

Child Online Protection in the MENA Region

Morocco Country Report

19 June 2016





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ACRONYMS

ACCD	Arab Council of Childhood and Development
CEOP	Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre
CJCP	Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention
COP	Child Online Protection
CRC	(UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSAM	Child Sexual Abuse Materials
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
GSMA	Groupe Speciale Mobile Association
ICMEC	International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children
ICTs	Information and Communication Technology
INHOPE	International Association of Internet Hotlines
ISP	Internet Service Providers
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
IWF	Internet Watch Foundation
LAS	League of Arab States
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MENARO	Middle East and North Africa Regional Office
MLAP	Mutual Legal Assistance Procedures
NCA	National Crime Agency
NCEMC	National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OPSC	Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography
PPIPEM	Integrated Child Protection Public Policy
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VGTF	Virtual Global Task Force

CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION IN THE MENA REGION

MOROCCO COUNTRY REPORT



COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Morocco is situated between Algeria and Mauritania. It is classified as a country of “medium human development” by the 2015 *Human Development Report*,¹ along with Jordan and Egypt. Morocco’s economy is primarily dependent on agriculture.² Morocco has a population of approximately 33.9 million, of which 9.5 million (28%) are under the age of 15.³ Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa represent a small percentage of the population, estimated between 30,000-40,000. Approximately one-fifth of the population (6.3 million) lives in poverty or just above the poverty line.⁴

The unemployment rate across the population is relatively low at 9.7%, although 20.1%, for youth aged 15-24,⁵ compared with a regional average of 28-30%.⁶ The literacy rate among those aged 15-24 is 83.2% with 116% enrollment rate in primary schools⁷ and 56% enrollment in secondary-school.⁸



While mobile subscriptions surpass 125%, Internet adoption in Morocco remains relatively low for the region at 56%, with only nominal increases in the past five years.⁹ Fixed line broadband subscriptions account for a small proportion of connections, with only 2.97 per 100 persons in 2014. By contrast, the mobile cellular subscriptions were 132 per 100 in 2014, having risen from 114 per hundred in 1996. They were 6 secure Internet servers per one million people in Morocco in 2014, and this figure has remained relatively stable for the past 20 years.¹⁰ Currently, no data are available for children’s internet use. (Note: Global map from [WikiCommons](#))

¹ United Nations Development Programme (2015). *Human Development Report*, available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/MAR.pdf

² World Bank (2016). Country overview, available at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco/overview>

³ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2015). *Country Profile: Morocco*, available at http://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-documents/CoM/com2015/cp_morocco_country_profile.pdf

⁴ UNICEF Netherlands, UNICEF Belgium & UNICEF Sweden, ‘Child Notice Morocco’, 2015, P. 22. Available at: <https://www.unicef.nl/media/4646666/cn-marokko-eng-def.pdf>

⁵ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2015). *Country Profile: Morocco*, available at http://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-documents/CoM/com2015/cp_morocco_country_profile.pdf

⁶ International Labour Organization (2015). *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2015*. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_412015.pdf

⁷ World Bank (2015). Country overview, available at <http://data.worldbank.org/country/morocco>

⁸ United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2015). *Country Profile: Morocco*, available at http://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-documents/CoM/com2015/cp_morocco_country_profile.pdf

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ World Bank (2015). <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.SECR.P6>

1. INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are now an integral part of children's everyday lives. While much of the growth in the use of ICTs over the past decade has occurred in developed countries, there is exponential growth taking place in developing countries as more children, in particular, go online. Countries in the Global South, including the MENA region, have experienced exponential growth in the roll-out and access to mobile communications and the internet.

While there are no precise or recent statistics on the number of **children** online in Morocco, data from the International Communications Union (ITU) show that one in three in the Arab States are online, and that 20.7% in Africa are online, with that number rising.¹¹ While there are no data on the percentage of these users who are children, Livingstone et al. (2015) argue that within the next few years, one in three children will be online globally, and increasingly, children under 18 are as likely to be online as those over 18 years of age.¹² The well-being and safety of children online is thus becoming increasingly important. Yet, as more and more children come online and engage with the internet both as users and generators of content themselves, and as children start to reap the range of benefits that access to ICTs and the internet provide, so too is there a range of risks to which they are exposed, not least of which is online sexual exploitation.¹³

Recognising the risks faced by children, in December 2014 the UK Government convened the #WePROTECT Children Online Summit to mobilise relevant actors in strengthening global efforts to combat online sexual exploitation. It is within this context that the UNICEF Global Programme to build capacity for tackling online child sexual exploitation is being implemented in 17 countries across six regions, with both regional and global engagement.

In line with the work that has already been started, UNICEF MENARO commissioned a regional study to map and scope the child online protection landscape in five countries (Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt), and to provide recommendations to government on how to strengthen detection and responses to any form of online sexual exploitation, including sexual abuse and exploitation, through their national child protection system. The study is intended to ultimately lead to a better understanding of children's experiences, risks and harms, and challenges faced online, as well as the opportunities available to them, within each country. This, in turn, will be used to inform concrete country-level policy and legislative recommendations. The research will also contribute to the development of a body of evidence on children's online usage, risks, and harms in the study countries and the region more broadly, leading to better evidence as a prerequisite for the development of future evidence-based policies.

¹¹ Very dated research on broad level trends on access and usage are available through reports such as, for example, ECPAT International: *Global Monitoring Reports on the Status of Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (Agenda for Action)/Jordan*, available at http://www.ecpat.net/sites/default/files/Global_Monitoring_Report-JORDAN.pdf (accessed 21 November 2016), and similar (including data on Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Israel, Kuwait, UAE, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Algeria and Tunisia). This data is however now extremely outdated and thus of limited relevance.

¹² Livingstone S. Carr J. and Byrne J. *One in Three: Internet Governance and Children's Rights*, Global Commission on Internet Governance, Paper Series: No 22, November 2015

¹³ Livingstone, S. and Helsper, E.J. (2010) Balancing opportunities and risks in teenagers' use of the internet: The role of online skills and internet self-efficacy. *New Media & Society*, 12(2): 309-329.

1.1 METHODOLOGY

A standardized methodology was adopted for all five countries. A comprehensive literature review provided the conceptual framework for the study, a detailed analysis of child online protection literature, and on the regional and national frameworks, legislation and policies in each of the five countries. This literature review was followed by in-country missions. The country visit to Morocco was conducted between 11 and 15 April 2016.

Fifty-seven participants representing a diverse range of ministries of the Government of Morocco were consulted and international and local non-governmental organisations (INGOs and NGOS, respectively). Participants were selected either on the basis of the relevance of their agency mandate and its possible inclusion of child online protection, or of their known activities in this area.¹⁴

The mode of inquiry was dynamic and combined focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. These were guided by an interview guide, which provided the departure point for discussions across all the study countries. The interview guide was based upon the #WEPROTECT Model National Response and sought to elicit an understanding of the systems response to child online sexual exploitation as well as child online safety more broadly.

1.2 LIMITATIONS

The duration of the full study was limited, and each research component was necessarily conducted over a very short space of time. With this in mind, the country visit to Morocco was conducted in five days and, as a result, the study presents an introduction to the approach adopted in Morocco to child online safety more broadly as well as the specific issue of child online sexual exploitation, but should not be considered comprehensive or conclusive.

Secondly, national legal and policy documents were consulted in their original language and any quotations are based upon unofficial, but verified, translations unless stated otherwise. Further, evaluation as to implementation of policies and initiatives is beyond the scope of this report.

2. FRAMING CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION

The following section provides an overview of child online protection, the risks and opportunities associated with online activities, and the rights of children relating to the digital world. The following section provides an overview of child online protection, the risks and opportunities associated with online activities, and the rights of children relating to the digital world.

2.1 CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION

Access and use of ICTs and social media opens up a range of services to children, including education and health services. They become particularly valuable in areas and countries where access to these and other social services might be limited. The Special Rapporteur to the Secretary General on Violence Against Children has clearly stated that “connectivity is a fundamental human right since it

¹⁴ A list of Departments, Ministries, and stakeholders consulted is included in the Appendix.

enables children to learn, work, connect, experience cultural activities and become citizens of the world,” thus recognising the range of rights and opportunities that ICTs and connectivity offer and facilitate.¹⁵

However, while ICTs and access to the internet have opened up a wealth of opportunities and possibilities for children, they come with increased exposure to different forms of risk. Care needs to be taken to ensure that in responding to the increased or new risks that the internet introduces to children, the opportunities that exist through technology are not missed.¹⁶ As the body of knowledge regarding online risks grows, there is worryingly little evidence on the harms that result from exposure to these risks, and indeed, a lack of consensus on what constitutes harm or how to measure harm.¹⁷ This differentiation between online risks and harms is an essential one to make, and a greater understanding is required to ensure the development and application of appropriate policy and intervention responses. This consideration frames this analysis of the literature and the presentation of the study findings.

When considering the experience of children online in the context of sexual exploitation, a wide range of behaviours should be considered. These may range from experiences of sexualised cyberbullying (a term which encompasses sending nasty or threatening sexualised texts or messages, posting explicit messages online, outing, badmouthing, spreading rumours related to sexual behaviour, flaming, harassment, impersonation, or cyber-stalking), online grooming and recruitment, exposure to child sexual abuse materials or other unwanted sexual content, sexting, and live-streaming of sexual content.

¹⁵ SRSG on Violence Against Children, Ms Marta Santos Pais, at the side event on a Call for Empowering, Inclusive, Safe digital environment for children, 28th Session of the Human Rights Commission, Geneva, Monday 9 March 2015, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Children/Pages/SafeDigitalEnvironment.aspx>

¹⁶ This dilemma is captured well in the report of the SRSG: Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary General on Violence Against Children (2014), *Realising Children’s Potential and Minimising Risk: ICTs, the internet, and violence against children*, New York.

¹⁷ Slavtcheva-Petkova, Nash and Bulger, *Evidence on the extent of harms experienced as a result of online risks: implications for policy and research*, in *Information, Communication and Society*, 2014; Finkelhor

Child sexual exploitation online, similar to offline, can involve several broad categories of abuse: Adult to child abuse; child to child abuse; and child to child where the action originated in a consensual activity. It must be noted, though, that **not all abuse is exploitative, while all exploitation is considered abuse**. First, adults often use online media to groom children for future contact abuse. This can include making first contact with the child and developing a relationship with them that gradually becomes more sexualised, or it can involve adults known to the child who use online media to sexualise their relationship with that child. Increasingly child sexual abuse is documented by abusers and posted online either as photos, videos, or sometimes as live streamed sex shows. Often these child abuse materials are sold online, sometimes by the child's own parents.¹⁸ Second, other children may use online media against their peers for cyberbullying. Third, children sometimes 'voluntarily' use online media to exchange sexual images of themselves (sexting) either with their peers, or with known or unknown adults. There is also an increasing phenomenon of children using online media to prostitute themselves in exchange for cash or consumable goods such as mobile phones or clothing.¹⁹

Just as it is important to recognise that not all abuse is exploitative, but all child exploitation is abuse,

Defining Online Child Sexual Exploitation

"While the term 'abuse' focuses more on the treatment of the child victim, 'exploitation' refers more to the benefit of the offender" (UNODC, 2014).

"The term 'online child sexual exploitation' refers to the use of the Internet as a *means* to exploit children sexually and includes all acts of a sexually exploitative nature carried out against a child that has, at some stage, a connection to the online environment. It includes any use of ICT which results in or causes a child to be sexually exploited or which results in or causes images or other material documenting such sexual exploitation to be produced, bought, sold, possessed, distributed or transmitted. This notion can thus encompass (but is not limited to):

- Sexual exploitation that is carried out whilst the victim is online (such as enticing/manipulating/threatening a child into performing sexual acts in front of a webcam);
- Identifying and/or grooming potential child victims online with a view to exploiting them sexually (whether the acts that follow are then carried out online or offline);
- The distribution, dissemination, importing, exporting, offering, selling, possession of, or knowingly obtaining access to, child sexual exploitation material online (even if the sexual abuse that is depicted in the material was carried out offline) [UNICEF internal, 2016].

so is it equally important to acknowledge that exploitation *can* have commercial gain (for example the generation of income through live-streaming of content, or the sale of child abuse images), but not all exploitation is for commercial purposes.

Online experiences, including online child sexual exploitation, should not be considered in isolation from broader social dynamics and contexts. In their global review of children's internet use, Livingstone and Bulger found that the distinction between offline and online worlds is blurring and

¹⁸ http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/10/world/asia/widespread-child-sex-abuse-case-rocks-pakistan.html?_r=0

¹⁹ A useful example of this is the recent scandal in Pakistan, where abusers were found to be blackmailing parents of children they abused, threatening to post sexual abuse recordings online?
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/10/world/asia/widespread-child-sex-abuse-case-rocks-pakistan.html?_r=0

that those who are vulnerable offline are exceedingly vulnerable online.²⁰ It is thus important that prevention efforts targeting child online protection, and specifically online child sexual exploitation, be located within the broader child protection and violence prevention discourse and framework. The importance of this is further reflected in statements made by the UNICEF Deputy Executive Director in 2014:

“What happens in the online world is a reflection of society at large, as the dangers children face online are mirrored in the risks children face in their homes, schools and communities. Protecting children online is part of a growing global movement to keep children safe from violence, abuse and exploitation in virtual and physical life-settings everywhere.”²¹

This relationship is further reflected in much of this report, as a number of nations globally lack online-specific legal provisions. Often existing and broader provisions are applied in ad hoc ways online-specific crimes.

2.2 ONLINE RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

While much of the focus of those concerned with child well-being has tended to be on the risks and harms associated with the use of internet and online activities, there is a growing emphasis on the promotion of online opportunities, and a recognition that minimising risk does not have to come at the expense of negating or minimising opportunities. In fact, many of the risks that adults perceive are legitimately perceived by children as opportunities (contact with others sharing similar interests, self-initiated collaboration and learning, social networking).

For example, Plan International identifies seven benefits of youth internet use: interpersonal relationships (which can reduce isolation), further education and skill development, participation in governance and communities, developing technical skills for the workplace, building knowledge on topics such as HIV and AIDS that they might not otherwise know about, and building self-esteem.²²

The opportunity to form relationships, to be ‘connected,’ while often conceptualised as risky – the risk of meeting strangers – are amongst the most common opportunities identified by children in some studies. In a recent study in South Africa, for example, young people most frequently identify inclusion and ‘connectedness’ as the key benefit of mobile phone use (this refers as much to the use of data services as voice services). In ongoing site-based work with marginalised South African communities, the opportunity to connect with children and others outside of their own community offers an exciting world which many children have never been privy to.

“The internet is expanding very rapidly, but in an unequal way.” –UNICEF country representative

In considering both risks and harms, it is essential that there is an adequate understanding of what makes children vulnerable to harms, and what increases the chance of risks translating into actual

²⁰ Livingstone & Bulger (2013). *A Global Agenda for Children’s Rights in the Digital Age: Recommendations for Developing UNICEF’s Research Strategy*. Available at <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/702>

²¹ UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Fatoumata Ndiaye. http://www.unicef.org/media/media_86244.html

²² Bachan, K., Stevenson, S., and van der Gaag, N. (2012). Girls in Cyberspace: Dangers and Opportunities. In Perisic, M., Komarecki, M., and Minujin, A. (Eds.) *Adolescent Girls, Cornerstone of Society: Building Evidence and Policies for Inclusive Societies*. p. 119-137. Available at http://www.equityforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/P60151-AdolescentGirls_print.pdf

harms. Much of the research on vulnerability had its origins in exploring the relationship between online and offline cyberbullying victimization and offender.²³ Like the research on bullying, recent research has shown that not all children are at equal risk of harms relating to the internet.²⁴ Those children who are most susceptible to harm are those who have problems or difficulties in other areas of their lives. Similarly, some forms of online abuse predict or co-occur with other forms, and vulnerability to one form of abuse may predict vulnerability to other (often more serious) forms of abuse. Thus, for example, children who are at greater risk of offline sexual abuse or neglect are generally at greater risk of online child sexual abuse.²⁵

Finally, in order to inform both policies and interventions, it is important that a thorough understanding of how children navigate these risks is elicited. International research shows, for example, that while large numbers of youth are engaging in risky online behaviours only a very small percentage experience sexual exploitation as a result of these behaviours. While youth may not be aware of the breadth of dangers in the online space, they do have “some awareness of potential online dangers, and this awareness seems to increase or decrease depending on background.”²⁶

2.3 CONSIDERATION OF CHILD RIGHTS RELATING TO THE INTERNET

Due to the hidden nature of online child sexual exploitation and the unregulated setting where it takes place, policies to protect child users of ICTs from sexual exploitation should not merely be reactive. This is aligned with the rights to protection from abuse contained in the CRC. The aim should be to prevent the abuse before it takes place by building children’s capacity to protect themselves when using ICTs. This approach is in line with Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the right to protection from abuse, which emphasises States’ obligation to implement, among other measures, educational initiatives to protect children from all forms of violence.

Also reflecting the rights of children detailed in the CRC, and of particular importance when considering child online protection, is the right to access justice and redress. Where children experience violations of their human rights, including sexual exploitation, they must have access to justice. The Committee on the Rights of the Child states “for rights to have meaning, effective remedies must be available to redress violations.” States must therefore “ensur[e] that there are effective, child-sensitive procedures available to children and their representatives.” This means ensuring that children have meaningful access to the judicial system – including “access to a readily available, prompt and effective remedy in the form of criminal, civil, administrative or disciplinary proceedings” – and any other independent complaints procedures.

In ensuring that children’s online safety becomes a reality, several different but complimentary approaches are likely to be required at a national level. These should ideally be framed not in isolation from wider (offline) child protection and safety initiatives and approaches, but rather in relation to these broader issues. The following list is not exhaustive but rather indicative of the complexity of the response required:

²³ See for example Wolak, J.D., Mitchell, K.K.J., and Finkelhor, D. (2003, 2007) and Williams, K.R., and Guerra, N.G. (2007).

²⁴ See for example Palfrey et al (2008) and Guan S.S., Subrahmanyam, K. and (2009).

²⁵ See for example, Burton, P., Ward, C.L., Artz, L., & Leoschut, L. (Forthcoming). The Optimus Study South Africa: A national study of child sexual victimization. CJCP Monograph series No 15, Cape Town, South Africa

²⁶ See Bachan, et al. 2012.

- An appropriate and responsive policy and legislative environment
- Effective implementation of law and policy on the ground in both urban and rural areas and throughout plural legal systems
- Balancing risks and opportunities—finding ways to promote healthy, safe engagement while also protecting from potentially harmful content, contacts, and conduct²⁷
- Raising awareness for parents, educators, and community members of effective protection and prevention²⁸
- Involvement from industry leaders in prevention and building safety into design
- Effective detection and prosecution systems
- Appropriate response and support systems for kids

These aspects are reflected in the Model National Response, developed under the #WeProtect Initiative, and endorsed by member governments and international stakeholders.

3. POLICY, LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

Morocco is a member of the League of Arab States and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. It has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Pornography and Child Prostitution (OPSC), and the Third Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure (OP3). In 2006 the Government of Morocco withdrew its reservation from Article 14 of the CRC, which was made upon ratification, and replaced it with an interpretive declaration²⁹. The declaration clarifies that Morocco interprets Article 14 in light of Article 6 of the Morocco Constitution which provides that the State religion is Islam, which guarantees freedom of worship for all; and in light of Article 54 of the Family Code, which stipulates that parents owe their children the right to religious guidance and education based on good conduct; and also reaffirms Morocco's attachment to universally recognized human rights³⁰.

Morocco is additionally recognized as a 'partner for democracy' by the Council of Europe (COE) and is demonstrably progressive for the region in its adoption of European and international conventions on children's rights. One of Morocco's co-operation priorities with the COE on human rights is promoting children's rights and protecting children against violence. Pursuant to this objective, Morocco ratified the COE Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention), the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights and the Convention on Contact concerning Children. Morocco also has Observer Status regarding the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention).³¹ As part of Morocco's Neighbourhood Partnership with the COE for 2015-2017, expected results include:

²⁷ <http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20I%20%282006-9%29/EU%20Kids%20Online%20I%20Reports/EUKidsOnlineFinalReport.pdf>

²⁸ It is particularly important that addressing stigmatization of sexual abuse victims is addressed, creating a safe space in which children can report abuse and feel safe and receive positive response and protection. This will be elucidated further in the study report

²⁹ OHCHR Status of ratification interactive dashboard: Morocco. Available at <http://indicators.ohchr.org/>

³⁰ Ibid, and see further CRIN, 'Status of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in National Law: Morocco' (undated). Available at: <https://www.crin.org/en/docs/CRIN%20OPSC%20Morocco%20Report.pdf>

³¹ Octopus Cybercrime Community, Morocco Country Wiki. Available at: <http://www.coe.int/sq/web/octopus/countries/>

1. The effective implementation of COE conventions and standards, in particular in the context of the revision of the legal framework concerning the protection of children.
2. Enhancement of institutional capacities of relevant professionals working in the field of child protection.
3. Drafting and implementation of an action plan on the integrated child protection policy, drawing on COE Guidelines on integrated national strategies for protecting children against violence.
4. Setting up of an Advisory Council for Family and Children's Affairs³².

Within the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Morocco has been recognized for its National Action Plan for Children (2006-2015), multi-sectoral partnerships, training of judges dealing with juvenile justice, and its ratification of the Lanzarote Convention. The CRC Committee, in its 2014 OPSC Concluding Observations, recommended further action to implement the Protocol, including:

- Establish a national database on all cases of domestic violence against children, and undertake a comprehensive assessment of the extent, causes and nature of such violence;
- Develop a formal cooperation framework with civil society organizations, which were observed to be consulted on an ad hoc basis in response to child protection needs.
- Building upon successful training efforts in the judiciary, ensure further capacity-building and specialization of all justice actors, including judges, prison officers, and lawyers on children's rights as outlined by the CRC;

3.1 POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

In 2014, the Moroccan government launched its Integrated Child Protection Public Policy (PPIPEM) after two years of development. The associated PPIPEM Plan of Action was launched in April 2016. The Ministry of Solidarity, Women, the Family and Social Development (MSFFDS) is responsible for the development, coordination and monitoring of government policy related to childhood. The Ministry also contributes to the development and updating of laws and regulations relating to children, and conducting studies and research on the situation of children. The MSFFDS acts as the central government agency to coordinate other ministries (education, justice, health, etc.) in relation to child protection issues³³. Concerning the PPIPEM, as Secretary to the Interministerial Committee for Child Protection, the MSFFDS coordinates the preparation and follow up of the implementation of the PPIPEM.

Similarly, the ministry engages in strengthening the capacity of actors, promoting the initiatives of civil society operating in the field of childhood, developing responses with a view to fighting violence against children and improving the quality of care for children in difficult circumstances in partnership with stakeholders.

/asset_publisher/ldw5HitmFR9f/content/morocco?redirect=%2Fsq%2Fweb%2Foctopus%2Fcountries&inheritRedirect=true

³² Council of Europe, Neighbourhood Partnership Morocco 2015-2017, P.8. Available at:

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016802f7c60>

³³ UNICEF Netherlands, UNICEF Belgium & UNICEF Sweden, 'Child Notice Morocco', 2015, P. 33. Available at:

<https://www.unicef.nl/media/4646666/cn-marokko-eng-def.pdf>

The PPIPEM policy has five aims:

- Strengthen the legal framework for child protection and reinforce access to justice
- Implement integrated local child protection systems
- Standardize structures, services, and child protection practices
- Promote positive social norms for childhood that include prevention
- Establish reliable and standardized information systems and regularly monitor their efficacy, including through independent evaluations

This ambitious initiative involves 22 government ministries and includes a National Implementation Plan of 25 sub-objectives and 124 actions, with a timeline of 2016-2020. Three stages of legislative reform are included in the implementation strategy: projects that are already developed, under development, or registered in the future reforms program. Legislative reform is paired with implementation strategies in an effort to move beyond paper and into practice. However, the budget allocation for each of the action points is still in process, pursuant to an organic law.

While most of the actions address child protection generally, Objective 1, sub-objective 2.3 requires mandatory reporting of “offenses relating to the sexual exploitation of children on the Internet and in the travel and tourism industry” and specifies that this reporting is required from “sectors of ICT, tourism and travel in accordance with the Lanzarote Convention.” The responsible departments to realize Objective 2.3 are the Ministry of Justice and Liberty, the Ministry of Tourism, and the Ministry of Communication, in partnership with the Ministry of Solidarity, the Family, Women and Social Development, and the Ministry of Industry, Trade, Investment and the Digital Economy. Objective 2 recognizes that local child protection systems are the mechanisms through which laws on child protection are actually implemented. Plans are in place to improve reporting mechanisms at the local level through increased access points and information sharing amongst teachers, medical staff, local authorities, police, and NGOs.

3.2 NATIONAL-LEVEL LEGISLATION AND POLICIES – AN OVERVIEW

Key legislation around child protection include:

- **Prohibition of the Sale of Children** (Penal Code as amended in 2003, Article 467): selling or buying a child under the age of 18 for any purpose, inciting or assisting parents or guardians in the sale of a child, or serving as an intermediary is punishable by 2-10 years imprisonment and a fine of 5,000-2 million dirhams. The sale of children specifically for the purposes of sexual exploitation is not distinguished from the sale of children in general.
- **Exploitation through prostitution** (Penal Code as amended in 2003, Articles 497-499): Provoking, encouraging, or facilitating the corruption or prostitution of children under age 18 is punishable by 2-10 years imprisonment and a fine of 20,000-200,000 dirhams. Aiding in the prostitution of others, employing or inciting a minor or adult to prostitution even with his or her consent is criminalized. If the victim is under 18, punishable by 2-10 years imprisonment and a fine of 10,000-2 million dirhams. If the crime is committed by an organized group, 10-20 years imprisonment and fine 100,000-3 million dirhams. The prostitution of children must be distinguished from sexual relations outside of marriage, which are punishable by between one month and one year’s imprisonment (Penal Code Article 490). The CRC Committee expressed concern that girl children found to be exploited in prostitution may be treated as offenders, and that the burden of proof was placed on the girl to prove she did not consent. The OPSC provides that children under the legal age of consent (15 in Morocco) exploited in

prostitution should be presumed not to have consented, and the CRC Committee has urged States Parties to set the age of consent at 18 for the purposes of the offences prohibited by the OPSC.

- **Exploitation through the production of Child Sexual Abuse Materials** (Penal Code Article 503): Article 503 of the Penal Code prohibits the production, distribution, dissemination, importing, exporting, offering, sale and possession of CSAMs, punishable by 1-5 years imprisonment and a fine of 10,000-1 million dirham. In 2006, the OSPC committee recommended that Morocco adopt specific legislation about the responsibilities of Internet Service Providers to support this legislation.
- **Exploitation through the corruption of children** (Penal Code Article 497): Provoking, encouraging, or facilitating the corruption or prostitution of children under the age of 18 is a criminal offence punishable by 2 to 10 years imprisonment and a fine of 20,000 – 200,000 dirhams.
- **Exploitation through child marriage** (Family Code Article 19): The legal age for marriage is set at 18 for men and women in the Family Code. However, concerns were raised in the Alternative Report to the CRC from a National Coalition of Moroccan NGOs in 2014 that Article 20 of the same Code allows for legal exceptions, which could open the door to child and forced marriages³⁴. In their 2015 *Child Notice Morocco*, UNICEF Netherlands found that early child marriages in Morocco had doubled since 2004, from 30,312 to 43,508 in 2013, noting that children younger than 13 can be married with the authorization of a judge.³⁵
- **Corporate liability** (Penal Code Article 501 & Article 29z Telecommunications Regulatory Law): Under the Penal Code, legal persons, which includes corporations, involved in prohibited activities regarding the sexual exploitation of children are subject to fines of 10,000 – 3 million dirhams. This has implications for any business which may be found to facilitate child sexual exploitation, including mobile phone providers and ISPs. Under the Telecommunications Regulatory Law, service providers have to comply with police requests for information and cooperation.
- **Exploitation of children in travel and tourism** (Penal Code): The Penal Code was amended in 2003 to introduce the offence of ‘sex tourism’.
- **Right to redress**: Children are able to bring a civil claim for compensation to the Court of First Instance with parental consent, and the case must be filed by the child’s father further to Article 236 of the Family Code. Article 77 of the Code of Obligations and Contracts provides that “any act whatsoever perpetrated by a person who, without being authorized by law, knowingly and intentionally causes material or moral injury to another person obliges its perpetrator to redress that injury, once it has been established that the act is the direct cause of the injury”. Articles 118 and 121 of the Constitution provide for access to justice for all and at no cost for those who do not have sufficient resources. However, in practice the legal aid

³⁴ Morocco National Coalition CRC Report, 14 August 2014. Available at:

http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx?CountryCode=MAR&Lang=EN

³⁵ UNICEF Netherlands, UNICEF Belgium & UNICEF Sweden, ‘Child Notice Morocco’, 2015, P. 20. Available at: <https://www.unicef.nl/media/4646666/cn-marokko-eng-def.pdf>

system is reportedly restricted to criminal matters, and therefore would not cover a civil claim for compensation.³⁶

- **Child-friendly justice procedures** (Penal Procedure Code Articles 458-509): Articles 484 and 495 provide for the child's right to be heard and express their opinion or give their consent. The Penal Procedure Code also provides for the child's right to lodge a complaint or undertake a legal case, and also gives a right of appeal.³⁷
- **Regulatory laws:** There is no specific legal requirement for ISPs to report websites containing CSAMs to the police, or for web hosts to share details of abusers. However ICMEC note that Morocco has taken some very strong steps to combat CSAMs. Article 17 of Law No. 24-96 concerning post and telecommunications states that service providers must file a declaration regarding the nature of their service provided and access conditions. Article 18 states that the competent authorities can immediately cancel such a declaration if it is contrary to moral and ethics³⁸.

Since 2002, Morocco has undergone a rigorous program of legislative reform, resulting in amendments to its Penal Code and Family Code. These reforms improve the treatment of victims of abuse and violence and contribute to lessening the stigma associated with sexual violence, shifting to a focus on penalties for the perpetrators rather than victims.

Additionally, legislative reforms contemplated by the PPIPEM include:

Right to recovery and reintegration

- Revision of the law on *Kefala*, which covers adoption and foster care for children based on Islamic principles.
- Revision of the law on norms and standards of alternative care institutions and services (law 14-05)
- All children in the justice system have access to psychosocial support
- Child victims receive compensation for damages

Laws addressing child sexual exploitation specifically

- Adoption of the draft law on trafficking in human beings
- Adoption of revision of law on age of consent for marriage
- Adoption of new law introducing offenses related to sexual exploitation of children on the internet and in the travel and tourism industry, with mandatory reporting of such offenses by the ICT, tourism, and travel sectors, in accordance with the Lanzarote Convention.
- Reform of the Penal Code introduces adequate measures to ensure non-criminalisation of children aged under 18 in all forms of sexual exploitation.
- Sexual harassment is redefined through Penal Code reforms to include online harassment. According to Article 503-1-1 of the draft, sexual harassment refers to "anyone who has bothered another person in public spaces, or in other environments, with acts of a sexual nature, or gestures for sexual purposes, by using written messages or phone or electronic records or pictures of a sexual nature, or in order to obtain sexual advantages." The

³⁶ <http://www.probonoinst.org/wpps/wpcontent/uploads/asurveyofprobonopracticesandopportunitiesin71jurisdiction-2012.pdf>; see further CRIN (2014) Access to Justice for Children: Morocco. Available at: https://www.crin.org/sites/default/files/morocco_access_to_justice_0.pdf

³⁷ UNICEF Netherlands, UNICEF Belgium & UNICEF Sweden, 'Child Notice Morocco', 2015, P. 39. Available at: <https://www.unicef.nl/media/4646666/cn-marokko-eng-def.pdf>

³⁸ ICMEC (2016), 'Child Pornography: Model Legislation & Global Review, 8th Edition, 2016.

prescribed penalty is between one month and three years in prison plus a fine of 1,000 to 3,000 dirhams.

Laws establishing a child protection systems framework

- Adoption of the Social Workers Bill
- Establishment of Advisory Council for Family and Childhood
- Adoption of law allowing setting up of an integrated child protection system and establishing enforcement mechanisms

Child friendly justice procedures

- No child is placed in provisional detention or custody.
- Alternatives to institutionalization and detention are used as a first resort by judges.
- The reporting procedure is simplified and publicized.
- Child victims and witnesses of crime are heard using procedures that respect international standards and national laws.
- Child victims and witnesses of crime have access to a needs assessment and to free expert examination by psychosocial or forensic experts.
- All stakeholders (police, justice sector, health) are sensitized and trained on a child rights based approach and the best interests of the child principle.

The Moroccan Government should be commended for the PPIPEM reforms, which are extensive and would go a long way to realizing Morocco's commitments under international law if they are successfully implemented by 2020 as planned.

It is noted that in 2014 the CRC expressed concern at the absence of an independent mechanism concerning the rights of the child in Morocco, and the PPIPEM does not appear to address this gap³⁹. The PPIPEM also does not appear to envisage a new law specifically to protect children, such as a Children's Code or Act. Currently the Penal Code and Penal Procedure Code address the legal dimension of child protection. However, it is not clear which law provides, for example, for the child victim's right to recovery, reintegration and redress.

Implementation

During a situational analysis of the situation of children and women in Morocco conducted by UNICEF in 2014, **Morocco was commended for achieving tremendous progress in terms of the national normative framework for child protection.** However, one of the greatest weaknesses identified was the ***"absence of or partial and limited effectiveness of the application of the law."***⁴⁰ Challenges highlighted included:

- Slowness of judicial procedures.
- Lack of right to be heard during court proceedings and lack of duly trained advocates to represent children
- Absence of alternative measures to imprisonment
- Frequent recourse to placing children in institutions, contrary to the best interests of the child.

³⁹ Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Morocco, 14 October 2014 (CRC/C/MAR/CO/3-4), para.18.

⁴⁰ UNICEF Netherlands, UNICEF Belgium & UNICEF Sweden, 'Child Notice Morocco', 2015, P. 40. Available at: <https://www.unicef.nl/media/4646666/cn-marokko-eng-def.pdf>

- Lack of reporting through fear, taboo, or misunderstanding of the reporting procedure.
- General misunderstanding regarding laws and procedures on the part of families.

During field research, stakeholders also reported that cases take a very long time to get to court. It was reported that often the police and social workers will only carry out what is explicitly set out in the law, and where there are gaps in the law actions may not be taken that would be in the best interests of the child. Knowledge was said to be very centralized at the Ministry level, whereas at a local level where child protection laws and policies are implemented there is less understanding of the law. Concerns were also raised that although the gendarmerie is given ad hoc trainings on child rights, the content of these courses tends to be very theoretical and lacks case study examples and practical application. Furthermore, while training does exist, judges are not consistently given practical training in children's cases before practicing as a children's judge, and it was thought that the role of a children's judge was not viewed as being very prestigious. Stakeholders also reported that there are often insufficient resources allocated in terms of human resources, provision of probation officers, and social work professionals may lack transport to visit children in need.

ECPAT International reported in 2016 that the Listening and Protection Centre in Morocco works with child victims of violence, interviewing children, and intervening where necessary with judicial authorities. They also coordinate with lawyers and health care providers. This is in addition to Child Protection Units, which also offer medical and social assistance to child victims of violence.⁴¹

In a roundtable discussion with representatives from the Ministry of Justice and Liberty, Gendarmerie, and judicial police, the role of social workers were discussed in multiple contexts. The general protocol is for a social worker to meet with a child victim and provide a report that the judge reviews. In practice, this process was described as weak because judges are not required to review the reports. There are also specialized "legal social workers," who are essentially probation officers who accompany a child through the judicial process and provide a link between child and judge, and to the child's broader social community. In this role, the social worker can promote more restorative alternatives to a punitive approach.

There are not many reported cases involving child sexual exploitation online. However, there has been some reporting of cases involving the sexual harassment of women online, which provide some context regarding how online crimes against females in Morocco have been dealt with in the past. A Belgian journalist, Philippe Servaty, was convicted in Belgium in 2013 for photographing naked women and girls between 2001 and 2004 in Agadir, and posting their pictures on the internet together with offensive comments⁴². The women and girls were reportedly aged between 17 and 45, but it is not clear how many of the victims were aged under 18 at the time their photos were taken by Servaty. The judge in the Brussels criminal court gave Servaty an 18 months suspended sentence⁴³. In contrast, news articles from Brussels report that the publicity about the arrest of Servaty in Belgium (in around 2005) resulted in the conviction of the women involved by judicial authorities in Morocco due to their

⁴¹ ECPAT International (2016), 'Offenders on the Move: Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism 2016'. Available at: www.ecpat.org

⁴² Global Information Society Watch (2015), Sexual rights and the internet: Morocco – sexual harassment in cyberspace. Available at gsw.org

⁴³ La Libre, 19 February 2013, 'L'ancien journaliste Philippe Servaty condamne a 18 mois avec sursis'. Available at: <http://www.lalibre.be/actu/belgique/l-ancien-journaliste-philippe-servaty-condamne-a-18-mois-avec-sursis-51b8f91ee4b0de6db9c9a695>

participation in the production of pornographic images. Reportedly 13 of Saverty's victims were given prison sentences, two attempted suicide in prison, and some had gone missing⁴⁴. It is not clear whether any of the victims who were reportedly criminalized were aged under 18. This case does suggest that there might potential gaps in the consistency in which appropriate sentencing for online cases might be handed out in respect of children's online victimization, and the degree to which these might act in the best interest of both child victims and perpetrators.

⁴⁴ The Brussels Journal, 13 July 2005, 'Avenging Muslims Seek to Kill Belgian Journalist'. Available at: <http://www.brusselsjournal.com/node/66>

4. MAJOR ACTORS AND ROLE-PLAYERS IN COP IN COUNTRY

4.1 NATIONAL MINISTRIES

4.1.1 *MINISTERE DE L'SOLIDARITE, DE L'FEMME, DE L'FAMILLE ET DU DEVELOPPEMENT SOCIAL (MINISTRY OF WOMEN, FAMILY, SOLIDARITY, AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT) (MSFFDS)*

The Ministry of Women, Family, Solidarity, and Social Development (MSFFDS) is responsible for implementing the social policies of the Moroccan government. Broadly, these include children, families, people with disabilities, elderly, vulnerable populations, and victims of abuse. The Ministry works on issues related to education of children with disabilities and domestic violence prevention, and therefore engages in partnerships across ministries to address key social problems. The MSFFDS develops partnerships with the public and private sectors to engage multiple stakeholders in the implementation of public policies, such as PPIPEM.

The MSFFDS is taking a lead role in the development and promotion of legislation that complies with international standards (e.g., CRC, OSPC) and implementation of enforcement for PPIPEM. The PPIPEM includes five strategic objectives and twenty-five sub-objectives which assign particular responsibilities and action items to various ministries. Each sub-objective has a timeline (2016-2020) and a plan for evaluation and monitoring. The MSFFDS is engaged in several dimensions of the PPIPEM, including:

- Legislation: bills on violence against women, protection and rights of people with disabilities, the establishment of an Advisory Board of Family and Children, restrictions on using children for begging, and revision of norms and standards of childcare. Of particular relevance for the prevention of online child sexual exploitation is the adoption of laws to establish the integrated child protection system and its enforcement.
- Training and awareness raising: Developed guidelines and implementation for training the multiple ministries who work with children to “detect signs of violence and danger and develop awareness of the importance of detecting and reporting children who are victims or at risk of becoming victims of abuse” (Strategic Objective No. 2, Sub-Objective No. 1).
- Appropriate and measured response: The MSFFDS advocated for a protocol in the PPIPEM that requires a case analysis to determine the protective measures in the best interest of the child.
- Coordination among the responsible for COP response: Development of a directory of child protection services regionally and locally.
- Access to services: Developing process to coordinate social and judicial child protection responses.
- Information management: Create a centralized system for coordinating, information sharing, and programmatic monitoring that allows for sharing across ministries and institutions while also allowing victims and their families access to their documents.

The Ministry hosted a workshop, *Rapport Atelier sur la Protection des Enfants sur Internet*, which engaged key government ministries as well as Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and NGOs to develop partnerships and action plans to protect against and prevent online violence against children. The Ministry invited a representative from the Council of Europe to describe lessons learned from EU-wide innovations, best practices, and relevant aspects of the Lanzarote Convention to advise on policy and programmatic intervention. Workshop attendees collectively recommended the creation of a culture of paying attention to what kids are doing online with parents and families and also in primary schools and middle schools. They committed to development of and engagement with awareness raising campaigns that talk to families and schools about challenges around online use. They also recommended the creation of hotlines staffed by qualified, highly trained staff so that children had a safe space to report problematic behaviors. A further recommendation emerging from the workshop was the importance of children learning programming languages so that they understand the tools of the Internet and are better able to protect themselves.

4.1.2 MINISTERE DE LA JUSTICE ET DES LIBERTES (MINISTRY OF JUSTICE & LIBERTY)

The Ministry of Justice and Liberty is responsible for the judicial system and legal policy. The Ministry draws its authority from the constitutional framework and maintains judicial independence from the legislative system. Structurally, it is divided between a central administration located in Rabat and the territorial branches.

The Ministry has a number of departments and divisions whose work is relevant to the protection of children in Morocco, and has been involved in constitutional reforms as well as the development of PPIPEM. In matters concerning child rights, the Ministry is responsible for prosecuting criminal offenses against children, such as commercial sexual exploitation and child trafficking.⁴⁵

In 2012, the Ministry collaborated with UNHCR to provide training for judges, judicial police officers, gendarmes, and civil society representatives in anti-trafficking and victim identification.⁴⁶ While already challenging, victim identification can be even more complex for online cases of abuse. It is unclear whether this training in 2012 covered online as well as offline conditions.

The Ministry is collaborating with UNICEF to address violence in all aspects of a child's life, including school, home, on the streets, and online. The Ministry is developing guidelines for public policy development and interventions for child online safety in partnership with the private sector and NGOs.

4.1.3 MINISTERE DE LA EDUCATION ET DE LA FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE (MINISTRY OF EDUCATION)

The Ministry of Education and Professional Development is responsible for the educational system of Morocco. It is structured into several departments: Department of Evaluation, Organization of Academic Life and the Formation of Inter-Academic Communities; Department of Curricula, the National Center for Pedagogical Innovation and Experimentation; Department of School Sports and Organization of Competitive School Sports; Department of Strategy, Statistics, and Planning; Department of Information Systems; Department of Juridical Affairs and Contestations; Department

⁴⁵ <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/210740.pdf> p. 70

⁴⁶ <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/morocco>

of General Budgetary Affairs and Patrimony; Department of Human Resources and Management Training; Department of Cooperation and Promotion of Private Schooling.⁴⁷

The Ministry works to combat school violence by establishing monitoring (listening) units in schools as part of its national strategy to combat violence in schools.⁴⁸ In 2015, the Ministry established a National Observatory to Combat School Violence, as part of a broader initiative of “school moralization” being put forward by the Ministry.⁴⁹ The Ministry is also responsible for reducing drop-out rates.⁵⁰

The Genie programme is a national effort to provide technologies and training to schools across Morocco. Its three pillars focus primarily on teacher training and include: ICT infrastructure at schools, training of school teachers; development of appropriate educational content. An aim is to integrate digital literacy into school curriculum.

In stakeholder meetings, representatives from other ministries described new curriculum that focuses on prevention of radicalization and suggested that curriculum could be broadened to deliver key messaging on online protection.

4.1.4 MINISTÈRE DE LE INDUSTRIE, DU COMMERCE, DE LE INVESTISSEMENT ET DE L'ECONOMIE NUMÉRIQUE (MICIEN) (INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, AND INVESTMENT IN DIGITAL ECONOMY) MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, TRADE, INVESTMENT AND THE DIGITAL

The Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Investment in Digital Economy is responsible for the implementation of government policy concerning industry, commerce, and new technology. Its activities include generating development strategies, producing research and statistics, and contributing to the development of legislation and regulation of industry.⁵¹

The Ministry has initiated ‘Digital Morocco’, which aims to support the development of technical skills and strengthen confidence in engaging with digital media. The Digital Morocco initiative has four sub-objectives: (1) develop online access to public services, (2) support development of national ICT industry; (3) promote small and medium business access to digital services, and (4) support and promote accompanying social transformation. Reported in *Rapport Atelier sur la Protection des Enfants sur Internet*, a workshop on the protection of children online, the Ministry is creating a strategy of protecting children online with an aim to create awareness of online security and online safety through public advertising and targeted awareness campaigns in schools. Findings from the workshop include a need for ISPs to be involved in awareness raising and prevention, rather than expecting parents alone to be responsible for child safety online.

In stakeholder meetings, a representative of the Ministry described participation in the Arab group of the ITU which met three times in 2013, to develop and adopt the guiding principles regarding

⁴⁷ <http://www.men.gov.ma/Fr/Pages/Organigramme.aspx>

⁴⁸ <https://www.unicef.nl/media/4646666/cn-marokko-eng-def.pdf> p. 34

⁴⁹ http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2015/02/23/violence-ecole-ministere-lance-observatoire-lutte_n_6734666.html

⁵⁰ UNICEF Netherlands, UNICEF Belgium & UNICEF Sweden, ‘Child Notice Morocco’, 2015, P. 34. Available at:

<https://www.unicef.nl/media/4646666/cn-marokko-eng-def.pdf>

⁵¹ http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2015/09/07/vie-privee-enfants-et-donnees-personnelles-pas-protégees_n_8100354.html

child protection online. The principles emphasize protection against any form of online violence. The principles further support children's right to access ICTs, access to information and to freedom of expression.

4.1.5 AGENCE NATIONALE DE RÉGLEMENTATION DES TÉLÉCOMMUNICATIONS (ANRT) (TELECOMM & ISP REGULATORS)

The National Telecommunications Regulatory Agency (ANRT) is an independent government body established in 1998 to oversee legislative and regulatory measures concerning telecommunications in Morocco. The Agency has powers to develop proposals to adapt the legal, economic, and security framework of telecommunications activities. The Director General is appointed by royal decree (dahir) and acts as the Agency's representative to the government, stakeholders, and in the court of law. The Agency also conducts an annual national survey on ICT use in Morocco which, in 2013, began gathering data on ICT use by children under 12 years of age.⁵²

Representatives from ANRT emphasized that under Telecommunications laws, they cannot regulate or check content, and the internet is treated as a telecomm. The agency is required to remain neutral and therefore must refer complaints or disputes regarding content to law enforcement.

4.1.6 COMMISSION NATIONALE DE CONTROLE DES DONNEES A CARACTERE PERSONNEL (CNDP) (NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE CONTROL OF PERSONAL DATA)

The National Commission for the Control of Personal Data was founded in 2009 with the purpose of ensuring that treatment of personal data is legal and sufficiently supports privacy, liberty and fundamental human rights. Its leadership is comprised of six members led by a president appointed by royal decree, and five departments: Administration and Finance, Judicial Affairs, Communication, Information Systems, and Expertise and Control. Some of the relevant objectives of CNDP are to inform about individuals' legal rights over their personal data; raise awareness among public and private bodies of their responsibilities and best practices regarding treatment of personal data; provide advice on government projects and propositions in the realm of law and regulation with regards to personal data; investigation of individual complaints; and conducts studies and analyses of technological, economic, legal, and social changes which may impact the protection of personal data in Morocco.⁵³

In 2015, the Commission also cooperated with the Global Privacy Enforcement Network (GPEN) in a survey that found that the personal data privacy of children in Morocco is "not sufficiently protected."⁵⁴

⁵² <https://www.anrt.ma/sites/default/files/CP-Resultats-enquete-annuelle-usage-TIC-2013-fr.pdf>

⁵³ <http://www.cndp-maroc.org/fr/cndp/missions.html>

⁵⁴ http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2015/09/07/vie-privee-enfants-et-donnees-personnelles-pas-protgees_n_8100354.html

4.1.7 CONSEIL NATIONAL DES DROITS DE L'HOMME (KINGDOM OF MOROCCO NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL)

In 2011, the Advisory Council on Human Rights was replaced by the National Human Rights Council, an independent national institution whose mission is to protect and defend human rights and freedoms. It is comprised of a national body and 13 regional commissions, whose chairpersons are appointed by royal decree.⁵⁵ The Council is mandated to intervene in five areas all of which could be relevant to online child sexual exploitation:

- **Monitoring:** the Council is tasked with monitoring and observing human rights at institutions such as prisons, detention sites, child protection centers, rehabilitation centers, psychiatric hospitals and detention centres for foreigners in illegal situation.
- **Handling complaints:** the Council receives citizen complaints and addresses human rights violation cases.
- **Mediation and early intervention:** together with human rights associations and an ombudsman, the Council may intervene in tensions which may lead to human rights violations.
- **Investigations and inquiries:** the Council may conduct investigations or request special reports or information.
- **Reporting and treaty practices:** the Council submits opinions and memoranda to the King.⁵⁶

In 2013, the Council published a report on child protection centers entitled **“Children in Protection Centers: Childhood at Risk – For an Integrated Policy to Protect Children’s Rights,”**⁵⁷ following an investigation to determine if the centers complied with the International Convention on the Rights of Children.⁵⁸ The report found inconsistencies across centers and found that conditions did not ensure children’s basic human rights. The report recommended national policy to ensure protection of children’s rights and improved conditions within the centres.⁵⁹

4.1.8 DIRECTION GENERALE DE LA SURETE NATIONALE (NATIONAL SECURITY)

The DGSN is the primary national police force of Morocco, which operates under the Ministry of the Interior. It works alongside the Gendarmerie Royale (Military Police Force) and the Force Auxiliaires (Paramilitary Force). In recent years, the DGSN has taken measures to combat cybercrime, both on a national and local level, including the formation of specialized police units to address cybercrime.⁶⁰

In stakeholder meetings, a representative of the ministry described the DGSN’s focus on cybercrime. The growth in use of ICTs, especially by children, has created new vulnerabilities amongst this category of users. Although the everyday use of the internet by children has helped to promote the acquisition of knowledge by young people, it has equally benefited online offenders, who threaten the physical

⁵⁵ <http://www.cndh.org.ma/an/about-cndh/about-us>

⁵⁶ <http://www.cndh.org.ma/an/presentation/cndhs-mandate-area-human-rights-protection>

⁵⁷ <http://www.cndh.ma/an/press-releases/cndh-holds-press-conference-reveal-conclusions-its-report-child-protection-centers>

⁵⁸ <http://www.cndh.ma/an/press-releases/cndh-holds-press-conference-reveal-conclusions-its-report-child-protection-centers>

⁵⁹ <http://www.morocoworldnews.com/2013/07/96887/moroccan-child-protection-centers-dont-comply-with-international-standards-report/>

⁶⁰ <http://www.le360.ma/fr/politique/la-police-de-rabat-cree-des-unites-pour-contrer-la-cybercriminalite-40483>

and moral integrity of children. The DGSN is addressing cybercrime and prevention of online sexual abuse of children by strengthening the legal framework to set out the exact nature of criminal acts prohibited under international conventions, and to align with international cooperation networks; as well as taking organisational measures at a central and regional level by creating offices tailored to the expected developments in this area, and the training of specialised personnel.

4.1.9 ENTRAIDE NATIONALE (HUMANITARIAN AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS)

The Entraide Nationale's mission is to provide assistance to populations and to promote family and social interests. Its activities include overseeing private charities and their charitable giving, providing consultation on the initiation of public works, collecting and distributing donations and grants, and participating in the creation of institutions to facilitate access and social integration of orphans, the physically disabled, and other persons under its assistance.⁶¹

4.1.10 GENDARMERIE ROYALE (GENDARMERIE - COUNTRYSIDE POLICE)

Founded in 1957, the Gendarmerie is a part of the Royal Army Forces and falls under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior. The Gendarmerie has status of military and functions as judicial police, responsible for around the cities and in the rural area. Currently, no specialized children's brigade exists within the Gendarmerie.

4.1.11 MINISTÈRE DE LA JEUNESSE ET DES SPORTS (MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORT)

The Ministry of Youth and Sport has a broad remit. They are responsible for creating social and educational programs, conducting studies and research, and assisting in the development of regional policy to ensure the protection of youth, children and women. The Ministry works to promote the development and popularization of sports by coordinating and monitoring sports activities nationwide.⁶² The Ministry is responsible for reducing delinquency and exclusion through its educational outreach.⁶³

The Ministry has also authority over Morocco's 20 existing centers for child protection that serve a dual purpose, housing children who have committed misdemeanors and crimes and also those who may be victims of domestic abuse or away from their families and are assigned to the centers through court order. The centers provide social, educational, and health services as well as academic and vocational training with the goal of promoting social and economic reintegration into society.⁶⁴ The Ministry is responsible for monitoring the conditions of these centers.

⁶¹ <https://www.entraide.ma/fr/content/index/43>

⁶² <http://www.mjs.gov.ma/fr/Page-8/attributions>

⁶³ UNICEF Netherlands, UNICEF Belgium & UNICEF Sweden, 'Child Notice Morocco', 2015, P. 34. Available at: <https://www.unicef.nl/media/4646666/cn-marokko-eng-def.pdf>

⁶⁴ <http://www.mjs.gov.ma/fr/Page-89/centres-de-sauvegarde-de-lenfance>

The Ministry also oversees cultural institutions such as the Youth House (La Maison des Jeunes)⁶⁵ and Children's Clubs (Les Clubs d'Enfants)⁶⁶ which promote activities such as theater, dance, and music.

The Ministry manages safeguard centers for children in conflict with the law or in difficult situations. A representative of the ministry described challenges of allowing safe online access within these institutions, which remains an ongoing effort.

4.1.12 MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ (MINISTRY OF HEALTH)

The Ministry of Health oversees public institutions related to health as well as matters of health generally, including medical and psychological treatment. It is comprised of four divisions: General Secretariat, General Inspection, and the Central and Regional Departments.⁶⁷ The ministry is responsible for establishing emergency units within national hospitals and has special units to address needs of child victims of violence. The orientation of the Ministry is currently one of response rather than prevention, although a few efforts are underway to raise awareness among the public about violence online and also efforts to train staff in identifying signs of bullying and violence. The Ministry addresses the physical and psychological harms resulting from abuse and have a system of evaluation and referral that includes assigning a social worker to accompany children through the process.

A representative from the Ministry of Health reported that they are now seeing several cases of abuse in which initial contact was made online and moved offline, but currently cannot report on numbers.

The Ministry of Health is collaborating with UNICEF on the development of a training kit to assist children in understanding risky behavior online and provide tools for prevention. In stakeholder meetings, the Ministry described the challenge of identifying signs of violence so that they can intervene to prevent or reduce exposure to abuse online and offline.

4.1.13 MINISTÈRE DES HABOUS ET DES AFFAIRES ISLAMIQUES (MINISTRY OF HABOUS AND ISLAMIC AFFAIRS)

The Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs has as its mission to manage public Habous (a form of land endowment under Islamic law) and to oversee Islamic religious affairs. The Ministry's administration of Habous includes responsibilities such as the preservation and development of assets and income, the initiation of studies on maximizing the potential of Habous property, and taking administrative and technical measures for construction and maintenance of Habous property.⁶⁸ The Ministry's role in Islamic affairs is split into four divisions: cultural activities, pilgrimage, religious awareness, and Islamic studies. Its mission consists of perpetuating Islamic religious tradition, providing the Moroccan community with religious resources, working with the General Secretariat of the Higher Ulema Council to raise the prominence of public religious leaders, organizing pilgrimages, among others.⁶⁹ The Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs has an important and demonstrable role to play in the

⁶⁵ <http://www.mjs.gov.ma/fr/Page-86/maisons-de-jeunes>

⁶⁶ <http://www.mjs.gov.ma/fr/Page-121/clubs-denfants> and <https://www.unicef.nl/media/4646666/cn-marokko-eng-def.pdf>

⁶⁷ <http://www.sante.gov.ma/Pages/Organisation.aspx>

⁶⁸ <http://www.habous.gov.ma/fr/presentation-d-habous.html>

⁶⁹ <http://www.habous.gov.ma/fr/presentation.html>

establishment of social norms and values, consistent with those of the international treaties to which Morocco is signatory, and is an important (potential) partner in addressing online risky behavior.

4.1.14 MINISTÈRE DU TOURISME (MINISTRY OF TOURISM)

The purpose of the Ministry of Tourism is to develop and implement government policy on tourism. Its activities include creating tourism development strategies, conducting studies and surveys on tourism development, and the supervision of tourism institutions, with limited data available on the sexual exploitation of children through travel and tourism.⁷⁰ [Note to reviewers: Does the ministry have any information available that might be useful to our reporting on online exploitation of children through travel and tourism?]

4.1.15 RABITA MOHAMMEDIA DES OULÉMAS (RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS)

The Rabita Mohammadia announced that it would pursue a “scientific platform online that would pursue the diffusion of moderate religious knowledge.”⁷¹ The organisation hosts a robust online magazine, *Alfitra*,⁷² that empowers youth to learn digital skills and explore issues related to digital safety and responsible use.

4.2 INDUSTRY

Service providers in Morocco are subject to the oversight from the ANRT (see Section 4.1.5 for description).

In 2013, ANRT conducted a review of existing laws to determine what protections are currently available against cybercrime and identified that for minors, the first response is criminal law, a legal framework in terms of crimes and misdemeanors, but not for the provision of prevention, support, and training. ANRT recommended a more encompassing legal framework that would include internet safety. They further recommended improving the system of reporting and response to enable easier access for victims to the services they need (especially by regrouping structures into one place). The study identified gaps and resulted in the proposal of a new law that was initially delayed because it could not influence the penal code but is now informing modifications to the penal code. The new was prevention focused and included sexual, harassment and spam/marketing to children, data protection, and protection of children online.

In stakeholder meetings, priorities were safeguarding personal data, the establishment and support of a national IT industry, protection against sexual risk, and prevention of extremist recruitment. Industry and regulatory stakeholders indicated strong practices of collaboration and currently engage in awareness-raising initiatives.

Stakeholders explained division of responsibilities as the regulators focus on privacy and regulate competition. Regardless of requests from users, the ISPs are forbidden to limit or control content,

⁷⁰ <http://www.tourisme.gov.ma/fr/administration-du-tourisme/missions-et-attributions>

⁷¹ http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2015/09/15/rabita-mohammadia-plateformes-savoir-religieux-moderne_n_8140524.html

⁷² <http://www.alfitra.net/>

however, through licensing agreements, ISPs can offer parental controls. It is the mission of government authorizes, such as the Ministry of Justice, to check content in response to complaints of abusive or criminal behavior. Stakeholders raised the question of whether prevention should take the form of education or control, with a preference for education to improve digital literacy and e-confidence nationally. Representatives from industry and government report partnering with UNICEF to develop age-appropriate awareness-raising materials directed toward children, parents, and schools.

Stakeholders expressed an immediate need for national surveys to gauge knowledge and use of parental controls, trends in youth internet use, and general fears and concerns of users.

“Online violence is a technical matter—it’s IT, so should be dealt with by IT” --stakeholder

4.2.1 INWI TELECOM

Initially established in 1999, INWI (formerly known as Wana, Maroc Connect) is the third largest telecommunications company in Morocco, holding 19% of the mobile market. INWI is a subsidiary of the Société Nationale d'Investissement, an industrial conglomerate controlled by the Moroccan royal family. In 2015, INWI Telecom partnered with UNICEF to work on limiting children’s Internet access in relation to violent imagery, contact with strangers, and other risks,⁷³ as well as launching a mobile application and parental control tools.⁷⁴ They have additionally partnered with UNICEF to elaborate and distribute awareness materials around child protection online . According to an evaluation⁷⁵ of the INWI and UNICEF campaign to protect children online, this campaign had significant impact in Morocco. Thousands of flyers were distributed in libraries and schools in Casablanca and Rabat, primarily aimed at raising awareness amongst parents regarding parental control options for the internet. The majority of parents reached by the campaign were found to have been previously unaware of the existence of parental controls and how to use them, and were very keen to adopt them as a result of the campaign. Parents requested that such campaigns should be carried out on a regular basis, and also in primary schools. The flyers were also well-received by teachers and headteachers. INWI and UNICEF also carried out an online campaign, which resulted in 29,304 unique visitors to the website pages related to child sexual exploitation online, 16,919 people impacted by twitter posts, and 57,632 people reached by Facebook posts as part of the same campaign. The campaign also resulted in an increase in the number of people downloading parental controls for the internet from 12,500 to 15,201.

4.2.2 MAROC TELECOM (IAM)

Maroc Telecom (Ittissalat Al Maghrib or IAM) is Morocco’s oldest telecom provider, and held a monopoly over the telecoms sector until 1999.⁷⁶ Its major shareholders are the Moroccan state and

⁷³ <http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/10/170428/inwi-partners-with-unicef-to-protect-moroccan-children/>

⁷⁴ <http://www.h24info.ma/economie/entreprises/rse-inwi-se-met-la-protection-des-enfants-sur-internet/26960>

⁷⁵ INWI. (2014). *Campagne Protection des Enfants sur Internet*. http://m.inwi.ma/sites/default/files/cp_protection_des_enfants.pdf

⁷⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2015/morocco>

Emirates Telecommunications Corporation (Etisalat). Menara, a major internet service provider in Morocco, is a subsidiary of Maroc Telecom.⁷⁷

4.2.3 MEDITEL (MEDI TELECOM)

Medi Telecom, headquartered in Casablanca, is the second-largest telecom provider in Morocco, was Morocco's first private operator, and is owned by Finance Com, CDG, and France Telecom. A representative from Meditel reports engagement with media to raise awareness of online safety issues for children.

4.3 CIVIL SOCIETY

There is a rich and active civil society in Morocco which offers direct service provision (including victim support services) and referral to appropriate services and awareness.

Civil society groups were consulted via a roundtable discussion about concerns and positive programming around online child sexual exploitation. A representative from the Coalition Against the Sexual Abuse of Children (COCASSE)⁷⁸ described a small, but growing number of reported incidents of abuse involving an online dimension. This concern was echoed by other groups. A representative from Association INSAF⁷⁹, which supports single mothers and aims to reduce abandonment of children born outside of marriage, reported that a proportion of their cases now involve women who first met a man online and their offline meeting resulted in pregnancy, for which the man did not provide support or take responsibility.

Regardless of the circumstances, a key problem identified by the civil groups was the need to reduce fear and stigma. Single mothers, for example, are afraid to report their pregnancy to their families. Reporting is additionally unlikely in cases of child abuse because sex is a taboo topic and families are often reluctant to report or unaware of how to report to authorities. During the roundtable discussion, experts stressed the need to transcend taboos around discussing sexual abuse, with AMANE⁸⁰ citing a

⁷⁷ <http://www.menara.ma/>

⁷⁸ The Coalition Against the Sexual Abuse of Children is a Rabat-based NGO founded in 2006, which consists of largely Moroccan organizations and a secretariat composed of five people. The Coalition works to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth. The Coalition is motivated by the non-severity and inadequate enforcement of national laws to protect children from abuse. Its objectives include collecting, disseminating and exchanging all information on the status of sexual abuse; providing legal, social, and psychological support to victims of sexual abuse; mobilizing national and international public opinion to denounce cases of sexual abuse and moving forward legislation guaranteeing respect for children's rights; encouraging cooperation between national and international organizations with the same objectives; encouraging the government to adopt appropriate legislation; raise awareness among judges, lawyers, and law enforcement on children's rights; educate families and girls about sexual exploitation; and assist sexually exploited children to reintegrate into society.

⁷⁹ INSAF is a nonprofit organization founded in 1999 which is dedicated to the prevention of abandonment of children born outside of wedlock, as well as fighting the exploitation of female minors through domestic labor. INSAF works to provide accommodation and administrative, legal, medical, and psychological support to single women and their children, as well as supporting their social and professional reintegration. INSAF also aims to raise awareness and engage in advocacy work in promoting respect for women and children and advancing their rights.

⁸⁰ AMANE is a Moroccan human rights organization founded in 2009, whose mission is to combat sexual violence against children by helping actors strengthen efforts to protect and care for vulnerable children and

need for more outreach and education within rural areas. They emphasized the need for awareness raising of parents about reporting mechanisms and treatment, teachers about identification, prevention and reporting, and specialized police trained in child friendly approaches. While primarily addressing these taboos and stigma in relation to the offline experiences of single mothers, and women generally, they translate into the willingness, and capability of women and girls to report negative experiences online, or those that transcend the online offline environments.

Stakeholders reported that children are more likely to report abuse to peers and identified a need for intervention in terms of awareness raising and education for children, especially in the area of basic sexual reproductive health. A few groups reported that children seem more comfortable reporting abuse to associations than to their schools, families, or government institutions. Unclear from the discussions is how the government might support these associations in their response to reports of abuse.

School systems were reportedly the most likely place where abuse would be detected and acted upon. This raised concerns about street children who are outside of the system and so their vulnerabilities may be compounded by a lack of support or access to safe reporting systems. Street children also reportedly seek shelter in cybercafés which are open 24 hours a day, which may also increase their exposure to potentially harmful situations.

There was a shared belief that interventions would be more effective if targeted toward children than adults. A few of the civil society groups were partnering with UNICEF to promote children's agency and encouraging peer to peer knowledge sharing and support.

Stakeholders recommended three key steps to improving the reporting and response systems: raise awareness of child online sexual exploitation, develop appropriate legal framework responses and train and build capacity. One civil society group provided an example of a case where two boys were being abused in a bathroom at school and the school made the case public so that classmates and parents were aware of what had occurred, serving to increase stigma and likely discouraging reporting or discussion. In discussing this example, stakeholders recommended specialized police that would understand the need for privacy in conducting investigations.

A representative from BAYTI⁸¹ observed that without awareness raising, there will be no protection at all. BAYTI works with children to raise awareness of problematic behavior online by supporting youth

child victims of violence; raising public awareness; and advocacy work in improving the mechanisms for protecting children. AMANE's past activities in Morocco include a 2012-2014 program in the northwestern city of Salé aimed at strengthening the local network of actors advocating children's rights through education and prevention, and participation in multi-country programs such as the Programme Afrique Contre la Traite et l'Exploitation Sexuelle (African Program Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation - PACTES) overseen by the NGO Acting for Life and ECPAT France.⁸⁰ In 2014, AMANE in partnership with UNICEF and the Moroccan National Human Rights Council released a report outlining the results of a national survey on sexual violence against children in Morocco.⁸⁰ AMANE's programs also span beyond Morocco into the MENA region generally.⁸⁰

⁸¹ Founded in 1994, BAYTI is a Moroccan NGO based in Casablanca that assists children in difficult circumstances between ages 6 and 17. Its mission includes the prevention of exclusion, violence, and exploitation of children; physical, legal, and social protection of children; psychosocial rehabilitation; family and school reintegration; education and training; and advocacy. Its programming includes a homestay program, enrollment in non-formal education, legal assistance for child victims of violence, as well as administering a Training & Expertise Poll among stakeholders in order to enable exchange of best practices,

in writing instructional guides for their peers. BATYI is working with Rabita Mohammedia des Oulémas and UNICEF to promote digital literacy among teens through hands-on development of an online youth-created magazine, Alfitra.

Another concern raised by the group was the lack of a known process for reporting abuse, citing there are no institutional listening centres for online abuse in the same way that exist for women. It was agreed that it would be best to integrate efforts to address online violence against children within the existing listening centres, but that staff would need to be trained to work with children. Further concern was raised about the need for clarity around how the legal system responds to reports—most families are unaware of the process. The group also pointed out that currently there are gaps in the law related to online violence and child online protection.

It was also recommended that health care workers received training in conceptual definitions of violence, tools for prevention and response, awareness of what is available to improve care and diagnostics, and how to develop listening techniques. The group further encouraged the building of capacity among psychologists and social workers to respond to child sexual abuse. While some tools currently exist, stakeholders recommended that these need to be made more accessible and better publicized.

Questions emerging from the discussion include:

1. If peers are most likely point of reporting adverse experiences, how can the current system be strengthened to support peer reporting and response? How can and should peers respond?
2. How are children—particularly those most at risk such as single mothers, neglected/abandoned children, children out of school, street kids—using the internet/mobile technologies? Are there specific examples of abuse and how these have been handled? Are there examples of offline to online transitions for at-risk youth?
3. What are the implementation gaps?
4. What are the major challenges going to be in implementing new policies, particularly PPIPEM?

4.4 YOUTH

BAYTI and the Rabita Mohammedia des Oulémas partner on Alfitra, an online magazine collaboratively developed by Moroccan youth. Seven youth participated in a roundtable discussion of their online experiences and concerns. They represented a range of opinions and skill levels, but demonstrated the importance of listening to each other and respectfully engaging together on issues, even when they disagreed. As part of their work on Alfitra, the teens report learning a variety of programs and skills, including photoshop, video game creation, Java, and animation software. They reported learning technical skills primarily at home and through their work with Alfitra, describing limited access to computer labs at schools. Through their work with BAYTI, the youth

strengthen skills and help intervening actors advance in their professions. Other activities include advocacy work at the local, national, and international levels together with other organizations like Manara Network, DCI, Voice of the Child, ECPAT International, EU Platform Against Trafficking of Persons, and StreetInvest, in order to influence decision-makers on the political arena. BAYTI partners with the Rabita Mohammedia des Oulémas on Alfitra, an online magazine collaboratively developed by Moroccan youth.

select a topic such as online safety, online sexual exploitation, or school dropout and research the topic online and through peer discussions and create cartoons or articles for their online magazine.

They reported using a variety of programs and apps in their personal lives, including Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Youtube, Candy Crush, Subway Surfers, Jeux Bnaim, Viber, and Skype. They report no access to Google Apps in schools.

They discussed security and privacy, with one respondent explaining why Facebook is technically more secure than Whatsapp. They discussed considering intention when asked to share a photograph. Some discussed a lack of parental control in online environments, while others said that this meant that they needed to develop skills on their own to make choices (“kind of like life” another added). One teen observed that with technology comes a lot of bad things (mostly that she had read about, rather than personally experienced), but that technology is often a tool and they have a choice for how they used it. A male teen added “It is we who make it positive or negative.”

Another teen observed that age is an important factor in considering safety, with younger kids not yet aware of right and wrong, but through age and experience, possible to develop positive practices for safety and privacy.

The teens said that they could teach their teachers technical skills, but would appreciate direction in how to find the stuff they don’t know about on the internet, especially related to school work.

In terms of parental control, while there was consensus that it was relatively easy to circumvent parent supervision, the teens reported that the gap between their and their parents’ technical understanding was not as large as imagined. As one teen described: “There is control—parents ask what are you doing, where are you going—so although our world is more digital and theirs is more physical, there is engagement.” The youth felt that while the government could make the internet a safer place, they felt responsibility should be evenly divided, that ISPs could control websites that make children vulnerable and leave the remaining responsibilities to parents and youth.

5. PRIORITIES, PREVALENCE AND COUNTRY FOCUS

A member of the National Human Rights Council, observed that “Moroccan society is more of an oral culture than a written culture and now a shift is happening that is from oral to digital,” a shift that Moroccan society, like much of the world, was not prepared for and do not have appropriate safeguards in place to protect children online. This sentiment was echoed in our meeting with ministry regulators and industry, with one ministry representative observing that given low literacy levels of parents, especially outside of the large cities, and the additional low understanding of technology, children are not supported in safe practice at home. This representative observed that schools should be the primary source of digital literacy and online safety training. Schools, however, have multiple responsibilities and limited resources. While some national training sessions have occurred under the GENiE programme (GENeralization of Information Technologies and Communication in Education in Morocco), many schools offering courses on computer use, for example, do not have computer labs or computers in the classroom.

5.1 PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Despite the multiple challenges of aligning resources, policy and legislation, technology understanding, and protection systems, the majority of stakeholders consulted for this work were engaged in some effort to improve child online safety. In meetings with government ministries associated with social services, such as the MSFFDS, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education, there was a shared awareness of the need to collaboratively approach child protection and efforts underway to work together (as demonstrated by the PPIPEM). A representative from the Ministry of Health referred to child online protection as an “old new subject,” because violence, abuse, and exploitation of children preceded the internet. Yet “just speaking about sexual abuse and exploitation is still a taboo” and so encouraging the reporting of abuse and the seeking of help remains a challenge. The Ministry of Health, as described earlier, has established special units inside hospitals to address the financial, medical, social, and psychological components of abuse. They are reportedly in early stages of collecting data around online incidents.

“In this region, we need to explain that no country in the world is immune, no child is immune, you can be rich, you can be poor, you can be black, you can be white.” – Najat Maalla M'jid, former Special Former Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography

5.2 AWARENESS-RAISING

Awareness-raising is a common effort among government ministries, industry stakeholders, and NGOs. The Ministry of Education reported on a campaign against cybercrime in which they distributed pamphlets about best practices for internet use for children and parents. They additionally use UNESCO’s *The Parental Control* guidebook, which is posted to the online portal used nationally by the schools.⁸² The Ministry of Health observed that when victims access their services after abuse has occurred. In an attempt to anticipate the abuse before it occurs, the Ministry of Health is in the process of developing sexual education materials, descriptions of healthy online practices, and materials that will reduce the shame and stigma associated with reporting violence, whether online or offline. The representative from the Ministry of Health observed that while the internet is promising because information is available “at a click,” so are negative experiences on the internet, so interventions need to be designed to take both the benefits and potential harms into account.

A training session for ministries was organized and involved experts from Safer Internet to train experts from the Moroccan COP system on the technical and human rights dimensions of addressing online violence, exploitation, and abuse. In partnership with UNICEF, this ministry is engaging in a campaign of violence awareness and prevention, including violence in schools, in homes, in public, online, workplace, sexual violence, and violence against those with disabilities. They have created guidelines for respectful and safe behavior on the internet.

The Ministry of Justice and Liberty has developed guidelines for professionals about how to report abuse, in an effort to help the various parts of the child protection system navigate the process. It was suggested that similar guides for reporting be available for parents, children, and teachers.

⁸² Online portal for schools: www.taalmintice.ma

“Our fears is that the internet will be used in the wrong way.” –Stakeholder from government

Representatives from the Digital Economy unit report they have developed a safety booklet in collaboration with Microsoft, reminding that “Sexual risks are not the only risks.” The booklet addresses prevention strategies and covers issues of data protection, commercial harassment, and recruitment for radicalization.

COCASSE publishes an annual report about sexual violence toward children. Representatives from COCASSE observe that this reporting acts as a catalyst for legislative and social change. They observe that currently, since Morocco lacks strong legislation to protect against online violence.

In response to reports that children have been exposed to sexual images, AMANE is engaging in research on child exploitation online in an effort to raise awareness among parents about the prevalence of sexual violence.

5.3 INTERVENTIONS

Beyond awareness campaigns, stakeholders described efforts to encourage the reporting and promote multi-sectoral response to abuse. The Ministry of Education has established ‘listening groups’ on school campuses, primarily supported by teachers and teaching assistants, to provide a space for children to talk about violence and abuse. These units work with law enforcement to report and address instances of abuse.

Stakeholders from law enforcement and justice report that criminal codes have been revised to strengthen sanctions against abuse, but also to emphasize educational measure, prioritizing what is in the best interest of the child, rather than starting with punitive measures.

INSAF, an NGO, provides shelter and job training for young women who become pregnant and are abandoned. Representatives from INSAF noted that in some cases, the women initially met their partners online.

5.4 CONCERNS

A topic addressed in multiple meetings were the unmet needs of children in institutions. These children may be juvenile defenders, or orphans, street children, victims of abuse, or children sent to large cities in the hopes of improved educational opportunities. A success reported by stakeholders is that all children in institutions have access to education, yet a few expressed concern about access to computers. There is low computer literacy among children in institutions and the educators who work with children in these spaces have reportedly low levels of computer literacy. There are fears that the children would be especially vulnerable to exploitation online, though prior to entering these institutions, these children were like others their age and had mobile phones and access to internet. A deeper concern is that in 2013, the CNDH reported that these institutions do not ensure

fundamental human rights to clean and safe living conditions, access to health treatment, and adequate nourishment.⁸³

5.5 CURRENT PRIORITIES

Stakeholders agreed that child protection is an important issue and described it in terms of national priorities around health and education. Currently, the UNICEF Country office is working to promote child and maternal health to assist in the early detection of disabilities. Early education development is a priority, as well as promoting the importance of schooling and supportive parenting.

Youth employability is an issue. Many countries globally are facing high youth unemployment rates, so in Morocco there are efforts to improve the school to work transition and reduce dropout rates. The UNICEF country office is partnering with government and industry to promote life skills training. There is a “how to be” series of materials that address many challenging topics, including sexuality.

6. EXISTING (GOOD) PRACTICES, POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

Many efforts are currently underway in Morocco to prevent online and offline violence. Here we summarize a few of the promising programmes and practices:

- PPIPEM represents a promising practice and example for the region. The draft outline addresses multisectoral cooperation in developing a holistic child protection response. Key to this program will be the evaluation and monitoring to identify strengths and gaps as it develops.
- Alfitra, a collaboratively developed online magazine supported by RABITAT el Oulemans a national organisation of religious leaders provides an opportunity for youth to learn digital literacy skills while also reporting on digital safety issues. The magazine hosts peer-to-peer programs as well as projects with other institutions. In addition to information exchanges between children, Alfitra also teaches on the topic of human dignity in collaboration with BAYTI (another Moroccan NGO). Youth learn to respectfully engage in dialogue and are empowered to develop their own programs and reporting.
- INSAF provides shelter and support for pregnant, unmarried women, some of whom have met men online.

83 CNDH: Children in safeguard centres: a childhood in danger (2 May 2013) p. 24. See also: <http://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/17466/maroc-violences-brimades-dans-centres.html>

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on both the comprehensive literature and legislative review, and the in-country visits, a number of recommendations are proposed relating to policies, interventions and data and research:

Policy

- The current conceptualization and discourse on online exploitation and violence should be **broadened to other forms of online behaviours**, including cyberbullying. This was not mentioned by most of the stakeholders interviewed, but emerged as a concern in the conversation with children. Literature points to shared risk and vulnerabilities between different forms of violence online, and so the complete ambit of adverse online experiences experienced by children should be considered through both appropriate policies and interventions.
- Related to this, it emerged from several meetings that there was a need for greater **clarity on what child sexual exploitation online is** and how to report. This clarity is required by adults, and by children.
- PPIPEM seems a very promising effort to integrate child protection systems. At the time of this reporting, there does not seem to be funding allocated to realizing the many potential positive outcomes it proposes. Given other past national plans for child protection (e.g., National Plan of Action for Children, PANE, GeNiE) that have held great promise, but seem only partially implemented, there should be **a clear plan for the funding and resource allocation** to realize PPIPEM's goals.
- Stakeholders from justice and law enforcement recommended **standardizing the nomenclature** for 'sexual exploitation' to explain what counts to aid both public awareness and research efforts.
- Over the medium term, consideration should be paid to the development of a **Children's Act**. In 2014 the CRC expressed concern at the absence of an independent mechanism concerning the rights of the child in Morocco. Currently the Penal Code and Penal Procedure Code address the legal dimension of child protection. However, it is not clear which law provides, for example, for the child victim's right to recovery, reintegration and redress, aspects which have direct relevance to online abuse and exploitation.

Interventions

- **Targeted support should be developed for schools**, focusing on both **educators and children**. This emerged as area of need identified by schools, who recognized the importance of addressing it, but felt they do not have the skills to adequately deal with online exploitation. Schools are particularly important entry points as much abuse, and adverse experiences, are shared with peers over others, and thus provide the ideal entry point for interventions focusing on peer support.

Such training should focus on several aspects:

- The importance of, and identification of indications of, online violence in all forms, for both principals and educators, and learners themselves
- Interventions focusing on safety and awareness messaging
- Responding to, and providing support for, victims and peer perpetrators of online sexual exploitation and ALL forms of online violence

There is a growing focus globally on the generation of evidence in training that focuses on both prevention and response to online violence in all forms. Such training in Morocco should build on evidence-based approaches to both training content and delivery.

- Some initiatives are already underway in partnership with UNICEF to develop **age-appropriate awareness-raising materials** directed toward children, parents, and schools. Such initiatives should be prioritized and rolled out nationally across all mediums including social media.
- Particular attention should be paid, across all training interventions, on **identification of the signs of online violence**. This was raised specifically by the Ministry of Health, but is relevant across all sectors.
- It is proposed that training material, and messaging interventions also offer guidance for parents and those working with children about the process of reporting abuse, where to start the process and an explanation of what to expect. This is premised on a very clear **standardized cross-sectoral reporting and case management protocol** for the processing of reports on all forms of online abuse and exploitation.
- Training is also required at a school level for **digital literacy** as much as for online risks and opportunities.
- **Specialized training is required for those working within child online protection response, both at the front-end (frontline workers) and at a senior level**. This was raised by several stakeholders, and there are already some initiatives in place or under development that begin to address this (including the partnership between Ministry of Health and UNICEF). However, such training **MUST** be accompanied by ongoing mentorship and training quality control, in order to institutionalize the learning and to ensure that the skills and capabilities transferred in this training continue to be implemented to minimum standards.
- It is also proposed that existing services and institutions offering services to victims of domestic or gender-based violence, for example the **Listening Centres**, be utilized to offer reporting and service points for victims of online abuse and exploitation, provided that specialized service be provided to service
- Concern was raised as to how to reach out-of-school youth, as they may also be vulnerable populations. There are few initiatives targeting out-of-school youth currently, mostly run by charity organizations. One stop centres are one means of reaching out-of-school youth, with both prevention messaging, and response services, and these should be considered as entry

points for further programmes developing digital skills, promoting online citizenship, and for offering services.

Research and Data

- As PPIPEM highlights, a select number of **indicators** of all forms of online exploitation should be included in the **new data collection systems**, both those provided for within PPIPEM, and other institutionalized data systems.
- The lack of reliable data on access, usage, knowledge and experiences was apparent across both the literature and the interviews. Several stakeholders identified the lack of empirical, reliable data on the extent of abuse both online and offline. This is not unique to Morocco. Industry stakeholders, in particular, highlighted an immediate need for national surveys to gauge knowledge and use of parental controls, trends in youth internet use, and general fears and concerns of users. The Department of Communication, along with others from industry, law enforcement, justice, and civil society emphasized the need for baseline data and the establishment of benchmarks to provide the best protection for children online. The Department of Communication, along with others from industry, law enforcement, justice, and civil society have emphasized the need for **baseline data** and the establishment of **benchmarks** to provide the best protection for children online.

Various options exist for the collection of such data: globally developed and tested tools that focus on all aspects of child and parent's access, usage, knowledge and experiences (including risks and harms), such as the **Global kids Online Study**, or more focused, limited modular approaches integrated into larger surveys, such as a dedicated cyberbullying and online sexual exploitation module integrated into studies such as the CDC Violence Against Children Studies. The collection, analysis and take-up of such data should be prioritized.

- It is also proposed that basic access and usage measures be integrated into national surveys/census instruments.

Appendix One: List of Stakeholders

1. Agence Nationale de Réglementation des Télécommunications (ANRT) (Telecomm & ISP Regulators)
2. Association Meilleur Avenir pour Nos Enfants (AMANE) (Association for a better future for children)
3. BAYTI (Protection of children)
4. Centre Marocain de Recherches Polytechniques et d'Innovation (CMRPI) (University)
5. Coalition contre les abus sexuels sur les enfants (COCASSE) (Coalition against the sexual abuse of children)
6. Commission Nationale de contrôle de la protection des Données à caractère Personnel (CNDP) (National Ministry for the control of personal data)
7. Conseil National des Droits de l'Homme (Kingdom of Morocco National Human Rights Council)
8. Direction Générale de la Sûreté Nationale (National Security)
9. Entraide Nationale (Humanitarian and social affairs)
10. Gendarmerie Royale (Gendarmerie--countryside police)
11. INSAF (against abandonment of children who were born out of wedlock, against exploitation of underage girls as domestic workers)
12. INWI Telecom
13. lycée Abi Dar Elraffari High School
14. Ligue Marocaine pour la Protection de l'Enfance (LMPE) (Moroccan League for the Protection of Children)
15. Maroc Telecom (IAM)
16. Meditel
17. Ministère de l'Education et de la Formation Professionnelle (Ministry of Education)
18. Ministère de l'Industrie, du Commerce, de l'Investissement et de l'Economie Numérique (MICIEN) (Industry, Commerce, and investment in Digital economy)
19. Ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports (Ministry of Youth and Sport)
20. Ministère de la Justice et des Libertés (Ministry of Justice & Liberty)
21. Ministère de la Santé (Ministry of Health)
22. Ministère de la Solidarité, de la Femme, de la Famille et du développement Social (Ministry of Women, Family, Solidarity, and Social Development) (MSFFDS)
23. Ministère des Habous et des Affaires Islmaïques (Housing & Islamic regulations)
24. Ministère du Tourisme (Ministry of Tourism)
25. Rabita Mohammedia des Oulémas (Religious scholars)
26. UNICEF Morocco Country Office