DISRUPTING HARM

PROTECTING CHILDREN IN TANZANIA FROM ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE: THE WAY FORWARD

Children in Tanzania are facing the harms and realities of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA). In the past year alone, 4% of internet-users aged 12–17 in Tanzania were victims of grave instances of online sexual exploitation and abuse. Promising practices are taking place in Tanzania to tackle OCSEA, but greater awareness raising, and system strengthening is required. The government, public institutions and society can all do more to disrupt the harm OCSEA is causing, and threatens to cause, to children in Tanzania.

Recommendations

Disrupting Harm in Tanzania lays out an evidence-based and actionable blueprint on how to protect children in Tanzania. This calls on the Government of Tanzania and its partners to **act** to put new legislation, systems and procedures into effect; to **educate** children, adults and public officials so that they can play their roles in combating OCSEA; and to **invest** in the implementation of new and existing initiatives.

Act

- Online' and 'offline' child sexual exploitation and abuse are increasingly entwined. Use the existing child protection structures to incorporate the online elements of these forms of violence, rather than establishing new ones to tackle OCSEA.

- Bring national legislation into line with international standards. Amend the Cybercrimes Act to criminalise conduct related to child sexual abuse material (CSAM) more comprehensively. Properly define and criminalise OCSEA including online grooming of children for sexual purposes, live streaming of child sexual abuse, and online sexual extortion.

- Accede to the Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection adopted by the African Union in 2014.

- Expand the number of police Gender and Children Desks, extending them to all regions. Provide adequate working spaces and equipment and ensure that there are sufficient male and female officers capable of delivering high-quality, child-friendly support.

- Develop detailed guidelines for police on how to interview children, safely and ethically.

- Establish operating procedures so that the provisions of the Law of the Child Act on child-friendly justice are implemented consistently. Ensure that all cases involving child victims of OCSEA are heard in juvenile courts.

- Provide officers, prosecutors, and courts with a standard information package to inform victims of child sexual exploitation and abuse (including OCSEA), along with their caregivers, of all the relevant procedures and rights, including the right to compensation.

- Establish more legal aid centres through the Ministry of Constitutional and Legal Affairs.

- Ensure social support services are available for all OCSEA victims across the country.

- Establish an electronic case management system to collect data and monitor OCSEA cases through the Police Gender and Children's Desks and by local government authorities.

- Strengthen the links between the Police Gender and Children Desks and local government authorities. Make sure that officers trained in handling OCSEA cases are not transferred to other units without a suitable replacement and necessary hand-over procedures to avoid loss of knowledge due to staff turnover.
- Consider connecting to INTERPOL's International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database and establish a national CSAM image database. The ICSE database is an intelligence and investigative tool, which allows specialised investigators to share data on cases of child sexual abuse.
- Cooperate more closely with global social media platforms for the gathering of evidence and removal of CSAM.
- Legally oblige internet service providers to retain data, filter/block/take down CSAM and comply promptly with law enforcement requests for information.
- Create more community-based mechanisms for disclosure and reporting of OCSEA.

Educate

- Raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and abuse, including the role of technology in this abuse, through effective programmes reaching all areas of Mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. Disseminate information on national reporting mechanisms such as the National Child Helpline 116.
- Improve caregivers' understanding of digital environments and teach them to recognise exploitative or abusive behaviour (both online and offline) and to talk to children about their lives online. Encourage open discussions about sex and sexuality between children and trusted adults (caregivers, educators) so that shame and embarrassment does not deter them from seeking help in case of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Teach children from an early age about consent and personal boundaries. Help them understand online risks, including that the abuse can also come from people they already know.

- Teach children at school about internet safety and improve their digital literacy, so that they can understand the necessary protective measures they can take to stay safe online. Children should also be taught how they can report inappropriate content or requests. Make sure that children and young people are aware of the risks involved in the exchange of personal information, images and videos.
- Expand and institutionalise training for police officers, social service professionals, and justice professionals in all regions. This training should reinforce child-friendly procedures and underscore that online abuse is a form of child abuse and is never the child's fault. Clarify the links between online and offline abuse.
- Continue the training efforts aimed at capacitating local government officials working at the council level about OCSEA and expand them to all 26 regions.

Invest

- The mandated government agencies should budget for their agency-specific interventions related to OCSEA instead of relying on the limited funding of non-government partners.
- Ensure sufficient funding for the National Child Online Safety Task Force.
- Recruit and train specialised officers within existing law enforcement units (Cybercrime Unit and Police Gender and Children Desks) to investigate OCSEA cases. This should be composed of officers with experience of both online and offline crimes against children. This should be implemented at the national and regional levels.
- Invest in additional equipment for law enforcement such as computers and 'live' forensic tools that perform analysis on active systems and tools to detect, triage and analyse CSAM.
- Make a transport budget available so that caregivers of child victims can attend court hearings.

Key insights

Disrupting Harm in Tanzania outlines several insights found through the unique project research. Specifically:

1. In the past year alone, 1 in 25 (4%) of internet-users aged 12–17 in Tanzania were victims of grave instances of online sexual exploitation and abuse. This includes being blackmailed to engage in sexual activities, someone else sharing their sexual images without permission, or being coerced to engage in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts. Scaled to the population, this represents an estimated 200,000 children who were subjected to any of these harms in the span of just one year.

2. According to the household survey, OCSEA offenders are most often people already known to the child. These include friends or acquaintances of the child (both peers and adults) but also romantic partners and family members. OCSEA is also committed by people unknown to the child. These crimes happen while children spend time online, or in person but involving technology.

3. Among children who experienced OCSEA through social media, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp were the most common platforms where this occurred (these are also among the most common platforms where children spend time).

4. Children who are subjected to OCSEA are most likely to disclose this to people they know in person, especially their friends. Children are very unlikely to rely on formal reporting mechanisms like helplines or the police.

5. While good building blocks are already in place – an interagency working group and an existing child protection system that can be harnessed to address OCSEA – there remain gaps in the awareness, capacity and resources of the law enforcement, justice and social support systems that should be addressed.

6. Though existing legislation, policies and standards in Tanzania include provisions relevant to OCSEA, further legislative action is needed to criminalise all OCSEA-related acts.

The full report and complete list of recommendations can be found <u>here</u>.

About Disrupting Harm

Disrupting Harm in Tanzania is part of an unprecedented large-scale multi-country research project into OCSEA that draws on the research expertise of ECPAT International, INTERPOL, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, and their networks of both national and global partners. It is supported by the <u>Fund to End Violence Against Children</u> and focuses on 13 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa and Southeast Asia.

Data collection took place from early 2020 through to early 2021 with the cooperation of the Government of Tanzania and a wide range of public bodies and other organisations active in the country.

A comprehensive analysis was made of the legislation, policy and systems addressing OCSEA in Tanzania. A range of statistical data was gathered for 2017–2019. Surveys were conducted with internet-using children, their caregivers and front-line service providers from the private and voluntary sectors. Interviews were held with high-level government officials, law enforcement officials and justice professionals. All the information was then analysed and triangulated. The analysis for *Disrupting Harm in Tanzania* was finalised in October 2021. Further, the recommendations were discussed at a national consultation in the same month.