



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Global law enforcement collaboration leads to rescue of 6-year-old girl from online sexual exploitation**

MANILA, PHILIPPINES – An international investigation resulted in the successful rescue of a 6-year-old girl from online sexual exploitation, and the arrest of a suspected trafficker, on June 18, 2023. Another suspect had been arrested in Manila on November 11, 2022.

The operations were a result of international law enforcement collaboration between the Philippine National Police – Women and Children Protection Center (PNP-WCPC), Victoria Police (VicPol), Netherlands Police (NP), and Australian Federal Police (AFP). The case was referred to the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC), a model for an enhanced global response against online sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

Atty. Reynaldo Bicol, Director of IJM Manila Program Office, praised the excellent work of international law enforcement partners. “These operations showcase the critical role that international law enforcement collaboration plays in ending impunity for the awful crimes that sex offenders commit against children. IJM applauds the work of the PNP-WCPC, VicPol, NP, AFP, and all the member agencies of PICACC. Let this be a clear message to perpetrators: your criminal actions will not stay hidden.”

In early 2022, VicPol and NP identified an individual sharing child abuse material on the dark web. VicPol, NP and AFP later referred the case to the PICACC, leading to an urgent investigation by PNP-WCPC. On November 11, 2022, the suspect, now aged 19, was arrested after the PNP-WCPC executed a search warrant at his home in Metro Manila. IJM provided legal and logistical support during the operation.

No children were found at the property, but efforts continued to locate and protect the victim. Further international coordination resulted in the rescue of the victim on June 18, 2023, and the arrest of another suspected trafficker, aged 37. The suspected perpetrators were to be charged with violating laws against child abuse, online sexual abuse and exploitation of children, and trafficking.

PNP Women and Children Protection Centre Police Colonel Portia Manalad said that the rescue of the child and the arrest of the two alleged traffickers highlighted the commitment of PNP to protect children. She [stated](#) that they “are determined to find children who have been subjected to these horrific crimes, make sure they are safe and support them in the future.”

“Children are not commodities to be used for the abhorrent gratification of sexual predators,” AFP Detective Superintendent Andrew Perkins [said](#). “This outcome has highlighted the shared commitment law enforcement agencies have to protect children wherever they live and ensure anyone who tries to harm them is identified and brought before the courts. We will do whatever we can to help Philippine authorities identify any child victims and remove them from further harm.”

Victoria Police’s Joint Anti-Child Exploitation Team (JACET) Detective Acting Superintendent Boris Buick [stated](#) that “Victoria Police JACET Victim Identification Specialists stand at the

shoulder of our law enforcement partners from across the world to identify children at risk, not just in Victoria and Australia, but spanning right across the world.”

Online sexual exploitation of children is an alarming, cross-border crime. Through online platforms, remote sex offenders, often from Western countries, communicate with local traffickers and pay them to livestream the sexual abuse of children. In 2022, an overwhelming 88.3 million child sexual exploitation-related files were reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

To better understand the scale of trafficking for the production of child sexual exploitation materials, IJM is preparing to release the Scale of Harm study, providing vital prevalence estimates of this specific crime. The study's findings are expected to offer invaluable insights for policymakers, law enforcement, and anti-trafficking organizations. ###

#### **Notes to Editors:**

- Under Philippine laws, the name and personal circumstances of the trafficked person or any other information tending to establish the identity of the trafficked person and his or her family shall not be disclosed to the public.
- The Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, also known as the Luxembourg Guidelines, prescribes the use of the term “child sexual abuse material” or “child sexual exploitation material” instead of “child pornography”. Sexualized material that depicts or otherwise represents children is a representation, and a form, of child sexual abuse and should not be described as “pornography.”

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#### **About IJM**

International Justice Mission is a global organization that protects people in poverty from violence. IJM partners with local authorities in 28 program offices in 16 countries to rescue and restore survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and help strengthen public justice systems so they can better protect people from violence.

Our work in the Philippines led to a dramatic decrease in the prevalence of sex trafficking of children in bars and brothels—reductions ranging from 72%-86% in the cities where we partnered with local authorities. In 2016, IJM fully transitioned our program in the Philippines to combat online sexual exploitation of children, in particular the trafficking of children to create new child sexual abuse materials, including via livestreaming.

Learn more: [IJM.org.ph](http://IJM.org.ph)