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Facebook Joins Industry Effort to Fight Child Exploitation Online

June 11, 2020
By Antigone Davis, Facebook Global Head of Safety



Child exploitation is a problem across the internet, and it's our collective responsibility – from social media and messaging services to cloud services and gaming platforms, as well as device makers and internet service providers – to fight this abuse and protect kids online. At Facebook, we use sophisticated technology and behavioral signals not only to prevent, detect and remove images and videos that exploit children, but also to detect and prevent grooming, or potentially inappropriate interactions between a minor and an adult. And we use this technology across Facebook, Instagram, Messenger and WhatsApp. But any industry-wide problem requires solutions broader than just one company – we need a robust international effort to combat this problem.

That's why today, Facebook joined Google, Microsoft and 15 other tech companies to announce the formation of **Project Protect: A plan to combat online child sexual abuse** – a renewed commitment and investment from the Technology Coalition expanding its scope and impact to protect kids online and guide its work for the next 15 years.

Project Protect will focus on five key areas:

- **Tech Innovation**: Accelerating the development and usage of groundbreaking technology to support the cross-industry approach powered by a multi-million dollar innovation fund
- **Collective Action**: Convening tech companies, governments and civil society to create a holistic approach to tackle this issue
- **Independent Research**: Funding research with the End Violence Against Children Partnership to advance our collective understanding of the experiences and patterns of child sexual exploitation and abuse online, and learn from effective efforts to prevent, deter and combat it
- **Information and Knowledge Sharing**: Continue to facilitate high-impact information, expertise and knowledge sharing among companies to help prevent and disrupt child sexual exploitation and abuse online
- **Transparency and Accountability**: Increasing accountability and consistency across the industry through meaningful reporting of child sexual exploitation and abuse content across member platforms and services. This will be done in conjunction with WePROTECT Global Alliance.

> "Project Protect brings together the brightest minds from across the tech industry to tackle a grave issue that no one company can solve on its own – child exploitation and abuse. Facebook is proud to help lead this initiative that we hope will lead to real changes that keep children safe."
>
> – Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook COO

Our cross-industry work to protect kids online extends beyond today's announcement. For example, we made our photo and video-matching technologies open source, which allows industry partners, developers and non-profits to more easily identify abusive content, share hashes — or digital fingerprints — of different types of harmful content and allow hash-sharing systems to communicate with each other, making the systems that much more powerful. We also recently hosted our fifth child safety hackathon, where we brought together engineers, data scientists and designers from across the industry as well as non-profit partners NCMEC, Thorn, SaferNet Brazil, INHOPE, Cybertip.ca, and IWF, to code and prototype more than a dozen projects focused on making the internet a safer place for children. Following the event, we committed to help fund the Internet Watch Foundation's initiative for young people to confidentially report self-generated sexual images of minors. And we recently committed to help fund a project led by Tech Matters that will develop new technology to support child helplines and make them more accessible to children in crisis.

We have also taken steps across our apps to make the broader internet safer for children. This includes running PhotoDNA on links shared on all our apps from other internet sites and their associated content to detect known child exploitation housed elsewhere on the internet. Not only does this help keep our platforms safer, but it also helps keep the broader internet safer as all violating content is shared with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) who work with local law enforcement around the world.

Lastly, we continue to innovate and use best-in-class technology to prevent abuse as we expand the privacy and security of our messaging services. For example, last month we announced a new safety feature in Messenger that provides tips for spotting suspicious activity, encourages people under the age of 18 to be cautious when interacting with an adult they may not know, and empowers them to block or ignore someone when something doesn't seem right.

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