Panoramic View of Online Child Sexual Exploitation:

Lessons to Discuss & Rethink

HEROES

CWCS

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Published by: Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS}
            Dhaka, Bangladesh

First published: February 2023

EXPLORING ONLINE CHILD EXPLOITATION

Online child sexual exploitation is a global, fast-evolving problem which demands a comprehensive response. Child sexual abuse material as the preferred term of choice to "child pornography" refers to materials depicting acts of sexual abuse and exploitation of the child.

The Centre for Women and Children Studies is one of the pioneering women rights organization who have been conducting multi-disciplinary action research since its inception in 1994. The vision is to include the human rights of women and children in the policy agenda to ensure gender equality. The Centre conducted more than 20 research studies/works on violence against women, feminization of poverty, women labour migration, political empowerment, child labour, child abuse and exploitation, implemented projects on human trafficking, developed training manuals and imparted training to law enforcement officials and legal practitioners on gender violence, pro-women, child-friendly and gender sensitive policing.

In 2017, the Centre started to explore the issue and challenges on child sexual abuse and exploitation online in the various social media platforms. During 2018, we developed an interactive playing card game with messages on organized crime such as online child sexual exploitation for students of 13-18 years age group. About 226 students both girls and boys participated in the card games from different urban and rural schools. The youths provided doable solutions to protect children from online sexual exploitation and abuse. For example, they will try to inform and warn their friends about the consequences of giving their pictures to strangers in social media and will try to share with adults and teachers if they or their friends are exposed to sexual exploitation in the social media platforms.

ADDRESSING THE ISSUE

Discuss & Rethink

⇒ When does children and youths know they are being abused and exploited online?

⇒ What measures can children and youths take to avoid online abuse and exploitation?

RED ALERT TO CHILDREN!

WHAT YOU POST CANNOT BE DELETED!!

When you are confronted with any unusual messages or approached by any unknown person, you can talk to a family member, parent, teacher, counselor or a responsible adult who is child sensitive and responsive.

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN

Online abuse and exploitation happens when one person or a group of persons manipulates another person to get them to do something sexual - it's an ongoing cycle of emotional and psychological abuse.

ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION & ABUSE ARE ILLEGAL

When do children and youths know they are being abused and exploited online?

If someone is doing things that make you feel uncomfortable, scare you or if someone tries to force you to do something, you could be experiencing abuse and exploitation.

It is abuse and exploitation if the person you are communicating with:

- Encourages you to do sexual things that make you uncomfortable
- Sends you unwanted nude photos or flashes you on webcam
- Asks abusive questions about you or makes inappropriate sexual comments
- Exposes you to pornography or child sexual abusing material
- Encourages you to watch them do abusive and sexual things.

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY AND ONLINE RISKS

Content Risk

Dirty Text

Obscene Images

Conduct Risk

Contact Risk

adult

Digital Connectivity & Risk

Discuss & Rethink

⇒ Do you know anyone who had experienced such risks?

⇒ In such instances, do you think that children should share such risks with parents, teachers or trusted adults?

CHILDREN ARE EXPOSED TO ONLINE RISKS

Digital connectivity has made children more accessible through unprotected social media profiles and online game forums.

Internet and new technologies have allowed potential victims to be accessible and available to perpetrators, who may be anonymously, quickly and freely according children and young people in ways that would otherwise not be possible.

Children and young people are now able to communicate more easily with people they would otherwise not usually interact with.

Content risks: Where a child is exposed to unwelcome and inappropriate content that may include sexual, pornographic and violent images; websites advocating dangerous behavior, such as self-harm and suicide.
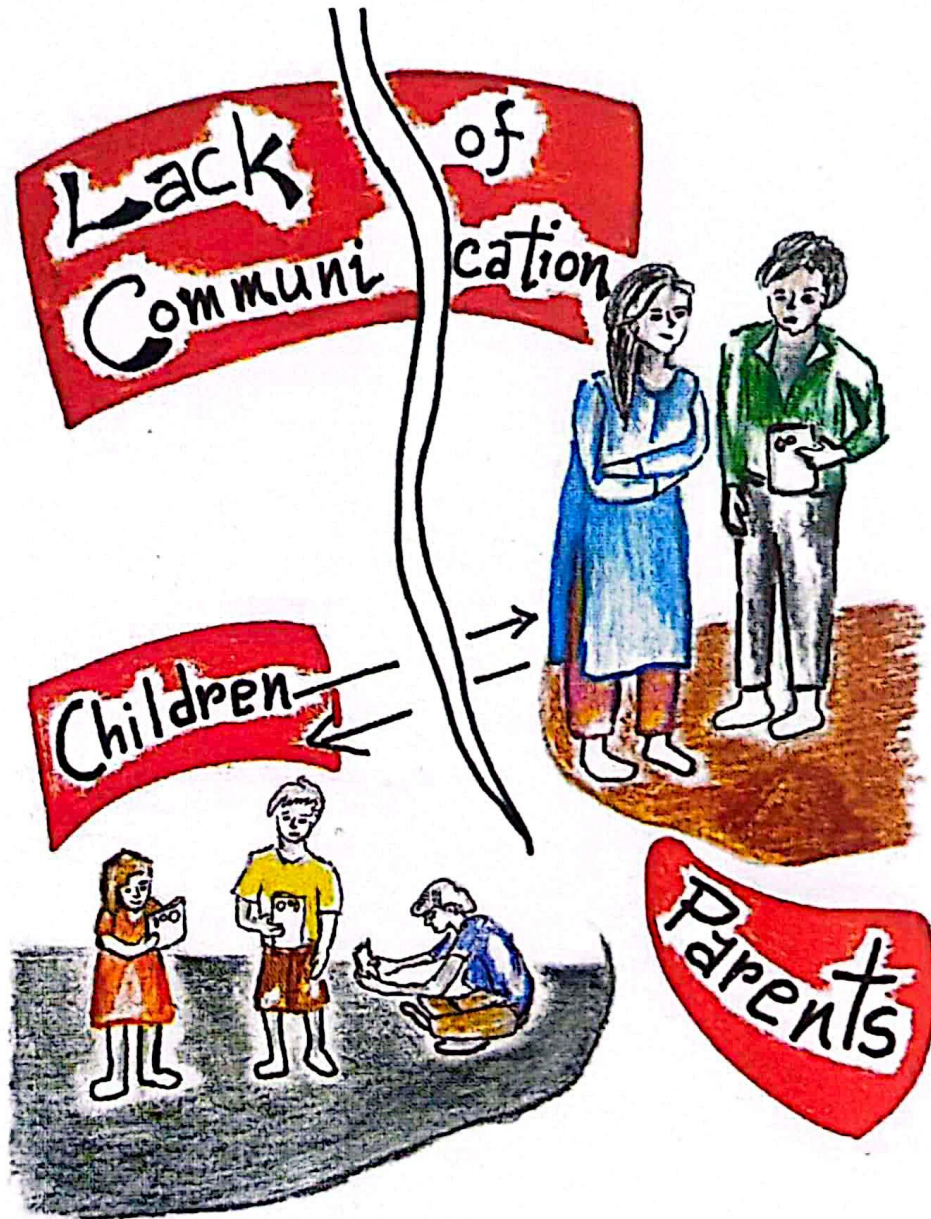
Contact risks: Where a child participates in risky communication, such as with an adult seeking inappropriate contact or soliciting a child for sexual purposes.

Conduct risks: Where a child behaves in a way that contributes to risky content or contact and may include children posting or distributing sexual images, including material they have produced themselves.

CHILDREN MOST VULNERABLE TO ONLINE HARMS

Discuss & Rethink

⇒ Which children do you think are also vulnerable?

⇒ How can you save these children from online abuse and exploitation?

VULNERABLE CHILDREN

> → Children who lack knowledge of Internet safety measures
> → Children who lack moral values and norms of community life
> → Children who lack proper communication with parents
> → Children who suffer depression or mental health problems
> → Children in communities with a limited understanding of various forms of online sexual abuse and exploitation.
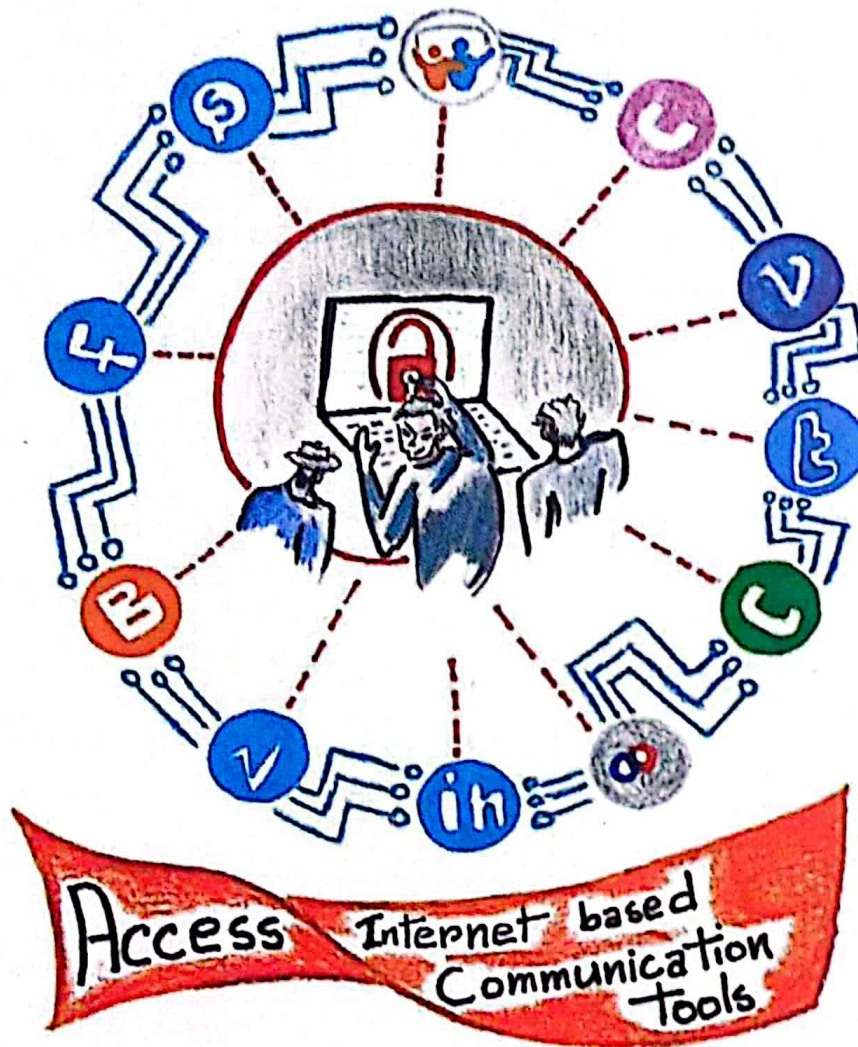
Adolescents are exposed to risks from abusers

Adolescents, are often exposed to a wider range of risks from abusers outside the family, including from offenders in the digital sphere.

A girl was abused online not by a stranger but by her former boyfriend. He asked for pictures of her "without a lot of clothes on or with no clothes at all." After she broke up with him a few months later, he created a social media profile with her photos. "When I got the friend request ... I felt my world crumbling. He'd sent friend requests to all my friends, to my mother, to my sister." She went to the police but they said, "It was my fault because I had sent the pictures." She felt abused, hurt but the culprit didn't get any punishment.

"I decided to tell my story to help other girls so that it does not happen to them" (UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a Digital*)

Access Internet based Communication Tools

Discuss & Rethink

⇒ Do you think that social networking sites are harmful for children and youths?

⇒ What can youth do to protect their privacy and safety?

OFFENDERS USING ONLINE PLATFORMS

Children regularly struggle to protect their privacy, security and keep abreast the frequently changing privacy rules of social network sites.

Offenders are able to gain easier access to larger and new populations of children through use of online forums, e-mail, social networks and other Internet-based communication tools.

Offenders may simultaneously have up to 200 "friends" or more with whom they are at different stages of grooming.

Offenders may then focus on those children that respond favorably, or at least remain engaged, thus enabling them to allocate their time to higher probability targets.

Groups of perpetrators constituting organized criminal groups are active in the area of online child abuse.

Human traffickers may also recruit new victims, including children, and market child sex tourism through the use of Information and Communication Technologies.

CYBERBULLYING

Discuss & Rethink
⇒ Have any of you heard of the above tactics of exploiters?
⇒ What will you do if someone starts cyberbullying?

ZERO TOLERANCE TO ALL FORMS OF BULLYING

Cyberbullying is social terror by technology - and it's on the rise. Studies have found that about 1 in 4 teens have been the victims of cyberbullying.

- ✓ Cyberbullying is a crime.
- ✓ We insist on Zero Tolerance of any bullying - whether it's face to face or online.

When a child is threatened, humiliated or harassed via the use of technology - this is cyberbullying.

It is used by individual or group through e-mail, cell phones, instant messaging apps, Web sites, Online personal polling Web sites with the intention of harming children.

Signs of cyberbullying vary, but may include: being emotionally upset during or after using Internet or the phone; withdrawal from family members, friends, and activities; avoiding school or group gatherings; wanting to stop using the computer or cell phone etc.

In Bangladesh, an elderly man used to blackmail a 14-year old girl when she rejected his illicit advances. The girl was psychologically traumatized and humiliated. She called the **child helpline number 1098** and her family was advised to report to the police. They filed a complaint with local police station and subsequently, the alleged offender was arrested and served six months in prison.

GROOMING

Discuss & Rethink
  ⇒ Do you know whether anyone of you had experienced with groomers who are using the online social media networks?
  ⇒ What should youths do when they face the above type of abuse or exploitation?

GROOMING USED BY EXPLOITERS

Grooming is used by exploiters to gain children's trust. Groomers spend time learning about a young person's interests from their online profiles, build up a relationship and then persuade them to take part in online sexual activity.
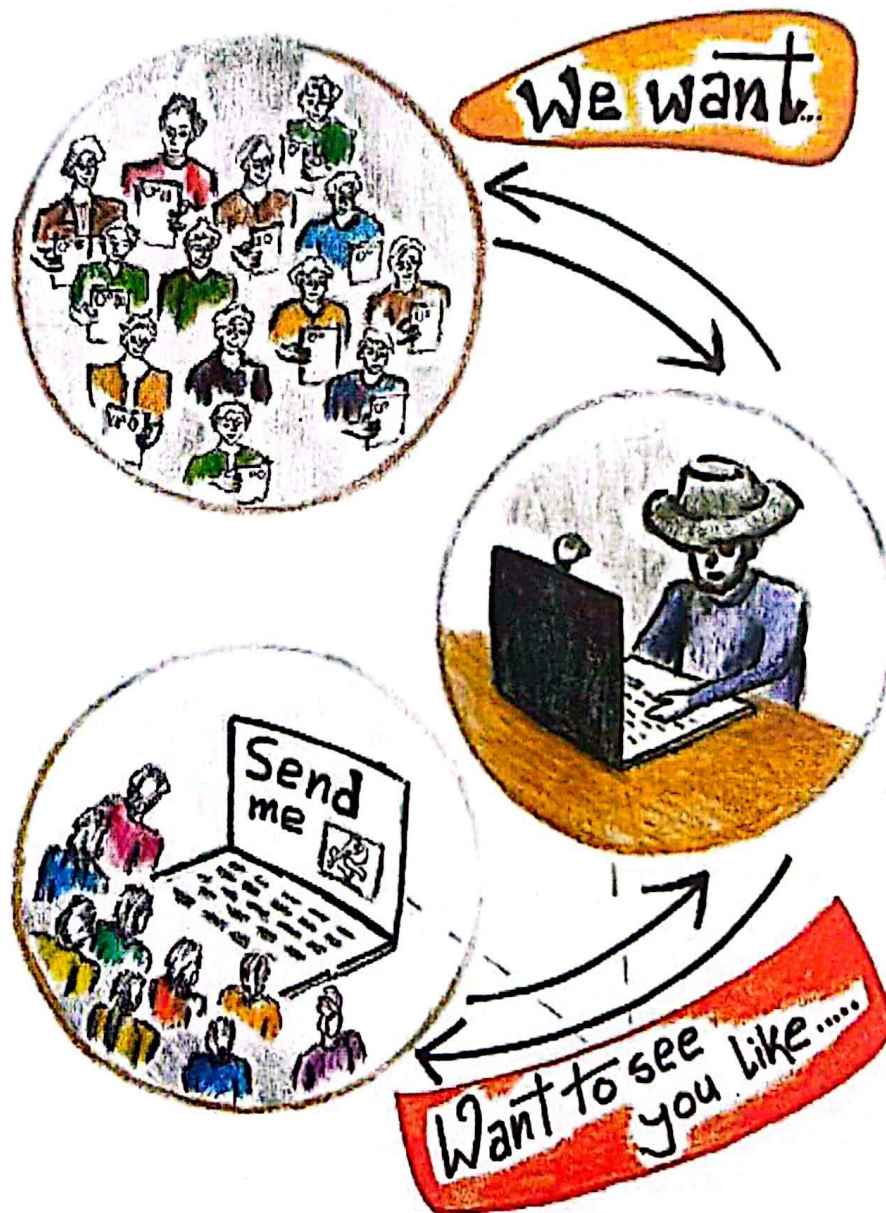
Groomers develop a relationship with children and youths, often using specific strategies like:

⇒ Complimenting them over and over e.g. "I've never met anyone as beautiful as you," or "I've never loved anyone as much as I love you."

⇒ Lots of attention and affection

⇒ Lots of kindness, gifts, money.

Groomers can use social media sites, instant messaging apps including teen dating apps, or online gaming platforms to connect with a young person or child.

Groomers hide their identity online - they may pretend to be a child and then chat and become 'friends' with children they are targeting.

MADE-TO-ORDER CHILD EXPLOITATION MATERIAL

Discuss & Rethink

⇒ Have you heard of anyone who was asked to send dirty materials like picture and video to criminals?

⇒ What should youths do when they encounter such offers to create their own pictures?

SELF-GENERATED SEXUAL ABUSING CONTENT

Made-to-order child abuse and exploitation material can be linked with organized criminal group activities.

Self-generated context or made to order exploitation material comprises images and videos that are produced by and feature children.

A 2015 Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) report on youth-produced sexual content highlighted the extent to which control over the content is lost once it has appeared online: 89.9 per cent of the images and videos assessed as part of their study had been "harvested from the original upload location and were being redistributed by third party websites."

While it is often assumed that material from self-generated sexual content is produced using mobile devices, 85.9 per cent of content depicting children 15 and under was created using a webcam (UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a Digital World*).

Case of Rokeya from Dhaka, Bangladesh

Rokeya, 13 years old girl of grade eight was given a smart mobile phone by her parents for her good result. She had internet connectivity, opened accounts in social media sites like Facebook and WhatsApp and made online friends from home and abroad. One of the online friends seemed to be very innocent and loving and Rokeya started to trust him. He convinced Rokeya to send some obscene pictures posted in several Internet sites. Rokeya had to stop going to school and social gatherings to avoid further humiliation. The online friend was actually a member of an organized criminal group engaged in collecting obscene pictures for their own benefits.

PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Discuss & Rethink
⇒ Do you think that the above guidelines will protect children?
⇒ Are there any other ideas that you want to share with us?
⇒ What should be your role to protect children from online abuse and exploitation?

GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN OF 13-18 YEARS

- Stay in control of your information and actions!

- In social networks there are different privacy settings - use them!

- Do not post your full name, date of birth, address or school!

- Think about what messages and information you post online - if you are afraid someone will read it then do not post it!

- You cannot 'unsay' what you say online, so think before you write!

- If you are not comfortable talking to someone, do not reply!

- Use the 'print screen' function to record any content that you do not feel comfortable with and show it to someone you trust!

- Do not take anything for granted: are you sure that your online friend is who you think they are?

- Never arrange to meet a 'virtual' friend in 'real life' without discussing it with an adult first!