

# 3.6 SAFE AND RESPONSIBLE USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES

## Key issues in East Asia and the Pacific



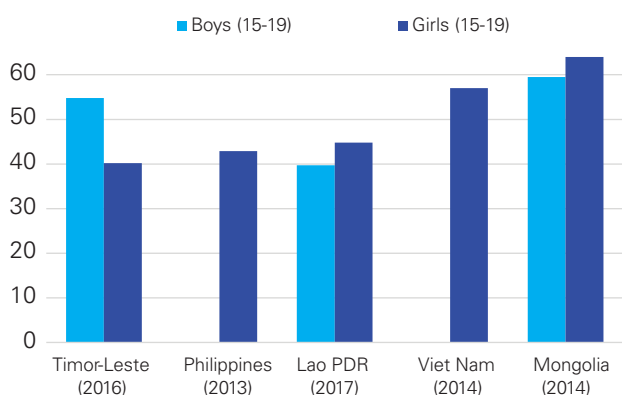
In East Asia and the Pacific, young people are among the most active and influential users of new technology. In the Philippines, around 44 million Internet users are children aged 17 and below. In Thailand, 60 per cent of children aged 6–14 are online, and in Indonesia around 60 per cent of children are accessing the Internet through mobile devices. A 2014 study conducted in 18 cities by the China National Youth Palace Association found that 72 per cent of children aged 10 or over in China owned a mobile phone, and 30 per cent of children aged under 6 have used a tablet. It also noted that the age of 10 was the turning point when children began using the Internet not only for online gaming, but

also for entertainment, communication, learning and self-expression. By 13, as adolescents, they become not only online content consumers, but also creators.

New developments in information and communications technology (ICT) have introduced significant opportunities for children and adolescents in terms of access to information, learning, communication, civic engagement and entertainment. ICTs also pose unique threats to children’s safety. They provide a means of rapidly and widely sharing child sexual abuse materials, they provide a relatively unregulated space, and neither children nor their caregivers always understand the risks involved in their use. Adolescent girls and boys are particularly at risk of various forms of online sexual abuse and exploitation, threats of violence and bullying. Online risks are also affected by a combination of offline factors, including: poverty and socio-economic inequality; social norms that tolerate these forms of violence; impunity from or a lack of legislation; weak regulatory framework governing ICTs; weak or non-existent reporting and referral mechanisms; and weak child protection services. In most countries, a lack of awareness, political will, coordination, capacity and resources continue to pose major challenges; and the rapid speed and breadth of ICT development has outpaced efforts to address cyber security for children.

Corporations increasingly collect, analyze, and sell browsing data about children and young people, and some governments are using data gathered online for surveillance purposes. Each of these activities poses a potential threat to children’s privacy, personal information and reputation. There are also growing concerns regarding overuse of gaming and social media by children, leading to a lack of engagement in other important areas of life including education, physical exercise and family life. It is difficult to obtain quality evidence on these issues because it requires modern and effective case management systems, as well as access to the growing body of data about children’s Internet usage and behaviour online that is harvested and maintained by the private sector.

**Adolescents aged 15–19 who used the internet at least once a week in the last month (%)**



## Driving results for children

'Safe and responsible use of ICTs' means that children are able to fully engage with the multitude of positive opportunities they present, while employing sensible safeguards to protect themselves and others, in the context of informed parental guidance and appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks. UNICEF prioritizes support to: (1) protecting children from risks and harm online, through the WePROTECT Global Alliance (an international movement dedicated to national and global action to end the sexual exploitation of children online), particularly the implementation of the Model National Response framework, which has become the international normative framework; (2) improving opportunities for children online, through improved understanding, empowerment of young people, digital literacy and innovation; and (3) ensuring prioritization of ethics and privacy in data collection and sharing.

## Key programme strategies



### Systems and capacity

- Identify and roll out innovation in the delivery of open educational tools that can promote access to quality information for both structured learning and teaching methods that utilize gaming.
- Support education about coding, artificial intelligence and virtual reality technologies, including related ethics issues, and promote digital innovation amongst youth.
- Empower children and young people to use digital platforms for civic engagement and activism around social causes.
- Strengthen law enforcement through training, staff retention programmes, and improvements in investigatory techniques and treatment of child victims of online crime.
- Improve reporting mechanisms such as child helplines, whereby children can receive professional help, advice and assistance regarding problems they are experiencing online; and hotlines whereby the public can report crimes against children online, connected to responsive law enforcement.
- Bridge the gap between offline and online prevention and response initiatives, and strengthen social services to respond to the psychosocial needs of child victims of online violence, support vulnerable children and prevent them from becoming future victims.
- Foster innovations in technology to enable victim identification online; and innovations to respond to cyberbullying and prevent harm to children (especially adolescents) online, such as suicide prevention tools developed by Facebook.
- Promote and support educational initiatives aimed at reducing peer-to-peer abuse online, which address the gender aspects of sexual harassment online, including victim blaming and the particular risks experienced by girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children.



### Behavior change

- Build parents' understanding of ICT through cross-generational learning and educational materials.
- Raise awareness and understanding of children and adolescents of the opportunities and risks of ICT.



### Data, evidence and knowledge

- Evaluate educational materials aiming to combat child sexual exploitation, both online and offline.
- Support digital evidence gathering by law enforcement, and its use in court systems, and enable necessary information sharing across international borders.



### Governance, policy and budgets

- Promote the use of digital technology to provide children with useful and accurate information and opportunities to voice their ideas and opinions.
- Promote digital literacy modules as a core and assessed element of national school curricula.
- Advocate for multi-sectoral approaches to addressing online child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Support the updating of legal and regulatory frameworks on cybercrime against children.
- Advocate for the prioritization of ethics and privacy in data collection and sharing.



### Partnerships and alliances

- Engage ICT companies as duty bearers for children's rights (products should be safe to use by children), and support partners to teach and empower children and parents to stay safe online.
- Collaborate with UN agencies (the International Telecommunication Union, UN Office on Drugs and Crime) and INTERPOL in strengthening law enforcement and developing effective regulatory frameworks.
- Build partnerships with Internet service providers and mobile phone companies to promote improved connectivity and hardware such as computers, laptops and tablets.
- Promote South-South collaboration and alliances between a wide range of stakeholders in promoting youth digital engagement and protecting their rights.