Health Invest

Position Statement

Pornography

Summary

The production and distribution of pornography can be associated with adverse impacts on health, human dignity and gender equality, including risks related to exploitation and abuse. For this reason, we apply exclusion criteria for pornography.

This document explains the relationship between pornography and sustainable development and why we apply exclusion criteria for pornography.

Our position

The production and distribution of pornography can be associated with adverse impacts on health, human dignity and gender equality, including risks related to exploitation and abuse. Given these adverse impacts and their relevance to HealthInvest's focus on health and sustainable development, we apply exclusion criteria for pornography.

Connection to sustainability

According to the UN's Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was adopted unanimously by 189 countries in 1995, the production and distribution of pornography is associated with the exploitation, trafficking, and abuse of adults and children, primarily women. Through this mechanism, pornography clearly undermines commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals related to good health and well-being (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), decent working conditions (SDG 8), and peace and justice (SDG 16) (see mapping below).

We exclude sectors that are fundamentally in conflict with good health and well-being. Pornography conflicts with good health and well-being because it has proven impossible to eliminate, or prevent monetization of, the type of illegal pornography that undermines health and gender equality (e.g., Uhl et al. 2018). This is in part because of the easy and anonymous distribution enabled by the internet, in part because of the difficulty of distinguishing between legal and illegal content, and in part because of the inability of regulation and policing to keep pace with technological development (Bartow 2008; Citron and Franks 2014; Volini and Ahmed 2022).

Mapping pornography to the Sustainable Development Goals

SDG Target	SDG Indicator	Comment
3.3 End the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, waterborne diseases and other communicable diseases	3.3.1 Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations	Non-use of condoms in sexual intercourse is a key factor in HIV transmission. Few pornographic videos include condom use, and research indicates that this is a factor in non-use by pornography viewers (Lim et al. 2016; Njue et al. 2011; Wright et al. 2020). Pornographic performers are often infected with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, during their work (El-Khoury Lesueur et al. 2024).
5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age	The UN finds that pornography drives physical and sexual violence, primarily against women (Singhateh 2022).
	5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence	The UN finds that pornography drives sexual violence, primarily against women (Singhateh 2022).

SDG Target	SDG Indicator	Comment
8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms	8.7.1 Proportion and number of children aged 5–17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age	Sex trafficking is a commercial sex act. Child sexual abuse material (CSAM), which is estimated to be as much as 20% of pornographic images on the internet, is considered sex trafficking and therefore a commercial sex act (Busick 2015; Luzwick 2017; MacKinnon 2005).
16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere	16.1.3 Proportion of population subjected to (a) physical violence, (b) psychological violence and/or (c) sexual violence in the previous 12 months	The UN finds that pornography drives physical and sexual violence, primarily against women (Singhateh 2022).
16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children	16.2.2 Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation	The pornography industry is a driver of sex trafficking (Busick 2015; Luzwick 2017). Research indicates that many people appearing in pornographic materials have been trafficked or otherwise coerced (Luzwick 2017).

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