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IJM and IACAT-DOJ Launch Handbook to Strengthen OSAEC Prosecution and Child Protection

TAGAYTAY CITY, PHILIPPINES—The Philippine government, in partnership with International Justice Mission, launched a groundbreaking resource to empower prosecutors and law enforcement in the fight against Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC).

Titled “**ALL SHIELDS UP: H.O.P.E. for Child Protection Strategies (Handbook on OSAEC Prosecution and Enforcement)**,” the handbook offers practical templates designed to streamline casework and integrate child-protective strategies. These strategies are *Videotaped In-Depth Disclosure Interviews (VIDI)*, *Maximizing Digital Evidence*, *Capitalizing on Financial Evidence*, and *Leveraging Plea Bargaining*, ensuring both effective prosecutions and the protection of child victims.

“This handbook is more than a collection of templates and strategies—it is a testament to what we can achieve together. Developed with the insights and expertise of prosecutors, law enforcement officers, and technical experts, it addresses the unique challenges of prosecuting OSAEC cases,” said Department of Justice (DOJ) Undersecretary Nicholas Felix Ty, Undersecretary-in-Charge of the DOJ-Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT).

Launched on Dec. 5, 2024, during the Anti-Trafficking Task Force Summit organized by the DOJ- IACAT in Tagaytay City, the handbook aligns with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s directive for intensified action against OSAEC.

This resource is the result of a multi-year collaboration between IJM, IACAT, and key government partners, including the National Coordinating Council Against OSAEC and CSAEM (NCC-OSAEC-CSAEM), the National Prosecution Service, and various law enforcement agencies.

“This resource will not only streamline casework but also protect child victims from unnecessary trauma, ensuring a more compassionate and just system for the most vulnerable among us,” said lawyer and IJM Philippines Director Samson Inocencio Jr. “It reflects the collective expertise and dedication of prosecutors, law enforcement officers, and government partners to shield children from harm and secure justice efficiently. We are honored to stand alongside the Philippine government in this vital work.”

Through the handbook’s strategies and templates, law enforcement and prosecutors can address the complexities of OSAEC cases with greater precision and confidence. Available as both a limited printed edition and a downloadable version for intended users, the handbook introduces four key strategies: *Videotaped In-Depth Disclosure Interviews (VIDI)*, which allow child victims to provide testimony in a safe, trauma-informed environment, reducing courtroom appearances; *Maximizing Digital Evidence*, leveraging digital tools to collect, analyze, and present critical evidence while minimizing reliance on victim

testimony; *Capitalizing on Financial Evidence*, tracing and presenting monetary flows to strengthen cases; and *Leveraging Plea Bargaining*, expediting justice while protecting victims from the emotional strain of testifying.

The launch included a ceremonial handover of the handbook from IJM to DOJ-IACAT, represented by IJM Cebu Director Lucille Dejito and DOJ Assistant Secretary Michelle Anne Lapuz, symbolizing its official dissemination to government partners.

Attendees, including members of the Technical Working Group who contributed to the handbook's development, shared insights into its creation and application.

This milestone event comes on the heels of the “**Iisang Nasyon, Iisang Aksyon: Tapusin ang OSAEC Ngayon**” summit held on September 16, 2024. Organized by IJM in partnership with DOJ-IACAT and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the summit was attended by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and other high-ranking leaders from the national government, local government units (LGUs), and various organizations.

During the summit, IJM and DOJ-IACAT launched a national campaign, “**Bayang Walang Bahid ng OSAEC**” (A County Unblemished by OSAEC) aimed at addressing cultural norms that discourage community reporting of OSAEC crimes.

The urgency combating OSAEC at the grassroots level is underscored by the findings of the **2022 Scale of Harm prevalence study** conducted by IJM and the University of Nottingham Rights Lab, which estimated that nearly half a million Filipino children—1 in every 100—were trafficked to produce child sexual exploitation material for profit.

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

About IJM

International Justice Mission is a global organization that protects people in poverty from violence. IJM partners with local authorities in 33 communities in 18 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: <https://www.ijm.org.ph>