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MARCH

Assessing the Child Rights Impacts of Wikimedia Free Knowledge Projects

ARTICLE ONE

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Content Warning: This report discusses sensitive topics related to potential risks and harm to children (persons up to the age of 18). The content may include discussions about harassment and bullying, inappropriate or harmful material, and other safety concerns that may affect children. Reader discretion is advised, especially for individuals who may find these topics distressing or triggering.



Foreword from the Wikimedia Foundation

January 2024

About the Wikimedia Foundation

The Wikimedia Foundation is the global nonprofit organization that hosts Wikipedia and other community-led [Wikimedia projects](#), making free and open knowledge accessible to everyone around the world. Wikipedia currently offers over 61 million articles across more than 300 languages, all for free and without commercial advertisements. A worldwide community of more than 265,000 volunteers contributes, edits, and moderates content across Wikimedia projects based on a robust set of [policies](#), standards, and norms that volunteers have created and regularly enforce.

Wikipedia and other Wikimedia projects occupy a unique space in today's internet ecosystem. The projects leverage a decentralized, community-governed model to create reliable, well-sourced knowledge for the public. Volunteer editors work together openly to prioritize accuracy and verifiability across these projects. As a result, Wikipedia and the other projects have become widely trusted sources of information to people around the world.

Wikimedia Foundation, Human Rights, and Children's Rights

The Foundation believes access to reliable information is a human right. The Wikimedia projects provide channels and platforms through which everyone, everywhere, has the right to share and access knowledge freely. Access to free and open knowledge, along with the fundamental right to freedom of expression, empowers people to exercise many other rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the rights to education, artistic expression, economic advancement, and political participation.

The Foundation, as the host to these community-led projects, is therefore committed to respecting the human rights of all those who seek, receive, and impart knowledge on Wikimedia projects—including children. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that children are entitled to special care and assistance, a status which is further elaborated upon in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Foundation is thoroughly committed to its responsibility as the host and operator of a major online platform, which extends to protecting and upholding the rights of children who engage with our free knowledge projects around the world.

About this Human Rights Impact Assessment Report

This Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) forms an important part of the Foundation's long-term efforts to meet the commitments articulated in our [Human Rights Policy](#). It follows and builds upon our 2020 organizational [Human Rights Impact Assessment \(HRIA\)](#), which identified risks to children's rights as one of five categories of significant human rights risks facing the Foundation and Wikimedia communities. The HRIA recommended that the Foundation undertake a targeted assessment to better understand risks to children's rights.

This impact assessment was carried out in 2022 by [Article One](#), a specialized strategy and management consultancy with expertise in human rights, responsible innovation, and sustainability. It was submitted to the Foundation in March 2023. The purpose of the assessment was to identify and analyze the impacts, risks, and opportunities posed to children who access and participate in Wikimedia projects. In doing so, the assessment proposes concrete recommendations that the Foundation and Wikimedia communities could implement to mitigate those risks, so that children can maximize the benefit they can receive by participating in the projects.

Foundation staff, volunteers, young users of Wikimedia projects, affiliates, and external subject matter experts were consulted as a part of this assessment. This included individuals who participated in Wikimedia projects as minors and continued their engagement into adulthood, activities that offered them unique perspectives on the risks and opportunities posed to children.

After reviewing the initial report, the Foundation and Article One partnered to carry out a comprehensive review of the internal CRIA report to prepare a version for publication. Some interviews and descriptions contained too much detail and could place individuals at risk or provide guidance to bad actors for how to cause harm if published. We made efforts to revise or generalize risky content where possible. Where it was not possible to revise or generalize such content to mitigate the risk of harm, it was deleted. This CRIA report is, therefore, a redacted version of the original.

Children and the Wikimedia Model

We know firsthand that Wikimedia projects have had a uniquely positive impact on the lives of many children. During this exercise, a participant told us that Wikipedia was a lifeline for them when they were growing up. We have heard many other similar stories from long-time Wikipedia editors and readers who discovered the projects in secondary school.

People of all ages use Wikimedia projects, particularly Wikipedia, to find and share knowledge. Wikimedia projects advance and support the right of all children, everywhere, to education and knowledge, and they enable children to more fully exercise a number of other rights. Access to free knowledge also helps children to exercise their freedom of expression, their right to access factually accurate health information, and their right to participate in cultural and civic life, among other rights, not only as youth but also as adults later in life.

This report affirms that children — and society at large — therefore stand to benefit significantly from accessing and being able to participate in Wikimedia projects. The Foundation is firmly committed to identifying and mitigating risks to children on our platforms so that they can safely participate in Wikimedia projects.

We seek ways to do so without compromising our strong [commitments to privacy as a human right](#), data minimization, and the safety of our readers and volunteer editors. Our principles mean that it is difficult to assess how many users worldwide are under the age of 18. We therefore seek to ensure safe participation for all, regardless of age, even though we do not know precisely how many minors participate in these projects. Anyone can access and edit Wikimedia projects without providing any personal information, and those who do choose to create an account to add or edit content

Looking Ahead

Publishing this CRIA represents a significant step forward in the Foundation's human rights endeavors, as it provides an opportunity for dialogue with [Wikimedia affiliates](#), volunteers, and policymakers around the world on our collective work to protect children online. This report contains a number of recommendations that the Foundation can implement, which include developing and strengthening Foundation policies and improving how the Foundation evaluates grants to affiliates and other organizations when children may be involved. In the coming months, we will continue to speak with our volunteer communities to better understand the work they are already doing to educate and protect children on Wikimedia projects and at in-person events, as well as identify areas for collaboration between the Foundation and volunteers.

When reading the CRIA's findings and recommendations, it is important to keep in mind that it was completed in March 2023. Since then, the Foundation has taken a number of concrete steps that aim to cohesively and sustainably address many of the report's recommendations. These include:

- **Finalized a child protection policy**, a set of guidelines and procedures regarding changes to or removals of content on Wikimedia projects, as well as actions against specific individuals, upon receipt of valid complaints from the community or the public or as required by law; this policy will be published in the days following the publication of this report;

only need to provide the information that they choose to disclose. Wikimedia projects collect the minimal amount of data necessary for the projects to function, and they store it for only a short period of time. These principles allow the Foundation to protect and uphold users' right to privacy and freedom of expression, including that of minors.

As the CRIA notes, Wikimedia's model does not present the same risks as for-profit platforms whose business models aim to maximize advertising revenue by targeting users with highly-engaging, but often unreliable or unsuitable, content. Our principles around privacy and data minimization mean that Wikimedia projects do not collect and sell user data or use it to target users with paid advertisements. Furthermore, content on Wikimedia projects, which is available to anyone regardless of age, is mainly educational in nature. Community-led processes set and enforce rules and editorial standards for well-sourced educational content. As a result, both the scope of content and nature of the user experience differ significantly from what children might encounter on commercial online platforms.

Governments around the world are increasingly working to promote child safety and wellbeing in digital spaces through legislation and regulation, a laudable goal that the Foundation supports. The European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA), which went into effect earlier in 2023, is one such piece of legislation. This CRIA plays an important part in our work in response to the DSA, by helping us to understand the existence and possible severity of risks facing children on Wikimedia projects. The Foundation is committed to addressing these risks, and looks forward to doing so together with our volunteer communities in the months and years ahead.

- **Provided actionable, easy-to-understand recommendations** in the child protection policy for children to protect themselves and their privacy on Wikipedia, including an email address to contact to express concerns;
- **Continued supporting the development of the [Incident Reporting System](#)**, which will provide users, including children, with streamlined reporting of and processing mechanisms for harassment and other inappropriate behaviors on Wikimedia projects;
- **Included child rights considerations** in recent reviews of grant applications. These are now being formalized into a set of standardized criteria that will be incorporated into grant application review processes;
- **Started mapping activities and initiatives** occurring within Wikimedia communities that strive to empower and protect children, so that we can identify future partners for addressing key recommendations in the report;
- **Enhanced the structure and governance** of the Foundation's Human Rights Steering Committee so that it is able to better carry out and implement the findings of human rights due diligence efforts, including this CRIA;
- **Designated a current staff member** with the relevant experience and expertise to lead child safeguarding efforts within the Foundation's Trust and Safety team.

Some key recommendations in this report provide opportunities for the Foundation and volunteer communities to collaborate more closely in order to incorporate child rights considerations into ongoing efforts, such as:

- **Developing a child-friendly complaints and reporting mechanism**, along with appropriate internal staffing, resourcing, and internal systems to process those complaints;
- **Integrating children's voices** into the Foundation's approach to protecting children and implementing its Design Principles;
- **Empowering children to better protect themselves** online by providing child-friendly resources and tools;
- **Developing a proactive and rights-compatible approach** to engaging on government regulations that affect children's rights.

Other recommendations, however, will need to be led by Wikimedia volunteers and affiliates. These recommendations include those concerning broader movement strategy and governance. Specific recommendations for affiliates and volunteers to consider and lead

on include evaluating the [Wikimedia 2030 Movement Strategy recommendations](#) through a child rights lens.

It is important to acknowledge that implementing the recommendations contained within this report will be a long-term endeavor, and not every recommendation may be feasible.

Given the decentralized and community-governed nature of the projects, and the minimal personal data collected on individual readers and contributing editors, the Foundation cannot impose solutions from the top down, as is the case with for-profit platforms. Rather, the Foundation works with and supports volunteers and affiliates to create solutions together. Furthermore, as a nonprofit organization, the Foundation does not have the vast financial resources to make changes at the same scale as for-profit platforms.

The Foundation believes that Wikimedia's nonprofit, community-governed model will ultimately result in a more rights-respecting approach to child safety on the Wikimedia projects. This is essential for our commitment to enabling everyone to share what they know, and to make this knowledge accessible around the world.



Stephen LaPorte
General Counsel
Wikimedia Foundation
17 January 2024



*Assessing the Child Rights Impacts
of Wikimedia Free Knowledge Projects*



Executive Summary



I. Executive Summary



The Wikimedia Foundation recognizes that core to its mission to help everyone, everywhere share in the sum of all knowledge is its commitment to respect and support the full range of human rights across its projects, including child rights.

Children interface with Wikimedia's free knowledge projects in multiple roles, including as editors, readers, and participants of educational programming and grant activities. The Foundation and its knowledge projects create significant opportunities for the promotion of child rights, including the right to free expression, information, and to engage in civic life. However, access to online platforms, including but not limited to Wikipedia and other Wikimedia projects, can also increase the risks of children

accessing inappropriate content, being targeted for sexual exploitation, and being the recipient of harassment. While this report will examine these risks on Wikimedia's free knowledge projects, unlike social media platforms that are managed for a profit and seek to maximize engagement through marketing and advertising, Wikimedia projects are not for profit and are considered to not carry the same risks as for profit platforms.

To fully understand the range of potential harms, and opportunities, facing children¹ who engage with Wikimedia's free knowledge projects – both online and offline – Article One conducted a **child rights impact assessment (CRIA)** with the goal to:

- 1 Surface relevant child rights impacts, risks, and opportunities** posed to children on Wikipedia and other free knowledge projects, thereby enabling the Foundation to focus its limited resources on the most salient impacts.
- 2 Assess the degree to which each child rights issue is effectively managed** by existing processes across the Wikimedia movement.²
- 3 Propose actionable recommendations to fill existing management gaps** and develop a holistic approach to managing child rights across the Foundation and the movement it supports.

This report summarizes the findings of the CRIA and proposed recommendations for the Foundation to consider, in conjunction with the broader Wikimedia movement, as it strengthens its approach to respecting and advancing child rights.³

¹ In line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), children are defined as individuals under the age of 18. OHCHR: "[Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)"

² Wikipedia and other Wikimedia projects are supported by a collection of individuals, affiliate groups, and organizations. Together, these groups comprise what we call the "Wikimedia movement."

³ See Wikimedia Foundation Board statement on Healthy Community Culture, Inclusivity, and Safe Spaces 2020, paragraph 5.

Scope & Methodology of the Assessment

Article One developed a four-phased methodology to conduct a CRIA of Wikimedia, its knowledge projects, and affiliates.⁴

The process was informed by guidance from the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), the Children’s Rights and Business Principles (CRBPs), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and best practice approaches to assessing risks to children, including stakeholder engagement.

CRIA Methodology

Article One took a four-phase approach to understanding the child rights risks and opportunities associated with Wikimedia’s free knowledge projects and related spaces, and existing risk mitigation measures. In line with the CRC, children are defined as individuals under the age of 18.⁵

The CRIA steps were as follows:



The assessment began with a desk review of risks facing children in the digital environment and on Wikimedia free knowledge projects (additional details can be found in the full Scope and Methodology section of this report). The desk review was supplemented with a series of engagements⁶, including:

- ★ Interviews with eleven Wikimedia Foundation staff and two affiliate staff.
- ★ Interviews with seven external child rights experts.
- ★ Interviews and focus groups with nine former youth volunteers.
- ★ A survey of youth volunteers, published in four languages and distributed through the Wikimedia Foundation’s Community Programs team.

Article One developed all research tools, including interview guides for virtual interviews with former youth editors and the online youth survey methodology. For sensitive topics, precautions were taken to ensure that the content and word choices avoided causing harm. The approach aligned with Article One’s Ethical Research Principles, including securing consent from both guardians and youth for all engagement with those under 18.⁷

Article One consolidated the findings from the first three steps, analyzed them in line with the UNGPs severity test,⁸ identified gaps in the Foundation’s and the broader Wikimedia movement’s current approach to management and oversight, and developed a series of recommendations for the Wikimedia Foundation to mitigate adverse risks to children and promote child rights related to its free knowledge projects in conjunction with the broader Wikimedia movement.



It is important to note that the public version of this report is a joint effort between Article One and the Wikimedia Foundation, based on a full CRIA independently conducted by Article One and submitted to the Foundation in March 2023. As with all impact assessments it remains a snapshot in time, highlighting child rights risks and corresponding management practices from 2023, when this report was finalized and submitted. It does not include actions the Foundation or the Wikimedia movement has taken or additional risks that may have materialized since the assessment was submitted. Article One and the Wikimedia Foundation jointly edited this public version of the report to protect the safety and security of Foundation staff and the larger volunteer community.

⁴ Affiliates are independent organizations representing the Wikimedia movement and supporting movement work globally. Affiliates can be formal chapters, which are incorporated organizations focused within a specific geography; a thematic organization focused on a specific theme, topic, subject or issue within or across countries and regions; or user groups, which are more informal open membership groups.

⁵ OHCHR: “[Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)”

⁶ This report includes quotes from engaged stakeholders. While Article One made every effort to quote directly, the quotations were edited, at times, for ease of understanding. To promote transparency during the interviews, Article One committed to non-attribution of quotes.

⁷ See Appendix A: Article One’s Ethical Research Principles

⁸ Severity of impacts will be judged by their scale, scope and irremediable character. See Phase 4 of the Methodology section of this report for further details.



Rightsholders

Recognizing that the way in which children engage with Wikimedia’s free knowledge projects can impact the potential risk and opportunities, Article One grouped children into three categories of rightsholders:



1 Volunteer Editors

Volunteers who contribute to Wikipedia and other Wikimedia projects by adding content to or editing pages. Anyone, including children, can be volunteers.

.....



2 In-person Participants

Volunteers who attend in-person events hosted by formal independent organizations that the Foundation recognizes and sometimes provides grants to as affiliates (e.g., Wikimania, Wiki clubs⁹) and informal gatherings (e.g., in school and meetups among volunteers) in accordance with their own policies and applicable national laws.

.....



3 General Public

Children who read content on Wikimedia projects, and who are subjects of articles, photographs, and other content on the free knowledge projects.

Child Rights Opportunities

Wikimedia’s free knowledge projects provide many actual and potential benefits to children, as editors, participants of in-person events and programming, and as consumers and subjects of Wikimedia project pages.



Volunteer Editors

Notably, volunteer editors of all ages are welcome to contribute to Wikimedia projects, to create reliably sourced, verifiable, encyclopedic content on issues that they are interested in and care about, thereby facilitating their right to freely express themselves (CRC 13). Contributions from children and adults are weighted equally. Both are expected to adhere to Wikipedia’s robust editing policies and practices to ensure that content remains verifiable and based on reliable sources. This process of editing contributes to advancing children’s right to education (CRC 28) and helps them realize their right to information (CRC 13), equipping them with important skills, including sourcing, creating citations, internet research, and the ability to critically evaluate information. These skills can also prepare young people for future careers, with the potential to positively impact their right to an adequate standard of living (CRC 27).

Beyond the educational benefits, as host to 335 different language projects, including Indigenous and other endangered languages, Wikipedia and other Wikimedia projects facilitate children belonging to minority and Indigenous groups’ right to access, participate in, and enjoy culture, cultural heritage, and cultural expressions (CRC 30). Wikimedia knowledge projects can also have positive mental health and developmental impacts on young editors (CRC 24), particularly those who may struggle with social isolation and benefit from connecting with peers and others who share their interests and challenges.

⁹ Wiki clubs are gatherings which can be organized by Wiki chapters for educational purposes, such as bringing together students to learn how to contribute to Wikimedia’s free knowledge projects.



In-Person Participants

Wikimedia positively advances children’s rights to meet and join groups and organizations (CRC 15) through the Foundation, affiliates, and informal community in-person events programming. For instance, meetups, whether organized formally or informally by the affiliates or community generally, can help young people meet up with their peers and foster meaningful connections. They can also help children belonging to a minority or Indigenous group to realize their right to cultural participation (CRC 30). For instance, in the past, the Wikimania conference, a global annual event with hundreds of sessions on a wide range of global topics relating to Wikimedia, dedicated a session to specifically recognize the contributions of African youth, and their cultural heritage. Wiki clubs and camps, which can be organized by Wikimedia affiliates, also bring together students to learn how to contribute to Wikimedia’s free knowledge projects, while having fun with friends. For example, the Armenia chapter has organized summer Wikicamps for students ages 9-15.¹⁰



General Public

For children who read content on Wikimedia projects, these free knowledge projects help to realize their rights to information (CRC 13) and education (CRC 28). Specifically, Wikipedia has become a significant source of information, as the seventh most accessed site in the world, with more than 61 million articles in more than 300 languages.¹¹ Wikipedia and other Wikimedia projects receive more than 20 billion page views each month.¹² Some studies reveal that students use Wikipedia to assist them in their school work,¹³ and as an easy to use, fast, and accessible source of information.¹⁴ Wikipedia is also one of the most frequently visited resources for health information on the Internet, providing general information about physical and mental health, and relevant services for children. Notably, this information is available to all children with access to the Internet (and in more limited cases, with little or no Internet access)¹⁵, regardless of income level.

Salient Risks to Child Rights

Salient risks are the human rights that are at risk of the most severe negative impacts through an organization’s activities or business relationships. This assessment focuses on the potential risks to children through their engagement with Wikimedia’s free knowledge projects.

The benefits provided to child rights should be considered against the potential risks the Wikimedia platforms and related spaces may pose to children, online and through in-person engagements. Under the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and Children’s Rights and Business Principles (CRBPs), Wikimedia and its platforms should avoid infringing on children’s rights and address any adverse impacts on children’s rights with which it is involved. The potential risks of Wikimedia projects and the associated rights for each group are summarized in the tables below, beginning with the highest risks for each rightsholder category. Details about the impacted rights and Wikimedia’s relationship to harm are covered in the main body of this report, along with recommendations for each salient risk identified. Details of existing policies in place to tackle these risks are also included later in the report.

Table begins on following page →

¹⁰ Wikimedia, “[Summer wikicamp for secondary students 2019 in Armenia](#),” (2019)

¹¹ Wikimedia, “[Wikimedia Foundation calls for protection and fair treatment of Wikipedia as UK Online Safety Bill becomes law](#),” (2023)

¹² Wikimedia, “[Wikimedia Statistics - All Projects](#),” (2023)

¹³ Luckin, Rose et al. (2008) “[Learners’ use of Web 2.0 technologies in and out of school in Key Stages 3 and 4](#).”

¹⁴ Luyt, B., Zainal, C.Z.B.C., Mayo, O.V.P. and Yun, T.S. (2008). “[Young people’s perceptions and usage of Wikipedia](#)” Information Research, 13(4) paper 377.

¹⁵ Wikimedia, “[The future of offline access to Wikipedia: the Kiwix example](#),” (October 2017)

Salient Risks to Child Rights



Risks to Volunteer Editors

RISK: Harmful contact and child exploitation (CRC 34 and 36)

Harmful contact includes grooming children to perform sexual acts online or offline and to access them as potential customers for illegal products. Initial contact may occur through the public talk pages on Wikimedia projects and then migrate to platforms hosted by other companies, as there are no chat and private messaging functions within Wikimedia's infrastructure. Children may also be manipulated or pressured into editing and creating content on behalf of governments or malign actors.

RISK: Threats to personal security and safety (CRC 19)

Child editors may be at risk of being targeted by states or malign actors who seek to control the public information space. There has only been one known incident - which has not been directly linked to involvement in a Wikimedia project - involving the child of an adult editor being exposed to danger, but there is still the possibility of children being directly targeted, particularly in conflict-affected and authoritarian regimes where online activity can result in arrest or detention.¹⁶

RISK: Lack of voice in the movement (CRC 3 and 12)

While there have long been efforts to enhance children's engagement with Wikimedia projects, such as community-led education and youth-focused programs¹⁷ and the Wikipedia Education Program,¹⁸ opportunities for children's voices and perspectives to be heard across the movement are still limited. This puts the Foundation at greater risk of designing projects and programming, as well as funding community-led initiatives, that do not take into consideration the best interest of the child.

RISK: Infringement on the right to privacy (CRC 16)

Privacy risks arise primarily from a young contributor's unintentional or voluntary public disclosure of personal information on the public platforms hosted by the Foundation. There is also the risk that children are not aware of Wikipedia's relevant privacy policies and practices or of online safety strategies for limiting the public sharing of personal information.

RISK: Discrimination and non-equity (CRC 2 and 28)

Children, like adults, may be discriminated against by receiving hateful communications or unfair treatment on the platform, primarily on the public talk pages, or by being deterred from using digital technologies and services.

¹⁶ Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in September 2022

¹⁷ Wikimedia, "[Wikimedia in Education](#)," (2021)

¹⁸ Wikimedia, "[Wikimedia Education](#)," (Updated March 2022)

RISK: Harassment and bullying (CRC 19)

Harm to children in the digital environment can manifest in several ways, including bullying and threats to reputation. A Pew Research Center study found that 90% of teens surveyed in the U.S. believe that online harassment is a problem that affects people their age.¹⁹ Children may also be harassed for their political, social, cultural, or religious views by states or state-like entities. Such harms may occur when discussing shared work on Wikimedia projects with other editors, or when engagement on Wikimedia projects can be traced back to an individual.

RISK: Exposure to harmful content (CRC 19)

A child may be exposed to unwelcome and inappropriate content on the platform. Content that may be classified as “harmful” on pages of Wikimedia projects include bloody or violent images (e.g., medical images), content detailing self-harm or eating disorders, hateful or racist speech, pornography, sexually explicit images, and child sexual abuse material. This exposure risk is heightened for editors who volunteer to remove “vandalism” from Wikimedia projects due to their higher degree of exposure to content that needs to be removed under existing Foundation and/or community policies across the public platforms.

RISK: Inadequate access to remedy (UDHR 8)

A young editor on Wikipedia or other knowledge projects may find it challenging to navigate the different community-run and developed reporting mechanisms and identify the appropriate one to use. This can impact the ability to access effective remedy.

**Risks to In-Person Participants****RISK: Best interest of the child not considered (CRC 3)**

Without the proper resources and training, independent third parties who have contact with children, through activities funded through Wikimedia Foundation grants for example, may not be equipped to appropriately consider the best interests of the child. For instance, at one independent affiliate event, the organization’s leaders brought in army members to do military style exercises with children, resulting in its suspension until new leadership was elected.

RISK: Child sexual exploitation (CRC 34)

While attending in-person events hosted by Wikimedia affiliates or informal community events, children may be at risk of harmful contact, including grooming. Children and young people who are groomed can be sexually abused, exploited, or trafficked.

¹⁹PewResearch Center, “A majority of teens have experienced some form of cyberbullying,” (2018)

RISK: Privacy infringement (CRC 16)

Children's privacy may be infringed if the policies and procedures employed at in-person events are not privacy conscious. Specifically, children's data, including personal information, may be collected and stored improperly during the registration process for an event.

RISK: Harmful contact, including bullying and harassment (CRC 19)

There is a risk that children face bullying and harassment at in-person meet-ups and events. This risk is potentially higher for informal community meetups that occur, for instance with participants of local user groups, where there may be fewer safeguards in place or in more restrictive environments where governments could engage in targeted activity.

RISK: Inaccessibility and inequity (CRC 2)

In-person events hosted by Wikimedia affiliates and informal groups may not always be accessible to children for various reasons, inhibiting their rights to express their views and assemble.

**Risks to the General Public****RISK: Exposure to harmful content and misrepresentation of facts (CRC 13, 17, 19, 27)**

The spread of mis/disinformation affects everyone online and offline, but because of their evolving capacities, children, in particular, cannot always distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information. As a result, they can both be harmed by mis/disinformation, as well as spread it among their peers.²⁰

RISK: Privacy infringement and risk to reputation (CRC 16)

Given their young age, children have a right to additional privacy protections and protections against adverse impacts on their reputation. The risk to privacy is higher for children who are subjects of Wikipedia articles or photographs in Wikimedia Commons, such as child activists and celebrities.

RISK: Child sexual abuse material (CRC 34, UDHR 1)

Child sexual abuse material directly infringes on the right to be treated with dignity and to be protected from exploitation. While Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) has been found on Wikipedia, it is very rare.²¹

²⁰ UNICEF, "[Digital misinformation/disinformation and children](#)" (2021)

²¹ Wikimedia Foundation staff reported that the Foundation reported 29 instances of potential CSAM material to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) in 2022.

▣ Recommendations

Wikimedia has taken a critical step in respecting children’s rights by conducting a CRIA.

Having identified children as active participants in Wikimedia’s community, and recognizing the unique risks faced by children, Wikimedia can work with community members to develop policies and practices to address surfaced risks, in addition to strengthening existing policies. In addition to the risk-specific recommendations presented for each stakeholder group, the recommendations below are intended to support Wikimedia’s broader child safety efforts and identify opportunities where Wikimedia can have an even greater positive impact on children.²²

1 Develop and implement a child safeguarding policy, approach to ongoing child rights due diligence and assign ownership of child rights within the Foundation.

A child safeguarding policy should provide a framework for ensuring the best interests of the child by the Foundation and the Wikimedia volunteer community. As the responsible person for overseeing ongoing child rights due diligence, as well as training and capacity building for community members and Wikimedia staff, a designated child safeguarding lead will ensure that child protection is prioritized throughout the organization and in its engagement with the ecosystem it supports.

2 Develop a child-friendly complaints and reporting mechanism, along with appropriate internal staffing, resourcing, and internal systems to process complaints.

Wikimedia should work with community members to create an escalation process for those who identify as children within the draft Private Incident Reporting System (PRIS), as well as develop a child-friendly version of the reporting system, to directly respond to young user’s concerns and unique needs.

3 Evaluate the Wikimedia 2030 Movement Strategy through a child rights lens.

A working group could be established to consider how the [recommendations of the 2030 strategy](#) are incorporating children’s rights, and where there are gaps that may require additional support.

4 Engage child rights experts and partner with other organizations working on supporting child rights online.

Partner with organizations focused on the digital rights and safety of children to provide Wikimedia with additional resources, expertise, and independent guidance on how the Foundation can advance its approach to child rights. Organizational units that may be best suited to lead these partnerships within the Foundation include Global Advocacy, Human Rights, Trust & Safety, and Legal.

5 Empower children to protect themselves by providing child-friendly resources and tools.

The community-developed Universal Code of Conduct and the Foundation’s Terms of Use are not tailored to support ease of comprehension for children nor designed to accommodate how children engage online. Wikimedia should partner with the community to develop distinct approaches for relaying information to children and create tools and reporting mechanisms that are easily accessible to children.

6 Integrate children’s voices into Wikimedia’s approach to design, including through their direct participation.

Children should have the opportunity to identify and describe the challenges they may face interacting with Wikimedia projects, as well as provide recommendations for how to make improvements that will advance children’s user experience. This could be accomplished by establishing a Child Rights Council or Youth Council that is composed primarily of children, to ensure that they can contribute directly to the Foundation’s strategy and by deepening engagements with children through school programs and initiatives focused on advancing children’s rights online.

7 Develop a proactive and rights-compatible approach to engaging on regulation that affects children’s rights.

Wikimedia has the opportunity to help shape the regulatory environment affecting children’s rights online. As a leading player, with the trust of civil society, Wikimedia can help ensure that regulation is developed in a rights-respecting way with outcomes that benefit children.

■ [End of Executive Summary](#)

²² Several of the [Wikimedia Foundation’s current policies](#) contain provisions applicable to protecting child rights



*Assessing the Child Rights Impacts
of Wikimedia Free Knowledge Projects*



Introduction





II. Introduction

The Wikimedia Foundation recognizes that core to its mission to help everyone, everywhere share in the sum of all knowledge is its commitment to respect and support the full range of human rights across its projects, including child rights.

In 2020, the Foundation partnered with [Article One](#), a specialized strategy and management consultancy with expertise in human rights, responsible innovation, and sustainability, to conduct a human rights impact assessment (HRIA) across its free knowledge projects.²³ The HRIA put forward multiple recommendations for the Foundation to better integrate rights-aware decision making and establish formal policies and processes to mitigate human rights risk.

A key area of risk surfaced as part of the HRIA was child rights. Children interface with Wikimedia's free knowledge projects in multiple roles, including as editors, readers, and participants of educational programming and grant activities. The Foundation and its free knowledge projects create significant opportunities for the promotion of child rights, including the right to free expression, information, and to engage in civic life. However, access to online platforms including but not limited to Wikipedia can also increase the risks of children accessing inappropriate content, being targeted for sexual exploitation, and being the recipient of harassment. While this report will examine these risks on Wikimedia's free knowledge projects, unlike social media platforms that are managed for a profit and seek to maximize engagement through marketing and advertising, Wikimedia projects are not for profit and are considered to not carry the same risks as for profit platforms.

To fully understand the range of potential harms, and opportunities, facing children who engage with Wikimedia's knowledge projects – both online and offline – Article One conducted a child rights impact assessment (CRIA) **with the goal to:**

1

Surface relevant child rights impacts, risks, and opportunities posed to children on Wikimedia Projects, thereby enabling the Foundation to focus its limited resources on the most salient impacts.

2

Assess the degree to which each child rights issue is effectively managed by existing processes across the Wikimedia movement.

3

Propose actionable recommendations to fill existing management gaps and develop a holistic approach to managing child rights across the Foundation and the movement it supports.

This report summarizes the findings of the CRIA and proposed recommendations for the Foundation to consider as it strengthens its existing policies and approach to respecting and advancing child rights.

²³ Wikimedia, "[Wikimedia Foundation Human Rights Impact Assessment](#)," (2020)



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Scope and Methodology



III. Scope and Methodology

Article One developed a four phased methodology to conduct a CRIA of the Wikimedia Foundation, its free knowledge projects, and Wikimedia affiliates.

The process was informed by guidance from the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), the Children’s Rights and Business Principles (CRPBs), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and best practice approaches to assessing risks to children, including stakeholder engagement.

Article One took a four-phase approach to understanding the child rights risks and opportunities associated with Wikimedia’s free knowledge projects and related spaces, and existing risk mitigation measures. In line with the CRC, children are defined as individuals under the age of 18.²⁴

The CRIA steps were as follows:



PHASE 1

Desk Review, Benchmark, and Interviews

Article One reviewed publicly available information on the risks to children on Wikimedia’s free knowledge projects, and in the digital environment broadly. We supplemented desk research with interviews of eleven Wikimedia Foundation staff, two affiliate staff, and seven external child rights experts. Child rights risks were mapped to the CRC, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The 4 C’s framework, developed by Children Online: Research and Evidence (CO:RE), led by the Hans-Bredow-Institut (HBI), also informed our analysis of risks to child rights online.²⁵

PHASE 2

Tools Development

Article One developed research tools for the next phase of work, including interview guides for virtual interviews with former youth editors and an online youth survey, which were reviewed by the Wikimedia Foundation team, including members from legal, education and human rights. External experts were engaged to review the methodology and the questions proposed for the online youth survey, and their feedback was incorporated into the development of the final product. All tools were developed in alignment with Article One’s Ethical Research Principles.²⁶

The online survey (developed in Google Forms) consisted of 33 questions and was grouped into four sections covering topics related to personal privacy, Wikipedia content, interacting with the Wikimedia community, and challenges reporting problematic behaviors. The survey was distributed in four languages: English, Arabic, French, and Spanish. For sensitive topics, precautions were taken to ensure that the content and word choices avoided causing harm. Additionally, the survey was structured to account for different comprehension levels and attention spans of various age groups, and to optimize engagement. Finally, participation in the survey was voluntary, and parental consent and the assent of the child were required. Survey responses were submitted anonymously to protect the participants’ privacy.

²⁴ OHCHR: “[Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)”

²⁵ Livingstone, S., & Stoilova, M. (2021). [The 4Cs: Classifying Online Risk to Children. \(CO:RE Short Report Series on Key Topics\)](#). Hamburg: Leibniz-Institut für Medienforschung | Hans-

[Bredow-Institut \(HBI\), CO:RE - Children Online: Research and Evidence.](#)

²⁶ See Appendix A: Article One’s Ethical Research Principles

PHASE 3 Consultations with Youth

Article One conducted virtual interviews with nine former youth editors. These editors were identified through desk research, as well as through connections with Wikimedia staff. The interviews lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. When asked at what age they started volunteering (editing) on Wikipedia, the interviewees estimated themselves to be between 9 years old (the youngest) and 15 years old (the oldest).

The online survey was distributed through Wikimedia's Education Team. Fourteen youths submitted responses to the survey. The objective of the interviews and the survey was to better understand children's unique experiences with Wikimedia knowledge projects and local affiliates, including child rights risks and opportunities, as well as potential opportunities for Wikimedia to better support them.

PHASE 4 Saliency Assessment, Recommendations and Report

To evaluate the relative priority of salient risks in line with the UNGPs, Article One considered the severity of each risk based on:

1. **Scale:** The degree of harm potentially suffered by the rightsholder.
2. **Scope:** The number of people who are or could be impacted should the infringement occur.
3. **Irremediability:** The degree to which the harm cannot be "undone" through a remedy.

In addition, we assessed the likelihood of each impact and the degree to which Wikimedia may cause, contribute or be linked to actual and potential infringements.



Cause: Wikimedia's direct action or inaction causes the child rights infringement (e.g., *Wikimedia has chosen a conference venue that does not take into consideration accessibility needs, such as by ensuring there is elevator access or providing ramps*).



Contribute: Wikimedia has created projects/mechanism that bring children together but has not done enough to prevent or mitigate the harm or created conditions that allow the harm to persist (e.g., *Wikimedia has created the tools for volunteers to chat via talk pages but does not provide sufficient information for volunteers to effectively protect their identity*).



Linked: Wikimedia has not contributed to the adverse impact, but the impact is nevertheless directly linked to the organization (e.g., *affiliates are hosting Wikimedia*

events, which require children to be accompanied by a parent and align with a child safeguarding policy, but harmful contact may still occur).

Where Wikimedia causes or may cause an adverse impact the Foundation should take the necessary steps to cease or prevent the impact; where it contributes or may contribute to an adverse impact, it should take the necessary steps to cease or prevent its contribution and use its leverage to mitigate any remaining impact to the greatest extent possible. In both a causal and contributory relationship, the Foundation should provide for or cooperate in remediation through legitimate processes. If the Foundation is directly linked, it is expected to use its leverage to prevent or mitigate the impact.

In each of these cases, it's important to consider that, as identified by John Ruggie, the architect of the UNGPs, "*there is a continuum between contribution and linkage*." According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)²⁷ determining whether an organization contributed or is solely linked to harm depends on whether the organizations:

1. **Incentivized harm**, including whether the organization's actions or omissions (failure to act) make it more likely that someone will cause the harm
2. **Facilitated the harm**, for example where the organization adds to conditions that make it possible for someone else to cause harm
3. **Failed to adequately conduct human rights due diligence**, in line with the UNGPs
4. **Knew or should have known** about the adverse impact.

Article One consolidated the findings from the first three steps, analyzed risks, identified gaps in management, and developed a series of recommendations for the Wikimedia Foundation to mitigate adverse risks to children and promote child rights related to its free knowledge projects, in addition to existing policies.

It is important to note that the public version of this report is a joint effort between Article One and the Wikimedia Foundation, based on a full CRIA independently conducted by Article One and submitted to the Foundation in March 2023. As with all impact assessments it remains a snapshot in time, highlighting child rights risks and corresponding management practices from 2023, when this report was submitted. It does not include actions the Foundation has taken or additional risks that may have materialized since the assessment was submitted. Article One and the Wikimedia Foundation jointly edited this public version of the report to protect the safety and security of Foundation staff and the larger volunteer community.

²⁷ An organization may be directly linked to a human rights impact that is caused by an entity with which it has a business relationship through its own operations, products or services.



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Child Rights Opportunities





IV. Child Rights Opportunities

Wikimedia positively advances several child rights, including freedom of expression, creativity, and access to information.

Overview

This section looks at the ways in which Wikimedia projects help to realize the rights of children.²⁸ Specifically, we sought to understand positive impacts facing:



1 Volunteer Editors

Volunteers who contribute to Wikipedia by adding content to or editing pages. Anyone, including children, can be volunteers.



2 In-person Participants

Volunteers who attend Wikimedia’s in person events hosted by formal independent organizations that the Foundation recognizes as affiliates (e.g., Wikimania, Wiki clubs) and informal gatherings (e.g., in school and informal meetups among volunteers).



3 General Public

Children who read content on Wikimedia projects, and who are subjects of articles, photographs, and other content on the free knowledge projects.

The potential benefits of Wikimedia projects and the associated rights for each stakeholder group include:



Freedom of expression (CRC 13)



Access to information (CRC 17)



Right to education (CRC 28)



Right to an adequate standard of living (CRC 27)



Right of ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities, or of Indigenous origin, to cultural participation (CRC 30)



Right to health (CRC 24)



Right to meet and join groups and organizations (CRC 15)

²⁸ The CRC covers both the protection and promotion of children’s rights.



Volunteer Editors



Freedom of expression (CRC 13)

Contributions from children and adults are weighted equally. Both are required to adhere to the community's rigorous editing guidelines to ensure content remains neutral and based on reliable sources. In this way, children can contribute reliably sourced, verifiable encyclopedic content on issues that they are interested in and care about. Indeed, this meets an obligation set out by the UNCRC General Comment No. 25, stating that relevant parties *"should promote the awareness of, and access to, digital means for children to express their views and offer training and support for children to participate on an equal basis with adults."*²⁹

Stakeholders reported that the confidence gained from being an editor on the platform can empower children to express their views not only online, but also offline. For instance, one editor, who started contributing to the platform at age 18, noted, *"[being an editor] has helped me discover that I could do something that I couldn't do before. When I was younger, I didn't feel comfortable talking in front of many people, but now, I can. It has helped with my self-esteem."*³⁰ Similarly, a study of participants in a program that edit Wikipedia as a course assignment found that students feel a sense of pride as a result of producing something that may help others and lives beyond the classroom.³¹



Access to information (CRC 17), right to education (CRC 28), right to an adequate standard of living (CRC 27)

Effectively navigating a Wikipedia article can provide students with an opportunity to learn essential skills including sourcing, creating citations, and internet research. It also teaches critical-thinking skills.³² Specifically, educators can use Wikipedia

to help students, especially those less experienced in conducting research, to become more critical consumers of information. Students may be encouraged by their teachers to critically evaluate footnotes on Wikipedia articles and the credibility of source material. As a contributor to the platform, children can develop their editing, writing, and collaborative skills, as well as general knowledge of various topics. The editing process, which typically leans on the community-driven process for developing consensus on article content, can also help to strengthen children's skills related to leadership, interpersonal influence, teambuilding, and group problem solving.

Wikipedia's value as a source of information is highlighted by its broad usage as a tool for research. In a survey of advanced placement and national writing project teachers, when asked which sources teachers say students are *"very likely"* to use in a typical research assignment, *"Wikipedia or other online encyclopedia"* came in second; *"Google or other online search engine"* came in first and *"YouTube or other social media sites"* came in third.³³ Respondents to the online youth survey also reported feeling confident about using the site as a trustworthy source of information -- 29% of respondents use Wikipedia *"many times a week"* to find information.³⁴ Anecdotally, one interviewee stated that initially, she didn't feel confident using Wikipedia for her schoolwork, but increased her usage more after better understanding the structure of the articles.³⁵ Similarly, another interviewee stated that since learning how to appropriately use Wikipedia, she *"trusts it and finds it more convenient"* than other educational platforms. She is now an advocate and tries to convince more people to use it.³⁶

The educational benefits of editing Wikipedia can also help prepare children for future work experiences and potentially advance in their career. For instance, Wikipedia can help students hoping to pursue medical careers to learn how to distill science into plain language for a general audience.³⁷ Additionally, Article One spoke with three former youth editors, who now work for the Foundation full time, highlighting the direct link between volunteering and career opportunities.

²⁹ UNHRC, *General Comment No. 25, 16th Sess., adopted March 2, 2021, UN Doc CRC/C/GC/25*

³⁰ Interview with former young editor in the Philippines, December 2022

³¹ Wiki Edu, *"What students learn from contributing to Wikipedia,"* (June 2017)

³² Wiki Edu, *"Chanitra Bishop: 5 ways Wikipedia can help teach research and critical thinking skills,"* (Oct 2015)

³³ Purcell, K., Rainie, L., Heaps, A., Buchanan, J., Friedrich, L., Jacklin, A., Chen, C., & Zickuhr, K. *"How teens do research in the digital world,"* (November 1, 2021)

³⁴ Article One and Wikimedia, *"Wikipedia Youth Survey,"* (January 2023)

³⁵ Interview with former youth editor in the Philippines, December 2022

³⁶ Interview with former youth editor in the Philippines, December 2022

³⁷ Wiki Edu, *"Students develop skills for a chosen career in STEM through Wikipedia,"* (January 2023)



Right of ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities, or of Indigenous origin, to cultural participation (CRC 30)

Wikimedia's free knowledge projects allow children to participate in creative and cultural activities. The right to take part in cultural life guarantees the right of everyone to access, participate in and enjoy culture, cultural heritage, and cultural expressions. Wikipedia hosts 335 different language projects, and some of these languages are considered "endangered" or in other words, at risk of disappearing. For instance, in Canada, Wikipetcia Atikamekw Nehiromowin is creating articles, sound clips and photos representing life, history and culture of the three Atikamekw communities in Quebec. It is the only active Wikipedia being used in an Indigenous language in the country. A coordinator for the project stated, "*Our young people are more inclined to take refuge behind their devices than to go on the territory. Hence, the importance of joining them via their technology for the transmission of language and culture. Wikipedia is, in my opinion, an excellent platform for that.*"³⁸ Similarly, in Rwanda, children are contributing to Kinyarwanda Wikipedia, and building communal knowledge, in the local language, of key topics and figures in the country.³⁹

Article 24 of the CRC recognizes that effective healthcare for children is an essential right, but also goes further than this by stating that children and young people have the right to be both physically and mentally fulfilled. Along these lines, participating in Wikimedia free knowledge projects can have positive mental health impacts on children, particularly for those who feel isolated or have few friends in school. Child contributors can make meaningful connections online with other like-minded peers. In a study conducted on behalf of the 5Rights Foundation, and with the support of 27 other partner organizations around the world, one teenager shared, "*following positivity blogs/accounts helps remind me that I am not alone as a biracial child. Being able to hear/read their stories and connect with other biracial people/teens help a lot.*"⁴⁰ The Committee on the Rights of the Child further acknowledges this benefit to children, stating,

"the digital environment can enable children to form their social, religious, cultural, ethnic, sexual and political identities and to participate in associated communities and in public spaces for deliberation, cultural exchange, social cohesion and diversity."⁴¹



Participants at In-Person Events



Right to meet and join groups and organizations (CRC 15)

As a community of volunteers, with no age restrictions, Wikimedia gives young people the space to be active members of a group with real decision-making power and authority. Meetups organized by the Foundation affiliates⁴² can also help young people meet and engage with others with similar interests. For instance, once a year, hundreds of volunteers come together for Wikimania, a global annual event with hundreds of sessions on a wide range of global topics that are relevant to the Wikimedia movement. Wikimedia affiliates also organize wiki clubs and camps bringing together students to learn how to contribute to Wikimedia free knowledge projects, while having fun with friends.⁴³

In-person meet-ups and events can give children autonomy and self-determination to show leadership and respect for others. For instance, one interviewee stated that at these in-person meet ups, "*you teach tips and tricks to people 20 years older than you, and they look to you for guidance. Wikipedia is the only place where that happens.*"⁴⁴ Details on how to organize a meetup and examples of past meetups are published on Wikipedia.⁴⁵

"Participating in Wikimedia free knowledge projects can have positive mental health impacts on children."

³⁸ Deer, Jessica, "A way to keep our language alive: How the Atikamekw Nation uses Wikipedia to promote its language," (CBC News, 2019)

³⁹ Nzabonimpa, Patrick, "Over 500 articles added onto Kinyarwanda Wikipedia," (The New Times, Oct 2022)

⁴⁰ Third, A and Moody, L., "Our rights in a digital world: A Report on the Children's Consultations to inform UNCRC General Comment 25," 5Rights Foundation, Western Sydney University (2021)

⁴¹ General comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment (para. 64)

⁴² Wikimedia, "Wikimedia movement affiliates/Models" (Updated December 2022)

⁴³ Wikimedia, "Wikimedia Communities and Education"

⁴⁴ Interview with former youth editor in Indonesia, November 2022

⁴⁵ Wikipedia, "Wikipedia:Meetup," (Updated Dec 2022)



Right of ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities, or of Indigenous origin, to cultural participation (CRC 30)

The Wikimania conference gives children the opportunity to contribute their cultural knowledge and traditions. Key highlights at the 2022 conference included a South African traditional dance program, a celebration of Africa through the cultural heritage of the Igbo tribe of Nigeria, and a session highlighting participation, including African youth.⁴⁶ Edit-a-thons have also brought children together to add and improve articles, including those related to issues around women and indigenous people and culture.⁴⁷

“As a free encyclopedia, this breadth of information is also accessible to all children with access to the internet, regardless of income level.”



General Public



Access to information (CRC 17) & right to education (CRC 28)

As the seventh most accessed site in the world, with more than 40 million articles and around 24 billion page views each month, Wikipedia has become a significant source of knowledge for users, including children.⁴⁸ Current estimates on the use of Wikipedia by those under the age of 18 could not be verified at this time, however, a national survey commissioned by BECTA, the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency, and conducted in 2007 of Year 8 and Year 10 students⁴⁹ found that of 1,556 students asked to name the top 15 sites that they liked to use for schoolwork, Wikipedia was the most frequently mentioned site. Another study found that secondary school students who are not required to conduct rigorous research use Wikipedia to gather general information which is incorporated directly into their projects, and several youth respondents viewed Wikipedia’s ability to be edited by almost anyone as a benefit since it allows them to discover a variety of opinions on an issue.⁵⁰

Wikipedia recognizes its limitation as an encyclopedia developed through an open-source process and as such provides general rules of thumb for conducting research.⁵¹ That said, Wikipedia is increasingly used by students as an easily accessible tertiary source of information, and as a quick “ready reference,” to get a sense of a topic or idea. Additionally, as a free encyclopedia, this breadth of information is also accessible to all children with access to the internet (note, efforts by the Foundation are underway to bring offline editions of Wikipedia to people with little or no Internet access),⁵² regardless of income level.



Right to health (CRC 24)

Wikipedia provides general information about physical and mental health, and relevant services for children. In fact, it is one of the most frequently visited resources for health information on the internet.⁵³ For example, one former youth editor in Rwanda stated that they had contributed articles about different health related topics, including on HIV/AIDS and prevention methods, Rwandan girls and women who face unwanted pregnancies, and how children can play a role in developing the solutions. Indeed, this aligns with General Comment No. 3 issued by the United Nations to promote the human rights of children in the context of HIV/AIDS.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ CIO Africa, “[Wikimedia 2022 is Coming!](#)” (August 2022)

⁴⁷ Wikipedia, “[Wikipedia: Edit-a-thon/Primary School Edit-a-Thons](#),” (Updated August 2020)

⁴⁸ Wikipedia, “[Wikimedia Statistics: Monthly Overview](#)”

⁴⁹ “Year 8” students are between 12 to 13 years old, and “Year 10” students are between 14 to 15 years old, according to GOV.UK, “[The national curriculum](#)” (referenced on February 17, 2023).

⁵⁰ Luyt, B., Zainal, C.Z.B.C., Mayo, O.V.P. and Yun, T.S. (2008). “[Young people’s perceptions and usage of Wikipedia](#)” Information Research, 13(4) paper 377.

⁵¹ Wikipedia is “not considered to be a reliable source as not everything in Wikipedia is

accurate, comprehensive, or unbiased.” Wikipedia, “[Researching with Wikipedia](#),” (Updated January 2023)

⁵² Wikimedia, “[The people behind free knowledge](#),” (2018)

⁵³ Heilman, James M, and Andrew G West. “Wikipedia and medicine: quantifying readership, editors, and the significance of natural language.” *Journal of medical Internet research* vol. 17,3 e62. 4 Mar. 2015, doi:10.2196/jmir.4069

⁵⁴ United Nations, “[Convention on the Rights of the Child: General Comment No. 3](#),” (CRC/GC/2003/3)



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The Unique Vulnerabilities of Children



V. The Unique Vulnerabilities of Children

While Wikimedia’s free knowledge projects contribute to the advancement of child rights, the CRIA found that the unique vulnerability of children suggests they may be at greater risk of experiencing adverse human and child rights infringements than adults. This section details how these vulnerabilities play out online.

The digital age has brought many new opportunities to children, including access to information, culture, communication, and entertainment on an unprecedented scale. Despite the extraordinary benefits, the online world also brings unique hazards and risks to children.

For example, a survey of 41,000 children and their parents found that only half of the children surveyed feel safe online, and 72% of children surveyed experienced at least one online threat, including most prevalently, inappropriate images and content, bullying, and unwanted sexual approaches.⁵⁵



Children are vulnerable to certain risks and harms, both online and offline, for several reasons. Specifically, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines child vulnerability as “the outcome of the interaction of a range of individual and environmental factors that compound dynamically over time. Types and degrees of child vulnerability vary as these factors change and evolve. Age, for example, shapes children’s needs while also exposing them to potential new risks. Infants, who are completely dependent and require responsive and predictable caregiving, are particularly sensitive to parents’ health and material deprivation. Young children under three years old are especially affected by family stress and material deprivation because of the rapid pace of early brain development. Young children can benefit from early childcare

and education (ECEC) interventions and time away from the home environment. The independence of older adolescents makes them more susceptible to opportunities and risks in the community, making the presence of supportive adults, school quality, and local economic opportunities important for well-being.”⁵⁶ There is a growing consensus that children’s vulnerability extends to the online environment, and thus, they require special attention. In 2021, the adoption of General Comment No. 25 made explicit for the first time that children’s rights (with respect to both potential risks and opportunities) apply in the digital world, and places responsibilities on both states and businesses to take action to address these risks.⁵⁷

Although there is still ongoing debate and limited robust research on the exact nature of how children experience online risks and harms, the number of relevant studies continues to grow. For instance, according to the American Psychological Association (APA), the use of technology and social media may be particularly concerning given that one of two critical periods for adaptive neural development is at the outset of puberty and lasts until early adulthood (approximately 10 – 25 years old).⁵⁸ Importantly, this period is also when a great number of youths are being introduced to technology, often in unsupervised ways. Technology induced aberrations in brain growth during this period may have lifetime implications. Indeed, one study found that children and young people under 25 who are victims of cyberbullying are twice as likely to self-harm and enact suicidal behavior.⁵⁹ Additionally, children who are victims of online sexual abuse can feel blame, shame, and are fearful, which can stay with them into adulthood.⁶⁰

At the same time, there is also increasing acknowledgment that while many children may encounter risks through their experiences online, not all risks translate into actual harms. Experience of harm is often linked to other vulnerabilities in children’s lives, such as a child’s age, being in care, or having a disability or eating disorder.⁶¹ For instance, a lower level of happiness and life satisfaction is found to be associated with exposure to negative online content, cyber hate, discrimination, and violent extremism.⁶² UNICEF research also found that older

⁵⁵ BCG, “Why Children are Unsafe in Cyberspace,” (Sept 2022)

⁵⁶ OECD, “Changing the Odds for Vulnerable Children: Building Opportunities and Resilience,” (2019)

⁵⁷ LSE Blog, “Children’s rights apply in the digital world!” (March 2021)

⁵⁸ American Psychological Association, “Written Testimony of Mitch Prinstein, PhD, ABPP, Chief Scientific Officer, American Psychological Association, Protecting Our Children Online, Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Judiciary” (February 14, 2023)

⁵⁹ Swansea University, “Young victims of cyberbullying twice as likely to attempt suicide and self-harm, study finds,” ScienceDaily, ScienceDaily, 19 April 2018.

⁶⁰ Internet Matters, “How to protect children from online sexual harm,” (Nov 2021)

⁶¹ Internet Matters, “Exploring the relationship between vulnerable children & online,” (Jan 2021)

⁶² UNICEF, “Investigating Risks and Opportunities: for Children in a Digital World” (Feb 2021)

children are somewhat more likely to experience harm than younger children, likely because they spend more time online and tend to be involved in more online activities.⁶³ Risks and the harm caused by these risks can also vary by country. In fact, one study found that of the children they surveyed, those in Latin America and MENA suffered the greatest number of cyber threats.⁶⁴ Consequently, some online encounters and experiences are harmful to certain children, while others are beneficial. This makes it all the more important to include children's views and experiences to assess what is harmful and what is beneficial. It also reinforces the need to balance attention to risks with attention to online opportunities and avoid the danger of reducing risks at the expense of opportunities.⁶⁵

A great example of this balance between risk and opportunity is the significance of information literacy, which is the ability to find information, evaluate information credibility, and use information effectively. As information and communications technology (ICT) is increasingly impacting many aspects of daily life, including education, work, and social interactions, information literacy becomes even more instrumental for participating safely and effectively in society. Of the children surveyed for the UNICEF study mentioned above,⁶⁶ between 30% and 75% of the participants said that they may not be able to verify the truth of online information, highlighting the vulnerability of children

to misinformation, as well as the importance of teaching and empowering them how to evaluate online information critically. Older children, likely to have spent more time online, tended to have higher critical evaluation skills than younger children.

Wikimedia's child rights assessment builds on this framing and existing research. It acknowledges that Wikimedia's free knowledge projects provide many actual and potential benefits to children, which were highlighted in interviews with children and child rights experts. They highlighted how the platform serves children as a meaningful source of information, education, fun, and collaboration with other peers, but there are also opportunities for children's voices and engagement to be elevated in the movement. Regarding risk, Wikimedia's organizational model does not present the same risks as a for-profit platform. For instance, it does not have targeted advertising or collect and monetize children's data.⁶⁷ That said, children participate in many parts of the movement, including as editors, consumers of information, as well as participants in Wikimedia's affiliate events, meetups, and grantee programming. In these roles, children face potentially negative risks to their rights (summarized in the table below), which were identified and assessed based on the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGP) severity criteria (see section on methodology).

Table 1. Summary of risks to child rights

Fundamental Children's Rights	Volunteer Editors	In-Person Participants	General Public
CRC 2: Right to non-discrimination	MEDIUM RISK	MEDIUM RISK	—
CRC 3: The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration	HIGHER RISK	HIGHER RISK	—
CRC 12: Right to freedom of expression	HIGHER RISK	LOWER RISK	—
CRC 13: Right to information	—	—	HIGHER RISK
CRC 15: Freedom of association and assembly	—	LOWER RISK	—
CRC 16: Right to privacy	MEDIUM RISK	MEDIUM RISK	MEDIUM RISK
CRC 17: Right to access appropriate information	—	—	HIGHER RISK
CRC 19: Freedom from all forms of physical or mental violence and abuse	HIGHER RISK	MEDIUM RISK	HIGHER RISK
CRC 23: Children with mental or physical disabilities have the right to a full and decent life	—	LOWER RISK	—
CRC 27: The right to development	—	—	HIGHER RISK
CRC 28: Right to education	MEDIUM RISK	—	—
CRC 34: Protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse	HIGHER RISK	HIGHER RISK	MEDIUM RISK
CRC 36: Prohibition of all forms of child exploitation	HIGHER RISK	—	—

The following section will provide descriptions of each of the specific risks, and examples of risks, identified by the assessment, as well as the recommendations aimed at mitigating the specific risks identified. The recommendations at the conclusion of this report suggest ways Wikimedia can

improve its holistic management of risks to children on and offline, in addition to existing policies that are noted later in this report. Additionally, the recommendations were devised keeping in mind that risk management should not jeopardize the many benefits Wikimedia offers to children.

⁶³ UNICEF, "Growing up in a connected world," (2019)

⁶⁴ BCG, "Why Children Are Unsafe in Cyberspace," (Sept 2022)

⁶⁵ CORE, "Understanding online risks for children," (Updated Sept 2022)

⁶⁶ UNICEF, "Growing up in a connected world," (2019)

⁶⁷ Common Sense, "Kids Are Exposed to Targeted Advertising Across the Industry," (March 2022)



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Salient Child Rights Risks





VI. Salient Child Rights Risks

The benefits of Wikimedia’s projects which work to advance children’s rights, should be considered against the potential risks they pose to children online and through in-person engagements in order to achieve the maximum educational benefit while minimizing the risk of harm to children.

Under the UNGPs and the CRBPs, organizations should avoid infringing on children’s rights and address any adverse impacts on children’s rights with which they are involved. This section looks at the ways in which Wikimedia projects pose potential risks to children’s rights.

Below we explore potential risks and the associated rights for three key stakeholder groups:



1 Volunteer Editors

Volunteers who contribute to Wikipedia by adding content to or editing pages. Anyone, including children, can be volunteers.



2 In-person Participants

Volunteers who attend Wikimedia’s and its affiliates’ in person events both formal (e.g., Wikimania, Wiki clubs) and informal (e.g., in school and informal meetups among volunteers).



3 General Public

Children who read rather than edit content, and who are subjects of articles, photographs, and other content on the free knowledge projects.

For each potential risk, this CRIA report includes:

- An outline of the risk and the impacted child right(s)
- Analysis of how the potential risk could manifest on Wikimedia’s free knowledge projects
- The Foundation’s existing mitigation measures
- Recommendations to mitigate risks



Stakeholder group Volunteer Editors

Editors are volunteers who contribute to Wikimedia's free knowledge projects by adding content to or editing pages. They can contribute as much as they want and remain engaged for as long as they want. Editors do a variety of tasks, from fixing typos and removing vandalism to resolving disputes, participating in self-governance processes, their project's local policy-making, and perfecting content. Anyone can be an editor, including children. There is no age restriction. While young editors may face many

of the same risks as adult editors (see Wikimedia's HRIA), they are also more vulnerable and experience unique risks, because of their young age and dependence on adults.⁶⁸ For instance, young editors who are exposed to harmful or inappropriate content may feel more confusion or uncertainty.⁶⁹ They could be vulnerable to online grooming by adult editors, especially if interactions take place outside the public transparency of Wikimedia's own platforms.

Below are the specific human rights risks to children who edit Wikimedia's free knowledge projects:

RISK: Harmful contact and child exploitation



Wikimedia's relationship to harm:
LINKED



Impacted Right(s):
Prohibition from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse (CRC 34); prohibition on all forms of child sexual exploitation (CRC 36)

Harmful contact includes grooming children to perform sexual acts online or offline and access them as potential customers for illegal products. UNICEF research notes that it has never been easier for child sex offenders to contact their potential victims, share imagery, and encourage others to commit offense.⁷⁰ For Wikipedia, the risk of this occurring is highest on its public talk pages, where editors can discuss improvements to articles or other Wikipedia pages. By providing a public venue for strangers to connect, a risk of putting youth in contact with bad actors is

present. For instance, one former young editor mentioned that they later suspected (though, did not confirm) that another volunteer he had been in communication with on the project as an adolescent had been convicted for possession of child pornography.⁷¹

While Wikimedia projects may be less prone to this risk than many other online platforms — due to both the encyclopedic nature of the content as well as the public nature of editor-to-editor communication — there are still vulnerabilities. Editors and Wikimedia staff expressed less concern about the risk of harm arising directly from interactions on Wikimedia projects directly, which take place on public talk pages, versus from interactions between volunteers who migrate their discussion to other platforms, such as IRC ("Internet Relay Chat") or Discord. For instance, Wikimedia has had sufficient evidence to ban at least two people from a volunteer-run mentoring program (e.g., "Adopt-a-user" or "Admin coaching," programs developed to foster mentorship between newer and more experienced users) for grooming other editors. While the connection was made on Wikimedia platforms, the actual grooming occurred on IRC.^{72, 73, 74}

In lieu of IRC, most recently, Discord has become one of the primary channels for volunteers to communicate with each

⁶⁸ Wikimedia, "Assessing the Human Rights Impacts of Wikimedia Free Knowledge Projects," (July 2020)

⁶⁹ eSafety Commissioner, "Inappropriate content: factsheet"

⁷⁰ UNICEF, "Protection children online," (Updated June 2022)

⁷¹ Interview with former young editor and Wikimedia Foundation staff in September 2022

⁷² Wikipedia, "Adopt-a-user," (Updated August 2023)

⁷³ Wikipedia, "Admin coaching," (Updated March 2023)

⁷⁴ Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in September 2022

“Along these lines, children, perhaps more so than adults, may be seeking friendships with others who are like minded and have similar interests, and consequently, have a greater desire to connect and personally identify themselves with other volunteers off Wikipedia, online and offline.”

other informally and independently of the Foundation’s platforms.⁷⁵ Along these lines, children, perhaps more so than adults, may be seeking friendships with others who are like minded and have similar interests, and consequently, have a greater desire to connect and personally identify themselves with other volunteers off Wikipedia, online and offline. One former young editor confirmed, “if I had the opportunity to connect with my buddies, I would have done it.”⁷⁶ At the same time, children’s social skills are less mature, and they have less experience identifying signs of potential harm.

Children may also be manipulated or pressured into editing and creating content on behalf of governments. While there has been no evidence of this occurring, Wikimedia staff believe that it is a possibility for children, just as it is for adults, to be trained (even unwittingly) or otherwise persuaded or forced on behalf of state actors to edit the history of that country.⁷⁷

Another risk of child exploitation was identified through an HRIA of a proposed technical project still in the testing phase. The HRIA found that while the goal of the project is to provide privacy for Wikipedia and its communities, it, along with other online tools, could have the unintended consequence of making child exploitative materials, such as CSAM, more accessible. The Internet Watch Foundation has stated that they were in conversation with providers of such tools because they believe certain features related to blocklists could have the unintended impact of severely affect their mission, which is to eradicate child sexual abuse imagery. The report acknowledges that there may also be alternative methods to filter harmful websites (e.g., taking down malicious domain names), which may be easier and more effective than using blocklists.

RISK: Threats to personal security and safety



Wikimedia’s relationship to harm:
LINKED



Impacted Right(s):
Freedom from all forms of physical or mental violence and abuse (CRC 19)

Editors, including children, are at risk of being targeted by states who seek to control the information space. In one authoritarian country, for instance, an editor was arrested and detained by the government after being doxed. He was later sentenced to prison for multiple years for organizing activities. There has been one reported incident involving a child, whereby a Wikimedia editor in occupied Ukraine was kidnapped along with his child.⁷⁸ The child was later found, but the adult was executed. One Wikimedia staff member stated that based on his prior, unrelated work outside of the organization, he has “encountered the issue of children being targeted to get to their parents, and this could also happen to Wiki editors, regardless of whether it’s the parent or the child that is the editor.”⁷⁹ Young Wikimedian editors based in conflict-affected and authoritarian countries may face a higher risk of threats to their personal security and safety based on their online activity. According to the 2022 Freedom on the Net report, officials in at least 53 countries charged, arrested, or imprisoned internet users in retaliation for posts about political or social causes.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Interview with former young editor and Wikimedia Foundation staff in September 2022

⁷⁶ Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff and former young editor in September 2022

⁷⁷ Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in September 2022

⁷⁸ Diff, a Wikimedia community blog, “[Ukrainian writer and Wikipedian Volodymyr Vakulenko](#)

[killed by the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine](#)” (2022)

⁷⁹ Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in January 2022

⁸⁰ Freedom House, “[Countering an Authoritarian Overhaul of the Internet](#),” (2022)

RISK: Lack of voice in the movement**Wikimedia's relationship to harm:**
CAUSE**Impacted Right(s):**
The right to express their views freely in all matters affecting the child (CRC 12); best interests of the child (CRC 3)

While there have long been community-led education and youth-focused outreach programs to enhance children's and educators' engagement with Wikimedia projects,⁸¹ this assessment found limited efforts to include children in the design of the projects. According to the perspective of one Wikimedia Foundation staff member, "*youth do not have a voice in the movement in a clear and mapped out pathway.*"⁸²

While many young editors who were interviewed noted that they specifically like that they are treated equitably on the platform and are not looked down upon or treated differently because of their age, they also noted that there was room for improvement in how editors engage with younger editors who contribute to Wikimedia projects. For example, one youth editor shared that they feel that editors should be more conscious about how they interact with the community since, "*this would go a long way in making the online experience for youth more comfortable.*" They noted that while this would benefit all community members, "*children are especially sensitive*" and if someone is made to feel uncomfortable, they "*may start to distance themselves from the projects.*"⁸³ An external stakeholder added that there is a tendency in child engagement efforts to only engage older children, but it's important for younger ones to be consulted. This should be done on a regular basis, she continued, and solutions should be co-created with children.⁸⁴

“Solutions should be co-created with children”

RISK: Infringement on the right to privacy**Wikimedia's relationship to harm:**
CONTRIBUTE**Impacted Right(s):**
Right to privacy (CRC 16)

Children have a right to privacy in the digital environment, including the protection of their personal data and respect for confidentiality in their personal communication. Moreover, while more research is needed on the links between privacy risks and the follow-on effect on children, there is a growing consensus that privacy is essential for child development, including their safety, agency, and dignity.⁸⁵ The effects of privacy disclosures can also lead to reputational damage, blackmailing, stalking or identity theft, and the infringement of other associated rights.⁸⁶

Wikipedia has robust privacy policies and practices for all its users.⁸⁷ The platform does not share user's information to third party sites for advertising purposes, and editors are required to provide minimal information upfront to start contributing. Indeed, depending on whether users create an account or not and how the user chooses to register (with email or without), Wikipedia only collects a user's IP address and browser agent for technical purposes, temporarily. As such, privacy risks arise primarily from a young contributor's voluntary disclosure of personal information on the public platform.

There is also the risk that children are not aware of Wikipedia's relevant privacy policies. For instance, its 'deletion policy' states that only information that is deleted by an administrator with oversight powers can be completely removed from the site.⁸⁸ Otherwise, a page that is deleted by a user is still visible to Wikipedia administrators. One interviewee described a situation where this occurred: at nine years old, the editor stated, "*I disclosed my age, name, and parent's information on my user page. I didn't realize, until two years later and requested it to be deleted. Also, I only realized later that I had to contact an administrator for the [Personal Identifiable Information] PII to be completely removed.*"⁸⁹ This same interviewee further noted, "*it takes a lot of inside knowledge about the process to get a piece of*

⁸¹ Wikimedia, "[Wikimedia Education](#)," (Updated March 2022)

⁸² Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in August 2022

⁸³ Interview with former young editor in the Philippines, November 2022

⁸⁴ Interview with external child rights expert in January 2022

⁸⁵ United Nations, "[General Comment No. 25 \(2021\) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment](#)," (CRC/C/GC/25)

⁸⁶ LSE, "[Children's data and privacy online: growing up in a digital age](#)," (2018)

⁸⁷ Wikimedia, "[Privacy Policy](#)," current version went into effect on June 25, 2021

⁸⁸ Wikipedia, "[Deletion Policy](#)," (Updated January 2023)

⁸⁹ Interview with former young editor in the Philippines, November 2022

“Overall, children are particularly vulnerable to privacy online threats due to their lower digital literacy skills”

personal information removed.” This process can also be more arduous for smaller Wikis, which don’t have their own oversight committees, and it is necessary to go out of your way to contact someone at Meta-wiki.

Importantly, a child does not necessarily have to reveal their name or other PII to be exposed to privacy risks. Several interviewees reflected on the challenge of remaining anonymous on the platform, and online more generally. Specifically, one former young editor noted: “it’s a lot harder to remain anonymous on Wikipedia than when I first started. Teenagers are online now more than they ever were.”⁹⁰ In other words, children’s digital footprint has increased significantly with the rise of technology usage, and even if they don’t reveal their names and other personal details, data pulled from various sources (e.g., their editing history, social media) can be used for the purposes of re-identification.

Overall, children are particularly vulnerable to privacy online threats due to their lower digital literacy skills and awareness of privacy risks. As one study suggests, children will develop privacy-related awareness, literacy and needs as they grow older. However, it is increasingly difficult for children to make informed decisions about their privacy and information disclosure, as even the oldest children struggle to understand the complexity of Internet data flows and potentially harmful consequences,⁹¹ and are therefore less able to understand the long-term implications of voluntarily revealing personal data or consenting to their data collection.⁹²

Children’s vulnerability to sharing information that should remain private can also expose them to the risk of doxing, which involves the act of someone exposing sensitive, private information online without the victim’s consent. Doxing is a form of cyberbullying. Additional details on this topic are covered under the section on risk of harassment and bullying.

RISK: Discrimination and non-equity



Wikimedia’s relationship to harm:
CONTRIBUTE



Impacted Right(s):
Right to non-discrimination (CRC 2);
Right to education (CRC 28)

Children, like adults, may be discriminated against by receiving hateful communications or unfair treatment online, or by being excluded from using digital technologies and services. Discrimination, under-representation or misrepresentation of minority groups online and in the media can negatively impact the development and validation of children’s cultural and religious identities – particularly during the critical phase of adolescence – and can result in poorer mental health and wellbeing outcomes.⁹³ One study found that children are increasingly experiencing both individual and vicarious discrimination online, which can trigger stress, depression, and anxiety.⁹⁴

Few interviewees had experienced discrimination firsthand on Wikimedia projects or knew about any other instances through peers. However, one interviewee noted that editors from other countries had “vandalized” his talk page with nationalist remarks and ethnic slurs.⁹⁵

Regarding the possibility of exclusion, children may not always be aware that their conduct is inappropriate, which can result in losing access to the platform. Along these lines, a Wikimedia staff member recalled an incident where a young editor forgot their password and struggled to prove their identity and gain access to their existing account.⁹⁶ Young editors who are blocked due to inappropriate conduct lose out on the potential educational benefits (see earlier section on benefits) of being an editor on the platform.⁹⁷

Finally, lack of Internet access globally remains a barrier to children becoming editors. According to a UNICEF-ITU report, two thirds of the world’s school-age children or 1.3 billion children aged 3 to 17 years old, do not have internet connection in their homes.⁹⁸ Lack of connectivity limits children’s ability to connect online, from competing in the modern economy, and can further widen the educational gap for those with and without access.⁹⁹

⁹⁰Interview with former young editor and Wikimedia Foundation staff in September 2022

⁹¹LSE, “Children’s data and privacy online: growing up in a digital age,” (2018)

⁹²UNICEF, *The Case for Better Governance of Children’s Data: A Manifesto*, (May 2021)

⁹³Third, A and Moody, L., “Our rights in a digital world: A Report on the Children’s Consultations to inform UNCRG General Comment 25,” 5Rights Foundation, Western Sydney University (2021)

⁹⁴Illinois News Bureau, “Online racial discrimination linked to depression, anxiety in teens,” (2009)

⁹⁵Interview with former young editor in Malaysia, November 2022

⁹⁶Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in September 2022

⁹⁷Please note: Users may create a new account that operates within the community rules of the project, though this action could violate community policies.

⁹⁸UNICEF, “Two thirds of the world’s school-age children have no internet access at home,” (2020)

⁹⁹The Economic Intelligence Unit, “Connecting Learners: Narrowing the educational divide,” (2021)

RISK: Harassment and bullying**Wikimedia's relationship to harm:**
LINKED**Impacted Right(s):**
Freedom from all forms of physical or mental violence and abuse (CRC 19)

Violence to children in the digital environment can manifest in several ways, including bullying and threats to reputation. A Pew Research Center study found that 90% of teens surveyed in the U.S. believe that online harassment is a problem that affects people their age.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, several studies show that cyberbullying victimization is associated with lower psychological well-being, externalizing behaviors (e.g., self-harm, substance use), children's greater exposure to negative online content and to cyber-dating violence.¹⁰¹

On Wikipedia, a young editor can be harassed by another editor, child or adult, or targeted by outside actors, such as a state (see further clarification under the risk, "threat to personal security and safety"). In 2022, the Wikimedia Foundation conducted a survey to understand the impact of harassment on volunteers who have been victims of the behavior and found that 25% of active editors responded that they had been harassed in a Wikimedia space at least once in the 12 months preceding the survey.¹⁰² The Community Insights survey did not survey editors under the age of 18, leaving an opportunity for Wikipedia to better understand children's experience. Anecdotally, one former youth editor that participated in an interview with Article One, posited that harassment is likely under-reported, clarifying that "*harassment usually stays extremely secretive*," since editors "*don't want to put attention to it*," and "*fuel the flames*."¹⁰³

Additionally, young users may not be aware of the harm that can result from selecting usernames that make them easily identifiable on Wikipedia. For example, one former youth editor described how they had been targeted for editing pages related to the history of a particular political party in their country - a sensitive topic in the country. They had created an account on Wikipedia when they were in primary school utilizing the same username that they used on social media sites. After editing a page on

that party, when they were a young adult,¹⁰⁴ other people (unclear if they were also editors) searched social media to uncover their identity and made it known to the editor that they knew who he was. The editor experienced this outreach as a threat and contacted Wikipedia's Trust and Safety team to escalate the issue and had his username removed from those edits. The issue was resolved in 2-3 weeks, but the editor noted, "*as a precaution, I changed my Wikipedia username. I do regret having to change my username that I was using for 10 years.*" According to the editor, this incident prompted other editors in his community to take steps, including the use of pseudonyms, to prevent being identified and targeted by others with malicious intent.¹⁰⁵ In another example, albeit rarer and more extreme, an editor who had been banned globally from the platform, uploaded the age and pictures of another editor to Wikipedia and threatened their wife and children.¹⁰⁶ While children were indirectly threatened in this situation, theoretically, young editors could also be directly and similarly targeted.

RISK: Exposure to harmful content**Wikimedia's relationship to harm:**
CONTRIBUTE**Impacted Right(s):**
Freedom from all forms of physical or mental violence and abuse (CRC 19)

A child may be exposed to unwelcome and inappropriate content on the platform. Content that may be classified as "harmful" on Wikipedia pages include graphic images of a medical nature, general purpose educational content detailing self-harm or eating disorders, hateful or racist speech, and sexually explicit images. Depending on the jurisdiction, content that is considered "harmful" (e.g., information that does not strictly fall under legal prohibitions, but might nevertheless have harmful effects) in one country, can be "illegal" in another. For instance, several countries have legislation around the prohibition of hate speech, while the U.S. does not.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ Pew Research Center, "[A majority of teens have experienced some form of cyberbullying](#)," (2018)

¹⁰¹ UNICEF, "[Investigating Risks and Opportunities for Children in a Digital World](#)," (2021)

¹⁰² Wikimedia: "Community Insights/Community Insights 2023 Report," (2023)

¹⁰³ Interview with former young editor in the Philippines, November 2022

¹⁰⁴ Spanning approximately ages 18 to 26

¹⁰⁵ Interview with former young editor in Indonesia, November 2022

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in August 2022

¹⁰⁷ NPR, "[Comparing Hate Speech Laws in the U.S. and Abroad](#)," (2011)



The impact on a child’s well-being depends on the child and their circumstances, including cultural context; however, evidence links some types of content to harm. For instance, studies suggest that exposure to pornography (that has appeared at times on Wikipedia sites due to vandalism) at a young age may lead to poor mental health, sexism and objectification, sexual violence, and other negative outcomes.¹⁰⁸ Children may be less aware than adults what kinds of content may be harmful to their development and wellbeing.

On Wikipedia, the risk of exposure to harmful content may be particularly heightened for editors who are also administrators. Specifically, administrators who intervene against vandalism must look at harmful content as part of their role removing content that violates community policies. On this topic, a Wikimedia staff member commented, “I would personally be concerned about children seeing that type [shocking images that are really gory] of content.”¹⁰⁹

While Wikimedia has bots to flag objectionable content for removal, one editor noted, “people can find ways to subvert the process or game the system by submitting content that is sexual or racist...the intent is to promote and stoke controversy.”¹¹⁰

RISK: Inadequate access to remedy



Wikimedia’s relationship to harm:
CAUSE



Impacted Right(s):
Right to effective remedy (UDHR 8)

Establishing mechanisms and procedures for complaints, remedy, or redress are critical for fully realizing the rights of the child.¹¹¹ On Wikipedia, editors, both children and adults, have several different avenues to make reports (as well as several pages detailing these reporting mechanisms) about harmful behavior or incidents, including through the community as well as the Foundation.¹¹² As such, a young editor may find it challenging to navigate the different reporting mechanisms, and identify the appropriate one to use. They may even get frustrated and give up. As one Wikimedia staff member noted, an individual “might not be in a good head space to find reporting. Wikimedia has a dozen boards, [making] it difficult to report someone.”¹¹³ As such, children may be hindered by the complex reporting landscape from reporting about harm they have experienced, preventing remediation as well as potentially allowing that harmful content or conduct to persist systematically on the platform.

For Volunteer Editors: Risk Mitigation Measures & Recommendations

The Foundation and the Wikimedia volunteer community have taken steps to mitigate the risks to children who are editors and volunteers but there are also areas for improvement. These include:

Risk	Mitigation Measures	Recommendation
Harmful contact and child exploitation	→ The Child Protection Policy and Terms of Use state that Wikimedia will globally block/lock out editors who attempt to use Wikimedia projects to solicit personally identifiable information from anyone under the age of 18 for an illegal purpose or violate any applicable law regarding the health or well-being of minors. ¹¹⁴	◆ Add additional guidance on responsible ‘conduct’ and a warning about harmful behavior to the pages on guidance for children and parents.

¹⁰⁸ Australian Institute of Family Studies, “The effects of pornography on family and young people,” (2017)

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in August 2022

¹¹⁰ Interview with former young editor in Singapore in November 2022

¹¹¹ United Nations: “General comment No. 25 (2021) on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment,” (CRC/C/GC/25)

¹¹² Wikipedia, “Trust and Safety,” (Updated November 2022); Wikipedia: “Dispute Resolution,” (Updated January 2023)

¹¹³ Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in August 2022

¹¹⁴ Wikimedia, “Child Protection,” (Updated August 2022); Wikipedia, “Terms of Use,” (Updated October 2021)

Risk	Mitigation Measures	Recommendation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The Child Protection Policy states that Wikimedia will block and ban any contributor who identifies themselves as a pedophile, attempts to use Wikipedia to pursue or facilitate inappropriate adult-child relationships, or who advocates inappropriate adult-child relationships on or off Wikimedia projects (e.g., by expressing the view that inappropriate relationships are not harmful to children). → Young editors and/or a responsible adult can make a report about threats to their personal safety to the following email: Legal-reports@wikimedia.org 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Work with the volunteer community to explore options to develop emergency help buttons on talk pages for projects children are likely to edit. This should be paired with a robust governance process to support the Foundation in responding to these alerts and identifying false positives. ◆ Develop an “if you see something, say something” campaign with the community regarding online grooming to help raise awareness of the risks and provide avenues to identify concerns.
Threats to personal security and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Issues involving threat to personal safety of editors are escalated to Trust and Safety, though depending on the nature of the case, other teams may become involved (e.g., Global Advocacy and Legal). → Urgent issues relating to personal safety emanating from state actors are escalated to the Human Rights Team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Global Advocacy team should collaborate with the Human Rights team, as well as the Wikimedia community, to identify geographies where young editors may be at higher risk (such as in countries with authoritarian regimes), and develop mechanisms to inform editors if they are engaging in high-risk behavior.
Lack of voice in the movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Children have been invited to participate and lead projects at Wikimedia affiliates’ events. → The contributions of children are treated equal to that of adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Work with the volunteer community to develop a systematic and clear pathway for children to regularly voice their views, outside of Wikimedia’s consensus driven process (see section on overarching recommendations)
Privacy Infringement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Privacy Policy and Terms of Use establish the Foundation’s rules around data privacy and protection. → Requests can be made to “oversighters” to delete PII. → “Wikipedia: Advice for Parents” states that the most useful piece of advice guardians can give to young editors is to never divulge PII on Wikipedia.¹¹⁵ The “Wikipedia: Guidance for younger editors,” available in 15 languages, gives children the same advice.¹¹⁶ → Threats relating to violations of individuals’ privacy may be escalated to Trust & Safety, Legal, or the Human Rights Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Collaborate with volunteers to offer a virtual training to youth editors on how to protect their privacy on the platform, expanding on current guidance. ◆ Develop training material and tools to support a new admin role (e.g., “youth privacy advocates,”) for Wikipedians to be “experts” on Wikimedia’s privacy policies to help uphold privacy best practices.

¹¹⁵ Wikimedia, “[Advice for Parents](#),” (Updated Dec 2022)

¹¹⁶ Wikimedia, “[Guidance for Young Editors](#)” (Updated Jan 2023)

Risk	Mitigation Measures	Recommendation
Discrimination, harassment, and bullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The Universal Code of Conduct (UCoC) states that harassment and discrimination, including doxing, are unacceptable behaviors within the Wikimedia movement. Actions that contradict the UCoC can result in sanctions.¹¹⁷ → The Terms of Use prohibits the harassment and abuse of others. → Users can appeal account blocks. → Anti-harassment tools, including AI/ML tools to detect personal attacks and aggressive tones in article talk pages.¹¹⁸ → Partnership with GSMA to expand digital literacy in emerging countries.¹¹⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Improve the ability for users to identify how to report potential incidents. For example, add reporting channels for incidents to Wikipedia: Contact Us page, the Help Desk and on pages commonly used to congregate, such as the Village Pump and Teahouse. ◆ Provide clarity wherever a resource for reporting is provided that includes details on what happens after someone submits a report. ◆ Apply a child rights lens to ongoing digital divide and literacy work. For instance, digital literacy frameworks, guidance, and tools can be integrated in the Reading Wikipedia in the Classroom ToT program.¹²⁰
Exposure to harmful content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Illegal content (CSAM, copyrighted material) is removed as it is identified (CSAM is also removed automatically through PhotoDNA), and certain administrators are tasked with removing “vandalism.” → Some options to selectively hide images. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Offer easily accessible written guidance (incl. references to relevant psychological support) for children who may be exposed to content that is harmful or upsets them. A good example of this is ConnectSafely’s “Resources for Youth in Crisis.” ◆ Provide training and resources, such as through programs managed by the Education team, part of Community Programs, to advance children’s critical thinking skills and empower them to protect themselves online. ◆ Encourage the volunteer community to incorporate into their development of content moderation guidelines and tools,¹²¹ consideration of child rights and the advancement of efforts to identify and manage content that may be harmful to children, such as cyberbullying, exploitative material or hate speech. Wikimedia may want to build on or follow the approach used for the Community Health Initiative.¹²²
Inadequate access to remedy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The Foundation has various reporting channels (e.g., legal, T&S), and the community has its own dispute resolution procedures for both conduct and content. → The Foundation is working on a system, called the Private Incident Reporting System, to help improve reporting for people who experience harassment or other forms of abuse.¹²³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develop a rapid escalation within the Private Incident Reporting System (a collaboration between the Foundation and the community currently in draft phase) for cases where someone identifies as a child. ◆ Private Incident Reporting System should be communicated in child friendly language and easily accessible to children. Such information should also be provided to parents, caregivers, volunteers, and professionals working with children (see section on overarching recommendations).

¹¹⁷ Wikimedia, “[Universal Code of Conduct](#),” (Updated Jan 2023)

¹¹⁸ Wikimedia, “[Community Health Initiative](#),” (Updated December 2022)

¹¹⁹ Wikimedia, “[Wikimedia Foundation Partners with GSMA to expand digital literacy in emerging countries](#),” (2018)

¹²⁰ Wikimedia, “[Reading Wikipedia in the Classroom - Training of Trainers](#)” (Updated October 2022)

¹²¹ Wikipedia, “[Policies and Guidelines](#)” (Updated January 2023)

¹²² Wikimedia, “[Community Health Initiative](#),” (Updated December 2022)

¹²³ Wikipedia, “[Private Incident Reporting System](#),” (Updated February 3, 2023)



Stakeholder group In-Person Participants

In-person participants include young volunteers who gather and meet offline through informal events, like club or affiliate meetups, and formal events hosted by the Wikimedia Foundation, such as Wikimania, or Wikimedia affiliates, such as regional conferences. This category also includes children in classrooms receiving financial or technical support from the Foundation through grants to third parties, as well as children involved in any other groups or organizations who receive grant funding from the Wikimedia Foundation.¹²⁴

Most of the risks faced by children through engagement at in-person events are likely to be similar to those faced by adults, including bullying and harassment, accessibility challenges, and privacy infringements. However, the severity would likely be higher considering the elevated vulnerability of children. The nature of the risk and harm to children will vary depending on the age of participants, the size, location, and type of event, and the safeguards in place, including whether a child is accompanied by a parent or guardian. Where children face unique risks will be in relation to grooming and child exploitation.

Below are the specific human rights risks to children who attend in-person events

RISK: Best interest of the child not considered



Wikimedia's relationship to harm:
CONTRIBUTE



Impacted Right(s):
The best interest of the child shall take primary consideration, particularly in areas of safety, health, and competent supervision (CRC 3)

Wikimedia volunteers, including those who are recipients of Wikimedia's funds and grants (particularly those with an education focus), may interface with children in a number of different capacities. Examples include: 1) Wikimedia Korea partnering with youth organizations to train and support youth editors¹²⁵; 2) Wikimedia Indonesia offering a hybrid internship to students and recent graduates to work on the organization's education programs¹²⁶; and 3) Wikimedia Nigeria creating a network of #WikiFan Clubs and hubs to support youth participation in the

organization's programming.¹²⁷ Children may also choose to participate in edit-a-thons¹²⁸ or meetups,¹²⁹ which are hosted by Wikimedia volunteers and provide an opportunity to build relationships in the community, but do not require permission from the Wikimedia Foundation. Without the proper resources and training, Wikimedia volunteers may not be equipped to appropriately consider the best interests of the child in these settings. As one Wikimedia staff member indicated, *"there's a need for volunteers that are having direct contact with youth [during in-person activities] to be trained, and a need for reporting mechanisms for youth."*

Additionally, there is a risk that the best interest of the child is not considered in formal events or informal meetups organized by Wikimedia affiliates, including by having children engage in inappropriate activities. For instance, at one affiliated organization, leaders brought in army members to do military style exercises with children. In response, the affiliate was suspended until new leadership was elected.¹³⁰ Children may also be endangered indirectly through their parents or guardians attending Wikimedia in-person events. Specifically, a Wikimedia staff member believes that it would be possible for an adult to reveal information about their kids to a person who they don't realize is colluding with the state, particularly with the uptick in state actors who are targeting Wikipedia editors.¹³¹

¹²⁴ Wikimedia, "Grants," (Updated February 2023)

¹²⁵ Wikimedia, "Grants: Programs/Wikimedia Community Fund/Boosting the Korean Wikimedia Community and Diversifying Editors and Contents on Wikimedia Movement/Final Report," (Updated June 2023)

¹²⁶ Wikimedia, "Pendidikan Wikimedia Indonesia," (Updated December 2022)

¹²⁷ Wikimedia, "Grants:Programs/Wikimedia Community Fund/Wikimedia Nigeria Foundation

Inc- Annual Activities 2023," (Updated June 2023)

¹²⁸ Wikipedia, "How to run an edit-a-thon" (October 2022)

¹²⁹ Wikipedia, "Meetup" (February 2023)

¹³⁰ Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in August 2022

¹³¹ Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in September 2022



RISK:

Privacy infringement



Wikimedia's relationship to harm:
CONTRIBUTE



Impacted Right(s):
Right to privacy (CRC 16)

Children's privacy runs the risk of infringement through participation at in-person events, such as attendees taking unauthorized photos or videos with the children in them. These risks may be reduced by ensuring privacy conscious policies and procedures are employed, but sophisticated and well-resourced, malicious actors may still find ways to circumvent such procedures. Specifically, children's data, including personal information, may be collected and stored improperly during the registration process for an event. Photographs may be taken of children participating in the event, and then posted online or in another public place without their consent.

RISK:

Harmful contact, including bullying and harassment



Wikimedia's relationship to harm:
LINKED



Impacted Right(s):
Freedom from all forms of physical or mental violence and abuse (CRC 19);
Right to non-discrimination (CRC 2)

There is a risk that children face bullying and harassment at in-person meet-ups and events. This risk is potentially higher for informal meetups that occur, for instance with participants of local affiliates. One editor said that local meetups are mostly informal, and don't need parent/guardian sign off (though potentially, there are some

exceptions). That said, when this person was in high school and traveled alone to an in-person meet-up, he said, "[the chapter] did a great job of accommodating my needs as a young editor."¹³²

Children involved in projects who receive Foundation funding and grants are also at risk of harassment. Specifically, the Foundation is aware of one incident where the project staff for a non-affiliate grant recipient were accused of sexually harassing indigenous youth participating in their other programs hosted by the same entity. There is an ongoing independent third-party investigation.¹³³ The grant was suspended as a result.

RISK:

Child sexual exploitation



Wikimedia's relationship to harm:
LINKED



Impacted Right(s):
Prohibition on all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (CRC 34)

Both adults and children attend events hosted by Wikimedia, though all children aged 14 or under can only register and attend Wikimedia events if they are accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.¹³⁴

While attending these in-person events, children may be at risk of harmful contact, including grooming. Children and young people who are groomed can be sexually abused, exploited, or trafficked. For example, one incident brought to the Foundation team related to the potential grooming of a teenager during a Wikimedia affiliate's event. In addition, the Foundation is aware of one incident where the project staff for a non-affiliate grant recipient were accused of sexually harassing Indigenous youth participating in other programs hosted by the same entity. There is an ongoing independent third-party investigation.¹³⁵ The grant was suspended as a result.

¹³² Interview with former young editor in Indonesia in November 2022

¹³³ Wikimedia, information from confidential working draft, "Problem statement on child safeguarding in the Wikimedia movement"

¹³⁴ Wikimedia, "Friendly Space Policy," (Updated October 2022)

¹³⁵ Information provided in working draft, "Problem statement on child safeguarding in the Wikimedia movement"



RISK:

Inaccessibility and inequity



Wikimedia’s relationship to harm: CAUSE



Impacted Right(s):
Freedom of association and assembly (CRC 15); freedom of expression (CRC 12); children with mental or physical disabilities have the right to a full and decent life (CRC 23)

In-person events hosted by Wikimedia may not always be accessible to children for various reasons, inhibiting their rights to express their views and assemble. Indeed, 43% of respondents to the online youth survey said they had never been to an in-person Wikimedia event.¹³⁶

There is a risk that events, including in-person events that are live-streamed or have a virtual component, are not accessible to children with disabilities, as well as

children with various learning preferences, students whose first language is not the language in which the event or instruction is delivered, students using a variety of devices and web browsers, and those with slow internet connections.¹³⁷ This risk is potentially higher for informal meetups with fewer resources and potentially less knowledge of accessibility risks.

Another accessibility barrier relates to the price of travel to the event. One editor said that he had not attended any in-person events, because “it cost too much to travel.”¹³⁸ Children may also struggle to find information about events, particularly if they are not marketed in a child-friendly format or in their local language. For instance, one editor mentioned that when he was younger, he was interested in joining an event, but said, “I didn’t know how, and there wasn’t anyone to provide me with this information.”¹³⁹ This same editor feels that there is an opportunity for Wikimedia to encourage more children to participate in in-person events, and may help children to feel more connected to the movement and stay engaged in the long-term.

For In-Person Participants: Risk Mitigation Measures & Recommendations

The Foundation and the Wikimedia volunteer community have taken steps to mitigate the risks to children who fall in this stakeholder category but there are areas for improvement. These include:

Risk	Mitigation Measures	Recommendation
Best interests of the child not considered	→ Friendly Space Policy includes a dedicated section to “Youth Safety.”	◆ Provide resources or training on children’s rights and protection measures for Wikimedia volunteers who are in contact with children, and are recipients of training and funding by the Foundation, as well as teachers who are trained by the Foundation to use Wikipedia as a pedagogical tool.
Privacy Infringement	→ Friendly Spaces Policy explicitly prohibits “harassing photography” which could violate individuals’ rights to privacy at events.	◆ Embed privacy protections in Friendly Space Policy, including a requirement around obtaining parental consent for processing data of children under 16 (as obligated by the GDPR).

¹³⁶ Wikimedia and Article One, “Wikipedia Youth Survey,” (January 2023)

¹³⁷ DO-IT: “A Tutorial for Making Online Learning Accessible to Students with Disabilities,” (2020)

¹³⁸ Interview with former young editor in Singapore in December 2022

¹³⁹ Interview with former young editor in Malaysia in November 2022

Risk	Mitigation Measures	Recommendation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Friendly Spaces Policy requires parental consent for participation of minors under 15 years of age. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develop a photography policy, including a detailed set of procedures that explains how Wikimedia and its affiliates use images of children, and what actions the organization takes to keep children safe (see example here). This may include a requirement that Wikimedia hosted- events must obtain the child and their parent's consent before taking or using a child's image. This can be enforced by providing lanyards to child participants, whereby the color would indicate whether a child and their parent have consented to being photographed.
Harmful contact, including bullying and harassment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Friendly Space Policy and the Universal Code of Conduct states zero tolerance for harassment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Same as above regarding enforcement and verification of Friendly Space Policy.
Child sexual exploitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The Friendly Space Policy ensures a safe and positive experience for young attendees at venues that the policy applies to.¹⁴⁰ Requirements include, but are not limited to: 1) people of age 14 or younger are required to be accompanied by an adult; and 2) every event or venue designed for young people aged 15-24 is required to have a safety plan for young attendees, which should include a contact method displayed at another person's safety. → Friendly Space Policy states Foundation's zero tolerance for harassment, which includes inappropriate physical contact and unwelcome sexual attention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develop enforcement and/or verification mechanism for the Friendly Space Policy. ◆ Require all partners engaging with youth to have a Child Safeguarding Policy and implementation plan. This should include background checks for those who engage with children on behalf of the Foundation.
Inaccessibility and inequity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Provides full (travel, accommodation, and registration) and partial travel scholarships (accommodation and registration)¹⁴¹ → A "guide" on best practices around accessibility, including general inclusion and participation, multilingual access, disability specific accommodations, remote access, and family friendly support (including older children and teens).¹⁴² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Directly consult children with disabilities to better understand potential events accessibility improvements. ◆ Develop a set of accessibility criteria for selecting venues for Foundation events. ◆ Consider offering a separate, more child-friendly scholarship application for children and their parents (individuals under 18), and extra financial support, where feasible.

¹⁴⁰ Wikimedia: "[Friendly Space Policy](#)," (2022)

¹⁴¹ Wikimedia, "[Wikimania Singapore: 2023 Scholarships](#)"

¹⁴² Wikimedia: "[Events/Accessibility](#)," (2021)



Stakeholder group General Public

The general public includes children who are readers and consumers of content on the platform and who are subjects of articles, images, or other content on Wikimedia's free knowledge projects. Children, like adults, can access any article or page on Wikipedia or other projects. However, younger children may not

have the skills to critically evaluate the information they find.¹⁴³ Additionally, photos of and information about children posted on Wikimedia's free knowledge projects, particularly without their consent, increases the risk of privacy infringements and brings up issues around autonomy and consent.

Below are the specific human rights risks to children who are readers and subjects of content on Wikimedia's free knowledge projects:

RISK:

Exposure to harmful content and misrepresentation of facts



Wikimedia's relationship to harm:
CONTRIBUTE



Impacted Right(s):
Right to information (CRC 13) and freedom from harmful information (CRC 17); freedom from all forms of physical or mental violence and abuse (CRC 19); right to development (CRC 27)

Wikipedia has long dealt with issues that are subjects of intense debate both among editors and the broader society. However, concerns about the integrity of the content have now grown to include risks around long-term infiltration of state-sponsored actors or independent "bad actors".¹⁴⁴ The spread of mis/disinformation affects

everyone online and offline, but because of their evolving capacities, children, in particular, cannot always distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information. As a result, they can both be harmed by mis/disinformation, as well as spread it among their peers.¹⁴⁵

Young consumers of information on Wikipedia can also be exposed to harmful content, including rare instances that involve:

- content that is not written in line with Wikipedia's policies on tone and point of view and addresses "substance abuse, racial hatred, risk-taking behavior or suicide, anorexia or violence."¹⁴⁶
- sexually explicit images when the user was neither looking for nor expecting to encounter them when researching a topic, including in a handful of cases, vandalism in the form of pornography, on Wikimedia Projects.¹⁴⁷

In one example, a Foundation staff member reported that they were showing a young relative how to search for images on Commons and searched for a generic term, like "trees." The first search results were men masturbating. They reported the incident to Trust and Safety.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ UNICEF, "Growing up in a connected world," (2019)

¹⁴⁴ El Pais, "Catching spies on Wikipedia," (2022)

¹⁴⁵ UNICEF, "Digital misinformation/disinformation and children" (2021)

¹⁴⁶ UNICEF: "Children's Rights and the Internet: From Guidance to Practice," (2016)

¹⁴⁷ Australian Institute of Family Studies: "The effects of pornography on children and young people," (2017)

¹⁴⁸ Information provided by Foundation in working draft, "Problem statement on child safeguarding in the Wikimedia movement"



RISK: Privacy infringement and risk to reputation



Wikimedia’s relationship to harm:
CONTRIBUTE



Impacted Right(s):
Right to privacy (CRC 16); Freedom from unlawful attacks on one’s honor and reputation (ICCPR 17)

Given their young age, children have a right to additional privacy protections and protections against adverse impacts on their reputation. The risk to privacy is higher for children who are subjects of Wikipedia articles or photographs in Wikimedia Commons, such as child activists and celebrities.

Vandals have targeted articles about living people and made edits designed to damage their reputation. Data on the extent to which children are subjects of such attempts on Wikipedia or other Wikimedia projects was not available at the time this report was produced. However, the Foundation has encountered some rare instances where parents are concerned about information related to their children on the site. Specifically, a celebrity couple were upset that their children’s names were included in their father’s biography.¹⁴⁹ The Wikimedia community became aware of this issue and addressed it directly by removing the names of the children and making a note to the revision indicating, “we do not name non-notable relatives, particularly minors”, seemingly in reference to the Biography of Living Persons policy.¹⁵⁰

RISK: Child sexual abuse material



Wikimedia’s relationship to harm:
LINKED



Impacted Right(s):
Right to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse (CRC 34); right to dignity (UDHR 1)

Child sexual abuse material directly infringes on the right to be treated with dignity and to be protected from exploitation. Children shown in child sexual abuse material are victimized twice: first by the person committing the sexual act, and again, by those who view it. Victims of CSAM often report feeling guilt, shame, and blame.¹⁵¹ While CSAM has been found on Wikipedia, it is very rare.¹⁵² One Wikimedia staff member remarked, “people are unlikely to post [this type of material] on Wikipedia, since it can be easily searched and screened for.”¹⁵³

For the General Public: Risk Mitigation Measures & Recommendations

The Foundation and the Wikimedia volunteer community have taken steps to mitigate the risks to children who fall in this stakeholder category but there are areas for improvement. These include:

Risk	Mitigation Measures	Recommendation
Exposure to harmful content and misrepresentation of facts	→ Wikimedia’s Knowledge Integrity ¹⁵⁴ program, focused on anti-disinformation, has been operationalized and is managed across the Global Advocacy, Trust & Safety, and Research teams.	◆ Develop a guide for youth on how to identify and deal with misinformation. The material from The Wikimedia Foundation’s “ Teacher’s Guide: Reading Wikipedia in the Classroom, Module 1 ” ¹⁵⁵ is a great example of material that should be made more easily accessible for children.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in August 2022

¹⁵⁰ Wikipedia, “[Biographies of living persons](#)” (Updated Feb 2023)

¹⁵¹ RAINN, “[What is child sexual abuse material](#),” August 2022

¹⁵² Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in February 2023 indicated that Wikimedia receives about six reports per month, and of those about three are reported to NCMEC.

¹⁵³ Interview with Wikimedia Foundation staff in August 2022

¹⁵⁴ Wikimedia, “[Knowledge Integrity](#),” (2019)

¹⁵⁵ Wikimedia Foundation, “[Teacher’s Guide: Reading Wikipedia in the Classroom, Module 1](#)” (2020)

Risk	Mitigation Measures	Recommendation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → WMF has recently finalized an institutional disinformation strategy to combat this threat, which is an organizational priority.¹⁵⁶ → The Trust and Safety Disinformation team focuses on supporting communities in identifying and countering disinformation campaigns on Wikimedia Foundation platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Include a section for children in community surveys (such as the Readers and Editors Surveys¹⁵⁷ that have been conducted in the past) to advance Wikimedia's understanding of children's experiences with the knowledge projects and the impacts of projects on children.
Exposure to harmful content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Wikimedia is evaluating options for adding mental health resources on self-harm related articles → Wikipedia provides guidance on how to spot and handle vandalism, which includes removing the vandalism and indefinitely blocking users whose main or sole purpose is clearly vandalism.¹⁵⁸ → All articles on Wikipedia fall under the site-wide content disclaimer and Wikipedia does not use specific disclaimers within articles warning readers of such content.¹⁵⁹ → Users have some options to selectively prevent Wikipedia images from being displayed on their screen. For example, people with a Wikipedia account are able to use features of the wiki software to disable specific images and or sets of images from being displayed. The Wikipedia page, "Help: Options to hide an image," provides detailed descriptions on how to do this, as well as how to configure a browser to block images.¹⁶⁰ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Offer additional training and warnings on the risks for administrators who are involved in anti-vandalism work. ◆ Support the volunteer community to build out guidelines for child protection on Commons. Currently, child protection falls under the Terms of Use. A Child Protection policy has been proposed for Wikimedia Commons, which provides guidance on enforcement of violations to the Terms of Use, but there has been no activity on the page since October 2019.
Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Project level efforts to protect the privacy of children for whom there is limited encyclopedic need to cover, such as the children of celebrities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provide resources and information to the volunteer community to develop a formal policy for best practices around biographies of children.
Child sexual abuse material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Wikimedia uses the content filtering technology, PhotoDNA, to automatically detect and remove CSAM on the platform. → When CSAM is reported or detected, Wikimedia immediately takes it down, reports it to NCMEC, and burns it off the servers. → There is also a unique email for reporting CSAM. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ No gap identified. The volunteer communities have developed strong guidelines against this type of content, as well as measures to identify and remove it.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Article One email communication with Foundation staff in February 2023

¹⁵⁷ Wikimedia Meta-wiki, "[Research: Wikipedia Editors Survey 2011 April](#)" (June 2011)

¹⁵⁸ Wikipedia, "[Vandalism](#)," (Updated Nov 2022)

¹⁵⁹ Wikipedia, "[Content Disclaimer](#)," (Updated Feb 2022)

¹⁶⁰ Wikipedia, "[Options to hide an image](#)," (Updated January 2023)

¹⁶¹ Wikimedia, "Policy: Terms of Use," (Updated September 2023)



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Recommendations





VII. Recommendations

Wikimedia has taken a critical step in respecting children’s rights by conducting this CRIA. Having identified children as active participants in Wikimedia projects, and recognizing the unique risks faced by children, the Wikimedia Foundation can continue to work closely with the volunteer community to expand policies and practices that address these risks.

The Wikimedia Foundation, as the host of Wikipedia and other free knowledge projects, is distinct from many other digital sites accessed by children. Unlike social media platforms that are managed for a profit and seek to maximize engagement through marketing and advertising, Wikimedia projects are not for profit and have the explicit goal of empowering and engaging people around the world to collect and develop educational content. Wikimedia projects are considered to not carry the same risks as for profit platforms.

However, as this report has identified, children are active users of Wikimedia knowledge projects, and while these projects offer many benefits to children, there remain child rights risks which require the Wikimedia Foundation, together with the volunteer community, to take adequate measures to identify, prevent, mitigate and, where appropriate, remediate. In addition to the risk-specific recommendations presented for each stakeholder group, the recommendations below are intended to support Wikimedia’s broader child rights efforts and identify opportunities where Wikimedia can have an even greater positive impact on children.

1 **Develop and implement a child safeguarding policy, approach to ongoing child rights due diligence and assign ownership of child rights within the Foundation.**

.....

A stand-alone child safeguarding policy should provide a framework for ensuring the best interests of the child by the Foundation, its affiliates, and the broader volunteer community, and protecting children (e.g., editors, the public, and participants of in-person programming) from all forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation. According to UNICEF guidance, a policy commitment is the first step that informs the path towards implementation and continuous improvement. UNICEF’s Child Safeguarding Toolkit provides a checklist, which can help Wikimedia further refine the scope and format of the policy.¹⁶² Additionally, to ensure that child safeguarding is a priority in the Foundation, there needs to be ownership at the senior management level (e.g., Board Member and/or Committee) as well as a child safeguarding expert or focal point within the organization.

Given the size and global reach of the Foundation, as well as the nature of the risks to children and scope of the recommendations identified in this report, we suggest that the Foundation designate a child safeguarding lead. This lead will be responsible for operationalizing the policy and processing safeguarding concerns, along with implementing the recommendations in this report in partnership with the volunteer community. Training and resources should also be provided to key leads, including Legal, Global Advocacy, and Community Resources, to embed child safeguarding across the organization and empower them to report “red flags” to the safeguarding lead.

Ongoing monitoring and prevention of children’s risks and harms can be more deeply embedded in Wikimedia’s risk management process. Moreover, training and capacity building should also be provided to any volunteers who have contact with children, including recipients of Wikimedia Foundation funds and grants. To further this objective, Wikimedia Foundation could develop a free, downloadable child safeguarding toolkit, tailored to the organization’s particular risks and mitigation measures, and roll it out via webinars and local conferences. The

¹⁶² UNICEF, “[Child Safeguarding Toolkit](#),” (May 2018)



Foundation can also leverage the WikiLearn platform to deliver child safeguarding training to volunteers. The child safeguarding lead should also consult and engage with the community of editors, including children, on an ongoing basis (see recommendation 5), and engage with outside child rights experts (see recommendation 3), particularly for more complex issues that might come up and for cultural and geographic nuances around child protection. Finally, the lead should be appropriately resourced by the Foundation (e.g., time, staff, money) to accomplish these objectives, as well as provide the funds (e.g., vis a vis grants) that community members may need in order to fulfill their new requirements with respect to child safeguarding (e.g., consulting child protection specialists/lawyers).

2 Develop a child-friendly complaints and reporting mechanism, along with appropriate internal staffing, resourcing, and internal systems to process complaints.

Wikimedia acknowledges that the way that harmful incidents are dealt with has developed organically and varies across different communities. As a result, for many users, this means that it is unclear what to do if an incident occurs. Additionally, there is no standardized way for users to file reports privately, which inhibits community members with privacy concerns from reporting incidents. In response, the Wikimedia Foundation’s Trust and Safety Tools team, in partnership with the volunteer community, is in the process of building the Private Incident Reporting System (PIRS), which “*aims to make it easier for users to report harmful incidents safely and privately.*”¹⁶³

In order to better respond to the needs of young users, Wikimedia should work together with the volunteer communities to develop a rapid escalation process for cases where someone identifies as a child within PRIS or highlights that an incident involves a minor, as well as develop a child-friendly version of the PIRS on the site. The Trust and Safety team should follow the guidance provided by UNICEF on the operational considerations that need to be taken into account to ensure that a complaints mechanism is child friendly, taking into consideration concerns around accessibility, responsiveness, timeliness, fairness, privacy and confidentiality.¹⁶⁴

It may also be helpful for the Wikimedia Foundation to establish a relationship with local non-governmental organizations that work on child protection measures, so they can help with advice and referrals to support services. Given that the Wikimedia Foundation is moving to streamline its incident reporting ecosystem, we would not, at this time, suggest creating a separate reporting structure that would feed up to the safeguarding lead. However, in the event that the safeguarding lead learns about an incident involving the safety and welfare of a child, there should be a clear internal process for processing and responding to these concerns, which may very well map onto the PRIS process.

3 Evaluate the Wikimedia 2030 Movement Strategy through a child rights lens.

Although children are an important demographic of the Wikimedia community, the Wikimedia Foundation has not directly developed tools and programming to meet their unique needs, treating them instead the same as all members of the Wikimedia community. While children may benefit from the responsibilities that this approach can instill, it also limits the Wikimedia movement’s ability to address risks that may be unique to children and misses opportunities to better serve their needs.

To address these limitations, the Wikimedia Foundation and the broader Wikimedia volunteer community should evaluate the Wikimedia 2030 Movement Strategy through the lens of child rights, including via engaging with child rights experts. Similar to how working groups were established to evaluate thematic areas for the development of the 2030 Movement Strategy,¹⁶⁵ a working group of community members could be established to consider how the recommendations of the strategy are incorporating children’s rights, and where there are gaps that may require additional support. The community may also consider developing a Child Rights Council or Youth Council that is composed primarily of children, to ensure that they can contribute directly to the Foundation strategy. The outcome of this process should be to develop a holistic approach to advancing child rights that is strategic, actionable, and adequately resourced.

¹⁶³ Wikimedia, “[Private Incident Reporting System](#),” (Updated February 2023)
¹⁶⁴ UNICEF, “[Child-friendly complaint mechanisms](#)” (2019)

¹⁶⁵ Wikimedia Meta-Wiki, “[Strategy/Wikimedia movement/2018-20/Working Groups](#)” (Updated July 2022)

4 Engage child rights experts and partner with other organizations working on supporting child rights online.

Partner with organizations focused on the digital rights and safety of children to provide Wikimedia with additional resources, expertise, and independent guidance on how the organization can advance its approach to child rights. Such partnerships would also enable Wikimedia to contribute to the technology industry's understanding of risks and learn from other organizations' approaches to mitigating risks. For example, the [WeProtect Global Alliance](#),¹⁶⁶ brings together experts from government, the private sector and civil society to generate political support and develop practical approaches to addressing online child sexual abuse at a global scale. The alliance includes many of the largest technology companies in the world, including Google, Meta, Microsoft and Apple, as well as social media companies such as Snap, Twitter, and TikTok, which collaborate to pilot safety tools, identify potential threats, and exchange best practices for protecting children online.

5 Empower children to protect themselves by providing child-friendly resources and tools.

Although the Wikimedia movement's [Universal Code of Conduct](#) and [Terms of Use](#) provide guidance for volunteers on how to behave when engaging with Wikimedia projects, the language is not tailored to support ease of comprehension for children nor designed to accommodate how children engage online. Wikimedia should consider developing distinct approaches for relaying information to children and create tools and reporting mechanisms that are easily accessible to children. Risks, and in this case internet safety concerns, can then be addressed through awareness building education, in addition to equipping children with strategies for handling potentially risky encounters. For instance, the Foundation should work with the community to build in safety mechanisms and training opportunities into the existing Children's Wikipedias (e.g., Vikida, Txikipedia), particularly for the age group, 8-13 years old. Doing so would allow

the Foundation to directly respond to the primary request of respondents to the youth survey. Indeed, when asked, "*What can Wikipedia do to help keep kids safe while on its websites?*" approximately 79% of respondents selected, "*Wikipedia should help kids to keep themselves safe (for example, instructions on how to protect ourselves online or use parental controls to block bad stuff).*"¹⁶⁷

Additionally, to this same end, the Foundation should consider developing a "Children's Guide to Editing" - a one stop-shop resource (e.g., a page on Wikipedia or a downloadable PDF) for children who edit Wikipedia, which would help to educate young users on Wikipedia tools, resources, and safety tips that address their unique needs. Specifically, the guide should empower children to independently navigate risks on the platform, by providing access to the following information in a child friendly format:

- the platform's deletion policy, privacy policy and best practices;
- the role of admins and oversighters;
- relevant content controls (e.g., hiding images);
- relevant reporting mechanisms;
- resources (e.g., psychological support, resources for survivors of sexual abuse material) for children who come across harmful (e.g., suicide, eating disorders, and sexual imagery) and illegal (e.g., CSAM) content, as well as for those who experience harmful conduct (e.g., cyberbullying, discrimination);
- advice on harmful contact that could occur on (e.g., vis a vis talk pages) and off the platform (e.g., Discord or Facebook), including how to recognize signs of grooming;
- and advice and guidance for parents, including how they can have conversations with their children about safety and best practices on the platform.

The guide should be developed with community input and feedback, and once it's developed, the Foundation should build awareness of it through workshops, webinars, and other relevant forums with admins, child volunteers and parents.

¹⁶⁶ Other potential organizations to consider for engagement include: the DQ Institute, the Technology Coalition, UNICEF, the 5Rights Foundation and Family Online Safety Institute. Please reference Appendix F for examples of how companies are collaborating with these groups.

¹⁶⁷ Article One and Wikimedia, "Wikipedia Youth Survey," (January 2023)



6 Integrate children’s voices into Wikimedia’s approach to design including through their direct participation.

A fundamental element of Wikimedia’s Design Principles is that “this is for everyone.” While that includes children, it is unclear how children’s well-being has been considered in the design of the knowledge projects. Children should have the opportunity to identify and describe the challenges they may face interacting with Wikimedia projects, as well as provide recommendations for how to make improvements that will advance children’s user experience. This could be accomplished by engaging with children through school programs and initiatives focused on advancing children’s rights online, as well as developing a working group within Wikimedia that includes children and by creating career opportunities for children, such as through internships, to work on Wikimedia projects.

For example, a 2019 process to update Wikipedia’s desktop interface¹⁶⁸ focused, rightly so, on including a sample of communities that represented different perspectives and geographies. Future efforts such as this one should include children as a target group to be included in the testing of new features (see Nielsen Norman Group Usability Testing with Minors: 16 Tips).¹⁶⁹

7 Develop a proactive and rights-compatible approach to engaging on regulation that affects children’s rights.

Wikimedia has the opportunity to help shape the regulatory environment affecting children’s rights online. As a leading player, with the trust of civil society, Wikimedia can help ensure that regulation is developed in a rights-respecting way with outcomes that benefit children.

This can be done by accomplished by:

- Developing a Child Rights Approach to Lobbying and Engagement
- Elevating the voices of experts by seeking their guidance and including their feedback in Wikimedia policy guidance and advocacy.
- Collaborating with peers to educate them on child rights.

¹⁶⁸ Diff Wikimedia, “[Prioritizing equity within Wikipedia’s new desktop](#),” (August 2022)
¹⁶⁹ Nielsen Norman Group, “[Usability testing with minors: 16 tips](#),” (April 2019)



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Appendix



◆ Appendix A: Article One's Ethical Research Principles

Ethical Research Principles

Engaging stakeholders around human rights necessitates attention to any barriers to participation – including age, gender, language, cultural beliefs and norms, among many others. As such, the assessment team will work with local organizations to promote the inclusion of underrepresented voices in the assessment.

In order to ensure participants are appropriately informed and protected during the engagement, participants will be asked to sign an informed consent form and the assessment team will implement the following guidelines:

1. Ensure the consultation is voluntary and make clear that participants can end their engagement at any time without adverse consequences.
2. Ensure the anonymity of all individual participants by aggregating data and ensuring the final report contains no identifiable information.
3. Consultations will be carried out with respect for the cultural practices, beliefs and norms of each community or group.
4. Provide participants with a written summary of the project and expected outcomes in a language and format they can understand.
5. Ensure an accessible and appropriate mechanism is put in place for stakeholders to issue a complaint in case they have concerns after the engagement, including concerns regarding retribution for engaging in the assessment.

Ethical Research Principles for Children

Direct consultation with children requires particular sensitivities, including additional caution or capacity to ensure that children do not experience exploitation, harm or retaliation as a result of participation in the process.¹⁷⁰

Consultation requires the support of a neutral, trusted individual to facilitate the engagement process. Moreover, direct consultations with children must be conducted with respect for all children's rights, including their right to privacy, protection from any form of violence or abuse, and freedom of thought.

Following guidance from the UNGC, UNICEF and Save the Children, the assessment team will take into account the following considerations when consulting children directly:

1. Participation will be voluntary, with informed consent from the child in written or oral form, and from the parents or caregivers.
2. Consultation topics will have a clear purpose and focus on specific issues that are relevant to children's lives and concerns.
3. Children's time is precious, and engagements will work to fit in with their daily routines.
4. Child rights stakeholders will also be consulted as part of the process.
5. Child safeguards and confidentiality will be ensured throughout the process.

¹⁷⁰ Adapted from "[Engaging Stakeholders on Children's Rights: A Tool for Companies.](#)"

◆ Appendix B: The Convention on the Rights of the Child: The children's version

This child-friendly text has been sourced from UNICEF and is available to download [here](#). The full text of the Convention and Optional Protocols can be consulted and downloaded from UNICEF's website [here](#).

1. Definition of a child

A child is any person under the age of 18.

2. No discrimination

All children have all these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what language they speak, what their religion is, what they think, what they look like, if they are a boy or girl, if they have a disability, if they are rich or poor, and no matter who their parents or families are or what their parents or families believe or do. No child should be treated unfairly for any reason.

3. Best interests of the child

When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. All adults should do what is best for children. Governments should make sure children are protected and looked after by their parents, or by other people when this is needed. Governments should make sure that people and places responsible for looking after children are doing a good job.

4. Making rights real

Governments must do all they can to make sure that every child in their countries can enjoy all the rights in this Convention.

5. Family guidance as children develop

Governments should let families and communities guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights in the best way. The more children grow, the less guidance they will need.

6. Life survival and development

Every child has the right to be alive. Governments must make sure that children survive and develop in the best possible way.

7. Name and nationality

Children must be registered when they are born and given a name which is officially recognized by the government. Children must have a nationality (belong to a country). Whenever possible, children should know their parents and be looked after by them.

8. Identity

Children have the right to their own identity – an official record of who they are which includes their name, nationality and family relations. No one should take this away from them, but

if this happens, governments must help children to quickly get their identity back.

9. Keeping families together

Children should not be separated from their parents unless they are not being properly looked after – for example, if a parent hurts or does not take care of a child. Children whose parents don't live together should stay in contact with both parents unless this might harm the child.

10. Contact with parents across countries

If a child lives in a different country than their parents, governments must let the child and parents travel so that they can stay in contact and be together.

11. Protection from kidnapping

Governments must stop children being taken out of the country when this is against the law – for example, being kidnapped by someone or held abroad by a parent when the other parent does not agree.

12. Respect for children's views

Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously.

13. Sharing thoughts freely

Children have the right to share freely with others what they learn, think and feel, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms other people.

14. Freedom of thought and religion

Children can choose their own thoughts, opinions and religion, but this should not stop other people from enjoying their rights. Parents can guide children so that as they grow up, they learn to properly use this right.

15. Setting up or joining groups

Children can join or set up groups or organisations, and they can meet with others, as long as this does not harm other people.

16. Protection of privacy

Every child has the right to privacy. The law must protect children's privacy, family, home, communications and reputation (or good name) from any attack.

17. Access to information

Children have the right to get information from the Internet, radio, television, newspapers, books and other sources. Adults should make sure the information they are getting is not harmful. Governments should encourage the media to share information from lots of different sources, in languages that all children can understand.

18. Responsibility of parents

Parents are the main people responsible for bringing up a child. When the child does not have any parents, another adult will have this responsibility and they are called a “guardian”. Parents and guardians should always consider what is best for that child. Governments should help them. Where a child has both parents, both of them should be responsible for bringing up the child.

19. Protection from violence

Governments must protect children from violence, abuse and being neglected by anyone who looks after them.

20. Children without families

Every child who cannot be looked after by their own family has the right to be looked after properly by people who respect the child's religion, culture, language and other aspects of their life.

21. Children who are adopted

When children are adopted, the most important thing is to do what is best for them. If a child cannot be properly looked after in their own country – for example by living with another family – then they might be adopted in another country.

22. Refugee children

Children who move from their home country to another country as refugees (because it was not safe for them to stay there) should get help and protection and have the same rights as children born in that country.

23. Children with disabilities

Every child with a disability should enjoy the best possible life in society. Governments should remove all obstacles for children with disabilities to become independent and to participate actively in the community.

24. Health, water, food, environment

Children have the right to the best health care possible, clean water to drink, healthy food and a clean and safe environment to live in. All adults and children should have information about how to stay safe and healthy.

25. Review of a child's placement

Every child who has been placed somewhere away from home - for their care, protection or health – should have their situation checked regularly to see if everything is going well and if this is still the best place for the child to be.

26. Social and economic help

Governments should provide money or other support to help children from poor families.

27. Food, clothing, a safe home

Children have the right to food, clothing and a safe place to live so they can develop in the best possible way. The government should help families and children who cannot afford this.

28. Access to education

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education should be free. Secondary and higher education should be available to every child. Children should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level possible. Discipline in schools should respect children's rights and never use violence.

29. Aims of education

Children's education should help them fully develop their personalities, talents and abilities. It should teach them to understand their own rights, and to respect other people's rights, cultures and differences. It should help them to live peacefully and protect the environment.

30. Minority culture, language and religion

Children have the right to use their own language, culture and religion - even if these are not shared by most people in the country where they live.

31. Rest, play, culture, arts

Every child has the right to rest, relax, play and to take part in cultural and creative activities.

32. Protection from harmful work

Children have the right to be protected from doing work that is dangerous or bad for their education, health or development. If children work, they have the right to be safe and paid fairly.

33. Protection from harmful drugs

Governments must protect children from taking, making, carrying or selling harmful drugs.

34. Protection from sexual abuse

The government should protect children from sexual exploitation (being taken advantage of) and sexual abuse, including by people forcing children to have sex for money, or making sexual pictures or films of them.

35. Prevention of sale and trafficking

Governments must make sure that children are not kidnapped or sold, or taken to other countries or places to be exploited (taken advantage of).

36. Protection from exploitation

Children have the right to be protected from all other kinds of exploitation (being taken advantage of), even if these are not specifically mentioned in this Convention.

37. Children in detention

Children who are accused of breaking the law should not be killed, tortured, treated cruelly, put in prison forever, or put in prison with adults. Prison should always be the last choice and only for the shortest possible time. Children in prison should have legal help and be able to stay in contact with their family.

38. Protection in war

Children have the right to be protected during war. No child under 15 can join the army or take part in war.

39. Recovery and reintegration

Children have the right to get help if they have been hurt, neglected, treated badly or affected by war, so they can get back their health and dignity.

40. Children who break the law

Children accused of breaking the law have the right to legal help and fair treatment. There should be lots of solutions to help these children become good members of their communities. Prison should only be the last choice.

41. Best law for children applies

If the laws of a country protect children's rights better than this Convention, then those laws should be used.

42. Everyone must know children's rights

Governments should actively tell children and adults about this Convention so that everyone knows about children's rights.

43 to 54. How the Convention works

These articles explain how governments, the United Nations – including the Committee on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF - and other organisations work to make sure all children enjoy all their rights.

◆ Appendix C: Glossary

Administrators: Wikipedia editors who have been granted the technical ability to perform certain special actions on English Wikipedia.

Best interests of the child: one of the four core principles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this applies to all actions and decisions concerning children and calls for active measures to respect their rights and promote their survival, growth and well-being as children, as well as measures to support and assist parents and others who have day-to-day responsibility for realizing children's rights.

Child: Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines 'children' as persons up to the age of 18.

Children's rights: a subset of human rights with particular attention to the rights of special protection and care afforded to minors.

Child rights and business principles: the first set of comprehensive principles to guide companies on a full range of actions they can take in the workplace, marketplace, and community to respect and support children's rights.

Convention on the rights of the child (CRC): an international human rights treaty which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children.

Child rights impact assessment (CRIA): according to UNICEF, a CRIA is a systemic process to assess the potential impacts of business or organizational decisions on children and their rights and promote policy coherence.

Child safeguarding: the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm.

Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM): United States federal law defines child pornography as any visual depiction of sexually explicit conduct involving a minor (a person less than 18 years old). Those working to combat this type of abuse have begun using the term "child sexual abuse material" (CSAM) to most accurately reflect what is depicted – the sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

CO:RE 4 C's classification: Online risks arise when a child engages with and/or is exposed to harmful content (content risk); experiences and/or is targeted by potentially harmful contact (contact risk); witnesses, participates in, and/or is a victim of potentially harmful conduct (conduct risk); and is party to and/or exploited by a potentially harmful contract (contract risk). The 4C's classification also distinguishes between aggressive, sexual, and value risks, retaining a balanced view of the range of risks that children can encounter.

Data re-identification: defined by the European Commission as a process of matching anonymized data with publicly available information, or auxiliary data, in order to discover the individual to which the data belongs to.

Doxxing: to publicly identify or publish private information about (someone) especially as a form of punishment or revenge.

Former young editors: individuals that Article One interviewed as part of this CRIA who are now adults but started volunteering as minors.

Oversighters: a select group of users who monitor the tools, which are used to suppress information. The permission is granted by Wikipedia's Arbitration Committee, after community consultation and vetting of the editor by the committee's members and the functionary team. The Committee has typically restricted applications to users who are currently administrators. They must also be 18 years of age or older.

Suppression: a form of enhanced deletion, that unlike normal page deletion or revision deletion, expunges information from any form of usual access, including administrators.

Talk pages: administration pages on Wikipedia where editors can discuss improvements to articles or other Wikipedia pages.

User pages: pages on Wikipedia for organizing the work that users do on Wikipedia, as well as speaking to other users.

Vandalism: editing a Wikimedia project in an intentionally disruptive or malicious manner.

ARTICLE ONE

