*Child**Safe**Net*

Annual Report (Short)

2023

For ChildSafeNet, 2023 was filled with noteworthy events. We initiated exciting new projects and achieved significant milestones in research, awareness campaigns, advocacy, and training. We scaled up our work in all seven provinces of the country. Furthermore, our impact extended globally and regionally. Among our endeavours was the commencement of a research study focused on empowering parents in safeguarding children in the digital era. Simultaneously, we delved into a research study on Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its implications on child online protection. Additionally, we developed a comprehensive situation paper on child online protection. Similarly, we developed five toolkits for enhancing the knowledge and skills of the service providers and duty bearers for the protection of children online. This concise report provides an overview of the strides taken by ChildSafeNet throughout the year 2023.

Research

1. On 1 January 2023, ChildSafeNet started a research project "Enhancing Parental Roles in Protecting Children from Online Sexual Exploitation and Abuse." We received a grant from the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, after winning a highly competitive bidding process open globally, under the Tech Coalition Safe Online Research Fund. The research aims to explore the knowledge, attitude, and practice of Nepalese parents to protect their children from online sexual exploitation and abuse.

   We conducted a training of trainers in Kathmandu (14 - 16 August 2023) to equip the research team, consisting of 9 enumerators. After the training, the research team conducted a comprehensive paperless survey with 900 parents of children aged 6 to 17 years, in collaboration with schools, colleges, child clubs, and communities in Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts, followed by Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs).

Training of Trainers for the Research Team

2. A research study, "Online Intimate Partner Violence against Teens and Young People in Nepal" under a Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) grant was completed, on 6 February 2023. To validate the findings of the research report, a workshop with over 40 experts from government entities, UN agencies, INGOs, CSOs, and the media was conducted which provided critical insights into the research findings. Their inputs were used to finalise the research report. In addition, ChildSafeNet, in partnership with NepAl Applied Mathematics and Informatics Institute for Research (NAAMII), developed and used an AI tool to detect and prevent online intimate partner violence.

3. In collaboration with UNICEF Nepal, we started an assessment to develop a position paper to understand the risks of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) for children and young people in Nepal, using a mixed methodology (primary and secondary data) to collect information for the development of the position paper. The position paper will help to develop the knowledge base of key stakeholders to take timely actions to protect children and young people from the malicious use of Generative AI.

Awareness Raising

4. Besides coordinating and organising Safer Internet Day (SID) 2023 programmes in Nepal, we also provided technical and financial support to community-based organisations, schools and child/youth groups to conduct awareness events and training sessions in different parts of the country. More than 30 national and international organisations working in Nepal, joined ChildSafeNet in celebrating the SID. ChildSafeNet started the celebration of the Safer Internet Day in Nepal, in 2019 and has been contributing as the national secretariat of the SID in Nepal.

Safer Internet Day 2023

Marking the SID 2023, we organised a public awareness event in Patan Durbar Square in collaboration with Lalitpur Metropolitan City and Child Fund Japan Nepal Country Office, with support from the Rotaract Club of Charumati. Popular artists, Yaman Shrestha, Jigme Chhyoki Ghishing and members of the Rotaract Club of Charumati performed awareness-raising and entertaining songs and dances. Besides, we also organised a public quiz and debates on child online safety.

Safer Internet Day 2023 Public Awareness Event - Balaju

Likewise, similar public awareness events were organised from February to June 2023 in Kirtipur and Balaju in collaboration with World Vision International Nepal and the Child Development Society. Rupantaran Kathmandu peer educators group helped in organising the events and performed songs and dances. In Balaju , popular artists, Yaman Shrestha and Jigme Chhyoki Ghishing performed an online safety awareness song, produced by ChildSafeNet whereasstudents of Tarun Secondary Schoolperformed online safety awareness dramas and cultural dances. All public awareness events included quizzes, debates and online safety awareness messages.

As a part of the Safer Internet Day 2023 programmes, online safety training sessions were conducted in the schools from February to March 2023. Children learned about online risks, safe online practices and how & where they can get help if they experience or are at risk of online abuse, exploitation and violence.

5. We raised awareness about the protection of children and young people in the digital age utilising both online and offline media platforms through engaging social media posts, blogs and videos.

6. Supporting the 16-Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) campaign, we raised awareness on the protection of children and young people from gender-based violence, from 25 November to 10 December 2023, using the online media channels.

Advocacy

7. Our Founder and President, Anil Raghuvanshi and Research Officer, Tulasha Khadka contributed as panellists in a workshop, "Promoting Information Integrity and Combatting Hate Speech – Evidence, Trends, and Actions to Counter Digital Violence and Hate Speech in Nepal." organised by UNESCO Kathmandu conducted the workshop on 21 March 2023. During the panel discussion, a presentation was made on the emerging online risks for children in Nepal, response mechanisms and gaps as well as the recommendations for the duty-bearers and service providers, based on the white paper on child online protection, developed by ChildSafeNet in partnership with UNICEF Nepal. Likewise, the preliminary findings of a research study on online intimate partner violence was also presented.

Workshop on Promoting Information Integrity and Combatting Hate Speech –
Evidence, Trends, and Actions to Counter Digital Violence and Hate Speech in Nepal

8. ChildSafeNet, in collaboration with UNICEF Nepal, started a project "Advocacy and Capacity Building to Protect Children Online" project in August 2023, as the second phase of a similar project, implemented in 2020-21.

   We developed a situation paper "Nepal's Digital Generation: Challenges and Solutions for Child Online Protection" updating the white paper on child online protection, produced in the previous phase of the project, which incorporated critical findings from a systematic desktop review of over 160 research reports and resource materials as the outcomes of key informant interviews with more than 20 child protection experts as well as six workshops with the stakeholders, duty bearers and service providers - government officials, police, judiciary, tech company representatives, parents, children and young people.

   Additionally, five toolkits for police, lawyers, psychosocial service providers, parents and addressing tech-facilitated child marriage were developed. ChildSafeNet and its partners will use the toolkits to conduct training workshops in Kathmandu and provinces to enhance the capacities of the service providers and duty bearers for the protection of children and young people in the digital age.

Training

9. Training sessions on protecting children in the digital age in different parts of the country were conducted which helped children learn about online risks, safer internet practices and how & where they can get help. Our trainers used cyber safety quizzes, online safety awareness videos and the standard training modules to make the training interesting and impactful.

Child Online Safety Training at Ghyangfedi Secondary School, Nuwakot

10. In partnership with World Vision International Nepal and Child Development Society, we conducted a Training Trainers (ToT) workshop in Kirtipur (19 - 20 February 2023), on the protection of children online. Participants of the ToT, 24 adolescent Rupantaran Peer Educators, conducted child online protection training sessions in 12 schools of Kirtipur and Balaju, Kathmandu.

11. ChildSafeNet conducted workshops on parenting in the digital age for the protection of children from online sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as other forms of online harm. The workshops helped parents and grandparents to learn about the positive and safe use of the internet and understand the online risks and protection from online harms for them as well as for children & young people. They also learned about the available support services and reporting mechanisms for children and young people who experience online harm.

12. ChildSafeNet organised a capacity-building workshop on the protection of children in the digital age for the ChildFund Japan (CFJ) Nepal Country Office team in Lalitpur (21 - 22 February 2023). The workshop helped the CFJ Nepal team better understand the online risks and challenges and ways to integrate child online safety in their programmes. The interactive workshop covered a range of topics related to online safety, including the impact of technology on child development, the risks and dangers associated with digital technology, and best practices for protecting children online.

Contribution to Global and Regional Initiatives

13. ChildSafeNet participated and contributed to the major international conferences and workshops in 2023.

Our Founder and President Anil Raghuvanshi participated in the Stockholm Internet Forum (SIF) 2023, Stockholm, Sweden (29 – 31 May 2023) under the theme of "Role of the Internet and ICT during Crises, Conflicts and Disasters", hosted by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Global Trust and Safety experts participated in the SIF 2023, a platform for advancing a free, open and secure internet as a driver of development.

Likewise, he represented ChildSafeNet as a child online protection expert and practitioner at the Asia-Pacific Regional Summit, "Meta APAC Youth Safety Summit 2023: Empowerment and Perspectives" in Singapore (28 – 30 August 2023). It brought together more than 40 esteemed safety academics and NGO leaders from across the APAC. During the Summit, Meta provided updates on their latest products and policies to keep teens safe across the family of apps.

Panel Discussion - Tech Coalition Safe Online Convening, San Francisco

Moreover, Raghuvanshi contributed as a panellist in the Tech Coalition Safe Online Convening at the Google Office in San Francisco, USA on 27 September 2023. He highlighted the importance of enhancing the awareness and knowledge of parents to keep children safe online, referring to the preliminary findings of the research on parenting in the digital age, conducted by ChildSafeNet with a grant from Tech Coalition. Besides, he made a presentation on enhancing parenting in the digital age at the Trust & Safety Research Conference at Stanford University, Palo Alto, USA on 28 September 2023.

Furthermore, our Research Officer Tulasha Khadka presented the key findings of the research, "Online Intimate Partner Violence against Teens and Young People in Nepal" at the ISPCAN Edinburgh Congress, Edinburgh, Scotland (24 - 27 September 2023). The findings were based on a national research study conducted. The Congress with the theme "Advancement in Data and Solutions to Tackle Child Abuse and Neglect," brought together prominent global experts, researchers, academicians, and practitioners.

In addition, representing ChildSafeNet, Raghuvanshi made a presentation on Generative AI and its impact on child online protection at the Electronic Crime Research 2023 Symposium, organised by the Anti-Phishing Working Group in Barcelona, Spain on 16 November 2023. He also contributed as a speaker in a panel, " Empowering Users Through Research-Based Awareness Instrumentation" within the session, "Human Factors in Cybercrime Proliferation and Suppression." The panel investigated the opportunities and essential utilities of the research studies into cybercrime resilience and susceptibility.

Presentation on Generative AI and Its Impacts on Child Online Protection
at Electronic Crime Research 2023 Symposium, Barcelona

14. Our Training and Programme Development Officer Urussa Joshi contributed as a panellist at a Safety Summit organised by TikTok on 5 October 2023 whereinshe highlighted the crucial roles of tech companies, the government, and parents in protecting children and young people from online sexual abuse and exploitation, cyberbullying, sextortion, and exposure to age-inappropriate content. Bijoy Kumar Roy, Director at Nepal Telecommunications Authority, and Zara Basharat Higgs, Head of Public Policy Programmes at TikTok South Asia, were the other key panellists.

TikTok Safety Summit in Kathmandu

15. ChildSafeNet young change-maker, Abhinaya Chauhan, 16 years old, contributed a foreword to the WeProtect Global Alliance Global Threat Assessment 2023. ChildSafeNet is a Civil Society Organisation member of the WeProtect Global Alliance. According to the Global Threat Assessment 2023, the volume of child sexual abuse online continues to increase and intensify, while new trends and threats emerge. The report also highlighted that the new forms of abuse, like financial sexual extortion and AI-generated imagery, underscore the urgent need for Safety by Design.

ChildSafeNet Contribution to the Global Threat Assessment 2023

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