What can Government and its partners do?

Protecting children online requires different stakeholders to work together, such as Government, Civil Society Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations, industry, teachers, caregivers and children. Putting legislation and policies in place, educating children on the dangers they might encounter online, training law enforcement officers and judiciary on the specifics of child-related cybercrime, installing reporting mechanisms for the population and children, evoking responsibilities and obligations of Internet Service Providers, providing for effective blocking and taking down of child abuse material and strengthening international collaboration and prosecution mechanisms are among the various approaches required to prevent and prosecute child online sexual abuse.

What is the issue?

The Internet and social media platforms are changing the scope, opportunity and form of violence, abuse and exploitation of children. Violence and abuse are no longer restricted to the offline environment, or may start off in the online environment, or may start off in the offline world and happen offline. This is for example the case when an adult sometimes pretending to be a child, befriends a child online, and arranges the meet offline only to abuse the child.

The study conducted in 2016 in Namibia showed that 66% of children (age group between 13 and 17 years) surveyed, reported having seen sexual content online, which they did not wish to see. Thirty-one percent of the surveyed adolescents had received sexually explicit images of people they did not know, and 59% had seen child pornography content. In total only 47% of children reported that they spoke to their parents/caregivers about their online experiences, and what they did online. The potential risks of digital engagement need to be managed well, by children themselves, caregivers and teachers, in order to enable children to bear all the fruits the Internet has to offer, without putting them at risk of violence, abuse or exploitation.

Call 116 for help!

The 116 Child Helpline, hosted by Life Line/Child Line, provides free counselling for children on issues such as violence, abuse and exploitation. A child can call 116 and talk to a counsellor, who can also provide further support by transferring the case to other service providers. The counsellors are trained on child online protection and can hence provide specific psychological support in this field.

Children Online

What you need to know to be informed and stay safe online

The Internet is an important source of information for learning and building friendships, but we need to be responsible in managing what we do and say online about ourselves and others.

What are the risks?

When children are online, they may face cyber-specific risks such as:

**Cyberbullying:**
- Children are using phones to harass, shame or hurt other children verbally:
  - e.g. someone sending you a nasty message via Facebook that hurts you

**Exposure to in-appropriate content:**
- Violence, pornography, xenophobia at al e.g. video of a criminal executing a victim

**Grooming:**
- Adults approaching children online in order to meet them offline and commit a sexual offence:
  - e.g. an adult asking you online to meet offline for sex

**Sexing:**
- Sending of sexually explicit texts, pictures, videos et al via ICTs, either consensual or non-consensual:
  - e.g. sending a friend a nude picture of you

**Grooming:**
- Sexually explicit content involving children:
  - e.g. a pornographic movie in which children are forced to have sex

**Child pornography:**
- Threatening to release sexual images or information of the victim to extort sexual favours from the victim:
  - e.g. an ex-boyfriend/friend blackmailing you to send a naked picture of you to the whole school if you do not grant him/her sexual favours

** Sextortion:**
- Children putting themselves at risk as they cannot assess the cyber-specific dangers such as worldwide audience, non-retrievable record, replicability of content:
  - e.g. children sharing sensitive information about themselves with a stranger which is then published on a public website

**Sharing of highly personal information, including sexualised images/videos:**
- Bullying, sexual exploitation and inappropriate content also exist in the offline world. However, the online world provides for a new context with cyber-specific risks.

The study conducted in 2016 in Namibia showed that 66% of children (age group between 13 and 17 years) surveyed, reported having seen sexual content online, which they did not wish to see. Thirty-one percent of the surveyed adolescents had received sexually explicit images of people they did not know, and 59% had seen child pornography content. In total only 47% of children reported that they spoke to their parents/caregivers about their online experiences, and what they did online. The potential risks of digital engagement need to be managed well, by children themselves, caregivers and teachers, in order to enable children to bear all the fruits the Internet has to offer, without putting them at risk of violence, abuse or exploitation.

What you need to do:
- Be informed, stay safe online
- Call 116 for help!
- Call 116 for help!
What can you do to stay safe online?
Here are some tips:

- Never post your personal information, such as a cell phone number, home number, home address, or your location.
- Be careful when posting pictures or videos of yourself. A video or picture once uploaded, can be shared and viewed everywhere in the world and can hardly be removed from the internet.
- Do not accept friend requests from people you do not actually know. It is dangerous to let unknown people have access to the information shared online. People might not be in the real life what they pretend to be in the online world.
- Never meet in person with anyone you first “met” on the internet. If someone asks to meet you, tell your parents or guardian right away. Some people may not be who they say they are.
- Never respond to mean or rude texts, messages, and e-mails. If someone bullies you online, do not respond to the bully and seek help from parents, teachers or other adults you trust. Remember that you have the right to block anyone who bullies you and report them to the social network so they can take down anything offensive.
- Never share your password with anyone. The only people who should know your password are your parents or guardian.
- Understand how photographs can give people a sense of your personality, and that sharing the wrong kind of image can give the wrong impression.
- If anything makes you feel uncomfortable online, talk with your parents or guardian right away.


What can your parents/caregivers do?
These are some tips:

- Do not prohibit your child to go online. Even though the online world can pose risks for children, educating them on how to manage these risks and the many advantages of digital engagement.
- Spend time with your child online. Have them teach you about their favourite online activities.
- Talk to your child about what “personal information” is - such as email address, full name, phone number - and why it is important not to share it with people who the child does not actually know.
- Contact the webhost to block a bully or take down abusive content. If your child is bullied online, contact the website like Facebook to block the bully from your child’s profile and remove the offensive content.
- Explain that it isn’t easy to identify someone online. People aren’t always who they say they are, so don’t share personal information. If it’s someone who genuinely knows your child, they shouldn’t need to ask for personal information online.
- The child is always the victim. Even if your child was a willing participant in any form of online exploitation, it is a victim. The responsibility lies completely with the sexual offender.
- Tell your child that if they’re in any doubt they should talk to you first.


What can your school do?
These are some tips:

There are two ways to protecting children online in the school environment. In case the school offers access to Information Communication and Technology (ICTs) and the internet, the school has to ensure that it monitors the children’s activity online and protects them from any form of harm or exploitation. This can be accomplished by installing appropriate filters and monitoring systems, so that no child can have access to inappropriate or abusive content using the school’s Internet or ICT facilities.

Secondly, the school serves as the educational centre not only for education in an academic sense, but also in terms of educating children on the dangers they might encounter in their daily life and how they can protect themselves. Therefore, the school offers the platform to discuss and report risks and harms in the online world and inform about access to support structures such as Lifeline/ Child Line and Social Workers.

Be Smart. Protect Yourself Online