

The Ministry of Women and Child Development to setup National Alliance against online Child sexual abuse and exploitation

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The Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India is to form a National Alliance against Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation with the aim of developing a comprehensive outreach system to engage parents, schools, communities, NGO partners and local governments (PRIs and ULBs) as well as police and lawyers to ensure better implementation of the legal framework, policies, national strategies and standards in relation to child protection and child rights. In this context, the Ministry hosted a day-long consultation on 16th January 2017 with all stakeholders including Ministries of Home Affairs, Health and Family Welfare, Electronics and Information Technology, Department of School Education and Literacy, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and civil society organisations working on the issue at Civil Services Officer's Institute (CSOI), Vinay Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi.

Child sexual abuse is a multi-layered problem which negatively impacts children's safety, health and well being. Research from world-wide indicates that children's exposure to violence and abuse is associated with long-term physical, psychological, and emotional harm. Child abuse is finding new forms and channels through mobile and digital technologies.

Online child abuse and exploitation amplifies existing forms of offline bullying, stalking and harassment. It also facilitates the sexual exploitation of children through the production and dissemination of child sexual abuse materials and by facilitating the sexual exploitation and trafficking of children. Online abuse knows no national boundaries.

Even though India has a comprehensive legal framework for protection of child rights in the form of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015, POCSO Act, 2012 along with RTE Act 2009 and recently amended Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2106, there is limited awareness of online risks for children, both among parents and guardian and children themselves,

However, to ensure protection of children from online sexual abuse, all stakeholders must work together. In this context, the National Alliance on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation has the following broad objectives:

- I. Bring a common definition of child pornography including amendment of acts (Information technology Act, POCSO Act).
- II. Set up a multi-member secretariat based in MWCD with a portal inclusive of a hotline for reporting and strengthening existing service delivery systems.
- III. Provide a platform for Government/ NGOs and other child rights activists for networking and information sharing.
- IV. Document and showcases success stories and best practices in terms of prevention of online abuse and exploitation of children.
- V. Inform and educate member organisations, parents, teachers, front line service providers and children on the rights of the children and various issues related to online child abuse and exploitation.
- VI. Provide a forum for advocacy for child rights and policy inputs based on research and studies

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