Nepal: Improving systems to better protect children from Online Child Sexual Exploitation
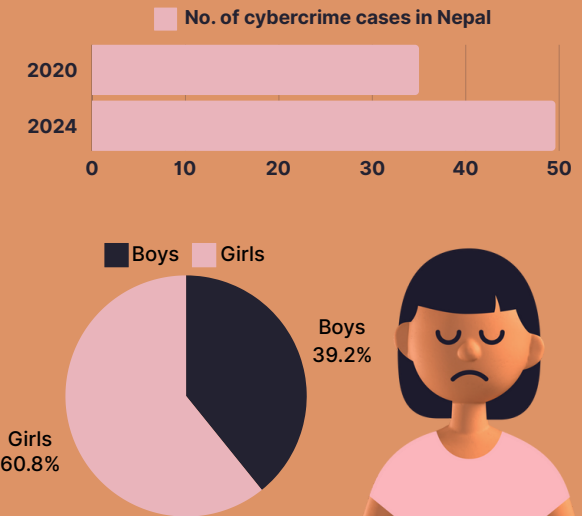
Advocacy Briefing Paper

Terre des Hommes
Netherlands

SCROL
Safety for Children and their Rights OnLine

NATIONALE
POSTCODE
LOTERIJ

IGNITE
PHILANTHROPY
inspiring the end to violence
against girls and boys

Context Update: September 2024

Internet and social media use in Nepal is rapidly increasing, especially among children and young people. The percentage of users rose from 35% in January 2020 to 49.6% at the start of 2024.[1] Between early 2023 and the beginning of 2024, social media use increased by 1.7 million (+13.9% per cent).[2] This raises critical questions about their online safety. Previous studies have highlighted significant issues, including unsafe internet and social media use, violations of social media user guidelines, and a lack of knowledge about safe internet practices among children, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders.[3]

The **2022 Out of the Shadows Index** reveals a concerning situation regarding child protection in Nepal. The country scored a mere 44.8 out of 100 on Prevention efforts against Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, indicating significant room for improvement in preventive measures. Similarly, Nepal's score of 45.6 on Response efforts suggests that the country's ability to address and manage cases of child abuse and exploitation is also inadequate for comprehensive reforms to safeguard children's rights and well-being in Nepal.

The Cyber Bureau's fact sheet from mid-June 2023 to mid-July 2024 reveals alarming statistics: police registered a total of **17,552 cases of cybercrime** across Nepal, with 487 involved children (191 boys and 296 girls). In 2023/24, two cases were registered of children in conflict with the law in cybercrime.[4] Facebook emerged as the most frequently used platform for committing cybercrimes.

No. of cybercrime cases in Nepal

Boys 39.2%
Girls 60.8%

A critical gap exists in Nepal's approach to online safety. There's an urgent need for comprehensive reforms to safeguard children's rights and well-being. In particular, the 2020 National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) requires revision. The plan aims to address legislative gaps, specifically the criminalisation of online grooming and possession of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM).

1 Kemp, S. (2024, February 23). Digital 2024: Nepal — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights. DataReportal – Global Digital Insights

2 Ibid

3 Terre des Hommes Netherlands. (2024, May 7). Child-friendly Baseline Summary Factsheets - SCROL. terredeshommes.nl.

4 ECPAT International. (2020). ECPAT Country Overview: Nepal. In ECPAT.(2022). Out Of The Shadows Index 2022. In Out of the Shadows. Ignite Philanthropy.
Ignite Philantrophy & Economist Impact. (2022). Out Of The Shadows Index 2022. In Out of the Shadows. Ignite Philantrophy.
Nabinda Aryal & Nepal Police, Cyber Bureau. (2024, June 14). Program on Prevention, Mitigation, Investigation, Awareness, and Promotion of Online Child Sexual Abuse: A Nepal Prospective [Slide show].

Reflection on achievements by Terre des Hommes Netherlands and partners:
November 2023 - September 2024

Increased awareness of Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) among children, families and communities. From Jan 2023 to June 2024, 43 Cases of OCSE have been reported by children, families and communities

Successful community police partnerships have raised OCSE awareness and identified new areas for intervention.

Local governments have started allocating funds to raise awareness about OCSE and are actively involved in awareness campaigns.

The project contributed to policy-level change as the Nepal Government passed an order to establish trial courts in all 77 country districts on 26th June 2023.

The National Curriculum Development Center advocates including OCSE prevention subjects in school syllabus.

In 2023, several policies related to online safety were promulgated, including:
- Directives for Managing the Use of Social Networks 2023 to regulate/monitor social media platforms in Nepal
- National Cyber Security Policy 2023
- Advisory Relating to Cyber Hygiene 2023

Key successful strategies for systemic change

1
Peer Education and Curriculum Integration

SCROL employs peer-to-peer education for OCSE sensitisation and advocates for including OCSE topics in school curricula to ensure early awareness. Children are actively involved in advocacy efforts, sharing their perspectives on online safety. It facilitated the integration of OCSE topics into the school curriculum, ensuring children are aware of these issues from an early stage. The project has successfully advocated towards the Curriculum Development Center for this inclusion, with children playing a vital role in these advocacy efforts.

2
Community Police Partnerships

Continued successful partnerships with community police to raise OCSE awareness in remote areas of Bagmati and Gandaki Province are crucial. Through this collaboration, the project has reached the most remote areas of Bagmati and Gandaki provinces for OCSE sensitisation and generated active engagement from frontline law enforcement officers.

3
Policy Development

Engage with government and private sectors to provide feedback on policies and lobby for OCSE prevention measures, including drafting child protection policies for various industries. The project provided feedback on policy development for government and private sectors, advocating for including OCSE prevention measures: TdH NL and partners reviewed the *Draft Bill relating to the Management of Social Network 2024 and the Draft Bill on the Management of Information Technology 2024*.

4
Private Sector Engagement

In the private sector, the project collaborated with the Travel and Tour Agency to draft the *Child Protection policy for the tourism industry and* created *Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for child online safety with the Internet Service Providers Association Nepal*. Recent Cyber Bureau data shows a concerning rise in OCSE cases, emphasising the urgency of these policy interventions and collaborative efforts to safeguard children online.

Key learning and strategies that need to be strengthened

1 Parental Engagement

The project hasn't yet achieved significant changes with parents. Baseline reports and field engagement reveal a need for increased parental involvement in positive parenting and OCSE awareness. The project will, therefore, concentrate on forming new parent groups and engaging more with existing ones, training them on positive parenting, including for children's online safety.
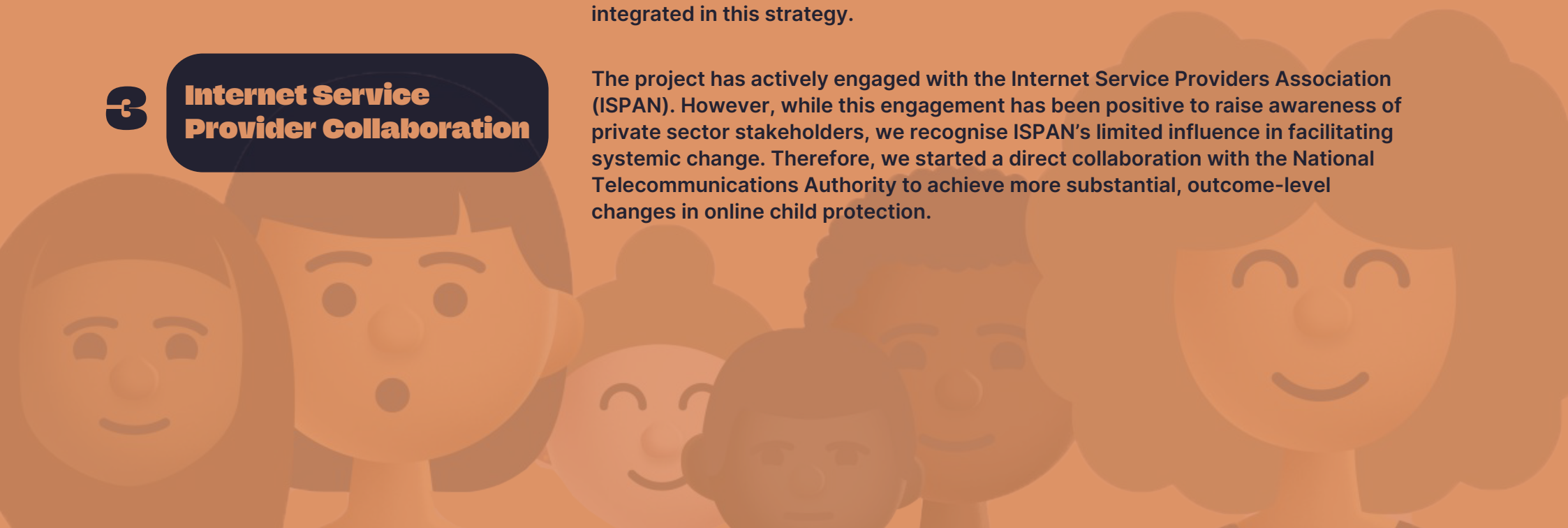
2 Tourism Sector Engagement

Previously, the project collaborated with the Hotel Association Nepal (HAN) and Travel Agency Association Nepal (TAAN). However, these efforts didn't yield the desired outcomes over the past year. Consequently, the project has pivoted its strategy. It now directly engages with the Nepal Tourism Department, leveraging its more significant influence on the T&T sector to prevent sexual exploitation and OCSE more effectively. Homestays have also been identified as a risky sector, involving children in their operations. Engaging with this sub-sector will be integrated in this strategy.

3 Internet Service Provider Collaboration

The project has actively engaged with the Internet Service Providers Association (ISPAN). However, while this engagement has been positive to raise awareness of private sector stakeholders, we recognise ISPAN's limited influence in facilitating systemic change. Therefore, we started a direct collaboration with the National Telecommunications Authority to achieve more substantial, outcome-level changes in online child protection.

Updated Advocacy Milestones and Roadmap

01 — October 2024

Private sector engagement

Actors Involved

ISPAN/ISP

A built-in child protection system is in place.

ISPAN supports Internet Service Providers in installing built-in child protection systems.

02 — December 2024

Policy Development

Actors Involved

Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens (MoWCSC)

Endorse SoP to handle OCSE-relates cases

MoWCSC finalises the Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) to address OCSE cases effectively.

03 — December 2024

Private Sector Engagement

Actors Involved

ISPAN/ Cyber Bureau

Parliament promulgates the laws relating to Information technology

MoCIT has developed a more robust IT policy for ISPs to filter harmful content.

Updated Advocacy Milestones and Roadmap

Community police partnerships

Actors Involved

Cyber Bureau

Cyber Bureau organises training for community police on child-friendly approaches while handling OCSE cases.

Cyber Bureau builds the capacity of community police to address OCSE in a child-friendly manner. The government provides technological know-how to the community police

June 2025

06

January 2025

Private sector engagement

Actors Involved

Tourism Council

The Safeguarding Protocol is in place under the guidance of the Tourism Council.

The tourism council guides the Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN) in developing child safeguarding protocols.

04

05

January 2025

Policy Development

Actors Involved

SAIEVAC

Provides recommendations to the GoN on OCSE concerns to be incorporated in NPA from the regional level.

SAIEVAC proactively initiates discussions with Ministries on strengthening the National Plan of Action to address SEC, including OCSE in Nepal

07

June 2025

Private sector engagement

Actors Involved

Ministry of Communication and Information Technology MOCIT

MOCIT prepares the recommendation/ request for the National Government to pass the bill.

MOCIT develops a policy for ISPAN to make built-in child protection systems mandatory for ISPs.

Updated Advocacy Milestones and Roadmap

August 2025

08

Formation of parent groups and sensitisation on OCSE and positive parenting

Actors Involved

Parents

Parents Monitor and support their Children's online engagement.

Adopt positive parenting; Support safe online behavior.

September 2025

09

Private sector engagement

Actors Involved

ISPAN/ Local Government

The municipality holds quarterly dialogues with national/local ISPs on OCSE prevention.

ISPAN engages in dialogue with local government on children's online safety.

Beyond September 2025

10

Peer Education and Curriculum Integration

Actors Involved

Local Government/ Education Department

Municipality updates and implements school curriculum to include safer Internet use and OCSE topics.

Amend Local Curriculum to incorporate safer Internet use and OCSE in school curriculum.

Updated Advocacy Milestones and Roadmap

Peer Education and Curriculum Integration

Actors Involved

CEHRD/ Education Department of National level

OCSE prevention topics are incorporated into the curriculum.

CEHRD incorporates OCSE into the school curriculum.

11

October 2025

Private sector engagement

Actors Involved

Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MOCIT)/ National Government

Parliament promulgates the laws relating to Information technology

MoCIT has developed a more robust IT policy for ISPs to filter harmful content.

12 **December 2025 and beyond**

13

Beyond 2025

Policy Development

Actors Involved

Ministry of Home Affairs

Sufficient human resources are in place for the Cyber Bureau at the district level.

Ensure sufficient human resources from the Cyber Bureau at the district level are available.

STOP CHILD EXPLOITATION Terre des Hommes Netherlands

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Terre des Hommes Netherlands is a global child protection organisation working in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. We protect children and prevent child exploitation, and empower children to make their voices count. We tackle issues at the roots by enabling systemic change with the support of grassroots level implementing partners. We ensure that children are at the centre of our initiatives.