

We're looking forward to our conversation! During the regional dialogues with Najat you will be able to ask questions and send YOUR messages. See you soon

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

A child-friendly version of:
2023 report to the Human Rights Council

By the Special Representative to the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The Special Representative and the Team



United Nations

The 'United Nations' or the UN, is an organization of almost all the countries in the world, created to promote development, peace and security, and human rights.

UN is a place where Member States (countries that are members of the UN) discuss common challenges and find solutions TOGETHER, for all humanity, including CHILDREN. The head of the UN is called the 'Secretary-General'. The UN Secretary-General selects people to work with him on specific issues.



The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (or SRSG-VAC), Najat Maalla M'jid is one of them.

Najat and her team help countries end all forms of **violence against children**, in all settings, everywhere, always putting children first!

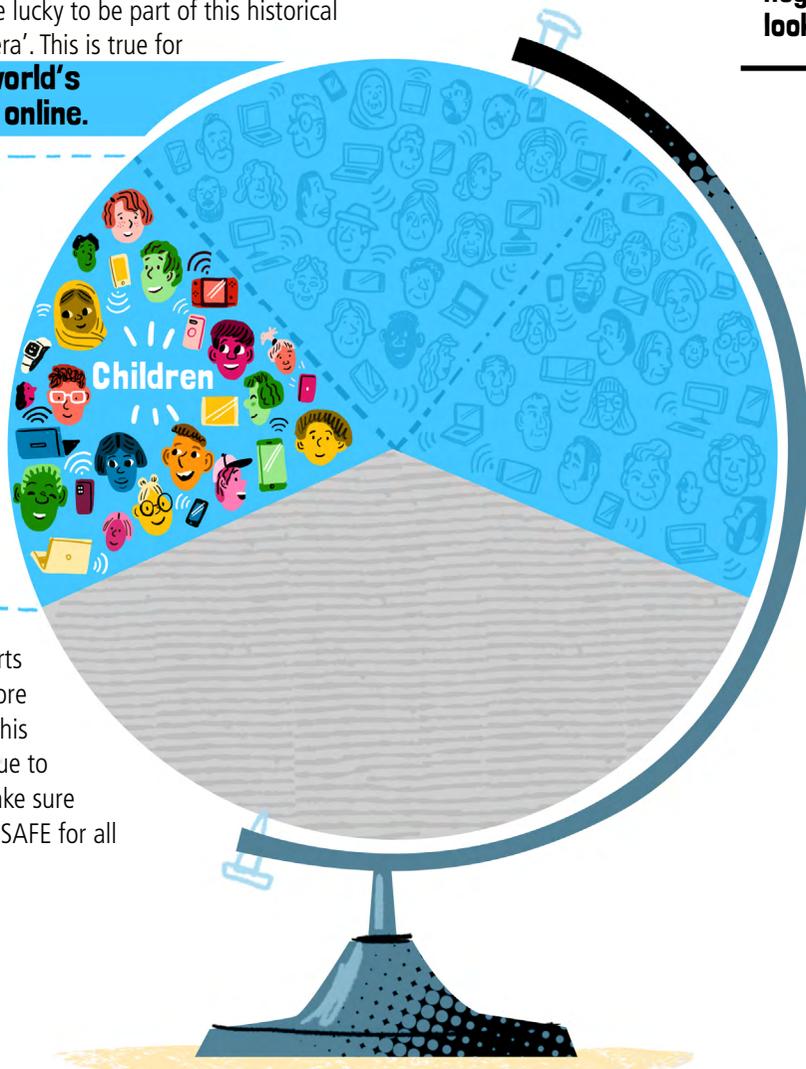
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

For the past thirty years, the world has witnessed how technology and connectivity have become a central part of people's lives. You are lucky to be part of this historical time! The 'information era'. This is true for

over 63% of the world's population who is online.

And did you know that **one-third of the world's Internet users are under the age of 18?**

As we make global efforts to connect more and more people to the Internet, this number will only continue to grow, so we need to make sure that the online world is SAFE for all children.



Like many things in life, the Internet has a positive and a negative side. Let's look at both.

THE ONLINE WORLD: LET'S LOOK AT THE GOOD!

The Internet (also known as the online and digital world) is AMAZING!

When children have access to digital technologies, it can help children fulfill many of *their* rights, like...



ONLINE RISKS: THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF THE INTERNET



The content children are exposed to online is harmful or not age-appropriate (violent, pornographic or sexual, hateful, or extremist, for example).

Online risks are the risks children are exposed to because they have access to the Internet, which can lead to children experiencing harm or violence.

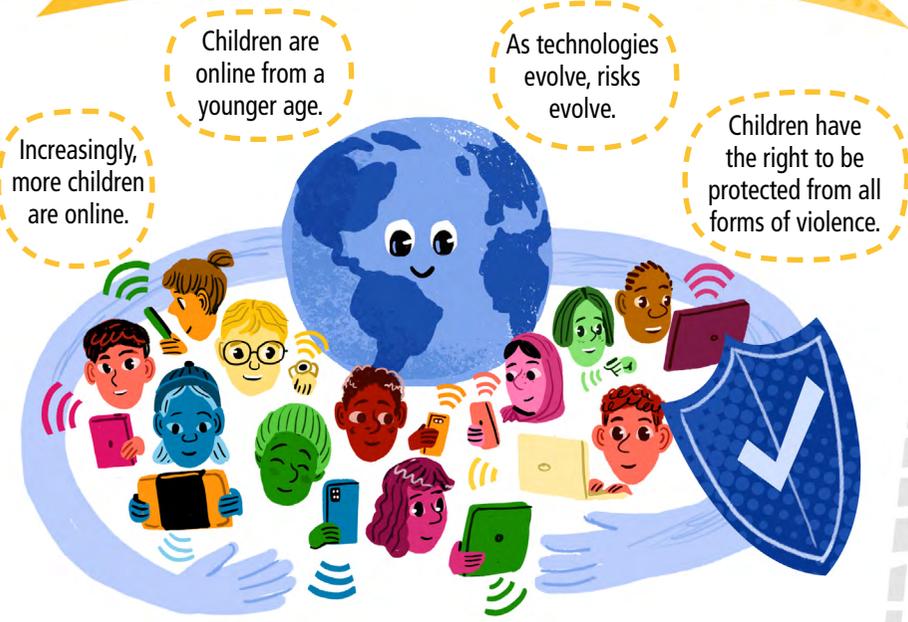


The interactions with others are risky (like other people looking to radicalize and persuade children, or adults sexually harassing or grooming children, for example).

Children behave online in a way that puts them at risk (like when children write or post hateful comments about others, or when children bully each other online, or when they post or share images of themselves that could later be used to harm them).

Children agree to how their data and information are handled, without really understanding what they are agreeing to. This is very common with the 'Terms and Conditions' you must agree to when you sign into an app, game, or social media company for example.

And the world needs to move faster and better in protecting children from these risks because:



There is a very strong connection between offline and online violence. Not only can one lead to the other, but violent actions can be made worse through the internet, as they can leave a permanent footprint in cyberspace and quickly reach a wide audience.



HOW FAMILIAR ARE YOU WITH SOME OF THE RISKS CHILDREN CAN ENCOUNTER ONLINE?

Here are a few of the most common forms of online risks, although the list could be longer:



Cyberbullying and harassment



Exposure to hate speech, discrimination, racism, and xenophobia



Recruitment into criminal, armed, or violent extremist groups



Grooming

Online grooming is where someone befriends a child online and builds up their trust with the intention to cause harm such as sexual violence.



Exposure to violent and sexual content



Sexual exploitation and abuse online



Trafficking and smuggling



Scams related to money and cryptocurrency



Hacking and identity theft

AND WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE RISKS?

IT DEPENDS



Sometimes risks come from adults.



Sometimes nobody knows who's behind online risks.



Sometimes risks come from other children.

When children are the ones responsible for their peers experiencing harm or violence, we talk about 'peer-to-peer violence'.



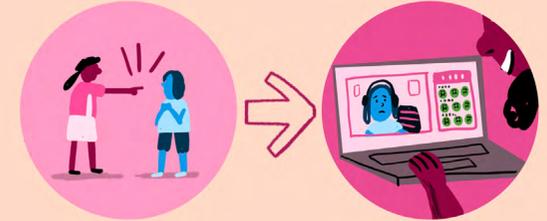
Let's look at one example of peer-to-peer violence:

Cyberbullying



Cyberbullying is a form of bullying or harassment that happens through electronic means, like cell phones, computers, and tablets. It can happen through chat, text, apps, social media forums, online gaming, or anywhere where people interact online.

A few things you may not know about cyberbullying.



There is a strong connection between in-person bullying and cyberbullying. Children who are likelier to be victims of in-person bullying, are also likelier to be victims of cyberbullying.

When children bully others online, it's common that they don't see the impacts of their actions, as there is always a screen between themselves and the children who suffer from bullying or harassment online. But bullying and cyberbullying are very harmful to children, causing:

Sleeping disorders

Depression

Low self-esteem

Anxiety

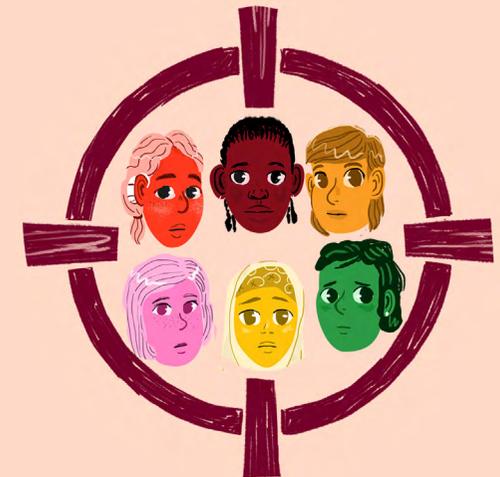
Alcohol and drug dependence

Aggression

Self-harming behavior (especially for girls)

Suicide

And more...



Girls tend to be targeted more than boys for their appearance, weight, sexuality, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and more. They are also more likely to be victims of gender-based harassment, exclusion, and reputational damage.

AND WHAT'S CHILDREN'S ROLE IN A BULLYING OR CYBERBULLYING SITUATION?

When responding to violence between children, it is important to respond in a way that guarantees the rights of all children. In bullying or cyberbullying, for example, there are at least three people involved:



The child or person who **IS BULLYING OTHERS** (who is probably reacting to other problems and also needs help)



The child or person who is **BEING BULLIED** (who is never to blame and who probably will need help in knowing how to respond to these situations).



THE BYSTANDERS are those who witness a situation of bullying (who may not always know it, but they could change and stop a situation of bullying).



BEING MORE THAN A BYSTANDER!

If you ever witness a situation of bullying, we encourage you to do something and help stop it. Here are things you can do:



You can say something and **speak up**.



You can **speak to an adult** if you don't feel comfortable speaking up.



You can **speak to your friends** and to other bystanders to help the situation.



You can **show support to the child** who is being bullied (support takes different shapes! You can send them a message, call them, send them a funny video...)



You can **speak privately** to the child who is bullying.

Y más...



WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PUT A STOP TO VIOLENCE ONLINE?



Many things! Everyone has a role to play when addressing violence online and preventing it: Governments, the tech industry, schools and educators, civil society and international organizations, and children themselves.

But there are three main messages we want to transmit to you:

Prevention must be the priority.

We can't focus on fixing the problems after they occur. We need to make the online world safer and help prevent violence from happening in the first place.



Tech companies must do more to protect children online.

It is not children's nor parents' responsibility to make the online world safer. Ensuring the safety and privacy of children in online spaces must be built into the design of the platform children use.



Children have a role, and they are being part of the solutions.

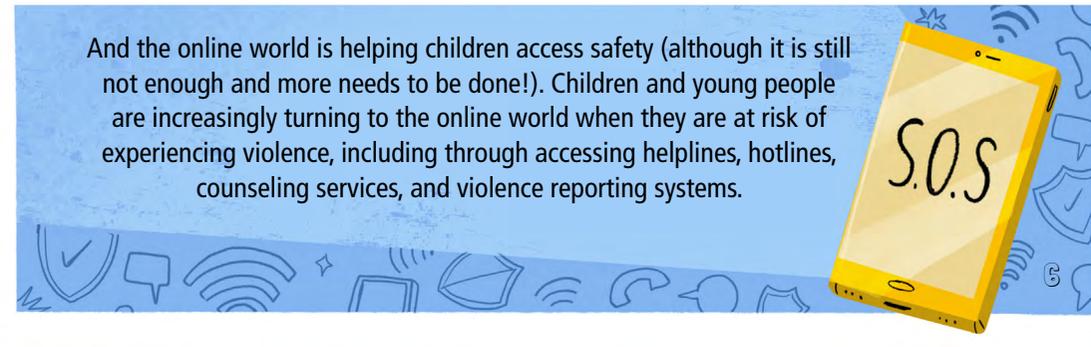
Children have an important role in helping create a culture of safety online by:

<p>Being kind to others. Empowering their peers on digital safety and wellbeing.</p>	<p>Respecting the Internet's rules of engagement.</p>	<p>Not replicating negative actions.</p>	<p>Taking action and using digital tools to build a better, safer, greener, and more inclusive world.</p>
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Children must first and foremost be empowered with the knowledge and skills to keep themselves and their peers safe online, while being able to access safety and protection through the Internet.



And the online world is helping children access safety (although it is still not enough and more needs to be done!). Children and young people are increasingly turning to the online world when they are at risk of experiencing violence, including through accessing helplines, hotlines, counseling services, and violence reporting systems.





WHAT NEXT?

WE NEED YOU!

We NEED YOU to finalize this document!

Najat will be hosting online dialogues with children from all regions and backgrounds to hear their views about addressing violence against children and the digital environment.



Do you think children are aware of these risks?

And we want to know what YOU think!

How can we make them more aware?

How can YOU be part of the solutions?

Let's continue the conversation!



violenceagainstchildren.un.org



srsg-vac@un.org



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