

# EVENT REPORT



## PANEL DISCUSSION

### **Safeguarding Children in India's AI Future: Towards Child-Centric AI Policy and Governance**

Organized by



In collaboration with



17th February 2026 | West Wing 4B, Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

## **Executive Summary**

The panel discussion titled ‘Safeguarding Children in India’s AI Future: Towards Child-Centric AI Policy and Governance,’ held on 17th February, 2026, as part of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, focused on the need for India’s rapidly expanding AI ecosystem to more effectively integrate children’s rights, safety and overall well-being into policy and governance frameworks. The panel discussion was organized by the Institute for Governance, Policies and Politics (IGPP) in partnership with Space2Grow and Childlight Global Child Safety Institute. The latter two organizations, together with the iSPIRT Foundation, constitute the Expert Engagement Group (EEG) on AI and Child Safety established by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. The EEG aims to compile multi-stakeholder inputs and prepare recommendations to inform the AI governance roadmap of India on child safety issues. These recommendations formed the basis of the discussion that ensued. This report highlights the major takeaways from the panel discussion.

The discussion was premised on an understanding that children are inextricably linked to AI-driven spaces that influence their learning, communication and engagement with the digital world. However, the current governance frameworks tend to view child safety as a content moderation or cybercrime problem as a peripheral issue.

In this context, the panel assembled experts from the government, industry, civil society and legal sectors to discuss the evolving risks of algorithmic profiling, behavioral nudging, data exploitation, discrimination and the establishment of a lasting digital footprint. Based on research findings, consultations with stakeholders and recommendations compiled by the Expert Engagement Group (EEG), the discussion highlighted the need to move from a reactive approach to incident response to proactive and preventive approaches to AI governance.

## **Key Takeaways:**

### **1. AI Risks as a Call to Action for Child Welfare**

AI amplifies existing harms and creates new pathways for abuse, misleading guidance and targeted exploitation. The long-term impact of these harms on children’s mental

health, productivity and social well-being should spur urgent action to safeguard their overall welfare and development.

## **2. From Safety to Rights-Based Well-Being and Preventive Measures**

Child protection must go beyond mere safety to adopt a rights-based approach, recognizing children as developing individuals with agency, dignity and the right to flourish. Preventive measures such as impact assessments, innovation sandboxes and knowledge observatories help identify and mitigate risks before harm occurs.

## **3. Design Imperatives: Safety, Cognitive Enrichment, Privacy and Healthy Relationships**

AI systems must be safe by design, transparent and structured to enrich children's learning and cognitive development rather than dull it. They should provide strong privacy controls, default safe settings and features that allow children and guardians to manage exposure and data sharing. Systems should avoid anthropomorphism, encourage critical thinking, foster autonomy and prevent unhealthy emotional attachments or dependencies.

## **4. Multi-Stakeholder Approach**

Effective AI governance requires coordinated action from children, parents, educators, doctors, counselors, tech companies, civil society and policymakers. Collaboration ensures policies are practical, context-sensitive and address the developmental, psychological and social needs of children.

## **5. Education, Digital Mentorship and Literacy**

Children need comprehensive AI literacy and digital resilience to safely navigate technology. Education must cover technical skills, critical thinking about AI, understanding of data use, ethics, rights and the social-emotional implications of technology. Digital mentors and educators are essential in guiding children to engage safely, responsibly and creatively.

## **6. Legislation as Preventative and Protective Structure**

Legal frameworks provide clear standards and obligations that support safety-by-design principles. Regulations should ensure platform accountability, define enforceable responsibilities and enable effective coordination with law enforcement to address

harmful content swiftly. Well-designed laws reinforce responsible innovation while holding developers, platforms and intermediaries accountable.

#### **7. Moving Beyond Benchmarks**

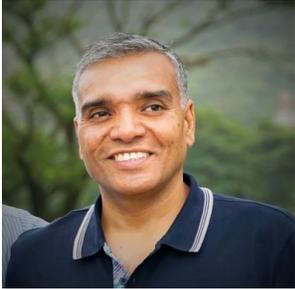
Global standards alone are insufficient. Context-specific, operationally grounded interventions and coordinated multi-stakeholder models are needed to define harm, enable rapid response and ensure continuous oversight.

#### **8. Operational and Enforcement Challenges**

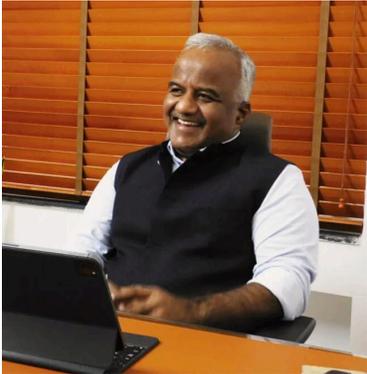
Implementing child safety in a linguistically diverse, high-engagement and culturally complex context is difficult. Platforms must detect harm across dozens of languages and local formats, while enforcement agencies often struggle to keep pace with new AI-enabled threats. Shared definitions of harm, interdisciplinary collaboration and collective action between platforms, law enforcement, educators and policymakers are essential for effective prevention and response.

The panel discussion helped to build a collective understanding that the protection of children in the AI future of India is more about responsible innovation and democratic accountability than just protection. Through the focus on children in AI policy and governance, India has the chance to establish a rights-based and universally relevant standard for child-friendly AI.

## Panelist Profile

Sl No.	Name	Photo	About
1	Ms. Zoe Lambourne		COO, Childlight
2	Ms. Chitra Iyer		Co-founder, Space2Grow
3	Mr. Gaurav Aggarwal		Volunteer, iSPIRIT Foundation
4.	Ms. N.S. Nappinai		Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India

5.	Ms. Maya Sherman		Project Co-Lead (India), GPAI and Senior Tech & Innovation Advisor (ST&I Attaché), Embassy of Israel in India
6.	Ms. Uthara Ganesh.		Head of Public Policy, APAC, Snapchat
7.	Mr. Atish Gonsalves		Head of Product, Computer Science and AI Product Experience, LEGO Education
8.	Mr. Akash Pugalia		Chief Digital Officer, TP

9.	Prof. (Dr.) Charu Malhotra	 A portrait of Prof. (Dr.) Charu Malhotra, a woman with dark hair, wearing a maroon saree and a blue lanyard, smiling. The background features a decorative pattern of stylized leaves.	Professor, IIPA
10.	Dr. Manish Tiwari	 A portrait of Dr. Manish Tiwari, a man with short grey hair, wearing a white shirt and a dark vest, sitting at a desk with a laptop, smiling. The background shows wooden blinds.	Director, Institute for Governance, Policies, and Politics
11.	Mr. Ashish Jaiman (Moderator)	 A portrait of Mr. Ashish Jaiman, a man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a light-colored striped shirt, smiling. The background is a blurred green and red foliage.	Co-founder, Nedl Labs and Former Director of Product Management, Microsoft Bing

## **Introduction**

The India AI Impact Summit 2026, held from 16–20 February 2026 in New Delhi, convened policymakers, industry leaders, researchers and civil society representatives to deliberate on the future of AI governance. Organized around seven “chakras”, human capital, inclusion, safety and trust, resilience, science, resources and social good, the Summit aimed to translate global AI discourse into concrete, actionable outcomes for “people, planet and progress.” Within the safety and trust chakra, particular attention was given to the risks AI systems pose to vulnerable populations, including children.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the everyday environments in which children in India learn, play, communicate, behave and grow. Children today are not only users but also subjects of AI-driven systems that shape their behavior, choices and digital identities across education, communication, entertainment and information access. Despite being deeply embedded within algorithmic ecosystems, children remain largely peripheral to AI governance frameworks. The existing policy approaches often treat child safety as a subset of content moderation or cybercrime, rather than as a systemic governance issue. Against this backdrop, the panel discussion ‘Safeguarding Children in India’s AI Future: Towards Child-Centric AI Policy and Governance’ was convened with focus on formulating child centric AI policy.

The panel drew on insights from the pre-summit roundtable, ‘Children and AI: Rights, Risks and Responsible AI,’ held on the 15th January 2026 by IGPP in collaboration with the Centre for Social Research and Yoti. This roundtable brought together policymakers, technologists, legal experts, educators, parents and child-rights advocates from India and the UK to explore AI-related risks such as exposure to CSAM, emotional alienation, privacy violations and broader infringements of children’s rights. The participants also examined global regulatory practices that place children at the center, identified gaps in existing legal frameworks and discussed practical interventions from both countries.

Building on these discussions, this panel focused on incorporating children’s rights, safety and interests into India’s evolving AI governance architecture. The event featured findings from an AI and Children Opinion Poll from the Expert Engagement Group (EEG) on AI and Child Safety

set up by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in response to the emerging challenges and systemic risks posed by AI. The session also featured recommendations for a Roadmap on AI and Child Safety, consolidated by the EEG in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including government, industry, civil society, practitioners and young people. These recommendations then set the stage for opening the floor to the panel and its ensuing discussion. To the objectives of the panel were as follows:

- Child Safety as a Foundational AI Governance Principle: Reframing safety from a reactive concern to a core design, deployment and governance imperative within India's AI ecosystem.
- Legal, Policy and Institutional Gaps in Protecting Children from AI Harms: Critically assessing existing Indian legal and regulatory frameworks, institutional mandates and enforcement capacities to identify blind spots, overlaps and gaps.
- Learning from Global and Rights-Based Approaches to Child-Centric AI: Exploring international best practices and child rights-based frameworks to understand what lessons can be meaningfully adapted to India's socio-technical realities without importing one-size-fits-all solutions.
- Embedding Child-Centric Principles in India's AI Policy Architecture: Discussing how child-centric principles can be systematically embedded within India's evolving AI policy and regulatory frameworks.
- From Principles to Practice: Actionable Pathways for Policy and Industry: Identifying practical, implementable recommendations for policymakers, regulators, technology developers and platforms to operationalize child-centric AI governance while enabling innovation.

The session concluded with the understanding that safeguarding children in India's AI future is not merely a matter of protection, but a question of how India defines responsible innovation, democratic accountability and intergenerational justice. By centering children, India has the opportunity to set a global benchmark for rights-based, inclusive and future-ready AI systems.

## **Proceedings**

The session began with Dr. Manish Tiwari, Director of IGPP, questioning what “Child-Centric AI” truly means. He noted that the answer differs across stakeholders. For the tech industry, it involves innovating responsibly while maintaining viable business models. For educators, it raises concerns about cognitive offloading and the erosion of independent thinking. For law enforcement, the focus is on preventing exploitation and mitigating digital harms. For children, AI often acts as a tutor, companion, problem-solver and sometimes an emotional confidant.

He observed that in its current state, the responsibility for child safety is shared but unevenly distributed. As platforms hold disproportionate power, policymakers set guardrails, educators and parents mediate access and children often have the least agency. Regulation is essential for minimum standards, but it alone cannot build ethical ecosystems or inspire innovation that serves children’s best interests. Real progress requires sustained collaboration across industry, government, civil society, academia and young people to align technological advancement with social welfare.

Dr. Tiwari framed the session as a step toward embedding children’s rights into AI design, deployment and governance. Safeguarding children, he emphasized, is central to responsible innovation, democratic accountability and inter-generational justice. The discussion, he concluded, is not about fear or blind optimism. It is about responsible stewardship and moving from abstract principles to practical, implementable solutions.

## **Expert Engagement Group: Findings and Recommendation**

Ms. Zoe Lambourne began by locating the conversation within the overall development agenda of India. She stated that India has always had a strong normative and policy focus on children. Thus, any attempt to put AI at the forefront of the development agenda in India must necessarily prioritize child safety. She pointed out that, with such a large number of children in the country, India is not only a high-risk environment where threats can escalate quickly, but also a critical opportunity to show how child safety can be integrated into AI systems at scale.

She then went on to describe what she called the “dual nature” of AI technologies. While AI presents tremendous opportunities across various sectors, it also exaggerates existing risks and creates new pathways for harm. AI systems can compound abuse, produce misleading or harmful guidance and help perpetrators target children more effectively. She pointed out the alarming rise of AI-produced child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Research estimates that over 300 million children were victims of AI-enabled nudification in 2024 alone, a number that continues to rise sharply.

In this context, Ms. Lambourne highlighted that children themselves are very much aware of these risks. Citing the results of the EEG’s AI and Children Opinion Poll, she said that children view AI as both positive and negative, which is a manifestation of their understanding of the trade-offs involved in AI development. The results also showed that children are very much aware of gender differences in risks, with girls reporting higher levels of vulnerability to negative impacts. When asked who should be primarily responsible for child safety, 48% of the children surveyed named technology companies, followed by parents and caregivers, governments, schools and law enforcement agencies. Despite their awareness of risks, children are confident that AI can be made safer if effective safeguards are in place. (See Annexure for EEG slides.)

Ms. Lambourne concluded her remarks pointing that Child-friendly AI governance needs to go beyond the focus on safer product design. It must involve effective grievance redressal mechanisms, quick response mechanisms when negative impacts happen and mechanisms for accountability and compensation. This is necessary because the long-term effects of abuse often last for several decades, including impacts on mental health, productivity and social well-being in adulthood.

Mr. Gaurav Aggarwal, a volunteer with the iSPIRT Foundation, followed Ms. Lambourne in emphasizing the extent of India’s responsibility in AI governance for children. Since the country has such a large number of children, he said, it cannot afford to view child protection in AI as a marginal concern; its policies will have far-reaching implications and may even set the global agenda. He then highlighted the efforts of the Expert Engagement Group (EEG), of which he is a part and explained that it was designed as a platform for engagement among a broad spectrum of

stakeholders, including children, parents, caregivers, industry representatives, civil society and policymakers. The objective, he said, was not to simply write recommendations, but to ensure that these recommendations are grounded in the real world and the realities of constraints. In this exercise, he said, the EEG reached three key conclusions. First, the term “child safety” itself may be somewhat patronizing, if it treats children merely as passive objects of protection. Rather, he said, the focus must be on child well-being, which is a much wider term that encompasses agency, development, dignity and flourishing. Second, he emphasized the need for parents and guardians to be involved in AI governance. Lastly, he recognized the structural issues in the Indian legal and enforcement framework. In such a scenario, it is not sufficient to depend only on ex post legal enforcement. Safety needs to be embedded in the design of AI systems and harm needs to be addressed at the architectural level, rather than being addressed after the event of harm has occurred.

Ms. Chitra Iyer, Co-founder of Space2Grow, then presented the following recommendations from the multi-stakeholder EEG:

**Recommendation 1: Child Safety Solutions Observatory**

Establish an open-access, multilingual knowledge portal to document global child safety research, technical designs and implementation practices, with a focus on AI systems. The Observatory would invite contributions from government, industry, civil society and researchers, and publish India’s draft reference specifications to foster a collaborative techno-legal ecosystem for child well-being.

**Recommendation 2: Global South Working Group for Child Well-Being**

Create a dedicated working group to adapt child safety frameworks to Global South contexts, grounded in region-specific evidence. The group would prioritise underrepresented realities such as shared devices, low-literacy environments and linguistic diversity, strengthening both domestic policy design and India’s leadership in global AI governance.

**Recommendation 3: Child Safety Innovation Sandbox**

Establish a regulatory sandbox to support the testing of child-safe AI innovations, including

curation engines, age-verification tools and device-level safety solutions. The sandbox would provide time-bound regulatory forbearance with a clear pathway to certification, enabling innovation while maintaining accountability.

#### **Recommendation 4: Youth Safety Advisory Council**

Institutionalise Youth Safety Advisory Councils to meaningfully integrate children’s lived experiences into AI policy development and platform governance. These councils would provide ongoing input on safety features, participate in pilot programmes and inform evidence-based interventions through a structured, ethical and privacy-respecting “listening by design” approach.

#### **Recommendation 5: Strengthen Legal Frameworks to Address AI-Generated Child Abuse Material**

Clarify legal definitions and liability frameworks to explicitly cover AI-generated and synthetic child sexual abuse material, including deepfakes and nudification tools. Mandate proactive detection, standardised reporting and accountability across the AI value chain, encompassing developers, deployers, platforms and intermediaries.

#### **Recommendation 6: Mandate Child Rights and Safety Impact Assessments for High-Interaction AI Systems**

Require Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIAs) for AI systems that materially interact with children prior to deployment. These assessments would identify and mitigate risks related to profiling, bias, emotional manipulation, dependency and data exploitation before harm occurs.

#### **Recommendation 7: Invest in Digital Resilience and AI Literacy as Preventive Infrastructure**

Integrate age-appropriate AI literacy and digital resilience education into national curricula to help children navigate AI environments safely and critically. This includes foundational digital citizenship at the primary level, algorithmic understanding at the secondary level and critical engagement with AI-generated content, rights and ethics at senior levels.

## **Safety by Design: How Tech Companies can ensure AI safety**

Following the presentation of the recommendations, the panel discussion resumed with Mr. Ashish Jaiman, moderating the discussion. He began the discussion by asking those involved in the design and product architecture of AI systems about how safety can be incorporated meaningfully into the design phase.

In response to the question, Ms. Uthara Ganesh, Head of Public Policy for APAC at Snapchat, stated that original product design has the most profound effect on user behavior and safety outcomes. It is therefore much more effective to incorporate safety into the underlying architecture of a platform as opposed to adding it later. She also stated that safety-by-design principles are different for each platform because each platform is used for different purposes. In Snapchat's case, she elaborated that the nature of one-to-one engagement on the platform means that there is inherently limited exposure to strangers. Privacy settings are enabled by default, making it easier for users to protect themselves without having to take deliberate action. Finally, messages are set to self-destruct by default, simulating the way that conversations in the real world work and minimizing long-term data retention and the risk of privacy breaches. She also pointed to the app's Family Center feature, which gives parents of minor users visibility into certain aspects of their activity on the platform, while also trying to preserve the child's sense of autonomy in the digital world rather than simply subjecting them to total surveillance.

Taking the conversation forward, Mr. Atish Gonsalves, Head of Product at LEGO Education, turned the conversation to the role of children and AI in the learning environment. He noted that his organization's strategy is focused on AI and computer science literacy for children and the goal of empowering them to understand, question and shape technology rather than simply consuming it. He questioned the premise that the use of AI is inevitable or universally necessary, suggesting that not all children need to use AI tools. He viewed children not as passive consumers of technology instead he emphasized on their need to empower children as producers and critical thinkers.

Furthermore, he emphasized that AI should never be conceptualized as a friend or emotional companion, but rather as what it is: a tool. He stressed on the need to avoid anthropomorphism

for prevention of unhealthy emotional bonds or dependencies. Mr. Gonsalves accentuated the necessity to be transparent about the use of pre-trained classifier models with known data lineage, upholding high data privacy standards and preventing the transfer of data to third-party platforms. He concluded by reemphasizing that child safety and well-being must be considered non-negotiable design principles. However, for this vision to be realized, educators themselves must be better supported and equipped to provide effective AI literacy. This will ensure that children are raised not only protected from harm but also able to build and control the technologies that will define their future.

### **Legislative Intervention: India and Beyond**

Mr. Jaiman then invited the Senior Advocate at the Supreme Court of India, Ms. N. S. Nappinai, to share a legislative point of view on AI safety, especially in the Indian scenario. Ms. Nappinai in response shared with the panel that although many technology developers may be safety-by-design thinkers, this is not a universal or industry-wide practice. In such a scenario, legal frameworks play a critical role. They provide a minimum preventive and protective measure that all developers must follow. The role of law, she said, should not be seen as a hindrance to innovation but as a structure that facilitates responsible innovation. However, she also emphasized that laws need to be specific and enforceable. Vague laws may not necessarily have the desired effect and therefore targeted, enforceable and effective regulation is the need of the hour. She highlighted two important developments that indicate the country's effort to address the risks posed by AI: the recent amendments to the Information Technology Rules that specifically deal with AI and synthetic content and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP). While accepting that these developments are unlikely to be adequate in the long run and that there are still significant challenges to their implementation, she said that these developments are an important starting point for India's legislative engagement with AI.

Building on this conversation about AI legislation in India, Mr. Jaiman directed Ms. Maya Sherman to provide a perspective on whether there are substantial global benchmarks for AI child safety that India could consider. Ms. Sherman in response stressed that child safety in the AI era is, by definition, a global problem. AI systems, platforms and risks do not care about national boundaries and thus no country can afford to operate in a bubble. She pointed out that

although many governments have adopted policies to address digital child safety, a common problem in different parts of the world is the disconnect between policy and implementation. Implementation and enforcement have often trailed behind policy ambitions. She also pointed out that AI has made the world of child digital safety benchmarks more complex. Governments are struggling with the dangers of AI systems while at the same time competing to advance their adoption for economic and strategic advantages. This tension has obscured the existing standards, such that the older digital safety standards are no longer sufficient for the unique risks posed by AI. In this regard, she indicated that nations must now look beyond inherited standards and establish new standards that are responsive to AI.

Rather than relying exclusively on broad, high-level legislation, she stressed the importance of addressing concrete risk scenarios involving children and AI. Targeted, operationally grounded interventions are more effective than vague regulatory language. In this context, she pointed to Israel's multi-stakeholder coordination model of centers, which connects government bodies, law enforcement agencies and technology companies to enable rapid cooperation and response. Such structured collaboration, she suggested, may offer valuable lessons as India strengthens its own child safety governance architecture in the AI era.

### **Child Safety: An educator's perspective**

Prof. (Dr.) Charu Malhotra introduced the voice of an educator, by emphasizing how AI governance for children must be informed not only by safety considerations but also by a child rights framework. She argued that child rights offer a stronger foundation for legislative and institutional action than a narrow protection-based approach. In this context, she specifically endorsed the EEG's Recommendation 6, which proposes that Child Rights and Well-Being Impact Assessments for high-interaction AI systems should be mandatory before deployment.

She then broadened the scope of responsibility as Child well-being in AI environments, cannot be the exclusive responsibility of legislators, tech companies, parents and children. A whole-of-society approach is needed, involving educators, counselors, psychiatrists, physicians and other professionals involved in children's cognitive-emotional development. AI-mediated harms are not merely technical issues but also developmental and psychological ones, requiring

an interdisciplinary approach. According to her, at the heart of this approach is the need for digital mentors, i.e., adults qualified to guide children in understanding, questioning and safely interacting with AI systems. This aligns with the recommendations from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which emphasize the need for digital literacy ecosystems around children. Without digital mentors, children are more susceptible to the persuasive and adaptive power of AI systems.

She also called for a move from a black box model of AI to what she described as an open glass approach, advocating greater transparency and visibility into how AI systems function, particularly in educational contexts. Opaque systems that personalise feedback and recommendations can easily create echo chambers, narrowing children's exposure and reinforcing behavioural loops. This concern led to her final point on design responsibility. Echoing earlier remarks about emotional dependency, she warned that AI systems, especially those relying on continuous positive reinforcement, risk fostering unhealthy attachments and undermining meaningful learning. In educational settings, friction, challenge and constructive feedback are essential and AI tools that simply affirm users may become pedagogically ineffective. For this reason, she argued that technology companies have a clear duty of care toward children which must be reflected in system architecture, feedback mechanisms and deployment choices, not merely in compliance documentation.

### **Operational Challenges in AI safety**

The discussion turned to what implementation might look like on the ground, particularly in a linguistically and culturally diverse country like India. Mr. Akash Pugalia, TP's Chief Digital Officer, weighed in with an enforcement and industry operations perspective. He started by pointing out that online harms tend to transcend national and jurisdictional borders. In such a scenario, the use of national laws by themselves tends to be ineffective in preventing harm, especially when the standards of enforcement tend to be highly divergent across different countries. He pointed out that AI is only hastening the pace and scope of harm. Technologies such as synthetic media and nudification tools have completely altered the landscape of what constitutes harm, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish between what is real and what is manufactured. He pointed out that law enforcement agencies associated with TP are struggling to

keep pace, not only with the volume of harmful content but also with the entirely new kinds of harm that AI systems are making possible.

He then highlighted a challenge specific to India and similarly diverse markets: linguistic fragmentation combined with near-universal smartphone access. While users engage across dozens of languages and cultural contexts, platforms must simultaneously balance engagement, monetisation and safety at scale. This creates operational complexity, particularly when harmful content appears in local dialects or culturally specific formats that are harder to detect. Mr. Pugalia concluded by stating that in order to deal with the issue, there is a need for collective action on the part of platforms, governments, educators, legislators and enforcement agencies. Beyond collaboration, there is a pressing need to develop shared understandings and clearer definitions of what constitutes harm in AI-mediated environments. Without common frameworks and agreed terminology, both enforcement and prevention efforts risk remaining fragmented and reactive.

### **Absolute Safeguards needed for protecting children**

The final thoughts of the session featured panelists sharing what they considered non-negotiable safety measures that must form the foundation of child protection in AI environments. Dr. Malhotra demanded the mandatory AI watermarking of synthetic media, as labelling is crucial to avoid deception and stop the misuse of manipulated media. Ms. Ganesh stressed the need for the implementation and enforcement of age-appropriate design codes, which will ensure that platforms used by children are designed with child-friendly developmental safeguards from inception. Ms. Sherman pointed out the importance of faster response times to identified harms and the incorporation of linguistic diversity into safety architecture to ensure that safety measures work well across languages and cultures. Ms. Nappinai and Mr. Pugalia had a similar view on the need for zero profiling of children, as children should not be subjected to any form of behavioural profiling. Mr. Gonsalves reiterated the need for legislative clarity on the prohibition of unsafe design practices, in addition to continued investment in digital and AI literacy to make children informed and critical users.

## **Conclusion**

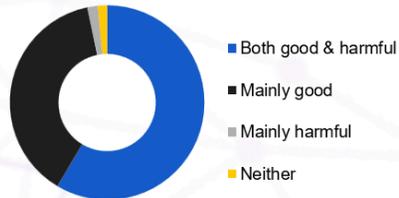
The panel converged on a unified message: protecting children in the AI future of India cannot be viewed as a marginal compliance activity, but must be integrated at the level of design, law, education and coordination. From the need for safety by design and zero profiling to the requirement for child rights impact assessments and digital mentors, the meeting highlighted that enforcement action alone would not be sufficient. AI-related risks are systemic, transnational and dynamic. Hence, there is a need for anticipatory, interdisciplinary and reality-based responses from the governance community. The recommendations of the Expert Engagement Group represent a paradigm shift from content moderation to architectural accountability, from sporadic actions to system-wide change.

At the same time, it was clear from the discussion that India is at a critical juncture. With its size, complexity and growing AI ecosystem, the country faces both increased accountability and unprecedented opportunity. By incorporating child well-being into its AI governance framework (through binding legal norms, coordinated action, open system design and sustained investment in literacy and resilience) India can transcend the mitigation of harm to forge a rights-based, globally significant model of child-centric AI governance. In this way, it would not only safeguard its youngest citizens but also enhance the democratic legitimacy and long-term viability of its AI future.

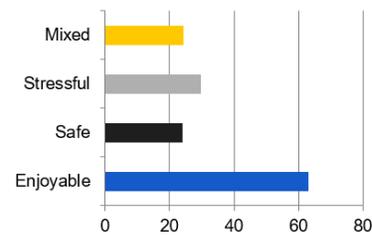
## Annexure

## Poll findings: 410 young people across India, January 2026

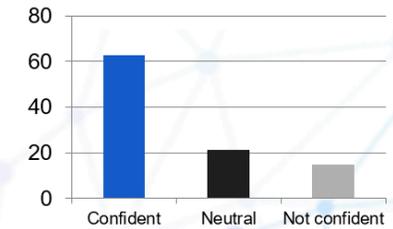
### Overall view of AI



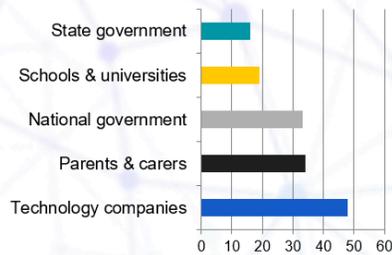
### How being online feels



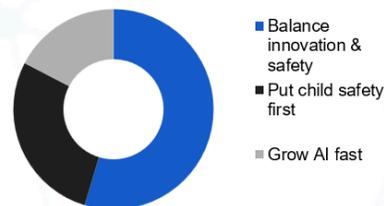
### Confidence in AI safety



### Responsibility



### Message to Policy Makers



“  
AI is great for the future  
only if it is used with good  
intentions  
”

Childlight Poll Respondent,  
January 2026