Empowering our young digital citizens

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Bangkok
September 2015
A bit about what I do…

**Voices of Youth**

- Global online community for young people
- Blogging internship
- VOY Citizens:
  - Understand how young people use digital tools/ICTs.
  - Bring children’s voices on the issue to the table & promote discussion.
  - Develop tools & resources.
1. A digital world

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“Wow. I don’t know what I would do without [the internet] because I was born in the internet era...

I cannot imagine a life without the internet because I use it every day, for my studies, I use it for all my needs.
And... I need it very much”

(Malaysia, male, 16)
A digital world

- For many children today there are no artificial boundaries between the “offline” and “online”.

- Environments are increasingly also digital, as many of their socializing, learning, civic engagement & entertainment - happens online.

- Children and young people are among the greatest users of this technology in many countries around the world. Even in countries where overall internet penetration is low, it is much higher among the 15-24 age group.
## A digital world

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<tr>
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<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>Madagascar</th>
<th>Vietnam</th>
<th>Bangladesh</th>
<th>Georgia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Internet penetration</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth Internet penetration</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
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<td>of youth are digital natives*</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
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“I think technology is a key element regarding the development of a nation”

(Colombia, male)
2. Engaging young digital citizens
• Children and young people are the most active users of social media and other digital tools.

• Online world is an opportunity to assemble online peacefully – to exchange ideas and opinions – to debate – to get inspired.

• Not just consumers - children and young people are driving the development and application of digital technologies.
“I have learnt how to bake, various baking techniques”

(Trinidad & Tobago, female, 16)

“... I learnt to make these clay dolls on YouTube”

(Colombia, male, 8)
UNICEF’s global online youth community.

Youth users share views & opinions on matters that concern them, engage in dialogue and debate, & find inspiration to take action for positive change in their own communities.

Children & Youth are the primary content contributors.
VOICES OF YOUTH MAPS

• Using a digital tool – VOY Maps - young people create maps that depict the social and environmental risks in their surroundings.

• Participants are trained to identify common risks, plot risks on maps with photos & descriptions, and use social media to raise awareness.

• Maps are powerful advocacy tools for UNICEF & partners.

• Brazil, Haiti, Argentina, Kosovo, Bhutan, Madagascar
“If the internet disappeared, we would not be able to do research on the internet for school projects, we would have to go to the library and that is a problem because some people don’t have a library in their village so it is a lot more difficult, especially since there are libraries that do not have a lot of books on specific topics or don’t have the money to buy more”

(France, female, 10)
• Launched Uganda 2011, U-report is a simple SMS-based system which enables citizens to monitor and report on conditions in their communities.

• Zambia: U-Report is educating young people on issues related to HIV and AIDS.

• Liberia 2014: spreading information about Ebola prevention.
Avaaz & Change.org

- More than 65 million Change.org users in 196 countries. Avaaz.org has just under 36 million members.

- Technologies that allow communities to identify what is important and to rally supporters behind the causes – brining change.
“I like creating apps, what I like is that we can create new things”

(Malaysia, male, 16)
Regina Agyare

Regina is a tech entrepreneur from Ghana. On top of starting her own IT company she also started Tech Needs Girls - a movement and a mentorship program to get more girls to create technology. Their mission is to mentor girls in leadership, innovation and coding.
Vojo.co is a mobile blogging platform that makes it easy for people to post stories from inexpensive mobile phones.

Paulo Rogerio Nunes is a young Brazilian who has brought this technology from MIT to Brazil to give minorities in his country a voice when they lack access to the internet.
“I think that digital media contributes to education too. Imagine all that is there in front of you on the net, to research, to learn”

(Brazil, female)
Gwen Yi

Gwen Yi is a young social entrepreneur working with tech start-ups, social enterprises and youth movements to scale their impact and engage their communities.

Farah Fauzi

Farah Fauzi, together with like minded individuals came up with FemStoria, a social platform that focuses on the empowerment of women from gender based violence and economic gender inequality.
Kartik Sawhney

Kartik is a visually-impaired computer science student from India.

He created a computer program that used different musical notes to ‘describe’ the graphs.

He is now studying at Stanford University on a full scholarship.
3. But what about the digital divide?
According to 2013 data from the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), % of individuals using the internet in the developing world was only 30.7 per cent – less than half of that in the developed world.

Lack of access more likely among highly vulnerable groups of children and youth – young children, females, children living with disabilities, out-of-school children, unaccompanied migrant children...
• Ownership rates, usage patterns and quality and cost implications vary wildly.

• Mobile-only users have a significantly different user-experience.

• Imbalance in the quantity and quality of content in different languages on the internet.

• Different digital literacy and skill sets.
“I am more comfortable with electronic communications. I can express myself better in electronic chat”  

(Turkey, female, 16)
4.

Ensuring a safe online experience for our young digital citizens & innovators
• What happens in the **online environment** is a reflection of society **at large**, and of the dangers that children face in their homes, schools, communities and institutions.

• Types of risks that children may be exposed to – **CONTENT, CONTACT, CONDUCT**.

• Higher use = Greater exposure to risk. **BUT** also important to remember: RISK ≠ HARM

• We need a clear understanding of the risks and how they manifest – scale of a problem, most vulnerable children, etc.
Online safety risk factors

- Psychosocial experience/history
- Location of Internet access
- Level of family awareness and support
- Attitudes to violence, exploitation and abuse
- Socio-economic circumstances
- Personal characteristics - age/sex/disability
• We need to build children’s resilience to deal with risk – strategies based on fear and limiting access will most likely be ineffective.

• We also need research to understand how to do this – not just quantitative, but also qualitative.
“...the biggest challenge is that adults don’t trust us...”

(Malaysia, male, 17)
5.

What is needed to promote & enhance digital excellence among children and youth?
What do we need to do?

Understand digital use & safety from the perspective of young people first...

...before designing digital safety information programs.
What do we need to do?

- Integrate digital into all areas of learning for children – in 2015 “ICT” can’t just be a subject that is taught once a week.

- Help children develop critical thinking skills to assess online media and information.

- Consider the disparities in information on digital media and digital safety received by young people growing up in different environments.

- Use full spectrum of traditional and digital media in online and offline digital safety campaigns. Foster young digital safety champions.
What do we need to do?

• Balance digital safety messages with emphasis on the usefulness of the internet.

• Encourage & facilitate the use of the internet as a resource for galvanizing positive action, accountability or reporting problems.

• Address digital divides effectively – do not exacerbate the gap.

• Use innovation where traditional internet access is low (i.e VOJO, U-Report, VOY Maps)

• Remember different age groups and their needs – children ≠ homogenous
What do we need to do?

- Strategies to address ICT related violence, abuse and exploitation must be part of **wider national strategies** to address violence, exploitation and abuse:
  - **Strengthening national child protection systems:** Laws, policies, regulations and comprehensive services across all social sectors - justice, social welfare, education, health and the ICT sector
  - **Support norms, attitudes and behaviors that prevent exploitation**
    working with communities, parents, teachers, children and industry

*Governments,* parliamentarians, *civil society,* professionals working with and for children, teachers, parents, children, media, academia, and the *private sector,* all have a role to play
Creating greatest possible opportunity for all children to take advantage of the benefits offered by ICTs, minimizing risks and potential harm.

- Research: undertaking research globally, regionally & locally to better understand how children’s rights & the digital world interact (to inform policies, interventions etc) & promoting research best practice.
- Working with multiple stakeholders in countries to guide development of national policies/strategies to address child online protection and digital empowerment.
- Promoting local innovation through innovation hubs & using innovation to address protection issues, e.g. Proteja Brasil app to report violence.
- Working with industry: developing guidelines for industry together with the ITU to create and promote safe and dynamic online environments for children & youth.
- Raising children’s and young people’s voices on how digital access impacts their lives.
“In my neighbourhood, I am educating younger children, aged eight to 12. They also have internet access, so we can also create awareness in them too”

(Malaysia, female, 14)

Thank you for listening! For more information contact me – kpawelczyk@unicef.org