

PRESS BRIEFING - Launch: 21 February 2022

BREAKING – Online sexual abuse and exploitation of children in Thailand is underreported, with only 1- 3% of children disclosing experience told the police.

“The interview [about my experience of online sexual abuse] took place in the police station at the front desk to receive reports; there were around 10 people there, [including] two male police officers and five of my friends.”

- child survivor of online child sexual exploitation and abuse

Ground-breaking research delivered by [ECPAT](#), [INTERPOL](#), and the [UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti](#), funded through the [Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children](#)'s Safe Online Initiative, *Disrupting Harm in Thailand* is an evidence-led report that outlines the harrowing realities of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children in Thailand.

Key findings in the *Disrupting Harm in Thailand* report include:

- **Children and caregivers are not reporting online sexual abuse.**
 - **Between 10% - 31% of children** (aged 12-17) who had experienced online sexual exploitation and abuse in the past year **did not disclose** the most recent incident **to anyone**.
 - **Only 17% of caregivers surveyed said they would report** to the police if their child experienced sexual harassment, abuse, or exploitation online.
- **Children are being subjected to horrific experiences of online child sexual abuse and exploitation. Why aren't they reporting it?**

The main barriers to disclosure reported by children were a lack of awareness around where to go or whom to tell.

 - **47% of children surveyed said they would not know where to get help** if they or a friend were sexually assaulted or harassed.
- **What are the experiences of those who are reporting?** Experiences leave some children feeling ashamed, blamed, and silenced.
 - Testimonies from some child victims interviewed show that they feel they are held **responsible for the online sexual exploitation and abuse they endured and are rarely considered to be a victim**. They shared they believe these views to be held among law enforcement officials and the general public in Thailand.
 - **Victims in Thailand continue to face their abusers in court**. Children that had to attend court sessions reported the harrowing ordeal of having to sit in the courtroom and confront their offenders.
 - Despite child-friendly, victim-centric investigation techniques and victim identification procedures standardised and in place in Thailand, they were not consistently applied by the police.
- **At least 9% of internet-using children aged 12-17 (approximately 400,000 children) were victims of grave instances of online sexual exploitation and abuse in the past year alone.**



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- This includes blackmailing children to engage in sexual activities, sharing their sexual images without permission, or coercing them to engage in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts.
- 7% of 12-17 year old internet users in Thailand were offered money or gifts to engage in a sexual activity in person over the past year. Among the children who received such offers, 76% said they were contacted via social media, most commonly on Twitter followed by Facebook and TikTok.
- 7% had been offered money or gifts for sexual images in the past year. Most offers received through 84% of these requests that came on social media came on Facebook or Facebook messenger.
- 10% were asked to talk about sex or sexual acts with someone when they did not want to in the last year. 70% of these children reported negative feelings about this experience, the most common being feeling guilty, scared, annoyed and distressed.
- Offenders are most often people already known to the child. Individuals, unknown to the child, accounted for around one-fifth of cases.

Disrupting Harm in Thailand recommends urgent action, education, and support to tackle this issue. The report recommends:

- The government of Thailand should appoint a government body to centralise and lead on online child sexual exploitation and abuse response and prevention. The response should include a dedicated law enforcement unit for online child sexual exploitation and abuse cases, staffed by specialised officers with technical training for prosecutors, judges/magistrates, lawyers, courtroom staff, child protection officers, medical staff, frontline social workers, and teachers to help them better understand their role in cases of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Destigmatising conversations about sex and adapting existing awareness and education programmes about sexual exploitation and abuse of children to familiarise people with online child sexual exploitation and abuse and the the role technology might play in facilitating it.

About *Disrupting Harm*

In early 2019, the [Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children](#), through its Safe Online initiative, invested \$7 million to develop *Disrupting Harm*, a holistic and innovative research project that aims to better understand how digital technology facilitates the sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

Safe Online brought together and funded three organisations – [ECPAT](#), [INTERPOL](#) and the [UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti](#) – to undertake new research in 13 countries across Eastern and Southern Africa and Southeast Asia. This type of holistic research and assessment is new and unique. The methodology developed for these assessments has been implemented across the 13 countries and can be used by other countries in the future.

Full report can be read here: <https://www.end-violence.org/disrupting-harm#country-reports>

(*) Definition of OCSEA:

Online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA) refers to situations involving digital, internet and communication technologies at some point during the continuum of abuse or exploitation. OCSEA can occur fully online or through a mix of online and in-person interactions between offenders and children.