Terms of Reference

Consultant to conduct landscape analysis, systematization and evaluation of ECPAT International’s initiative to address the gender dimensions of child safety in online gaming environments.

Organisational background

ECPAT International is a global network of civil society organisations working together for the elimination of the sexual exploitation of children (SEC) in all its manifestations. This includes in the context of exploitation of children in prostitution, child sexual exploitation in digital environments, the sale and trafficking of children for sexual purposes, and the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. The ECPAT Network currently consists of 125 members working as independent organisations or coalitions in 104 countries.

The ECPAT International Secretariat (EIS) coordinates the global work of the network and is based in Bangkok, Thailand. The Secretariat designs and implements global and regional initiatives and undertakes programming, campaigning, advocacy and research to facilitate network initiatives.

Context of the assignment

In 2022, ECPAT began exploring the positive potential of online gaming communities to support children and young people, in particular boys to seek advice and support in the face of sexual abuse and exploitation. We began with the hypothesis derived from available data that: a) pervasive and persistent gender norms in the physical world as well as online heightened obstacles for boys to get advice about sexual matters, disclose abuse and seek support; b) the type of engagement and community existing in online gaming communities also offered significant potential to support an adaptive response.

This initiative brought together the unique expertise of ECPAT in the sexual abuse and exploitation of boys, and sexual exploitation in and through digital environments. We wanted to explore our hypothesis with experts from across the sectors, with the ultimate goal of identifying and developing practical tools for the gaming sector and civil society. This resulted in a series of 3 expert roundtables held in London in 2022, New York in 2023 and Seoul in 2024. With different participants each time, the confidential roundtables brought together experts from academia, civil society and the online gaming and social media industry to explore opportunities, identify gaps and shape a framework to leverage the positive power of gaming to help children suffering sexual abuse and exploitation.

Objectives of the assignment

ECPAT is seeking a consultant to partner with us in systematizing the knowledge, contacts and ideas generated through ECPAT work so far. The consultant will identify, connect and find synergy with similar existing initiatives across the world and help ECPAT craft a roadmap for leading the development of a child sensitive gender-focused help-seeking framework for the online gaming world.
To this end, ECPAT is seeking a consultant with experience of the online gaming world to co-design and guide ECPAT’s transition to the next phase of this initiative.

Scope of the assignment

The scope of the assignment is child safety and the impact of gender norms and stereotypes in the context of online gaming, with a particular focus on sexual harm (abuse, exploitation, harassment) involving adolescent boys (teenagers, 13 – 18 years old). The scope is global; however, parameters will be agreed with the consultant as part of the co-creation of the final methodology.

Deliverables

1. Database of the key relevant stakeholders, including contacts generated so far through the initiative.
2. Landscape mapping of child safety and gender-related initiatives in the fields of game design, trust and safety, public policy, civil society programming, and academic research/collaborations.
3. List of key events and opportunities for engagement from April 2024 – December 2025.
4. Draft roadmap for the next phase of the initiative (max. 20 pages).

Proposed Methodology

Working in close collaboration with the ECPAT leads on sexual exploitation of boys and child protection and technology, the selected consultant will propose a methodology, structure and timeline for the deliverables. At a minimum, the methodology is expected to include:

1. Literature review: Short (max 2 page) overview of open-source research including academic, government, private sector, civil society and media literature relating to child safety, wellbeing and gender in the context of online gaming. Review will be in English.
2. Landscape mapping: Mapping of the key actors and initiatives that directly or indirectly relevant to the topic of interest.
3. Key Stakeholder Interviews: A series of 20 key informant (KI) interviews lasting 45 minutes. KIs will be online gaming companies (at least 10), from academia, civil society, and social media companies, international organizations, and governments. Regional balance should be ensured as far as possible and include experts from at least four regions of the world including East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America.

Consultant profile

- Demonstrated research experience including work on similar assignments.
- Proven knowledge of the online gaming and/or social media sector, with knowledge of children’s rights and child safety in digital environments considered a strong asset.
- An established network with relevant stakeholders.
- Advanced drafting, writing and editing skills in English.
• Flexibility and availability for regular progress check-ins with the two primary contacts at ECPAT, based in Amsterdam and Bangkok.

Management and reporting process

The Consultant will report to the Head of Child Protection and Technology, working in close cooperation with the ECPAT Global Boys Initiative for the design and delivery of the study.

Duration of the Assignment

The assignment is expected to last 15-20 days distributed over the delivery timeline.

Delivery timeline

1 April – 15 May 2024

How to apply

Please submit a CV, Cover Letter, Financial Proposal, sample of previous similar work, and a short outline of the methodological approach to vacancy@ecpat.org.

ECPAT International is committed to keeping children safe. The selection process reflects our commitment to the safeguarding of children. Selected candidates will be required to sign and adhere to our Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct.

Deadline to apply

23:59 CET on Friday 15 March 2024.