



**Child Helplines and
Mobile Operators:**
Working together
to protect children's
rights

A practical guide



FOREWORD

On 20 November 2014, the 25th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the GSMA and Child Helpline International (CHI) signed an agreement to work together to help protect and support those rights: from children's right to be heard, to their right to be protected from violence and exploitation.

Globally, a child reaches out for support from a child helpline every two seconds, but child helplines often lack the resources to answer every call. In support of CHI's 'Free our Voices' campaign, which seeks to raise support for child helplines internationally, the GSMA and CHI have joined hands to work towards a world in which every child in need of being heard, will be heard, and more importantly, will be listened to.

In a number of countries, our respective members already invest in working together and enjoy a strong, collaborative and fruitful relationship – with the natural result being that the needs of children seeking help can be met with greater success.

We have captured a selection of their experiences and learnings in this document, with the hope that they will be of value to others as they embark upon similar journeys.

We look forward to our continued collaboration and to working together to better meet the needs and uphold the rights of children around the world.

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Purpose of this document

In order to promote the huge potential of mobile services in both safeguarding and supporting children's rights by enabling access to child helplines, Child Helpline International (CHI) and GSMA – with the generous help of several of their respective members – have worked together to collate insights into good collaborative working practices.

This document contains information, suggestions and case studies contributed by mobile operators and child helplines who have built up experience of working together over a number of years – in some

cases relationships date back to the pre-mobile world of fixed telecoms, in others, the helplines are relatively new and have been able to work with mobile operators since their inception.

The intention is to share experiences and learnings that may benefit child helplines and mobile operators who are just beginning to work together. It is not intended to offer any judgement of which approaches are “best” but to provide a range of examples and ideas which may be adopted by helplines and mobile operators.

1. Child protection and the role of child helplines

What is a child helpline?

Child helplines are support services run specifically for children – they are usually run by civil society organisations or, sometimes, government bodies.

Child helplines typically base their work on the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC spells out the basic human rights of children everywhere: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, violence, abuse and exploitation; and the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

The UNCRC also specifically gives children the right to be heard and to express their views without fear of harm or reprisal. Child helplines help ensure all children have the opportunity to be heard.

Child helplines also adhere to the four core principles of the UNCRC: non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child.

Often, child helplines are a young person's first point of contact with child protection services. Child helplines are the most trusted and accessible gateway for young people to find the

much-needed next level of support. Between 2004 and 2014, over 277 million children contacted CHI's member child helplines. Millions of contacts were about violence, millions about neglect and millions of children called to be saved from sexual abuse and suicide.

Child helpline counsellors actively listen to children who wish to express their concerns, and link children and young people to resources and emergency assistance as needed. Where necessary, child helplines also directly intervene, providing shelter, education and legal support. Importantly, child helplines also reach out to those children who may not be able to access these services on their own.

Finally, child helplines empower children by raising awareness of the issues they face and by taking their voices to decision makers. More than any other child protection service, child helplines have direct access to invaluable insights into the lives of children. With this unprecedented data in hand, child helplines and CHI approach governments, UN agencies and other important stakeholders to advocate for stronger child protection systems.

What problems do children contact helplines about?

The high numbers of contacts to child helplines indicate that children are willing to share their concerns and fears once they have trust in a system or mechanism such as a child helpline. The increase in the number of child helplines, as well as the provision of toll-free, easy to remember telephone numbers, and the adoption of new communications technology has enabled more children worldwide to access child helplines services than ever before.

An important part of CHI's activities is to report annually on the data collected from its member child helplines. In an average year, CHI collates data from over 30 million contacts made by children to child helplines around the world. The majority of these contacts are still made over the telephone. On average, children who contact child helplines are between 10 – 17 years of age.

Globally, the extensive data collected by CHI has provided an insight into the depth and range of issues faced by the young population in a country or region.

For more details and to access CHI's data and publications, please see: <http://www.childhelplineinternational.org/resources/data/>

The most common reasons for children and young people requesting assistance, counsel, or referral, concerned abuse and violence (approximately 30%), psycho-social mental health (approximately 15%), peer relationships (approximately 12%), family relationships (approximately 10%) and sexuality and sexual awareness (approximately 10%).



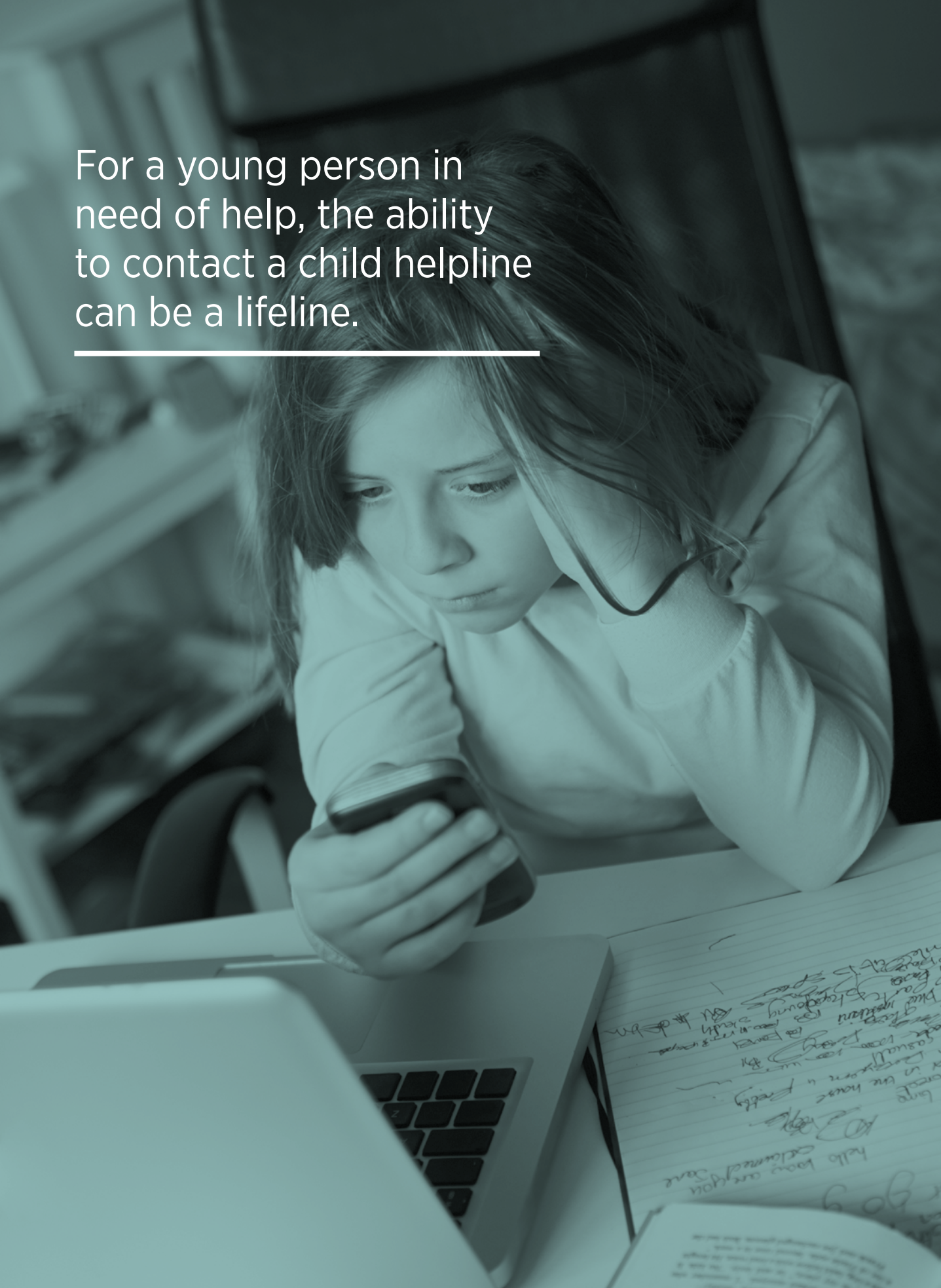
Why is support from mobile operators so valuable?

In today's connected society, young people are increasingly using mobile services to connect and communicate with the world around them. Mobile phones and information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be great enablers of human rights, for example, bringing learning opportunities to otherwise disenfranchised segments of society, and enabling people in remote corners of the world to access information and participate in the digital

economy, with all the inherent benefits that can bring. Critically, ICTs, including mobile phones, can play a vital role in enabling children in need to reach out to helplines for support and protection, to assert their right to be heard and their right to safety. CHI's mission statement seeks to harness the power of ICTs and create "a world where technology allows children to be heard, one by one, and through their voices shape the world and realise their rights".



For a young person in need of help, the ability to contact a child helpline can be a lifeline.



2. Enabling the fundamentals

In order for helplines to successfully deliver their support services to children, national mobile operators can typically assist child helplines in three key areas:

- Supporting children's easy access to the helpline
- Protecting children's confidentiality
- Routing calls to regional helpline hubs

1. Ease of access to child helplines

It is extremely important to make it as simple as possible for children of all ages to call child helplines, and to minimise any potential obstacles to calling.

Cost-free access

Child helplines prioritise making calls free of cost to the caller ("toll-free" calling) so that children can call at any time without having to worry about their ability to pay; indeed, years of experience from the CHI network of child helplines shows that if calls are charged most children simply will not call.

The costs to a helpline of offering toll-free numbers are borne in different ways in different countries. In many countries, the national fixed telecom and mobile operators cover the costs themselves on a voluntary or regulated basis; in others, the costs are passed on to the child helpline who has to pay the

relevant telecoms provider from its overall budget. Where local market conditions allow, mobile operators may be able to ease the financial strain faced by child helplines by not passing on call costs. This would enable helpline funds to be re-directed to other areas – for example training more volunteers – which would mean that fewer calls to child helplines would be left unanswered due to lack of resource. A growing number of child helplines already enjoy this kind of support from their national fixed and mobile operators, and the case studies from Costa Rica, Albania and Germany highlighted later in this document demonstrate how these partnerships can add value to both the operators and the child helplines.

Raising awareness of the child helpline number

Child helplines work with the relevant national authorities to obtain short, easy-to-remember phone numbers which they promote through a range of channels seen by young people. It is vital to the success of a child helpline that the phone number be constantly communicated and promoted, as new generations of children will need to be made aware of the service available to them.

Operators may be able to deploy their customer contact and marketing channels creatively to help raise the profile of the national child helpline and its phone number. For example,

- Telenor India has embedded the helpline number 1098 in all its new SIM cards and the number is available on the customer's default phonebook.

- Mobile operators in Brazil and Nicaragua have sent SMS messages to all their customers informing them about the national child helplines and how to contact them (N.B. in many markets, regulation designed to prevent spam would make such an approach unfeasible).
- Sonera in Finland has supported the development of a mobile app, *Help.now*, for Save the Children Finland. To help raise awareness of *Help.now*, Sonera promotes the app in its newsletter and also from the Sonera website pages dedicated to information about subscriptions that are suitable for children.

If additional channels and campaigns such as those outlined above are being used to promote

the service, or if a national child helpline is moving to a toll-free model, the helpline must be prepared for an uplift in the number of calls they are likely to receive. To maintain a quality service, the helplines may need to consider adjusting their staff and volunteer structures, or investing in additional training for their counsellors, for example.

In addition to general awareness-raising campaigns about the helpline services, there may be opportunities for mobile operators and helplines to campaign jointly on issues of mutual interest – such as the safe and responsible use of the internet, which could be supported by child helpline data and could point to the helpline as a support mechanism.

CASE STUDY: 1147 CHILD HELPLINE IN COSTA RICA



The Costa Rican 1147 child helpline, managed by Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI), allows children to contact counsellors to express their concerns and report abuse.

In October 2014, with the support of GSMA and CHI, and under the auspices of the GSMA WeCare campaign, the mobile operators of Costa Rica – ICE, Telefónica and Claro – signed a collaboration agreement with PANI to support the work of 1147 helpline.

The first and main action undertaken by the mobile operators was to ensure that calls to 1147 were cost-free. As part of the agreement, the 1147 helpline and mobile operators created a permanent working group to establish an action plan to raise awareness of the 1147 helpline and to manage the collaboration on an ongoing basis. To date, the group is working on:

- Developing an awareness campaign targeting youth and the general population
- Developing tools to expand the reach of the helpline through social networks and smartphones
- Adding more resource to manage the growth in calls that will be enabled by the new collaboration and in order to improve the service (PANI)
- Providing support in terms of equipment for receiving and managing calls (mobile operators)

Preventing call restrictions

In keeping with their goals of enabling younger users to enjoy mobile services safely and responsibly, a growing number of mobile operators offer “parental controls” solutions. It is important

that mobile operators that offer or promote “contact control” solutions as part of a parental control proposition take steps to ensure that access to the local child helpline number(s) cannot be blocked through this service.

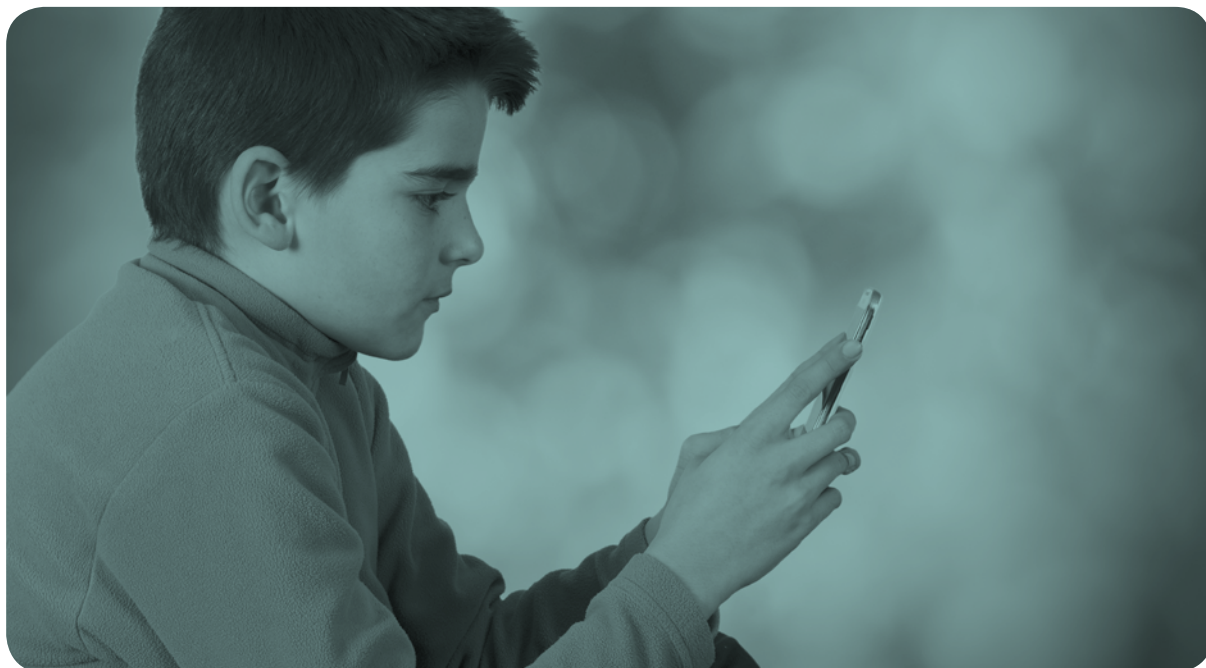
CASE STUDY: VODAFONE GUARDIAN APP

In a number of its markets, Vodafone offers parents the option of downloading the Vodafone Guardian app on to their child's smartphone. The app gives parents options to place restrictions on various functions on the child's device including, for example, automatically opting out of premium texts, restricting which apps can be downloaded, and turning off Bluetooth, wifi or Vodafone mobile internet access.

As part of this service, a range of contact controls are available:

- Option to restrict incoming and outgoing communication by Contacts
- Option to restrict incoming and outgoing communication by Time
- Option to customise the time limit for each contact

In spite of the many ways of customising the contact controls, the Vodafone Guardian App was specifically configured so that calls to the national child helpline cannot be blocked or logged, ensuring that the ability to access the child helpline and the child's confidentiality are both safeguarded.



2. Confidentiality of children's calls to child helplines

To protect children's confidentiality and well-being, it is essential that their calls to child helplines do not show on the phone bills, even if just as a line item confirming that the call has no cost: many calls to child helplines relate to issues directly involving the adult who would be paying the bill.

However, if a call is charged for, by definition it must appear on the user's bill. Therefore protecting children's confidentiality is another reason that it is vital for helpline calls to be free-of-cost to the caller.

With regard to number recognition, toll-free numbers are handled like any normal telephone number. Number recognition is possible, as long as the caller allows it and does not hide his or her number from the called party. However child helplines, due to the nature of the service and its

emergency character, sometimes seek a solution whereby number recognition is enabled by the telecom provider. If so, child helplines usually choose a solution where only supervisors and management have access to the numbers and thereby the identity of the caller.

3. Regional child support services: call routing

In many countries, national child helplines will require calls to be routed to specific locations so that the call is being answered in the same region from which it originated. This is partly for reasons of language or dialect – so that the child and the helpline volunteer can communicate easily – and partly because child helplines connect with other child protection services, which typically operate regionally rather than nationally.

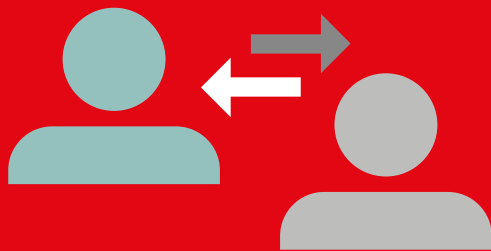
CASE STUDY: VODACOM SOUTH AFRICA: CHILDLINE CALL ROUTING



Childline South Africa provides a safe haven for children, adults and caregivers to reach out and seek help and support. Childline provides a toll-free crisis telephone counselling service that deals with hundreds of queries from children and adults, as well as providing an invaluable educative service.

In addition to ensuring that the Childline toll-free number is zero-rated to all customers, meaning anyone can dial it free of charge and get to speak to a counsellor, Vodacom also supports the helpline by routing calls. The calls are routed via Vodacom's smart spatial exchange database that is location based and routes the call to the nearest Childline centre depending on the callers' location. Vodacom applies load balancing to route calls smartly based on time of day and location, and spreads the load of calls to multiple destinations of Childline numbers in South Africa.

3. Working relationships



Child helplines and mobile operators in different countries will, of course, develop different working relationships. But all collaborations will be most successful when the underlying relationship is based on mutual respect, transparency and integrity; where both parties feel that they understand and can support each other's objectives.

Regardless of the specific nature of the collaboration between the mobile operator and the child helpline (and, potentially, other corporate partners) in a particular market, it is helpful if both parties invest time in getting to know each other and understand their relative strengths and challenges upfront.

For example, mobile operators could take the time to explain their internal processes for budget and resource allocation, and the requirement to be able to demonstrate results and measurable outcomes in order to justify continued support. Child helplines can assist their colleagues at the mobile operator to get support internally by providing quality assurance upfront (for example, letters of support from the relevant government ministry as required for membership to CHI) and clear information on an ongoing basis on the difference that the operator contribution is making to their ability to help children.

From a very practical point of view, the following steps are recommended upfront:

- Have a legal contract stating clearly what is expected from each party; what obligations, roles and responsibilities does each partner have?
- Define the duration of any specific partnership activity/activities and plan a review point before the contract expires. For example, with a three year contract, plan to review and re-assess one year before the expiry date to enable planning on both sides.
- Have a dedicated single point of contact (SPOC) on each side, through which all interactions and issues can be channelled in the first instance, even if they will ultimately be handled by a colleague in, for example, the legal or technical team.

Once working processes are in place, both organisations should invest in regular communication and in building open and trusting relationships. In some markets, helplines may have a close partnership with one specific telecoms operator, in others, helplines will seek a broader collaboration with all players. Whichever model applies, the need to build clear lines of communication is consistent, as can be seen in the two following case studies.



CASE STUDY: DEUTSCHE TELEKOM AND NUMMER GEGEN KUMMER, GERMANY



Deutsche Telekom and Nummer gegen Kummer have been in partnership for 25 years. Over this period, the two organisations have worked continuously to build a strong relationship based on mutual respect for the benefits that each party brings to the other.

Deutsche Telekom's stated goal is to be a trusted company which take its responsibility to society very seriously. The company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy stems from its overarching corporate strategy and the belief that economic success is balanced with environmental and social involvement. The partnership with Nummer gegen Kummer is a natural fit, as the support provided is in line with Deutsche Telekom's core business and therefore involves the deployment of company resources to contribute to public welfare. From a practical standpoint, Deutsche Telekom provides Nummer gegen Kummer with technical support (technical expertise, provision and maintenance of phone numbers), financial support (bears all call costs, additional adhoc donations), employee support (provision of human resources for volunteer work) and project-specific support, such as developing a tool for email counselling.

In return, Nummer gegen Kummer supports Deutsche Telekom in practical terms by embedding its brand into external communications (advertisements, press releases, etc), providing educational and training courses (vocational training of Deutsche Telekom's employees for volunteer work at Nummer gegen Kummer) and holding up the organisations' collaboration as a living example of good corporate citizenship.

Both organisations have clearly defined responsibilities within the partnership, which is managed by a specific lead contact from each party. The organisations share a commitment to bring professionalism and reliability to their every day work.

In addition to adhoc meetings, the organisation's respective lead contacts meet formally twice each year. The meetings provide an opportunity for discussion about upcoming projects and challenges, and for sharing ideas.

CASE STUDY: ALO 116 ALBANIAN CHILD HELPLINE



ALO 116 was launched in July 2009, one year after UNICEF and CRCA (Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania) convened a multi-stakeholder workshop entitled "Towards the Establishment of a National Child Helpline". In the absence of robust national child protection and support services, it was important to involve all stakeholders from the beginning. The following players helped to set up the helpline: UNICEF Albania; CRCA; Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities; Ministry of Telecommunications; Child Protection Units; fixed telecoms providers and mobile operators; justice system and law enforcement agencies; educational system; General Administration of Social Services; other children's NGOs and civil society partners.

ALO 116 has been a successful partnership between CRCA and the fixed and mobile telecoms providers since its inception. The balance is as follows: CRCA provides the expertise on counselling and protecting children who reach out for help; the telecommunications industry provides the technical expertise to enable these interactions to happen.

From the telecom operator perspective, involvement in ALO 116 has supported the industry's Corporate Social Responsibility objectives as well as providing opportunities to work together on areas of mutual interest such as internet safety; from the helpline perspective, the telcos provided the technical solutions and support to make it possible to receive calls free-of-cost, maintain the systems and manage data, and build a system that can respond to children's need.

ALO 116 has at least one specific point of contact with each mobile operator (and other corporate partners) to help deal with any technical issues that may come up, as well as feeding into joint annual work plans. ALO 116 has established a "Board of Support" which convenes every three months and brings together all participating companies to work. This group also hold adhoc thematic meetings to discuss their approach to specific issues such as child online safety or missing children.



IN SOME COUNTRIES MOBILE OPERATORS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO STRENGTHEN CHILD HELPLINES BY SHARING RELEVANT IN-HOUSE ANALYSIS, EXPERTISE, AND RESOURCES. EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

Analysis and planning

In some countries, helpline calls will remain unanswered due to lack of resource within the helpline organisation. Telecoms partners (both fixed and mobile) may be able to analyse the volume of calls being made to child helplines over their networks so that helplines can plan for daily peaks of activity and try to mobilise more volunteers at these times.

Similarly, as part of day-to-day business activities, it is likely that research and planning are taking place within a mobile operator's organisation that could be enormously valuable to a child helpline.

The kinds of questions which mobile operators or other partners might be working on in-house which could readily be re-purposed to help support the national helpline could include:

- What shifts in communication habits are expected over the next 5 years?
- How might children want and expect to communicate with the helpline beyond traditional calls (text, VOIP, etc)?
- What do data protection laws mean for children?

'In kind' support and sponsorship

Child helplines typically rely heavily on volunteers and consequently may have limited resource and in-house expertise for a range of business functions. 'In kind' support from mobile operators or other partners could therefore be extremely valuable in areas such as financial planning and public relations, as well as with regard to broader management issues. It could be worth considering creative ways of sharing knowledge and helping with capacity building – for example, through 'job

swap' days in areas such as PR, so that skills can be enhanced through hands-on experience and understanding of the partner organisation can be deepened.

Operators may be able to facilitate and encourage their staff to volunteer whether through formal schemes run by HR or more informally, and although skills-based support is highly valued so is additional manpower for answering calls.

Facilities

Training volunteers is a constant and resource-intensive necessity for child helplines. If operators or other corporate partners are able to help subsidise this by offering their meeting room facilities – particularly

for weekend training sessions when meeting spaces are more likely to be available – this will enable the helpline to stretch their financial resources further.

CHILD HELPLINES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PLAY A SIMILAR ROLE IN SUPPORTING THEIR MOBILE OPERATOR PARTNERS.

Branding and reputation

In many countries, mobile operators do not receive much recognition for the work they do through their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes or company Foundations, or as part of their business-as-usual commitments around service delivery to entities such as child helplines.

Child helplines can show support for their mobile operator partners by raising awareness of their partners' contributions, for example by featuring mobile operator logos in communications materials or on TV commercials, as well as inviting them to participate in child helpline events and celebrations.

Safe and responsible use of ICTs

Mobile operators are working to offer their younger customers a mobile experience, including access to the internet, which is as safe, age-appropriate, and enjoyable as possible.

Child helplines, with their expertise and understanding of children's issues, concerns and behaviours, can play an important role in helping to

educate the next generation to become confident and responsible 'digital citizens'. In many countries, mobile operators and other corporate partners would value leadership and guidance from the national child helpline in outreach campaigns; naturally, the ability to signpost young people who are dealing with issues online to the national child helplines will be also be very valuable.

Strong partnerships
better meet the needs
and uphold the rights
of children around
the world.

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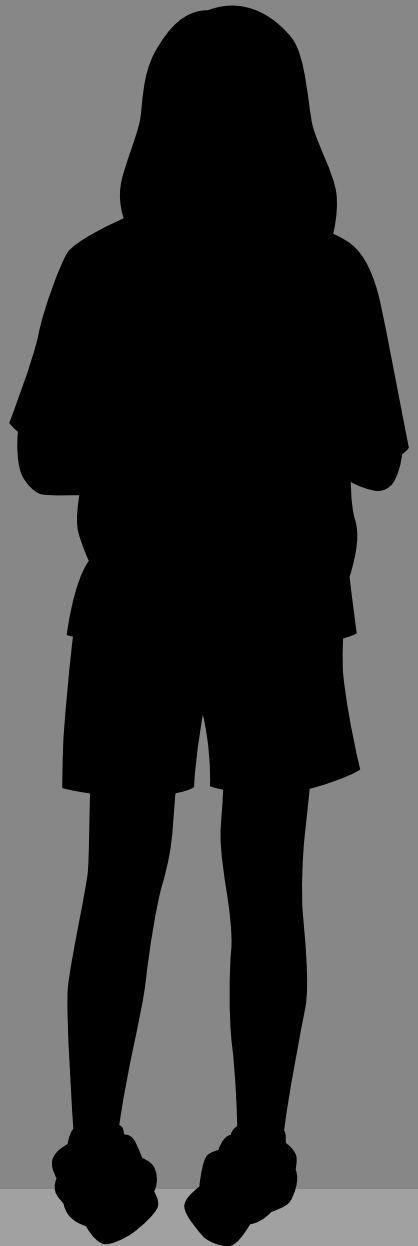
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