MODULE 3:
RECOGNIZING SIGNS AND PREVENTION

CHILDREN OF INDIA FOUNDATION

Terre des Hommes Netherlands

Overview

Module 3 focuses on identifying signs of child exploitation from the perspective of victims or those at risk. It aims to educate about safe online practices and preventive measures. The module also guides conducting effective awareness campaigns both online and offline and includes practical learning through interactive role-playing exercises.

Objectives

- Recognize potential signs of online sexual exploitation in children, focusing on changes in isolation behaviors, social life, and emotional well-being.
- Share best practices for maintaining online safety
- Implement preventive measures for children to reduce the risk of online exploitation
- Guide participants in conducting effective online and offline awareness campaigns
- Interactive role-playing scenarios to provide practical insights and understanding of different situations related to child exploitation.
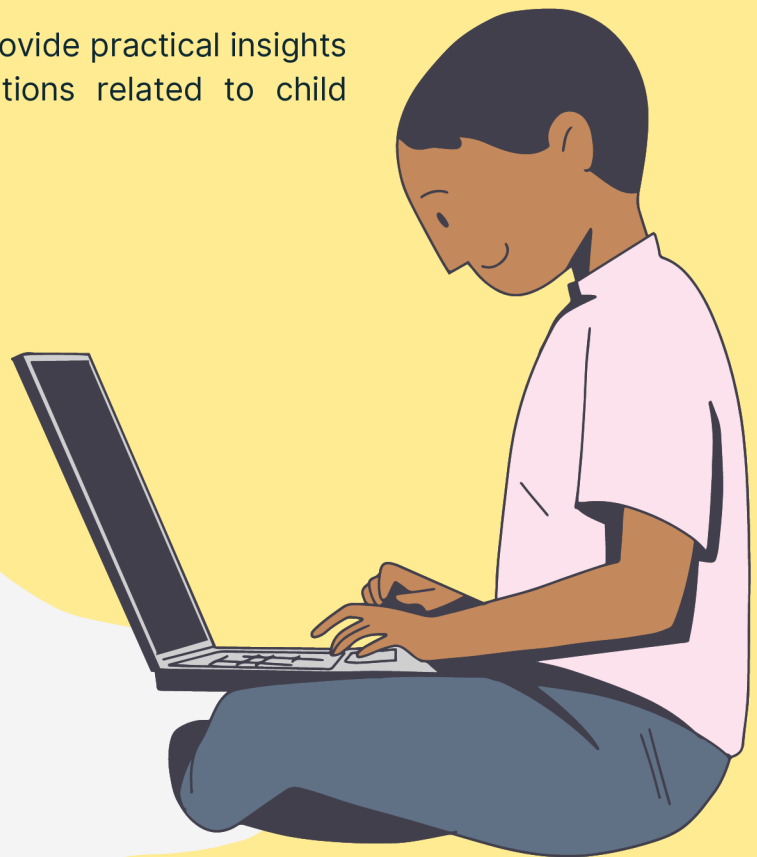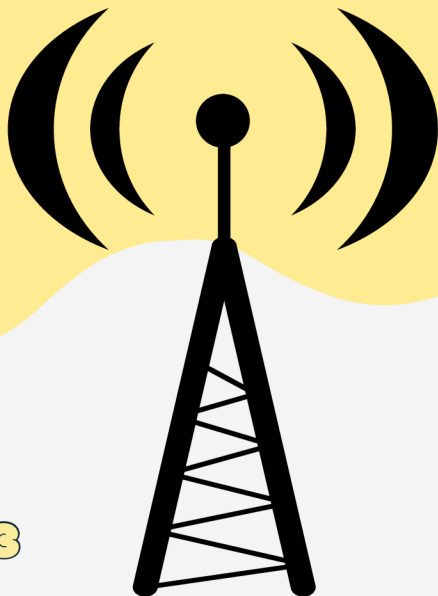
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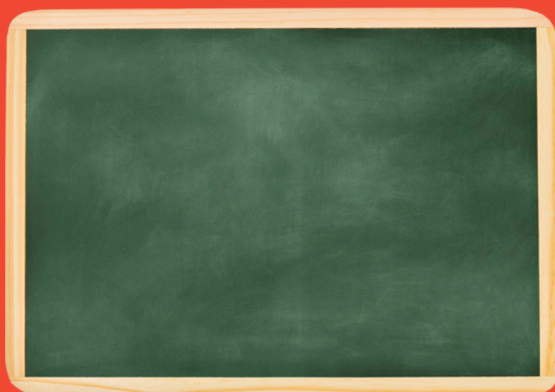
Warning Signs

Recognizing signs of potential online sexual exploitation in children is crucial for early intervention and support. These signs can be broadly categorized into behavioural changes related to isolation, social interactions, and emotional well-being.

1. Isolation Behaviors: When a child is being targeted or exploited online, you may notice that they are increasingly isolating themselves and perhaps becoming more secretive. Although seeking more privacy is a part of normal adolescent development, an increase in secretive behaviour, especially with strong emotional reactions, may require further attention

- Often closing the door while using technology or hiding the screen when someone comes in.
- Spending more time on digital media.
- Being less open about their online interactions or activities.
- Staying up late on their devices, more than they used to.
- Showing possessiveness over their phone or other devices, and reacting with agitation or fear if others try to use them.
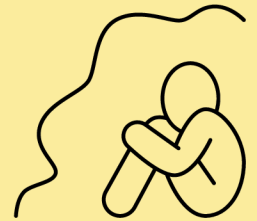
Role Play : Isolation Behavior Scenario

- **Setting**: Family home
- **Characters:** Parent/Guardian, Child (aged 13-15), Sibling/Friend
- **Situation:** The child frequently shuts the door when using technology and shows anger when the parent inquires about their online activities. Noticing this, the parent decides to initiate a conversation.
- **Objective:** To role-play the conversation between the parent and the child, focusing on expressing concern, asking open-ended questions, and observing the child's reactions.

2. Changes in Social Life: Being aware of alterations in a child's social habits is crucial, as these could signal potential online exploitation. While seeking independence and spending more time with friends is a typical part of youth development, certain changes that negatively impact their daily routine or create risky situations might indicate deeper issues.

- Talk vaguely about a 'new friend' but don't offer any further information.
- Spend more time talking with this 'new friend' but doing so in a secretive way, different from how they might behave with other friends.
- Leave the home for longer periods of time with little to no explanation about where they are going.
- Spend more time talking with 'friends' through social media or the internet, and no longer hanging out with their larger friend group as frequently.
- Miss increasing amounts of school in order to be able to talk with their 'friend', canceling plans, or not wanting to attend previously enjoyed after-school activities (i.e. sports, arts, etc...)
- Receive 'gifts' (such as new electronic devices, clothing, digital currency etc) but will not share where they got it from or who gave it to them.

Role Play: Changes in Social Life Scenario

- **Setting**: Parent-teacher meeting or a school setting
- **Characters:** Teacher/School Counselor, Parent/Guardian, Child
- **Situation:** The child talks vaguely about a new online friend and has been missing school activities. The teacher or counsellor notices these changes and initiates a discussion with the parent and child.
- **Objective:** To role-play a sensitive conversation addressing the child's recent behaviour changes, exploring the nature of the new friendship, and assessing any potential risks.

3. Emotional Changes: A child may also start showing noticeable changes in mood or personality. It's important to note that these emotional changes may come up for a variety of reasons and may not be related to online exploitation. However, any major changes in mood or personality indicate that a child needs further support - no matter what it is they might be dealing with.

- Sudden outbursts of anger or irritation.
- Engagement in self-harm or risky behaviors, potentially as coping mechanisms.
- Signs of unexplained sadness, fear, anxiety, and low self-esteem.
- Altered eating or sleeping patterns and regression to earlier childhood behaviors like bedwetting.–≠

While these signs can be indicative of various issues, significant changes in mood, behavior, or social interactions should be taken seriously, as they may signal a child's need for support, whether related to online exploitation or other challenges.

reminder:

Children who are targeted for online sexual exploitation often exhibit certain vulnerabilities that make them more susceptible.

- *Recent grief and loss*
- *Lack of permanent and dependable housing*
- *Developmental, intellectual, or physical disability*
- *Experiencing exploitation in the past*
- *Isolation, lack of peer connection, or emotional support*
- *Questions about sexual identity and/or identifies as LGBTQIA+*
- *No safe outlet to explore sex and sexuality*
- *Lack of information about healthy sexuality development and relationships*

Safe Online Practices

- **Protect Digital Footprints:** Learn the importance of being mindful about what is shared online. "Pause before Posting" should become your mantra, as each post, like, or share contributes to your digital legacy.

A digital footprint is the trail of data you leave behind while using the Internet. It includes the websites you visit, the emails you send, and the information you submit to online services. There are two main types of digital footprints

Active Digital Footprints: These are the traces you leave intentionally through actions like posting on social media, writing blogs, or leaving comments on websites. Active footprints are created when you deliberately share information online, whether it's a tweet, a Facebook post, a blog article, or an online transaction.	Passive Digital Footprints: These are generated when information is collected about you without you actively sharing it. This can happen through web browsing, where websites collect data about your activity without you necessarily being aware of it. For example, a website might track your IP address or the type of browser you are using.

- **Regular Checks:** Implement a routine of regularly checking and updating your account settings and overall digital presence. This process should include reviewing friend lists, checking shared content, and verifying that your personal information, such as phone numbers and home addresses, is not exposed publicly or shared more widely than necessary.

- **Anti-bullying:** Understand how to recognize, respond to, and prevent cyberbullying. This includes to protect yourself, offer support to others, and effectively report online exploitative behaviours.

- **Credibility Check:** In a time where information is abundant and not always accurate, verifying the reliability of sources is crucial, particularly in the context of news and other information. Try to develop skills to discern fact from fiction.

- **Privacy is Priority:** Utilize privacy settings on social media platforms to control who can access your information and geolocation. This could include controlling who can see and interact with your online information and ensuring personal data remains secure.

- **Balanced Screen Time:** Manage the amount of time spent in front of screens. It's crucial to find a healthy balance between digital and offline activities, and recognize the need to step away from digital devices for overall well-being and avoiding digital overload.

- **Critical Thinking:** Apply critical thinking skills to your online interactions. This means carefully evaluating conversations, requests, or information you encounter on the internet to identify and avoid potential threats.

🔔 **reminder:**

Platforms of concern : *Social media, Gaming platforms, chat rooms*

Online Privacy Practice

Scenario 1 Location Tagging: You are having a day out with your friends. You reach a cafe and post a picture of you and your friends and tag the cafe name and location. Seeing this, someone who follows you on instagram reaches the cafe to meet you.

<Not sharing live updates on social media platforms, avoiding tagging locations until after you've left a place, controlling who gets to see your stories or posts>

Scenario 2 Public Wifi usage: Mala connects to a public Wi-Fi network at a coffee shop to do some schoolwork. A hacker is on the same network attempting to access her sensitive information like login usernames and passwords.

<Enable 2-factor authentication, log out of all accounts, not use the public wifi for her personal use like online banking, logging in to emails, social media, etc.>

Scenario 3 Parental Monitoring: Varun discovers that his parents have installed a monitoring app on his phone, tracking his location and online activities without his knowledge or permission.

<Asking them why, letting them know that he is not okay with the monitoring, deciding with his parents what kind of updates and information from him will help them build trust and feel at peace>

Scenario 4 Social Media Tagging: Aisha attends a party and takes photos. She unintentionally tags her friend in a photo who didn't want to be identified at the event. The friend gets upset. How can Aisha handle the situation and prevent such incidents in the future?

<Asking for consent before posting pictures, removing the tags, the friend can change their privacy settings to who can tag them in pictures>

Scenario 5 Phishing email: Arjun receives an email claiming to be from his favourite online shopping website, asking for his login details to fix an issue. The email looks convincing.

<No website will ask you for your login details, they will already have it, he can call customer care to double check, be aware of phishing emails which try to steal your identity with email login details, bank OTPs, etc.>

Scenario 6 Privacy on Gaming Platforms: Raj plays an online multiplayer game and shares personal details with a player he just met, including his real name and city. Later, he realises the other player pressures him to share even more personal information.

<saying no confidently(refer to previous lessons), try to find out why they want this information, if there is a lot of pressure then report the player, and inform an adult they trust>

Scenario 7 Smartphone App Permissions: Sahil downloads a new app that requests access to his contacts, location, and camera. The app seems fun, but Sahil is not sure why it needs access to so much personal information.

<deny access to things not required for the app, change settings to give access only while the app is open, is the app really necessary? Is there a safer version of the app that you can find?>

100%

SECURE

Preventive Measures For Children

The online risks particularly for children are not always obvious, which is why understanding and spotting signs of danger is crucial in order to prevent it.

- Know Who You're Chatting With: Online, people might not be who they say they are. It's safer to only chat with people you know in real life.

- Keep Personal Info Private: Don't share personal details like your address, phone number, or where you go to school with strangers online.

- Think Before You Click: Be cautious about clicking on links or downloading things from people you don't know – they could be harmful.

- Use Strong Passwords: Make sure your passwords are hard to guess. Don't share them with anyone except your parents.

- Adjust Your Privacy Settings: On social media, use privacy settings to control who can see your posts and personal information.

- Be Smart About Sharing Photos: Think carefully before sharing photos or videos. Once something is online, it's hard to take it back.

- Speak Up Against Bullying: If you see someone being bullied online, don't be afraid to speak up or tell an adult.

- Don't Meet Online Friends Alone: If you plan to meet someone you've only talked to online, talk to your parents first and never go alone.

- Be Careful with Webcams: Be cautious when using webcams. Don't do anything you wouldn't want others to see.

- Tell Someone if You're Uncomfortable: If someone says or does something online that makes you uncomfortable, tell a parent, teacher, or another adult you trust.

- Community and School Support: Schools and local groups can provide important information and support about staying safe online. Don't hesitate to use these resources.

- Learning Digital Skills: Understand how to use the internet safely. This means knowing how to find good information and avoid false or misleading content.

- Balanced Internet Use: It's great to use the internet, but also important to have time away from the screen. Make sure to spend time doing physical activities and hanging out with friends in person.

- Remember, the Internet Is Public: What you do and say online can be seen by lots of people, so always be respectful and think before you post.

- Speak Up: If they encounter something uncomfortable or suspicious online, they should feel comfortable talking about it with a trusted adult.

Peer-to-peer education:

Peer to peer education is a method to educate each other about important topics. In this context, it's about sharing knowledge on how to stay safe online.

Implementing Peer-to-Peer Education on Online Safety:

- **Training Peer Educators:** Select students who are interested and responsible to be peer educators. Provide them with training and resources about online safety and exploitation risks. Ensure they understand the sensitivity and confidentiality of the topic.

- **Discussion Sessions:** Organize small group discussions or classroom sessions led by peer educators. Focus on topics like privacy settings, recognizing grooming behaviors, and safe online communication.

- **Interactive Activities:** Use role-plays or simulations to demonstrate safe and unsafe online interactions. Create games or quizzes to make learning about online safety engaging.

- **Digital Literacy:** Teach students how to critically evaluate online content and interactions. Discuss the importance of not sharing personal information or photos online.

- **Encouraging Open Dialogue:** Create a safe space for students to share their experiences and concerns. Discuss how to report suspicious online behavior or abuse.

- **Support and Resources:** Provide information on where to get help if they or someone they know is at risk. Include contact details of school counselors, helplines, and child protection services.

Offline Campaigns:

- **School Programs and Workshops:** Collaborate with schools to integrate awareness sessions into their curriculum. Use interactive activities and role-playing to teach students about online safety.

- **Community Events:** Organize local events like seminars, talks, or awareness walks. Involve local authorities, child protection agencies, and counsellors to provide credibility.

- **Print Material Distribution:** Distribute brochures, posters, and flyers in schools, libraries, community centres, clinics etc. Ensure materials are eye-catching and contain actionable advice.

- **Parent-Teacher Meetings:** Conduct special sessions during parent-teacher meetings to educate parents about online risks. Provide them with resources and tools to monitor and discuss internet safety at home.

- **Partnerships with Local Organisations:** Collaborate with NGOs, government bodies, and child protection services for a unified approach. Leverage their networks and resources for broader reach.

Special Considerations: Awareness campaigns should deliver age-appropriate, culturally sensitive content aimed at empowering, not frightening, diverse audiences, ensuring inclusivity and effective education for both children and adults.

GLOSSARY

Words	Brief Explanation
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs); refers to technologies such as the internet, computers, and smartphones.
Minors	Individuals who are under the age of legal adulthood; typically under 18 years old.
Non-consensual	Something that happens without the agreement or permission of all parties involved.
Sexual Activity	Actions that involve sexual contact or behaviour, including physical or virtual interactions.
Consent	Agreement or permission given freely and willingly by all parties involved in an activity.
Coerced	Forced or pressured into doing something against one's will.
Prostitution	The act of engaging in sexual activities for payment or other material benefits.
Pornography	Visual or written content that depicts sexual acts or nudity for the purpose of sexual arousal.
Human Trafficking	The illegal trade of people, often for the purposes of forced labor or sexual exploitation.
Exploiter	A person who takes advantage of others, often for personal gain or to inflict harm.

Manipulation	The act of controlling or influencing someone in a deceptive or unfair way.
OCSE	Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) refers to the use of the internet to exploit minors sexually.
Sexually Explicit Messages	Messages that contain or describe sexual content or actions.
Genitalia	The external sexual organs of a person.
Offenders	Individuals who commit crimes or offensive actions, particularly in the context of sexual exploitation.
Self-perception	How one views or thinks about themselves.
Survivors	People who have lived through and endured a traumatic or harmful experience, like exploitation.
CSAM	Child Sexual Abusive Material
CSEM	Child Sexual Exploitative Materials

About DtZ SUFASEC

Sexual exploitation of children (SEC) is a grave violation of children's rights and affects millions of children and youth annually, regardless of gender. No region, country or child is immune. However, girls, boys and children with other gender identities face differing levels of risk to different manifestations of SEC depending on their intersectional vulnerability factors. It impacts heavily and long-lasting on their physical, emotional and mental well-being. It deprives children and youth of establishing healthy (sexual) relationships and from developing to the best of their potential. The DtZ SUFASEC programme is designed to combat SEC. It will work in 12 countries in Latin America and Southeast Asia: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Philippines and Thailand.

About Children of India Foundation

Children of India Foundation, an affiliate of Terre des Hommes Netherlands in India, is a non-profit organisation which empowers children and families from socio-economically vulnerable communities. We address child labour, child marriage and child sexual exploitation, ensuring access to education, health care, livelihood and child protection.