

PRESS BRIEFING - Launch: 3-August-2022

***New report reveals that only a third of internet-using children in Viet Nam received information on how to stay safe online***

A new report released today by ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti, found that children in Viet Nam are being subjected to online sexual abuse and exploitation, but are not reporting it.

The majority of the children who said they had been subjected to online sexual abuse and exploitation in the survey did not disclose the abuse to anyone or confided only in a friend. Very few children said they told a caregiver and/or an official channel, such as the police or a helpline. It is likely that children may be reluctant to speak openly about a largely sensitive subject. However, the report reveals that children are at risk of online sexual exploitation and abuse in Viet Nam. Children face multiple risks online; 23% of internet-using children aged 12-17 who participated in the survey said that they had accidentally viewed sexual images or videos online in the past year. Additionally, 5% had been sent unwanted sexual images.

The lack of reporting of online exploitation and sexual abuse in Viet Nam is affected by stigma and attitudes that discourage discussions about sex, especially with children. Without information, children are not aware of risks or when and how to seek help. Stigma from the community can also impact the children who do disclose abuse and/or encourage victims not to report experiences at all. Furthermore, the *Disrupting Harm in Viet Nam* research found that many children lacked information, awareness and knowledge about online child sexual exploitation and abuse, which accentuated their vulnerability.

The internet and social media platforms are being misused in Viet Nam to target vulnerable children. *Disrupting Harm in Viet Nam* reports that social media platforms were used to identify, connect, and build trust with prospective victims. Entry-level searches related to child sexual abuse were common during the reporting period, including English-language searches for content depicting sexual activity with and between teenagers; with children; and with infants.

Additionally, the *Disrupting Harm in Viet Nam* report found that children experienced various forms of online sexual exploitation and abuse:

- 8% of internet-using children aged 12 - 17 years had been subjected to sexual comments about themselves that made them feel uncomfortable in the past year. 43% of those children did not disclose this had happened, mainly because they did not believe telling would lead to anything happening.
- 5% of children surveyed had been sent unwanted sexual images. Nearly half of these children did not tell anyone because they didn't know whom to tell.
- 2% of children were asked to talk about sex when they didn't want to. About half of these children received these unwanted sexual requests online and most of those children did not tell anyone this happened. Children did not tell anyone this happened because they didn't think it was serious enough or thought they would get into trouble.

Researchers for *Disrupting Harm in Viet Nam* believe that these findings are only a snapshot of the true picture of online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Viet Nam. As such, prioritising the issue is vital. Only 36% of children



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surveyed had received any education on the importance of staying safe online, highlighting the need for increased awareness and understanding of the issue to be established in the country.

Additionally, there is a need to increase professional resources to manage cases. Currently, the number of officers and the available equipment may be insufficient to accommodate the investigation of online sexual exploitation and abuse cases, which must be addressed. Prevention is key to tackling online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Viet Nam.

### **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 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>

### ***What is Online child sexual exploitation and abuse (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.