

**Report of eNACSO workshop at the 3rd UN Internet Governance Forum,
3-6 December, 2008, Hyderabad**

**“The Internet Goes Mobile – Child Protection in the Always-Connected
Age”**

3rd December 2008, 10.30 – 12.00

Chair: Kathleen Spencer Chapman, NSPCC

Speakers¹:

John Carr, eNACSO

Adrian Dwyer, INHOPE

Gitte Bang Stald, IT University of Denmark

Margaret Moran MP, British Parliament

Summary of discussions

The workshop heard how the use of mobile devices was reaching saturation point in many youth markets around the world, with several countries recording ownership levels significantly in excess of 100%. Many children now use internet-enabled mobile devices, with the level varying across the globe.

The use of mobile devices brings many opportunities for children such as empowerment, creativity and connectivity. It also became clear that mobile phone technology held great promise in many developing countries who could use it to provide a phone service and internet access without the time consuming need to lay down thousands of miles of expensive cable.

However there are also risks for children linked to connectivity to the internet including around the content available online, problematic contacts which may be made via internet and also young people’s own conduct. The fact that a device was mobile meant that children have increased opportunity to access the internet and it is inherently more difficult to supervise or support children and young people in their use of them and help guard against some of these risks.

Current statistics and the increased reporting of cell phone abuse indicate that text messaging and cell phone cameras have opened the mobile phone community to individuals who used the internet to prey on children. A review of some U.S. cases from INHOPE indicates that many of the incidents are perpetrated by teenagers improperly/illegally utilizing the technology.

¹ Following the Mumbai attacks several originally agreed speakers were not present at the IGF, including Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for Information Society; Annie Mullins, Head of Global Standards for Vodafone, and Teruhiko Sato, Japanese Government

In some countries, such as in the UK, the mobile phone networks were introducing adult filters and adult bars. These filters and bars can be lifted but generally only after a procedure has been completed which allows the mobile phone network to determine that the user is over 18. In February 2007 the Commission of the European Union signed a memorandum of understanding with most of Europe's major mobile phone networks to develop a policy similar to the UK's in each of national market.

There was a discussion of how mobile phones can also be used as tracking devices and for more general surveillance purposes, for example as remote listening or remote video devices. There is very little regulation in this area and with the introduction of GPS technology it was becoming even more difficult to ensure consistent standards. With any system which allows for children and young people, or objects closely associated with them, to be tracked, some key security issues need to be considered so as to ensure that persons not entitled to track or know the whereabouts of the child were unable so to do. Within the UK Parliament a Bill (draft legislation) had been published to try to establish a regulatory regime which would embrace all remote systems which offered location data, irrespective of the technology platform.

The workshop heard that many mobile phone networks that provided internet access were blocking access to known child sex abuse web sites by deploying at network level the lists of known illegal web sites supplied to them by national hotlines.

The ways in which mobile phones can be used to facilitate bullying, either by text messages or through the use of humiliating photos or videos, was discussed at length, as were the many initiatives around the world aimed at raising awareness of the issues or aimed at providing support to victims. The incorporation of stills and video cameras into almost all new handsets had also given rise to an increase in the distribution of child sex abuse images, typically produced by children themselves, often portraying themselves or their school friends in a sexual and therefore illegal setting. It was understood that where these images were exchanged directly from phone to phone there was little or nothing the networks could do as very often e.g. if Bluetooth is used, the images will not touch the networks at all. This issue, along with several others, underlined the importance of engaging with the mobile phone handset manufacturers. So far they were proving reluctant to engage in conversations with those concerned about child safety.

Powerpoint presentations by Gitte Bang Stald and Adrian Dwyer are available on request.

For further information please contact:

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