



National Rapporteur on Trafficking in
Human Beings

Child Pornography



First Report of the Dutch National Rapporteur

Summary Report



© I am Ivar / Ivar Teunissen

'My core message is that children are entitled to protection from all forms of sexual violence. The approach towards tackling child pornography must form part of an integrated approach towards tackling sexual violence against children. Connection, coordination and monitoring are essential elements of that approach.'

**National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children in the Netherlands,
Corinne Dettmeijer-Vermeulen**

In her First Report on Child Pornography the independent Dutch National Rapporteur concludes that child abuse images, as a phenomenon, cannot be regarded separately from sexual violence against children. To separate the two in terms of policy would therefore be artificial. The findings in the report show that such a separation lessens the effect of interventions. Protection of children cannot solely be provided by a repressive approach. Protection also means: prevention of offenses, identification and registration of offenders and victims, provision of assistance to victims and after-care for offenders. This requires cooperation and partnership between government institutions, non-governmental organisations and private parties.

Tackling child abuse material

Summary Report of the First Report on Child Pornography

1. Five conclusions on the phenomenon of child abuse images

The following conclusions have been drawn with regard to the phenomenon of child pornography. These have formed the guiding principles for research into policy and practice.

1. Child pornography is sexual violence against children

Child pornography does not exist in isolation; it always occurs in conjunction with other (punishable) sexual conduct, ranging from child prostitution to trafficking in human beings, from abuse to grooming. The common denominator of these offences is that children are victims of sexual violence. From this perspective, child abuse material is sexual violence against children displayed on images or film. Child sex tourism is sexual violence committed abroad. Child sexual exploitation is sexual violence for profit. If strategies to tackle child pornography and to protect children from all forms of sexual violence are to be effective, these strategies must be interlinked with regard to policy and implementation.

2. Perpetrators, victims and technology vary

The phenomenon of child pornography can be broken down into three elements: perpetrators, victims and technology. Technology may refer to abusive material on the one hand and the information and communications technology (ICT) which enables the production, distribution and possession of such material, on the other hand. The nature of perpetrators, victims and material is not clear-cut. Firstly, perpetrators do not form a homogenous group in terms of behaviour; some individuals only view child abuse images, whilst others also physically abuse children themselves. Secondly, victim characteristics, the nature of child abuse material and the circumstances under which it is produced differs between various age groups of victims. Apart from this, there are considerable differences between the commercial child pornography circuit and the amateur circuit in terms of perpetrators, victims and material. If policy and implementation are to be successful, they must reflect the diversity in perpetrators, victims and child abuse material.

3. Sexual violence exists in both the digital and analogue worlds

At present, child abuse material predominantly exists in digital format. Technological developments rapidly succeed one another and will almost always influence the phenomenon of child pornography. What is more, online aspects of sexual violence are becoming increasingly prominent, such as child sex tourism and grooming. We all use ICT intensively in our daily lives. So too do (potential)

perpetrators and (potential) victims. To children, cyberspace is an extension of the ‘real’, physical world; the offline and online worlds smoothly converge into one. This means that both worlds must be taken into account in legislation, policy and implementation. Technological, empirical and legal expertise and associated means must keep pace with developments in the digital domain. ICT sometimes presents a challenge, yet it also provides a means for preventing and tackling child abuse images. Much is yet unknown. For example, it is not known what proportion of victims of sexual abuse are also victims of child abuse material. Furthermore, no judgments can be made with regard to the numbers of minors who have become victims of sexting and grooming. It is therefore necessary to investigate these areas in order to develop evidence-based policy and implementation.

4. Child pornography is not bound by time or space

Children have always been sexually abused. Individuals have produced and viewed images of such abuse ever since the existence of photography. With current technologies, it is likely that child abuse material – even very old material – will be available for a very long time to come, possibly indefinitely. Space is hardly a factor at all. As indicated in the previous section, ICT has added a new, online dimension to the phenomenon, which enables perpetrators, victims and material to come into direct contact with one another from anywhere in the world and at any time. It is highly likely that other countries are faced with similar challenges. As far as efforts in the Netherlands are concerned, it is desirable to seek international cooperation, for through this, we can learn from experiences of other countries.

5. Child pornography cannot be tackled by the police alone

The extent of the phenomenon of child pornography – the number of perpetrators, victims and the quantity of child abuse material – is unknown. It may be argued that the number of perpetrators and the volume of child abuse material have increased to such an extent that it cannot be tackled by criminal law alone. Put differently: there are too many perpetrators and too many images for the criminal justice system to process in a traditional manner. This means that we must seek strategies to tackle child pornography both within and beyond the criminal justice process.

2. Recommendations for tackling child pornography effectively

Until recently, the Dutch government regarded child pornography predominantly as a cybercrime. As a consequence, the Dutch strategy to combat it leaned heavily on repression via the justice system. While the legal framework is useful for determining the subject area, it is not the only perspective that can and should be used to address this form of sexual violence against children. Most importantly, if strategies to tackle child pornography and to protect children from all forms of sexual violence are to be effective, these must be interlinked with regard to policy and implementation.

Policy

In order to tackle child pornography effectively, the Rapporteur recommends that on a policy level:

1. An integrated approach to tackle sexual violence against children be provided, into which the programme of measures to tackle child pornography is fully integrated.
2. Clear coordination be provided, in order to give substance to the integrated approach and to implement it.
3. An independent monitoring mechanism be established.
4. Continuity be safeguarded.

Practice

On a practical level, the complexity of the phenomenon and the variety of forms that it is able to take, present considerable challenges for preventing and tackling child pornography. From the analysis of the implementation of the processes for the prevention, registration and identification, detection, prosecution and trial, aftercare and supervision of offenders, and the provision of assistance to victims the following recommendations have been formulated:

Prevention

1. Expressly include the dangers of online behaviour, including child pornography, in prevention projects aimed at children.
2. Extend situational prevention to include all sectors that involve working with children.
3. Promote Stop It Now! helpline for potential perpetrators, also on digital channels.
4. Introduce a public health model as a basis for a public prevention strategy, in which attention is devoted to the nature of all forms of sexual violence against children.

Identification & recording

1. Invest in training for professionals in detecting digital signs of sexual violence against children.
2. Improve registration of cases of child pornography by institutions providing assistance (including Child Abuse Counselling and Reporting Centres).
3. Continue the public awareness campaign on child abuse and include digital signs of sexual violence against children in it.
4. Promote the identification of perpetrators and material through public-private sector partnerships (for example internet service providers).

Investigation, prosecution and trial

1. Combine offender-oriented and victim-oriented detection within a single national police unit.
2. Always investigate networks of offenders comprehensively.
3. Always seize data storage media of those suspected of sexual abuse.
4. Explore the possibility of making arrangements in relation to limiting the international influx of proposals for police investigations.
5. Make the efficacy of detection transparent by registering identified victims.
6. Also consider making child pornography part of the remit of the National Public Prosecutor's Office.
7. Investigate the possibility of extending the legal provisions for (in)direct victims, such as the right to speak, compensation and anonymity.

After-care for and supervision of sex offenders

1. Investigate the possibilities of central control for supervision on a case level, as exists in the United Kingdom.
2. Improve risk assessment instruments (distinction between those who view child abuse material and hands-on offenders; record digital data).
3. Develop low-intensity interventions for low-risk viewers of child abuse material.
4. Investigate the possibility of a national policy framework and expertise centre for the supervision and after-care of convicted sex offenders.

Victim assistance

1. Develop expertise with regard to victimhood of child pornography and provide an assistance package which addresses the consequences of the existence, distribution and possession of visual material of the sexual abuse.

Public-private partnerships

1. Safeguard public-private sector partnerships within a platform and give direction to these partnerships, which includes optimisation of the notice and take-down regulation.

3. Recent developments in the Netherlands (first half of 2012)

In the Netherlands, the Rapporteur presented these findings and recommendations to the Dutch Minister of Security and Justice and the State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport, after which the report was discussed in Parliament. Partly as a result of her findings, various positive developments have since been set in motion, as matters of priority. The most important of these developments are singled out below.

The Government is developing an integrated approach and coordination

By far the most important measure is the taking up of the Rapporteur's recommendation to develop an integrated programme of measures to tackle child pornography. The Ministry of Security and Justice and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport are assuming joint responsibility for this. By doing so, the government demonstrates its commitment to the obligations arising from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, and the Lanzarote Convention. A Child Abuse and Sexual Abuse Task Force, which is yet to be established, will coordinate the implementation of the policy.

Implementation has brought about changes

The most significant changes have taken place with respect to the understanding of this issue among those responsible for providing assistance to victims, with the increasing realisation that cyberspace is a relatively new arena in which sexual abuse is taking place, and one that adds a new dimension to victimhood. Moreover, the understanding that the Internet presents an opportunity to combat sexual violence is also growing. In February 2012, an online reporting button was launched, where children can find help and advice in the event of negative experiences on the Internet.

Efforts have not only been made in terms of identifying (potential) victims, but also in terms of identifying potential perpetrators. In this way, the offender-oriented 'Stop it Now!' programme, which was launched in April 2012, will help prevent children from being subjected to sexual violence. As far as detecting perpetrators is concerned, the capacity that has been deployed to combat child pornography has increased substantially. The Programme of Improvements in Tackling Child Pornography of the National Police Services Agency that had already been set in motion has enabled a more effectively integrated working method to be developed within a short span of time. A new, large-scale and national child pornography unit will not only work in collaboration with the national High Tech Crime Unit, but also with regional police units, which attend to types of analogue sexual violence against children. Detection will be aimed at rescuing victims and locating perpetrators who produce material. The results of a project to employ non-judicial interventions for low-risk offenders – those who view child pornography sporadically – have been positive. This project will therefore also be implemented on a national scale.

When prosecuting suspects, the ability to ensure that victims remain anonymous in criminal proceedings is a positive development, as is the extension of the right to speak to include parents in cases in which (very young) children are not able to speak for themselves. Developments are also underway

right at the very end of the judicial process – which involves the reintegration of convicted perpetrators, including the expansion of COSA, a probation and after-care project, and the investigation of the possibilities of long-term or life-long supervision of convicted high-risk sex offenders.

National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children in the Netherlands

Main task

The Rapporteur's main task is to report on the nature and extent of trafficking in human beings and sexual violence against children in the Netherlands, and on the effects of the policies pursued. The reports contain information on relevant regulations and legislation, as well as information on prevention, criminal investigations regarding human trafficking, prosecution of perpetrators and victim support. They also contain policy recommendations aimed at improving the fight against trafficking in human beings.

Independent position

Independent monitoring mechanisms are vital for a democratic society as they critically review all governmental responses to phenomena such as trafficking in human beings and sexual violence against children. Independence forms the basis for an objective and non-biased view on the developments and the pros and the cons of policies and practices. The periodic reports by the Rapporteur therefore function as an impetus both to the government and to Parliament to perform their respective tasks of fighting trafficking in human beings and sexual violence against children and monitoring the effectiveness of that fight.

Working methods

The Bureau of the Rapporteur stays in regular contact with and gathers information from individuals, organisations and authorities involved in the prevention and combating of human trafficking and sexual violence against children and those providing assistance to victims. In order to gather information, the Rapporteur and her staff have access to criminal files held by police and judicial authorities. As trafficking in human beings and sexual violence against children regularly have an international element to them, the Bureau also has many international contacts and co-operates with international organisations.

Nowadays, trafficking in human beings and sexual violence against children are increasingly transnational and digital phenomena. In this regard, it is highly likely that other countries are faced with similar issues in relation to the strategy to tackle it. As far as efforts to prevent and tackle child pornography and sexual violence against children in the broad sense are concerned, it will at times be desirable to seek international cooperation. Through this, we can examine whether experiences in other countries can be of benefit to the strategy to tackle the issue in the Netherlands. Therefore, the Dutch Rapporteur is always interested in getting in touch with and exchanging knowledge and experiences with professionals and international and foreign national institutions active in the field of combating trafficking in human beings and/or sexual violence against children.

Contact details

Postal address

Bureau of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in
Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children
in the Netherlands
P.O. Box 20301
2500 EH The Hague
The Netherlands

Visiting address

Schedeldoekshaven 131
2511 EM The Hague
The Netherlands

Website

<http://english.bnrm.nl>

Email

secretariaat@bnrm.nl

Telephone and fax

Telephone: +31 (0) 70 370 45 14
Fax: +31 (0) 70 370 45 37

Twitter

@B_NRM

June 2012 | J-14590