

# DATA FOR THE DIGITAL PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

## THE NEED

The online exploitation of children has increased dramatically in recent years and has been exacerbated by specific enabling factors provided by technology, social media, and digital service providers.<sup>1</sup> Since 2005, abuse content reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has increased exponentially by 15,000%. Moreover, the targets of abuse are increasingly younger, and girls are disproportionately targeted. More recently, children and predators locked down by the COVID pandemic resulted in a 200% increase in activity.<sup>2</sup>



In today's digital world, the ability to effectively respond to child protection needs is increasingly contingent on data. Yet, the agencies who seek to protect children and minimize harm often lack the appropriate tools and technology to share timely information with each other, their implementing partners, as well as affected communities and governments. As a result, response efforts are almost always far from optimized. While a wide range of data sources may exist, these data sets are proprietary and confidential in nature, which leads to siloed efforts that perpetuate inefficiencies in response activities. This presents an opportunity for improved coordination, lower costs, and reduced risk that can lead to more efficient and impactful responses.

Organizations focused on child protection recognize the need to develop a common data model and sector standards that set clear and consistent definitions and ways of handling data. However, individual organizations lack the funding and resources needed to sustain activities that can convene enough representation within the sector to create a truly common standard. Moreover, off-the-shelf digital information systems (e.g., content or case management systems) rarely meet 100% of organizations' needs, which leads to customizations and unique variations per system, further degrading the potential for interoperability or commonality.

## THE SOLUTION

Organizations responding to child protection needs must be able to exchange data and trusted information with each other and local governments. Based on our expertise and experience in data standards for the humanitarian sector, NetHope can create an open data model that aligns with sector standards and serves as a common language for the NGO sector and other key stakeholders, such as law enforcement, local government, and technology partners. This model can then be included in other public models, such as the [Common Data Model](#).

Working in partnership with NetHope Member organizations and community stakeholders, NetHope will develop, implement, and incorporate a Common Data Model (CDM) for the Digital Protection of Children into commercial solutions, with the aim of adopting into nonprofit workflows. To do this, NetHope will work with an active coalition to advance key stakeholders through four interconnected phases:

- **PHASE I | Conduct learning exercises and form coalition:** Identify key stakeholders to document the current state of actions and key barriers encountered, to be published in a report.
- **PHASE II | Create a CDM for the Digital Protection of Children:** Work to align stakeholder data standards, beginning with key focus areas defined by coalition NGOs and expand with other key stakeholders, including

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/09/28/us/child-sex-abuse.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/online-child-exploitation-flourishes-investigators-struggle/>

technology partners. Publish a common data and process model.

- **PHASE III and IV | Embed the CDM for the Digital Protection of Children:** Work to engineer reference and data models into vendor solutions that are offered in commercial products to be procured by NetHope Members and other NGOs focused on child protection. Publish a socialized and implemented CDM.

Currently, the coalition is in Phase I learning exercises to understand how we use data, digital resources, and information reporting to protect children from exploitation and harm. Through this program, our aim is to develop a more strongly coordinated, well-informed ecosystem for child protection that leads responses driven by timely and accurate information. As we move forward, NetHope seeks additional resources and expertise to build on this work. The coalition is expected to grow to include additional NetHope Members through October 2022 and include other key stakeholders by early 2023.

NetHope is well positioned to address gaps in data standards because we know that our Members achieve more digital change faster through our network than if organizations are left to do it on their own. Serving as a bridge between the nonprofit sector and global technology companies, NetHope has proven expertise leveraging technology to achieve greater mission-focused impact and scale across the sector.

As this work grows and evolves, we welcome opportunities for partnership. For more information and to get involved in this cutting-edge work, contact [nicholas.kerastas@nethope.org](mailto:nicholas.kerastas@nethope.org).

## PARTICIPATING NETHOPE MEMBERS



## PARTICIPATING NON-MEMBERS



## ABOUT NETHOPE

Working at the intersection of international NGOs and global technology corporations, NetHope is a membership organization currently serving 65 leading humanitarian relief, development, and conservation organizations around the world. NetHope empowers its members to collaborate, innovate, and leverage the full potential of data, information, and communications technology to support their work in 190 countries. NetHope and its members partner with 80+ of the world's leading technology firms to create innovative solutions to existing and emerging challenges, and to reimagine how technology can improve our world.