

Enabling Gaming for Good

A regional dialogue to map the landscape for producing games with social impact

📅 June 19, 2026 📍 Asia Pacific University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

✿ Why this dialogue matters

The stakes for game development have evolved. Online games today create an impact on children and youth beyond simple fun and entertainment: They support players in learning values, connecting with people, seeking help, and building personal and cultural identities. For this reason, creating games now inevitably touches upon factors such as content standards, regulations, child safety guidance, and diversity and inclusion principles.

Because no single industry can navigate these alone, the 'Gaming for Good' Dialogue served as a starting-point initiative by ECPAT International that sought different perspectives on what it truly means to create an environment that enables online games to have positive impacts on safety and gender norms transformation. This step was made possible with the support of The Caring Masculinity Fund, by Equimundo.



✿ Who was in the room



27 attendees

representing civil society, gaming communities, private sector, academia, government and attached agencies

Countries present:



✿ What we've gathered

'Positive impact' from online games can be delivered through different aspects of the game experience. Many games are intentionally designed around meaningful narratives and representations of social issues, cultures, and values. But impact is not exclusive to story-based content.

Other factors that also contribute to positive play experiences are: game mechanics (e.g., team-up or cooperative mode), community (e.g., engaging with streamers or other players), safety features (e.g., moderation, help-seeking pathways, age verification), and off-platform support (e.g., family-facing resources).



Generally, design goals that promote child safety and challenge gender norms are relevant to all stakeholders. But in practical terms, varying considerations spread across different function areas can create barriers to their realisation.



In examining these more closely during the dialogue, three interconnected lenses emerged:

Building games as a standalone product

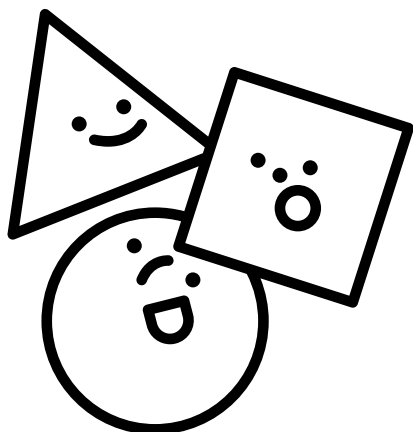
- Primarily concerned with creating a fun and engaging game
- Aims for commercial distribution in most cases
- Bound by local regulations, app store or distributor ratings and other legal standards

Building games as a tool for online safety and gender norms awareness

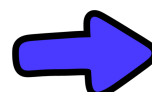
- Uses games to convey messages about values and behaviors
- Translates complex issues into game elements
- Actively shifts narratives and improves representation of diverse identities
- Usually produces serious games or educational games

Building games with awareness of wider social dynamics

- Recognises the role and impact of communities, streaming platforms, and global matchmaking
- Focuses their impact less through the core content, and more through safety tools, mechanics, or social features
- Includes at least some behavioral standards or platform safeguards to protect players



When the different treatments of game creation became clear, these key learnings then stood out ...



Exclusively or narrowly focusing on one approach to game building can only achieve a limited form of success and impact.

Focusing on the game product in isolation
↳ unknowingly creates a blindspot where safety risks can happen 

Focusing on the educational concept only
↳ creates serious games that are not "fun" enough to gain visibility and retain player engagement 



A game that worked diligently to create age-appropriate, gender transformative content

↳ may still be negatively received by a gaming community, possibly because of existing social norms and cultural dynamics

There is no "perfect" game product that could cover all forms of positive impact. This is due to the complex ecosystem where games exist.

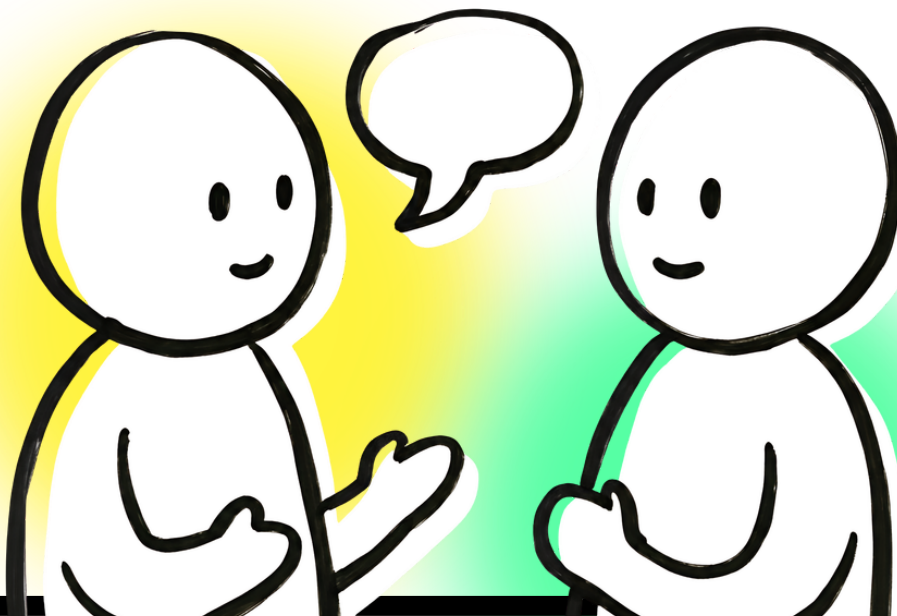
Even so, every game has the potential to contribute positive impact in at least one dimension.

There remains a real gap in technical knowledge and mismatch of language between different sectors – one that could be bridged with constructive collaboration.

Not having a proper avenue to learn and understand others' reasoning, processes, limitations, and other considerations

↳ can limit everyone's potential to contribute to the solution. 

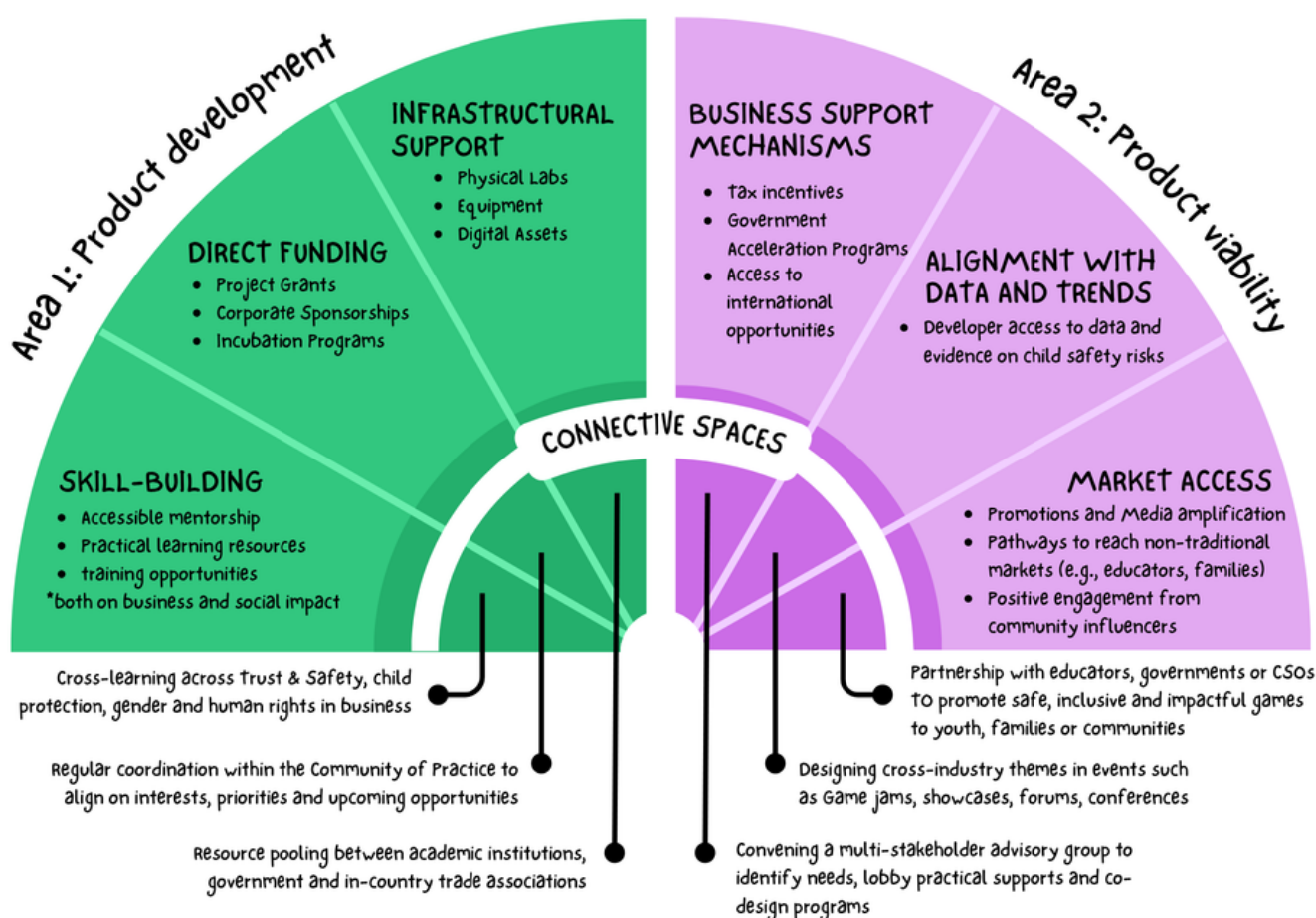
When different actors open up their processes, language, tools and products to make room for others, including children and youth, to have a meaningful role and voice, it expands the scope of impact.



✿ Where action is needed

Finding a sustainable model for the development of social impact games remains the most critical need for the majority of sectors. Based on the discussion, **enablers can manifest in varied and complementing ways**, either supporting product development directly or improving the wider environment or market.

These enablers also point to the **connective spaces** – key opportunities where sectors could combine expertise and resources, to improve integrations and exchange of knowledge between the fields of game development education, gender and child safety, business, and policy.



**We've learned a lot.
Now, we have to
take this forward**



This dialogue represented an important step of an ongoing conversation. The discussions demonstrated that creating safer and more inclusive gaming experiences requires sustained collaboration across sectors, with each stakeholder bringing complementary expertise, resources, and perspectives.

The next phase of this work is about turning these five insights into practical partnerships and products:

Finding common ground

Game developers, civil society organisations, researchers, policymakers, and educators often **work toward similar outcomes but with different language and processes**. Creating regular opportunities for exchange can build greater mutual understanding, defining common values and allowing stakeholders to **identify realistic ways to integrate child safety and gender inclusion** in and beyond game development while recognising fun, play, commercial, technical, and regulatory realities.

Increasing leadership from industry

Gaming companies have an important opportunity to shape the future of safer and more inclusive online play for children and young people. Beyond adopting safety features, companies can embrace non-traditional approaches, working with academia and civil society organisations **earlier in product and policy development**.

Strengthening donor support for change

Many organisations have the expertise to address child safety and gender equality, while gaming companies have the technical capabilities to build fun and playable products. However, opportunities to combine these strengths are often constrained by limited resources. **Donors and government agencies can support collaborative partnerships by investing in innovation, learning exchanges, gaming research, and development of practical tools.**

● Ensuring children and young people are part of the solution

- Children and young people's **lived experiences provide critical insights** into how games are played, connections formed and how online communities work for them. **Above all,**
- **they can tell us what makes safety measures effective and accessible.**

Meaningful participation extends beyond consultation to include co-designing, playtesting, and feedback looping. Approaching this with a gender and intersectional lens means recognising that **safety and accessibility can mean different things to different children**. Boys, girls, non-binary youth and those from marginalised communities need to be able to shape digital narratives and products to align with their identities and contexts, especially when it comes to help-seeking and risk mitigation.

● Strengthening regional cooperation

- The technical, cultural, and regulatory context for Asia and the Pacific is moving at a different pace than other regions. There is high appetite and need to strengthen region-specific engagements and the community of practice, including through APAC-focused gatherings and interventions. This enables stakeholders to continue building on emerging practices, in a way that reflects the challenges and priorities of the region – which can also support the case for accessing targeted funding and opportunities.

This idea is also relevant and replicable for other regions, highlighting the opportunity to connect the fields of game development, child protection, gender equality and academia, and create stronger pathways for inclusive global innovation.

Want to work together to build safer online gaming environments?

Let's connect: gaming@ecpat.org



**ENDING THE SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION
OF CHILDREN**