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DC on Children's Rights in the Digital Environment Annual Report 2022

Reporting period: 1 January to 31 December 2022

Compiler: ECPAT International (DC Chair)

Background info about the DC

- The DC-COS was established in 2006 at the 2nd IGF in Rio de Janeiro by organisations working with and for children and youth. Its aim was to establish a dialogue and address fundamental and practical issues impacting on child safety in the online environment.
- Since 2006, there have been significant evolutions in the scale and nature of opportunity, risk and harm to which children are exposed in digital environments, and the relevance of the group continues to expand and grow.

Activities conducted in the past year

Activities within the IGF

- Ongoing exchange and coordination within the DC steering group to help elevate the role of DCs within the IGF and beyond.
- Planning meetings of the DC on children's rights in the Digital Environment

DC session at the 2022 IGF in Addis Ababa

[Translating data & laws into action for digital child rights](#)

Where and when is the Session?

The event took place in Banquet Hall B from Thursday, 1st December, 2022 (06:30 UTC) - Thursday, 1st December, 2022 (08:00 UTC)

Overarching questions for the session

- How can international initiatives such as the General Comment #25 to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child translate into change for children?
- What are the real-life experiences from organizations conducting national advocacy based on the findings of the Disrupting Harm research project?
- What lessons are we learning from the Disrupting Harm project overall in the participating regions?
- What do we know about gaps and opportunities to collect, analysis and use data for action?
- What more do we need to be doing to translate data and laws into action on the ground?

Background to the discussion

- Internet Governance is experiencing a transition from self-regulatory to regulatory environments for online service providers, highlighting the complexities and lack of consensus between different issue groups.

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- Arguments for and against regulation often default to binary or seemingly mutually exclusive positions, missing the nuance and compromise needed to identify sustainable, cross-sector solutions to violence against children in real-life and in digital environments.

Speakers

Seila Samleang, APLE Cambodia

Dr. Tessema Bekele: Emmanuel Development Association, Ethiopia

Joy Katunge, Kenya Alliance for Advancement of Children

Serena Tommasino, Safe Online, Global Partnership to End Violence against Children

Prof. Sonia Livingstone, London School of Economics and Political Science

Jutta Croll, Stiftung Digitale Chancen / Digital Opportunities Foundation

Onsite Moderator: Adama Jallow

Online Moderator: Amy Crocker (ECPAT International)

Rapporteur: Amy Crocker / ECPAT International (tbc)

Key Session Takeaways

- Regulation and prevention do not exist in a dichotomy but are too often framed in that way – it is possible and essential to have both.
- Regulation is often politically expedient and based on the values, priorities, and political interests of a country. Therefore, lessons must be learnt from public health messaging and other approaches to social problems, with attention given to disparities between Global North and Global South countries that are often missed in general regulation proposals for the internet.

Activities beyond the IGF

Members of the DC are active beyond the IGF on the themes and questions addressed by the DC. While these are not specifically coordinated by or through the DC, they nevertheless contribute to the knowledge base upon which the DC operates. Examples include:

- **ECPAT International** has continued to engage in multistakeholder settings globally to advocate for children's rights to be free from sexual exploitation and abuse. In 2022, highlights include: 1) ECPAT in partnership with INTERPOL and UNICEF Innocenti and with funding from the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children completed the Disrupting Harm research project to assess the prevalence, nature and socio-political and legal context of online child sexual exploitation in 13 countries in Southern and Eastern Africa and Southeast Asia; 2) ECPAT is leading Project Beacon, a campaign of targeted advocacy to ensure children's rights are prioritized in EU Digital Policy, in particular around the proposal for a regulation to prevent and combat child sexual abuse as an output of the EU Strategy to combat child sexual abuse.
- **Stiftung Digitale Chancen (Digital Opportunities Foundation, Germany)** continues to advocate in Germany, the EU and across the world to promote digital and social participation, strengthen media competence, promote equal opportunity access for all people to the Internet and digital offerings, and to research the social consequences of digitization. It operates a programme of activity through the Child Protection and Children's Rights in the Digital World project. Mainly they are advocating for children's rights in

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European and international regulatory policy. In March 2022 they have sent a letter composed by Thorn, US to advocate the comprehensive consideration of children’s rights in the EU Digital Service Act together with members the National Coalition on Children’s Rights, Germany to the European Parliament and the respective German Ministries, <https://childrens-rights.digital/fokus/index.cfm/key.3811/aus.2>. On November 18, 2022 the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse together with child rights advocate organisations they have issued an open letter to the European Commission to support the draft CSA regulation to prevent and combat child sexual abuse, s. <https://childrens-rights.digital/fokus/index.cfm/key.3840>.

- **Prof. Sonia Livingstone, London School of Economics and Social Sciences** continues to provide thought leadership and conduct groundbreaking research in the field of children’s digital lives and children’s digital rights, to co-lead the Global Kids Online initiative, and to advocate for the General Comment #25 the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on Children’s Rights in relation to the digital environment. Insights and information can be found at: <https://www.lse.ac.uk/research/research-for-the-world/impact/safeguarding-play-childrens-rights-and-the-internet> and through the Parenting for a Digital Future blog <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/parenting4digitalfuture/>
- **Internet Watch Foundation** continues to act as a global leader in cross-sectoral collaboration to remove child sexual abuse material from the Internet. Active in policy and debate around regulation of online service providers in the UK and the EU, the IWF also leads global insights into trends in online exploitation of children, and facilitates reporting portals for countries around the world, committed to ensuring no victim is left behind.
- **Dot kids** has made significant progress in relation to .KiDS, the only child-centric top-level-domain name with children’s best interest at heart, aiming to create and foster an online space with kids’ best interests at heart; serve as a sustainable source of support to children’s rights and welfare initiatives, especially as related to the Internet, and through Foundation, create a dedicated Internet space for kids, supporting and championing for a better cyberspace favorable to the positive development of kids, and the active participation from children and youth in global governance, especially for the Internet.

Priorities/objectives for the following year

- Update the ToR of the DC to outline the role of members in driving the DC forward
- Restructure the ways of working of the DC, including by expanding the ways that the DC can be a reference group for key initiatives led by members of the DC
- Analyse the impact of Internet Governance on national and regional regulatory policies and vice versa
- Seek closer collaboration with other DCs

Report finalised on 31 January 2023 by the Chair of the Coordination Team of the Dynamic Coalition on children’s rights in the digital environment: Amy Crocker – ECPAT International – amyc@ecpat.org