



# DEFEND YOURSELF CAMPAIGN

**Self-Defense and Online Security**

Argumentation

## Defend Yourself Campaign

The **Defend Yourself Campaign (Campanha Defenda-se)** has been running since 2014, using animated videos for children and adolescents aged 4 to 12 years, with a focus on preventing sexual violence. The goal is to speak directly to the children and adolescents, **to facilitate the identification of risky situations, and to strengthen their self-defense skills**. The 15 videos offered present situations with a potential risk of sexual violence and preventive attitudes.

And you can share another story!



An illustration of two children with red hair standing in front of a building. The child on the left is wearing glasses and a plaid shirt, holding a small blue object. The child on the right is wearing a green striped tank top and blue shorts. The building has a yellow wall and a window with a blue frame.

## Approach to Rights and Comprehensive Protection of Childhood

Since the ratification of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989**, States that are part to the United Nations (UN) system have committed to fully respecting, protecting, promoting, and guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents. This commitment has led to the establishment of obligations for families, authorities, and society at large.

Within this framework, **Children and adolescents are also recognized as active agents in the promotion, respect, and defense of their rights.** As such, effective protection must involve children and adolescents at the forefront of efforts to safeguard their rights.

Moreover, to protect their rights, children and adolescents have access to **a Protocol under the Convention** that allows them to file individual complaints directly with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, demanding that their country uphold their rights in specific situations.

A key characteristic of human rights is their progressive nature. In recent decades, particularly with the advent of the digital age, **it has become essential to identify rights that are being violated in virtual spaces**—rights that were not necessarily foreseen when the Convention was first adopted.

In this context, based on UNICEF's Decalogue on Children's Electronic Rights (2004), the platform "Pantallas Amigas", which promotes the safe and healthy use of the internet and other information technologies for the civic engagement of children and adolescents, **has identified at least 15 cyber-rights.** These range from ensuring access to technology and the internet to safeguarding digital security and promoting the exercise of digital citizenship.



## Violence Against Children in the Virtual Space

As of April 2020, **an estimated 59% of the global population had access to the internet**, with 4.57 billion active users. Among these, 4.2 billion use mobile devices, and 3.81 billion engage with social media (AFCOM, 2021).

According to UNICEF (2017), young people aged 15 to 24 represent the most digitally connected age group, with 71% of them online, compared to 48% of the general population. Children and adolescents now account for one in every three internet users. Furthermore, empirical studies show that children are accessing the internet at increasingly younger ages, with smartphones contributing to a “bedroom culture.” **For many children and teenagers, online browsing is seen as a private activity with minimal supervision.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has further amplified the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in our daily lives, impacting individuals of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. In terms of children’s, adolescents’, and youth rights, this new reality poses a dual challenge. On one hand, it is crucial to ensure access to ICT in a way that prevents these technologies from deepening existing inequalities. On the other hand, **we must provide the necessary protections to shield young people from**





the growing threats of violence and online crimes they face in the virtual space.

In this race against inequality, by 2016, **40% of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean lived in poverty, with a significant portion in extreme poverty** (CEPAL cited in OEA/IIN, 2018). At the same time, a large portion of the population in these countries is made up of children, adolescents, and young people. Therefore, despite global trends in access to information and communication technologies (ICT), many of them cannot be considered digital natives.

According to the Inter-American Children's Institute (OAS/IIN, 2018), 53% of people in the region do not use the internet, 66% of households lack internet access, and only 5% of the poorest population has this opportunity. When it comes to the risks faced by children and adolescents in navigating the internet safely, issues such as **cyberbullying, grooming, child pornography, sexting, and sextortion stand out**. These risks disproportionately affect girls and adolescent women.

Based on a global study conducted by UNICEF (2016 cited in OEA/IIN, 2018), Latin American adolescents, along with those from Sub-Saharan Africa, are perceived as being at the greatest risk of sexual abuse compared to their peers in other parts of the world. On the other hand, some studies on children and adolescents in several countries of the Americas, **such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Uruguay, which have**



**access to the internet, report that 4 out of 10 use the internet without the presence of an adult** (UNICEF/CEPAL, 2014 cited in OEA/ IIN, 2018).

Regarding online crimes, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2021), **human trafficking crimes involving minors through social media represent 31%, and 24% occur through classified ads websites.**

Experts have pointed out that in 2019, **there was a 3,000% increase across the entire region, putting children at risk with crimes such as grooming** (Sorbo, 2021) and human trafficking, with a trend that primarily affects girls and women (65%) and 48% of the child population.

The ICTs used by traffickers are employed to: 1. identify and capture victims; 2. advertise exploitation services to potential clients; and 3. broadcast online abuse and exchange pornographic material (IDB, 2021 cited in Villanueva, 2021).

As previously mentioned, and following Livingstone and O'Neill (2014), in the context of promoting and protecting children and adolescents online, and with the Convention (1989) as a reference, **it is important to remember that children have the right to be protected "from all forms of physical or mental harm, neglect or negligent treatment, abuse or exploitation, including sexual abuse" (Article 19).** To achieve this, efforts must be made to help children develop self-defense skills (provision), involve them in diagnoses, decision-making, and proposals for problem-solving (participation), and continue supporting them, even in the virtual world. Only by doing so can we ensure their comprehensive protection.





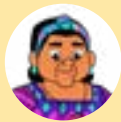
## Some Suggestions for Preventing Online Sexual Crimes

- Talk to children and adolescents about how to use technology safely.
- Warn them about the dangers of adding people they don't know to their social networks and meeting them in person.
- Supervise their use of technology without invading their privacy, as this is their right.
- As adults, DO NOT share any activities, interests, schedules, or places that children and adolescents attend on social media.

### • What to Do in Case of Grooming?

- Do not delete any content that has been received..
- Take photos or screenshots.
- Do not threaten the aggressor but immediately file a report.
- Do not pretend to be the child or adolescent.
- If you are an educator and have detected a case of grooming, notify the school authorities to address the situation and ensure support, remembering that the protection of children is everyone's responsibility.

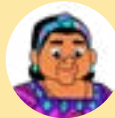
After reviewing this material, we hope it encourages you to reflect on our **video number 14** and helps families and communities in their efforts to educate and defend the rights of children and adolescents, integrating these messages into your educational projects.



If you'd like to learn more about this topic, we also have additional resources available.



**File - 'Self-Defense and Online Safety – Support**



And how great that the videos are available in English, Spanish, Brazilian Sign Language (Libras), and with audio descriptions!



You can find them at [www.defenda-se.com](http://www.defenda-se.com)

 **DEFEND YOURSELF**  
CAMPAIGN 



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