



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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4 children rescued from online sexual exploitation in Bacolod City

BACOLOD CITY, PHILIPPINES – Police rescued four children from online sexual exploitation and arrested two suspected traffickers in an operation in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental on July 14, 2023.

The Philippine National Police – Women and Children Protection Center – Visayas Field Unit (PNP-WCPC-VFU) implemented a warrant to search, seize and examine computer data, with the help of the Bacolod City Police Office, the Regional Anti-Cybercrime Unit 6, the Department of Justice – Regional Anti-Trafficking Task Force 6, and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Region 6. International Justice Mission also provided legal support.

“The rescue of four innocent children and the apprehension of two suspected traffickers stand as a testament to the effectiveness of strong collaboration across local law enforcement. Together, we are determined to hold traffickers accountable for the crimes they have committed. This should be a warning to all traffickers: you cannot hide behind computer screens,” said WCPC-VFU Acting Chief, PLTCOL. Aladdin E. Dingal.

The siblings—a 9-year-old girl, 6-year-old boy, and 2-year-old twins—have been placed in the care of social workers from the DSWD Region 6. Their mother, 28, and father, 35, are suspected of online sexual exploitation of children and were brought to the BCPO Police Station. They were to be charged with violating the country’s laws against trafficking in persons, child abuse, cybercrime, and online sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

“The Philippine government and our partners are steadfast in our commitment to safeguarding our community’s most vulnerable. Let it be known that we will relentlessly pursue those who engage in the online sexual exploitation of children, and we will leave no room for impunity. Our city will not tolerate such crimes, and those who choose to harm our children will be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law. So, in order to strengthen more this campaign against trafficking, particularly online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC), we will further endeavor through the help of the local government, for the establishment of facilities and specialized trainings for our local law enforcers needed in the efficient detection, investigation, case build-up and prosecution of trafficking cases,” said Bacolod City Prosecutor Ma. Theresa B. Ditching.

Atty. Lucille Dejito, IJM Cebu Program Office Director, said: “We at IJM are honored to support our law enforcement partners who are working tirelessly to rescue victims subjected to online sexual abuse and exploitation of children and bring perpetrators to justice. This successful operation affirmed the exceptional collaboration between various agencies, uniting law enforcement, social services and non-government partners to shield our most vulnerable today and pave the way for a world where no child suffers from exploitation.”

Online sexual exploitation of children, including trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material is an alarming, borderless crime. In these crimes, sex offenders communicate online

with traffickers (often close relatives or family members of the victims), paying and directing the traffickers to livestream the sexual abuse and exploitation 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 of children to produce child sexual exploitation materials, IJM is preparing to release the results of a study providing prevalence estimates of this specific crime. Called *Scale of Harm*, the study's findings are expected to offer invaluable data and insights for policymakers, law enforcement, and anti-trafficking organizations.

To date, IJM has provided support to Philippine authorities in rescuing 1,161 victims and apprehending 356 suspected perpetrators, with at least 199 of them having been convicted.

To report information about online child sexual exploitation, contact the Philippine National Police – Women and Children Protection Center at 0966-725-5961 (Globe) and 0919-777-7377 (Smart). ###

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