



Fight Against Violence Against Children in Digital Games: An Example from the Partnership Network

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Although there has been an increase in internet use and in risks on digital platforms faced by both adults and children, it may be difficult to say that this is a new phenomenon. However, rapid transformation of digital tools and platforms requires us to transform as well our understanding of human/child rights and our evaluation of potential risks on these rights. Researches in the field shows that children are increasingly using digital tools and platforms to learn, communicate, participate, play, study and for creative work. This situation leads to the need for civil society organizations (CSOs) such as Partnership Network for Preventing Violence Against Children to rapidly identify a given problem, conduct analysis and act.

The work of the Partnership Network focuses on monitoring, reporting violence against children and develop, advocate for recommendations for the betterment of the child protection system. While the Network works on specific settings such as institutions (care, detention, justice, etc), family and school settings, workplace and public spaces; violence against children online has been mostly addressed by the member CSOs individually.

When, on December 2017, a member raised concerns about an awarded Youtube video that contained sexist curse words and elements of violence against children, the process of expanding the work field of the Network has begun. Following such notification made by the member, the Network was able to get organized around a common issue at an unfamiliar speed, achieve a tangible result in the short run and initiate a work that could be used in the long run.

This whole process can be described as having two components with short and long-term goals. The short-term goal was to raise awareness of the content creator, his followers, awarding organization and of the society in general on the potential negative effects of such content and on the need to avoid awarding such videos. The long-term goal on the other hand was to create a tool that would facilitate rapid and consistent future actions of the Network in similar situations by strengthening its knowledge-base.

The internal discussion of the Network on this matter placed emphasis on not contradicting with freedom of expression and avoiding actions that would breed into a censoring culture.

In this context, Network members have communicated both with the content creator and with representatives of the awarding organization and expressed their concerns with a constructive language rather than a complaint-oriented approach. As a result, content creator chose to discontinue the video and the organization withdrew the award.



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The objective of the study envisaged for the long term was to develop a strategy paper that would be used to identify and prevent various types of risks and forms of violence in the “New Media”, which consists of digital tools and platforms such as Youtube, Facebook, Reddit, Twitter and Instagram. Issue tackled by this paper was on how to address the content that includes elements of violence against children created by individuals on new media. One of the debates that shaped the paper was about the lack of quality research in the area that leads to emotive assumptions of harmful effects of the internet overtaking the public debate on the issue. However, digital tools can also have quite positive effects on children. It was agreed that the prohibition based approach would not be favored, as it would be in contradiction with children’s freedoms.

All these decisions and consultation process mentioned above were in line with the Partnership Network’s work culture, inspired by the Participatory Action Research / Learning (PAR/L) method. Cooperation, systematic learning and impact-oriented-approach is at the core of PAR/L. In this context, the problem was identified together and the steps to be taken by the Network were decided in a participatory way in line with the self-assessment of weakness and strengths of the Network itself, and finally the knowledge-base needed for future actions was constructed jointly. All these steps have been evaluated while taking them, always in view of creating an impact.

Assessing this entire process and results as a whole by the taking into consideration all other forms of violence against children that exists online (sexual abuse and exploitation, bullying, hate speech etc) and all actors, institutions, organizations who exercise violence and who fail to protect children from violence online; the importance of self criticism becomes more evident than ever.