![WeProtect Global Alliance logo]

Framing the future:

How the Model National Response framework is supporting national efforts to end child sexual exploitation and abuse online

Briefing paper

unicef | for every child

The issue

Children today face a sustained threat of child sexual exploitation and abuse online.

- In 2020, over one million individual media files were exchanged via INHOPE's child sexual abuse material collection and classification platform.[1]

- More than three million accounts are registered across the 10 most harmful child sexual abuse sites on the dark web.[2]

- From 2019 to 2020 there was a 100% increase in reports from the public of online sexual exploitation (NCMEC).[3]

- Interviews with children across 12 countries during 2020-2021 indicated that up to 20% of children suffered online sexual exploitation and abuse in the past year; one in three of whom stayed silent about this experience.[4]

Join the WeProtect Global Alliance and its members who are taking action to combat this threat.

Good practices and advancements

In just over six years, governments in all regions of the world have stepped up efforts to develop coordinated multi-stakeholder national responses. Many have introduced new legislative and policy frameworks, strengthened criminal justice systems and victim services, set in place interventions and services to reach the wider public, encouraged industry innovation and action, and promoted victims' and survivors' dignity and rights in media and communications. Though many good practices and advancements were implemented, gaps remain, and the level of investment does not yet match the need.

Barriers and challenges

Critical frontline services are often under-resourced and over-burdened. Industry engagement is limited in some contexts without a responsible business culture. There are challenges in coordination and collaboration across sectors, companies, and countries. Social taboos and harmful norms negatively impact responses to cases of child sexual abuse and can constrain efforts to prevent abuse from occurring in the first place. A lack of data and evidence hampers efforts to track progress and improve responses. Children remain at risk and are unable to access quality services and remedies if they experience harm.

Call to action

We urgently call on governments and partners to:

1

Invest in comprehensive national responses to prevent and respond to online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Multisectoral, multi-layered interventions are essential to prevent and respond to online child sexual exploitation and abuse. The Model National Response (MNR) framework can guide efficient and effective investments to tackle this issue. This requires increased investments at the individual, institutional and systemic levels.

Examples: Law enforcement units dealing with child sexual exploitation and abuse require sufficient resources to carry out their work. Officers need systematic training and capacity building to stay ahead of new and emerging offending. Case management and multidisciplinary models for victim services should be available nationwide and accessible for all children that require them.

1. Annual Report 2020 (INHOPE) <https://inhope.org/media/pages/the-facts/download-our-whitepapers/c16bc4d839-1620144551/inhope-annual-report-2020.pdf>
2. NetClean Report COVID-19 Impact 2020 <https://www.netclean.com/netclean-report-2020/#>
3. By the Numbers (NCMEC, 2021) Accessed <https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline>
4. UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti (forthcoming). Children's experiences of online child sexual exploitation and abuse in 12 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa and Southeast Asia. Disrupting Harm Data Insights (1). Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

2

Accelerate global collaboration among governments and companies to strengthen prevention and response efforts to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Online child sexual exploitation and abuse is borderless, meaning countries' national responses cannot be separated from the global landscape. To effectively combat the cross-border dimension of this issue, international and cross-industry cooperation are critical to support national efforts.

Examples: International cooperation is needed to address jurisdictional challenges in investigating and prosecuting online child sexual exploitation and abuse. Greater cross-industry collaboration is also required as countries pursue global alignment on legislation, classifying child sexual abuse materials, and data and intelligence sharing standards.

3

Strengthen the use and collection of data and evidence to enhance effective, sustainable national efforts to protect children.

Quality data and evidence generation are essential to improve policy, legislation, service delivery and initiatives to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse. This requires not only strengthening countries' administrative data systems for law enforcement, prosecution and social services, but also dedicated research to help better inform and track improvement.

Examples: More evidence is required on the effectiveness of interventions to support children who have experienced sexual exploitation and abuse, and to inform offender management and rehabilitation programmes. Other specific areas for further research include consultations with victims/survivors to understand barriers to disclosure of abuse; and their personal experiences of the justice system to improve services.

4

Share best practices and lessons learned to support national responses to protect children from online sexual exploitation and abuse.

Through sharing best practices and lessons learned, countries can continuously adapt and improve the implementation of the MNR framework within national and regional contexts. The development and implementation of interventions adapted to diverse contexts must be driven by national evidence to support sustained, effective country responses.

Examples: Specific areas some countries already identified for knowledge-sharing include how to reform legislation to deal with new and emerging patterns of offending; how to increase public reporting to hotlines and online portals; how to reach vulnerable children in national education programmes; and how to optimise the role of media and communications in shifting social taboos and harmful norms concerning child sexual exploitation and abuse.

5

Promote the global implementation of the Model National Response framework, and its continuous refinement based on lessons learned.

As the world shifts with ever-evolving contexts and innovation, the MNR framework must be improved and adapted by incorporating lessons learned, leveraging technology and continuously refining its guidance for diverse contexts. Broader consultation can help shape future iterations of this framework and the feasibility and utility of a country maturity model.

Examples: Psychological care and mitigation tools for law enforcement officers' health and well-being should be strengthened. The components of effective remedy and reparations for victims and survivors must be better elaborated. Countries seek additional guidance and frameworks for the industry, such as common standards or metrics on transparency.

As set out in the 2021 Global Threat Assessment, the nature of harm has continued to grow and diversify. The global community must accelerate its efforts to tackle these crimes and better protect children. This review has charted a path forward for action by the Alliance, its membership and other stakeholders to take up this urgent call.

You can read the full report documenting how and where the Model National Response framework has been implemented on our websites:

www.weprotect.org/framing-the-future/
www.unicef.org/reports/framing-future

For more information, please contact: **info@weprotectga.org**