OUT OF THE SHADOWS INDEX HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED FOR PARTNERSHIPS WITH PRIVATE SECTOR AND INDUSTRY TO BETTER PROTECT CHILDREN AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The Economist Intelligence Unit’s (EIU) Out Of the Shadows Index (OOSI) has highlighted the need for partnerships with private sector and industry to better protect children against sexual violence at the SVRI Forum 2019, which has taken place at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from 21 to 25 October. This benchmarking Index, developed with support from the World Childhood Foundation, Oak Foundation and Carlson Family Foundation, maps how 60 countries are responding to sexual abuse against children.

Katherine Stewart, Public Policy Consultant at the EIU, says the OOSI is a valuable resource for countries worldwide that showcases countries’ responses to child sexual violence and highlights areas of attention, factors that drive change and how governments, businesses and society can help achieve the UN SDG Target 16.2, calling to end all violence against children by 2030. She says the index is based on input from international experts and incorporates the latest available quantitative data and qualitative research.

“The OOSI data is critical for developing a better understanding of sexual abuse against children, highlighting where progress is needed and the interventions that can drive change. Countries in the OOSI are given an aggregate score out of 100 in four categories: environment; legal framework; government commitment and capacity; and engagement of industry, society and media relating to violence against children,” says Stewart.

Each category is weighted differently, which experts agreed upon, according to the category’s importance as a priority in driving progress to end sexual violence against children. The data covers 85% of the global population under 19 years of age. Government commitment and capacity is weighted at 33.3% of the score, environment at 29.2%, industry, society and media engagement at 20.8%; while legal framework makes up the remaining 16.7%.

Key findings from the Out Of the Shadows Index

- The top 10 countries in the OOSI are among the world’s richest, but only four score 75 out of 100, revealing substantial gaps in protective conditions for children in even the wealthiest countries.
- UK, Sweden and Australia hold the top three positions in the OOSI. However, these countries still face challenges with the UK and Sweden not having laws requiring Internet service providers block child sexual exploitation content, and Australia and the UK not having official data on child exploitation prevalence.

“We must ‘shine a light’ on violence against children.”
• The average score of the 60 countries in the Index is only 50.2 out of 100.
• Many countries have strong legal frameworks for protecting children from violence, but most do less well implementing policies or creating effective responses.
• Partnerships with private sector and industry are needed to better protect children, especially against online child abuse where internet expansion has placed more children at risk.
• There is a need for increased government, business and public response to violence against children.
• Despite investments and efforts globally to end online child abuse and to track reported incidents of violence against children, data to measure and understand the scale of the problem is lacking.

Stewart says child violence happens across the world, regardless of a country’s economic status or citizens’ quality of life and it has devastating emotional, health and socio-economic consequences, costing countries billions. However, she also states that it is preventable and there are promising strategies for reducing sexual violence against children, including implementing national plans of action and devoting more resources to execute plans.

“Creating a healthy environment for children to grow up in, improving societal attitudes and using data to inform decision-making is vital to help end this problem. We must implement effective reporting mechanisms where countries collect and publish information on the number of reported offenses against children. Technology is also a critical part of the response to ending child sexual abuse and exploitation both on and offline. Governments, businesses and societies globally must have a stronger, more targeted response, while measuring progress to end sexual abuse against children,” says Stewart

Find out more about the OOSI at www.outoftheshadows.eiu.com.

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