Researching children's rights globally in the digital age

Sonia Livingstone, Jasmina Byrne and Monica Bulger

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#LSEChildRights

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Contents

Context

As broadband connectivity reaches ever more remote parts of the world, and digital devices become increasingly portable and affordable, any understanding of children's daily lives necessarily includes a digital component. Regardless of whether children are at home or at school, in transit, playing or studying, digital devices are becoming an increasingly integral part of their daily life. Although this phenomenon is not restricted to industrialised countries or urban areas, these are frequently sites where digital use starts.

While digital engagement is rapidly spreading throughout the world, this fast-paced, widespread growth often occurs far ahead of any understanding of what constitutes safe and positive use in digital contexts. Parents, caregivers and teachers are struggling to keep up with continually advancing technologies. Likewise, technology use is consistently outpacing legislation and regulation. This environment presents challenges for safeguarding children as their use of digital devices often precedes an effective rights framework or challenges existing laws when applied to the digital environment.

What research is and should be conducted to understand whether and how children's rights are being enhanced or undermined in the digital age, on a global basis? What research do stakeholders need, and how can this be provided? To address such questions, the meeting extended the collaboration among the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), EU Kids Online and UNICEF. For previous reports and events, see:

- *A global agenda for children's rights in the digital age: Recommendations for developing UNICEF's research strategy*[1]
- *Children's rights in the digital age*[2]
- *Children, ICT and development: Capturing the potential, meeting the challenges*[3]
- EU Kids Online findings, methods, recommendations[4]
- 'Children's rights in the digital age', LSE Public Lecture[5]
- Digitally Connected[6]
- UNICEF child rights guidelines for industry, educators and parents[7]

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[1] www.unicef-irc.org/publications/70

[2] www.unicef-irc.org/research/264/

[3] www.unicef-irc.org/publications/715

[4] www.eukidsonline.net

[5] www.lse.ac.uk/newsAndMedia/videoAndAudio/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/player.aspx?id=287 6

[6] www.digitallyconnected.org/agenda/

[7] www.itu.int/en/cop/Pages/guidelines.aspx

Aims

To examine whether and how children's rights to provision, protection and participation are being enhanced or undermined in the digital age, 35 international experts met for three days at the LSE to share their collected expertise.

Convened by Sonia Livingstone (LSE, EU Kids Online) and Jasmina Byrne (UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti), the aim of the meeting was to evaluate current understandings of the risks and opportunities afforded to children worldwide as they gain access to internet-enabled technologies, and to explore the feasibility of developing a global research framework to examine these issues further.

A global research framework would enable a connected understanding of children's experiences in the digital age. The aims of the meeting were both conceptual and practical:

- to identify the key opportunities and barriers to children's rights in a digital age, as viewed from diverse perspectives and continents;
- to debate the merits and challenges of standardised versus contextual approaches to cross-cultural research;
- to address the challenges of such research regarding research and policy priorities, research training needs and research impact;
- to consider multistakeholder engagement and funding prospects;
- to recognise the practical, political and ethical challenges of conducting research;
- to scope key elements that could be developed for a flexible, modular research toolkit likely to be of wide benefit;
- to consider practical knowledge-sharing strategies, platforms, dissemination, ownership/authorship, quality control, maximum and minimum scenarios, expertise and standardisation/variation.

Participants represented a range of experience in child rights, child protection, internet and mobile technologies and governance, cross-national survey and ethnographic methods, applied and policy-relevant research, as well as a breadth of regions in the global South and North. With backgrounds in non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia and industry, experts contributed a diversity of perspectives and opinions.[8]

The goal was to identify collaborative models for funding, working together and sharing knowledge. Drawing on the participants' expertise, the meeting sought to identify good practice in addition to tangible elements that could apply to the development of a global research toolkit. Production of such a global research toolkit would represent a future collaborative project, once scoped in terms of purpose, elements and practicalities, as discussed in the meeting.

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[8] For full biographies, see Full biographies are available at
http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/Researching-Childrens-Rights-Globally-in-the-Digital-Age.asp

Overview

During the meeting, participants explored the role research can play in informing policy, technological developments and intervention efforts. Discussions built on a report commissioned by UNICEF in 2012 (Livingstone and Bulger, 2013[9]) that examined global research related to children's use of technologies to determine where baseline studies were available, and where gaps existed in understanding the extent of technology use among children and young people. The report framed children and young people's digital use in terms of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child[10] (UNCRC, 1989), which sets out children's rights to protection, provision and participation. Drawing connections between the existing UNCRC framework for offline rights, and envisioning how these could be applied in digital environments, the report recommended evidence-based action to ensure the rights of the child in the digital age.

The meeting addressed issues of substance and process, aiming to determine how lessons learned in countries with high digital penetration might be applied in countries where digital use is growing or about to grow. In her introductory remarks, Jasmina Byrne provided an overview of the state of global research around children's digital use, observing that while sporadic national studies do exist, the lack of comparable data often inhibits cross-national

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[9] www.unicef-irc.org/publications/702
[10] Ratified in November 1989 and adopted in September 1990 – see www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx

policy and coordinated intervention efforts. Yet an evidence base is sorely needed insofar as ICTs are becoming ever more central in terms of empowering children around the world. As the research arm of a global organisation, the UNICEF Office of Research aims to support UNICEF country offices and their national partners to learn from each other, to exchange knowledge and resources.

Sonia Livingstone challenged the group to imagine what the internet might mean for the experiences of children in diverse countries. She encouraged participants to consider the practicalities of global research, asking whether it is helpful to develop cross-national measures that can be comparable across countries, or whether it is preferable to conduct contextual research so as to allow policies to emerge from the bottom up. Livingstone addressed specific challenges that have emerged in global research, for example, the realities of conducting research in countries such as Indonesia or Norway, where geographical spread is a challenge, or in areas where research training might be lacking. Considering varying political and cultural contexts, Livingstone encouraged the group to attend to the process of 'translating' research agendas, methods, policies and practice. She also drew attention to the growing interest in children's rights, acknowledging that in relation to the internet, most research and policy has focused on the global North (as, for instance, in the EU Kids Online project). As the internet is now rapidly spreading through much of the global South, the role of ICTs in relation to children's rights must now be reconsidered.

Challenge 1: Opportunities and barriers to children's rights in a digital, global age

- Chair: Sonia Livingstone, Professor, LSE and EU Kids Online, UK
- Alexandre Barbosa, Manager, Cetic.br and EU Kids Online Brazil: 'As Brazilian kids go online, what are the opportunities and risks?'
- Patrick Burton, Director, Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP), South Africa: 'Opportunities and barriers to (researching) children's rights online in South Africa'
- Nishant Shah, Co-founder, The Centre for Internet & Society, Bangalore, India: 'A child's-eye view of the world'
- Bu Wei, Director, Research Centre for Children and Media, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, China: 'What's the problem with children's rights online in China? A critical perspective'

The aim of this first session was to identify the diversity of problems around the world and the research challenges that result. In particular, contributors discussed the particular barriers to, and opportunities faced by, children in engaging with digital technologies in their country or region, also identifying areas where more research is needed.

Alexandre Barbosa described the experience of adapting the EU Kids Online framework to **Brazilian Kids Online**. Barbosa provided an overview of the extensive household surveys already conducted in Latin America, emphasising the importance of collecting data that can be cross-culturally compared. As a framing question, Barbosa asked what the role was of regulation, content development or the media in protecting children online. He then reflected on the challenge of translating research for policymakers, arguing that a significant outcome of the Brazilian Kids Online effort, like EU Kids Online, was creating a network of stakeholders committed to child rights and to moving the agenda forward. The Kids Online framework builds in multistakeholder involvement throughout the research process. Barbosa recommended identifying a set of core indicators for cross-national comparable data.

Barbosa presented key findings that highlight the potential barriers to children's rights in the digital age. Many inequalities exist in Brazil: 40 per cent of households don't have internet access, and 77 per cent of children in Brazil are internet users compared with 51 per cent of adults, which raises issues of mediation and diversity of devices. Brazilian children are very similar to European children in their digital use, with major differences in perception of use by their parents. Content creation and content sharing were low, and findings suggest that using Facebook, for instance, does not equate to developing the skills and understanding of how to engage with information and relationships online.

Patrick Burton provided an overview of the South African context, where only 23 per cent of children live with both parents, 55 per cent live below the poverty line, and 48.7 per cent have been exposed to violence in their community. Furthermore, 89 per cent of households in South Africa have a mobile phone, while only 21 per cent have a computer; 25 per cent of children who had a negative online experience missed school while 31 per cent reported difficulty concentrating. Media panics are resulting in tough legislation: in South Africa, sexting laws can result in lifetime registration as a sex offender, even when consensual. The use context and legal context raise questions about how research can inform interventions and potentially result in policy change.

Burton explored what counts as evidence, discussing how media panics often drive policy discussion, and asked participants to consider how to use data to respond. He emphasised the importance of project evaluation when engaging in high-quality, rigorous research. A significant challenge in studying children and young people's internet use is the current legislation that criminalises sexting and requires mandatory reporting. Burton recommends involving children and young people in the survey development process, so as to ask children and young people about what is important to them.

Nishant Shah described the many contradictions that qualitative research reveals, based on his work in rural India. In a region with the highest mobile phone penetration in India, children and young people use Chinese-based mobile phones, where they have learned enough of the characters to manage to communicate. Despite women's access to technology being difficult and not always socially allowed, it was intriguing that women with limited access to mobile phones were often up to date on their favourite soap opera because they could access what Shah called 'human internets': their young children would borrow their father's devices, and then stage afternoon performances to re-enact key moments for the village, to update themselves on the content of soap operas and other popular shows.

Using these examples to demonstrate the richness of qualitative data collected by Shah and his colleagues, he focused on children and young people's participation in the research process. Shah urged a shift in thinking from 'children *on* the internet to children *as* internet'. He encouraged participants to re-think the image of the child internet user as 'fragile'.

Returning to contradictions, Shah reported that in some regions of India it is not uncommon for children to have access to laptops outside, but not in their homes. Here, traditional measures of household computer access would miss key contextual clues to the everyday life of the child. In developing studies of children, Shah recommended thinking of children as having agency, and empowering children and young people to help researchers develop a child's eye view of the world – how do they think of themselves, and what interventions would they want to make? What is lacking for many is a structure of belonging (online) over and above access to technology.

Bu Wei described the Chinese context, where 195 million users are urban children and there are 61.5 million rural users; 20.7 million on average go online weekly; and 38 per cent of the total child population are rural children and young people left behind by one or both of their parents. About four out of every 10 children in China are affected by migration. It affects mostly rural children and young people with serious consequences; most drop out of school or lack any social or family support. However, internet use statistics show a growing trend, particularly among urban children, who spend on average 20.7 hours per week online. Access and use differ starkly between urban and rural children and young people. Efforts to use digital devices and social media for social support include 'Baby Come Back Home', an internet project launched by NGOs to help trafficking victims find their parents. To raise awareness of this issue, UNICEF developed a documentary, 'Stories through 180 lenses', for and by left-behind children. The '1kg More' project encourages urban children and young people to carry an additional 1kg in their backpack when travelling to rural areas to help rural children (carrying textbooks, etc.). While research is not a main focus, these projects serve to highlight a digital divide, not just in access, but also in resources, information and languages. While a majority of urban children in China fully participate in the digital age, most rural children do not have access to the internet and other new ICTs. Policy and programming interventions tend to prioritise urban children and new ICTs.

Bu Wei also reported on sampling issues when studying migrant children. She recommended content analysis of information used by children to better understand their use patterns and experiences. Pairing research with participatory action, Wei invited participants to consider how new mobile technologies can address the needs of migrant children.

Discussion and key points

This session sought an approach that pairs research with action, a theme repeated throughout the meeting. Panellists highlighted efforts to improve living conditions for marginalised children, and also emphasised the importance of finding ways to include their voices in research studies.

The process of adapting the EU Kids Online survey model to a Latin American context is a good example of how the cultural contexts were addressed, and marginalised populations were included in the translation and adaptation of the survey. It is important to take note of

the contradictions in each country's statistical profile – the differences due to gender roles, socioeconomic status, geographic areas and education levels.

- There is growing evidence that the internet poses considerable risks, but also considerable opportunities, for children around the world.
- Different cultural and national contexts encompass considerable diversity, both across and within countries.
- In many countries, however, and especially in the global South, there is too little research to gain a sufficient understanding of children's practices and contexts of internet use.
- Adapting research instruments designed in the global North to Southern contexts is challenging, and requires considerable sensitivity to the local circumstances of children's lives, as well as sustained dialogue with the stakeholders who will use the research findings.
- Conducting and using research with stakeholders new to the issues involved is equally challenging, given sometimes stringent legislation and political imperatives.
- In conceptualising children and childhood, while society affords them many and often severe problems, it is still important to conceive of children as agents rather than as victims when conducting research and developing policy.
- The definition of a 'child' must be carefully considered in different cultural contexts.

Challenge 2: Standards for rigorous methods of cross-national comparison

- Chair: Ellen Helsper, Associate Professor, LSE and EU Kids Online, UK
- Fiona Brooks, Professor, University of Hertfordshire, Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HSBC), UK: 'Learning from the Health Behaviour of School-aged Children survey'
- Kjartan Ólafsson, Lecturer, University of Akureyri, Iceland and EU Kids Online: 'Lessons from the EU Kids Online survey'
- Clara Sommarin, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Child Protection, New York: 'UNICEF's Violence Against Children Surveys'

For this challenge, contributors shared strategies for engaging in rigorous and comparable methods of investigation cross-nationally. Panellists represented established cross-national surveys, and discussed the challenges faced by large surveys generally, and particularly when measuring the risks and opportunities that children experience online.

Such surveys raise questions of principle (focused on the rationale for standardised measures and replicable procedures) and practice (such as survey protocols, pilot work, sampling, participatory methods, survey administration, coordination, collaboration, policy impact, key indicators, local concerns, training needs and linguistic/translation issues).

Fiona Brooks presented on the **Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)** World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborative Cross-national Survey.[11] Conducted every four years in 39-44 countries among children aged 11, 13 and 15, the HBSC examines over 60 topics related to adolescent health and wellbeing and its social and environmental contexts. The longitudinal study allows for comparisons across age, gender, socioeconomic status and academic achievement.

While focused primarily on broad determinants of health and wellbeing, a portion of the survey examines children's technology use. Brooks reported on the types of longitudinal comparisons possible with the HBSC survey – for example, the proportion of children's time spent on gaming increased between 2006 and 2014, and ownership of digital devices has shifted from shared to individual. Data from the study are also used to examine relationships between computer game play and sleep, or social media use and social relationships, or computer use and the impact on measures of wellbeing.

Kjartan Ólafsson presented on the **EU Kids Online**[12] study of 25,000 children aged 9–16 and their parents in 25 European countries. The first phase of EU Kids Online (2006–09) built a network of European scholars and resulted in a series of reports, a research database and a book assessing the state of evidence-based policy for children's technology use.[13] The pan-European survey was conducted during phase II (2009–11). In the past few years, the network has grown to include over 33 countries.

Outputs of the network include a research toolkit that has been used in Russia, Brazil and Australia to measure the risks and opportunities children encounter in their daily internet use.[14] The cross-national studies allow for comparisons across age, gender, socioeconomic status and geography. By including parents, comparisons of parental mediation strategies and levels of parental awareness of children's experiences become possible.

Clara Sommarin described UNICEF's **Violence Against Children Surveys (VACS)**[15] of 13- to 24-year olds that document childhood experiences of sexual, physical and emotional violence. Started in Swaziland in 2007, studies have been completed in nine countries in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia, with an additional seven planned for the next few years. The surveys are part of a larger initiative to improve and develop national multisectoral programmes and policies, global advocacy and public awareness-raising. They are developed in cooperation with the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and implemented with multisector support including governments, UNICEF, CDC, Population Europe Resource Finder and Archive (PERFAR) and the Together for Girls initiative (cooperation among five UN agencies, US and Canadian

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[11] Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey, available at www.hbsc.org/

[12] EU Kids Online reports and findings, available at www.eukidsonline.net

[13] See O'Neill, B., Staksrud, E. and McLaughlin, S. (2013) 'Introduction', in *Towards a better internet for children*, Gothenburg: Nordicom. Available at http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/57403/

[14] www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20II%20(2009-11)/Survey/Survey%20documents.aspx

[15] Results and reports from the Violence Against Children Surveys are available at www.unicef.org/esaro/5480_violence-against-children.html

governments and the public sector). Findings allow for comparisons of the prevalence and magnitude of childhood violence across age, gender, geography and socioeconomic status.

Discussion and key points

Panellists shared similar experiences of the challenges of developing and fielding large-scale cross-national surveys. They discussed the particular challenge of studying children in terms of access, research ethics and the child's understanding of survey or interview questions. All panellists reported on substantial challenges of translation, context and logistics that face cross-national comparative surveys. Yet, when studying children and young people's technology use, they additionally encountered unique challenges in terms of pace of change and sensitivity of questions related to sexual content or experiences. Other challenges include a disconnect between adult assumptions and children's lived experiences, and navigating political sensitivities related to the issues under study (especially when risk-related) as well as reporting the results. The discussion revealed five broad categories of challenges and strategies for resolving them:

- Survey development (measures, timing, translation and language). Emphasis was placed on the balancing required and optional modules within a questionnaire to be applied across diverse contexts; on consulting children and ensuring that questions have real implications for their wellbeing; on drawing on qualitative research to frame survey items; and on cognitive testing of items with children in relevant cultural contexts.
- The conduct of the research (multistakeholder engagement, consistency, training and quality assurance). A single survey agency working across cultures/contexts offers consistency of approach. Nonetheless, cultural factors can affect sampling, response rates, ethical issues, etc. It is vital not to underestimate the need for extensive interviewer training and researcher oversight of the entire process.

- Interpretation and reporting results (ranking, cultural context and political sensitivity). Here discussion recognised the need to explain research criteria and concerns to policymakers, and for the researcher to follow through on the uses of the data within policy circles. Ranking countries was particularly contentious in being favoured by and motivating for policymakers, despite the loss of contextual and quality data valued by researchers.
- Challenges unique to studying risks and opportunities of children's technology use. The potential disconnect between what matters to adults and children's own perceptions of technology was at issue here. So, too, were the particular sensitivities of asking children about risk, especially when they may consider online spaces private. Here the integration of child-centred qualitative approaches into survey work is vital.
- Also challenging in relation to technology is the sheer pace of change, with the time taken between survey development, fieldwork and reporting results a point of contention between researchers and policymakers. The HBSC survey takes four years from design to results; for Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) it takes three years to get a module developed, tested and approved. To ensure quality results, policymakers need to understand these constraints. Researchers can, however, also work to ask questions that will still be meaningful over time.

## Challenge 3: Research contexts – priorities, training and impact

- Chair: Jelena Zajeganovic Jakovljevic, Project Officer for Adolescents, UNICEF Serbia
- Dorothea Kleine, Director, ICT4D Centre, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK: 'Beyond surveys "made in the EU"? Evaluation, participation, action research'
- Joe Khalil, Professor, Northwestern University, Qatar: 'A perspective from the Arabic Gulf and the Levant'
- Surya Av, Head, IMRB Social & Rural Research Institute (SRI), India: 'Researching rights'
- Preetam Maloor, Strategy and Policy Advisor, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Geneva: 'Setting global targets on child online protection: towards a results-based approach'

While challenge 2 outlines the imperatives for standardisation of questions and methods across countries, if valid comparisons are to be drawn, this challenge explored the opposite argument, namely, that it is important to recognise how context shapes ICT use and children's lives more widely. Thus, how shall we recognise the particular meanings and practices that make sense in different parts of the world? And how can we navigate the terrain between the published, generally Western, research literature, and the research questions, concepts and priorities that may arise in the global South?

There are two key hazards to consider: either researchers take the Western research agenda and simply impose it on their own culture, whether or not it fits; or researchers work from the bottom up, or with alternative theories and concepts, and then their findings are often not recognised by Western researchers or comparable across countries.

Dorothea Kleine discussed the importance of understanding the contexts in which children use technologies. Drawing on her recent report, co-authored with David Hollow and Sammia Poveda, *Children, ICT and development* (2014),[16] Kleine first questioned normative assumptions in the global North, in terms of their often-assumed relevance to the global South, and then offered recommendations for a global research framework. She particularly cautioned against the normative assumptions evident in many established, large-scale surveys (e.g., construction around childhood/adulthood, gender roles, heteronormativity and the nuclear family). She additionally observed that 'reported behaviour is not the same as behaviour' and what surveys are bound to record is simply recorded behaviour. She recommended triangulating research methods.

See Figure 1, below: 'Beyond surveys "made in EU"? Evaluation, participation, action research' presentation by Dorothea Kleine of the ICT4 Centre at Royal Holloway, University of London.

The Choice Framework

(Kleine 2007, 2011, 2013 based on Alsop & Heinsohn 2005, DFID 1999)

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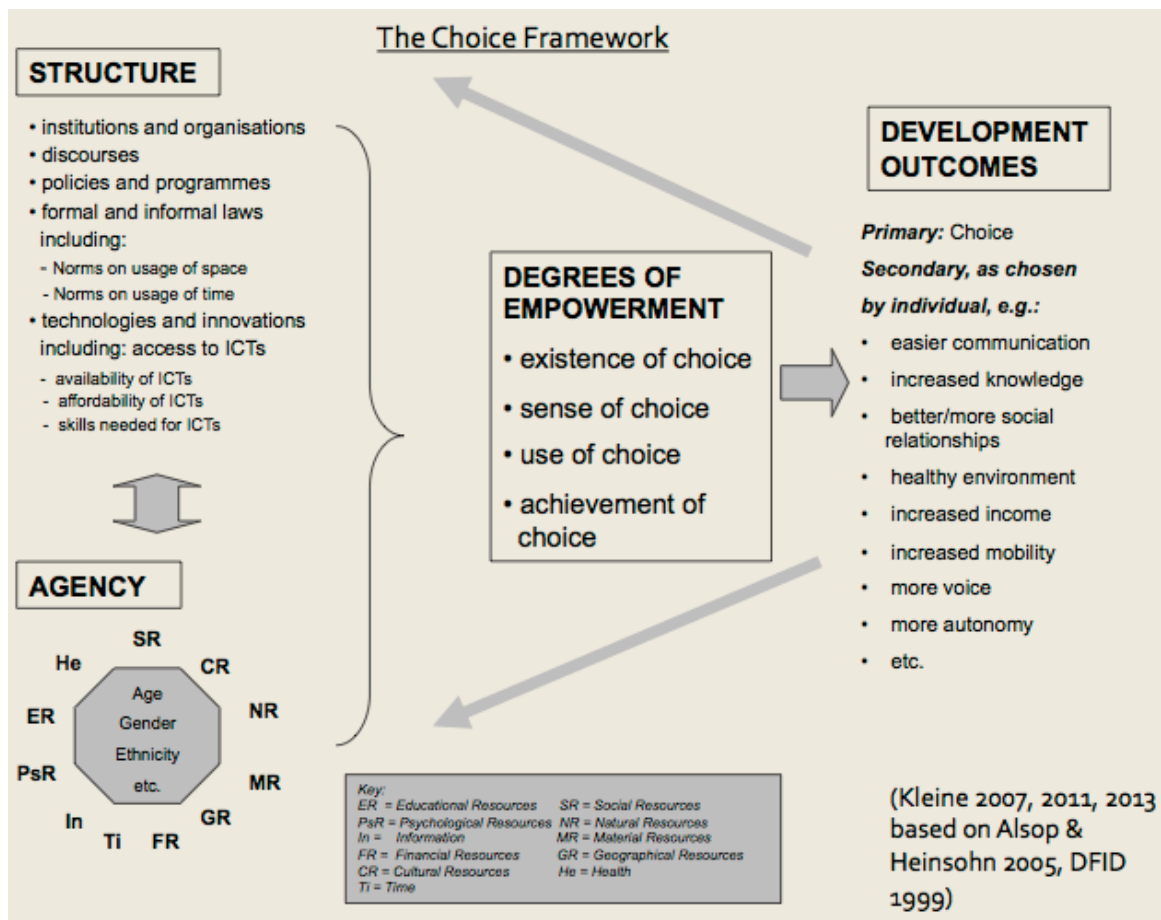
[16] *Children, ICT and development* is available for download from UNICEF at www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/unicef_royalholloway_ict4dreport_final.pdf

Kleine urged participants to shift from thinking of children as objects of inquiry to co-creators of meaning, and therefore to develop participatory models that involve children and young people at each stage. She also emphasised the importance of involving locals in the research process to get a better sense of local context, a higher sense of ownership and improved chance of project viability and sustainability after the instigators have left. She outlined a research framework, the 'choice framework'[17] (see Figure 1) that considers structural factors (e.g., norms on the use of space or use of time) as well as issues of agency and individual resources, including social resources, psychological resources, cultural resources, information and time. Kleine's discussion of research methods consistently tied advocacy and intervention goals to the framing and implementation of the research, prioritising children's voices, envisioning solutions, addressing policy needs throughout the process, treating research as part of a meaningful participatory approach and not as an end in itself. Further, she advocated close links between survey research, participatory action research and policy research and advisory work.

Joe Khalil provided a comparative view of research and intervention priorities and challenges in the Middle East. He described the two parts of the Arab world – the Arabian Gulf and the Levant – in terms of their differing priorities. In both regions, research is motivated by political imperatives and democratic potential, and is implemented by Western NGOs, Arab-based NGOs and local governments. In the Levant region, research priorities focus on developing skills to contribute to economic development. In the Arabian Gulf, research prioritises safeguarding cultural values (mainly religious) and developing technology tools for children. Khalil supported earlier comments that traditional home or school-based surveys may miss key practices; for example, many digital devices and internet connections are shared, and children often access the internet in cafés. In the Middle East, conducting research with children is challenging due to privacy concerns, and so much of the existing data relies on adult responses. Kahlil observed that studies rarely consider the positives or negatives of children's internet use, instead focusing primarily on access.

Surya Av[18] addressed the challenge of misinformation and scarcity of information about children's internet use in India. Of greatest concern is the way that social norms restrict relationships to (adult) approved circles, potentially limiting peer support when using social media, and leaving upsetting encounters unreported. These risks are heightened by widespread internet use outside the home, particularly in cafés. Children in some parts of the developing world have easy access to electronic content in terms of pornography, violence etc., despite limited internet access at home at home.

Statistically representative research is challenging given the diverse cultural, geographic, economic and population density contexts of India. Surya Av began his presentation by saying that population sampling would not reach the most marginalised and vulnerable children, and recommended targeted sampling methods. However, there is much to learn in terms of research methods from other domains of research. In terms of capacity, Surya Av

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[17] www.ict4dc.org/project/choice-framework
[18] Recent reports from SRI are available at
www.imrbint.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=31:sri&catid=6:divisions&Itemid=21

observed that research ethics is not a well-understood topic in many parts of the world, and researchers lack skills in interviewing children about sensitive research topics. Challenging traditional survey design, he observed that many children do not effectively respond to scales that use 5 to 7 points, if administered in a conventional manner.

Preetam Maloor provided an overview of the Connect 2020 agenda,[19] an ITU initiative that identifies ICTs as a key enabler for development and includes child online protection as a priority. Maloor reviewed the ITU's history of developing indicators to measure communications use globally. ITU provides global guidelines for cross-national comparative measures of ICTs in its *Manual for measuring ICT access and use by households and individuals* (2014).[20] Maloor described a shifting focus away from isolated projects and toward results-based approaches in response to the renegotiation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. This shift involved building a multistakeholder network and identifying tangible goals with dates for achievement. To develop their Child Online Protection initiative, the ITU developed guidelines for its stakeholder categories, and has identified five pillars for policy and intervention action: legal measures, technical and procedural measures, organisational structures, capacity building, and international cooperation.

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[19] More information about the Connect 2020 agenda is available at www.itu.int/en/connect2020/Pages/default.aspx

[20] *Manual for measuring ICT access and use by households and individuals* (2014) is available at www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/ind/D-IND-ITCMEAS-2014-PDF-E.pdf

Discussion and key points

Consistent with previous sessions was an appreciation of the magnitude of contextual challenges facing research on children and young people's internet use. Moreover, it was clear that research is vulnerable to political priorities in its funding, development and reporting. Locals are suspicious of researchers who 'parachute' in and leave. There are also challenges in determining the types of after-care that should be or are offered for respondents. An example of dealing with this challenge includes the referral to counselling services offered by UNICEF's partners for the VACS studies.

- Challenges to normative assumptions and common practice are most evident when attempting to use surveys from the global North in Southern contexts. It is thus challenging to develop a global research framework that builds in the flexibility to respond to these varied contexts while remaining comparative.
- Such research must also go beyond tracking access to ICTs in order to grasp the meanings of ICTs in children's lives in particular contexts.
- Emerging as a key issue was the difficulty in accessing marginalised groups (homeless children, those living in institutions or slums and rural children). A challenge in developing a global research framework would be building in the flexibility to respond to these varied contexts while remaining comparative. It is imperative to find ways to include these groups in research without imposing *a priori* normative (Northern) assumptions regarding their lives, problems or needs.
- Also challenging is researching sensitive issues of agency, sexuality and risk in contexts where children's lives – and what they can tell a researcher – may be heavily circumscribed by adult norms and values.
- To achieve the above goals, qualitative (including participatory) research is often preferable. This may mean persuading stakeholders of the value of such research, given the priority often accorded to surveys (and the country rankings they produce).
- Rather than defining the optimal project, it might be worth specifying the minimum conditions for researchers, funders and policymakers to consider a project adequate. This implies that opening up dialogue with governments to determine minimum needs for research could be useful.
- Practitioner organisations seem to be shifting away from isolated projects toward holistic agendas that include research as a means of grounding advocacy and intervention.

Breakout session: Research priorities for child rights and the online environment

Discussion leader: Leslie Haddon, Visiting Lecturer, LSE and EU Kids Online, UK
Rapporteur: Giovanna Mascheroni, Lecturer, Catholic University of Milan and Net Children Go Mobile, Italy

Participants discussed different social constructions of childhood that exist across countries, which may lead to different understandings of children's rights. Even within the same country, framing of children and childhood can vary in the research and policy agendas. How do we define a child? Is it simply a matter of age, whereby a child is someone under 18 years old? Is it a matter of being a subordinate actor or of self-definition as a child? Participants agreed that a holistic approach to children's rights is needed, rather than studying rights in isolation, since rights can conflict with other rights (e.g., the right to privacy versus the right to self-expression; parents' versus children's rights; individual versus collective rights). Research needs to take into account children's different capacities at different ages, and specifically how 'responsible' they can be at different ages. This may have a bearing on their perceived rights and on how research is formulated. This also has ethical implications (e.g., as regards consent forms).

Breakout session: Policy priorities

Discussion leader: Dale Rutstein, Communication Chief, UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti, Italy
Rapporteur: John Carr, Expert Advisor, End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT) International, UK

Participants in this session questioned whether the agenda for studying children's internet use was sustainable, especially since funding does not seem to match the level of expressed interest. In determining strategic directions, participants wondered whether to focus on a smaller number of issues in an effort to reduce costs. As part of developing a research framework, more evaluation is necessary to determine the effectiveness of different approaches and initiatives to help children or parents – especially if on the brink of exporting these to the global South. In discussing for whom policy advisement is targeted, governments and inter-government agencies were identified as well as private sector organisations, particularly the companies that shape the technologies. Building on discussions from previous sessions, participants recommended identifying 'circles of influence' in the public and private sectors. Researchers were urged to disseminate findings in forms that the mass media can understand in order to be more influential. A challenge is in navigating media panics. Although these tend to guarantee the prioritisation of children's issues, at what cost, and is it sustainable? Educating journalists and explaining to them when and how they are asking the wrong questions would be helpful in shifting roles for researchers as information sources to experts driving the discussion.

Challenge 4: Multistakeholder engagement and research funding

- Chair: Monica Bulger, Fellow, Berkman Center for Internet & Society, Harvard University, USA
- Eija Hietavuo, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Manager, UNICEF CSR Sector: 'Multi-stakeholder engagement and research funding'
- Natasha Jackson, Head of Content Policy, Group Speciale Mobile Association (GSMA), UK: 'Insights from the GSMA surveys'
- Yves Boillot, Strategic Marketing Manager, Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility, Orange, France: 'The internet industry and the value of evidence'

Despite a broad consensus that empirical research is needed to understand the risks and opportunities associated with children's technology use, funding remains scarce. This panel addressed the practical challenges and realities of coordinating multistakeholder groups and securing research funding. Challenges identified in coordinating multistakeholder groups around child rights-focused research included:

- **accountability and implementation;**
- **sharing data, standardising categories and mode of collection (e.g., identifying a child as under 18 versus under 14);**
- **disaggregating data (e.g., when collecting data on 15- to 24-year-olds, allowing analysis for each age group or different combinations within that age range).**

Panellists agreed that competing priorities were the key obstacle to scarcity of funding. While there seems to be a consensus among funders and governments that these issues are important, funding remains nearly non-existent, especially for baseline quantitative studies, in-depth smaller studies, longitudinal work or cross-national comparison. A challenge for the panellists was to agree on priorities for funders, and what might be shared common goals.

Eija Hietavuo[21] emphasised the importance of empirical evidence in child rights discussions. Hietavuo outlined human rights impacts in the ICT sector, which include labour, environment, access, product safety, and data privacy, security and freedom of expression. CSR for UNICEF collaborates with the private sector to collect data and perform impact assessments. A key challenge is lack of research in the area of children's internet use; UNICEF is uncertain of the nature of the problem or the impact of interventions. UNICEF is therefore actively seeking diverse partners to examine the issue and to evaluate existing interventions. Hietavuo explained that businesses, government and NGOs all want the same information to base national activities – to be a responsible business, to guide government policy, to support all national stakeholders – as it is more sensible to collaborate than for each group to attempt to collect its own data.

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[21] News, information and current events related to CSR at UNICEF are available at www.unicef.org/csr/

Natasha Jackson described the GSMA's recent collaboration with the Mobile Society Research Institute as it surveyed over 20,000 children and their parents in 13 countries about their mobile phone use, most recently in Iraq, Saudi, Egypt and Algeria.[22] Each study involves paired research, usually interviewing parents and children together. Participants are asked questions such as how mobiles were acquired, what the children use them for, what parents think about risks and what risks the children encountered. Some variation in the methodology is allowed – for example, online, face-to-face – but there is a core set of questions that every country has to ask, including a minimal set of questions on mobile risk. Usually the national mobile operator pays for the research. GSMA's large evidence base is attractive to policymakers, especially in countries where children's internet use is gaining policy attention. Jackson outlined the challenges of multistakeholder engagement, which include:

- Countries' reasons for participating vary hugely – depending on the national operator, or if the operator wishes to target the child or teen market, or to launch a new service.
- The purpose of comparative research – operators don't want to stand out, especially regarding evidence of problems with their services, and so prefer a comparative report rather than the spotlight on one country.

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[22] See reports available at www.gsma.com/publicpolicy/myouth/research

- Research lead time – researchers must talk to the operator/sponsor in the year before the budget, which itself is a year before publishing the report.
- The budget may be commercial, CSR, marketing, etc. – it comes from different places and requires different rationales.
- The operator often wants a tangible deliverable, for example, a national launch in addition to a comparative report.
- Messaging around risk is particularly difficult to manage.

Yves Boillot began his presentation by establishing that since many mobile phone users are children, mobile operators have a responsibility to create a better internet for them. He agreed with other panellists that multistakeholder collaboration is essential for child rights-focused research. While a key priority is to improve visibility for children's issues and experiences, stakeholders' key concerns are access, cost and reliability for business. Orange sustains active stakeholder dialogue around issues of children's use in all the countries in which it operates.

To date, research has been conducted in the global North, but although Orange has a presence in 23 African countries, no research has yet been conducted in the global South. Boillot described tensions between child protection and freedom of expression – even raising awareness of child protection in some countries can be seen as a threat to freedom. He noted that companies generally expect to deal with the parent and not the child, which reflects a normative assumption that all children have guardians and caregivers. Boillot reminded participants that businesses must prioritise their business model, ensuring that research stays within the core business. Companies are more likely to engage when research findings can link to impacts.

Discussion and key points

In discussion, Ola Jo Tandre of Telenor confirmed mobile operators' difficulty in identifying when children versus adults are using their services. Telenor works with helplines for children, and Tandre believes that reaching some parents might positively impact a larger network of peers and parents. Boillot noted that as family payment plans become more popular, it will become possible for operators to know more about children's use.

- There is a clear lack of funding for research – in new countries or contexts, with hard-to-reach populations – to keep findings updated. Frameworks that specify the responsibilities of all stakeholders in generating and using research are vital if new funding is to be forthcoming and used appropriately.

- Key tensions exist between a need for operators to preserve their reputation and policymakers' needs to understand the risks that children might encounter on their services. So while ICT industry players and mobile operators might be able to provide funding for research, they face reputational issues if the research addresses online risk of harm to children.
- A clear challenge to multistakeholder engagement lies in addressing these varying priorities and limitations. Nonetheless, there have been some successful efforts in funding new research and these could be built on. These may depend on finding ways of aligning the interests of corporations and child rights organisations or the academy (e.g., obtaining robust independent findings can defuse overblown anxieties about new services).
- It can be more constructive for academics and NGOs to view companies as partners in the research, rather than simply as funders. This might aid stakeholders in finding mutually beneficial points of entry to initiate potential collaboration. Ultimately, there are benefits for everyone if an agreed and robust evidence base exists, given the public anxieties, government pressures and media panics that surround children's internet use.

Breakout session: Evaluation

Discussion leader: Dorothea Kleine, Director, ICT4D Centre, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK
Rapporteur: Clara Sommarin, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Child Protection, New York, USA

While academia is to some extent self-regulating (e.g., the peer review process for journal publication), and there are ethical protocols for conducting research, this framework does not always extend beyond universities. There are no commonly agreed ethical standards for research with children at a global level, although various organisations have their own ethical standards and quality assurance guidelines.[23] Participants discussed how to manage quality control in research. Suggested solutions included being close to the fieldwork and monitoring data collection. An issue faced by some participants was the challenge of ensuring quality when implementing a survey in different languages, using different translators. One of the recommendations was to involve translators early on in the research design process, and to empower them to give feedback on the survey design. Best practice guidelines for conducting research with children should also be widely available. A suggestion was to review market research standards for interviewing children, as well as those operated within the academy, to develop a practical and ethical approach.

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[23] UNICEF Office of Research with Child Watch International developed ERIC a compendium of guidelines and case studies for researchers on the ethics of research with children – http://childethics.com

Breakout session: Impact of evidence-based interventions

Discussion leader: Robin Mansell, Professor, LSE, UK
Rapporteur: Eija Hietavuo, CSR Manager, UNICEF CSR Sector, Switzerland

During this session, participants agreed that 'impact' research is a multifaceted, complex and broad issue that is not easily defined, and no one model fits all. Impact means different things for different stakeholders. From a private sector perspective, impact involves clear metrics, while academics use multiple methods to examine and report on children's internet use.

Participants recommended consideration of 'What if…?' scenarios when evaluating research impact: 'If this research had not existed, how would the world be different?' They also questioned whether traditional academic measures such as citations are really relevant for measuring impacts in this field. How do we structure research questions into a framework so that we can later measure the impact of the research? Discussion of the impact of qualitative and quantitative research focused on the need to clearly identify expected outcomes, which can differ depending on method.

Challenge 5: Implementing evidence-based policy internationally: practice, politics, ethics

- Chair: Lely Djuhari, Communication Specialist, UNICEF CEE/CIS Regional Office
- Robin Mansell, Professor, Media and Communications, LSE, UK: 'Challenges of global internet governance'
- Nevine Tewfik, Head of the Research, Studies and Policies Bureau, Ministry of Communications & Information Technology (MCIT), Egypt: 'Child online protection experience in Egypt'
- John Carr, Expert Advisor, ECPAT International, UK: 'Why policymakers need evidence'

It is important not to be naïve or empiricist about the uses of research in diverse societies around the world. Research can be conducted for one purpose and used for quite another. In relation to child protection especially, evidence may be used to legitimise government censorship or other punitive policies (e.g., against all pornography use, including accidental exposure among children). In relation to children's participation, initiatives may pay lip service to their voices but little may result in reality. Then, evidence may simply be ignored by international policymakers given the many political and economic interests at stake in governing the internet – leaving children's concerns on the margins.

Robin Mansell started with practical insights into the implementation of evidence-based policy. Mansell observed that in the research community, projects are often monitored by budget or funder, rather than by a desire for social change. This presents a different model from the agenda and participation-based approaches described in earlier sessions. Mansell
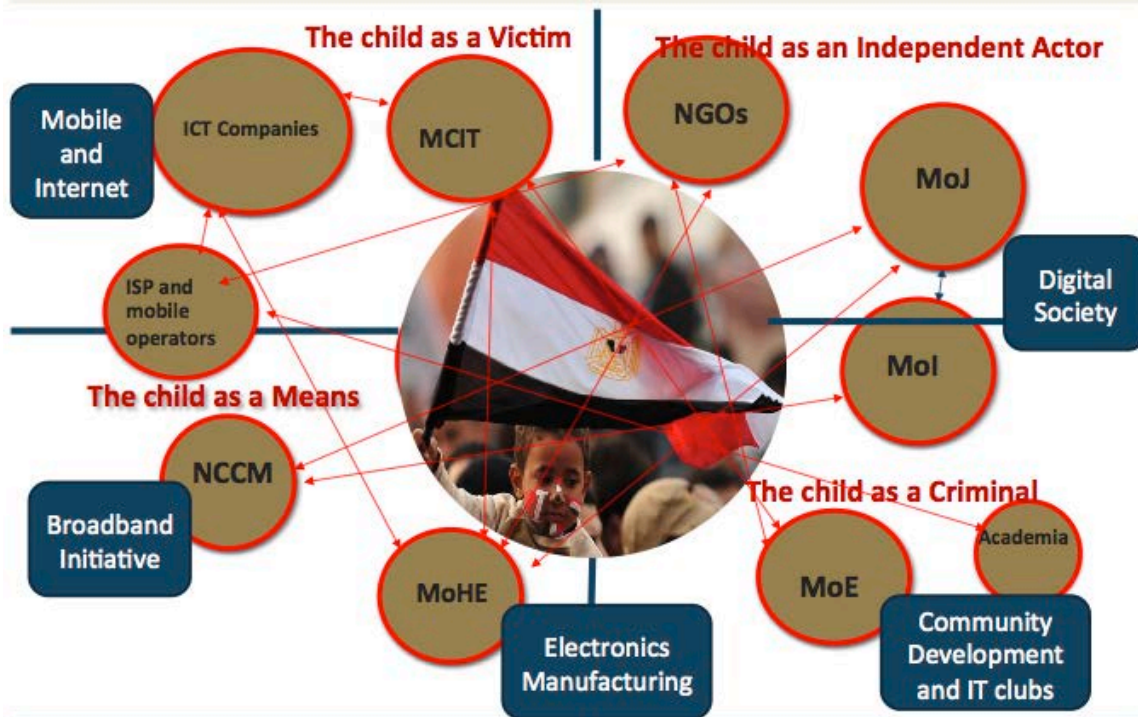
questioned participants about the values that inform their search for evidence. What should data do?

She argued that, in practice, regardless of findings or methods, implementation often comes down to resource allocations, and policymakers must make choices about impacts, priorities and what is feasible. Mansell provided an example: do you allocate your resources to conducting a survey or to grassroots intervention? She emphasised the importance of listening, to ground the child protection agenda in the needs of stakeholders, and to make long-term plans. In engaging stakeholders, it is important to identify which people to involve, to determine whether they will listen to what they hear, recognise contradictions between different constituencies and their needs, and make fair decisions about what to fund.

Nevine Tewfik analysed how different stakeholders differ in regarding the child as a victim, as an independent actor, as a means, or even as a criminal. Different stakeholders have different interests, and they use evidence for their particular purposes. These differing perspectives raise interesting challenges when considering a multistakeholder environment. Tewfik described efforts to create a national committee for online child safety to steer discussion of the child as an independent actor. Part of the committee's work would be to study children's experiences online through focus groups with teachers, parents and children. Tewfik recommended further exploration of stakeholders' perspectives on children and childhood.

In addition to conflicting perspectives on the child, Tewfik identified funding as a challenge for evidence-based research. A third challenge was finding a combination of appropriate expertise and an institution capable of organising and implementing the research. She advocated flexibility when approaching the research agenda in Egypt.

See Figure 2, below: 'Child online protection context in Egypt' presentation by Nevine Tewfik, MCIT, Egypt.

Child online protection; a glimpse at the Ecosystem in the Egyptian Scene... Can Research create a Paradigm shift ... ?

John Carr described ECPAT's international research agenda as a focus on research for a purpose, with a primary concern to influence policy outcomes around child commercial sex trafficking. Evidence is necessary to influence policymaking and industry interventions. To illustrate the policy potential of low-cost research, Carr described when he asked UK police how many child pornographic images were seized in arrests for small areas of the UK over two years – 52 million. He asked whether it was possible to find out what the number might be across the UK. The response was that over 50,000 people in the UK download child abuse images (police estimate based on internet provider [IP] addresses), but less than 2,000 were arrested in a year because of lack of resources. By identifying this large number, Carr was able to communicate the prevalence and scale of the problem to policymakers and the public.

Discussion and key points

Competing interests and priorities for funders and governments present a critical challenge for studying children's internet use. As discussed in earlier sessions, the framing of children's rights issues impacts whether the work will be prioritised. Tewfik provided comparisons of how viewing a child as a victim supports protectionist aims versus a focus on the child as an independent actor which might lead to prioritising digital literacy. The extent to which findings are framed and disseminated further affects prioritisation and funding. It is possible for research on children to be used (or misused) to legitimate other agendas, such as internet censorship or restrictions on children's freedoms.

- Ensuring that research findings are used to benefit children is no easy task, especially when children's needs generate competing priorities themselves, for policymakers with finite sources of funding and other resources.
- In a multistakeholder debate over meeting children's needs and rights, it is important to include children and young people's voices as stakeholders in their own right.
- For some stakeholders, it is the regular, independent, robust generation of key indicators that really makes the difference in stimulating government action.
- This is a very new field of policy action, so some of the challenges discussed in this and other sessions may be met over time, as the key issues become better understood and past practices can be learned from.
- In relation to the internet in particular, there is a real challenge in addressing matters of global governance at the same time as recognising the very local nature of children's lives and the factors that matter therein. In between the global and the local, one should not underestimate the continued importance of national governments and other key actors.
- Neither policymakers nor researchers should be homogenised. Different policy actors have different interests, and some are more amenable to addressing children's digital

28

rights than others. Within the academic research community, it is preferable if some engage with stakeholders and others sustain a critical independence.

- One possibility would be to consider a regional research toolkit instead of a local or global one, bearing in mind the need to tailor/localise it as needed when conducted in different national contexts.

Challenge 6: Producing a robust yet flexible cross-national research toolkit

- Chair: Cristina Ponte, Associate Professor, New University of Lisbon and EU Kids Online, Portugal
- Deborah Fox, Operations Account Director, Kantar, UK: 'Considering consistency in data collection and sampling'
- Giovanna Mascheroni, Lecturer, Catholic University of Milan and Net Children Go Mobile, Italy: 'Learning from the Net Children Go Mobile experience'
- Lucinda Platt, Principal Investigator, Social Policy, LSE and Millennium Cohort Study, UK: 'Lessons from the Millennium Cohort Study'

This session drew on participants' collective experience to determine the feasibility of a cross-national toolkit. Key questions framing the discussion included:

- **What have we learned so far about how to develop a research agenda on children and the internet that works in countries with little prior research?**
- **What have we learned about how to compare findings across countries so as to share best practice, generalise knowledge where possible and anticipate future issues, given the equal importance of recognising local factors that shape contexts of ICT use in children's lives?**

From a practical perspective, participants scoped key elements that could be developed for a flexible, modular research toolkit intended to be of wide benefit. Integrating earlier sessions, participants discussed what is essential and desirable in a research toolkit, including protocols, pilot work, sampling, participatory methods, survey administration, coordination, collaboration, policy impact, key indicators, local concerns, training needs and linguistic/translation issues.

In addition to research development, Sonia Livingstone invited panellists to also consider practical knowledge-sharing strategies, platforms, dissemination, ownership/authorship (for example, Creative Commons licensing – including conditions for derivatives and commercial exploitation), quality control, maximum and minimum scenarios for research implementation, necessary expertise, and the balance between standardisation/contextualisation.

Giovanna Mascheroni shared lessons learned from **Net Children Go Mobile** and **EU Kids Online**. A common challenge in comparing child-focused research is that often surveys:

- use different age group sampling (e.g., 9–16 or 8–18 or 15–25)
- ask questions that differ enough to not be comparable (e.g., 'When do you use the internet?' 'How often do you use the following devices…?' 'Do you ever use device X to go online?')
- are conducted in different countries with different sampling techniques.

In adapting a survey instrument from one country to be used in another, Mascheroni notes that translation is not only a matter of language, but also of using child-friendly and contextually relevant language. Developing easily comprehensible questions is particularly difficult when referring to digital devices as children use colloquial and fast-changing language for digital devices and services. Cognitive interviews can be helpful to anticipate and test translation issues – for example, 'personal computer' versus 'laptop'; explaining when a mobile phone is or is not a smartphone (here interviewers can use physical examples to ask which phone the children were actually using).

The fast pace of technological change and attendant uses means that relationships across variables can change over time, and Mascheroni cautioned that a contextual understanding is essential to interpreting results.

Deborah Fox provided a useful comparison of the benefits and drawbacks of face-to-face, online and mixed methods research. Criteria included: cost, reach, inclusion of marginalised and difficult-to-access populations, likelihood of survey/interview completion, truthfulness of responses, literacy requirements, privacy concerns, speed of research completion, cross-country consistency, consistency over time and administrative complexity. Based on these criteria, Fox favoured face-to-face interviews in the global South; due to reduced literacy demands, personal contact encourages completion and honesty, affords a longer reach than an online survey, and face-to-face interviews can ensure methodological consistency. While each method has its drawbacks, face-to-face interviewing is slower than online, and more expensive. In some cultural contexts, the researchers' ability to interview girls is restricted. For responses to sensitive topics, Kantar uses a tablet for survey administration.

Online methods are growing in popularity because they are fast, relatively cheap, more private and confidential than face-to-face, and can reach larger numbers of people in the global South via mobile applications than personal interviews. However, Fox noted that

online methods risk not being representative of the total population. In fact, online surveys might raise equity issues and exclude precisely the populations that are difficult to access and often excluded. Additionally, online surveys tend to be shorter, so fewer questions can be asked.

See Figure 3, below: 'Considering consistency in data collection and sampling' presentation by Deborah Fox of Kantar.

Data collection

Face to face	Online	Mixed method
Better reach Cross-market consistency Social contract encourages completion and honesty Longer interviews No or fewer literacy issues	Fast Cheaper Privacy/confidentiality Including mobiles increases reach	Compromise on cost and reach
Expensive Slow Privacy concerns (overcome with tablets) Concerns re ability to interview girls	Unrepresentative Shorter interview Difficult to sample Poor cross-country consistency Literacy issues Language issues	Slow Poor cross-country consistency Poor consistency over time Shorter interview Administratively complex

KANTAR

Fox recommended multiple/mixed methods approaches, initially to sample offline and then to follow up in depth online. A mixed approach can also include methods best suited to geography (for example, face-to-face for rural areas and online for urban areas) as a fair compromise. Fox acknowledged concerns about maintaining consistency when using mixed methods for different populations (in this case, face-to-face and online), and predicted that the proportion of face-to-face to online might change as technologies evolve and use spreads. Supporting earlier statements by Surya Av, Fox cautioned against sampling based on demographic quotas: while many demographic groups might be represented, they might not be representative of attitudes or behaviours of the population. Fox recommended face-to-face sampling based on random sampling. She views purposive sampling in schools as an acceptable supplement, but does not view it as a viable means of main fieldwork. The reliance on child panels for online sampling eases recruiting burdens, but is not representative. While they are gaining popularity, Fox recommends against 'river sampling' (via ad hoc pop-ups online) because it is difficult to ensure a representative sample. She concluded by addressing concerns about sampling in violent and conflict areas, a topic noted

earlier in Clara Sommarin's discussion of the VACS studies. Both say it is possible, but presents specific challenges.

The Millennium Cohort Study, UK[24] follows 19,000 children born in the UK in 2000–01. To date, the birth cohort has been studied at nine months, and three, five, seven and eleven years old. The study additionally collects information about their parents and siblings. **Lucinda Platt** described the theory of cognitive development stages and their implications for what is possible to study via interviews and surveys of children at different ages. She advised that, when studying families, the researcher should decide in advance which questions can be asked of parents and which must be asked of children, and to develop the survey accordingly. For the Millennium Cohort Study, cognitive interviews were conducted when the cohort was three years old, and shifted to self-completion surveys at age seven.

In addition to studying children's lives, researchers are also developing an understanding of how best to study children's issues, when it is appropriate to speak with the child, how to ask questions and how to involve children in the research. They have explored how children respond to questions about frequencies and quantities, and at what age children understand these questions. Younger children are more likely to attempt more desirable responses. When younger than seven, children tend to have very literal understandings of the world and usually do not engage in abstract thought until after the age of 11. The younger the child, the more the questions must be concrete and literal. At age 11, children can still have difficulty with negative phrasing, for example, although in all such matters there is considerable variation across children, even within an age cohort.

Children tend to dislike impersonal or direct questions. Platt recommended asking questions about themselves in particular rather than children in general. She further advised that, in developing questions, researchers be aware of children's literacy constraints, and create a space in which terms can be qualified to account for their level of understanding and sense-making processes.

Cognitive testing is critical given the difficulty in predicting what words will be understood or misunderstood by children. Platt cautioned against presuming to know which questions may be sensitive or embarrassing in advance, noting that cognitive testing is also essential for determining where sensitivities might exist.

If the questionnaire is to be administered on paper, Platt advised embedding essential information with the questions themselves rather than assuming children would read prior instructions or introductions. Particularly challenging is question routing – even at age 11, children have difficulty following instructions to skip ahead on paper surveys, depending on their own responses.

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[24] Research findings of the UK Millennium Cohort study are available at www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/page.aspx?&sitesectionid=851

Discussion and key points

A key message was *the need to evaluate context and research goals when selecting a research method.* The central research questions should drive the methods while considering cultural context and comparability aims. While research must vary according to context, to the outside world such studies might appear to lack standardised methods. One solution is to carefully document the methodological rigor of the research process. A related solution is to standardise *what* is being measured rather than *how* it is being measured.

In terms of when to involve children, UNICEF members recommended that, for sensitive issues, they should try to seek answers from other sources before interviewing children, for reasons of expense and practicality. Also recommended was to ask questions about behaviour in general, and then to interpret the answers as, for example, violent or not. Or to ask about specific behaviours rather than general: for instance, to ask whether something has happened (hitting, name-calling or exclusion) rather than 'bullying'. Researchers should be aware of children's developmental stages, and develop their methodological approach and frame questions accordingly.

Participants agreed that *children are concerned about how responses will affect* them and how they will be shared. When surveyed in schools, children might respond differently than when they are at home. Both sites give rise to specific problems – for instance, at school, children worry that the interviewer will tell their answers to the teachers; at home, the largest problem is siblings interfering with in-home interviews. In addition, reporting on sensitive issues, children are worried about doing things their parents don't know about (and they worry that the interviewer might share what they say with parents), or doing something illegal (which can be sensitive for an interviewer to ask because of reporting regulations or concerns about other repercussions). All this has implications for interviewer training.

When asked how research can contribute to children's online rights, a series of points were made by way of answer:

- It is vital to consider how rights are perceived differently in the research and policy agenda, and also by the children themselves.
- Since personal digital devices are actually shared by more than family members, it is vital to adopt a holistic approach to children's rights.
- Rights can conflict with each other: parents' rights versus children's rights, privacy versus protection.
- How we define a child matters – purely in terms of age in years? Or should we take into consideration subject positioning or self-definition?
- When relating rights and responsibilities, we must address the differential capacities of being a responsible subject at different ages, and tailor interventions.

This session served to draw together a host of discussion points made throughout the meeting regarding the key elements of a global research toolkit for children's rights in the digital age. It was broadly agreed that, in terms of the elements for a research toolkit (of which several concrete models were discussed during the meeting), the following should be prioritised:

33

- An agenda of core (shared, comparative) and optional (context-specific) research questions.
- Careful consideration of research ethics appropriate to the research and policy context.
- A broad framework (intellectual, analytic and practical) for making research comparisons.
- Prior contextual analysis of relevant policy, cultural dimensions, regulatory and socio-technological dimensions (before beginning new research).
- A user-friendly qualitative/participatory methods toolkit.
- A user-friendly quantitative survey methods toolkit. This, in particular, should include:

  - a set of required questions (for cross-national comparisons and to ensure coverage of the research agenda);
  - a set of optional (suggested) questions;
  - guidance on the construction of further optional questions to meet local needs;
  - a short set of essential indicators (to be incorporated as a module of 5–10 questions into other national and international surveys).

- An agreed approach to population sampling, bearing in mind recognised standards of sampling and guidelines for tailoring the approach to national or local conditions.
- Resources for good quality researcher training on the ground.
- A strategy for involving/consulting children and young people before, during and after the research process.
- Clear and robust standards for quality assurance, checking and control.
- A reflexive approach to the evaluation of both the research and its impacts.
- A sustainable and accessible knowledge-sharing platform for tools, findings and impacts with global reach.

Conclusions and next steps

Sonia Livingstone, Professor, LSE and EU Kids Online, UK and Jasmina Byrne, Child Protection
        Specialist, UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti, Italy

Sonia Livingstone and Jasmina Byrne concluded the symposium by summarising key points
and asking:

- How can we overcome the challenges identified?
- How can we move this group, and field, forward?

Participants agreed on the necessity and feasibility of a global/regional toolkit that addressed
the issues, proposals and concerns raised during the symposium. As well as synthesising the
best practices of existing research frameworks that address children, the toolkit should
recommend clear research questions, inform choices of quantitative and/or qualitative
approaches, establish ethical standards, allow for modules that can be flexibly applied and
adapted as well as core modules required for comparability across contexts and time, and
provide succinct modules that can be included in larger/established surveys.

Some preliminary work is needed to establish what other surveys are being conducted
nationally and internationally, and whether they include questions about ICTs. Then a
subgroup of experts, possibly from two or three countries, could discuss the practicalities of
pilot-testing the toolkit. When discussing how to incorporate children's rights into research,
it is important to acknowledge that children are not only users, but also agents for social
change; how do we encourage children to participate? Can we develop a toolkit for children's
participation? Suggestions were made to perform participatory research with children and to

socialise results with children and also participatory research with policymakers, to link policy and research agendas.

Participants discussed a need to define methods for measuring provision, protection and participation. Other key questions include who will own the research and methods/tools. Creative Commons licensing offers a possible solution. Also, when carrying out research in complex environments, disseminating findings to different audiences and knowledge management, how do we ensure that findings and methods are shared? It was recommended that impact and assessment measures be built into any research design to identify desired outcomes and outputs, and to measure accordingly.

The group agreed that as the follow-up to the meeting, the UNICEF Office of Research and LSE will coordinate the design of the research toolkit, to be piloted in several countries in the coming year. This will include:

- wide dissemination of the symposium report and related materials through LSE and UNICEF Office of Research web platforms;
- establishing a multistakeholder steering and advisory group comprised of representatives of the private sector, research/academia and UNICEF;
- seeking funding opportunities for the toolkit design and piloting;
- subject to availability of resources, undertaking training to build the capacity of the researchers within pilot countries;
- supporting the creation of a platform, or sharing knowledge and resources among participating countries;
- convening a follow-up symposium in the year 2016.

Participants

First name	Last name	Country	Affiliation
Surya	Av	India	IMRB Social & Rural Research Institute (SRI)
Alexandre	Barbosa	Brazil	CETIC – Regional Centre of Studies for the Development of the Information Society
Yves	Boillot	France	Orange
Fiona	Brooks	UK	Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)
Wei	Bu	China	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Monica	Bulger	USA	Berkman Center for Internet & Society
Patrick	Burton	South Africa	Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP)
Jasmina	Byrne	Italy	UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti
Patricio	Cabello	Chile	Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso
John	Carr	UK	ECPAT International
Lely	Djuhari	Switzerland	UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe
Marialaura	Ena	UK	UNICEF UK
Deborah	Fox	UK	Kantar
Leslie	Haddon	UK	London School of Economics (LSE), EU Kids Online
Ellen	Helsper	UK	London School of Economics (LSE), EU Kids Online
Eija	Hietavuo	Switzerland	UNICEF
Natasha	Jackson	UK	GSMA
Joe	Khalil	Qatar	Northwestern University
Dorothea	Kleine	UK	ICT4D Centre, Royal Holloway, University of London
Sonia	Livingstone	UK	London School of Economics (LSE)/EU Kids Online
Preetam	Maloor	Switzerland	International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
Robin	Mansell	UK	London School of Economics (LSE)
Giovanna	Mascheroni	Italy	Catholic University of Milan, Net Children Go Mobile
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Nevine	Tewfik	Egypt	Ministry of Communications & Information Technology
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