

## **Panel Summary: A New Layer of Help: The Role of Helplines in Online Safety**

*Moderator: Matt Soeth, iCanHelpline*

*Panelists: Desireé Caro, Hollaback!; Martin Cocker, NetSafe ; Anne Collier, iCanHelpline; Karuna Nain, Facebook*

**Overview:** Led by Matt Soeth, this panel of experts held a lively discussion on the parts helplines are playing in keeping users safe both online and offline, the differences between their platforms, the challenges they face, and the importance of their partnerships.

After each panelist described their platforms, how they got started, and the types of content they see, they discussed the challenges they face providing help for a wealth of different cultures. Karuna Nain talked about how, especially with such a large company like Facebook, providing support across cultures is a huge learning process as they need to break it down by language and decide which kinds of reports to prioritize. Martin Cocker touched on how definitions of freedom of speech differ from nation to nation and how that affects what companies are able to do as they grow.

In terms of partnerships, Cocker said that since the main role of helplines is to assist, and partnerships become critical. When they have connections with Facebook and local law enforcement and the like, they become more trustworthy and are able to bypass the slower processes that one would deal with on an individual basis. Desiree Caro said that Hollaback's partnerships with social media platforms allows to have all their resources and safety guides in one central location and shows that industry cares about these issues. Ann Collier discussed how local partnerships know their communities and specific groups that can get the word out. Nain also added that without having partners on the ground, helplines would not be able to grow in the way that they are.

Soeth also asked the panel what they found were best practices for helplines just starting out and looking to grow. Nain offered to test the platform with a smaller group before launching it worldwide as Facebook did. Caro said that HeartMob allows users to define the harassment and potential motivations for that harassment themselves and that giving users the ability to label their own experiences empowers them. Cocker suggested that helplines find their own niches. Netsafe, he said, doesn't try to tackle bullying in general but focuses more on the texting platform. It is important to acknowledge one's own strengths as well as limitations. Collier discussed how it is important to recognize the people involved and to encourage peer-to-peer support.

Collier closed the discussion by saying that this type of help has only just begun. Countries are rapidly adopting technology and only scratching the surface of Internet safety resources.