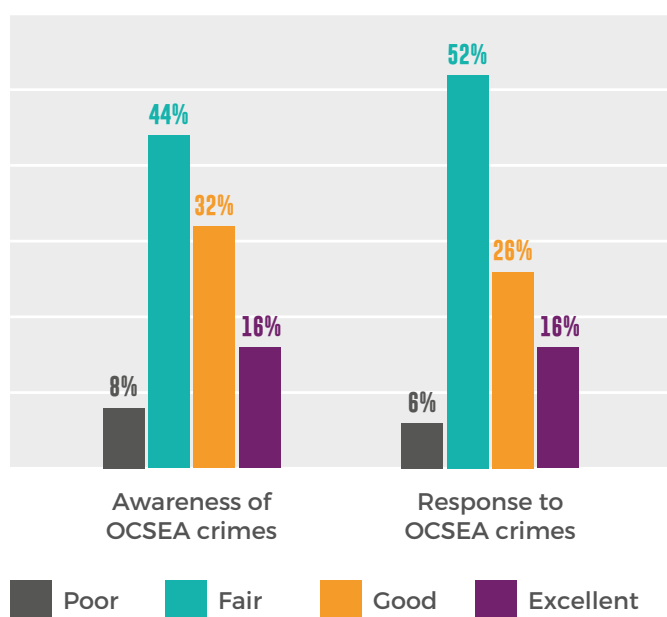
Base: Frontline welfare workers, n = 50.

Investigative/operational capacity

While general awareness among the police may require improvement, among specialist units, the law enforcement officers interviewed exhibited a good knowledge of basic investigation techniques; however, both current and previous research found that the law enforcement units tended to be largely reactive rather than proactive, and were often dependent on other government agencies to run the investigations.[117]

The investigation officers reported that they did not have authorisation in Cambodian law, nor any experience of covert investigations or monitoring of anonymous networks. However, it was found that the surveillance of cyber security is reasonably well organised and leads to early detection of cases.

The Anti-Trafficking Police respond to OCSEA under the limited Anti-Trafficking legislation, and usually refer cases to the Anti-Cybercrime Department. While, the Anti-Cybercrime Department has limited capacity to support cases beyond the physical examination of hardware in search of CSAM, one of the law enforcement officers stated that the unit assists prosecutors in tracing IP addresses or user accounts that can be used as evidence, which can sometimes aid in the broader investigation process. (RA1-CA-03-A)

The law enforcement officers also suggested that the successful investigation of cases was dependent on a range of factors, which were often outside the realm of the police or specialised unit, and which, according to the respondents, were sometimes not strictly within the control of the law enforcement authorities. Some of these included, but were not limited to, the level of cooperation from the victim and their family, support provided by non-governmental organisations and assistance from the Ministry of Women Affairs. (RA8-CA)

Training and development

The officers interviewed explained that there are procedures for the investigation of cases, data collection and the resolution of cases. However, a representative from the Cambodia National Council for Children said that, while procedures are in place, *"the police's investigative procedures concerning this type of OCSEA offences are still unclear and complicated. Both police and court officials (prosecutors, judges) need additional training on these emerging contexts of crime."* (RA1-CA-10-A)

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116. Cambodia National Council for Children. (2019). Initial Situational Analysis on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) in Cambodia.
117. Action Pour Les Enfants (2018). The Current Perception of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in Cambodia: A Study in Five Provinces.

3.2 LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE

A representative from the Cambodia National Council for Children also stated: *"We should integrate OCSEA topics into the Police Academy training curriculum or Bar Association's. And we should perhaps create a group of lawyers specialised in OCSEA. We've also seen many successful examples of cooperation between the national police and other local and international agencies, including non-governmental organisations to respond to these issues."* (RA1-CA-10-A)

The National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Children (2017–2021) includes developing child protection training modules on online child sexual exploitation and investigation of such cases for law enforcement.[118] Representatives from the Anti-Cybercrime Department indicated that some of the investigation officers were trained by the Ministry of Women Affairs and the Cambodian National Committee for Children on issues of OCSEA. There was also mention of external/international training programmes delivered by the International Organization for Migration in Bangkok and in the Republic of Korea. It was not clear what the training covered nor how many officers took part in these training opportunities. In previous research, representatives from the Anti-Trafficking Police stated that, while some law enforcement training on OCSEA has been made available to the Cambodian National Police, the relevance of learning about new technology was not well-understood resulting in very low attendance.[119] Interviews with officers did not identify clear future plans for widely available training for police.

Equipment and collection of evidence

The Investigation Unit, under the charge of the Commissariat General of the Cambodian National Police, is equipped with designated office space, tools and devices including computers and an internet connection. The digital forensic tool *Cellebrite,* initially provided to Cambodian authorities by the Australian Federal Police, was not sustainable given that the state budget was inadequate to pay for the ongoing authorisation of the tool.

The pace of technological advancement related to OCSEA offending continues to pose a challenge to Cambodia law enforcement. The Director of Information Security from the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications stated that the "investigator's capacity has not advanced in parallel to the advancement of technology." (RA1-CA-04-A) This view was also shared by another respondent from the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications who stated: "We do not have enough equipment or legislation to enhance the investigation. Technology is furthering, but the capability of our police has not progressed. So, this makes it extremely challenging." (RA1-CA-04-A)

Collection of evidence – especially digital evidence – is also challenging, as law enforcement does not possess the tools to examine digital evidence and, therefore, is not able to hand the intelligence over to the Anti-Cybercrime Department in order to proceed with investigations. Unregistered SIM cards are an added obstacle when it comes to determining IP addresses and associating them with the owner's devices. Despite the 2018 directives from the Ministries of Posts and Telecommunications and the Cambodian National Police that stated that all telecommunications companies in Cambodia must ensure all SIM card users are registered, the internet regulators estimate that around 10% of current SIM cards in circulation remain unregistered.[120] The Vice Chairperson for National Committee for Counter Trafficking from the Ministry of Interior noted: "We have difficulty finding the offender because the offender often only communicates online, and sometimes, they have changed their account already because they can create an account themselves illegally. We do not have the tools for the recognition of Wi-Fi or other online names. So, that is the challenge we face." (RA1-CA-06-A)

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118. The Steering Committee on Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children. (2017). Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children 2017-2021.
119. Cambodia National Council for Children. (2019). Initial Situational Analysis on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) in Cambodia.
120. Cambodia National Council for Children. (2019). Initial Situational Analysis on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) in Cambodia.

Child-friendly procedures

A child protection specialist from APLE shared their impressions of child-friendly practice in law enforcement: *"One of the things that I can see has improved is the police practice of the interview. They receive quite a lot of training in regard to child-friendly practices and investigation procedures. For example, during the investigation process, police try to engage with the people, especially social workers either from the government institution or from non-governmental organisation, to ensure to help and provide support to children in order for the investigation process to proceed smoothly."* (RA4-CA-01-A)

Interviews with children and their caregivers suggested, however, that despite the progress, children still described feelings of confusion, fear, shame and embarrassment. For some, these feelings were exacerbated by the lack of a private and confidential environment to discuss their experiences with the police (see chapter 3.2.2).

International collaboration

A representative from the Cambodia National Police reported that law enforcement agencies cooperate efficiently with international agencies. He stated that if there is a known case in which a person with a background of offending against children enters the country, international police will share intelligence to track down and carry out surveillance of the suspect in Cambodia. They will exchange information and background checks on offenders that enter Cambodia and, similarly, the Cambodian police will share information with other countries about Cambodian offenders in these countries. (RA1-CA-03-A)

The Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department, in particular, has cooperated closely with multiple foreign law enforcement agencies, including the Australian Federal Police, United States Homeland Security/FBI, the U.K. Police, the German Police, the French Police, the Swedish Police and the Austrian Police to investigate sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism perpetrated by foreigners. (RA1-CA-10-A)

A representative from the Ministry of Women Affairs noted that the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department has been *"preventing human trafficking at the inter-country level through a mechanism called COMMIT. They have been involved mostly in sex trafficking of children cases, but for case interventions, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are the lead agencies to coordinate. The international counterparts within COMMIT have also discussed the issue of OCSEA. It is hard to prevent this problem because each country must strengthen the management of internet connectivity and the education of users."* (RA1-CA-05-A)

A certain amount of cross-border collaboration has commenced, including the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Cambodian National Police in 2019 to fight transnational crimes (including crimes against children). Such initiatives need to be further expanded. As a child protection specialist from APLE commented: *"This is very important because OCSEA is not committed in a particular country, but is a global network. So, suppressing the offender or dealing with OCSEA needs collaborative efforts not only from Cambodia, but from everyone across the globe."* (RA4-CA-01-A)

3.2.2 Children's and caregivers' encounters with the police

This sub-chapter is based on the analysis of a relatively small sample of six victims in two geographical locations in Cambodia. Of the six victims interviewed, one case related to online grooming, but did not proceed beyond the initial police investigation, as the suspect was not located. Of the remaining cases, all charges were related to the production of child sexual abuse material. In one case, an additional charge was brought under Article 232 'Threats accompanied by extortion' of the Criminal Code.[121]

In a number of cases, young people describe how their first encounter with police was characterised by breaches of privacy and confidentiality. Young people described being approached by police within their community and being questioned in public with little consideration of basic respect for the dignity of the child and their family.

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121. Government of Cambodia. (2009). Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Article 232.

In another case (in which the young person believed that the abuse had initially been reported to the authorities by another child's parent), the police arrived at her home to inform her parents of the complaint and take them to the station for questioning. Their comments describe how difficult an experience this was for both children and families, and how the indiscreet actions of law enforcement meant that their entire community became privy to information that should have remained private. One of the children shared their recollections:

"The police came with the children who were photographed with me, brought them to my house... The whole village got into the car to see the faces of all the children who had been photographed... They came with the children who brought them to my house, who had made the complaint against him.... After that, my friends called on me to make a complaint against him [the offender] and told me to get into the car with them. The car took me and some of my friends in the very full car to get there, all of us went up there... When we got in the car, the whole village went crazy, screaming, and shouting, 'Make a complaint against him, make a complaint against him!' at the police...My father heard all that and he didn't understand. Then they pushed me into the car, and when my dad saw that, he got into the car and came with me." (RA4-CA-07-A)

Young people stated that the police (and lawyers and judges) spoke to them in a way that could be described as 'gruff and angry' or 'harsh' with one young person saying: *"Sometimes, some police are angry – they make out that their hearts are not easy-going, and their faces are angry. So, it's difficult."* (RA4-CA-2-A-Child)

The interview process

As mentioned above, some of the social workers interviewed mentioned that they had noticed improvements in the interview process over recent years. While this is a positive sign, interviews with young people who went through the justice system did not always echo this view.

In many situations, initial interviews with children and caregivers took place in 'open offices' with other officers and people around, which proved very difficult, as one caregiver explained: *"The room used for interviews should only have the people for the interview... Just have one interviewer, that's enough. Don't do it like they did with us: there were a lot of people there, there were a lot, not just a few."* (RA4-CA-4-A-Parent)

One young person explained how he was nervous and felt afraid of the police and fearful of their responses: *"When I spoke, I was afraid some of them would think about it and laugh, and embarrass me, look down on me and discriminate against me... I was like, nervous... I thought about the way, when they asked, I answered. I answered, they shouted and then my words wouldn't come out, it would block up and I didn't know what to do."* (RA4-CA-3-A-Child)

He later described how two other police officers also present in the room but not directly involved in the interview were listening and laughed at him when he was answering questions. He said that he *"[wanted to] stop the laughing and the discrimination".* (RA4-CA-3-A-Child)

One of the caregivers highlighted the need for empathy, commitment and sensitivity and recommended that those within the criminal justice system should *"pay attention to treat the children as their own, as if the victims were their own children and so get them justice quickly. When they think of the victims as any old person, they can't really be bothered."* (RA4-CA-9-A-Parent)

Other young people reported feeling scared, embarrassed, ashamed and fearful of the consequences. They spoke about the lack of choice that they felt they had during the process, and also, in relation to the gender of the police officers who conducted the interviews. One young person noted: *"I would have preferred a female; speaking with a female I would not be so embarrassing."* (RA4-CA-04-A-Child) Her mother confirmed this: *"I remember feeling afraid that my daughter was ashamed, because usually with that kind of story, speaking with men, you'd automatically be ashamed."* (RA4-CA-04-A-Parent)

Another young woman commented: *"Meeting a male police officer, it was difficult to speak. They were male, I'm female and with that, it was difficult to tell him things and answer questions. But even though it was difficult, I had to dare to speak so that I could get justice for myself."* (RA4-CA-9-A-Child)

There were examples of positive experiences shared. One young person described how her father had made the initial complaint and accompanied her throughout the interview and evidence gathering process. The young person stated: *I felt I wanted him there [her father] and when not alone, I wasn't scared."* (RA4-CA-9-A-Child) This close support was an important part of her experience, as was the opportunity to meet the police officer in a quiet and private room (see Sreylin's Story on page 88).

Implications of 'Rescue Operations'

There is a history of residential care being used for a range of child protection issues in Cambodia. This approach is supported by the government[122] and many non-governmental organisations provide such services, including to 'rescue and rehabilitate' children from trafficking, exploitation and abuse.

Anecdotal evidence[123] suggests that abuse and exploitation remain common reasons for placing children in residential care, and that few efforts are made to reintegrate children and to reunify families, including in cases where family members are not directly involved in their abuse. Research undertaken in 2017 indicates that a high number of children live in residential care in Cambodia.[124] Additionally, nearly one third of the institutions in which these children live do not have a Memorandum of Understanding with the relevant government authority – the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation.[125]

Over the last few years, awareness of the potential harm and the need to avoid institutionalisation wherever possible has grown, alongside an increasing commitment to community- and family-based care, an increase in the availability of foster care placements and greater investment in family strengthening initiatives.

These initiatives, involving close collaboration with the government, are contributing to a change in the 'culture of care' for all children. This is evidenced by the Family Care First initiative, led by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, which is currently active in five provinces.[126]

While positives steps have been taken to move away from placing children in institutional care when alternatives can be found, interviews conducted with children as part of *Disrupting Harm* indicate that taking children into care, even in a temporary capacity, is still a practice that takes place. This was illustrated in a case involving several OCSEA victims, in which the children were placed in a shelter for several days without any opportunity to make choices or be involved in the decision-making process: *"Because absolutely no one asked... we weren't happy at all, we all cried together. We missed home."* (RA4-CA-7A) The lack of choice for child victims, specifically related to their placement in residential institutions, is significant.

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122. The Sub Decree 119 on the "Management of Residential Care Centers" specifies that some children may need to be cared for in Residential Facilities. These accepted situations described in Article 11, include orphans or children who do not have any family to live with or are separated from them for various reasons, including migration and imprisonment, and children who are survivors of human trafficking, violence or sexual abuse or exploitation, among others. (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2015).

123. Personal communication with MoSVY Technical Advisor. (December 2020).

124. Stark, L., Rubenstein, B.L., Pak, K., Sok, K. (2017). National estimation of children in residential care institutions in Cambodia: a modelling study | BMJ Open.

125. Stark, L., Rubenstein, B.L., Pak, K., Sok, K. (2017). National estimation of children in residential care institutions in Cambodia: a modelling study | BMJ Open.

126. Family Care First | Safe and Nurturing Family Care for Cambodian Children (fcf-react.org).

3.3 OBTAINING JUSTICE AND ACCESS TO REMEDIES

3.3.1 Court proceedings

Child-friendly courts

In 2008, the Ministry of Justice passed a *Prakas*[127] on the Use of Court Screens and Courtroom TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses.[128] The aim of the *Prakas* is to provide a safe and supportive environment in which child victims can share information regarding their experience, in accordance with their developmental level, minimising trauma and threats to their safety.[129] This *Prakas* sets court screens as a primary protective measure in all cases involving children, and TV-linked testimony in cases where special protection is needed.[130] According to the regulation, the testimony of a child should be held *in camera*,[131] children can be accompanied by a court-approved support person[132] and the court must ensure that there is a comfortable environment for the child.[133]

The legal measures provided under this *Prakas* are, however, not automatically implemented but are based on an application introduced on behalf of the child by the prosecutor or lawyer at the beginning of the trial. From the interviews with criminal justice professionals, it emerged that, where an application for the protective measures is made, these are typically made available to child victims. A Child Protection Specialist with APLE commented:

"Our lawyer always requests the court officials, especially during the trial hearing, to use a privacy screen or to use a tailored television link interview to ensure children are not traumatised by joining the same trial and courtroom as the offender. This has been implemented quite well in some courts that we have been dealing with. But that happened mostly in the cases in which we required it [via the prosecutor or lawyer who represents the child victims]". (RA4-CA-01-A-justice)

In contrast, it also emerged from one of the criminal justice professionals that many victims and their families are not aware of these protection measures and do not apply for them. (RA4-CA-02-A&B)

A Child Protection Specialist from APLE also noted that not all courts actually have privacy screens available. (RA4-CA-01-A-justice)

Another justice professional noted that child victims are often traumatised if they see the offender in the courtroom, especially if the offender is a family member. (RA4-CA-04-A&B-justice) In response to this situation, one respondent, a prosecutor, explained that *"so far, the court has utilised a curtain block to prevent the offender and victim from seeing each other."* (RA4-CA-10-A-justice)

One child friendly measure that was consistently acknowledged by child victims and caregivers is the presence of staff from non-governmental organisations (lawyers, social workers, counsellors, etc.) throughout each step of the criminal justice process. They confirmed that staff provide emotional and practical support (for example, with transportation to attend court), including the preparation of children and caregivers for attending the court hearing, and processing the required paperwork to help them apply for compensation. As one child stated: *"They explained clearly, really encouraged me to talk... and I had confidence to talk. They told me that whichever story they asked me to shed light on, like the rape story, I must talk about what exactly happened. And that I could be brave because they were behind me."* (RA4-CA-2-A-Child)

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127. A Prakas is a ministerial or inter-ministerial decision signed by the relevant minister(s). A proclamation must conform to the constitution and to the law or sub-decree to which it refers.
128. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtroom TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses.
129. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses, Item 1.
130. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses. Item 2.
131. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses, Items 6 and 17.
132. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses, Items 7 and 12.
133. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Prakas No. 62/08 on the Use of Court Screen and Courtrooms TV-Linked Testimony from Child/Vulnerable Victims or Witnesses, Items 6, 12 and 14.

An official from within the justice system explained: *"Currently, there is no specialised judge to deal directly with cases involving children. The judge can be someone who has tried robbery cases. These judges can also be in charge of the children. So, this is something very hard for children who have to go through the legal justice system."* (RA4-CA-01-A)

Re-traumatisation

During the court hearing, child victims must also answer questions from different justice professionals when giving their testimony and in cross-examination. A Child Protection Specialist from APLE noted that *"questions have to be asked by different parties within the courtroom, by the prosecutor, by the judge, and especially by the defence lawyers."* The respondent went on to explain that defence lawyers *"ask questions as hard as they can in order to have the charge dropped or to have their client receive less punishment…. Children are very traumatised when answering those types of questions from the defence lawyers."* (RA4-CA-01-A-justice)

Duration of process and trial

Criminal justice professionals indicated that court proceedings are generally slow. One of the respondents explained: *"These processes can take years. And while we have seen some improvements in the speed at which trials are proceeding, it could still be drastically improved. The long duration puts additional pressure on children to be dealing with this for years."* (RA4-CA-02-A&B-justice)

> **They explained clearly, really encouraged me to talk… and I had confidence to talk. They told me that whichever story they asked me to shed light on, like the rape story, I must talk about what exactly happened. And that I could be brave because they were behind me.** RA4-CA-2-A-Child

Informal Out-of-Court Settlements

According to previous research, informal out-of-court settlements, which are common in Cambodia, represent a key obstacle to accessing justice for OCSEA victims.[134] Interviews conducted by *Disrupting Harm* confirmed that the culture of out-of-court settlements remains prevalent in the country. One criminal justice professional stated: *"The value of sexual modesty is highly regarded as sacred and praised; therefore, many families would prefer to keep abuse private and quiet rather than go through a public court system. So, that often results in marriage to the offender or out-of-court settlements.* (RA4-CA-02-A&B-justice)

This respondent also added: *"Some police officers and judicial personnel profit from these deals. They take a personal cut with the idea of doing justice, which is reinforced by the cultural perception towards these cases."* (RA4-CA-02-A&B-justice)

A Case Intake Specialist from Hagar added another explanation for this practice, stating: *"In Cambodia, poorly educated families do not want to go to court. So, when the abuses happen, the abuser and the family will try to solve and avoid going to court."* (RA4-CA-08-A-justice)

A criminal justice professional explained that, once informal settlements have been made in cases that had already been reported to the formal justice system, child victims often contact civil society organisations to request help in withdrawing the case as they are afraid to go to the police station after receiving money. (RA4-CA-02-A&B-justice)

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134. APLE. (2014). Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders. 21.

Legal aid

A Vice Prosecutor with the Phnom Penh Municipal Court pointed out that legal representation for child victims of OCSEA is not a mandatory requirement under the law. (RA4-CA-10-A-justice) A judge from the Phnom Penh Municipal Court explained that *"child victims, according to the legislation, do not need a lawyer, they have a social worker, a parent/caregiver who can represent them."* (RA4-CA-09-A-justice)

Criminal justice professionals, however, did point out that child victims from poor families have access to legal support from the Legal Aid Department of the Bar Association of Cambodia and certain non-governmental organisations. A Case Intake Specialist from Hagar Cambodia stated that most legal aid assistance comes from non-governmental organisations, including APLE, which provides pro bono legal counselling and representation to child victims, vulnerable children, witnesses and family members; (RA4-CA-08-A-justice) Terre des Hommes Netherlands, which provides legal support by accompanying child victims to the police station and court; (RA4-CA-05-A-justice) and the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights, which provides legal guidance on how to file complaints if OCSEA victims wish to do so. (RA4-CA-02-A&B-justice)

The OCSEA victims and caregivers interviewed indicated that they received legal support from lawyers from non-governmental organisations. This support was very positively regarded and appreciated. Young people spoke of feeling nervous and scared, and noted that the presence of lawyers from non-governmental organisations and staff was very important in providing reassurance, support and clarity about the process. One young person indicated that the lawyers explained the legal process, and when she did not understand, her father asked questions on her behalf. (RA4-CA-7-A-Child)

Although the support by lawyers was regarded positively and was appreciated, one child victim, however, described feeling nervous when meeting his lawyer, as his lawyer was female. He stated that he would have preferred a male lawyer since he was shy to discuss his case with a woman. This child victim also indicated that the language used by the lawyer was hard to understand. (RA4-CA-3-A-Child)

Criminal justice professionals observed that legal assistance for child victims from the Bar Association of Cambodia was insufficient due to excessive demand and non-governmental organisations were limited by the available financial resources. One respondent highlighted the lack of lawyers for child victims for all forms of exploitation, including OCSEA, in Cambodia. (RA4-CA-06-A&B-justice) A Child Protection Programme Manager, from M'Lop Tapang, emphasised the importance of legal aid by stating that, where lawyers are not present, judges do not pay attention to child victims. (RA4-CA-07-A-justice)

3.3.2 Compensation

Child victims of OCSEA in Cambodia can seek compensation in civil or criminal proceedings, as enshrined in Title 3 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, regardless of whether the injury is physical or psychological.[135] Although child victims of OCSEA can seek compensation through civil or criminal proceedings, the experiences of the criminal justice professionals interviewed regarding compensation claims by OCSEA victims all appeared to concern civil proceedings.

Awareness and practice of seeking compensation by child victims of OCSEA

From the interviews with the six child victims of OCSEA undertaken for *Disrupting Harm*, it emerged that the majority were aware of the option to seek compensation as they had been informed by the non-governmental organisations supporting them, and on some occasions, they remembered it being discussed in court by the judge and court officials. As one young person commented: *"I knew … At that time at the court, to my parents, at the time they asked us first, 'How much do you want to claim?'"* (RA4-CA-07-A-Child) Interviews with criminal justice professionals also confirmed that victims of child sexual exploitation and abuse, including online, in Cambodia actively use the law to seek compensation with the support of non-governmental organisations. Of the six victims of OCSEA interviewed, three confirmed that they had received compensation.

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135. Government of Cambodia. (2007). Code of Criminal Procedure of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Article 13.

Barriers to seeking compensation

Although there is awareness and an established practice of seeking compensation in Cambodia, criminal justice professionals pointed out that the process can be costly, and that it is difficult to obtain legal aid to file a compensation claim. Additionally, criminal justice professionals revealed that *"the compensation process is not easy, and it is even more difficult when it involves foreigners."* (RA4-CA-05-A-justice) The child victims and caregivers interviewed stated that seeking and gaining compensation was generally a long process, and there was little to motivate and encourage them.

A further challenge is the prevalence of out-of-court settlements, a common practice in Cambodia, which can lead to the offenders going unpunished, a financial compensation lower than the worth of the damages sustained[136] and a lack of access to support services for the victim (see Informal out of court settlements on page 85).

Even when compensation orders are finally awarded by the court, criminal justice professionals noted that it is difficult to have the order executed, and hence, most offenders never pay. One reason provided for this was that offenders sometimes do not have the financial means.

3.3.3 Social support services

Regarding the provision of social support services to child victims of OCSEA, both government agencies and non-governmental organisations play a role according to the criminal justice professionals interviewed. One explained that *"if there is a report, police will cooperate with the relevant parties, particularly with their collaborators, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, etc."* (RA4-CA-10-A-justice) Furthermore, services provided by the Ministry of Women's Affairs include legal counselling, psycho-social support and referral of victims to partnering non-governmental organisations for safe shelter. These services are provided through the Ministry's Legal Protection Department, which also assists victims with the support of a pro bono lawyer, drafting of complaints and support in justice seeking for women and girls affected by Gender-Based Violence in all stages of court proceedings.[137]

Regarding provision of medical care to victims of OCSEA in Cambodia, the Ministry of Health has taken the initiative to provide healthcare staff with training to build their understanding of violence against children and child sexual abuse, although this does not specifically focus on OCSEA. As the Vice Chair for the National Committee for Counter Trafficking's Prevention Working Group stated: *"The training generally focused on how to provide care and treatment to victims, using the book we have developed which is titled, 'Guiding Book on Healthcare for Victims of Violence and Sexual Abuse'."* (RA1-CA-02-A) This respondent explained that, in 2019, the Ministry of Health educated trainers in eight provinces covering 150 healthcare bases; however, as a result of COVID-19, the training was not extended to the 15 remaining provinces. (RA1-CA-02-A) Much healthcare in Cambodia is provided privately, and the respondent also noted that the Ministry of Health is also slow in engaging the private sector in tackling OCSEA and other child sexual abuse offences. The representative from the Ministry of Health did, however, state: *"We will assess if there's a possibility that the private sector can engage."* (RA1-CA-02-A)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, in collaboration with non-governmental organisations, conducted digital campaigns on the Ministry's Facebook with over 150,000 followers, and produced short educational videos and other promotional material with the aim of raising awareness of sexual exploitation online, with a particular focus on the exploitation of children.[138]

In terms of support services by non-governmental organisations, a Vice Prosecutor with the Phnom Penh Municipal Court stated: *"non-governmental organisations provide support to the children, especially psychological and legal support".* (RA4-CA-10-A-justice)

Non-governmental organisations providing services include APLE, which has social workers that provide child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, including OCSEA, with a wide range of services, such as medical care, shelter, social support and trauma counselling. Terre des Hommes Netherlands provides emotional support and legal support to child victims. (RA4-CA-05-A-justice)

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136. APLE. (2014). Investigating Travelling Child Sex Offenders. 21.
137. Information obtained during the consultations with the Technical Working Group of the Cambodia National Council for Children in May 2022.
138. Information obtained during the consultations with the Technical Working Group of the Cambodia National Council for Children in May 2022.

Frontline social service workers were also asked to identify factors that influence the availability of support services for child victims of online sexual exploitation and abuse. Location was the most commonly identified (92%) factor impacting the availability of support services, namely, the concentration of support services in urban areas.

Similarly, critical to the availability of such services was the perception that services were of a low quality (82%), which could potentially also affect uptake. Cost was identified by 68% of respondents as a barrier to child victims accessing support services, along with perceived discrimination against clients (58%).

Sreylin's* Story – A Positive Experience of the Criminal Justice System from the Perspective of an OCSEA Victim

Disrupting Harm has benefitted from the perspectives and insights of OCSEA survivors and their caregivers who generously shared their experiences to enrich the understanding of this phenomenon and to contribute to positive change. These interviews were specifically focused on experiences within the criminal justice process. Whilst there is much to learn from the challenges and difficulties that survivors and their caregivers describe, a great deal can also be gained from positive experiences and from understanding 'what worked well.'

In the case of Sreylin, her experiences throughout the criminal justice process after reporting a case of OCSEA were generally positive. Her father was also interviewed and shared a similar perspective. Overall, both daughter and father described a case that was well-handled by authorities who displayed professionalism and 'best practice' throughout the criminal justice process.

At the point of reporting, the father described how he chose not to involve the local police, instead going directly to the Anti-Cybercrime Department to lodge a complaint on behalf of his daughter. He describes being very encouraged by their response, which he described as both informative and confidential saying: *"They [the police within the Anti-Cybercrime Department] welcomed and cooperated with us very well… The police explained the father's rights and children's rights … The process of the police was careful and secure."* (RA4-CA-9-A-Parent)

It should be noted that Sreylin's father was educated and from a middle-class background which may have positively influenced the responses of the various criminal justice professionals involved in the case.

The father also indicated that he was quite assertive in ensuring his daughter received the appropriate responses: *"If we weren't stern with the police, they wouldn't [act] quickly to be able to arrest him, because he had disappeared completely from his account, on his telephone."*

His account of the process indicates that guidelines for conducting interviews in a child-friendly and confidential manner were generally followed, in contrast to other experiences captured in this report. At the police station in which the complaint was lodged, the child and her father were interviewed in a quiet and confidential room, with no disturbances, the police used appropriate language that the child understood, and the father attended the interview, which enabled him to provide support and encouragement to his daughter. The female lawyer of the non-governmental organisation was supportive and encouraging, and identified by the child as preferable, as she considered it easier to discuss the case with a woman. The child also had access to a social worker/counsellor, who was very supportive and advocated for her throughout the process.

Meeting the investigating judge was also described by Sreylin as a smooth and confidential process: *"At the time I met the investigating judge, there wasn't anything to explain again because he had all my documents already, so he had questions that he asked, and read out what the suspect said, and he asked questions to clarify if that was the truth or not the truth. At that time, there was nothing that was difficult and there weren't many people there while we met, there was just his side and us."* (RA4-CA-9-A)

She then described the court process, which appeared to follow guidelines restricting those attending to those directly involved in the case, therefore excluding members of the public:

"At the court, there were a lot of people together and, at that time, there was just the court people and some others, and for the people from outside, it was the wish of the court that they not be let in to watch. For myself, there was a room outside, and I could sit in there waiting and listening, and when they needed my statement, I went in and they put a screen in front of me so no-one could see my face. So, it was quite easy for me."
(RA4-CA-9-A)

The suspect was charged under Article 41 "Child Pornography" of the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation,[139] and Article 232 "Threats Accompanied by Extortion" of the Criminal Code.[140] The suspect was sentenced to three years in prison. No compensation was sought.

Although other experiences differed markedly from this, progress is evidently being made in Cambodia.

* name changed to protect the victim's identity

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139. Government of Cambodia. (2008). Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, Royal Kram NS/RKM/0208/005, Article 41.
140. Government of Cambodia. (2009). Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Article 232.

3.4 COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

3.4.1 Policy and government

The main government agencies working to address OCSEA in Cambodia are the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and the Cambodia National Council for Children. The Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation 2021–2025, developed and overseen by the Council for Children, also calls the following ministries to actively engage in the response to OCSEA: the Ministry of Women Affairs; the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation; the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Culture. The Cambodian National Council for Children is also leading the implementation of the Action Plan for the Prevention and Response to Violence Against Children (2017–2021) (see overview of Legislation and Policy).

Promising developments and initiatives
Actions of the Cambodia National Council for Children Working Group. Aside from developing the five-year plan to respond to OCSEA, the council coordinates efforts and responses of all of the ministries, organises stakeholder trainings and undertakes awareness-raising efforts. (RA1-CA-10-A) Together with Terre des Hommes Netherlands and APLE, the Council commissioned the Initial Situational Analysis of Online Child Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia in 2019[141] to assess the current threat of OCSEA and to better understand child vulnerabilities along with existing gaps in national policy, legal standards, criminal justice, social services and the private sector. (RA1-CA-10-A)

While these initiatives are promising, effectiveness can only be assessed via rigorous evaluation and evidence that, to date, is lacking. A representative from the Ministry of Women's Affairs stated: *"If we want to measure the impact of, for example, violence being decreased, it is hard because it requires a long time. So, when we develop a budget proposal, it is quite challenging."* (RA1-CA-05-A)

Child participation in the development of policies and plans. As research shows, children demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the vulnerabilities that they face in their online environments and ways in which these environments could be made safer in the Cambodian context.[142] They are a vast resource of practical knowledge of online environments and should be given the opportunity to influence the development of OCSEA-related policy and practice. In 2014, the Cambodian Government issued a Guideline for Applying Child Participation to promote quality child participation at the sub-national, national and international levels on relevant issues or concerns affecting children.[143] The guideline aims to facilitate child participation processes by stating key principles[144] that should be implemented and steps to follow in each of the stages of the process.[145] A representative from the Ministry of Interior noted that children were involved in the development of the Child Protection Law. (RA1-CA-03-A)

Establishment of Commune Committees for Women and Children across the country to ensure child protection at the local level. While it has been reported that members sometimes lack capacity, have insufficient funds to fulfil their mandate and are unclear about their responsibilities, these committees aim to provide the necessary support to victims, including emotional support. The Commune Committees for Women and Children represent a unique local response to protecting children, including those impacted by OCSEA.

Challenges
Low awareness of OCSEA among government officials. The government representatives interviewed demonstrated limited understanding of OCSEA. Previous research in Cambodia also found that some of the leaders within the National Cambodian Police did not exhibit a good level of awareness of OCSEA nor did they demonstrate a strong understanding of the critical role of the internet in child sexual abuse and exploitation within Cambodian communities.[146]

141. Cambodia National Council for Children. (2019). Initial Situational Analysis on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) in Cambodia.
142. Cambodia National Council for Children. (2019). Initial Situational Analysis on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) in Cambodia.
143. Government of Cambodia. (2014). Decision on Guideline for Applying Child Participation, Article 1.
144. Government of Cambodia. (2014). Decision on Guideline for Applying Child Participation, Article 5.
145. Government of Cambodia. (2014). Decision on Guideline for Applying Child Participation, Article 6.
146. Cambodia National Council for Children. (2019). Initial Situational Analysis on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) in Cambodia. The Initial Situational Analysis on OCSE in Cambodia research conducted with Action Pour Les Enfants (APLE) was finalised, endorsed by Cambodia National Council for Children after several workshops and has become an official document signed by Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation in March 2020.

Government agencies also lack capacity in terms of technical expertise. As a result of limited awareness-raising programmes on OCSEA, awareness and knowledge among all parties, including government officials, teachers, caregivers and communities, is lacking. In 2015, the Committee on the Rights of the Child noted that Cambodia had not addressed the underlying root causes and contributing factors leading to children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation.[147] Despite the increasing number of initiatives, preventative measures specifically addressing child sexual abuse material are broadly described as scattered, inadequate and limited.[148]

Mandated agencies working in silos. Evidence suggests that, while there is some collaboration between agencies in Cambodia, many agencies and organisations work independently of one another and are driven by different policies, standards and mandates. A representative from the Cambodia National Police noted that ongoing cooperation among government agencies is needed stating: *"We cannot do this effectively alone. We cannot implement our strategy disjointedly. The challenge, at present, is that we are unable to harmonise our action plan yet. Based on my observation, the practice is still very individual."* (RA1-CA-03-A)

The Director of the Information Security within the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications added that *"it is important to have political support and will. If everyone does it together, then it will be done."* (RA1-CA-04-A)

> **It is important to have political support and will. If everyone does it together, then it will be done.**
> RA1-CA-04-A

Lack of OCSEA-related education in schools. Interviews with government representatives indicated that few OCSEA-related awareness-raising programmes currently exist for school students in Cambodia. Most existing programmes cover general internet safety. (RA1-CA-04-A) A representative of the Ministry of Interior mentioned that the National Committee for Countering Trafficking in Persons and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports are currently developing a resource for primary and secondary schools that will *"provide the concept of child abuse including online or sexual violence against children [...] as well as parts of laws and the procedures of complaints. It will be finalised soon and will be incorporated into school curricula."* (RA1-CA-06-A) At the time of writing, this manual was yet to be published.

Insufficient government investment. Several government interviewees mentioned that Cambodia's child protection system remains weak and significantly under-resourced due to insufficient budget allocation to invest in the human and financial resources required to address child protection concerns, including OCSEA, in Cambodia. (RA1-CA-05-A) (RA1-CA-07-A)

3.4.2 Civil society

Civil society organisations play an important role in responding to OCSEA. They cooperate with law enforcement and justice professionals in the provision of services such as shelter, counselling and legal aid. They are involved in awareness-raising activities and in providing training for the child protection workforce. There are legal provisions in Cambodia to ensure that non-governmental organisations can assist or support victims, at their request, during the investigation and legal proceedings, and non-governmental organisations providing legal aid play a significant role in supporting children in these proceedings.[149] As mentioned by some of the caregivers interviewed, support from non-governmental organisation during the justice process was crucial to their children's cases. (RA4-CA-2-A-Parent)

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147. Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2015). Concluding Observations on the Report Submitted by Cambodia, Paragraph 16(a).
148. ECPAT International. (2018). ECPAT Country Overview: Cambodia. Bangkok: ECPAT International.
149. Joamets, K., & Ngouv, M. (2019). A Child's Right to be Heard and be Represented in the Criminal Procedure: A Comparative Analysis of Estonian and Cambodian Law To CRC. Baltic Journal of European Studies, 9(4), 141.

Additionally, workers from non-governmental organisations are often the first respondents to cases of OCSEA. When a case is reported to a non-governmental organisation, in most cases, representatives from the organisation accompany the child victim to the police station together with the victim's family members, wherever possible.

Some of the organisations receiving reports of OCSEA in Cambodia include APLE which also operates the CSAM Hotline (see sub-chapter 3.1.3), Terre Des Hommes-Netherlands, Friends International, and M'Lop Tapang, which operates the ChildSafe 24-hour Hotline for children in danger in the Sihanoukville area.

While existing non-governmental organisations who receive referrals from law enforcement provide services and support to children, they sometimes lack specialist training, which may limit their effectiveness. The *Disrupting Harm* research also indicated that many frontline social support workers knew little about OCSEA.

When frontline social support workers were asked to rate collaboration between non-governmental organisations on OCSEA, 60% of respondents rated current collaboration as good or excellent, with a further 40% rating it as fair. Just 4% of respondents suggested that such collaboration was poor.

3.4.3 Internet and mobile service providers and platforms

Collaboration with Internet and mobile service providers and platforms is essential to investigating OCSEA crimes and preventing the dissemination of CSAM. The legal requirements and practical procedures differ depending on whether the operators are Cambodian or global.

Domestic Internet service providers

Evidence gathering: Currently, there is no legislation in Cambodia requiring Internet service providers to retain content-based or non-content-based data, or to provide such material to law enforcement. Cambodian law enforcement has no power to request or require that private parties, such as platforms, retain the evidence of a crime. (RA1-CA-04-A) The most recent publicly available version of the draft Cybercrime Law includes a provision related to the preservation of computer and traffic data.[150] This draft provision establishes that the prosecutor or the court can order the expeditious preservation of computer and traffic data if there are indications that such data is connected with a cybercrime, including offences related to CSAM, being committed.[151] The period of expeditious data preservation cannot be longer than 120 days.[152] Prosecutors and courts can also order the copying of such data when needed for evidence purposes[153] and the searching and seizing of computer data.[154]

As the draft law is still under review, accessing the relevant data needed for an investigation by law enforcement agencies is currently a long and difficult process. A representative from the Ministry of Justice explained: *"When it comes to storing user identity data, it is kept by mobile companies who store all the data on their database or server as they need to make sure everything is in place, so when there are problems, law enforcement officers can go there to obtain information about the suspect; however, not everyone is authorised to do that. For example, when a crime is committed and there is an open investigation, law enforcement officers must present a court warrant to access such information."* (RA1-CA-08-A)

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150. Government of Cambodia – Working Group of Council of Ministers. (n,d). Cybercrime Law Draft V.1, Article 17.
151.147 Government of Cambodia – Working Group of Council of Ministers. (n,d). Cybercrime Law Draft V.1, Article 17.
152.148 Government of Cambodia – Working Group of Council of Ministers. (n,d). Cybercrime Law Draft V.1, Article 17.
153. Government of Cambodia – Working Group of Council of Ministers. (n,d). Cybercrime Law Draft V.1, Article 18.
154. Government of Cambodia – Working Group of Council of Ministers. (n,d). Cybercrime Law Draft V.1, Article 19.

Removing/reporting CSAM: Cambodia has no laws that require Internet service providers to filter, block and/or remove CSAM and report individuals or companies who disseminate, trade or distribute such material. This lack of legislation persists despite the indication of the Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children 2017–2021, which tasked the Ministry of Justice with adding a new article to the draft Cybercrime Law to ensure that law enforcement agencies have the authority to block content of any online platform that contributes to, promotes, or facilitates OCSEA.[155] According to the most recent publicly available version of the draft Cybercrime Law, this provision is yet to be included.[156]

While no law requires Cambodian Internet service providers to filter and remove CSAM content from their platforms, indications of action are good. For example, the APLE CSAM Hotline data showed that hosting/domain owners were predominantly removing content when requested. Between 2017 and 2019, 85% of the reports being referred to the domain owners were removed (see Figure 24).

Global platforms

Evidence gathering: The most recent publicly available version of the draft Cybercrime Law includes a provision related to mutual legal assistance in relation to cybercrime offences, including CSAM-related offences.[157] Such provisions comprehensively refer to different procedures of the criminal case such as evidence gathering, searches, confiscation, seizures and arrests.[158]

Furthermore, in November 2019, the Government enacted the Law on Electronic Commerce.[159] The fifth chapter of this law covers potential liabilities of e-commerce service providers and intermediaries, possibly including foreign entities for third-party content and content takedown requests.[160] This could potentially be applicable to content relating to OCSEA.

Removing/reporting CSAM: With respect to removing/reporting CSAM, there are rarely any formal agreements between national law enforcement agencies and global platforms. The platforms would prefer to view requests from government partners as notifications of potential violations of their own terms of service. Since CSAM is contrary to the platforms' terms of service and U.S. law, it would be in the companies' interests to remove such content.

A representative from the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications explained that sometimes *"in the case where it [CSAM] was hosted in another country, but it involved a Cambodian child or Cambodian citizens, we could then block access to the website here so that Cambodians could not see it. Or we could have another possible mechanism through our incident response team called CamCert Cambodia. This team could email Internet service providers in other countries, asking them to remove access to that child porn site. We would just need to instruct them that, 'We have seen an incident where child pornography was hosted on your server; could you investigate and take it down?' This is what we can do."* (RA1-CA-04-A)

Transparency Data[161]

In 2017, 2018 and 2019, the transparency reports of major social media platforms[162] show that authorities in Cambodia made:

- One request to Facebook for content restriction, and two requests for user data.
- One request for Google user data.
- No other requests to globally popular platforms or technology companies.

These figures suggest that Cambodian law enforcement did not regularly engage in cross-border electronic evidence gathering or information sharing in 2017–2019.

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155. Government of Cambodia. (2017). Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017-2021), 24.

156. Government of Cambodia – Working Group of Council of Ministers. (n,d). Cybercrime Law Draft V.1.

157. Government of Cambodia – Working Group of Council of Ministers. (n,d). Cybercrime Law Draft V.1, Article 37-38.

158. Government of Cambodia – Working Group of Council of Ministers. (n,d). Cybercrime Law Draft V.1, Article 37.

159. Khmer Times. (2019). New Commerce Laws Come into Effect.

160. Tilleke & Gibbins. (2019). Cambodia Enacts a New E-Commerce Law and a Consumer Protection Law.

161. The annual transparency reports of major social media platforms provide statistics on the number of requests for user data and content removal from each country's government authorities. While none of the major platforms list the number of requests specifically related to OCSEA, their transparency data gives an indication of the extent to which the law enforcement agencies of various countries are engaged in direct cooperation with large global platforms.

162. Platforms were selected on the basis of high volumes of reports to the NCMEC (10,000+), availability of transparency reporting and known popularity in *Disrupting Harm* focus countries. In addition to U.S.-based companies, transparency reports for Line and TikTok were also reviewed.

4. HOW TO DISRUPT HARM IN CAMBODIA

Disrupting Harm from OCSEA requires comprehensive and sustained actions from all stakeholders – families, communities, government representatives, law enforcement agencies, justice and social support service professionals and the national and international technology and communications industry. While children are part of the solution, the harm caused by OCSEA obliges adults to act to protect them; we must be careful not to put too much of the responsibility on children to protect themselves from harm without support.

Detailed recommendations for action in Cambodia are clustered under six key insights from the *Disrupting Harm* research and are signposted for different stakeholder groups. However, all these recommended actions are interlinked and are most effective if implemented together.

4.1 SIX KEY INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIONS

INSIGHT 1

In the past year, 11% of internet-using children aged 12–17 in Cambodia were subjected to clear examples of online sexual exploitation and abuse that included being blackmailed into engaging in sexual activities, having their sexual images shared without permission, or being coercing into engaging in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts. Scaled to the national population, this represents an estimated 160,000 children who may have been subjected to any of these harms in the span of a single year. Boys reported such experiences almost twice as often as girls.

Government

1.1 Adapt national-scale awareness and education programmes about sexual exploitation and abuse of children to familiarise people with the role technology can play in this type of abuse. Adapting and contextualising existing evidence-based programmes that have proven to be effective should be prioritised and sustained. When such programmes exist, their proper implementation should be ensured, and adequate monitoring and evaluation measures should be put in place. Evaluation of interventions and programmes should make use of innovative tools, such as the online safety programmes evaluation model[163] that was recently developed by a global panel of experts on online safety. This framework of indicators was designed to address the specific challenges of the East Asia and Pacific regions and has been piloted in Cambodia.

It is crucial that these programmes be adapted and tested through safe and ethical consultations with children, caregivers and teachers to ensure that they address their lived experiences of online risks and also include the techniques they use to keep themselves/children safe. This will help to create campaign messages that are relevant to children's lived experiences and are, therefore, more likely to resonate with them.

The key objectives of these messages should include:

- Equipping caregivers with the knowledge and skills that allow them to foster safe and ongoing communication with children about online activities, leveraging, when possible, existing positive parenting programmes in Cambodia.

- Supporting caregivers, especially those who are not current or confident internet users, in going online and becoming more familiar with the platforms that children are using. Provide evidence-based education and information to caregivers so that they can recognise exploitative or abusive behaviour from members of the community, both online and offline. This will also help them teach children how to recognise such behaviour and stay safe.

- Help adults who are in contact with children to overcome discomfort when discussing sex and sexuality and encourage open dialogue about sexual abuse and exploitation online or in person. In the longer term, this will make it easier for caregivers to talk to and support their children and will make children more likely to come to their caregivers for help when needed. The fact that a majority of caregivers of internet-using children also frequently go online, and that most children go online from home, presents an important opportunity for caregivers to be involved in teaching children how to stay safe online.

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163. UNICEF (forthcoming). Evaluating Online Safety: What Works to Keep Children Safe Online.

These messages can be disseminated to children through their preferred sources. *Disrupting Harm* data shows that school teachers are both the primary (88%) and preferred source (50%) of sex-related education or information. They are also one of the possible points of disclosure for a proportion of children. Engaging teachers in campaigns is a critical means by which to disseminate key messages; however, it is also key to building trust and a sense of safety in order to enhance the opportunity for an open conversation and, where necessary, disclosure.

1.2 Invest in digital literacy programmes for both children and caregivers. To ensure that children and caregivers are not only *aware* of the possible risks but that they know *what to do about them*, there is a need for comprehensive digital literacy and safety training. This should include information about what children can do if they are being bothered online, what kind of content is appropriate to share online with others and basic skills, such as how to change their privacy settings and block people from contacting them. This information could be integrated into positive parenting programmes. Since a third of children use internet at school, there is a need to consider integrating cyber safety education into school curricula. The *Disrupting Harm* data indicates that younger children aged 12–14 are consistently less likely than older children aged 16–17 to acknowledge online risks; thus, awareness campaigns should pay special attention to this age group.

Caregivers, teachers and social support services[164]

1.3 Engage with children to encourage open dialogue and to provide appropriate oversight of both their online and offline interactions and behaviours. Become informed about current and emerging risks to children. Be aware that in Cambodia, the evidence suggests that boys are twice as likely as girls to report having experienced OCSEA.

INSIGHT 2

According to the household survey, most offenders of OCSEA are people already known to the child. These were often family members, adult friends, peers or romantic partners. People previously unknown to the child were responsible for approximately one in five instances of the OCSEA-related offences identified in the household survey.

Government

2.1 Education and awareness-raising efforts should not focus disproportionately on 'stranger danger'. The *Disrupting Harm* findings demonstrate that children are more likely to be asked to talk about sex or share sexual material online by people they already know, rather than people unknown to the child. Efforts to raise children's, caregivers' and teachers' awareness about the risks of sharing images online should avoid an excessive focus on the 'dangerous stranger.' Prepare messages and materials with the aid of experts and encompass the various manifestations of OCSEA. Include information on where to go if a child is in danger or needs support, and how caregivers and communities can foster safe and child-appropriate communication channels with children.

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164. Government, inter-governmental agencies and civil society need to translate and convey these messages to reach caregivers, communities, medical staff and teachers.

2.2 Age-appropriate education and awareness-raising approaches need to reach all children. When children do not have all the information, it enables offenders to take advantage. Inclusivity is crucial in disseminating these messages. It must be ensured that knowledge reaches all children, and includes information about sex, consent, personal boundaries, and what adults or others around children can and cannot do to them. Younger respondents aged 12–14 were consistently the least likely to recognise the risks associated with potentially harmful online activities as compared to older 16–17-year-olds.

Although it might be uncomfortable to discuss these issues with children, younger children should also be targeted in these awareness efforts. As a vast majority of the children surveyed cited school teachers as their preferred source of sex education, the existing Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport curriculum should be scaled up to include relevant sex education both in primary and secondary schools.

Special care should also be taken to ensure that information is communicated to children whose situation may increase their vulnerability to OCSEA, including children with disabilities, migrant children, children living on the street and out-of-school children. Non-governmental organisations may be ideally positioned to deliver information to these vulnerable populations. Existing outreach and informal education activities, such as the ones delivered by the Partnership Programme for the Protection of Children, could be scaled-up to that effect.

In addition to what already exists in Cambodia, there are other developed internationally reports[165] and initiatives[166] that might act as helpful references and good practice examples of age-appropriate resource material.[167]

2.3 Help caregivers who are in contact with children to overcome discomfort in discussing sex and sexuality with the children. This can encourage open dialogue about sexual abuse and exploitation online or in person. Guidance and skills-building programmes for caregivers could be provided through existing government interventions and programmes promoting positive parenting. In the longer term, this will make it easier for caregivers to talk to and support their children and will make children more likely to come to their caregivers for help when needed. Provide evidence-based education and information to caregivers so that they can recognise exploitative or abusive behaviour from members of the community, online and offline. This will also help them to teach children how to recognise such behaviour and stay safe. Good practices already exist[168,169] and can be adapted for use in the local context.

Caregivers, teachers and social support services[170]

2.4 Play an active role in teaching children about sex, consent and boundaries and what adults or others around them can or cannot do to them, and how to say no to others. This can encourage open dialogue about sexual abuse and exploitation online or in person. This is especially important since data shows that offenders can be persons close to the child. In the longer term, this will make it easier for caregivers to talk to and support their children and will make children more likely to come to their caregivers for help when needed.

2.5 Help children, caregivers, teachers and those working with children to understand the full extent of the risks of sharing sexual content and how to engage in harm minimisation to limit possible negative repercussions. The largest proportion of children who shared sexual content initially did so because they were in love (29%) or trusted the other person (20%), but this behaviour can lead to serious harm, such as non-consensual sharing of the content with others and sexual extortion.

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165. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). (2021). My Body is My Own.
166. United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. (2020). Bodily autonomy and SRHR.
167. National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. (2017). Talk PANTS with Pantosaurus and his PANTS song #TalkPANTS – YouTube.
168. National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. (2017). Talk PANTS with Pantosaurus and his PANTS song #TalkPANTS – YouTube.
169. Australian eSafety Commissioner's programme 'Start the Chat' to encourage caregivers to talk with their children about their lives online; and eSafety Commissioner's programme for seniors going online for the first time 'Be Connected'.
170. Government, inter-governmental agencies and civil society need to translate and convey these messages to reach caregivers, communities, medical staff and teachers.

INSIGHT 3

Children mainly experienced OCSEA through the major social media platforms, most commonly via Facebook/Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp.

Government

3.1 Impose legal duties on domestic Internet service providers to promptly comply with law enforcement requests for information, to retain data for a minimal period and to filter, block and/or take down CSAM. This will assist investigations into crimes and control the wide distribution of CSAM.

3.2 Promote awareness of OCSEA among the relevant private sector entities including Internet and mobile service providers to enhance understanding of the risks to children and what they can do to combat OCSEA. Promote multi-sectoral initiatives, such as the UNICEF and Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications programme, to develop or strengthen internal child protection policies on internet and communications technologies companies, ensuring these align with international standards.

Law enforcement

3.3 Enhance and expand existing collaborative mechanisms with global social media platforms to ensure the timely and effective gathering of digital evidence provided by these platforms, particularly in the form of data requests and content removal procedures.

Industry

3.4 Make flagging, blocking and reporting mechanisms within online platforms clear and accessible to children. These mechanisms should be child-friendly and should explicitly outline what children can expect following the submission of a report. Platforms and service providers must demonstrate transparency and accountability in how they make timely responses to reports made by children. Engage with relevant governmental agencies to enhance staff training on child online protection and reporting of OCSEA.

3.5 Enhance collaboration with government and non-government agencies in building preventive measures with the engagement of the public and strengthen the development of innovative technological solutions to tackle OCSEA.

3.6 Implement standards to actively remove inappropriate content that children might encounter online, particularly on social media platforms. Half of the children in Cambodia who saw sexual content by accident in the past year came across this on social media (social media posts 35%; Direct messages via social media 15%).

3.7 Prioritise children's needs in product development processes. Such design must be informed by evidence on children's digital practices and their experiences of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, including this *Disrupting Harm* study.[171]

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171. A good starting point for exploration is the free tools made available by the Australian eSafety Commissioner as well as well as this framework developed by UNICEF.

INSIGHT 4

Children who were subjected to OCSEA crimes tended to confide in people within their interpersonal networks, particularly their friends, male caregivers and siblings. Helplines and the police were almost never avenues through which children sought help.

Government

4.1 Create community-level mechanisms for disclosure and reporting. As children tend to be most inclined to disclose abuse to those within their existing interpersonal networks (most often friends and caregivers), providing a diversity of mechanisms that best support impacted children to share their story in safety is critical. For example, create programmes in which trained community members can assist children and their families with the reporting and help-seeking process. The Cambodia PROTECT/ Strong Family[172] behaviour change campaign could be utilised to disseminate information about reporting mechanisms and the community aspect could be integrated as part of Cambodia PROTECT community engagement outreach.

4.2 Given that children rely heavily on their interpersonal networks for support, especially friends, consider creating programmes, which partly rely on empowering children to encourage their peers to report their experiences of abuse. The existing literature states that such initiatives in the region[173] are effective in improving children's awareness of CSEA and increasing rates of disclosure.

4.3 Improve the quality and efficacy of helplines by providing them with adequate resources and developing operating guidelines and coordination mechanisms. Even if children are made aware of helplines, if initial responses to disclosure and help-seeking are poor, the child, and others observing the case, will be much less likely to seek help again.

4.4 Raise awareness that Cambodia Child Helpline can be a source of information about how to support young people subjected to OCSEA. The *Disrupting Harm* data shows that children prefer to disclose OCSEA to people that they know and trust. Awareness-raising efforts can communicate that peers, siblings, caregivers and teachers are able to find information, support services and advice from helplines. An important prerequisite is that helplines are adequately resourced and trained concerning OCSEA so that they provide good quality information and advice.

4.5 Invest in improving the knowledge and skills of the social service workforce regarding OCSEA. Improve the capacity of frontline staff to better identify children at risk or that have experienced OCSEA. This should include teachers, social and health workers and those providing psycho-social support.

4.6 Dedicate resources to child helplines and CSAM hotlines to improve record keeping so that they can encode detailed statistics on the OCSEA reported. Increasing the capacity of these organisations to collect and analyse such data will provide a better understanding of children's experiences of OCSEA, including how it changes over time, which could help develop prevention programmes, necessary policies and legislative amendments.

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172. see: Strong Family campaign.
173. Madrid, B. et al. (2020). Safe schools for teens: preventing sexual abuse of urban poor teens, proof-of-concept study - Improving teachers' and students' knowledge, skills and attitudes. *Heliyon 6(6).*

Caregivers, teachers and social support services[174]

4.7 Foster an environment in which children are comfortable seeking advice and help and can have conversations about sex, sexuality and reproductive health. Norms that limit discussions about sex, or that cause children to feel embarrassment and shame when they are subjected to child sexual exploitation and abuse, hinder help-seeking.

4.8 Responses to disclosures of OCSEA should always convey that the abuse is never the child's fault, whatever choices they have made. The *Disrupting Harm* research shows that children subjected to OCSEA often blamed themselves and felt that they had let their caregivers and others down. Children also reported feeling judged by the police. All responses to and interactions with children impacted by OCSEA should be without judgement or punishment.[175]

4.9 Avoid restricting children's internet access in response to potential harm. One third of caregivers said they would restrict their child's internet use if their child was bothered by something online. Restricting access to technology is seen as a punishment. It only protects children temporarily and does not teach them how to navigate similar situations in the future. This response also tends to discourage children from confiding in adults about the problems they experience.

4.10 Help children understand the full extent of the risks of sharing sexual content and how to engage in harm minimisation to limit possible negative repercussions. The largest proportion of children who shared sexual content initially did so because they were in love (29%) or trusted the other person (20%); however, this behaviour can lead to serious harm, such as non-consensual sharing of the content with others and sexual extortion.

Law enforcement

4.11 Establish clear guidelines on case referrals between the agencies involved in case investigations. Make sure the referral of OCSEA cases aligns with the Child Protection Standard Operating Procedures, which define the role and responsibilities of child protection actors. Establish a monitoring system to make sure the guidelines are followed. Build on existing resources such as *Primero*.[176]

4.12 Clearly define the mandates and responsibilities of the Anti-Cybercrime Department and The Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department in addressing cases of OCSEA. Once defined, strengthen their capacity and cooperation by facilitating widespread training for law enforcement officers (especially local) and other duty-bearers. This should be supported with resources, both human and financial, so that children and families are comfortable reporting abuse. Enhance existing child-friendly procedures to ensure the best interest of the child and protect their right to be heard and informed when involved in criminal proceedings.

Industry

4.13 Make formal reporting mechanisms within social media and instant messaging platforms clear and accessible to children and detail in child-friendly terms what happens after children submit a report. Platforms and Internet service providers must respond rapidly to reports made by children and demonstrate transparency and accountability.

4.14 Improve cooperation between Internet service providers and law enforcement agencies by:

- Creating pathways for processing requests and collaboration.
- Training staff to respond to data requests for ongoing cases and minimising processing times.
- Providing the law enforcement authorities with any associated information they have that might help to identify offenders and victims in a timely manner.
- Detect and remove OCSEA-related content on their servers.

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174. Government, inter-governmental agencies and civil society need to translate and convey these messages to reach caregivers, communities, medical staff and teachers.
175. See for example WHO Guidelines for the health sector response to child maltreatment.
176. UNICEF Cambodia. (February 15, 2021). Interoperability between Primero and OSCaR goes live.

Disrupting Harm's Alignment with the Model National Response and the Regional Plan of Action for the Protection of Children from All Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Many countries, companies and organisations have joined the WeProtect Global Alliance to prevent and respond to online child sexual exploitation and abuse. As a member of the Global Alliance, Cambodia made a firm commitment to use the Model National Response to Preventing and Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse to help organise its response to OCSEA. The model is a valuable tool for governments to improve the level of their response.

More recently, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations endorsed a Regional Plan of Action for the Protection of Children from All Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse, which includes commitments for member states to strengthen online child protection in the region. The plan includes seven focus areas ranging from awareness raising to strengthening of data collection and legislative reform. As with the Model National Response, the *Disrupting Harm* recommendations align with these focus areas and detail sustained, practical and evidence-based responses to OCSEA.

Most of the recommendations in this report align with the 21 'capabilities' articulated in the Model National Response; however, *Disrupting Harm* identifies priority areas for interventions based specifically on the data regarding the Cambodian situation. Most *Disrupting Harm* recommendations address legislation,[177] dedicated law enforcement,[178] judiciary and prosecutors[179] and education programmes.[180]

INSIGHT 5

A range of promising initiatives driven by both government and civil society are already underway in Cambodia; however, significant challenges still exist. The growing momentum and commitment to ensure that children in Cambodia are protected from OCSEA should be used to increase awareness and the skills and resources with which law enforcement, justice and social support workers can respond.

Government

5.1 Law enforcement officers, government social welfare officers and social workers from non-governmental organisations should avoid any unnecessary removal of children from their families and communities. If a child is to be removed from their home or community, an assessment should be made to ensure that this is in the best interest of the child. While children are often best protected in a home environment, rescue or temporary shelter services may be unavoidable if the situation at home is unsafe or alternative family-based care is not immediately available. If shelter services are to be utilised, it should be for the shortest possible time and conditions should conform to international standards.[181]

An approach that involves law enforcement and social support workers engaging respectfully and cooperatively with children, families and communities to develop tailored solutions should be the goal. Align with key programmes in this area, such as the Family Care First,[182] and conform to international standards.[183] These initiatives, involving close collaboration with the government, are contributing to a change in the 'culture of care' for all children.

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177. Model National Response #3.
178. Model National Response #4.
179. Model National Response #5.
180. Model National Response #13.
181. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly [on the report of the Third Committee (A/64/434)] 64/142. Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.
182. Family Care First | React.
183. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly [on the report of the Third Committee (A/64/434)] 64/142. Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.

5.2 Establish a multi-agency response team and designate a lead government agency to reduce the re-traumatisation of children in the various legal processes. Having response teams, for example one-stop centres, across the country would help the authorities to extract information from children only once. Places where services can be provided to children in a single child-friendly setting can potentially improve collaboration and coordination between service providers.[184] These centres also ensure a holistic survivor-centred approach to promote access to justice and improved psycho-social support. While previous research suggests the current institutional capacity for establishing one-stop centres remains limited in Cambodia, there are steps that can be taken to strengthen the capacity of systems which may put in place the critical foundations that precede the future establishment of one-stop centres.[185]

5.3 Foster enhanced cooperation between different stakeholders. Streamlining processes, sharing collected information and resources and minimising the duplication of efforts would improve the ability of all parties to respond to OCSEA. Work with the designated ministry and administrative units to design a targeted approach. Among other tools, signing Memoranda of Understanding will foster cooperation and partnership.

5.4 Invest in building the technical knowledge of police officers, prosecutors, judges, lawyers, courtroom staff, child protection officers and frontline social workers on OCSEA and its varied manifestations. Considering the rapidly evolving online tools and opportunities, it is pertinent for professionals to understand how to address OCSEA issues within their respective professions individually and as a community. The capacity building initiatives should be funded and institutionalised in the training calendar of the Government of Cambodia. This will enable secure resources and a recurring budget allocation instead of depending on sporadic foreign collaboration/funding.

5.5 Incorporate training on OCSEA into the ongoing training initiatives on violence against children and child sexual abuse undertaken by the Ministry of Health and include OCSEA in the guidelines for healthcare personnel developed from the Ministry of Health.

5.6 Expedite criminal procedures where a child victim has been in government care during the court procedure. This could be done by having Internet service providers appoint a law enforcement liaison officer to be responsible for handling any data requests from law enforcement to speed up the investigation and prosecution of OCSEA cases.

5.7 Monitor the implementation of the 2018 directives of the Ministries of Posts and Telecommunications and Cambodian National Police requiring that telecommunications companies in Cambodia ensure all SIM card users are registered. The internet regulators estimate that around 10% of current SIM cards remain unregistered, which is an obstacle when determining IP addresses and associating them with the phone's owner.

5.8 Increase coordination across programmes focused on online and offline violence and, to the extent that it makes sense, across programmes focusing on violence against women and children.

Caregivers, teachers and social support services[186]

5.9 Train all staff of social support services (not just specialist services) to recognise the unique risks and harms of OCSEA, and provide them with evidence-based best practices for responding. This could be done by incorporating information on OCSEA into the existing child protection social services training. When children are brave enough to seek help, those they seek help from must be equipped to provide it.

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184. WHO (2016). INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children.
185. APLE Cambodia. (2020). From Operation Oriented to Child-Centered.
186. Government, inter-governmental agencies and civil society need to translate and convey these messages to reach caregivers, communities, medical staff and teachers.

Law enforcement

5.10 Create a dedicated specialised unit, or dedicated specialised officers within a unit, to investigate OCSEA cases. This should be composed of officers with experience of both online and offline crimes against children. Ideally, the specialised unit should have a public-facing reporting desk, child-friendly spaces, internet connectivity, and technical tools and capacity on-site. Short of a dedicated specialised unit, a taskforce of dedicated officers from the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department and Anti-Cybercrime Department may suffice.

5.11 Improve data collection and the monitoring of OCSEA cases both on the national and local levels. Systematic recording and classification of cases will facilitate in developing evidence-based prevention and response mechanisms to OCSEA.

5.12 Invest in additional equipment and tools to detect, triage and analyse CSAM. Currently, Cambodian law enforcement does not possess the necessary tools to collect and examine digital evidence with sufficient speed for the Anti-Cybercrime Department to proceed with investigations. Train officers on how to use those tools.

5.13 Establish a data management system for OCSEA offenders and undertake systematic recording, archiving and tracking of their movement within the country and beyond.

5.14 Consider connecting to INTERPOL's International Child Sexual Exploitation database. Establish a connection to the international image and video database for the early detection of threats in order to avoid duplication of law enforcement's efforts and to ensure both an effective response and proactive surveillance.

5.15 Provide an effective mechanism and adequate resources to ensure international OCSEA referrals, including NCMEC CyberTips, are investigated in an appropriate and timely manner.

5.16 Ensure that police officers/prosecutors/courts have a standard information package to provide to all victims and their caregivers related to child sexual exploitation and abuse (including OCSEA), thus ensuring that all the relevant procedures and rights, including their right to compensation, are clearly explained. This will enable child victims and their caregivers to make informed decisions as well as familiarise themselves with the upcoming procedures. **Promote the implementation of child-friendly procedures during the investigation process.** Limited understanding and application of child-friendly procedures render children particularly vulnerable in the justice process. Integrate OCSEA topics into the police academy training curriculum.

5.17 Invest in resources to conduct proactive investigations of OCSEA. *Disrupting Harm* found that law enforcement units tended to be largely reactive rather than proactive, and often depended on other government agencies.

5.18 Liaise more closely with global technology platforms and build on existing collaborative mechanisms to ensure that the digital evidence needed in OCSEA cases can be gathered rapidly and efficiently, including in response to data requests, and illegal content is promptly removed.

Justice professionals

5.19 Train all justice professionals, including prosecutors and judges, on how to handle OCSEA cases and deliver child-friendly justice. Children indicated that, throughout the process, where possible, a choice regarding the gender of police, lawyers and other key individuals should be provided to children. For many of the children, their experiences led to feelings of shame, and being interviewed can be a difficult and embarrassing process. Children, both boys and girls, reported that having a person of the same gender would be preferable.

5.20 Develop and implement programmes that prepare child victims and provide them with adequate legal assistance to engage with the court system and legal actors. Expand the involvement of multi-disciplinary teams during that process.

5.21 Prevent re-traumatisation caused by repeating the ordeal in front of the court/offender. This could be done by establishing one-stop centres across the country in which all the relevant justice professionals can interview and obtain the relevant information from children in one sitting, rather than repeatedly interviewing the victims. This can also be done by videotaping the interview with a child victim.

5.22 Make it standard practice to use court screens and courtroom TV-linked testimony from victims or witnesses in order to provide a safe and supportive environment for child victims. Currently, the legal measures pertaining to these child-friendly tools are not automatically implemented but are based on an application introduced on behalf of the child by the prosecutor or lawyer at the beginning of the trial.

5.23 Inform victims of OCSEA and their caregivers about the right to apply for compensations through the criminal justice process and not just as a separate civil suit, which is both an expensive and complex process. Develop and implement a legal support system for child victims/their families to process compensation claims.

Industry

5.24 Prioritise responding to data requests from the courts in cases involving children to help reduce the duration of trials. This could be done by having Internet service providers appoint a law enforcement liaison officer to be responsible for handling any data requests from law enforcement agencies to speed up the investigation and prosecution of OCSEA cases.

5.25 Consult with Internet service providers, law enforcement, privacy experts and technology companies to develop realistic, mandatory regulations for filtering, removing and blocking CSAM, addressing grooming and the live-streaming of sexual abuse and complying with legally approved requests for user information in OCSEA cases. Monitor for timely compliance and ensure that there are repercussions for a failure to comply.

5.26 Technology companies and online financial providers should consider proactively detecting and eliminating CSAM and identifying grooming attempts and live-streamed child sexual abuse by utilising technology tools, such as PhotoDNA[187] and API Arachnid.[188]

5.27 Promote awareness of OCSEA among relevant private sector entities including internet, mobile and financial service providers to ensure companies of all sizes have a better understanding of the risks children face and what they can do to combat OCSEA. Promote multi-sectoral initiatives to develop and/or strengthen internal child protection policies.

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187. Microsoft, PhotoDNA.
188. API is the acronym for Application Programming Interface, which is a software intermediary that allows two applications to talk to each other. See, Mulesoft, *What is an API (Application Programming Interface)?*

INSIGHT 6

While the launch and ongoing implementation of the National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia is an important step, other legislation, policies and standards still need to be enacted in Cambodia.

Government

6.1 Consider amending legislation to conform with the Regional Plan of Action and international conventions that offer good guidance for addressing OCSEA, such as the Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) and the Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention). These conventions provide useful measures of national legal frameworks related to OCSEA and are open for accession by states that are not members of the Council of Europe.

6.2 Explicitly criminalise specific OCSEA crimes, such as live-streaming of child sexual abuse, online grooming and sexual extortion, and amend the legislation on CSAM to explicitly cover depictions of a child's body for sexual purposes and materials that depict a person appearing to be a child engaged in sexually explicit conduct. This could be done by adopting the Draft Cybercrime Law, which will more comprehensively define CSAM and criminalise various CSAM-related crimes and offences committed online and/or through the use of a computer system or other digital device. There is also opportunity to explicitly criminalise specific OCSEA crimes in the draft Child Protection Law, which is at a more advanced stage in the enactment process than the Draft Cybercrime Law.

6.3 Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the new National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia 2021–2025 and other related action plans. Improve the systems for disseminating findings/lessons learnt.

6.4 Provide guidelines to Internet service providers on when and how to record IP data and preserve content-based or non-content-based data. This could be done by adopting the draft Cybercrime Law, which includes a provision related to the preservation of computer and traffic data (establishing that the prosecutor or the court can order the expeditious preservation of computer and traffic data if there are indications that such data is connected with a cybercrime, including offences related to CSAM, being committed).

6.5 Remove the double criminality requirement for the applicability of extraterritorial jurisdiction for crimes included in the Criminal Code.

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