



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Official Launch of the National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia 2021-2025

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, 14 July 2021: the Cambodian National Council for Children (CNCC) in collaboration with the National Committee for Counter Trafficking-in Persons (NCCT), the Minister of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) and the Ministry of Interior (MoI) organises the official Launching ceremony Cambodia's first five-year Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE Action Plan 2021-2025) through Zoom.

This is a historic event for the child protection sector, stakeholders, especially for all children and young people in Cambodia, who will be better protected when using modern technology in this digital age.

Online Child Sexual Exploitation is a global problem and poses a serious concern for children. In 2020, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) reports that the number of cases of Online Child Sexual Exploitation has risen to more than 21.7 million, and most of the perpetrators were not known by the child victims. Meanwhile, the International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE), in its 2020 report, shows that 76% of child victims of sexual abuse are between 3 to 13 years old, 1% are children between 0 and 2 years old and 93 % are girls.

For Cambodia, there is no official data on the extent of Online Child Sexual Exploitation, but through reports from the general public to the authorities and the Internet Hotline, the average number of reports per year is more than 150, including suspected cases of Child Sexual Abuse Materials, also called child pornography, Sextortion, etc. According to the Initial Situational Analysis on OCSE which was led and facilitated by CNCC in 2020, 60% of Cambodian children who participated in the survey found that there was a risk of online sexual exploitation when they used the Internet, such as grooming and being forced to create and share pornographic images.

To respond to this issue, the world as well as Cambodia has put it at the center and built collaboration for effective prevention and response. In the context of innovation in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and increasing use, Cambodia has made great efforts in the fight against Online Child Sexual Exploitation and strives to improve cyber security to provide a positive and secure digital environment for users, especially children who are active users, as well as for their education in both urban and rural areas which makes Information Technology even more accessible, popular for communication and development in all sectors.



The Royal Cambodia Government has become a signatory to the Global Statement of Action (WePROTECT) signed at the Global Summit, Abu Dhabi in 2015, with the Ministry of Interior as the mediator. The Global Statement of Action led Cambodia to adopt a Model National Response (MNR) that is integrated into this OCSE NAP 2021-2025.

Cambodia joined the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (PathFinding Country) on September 12, 2019 and developed the Action Plan to Prevention and Respond to Violence against Children 2017-2021 which also encouraged developing actions to prevent violence and Online Child Sexual Exploitation. In addition, the Head of the Royal Government of Cambodia participated in the approval of the Declaration at the Summit on November 2, 2019 with the aim of calling on all ASEAN Member States to use the highest standards to protect all children in ASEAN from all forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse.

The General Secretary of the Cambodia National Council for Children (CNCC) facilitated and collaborated with the relevant ministries, institutions and NGOs to develop the Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation 2021-2025 with financial and technical support from Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TDHNL) and Action Pour Les Enfants (APLE). The Action Plan shows the willingness, effort and especially the commitment of the Royal Government of Cambodia to protect the children from harm and all forms of child exploitation. The plan sets six strategic priorities including:

1. Strengthen effective implementation of policy and governance
2. Promote criminal justice system
3. Promote measures to prevent and rehabilitation OCSE victims
4. Strengthen community safety from child sexual abuse and OCSE
5. Strengthen the statue for the provision of internet services
6. Increase dissemination and proper understanding of OCSE issues.

The Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation is very important to continue to implement the government policies aimed at:

1. Protecting the rights and the best interest of children, including the interests of victims, communities and society
2. Increasing education, prevention and accelerating the response to measures taken by the Royal Government of Cambodia, together with families, communities, development partners and non-governmental organisations in supporting minors to become good citizens and successors of the nation
3. Increasing cooperation between relevant ministries, institutions, the executive and the judiciary in resolving cases involving child victims in accordance with international standards on children's rights.



4. Fulfilling its obligations as a member of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and increasing cooperation between Cambodia and other international institutions for the protection of children's rights.

The Action Plan has included stakeholders and multidisciplinary institutions responsible for online child protection, including civil society and the private sector under the auspices of the Royal Government.

“The official launch of the OCSE Action Plan today, is organized to promote the participation of relevant ministries and institutions, especially the criminal justice actors, law enforcement agents, and relevant development partners and NGOs to receive and support the implementation of this OCSE NAP 2021-2025 by aligning with each individual ministerial strategic plan of action,” **said His Excellency Vong SAUTH, Minister of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation.**

Samdech Kralahom Sar KHENG, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior said “ Amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, technology has become more important for communication and addressing all matters including online education for children, adolescents, and youth in both urban and rural communities. This context favours development in communication and technology sectors,” he said. “However, advancements in technology also bring some negative consequences, such as criminals having the opportunity to take advantage of children, through illegal and unethical practices, including online sexual exploitation. This emerging issue is rapidly spreading and placing children at greater risk globally, as well as in Cambodia”.

“Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TDHNL) is extremely proud to have supported CNCC throughout the journey that led to the adoption of the OCSE Action Plan. Due to the complexity of Internet mediated exploitation and taking into account the challenge created by the use of emerging technologies to identify, report and investigate it, a specific response is needed. This National Action Plan to Prevent Online Child Sexual Exploitation in Cambodia is a great step forward in our aim to create safe access to the internet for children.”, **said Zoe de Melo, Cambodia Project Manager and Country Representative for Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TDHNL).**

“I strongly believe in the criticality of collaboration to prevent and respond to violence against children and online exploitation and abuse; and look forward to continuing to partner with the Government, other UN agencies, the private sector, NGOs, and adolescents and youth to ensure no child has to grow up in the shadow of abuse and fear, offline or online, by joining forces to accelerate the implementation of Cambodia’s Action Plan to prevent and respond to violence against children 2017-2021 (VAC Action Plan) and the implementation of Cambodia’s Action Plan to prevent and respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation 2021-2025,” **said Mr Jalaa Abdelwahab, acting Representative of UNICEF Cambodia.**



The estimated cost of the OCSE Action Plan 2021-2025 is more than USD 3.8 million over five years of implementation, covering all six strategic areas. 36% of the budget is from the government's contribution, while the remaining 64% is the contribution from development partners.

The official virtual Launch of the Action Plan was held online under the high presidency of Samdech Kralahom Sar KHENG, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, with the participation of more than 500 people from: Excellencies, Ministers, Ambassadors to the Kingdom of Cambodia, Prosecutor General of the Court of Appeal, members of the National Council of Cambodia for Children, National Police, General Department of Prisons, Police Academy of Cambodia, Governor of the Capital and Provincial Board of Governors, Judges, Prosecutors of the Capital and Provincial Courts and the Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia, representatives of relevant Ministries, Institutions, Internet Service Providers and Children representatives.

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