POSITION PAPER FROM CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE

Terre des Hommes Netherlands

SAFETY FOR CHILDREN AND PROTECTING THEIR RIGHTS ONLINE IN NEPAL

SCROL
Safety for Children and their Rights OnLine

Introduction

This position paper has been prepared by children ourselves on how we view internet access and our rights and safety concerns when we are online. We are using the internet and social media more than before and increased access to these technologies and platforms has raised serious concerns for our online safety.

We prepared this paper by group discussions with children from diverse backgrounds in the Gandaki and Bagmati Provinces of Nepal. We identified issues and concerns for our rights and online safety and wrote in this paper.

After the first draft was prepared, we revised the content of the paper and added some more recommendations.

The objective of this position is to let the government and relevant stakeholders know about our rights and online safety and use this paper to ask them to take necessary actions. We prepared this paper focusing on the roles of parents, teachers, community leaders, law enforcement officials, internet service providers, and other relevant people to work for our online safety and protecting our rights online.

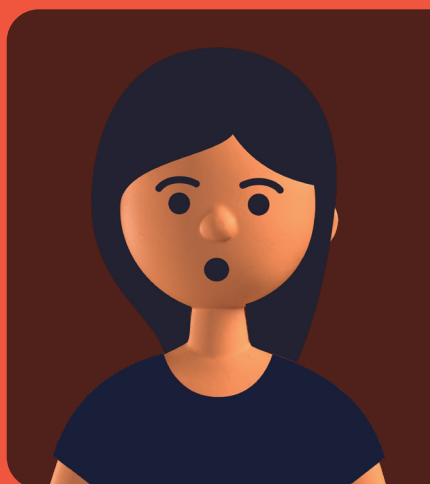# Current Position of Children's Online Safety in Nepal

More and more people are using the internet in Nepal, as seen at 35 per cent in January 2020, 38.4 per cent in 2022, and 51.6 percent at the start of 2023. Likewise, social media users have also increased in Nepal. As of January 2023, Nepal is home to 12.60 million social media users.

The internet plays a vital role in the lives of children today, offering numerous benefits and shaping our future. When used appropriately, the Internet provides rich learning experiences.

We identified in our discussions that there is a need for greater online safety for us in Nepal, as we know our friends who use the internet without knowing that harming, abusing, or insulting someone online may amount to a crime. We know our friends who frequently share images with strangers online. We also have been exposed to vulgar content and received unwanted messages and pictures. We do not feel safe when we are online because someone may just send something or write something that we do not like.

We think that children should go to the police in case of online abuse, such as bullying, sexting, etc., but many of us do not actually know where to go, how to report and whom to report. Thus, the response system should be made simple and let us know about it.

At the moment, many children are not sure whether they will report, if they encounter online abuse.

> **"**
> *We can access educational resources, research materials, and online courses. We are basically using the internet to search for information to complete our school assignments, to communicate with family members, relatives, friends, and teachers, for entertainment and recreation, and to learn skills in art, dance, music, cooking, etc.*
>
> **13 year old child, Gandaki Province**

What children want to see in future

We want our parents, teachers, police, and internet service providers (ISPs), media, local government, etc. to act and respond to the growing concern of online safety for children. It's not only a matter of online safety but it is also a matter of access to safe and age-appropriate content on the internet for all children regardless of their geographical locations.

Majority of the parents in Nepal are unable to guide their children for safer use of the internet. Most of them do not know about parental control tools. Many of such parents do not know about school assignments based on the internet. We want our parents to know the education methods of the time and provide us with digital devices and the internet to complete our school assignments.

We want our schools and teachers to teach about how to remain safe while using the internet as well as their rights while using the internet. We want our schools and teachers to organize events to educate us about online safety rather than always engage in teaching school curricula.

We want our leaders of the community to conduct awareness activities targeted to members of the community on children's right to access to the internet and their online safety. We want our leaders to speak to their parents about this. We want police to be cooperative, polite and responsive when children come to report cases to them. There should be a welcoming environment for children at police offices. Police should provide information about the investigation process and progress made in children's cases.

We want other stakeholders, such as, internet service providers, Nepal Telecommunications Authority, and ministries to work to make safer digital spaces for children and to make internet affordable and accessible to all children all over Nepal.

Recommendations

To the Government and Internet Service Providers

1. Work to make digital spaces safer for children.

2. Block the harmful content and ensure age-appropriate contents for children on the internet.

3. Conduct awareness-raising programs in coordination with schools and law enforcement authorities; Provide awareness about online safety to larger population and children around the country through radio, television and other media platforms.

4. Develop diplomatic cooperation relations with other countries to bring perpetrators of online sexual abuse to justice.

5. Develop protocol or guideline to takedown child sexual abusive materials from the internet and social media platforms.

6. Make the internet affordable and accessible to all children all over Nepal.

To support the cause reach out to us at asia@tdh.nl

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