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INDIA'S **1ST** INTERNET HOTLINE
TO REPORT ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IMAGERY

Rationale:

The number of internet users in India is second only to China. Currently, just over 20% of Indian citizens have access to the net. Of this, 37% of users are below the age of 15 years of age.¹ With a proliferation of cost-effective technology like smart phones and internet recharge packs, these numbers are set to rise.

However, as the internet becomes more and more widespread, the number of cases of online sexual abuse of children is seeing a worrying spike. Parents, guardians, civil society and even policy makers are increasingly concerned about the online vulnerability of children. Of prime concern is what to do if pornographic image/video of a child is found on the internet.

There are no accurate numbers available to quantify the phenomenon of child sexual abuse images and videos in India. Trends and patterns internationally, however, suggest that along with growth of the internet, the number of child sexual abuse images available online has grown from a mere 45,000 in 2002 to a staggering 24 million in 2013.²

Way back in 2007 when the internet was making inroads into the mainstream, the Government of India report on Child Sexual Abuse found that 4.46% of 12000 children surveyed had been photographed in the nude. Between 2013 and 2014, there has been a 100% increase in the number of cases filed under 'publication and transmission of obscene' material, including child sexual abuse material.³

¹ Mckinsey & Edelweiss Research

² National Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, USA

³ National Crime Records Bureau, India

The kinds of cases being reported include those of Travelling Sex Offenders creating and uploading child sexual abuse images, children's personal photos and videos being leaked, rape videos being created to blackmail and silence the victim, among others. Organizations working on child sexual abuse claim that almost every case they see increasingly is used either to groom or to blackmail a child.

Even as cyber watchdogs are being trained and prepared to deal with this brave new world of technology, the global and almost abstract nature of the internet creates challenges for the police to follow through with investigation and prosecution. At a policy level, there is friction between the need to preserve the freedom of the internet versus the need to protect our children.

Against this backdrop, there is a need for an effective approach that is global, self-regulatory and multi-stakeholder - one that involves and gives agency to all participants. It needs to work closely and in co-ordination with the technology industry, the government and law enforcement, retaining open access for any and every internet user.

The Hotline:

In September 2016, Prerana's Aarambh India Initiative working with UK-based Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) will introduce India's first internet hotline for reporting child sexual abuse images and videos on the internet. The hotline will enable citizens of India to report child sexual abuse images and videos in a safe and anonymous environment.

IWF runs the most successful hotline in the world aimed at removing child pornography. In 2014, IWF successfully dealt with over 31,000 illegal images of children. It is also one of the fastest watchdogs, responding quickly to reported instances of online child pornography. Over 84% of reported webpages were removed within 10 days. IWF's strength is due to the fact that it represents an industry self-regulatory body, funded and supported by 120 of the largest internet companies globally. It also works closely with international law enforcement.

The India hotline will be hosted on aarambhindia.org, India's first online resource portal focused on the issue of child sexual abuse prevention. [Aarambhindia.org](http://aarambhindia.org) was launched by Prerana and Hong Kong-based ADM Capital Foundation in 2014 and is the largest network of (governmental and non-governmental) organizations and individuals actively working on child protection in India.

For India to successfully tackle the problem of child sexual abuse images and videos, Aarambh India is putting in place a number of key partnerships with law enforcement, government and internet industry.

Reporting online Child Sexual Abuse:

- ✓ When any individual comes across an image or video on the internet which they feel shows the sexual abuse of children, they can report the url to the hotline hosted on aarambhindia.org.
- ✓ Reporting is done via a simple linear 5 step online form in which the individual is also given the choice of reporting anonymously.
- ✓ The reports are confidential and are assessed by the expert team of IWF analysts based in the UK. The criminality and severity of the content is decided against UK law and IWF remit.
- ✓ If the reported content is found to be criminal, IWF will determine the location from where it was uploaded and is being hosted. IWF will contact the hosting company and relevant law enforcement and initiate the process to remove the content.
- ✓ Meanwhile, the offending URL will be immediately added to IWF's url blocking list thus disrupting any further access to the content until it is removed. It is the most comprehensive and updated blocking lists implemented by most major internet companies.
- ✓ Once the content is removed, the content is assigned a hash - a unique number generated from the data in the content. This will be used to identify, remove copies of the image/video and prevent future uploads.
- ✓ Depending on the requirement, Aarambh India will provide assistance in the investigation of the case and rehabilitation of the child victim and family.

A Vision for our Future:

The Elimination of Online Child Sexual Images

**For more information on the hotline please
write in to us @ info@aarambhindia.org
or call us @ +91-8652625505**