Draft

Concept Note

Webinar Title: "A Best Practice on Balancing risks and opportunities to protect children in Thailand"

Background:

Of the 4.5 billion people with access to the internet today, 1 in 3 are under 18, and they often go online unsupervised.[1] The internet offers many opportunities for learning, communication, creativity, and entertainment for children and young people. However, it also exposes them to certain risks and threats such as online grooming, cyberbullying, exposure to all types of harmful content, including violent and glory, pornographic, hateful content, misinformation and disinformation, child sexual abuse material, and online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA) etc. The dark side of the expansion of the online environment has been an unprecedented surge in online sexual abuse of children and young people.[2] The global spread of new technology has digitalized all walks of life – often with little awareness of the risks posed by new technologies to children and young people. The reality is that technology has made nearly every facet of online sexual abuse easier, leaving children and young people of all ages more vulnerable than ever online.[3]

According to the risk classification guides of the Children Online Research and Evidence (CO:RE),[4] the risks that children and young people face online can be classified into four categories (4Cs). This classification[5] recognizes that online risks arise when a child: is exposed to potentially harmful content;[6] is targeted by potentially harmful contact;[7] is a victim of potentially harmful
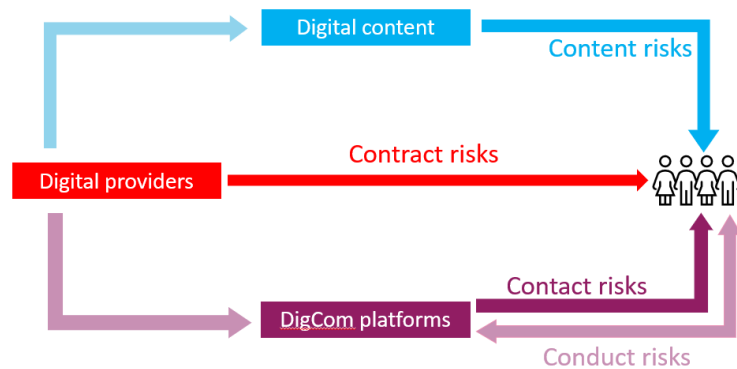

Figure 1: EU CO-RE - *https://core-evidence.eu/posts/4-cs-of-online-risk*

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[1] Sonia Livingstone, John Carr, Jasmina Byrne. "One in Three: Internet Governance and Children's Rights". UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. January 2016

[2] Thorn. Technoilogy has made it easier to harm children

[3] Thorn. Technoilogy has made it easier to harm children

[4] EU CO-RE – A 4Cs new risk classification. Available here: https://core-evidence.eu/posts/4-cs-of-online-risk

[5] CO-RE – Moving towards mulitdisciplinery to online risk - https://core-evidence.eu/posts/online-risks-takeaways

[6] The child engages with or is exposed to potentially harmful content. This can be violent, gory content, hateful or extremist content, as well as pornographic or sexualized content that may be illegal or harmful, including by being age inappropriate. Content online may be mass-produced or user-generated (including by the child), and it may be shared widely or not.

[7] The child experiences or is targeted by contact in a potentially harmful adult-initiated interaction, and the adult may be known to the child or not. This can be related to harassment (including sexual), stalking, hateful behavior, sexual grooming, sextortion, or the generation of sharing of child sexual abuse material.

conduct;[8] is exploited by a potentially harmful contract.[9] In addition to the 4Cs, and the many intersections among them, the CO:RE classification recognizes significant cross-cutting risks, notably to children's privacy, health and fair treatment. These risks can occur with all content, contact, conduct and contract risks.

Thailand context and situation

Rapid digital technology expansion and increased internet access have drastically transformed the lives of children and youth in Thailand. Internet use has become widespread. Over 75 per cent of Thais use the internet and spend considerable time doing so. Children and young people in Thailand are accessing the internet from a younger age than ever. An estimated 94 per cent of 12–17-year-olds in Thailand are internet users[10] , and children under five use connected electronic devices regularly.[11] Almost all internet-using children in Thailand go online at least once a day for entertainment or social activities, such as watching videos, using social media, chatting with friends, reading news, and for educational activities, such as joining an online class or searching for new information.[12] Given the time they spend online, and their reliance on digital technology, children and young people in this generation are growing up online. They face risks of different types of harm. However, not all risks have the same likelihood of harm to children. Below are some of the data from different pieces of research that highlight the potential impact of online risk on children;

1. Over 9 per cent of internet users aged 12–17 in Thailand were victims of **online sexual exploitation and abuse**, which occurred in various forms, from being blackmailed to engage in sexual activities, someone else sharing their sexual images without permission, to being coerced to engage in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts.[13] Around 11 per cent of children aged 9 to 18 reported having experienced online harassment and sexualized comments.[14]

2. Between 2019-2021, the US National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), which compiles reports (known as CyberTips) from U.S.-based technology companies, found an increase in the number of reports containing **child sexual abuse material** (CSAM) related to Thailand. In 2019, NCMEC received 355,369 reports related to Thailand, and the number rose to

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[8] The child witnesses, participates in or is a victim of potentially harmful conduct such as bullying, hateful peer activity, trolling, sexual messages, pressures, or harassment, or is exposed to potentially harmful user communities (e.g., self-harm or eating disorders). Typically conduct risks arise from interactions among peers, although not necessarily of equal status.

[9] Contract risks: The child is party to and/or exploited by potentially harmful contract or commercial interests (gambling, exploitative or age-inappropriate marketing, etc.). This can be mediated by the automated (algorithmic) processing of data. This includes risks linked to ill-designed or insecure digital services that leave the child open to identity theft, fraud, or scams. It also includes contracts made between other parties involving a child (trafficking, streaming child sexual abuse).

[10] ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF (2022). *Disrupting Harm in Thailand: Evidence on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.* Global Partnership to End Violence against Children

[11] MICS 2021

[12] ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF (2022). *Disrupting Harm in Thailand: Evidence on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.* Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Internet Foundation for the Development of Thailand. Child Online Protection Guidelines 3.0 – 2022.

397,743 and 589,515 reports in 2020 and 2021, respectively. The reporting on CSAM does not equate to the level of abuse in Thailand.[15]

3. **Online grooming** is rising as technology has made it easier to harm children.[16] Children are uniquely vulnerable to grooming with unsupervised use of the internet, smartphones and webcams, which they use to share images and communicate with strangers. Close to 1 in 5 children are sexually solicited online.[17]

4. Between 8 to 15 per cent of children in Thailand who had experienced different forms of OCSEA in the past year did not disclose the most recent incident to anyone. Very few children used **formal reporting** mechanisms like police, social workers, or helplines. The main barriers were a lack of awareness around where to go or whom to tell, which suggests that children were not familiar with the formal reporting mechanisms available to them or did not feel comfortable disclosing to their caregivers.[18]

5. While online, **children's privacy and protection** can be undermined by several risks related to the collection and onward sale of their data and browsing habits, behaviour targeting and advertising, the use of biometrics, age verification and the mandatory use of identification, government surveillance and a variety of parental controls.[19]

6. Close to 47 per cent of children in Thailand did not know where to **access services and get help** if they or a friend were sexually assaulted or harassed[20] and 82 per cent of social workers and police indicated that low reporting was due to the caregivers' low level of awareness of the risks of OCSEA.[21]

7. Nearly 26 per cent of children aged 9 to 18 in Thailand were reported to have **self-generated sexual images** that could be classified as child sexual abuse material.[22] Such images of children are innocently produced mostly for their own use but are used for bullying and exploitation, including sexual exploitation online.

8. Over 54 per cent of children aged 9 to 18 in Thailand were reported to have been exposed to pornographic and child sexual abuse material online in 2022.[23] **Pornographic content** can harm

[15] National Centre for missing and Exploited Children. Cyber Tipline Reports 2021.

[16] Thorn. Technoilogy has made it easier to harm children

[17] Kimberly Mitchell et al. "Risk Factors for and Impact of Online Sexual Solicitation of Youth". Journal of the American Medical Association. 2018. Anja Schulz et al. "Online Sexual Solicitation of Minors: How Often and between Whom Does It Occur". Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency. 2016; Internet Watch Foundation. "Trends in Online Child Sexual Exploitation: Examining the Distribution of Captures of Live-streamed Child Sexual Abuse". May 2018.

[18] ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF (2022). *Disrupting Harm in Thailand: Evidence on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.* Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

[19] UNICEF. Privacy, Protection of Personal Information and Repution – A discussion paper on Children's Right and Business in eth Digital World; and UNICFE. Child rights in the digital age.

[20] ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF (2022). *Disrupting Harm in Thailand: Evidence on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.* Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

[21] ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF (2022). *Disrupting Harm in Thailand: Evidence on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.* Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.

[22] Internet Foundation for the Development of Thailand. Child Online Protection Guidelines 3.0 – 2022.

[23] Internet Foundation for the Development of Thailand. Child Online Protection Guidelines 3.0 – 2022.

children. Exposure to pornography and CSAM at a young age may lead to poor mental health, sexism and objectification, sexual violence, and other negative outcomes. Among other risks, when children view pornography that portrays abusive and misogynistic acts, they may come to view such behaviour as normal and acceptable.[24]

9. Children and young people in Thailand have spent more time online than their peers in countries with similar income levels. Their exposure **to hate speech** has increased with more time online. This includes hate between children and teens during online and gaming chats, reflecting how children can be both victims and perpetrators of hate speech.[25]

10. Data from 11 countries[26] show that between 43 and 64 per cent of 9 to 17-year-olds look for **news online**.[27] Because of their evolving capacities, children cannot always distinguish between reliable and unreliable information contained in the news. As a result, not only can they be harmed by **misinformation/disinformation**,[28] but they may also spread it among their peers. Even very young children or those without access to social media networks may be exposed to misinformation/disinformation through their interactions with peers, parents, caregivers and educators.[29] Children and young people are especially vulnerable to online abuse, hate speech and misinformation/disinformation on social media.

11. **Social media platforms** were designed to hold users' attention as long as possible, tapping into psychological biases and vulnerabilities relating to our desire for validation and fear of rejection. Too much passive use of social media that is very popular with young people – just browsing posts – can be unhealthy and has been linked to feelings of envy,[30] inadequacy[31] and less satisfaction with life.[32] Studies have even suggested that it can lead to ADHD symptoms,[33] depression, anxiety[34] and sleep deprivation.[35]

12. In Thailand, 22 and 41 per cent of children aged 9 to 18 years reported showing aggressive behaviour. They experienced problems in their social relationships with family and friends

[24] UNICEF. Protection of children from the harmful impacts of pornography: Pornographic content can harm children
[25] UN Strategy and Plan of Action to Hate Speech.
[26] Colombia, India, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Philippines, South Africa, Tunisia, Venezuela and Vietnam
[27] UNICEF. Feb 2020. Digital Civic Engagement by Young People.
[28] Misinformation refers to false or misleading information that is unwittingly shared, while disinformation is false or misleading information that is deliberately created and distributed with an intent to deceive or harm. UNICEF Office of Global Insight and Policy. August 2021. Digital misinformation / disinformation and children.
[29] UNICEF Office of Global Insight and Policy. August 2021. Digital misinformation / disinformation and children.
[30] Philippe Verduyn, Oscar Ybarra, Maxime Résibois, John Jonides, Ethan Kross. Do Social Network Sites Enhance or Undermine Subjective Well-Being? A Critical Review. 2017.
[31] Ibid
[32] Holly B. Shakya, Nicholas A. Christakis. 2017. Association of Facebook Use With Compromised Well-Being: A Longitudinal Study . American Journal of Epidemiology, Volume 185, Issue 3, 1 February 2017
[33] Chaelin K. Ra, MPH1; Junhan Cho, PhD1; Matthew D. Stone, BA2; et al. 2018. Association of Digital Media Use With Subsequent Symptoms of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Among Adolescents
[34] AJon D.Elhaiab, Robert D.Dvorakc, Jason C.Levinea, Brian J.Hallde. Problematic smartphone use: A conceptual overview and systematic review of relations with anxiety and depression psychopathology. Journal of Affective Disorders. Volume 207, 1 January 2017, Pages 251-259
[35] Jean M.Twenge, Zlatan Krizan, Garrett Hisler. Decreases in self-reported sleep duration among U.S. adolescents 2009–2015 and association with new media screen time. Sleep Medicine Volume 39, November 2017, Pages 47-53

because of the **impact of online gaming**.[36] Online gaming has established itself as part of children's lives. Social gaming platforms are expanding because of better, cheaper, and widely adopted virtual and augmented reality devices. Big Tech is investing billions in building the digital infrastructure for the metaverse. The beginnings of it already exist in non-immersive forms, such as the play environments of Minecraft and Roblox, where children create their own worlds or meet in their thousands for music concerts.[37]

In Thailand, a holistic and coordinated approach is required to address the above challenges. Such an approach will need to involve all relevant stakeholders, including children, young people and parents. If followed systematically, the approach will ensure children and young people in Thailand are increasingly able to safely and confidently navigate the digital world while also able to utilize the benefits and potentials of the internet.

Currently, Ministries, Departments, and agencies, from the government, civil society organizations, and the private sector are working toward this goal. They face different limitations. The existing initiatives cover different dimensions to address some of the challenges highlighted above. They include measures that can be classified as administrative, policy, regulatory, educational and preventive, responsive, hotlines and helplines. However, the different existing programmes and components remain disconnected, inadequate in terms of their scale and coverage and lacking coherence in strategy and messaging.

Objectives:

1. Raise awareness about the opportunities and diverse threats and risks that children face online in Thailand and presenting Thailand's effort to counter those threats.

2. Highlight the urgent need for collaboration among stakeholders to safeguard children's rights in the digital space.

3. Advocate for the adoption of comprehensive strategies, prevention, and interventions to enhance child online protection in Thailand.

Key Topics:

1. Balancing Risks and Opportunities

- Overview of the digital landscape in Thailand and its impact on children and youth.

- Acknowledging Benefits: While recognizing online risks, it's imperative to highlight the internet's positive contributions to children's development.

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[36] Internet Foundation for the Development of Thailand. Child Online Protection Guidelines 3.0 – 2022.
[37] Bracket Foundation, 2022. Gamign and the Metaverse - The Alarming Rise of Online Sexual Exploitation and

Abuse of Children Within the New Digital Frontier

- Introduction to the EU CO-RE risk classification framework, identifying the four categories of online risks children face.

- Examination of cross-cutting risks, including threats to children's privacy, health, and fair treatment in the digital environment.

- Holistic Approach: Addressing online safety requires a multifaceted strategy encompassing regulatory measures, educational interventions, and parental guidance.

2. Addressing Emerging Challenges and Threats

- Presentation of research findings highlighting the prevalence and impact of online risks on children in Thailand.

- Exploration of specific challenges such as online grooming, cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, and online sexual exploitation and abuse.

- Discussion on the gaps and limitations in existing initiatives and strategies to address these challenges effectively.

- Expanding Perspective: Beyond blaming children, acknowledging the role of criminal elements and societal factors in online harms.

- Broader Ecosystem: Recognizing systemic influences on online safety, including the role of families, communities, and regulatory frameworks.

3. Towards a Coordinated and Holistic Approach

- Showcase of existing efforts and initiatives by government, civil society, and private sector stakeholders in child online protection by presenting Thailand Safe Internet Coalition (TSIC)'s mechanism and share lesson learnt.

- Identification of key barriers and challenges hindering the effectiveness and scalability of current interventions.

- Call to action for stakeholders to adopt a coordinated and holistic approach to child online protection, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and synergy.

4. Promoting Digital Literacy and Resilience:

- Offline Skills Integration: Emphasizing the importance of offline skills like critical thinking and emotional intelligence in navigating online risks.
- Comprehensive Education: Advocating for holistic education that combines digital literacy with broader life skills.

5. Fostering Regional and International Collaboration:

- ASEAN Framework: Recognizing the ASEAN framework's relevance in promoting cross-border collaboration and addressing regional challenges.
- International Cooperation: Stressing the need for global partnerships to combat online risks effectively.

Design of Each Session:

1. Opening Session (15 minutes)

- Welcome remarks and introduction of the webinar's theme and objectives.

- Overview of the partnership between Thailand Safe Internet Coalition (TSIC) representing by depa and APT in addressing child online protection challenges.

2. Panel Discussion (60 minutes)

- Brief presentations by panelists highlighting their organization's perspective and initiatives on child online protection.

- Moderated discussion exploring key topics, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.

- Interactive Q&A session with the audience to encourage engagement and participation. Panelists are comprising of;

    o The Digital Economy Promotion Agency (depa), Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (MDES), Thailand

    o Department of Special Investigation (DSI), Ministry of Justice Thailand (MOJ)

    o UNICEF Thailand

    o The internet Foundation for Development of Thailand (IFDT)

3. Closing Session (15 minutes)

- Recap of key insights and takeaways from the panel discussion.

- Call to action for stakeholders to commit to concrete steps towards enhancing child online protection in Thailand.

- Expression of gratitude to participants, speakers, and partners for their contributions.

Key Messages:

- **depa:** Highlight the role of technology and innovation in creating opportunity for children and vulnerable people. Also highlight a digital foresight 2024 and its key findings[38]. a safer online environment for children, while emphasizing the need for robust regulatory frameworks to protect children's rights.

- **DSI:** Presenting the online child sexual abuse and exploitation cases in Thailand and the obstacle in investigation and law enforcement.

- **IFDT:** Advocate for increased digital literacy and empowerment among children and caregivers to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

- **UNICEF Thailand:** Stress the constructive engagement and urgency of collaborative action to address the multifaceted challenges of child online protection, emphasizing a rights-based approach and the importance of child participation in decision-making processes.

- **APT (Moderator):** Facilitate an inclusive and constructive dialogue among stakeholders, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange to advance child online protection efforts in Thailand.

Through "Thailand Safe Internet Coalition", we aim to catalyze a collective response to the complex and evolving challenges of child online protection, ensuring that every child in Thailand can explore the digital world safely and confidently.

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[38] https://depa.or.th/storage/app/media/file/depa-Technology-Foresight-Final-Report-EN-250320.pdf