

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Implementing the Model National Response: A Collaborative Approach to Combat Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Five Countries

Background

Technology empowers billions of people to connect and explore the world in ways that previously were unimaginable. However, there are unforeseen consequences of technology, too, which can put children and young people at risk.

On 11 July 2016, the [WePROTECT Global Alliance](#) Board of Directors launched its strategy to identify and safeguard victims of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), apprehend more perpetrators, and end online CSEA. This strategy complements the launch, on 12 July 2016, of the [Global Partnership and Fund to End Violence Against Children](#), which will deliver a global program of capacity and capability building with an initial donation of £40 million from the UK government and US\$5 million from Human Dignity Foundation. The Fund will provide financial support to programs and activities that further the Partnership's goal of accelerating action in three priority areas, the first of which is **preventing online violence with a particular focus on child sexual exploitation**.¹

The first 15 grants from the Fund were announced in early 2017, and the second 15 grants were announced in February 2018. All projects aim to address online CSEA in line with the [WePROTECT Model National Response](#) (MNR). Together, the [International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children](#) (ICMEC) and [Child Helpline International](#) successfully submitted a round-two proposal for a joint program titled *Implementing the MNR: A Collaborative Approach to Combat Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Five Countries*.

Program Description

Child Helpline International and ICMEC are renowned global organizations working to protect the rights of children and young people around the world. Collectively, our programs address various MNR capabilities. We also jointly subscribe to the belief that collaboration is imperative to achieving meaningful, sustainable, and lasting change. Consequently, through this joint program, we are combining expertise and working together to **promote enhanced end-to-end victim support in furtherance of the MNR's goal of "preventing and tackling CSEA."** The program's overall strategy is to enable child helplines, law enforcement, and other child-serving professionals – through capacity building and cross-sector collaboration – to better prevent, respond to and support victims and survivors of online CSEA.

Child helplines in particular lie at the critical intersection where children and young people find their way to protection and care; they are trusted and accessible resources for help and support for children and young people, and of referral to child protective services, law enforcement, and other official actors, when necessary. The value of child helplines is not only in their response to

¹ The other priority areas are (1) addressing violence in the everyday lives of children and (2) addressing the prevention of violence against children who are facing conflict and crisis.

CSEA, but also in the work they do to bring relevant issues to the attention of children and youth. However, evidence from a comprehensive [baseline study carried out by Child Helpline International](#) under the auspices of the WePROTECT initiative shows that child helplines in the majority of the 17 countries studied² lack the capacity to properly respond to reports of online CSEA, and cannot always provide adequate services to children and youth who have been victimized by online CSEA.

Children and youth are better protected and cared for in the face of online CSEA because their support mechanisms work together effectively to prevent and respond. Consequently, **child helplines** need continuous capacity building, including technical skills and knowledge, to properly document the contacts received on this subject, and cannot (in many cases) provide adequate services to children and youth who have been victims of online abuse. **Law enforcement** needs intensive training on the use of technology to identify and locate both offenders and children. **Attorneys** need education on effective ways to successfully prosecute cases. **Healthcare professionals** need specific training on conducting medical evaluations and providing appropriate physical and mental health referrals. **Educators** need resources to help prevent, identify, and respond to CSEA. And **all professionals serving children** need training on the victim-centered, trauma-informed approach to child protection; they need to be able to identify victims and those at high risk, and to protect children from online CSEA.

Our joint program emphasizes a multi-disciplinary, culturally sensitive, victim-centered approach to enable five target countries – Jordan, Kenya, Peru, the Philippines, and Romania – to achieve a comprehensive response to online CSEA by:

1. Conducting a **needs assessment and legislative review** to serve as a baseline for the preparation of tailored multi-disciplinary/multi-stakeholder trainings;
2. Convening **multi-disciplinary trainings** for child helpline staff, police, prosecutors, judges, social workers, healthcare professionals, educators, NGOs, and other child-serving professionals (including both in-person and through e-learning modules); and
3. Developing **national plans of action** that encourage stakeholder collaboration and interaction on the national level.

The program is consistent with MNR capabilities ('criminal justice' (4,5); 'victim' (8,9,11); 'societal' (13); 'universal terminology' (21) in that the [Luxembourg Guidelines](#) will inform all project activities) and the INSPIRE strategies ('norms/values'; 'safe environments'; 'response/support services' strategies). Additionally, it recognizes that child helplines are being contacted by children and young people – a crucial component of the MNR for victim support (8) – via chat, text and messenger services. This offers enhanced confidentiality and anonymity for children when speaking out about the abuse and violence they experience online.

Target Countries

The five target countries share the following characteristics:

² Albania, Algeria, Brazil, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, India, Jordan, Kenya, Madagascar, Montenegro, Namibia, Paraguay, the Philippines, Serbia, Uganda, and Vietnam.

- They have signed onto the Sustainable Development Agenda, of which goal 16.2 is aimed at “end[ing] abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children [by 2030].”
- They are actively engaged in online CSEA issues, and law enforcement representatives from each of the five countries have attended at least one ICMEC training program on combating ICT-facilitated crimes against children.
- There is a general legal framework in place for addressing online CSEA.
- Various stakeholder constituencies are interested in receiving training and additional resources to help better address local issues and challenges related to online CSEA.

Additionally,

- In 2016, child helplines in Jordan, Kenya and the Philippines participated in the baseline study conducted by Child Helpline International to address child sexual exploitation online, which identified gaps in operations and training to be filled.
- Romania is one of the pathfinding countries under the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and Peru has expressed interest in joining.

Anticipated Impact

There is a virtuous circle. Training begets better response begets effective counselling begets prevention and support for children and young people when addressing online CSEA. In addition, the implementation of internationally accepted standards of taxonomy and improved data collection will lead to vastly improved reporting and evidence base for child helplines and for all of MNR stakeholders to combat CSEA. The visibility and effectiveness of child helplines and their role in CSEA prevention and response will be highlighted amongst their national and regional partners and resources should be forthcoming that will provide funding for ongoing capacity building.

There is power in the network. From the five target countries, Child Helpline International and ICMEC will encourage stakeholders in other countries to follow the training and incorporate lessons learned. For example, training materials will be made available to Child Helpline International’s network, which encompasses 147 countries. And as a result, elements of the training will also be integrated into key performance indicators and minimum quality standards for the child helpline network, part of a revised quality assurance framework to be launched in 2018 by Child Helpline International.

Additional Information

For more information, please contact:

Magdalena Aguilar

Co-Chief Executive | Child Helpline International
+31 (0) 20 528 9625 | magdalena@childhelplineinternational.org

Jessica Sarra

Chief Financial, Legal & Administrative Officer | ICMEC
+1 703 837 6296 | jsarra@icmec.org

