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Philippines Marks 10 Years of Tier 1 Status in U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report, Stronger Local Government Action Urged

MANILA, PHILIPPINES — The Philippines has once again earned Tier 1 status in the 2025 U.S. State Department’s Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, marking a decade of consistent recognition for its efforts to combat human trafficking.

“This incredible achievement validates the tireless work of government agencies, civil society, the private sector, survivor leaders, and all stakeholders who continue to push for justice and the protection of the country’s vulnerable populations,” said Samson Inocencio Jr., National Director of International Justice Mission (IJM) Philippines.

Tier 1 is the highest ranking a country can receive in the TIP Report, placing the Philippines among global leaders in anti-trafficking efforts. It signifies that the country meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and demonstrates sustained, serious efforts to address crime.

This latest affirmation comes as the Philippine government renews its commitment to ending trafficking through a whole-of-society, whole-of-nation approach—mobilizing every sector, from national agencies to grassroots communities, to contribute meaningfully to the fight.

Despite national recognition, the fight against trafficking is far from over—and local governments are at the frontlines. The TIP Report outlines key recommendations that can help the Philippines bring the fight against trafficking to the finish line, particularly by strengthening the role of local government units (LGUs).

Recommended priorities include strengthening the capacity of LGUs to support survivor reintegration, expanding specialized care for victims—especially children—and ensuring survivor voices shape policies and programs.

Philippine Survivor Network Chair Charito (a pseudonym) emphasized the importance of survivor leadership: “Survivor voices are critical in all efforts to end trafficking. We commend the Philippine government for beginning to put survivors at the forefront of this fight, especially against OSAEC. We are eager to continue having a seat at the decision-making table to ensure that solutions reflect our lived experiences.”

IJM urges LGUs to pass and implement localized Anti-OSAEC and Anti-CSAEM ordinances, and to allocate sufficient resources for survivor care and community protection.

Community Response: The Next Frontier

“Local governments are the first line of defense against trafficking, particularly OSAEC, which often occurs inside homes. Positioned closest to where abuse occurs, LGUs are uniquely equipped to respond swiftly and effectively. IJM commends LGUs that have passed anti-OSAEC ordinances and institutionalized programs for long-term impact. These efforts are essential to

ending impunity, preventing the normalization of abuse, and encouraging community reporting of this crime,” said Inocencio, who was hailed a 2024 TIP Hero by the US State Department.

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

“Studies have shown how widespread OSAEC is in the country, yet underreporting remains a major challenge. We urge community leaders to break the culture of silence and prioritize child protection over complicity and indifference,” Inocencio added.

In September last year, IJM co-organized an event in support of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s call to unify the country against OSAEC. The event, dubbed "Isang Nasyon, Iisang Aksyon: Tapusin ang OSAEC Ngayon" (One Nation, One Action: End OSAEC Now), was held in partnership with the Department of Justice–Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (DOJ–IACAT) and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). It marked the launch of the national campaign “Bayang Walang Bahid ng OSAEC” (A Country Untainted by OSAEC), which aims to challenge cultural norms that hinder proactive reporting of OSAEC in communities.

OSAEC crimes are penalized under Republic Act (R.A.) 11930 or the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children Act (OSAEC) and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse of Exploitation Materials Act (CSAEM) Act; R.A. 7610 or the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act; and R.A. 9208, as amended by R.A. 10364 and R.A. 11862, known as the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2022.

To report information about possible OSAEC crimes, contact the Philippine National Police – Women and Children Protection Center at 0966-725-5961 (Globe) and 0919-777-7377 (Smart).
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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>