

Report of the EGH subgroup on Child Online Protection

6 September 2021

Protecting children online is a rising global challenge. The 2017 EGH meeting agreed to explore and discuss how data from household surveys can contribute to increasing data availability relating to child online protection (COP). The following year, the 2018 meeting concluded that child online protection is a highly important topic for policymakers, industry and society in general, but its implementation within household surveys is complex.

The 8th Meeting of the ITU Expert Group on ICT Household Indicators (EGH), which took place virtually from 14 to 18 September 2020, agreed to create a subgroup within EGH to address the measurement of child online protection within the context of household surveys. Further insight in relation to this topic was shared by Costa Rica in their presentation at the 17th WTIS event, based on their experiences of implementing their own national data collection.

The objectives of the subgroup were to discuss ways in which issues relevant to child online protection might be measured within the framework of household surveys, and make proposals to the EGH in this regard.

The subgroup consisted of representatives from Colombia, Costa Rica, Ghana, Kenya, the London School of Economics, UNICEF and ITU.

The subgroup considered the following inputs:

- The [ITU 2020 COP Guidelines](#);
- [EU Kids Online](#) (EUKO) and [Global Kids Online](#) (GKO);
- [“Access and use of mobile devices and Internet by boys, girls and young people 2018-2019”](#) as reported by Costa Rica.

Countries that wish to develop a survey module on COP should take into account the following considerations:

- Some indicators will require asking questions to children, while other indicators will require asking questions to the parents or guardians. Therefore, a separate set of questions is needed for parents and for children. Wherever possible, the caregiver and child indicators should mirror one another, because it will allow for some very interesting analysis.
- Asking questions to children will require a specific survey strategy. Countries should consider the need for fieldwork interviewers to have special permission (such as police checks) to interview children in most countries.
- Furthermore, children need to feel secure, and may not answer truthfully if in front of their parents/guardians. In Costa Rica, the second time children were surveyed, it was done in a school environment, not in a home environment. EU Kids Online has a protocol for interviewers, explaining how to deal with parents while children are answering the questions. EUKO also has protocols for parent surveys. Enumerators should be trained how to conduct interviews with children – how to build rapport, appropriate boundaries, knowing what to do if a child is upset by the survey etc. UNICEF has developed some training materials that might be useful.

- Ideal would be to have two interviewers present, one to interview a parent and one to interview a child. But this has financial implications, raising the cost of the survey. An alternative would be to have the sensitive part of the survey completed via a tablet.
- What should be the age cut-off? There will also be legal barriers in countries. This will also largely depend on the questions and type of risks that are explored in the tool. EU Kids Online surveys children from 9-16 years, but there are less questions for 9-11 year olds than for 12 to 16 year olds. For children below 9 years, questions are asked of the parents. Global Kids Online surveys children from 9 to 17.
- What are some of the questions and indicators that can be developed in the framework of a household (ICT) survey? Global Kids Online builds on EU Kids Online, and is more recent (from 2020). Therefore, that survey could be taken as the basis for possible questions that can be added. The [Full survey](#) has many modules and is very long. Selecting only the core questions still is a list of 63 questions.
- **The subgroup therefore recommends that EGH adopts the [key measures for Global Kids Online](#).** As highlighted by GKO: “The Global Kids Online key measures are selected from the full Global Kids Online survey questionnaire. They capture the fundamental issues related to children’s internet use and are intended for inclusion in survey research on children’s circumstances, experiences or life chances. The key measures encompass internet access, use, online opportunities, risk of harm and social support. They have been developed by the GKO network through the pilot testing and full implementation in multiple countries, with periodic review and revision to improve the measures.”. Furthermore, the [GKO method guides](#) cover the issues raised regarding ethics, survey administration, and so forth.
- Of note that this only covers questions to children. For a parent module, countries need to refer to the core module.