VOICES OF YOUTH CITIZENS

Digital Citizenship and Safety

Presentation by Kate Pawelczyk, Division of Communication, UNICEF NYHQ at UNESCO Experts’ Meeting

March 6 2014
A changing digital landscape

Explosion of Internet and mobile phone usage in the developing world

- In 2012 Sao Paulo ranked fourth in the world for cities with the most number of tweets.
- Brazil (2), Argentina (12), Colombia (15), Peru (24) and Venezuela (25) are part of the top 25 countries represented on Facebook in the world:

*Fixed (wired)-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, 2011*

- Europe: 25.8
- The Americas: 15.5
- CIS**: 9.6
- World: 8.4
- Asia & Pacific: 6.2
- Arab States: 2.2
- Africa: 0.2

*Estimate.
**Commonwealth of Independent States
Regions are based on the ITU BDT Regions, see: http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/definitions/regions/index.html
Why Digital Citizenship and Safety?

• Penetration of ICTs in developing countries has increased rapidly -- fuelled by mobile technology ---> young people have been driving this.

• Little localised understanding about the opportunities and risks that ICTs present for the rights of these young people.

• Low digital literacy among parents and caregivers/schools/teachers.

• Some governments to move towards strict Internet and mobile regulation that is not informed by evidence on behavior and use by young people, or the rights in the CRC.

• UNICEF is the leader on child rights.
The framework: the UNCRC in the digital age

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989) guarantees:

• The right to express views and to be heard (Art.12),
• Freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information (Art.13),
• Freedom of association and peaceful assembly (Art. 15)
• The right to information (Art.17)

However, access to ICTs has the potential to undermine the following rights: the right to privacy (Art. 16); the right to protection from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, abuse or neglect (Art. 19); the right to protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Art. 34); and the right to protection from sale or trafficking (Art. 35).
Situating the initiative within UNICEF’s main digital youth community: Voices of Youth

A safe online space for youth to exercise their right to expression and participation.

A place to share all the resources and knowledge from the project.
Partnerships & Sustainability

• Global project with organic growth
• Multi-stakeholders and robust partnerships – NGOs, GOV, Pvt. Sector
• Tailored approach for each Country Office
• Streamlined management
• Resource sharing
• Concrete outcomes
Typical ‘VOY Citizens’ Project Cycle

Exploratory research (primary and/or secondary): quantitative and qualitative surveys examining access and use; digital behavior; safety risks; rights.

Raising awareness on the optimal and safe use of ICTs.

Advocate the concept of digital citizenship at government level.
Country-specific exploratory ‘landscape’ reports on young people and digital tools
Public Awareness & Advocacy

View all the videos here:

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD2C18A5CF84556D4
• Initiative is designed to be very flexible.

• Different focus areas & methodologies in different countries (also different capacities, budgets etc.)

• Collaboration with the UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti who have produced two key reports in the area of child rights and digital over the past 2 years.

RESULTS

• Different from country to country – in research, communications and advocacy.
• UNICEF is able to bring together the different role players.
• Holistic & rights-based approach – talk about risks AND opportunities and how to increase them.
Policy & Government Advocacy – Country examples

ZAMBIA: workplan & MOU with the national ICT authority

TURKEY: Evidence validation and policy recommendations; creation of a National Research Committee

SOUTH AFRICA: UNICEF reviewed Ministry of Communications strategy on child online protection.
CRITICAL FACTORS

• Have clear aims for the initiative – Advocacy? Communication? Education? Policy?
• Ensure evidence-based approach using good quality evidence
• Being clear on concepts: e.g. Risk vs. Harm
• Advocate for balancing risk & opportunity and look at empowerment, digital literacy, education rather than restriction and censorship.
• Examine who is doing what & how – always lots in this area, often overlapping/competing.
RECOMMENDATIONS

• Policies need to focus on fostering an environment where young people can build resilience, and learn appropriate responses to online risks, rather than on restricting and controlling usage or online behaviour.

• Policies should be premised on a more nuanced understanding of online risks, and the associated harms. Research has shown young people possess the resources to manage online conflict, and strategies aiming to address online violence should support these resources and help develop them further.

• Policy responses should be driven by evidence-led approaches, and considerable attention should be placed on generating a body of evidence for effective strategies and approaches.