



Youth Development in Digital Economy

info@shilpasayura.org TP : 0812 575759

131, Dawulagala Rd, Pilimalatalawa, Kandy, Sri Lanka

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Respect Girls on Internet Interim Report

February 1st - October 31st (Phase I & II)

Community Based Cyber Harassment Protection.

Respect Girls on Internet project address Harassment of teenage girls on social networks – including extreme cases of self-harm - is a growing problem in Sri Lanka due to an increase in their use among teenagers. In most cases young people are withdrawing from social life and digital society; the physical and/or psychological victimization affects their education and employment. Although national laws and procedures are in place for protection, there is a general lack of awareness, advice and resources available – in the local language - for victims to seek justice. The project will create digital content in the local language to raise awareness about the problem, advocate for safe and respectful online discourse, and train youth. One output will be a Cyber Privacy eHandbook for those new to the Internet, as well as for teachers and parents. A group of young people will learn how to create short films, digital posters, stories, and comics available online to encourage peer-to-peer awareness. This online network will expand to the real world with short film exhibitions and awareness raising exercises in schools. In long term all content created from the project will be distributed freely under Creative Commons 3.0 online allowing for wider sharing, replication and adaptation across the world.

A description of the activities undertaken by the project during the reporting period

1. Creating the Local Language Cyber Privacy e Handbook

The Cyber Privacy and Security Hand Book created through research and published on <http://respect-girls-on-internet.blogspot.com/>

The content was translated to Sinhala and Tamil Languages and being updated on

<http://respect-girls-on-internet-sinhala.blogspot.com/>

<http://respect-girls-on-internet-tamil.blogspot.com/>

The handbook is being shared on social networks

2. Training of 30 youth in digital media creation using

36 Youth trained in media creation on Adobe Youth Voices Curriculum

<http://shilpasayura.org/ayv/course/> enabled learning of photography, graphics design, Animation , documentary and short film production and publishing on social networks.

The training program successfully conducted from March to August 2015.

The training program Included class room sessions, field workshops and media creation group work and online training

Partnering with Youth Empowerment Society (YES), A youth group founded by Shilpa Sayura in 2011.

<http://www.kandy-youth.org/> and

AYV Digital Rainbow project supported by Adobe, Microsoft with software

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/DigitalRainbow/>

Youth Participated from different regions.

Youth Empowerment Society (YES) – 20

Madirigiriya Telecentre – 04

Lahugala Telecentre – 04

Madagama Telecentre – 04

Colombo - 04

3. Creation Facebook Page and community forums.

Respect Girls on Internet Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/respectgirlsoninternet/?fref=ts>

The page has received 7462 likes

4. The facebook group engaged in advocacy and support for victims

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/912087742135688/>

This group membership is grown to 319 members

5. Online and Online and offline advertising and promotion

Short films and photos and graphics produced by youth related to the cyber harassment were shared on social networks, exhibited at youth gatherings, seminars and creating a wider community awareness. and social action to increase network to 5000+ members. We will publish a case study based on M & E to share the project for replication.

6. Awareness Building

Project promoted to Non-profit organization, Telecasters, Schools and government authorities sending 100 letters

1. Discussion of the performance to date against the goals of the project

The project made partnerships with youth organization YES and picked the youth to be trained. The youth trained in media creation produced several digital posters, graphics and short films. The content were shared on Respect Girls Facebook page. The facebook page generated 7462 likes so far. The e handbook on cyber safety and security shared on social networks has generated community awareness and interest. Among the creations were "Fake Post" Short film supported by Cert.lk and LK domain registry has reached large number of youth creating awareness and empathy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhQU6sSFEHg>

One of the key groups focused by the project were victims of cyber harassment. Most of them were girls who were afraid of telling parents or teachers of their problem. In many cases they were harassed by their former boy friend's by posting private photos on facebook. The community driven support system enabled on respect girls facebook page helped them to seek support. 21 major cases on breach of privacy, 11 cases of hacked passwords were successfully solved by youth trained with expert support. In many other cases it was enough to give advice on how to report such content to facebook.

One of key weaknesses of victims was lack of awareness of privacy tools and knowledge on local support systems. The project making awareness online and at youth events educated young people and teachers on online safety and protection systems. We also found lack of safety measures among young people in using mobile phone, which they often share with peers. There were cases of stealing private content from friends and using it to bully them. We also found cases of peers harassing peers with bad comments, posting of photos and videos that hurt the victims. We are not sure that all cases are intentional. One problems found among young people was lack of knowledge on handling online conflicts. Silence has been a major barrier to apprehend the culprits.

In two occasions the project engaged the community in fighting of two mass cyber harassments cases related to two girls, and similar events did not occur so far. The project has formed an information community on Sri Lanka facebook space who promote cyber safety and security awareness and advocacy with content created by the project. The school ICT curriculums include internet use however lacks content on cyber safety and privacy. Several teachers have become victims including an ICT teachers who's password was hacked and emails were sent by someone. There is a major need to include Cyber Safety in school curriculums.

One of the weakness found in the legal support system was lack of knowledge of internet, social networks and cyber safety and privacy knowledge among police officers. The special units created on women and child affairs at local police stations lacked staff with knowledge and access to internet connectivity and resources. A person reporting requires travel to Colombo, making it difficult for rural parents to peruse cases even with adequate evidence. The legal is not friendly at local levels, hence most cases are kept unreported while culprits continue their harassments.

The approach of the project was to promote empathy towards girls online to consider her as their own sister or mother. This concept has matched the Sri Lankan culture where women enjoy much respect in society. However the anonymous has created vulnerability of young girls on social networks.

Lessons learned and disappointments

most young people newly connecting to internet are unaware of cyber safety and privacy mechanisms and tools. Most people getting their first smart phone connect to social networks easily and tend to misuse due to lack of awareness of related laws and counter effects.

The most victims we encountered were teenagers. Therefore it's important to create an education environment that is aware of cyber safety and encouraging students, teachers, parents and community members to discuss cyber harassment and to report it when they become aware of it. Young people engaging in cyber harassment due to lack of awareness need to be dealt carefully as it could result their breakdown as result of punishments will mark them forever as cyber bullies.

The school ICT curriculums include internet use however lacks content on cyber safety and privacy , hence Cyber Safety and Privacy content needed to be included in School ICT curriculums.

In Sri Lanka mobile internet booming at a fast it's necessary to make awareness among students, teachers and parents as well as public of cyber safety and privacy issues. The content in local language need to be disseminated in various channels to increase awareness increases to develop local communities who are committed to prevent all forms of harassment of girls on internet.

Our experiences of online safety and security increased with this project and consider community driven empathy based initiatives can help create a safe and secure internet for young girls to enjoy information, access and opportunities equally. Availability of community based support mechanisms, although informal , make convenient for victims to get support and development of a respectful online culture in society.

2. Any changes in the design of the project and implications for future work
The project shall continue as planned without changes to design. The Phase II 8th-12th month shall finalize Sinhala and Tamil e Cyber Safety and Security Handbook and published for the online and offline.
3. **Any additional information that would be useful to the Internet Society community for purposes of an interim report.**

We are seeking possibilities of expanding the project experience to reach wider audience using mobile internet, developing mobile content, application that will strengthen community driven empathy based online safety and security in Sri Lanka as it seems to be a growing problem. We seek partners to help us in the process of up-scaling.

Photos from the project activities





















