Safe Online

Investment in *Frontline Responses* to Technology-Facilitated Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Lessons from Kenya and the Philippines

What is Technology-Facilitated Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (TF-CSEA)?

TF-CSEA encompasses abuse that occurs through, or is enabled by, information and communication technologies.

TF-CSEA harms millions of children worldwide through online grooming, the production and distribution of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), live-streamed abuse, sexual extortion, and other forms of exploitation. It is fast-evolving, and new forms such as generative AI-enabled CSAM, continue to emerge.

Why Invest Now?

TF-CSEA is becoming more complex as technology continues to advance, making it increasingly difficult to detect and respond to cases. Professionals working on TF-CSEA across government, civil society, and the private sector need to regularly update their knowledge and skills to keep pace.

Some frontline roles – particularly those involved in repeated engagement with child survivors, traumatic case material or CSAM – also carry significant risks of work-related stress, burnout and secondary trauma. Attention to, and investment in the frontline workforce therefore needs to include appropriate supervision, wellbeing support and systems to manage workload – running alongside the more frequently identified technical capacity development goals.

Beyond strengthening the knowledge and skills of individual professionals, an enabling environment that supports them in carrying out their work is equally important.

Such an environment directly affects their ability to identify, protect, and support child survivors, ultimately improving the effectiveness of the child protection response.

What Frontline Practitioners Need from the Wider Ecosystem

Over the past decade, Safe Online-supported projects in Kenya and the Philippines were part of wider investments and reforms that contributed to changes to the TF-CSEA ecosystems of both countries. Case study analysis of the two countries shows that a comprehensive ecosystem approach helps strengthen coordination across the many agencies that must engage to address TF-CSEA; builds relationships for collaboration among actors; and enables integrated systems that benefit the children and survivors accessing justice and support.

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[1] ECPAT, INTERPOL, & UNICEF (2026). Disrupting Harm: Evidence on Technology-Facilitated Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Country Reports. Safe Online.

[2] Kavenagh, M. Gacengo, B. & Singsakhorn, S. (2026). Decade of Change: A Stocktake of the TF-CSEA Ecosystem in Kenya. Safe Online.

[3] Kavenagh, M. & Singsakhorn, S. (2026). Decade of Change: A Stocktake of the TF-CSEA Ecosystem in the Philippines. Safe Online.

Key System Condition	Why It Matters for Frontline Responses
Legislation that criminalises TF-CSEA	Provides the legal authority and clarity needed for frontline action and child protection.
An effective national coordination mechanism with clearly defined authority and responsibilities	Ensures clear leadership, coordination, and support across frontline agencies.
Regular multi-stakeholder coordination platforms	Strengthen collaboration, referrals, and coordinated case management.
A national action plan	Aligns frontline implementation with shared national priorities and standards.
National, interoperable data gathering, knowledge and management systems	Supports evidence-informed practice and adaptation to emerging threats. Practitioners can document and efficiently track cases.
Continuing access to domestic budget and financing arrangements	Services, technology, and resources remain consistent rather than dependent on project funding.
Cross-sector operational guidelines and capacity-building programmes	Promote consistent, coordinated, and child-centred practice across sectors.
Agency-specific operational guidelines/SOPs and referral protocols	Frontline staff know what to do, who is responsible and where a case goes next.
Integration of TF-CSEA priorities into routine government systems	Embeds TF-CSEA into routine practice, supervision, and accountability systems.
Mechanisms to extend knowledge, resources, and technical support to local levels	Ensure equitable access to expertise and quality services across locations.
Quality assurance and feedback mechanisms (including feedback from children/survivors).	Identify implementation gaps and whether children and survivors experience services as accessible, safe and effective.

TF-CSEA has distinctive operational demands including digital evidence, rapidly changing technologies, cross-border investigations and necessary engagement with technology and financial-sector actors to respond. Frontline practitioners therefore need access to a range of specialised expertise and tools in order for TF-CSEA to be adequately integrated and addressed in wider child-protection and justice systems.

Effective frontline responses require sustained investment across justice and child-protection systems and in the operational interfaces with industry. Practitioners need the workforce capacity, technology, procedures, financing and cross-sector relationships required to prevent, identify, investigate and respond to TF-CSEA, including timely cooperation with technology, telecommunications and relevant financial-sector actors.

When frontline systems are neglected and under-resourced, cases will be missed, referrals delayed, services interrupted and practitioners left without the support or tools needed to respond effectively in support of the affected children and survivors

Recommendations for Investment

1. Policy, Legislation, and Governance



Effective frontline responses require not only skilled practitioners but also laws, policies, and public administration systems that institutionalise workforce development, professional support, and high-quality practice.

- Embed frontline requirements into national policies, agency mandates, professional standards and implementation plans, with clear responsibilities for competency development, supervision, staffing and quality assurance.
- Institutionalise continuous professional development, supervision, and workforce wellbeing within routine government staffing support and management systems, including workforce planning, performance management, salary/compensation and professional development.
- Ensure sustainable public financing and organisational support that enables frontline agencies to recruit, retain, and continuously strengthen specialised practitioners.

2. Law Enforcement and Justice



TF-CSEA involves cybercrime requiring specialised expertise in digital investigations, criminal justice, and child protection. Both case studies point toward the need for a tiered model: Whilst developing baseline competence widely, maintain specialist units and make their technical capability accessible to local practitioners. Equip frontline law-enforcement personnel with the baseline knowledge needed to identify, preserve and refer digital evidence, while ensuring rapid access to specialist forensic, financial-investigation and international-cooperation expertise at regional or national level.

- Institutionalise workforce development across the justice response chain by embedding child-centred, trauma-informed, and technology-enabled approaches into professional standards, operational guidance, supervision, and continuous learning systems.
- Allocate resources to strengthen investigation and prosecution capacities by ensuring frontline practitioners have access to digital evidence management systems, specialised forensic capability, coordinated operational procedures, and multidisciplinary operational support.
- Ensure frontline cases can connect efficiently to international mechanisms. Establish clear escalation routes from local investigators to national focal points, regional and global law-enforcement networks, international evidence channels and global technology companies.
- Develop secure systems for digital evidence storage and exchange to enable timely investigations, preserve evidential integrity, and reduce operational delays in the justice process.
- Strengthen safe and trusted disclosure pathways by institutionalising child-friendly reporting mechanisms that reduce barriers to help-seeking and enable earlier detection, investigation, and protection of children affected by TF-CSEA. Ensure that police, social workers, helpline personnel and other likely first points of contact know how to respond safety, preserve relevant information, make appropriate referrals and explain to children and survivors what will happen next.
- Reporting mechanisms should be assessed not only by whether they exist, but by whether children receive timely and effective support after disclosure.

3. Social Services and Survivor Support



Child survivors of TF-CSEA often experience long-term physical, psychological, social, and digital harms that extend well beyond the initial abuse. Effective frontline responses require policies, service systems, and workforce support that enable practitioners to deliver coordinated, trauma-informed, and long-term care tailored to children's evolving needs.

- Institutionalise interoperable child-centred case management and multidisciplinary service delivery to ensure coordinated and continued support for as long as is wanted. Trauma-informed support should continue from disclosure through long-term recovery and reintegration.
- Build continuous learning and feedback into frontline services. Use case reviews, supervision, practitioner learning and ethically designed child and survivor feedback to identify implementation problems and improve practice. Establish clear mechanisms for showing clients how feedback has informed changes in guidance, training or service delivery.
- Strengthen organisational systems that support high-quality frontline practice through competency standards, continuous professional development, salary/compensation incentives, clinical supervision, workforce wellbeing, and operational guidance for social service and child protection practitioners.
- Where appropriate, engage safe and supportive caregivers and family members into recovery planning and routine service delivery to strengthen children's resilience, digital wellbeing, and long-term reintegration while ensuring services respond to children's evolving needs.

4. Industry Engagement



Industry plays a critical role in frontline TF-CSEA responses. Effective collaboration requires institutional mechanisms that enable timely information sharing, secure digital evidence exchange, and coordinated operational responses.

- Establish mandatory operational protocols and coordination mechanisms between relevant government authorities and industry actors that enable reporting, escalation, evidence preservation and lawful data requests with clearly identified contact points, response timelines and accountability mechanisms.
- Ensure reporting generated by platforms and financial institutions reaches trained national focal points and can be translated efficiently into actionable referrals for frontline investigators.
- Develop incentives and accountability mechanisms for industry engagement by establishing proportionate performance measures and incorporating frontline practitioner feedback to strengthen operational collaboration and drive continuous improvement.

Survivors Voice

Accounts from child survivors consistently show that many don't recognise that they are being victimised. Offenders are often trusted adults or family members who use fear, manipulation, threats, and coercion to control them. Some children are forced to undress, perform sexual acts, or abuse their own siblings to produce images and videos that are sold or shared online. Behind every image is a child experiencing fear, betrayal, and profound emotional harm.

For many survivors, recovery begins only after police, social workers, and child protection professionals intervene. Being consistently told that the abuse was not their fault, understanding their rights, and receiving consistent psychosocial and practical support helps young people to gradually rebuild their sense of safety, trust, and dignity.

Without timely identification, ongoing protection, and access to support and recovery services for as long as they wish, children and survivors remain at risk of continued exploitation, lifelong trauma, and repeated victimisation. Investing in integrated child protection systems is therefore not only essential to stopping abuse, but also to enabling children's recovery and protection from future harm.



5. Public Engagement and Education

Preventing TF-CSEA requires more than raising awareness. Effective frontline responses depend on meaningful engagement with children, families, schools, and communities to strengthen awareness, and trust in services to enable community preventative actions, early identification, and help-seeking.

- Embed meaningful child and survivor participation into frontline service design, delivery, and evaluation to ensure prevention and response measures are shaped by children's and survivors' own experiences and are regularly updated to reflect evolving digital realities. Participation should be genuinely meaningful, with the value, risk, and burden of involvement to the child actively weighed in each instance.
- Strengthen families, schools, and communities as trusted partners in early identification and safe help-seeking by promoting practical communication, age-appropriate digital guidance, and clear pathways for accessing support.
- Build trusted, low-barrier pathways from community awareness into frontline services where national or public campaigns build general awareness and frontline investment focuses on what happens next (i.e. ensuring families, schools, and community gatekeepers know how and where to escalate a concern, and that the first point of contact a child or caregiver reaches is trained to respond safely and appropriately).

6. Research, Data and Evidence

Effective frontline responses depend on timely and continuously updated evidence. Data systems and knowledge management should support continuous gathering of data to inform operational decision-making, and service improvement while minimising administrative reporting burdens on frontline practitioners.

- Standardise indicators and classifiers/tags across data systems so that frontline case-related data can be cross-compared prioritising alignment of existing systems over costly and complicated full consolidation. This can reduce double-reporting burdens and enable generation of timely information.
- Strengthen knowledge management systems by translating operational data, case reviews, and practitioner experience into operational guidance, quality improvement, and evidence-informed frontline practice. Performance indicators should capture children's and survivors' experiences of services and longer-term outcomes, rather than only activities delivered or number of people trained.
- Create regular mechanisms for convening cross-sector operational learning, including case-based reflective practice, practitioner networks and structured exchange between frontline and policy levels, so that recurring bottlenecks and emerging threats can inform guidance, resource allocation and system reform.

7. Financing and Resource Mobilisation

Effective frontline responses depend on financing that is predictable, flexible, and responsive to operational needs. Resources should enable frontline agencies to sustain quality services, adapt to emerging threats, and continuously improve practice.

- Allocate resources based on frontline operational needs by ensuring flexible funding arrangements (to respond to changing caseloads, emerging technology needs and bottlenecks identified through administrative monitoring) for workforce support, multidisciplinary responses, and service delivery at national and local levels.
- Support government agencies to strengthen costing, budgeting projections, and internal resource mobilization processes so that they may continue to apply for and secure relevant domestic budget appropriations. Ensure adequate reporting – such as workload data and service demand – so that such funding allocations are accountable and continue to be demonstrably justified.
- Institutionalise recurring budget lines for technology and forensic tool subscriptions specifically, not just one-off procurement or training costs to ensure sustained capability for specialised digital investigation.
- Establish financing mechanisms that prioritise long-term ecosystem strengthening over short-term project funding, enabling continuous workforce development, operational support, quality improvement, and sustainable frontline responses.



Read the case studies reports for
Kenya and Philippines
and learn more at

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