

Press release

A 3-year programme launched on Safer Internet Day to address online sexual exploitation of children in Kenya

Nairobi, Kenya, 7 February 2023 - Terre des Hommes Netherlands in partnership with Childline Kenya, and in collaboration with the Directorate of Children Services, launched a 3-year programme dubbed '*Safety for Children and their Rights OnLine (SCROL)*.' The programme is hinged on a goal to have "all Children (regardless of gender, class, religion, ethnicity and abilities) protected from Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) in a safe family and community environment through proactive and collaborative engagement of policy makers and child protection systems, judiciary, Law enforcement agencies and private sector".

The internet offers opportunities for child development, but it also provides an anonymous platform for online child sexual exploitation, an emerging vice affecting children globally. According to the Disrupting Harm report, published in October 2021, 67% (14.7M) of children aged 12-17 in Kenya are internet users. However, two-thirds of internet-using children have not been taught how to stay safe while engaging on the online space. The report depicts that less than 5% of children who were subjected to OCSE in the year 2020 had formally reported it to the police or a national helpline. A further 7% had been offered money or gifts in return for sexual images or videos, 4% had been threatened or blackmailed online to engage in sexual activities and 7% of children had had their sexual images shared with others without their permission.

The SCROL programme aims to prevent and reduce the prevalence of Online Child Sexual Exploitation. The programme will be implemented in **Nairobi, Kisumu and Kilifi counties** in Kenya, as well as in **Cambodia, Nepal and the Philippines in Asia**. The official launch was held during the Safer Internet Day celebrations, an international day marked annually to promote a safer and more responsible use of online technology by children around the world. The launch aimed to engage and create awareness to key actors on the SCROL programme's scope, mandate and desired results while establishing a strong foundation for effective and efficient programme implementation.

By the end of the three year period, the SCROL programme envisages 9,000 children (girls and boys) empowered to safely access the internet, 1200 caregivers equipped with online safety technical skills to monitor and regulate children online, 480 private sector actors adopting safety measures to protect children online, 270 Government actors including law enforcement agencies capacity built on child friendly approaches to OCSE prevention.

"The increase in internet availability across Kenya has not been matched by measures addressing how to adequately protect children in this new online environment. Some forms of OCSEA are not explicitly criminalised in Kenyan law and most incidents go unreported. The emergence and expansion of OCSE in Kenya has also been aided by children who lack the requisite knowledge and skills to access the internet safely and caregivers who have limited knowledge to provide guidance. SCROL programme is coming in to address these important gaps. Through a multi-stakeholder integral approach, we can strengthen our collaborative engagement, create protective systems & frameworks for children, ensure that they are effectively protected by the legal system and that their agency is respected by laws, policies, societal norms and practices." said **Magdalene Wanza, Country Director, Terre des Hommes Netherlands.**

SCROL programme is aligned with the Kenyan Government national commitments to eliminate OCSE as envisioned in the National Plan of Action (NPA) to tackle Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The NPA envisages that, by 2026 children and communities stay safe online and report to a comprehensive, multi-sectoral and coordinated child protection system which effectively prevents and responds to OCSEA. TdH NL acknowledges the Government efforts and commitments in establishing the Child Online Protection Department, under the Directorate of Children Services, and the Anti-Human Trafficking Child Protection Unit (AHT_CPU). SCROL programme will closely work with these specialised outfits in sustainable elimination of OCSE. It will largely contribute to this vision as it (the Programme) seeks to work with the social cultural, law enforcement, formal institutions and the private sector domains to enhance coordinated collaboration of multiple stakeholders to create a more harmonised, complimentary, integrated and comprehensive approach, to empower children and all those who support them to use the internet safely and to tackle OCSEA.

“The SCROL programme rightfully puts the child at the centre and not only empowers the child to participate in their own protection online but also strengthens the ecosystem around them to facilitate true safety for the child from online sexual exploitation. Everybody has a role to play to keep children safe.” concluded **Martha Sunda, Executive Director, Childline Kenya.**

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Note to the editor

Terre des Hommes Netherlands

Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL) is an international non-governmental organisation committed to stopping child exploitation. Our mission is to protect children by preventing and stopping child exploitation, and by empowering children to make their voices count. Our vision is that children can flourish in a world free of all forms of exploitation. In Africa, Terre des Hommes Netherlands works in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Madagascar. We work with communities, government, private sector, civil society organisations and children themselves, at the centre, to address systemic and structural drivers that expose children to exploitation. For more information about Terre des Hommes Netherlands, visit www.terredeshommes.nl

Childline Kenya

Childline Kenya is an organisation that seeks to create an enabling environment for children to voice their concerns, be listened to and be linked with essential services through a coordinated referral system nationwide. Childline Kenya works in partnership with the Government and other non-state actors to STOP child abuse and provide a safe environment for all children. Childline Kenya offers the only nationwide helpline service dedicated to children that runs 24 hours toll free, and is accessible by simply dialling 116. The Helpline service can also be accessed through WhatsApp (0722116116), Facebook fan page (Childline Kenya or Child Helpline 116 – Kenya), email (116@childlinekenya.co.ke) and twitter (@childlinekenya). For more information about Childline Kenya, visit www.childlinekenya.co.ke



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