

Fighting the Hidden WAR



Combatting Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Philippines



Photos taken with consent. Identities of victims have been obscured in order to maintain confidentiality. Some photos are for illustrative purposes only.

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FROM THE GLOBAL PROGRAMS AGAINST ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

he launch of the Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership in October 2017 marked a new milestone in the fight against the online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC). Over the last four years, this partnership with the U.S. Department of State has enabled IJM and our consortium to capacitate more dedicated law enforcers, prosecutors, and aftercare service providers in handling OSEC cases - resulting in a strengthened criminal justice system. Because of the CPC Partnership, robust community protection systems have been established to not only combat OSEC, but also prevent child labor trafficking (CLT).

We are thankful to the U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP) for partnering with IJM and our consortium to fight these forms of modern-day slavery targeting vulnerable Filipino children. I am proud of what our incredible collaboration has achieved – which this publication illustrates.

IJM's partnership with the Philippine Government to fight livestreamed child sexual abuse dates back to 2011. Since then, we have supported our relentless Philippine authorities in the rescue of more than 700 victims and the arrest of 278 suspected perpetrators, more than 100 of whom have already been convicted.

Behind these numbers are children on their way to restoration and perpetrators facing life-changing consequences of the crime they committed against the survivors. Beyond every rescue and arrest are would-be perpetrators realizing it is too risky to engage in the trafficking of children to create new child sexual exploitation materials. With every rescue and arrest, we inch closer to the end of impunity for this crime.

The Philippine Government, with support from other stakeholders, has achieved significant progress in the fight to end online sexual exploitation of children - and we have documented best practices developed over the years through the study we released last year, "Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Philippines: Analysis and Recommendations for Governments, Industry, and Civil Society." But this is a crime that transcends boundaries. It is a global crime fueled by demand from child sex offenders abroad. Therefore, it cannot be solved by Philippine stakeholders alone. It will take strong collaboration on a global scale—a firm global resolve—to end this crime.

Thankfully, we have the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC) already paving the way for greater information-sharing among global law enforcement agencies. The PICACC is a cooperation among local and international law enforcement, namely the Philippine National Police - Women and Children Protection Center (PNP-WCPC), the National Bureau of Investigation's Anti-Human-Trafficking Division (NBI-AHTRAD), the Australian Federal Police (AFP), United Kingdom National Crime Agency (UK NCA) and the National Police of the Netherlands; in

partnership with IJM. It has proven to be a model for enhanced global law enforcement collaboration against OSEC.

Last year, we also launched IJM's Center to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children to work closely with global stakeholders to achieve critical goals such as improved detection and reporting of OSEC by technology and financial sector platforms. The Center is also collaborating with global stakeholders to develop a methodology to measure the prevalence of OSEC. Knowing the prevalence of OSEC—currently hampered by the lack of detection and reporting of livestreamed child sexual abuse will help governments and other stakeholders determine the level of resources needed to effectively combat this crime.

As IJM continues to leverage proven practices to end the global scourge of OSEC, we deem it necessary to document the successes and even the challenges encountered in the implementation of CPC Partnership related activities. This publication is not only a celebration of the incredible results of our CPC Partnership collaboration with government partners, but also a repository of the valuable lessons learned, in the form of case studies, insights and analysis. In releasing this publication, it is IJM's goal to help enrich the literature on combating OSEC and arm ourselves and our partners with critical knowledge to implement evidence-based interventions. May the reports and stories here fuel our hope as we carry on in this journey of creating a world where no child is ever exploited again.

Atty. Samson Inocencio

Regional Vice President Global Programs Against Online Sexual Exploitation of Children International Justice Mission

FROM MANILA PROGRAM OFFICE

or almost two decades, I have had the privilege to work alongside government and civil society partners in the fight against human trafficking, having served in different capacity at the Manila Field Office of International Justice Mission. Through the field offices of IJM in Manila and Cebu, our multi-disciplinary team has been working closely with the Philippine Government in bringing relief to trafficked persons, most especially children, in different parts of the country. In my years with IJM, I have witnessed how my team has struggled, learned together, and succeeded with our partners in the trenches in serving the most vulnerable Filipino children.

Our long years of working relationship with law enforcement partners in the PNP and NBI in investigating cases resulted in thousands of victims being rescued from sexual exploitation. Our active collaboration with public prosecutors from the Department of Justice (DOJ) in prosecuting cases saw hundreds of traffickers and abusers being convicted in our courts of law. Moreover, our close working relationship with our aftercare partners in the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Local Government Units (LGUs) and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) led to countless survivors being restored and brought to a place of safety and strength.

The collaboration, however, does not stop there as our casework partnerships led to the creation of sustainable improvements in the justice system that serve survivors, deter criminals, and dramatically decrease the crime.

It is noteworthy that after years of IJM's sustained work with the Philippine government and local authorities to protect children and stop traffickers, studies have shown that prevalence of commercial sex trafficking plummeted between 72% and 86% in our areas of operation. This is an unprecedented result and a clear demonstration that when laws are effectively enforced, the prevalence of the abusive crime is dramatically reduced.

The Philippine government is now uniquely positioned to become a world leader in the fight against human trafficking, even as it now confronts its most vicious form, which is the online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC). While studies indicate the high prevalence of this crime in the country, the Philippine government remains committed to combat this threat to Filipino children and has shown great progress in confronting this crime. Through the increasing investment and expanding cooperation, such as that provided by the US-Philippines Children Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership, the Philippine government has built on the model it has developed alongside IJM and other stakeholders in addressing online sexual exploitation of children.

The CPC Partnership enabled the Philippine Government to work closely with IJM and different stakeholders to bolster efforts to prosecute and convict child traffickers, provide comprehensive, trauma-informed care for child victims, strengthen community mechanisms. and prevent these crimes from occurring in the future. The past four years of the CPC

partnership have been phenomenal and exciting as we saw highly successful results in collaborative casework and in the development of effective strategies and framework that strengthen the Philippine government's response against online sexual exploitation of children.

With the increasing momentum and mounting success that place the Philippines at the forefront of eliminating human trafficking, it is but timely and necessary that the achievements and learnings under the CPC Partnership be presented in a publication such as this. This work will not only memorialize the success of the partnership but also provide best practices and recommendations based on field experience for a victimsensitive justice response in effectively confronting the rising global menace of online sexual exploitation of children.

As the hidden war that we are engaged in is brought to the world's attention, I would like to express my deepest congratulations to the National Prosecution Development (NPD) Team of IJM Philippines for carefully documenting the success and learnings under the CPC Partnership through this publication. The highest commendation is of course reserved to our partners in the government and civil society and the U.S. Department of State whose excellent work through the Partnership has made us closer to our goal of ending human trafficking in our lifetime and guaranteeing a safe future for the Filipino child.

Mabuhay!

Atty. Reynaldo H. Bicol, Jr.

Director, Manila Program Office International Justice Mission Philippines



FROM CEBU PROGRAM OFFICE

substantial part of my close to 10 years of working at International Justice Mission has been being on the ground, in the trenches, and seeing this hidden war of online sexual exploitation of children firsthand. As a lawyer formerly prosecuting commercial sex trafficking of children in Cebu, young children sexually abused online is one of the worst forms of human trafficking that I have ever seen in this work. While this is happening all over the Philippines, IJM Cebu Program Office gets to work on this type of abuse in Visayas and Mindanao regions with a nexus to other countries of demand. Our actual casework, closely collaborating with and working alongside Philippine law enforcement as well as international counterparts in investigations and rescues operations, DOJ prosecutors in criminal prosecutions, DSWD, local social welfare offices, and aftercare partners in restoring survivors - all this has immersed us in the work deep enough to see this issue from different fronts. This experience has allowed IJM to walk alongside the Philippine government at the casework level as a foundation to holistically and sustainably address this global issue at the justice systems level.

This publication, "Fighting the Hidden War: Combatting Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Philippines" is shaped by the realities at ground zero, the challenges and roadblocks as well as the victories and breakthroughs experienced by our frontline duty bearers, the gaps, and solutions, as well as what has been accomplished and what else can be done. This publication is a testament to the Philippine government taking ownership and leading this fight. Investigations resulted in restraining perpetrators and rescue of victims, the deterrence of effective law enforcement led to the protection of more children and restoration of survivors, and we can see how a stronger justice system sustains this protection.

The breakthroughs in investigations, successful prosecutions, casework innovations, promising practices, and commendable fruits of multidisciplinary collaboration celebrated in this publication honors the work that has been accomplished through the Child Protection Compact between the Philippine Government and the US Government. Yes, this is an ongoing fight and there are still fronts awaiting breakthroughs, however, this does not

overshadow how far this community has come. Hopefully, the resources and influence that are untapped at this point, will not see the need to reinvent the wheel, but instead to inspire solution-driven initiatives with tech industries and financial institutions joining the fight, bring breakthroughs in scaling timely crime detection globally, and build on the sustainable solutions for public justice systems in source countries and demand countries.

Finally, this publication is a declaration of hope - hope for children who are yet to be rescued, hope for the restoration of survivors, the hope that as a community, we can create a safer future for our children. While the fight against online sexual exploitation can sometimes feel like an uphill climb and a dead-end at every turn, this relentless hope for children to be rescued, restored, and protected continues to fuel us. We do not give up on the impossible, we take risks for that small glimmer of light, we soldier on because the children and their future are worth it. What is hidden will be powerless in the light. The impossible becomes possible. The possible becomes done.

Atty. Lucille Dejito
Director, Cebu Program Office
International Justice Mission Philippines

Stock photo: not actual survivor

FROM THE CENTER TO END ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

since 2011, IJM has worked tirelessly to protect children in the Philippines from online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC). In particular, IJM has focused our efforts on protecting children exploited by traffickers to create child sexual exploitation material (CSEM), including livestreaming, to satisfy the online demand of child sex offenders around the world.

My IJM colleagues and I have seen first-hand the devastation caused by this global crime, a growing form of modern slavery traumatizing young children. At the same time, we have seen the fruit of an effective justice system response that protects victims from further abuse while journeying with them to achieve justice and restoration in a trauma-informed way.

With hundreds of survivors already restored and given the justice they deserve, IJM is filled with an energizing hope.

We know this crime is not confined to the Philippines, as it can flourish in any country with multiple enabling factors, such as money transfer agency infrastructure with few detection practices, widespread and inexpensive internet access, and relative impunity for traffickers, to name a few. This is truly a global crime, facilitated on globally accessible tech and financial platforms, impacting

vulnerable populations in multiple source countries, and perpetrated by remote offenders in multiple demand countries.

That is why in 2020, IJM launched the Center to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children—to take our fight against OSEC global. Showcasing IJM's survivor-centered casework model from the Philippines, the Center partner with governments, industries, NGOs, and other stakeholders to expose, neutralize, and deter online sexual exploitation of children around the world. Through global partnerships, the Center is improving detection and reporting of this crime by the technology and financial sectors, strengthening international collaboration, and supporting effective justice system responses, all towards the goal of protecting children.

That is why I am pleased to promote the pioneering work of IJM Philippines in developing survivor-centered, trauma-informed approaches to justice delivery, like Videotaped In-Depth Interviews (VIDI). VIDI allows children to provide recorded testimony about their abuse without having to recount it live in a courtroom, providing protection from potentially re-traumatizing in-court testimony. Working to make VIDI a common practice is a perfect example of a scalable, survivor-centered approach to strengthen justice systems that the Center is excited to champion globally.

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Atty. John Tanagho

Executive Director

Center to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children

International Justice Mission







nternet has changed the way young children are being sexually abused or exploited today. At a massive scale and at a speed of a click, abusers located anywhere in the world can exploit without ever leaving the comfort and safety of their homes. In these cases, children are sexually abused by traffickers, who then spread or sell images or videos of the exploitation online—even livestreaming the abuse from any place in the world.

This is online sexual exploitation of children.

Online sexual exploitation of children encompasses a range of crimes, including creating, possessing, or distributing child sexual exploitation material (CSEM) like photos and videos. It also includes the sexual abuse of children by traffickers who livestream the exploitation to satisfy the online demand of child sex offenders paying to direct the abuse in real time. Its commercial nature makes it unique from other forms of internet crimes against children (ICAC).

This form of modern slavery and online child sexual abuse is particularly devastating because the perpetrators are often family members or close friends of the victims. Typical cases involve a local trafficker who has access to multiple vulnerable children and is in communication with multiple offenders using online platforms with livestream video and real-time chat functions. Financial transactions are conducted through money transfer agencies.

Despite being online and often livestreamed, it is not a "virtual" form of abuse. The exploitation is still inflicted in real life, real time, to a real child—stripped naked, sexually-abused, or raped on camera for strangers they sometimes could not see. The physical, emotional, and psychological damage inflicted on the child is as real, if not more, as having the perpetrator in the same room with them.

The Challenges of Waging a Hidden War

Online sexual exploitation of children is a crime easily hidden not just behind closed doors, but by the same access and conveniences offered by the rapid development of the internet and digital technology. On one hand, the democratization of the internet has delivered to people information, broader horizons, learnings, the global marketplace, and instant connection to strangers, friends, and family no matter where they are in the world. On the other hand, this same access has also opened a whole new world of risks and dangers for children. Child sex offenders have adapted to the new technology and have used it to prey on their victims from different parts of the globe, especially in developing countries.

This presents a complex challenge to the global community. Offenders have readily embraced high-speed internet connectivity to exploit children from anywhere. Using their mobile devices, they easily access abuse images, manipulating children online for abuse, sextortion, and trafficking. All the while law enforcements and groups against this crime are scrambling for reliable and quality data on this crime.

The Philippines as a Battleground

While the livestreamed sexual abuse of children is not unique to the country, the combination of widespread and inexpensive access to the internet, established money transfer infrastructure, and a largely English language proficient population, not to mention the country's history of commercial sex industry, unfortunately makes the Philippines the ideal stomping ground for online sexual exploitation of children. This is why International Justice Mission Philippines advanced and launched the "OSEC program" in 2016 to put an end to this crime.

Combatting online sexual exploitation of children requires collaboration among international law enforcement, government, non-government organizations, and private sector companies. IJM works with government partners in law enforcement, prosecution, and aftercare to combat the online sexual exploitation of children, particularly those crimes with a commercial element and subject to Philippines anti-human trafficking laws. Public prosecutors and judges contribute to protection by prosecuting and convicting perpetrators in accordance with the law, creating the second layer of deterrence through lasting accountability.

Alongside the goal of deterrence, IJM supports trauma-informed care as an indispensable part of casework and system enhancement. IJM works with private aftercare providers to deliver services to survivors that improve personal well-being, reduce the risk of re-victimization, and enhance engagement with the public justice system. IJM envisions a public justice system that is trauma-informed in its law enforcement, prosecution, adjudication, and aftercare disciplines.

Digging Deep into Online Sexual Exploitation of Children

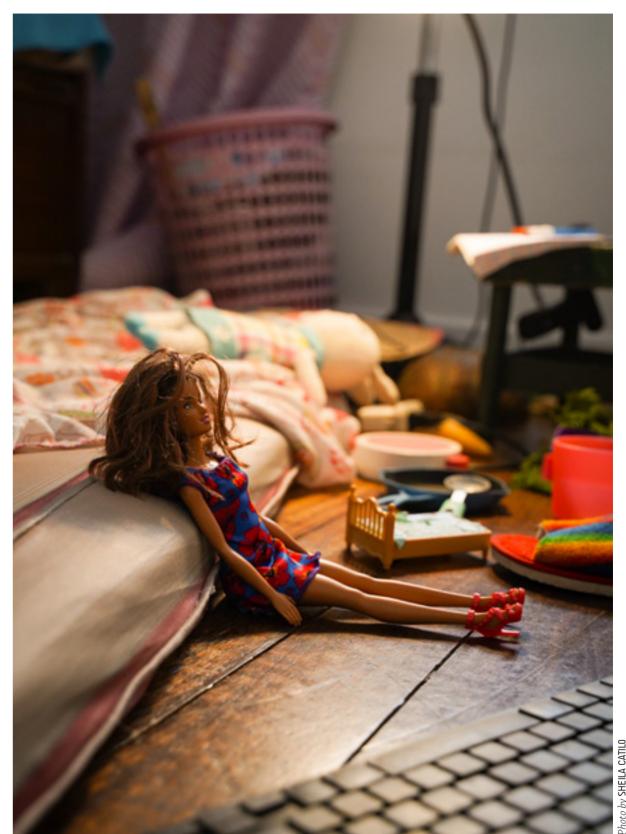
In 2020, IJM led and completed a groundbreaking study in partnership with the Philippine Government, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), and a variety of stakeholders, under the U.S.-Philippines CPC Partnership between the U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP) and the Government of the Philippines. Global and local experts were brought together in this effort to better understand the nature and scale of this crime in the Philippines.

The study analyzed trends in Philippine cases and confirmed the country as a global hotspot. According to data from participating law enforcement agencies globally, the Philippines received more than eight times as many referrals as any other country during the baseline time period.

While the study initially set out to determine the prevalence of livestreamed sexual abuse of children in the Philippines, two main factors unfortunately prohibited this: First, inconsistencies in the quality of reporting by Electronic Service Providers (ESPs). Second, ESPs currently lack the ability to detect livestreaming shows of child sex abuse (CSA). Despite this, the study surfaced valuable insights on the scale of the crime.

The study found a dramatic rise in internet-based child sexual exploitation cases reported to the Philippines. Between 2014 and 2017, CyberTipline Reports sent to the Philippines (on a weekly basis) were more than doubled. Additionally, the estimated number of IP addresses used for internetbased child sexual exploitation in the Philippines rose by approximately 250%. Of the Philippine cases, 64% were initiated by referrals from international law enforcement agencies. These are referrals from demand-side countries that have ignited investigations that led to the rescue of victims and arrest of source-country traffickers. The study also uncovered that the victims were abused for an average of two years before they are rescued, with some enduring abuse for as long as four years.1

Overall, the findings suggest that this crime is growing and there is a need for the global community to act together to address it. Several recommendations were listed for the Philippine government, government and NGO service providers, technology platforms (electronic service providers), academics, technology designers, experts, and data owners. To combat this crime, all stakeholders should engage and collaborate together locally, regionally, and globally.



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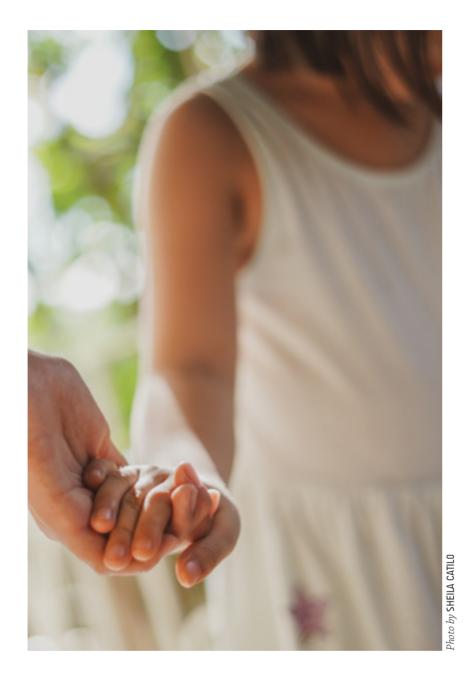
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Gaining Ground

IJM has partnered with J/TIP and the Government of the Philippines under the CPC Partnership, to scale improvements in protection mechanisms for vulnerable children and develop a replicable model for combatting this crime globally. The "Child Protection Compact - Improving the Government of the Philippines' Response to the crime and CLT" program addressed the critical shortterm needs of current victims of online sexual exploitation of children and labor trafficking, whilst working to build long-term improvements in the government response.

By the end of the project, the Philippine government increased its capacity to prevent and respond to online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking.

This book details IJM's work to combat online sexual exploitation of children as an implementor of the Child Protection Compact Partnership.



OBJECTIVES

Objective 1.1: Increased number of successful victim-centered investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of OSEC cases.

Responsible Party: IJM

Objective 1.2: The Government of the Philippines and civil society have increased capacity to effectively identify and provide comprehensive services for victims of OSEC and CLT, including both girls and boys, sibling groups, PWD, and LGBT children, from identification through protective care, community reintegration, and long-term follow up services.

Responsible Party: IJM

Objective 1.3: Strengthen existing community-based mechanisms for identifying and protecting child victims of OSEC and preventing this crime.

Responsible Party: World Vision, sub-grantee under IJM's project



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For our valued partners: thank you for the outstanding efforts and collaboration in counter-trafficking and children protection cases. Your leadership has done much to combat online sexual exploitation of children in the country.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A

AFP

Australian Federal Police

NBI-AHTRAD

Anti-Human-Trafficking Division

AIW

Advanced Investigative Workshop

C

CASE 1.0

Case Management Advanced Skills TrainingChild

CLT

Child Labor Trafficking

CPAs

Child Placement Agencies

CPC

Child Protection Compact Partnership

CSA

Child Sex Abuse

CSEC

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

CSEM

Child Sexual Exploitation Material

D

DOJ

Department of Justice

DOLE

Department of Labour and Employment

DSWD

Department of Social Welfare and Development

Ε

ESPs

Electronic Service Providers (ESPs)

H

FOCOS

Foster Care for OSEC Survivors Training

G

GSN

Global Survivor Network

ICAC

Internet Crimes Against Children

IJM

International Justice Mission

DOJ-IACAT

Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking

J

J/TIF

U.S. Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

LGUs

Local Government Units

LGBTQ

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning

M

MSW

Master of Social Work

N

NBI

National Bureau of Investigation

NCMEC

National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

NCR

National Capital Region

NGC

Non-government Organizations

0

OSEC

Online Sexual Exploitation of Children

OSEC RACE

Online Sexual Exploitation of Children - Remote Accelerated Casework Event

P

PICACC

Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center

PNP-WCPC

Philippine National Police - Women and Children Protection Center

POSE

 $Prosecuting\ Online\ Sexual\ Exploitation$

R

RECW

Rule on Examination of a Child Witness

S

SMART

Survivors Mentoring and Advocating for Restorative Transformation

STAR

Standing Together Advocating Rights

U

UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund

UK NCA

United Kingdom National Crime Agency (UK NCA)

V

VIDI

Videotaped In-Depth Interviews (VIDI)



LAW ENFORCEMENT CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION



The title of this publication, "Fighting the Hidden War," aptly captures the journey of Philippine law enforcement in addressing the phenomenon of online sexual exploitation of children. As with any war, battles are fought on many fronts. The Philippine National Police - Women and Children Protection Center (PNP-WCPC) and the National Bureau of Investigation Anti-Human-Trafficking Division (NBI-AHTRAD) are leading the law enforcement front to address the most serious form of online sexual exploitation of children which is the livestreaming of child sexual exploitation.

In 2016, as IJM was closing its commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) project, it was also observing a different type of CSE that is internet-facilitated. Like CSEC, this too is a trafficking offense under Philippine laws. IJM maintained its strong partnership with PNP-WCPC and NBI-AHTRAD as it transitioned to its online sexual exploitation against children project. The momentum built under the CSEC project; the interest to maintain the Philippines under Tier 1 status in the United States Trafficking in Persons Report, after attaining it for the first time in 2016; the compelling nature of the crime; along with the signing of the CPC Partnership in 2017

and the subsequent investments by both governments towards addressing this crime under the Partnership, all served as motivating factors to build Philippine law enforcement's response against online sexual exploitation of children.

To build a capable and credible law enforcement response against the threat of online sexual exploitation of children, it was important to develop a new investigative skill set that is contextualized to the Philippine legal framework and other particularities. IJM Philippines' Investigations and Law Enforcement Development Team embed an Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Specialist to work alongside PNP-WCPC officers and NBI-AHTRAD agents as they developed the expertise in their units. This embed, coupled with contextualized trainings and workshops; advocacy for greater financial and operational autonomy of the operating units, is among the strategic investments for law enforcement development.

With a growing track record of successful law enforcement interventions resulting in the rescue of online sexual exploitation of children victims and the arrest of suspects, international law enforcement took notice. In February 2019, a multi-agency international cooperation composed of PNP-WCPC, NBI-AHTRAD, United Kingdom National Crime Agency (UK NCA), Australian Federal Police (AFP), and IJM as founding members, gave rise to the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC). The operational coordination happening at the PICACC involves more agencies outside the founding agencies. The PICACC has become the touchpoint for international law enforcement collaboration on this crime type.

The biggest challenge now for PNP-WCPC and NBI-AHTRAD is sustaining and scaling their response to attain the tipping point and to see a downward trend of the incidences of online sexual exploitation of children. For this to happen, there needs to be a sustained commitment to build law enforcement's capacity in terms of increasing the number of personnel dedicated to the work; financial and operational autonomy; and streamlining the processes and infrastructure supportive of international cooperation.

The hidden aspect of this war is the everyday violence committed against children in their tender years. However, the rays of hope continue to shine with the men and women of PNP-WCPC and NBI-AHTRAD who truly are the everyday heroes in this fight.

Atty. Gideon Elfred Cauton

Former Director

National Investigations and Law Enforcement Development International Justice Mission Philippines

Law Enforcement Development Work

Before IJM focused on online sexual exploitation of children in 2016, IJM engaged with the Philippine National Police (PNP), its specialized units, as well as the National Bureau of Investigation's specialized units to stop traditional trafficking: establishment-based trafficking of children. Even then, IJM was already seeing a few cases involving online sexual exploitation of children.

Online sexual exploitation of children encompasses a wide range of crimes including peer-to-peer sharing and livestreaming. IJM focuses on the very narrow category of livestreaming because the cases require a more urgent course of action. The most vulnerable victims are in the livestream, and if they are not immediately identified and rescued, all traces of the crime could disappear, as if it had never happened.

From Roots to Fruits: Walking Alongside Law Enforcement

In the beginning of the OSEC program, before the signing of the U.S.Philippines CPC Partnership, IJM, in partnership with the PNP, established an Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) office within PNP-WCPC, mirroring the ICAC program in the United States. The CPC Partnership afforded IJM the opportunity to hire an ICAC specialist who provided individualized mentoring to Philippine investigators.

With the help and expertise of an IJM

ICAC specialist, the ICAC office grew faster and better in its response to referrals from foreign law enforcement agencies. Under the leadership of Major Mike Virtudazo, Team Leader of what was then known as the PNP ICAC unit, with the support of IJM, a significant number of OSEC cases were investigated. In the early phases and in some unique cases, foreign law enforcement participates to add value.

The ICAC office's success in 2016-2017 paved the way for the February 2019 launch of the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC). The PICACC is a multiagency effort founded by the Philippine National Police's Women and Children Protection Center (PNP-WCPC), the National Bureau of Investigation Anti-Human-Trafficking Division (NBI-AHTRAD), the Australian Federal Police (AFP), the United Kingdom National Crime Agency (UK NCA), the National Police of the Netherlands and International Justice Mission (IJM).

PICACC: The Case Process Today

The Philippine Internet Crimes
Against Children Center (PICACC)
is a cooperation among local and
international law enforcement. It
envisions a world where children are
free from online exploitation and
serves to combat said issue through an
enhanced global response.

The PICACC is a coordination hub (not an operating unit) meant for coordination, de-confliction, and resource management, among other functions. Partners are deeply invested

in the PICACC. Aside from identifying and meeting the different needs of the center, partners also contribute by direct mentoring to upskill law enforcement. The overarching interest of participating law enforcement agencies in the PICACC is one of mutual reciprocity- benefitting both Philippine and foreign law enforcement. Foreign law enforcement agencies make an arrest of a perpetrator in their own countries and, through the PICACC, intelligence from the foreign perpetrator is shared with Philippine law enforcement who goes on to rescue the victim in the Philippines and makes the arrest of the local perpetrator. Philippine law enforcement then shares intelligence gathered from the local perpetrator to foreign law enforcement for possible links to still-at-large foreign perpetrators and the cycle starts all over again. The investment from foreign law enforcement is notably substantial.

As it celebrated its two-year anniversary in April 2021, the PICACC had received 201 referrals, conducted 118 operations, rescued 373 victims, and arrested 84 suspects. PICACC strives to become the center of excellence.2 Over time. the PNP and the NBI have evolved, in their skills and peer-recognition, as important partners on the foreign law enforcement stage. Its agencies have lined up several initiatives to showcase PICACC as a successful model in the region. Online sexual exploitation of children, again, is a global crime. It takes allies from the local and international territories joining the fight against this horrid offense to end it.

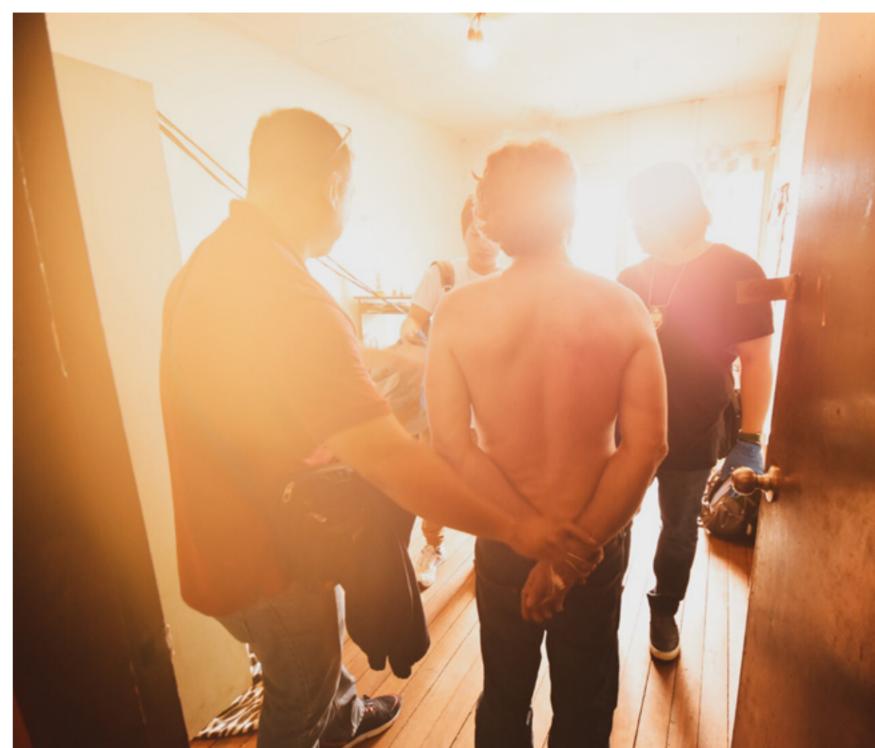


Photo by ATTY LAWRENCE ARITA

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A Victim-centric and Development-minded Approach

IJM has a development-minded approach when working with its partner law enforcement agencies. A casework team works alongside the partners, encouraging them to be more victimcentric in their operations and pointing out details that are easily overlooked in the process.

A victim-centric approach puts the focus on the children that are rescued. When doing triage — prioritization of cases as the referrals come in —the considerations include: if the victim is at high-risk, when the abuse is ongoing, the number of victims, and other metrics that are needed to support the urgency of the case. While each case is important, the compelling factor in prioritization is the state of the victim. This is how IJM encourages its partners to pursue the case.

For the development focus, IJM's law enforcement department checks on the investigative pipeline. Using casework as a diagnostic tool, the cases are passed along an imaginary public justice system pipeline. And should they encounter "holes" or gaps in the system, IJM "plugs" them. This way, when IJM's teams advocate to policymakers and lawmakers, they have supporting data taken from real cases rather than theoretical ones.

It's an adaptive challenge — passing cases down the pipeline and positioning them in the best possible way to get the best possible outcome. However, they do encounter gaps in the system that have to be addressed.

When handling cases, IJM identified details in the process to make sure that the victim would not be needlessly

traumatized after the rescue. During processing immediately after the rescue, the victim would be left sitting across from the suspect. When this was pointed out, IJM suggested that they should be transported in separate vans. Another small but important detail is when the mother is arrested, she should not be handcuffed in front of her children. It is all about protecting the victim.

Driving Online Sexual Exploitation of Children Out of Business

The reality is, there is no such thing as complete eradication of crime. Even if it seems that the prevalence rate is at zero, there is no guarantee that it will not happen again. Law enforcement's work is more of crime management. It is being vigilant and making sure that the police and investigators are "on the pulse" of illegal business. Because that is what the crime is: a business.

Online sexual exploitation of children is an economically-motivated crime. This is why IJM believes that effective law enforcement is a key factor in driving down its prevalence because it changes the cost-benefit analysis, making it riskier for criminals to engage in that criminal behavior. If the risk is high, perpetrators- relatives and parents who have access to their children or their neighbor's children who are facilitating the crime- would think, "I don't think I want to risk this and go to jail for life for just a measly sum of money!"

Application-based Training

Part of IJM's work is to provide training for capacity building and ensure that the infrastructure is there, so that law enforcement partners are more equipped to work online sexual exploitation of children cases. IJM's strong relationships with the local law enforcement units, namely PNP and NBI, allow for connection, collaboration, and co-facilitation of trainings.

Under the CPC program, IJM has conducted a total of eleven trainings which resulted to 237 trained law enforcement officers. The main training courses delivered by the NILED under the CPC are the ICAC Basic Training, the OSEC Intermediate Individualized Investigative Instruction (I₄), and the Advanced Investigative Workshop (AIW). Among these four, the flagship training course is the AIW training, which is a hands-on, practical application-based training that enables Philippine law enforcement teams to work on actual cases while being taught by mentors on technical and physical surveillance, online and in-persons investigation, advance case management, tactical operation planning, and inquest preparation. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the AIW was reconfigured to adjust to the restrictions on face-to-face interactions, thus, the Online Sexual Exploitation of Children Remote Accelerated Casework Event (OSEC RACE) was born. Analysis of the pre- and post-AIW skills application assessments found that the AIW was effective at increasing the OSEC-related investigative activity of the participants. Even during the

COVID-19 lockdown, several operations directly resulted from the OSEC RACE.³ Many cases with online sexual exploitation of children elements were investigated during the training with police officers. As a result of receiving these trainings, police officers were equipped with the knowledge to conduct the investigation. As of April 2021, the CPC-funded trainings have resulted in 14 operations, 73 rescues and 19 arrests.⁴ This affirms the effectiveness of the application-based approaches of the curriculum.

Plans for the Future

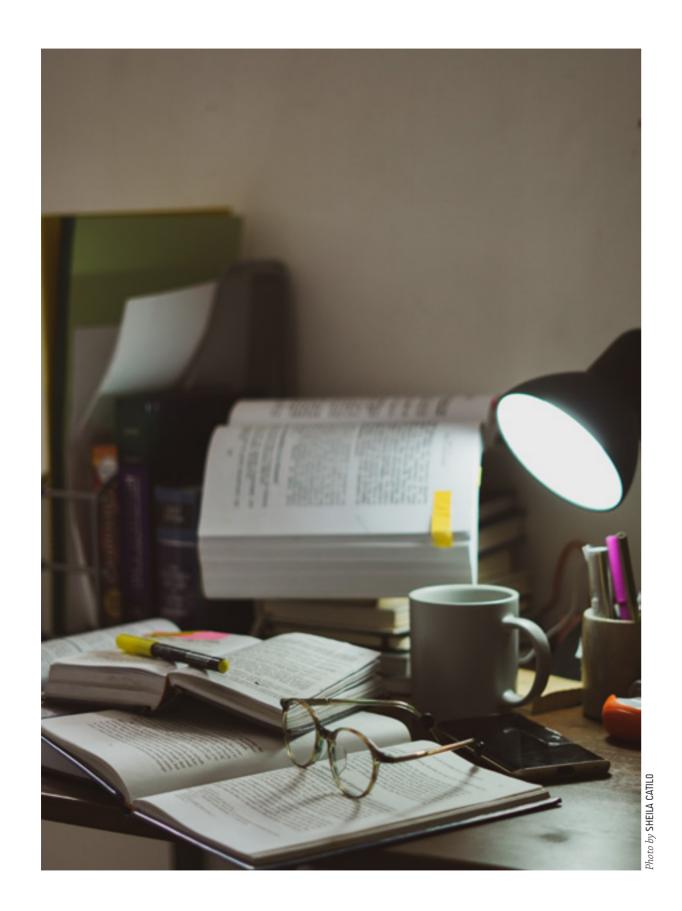
IJM will continue training for capacity and walking alongside partner law enforcement agencies.

As with any endeavor, budget and manpower are critical components. While the PNP-WCPC and NBI AHTRAD have been effective antitrafficking units, they still lack the necessary personnel and budget to achieve their full potential. As such, IJM will continue to advocate for increased resources and personnel for the Philippine anti-trafficking units. Moreover, IJM will continue to practice thought leadership with Philippine law enforcement partners and continue building their expertise in this crime type.

IJM is also looking to expand to other countries in Southeast Asia because of the rising incidents of OSEC cases in those countries. Of particular note, is the increase of sex offenders travelling to other Asian countries who, because of limited English fluency in that country, opt to travel because they have trouble understanding each other online.







INTRODUCTION

n the casework continuum, successful rescues are often followed by an inquest or a preliminary investigation to determine appropriate charges against suspected offenders. In this process, the prosecutor weighs the law enforcement evidence and determines if a case meets the probable cause threshold for criminal trial. Once a case is filed, the courtroom journey to accountability in the supply side of online sexual exploitation of children begins.

In every case, IJM and its partners prioritize the best interests of the child victim as an integral part of the justice process. Due to the unique factors of an OSEC case, Philippine prosecutors have had to harness tools that provide strong evidence while also upholding the best interests of the child. Tools such as Videotaped In-Depth Interviews (VIDIs) and plea agreements have stood out over time as the most effective child protection measures in casework.

Videotaped In-Depth Interviews (VIDIs) are a tool envisioned by the Supreme Court in the Rule on Examination of the Child Witness. VIDIs are a rule-sanctioned means to record evidence from a child victim so that if they are unable to testify in person later, the evidence remains admissible. They serve as child protection measures for cases at the inquest stage as well as the court-bound stage.

In the court or trial phase, plea agreements have served as a powerful tool for justice delivery and child protection. IJM has supported cases that run through full trial as well as cases reaching promulgation of judgment through a guilty plea. Under the CPC Partnership, several rescue operations led to speedy justice after rescue on account of plea agreements. The casework numbers on plea agreements show that it is quantitatively effective (well over 80% of cases succeed due to plea agreements), while qualitative observations from our aftercare teams indicate that it has also served as a trauma-informed tool to reduce victim exposure to justice processes.

When the pandemic reached the Philippines in March 2020, the Philippine justice system proved itself resilient. The Supreme Court worked to keep courts open, keeping trials moving forward and even rendering 24 OSEC convictions from March 2020 to March 2021. The Supreme Court's proactive guidance continued to benefit OSEC casework throughout 2020. By the end of the year, the Supreme Court had released a permanent rule that make videoconferencing hearings an available tool in appropriate cases, including those involving child exploitation.

The information presented in this section is a celebration of the frontline achievements of the national prosecution service and the policies that support child protective prosecution. They affirm that upholding the best interests of a child is an approach compatible with – and integral to – strong and successful prosecutions.

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Director, Prosecution and Aftercare Center to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children International Justice Mission

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How IJM Works with the Prosecution System

IJM supports the objectives of the justice system to promptly resolve criminal cases in a way that upholds the dignity of all people and protects the best interests of the child. To accomplish its goals, the Philippine legal framework values partnership and collaboration. Key guiding principles in prosecution of online sexual exploitation of children include the best interests of the child and the importance of independent, traumainformed prosecution. The effectiveness of IJM's partnerships is shown through achievements in collaborative casework.

When working on specific cases, IJM lawyers are authorized to prosecute under the Rules of Court. In the Philippines, lawyers in private practice can prosecute criminal cases under the control and supervision of a government prosecutor, or upon written authorization from the Chief of the Prosecution Office or Regional State Prosecutor. In specific cases, IJM lawyers, closely working with government prosecutors, represent victims and prosecute criminal cases against perpetrators. Because of this, IJM lawyers are in a unique position to strengthen partnerships with the government, identify and experience first-hand the gaps in the criminal justice system, and propose and advocate for solutions.

When assisting in operations, IJM's presence is authorized under Section 17, RA 9208 as amended. Non-government Organizations (NGOs) serve as bridge-builders for the different

government departments as children are rescued, given justice, and restored through these collaborations. The Law encourages the involvement of NGOs as read in Sec. 17 of the Republic Act No. 9208, otherwise known as "The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003." With this mandate, IJM has been collaborating with the government partners (DOJ-IACAT, WCPC, NBI, DSWD, MSWDO/CSWDO, other NGOs) to support in the enforcement, prosecution, and protection of the children-victims of OSEC.

Wins and Challenges

STRONG LAWS AND RULES SET THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS

Prosecuting OSEC cases is not an easy feat - but there is a legal infrastructure in place and emerging good practices that paved the way for the successes witnessed through the years. There are laws in place that allow for accountability by perpetrators as they provide for penalties that are commensurate to the crime committed. Traffickers convicted in the Philippines can face life sentences and are often sentenced to a minimum of 15 years imprisonment. In IJM-supported convictions, the average sentence is approximately 20 years and 10 of the convicted perpetrators have received life sentences. Prosecutors, through these laws, can ensure that sentences adequately reflect the gravity of the crime committed by offenders.

The same laws that punish online sexual exploitation of children also support the use of child-protective prosecution measures. The Philippine Constitution and Republic Acts 9208 as amended by 10364, 9775, 10175, and other related laws create a strong network of protective policies emphasizing the best interests of the child and the upholding of the dignity of each person involved (the accused included) in the justice process. These align with the state-declared policy that the "best interests of children shall be the paramount consideration in all actions concerning them."5 The Rule on Examination of the Child Witness (RECW) also supplies one of the most concrete definitions of the best interests of the child, in Section 4(g). The DOJ Protocol of the Committee on the Special Protection of Children⁶ similarly confirms that the best interests of the children must be upheld in child-protective actions. This guiding document is used in hospitalbased child protection units.

The rules on e-inquests⁷ and videoconferencing hearings⁸ also help protect child witnesses from a demanding open-court environment. DOJ's 2019 Advisory on Plea Bargaining advocates using child protection measures, particularly the strategic use of plea agreements, and has seen excellent usage in child protective outcomes.

When these policies are maximized, it allows for a victim-centric and child-friendly prosecution of cases. It cannot be overemphasized enough: the main goal is always to protect the children from potential re-traumatization as they go through the prosecution process.

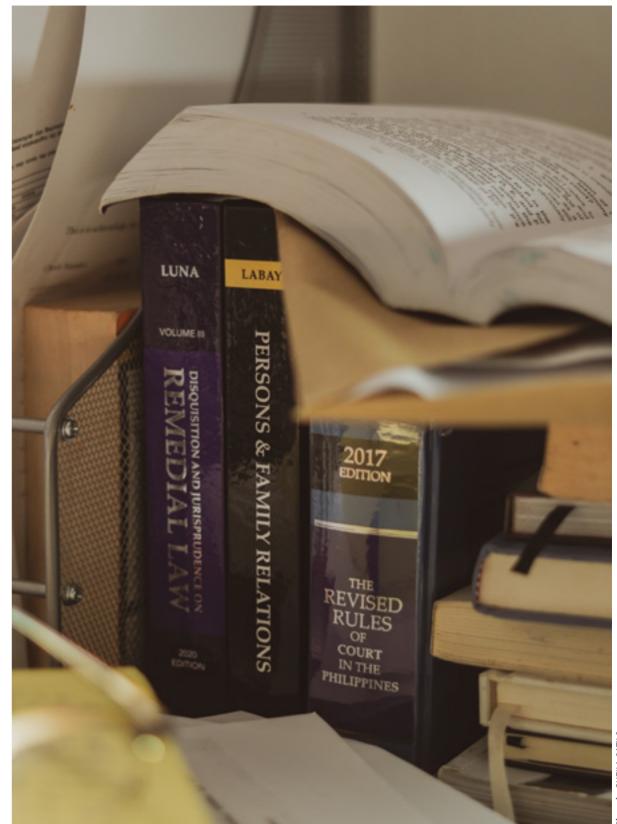


Photo by SHEIL

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A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FOR CHILD-PROTECTIVE PROSECUTION

On the forefront of this robust legal infrastructure are our hardworking prosecutors who have intentionally devoted time and energy to learn, innovate, and collaborate as they prosecute OSEC cases. To date, a total of 95 prosecutors have joined the trainings to enhance their capacity to use digital evidence in prosecuting OSEC crimes. In IJM-supported cases, 51 cases underwent inquests without the survivors having to testify before the prosecutor; 80% of convictions were secured through plea agreements, while 68% of convictions were secured through the utilization of strong victim-independent testimonies and without having the victim testify in open court at all.9

The resulting convictions reflect the hard work of our excellent prosecutors. As of April 2021, there have been 114 perpetrators convicted of OSEC crimes. It is noteworthy that convictions took place even during the lockdowns caused by COVID-19 - 31 judgments of convictions were promulgated in 2020. This shows how perpetrator accountability and justice for survivors are still possible in the time of limited movement and new trial arrangements.

The pursuit of justice in a victim-centric manner, however, remains to be challenged by the adversarial system of justice that is in place in the Philippines. This system places a premium on utilizing confrontation as one of the means of ascertaining the truth as to the guilt of the accused. This right to confrontation has been primarily expressed in the Bill of Rights under the 1987 Constitution and further elaborated by the Rules of Criminal Procedure.

Therefore, while the ideal scenario in OSEC prosecution is to maximize victim-independent evidence, such as digital evidence, and minimize reliance on victim testimony, our prosecutors are faced with this Constitutional right – a right that is often tantamount to placing the victim on the witness stand. This process has proven to be harmful to victims who have undergone abuse as they have to endure the traumatic process of retelling their painful experiences in a harsh, open-court environment.

Thus, IJM's partner prosecutors have to intentionally balance the right to confrontation with the equally pressing rights of the victim, especially the children, to be protected from retraumatization. The emergence of the promising child-protective prosecution strategies can help our prosecutors in this balancing act.

Promising Practices: VIDIs, Remote Testimony, and Plea Bargaining

IJM's casework experience has shown that requiring children to recall and relay experiences of abuse during trial puts them at risk of re-traumatization. For this reason, the teams have constantly sought and advocated for measures that will prevent child survivors from having to actively participate in criminal trials. Again, the goal has always been to operate in such a way that upholds the dignity of all people and protects the best interests of the child.

An effective child-protective prosecution measure is the use of a Videotaped In-Depth Interview (VIDI). This strategy finds basis in Section 29 of the Rule on Examination of a Child

Witness (RECW). The Rule allows the admissibility of a child's disclosure captured through a recorded video provided the Rule's conditions are met. Through a VIDI, a child victim makes factual disclosures in a safe environment. Once secured on video, it may be used to replace the child's actual presence, and even testimony, in the following situations: (1) during inquest or preliminary investigation before the prosecutor, and (2) at trial before a court. Through the VIDI, a child victim may be spared from repeatedly relaying abusive experiences.

IJM has been working with justice system partners to mainstream this prosecution strategy. In collaborative casework to combat OSEC, there has been increased utilization of VIDIs in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. As of April 2021, IJM has supported 63 cases with 153 instances of video-captured child interviews. 73% of these were used by prosecutors during inquest, which means 112 children no longer had to appear in-person during these proceedings and were protected from potential re-traumatization and revictimization.¹¹

Remote testimony, another measure, is also being utilized in cases by IJM and partners. This allows for a testimony in court using live feed, not necessarily taken in court. The child-protective value is similar to that of VIDI as the victims no longer have to be interviewed in environments that may trigger re-traumatization such as the court setting and repetitive questioning.

"Prosecuting Online Sexual Exploitation (POSE)" training is a product of partnership between the Philippine Department of Justice Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (DOJ-IACAT), the U.S. Department

of Justice (US DOJ), and IJM. The faculty includes experts on digital investigative analysis and prosecution from the Philippines and the United States. POSE's objective is to support law enforcement and prosecution frontliners in their casework through application-based training. Since 2018, there have been five iterations of the training across the country. Out of the total tally of 114 convictions, almost half (59) were obtained through POSEtrained prosecutors.12

Finally, plea bargaining is a childprotective prosecution measure that IJM continues to strongly advocate for. It is a measure allowed by law through which the child is protected from relaying traumatizing experiences in open court. Months of protracted legal proceedings can be shortened, providing the child survivor a sense of swifter justice. From the start of the program to April 2021, 91 out of 114 convictions have been achieved through plea bargaining.13

Prosecution in 2020

In early 2020, the Philippines fell prisoner to an infectious disease known as COVID-19. As with many countries, the Philippines imposed lockdowns (community quarantine) to reduce the risk of community transmission. While these measures were intended to contain the virus and mitigate its exposure, sources have linked lockdowns to the increase in online sexual exploitation of children cases.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the Philippine criminal justice system officials continued to investigate, conduct

operations, and prosecute perpetrators. Against all odds, justice agencies and child protection stakeholders rescued at least (167) victims, apprehended (34) suspects, and generated (31) convictions.15

Prosecution measures and court proceedings shifted online as the justice system adjusted to the "new normal." Inquests in NCR were conducted electronically in accordance with the March 2020 DOJ order. The Supreme Court authorized videoconferencing hearings in civil and criminal cases, paving the way for five convictions to be promulgated online. These are proof that justice can be served, despite the pandemic. Methodologies may have been tweaked in response to COVID-19, but the goal to protect vulnerable children still stands.

Case and point, on May 26, 2020, David Timothy Deakin was the first foreigner to be convicted for trafficking offenses through online proceedings (E-promulgation) in the Philippines. 16 Deakin was declared guilty of largescale qualified trafficking in persons and was sentenced to suffer the penalty of life imprisonment and a fine. Another case, initiated and concluded during the pandemic, highlighted the use of child-protective prosecution measures. Rescue and entrapment operations were successfully conducted last November 2020, and the testimony of the victim was obtained using VIDI during the inquest phase. A POSEtrained Prosecutor actively handled the case, which resulted in the conviction of the perpetrator through plea bargaining just two months after her arrest. In a separate case, conviction

was obtained through plea bargaining agreement via videoconferencing. This was achieved only three months after the arrest, during the pandemic. VIDI was also employed by the POSE-trained prosecutor during inquest proceedings.

IJM was able to distill some insights from IJM-supported online sexual exploitation of children cases within the January to December 2020 period:

- Partners handled the cases with trauma-informed behavior.
- · COVID-19 protocols were followed. Partners complied with these safety and health precautions.
- There was increased utilization of electronic inquest, remote testimony, and videoconferencing hearings.
- Specific IJM-supported training programs (OSEC RACE, POSE, and VIDI) directly influenced successful outcomes in cases, but some training needs were identified.
- · Coordination and collaboration continued to be a successful practice.
- · Partners found value in using special warrants such as Warrant to Search, Seize and Examine Computer Data (WSSECD).
- · Partners found videotaped indepth interviews relevant and utilized these as a child-protective measure during inquest.



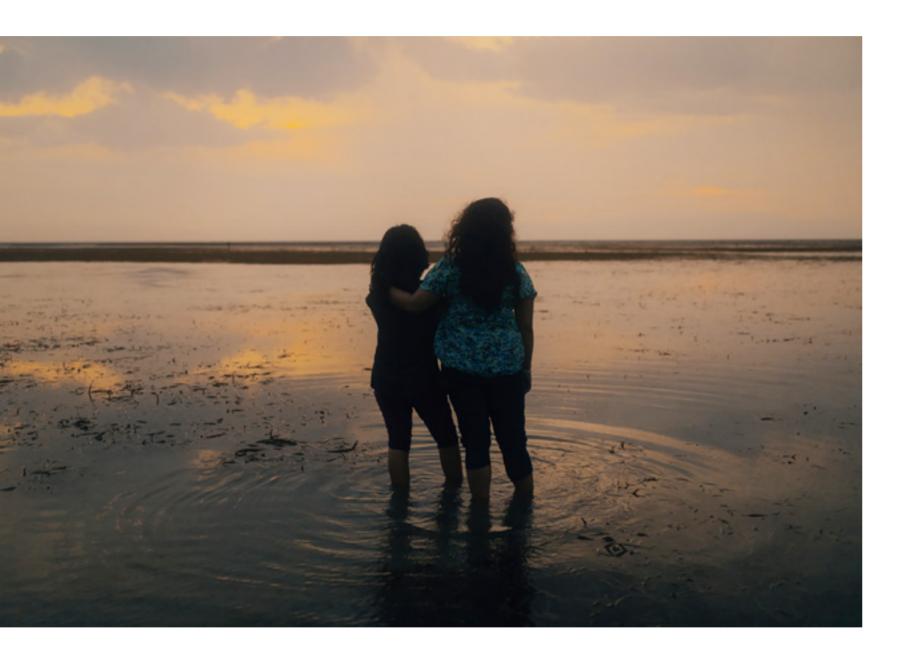






AFTERCARE CHAPTER





he journey with a survivor is both a joy and a challenge. This section describes how a survivor of online sexual exploitation of children goes through a process of restoration. It honors the gentle warriors who are always ready to defend and protect vulnerable children. They are the social workers, case managers, and service providers. The compassion that these service providers bring into their relationship with the survivors gives hope and inspiration that sustains the survivor's journey.

When IJM started to see an overwhelming increase in the number of rescued children from online sexual exploitation of children, multiple gaps related to their protection and care surfaced. The average age of an OSEC survivor is 12 years old, reflecting that very young and pre-pubescent children are highly at risk of experiencing this horrific abuse and trauma. Alongside this, a big percentage of OSEC offenders are found out to be the children's parents, adult relatives, or close family friends which affects the OSEC survivors' recovery and heightens the risk of re-traumatization and revictimization once reintegrated back to the community. Identifying safe temporary placements, appropriate individualized services, and assessing

permanent placements for survivors were also some of the pressing concerns that IJM sought to address together with the government and aftercare partners.

In 2017, under the Child Protection Compact, IJM and the Philippine Government forged ahead to enhance the country's foster care program in response to the needs of the OSEC survivors. IJM and the DSWD partnered with Parenting Foundation of the Philippines, Inc. and NORFIL Foundation, Inc in forming a working group that aimed to identify and act on the gaps in the foster care program's implementation for OSEC survivors.

The fight for justice and for survivors' rights would not be possible without active collaboration with the government, NGOs, and other stakeholders. Aside from temporary placement and trauma recovery, the other needs of OSEC survivors and their families are often complicated. It is through such partnerships that we are able to provide our clients with their immediate needs and psychosocial interventions. In the end, our hope is to develop more integrated networks of care that would work together to facilitate the best care and protection for OSEC survivors that would lead to their empowerment and restoration.

Dolores B. Rubia, MSWDirector, National Aftercare Development
International Justice Mission Philippines

Aftercare Development

Aftercare refers to the IJM's program encompassing the interventions and initiatives to and for OSEC survivors throughout the whole continuum of care. IJM Philippines' National Aftercare is the pillar that collaborates with the duty bearers and Aftercare stakeholders to develop and enhance the systems and models that are needed to meet the unique and significant needs of survivors of OSEC.

Social workers and other aftercare service providers are essential for OSEC survivors as they journey with them in the process of healing and restoration. They are there in every step of the way. Through the aftercare program, the aftercare team, actively collaborates with interagency and interdisciplinary partners for the management of OSEC survivor cases and the extension of interventions to them and their families. They aim to ensure that the survivor is able to thrive in a safe in the community without the risk of revictimization.

IJM's Aftercare Process

When a child is identified as a victim or at-risk of OSEC, a team of interagency and interdisciplinary professionals collaborate with one another for the rescue of the child and the arrest of the foreign or local offender. Interagency members include IJM, foreign and/ or local law enforcement officers, and DSWD or local government unit (LGU) social workers.

Once the child is rescued from the place of exploitation, he or she is then placed in a child-friendly victim processing center and provided with crisis care while being assisted for activities leading to the inquest proceedings. The social workers make sure that the child is treated law enforcers and prosecutors in a trauma-informed manner.

While every effort should be made to keep a child in the care of his or her family, when this is not possible, the best alternative care option should be utilized. The social worker makes an assessment on the best temporary alternative placement for the protective custody of the children. They may either be referred to be admitted in an assessment center, a residential care facility, or in foster or kinship care placement.

Comprehensive assessment for the child and his or her family is crucial for social workers to accomplish as it will inform the individualized intervention plan and services to be facilitated for each child. Survivors of OSEC often have experienced complex trauma, which describes both their exposure to multiple traumatic events (abuse, neglect, abrupt separation

from biological family, etc.) often of an invasive, interpersonal nature and the wide-ranging, long-term impact of this exposure. Further, complex trauma can have a profound impact on a child's development and wellbeing, including cognition, physical health, and the ability to form secure caregiver attachments and healthy peer relationships. Thus, specialized aftercare interventions are extended to them

Comprehensive assessment for the child and his or her family is crucial for social workers to accomplish as it will inform the individualized intervention plan and services to be facilitated for the child. A sound home or family assessment will also aid in the identification of the permanency or reintegration plan for the child. It is aftercare's goal to assist the child in his or her reunification with birth family. However, if the assessment shows that the family in incapable of caring for the child, social workers then strive to identify and assess the best permanency placement option for him or her. This may be through reunification with relatives (kinship care) or adoption. If the child is an older teenager, he or she may be assisted for eventual independent living.

Once reintegrated to the community, the child is endorsed to the city or municipal social welfare office for continuous service delivery and monitoring. The social workers also work with the families to ensure that they are capacitated to effectively care for the child and protect him or her from revictimization and retraumatization.





Challenges in Aftercare Development

OSEC presents a myriad of unique challenges, especially in case management.

APPROPRIATE TEMPORARY PLACEMENTS FOR THE SURVIVORS.

The government, IJM, and aftercare partners are still in the process of ensuring that OSEC survivors are referred to appropriate temporary placements after rescue. There are remaining challenges as to temporary placements for male survivors, sibling groups, and teens from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning (LGBTQ) group. IJM continues to advocate for and capacitate more foster care placements and residential care facilities that can provide a home for OSEC survivors belonging to these vulnerable groups. IJM is also collaborating with the aftercare partners for the development of kinship (relatives) carers who may be able to accept mixed-gender sibling

QUALITY AND TIMELINESS OF ASSESSMENTS FOR SURVIVORS.

Comprehensive and individualized assessments for survivors are critical. However, there are gaps in terms quality and timeliness in the facilitation of these assessments as produced by social workers and other assessment service providers. Because of the sheer number of cases being managed, assessment is not prioritized resulting to delayed results and poor quality thereby affecting the interventions or services extended to the OSEC survivors.

DELAYS AND CHALLENGES IN THE REINTEGRATION OF SURVIVORS BACK TO THE COMMUNITY.

There are many factors that could affect successful reintegration of the survivor into the community. There is no standard time duration for an OSEC survivor's process of recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration as this varies per individual.

Aside from OSEC survivors, their families are also assessed to ensure that OSEC survivors are reunified with non-offending, ready, and capacitated family members or guardians. If a family member is the perpetrator, reintegration is especially difficult, and the social worker has to look for other relatives who would be capable of caring for and protecting the children. There are also family members who are non-offending and willing, however, their present circumstances related to them.

Another challenge is the complicity of the community to the crime. The community may not be supportive because it benefited from the business of the facilitator.

Ongoing Aftercare Initiatives Under the CPC Project

IJM spearheads the coordination and implementation of aftercare initiatives in accordance with the protection objective of the CPC Partnership project which focuses on increasing the capacity of the Philippine government and the civil society to effectively identify and provide comprehensive services for victims of online sexual exploitation of children from identification through protective care, community reintegration, and long-term follow up services.

Under this project, the team works collaboratively with DSWD and the subgrantees in identifying the gaps in foster care and developing practice models for OSEC survivors under foster care. The team also worked with the government and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of training modules that would enhance the capacities of social workers in OSEC case management.

Through the efforts of the CPC foster care working group, the following achievements have been accomplished:

Foster Care

- Collaborative Case Management for OSEC Survivors in Foster Care
- Development of the Foster Care for OSEC Survivors (FOCOS) Training modules
- FOCOS Pilot Virtual Training
- FOCOS Virtual Training of Trainers
- FOCOS Virtual Training Rollouts in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao
- · Foster Care Webinar

Case Management Training

- Development of Case Management Advanced Skills Training (CASE 1.0) modules
- CASE 1.0 Virtual Training of Trainers
- CASE 1.0 Virtual Pilot Training and Mentoring
- CASE 1.0 Virtual Training and Mentoring Rollouts



Photo by SHEILA CA



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FOSTER CARE FOR OSEC **SURVIVORS**

Foster care is the provision of planned temporary parental care to a child by a foster parent or foster family. This program is implemented and regulated by DSWD together with its licensed Child Placement Agencies (CPAs). As IJM observed that more and more younger children were rescued from OSEC, the team recognized the importance of family-based care that the survivors can benefit on aside from residential care. With this, IJM initiated to explore and develop foster care as one of the safe alternative placement options for child survivors of online sexual exploitation. This paved the way for the formation of Foster Care Working Group together with DSWD, Parenting Foundation and NORFIL Foundation through the CPC Project.

As in any placement, abused and exploited children may exhibit challenging behaviors associated with the trauma they have experienced. The foster parent or foster family, together with the foster care social worker, hold the responsibility of caring for the OSEC survivor and ensuring that practical measures are done to ensure their continuous recovery from trauma. This enables the children's complex needs to be met one by one through trauma-informed care and proactive response of a supportive environment.

Fostering OSEC survivors may be a daunting task for foster parents primarily because of the complexity of these children's traumatic experience at a very young age and the variety of effect resulting from it. Other than their regular duties and responsibilities, prospective foster parents require adequate knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Thus, the working group developed a set of training modules for foster parents that would equip them to be more prepared in effectively caring for and responding to OSEC survivors.

CASE MANAGEMENT ADVANCED SKILLS TRAINING (CASE 1.0)

Case management is the principal child protection approach adopted by governments around the world to organise services for children who are in need of care and protection outside the family home.¹⁷ It is widely adopted due to its comprehensive nature and adaptability to address a wide range of issues and has been adopted in the Philippines as the primary approach to responding to child exploitation including OSEC. 18, 19 Case management is defined in the Philippines as "a procedure to plan, seek, and monitor services from different social agencies and staff on behalf of a client".20 It principally involves the identification, assessment, treatment, monitoring and closure of reported cases of child abuse, neglect or exploitation.21, 22 Among the few studies available, evidence suggests that the case management system in the Philippines is underfunded, fragmented and ineffective in supporting survivors from rescue to reintegration.^{23, 24} This is partly due to systemic issues such as funding and resource allocation as well as the lack of implementation of existing policies.²⁵

In February, 2021, IJM completed two research projects targeting case management practices in the Philippines. The first project was a comprehensive literature review which sought to examine best practices in case management which may be suitable with OSEC survivors. The second project was a training needs assessment which was conducted with 81 professionals who implement case management from the LGU, DSWD, Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE), and NGO's. One of the key findings of the training needs assessment was that although most (84%) participants had undertaken case management training previously, a large proportion identified low-level

competence in conducting Child Safety Risk Assessment (80%), Psychosocial Assessment (77%) and Parental Capability Assessment (60%).26 Overall the training needs assessment found that one of the critical gaps in effective case management is a low level competence and inconsistent practices occurring throughout the assessment phase. This is of grave concern, in light of the finding from the literature review that effective case management hinges upon a comprehensive and accurate process of assessment.

In response to the clearly identified need for targeted enhancement of the case management system, specifically in the area of assessment, IJM, in partnership with the U.S. Department of State, is developing the CASE 1.0 training. Since the second quarter of 2021, the team has already achieved one (1) Case 1.0 virtual training of trainers and one (1) virtual pilot training. The team is also in the process of implementing the training rollouts to social workers for the remainder of the year. The CASE 1.0 training seeks to provide targeted enhancement to critical skills which lead to effective case management, particularly for survivors of OSEC. The CASE 1.0 training employs an innovative and evidence-based training approach, drawing on the work of Barrows and Tamblyn (1980) who developed the Problem-Based Learning approach.²⁷

Ongoing Aftercare Efforts

The pandemic has brought about more challenges in the implementation of aftercare activities and interventions for OSEC survivors. However, the IJM, the government, and aftercare partners strived to adapt to the new normal to ensure that rescue and the delivery of services for OSEC survivors are still prioritized. Remote work because of the pandemic also paved a way for the implementation of innovative mechanisms for partner collaboration, capacity building, and aftercare service facilitation.

OSEC CASE MANAGEMENT

End-to-end case management support from intervention to reintegration is critical. The IJM Aftercare team continues to manage cases of OSEC survivors by actively collaborating with interagency and interdisciplinary partners on the rescue, legal case concerns or activities, and aftercare interventions. The aftercare team and partners have utilized online video conferencing mechanisms for interagency case conferences, coaching, and mentoring on OSEC cases. This ensured that the professionals are actively collaborating for the benefit of the OSEC survivors despite the distance.

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE (TIC)

Trauma informed care refers to how organizations and service providers think about and respond to survivors of trauma. It encompasses an understanding of the prevalence of trauma, its impact on survivors, and the complex path to recovery (SAMHSA, 2013). All professionals who engage with survivors of OSEC through the criminal justice process should be equipped and trained in trauma-informed care in order to minimize re-traumatization, create safe spaces for recovery, and to empower survivors to access and benefit from all available resources. This includes trauma-informed crisis intervention, police interviews, legal support, and social services.

IJM continued their partnership with the TIC Technical Working Group composed on DSWD, Consuelo Foundation, and Child Protection Network, for the rollouts of TIC training for partners engaging in OSEC case work. The group aims to equip more service providers on traumainformed knowledge and skills to ensure that OSEC survivors are treated with trauma-informed care and have less risks of re-traumatization. The TIC modules were converted into an online training format and platform to ensure the continuity of TIC trainings with partners despite the restrictions due to the pandemic.

ASSESSMENT CENTER

When OSEC survivors enter care, social workers conduct an initial individual assessment to address any immediate needs and formulate a treatment plan. Ideally, the impact of OSEC on and complex individualized needs of a survivor are identified through a lengthier comprehensive assessment requiring the multi-disciplinary input of social service, psychological and health professionals. This standard has been inconsistently applied, and social workers often rely only on brief initial assessments to determine a child's placement, including return to the home of origin, which in turn impacts their access to services.

In recognition of the need for comprehensive assessments for OSEC survivors, IJM partnered with three (3) local residential care facilities that can function as assessment centers. These assessment centers are, in the process, being developed to facilitate individualized, comprehensive, and timebound assessments for newly rescued OSEC survivors. These assessments will critically inform the types, quality, timeliness of interventions facilitated for OSEC survivors geared towards their recovery and reintegration.

SURVIVOR EMPOWERMENT THROUGH LOCAL SURVIVOR NETWORKS

International best practices recognize the right of every child to have meaningful engagement in the matters that affect them, including for Sustainable Development Goal 16.2. IJM further endorses the critical contribution that OSEC survivors can make in developing, implementing, and evaluating interventions. Survivors have powerful experience and expertise to offer about exploitation, the factors that enable it to thrive, the criminals who profit from it, and the solutions that will stop it.

As part of the strategy to sustain restoration and to empower survivors, IJM initiated a support group for active restored clients called STAR (Standing Together Advocating Rights) and Survivors Mentoring and Advocating for Restorative Transformation (SMART). Each group meets regularly under the guidance of an IJM social worker. These survivors also work together and are trained to be active advocates of anti-human trafficking.

IJM also intends to work with the local government and aftercare partners in developing more local survivor networks in key cities and regions to ensure that survivors are empowered to promote and protect their rights as well as the rights of other OSEC survivors.



At present our survivors' hard work and resiliency show a glimpse of their future as leaders and advocates for their rights and fellow survivors. They are a group of survivors who have exhibited their dedication to grow, learn and reach out to their fellow survivors towards the path of healing and recovery. As one survivor leader said, "We use our voices and experiences together to educate the community and raise awareness about the realities of human trafficking and the real solutions to end this crime. My vision for the Global Survivor Network is for survivors all around the globe to know that they are not alone and that they are part of something much bigger."

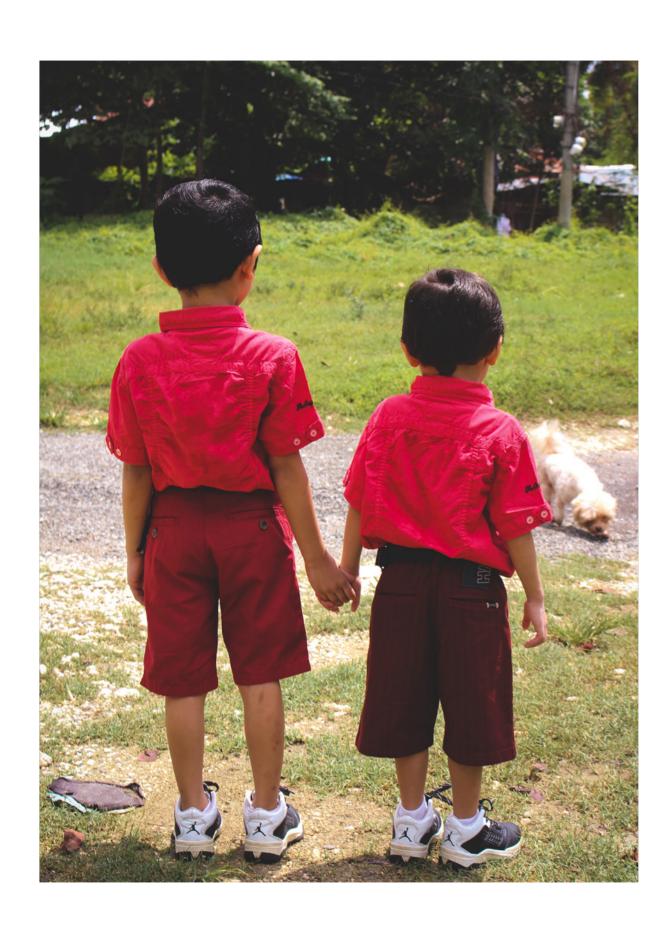
STRONG NETWORK OF CARE/PARTNERSHIPS

IJM continues to develop a traumainformed network of care that addresses the varying needs of OSEC survivors in the areas of safety, mental wellbeing, legal protection, social support, economic empowerment and education, and physical wellbeing (including health and safe housing). These should be strengthened for OSEC survivors' needs to be addressed holistically. This includes but are not limited to traumainformed processing and assessment centers and alternative care placements, comprehensive therapeutic and mental health interventions, education and economic empowerment services, and strong community-based services that are critical for recovery and restoration of the survivor.

to by SHEILA CATILO



STORIES OF HOPE



Kevin Aaron's Story

evin (3) and his younger halfbrother Aaron (2) years old were rescued by PNP WCPC officers and DSWD social workers in 2019 after being identified as potential OSEC victims by a German national who happened to be Aaron's father.

The children were initially brought to an assessment center where they were assessed and provided with their basic and therapeutic needs. The siblings were later referred to foster care, where they can continue recovery in a familybased environment.

Their life after abuse has been more positive. Both Kevin and Aaron have thrived and adapted to their situation through the unconditional love, care and attention that they receive from their foster family. They were treated as real family members and their needs were fully and properly provided. Both children were able to continue attending regular therapy sessions while in foster care to help process the possible effects and trauma brought about by the abuse. At present, they are now showing good progress in their coping skills and in functioning as healthy and active toddlers. They continue to play, smile, and develop positively and healthily. Their stay in the foster home may only be temporary, yet the nurturing experience they enjoy now will definitely contribute to lasting and meaningful effects on the children's life as they continue their journey towards healing and restoration.

Kevin and Aaron may have been separated from their parents at an early age. Still, having each other while growing together is a blessing that will all the more strengthen their bond as brothers as they wait for a more permanent home.



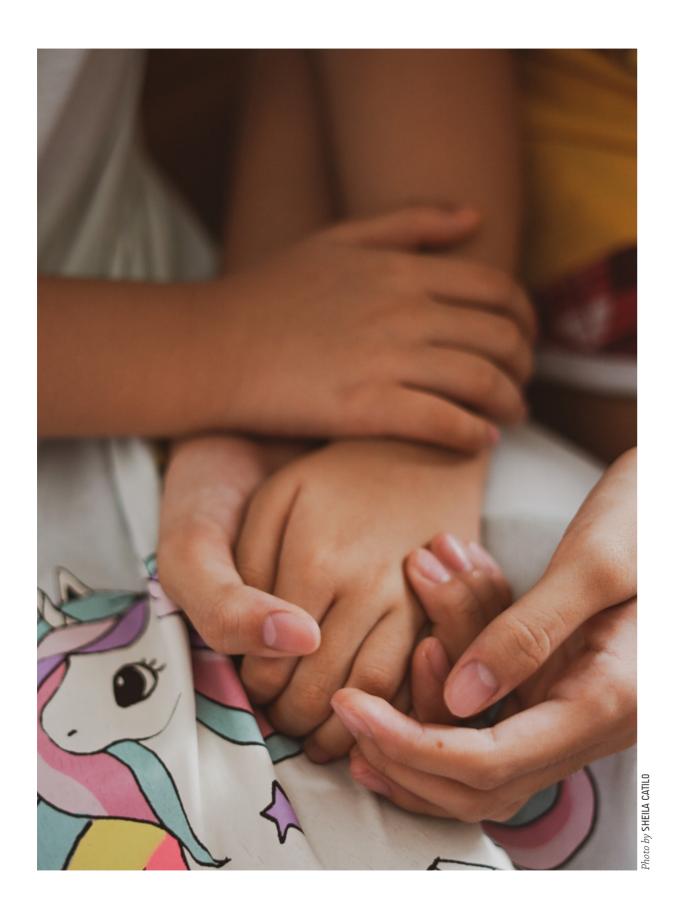
Survivor, Siblings' Story

sibling set of four (female twins aged 13, one 12-year-old male, and one 10-year-old female) were rescued from Cordova, Cebu in 2016 after being identified as victims of OSEC facilitated by their very own mother. All four children were placed in a residential care facility where they stayed for two years as the social workers strived to identify a permanent home for them.

Social workers assessed reunification with their father and their paternal relatives was not possible, due to their father's illness to diabetes and difficulties with handling finances at the time. Also, it was deemed unsafe and unhealthy for the children to be returned there as it is the same place of abuse which may cause them potential stigma and re-traumatization.

Interagency social workers (IJM, DSWD, LGU, World Hope International, and NORFIL Foundation) collaborated, identified, and assessed a maternal aunt who may be assisted and capacitated as a kinship caregiver under the foster care program. NORFIL Foundation assisted the maternal aunt for foster care orientation, licensure, and preparation.

Despite the tough separation from their parents and placement in a center for a long time, the children were observed to have adjusted more positively after being transferred to their licensed kinship caregiver. They continued to receive therapy sessions while in kinship care. The kin family, on the other hand, were being assisted for livelihood services, scholarship assistance of the children, and home renovation to accommodate the mixed-sibling group's needs. The children have benefitted in temporary kinship care placement under the foster care program as they are placed with people who are related to them. The kin family have also been capacitated to be the children's permanent placements after they expressed their commitment to love and take care of them until they develop as adults and gain their independence.



Ben Shane's Story

s the COVID-19 pandemic hit the Philippines in early 2020, people were distressed and busy to prepare for its onslaught. However, this was not the only challenge for some. In March 2020, Ben (7) and Shane (5) were rescued by the authorities after allegedly being sexually exploited online by their mother. The children were initially brought to DSWD Center for Women and Children for temporary residential care, but immediately referred to NORFIL Foundation for emergency foster care. Interagency social workers persisted in finding their foster care family so that they can experience one-on-one family care while a more permanent placement was still being determined. The children were officially and successfully placed in a licensed foster just in time for the nation-wide COVID-19 lockdown.

At the beginning of their stay in the foster home, the children were very observant, shy, and anxious but nevertheless allowed themselves to be held by the family members. The children feared being taken away and transferred to another place. During the first few nights, the boy constantly asked his foster mother "Nanay, sino na naman ba ang kukuha sa amin bukas?" ("Mom, who's going to take us away again tomorrow?") while his sister cried and trembled beside him. The foster parents did their best to comfort the children in their times of distress. The children were also constantly assured that they will stay in the foster home and nobody else will take them for the mean time. The foster parents also ensured sufficient provision for the children's needs, something the survivors were not used to but learned to appreciate.

Eventually, the children learned to trust their foster family and started showing friendly, intelligent, and witty personalities. The siblings also grew more comfortable in sharing their stories with their foster family.

At present, the children are thriving in the foster care placement and constantly monitored by the foster care social worker.



Stock photo; not actual survivor



Maarko wanted to be a superhero when he grows up. Like Superman, he wanted to fight crime, uphold justice and truth, and protect the innocent. His mom told him that if he worked hard, he could be whatever he wanted to be.

The crime

Maarko was only seven years old, and his mom made him "work" in front of a webcam, performing sex acts, directed by a customer sitting on the other side of a computer screen. Maarko, his two-year-old sister, and cousins living next door were trapped in a global network of abuse facilitated by Maarko's own mom.

A British man had paid Maarko's mom to set up a webcam in her home to direct live sexual abuse of children over the internet. For a family as poor as Maarko's, this meant a fast and easy way to make money behind the closed doors of their house, for people who were not even in the same country. The criminals paying to watch children being sexually exploited on livestream feel protected by the anonymity of the internet. But the crime, as much as the perpetrators would try to rationalize it as "only virtual," is the abuse of real children in real time.

The rescue

It took six months of investigation before the authorities rescued Maarko, his sister, and cousins. Cybersex trafficking is a complex and borderless crime because of the internet. And live-streamed shows do not leave video evidence behind. It was only through the cooperation of many law enforcement agencies — both local and international — that the children were found and the adults responsible were arrested, including Maarko's mother.

"I had mixed emotions while listening to their stories," an IJM social worker shared after supporting Maarko throughout the rescue operation. "I could not understand the logic of these suspects in abusing their own family members. This is a very traumatizing experience for the victims and will definitely affect the way they look at their future."

After their rescue and initial processing, Maarko, his sister, and their cousins were taken to a government-run shelter. There, IJM social workers continue counseling and meeting with Maarko and the other children to help them heal from the abuse.

Maarko is learning and growing into his new life, a life where he is free to dream of being a superhero, where he can play games with his friend, a life where he could be free to be a child again.

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