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FEELS

FOR

REELS

**Listening to Children
on Their Rights
in the Digital World**

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With advice from a group of children and youth aged 16-19
from the Philippines

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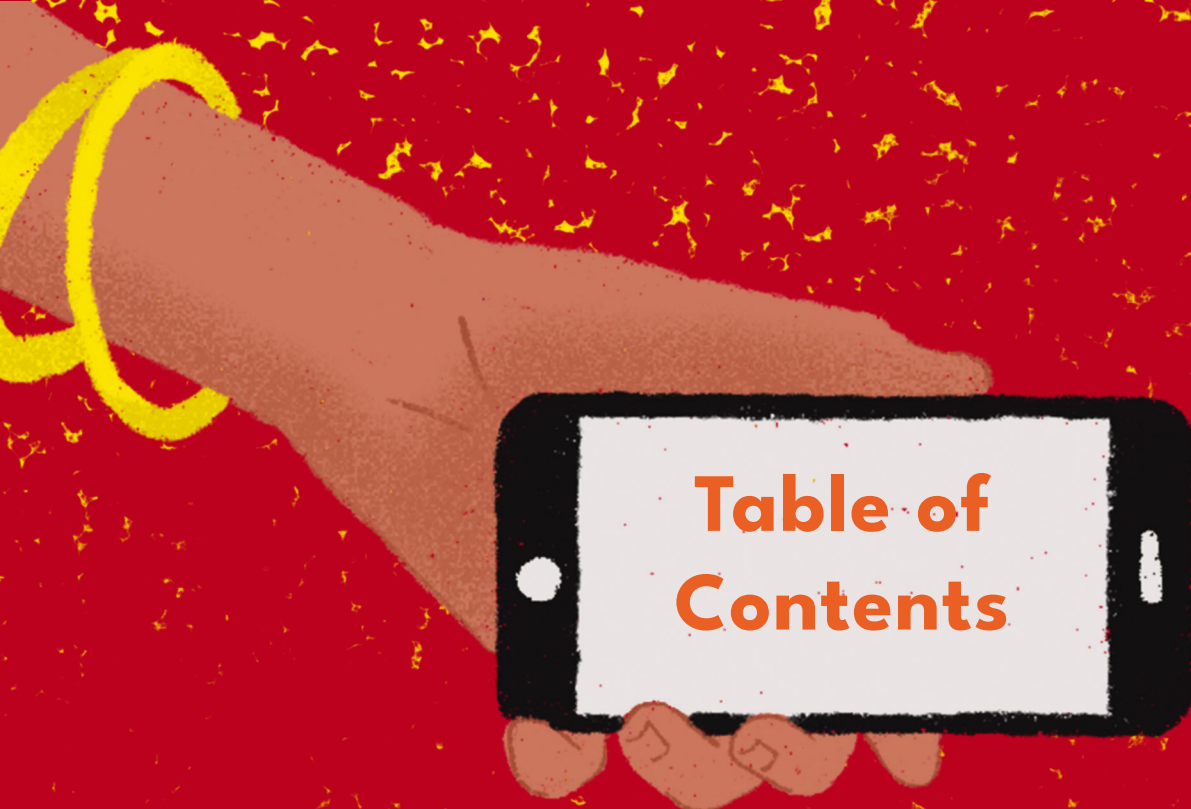


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Why We Made This Flipbook

Filipino children are growing up online. Their relationships, learning, and play increasingly happen on digital platforms. With the Philippines often called the “social media capital of the world,” young people spend a significant part of their daily lives on platforms like Facebook, Tiktok, Youtube, and Messenger. Their friendships, learning, and play increasingly happen in digital spaces — whether through online classes, group chats, or gaming communities. But alongside these opportunities come real risks. Filipino children face exposure to harmful content, peer pressure, privacy challenges, misinformation, and exploitation.

This flipbook brings children’s voices to the forefront. We listened to what they feel, what worries them, and what they hope for online – not as passive users, but as rights-holders navigating the digital world.

We made this for:

- **Tech and platform teams** to understand children’s real experiences online
- **Policy and safety teams** to see where systems succeed — and where they fall short
- **Partners and stakeholders** to use these insights to create safer digital spaces

Our goal is to build online environments where children feel safe, supported, and empowered with practical guidance for the teams shaping their digital world.



Meet the Team

This consultation was made possible by:



Child Rights
Coalition Asia



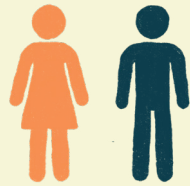
We came together with one clear purpose: to listen, understand, and act on children's experiences online.

- To hear children's voices in the digital environment
- To understand their experiences, challenges, and hopes
- To ensure digital platforms support safety, privacy, and inclusion

We believe that **children's perspectives must guide design, policy, and advocacy** because the best solutions to the challenges in the online world come from them.

The Consultation at a Glance

We brought together a diverse group to listen, learn, and co-create solutions.



Children: 30 participants
aged 16-19 from the Philippines
actively engaged in the sessions



Mentors: 21 adults
supported the young people
throughout the sessions



Stakeholders: 13
representatives from
Philippine government



Facilitators & Organizers:
19 individuals ensured
smooth coordination and
implementation

Children were not just participants; they led discussions, shared experiences, and shaped outcomes.

Giving Children Space to Speak

Listening well means creating safe spaces. Our workshops combined:

- Workshops and small group discussions with clear ground rules
- Creative activities and exercises through skits, performances, and group sharings, to express thoughts and emotions
- An intergenerational dialogue between children and representatives from tech companies, civil society, development partners, and the government

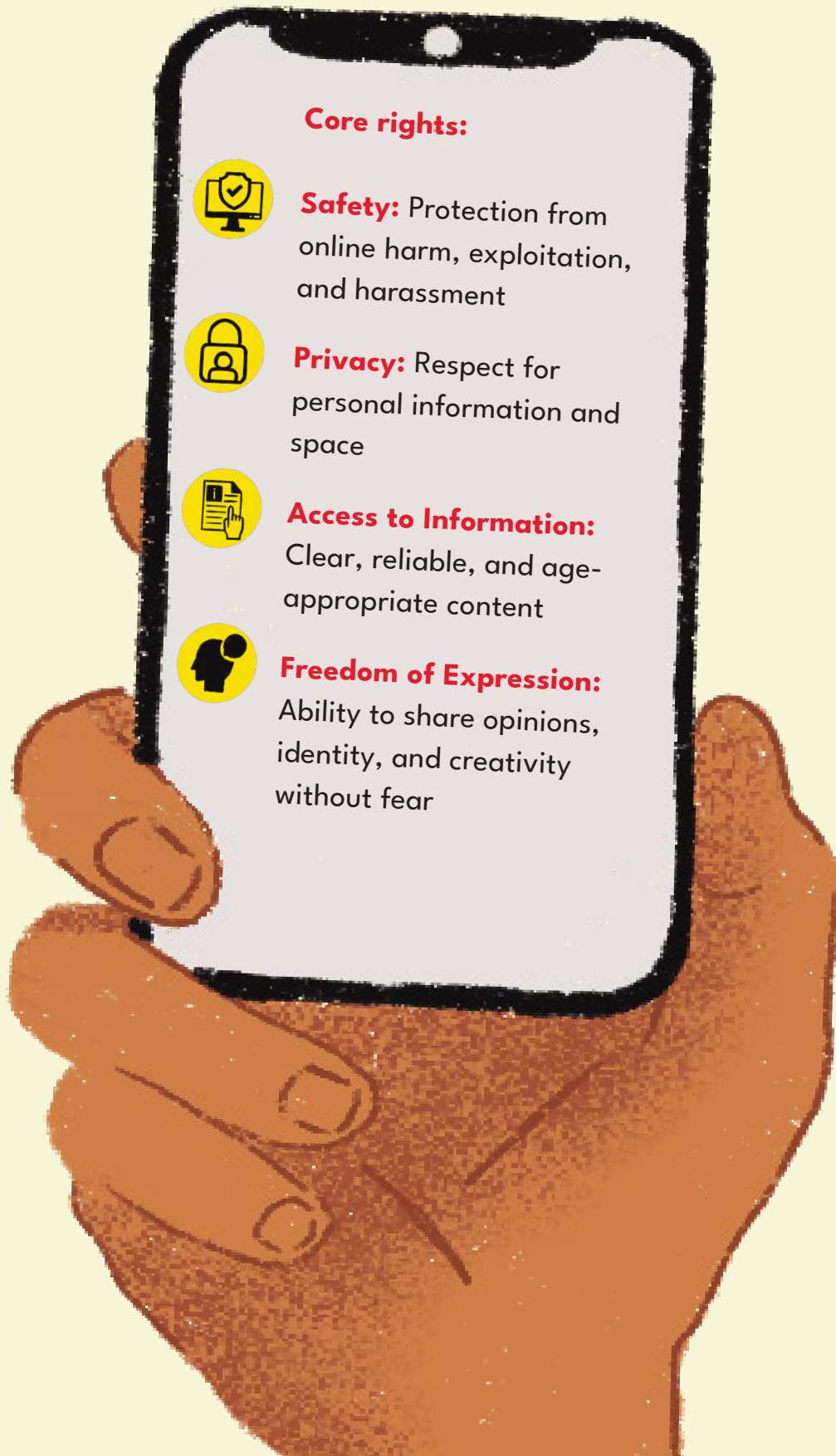


Our approach was simple. We created a safe, respectful, and engaging environment that encourages honest and open feedback, and values children as experts of their own online experiences.



Children's Rights Online

Children have rights – in every click, chat, and post. Safety, privacy, access to information, and freedom of expression are not just principles; they are the foundation of a child's experience on digital platforms.



Core rights:



Safety: Protection from online harm, exploitation, and harassment



Privacy: Respect for personal information and space



Access to Information: Clear, reliable, and age-appropriate content



Freedom of Expression: Ability to share opinions, identity, and creativity without fear



Why It Matters For Tech Teams

Every design choice affects children’s safety, trust, and confidence – online and offline. Thoughtful, rights-informed design empowers children. Neglecting these rights exposes them to risks.

“ The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and General Comment 25 guide how children’s rights apply online. Tech teams can embed these principles through rights-based design: giving children a voice, protecting privacy, and promoting safety and creativity. ”

General comment No. 25 (2021) on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment In this general comment, the Committee explains how States parties should implement the Convention in relation to the digital environment and provides guidance on relevant legislative, policy and other measures to ensure full compliance with their obligations under the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto in the light of the opportunities, risks and challenges in promoting, respecting, protecting and fulfilling all children’s rights in the digital environment.

The UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) is a legally binding international agreement detailing the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children. Adopted in 1989, it defines a child as anyone under 18, setting standards for health, education, and protection.

What Children Want Tech Companies to Do

Filipino children are not asking to leave digital platforms. They are asking for them to work better. Across consultations, workshops, and dialogue sessions, children spoke clearly about what needs to change. Their recommendations are practical, specific, and directly relevant to how platforms are designed, moderated, and governed.

1. Strengthen Protection Before Harm Spreads: Children want platforms to act earlier not only after harm has already circulated.

- Improve proactive detection of harmful content
- Prevent exploitative material from spreading
- Strengthen safeguards against grooming, sextortion, and abuse
- Reduce the visibility of violent or sexually explicit content in feeds

2. Fix Reporting and Response Systems: Children reported frustration when reports felt ignored or unclear.

- Make reporting tools simpler and easier to access
- Respond faster and communicate outcomes clearly
- Provide understandable explanations when content is removed
- Ensure reports lead to visible action

3. Improve Cultural and Context Awareness: Children shared that moderation systems often fail to understand local languages and context.

- Strengthen detection of harmful content in local languages
- Better identify cultural slurs and coded harassment
- Protect political and cultural expression from over-removal
- Reduce bias in automated moderation systems

4. Design Safer Defaults for Children and Teens: **Children want safer environments without losing their voice.**

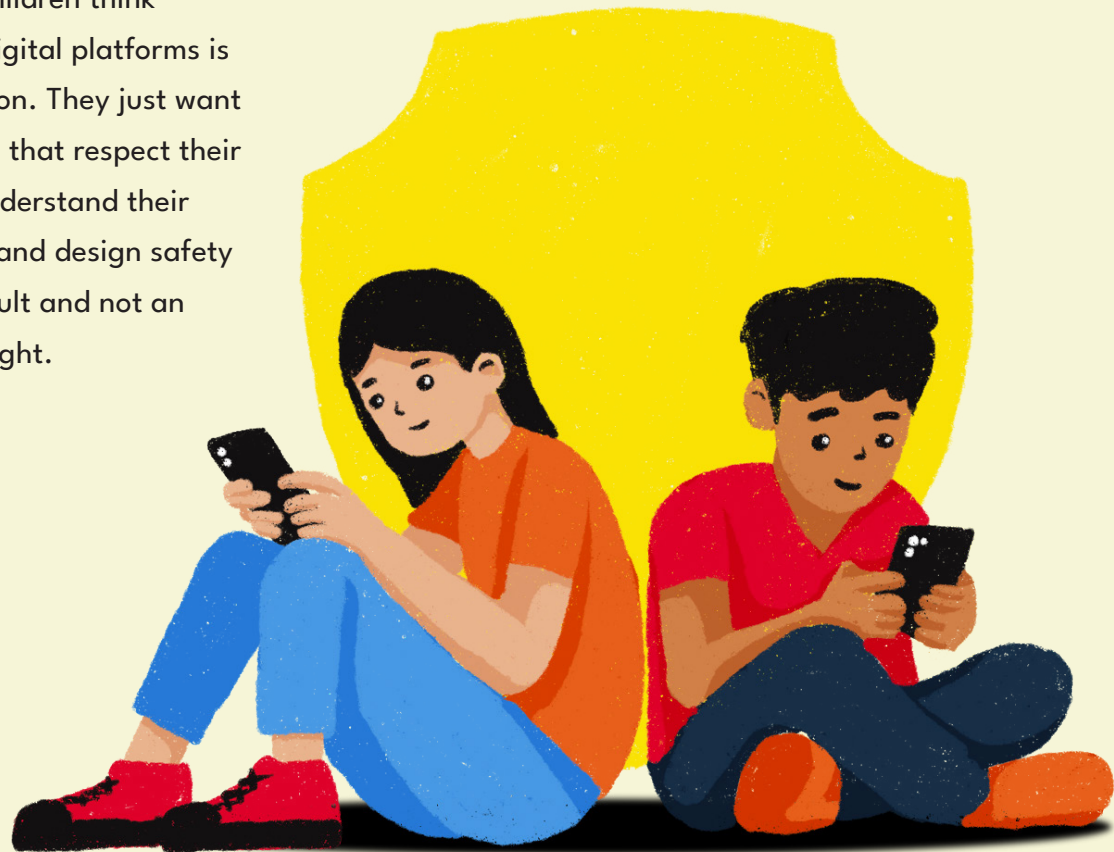
- Stronger age-appropriate protections
- Safer default privacy settings
- Better systems to prevent dummy or fake accounts
- Clearer distinctions between adult and child spaces

5. Increase Transparency and Accountability: **Children want to understand how decisions are made.**

- Clearer communication about why content is taken down
- Transparent safety policies
- Visible enforcement of community standards

Their message is clear:

Filipino children think leaving digital platforms is the solution. They just want platforms that respect their rights, understand their realities, and design safety as a default and not an afterthought.



Balancing Safety and Freedom

Filipino children value their freedom to express as much as their safety. They want tools that allow them to explore the digital world confidently, while feeling supported by parents and platforms alike. That is why they're asking digital design and policies to empower children, respecting their evolving capacities as they grow up.

How Children Choose Apps

Children often decide which apps to download based on curiosity, personal interests, and trends they see online. Peer influence, popular content, and recommendations from friends or influencers also play a significant role. Practical needs, such as communicating with family, fulfilling school requirements, or entertainment, further shape their choices. Some children pay attention to privacy, security features, and terms and conditions before signing up.






Experiences with Parental Controls

Children have mixed feelings about parental controls. Many recognize the benefits, including protection from harmful content and guidance for younger users. At the same time, these controls can feel restrictive, sometimes leading children to create “dummy” accounts or find ways to bypass limitations. What they want most is balance: Having protection without losing their privacy, freedom, or autonomy.

Children's Top Concerns

- Confusion about privacy settings
- Weak age verification
- Parents sometimes lack guidance

Safety Tools Children Actually Use

-  Privacy dashboards
-  Default account restrictions (private accounts)
-  Reporting tools
-  Messaging controls
-  Blocking or muting features

What This Means for Platforms

Platforms should design controls that respect children’s privacy and evolving capacities. Privacy dashboards should be simple and intuitive, and guidance for both children and parents should be clear and age-appropriate. Minor accounts could be private by default, and in-app parental guidance tools should empower rather than restrict. Platforms can also use recommendation engines, AI moderation, and reporting tools to enhance safety while allowing children to explore digital spaces responsibly.



Finding the Right Signals Online

The internet offers endless possibilities, which also means countless risks. Children frequently encounter fake news, scams, harmful content, and misleading AI-generated information. Even content that has been reported can reappear, and harmful trends can spread quickly, making extreme or unsafe material more visible over time.

Red Flags Children See

Children reported encountering a wide range of red flags online. Fake news about politics, health, education, and celebrities can cause unnecessary panic or confusion. Scams, phishing attempts, and impersonation of official accounts are also common. Harmful or inappropriate content, such as sexualized memes, graphic images, or content disguised as child-friendly, poses serious risks. AI-generated content can add to confusion, providing misleading or false information. Finally, content recommendations are often confusing or unsafe: even after reporting, harmful content can continue appearing, and some extreme or trending posts become more visible over time.

Children's Suggestions

- Better content moderation and labeling to clearly identify harmful or misleading posts
- Digital literacy education for children and parents to help identify red flags
- Encouraging responsible content creation from influencers and content creators
- Guiding children toward trusted, age-appropriate content through platform features, filters, and recommendations

What This Means for Platforms

Platforms should actively filter harmful content and ensure that reported posts are reviewed and removed quickly. Content labeling can help children and parents distinguish reliable information from misinformation. Recommendation systems should prioritize trusted, age-appropriate content. Platforms can also collaborate with educational institutions, government agencies, and content creators to promote digital literacy and encourage responsible online behavior.







Voices, Feelings, and Safety

Children shared that expressing their identity, culture, or opinions online can sometimes invite judgment, harassment, or ridicule. Experiences around gender, culture, advocacy, and political opinions vary. While some feel safe discussing advocacies or personal hobbies, many encounter negative reactions ranging from hate comments and body-shaming to culturally insensitive remarks and political backlash. These experiences have a strong emotional impact, affecting confidence, emotional well-being, and willingness to speak freely. Some children shared that they censored themselves or hid their true identity online to avoid judgment, while others were repeatedly exposed to content that affects their mental health.

Children recognize the role of tech platforms in shaping these experiences and expressed clear suggestions to improve safety and wellbeing online:

Key Asks from Children

- Better reporting tools that are accessible, user-friendly, and provide faster action against harmful content
- Mental health support and resources
- Culturally sensitive AI moderation to detect hate speech, discriminatory comments, and context-specific offensive language

What This Means for Platforms

Platforms should strengthen content moderation systems to detect harmful, discriminatory, or culturally insensitive comments, including context-specific language. Reporting tools should be responsive and easy to use so children can act quickly when encountering harassment. Platforms can also provide mental health resources or support features to help children process negative experiences online.

At the same time, transparency should be embedded within these systems. Users need to clearly understand why content is removed or flagged, not only to build trust but also to help them learn and navigate online spaces more responsibly. By combining technical safeguards, clear guidance, and supportive tools, platforms can create a safer environment that allows children to express themselves confidently while protecting their emotional wellbeing.



“Many children feel unsafe expressing their cultural identity online because people shame them for how they speak or where they come from.”

On Privacy & Safety :

“Privacy matters a lot. Some apps ask for too much access to personal information, which makes me cautious.”



On Parental Guidance & Supervision:

“The quality of the relationship with our parents matters. Supportive monitoring feels helpful, but too strict supervision can make us secretive.”

New Risks and Opportunities

Digital platforms offer children spaces for learning, creativity, and connection, but many environments remain unsafe. Children navigate risks across features like direct messages, comments, live streams, and public posts, where harmful or inappropriate content can surface without warning. While reporting tools are available, these often respond only after harm has already occurred, leaving children vulnerable in the moment.

Across emerging trends, children experience both opportunities and risks. AI supports learning and creativity, but can also produce misleading information, reinforce bias, and encourage over-reliance. Sharenting and kidfluencing create avenues for expression and early opportunities, yet raise concerns about privacy, consent, and potential exploitation. Online selling and gaming build skills and community, but also expose children to scams, bullying, overspending, and harmful interactions. Exposure to sexualized content through memes, fanfiction, or explicit links remains a significant concern, as it can normalize unsafe behaviors and blur boundaries.

Children Are Asking Platforms To:

- Design systems that prevent harm before it happens, such as detecting grooming patterns, filtering sexualized or exploitative content early, and strengthening safeguards in high-risk spaces like live streams and private messaging
- Strengthen protections around children's data and identity, including clearer privacy controls, limits on public visibility, and safeguards against misuse of images in cases like sharenting
- Introduce safer, age-appropriate experiences across features like online selling and gaming, including scam detection, spending limits, and stronger moderation of interactions
- Ensure that content recommendations and algorithms do not amplify harmful trends, including sexualized or misleading content
- Provide accessible education for both children and caregivers on navigating emerging risks, including AI use, digital consent, and online safety practices

What This Means for Platforms

Platforms need to implement stronger safeguards across all touchpoints: DMs, comments, live streams, and public posts. AI tools should identify risky content before it reaches children, including sexualized material, scams, and manipulative practices. Age-appropriate controls, privacy protections, and content restrictions should be enforced consistently. Platforms should also educate children and parents about safe use, guiding them to make informed choices online. By taking proactive responsibility, platforms can create safer digital spaces while still allowing children to explore, learn, and connect.



Kidfluencers:

“The most frequently cited risk was exploitation...children are made to model or create reels and pictures that lead to objectification.”



Online Selling:

“Children, especially as buyers, may fall for online selling tricks due to limited awareness and lack of fact-checking.”

Artificial Intelligence (AI):

“Some students may lose motivation to study or understand topics deeply, becoming overly dependent on AI.”



Online Gaming & Metaverse:

“Addiction is a major concern... children prioritize gaming over other responsibilities.”
“Online games often result in bullying, where players use offensive language or intentionally hurt others.”

Children in Dialogue with Decision-Makers

Children didn't just share their thoughts. Children led the conversation. Through the four workshops, child delegates presented insights, reflected on challenges, and offered solutions, showing how much they can contribute when given the space to lead.

During the Intergenerational Dialogue, young people engaged meaningfully with representatives from Meta, government, civil society, and development partners. These exchanges underscored the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in creating safer, more inclusive digital spaces for children and youth.

Children's perspectives aimed to inform decisions in government, business, and civil society. Representatives were encouraged to reflect on how they can integrate children's views into policies, practices, and operations.



The adults present included Ms. Amihan Abueva, Regional Executive Director of Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia); Senator Francis “Kiko” Pangilinan; Mr. Aldwin Jamora, Advocacy and External Engagement Manager of World Vision and CRC Coalition; representatives from PLDT and Smart, Ate April and Ate Ghie; representatives from Canva's Trust and Safety Group, Ate Alyssa and Ate Jingger; PMajor Meriel Editha M. Reyes, Assistant Chief of the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Division of PNP-WCPC; Atty. Mary Kate Clariz C. Marcelo, Attorney III of the Policy Development Division; and Ate Louie from the Child Rights Network and PLCPD.

The stakeholders' representatives shared their thoughts on how to make the digital world safer, more fun, and more empowering for children. They talked about the importance of listening to young people's ideas, making rules and programs that actually help children, and using technology responsibly. They encouraged the participants to keep being creative and brave online, highlighted ways parents and companies can support children, and reminded everyone about staying safe, being mindful of online privacy, and thinking before clicking. They also discussed how AI and other digital tools can be helpful if used carefully, and how adults and tech companies can work with kids to make online spaces better for everyone.



"I affirm my commitment to collaborate on crafting appropriate regulatory measures that would harness digital technology for education, empowerment, and the protection of children's rights and welfare."

Senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan

"The WCPC has an official Facebook page and hotline where children can message, comment, or ask for help. We have the Makabata Helpline of the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) as an additional resource. Children can reach out any time, whether anonymously online or face-to-face, because support must be accessible and child-friendly."

PMajor Meriel Editha M. Reyes (PNP-WCPC)



"We invite children to suggest improvements through our reporting channels if they think a feature could be made safer or more child-friendly."

Alyssa & Jinger (Canva)

"I emphasize the importance of reaching and educating parents so that their use of parental controls and guidance are informed by child rights and digital realities."

Louie (Child Rights Network and Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development)







Designing Safer Platforms Together

Children’s insights reveal gaps in how digital spaces protect, empower, and respect them. Integrating safety into core design principles means respecting children’s autonomy and evolving capacities while improving reporting tools, moderation, and privacy features.

Short-term actions: Adjust platform controls, enhance reporting systems, and support parental guidance.

Medium-term actions: Strengthen content moderation, update AI safeguards, and expand digital literacy programs for children and caregivers.

Long-term actions: Drive policy reform, regulation, and child-centered co-design to ensure lasting safety.

Platforms, families, governments, and communities must collaborate, guided by the voices of children who live, learn, and explore online every day.



What Needs to Change

Children want safety, privacy, freedom, and support. Every design choice matters. Collective action ensures that children's rights are respected and their experiences are valued.

From the activities and discussions, we learned that:

- Children value spaces where they can express themselves freely without fear of judgment or overreach by adults.
- Guidance matters more than control. While parental supervision is important for younger children, overly restrictive measures can create distrust or limit exploration.
- Children notice and respond to unsafe content or harmful behaviors online, including misinformation, scams, and inappropriate images.
- They value inclusive, respectful interactions. Several participants mentioned that hate comments, gender discrimination, and cultural insensitivity limit their ability to participate meaningfully online.
- Peer learning and dialogue are powerful. Children learn not just from adults, but from each other, reinforcing the importance of participatory approaches in designing platforms, policies, and interventions.

Takeaway: When we design digital spaces, policies, or interventions, we must center children's voices, prioritize safety and privacy, and create mechanisms for empowerment and collective action. Listening carefully to their concerns and reflections ensures that solutions are not just protective, but also respectful, inclusive, and empowering.

Turning Ideas into Action

Children's recommendations have reached far beyond the workshops. They were shared with tech companies such as Meta, TikTok, Canva, and Google, as well as at key international and regional forums and high-level policy discussions, including the ASEAN ICT Forum on Online Child Protection. CRC Asia continues to collaborate with partners across the region through research, advocacy, campaigns, and capacity-building to advance children's rights in the digital environment.

Children shared their stories, worries, and hopes through words, drawings, and creative outputs. These contributions are a powerful reminder of why listening is so important. Every child's voice adds depth to our understanding and should guide how platforms and policies are designed to be safer, fairer, and more empowering. These shared thoughts show that children are thoughtful and discerning users of digital tools. They weigh curiosity, social trends, personal interests, privacy, safety, and guidance when engaging online. Listening to their voices ensures platforms, policies, and interventions are centered on children's needs and rights.

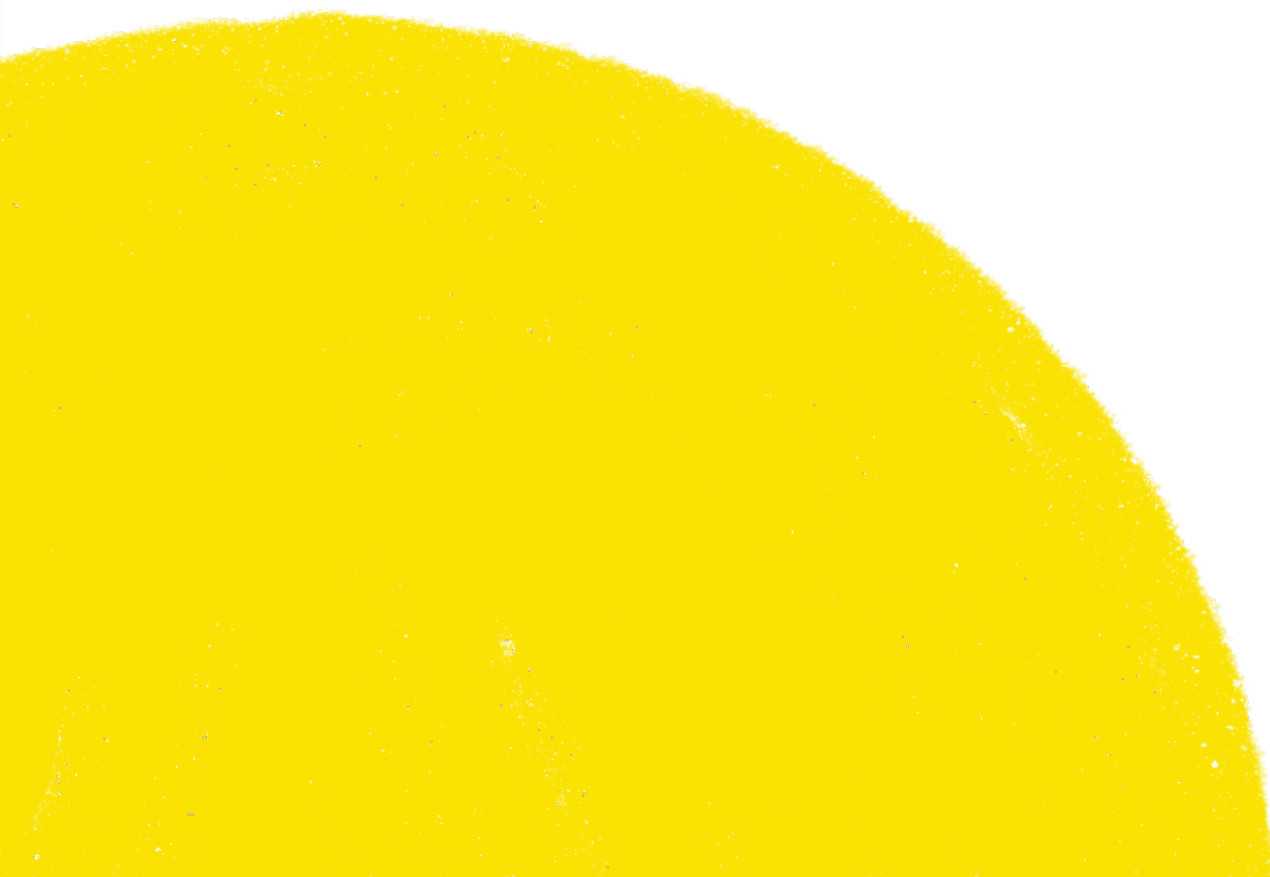
We look forward to working with governments, UN agencies, tech companies, and child rights networks that share our vision of a digital future that is safe, inclusive, and empowering for all children in Asia.



Partner with CRC Asia

CRC Asia invites partners to join in advancing children's rights in the digital environment—through collaborative research, joint advocacy, campaigns, and capacity-building across the Asia-Pacific region.

Together, let us ensure that the online world remains for and with children in Asia.



LISTEN TO

CHILDREN

CRC Asia is a network of child rights organizations working together to be a strong voice for child rights in the region by leading in strengthening child rights movements, promoting innovative programs, and advocating better policies for and with children in Asia.

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