CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION
Global Programme

A Global Challenge

Child Online Protection (COP) is a global challenge, and it requires a global response, international cooperation, and national coordination to protect children from online risks and the potential severe consequences.

During its 86th session, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) adopted the General Comment (GC) No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment. This represents a landmark moment because it is the first authoritative international legal document recognizing explicitly that children's rights apply both offline and online. The digital environment acts as a nexus to providing diverse opportunities and choices. It has opened many doors for children and young people to realize the full range of their rights, such as the right to participate, express themselves, access information, communicate, and learn, and to live free from violence.

This adoption comes at an unprecedented and pivotal time due to the coronavirus pandemic, which has relocated worldwide educational, leisure, social, political, and professional activities to the online environment. Massive change at this scale has caused new challenges to preserve the full integrity of children's rights online, while also ensuring their rights to access and create information on the internet.

The digital environment exposes children to an abundant number of harmful risks. According to a recent United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) youth survey, more than 70% of young people online worldwide face harassment and bullying[1]. One in three young people say they have been bullied online, with one in five saying they did not go to school because of cyberbullying and violence, according to a survey of some 30 countries published by UNICEF[2] .

[1] UNICEF (2019). More than 70% of the world's online youth face harassment and bullying.More than 70% of the world's online youth face harassment and bullying.
[2] UNICEF (2019). U-Report highlights prevalence of cyberbullying and its impact on young peopleUnicef poll: More than a third of young people in 30 countries report being a victim of online bullying

2020

Young people (15-24 years of age) worldwide were **1.24 times more likely to connect to the Internet** than the rest of the population[3]. Worldwide, one in three internet users are children, and yet too little is done to protect them from the perils of the digital world, to safeguard the trail of information their online activities create, and to increase their access to safe and quality online content[4].

2021

93%

children are online
by age 12

40%

children are online
by age 8

As per **article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child**, children must participate in matters that involve or interest them. The digital environment provides children with the opportunity to be active digital citizens, which ensures they are involved in expressing their rights online. Hence, it is our responsibility to enable children to be more engaged in the development and implementation of online protection strategies, by providing child-friendly learning resources to children about their rights online, all while providing concrete opportunities for active child participation.
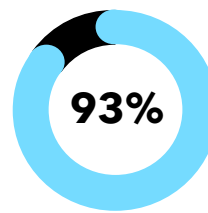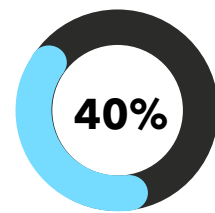
A Global Solution

There is a need to provide the necessary frameworks and services as well as empower children with the necessary skills and support to be able to tackle the online risks they are exposed to, with the goal of enabling children to navigate through digital spaces safely and securely.

ITU's Global Programme **"Creating a Safe and Prosperous Cyberspace for Children,"** launched in collaboration and with the support of the National Cybersecurity Authority (NCA) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, provides a global collaborative response to the increased risks and potential harms children are facing online. It also brings together international partners from all sectors of the child protection ecosystem to create a safe and empowering online experience for children around the world.

The programme aims to support countries in evaluating, developing and improving relevant policies, launching awareness campaigns, enriching discussions on child protection, and establishing task forces to set up child protection programs.

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[3] ITU (2022). Measuring digital development: Facts and figures 2021: Measuring digital development: Facts and figures 2021 (itu.int)
[4] UNICEF (2017). The State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a digital world: The State of the World's Children 2017 | UNICEF

The programme is divided into two pillars

Capacity building

Aims to effectively protect and empower children online by providing awareness, knowledge, and skills development in order to give children the tools to participate for their own protection. This would include all stakeholders, including parents, careers and educators, the information and communication technology (ICT) industry, and policymakers. This is accomplished through dissemination and implementation of:

- ✓ recommendations and concrete guidance for all relevant stakeholders

- ✓ face-to-face and online training for children and young people,

- ✓ train-the-trainers modules for educators,

- ✓ interactive game and an app for children of different age groups built on the child online protection guidelines.

Policy support

Aims to support Member States to develop regulatory, policy and legal frameworks to jointly build an international cooperation framework on COP and empowerment for children and young people online. Proactive child taskforces will support the development and implementation of national strategies.

A Common Future

The overarching goal of the ITU global programme is to complement the global efforts for child protection in the online environment and at a national level, to **foster a culture of COP with all relevant stakeholders through awareness, capacity building, knowledge sharing and digital skills development.**

In upcoming years, the focus will be on engaging and enabling all stakeholders to be able to prevent, report and respond to online safety risks and harms for children. With the objective to increase COP related programming to meet the needs at local, national, regional, and global levels, ITU aims to direct efforts towards the development and adoption of COP national strategies and related frameworks in all interested Member States and Sectors. This work aims to increase capacity building and skills development programmes, including the dissemination of locally relevant child-friendly solutions, co-create with children and young people, support the development of digital skills and positive online behavior for children. This will help increasing the number of children worldwide who will be empowered to safely navigate the online environment without fear of being exposed to online risks or to experience harm online.

© Play between classes / Zhou Weixi / WSIS

"The number of children using the internet has increased dramatically over the past few years, and the amount of time they spend online continue to rise steadily. Despite the tremendous efforts of many stakeholders, several challenges remain standing. We need to design processes, tools and campaigns to help mitigating the risks faced by children and to continue combining our efforts into cohesive, integrated and evidence-based programs to improve children's protection in Cyberspace".

H.E. Majed M. Al-Mazyed, Governor of the National Cybersecurity Authority

Opportunities to Partner

Potential partners can become part of the ITU's Global Programme on COP by contributing as donors and/or supporting the implementation of the programme.

These are the opportunities for partnering:

01 **FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION** — Support the achievement of the ambitious goals of the ITU's global programme on COP

02 **TECHNOLOGY** — Support the development of a game, and app and an online training platform for children.

03 **DISSEMINATION** — Share, localize and adopt the ITU COP Guidelines, the online safety with Sango course and the ITU COP policy brief as well as other relevant resources.

04 **CAPACITY BUILDING** — Awareness raising, training, and educating relevant stakeholders.

05 **POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS** — Create strategies, policies, legal or regulatory frameworks in your country, your company, your educational institution, your association, or any other relevant organization you are affiliated to, to protect and empower children online.

06 **CHILD ENGAGEMENT** — Join ITU in our work with children and young people in your country or sector, to support children and young people to realize the full range of their rights in the digital environment, including the right to participate, express themselves, access information, communicate, and learn, and to live free from violence.

PLEASE CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE ABOUT US:

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