

Challenges in Protecting Children Online: Blueprint for Identifying and Addressing Need

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HARM IN THE DIGITAL PLAYGROUND: Online Child Exploitation and Recovery

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Outline

- Context of online abuse
- Challenges
- Creating blueprints
- UN ITU Child Online Protection initiative
- Creating and Internet safety toolkit for developing countries
- Bahrain: A case study

Context of Online Abuse: Risks

Risks

1. Contact- online grooming/luring
2. Conduct – peer to peer inappropriate behaviour e.g.. Sexting and cyber bullying
3. Commerce- access to age inappropriate goods and services
4. Exposure to age inappropriate materials and/or text

Safeguarding Context

Legislation

Law
enforce
ment

Child
safeguarding
& ICT

Cultural &
social
issues

Educational
awareness

Challenges

- Safety policy, practice and research has a Canadian , European and US focus
- Other countries are at varying stages of ICT usage and safety development
- Usage increasing- ITU – poor countries at least two thirds of the pop have access to a mobile phone
- Relevance of practice and knowledge in other contexts? Global issue but needs to be adapted to local context
- Lack of good basic research in some countries = lack of knowledge on which to base policy and practice

Children's online behaviour:

1. Developing countries where access not yet widespread may face different issues
2. Countries with different religious and cultural perspectives that may impact upon attitudes towards children's online behaviour e.g. Middle East
3. Digital divide not only generational but social class based in some countries

Creating Blueprints: What is being done?

UN ITU Child Online Protection Initiative

- Aims to approach cyber security holistically addressing legal, technical and procedural issues
- Through capacity building and international cooperation
- Has established an international collaborative network to encourage Internet safety in developing countries

Key Objectives of COP

- Identify risks and vulnerabilities to children in cyberspace
- Create awareness
- Develop practical tools to help minimize risk
- Share knowledge and experience- but not transplant existing western models

ITU Internet Safety Toolkit

- Commissioned by ITU to create a toolkit for developing countries (August 2011) . Beginning of process.
- Will allow for development of local frameworks by countries within different geographical contexts.
 1. Current context & latest research
 2. Actions at regulatory and Govt level (inc legislative frameworks)
 3. International collaboration
 4. Engagement with industry
 5. Awareness raising
- Workshops will be held with country reps to facilitate implementation of the toolkit at local level
- Training website will be developed

Bahrain: 'State of the Nation Review of Internet Safety' Davidson & Martellozzo, 2010

- Commissioned by Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
- Review of Internet safety based on empirical research
- Large scale research project
 1. Online survey 800 adults
 2. Online survey 2,600 children* (private and public school) & focus groups with 130 children aged 7-18
 3. Stakeholder interviews x 30
 4. Analysis of policy and legislation in the region(copy of report available from me j.davidson@kingston.ac.uk)

*Survey administered by Nielsen ,Arabic focus groups undertaken by the University of Bahrain

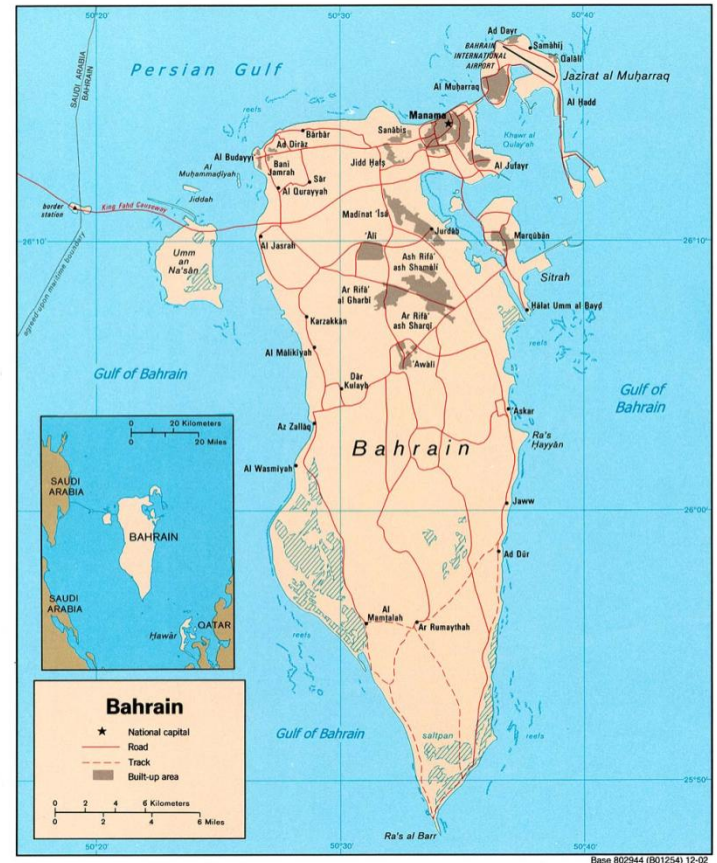
Aims of the Study

- Evaluate children & adults' use of the Internet
- Identify and review the evidence on risks to adults' & children's safety
- Suggest ways to help parents & teachers understand and implement safety
- Make recommendations for improvements and additional action
- Provide a framework for Internet safety in the Kingdom

Internet Use In Bahrain

- Internet use has grown from 40,000 (5.7% of the population) in 2000 to 402,900 (55.3%) in 2010.
- Bahrain has a facebook site which has 11,766 fans
- ICT will play a central role in economic development

* Source: *Internetworld statistics (ITU)*



Bahrain: Contrasts



Images of Bahraini Children



Key Findings: Stakeholder Interviews

- No legislative framework - to protect children from Internet related or other forms of abuse.
- Have been some prosecutions for stranger sexual abuse under other legislation
- A legislative framework in the child protection area which includes online '*luring*' (grooming) and indecent child image production and collection is proposed.
- There is a strong opposition to blanket blocking of the Internet and attempts to further control Internet usage.
- Educational awareness training for parents and children was instead strongly advocated.
- There is a strong social class digital divide . Poorer, less educated parents have lower computer literacy and understanding of Internet safety issues.

Background and Legislative /Policy Overview

Need for a legislative framework that protects children from abuse in both the real world and cyber space;

“Currently nobody who commits an offence online would be criminalised because we don’t have the legislation. Very important as it recognises the problem”. (R8)

Proposed Legislation

Draft Child Protection Law, 2010

1. Prohibits the showing of pornographic images to children and the use of children in the production and of pornography via the Internet (Article 129)

2. Prohibits Internet luring or grooming:

'luring and exploitation of children via the web "Internet" in matters contrary to public morals, public order or not commensurate with their age, is now a criminal act punishable by imprisonment.'
(Article 17)

Gaps in the Law

Re-visit definition of a 'child'

“A child is defined a person under 16 but children that are between 16 and 17 aren't protected because they are not considered as children. They wouldn't even be put in a juvenile centre and not dealt with by the juvenile law [...]” (R 11)



Enforcing the Law

- Stakeholders identified reluctance to prosecute *any* child abuse perpetrated within families
- There is no mandatory referral law in Bahrain, but there is a professional requirement for health professionals to refer abused children to the Child Protection Committee.
- There are currently no such requirements for other professionals, such as teachers or social workers, to report abuse. The proposed child protection legislation does however address this issue.

Enforcing the Law

- Not recognised as abuse
- Bahraini Child Welfare Centre receives all case referrals and refers cases to prosecutor
- BCWC receives large number of referrals
- Referral from mother or female relative not from police or professionals
- No prosecutions

Child Abuse: Safeguarding Children

- Cultural context produces specific sometimes violent responses on the part of some parents to situations that are perceived to be unacceptable eg peer interactions on SNS, removal of the burqa (veil) in photos on SNS.
- 7-9 attempted suicides of adolescent girls each month- parental condemnation of peer interaction on SNS

Child Safeguarding

The Bahrain Child Welfare Centre works with children and their families involved in abuse, but it was suggested that the remit be expanded to include Internet abuse .

Safeguarding Children

- All stakeholders felt that safeguarding children and adults is a complex agenda dependent on multidisciplinary collaboration involving Government Departments, NGOs, Social Services, Charities, Law Enforcement Agencies, the private sector and academic specialists.
- However, it was recognised that it is important to have a good legislative framework in place.

Key Findings: Young People

- Sample- Aged 7-18 , 50% Bahraini nationals, 50% non-national (reflects population), 60% male, 30% female, 80% Muslim.
- Children are children! Young people use the Internet an average of 2.5-3.5 hours each day.
- Young people connect via instant messaging, chat rooms, games, blogging and Social Networking Sites (SNS).
- Young people do not have a great understanding of what is meant by 'personal' information.
- A significant number of young people had their profile on SNS set to public and did not know how to set it to private.
- Generally older children in the 14-16 and 17-18 age groups took the most risks in terms of online safety

Feeling 'Uncomfortable' Online

Respondents were asked if they had been made to feel 'uncomfortable' online:

- 36% (925) reported that they had been made to feel 'uncomfortable'
- The proportion feeling 'uncomfortable' increased with age: 30% of 11-13s: 40% of 14-16s and 44% of 17-18s.
- There was a gender difference, girls (43%) were more likely to have felt 'uncomfortable' than boys (32%).
- Majority (79%) blamed some form of online bullying for source of discomfort

Meeting Online Strangers

- 43% (1090) of children had met with an online contact who they had not met before in person.
- There was a gender difference as boys were more likely to meet (49% had) than girls (32% had).
- This finding is supported by the qualitative data- 72% of boys admitted that they had met with someone they only interacted with online .
- Rates in Europe are (10% , Livingstone, 2009) and the UK (7%, Davidson & Martellozzo, 2010).
- Context – Bahrain? Level of trust is high, importance of understanding the context.

Meeting Online Strangers

- 14-16 age group were most likely to meet with an online contact (49% had) compared to 35% for the 11-13s and 47% for the 17-18s

‘Once [I met] someone. I knew her for a long time [online] and she then asked to meet her and she insisted on meeting me and later I discovered he was a boy not a girl’ (FG7)



Bahrain: National Framework for Internet safety

- Bahrain Committee for Child Internet Safety (BCCIS) set up to implement recommendations - representatives from: Government ministries; the legal profession; relevant NGOs; child welfare organisations; academia; ISPs; TRA and key community groups.
- Proposed legislative child protection framework be introduced and implementation in respect of the online luring clause monitored by BCCIS;
- The role of the Bahrain Child Welfare Centre should be expanded to include internet related abuse
- Training for police officers and prosecutors should be introduced to ensure effective implementation of the new legislation;

Bahrain: National Framework

- ISPs and TRA should play an active role in providing safety advice and technical advice to young people and their parents
- A comprehensive Internet safety training programme be developed for both the private and public school sectors as part of the national curriculum . The programme should draw upon good practice from programmes developed in other countries, but should take account of the cultural context in Bahrain.
- Young people should be consulted on the most appropriate and effective means of delivering the programme and on programme design;

Bahrain: National Framework

- Schools should introduce a designated e-safety staff function to ensure that programmes are delivered on a rolling basis in each school and that outreach safety advice work is undertaken with parents;
- Schools and NGOs should play an active role in working with parents to raise awareness about Internet safety and about the nature of young people's online behaviour.
- Families in socially deprived areas might benefit from more informal advice offered by community groups and via Mosques.
- A far reaching media campaign should be organised by BCCIS using a wide range of media. Safety messages should be clear and simple and designed to appeal to different audiences.
- The e-safety strategy should be developed and implemented in stages within a specified time frame.
- Progress against agreed objectives should be monitored and evaluated | full year following initial implementation to enable further development of the strategy.

Images of Bahraini Children





Thanks for listening

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