Not for Profit Consortium Paves Way for Cyber-Safety for Kids
LEADS, Save the Children International and World Vision Lanka broaden its reach and impact in ending online violence

12th June 2020; LEADS, Save the Children International, and World Vision Lanka, as non-profit organisations working with vulnerable communities in Sri Lanka, have come together as a consortium to broaden its reach and impact in ending online violence and exploitation against children in Sri Lanka. Recently, the consortium joined hands with the Ministry of Education and the State Ministry of Women and Child Development, Pre-School & Primary Education, School Infrastructure & Education Services to launch an online learning programme to address the importance of cyber-safety among school-going children. This online learning programme **is available at www.cybersafety.lk**, free of charge for all students in all three languages.

The internet is an ideal learning hub for kids; be it for school, playing games, or even to simply keep in touch with friends. Unfortunately, the internet is also a hub for paedophiles, online predators, identity thieves, and sources of other jaded content. Therefore, it is essential that young users be made aware of how to use the internet productively and be safe online. This is rapidly becoming a vital requirement as the lifestyles of most adults and children are now closely intertwined with the internet. INTERPOL and child protection agencies worldwide have found a rapid increase of online sexual exploitation of children during the global pandemic and the WeProtect Global Alliance warns that the lockdown situation has exacerbated existing drivers of online child sexual exploitation and other types of violence against children online.

Most children are self-assured that they are aware of how to be safe online. However, they may not always be aware of the consequences of their actions online, which may result in them facing many dangers. These dangers may materialise in the form of cyberbullies, paedophiles, and stalkers, who prey on young users with the aim of exploiting children or to gain financial or other benefits. Due to the swift growth in the use of the internet (post-quarantine) by children around the island, the consortium felt the pressing need to instruct children on how to be safe online. Towards this, an interactive online course was developed by the consortium which will be freely available for all children.

The interactive course covers many key areas, giving children a basic understanding of **the Internet and its many uses, how to discriminate when sharing personal information**, practicing caution, when sharing images, standing up against **cyberbullying; identifying phishing scams and other forms of online thefts and on how to be responsible cyber citizens.** The course is compiled with animated briefs and real-life scenarios so that, the learning experience will provide students with a 360 degree understanding of how to be safe on the internet. The interactive online course will be made available free of charge to all students on **the E-Thaksalawa educational website hosted by the Ministry of Education in English, Sinhalese and Tamil**. In order to ensure ease of access to young students, the course is compatible with mobile phones, tablets, and personal computers.

If you are a parent or teacher, you too can contribute towards the safety of your children and students by registering them for this online course and ensuring that they are aware of all there is to know about the world of the internet, along with its online dangers, so that they are equipped to make better and more informed decisions for themselves.

This project is launched and initiated by LEADS, Save the Children International, and World Vision Lanka with the support of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and Social Services.

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