Event: Safe Digital Futures for Children

6 November 2024, all day event with a Networking Reception at 5pm
Ágora Bogotá Centro de Convenciones, Bogotá (Colombia)

Safe Online, WeProtect Global Alliance and the Brave Movement and other key actors join forces to host the event Safe Digital Futures for Children and Young People on Wednesday 06 November 2024 in Bogotá (Colombia) to illuminate the magnitude and complexity of the issue and galvanise political momentum to address this significant and growing threat within the sphere of violence against children globally. The event will bring together policy makers, practitioners, civil society, researchers, industry members, operators, media as well as survivors and youth groups.

The event will leverage and build the momentum towards the first Global Ministerial Conference on ending Violence against Children which will be held on 07 - 08 November 2024 hosted by the Governments of Colombia and Sweden, in partnership with WHO, UNICEF and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on ending violence against children (SRSG VAC).

This collaboration aims to shine light on the digital challenges faced by children while fostering cross-sector dialogue and creating an influential platform to secure political commitments and investments towards child-centric, safety by design-based and future-proof prevention and response mechanisms to online harms and crimes against children globally. It will also be a critical opportunity to exchange the linkages between the growing relevance of online spaces and digital harms and the overall violence prevention agenda to identify concrete avenues to better integrate and align efforts.

This event will follow on the Regional Network Forum on Tuesday 05 November 2024 hosted by Safe Online for its Grantees working in Latin America & the Caribbean region. The Regional Forum aims to co-create a body of collaborative knowledge and solutions that can feed into the discussions at the event and main plenary sessions at the Ministerial Conference, setting regional insights within a global context.

The main objectives of the event are as follows:

- Bring attention to the growing dangers and latest trends of online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) and other online risks and harms to children.
- Articulate how these online risks and harms link with the wider Violence against Children (VAC) agenda and related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) efforts to identify concrete avenues to align efforts with the WHO Global Conference and follow up actions.
- Map out critical needs, factors and opportunities globally and context specific ones for the Latin America & the Caribbean region, and build further support for the adoption of data and evidence collections efforts on online CSEA – e.g. Disrupting Harm now implemented in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico as part of Safe Online $15 million investment in 25 countries across 6 regions.
- Explore new or strengthen existing collaborations around strategic opportunities, while fostering dialogue to promote cohesive approaches informed by the latest evidence and best practices – e.g. profile countries from the region who have used the Model National Response Framework to drive effective cross-sectorial national systems.
- Create momentum for joint action to tackle online CSEA in the context of other forms of violence and unify voices around critical and urgent asks for concrete political commitments, legislative reforms, coordinated action internationally and sustained investments in technology and overall capacity across the globe.
Background information

The internet’s increasing global reach is providing valuable opportunities for children to learn, connect and play, but it can also increase the risk of unsafe or traumatic experiences including online CSEA. It comes in many forms and includes child grooming, live streaming of sexual abuse, consuming child sexual abuse material, and coercing and blackmailing for sexual purposes; and it comes in closely interlinked with other forms of violence such as cyberbullying, stalking, cyber-harassment, gender-based violence, trafficking, etc. The impact of sexual abuse on children is long-lasting and profound with severe consequences on the health and lives of children; evidence shows that child victims of online CSEA are 2-4 times more likely to have self-harm and suicidal ideation.

Every second, at least 2 images or videos of children sexually abused are shared online. In 2022 alone, 32 million reports of suspected photos and videos depicting sexual abuse of children on the internet were received. These are not only teenagers exploring their sexuality as people may think, in fact, 1 in every 3 reported photo or video is a child under the age of 10, and a study in Canada shows that 56% of the cases of online child sexual abuse began before the age of 4, and 42% of these children were sexually abused for more than 10 years. In some countries up to 20% of children are victims of online sexual abuse (Disrupting Harm data from 13 countries); scaled to the general population of internet-using children, these estimates represent 5+ million 12–17-year-olds that experienced online CSEA in 2021 alone.

Most actors including governments, tech companies, professionals and parents are not prepared to respond to this new and fast-evolving crime against children. The lack of a robust evidence base, adequate regulations and effective coordination across borders and sectors, including industry actors, is widespread globally and is jeopardising investments to tackle this horrible crime against children. To address this gap, key actors have invested in multiple initiatives such as the WeProtect Global Alliance’s Global Threat Assessment, INHOPE Global Standard project, Out of the Shadows Index, ECPAT’s public opinion polls on the intersection of privacy and safety online, and similar. Moreover, Safe Online has invested almost $100 million in over 100 projects with impact in more than 85 countries to strengthen evidence, tech tools, systems and networks to both prevent and respond to online CSEA in the context of other forms of violence. Significant changes are also happening at legislative level with Brazil Bill - Projecte de lei 2628 to protect children and adolescents in digital environments approved by the Justice Commission in February 2024, the UK Online Safety Act, Australia Online Safety Act, California’s Age-Appropriate Design Code, EU Digital Services Act and the new EU legislative proposal that would, among other things, make it mandatory for Internet companies to detect, report and remove Child Sexual Abuse Material.

About the Organisers

Safe Online exists to catalyse and accelerate innovative solutions making the internet a safe place for children to explore, learn and develop. It is an investment vehicle supported by government, philanthropic and private donors, working in partnership with a wide range of civil society, academia, industry and policymaking institutions committed to tackle digital harm to children and young people. We focus on how digital technologies and connectivity intensify existing and facilitate new forms of violence against children. We create cutting edge evidence and access to the latest models and networks, while promoting innovation and tools that are shareable and adaptable to ensure efficiency.

The Brave Movement is a survivor-centered advocacy movement working to end childhood sexual violence. An integral part of our mission involves supporting survivor leaders advocating to end child sexual exploitation and abuse online and holding tech companies and governments accountable, through a global campaign for a sexual violence-free internet. Our campaign – centered in the experience and knowledge of survivors of childhood sexual violence – is fighting to ensure that the digital world is rewired and made safe for children. Working with tech companies and governments,
and collaborating with partners and allies, we will improve practices and ensure they design a world where every child is safe from sexual violence online.

[WeProtect Global Alliance] brings together experts from over 270 member governments, private sector companies and civil society organisations. Together, they break down complex problems and develop policies and solutions to protect children from sexual abuse online.

Other partners have expressed interest and will be added here as they are confirmed. If you would like to learn more about the event, please contact Caroline Makumbe at caroline@safepoint.global.