

**A Call to Action**

**from Children  
and Young People**

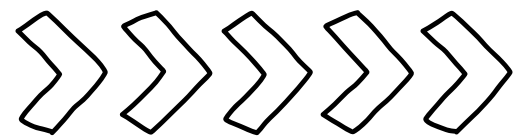
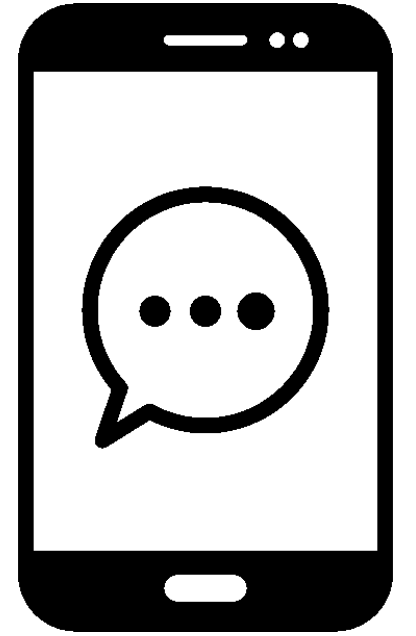
**TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR ON  
CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION**



# Introduction

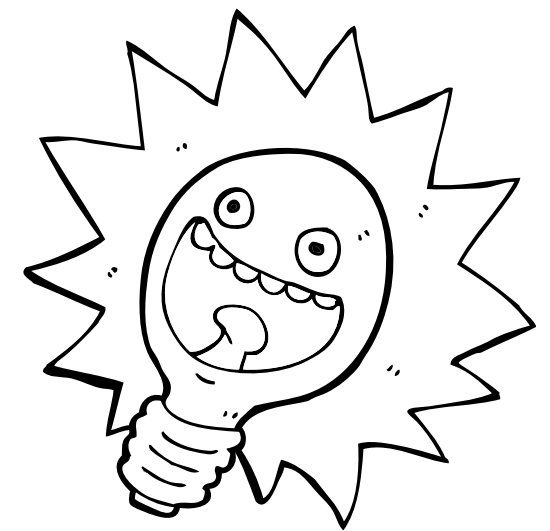
Digital devices and services play a vital role in the lives of children and young people. Estimates suggest close to [3 out of 4 of internet users in the Asia Pacific region are between 15 and 24 years old](#), with little difference between girls' and boys' internet access.[1] On the one hand, the digital environment provides abundant opportunities for children and young people to communicate, participate in online learning, learn about and claim their rights and engage in recreational activities. On the other hand, potential threats such as [exposure to inappropriate content, violations of privacy, cyberbullying](#), and [online sexual exploitation and abuse](#) are increasingly common.

The Disrupting Harm studies undertaken across Southeast Asia enhance our understanding of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. In the year prior to data collection, 11% of internet-using children aged 12-17 in [Cambodia](#), 2% in [Indonesia](#), 4% in [Malaysia](#), 20% in the [Philippines](#), 9% in [Thailand](#) and 1% in [Viet Nam](#) disclosed they were blackmailed or coerced (e.g., through promises of money or gifts) to engage in sexual activities, or reported someone had shared their sexual images without permission.[2]



The private sector has a crucial role in ensuring children are protected from all forms of violence online because they provide the digital products and services that can enable online child sexual abuse and exploitation to take place. Meaningful engagement with the users of online systems and platforms is also essential to ensuring those services are safe. It follows, then, that children and young people should be engaged in the design, implementation and evaluation of strategies to safeguard them online.

To seek the opinions of children and young people on the role of the private sector in child online protection, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific and Australia's Young and Resilient Research Centre at Western Sydney University consulted children and young people from diverse backgrounds[3] across various ASEAN Member States. Focus group discussions and participatory workshops with 321 children and young people were conducted in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Furthermore, approximately 7,000 children and young people[4] from Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia and Myanmar participated in U-Report[5] polls and expressed their views on what companies should do to improve their experiences with digital technologies. Across these activities, participants shared their personal experiences of using digital products and services and extensively discussed solutions private sector companies should develop to tackle the challenges children and young people may face online.



**Drawing from the findings of these consultations, this Call to Action presents what children and young people would like the private sector to do to keep them safe online.**

[1] ECPAT International, INTERPOL and UNICEF (2022) Disrupting Harm Research Series, online child sexual exploitation and abuse, <https://www.end-violence.org/disrupting-harm>


[2] Ibid.

[3] 38% male, 61% female, and 1% non-binary children and young people participated in the consultations. Further, children and young people with disabilities, victims and survivors of trafficking or sexual exploitation, those in alternative care, those identifying as LGBTQ+ and those in other vulnerable situations participated in the consultations.

[4] 29% male, 66% female, and 5% others or preferred not to say.

[5] [U-Report](#) is a social messaging tool and data collection system developed by UNICEF to improve civic engagement, inform leaders and promote positive change. The survey in Lao PDR was conducted through a different polling tool.



A young woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a bright yellow t-shirt, is shown in profile from the chest up. She is looking down at a smartphone held in both hands. The background is slightly out of focus, showing a window with a view of greenery and some laundry hanging on a line. The lighting is soft, coming from the window on the left.

**Messages from children and  
young people to the private  
sector on child online protection.**

***To keep us safe online,  
we want...***





## CHILD-CENTRED FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS



### Recommendations for private sector:

- Put children's needs, vulnerabilities, and contexts at the heart of the design of all products and services.
- Work on ways to identify when a user is a child, to protect them from age-inappropriate content and products.
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- Provide tools and measures to strengthen children and young people's safety online, such as pop-up reminders about how to keep their personal information safe from strangers.
- Give children and young people the option to activate a developmentally-appropriate mode in search engines, social media, gaming platforms, and other websites and applications they commonly access.





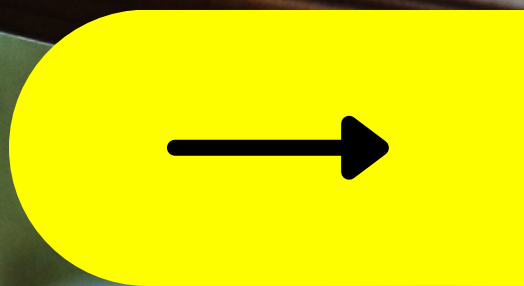
“When they share their location or ID, the app [should] pop up an online safety [reminder], to confirm the users want to share their personal info.” – *Malaysia, outcome of discussion among adolescent girls and boys*



Children and young people aged 12-24 years from Thailand often find the terms and conditions of platforms/services too long and difficult, so they usually just click ‘accept’. They think that companies should use clear, concise, and easy-to-understand language so that children and young people can make an informed decision before they enter a platform or use a product.



“Nowadays, many minors use social media by faking their age so they get information or see posts that they are not supposed to see. I think ICT companies or related parties can immediately find a solution.” – *Indonesia, female, 18 years*







## Recommendations for private sector:

- Create and raise awareness about intuitive and child-friendly reporting mechanisms that are easy to find and navigate.
- Respond promptly to user reports and take appropriate measures to protect victims of online safety breaches, such as removing users who breach community guidelines or taking down content if it is found to be unsuitable.

**EFFECTIVE REPORTING AND  
FEEDBACK MECHANISMS**





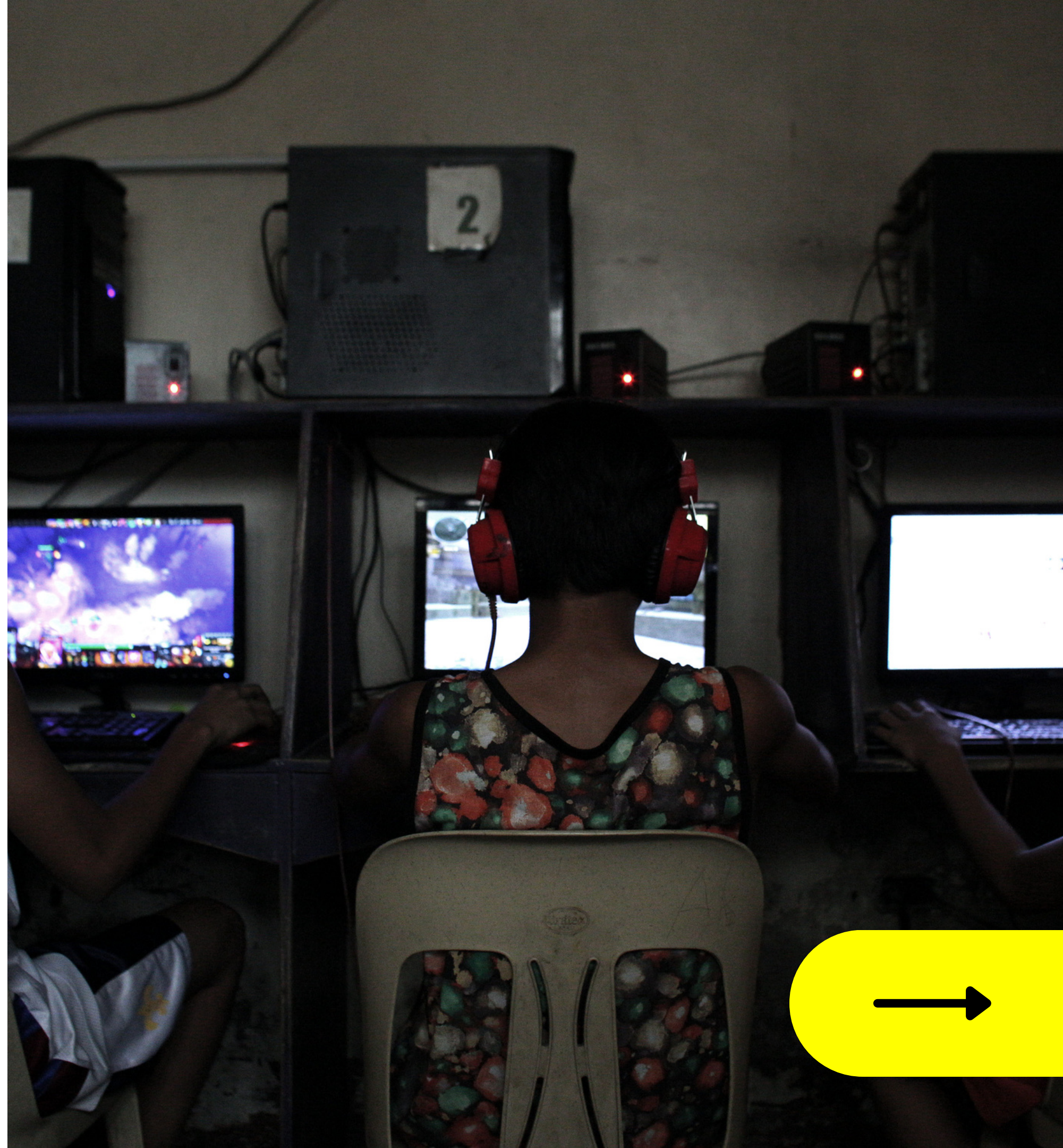
“Never ignore reports and criticisms received; put the safety and comfort of users first and act.” – *Indonesia, outcome of discussion among adolescent girls and boys*



29% of U-Reporters in Malaysia suggest that companies should establish easy reporting systems so that young people can quickly tell companies when they have a problem.



Children and young people aged 15-24 years from the Philippines suggest that report buttons should be more interactive and responsive. A convenient reporting system should cater to different needs of children online.







## DIGITAL LITERACY AND ONLINE DIGITAL SAFETY GUIDANCE



### Recommendations for private sector:

- Educate children, young people and the adults that support them in culturally appropriate ways about how online services work.
- Provide service-specific guidance and information on online safety for both children and young people as well as parents, caregivers, and teachers.
- Regularly share safety tips and produce interesting posts or videos about how to manage online safety in the digital world.
- Empower parents and caregivers to weigh the risks associated with their children being online and to make informed decisions about how to support children and young people to manage risks online.
- Collaborate with government to develop curricula focused on online safety that can be taught in schools or via other activities in which children engage.





“Tech companies should demonstrate and educate young people about cybersecurity.”  
– Viet Nam, outcome of discussion among adolescent girls and boys



U-Reporters from Lao PDR, Myanmar and Indonesia named education on Digital Safety and Digital Literacy provided by the private sector as a key solution to improving children’s experiences online.



“Companies have to educate parents on when the right time is to open up social media accounts for children, and on what the consequences of using the internet at a young age are.” – Myanmar, female, 21 years







## DATA PROTECTION AND RESPECT FOR PRIVACY



### Recommendations for private sector:

- Enhance children and young people's autonomy over their personal data by fully informing them of what they share, when they share, how they share, and what happens to their data.
- Empower children to easily access and adjust their privacy settings.
- Strengthen data security to prevent hacking or invasion of users' privacy.
- Develop viable mechanisms for parents and caregivers to guide children and young people about protecting their privacy and personal data online.





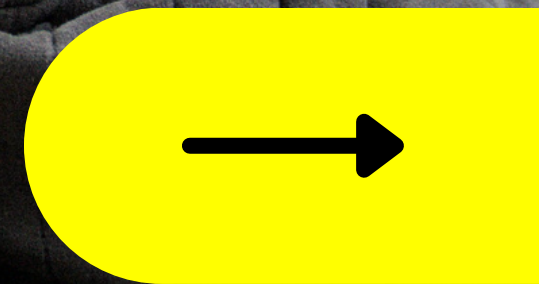
“[The private sector should be] making sure online information is kept confidential.”  
– Viet Nam, outcome of discussion among adolescent girls and boys



Young people aged 16-24 from Cambodia emphasise the importance of every child’s right to privacy, which is crucial in communication and platform navigations. They note that personal information of users should be well protected and that companies should prevent privacy breaches.



“Data protection is important. Children can be really emotional. If their data is stolen when playing games, it can impact their emotion.” – Indonesia, boy in the age group of 12-14 years





# Thank you!

#SafeOnlineinASEAN

