A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO EMPOWERING YOUNG USERS ONLINE
Two important questions

- When and how does use of the internet contribute positively to children’s lives – providing opportunities to benefit that may contribute to their well-being?

- When and how is use of the internet problematic in children’s lives – amplifying the risk of harm and potentially undermining their well-being?
A (false?) dichotomy of risks and opportunities

- **Risks**
  - Meeting new people
  - Sexual content/contact/conduct
  - Cyberbullying
  - Sexual exploitation

- **Opportunities**
  - Civic engagement
  - Entertainment
  - Socializing
  - Identity exploration

- **Risky opportunities**
  - Meeting new people
  - Sexual content
Internet itself is not a main cause of anything: context matters

- Individual child
- Connectivity and access (rural/urban, places, languages)
- Digital landscape
- Support networks, family
- Social norms (gender, participation)
- Political and legal context
Global Kids Online – an overview

A collaborative effort

An international research project which aims to:

- **Build and test a research framework and a toolkit for comparative research on children’s online experiences worldwide.**

- **Create a global network of researchers / experts and build national capacity.**

- **Contribute to the evidence base for policy makers and practitioners to strengthen children’s rights in the digital age; maximizing their opportunities to benefit while minimizing risk of harm.**
Global Kids Online – research toolkit

• Survey questionnaire
  – Standardized in-depth survey on children’s internet use that has been piloted in multiple countries in/outside of Europe
  – Contains a parent questionnaire and child questionnaire
  – Flexible in terms of adaptation to country context

• Focus group / interview guidelines

• 12 methodological guides
  – Survey adaptation, ICT & Ethics, addressing diversity and inequality, researching online sexual exploitation and abuse, from research to policy making, etc.

• Case studies from different countries to share experiences
Global Kids Online – research toolkit

- Topics covered in the toolkit
  - Child identity and resources
  - Children’s access and use
  - Opportunities, digital skills and risks
  - Family/peer relationships, parental supervision, parent/teacher/peer involvement in child’s internet use, community, ICT use in school
  - Unwanted sexual experiences

- Open access website to host the toolkit and research results
Global Kids Online – the network

GLOBAL KIDS ONLINE

[Map of countries indicated as pilot sites or expansion sites with various regions labeled such as Argentina, South Africa, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Ghana, Egypt, India, China, Malaysia, and Philippines.]
How do children go online?

A lot of the children ... take their phones everywhere, even into the toilet. How can you get your hands on it? They sleep with it under their pillows.

(Parent focus group, Western Cape, South Africa)

Figure 1: When you use internet, how often do you use any of these to go online? (% who use the device at least monthly, by country)
Who do children seek support from?

Recently we had a lecture about internet safety at school. It was funny how many things they didn’t mention, like some really scary things. ... They probably did not want to frighten us.

(Girl, 16 years old, Serbia)

Figure 7: The last time something happened online that bothered or upset you, did you talk to any of these people about it? (% yes, by country)
Implications for research, policy and practice

• Need to take into account life context as well as children’s online experiences
• Focus needed on outcomes as well as risk/opportunities
• Holistic research framework
• Multi-stakeholder approach crucial