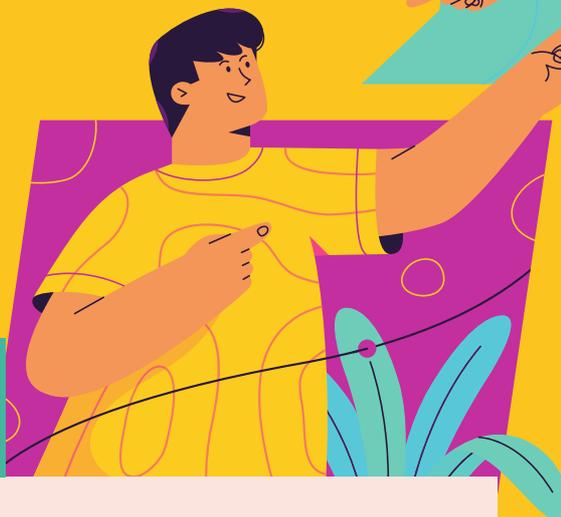# Internet Society
India Mumbai Chapter

Women in Technology Leadership Speaker Series

PROTECTING CHILDREN ONLINE

DR. TAMALI SEN GUPTA

PRINCIPAL, TSG LEGAL and INDEPENDENT BOARD DIRECTOR

30 April 2022

11 am IST

Protecting Children Online: Report

About the Women in Technology Leadership Series

Women in Technology Leadership (WITL) series is an initiative by the Internet Society(ISOC) India Mumbai Chapter to celebrate the women who have been creating a mark for themselves in the technology leadership space. As the only all women-leadership driven Internet Society chapter, ISOC Mumbai envisions creating an empowered, innovative and inclusive community that can help leverage the power of existing and emerging Internet-based technologies to make an impact. Aligning with this vision of ISOC India Mumbai to further promote women's leadership in the technology sector, the chapter organised its fifth webinar in the WITL Speaker Series on the theme "Protecting Children Online".

About the Speaker

Dr Tamali Sen Gupta serves as the Principal, TSG Legal Pvt Ltd and Independent Director on Boards. She has over 36 years of experience in law and has been an active voice for child safety, having served as a part of the three-member expert group set up under the Ministry of Women and Child Development on child protection. She has also served as a Board Director for many prominent organisations including HFCL, SREI Infrastructure Limited, Aria hotels Pvt. Ltd, Sony Pictures Entertainment Films India among others. Dr. Sen Gupta is a widely published author and has been an invited speaker at CASBAA, FICCI Frames, IBA, WCD and India Today.

PROTECTING CHILDREN ONLINE: WEBINAR REPORT

The revolution called the Internet has affected the lives of everybody around the world including children. Children go on the Internet to explore the world beyond theirs, which could not have been possible without the technology present in their pockets. But seldom do we talk about children's safety online, despite the fact that there is the presence of an entire dark web on the other side of the Internet. To further talk about this aspect of the Internet, the Internet Society India Mumbai Chapter invited Dr Tamali Sen Gupta to discuss the various legal, technological and societal challenges that Internet can pose to child safety online.

The moderator for the session chapter advisor and volunteer Prateek Pathak began by asking Dr Gupta to share her foray into the area of child rights. Dr Gupta shared that she has been an active voice for children's safety for the last many decades. She started getting involved in this issue in 2004 when she helped the government to draft an act around the Children's Rights Protection Act. Through this, a three-member committee was set up to interview around 15000 children. The results that were analysed were terrifying, as the committee found that around 5000 children wanted to be rescued from their very homes. The studies also realised that this abuse was somehow being justified by the families under the garb of patriarchy, misogyny and entitlement. Through the efforts of this study, the POSCO act was passed. However, according to Dr Gupta, there is still a huge gap which needs to be mended.

Dr Gupta further mentioned that now with the introduction of the Internet, there is suddenly an additional risk to the children, as children have no legal rights and it is very easy to victimise them in this case.

Being online, children are not only susceptible to dangerous games like the Blue Whale, but they are also interacting with people outside their reach and sharing their information with them. Hence, they become vulnerable to the crutches of traffickers or other dangerous elements.

Responding to the moderator's question on whose responsibility it is to balance child rights in an online age- Parents, Schools, Internet companies or governments? Dr Gupta said that there is a generation of parents who have not understood the technology or the risk associated with the same. There has also been an increase in massive bullying through social media, affecting both genders. The schools and teachers are trying to help however even they need to be equipped with the proper training to tackle difficult issues of law and order.

When asked about whether there is a need for re-thinking child rights in the digital age and are there any frameworks that Internet Governance based organisations like ISOC can imbibe? Dr Gupta reflected that the solution to the problem is difficult. There is no one solution and the Indian mindset makes it more difficult to help find a solution for this problem as there is a lack of understanding and a lack of belief that something like this is even happening. However, a lot of organisations are working on solutions reigniting hope, though it is still a long way.

Dr Gupta further added that children's rights need to be also made human rights and although children are not considered a "vote bank" but still the government needs to treat them equal in every aspect.

Moving on to the question and answer round, Prateek asked Dr Gupta what should policymakers do in order to get qualified access to information to implement impactful programmes catering to above discussed issues?

In response, Dr Gupta advocated that schools should take pre-emptive measures and engage experts to teach children about cyber abuse, teaching them how to protect themselves online from hacks especially those schools that have a Hi-Tech component.

She also emphasized that there is a further need for push from big tech giants like Facebook and Google to initiate discussion and provide thought leadership on these issues. She also proposed sensitizing the police as another effective way to combating cyber-crime against children.
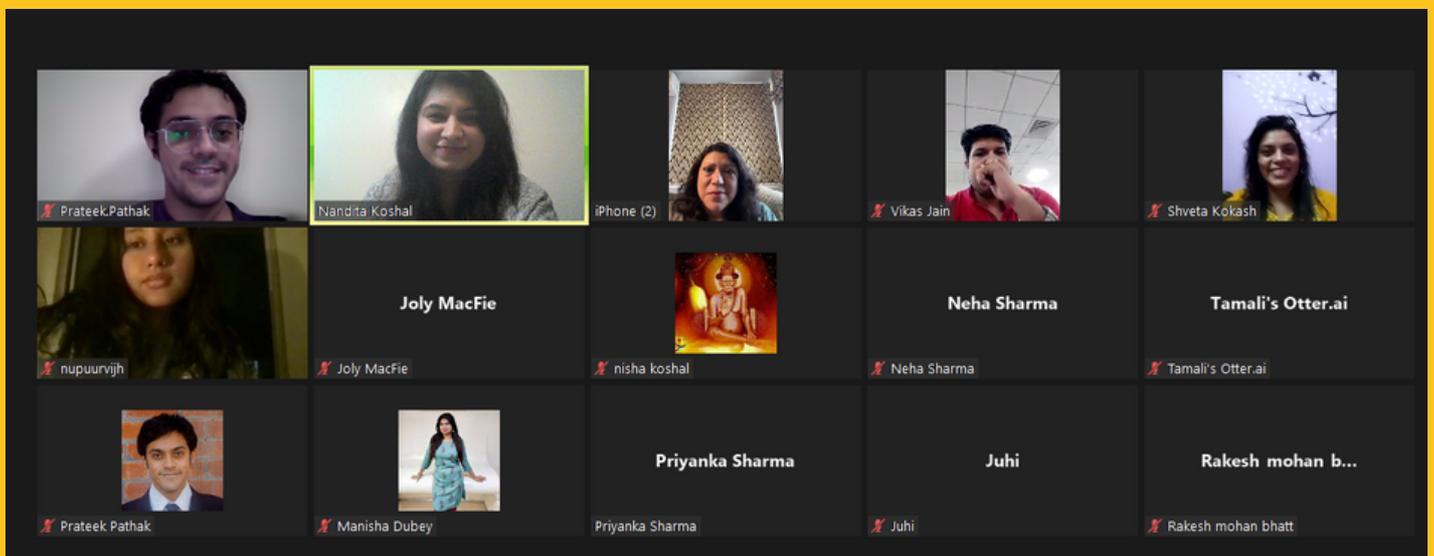
On the question of whether there is any specific set of guidelines that teachers, educators and educational administrators can keep in mind when dealing with child rights issues online, Dr Gupta shared that it is essential to understand the cause for provocation as well as the potential gains from a particular behaviour in order to protect people from such behaviours. People need to put their personal belief, their personal biases aside to protect children till the time they are old enough to understand the consequences of their actions.

She also added that as it is a hydra-headed problem, there is a need for a multi-pronged solution. School teachers need to collaborate with psychiatrists and other law enforcement agencies to first, acknowledge and understand the problems; and then provide a customized set of solutions to reduce the incidences of such occurrences.

The session concluded with Dr Gupta opining that cybercrime is a criminal law issue. It is not separate from the Internet. The Internet is simply a delivery mechanism for prospecting children for criminal activities, which reaches them easily and serves as a simple mode of access for criminals. Therefore, protecting children online is the need of the hour.

The session ended with a vote of thanks delivered by Chapter President, Nandita Koshal, where she thanked the speaker, Dr Tamali Gupta, for her inputs and insights, Chapter Advisor and moderator for the session Prateek Pathak for his engaging moderation. She also thanked the outgoing leadership Shveta Kokash and Feroza Mody for their contribution to the growth of the Chapter and welcomed the new leaders, Nupur Vijh and Juhi Khetan. She further thanked Joly MacFie for live streaming the event to all the ISOC chapters.

The leadership is also thankful to Secretary Nupur Vijh for her editorial inputs in drafting this report and volunteer Crystal Soares for her contribution in designing the report.

One of the Moments from the Webinar

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