

## **CYBER SAFETY: JUST WHO IS TALKING TO OUR GIRLS?, 18 NOV 2011**

### **WCC Survey on Hand phone and Internet Usage**

WCC conducted a pilot survey on 100 teenage girls (15-17 years old) to better understand handphone and internet usage by youth and their exposure to possible sexual exploitation. The survey took place over 8 months (January until August 2011) and covered 100 respondents from 11 schools (5 schools in Daerah Seberang Perai Selatan and 6 schools at Daerah Timur Laut, Penang).

A summary of survey data:

#### **1. Handphone Usage:**

- 98.0% of the respondents had a handphone
- 80.0% of respondents had received calls/texts from strangers.
- 17.3% of respondents went out with people they befriended via the handphone.
- 29.6 % of respondents have been asked for sexually suggestive sms-es/MMS.

#### **2. Internet Usage:**

- 81.3% of the respondents accessed the internet in their own homes.
- 54.0% of respondents have chatted online with strangers.
- 23.0% of respondents have shared their personal information with strangers on line.
- 36.0% of respondents have been asked for sexually suggestive material on line.

### **Survey results**

1. Most of the respondents had a handphone and accessed the internet in their own homes. The survey results show that 8 out of 10 respondents had received calls from strangers, while more than half of respondents chatted online with total strangers. It is alarming that young women are now easily accessible by people whom they do not know, including potential perpetrators. They are at risk to sexual exploitation or abuse by these potential perpetrators who will seek out their vulnerability via ICT technology.

2. The results also show that approximately a fifth of the respondents either went out with people they befriended via the telephone or shared their personal information with strangers on line. It is extremely worrying to find young women trusting people whom they do not really know. Many young women do not seem to understand the danger in making friends with a stranger by chatting on line or over the phone. They may feel 'safe' or less vulnerable because they are not in the presence of the person they are speaking to. But a perpetrator can gain their

trust, build a relationship and entice them out of their safe space into where he has direct access to them.

3. The results show that shockingly approximately a third of the respondents had been asked for sexually suggestive material via the handphone or online communications. Young women need to be aware of the dangers of responding to requests for sexually suggestive material. Sexting may seem to be trendy but it can have serious consequences especially when intimate photos are uploaded online and parties involved are severely humiliated or blackmailed in the process.

For further information, please contact WCC at 04-2280342 or <http://www.wccpenang.org>