

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

07 February 2023

MEDIA CONTACT

Gurpreet K Bhatia, gbhatia@childfund.org

BE WEB SAFE AND WISE

On Safer Internet Day, ChildFund Announces Campaign to Make Online Spaces Safer for Children in the Asia-Pacific

February 7, 2023 (Bangkok) – Online spaces must be safer for children. Yet, estimates indicate 750,000 individuals are looking to connect with children online across the globe for sexual purposes at any one time¹. More than 200,000 children go online for the first time every day, with 800 million actively using social media.² Children in the Asia-Pacific are the most connected in the world and therefore the most vulnerable. ChildFund today announces the online child safety campaign [#WebSafeAndWise: Creating A Better Digital World With Children](#) in the Asia-Pacific. This new initiative will focus on addressing the risks emerging in the digital environment while helping children and young people empower themselves to become effective digital citizens.

As part of the campaign, a webinar '[ChildFund for Safer Internet](#)' was organized to commemorate Safer Internet day. The speakers at the webinar highlighted the challenges children face online and discussed strategies to ensure children can equitably access the internet for education, entertainment, and socialization without being threatened by predators.

“Rapid expansion in digital technologies is exposing children to an increasing range of online threats to their safety and well-being,” said Mr. Wanchai Roujanavong, Thailand’s Representative for Children’s Rights, ASEAN Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC). “We require a multisectoral collaborative approach to combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse. I appeal to the ASEAN member states to commit to [the regional action plan](#) to protect our youngest generation from all forms of online violence and exploitation.

ChildFund today launched its flagship campaign ‘Web Safe and Wise’ in seven countries in the Asia-Pacific region – Indonesia, Philippines, Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and India. The campaign aligns with the [ASEAN Declaration for the Protection of Children from all forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse](#), particularly targets to promote national-level education on online child safety.

“It’s every child’s fundamental right to be protected from all forms of violence,” said Mr. Roland Angerer, Regional Director, ChildFund, Asia. “ChildFund has been at the forefront of protecting children across the Asia-Pacific for more than 70 years. The launch of the Web Safe and Wise campaign expands our work into a new area: to make online spaces safer for children.”

ChildFund has a substantial portfolio of activities relating to children's online safety throughout the Asia-Pacific region. ChildFund in Australia developed [Swipe Safe](#) – a tailor-made training package to train young people in under-resourced countries to safely navigate their online lives in 2017. Swipe Safe has reached more than 33,000 young people and continues to be delivered in Vietnam – where it was born. Its implementation scaled up in the Solomon Islands and Indonesia. Preparations are well underway to expand its reach to young people in Cambodia and Timor-Leste this year.

¹ Global Partnership and Fund to End Violence Against Children

² Global Partnership and Fund to End Violence Against Children



“Swipe Safe training program is different as it embraces technology and imparts practical and immediate skills to children and young people,” said April Turner, Senior Child Protection Advisor, ChildFund Australia.

ChildFund launched a social media campaign, #ShutdownOSEC, in the Philippines with the country’s leading civil society network for children to urge the government to prioritize online child safety and take stronger actions to address it. It resulted in the passing of legislation in the Philippines against online child sexual abuse and exploitation in 2022.

“Through the #ShutDownOSEC campaign, we advocated for stringent laws,” said Mr. Anand Vishwakarma, Country Director, ChildFund Philippines. “I am proud that our efforts significantly contributed to the passage of a new law against online sexual abuse and exploitation of children, including the online production, selling and distribution of child sexual abuse materials, in the Philippines last year. With the launch of the Web Safe and Wise campaign, we will now focus on the role the private sector and media could play to complement government efforts to make online spaces safer for children.”

ChildFund recently conducted a [study](#) on cyberbullying and online sexual exploitation and abuse of children and youth in Indonesia. According to the study, five out of ten high school and college students bully others online, and six out of ten students in these settings have been bullied online in the last three months.

“The number of children and young people victims of cyberbullying in Indonesia is staggering,” said Hanneke Oudkerk, Country Director, ChildFund Indonesia. “Online child sexual exploitation and abuse can have a devastating impact on children’s physical and mental health. With the launch of the Web Safe and Wise campaign in Indonesia, we will address cyberbullying and victimization and train children and young people to safely navigate their online lives.”

The webinar ‘ChildFund for Safer Internet’ was attended by participants from across the development spectrum. ChildFund along with the support of its partner organizations will continue its efforts to make online spaces safer for children in the Asia-Pacific.

About ChildFund

ChildFund International works throughout Asia, Africa and the Americas to connect children with the people, resources and institutions they need to grow up healthy, educated, skilled and safe, wherever they are. We place a special emphasis on child protection throughout our approach because violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect can reverse developmental gains in an instant. Last year, we reached 21.1 million children and family members in 24 countries.

Learn more at www.ChildFund.org