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IJM Joins Philippine Government and Global Community in Observance of Safer Internet Day

MANILA, Philippines—On this year’s Safer Internet Day, International Justice Mission (IJM) stands in solidarity with the Philippine government and global stakeholders in the fight to end Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) and trafficking. Under the local theme “*Digital Bayanihan, Para sa Kabataang Ligtas at Protektado Online*,” this year’s celebration highlights the power of collective action in making the internet a safer place for Filipino children.

The Philippines has made significant progress in strengthening protections for children in the digital age. IJM commends local law enforcement for their unwavering commitment to rescuing victims and holding perpetrators accountable. In 2024, the Women and Children Protection Center (WCPC) of the Philippine National Police (PNP) made remarkable strides in the fight against trafficking and OSAEC, conducting 101 operations that led to the rescue of 208 victims, including 176 minors, and the arrest of 38 suspected traffickers.

Key milestones in the legal landscape over the past few years are also worth celebrating. The passage of landmark laws has strengthened the country’s legal framework, notably Republic Act (R.A.) No. 11930 (Anti-OSAEC and Anti-CSAEM [Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Material] Act), and R.A. 11862 (Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act), which enhances law enforcement capabilities to combat human trafficking and OSAEC more effectively. These legislative advancements reinforce the Philippines’ commitment to creating a safer environment for children and holding offenders to the highest level of justice.

The Philippine government further demonstrated its commitment to protecting children from OSAEC by the establishing the Presidential Office for Child Protection—a dedicated office under the Office of the President that ensures a whole-of-nation approach to child protection. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has consistently emphasized the government’s determination to eradicate OSAEC through a whole-of-nation strategy.

This commitment was evident in his participation in the national summit, “*Iisang Nasyon, Iisang Aksyon: Tapusin ang OSAEC Ngayon*,” held on September 16, 2024. Organized by IJM in partnership with the Department of Justice - Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (DOJ-IACAT) and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), the summit served as a critical platform to strengthen multi-sector collaboration in the fight against OSAEC. A key highlight of the event was the launch of the national campaign, “*Bayang Walang Bahid ng OSAEC*,” aimed at challenging cultural norms that discourage proactive reporting of OSAEC cases within communities. By fostering greater awareness and engagement, this campaign seeks to break the cycle of silence and empower communities to take an active role in protecting children.

OSAEC often involves the trafficking of children to produce child sexual exploitation materials, including livestreamed abuse, for profit. Alarmingly, these crimes are often facilitated by family members or trusted individuals who connect with remote sex offenders abroad.

Unlike other forms of trafficking, OSAEC frequently occurs inside the victim’s home, making detection more challenging and requiring proactive law enforcement and heightened community vigilance. In some communities, these illegal activities are casually referred to as “show” or “show me,” masking its true nature.

A 2022 prevalence study by International Justice Mission (IJM) and the University of Nottingham Rights Lab estimated that nearly half a million Filipino children—approximately 1 in 100—were trafficked to create child sexual exploitation materials for profit.

OSAEC is a serious crime under Philippine law and is penalized under R.A. 11930 (the Anti-OSAEC and Anti-CSAEM Act, R.A. 7610 (Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act), and R.A. 9208, as amended by R.A. 10364 and R.A. 11862 (Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act).

To report OSAEC activities or suspicions, contact the Philippine National Police – Women and Children Protection Center at 0966-725-5961 (Globe) and 0919-777-7377 (Smart). ###

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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 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>