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IJM Rolls Out Video Resource to Strengthen Child Protection in OSAEC Cases

PASIG CITY, PHILIPPINES – IJM Philippines has launched a new video resource to promote the use of Video In-Depth Disclosure Interviews (VIDI) in prosecuting cases of online sexual abuse or exploitation of children (OSAEC), aiming to reduce retraumatization and strengthen child protection throughout the legal process.

A VIDI is a court-admissible recording of a child survivor’s testimony, allowing them to avoid appearing in court and facing their perpetrators—thereby protecting them from further trauma.

Held on June 25, 2025 in Pasig City, Ortigas, the launch of the VIDI Orientation Video gathered key stakeholders from law enforcement, prosecution, social work, as well as representatives from relevant national agencies, including the National Coordination Center Against Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children and Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials (NCC-OSAEC-CSAEM), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD), and the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

DOJ Assistant Secretary Michelle Anne S. Lapuz emphasized the value of empathy and the need to “place ourselves in the shoes of the children.” She said: “We imagine their suffering—fear, confusion, distress. We ask ourselves, ‘What do we do to prevent further harm?’ We want this tool to become best practice—the default. We’re not just advocating for the use of a tool; we are advocating for culture change.”

The heart behind this prosecution strategy is to protect the best interests of the child. Theia, a Survivor Leader and Advocate with the Philippine Survivor Network, shared her experience with the justice system and the need for trauma-informed approaches.

“Filing the case was really a struggle,” she recalled. “I had to go back and forth to the police station and DSWD to recount my story over and over again, which was terribly stressful.” She added that the interviews were conducted in spaces that lacked privacy, and that she had nearly given up on pursuing the legal case.

Reflecting on the progress since her own case 14 years ago, Theia affirmed the impact of reforms such as the use of VIDI. Survivors today are no longer required to appear in court for multiple interviews, as VIDI is now accepted as evidence, with some judges and prosecutors even championing its use.

VIDI is a legally supported prosecution strategy grounded in existing Philippine law. Its basis is found in the *Rule on Examination of a Child Witness* [A.M. No. 00-4-07-SC], and it is further reinforced by recent legislation, including Republic Act (R.A.) No. 11930 (*Anti-OSAEC and Anti-CSAEM Law*), as well as R.A. No. 9208, as amended by R.A. No. 10364 and R.A. No. 11862 (*Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2022*).

IJM’s goal is for VIDI to be mainstreamed and become the norm in casework. IJM’s Atty. Nelisa Guevara-Garcia, Director of National Prosecution Development and one of the main narrators and trainers in the VIDI Orientation video, said that more than just a casework tool, VIDI is a means to achieve “survivor-centered justice [and] a commitment to protecting the most vulnerable, a commitment to doing better.”

She continued: “With VIDI, we offer them a safe space—a trauma-informed setting. Whether you’re a caseworker, a prosecutor, a law enforcer, or a partner in the fight against OSAEC, you now carry the responsibility and the privilege of using VIDI.”

The 35-minute VIDI Orientation Video serves as a supplemental training tool and reference for caseworkers, including prosecutors, social workers, and law enforcement officers. Informative and instructional, the video includes step-by-step guidance, checklists, best-practice recommendations, and references to relevant legal frameworks such as the *Rules on Examination of a Child Witness*—empowering professionals to apply VIDI effectively and consistently in the pursuit of survivor-centered justice.

During the launch, frontliners shared their first-hand experiences with VIDI. Among them were Limwin Lujera, a social worker from the City Social Welfare and Development Office of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan; Prosecution Attorney Princess Roxanne Sucor from the Office of the City Prosecutor, Taguig City; and PCPL Queen Denise Cuevas, an investigator with the Philippine National Police – Women and Children Protection Center.

PCPL Cuevas shared the story of “Maria” (not her real name), an 11-year-old survivor “rescued from online sexual exploitation orchestrated by someone who was supposed to love and protect her.”

“When we first met Maria, she was afraid to speak,” she recalled. “If she had to recount her ordeal again and again—in courtrooms, in police stations, before strangers—we might have inflicted more wounds than we hoped to heal. But this time we had VIDI. VIDI gave her control over her voice. A trained team carefully guided her through her disclosure. Once. Just once.”

Cuevas added, “It is not only the child who benefits from VIDI. It strengthens the work of law enforcers by capturing high-quality, legally admissible interviews. It preserves crucial evidence early in the investigation and enables police officers to act with both efficiency and compassion.”

Despite its potential, the implementation of VIDI still faces challenges. “Unfortunately, the truth is many in law enforcement still don’t know VIDI exists or how to use it effectively,” said Prosecutor Sucor.

“I once shared the common belief that live testimony of the child was the gold standard, and that digital evidence is unreliable,” she admitted. “However, my perspective changed when I saw the cost. Watching the children break down, forced to confront their abusers, changed me.”

Prosecutor Sucor also shared a difficult case where VIDI was improperly used: “There was no proper disclosure; critical details of the elements of the crime were missing... I had no choice but to subject the child survivor to the stand, knowing the toll it would take on him.”

“This experience taught me two critical lessons: first, that our skepticism about digital evidence often stems from improper execution and not the method itself. Second, that with proper protocols, VIDI can be as reliable as any evidence we admit in court.”

The VIDI Orientation video is available for download at <https://ijm.org.ph/vidi-orientation>.

To report OSAEC incidents, 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 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>