

End Violence Fund 9th Knowledge Exchange Global Webinar

Child Safeguarding in the Digital World

16 April 2020

RECAP

Background

The Knowledge Exchange Global Webinars hosted by the End Violence Fund are a 'community space' where grantees can share the progress they have made, as well as challenges they are facing. These webinars are evolving to address technical issues and capacity needs of the grantee community with topics chosen based on key gaps/priorities, and feedback from the grantees. For the first webinar to focus on safeguarding which included technical experts, Sally Proudlove (SallyP@unicef.org.uk), UNICEF UK; Linda Raftree (lindaraftree@gmail.com), Independent Consultant; and John Zoltner (jzoltner@savechildren.org), Save the Children shared their knowledge on how to safeguard children online framed within the current pandemic.

Child safeguarding and COVID-19 - Sally Proudlove

To frame the discussion, Sally Proudlove provided an overview of why safeguarding is such an important consideration as we manage the implications of the pandemic on the lives of children. This included some of the risks and mitigation strategies shared by UNICEF UK: increased online activity; parents/carers working and caring for children at the same time; offline activities moving online; 'new normal' – old rules don't apply; and increased activity of online predators.

This promoted a discussion about whether there was evidence of increased risk to children online during this pandemic. Some examples were given from Europol. Tink Palmer (Marie Collins Foundation) referenced their National Assessment Centre reporting a 19% increase in the viewing of adult pornography. Risks include a rise in viewing of the indecent images of children as well as children living in households where such viewing is occurring. The moderated discussion also agreed on the need to have more concrete data. There was consensus that the next several months may give the community more rigorous evidence of the threats being posed online.

Good practices to protect children's privacy online - Linda Raftree

Linda remarked that organisations that encourage children to be online should have Safeguarding policies that integrate online safeguarding practices with traditional safeguarding practices. It is also essential to protect children's data that is being collected. Linda's presentation centred around the different key questions that should be posed to practitioners as they navigate how to protect children's privacy online in today's world.



Field practitioners should consider what we are protecting children from. This includes themselves and their peers and making sure their own actions are not putting them at risk. The wider digital environment has hidden risks and there is need to think clearly about digital risk assessment – it is a different set of risks. For example:

- Staff, including teachers, coaches – people new to this who may not have their devices protected.
- Giving out devices may conflict with parents' values. It may facilitate grooming, trafficking, and exploitation.
- Corporations using children's "digital footprint".
- Parents putting photos of children online, making them "influencers" to gain more likes.
- Information posted online could affect access to future jobs, insurance etc.
- Governments could use online information against people, for example, refugees and asylum seekers.

It is important to raise awareness and create policies and laws that promote better data governance and more accountability. For example, we need digital literacy, but also better data literacy. This must address:

- What do we know, what does our staff know, how is data captured, collected and used? Think about prevention.
- "Privacy by Design".
- Maximum privacy and data protection should be a consideration from the beginning – everything should be as locked-down as possible.
- Data governance policies must be in place with accountability, complaint mechanisms that children and their caretakers can access.
- Training of staff and clear legal agreements.
- Adherence to laws and regulations.
- Be very careful of what data we collect, and don't collect it unless we absolutely need it.

To safeguard online, consider:

- Individual's own conduct, conduct of others, how they interact.
- Teaching children to prevent unwanted contact, but also using moderation.
- Using AI to prevent posting of phone numbers and possibly to test/block other data.
- Privacy and protection for sites, applications, programs and activities, from the beginning of the design process.

We also need to understand the young people we are protecting:

- Problem content could be adult pornography but also could be non-traditional content that upsets parents/legal guardians.
- How are they getting online? What platforms are they using?
- Is there censorship?
- Is it an oppressive government?
- Is it permissible to have political opinions?

Consider ethics:

- Is it ethical to introduce children to certain types of technology and to encourage them to participate in them?
- Who is benefitting from online activity and who is taking risk?
- Benefits may accrue to an agency while risk accrues to individuals.
- Understand trade-offs, such as ease-of-use versus security and protection.

Think about:

- What we are doing to educate government, partners and our own organization in terms of policy, and how to have solid, sound safeguarding and child protection policies.
- Are we evaluating, monitoring and learning from the kind of risks children are facing online?
- Are we adapting and adjusting based on what we learn?

An organisational response - John Zoltner, Save the Children

John echoed Linda's comment that online safeguarding should be integrated into an organisation's safeguarding policy because things being developed should have safeguarding as part of their design. Therefore, it is important to have technology developers work more closely with safeguarding staff, for example.

John outlined a number of programmes that Save the Children is implementing to protect children online, including several supported by the End Violence Fund, and how safeguarding practices are incorporated holistically. Examples include:

- Convening and coordination of activities of governments, schools, community-based organisations, parents, internet service providers, technology companies and other stakeholders.
- Reporting and training for safety.
- Trying to unify reporting of CSEA so children and/or adults do not have to choose which of multiple hotlines/sites to report to.
- Supporting legal/governmental policy changes for online CSEA (explicitly criminalizing behaviours).
- Support/capacity building for judicial and law enforcement agencies.
- Developing safe tools (website, apps, games, chatbots, etc...)

Save the Children trains different stakeholders in all projects. It is essential to acknowledge that training varies a great deal throughout the field and that standard training plans can be insufficient for children with limited exposure to certain technologies.

Many tools are being created to help children and adults learn about online safety and report on online safety. Therefore, it is very necessary to test such systems because they can inadvertently capture information that can be used to identify individuals and that is why safeguarding and protection specialists should be brought in on the design

of these projects.

To respond to COVID-19, Save the Children is increasing awareness of children being at greater risk. It is hoped that the displacement of children from schools during COVID-19 can be used to develop valuable resources that can also be used post COVID-19.

John remarked that hotline data does not currently reflect increased incidents due to the COVID-19 lockdown, but it seems very likely they will soon. Children have more time on probably unfiltered platforms and devices, and perpetrators who are not at work also have more time.

Update from End Violence

For End Violence, safeguarding is cross-functional and interlocks with all team members. We try to use every opportunity to speak with the grantees about safeguarding. Grantees are encouraged to liaise with Sarah Stevenson in case they have any questions or require further support.

As for other updates from the Safe Online team, various new resources have been developed in collaboration with partners in response to COVID-19, including a [Leaders Statement](#), [Keeping Children Safe Online Parenting Tip](#) and a [technical brief](#). All of these can also be found on our [website](#).

A reminder that the COVID-19 response plan has been shared with all of you and is due by 1 May 2020 should you require a project extension or reprogramming. Please follow-up with Trang Ho Morton if you have any questions.