

FULL REPORT

# Scale OF Harm

RESEARCH METHOD, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Estimating the Prevalence of Trafficking  
to Produce Child Sexual Exploitation  
Material in the Philippines

SEPTEMBER 2023



IJM



University of  
Nottingham  
Rights Lab



IJM



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Nottingham  
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## Research Team

International Justice Mission (IJM) commissioned the University of Nottingham Rights Lab (Rights Lab) as the lead research consultant to conduct IJM's *Scale of Harm* study estimating the prevalence of the trafficking of children to produce new child sexual exploitation material in the Philippines. The Rights Lab is the world's leading and largest group of modern slavery researchers. The research team consisted of academic and research experts, people who understand IJM's theory of change and the realities of online sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines.

**Research Consultant - University of Nottingham Rights Lab:** Professor Doreen Boyd, Albert Nyarko-Agyei, Esther Weir, Dr. Ben Brewster, Professor Todd Landman, Dr. James Goulding, Dr. Sabrina Li, Dr. Scott Moser, Dr. Emily Wyman and Dr. Rowland Seymour, with additional advisory input from Dr. Dennis Feehan.

**IJM Project Core Team:** Dr. Imogen Fell, John Tanagho, Leslie Garcia, Christine Belle Torres, Pia Camagay, Jenette Jadloc-Carredo, Internal Advisory Council and other subject matter experts.

**Survivor Consultants:** Ruby\*, Liberty\*, and Joy\*.



*\*pseudonyms*

## Acknowledgements



**External Advisory Council (EAC):** National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, Internet Watch Foundation, Justice and Care UK, Microsoft, Meta, Scotiabank, Promontory Financial/AMLakas, Quantum, Western Union, WeProtect Global Alliance, Virtual Global Taskforce, Australian Institute of Criminology, and the Philippine Inter-agency Council Against Trafficking (13 of 24 EAC members)

### Survey Design Advisory Group Members:

- University of the Philippines Manila: Dr. Laurie Ramiro, Janelle Rose D. Tan and Gaea Marelle J. Miranda
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Dr. Greta Massetti, Dr. Andrés Villaveces and Whitney Skowronski
- UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti: Dr. Daniel Kardefelt Winther

**Survey Implementation Partner:** Ipsos Philippines – Milton John Mendiola and Mae Malelang

**Additional Project Partner:** PLDT Inc. (PLDT) and its wireless subsidiary Smart Communications, Inc. (Smart)

**Launch Partner:** Kumu



## Foreword

There are just some words that should never go together in a sentence:

*livestreamed child sexual abuse*

*child sexual exploitation material*

The thought is enough to make honest people cringe. Every one of us has been a child. We know the vulnerability of children, especially young children – children like \*Jolene.

She's like many 6-year-old girls, maybe like you when you were six. She lives with her mom in a small house. She loves cake and wearing dresses. And like many 6-year-olds today, she's spent much of her life behind a mask to protect her from COVID.

But while being behind a mask protected her health, **being placed in front of a camera took it away.**

You see, Jolene was not safe—not at home, not with her mom, and not in the videos and photos sold online to men hungry to consume her abuse.

Jolene is just one.

1 of over 1,100 Filipinos brought to safety from this violence.

Today, she is safe and her perpetrators are arrested.

But Jolene is just one.

1 of the nearly **half a million Filipino children** sexually abused and exploited in person by adults to create images, videos, and livestreams for sale to offenders around the world.

*In 2022 alone.*

*That's 1 in every 100 Filipino children.*

The *Scale of Harm* study and this report is about those children, and how together we must protect them.

Now.

John Tanagho  
*Executive Director*  
Center to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children  
International Justice Mission

*\*pseudonym*

## Survivor Reflections



“I believe that to develop an effective solution, we need to know how big the problem is. Hence, in attempting to protect Filipino children from trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation materials (CSEM), we need to know how prevalent it is in every part of the Philippines so we can strategize and plan better. I also believe that what makes *Scale of Harm* even more important is that we get to know the factors which drive online sex offenders and traffickers to abuse children. The study also gives us at least an idea of who are the usual traffickers of children to produce CSEM, and the common signs and behavior which indicate people might be doing this crime at their homes.

In my opinion as a survivor leader, we should derive a preventive concept or a system of protecting children based on the *Scale of Harm* results with an adaptable design and collaborate with the government and non-government organizations in implementing it. I think it is also important for trafficking of children to produce CSEM to be heard more. We should raise people’s awareness about the nature of the crime itself and the consequences, not only to prevent more victims but also to be a tool in sending a message to the abusers to stop doing what they do. Provide spaces and platforms for survivor leaders to lead in spreading awareness about it and think of creative ways in which talking about trafficking of children to produce CSEM would not be hard for many, especially within the family. It could also be a way in removing the existing idea that talking about it is a taboo in Filipino communities.

I am deeply grateful that I was able to participate in this study. I was brought back to a place where my journey as a survivor leader started, and it has taught me to look at trafficking of children to produce CSEM in a different perspective. Although I thought there would be a much higher number of victims and traffickers who produce CSEM from the survey results, the numbers were still alarming. I took it more seriously. It also felt great to hear my fellow survivor leaders’ different experiences and perspectives about trafficking of children to produce CSEM. It ignited a different level of drive in me to continue the advocacy work I am doing. I hope there will be more engagements like this in the future as it helps with my growth as a survivor leader and consultant. To my fellow survivor leaders, I hope that we look at *Scale of Harm* Project as another motivation to not be weary in doing our part in fighting against online sexual abuse of children. A huge factor [in] why I always put my best foot forward in doing advocacy work is to become at least a reminder for us that we are strong individuals. We are all capable of anything we put our hearts into. I am so excited to see each of us thrive and live the legacy we wanted to create for the next generation.”

**Ruby\***, Survivor Leader and Consultant

“For me this study is important because our voices will be heard, and this form of online sexual exploitation will be known to other people for them to have awareness that the experience of survivors isn’t easy.”

**Joy\***, Survivor Leader and Consultant

“It is important that our voices are being heard. What is here is true and real. It will also make the audience feel convicted. It means a lot that this study was intentional to include survivor voice.”

**Liberty\***, Survivor Leader and Consultant

*\*pseudonyms*



## Partner Reflections

“Alarming findings from the new IJM *Scale of Harm* survey reveal that nearly half a million children in the Philippines have been trafficked to produce child sexual exploitation material, often by relatives or people they know. However, this issue transcends borders: where we look for these crimes, we uncover them, and once these abusive images and videos are online, they can be accessed and shared by perpetrators all over the world. Responses to this threat must therefore be global, coordinated, and guided by both evidence and the voices of survivors, just as this study’s recommendations have been.”

**Iain Drennan**, Executive Director  
WeProtect Global Alliance

“The Australian Institute of Criminology has been pleased to support International Justice Mission’s *Scale of Harm* project as a member of the initiative’s External Advisory Council. Through our own work, we have recognised the harm caused to children in the Philippines by perpetrators who purchase livestreamed child sexual abuse. This project has helped to clarify the extent of that harm, using robust scientific methods to generate an understanding of the problem that has not previously been possible. We believe this study will help to drive further action to protect future generations of children from experiencing online sexual exploitation.”

**Dr. Rick Brown**, Deputy Director  
Australian Institute of Criminology

“IJM’s *Scale of Harm* provides alarming insights into the magnitude of child sexual exploitation in the Philippines, especially the prevalence of live streaming, on demand child sexual exploitation and child sex traffickers exploiting victims to produce child sexual abuse imagery. Every day, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children provides

thousands of CyberTipline reports to the Philippine National Police regarding child sexual exploitation. We strongly support IJM’s *Scale of Harm* key recommendations to better protect children.”

**John Shehan**, Senior Vice President, Exploited Children Division & International Engagement  
National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

“Western Union vigorously condemns crimes of this nature, and we devote significant resources to help detect and deter the misuse of our services. In addition to supporting industry efforts such as this work with IJM, we are constantly adapting and evolving our systems and collaboration efforts to enable a more sophisticated level of detection and deterrence against illegal activity. Key findings from this report help inform and reconfirm the need for Western Union’s robust anti-human trafficking measures. To this degree, we appreciate the opportunity to participate in this research, and together with our partners, collaborate to protect our communities and our global financial system.”

**Western Union**

“Being a member of the External Advisory Council (EAC) for *Scale of Harm* has allowed us at Quantum to share our data, analytics and financial industry knowledge to help drive for impact on raising awareness and help drive the right strategies in combating CSEM. Being able to partner with IJM, University of Nottingham Rights Lab and other EAC members has been a great experience and we are very privileged to do so. We are very thankful for this opportunity and look forward to seeing the great work this will enable going forward.”

**Alistair Knox**, Lead Analyst, Global Markets & **Tatia Rashid**, Executive Manager  
Quantum

## Key Definitions

This section details the definitions and explanations of key terms associated with trafficking of children to produce child sexual exploitation materials, which provides a common understanding of terminology for this report.

### Trafficking of Children to Produce Child Sexual Exploitation Material

In this form of online exploitation in the Philippines, offenders typically in Western countries pay adult traffickers to livestream the sexual abuse of children in real time, and/or to produce new child sexual exploitation material (CSEM) such as images and videos. Based on this contextualized definition, the trafficking of children to produce child sexual exploitation materials involves the following: 1) a ‘trafficker’ who is usually a parent, a trusted relative, a friend, or a neighbor who lives in the same home or community as the child; 2) exchange of money or payment between the trafficker and ‘offender’ who is usually overseas in their home country; and 3) newly produced CSEM material (including online livestreaming). Where possible, IJM aligns its terminology with the Luxembourg Guidelines;<sup>1</sup> Readers are encouraged to reference these Guidelines for a more in-depth exploration of terms and associated issues.

### Child/Minor

A person below eighteen (18) years of age but also any person over eighteen (18) years of age who is unable to fully protect himself/herself from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination, or who is unable to care for himself/herself because of a physical or mental disability or condition.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ECPAT International, jointly with ECPAT Luxembourg, Interagency Working Group (2016), “Luxembourg Guidelines,” accessed at [https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS\\_490167/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_490167/lang--en/index.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the definition of “children” under the Philippine Statistics Authority, “Statistics on Children,” accessed at <https://rssoncr.psa.gov.ph/Children#:~:text=%22Children%22%20refers%20to%20person%20below,defined%20under%20Republic%20Act%207610>.

### Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM)

Any visual or audio (and/or any combination thereof) representation of children (under the age of 18) engaged in sexual activity or of minors engaging in lewd or erotic behavior recorded, produced and/or published to arouse the viewer’s sexual interest. Child sexual abuse material (CSAM), which depicts the contact sexual abuse of a child, is a subset of CSEM. This report will use CSEM as a broad, umbrella term.

### CyberTipline Report

Reports received by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) from the public and Electronic Service Providers (ESPs) related to child sexual exploitation. NCMEC makes CyberTipline reports available to law enforcement agencies around the world as appropriate, based on apparent jurisdiction related to the reported incident.

### Electronic Service Provider

Electronic service providers (ESPs) provide communication services via the internet or other electronic platforms.

### Livestreaming of Child Sexual Abuse

Children are forced to perform sex acts on themselves or each other, are abused by an adult or are exploited in other violent ways. This child sexual abuse material is transmitted to a viewer/s in real time through live video calls while the offender watches, engages, and even directs the abuse while it is occurring.

Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that, “a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier,” accessed at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child#:~:text=PART%20I-,%20Article%201,child%2C%20majority%20is%20attained%20earlier>.

### **Money Transfer Agency**

Agencies and platforms that provide international money transfer and payment services between individuals and/or institutions. Traffickers in the Philippines typically receive payment from demand-side offenders via money transfer agencies.

### **Demand-Side Offender (DSO)**

A person based in a demand-side country (such as the U.S., U.K., Australia, or EU) who provides financial compensation to a trafficker producing child sexual exploitation material, including via livestreaming in a source-side country (such as the Philippines) for any form of CSEM or in-person sexual exploitation of children. In cases of trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material, DSOs often actively participate in the sexual abuse of children by dictating the child's abuse in advance and/or directing abuse as it occurs via livestream (see livestreaming definition above). DSOs can also produce CSEM when they record sexual abuse remotely and when they entice, solicit, or coerce minors to create CSEM.

### **Trafficker**

A person who sexually abuses or exploits a child through the means of the internet to produce and offer for sale new CSEM, including via livestreaming, in exchange for compensation. According to Philippine Law (Republic Act 10364),<sup>3</sup> this facilitation is a trafficking offense.

### **Trafficking in Persons**

According to the Palermo Protocol (2000), "trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery, or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth [above] shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth [above] have been used. The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered trafficking in persons even if this does not involve any of the means set forth [above]."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Republic Act No. 10364 at <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2013/02/06/republic-act-no-10364/>.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations (2000) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime accessed at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

\*Child actor;  
not an actual survivor

## Executive Summary

The production of child sexual exploitation material (CSEM) is an issue that plagues communities worldwide. Yet, the Philippines has been identified as a global epicenter for financially motivated CSEM production, especially via livestreaming. Anecdotal evidence suggests that incidences of this form of trafficking and exploitation in the Philippines are high. In March 2021, International Justice Mission (IJM) launched the *Scale of Harm* project to measure the prevalence of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines. Prevalence estimates are crucial, enabling governments and stakeholders to assess whether interventions designed to protect vulnerable children from this abuse are effective at doing so. Together with the University of Nottingham Rights Lab, IJM implemented the *Scale of Harm* project centered on two primary research objectives:

1. Produce national prevalence estimates of the number of children who were victims of trafficking for CSEM production, and the number of traffickers involved in CSEM production in the Philippines.
2. Design, develop and test a survey that IJM can replicate to estimate national prevalence over time.

To achieve these objectives, 3,600 household surveys were conducted across the Philippines using the network scale-up method. The surveys asked respondents the number of adult traffickers and child victims they knew were involved in trafficking of children to produce CSEM. Alongside national household surveys, survivor consultants co-designed and facilitated two focus group discussions with survivor leaders from the Philippine Survivor Network (PSN).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Philippine Survivor Network (PSN) is “an all-inclusive program for survivors of child sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, and online sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines, who desire and pursue safe communities through justice systems that protect the most vulnerable people,” see more information at <https://www.ijm.org.ph/articles/philippine-survivor-network-launched>.

Numerous barriers posed challenges to this undertaking. Firstly, the sexual abuse of children to produce new livestreams, videos, and images is clandestine in nature, perpetrated in private homes, out of the view of the public and most community members. The production of CSEM is further hidden on encrypted platforms, including messaging and video-chat apps, with companies and platforms not detecting or reporting livestreamed abuse, while CSEM image and video reports rarely specify if they are “new production.” Moreover, most victims are prepubescent (12 years-old and younger) and trafficked by family members, making proactive disclosure and reporting rates abysmally low. Another barrier is the complexity in understanding different local contexts, specifically local language used in communities and behaviors related to how trafficking to produce for-profit CSEM manifests. Lastly, challenges exist in accessing relevant data sources to understand this crime supporting interventions and research.

*Scale of Harm's* innovative methodological approach and national prevalence estimates break new ground in the field of child sexual abuse online and trafficking research. As such, the project offers numerous learnings that will enhance and support future child protection and anti-trafficking programming, policy, research and methodological applications, including to other contexts beyond the Philippines. Moreover, *Scale of Harm's* multi-sector partnership approach to methodology development and implementation demonstrates another significant learning for future collaborative projects involving civil society, survivors, academia and the private sector.

## Scale of Harm Survey Key Findings

*Scale of Harm* findings showed that the prevalence of trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material is widespread across the Philippines, occurring in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. This is a crime that every region, city, and municipality in the Philippines must combat.



### VICTIMS

Nearly **half a million** Filipino children were *trafficked to produce new child sexual exploitation material in 2022.*

\* 1 child in every 100 children.  
The specific estimate is 471,416.



### TRAFFICKERS

Nearly a **quarter of a million** adult Filipinos *trafficked children to produce new child sexual exploitation material in 2022.*

\* 3 out of every 1,000 adult Filipinos.  
The specific estimate is 232,444.

The **ratio of traffickers to child victims is 1 to 3.5**; for every such trafficker, three and a half child victims were sexually exploited.



## Survivor Engagement Findings

The following results are from two focus group discussions (FGDs) with survivor leaders from the Philippine Survivor Network that were led and co-designed by *Scale of Harm*'s survivor consultants.

The results from the first FGD—conducted during the same period as household survey implementation—are based on the following themes:

- (1) awareness and understanding of trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material in the Philippines;
- (2) normalization of trafficking to produce CSEM and efforts to conceal exploitative activity;
- (3) culture of underreporting of livestreaming and online sexual abuse in communities;
- (4) contributing factors or enablers of trafficking to produce CSEM;
- (5) current efforts to address trafficking to produce CSEM by authorities; and
- (6) broader reflections on participation in the research process.

The results from the second FGD—conducted after the household survey—are based on themes regarding trafficking to produce CSEM that emerged from the survey results, including possible reasons for non-disclosure of the crime by survey participants, different models of exploitation, and the meaning and implications of the survey results.

## Summary of Survivor Engagement FGD Findings



1. Various **social** and **cultural factors** contribute to **low levels of reports** made to law enforcement, particularly in circumstances where potential witnesses or reporting parties in the community have existing relationships with traffickers. Some of them are relatives and neighbors who do not want to “meddle” in the affairs of others and choose to remain quiet about it.



2. Current **community efforts** and capacity at the local law enforcement and barangay level are **inadequate** in preventing and reducing the trafficking of children to produce CSEM.



3. There are several intersecting reasons why survey respondents might not have wanted to disclose knowledge of traffickers or victims when taking the survey. These include social and cultural issues associated with **family** and **community loyalty**, as well as being fearful of traffickers (including the risk of being implicated themselves as beneficiaries of this form of trafficking).



4. Some traffickers try to **conceal** their activity by using **falsified details** online and selecting **physical locations** where they are unlikely to be disturbed.



5. Trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material is perceived as a **financially lucrative activity**.



6. Awareness and understanding of adults sexually abusing children to sell livestreams, images, and videos in the Philippines **varies** between people, and work is needed to **educate** and build understanding about specific issues linked to creating new child sexual exploitation images and videos, including livestreaming.



7. There is a **lack of understanding** regarding how some online behaviors constitute **exploitation**, particularly in circumstances where demand-side offenders pay children and adolescents directly for child sexual exploitation material online.



8. *Scale of Harm* drawing additional attention to the crime is a **mechanism** to help address it and help other **young people** feel **seen** and have a **voice**.



9. Not everyone surveyed would likely be aware of the **specifics** of this form of abuse as **different terms** are used locally (such as: *show, cybersex, internet, taking pictures, “chat chat,” “nagtrabaho sa iyang office sa kwarto” [working in her office in the room], cyber, and child abuse*) to refer to the crime and behaviors associated with it, including terms that **minimize** the harm.



## Scale of Harm Recommendations



### 1. Cultivate community-based reporting

Government, non-government organizations (NGOs), community leaders, local government unit (LGU) officials, and the public should cultivate increased reporting of trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material from the community and support efforts to deter traffickers.



### 2. Enhance criminal justice response

Alongside increased community-based responses, Philippine law enforcement efforts at the national, regional, and local levels should intensify to apprehend and prosecute more traffickers, thereby creating deterrence while safeguarding victims. Demand-side law enforcement should hold accountable more demand-side offenders too.



### 3. Implement robust community-based efforts

Alongside increased law enforcement interventions, additional local efforts to prevent, frustrate, and disrupt the trafficking of children to produce CSEM should be deployed through robust community-based norms change and sensitization.



### 4. Enforce Anti-Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) Law tech provisions

The Philippine government should enforce and, if needed, enhance regulations mandating the use of safety by design technology designed to detect, prevent, and disrupt the production and distribution of livestreamed child sexual abuse and other CSEM images and videos at scale.



### 5. Expedite detection, reporting, and blocking of suspicious financial transactions

Banks and money service businesses must act with urgency to implement effective transaction monitoring to detect suspicious payments indicative of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children, apply enhanced due diligence if suspicions exist, expedite suspicious reporting, and block payments involving known or suspected offenders and traffickers.



### 6. Demand-side governments should urgently pass online safety legislation with survivor consultation

Legislators in governments globally should champion survivor experiences by urgently passing online safety legislation to protect children worldwide.



### 7. Further survivor-informed research is critical

Survivors propose future research studies should investigate the normalization of online sexual exploitation of children, particularly demand-side offenders engaging in online relationships with children and local traffickers who seek financial gain.

A dimly lit room with a computer desk. On the desk, there is a monitor displaying a website, a keyboard, a mouse, and a white printer. A webcam is mounted on top of the monitor. The room has blue walls and a patterned curtain. In the foreground, a large, out-of-focus yellow object, possibly a piece of furniture or a prop, is visible. The overall atmosphere is dark and somewhat mysterious.

# INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

\*Child actor;  
not an actual survivor

## Introduction

Worldwide, the threat to children of being sexually abused in real-time has grown. According to INTERPOL<sup>6</sup>, “live-streaming of child sexual exploitation for payment has seen an increase in recent years.” Other organizations such as Europol<sup>7</sup> and WeProtect Global Alliance concur<sup>8</sup>. While cases of children being sexually abused by adults to sell live videos and other child sexual exploitation material<sup>9</sup> have been documented in other countries, the Philippines is a global epicenter.

Unfortunately, global tech platforms remain fertile ground for this type of abuse, with Australia’s eSafety Commissioner reporting in December 2022 that “[platforms] are neither taking action to detect CSEA (child sexual exploitation and abuse) in livestreams ... or taking action to detect CSEA in video calls or conferences.”<sup>10</sup> Such inaction is alarming, considering Suojellaan Lapsia’s (Protect Children) study reported that “CSAM is increasingly livestreamed” with 45% of respondents reporting that they watch livestreamed CSAM.<sup>11</sup>

Another concerning trend being reported is the severity of harm to children in child sexual abuse material. In 2022, the U.K. based Internet Watch Foundation found that online, “extreme child sexual abuse” doubled in two years (such abuse is defined as images/videos involving penetrative sexual activity, sexual activity with an animal, or sadism).<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, in IJM’s own casework experience in support of Philippine and foreign law enforcement partners, children have been brought to safety from horrific forms of abuse, including bestiality.

Zooming out, in 2022, the U.S. based National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) received more than 32 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation, with 99% submitted by Electronic Service Providers (ESPs) to the CyberTipline. Those reports contained 49.4 million images, 18.8 million (38%) of which were unique images. Of the 37.7 million videos reported, 8.3 million

<sup>6</sup> INTERPOL, “*INTERPOL report highlights impact of COVID-19 on child sexual abuse.*” 7 September 2020, <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2020/INTERPOL-report-highlights-impact-of-COVID-19-on-child-sexual-abuse>.

<sup>7</sup> Europol, “*Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA) 2020.*” Last updated 7 December 2021, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/internet-organised-crime-threat-assessment-iocta-2020>.

<sup>8</sup> WeProtect Global Alliance, “*Global Threat Assessment 2021.*” (Report, WeProtect Global Alliance). <https://www.weprotect.org/wp-content/plugins/pdfjs-viewer-shortcode/pdfs/web/viewer.php?file=/wp-content/uploads/Global-Threat-Assessment-2021.pdf&dButton=true&pButton=true&oButton=false&sButton=true%22%20\%20%22zoom=0&pagemode=none>.

<sup>9</sup> See Colombia February 2023 case where police safeguarded three children: 19 months, seven and nine years, and arrested their mother and aunt accused of livestreaming child sexual abuse for profit, “*Horror en Medellín: madre obligaba a sus tres hijos de 19 meses, 7 y 9 años a grabar pornografía infantil.*” 27 February 2023, <https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/horror-en-medellin-madre-obligaba-a-sus-tres-hijos-de-19-meses-7-y-9-anos-a-grabar-pornografia-infantil/202311/>.

See Brazil case, “*Brazil: Two arrested in global hunt to catch child predators.*” 14 April 2021, <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2021/Brazil-Two-arrested-in-global-hunt-to-catch-child-predators#:~:text=In%20August%202020%2C%20disturbing%20footage,for%20Missing%20and%20Exploited%20Children>. See Romania case, “*Sask. Appeal Court increases sentence for child pornographer Philip Chicoine – Saskatoon.*” 17 October 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/6042218/appeal-court-increases-sentence-for-child-pornographer-philip-chicoine/>. See Thailand case, “*Man pleads guilty to seeking violent sex abuse images from source in Thailand.*” 24 July 2023, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-07-24/arslan-safdar-guilty-in-sex-transmission-case/102641592>.

<sup>10</sup> eSafety Commissioner, “*Basic Online Safety Expectations: Summary of industry responses to the First mandatory transparency notices.*” December 2022, <https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-12/BOSE%20transparency%20report%20Dec%202022.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Suojellaan Lapsia (Protect Children). (2021). CSAM Users in the Dark Web: Protecting Children Through Prevention. <https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/en/post/csam-users-in-the-dark-web-protecting-children-through-prevention>.

<sup>12</sup> Internet Watch Foundation, “*‘Extreme’ Category A child sexual abuse found online doubles in two years.*” 25 April 2023, <https://www.iwf.org.uk/news-media/news/extreme-category-a-child-sexual-abuse-found-online-doubles-in-two-years/>.

(22%) were unique.<sup>13</sup> In 2022, the Philippines received a staggering 2.5 million CyberTipline reports. NCMEC reports reflect the broader global problem of child sexual exploitation material production, sharing, and viewing, but not necessarily livestreaming as those incidents are not routinely detected and reported. Due to uneven detection and reporting across tech companies, the world does not actually know how many children globally are sexually abused to produce CSEM, or how many such live videos, recorded videos, or images of child sexual abuse and exploitation are produced and shared online.

Turning to the Philippines, the *Disrupting Harm* study by UNICEF, ECPAT International and INTERPOL (2021) estimated that at least 2 million children in the Philippines experienced tech-facilitated online sexual exploitation and abuse. *Disrupting Harm* studied broader types of online abuse than *Scale of Harm*, including children being blackmailed to engage in sexual activities, someone sharing their sexual images without permission, or being coerced to engage in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts.<sup>14</sup> In 2021, UNICEF stated that 1 in 10 children in the Philippines had been put in unwanted sexual situations online – ranging from sexual requests to unsolicited material being sent from one online user to another (or groups).<sup>15</sup> Since the Philippines has widespread English proficiency, high internet use, and low awareness of risks,<sup>16</sup> the country is identified as an epicenter for a particular form of unwanted sexual abuse: online sexual exploitation of children—where exploitation is facilitated or occurs through the internet and other related material.

Meanwhile, Philippine government and policymakers continue to make progress in efforts to combat trafficking of children to produce CSEM, as demonstrated by the Philippines' ongoing Tier 1 status in the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons report.<sup>17</sup> Despite progress, the Philippine government cannot combat this problem alone. A stronger global commitment to combatting livestreamed abuse is needed, especially through a safety by design approach that prioritizes technological prevention and disruption at scale. The complex nature of the crime, a dearth of accessible data, limited access to technology and financial sector reporting, and the young age of victims all pose barriers to understanding the scale and impact of this crime against children.

Uniquely, *Scale of Harm* set out to determine the prevalence of a specific form of child sexual abuse online: in person sexual abuse of children by adults in the Philippines while foreign offenders watch and direct abuse in real-time for a fee and receive newly produced images and videos. This report presents prevalence estimates for a specific form of online sexual exploitation of children, more specifically defined by IJM as trafficking of children to produce child sexual exploitation material. Prevalence in this context is defined as:

*The percentage of the target population that are/were victimized during a specified time in a specified area. It measures the primary intended effect of transformed justice systems that fewer people are victimized by perpetrators.*

<sup>13</sup> National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, "CyberTipline 2022 Report." [https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline/cyber\\_tiplinedata](https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline/cyber_tiplinedata).

<sup>14</sup> ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF. (2022). *Disrupting Harm in the Philippines: Evidence on online child sexual exploitation and abuse*. Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. <https://ecpat.org/resource/disrupting-harm-philippines/#:~:text=Disrupting%20Harm%20in%20the%20Philippines,of%20children%20in%20the%20Philippines>.

<sup>15</sup> Burton, P. (2020) *Philippines Kids Online: The Online Experiences of Children in the Philippines: Opportunities, Risks and Barriers*. UNICEF Philippines, pp. 1–164. <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/media/2706/file/UNIPH-2021-PhilippinesKidsOnline-FullReport.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Roche, et al., (2023). Online sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines: A scoping review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 148. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.106861>.

<sup>17</sup> United States Department of State, "2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines." <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/philippines>.

The report presents the research method to estimate prevalence, key findings, and key recommendations to protect children from this abuse and, ultimately, reduce prevalence of the crime. The *Scale of Harm* study results indicate that the prevalence of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines is widespread, vast, and concerning.

## Scale of Harm Overview

With this backdrop, in 2021, **International Justice Mission (IJM)**, together with the **University of Nottingham Rights Lab**, a world-leading human trafficking research institution, launched the *Scale of Harm* project to develop and implement a mixed-methods approach to produce prevalence estimates of trafficking of children to produce CSEM, including via livestreaming, in the Philippines.

Prevalence estimates offer critical indications of the protective impact that government and multi-stakeholder efforts have over time. After all, successful child protection interventions should lead to fewer children being harmed in the first place. Prior IJM prevalence studies<sup>18</sup> on various forms of violence have proven that increased perpetrator accountability through detection, arrest, and prosecution can have a disproportionate impact on reducing crime within the context of a trauma-informed, holistic justice system and societal response. For example, studies showed between 72% to 86% reductions of in person child sex

trafficking in commercial establishments across regions in the Philippines.<sup>19</sup>

## Objectives

The **primary research objectives** were to:

- Produce national prevalence estimates of the number of children who were victims of trafficking for CSEM production, and the number of traffickers involved in CSEM production in the Philippines.
- Design, develop and test a survey that IJM can replicate to estimate national prevalence over time.

The **secondary research objective** was to produce operational insights on the nature of the trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines such as:

- Highly localized, municipality-level data on trafficking locations and prevalence rates (ongoing work until end of 2023). See Appendix A for more details on secondary data analysis that is being conducted.

## Components

The *Scale of Harm* study consisted of two components: (1) developing a research methodology to estimate the trafficking of children to produce CSEM and then (2) implementing the designed methodology to estimate prevalence. The following provides an overview of the timeline for both components.

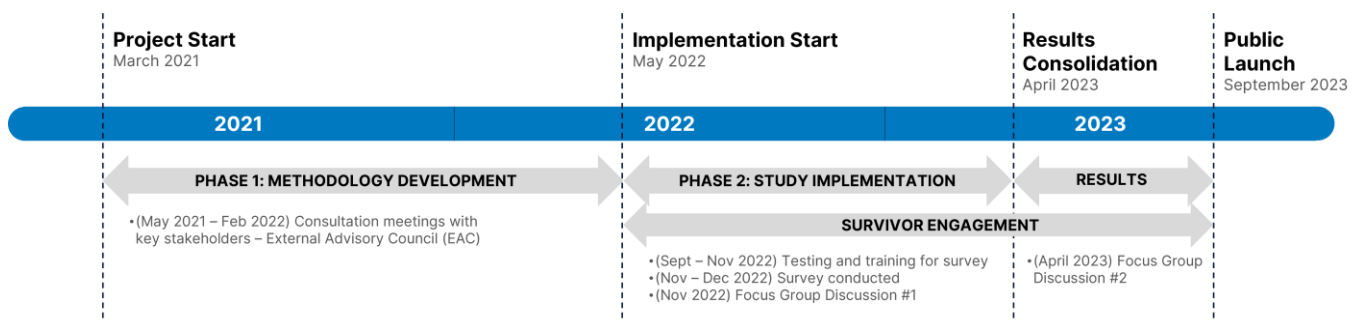


Figure 1. Scale of Harm Timeline

<sup>18</sup> See International Justice Mission’s prevalence studies: <https://www.ijm.org/studies>.

<sup>19</sup> Haarr, R. (2017). Evaluation of the Program to Combat Sex Trafficking of Children in the Philippines: 2003-2015.

[https://ijmstoragelive.blob.core.windows.net/ijmna/documents/studies/philippines-csec-program-evaluation\\_2021-02-05-063357.pdf](https://ijmstoragelive.blob.core.windows.net/ijmna/documents/studies/philippines-csec-program-evaluation_2021-02-05-063357.pdf).

## Methodology Development

To develop and advise on the methodology, IJM and the Rights Lab convened a 24-member **External Advisory Council (EAC)** of leading experts, researchers, and field practitioners across technology, financial, government, non-government, and child protection sectors, relevant to tackling trafficking to produce CSEM.<sup>20</sup> The EAC joined as co-designers in shaping the project's strategy and direction to achieve the *Scale of Harm's* objectives. Alongside partnerships to develop the methodology, Rights Lab conducted desk-based research to build foundational knowledge while assessing data sources for their feasibility in contributing to prevalence estimates. Rights Lab also led a series of one-on-one discussions or key informant interviews with each EAC member to understand in-depth the barriers, policies, and experiences from each sector to address trafficking to produce CSEM including livestreams.

## Study Implementation

From May 2022 to April 2023, IJM and the Rights Lab commenced the implementation of *Scale of Harm's* methodology consisting of two core focal areas specified below:

**1. Network Scale-up Method (NSUM) Survey**  
National household surveys were conducted. A Survey Design Advisory Group (SDAG) of research and academic experts advised on the overall design, sampling, and contextualization of a national household survey using the Network Scale-Up Method (NSUM) approach. The NSUM survey asked the number of adult traffickers and child victims respondents knew were involved in trafficking of children to produce CSEM. Ipsos Philippines, a leading global

marketing and research institution<sup>21</sup>, implemented the survey nationwide. Ipsos Philippines has extensive experience conducting national household surveys with enumerators based in local communities across Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao where the surveys were conducted. The survey reached 3,600 households nationwide.

## 2. Survivor Engagement

Alongside the national household survey, survivor engagement was a critical component. Survivor consultants and leaders informed and co-designed the survey by drawing from their lived experience of exploitation and community knowledge in the Philippines. This includes co-designing and enhancing research instruments such as the survey questionnaire and protocols. Survivor consultants also co-designed and facilitated two focus group discussions (FGDs) with Filipino survivor leaders from the Philippine Survivor Network. The FGDs themes centered on the following:

- **Development and Implementation** – perspectives about trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material in the communities and current efforts to address it; and
- **Evaluation** – evaluating and reviewing the study's findings, detailing from their perspectives how these may be used to create a positive impact across communities in the Philippines.

The pursuit of these two key areas enabled the *Scale of Harm* study team to estimate the prevalence of the trafficking of children to produce child sexual exploitation material and provide evidence on the behaviors and

<sup>20</sup> International Justice Mission, "Methodology Developed to Measure Prevalence of Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in PH." 22 February 2022, <https://www.ijm.org.ph/articles/methodology-developed-to-measure-prevalence-of-online-sexual-exploitation-of-children-in-ph>.

<sup>21</sup> Ipsos Global Market Research and Public Opinion Specialist, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ph>.

modus operandi of the crime. The focus on the survey and survivor engagement offers insights on different data sources for *Scale of Harm's* replication in order to monitor national prevalence over time.

## Understanding the Trafficking of Children to Produce New Child Sexual Exploitation Material

As a subset of online sexual exploitation, the trafficking of children to produce CSEM is a borderless, global crime. In this form of exploitation, a child is sexually abused by an adult in person while a foreign offender, typically a man from a Western or developed country,<sup>22</sup> watches the abuse happen in real time via a video call. These demand-side offenders pay adult traffickers for the opportunity to direct specific acts of sexual abuse against children by typing in the chat or dictating the abuse audibly on the video call. Based on IJM's experience supporting up to 348 Philippine-led law enforcement operations,<sup>23</sup> the abusive conduct usually includes forcible sexual penetration, constituting rape in the Philippines and many other jurisdictions. The trafficker also produces and transmits new child exploitation images and videos.

In 2020, IJM initially convened Philippine and global partners<sup>24</sup> to develop an agreed upon

method for studying the scope and nature of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) crimes. From this study, IJM released the report titled, "*Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Philippines: Analysis and Recommendations for Governments, Industry, and Civil Society.*"<sup>25</sup> The 2020 study compiled existing stakeholder data on OSEC using NCMEC CyberTipline reports from 2010 to 2017 as a primary data source applying the mark-recapture method. Adopting this approach, the study sought to estimate the number and percentage of Philippine IP addresses used for child sexual exploitation generally and online forms of sexual exploitation more specifically.

The 2020 study's findings and recommendations significantly informed IJM and multi-stakeholder work in the Philippines, including offering evidence to support global policy and advocacy efforts to protect children. However, the complexity of identifying data to measure livestreamed and other CSEM production incidents, and other data weaknesses, prevented a prevalence measurement. Since then, there has been no other existing detection or data collection for prevalence purposes on trafficking of children to produce child sexual exploitation material, including via livestreaming. *Scale of Harm* builds upon IJM's 2020 OSEC study, which provided contextual insights of OSEC in the Philippines. The 2020 study identified the following findings that informed *Scale of Harm*.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See Anti-Money Laundering Council, "*Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in the Philippines: An Evaluation Using STR Data (July 2020 – December 2022)*." April 2023, <http://www.amlc.gov.ph/16-news-and-announcements/454-online-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation-of-children-in-the-philippines-an-evaluation-using-str-data>. Anti-Money Laundering Council reports that since 2015, the top sources of OSAEC-related remittances in terms of volume and PhP value include the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada.

<sup>23</sup> All IJM-supported operations since 2011, updated as of September 8, 2023.

<sup>24</sup> INTERPOL, the U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP), the Global Partnership to End Violence, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), and international law enforcement partners, to name a few.

<sup>25</sup> International Justice Mission, "*Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Philippines: Analysis and Recommendations for Governments, Industry, and Civil Society.*" 2020, <https://www.ijm.org.ph/assets/resource/IJM-OSEC-in-the-Philippines-Analysis-and-Recommendations-for-Governments-Industry-and-Civil-Society-Full-2020.pdf>.

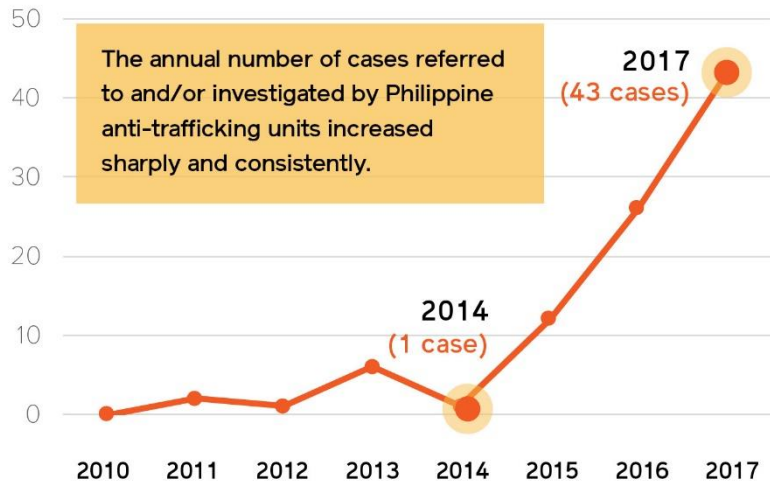

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

Other findings from IJM’s 2020 OSEC study include the following:



**INTERNATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT**

64% of Philippine OSEC cases were initiated by referrals from international law enforcement agencies.

The characteristics of **OSEC** victims were **distinct** from those of victims of **establishment-based** sexual exploitation of children.



**ENGLISH**

All traffickers communicated in English.



**SURFACE OF THE INTERNET**

Most traffickers communicated and exchanged materials with customers on the surface of the web (as opposed to the dark web).

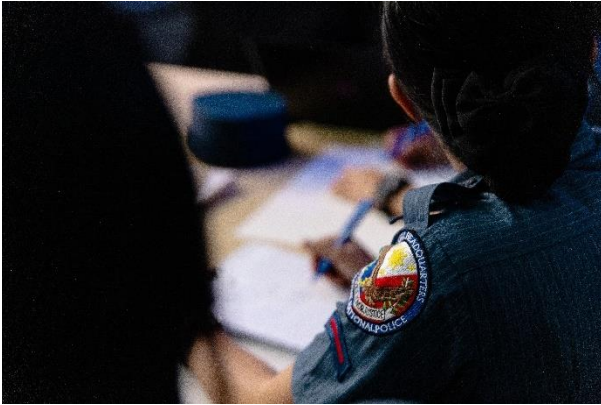


**FINANCIAL MOTIVATION**

Evidence was able to confirm that there was a commercial element (e.g. exchange of CSEM for money) in 83% of all cases.



## Philippine Government's Response to Trafficking of Children for CSEM Production



IJM has been working with the Philippine government to protect children and hold perpetrators accountable since 2016, with initial cases supported in 2011. IJM has provided casework and capacity building support to the government and local communities on prosecution, law enforcement, forming trauma-informed networks of care for survivors, and empowerment of survivors and government leadership.<sup>27</sup>

As of August 2023, data on IJM supported operations reveals that Philippine authorities have brought 1,181 victims and at-risk individuals to safety and apprehended 359 suspected perpetrators, with at least 202 of them already convicted.

Through partnerships and collaboration, child-protective prosecution strategies, primarily using Video In-Depth Interviews (also known as VID I), are being used by the Philippine government to prevent contact between survivors and traffickers in courtrooms and other legal proceedings. As of

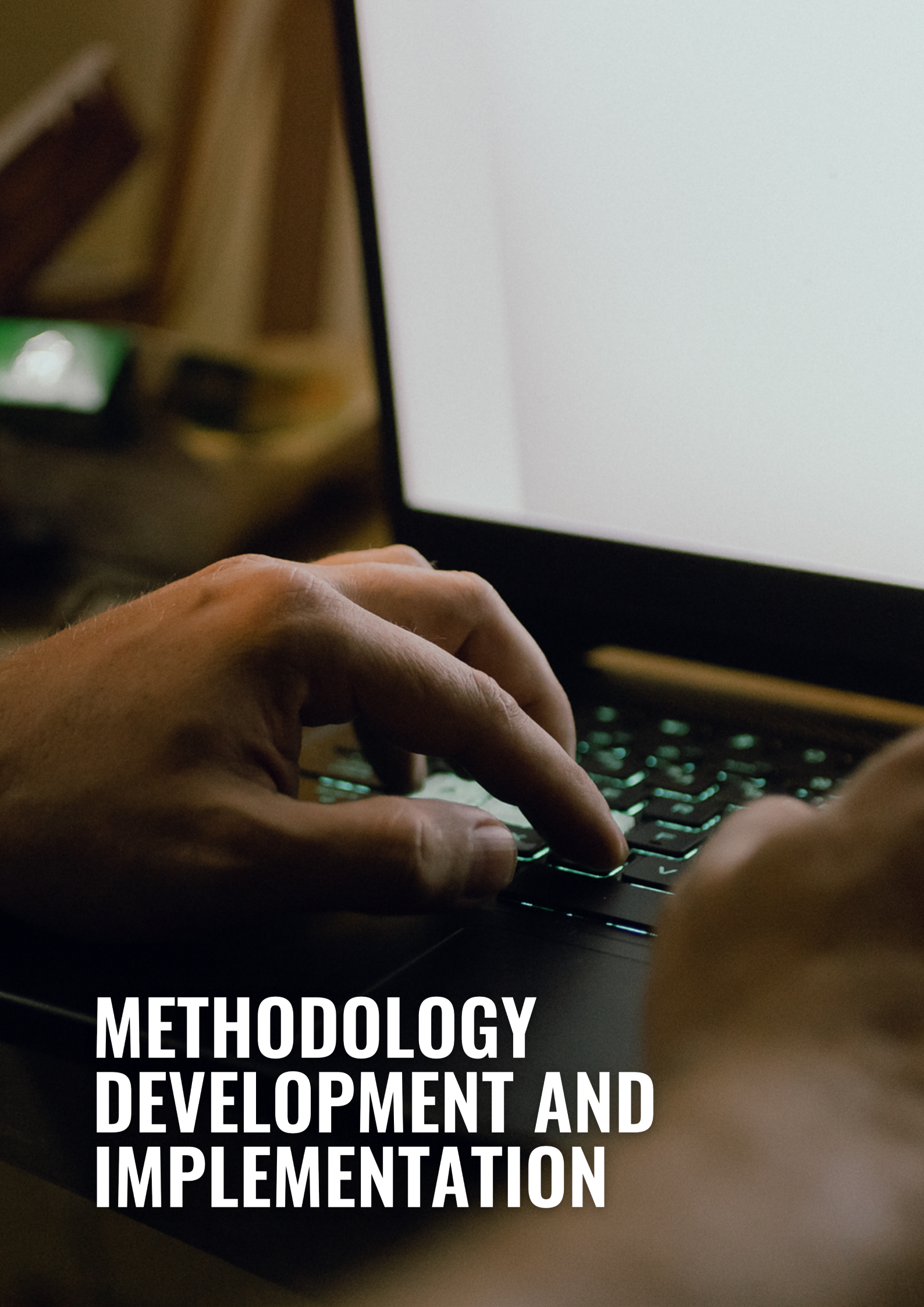
September 2023, IJM has supported up to 108 cases with VID I of 242 survivors. From these cases, public prosecutors achieved convictions through plea bargaining agreements, which prevented up to 105 survivors from testifying in court and thus avoiding further trauma from a full trial. In 2018, the Philippine Congress increased the Philippine National Police - Women and Children Protection Center budget by 347% to provide additional resources to support anti-trafficking efforts. Philippine law enforcement units have attended training programs led by IJM on Internet Crimes Against Children and the Advanced Investigative Workshop to equip professionals with handling casework of trafficking of children to produce CSEM. Overall, IJM has trained over 2,000 police, prosecutors, judges, social workers, NGO partners, faith-based leaders, and community members in capacity building efforts.

To support sustainability, the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has worked closely with IJM to form an inter-agency Foster Care Working Group enhancing therapeutic foster care networks to further support survivors. Furthermore, DSWD has adapted their trauma-informed care training and knowledge in handling cases with survivors to enhance efforts preventing re-traumatization. Survivors are locally trained to improve their knowledge of children's rights and equipped to build self-awareness and coping skills.

In May 2023, secretaries of the DSWD and Department of Justice signed the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the newly enacted Republic Act 11930, also known as the "Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials".<sup>28</sup> Across the board, the Philippine government has advanced legislative efforts indicating a responsive approach in the fight against the trafficking of children to produce CSEM.

<sup>27</sup> See more details at IJM's 2022 Factsheet, <https://www.ijm.org.ph/assets/ourwork/IJMPHFactsheetMarch2022.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Philippine News Agency (PNA), "DSWD, DOJ sign IRR of Anti-Online Child Sexual Abuse law." 18 May 2023, <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1201789>.



**METHODOLOGY  
DEVELOPMENT AND  
IMPLEMENTATION**

## Scale of Harm: Developing the Prevalence Methodology



The trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material is a complex and clandestine form of exploitation. The complicated nature of this form of trafficking, which intersects across social, technological, cultural, and financial issues (for-profit) means that identifying an approach estimating this crime has been almost impossible until now. For *Scale of Harm*, the project was focused on methodology development and then implementation. This section details the methodology development from March 2021 to April 2022. This dedicated process sought to invest a substantial amount of time and effort, to match the difficulty of estimating the prevalence of trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation including via livestreams.

### Developing a Method

To develop a methodology to measure the prevalence of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines, the study team built an evidence base detailing a comprehensive understanding of the modus operandi, existing prevalence methods and context where the crime exists. To achieve this, Rights Lab focused on:

1. Centralizing all accessible information about trafficking of children for CSEM production from a scoping review of academic and grey literature, and all crucial information gathered from IJM and partners.

2. Systematically collecting information on datasets and dataset viability conducted through one-on-one interviews with External Advisory Council members to determine viability of datasets and their role in estimating prevalence using these data.
3. Systematically identifying key knowledge and data gaps.
4. Having a template method for consolidating and organizing information about trafficking of children to produce CSEM for possible replication.

### Determining the Modus Operandi and Context of Trafficking of Children to Produce CSEM in the Philippines

To understand trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines, the study adopted the following approaches: 1) a desk-based scoping review; and 2) gathering and presenting existing research, evidence, and information from various sectors through a systematic approach called ‘crime scripting’.

#### Scoping Review

Rights Lab led a scoping review compiling various sources of literature including the following: academic and grey literature databases; anti-trafficking and anti-slavery websites; child sexual abuse and exploitation literature; and recommendations from colleagues and stakeholders, including key informants from different organizations.

#### Crime Scripting

The crime scripting mechanism was utilized to synthesize evidence on either identified or non-identified information about key actors, actions, objects (and their features), and contextual conditions such as social, cultural or economic that represent the entire modus operandi of trafficking of children for CSEM production in the Philippines. Crime scripting is a practical approach that synthesizes all available information within the process of a crime to come up with most relevant data sources and indicators linked to locations,

actors, objects, and actions that will potentially measure the prevalence.

The crime script developed by Rights Lab has typologies of key actors and elements within the trafficking of children for CSEM production transaction process. Key actors include the *trafficker (supply-side)*, *demand-side offender*, and the *victim or target of exploitation*.

The findings show that traffickers are usually family members or close relatives. This finding is consistent with IJM's previous 2020 study. Other typologies of traffickers consist of operations linked to and facilitated by organized crime groups; traffickers that impersonate children to lure demand-side offenders into a scam and eventually gain money; and traffickers who act both as a demand-side offender and an exploiter typically through grooming and manipulation of children to produce CSEM for consumption and distribution. Demand-side offenders are sexually motivated individuals who consume CSEM produced by traffickers. IJM previously found that demand-side offenders usually are in their mid-twenties to sixties, mostly in their fifties.<sup>29</sup> Demand-side offenders are typically male with Caucasian or European ethnicity, or from Western countries like the U.S., Australia, Germany, and U.K.<sup>30</sup>

Victims or targets of child sexual exploitation may come from different ages or age ranges. While the average age of trafficked victims at the time of law enforcement intervention is 11 years old, IJM has supported Philippine law enforcement in bringing to safety victims as young as below one year old.<sup>31</sup> Children are usually abused for a long period of time ranging in length from two months to four years with an average abuse duration of two years, which leave children in a condition of psychological distress.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> International Justice Mission, *Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Philippines: Analysis and Recommendations for Governments, Industry, and Civil Society*.

<sup>30</sup> DeMarco, J., Sharrock, S., Crowther, T., & Barnard, M., 2018. *Behaviour and Characteristics of Perpetrators of Online-facilitated Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation*. NatCen, January. [https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/basw\\_64920-4.pdf](https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/basw_64920-4.pdf)

Rights Lab determined the trafficking of children to produce CSEM modus operandi mainly works through the following components: (1) social networking and text messaging apps; (2) money or remittance transfer; and (3) CSEM production and dissemination.

1. Social networking and text messaging apps were identified as platforms where demand-side offenders would initiate contact with traffickers online, which also includes referrals by other demand-side offenders.
2. Money or remittance transfer would then be processed by demand-side offenders to traffickers. Payment terms and requests are initiated by the traffickers and are made before the livestream.
3. According to IJM's 2020 study<sup>33</sup> and a previous study by UNICEF in 2021, production and dissemination of CSEM are often happening in the surface web or mainstream social media platforms and conducted using mobile phones.<sup>34</sup>

Two systematic data maps were established outlining the modus operandi of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines based on relevant datasets. The first data map shows all datasets that are directly relevant to a robust prevalence estimation. The data directory included: The National household ICT survey; Annual poverty indicators survey; National family income and expenditure survey; National demographic and health survey; Census data; Social amelioration program data; Conditional cash transfer also known as the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)* data; UNICEF Kids online

<sup>31</sup> International Justice Mission, *Online Sexual Exploitation of Children*.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> UNICEF. (2021). *National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in the Philippines*. <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/reports/national-study-online-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation-children-philippines>

survey; UNICEF Disrupting Harm survey; and DSWD intake form. These datasets contain information and knowledge on traffickers (supply-side), demand-side offenders, and the victims or targets of exploitation including behaviors to support methodology development. The second data map included relevant datasets but were excluded due to concerns surrounding data quality or bias. After data mapping, the project team began considering data access and existing methodologies that may contribute to prevalence estimates. Alongside access, data viability assessments were conducted to evaluate the extent to which data was accessible, ethical and accurate.

The additional sections below include all the different components that went into the study's methodology development. Some of these were happening simultaneously. We believe all these components combined contributed to a successful implementation and outcome.

### Multi-sector partnership and collaboration

Following the data directory's creation, the study engaged with stakeholders representing important and relevant sectors to establish data partnerships and engage with subject matter expertise. Multi-sector partnerships were established from both local and international academia, non-government organizations, government sector and the private sector to build a comprehensive methodology. These identified partners were convened to form an External Advisory Council (EAC). The EAC was composed of 24 organizations from the following fields: technology, financial, law enforcement, research, non-government, government, and child protection. The EAC were invited to a series of roundtables to design, contribute and advise on the development of a prevalence methodology alongside IJM and Rights Lab. EAC members were engaged in preliminary viability assessments of data sources and research methods. Following roundtable discussions, individual consultations led by the Rights Lab were held with specific sectors or organizations to gather in-depth insights to

progress the methodology. Outputs from each session were collected and mapped out based on the existing priority and objectives. Rights Lab and IJM also consulted with Philippine government agencies working on monitoring suspicious financial transactions, and information and communications technology.

The following specific factors were considered during data viability assessments of secondary datasets:

- What was the degree where unique trafficking to produce CSEM indicators could be identified (i.e., either in current form, or in principle) in specific available datasets? What was the quality of evidence these indicators have?
- How did the structure of data look like including its temporal and spatial granularity?
- Was there any accessible contextual information about how datasets were collected, processed, and perhaps analyzed?
- What is the level of readiness among specific target institutions and sectors to partner with IJM and Rights Lab for study implementation?

### Focus group discussion with IJM subject matter experts

As part of reviewing progress, IJM subject matter experts, such as Filipino social workers, lawyers, internet crimes against children specialist, and psychologists were consulted to advise on the methodology. These professionals have specialized knowledge and experience engaging across the Philippines at community level (i.e., with families and community members). Each professional was consulted to better understand community dynamics and networks, which helped to inform the design and execution of the survey within different community settings.

IJM has teams in Metro Manila and Metro Cebu with years of experience working on hundreds of individual trafficking of children to produce CSEM cases in collaboration with Philippine government and foreign law

enforcement partners. These experts were provided with an overview of the proposed methodology for the prevalence study, particularly on the survey component. They were asked questions related to ethnographic knowledge on the ground to identify the following: who are most knowledgeable about trafficking of children for CSEM production in the communities; behaviors of traffickers (e.g., how often they produce CSEM); varying costs for different types of CSEM and payment platforms used by traffickers and demand-side offenders; possible relationship between traffickers and adult prostitution; and characteristics of trafficking of children for CSEM production-implicated communities and the rural-urban split among these areas (e.g., religion, ethnicity). Insights of IJM case experts on these questions informed the overall proposed survey method such as who the potential survey respondents are, and important factors and considerations in conducting a trafficking of children to produce CSEM prevalence study in Filipino communities nationwide.

### Innovative Approach to Measure Prevalence

The *Scale of Harm's* methodology development produced numerous outputs to achieve the project's objectives to determine a robust and replicable method that quantitatively estimates the prevalence of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines.

Primary prevalence estimation method (national surveys using the Network Scale-Up Method)

The *Scale of Harm's* primary method to estimate prevalence is a national household survey conducted in communities across the Philippines where traffickers and victims may reside. This survey is replicable both in the Philippines and can be contextualized for adaption and use in other countries. The national household survey used the network scale-up method (NSUM) to target community

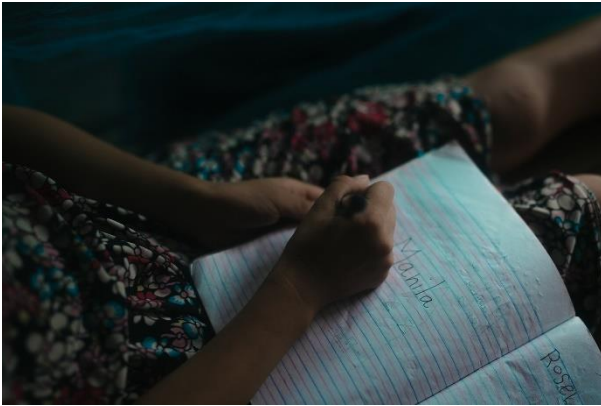
knowledge of the trafficking of children to produce CSEM via their social connections and networks. Simply put, NSUM is a unique method whereby the survey does not focus on the participant's individual experience but rather asks the participant to reflect on their social connections, requesting insights into others' behaviors while quantitatively assessing the size of their networks. After extensive exploration and consideration, the NSUM survey approach was determined to offer the most viable and valid results to estimate prevalence of trafficking of children for CSEM production.

Numerous assessments made by the project team indicated that NSUM could provide accurate estimates. Methods assessments considered contextual and environmental factors for implementing a study in the Philippines, including the complexity of accessing the trafficking of children to produce CSEM as a phenomenon. Furthermore, the NSUM method has been endorsed by organizations such as GFEMS<sup>35</sup> as an approach to measure other forms of human trafficking and modern slavery. Survey methods presented as the strongest methodology option, since they can be used to generate prevalence estimates independently of access to and quality of secondary datasets. A scoping review conducted by the Rights Lab indicated that national survey work on online sexual exploitation of children, such as the trafficking of children to produce CSEM, was feasible in the Philippines.<sup>36</sup> Based on these considerations, a strong argument transpired for using the NSUM survey as a primary methodology for *Scale of Harm's* objective.

<sup>35</sup> Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, "Prevalence Estimation Methods Brief," 10 February 2021, <https://gfems.org/reports/prevalence-estimation-methods-brief/>.

<sup>36</sup> UNICEF, *National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in the Philippines*.

## Scale of Harm: Methodology Implementation



In May 2022, IJM proceeded to the *Scale of Harm* methodology implementation phase to conduct the prevalence study in the Philippines. The next section details the project's survivor engagement followed by how the methodology was executed, specifically the national household survey from which captured data was used in NSUM to produce national prevalence estimates.

In addition, during the implementation, secondary data sets were explored to generate municipality-level information. Appendix A explains how secondary data analysis will be used for this purpose following *Scale of Harm* since these data sets fall beyond the scope of estimating national prevalence.

### Survivor Engagement

In 2011, IJM began partnering with Philippine government, international law enforcement and other NGOs to address trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines. Survivor leaders, advocates, and consultants have become an essential component of programming, including efforts to advocate

for reform and change to protect others from being victimized. Survivors' lived experience allows them to share about the nature of exploitation, the factors that enable trafficking of children to produce CSEM to thrive, insights into the traffickers who profit from abuse, and possible solutions to protect children. Survivor leaders through their experiences can address both the protection and restoration that must exist to promote safe communities and individual healing.

According to a definition used by the U.S. Department of Justice, "A program, policy, intervention or product is survivor informed if the design, implementation and evaluation has intentional input from victims/survivors ensuring that the program or product accurately represents the need, interests and perception of the target population."<sup>37</sup>

In the Philippines, IJM's Program Against Online Sexual Exploitation of Children convened the Philippine Survivor Network (PSN) by unifying existing survivor groups: Survivors Mentoring and Advocating for Restorative Transformation (SMART) in Cebu and Standing Together Advocating Rights (All-Stars) in Manila, which started in 2012. The PSN is an all-inclusive program for survivors of child sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation, and online sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines, who desire and pursue safe communities through justice systems that protect the most vulnerable people.

The PSN was formally launched on February 8, 2023, and currently has more than 100 members all over the country. PSN has been actively involved in several advocacy efforts both locally and internationally.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the PSN is a member of the Global Survivor Network (GSN).<sup>39</sup> Through the

<sup>37</sup> This is the definition used by U.S. Department of Justice: [https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/model-standards/5/glossary.html#demo2\\_tip](https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/model-standards/5/glossary.html#demo2_tip)

<sup>38</sup> This includes drafting two letters to the EU Parliament and U.K. government, calling on them to strengthen and pass respective online safety bills based on their personal knowledge of the protection that can follow the enactment of these bills. Three Philippine survivor leaders provided expert consultation to World Economic Forum's Global Principles on Digital Safety.

The inclusion of survivor voice and from the Global South in this integral online safety resource leverages their expertise to foster a safer internet for children globally. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Global\\_Charter\\_of\\_Principles\\_for\\_Digital\\_Safety\\_2023.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Charter_of_Principles_for_Digital_Safety_2023.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> <https://globalsurvivornetwork.org/>

GSN, survivors of violence worldwide are advocating for change in their communities and speaking out as leaders. The GSN includes survivors from Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America, and South Asia. PSN adheres to GSN standards in conducting its processes and activities. These include but are not limited to contextualization of the purpose or objectives, and criteria of membership and selection of survivors in the Philippines.

Survivors offer a unique and invaluable lens to understand nuances of human trafficking but can often be overlooked in research where their experience is most critical.<sup>40</sup>

Acknowledging the significance of survivor engagement, *Scale of Harm* incorporated survivor leadership as a vital component of the project. Rights Lab led the survivor engagement working with survivor consultants who are part of the PSN. The survivor consultants contributed their experiences and knowledge of the Philippine context to the household survey design. In addition, they co-designed and led two focus group discussions (FGDs) with six other survivor leaders from the PSN. Details of the FGD results are shared in a later section.

#### Survivor Consultants: Collaboration

From August 2022 to May 2023, the study team led by the Rights Lab collaborated closely with three survivor consultants in an iterative process to co-design and co-deliver the FGDs. The consultation included survivor-informed mechanisms to identify structure and rhythms of planning and preparations for the FGDs. Survivor consultants proposed an approach that would work best for them throughout the engagement. Orientations and initial meetings were held to establish the structure preferred by survivor consultants including prepared materials to support this process. Survivors met with the research team on a weekly basis. The purpose of these weekly sessions was to prepare for the upcoming FGDs to ensure discussions went smoothly and key observations were captured accurately. In these weekly sessions, agendas were set and visual materials created to help

the team follow a structured flow. Research concepts and methods were expounded by the Rights Lab, including introductory seminars on the *Scale of Harm*, including its rationale and objectives, and other studies related to the project. In between weekly sessions, survivor consultants were able to review and provide feedback on the upcoming FGD materials.

As part of the survivor engagement, survivor consultants reviewed drafts of the household survey questionnaire to ensure that:

- language translations were accurate and sensible;
- questions were culturally appropriate in the context of Filipino communities; and
- questions would likely be answered by survey participants in households across the Philippines.

#### Survivor-Led Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The FGDs offered an in-depth and diverse understanding of trafficking of children to produce CSEM from people with lived experience of exploitation. The FGDs offered a space for survivors to share their perceptions about current interventions to address trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines. Survivor leaders were asked to share contextual insights to improve the interpretation of the household survey results.

The objectives of the FGDs are specified below:

1. Understand how trafficking and child sexual exploitation are understood and recognized by the wider population of the Philippines;
2. Ensure that our research was culturally sensitive and conducted in the best interest of those who live in the Philippines;
3. Understand the needs of communities, and how efforts to address trafficking and exploitation are currently perceived;
4. Sense check and provide authoritative comment on the data captured by the

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<sup>40</sup> Lockyer (2020): Beyond Inclusion: Survivor-Leader Voice in Anti-Human Trafficking Organizations, *Journal of Human Trafficking*, DOI: [10.1080/23322705.2020.1756122](https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2020.1756122)



- household survey by interrogating aggregated results; and
5. Use the results of objectives 1-4 to take the necessary methodological decisions for calculating prevalence via NSUM.

A small sample of six participants ( $n=6$ ) from the PSN were invited to engage in two, two-hour FGDs. The survivor leaders are network members who are considered as ‘restored’ or those who have typically exited care, are living back within their communities, and are often professionals and students with families of their own. The project timeline limited the number of survivors who would have received their onboarding prior to participating in the FGDs. This was an effective group size, but future research could engage more survivors from diverse regions and backgrounds across more FGDs.

The FGDs were conducted with the following components in their format: introduction to the project; study objectives and methods; and for the second FGD it included a presentation of the survey results. The FGD questions were semi-structured with a list of prompts and follow up questions. For full details about the ethics considerations and protocols in place for *Scale of Harm’s* survivor engagement, please see Appendix C (Ethics).

#### Feedback from Survivor Consultants and Survivor Leaders

Following the FGDs, survivor consultants were invited to reflect on their experience of working on the study. Responses were collected via an anonymous online questionnaire, which asked for their general reflections on the FGDs, working with the team and recommendations on improving future engagements with other survivor groups.

Overall, the feedback was excellent and extremely positive. Survivor consultants were

happy to participate in collaborative efforts which led them to build their confidence. Survivor consultants noted improvements in the level of engagement among other survivor leaders between their participation in FGD 1 and FGD 2.

Survivor leaders were requested to provide feedback on the FGDs they participated in via an anonymous online questionnaire post-FGD. Overall, they provided positive responses affirming that it was a good opportunity for them to participate and they felt that they were listened to. They also found the overall FGD process and structure helpful. Although in FGD 2, some survivor leaders were confused in specific parts of FGD questions. Survivors noted that each question item should have a clear context and be clearly explained even before actual discussions.

#### Estimating prevalence: Network Scale-Up Method (NSUM) Survey

Calculations of the prevalence of something occurring in a population normally resort to surveying a sample of the population within which the occurrence features. However, the criminal nature of trafficking of children to produce CSEM complicates the collection of data from people who are in any way linked to the crime (and therefore want to remain anonymous). Therefore, in *Scale of Harm*, the primary prevalence method adopted for estimating national prevalence of trafficking of children to produce CSEM was the Network Scale-Up Method (NSUM), a method that has been developed to measure hidden populations.

This choice of method informed the design of the project’s sampling framework and survey instrument, which was implemented to support data collection via computer-assisted, face-to-face household surveys for prevalence estimation. The following section presents the NSUM approach adopted in this study.

## Network Scale-Up Method adopted for Scale of Harm

The form of NSUM used in this study was proposed by Killworth et al. in 1998 as a means of estimating the size of groups that share a common characteristic.<sup>41</sup> Using this approach, respondents in a survey are asked how many people they know have each set of different characteristics, one or more of which are the target of the study (in this case a perpetrator or victim of trafficking to produce CSEM). This approach is specifically suited to and used for groups with stigma, i.e., revealing identities would be too personal for the respondents such as adults and children studied in *Scale of Harm*. These groups are also known as “hidden populations.”

NSUM takes advantage of the observation that personal networks are reflective of the population as a whole. This emerged from the recent field of social networks research and realizing that being able to survey the

relationship ties that exist between people in a population is a powerful tool for understanding the structure of that population.<sup>42</sup> The method is based on the following steps:

1. Estimate the size of each person’s (respondent in a survey) personal network;
2. Use the occurrence of a characteristic in the personal network to estimate the prevalence of the characteristic in the population.

The standard form of network scale up data is a matrix, where each row is a respondent and each column is a category, known as aggregated relational data (ARD). The value in each cell is therefore the number of people the respondent knows in that category.

The characteristics for which the number of members is known are called the known groups and the remaining are the unknown groups. Selected *known* and *unknown or hidden* groups or population were the following:

Table 1. Selected Known and Unknown Population

Known Population	Unknown or Hidden Population
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doctors</li> <li>• Lawyers</li> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Drivers</li> <li>• Nurses</li> <li>• Guards</li> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Construction Workers</li> <li>• Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Workers</li> <li>• Retail or ‘Sari-sari’ Store Owners</li> <li>• Social Workers</li> <li>• Children aged 0-2</li> <li>• Children aged 3-5</li> <li>• Children aged 6-12</li> <li>• Children aged 13-17</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children forced to produce non-live CSEM.</li> <li>• Children forced to produce live CSEM.</li> <li>• Adults who are forcing children to produce non-live CSEM.</li> <li>• Adults who are forcing children to produce live CSEM.</li> </ul>

<sup>41</sup> Killworth, P.D. et al. (1998) “A Social Network Approach to Estimating Seroprevalence in the United States”, *Social Networks*, 20(1), pp. 23–50. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0378-8733\(96\)00305-x](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0378-8733(96)00305-x).

<sup>42</sup> Killworth, P.D. et al. (1990) ‘Estimating the Size of Personal Networks’, *Social Networks*, 12(4), pp. 289–312. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-8733\(90\)90012-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-8733(90)90012-X).

Travers, J. and Milgram, S. (1969) ‘An Experimental Study of the Small World Problem’, *Sociometry*, 32(4), pp. 425–443. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2786545>

Starting from the ARD, the standard approach is to use the number of people a respondent knows in each category over the known size of that category in the population to estimate the number of people the respondent knows (degree size). After the degree has been estimated, it can be combined with the

number of people reported in each unknown group to form an unbiased estimate of that unknown group's occurrence in the population. This is the crucial observation that enables scale up and is the ratio reported by Killworth in the original NSUM method:

$$\frac{\text{Number of people in the category the respondent knows}}{\text{Total numbers of people the respondent knows}} = \frac{\text{Number of people in the category}}{\text{Total population}}$$

Figure 2. NSUM Core Equation

### Victim Estimate Approach

The summation method was used to accurately estimate the size of unknown child groups or population for this study.<sup>43</sup>

This method involves directly estimating the respondent's degree from the sum of their responses in the different categories. The benefit of this approach is that having to recall the number of people in each category is reduced to a few well-defined categories. In this case, the categories were four age categories (see *Table 1. Selected Known and Unknown Population*), and they amount to the number of people the respondent knew that are 17 and under. Additionally, when an adult respondent is asked if they know someone, the requirement is that this knowledge is reciprocated by the other adult person. Due to the weakness of the social ties between adults and children, the definition and parameters were slightly different for adult respondents being asked if they knew a child. This means that a respondent can report knowing a child without the child reporting knowing them. This relaxed condition allows information to be more reliably collected from adults with no children surveyed and information from a weak tie, which is the strength of NSUM and can be usefully extracted.<sup>44</sup>

The summation method is designed to reduce barrier and transmission effects. Firstly, the method overcomes this by asking the respondent to report the number of people they know in distinct and clear categories, which are easy to recall and report such as family relations and age groups. This procedure is suggested to reduce double-counting; which happens easily in the case of occupational groups as people can work in multiple jobs (Bernard et al. 2010). For this study, as each child is in exactly one age group this effect is minimized. Secondly, by using the sum of responses as actual degree size, the method sidesteps the issue of estimation through complex methods that exacerbate these effects. The only remaining problem is if the respondents cannot recall their connections to the required groups in the allotted time. This, however, is a limitation of any network scale-up method.

### Trafficker Estimate Approach

For the adult unknown groups, the occupational categories were the starting point for degree estimation. In total, 11 different known groups were provided to respondents. Each of these would estimate personal degrees differently and the goal would be to select a few that accurately reflect the distribution of what people's true degrees are. This is with the idea that just one

<sup>43</sup> McCarty, C. et al. (2001) "Comparing Two Methods for Estimating Network Size," *Human Organization*, 60(1), pp. 28–39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44126693>.

<sup>44</sup> Feehan, D.M., Hai Son, V. and Abdul-Quader, A. (2022) "Survey Methods for Estimating the Size of Weak-Tie Personal Networks," *Sociological Methodology*, 52(2), pp. 193–219. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00811750221109568>

category, which is proportionately spread in people's networks as the size of that category in the population is adequate to determine degree size. There are also criteria that can be used to reduce this list of known groups and make the estimation procedure more self-consistent (Habecker et al., 2015).

To generate the adult estimates from the ARD, the study chose a Bayesian NSUM approach that accounts for barrier and transmission effects.<sup>45</sup> Four models were implemented, and the final model was used in estimation as the other models deal with separate issues of NSUM and are combined in the final 'full' model employed in the *Scale of Harm*. (Please see Appendix B for details on the models.)

### Design of the NSUM survey

The Rights Lab led the research design including instruments, protocols, and sampling design, which were followed by Ipsos Philippines during implementation in addition to their existing research principles and protocols. The NSUM survey design, methodology and questions were refined through consultations with in-country subject matter experts mainly IJM Philippines program teams and survivor consultants to ensure that the survey was culturally sensitive, adapted for local languages and sound to produce accurate and reliable prevalence estimates. Insights provided by IJM subject matters and survivors contributed to the development of the survey instrument and approach. These insights include guidance on the wording and language, delivery of the survey, ensuring confidentiality, and additional guidance based on expert community knowledge and experience in working with local communities.

The national household survey was presented as a study regarding 'Internet Behavior and Safety' to support engagement from the local government units<sup>46</sup> (i.e., *barangays*) and individuals, and to protect respondents from

being perceived as 'giving information' on criminal activity. Because the survey was designed to align with the theme of Internet Behavior and Safety, this eased the respondents into responding on topics about trafficking of children to produce CSEM, and remained succinct enough that high drop-out rates were prevented.

The target sample size was 3,600 households, which were successfully surveyed across 150 municipalities in the Philippines. Respondents were adults who are 18 to 65 years old distributed across male and female on a 1:1 ratio. The survey was designed and conducted in different local languages including Filipino, Cebuano, and Hiligaynon (also known as Ilonggo) based on the languages spoken in all sample areas. The survey locations and households were randomly sampled to provide the following four key prevalence measures from the respondent's network in year 2022 that are representative of the population:

To obtain prevalence estimates of traffickers who produce CSEM, the survey respondents were asked about how many children they know in 2022 are used or forced by an adult to produce sexually explicit livestream, and videos or photos.

To obtain prevalence estimates of child victims of trafficking to produce CSEM, the survey respondents were asked about how many adults they know in 2022 who are involved in selling sexually explicit livestream, and videos or photos of children.

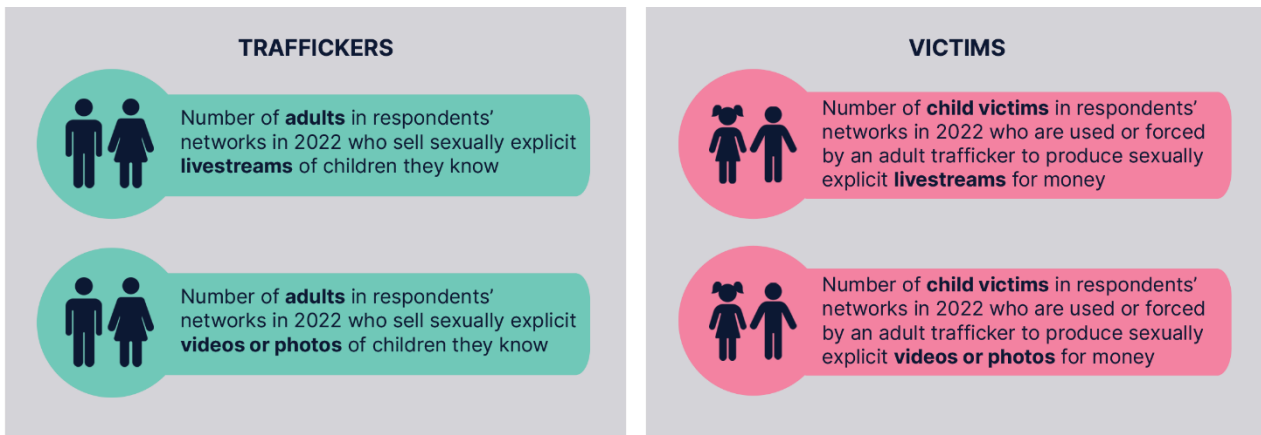
Additional survey data to support the analysis of these prevalence measures are:

- Household rosters
- Adult network size estimate
- Child network size estimate
- Estimated frequency of trafficking of children to produce CSEM events; # child victims per trafficker; estimated profit (per week / month / year).

<sup>45</sup> Maltiel, R. et al. (2015) "Estimating Population Size Using the Network Scale up Method." *The Annals of Applied Statistics*, 9(3), pp. 1247-1277. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43826420>.

<sup>46</sup> Barangay is the basic political unit in the Philippines. [https://www.dilg.gov.ph/PDF\\_File/reports\\_resources/dilg-reports-resources-2016120\\_5e0bb28e41.pdf](https://www.dilg.gov.ph/PDF_File/reports_resources/dilg-reports-resources-2016120_5e0bb28e41.pdf)

## Four Key Prevalence Measures



### Defining Adults and Children

The survey defined an *adult* 'who you know' as someone who the respondent knew by sight and name and that adult also knew the respondent by sight and name within year 2022 (i.e., from January to December). This would create a network populated by family or relatives, friends, colleagues, or geographically close community members. People who the respondents knew but did not know them such as famous people, individuals they may have heard of, and people outside their municipality/city were not included.

For estimating child network size, the study defined a *child* 'who you know' as a child who the adult respondents knew by sight and name/nickname in year 2022, but the child did not need to know them by sight and name/nickname (excluding famous children). This was because a child's network under the same criteria (who they know by sight and name/nickname) would be too narrow and would exclude too many children from the respondent's child network size. The broader definition was anticipated to include family or relatives and the children of friends, colleagues, or geographically close community members and have the same purpose as listed above.


### Sampling Approach

A stratified multistage clustered area sampling approach was applied to determine the number and spatial distribution of barangays to sample during the household survey. This method involves splitting the population into groups at different stages of the sampling frame to ensure the population is representative while providing a cost-efficient sampling frame (known as a Probability Proportional to Size). The number of households sampled within each randomly selected barangay was determined by population size and the desired statistical margin of error. During the initial stages of designing the survey, it was determined by way of a sample size calculator<sup>47</sup> that between 3,000 to 5,000 household survey responses in total would provide statistically robust nationally representative samples for each national survey.

Given the resources for the survey implementation by Ipsos, the final sample size was 3,600 surveys (Philippines population used was 113,771,856). This was distributed across barangays in 150 municipalities (24 household surveys per barangay) and given a 99% confidence level gives a margin of error of 2.15% (i.e., there is a 99% chance that the real value is within  $\pm 2.15\%$  of the measured/surveyed value). The total number of barangays was chosen to support the potential of secondary data analysis, which is at the scale of the municipality.

<sup>47</sup> See sample size calculator at: <https://www.calculator.net/sample-size-calculator.html>.

# Surveyed Municipalities in the Philippines

 The survey covered **150 municipalities** across the Philippines (Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao)

 **3,600 total surveys** were conducted nationwide in Tagalog, Cebuano, and Hiligaynon (Ilonggo)

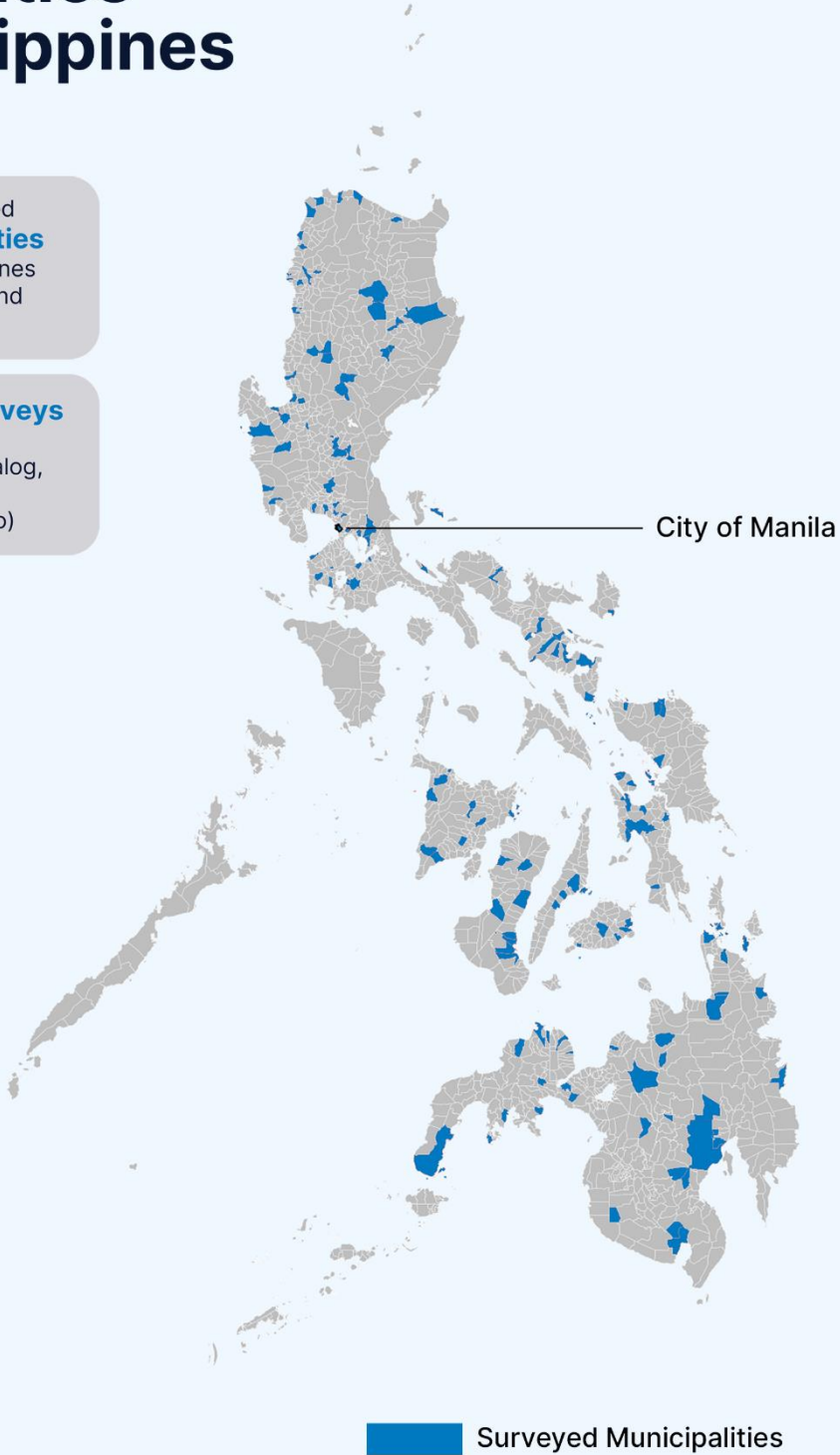


Figure 3. Map of Surveyed Municipalities in the Philippines

## Ethics Review and Approval

The study implementation involved various research activities that required ethical review and feedback prior to the start of data collection. These include the following:

- A national household survey conducted in the Philippines;
- A series of focus group discussions with survivors of trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material; and
- Analysis of secondary datasets that required permission from data owners before their use (see Appendix A).

IJM ensured that the study was compliant to both international and Philippine ethical requirements and standards. At the international level, ethics application was reviewed, and approval was granted by the University of Nottingham's School of Politics and International Relations' Ethics Committee. At the in-country level, ethics was reviewed and approved by the Philippine Social Science Council's Social Science Ethics Review Board or PSSC-SSERB (approval number CE-22-53).<sup>48</sup>

All research activities were conducted in accordance with the University of Nottingham Code of Research Conduct<sup>49</sup> and Research Ethics and Data Protection Policy.<sup>50</sup> This process ensured a robust approach to securing informed consent, as well as data collection, analysis, storage, and sharing.

No personally identifiable information was collected throughout the study and research participants in the national household survey and survivor focus group discussions were provided with relevant privacy information, including a description of which data will be more broadly shared under controlled conditions, and describing what safeguards

were in place for the storage and handling of data. All publicly shared data from the study were anonymized/pseudonymized so that no individuals are identifiable. Anonymization and pseudonymization protocols were established prior to data collection as part of the study's broader research and ethical protocols. Since all data collected in the study are handled and managed primarily by the University of Nottingham Rights Lab, which is based in United Kingdom, research consultants followed the Information Commissioner's Office Guidelines and Code of Practice in anonymization and managing data protection risk.<sup>51</sup> These accounted for the specific context of the research, to ensure both direct and indirect identifiers were removed to prevent placing participants at risk.

The Rights Lab worked closely with IJM research team during the preparation of the research ethics protocols and closely with Ipsos and IJM during implementation to ensure the field protocols followed the ethics principles described in the application and signed off by the University of Nottingham School of Politics and International Relations Research Ethics Committee, and the Philippines Social Science Council Social Science Ethics Review Board, respectively.

Key principles of the approved ethics protocols are summarized in Appendix C (Ethics). The process primarily refers to the survey protocol, however these same principles were adapted and applied during the focus group discussions and the process of analyzing the secondary datasets.

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<sup>48</sup> See in-country ethics review process and requirements submitted at the Philippine Social Science Council's Social Science Ethics Review Board: <https://www.pssc.org.ph/sserb/>

<sup>49</sup> The University of Nottingham, "Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics," April 2016, <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/academic-services/documents/academic-misconduct/code-of-research-conduct-and-research-ethics-version-6-2016.pdf>

<sup>50</sup> The University of Nottingham, "Data Protection Policy:" <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/governance/records-and-information-management/data-protection/data-protection-policy.aspx>

<sup>51</sup> The United Kingdom's Information Commissioner's Office, "Anonymisation: managing data protection risk code of practice." November 2012, <https://ico.org.uk/media/1061/anonymisation-code.pdf>

## Conducting the Survey

### Pilot testing

NSUM survey pilot tests were conducted simultaneously from September 29 to October 1, 2022, across three key study areas or metro cities in the Philippines: Metro Manila ( $n=20$ ), Cebu City ( $n=15$ ), and Davao City ( $n=15$ ).

Overall, the pilot test sought to assess sequence and flow of questions and instructions, check for respondents' comprehension, understanding and comfort level of the questionnaire (i.e., is it easy to understand or does it make them feel uncomfortable?), identify variation in responses, identify translation gaps and assess potential dropout rates.

Pilot testing suggested that minor amendments to the survey would improve the respondent's understanding and comfort on sensitive questions related to internet behavior and activities. After the pilot, enumerator scripts were added to the survey as a method to build rapport and reassure the respondents of their privacy and anonymity in participation.

### Training

Two training sessions led by Ipsos were conducted for field enumerators: 1) November 3 for Metro Manila and Luzon teams; and 2) November 8 for Visayas and Mindanao teams. On January 12, 2023, additional training was conducted for the extra 100 surveys in Metro Manila. These trainings targeted full understanding of the survey objectives and questionnaire, research protocols, execution of the methodology, and other reminders or necessary actions for potential fieldwork issues.

While data collection was underway, each field team had weekly calls or refresher sessions led by their field supervisors. These weekly meetings allowed the teams to align and

refresh on objectives; discuss and resolve difficulties; keep track of remaining targets; provide feedback on implementation and areas covered; and other relevant matters. There were 71 field enumerators and 26 field supervisors deployed nationwide. All enumerators were recruited locally so they are accustomed to local languages and culture.

### Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted from November 7 to December 23, 2022, using computer-assisted personal interviewing which refers to an in-person survey data collection by an enumerator using a tablet computer.<sup>52</sup> On December 15, IJM was able to observe in-person fieldwork in one sample barangay in Metro Manila. IJM observed how the surveys were administered from random selection of households, conversation with household informant at the doorstep up to actual interviews. IJM provided feedback to enumerators for more effective conduct of the survey.

When it came to the target questions about trafficking of children to produce CSEM, Ipsos reported that some respondents were hesitant when asked about trafficking of children to produce CSEM and in a manner that suggested that they knew people in the hidden population, but they would still report knowing none. To mitigate these concerns, field enumerators followed the survey protocols and script for probing for responses and reassuring respondents of confidentiality and anonymity.

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<sup>52</sup> Ipsos, "Ipsos Encyclopedia - Face to Face Interview." 16 May 2018. <https://www.ipsos.com/en/ipsos-encyclopedia-face-face-interview>



## Household and respondent selection

A starting point and a random start were randomly drawn and designated prior to the fieldwork. Household is selected through a random-walk procedure using an interval of five for urban areas where households were more condensed, and structures were adjacent to each other; and three for rural areas since households were more scattered.

Ipsos adhered to the standard survey guidelines and protocols in selecting and replacing households based on the sampling design. All sample households were given up to two valid callbacks following a specific time and day interval as applicable.

Several sample barangays were saturated hence the selection of expansion barangays in some municipalities. Meanwhile, a number of barangays had to be replaced due to valid reasons such as safety and security issues, and respondents or barangay officials were hesitant to cooperate for no particular reason. All household and barangay replacements or expansion were implemented in accordance with the agreed upon survey protocols to ensure that the sampling design and technique were followed.

## Additional surveys

Following completion of the national survey, 100 additional household surveys were conducted in the same municipalities sampled for Metro Manila; different barangays were randomly sampled to reduce risk of contamination. These 100 surveys enabled the study to:

- a. check variation in the municipality data when survey sample size was doubled;
- b. explore what the variation could mean for prevalence, when modelling it nationally.

These extra surveys were utilized to “sense-check” the findings of the 3,600 national household surveys by replicating the survey in four cities of Metro Manila (National Capital Region) – a suspected hotpot. Statistics from these surveys mirrored the findings from the 3,600 surveys and built confidence in the ability to replicate the *Scale of Harm* methodology.

## Survey partner’s data cleaning and processing

Ipsos was required to implement standard quality control measures to ensure the highest quality of data collected. Ten percent of each enumerators’ surveys were directly observed by their field supervisors to ensure accuracy of implementation and address difficulties early on. Twenty percent of completed interviews across all field teams were back checked by the internal quality control team of Ipsos (i.e., checked after the survey was done). Ipsos onboarded a third-party vendor to conduct extra quality control by revisiting and conducting back check of 20% of interviews through phone and data vetting to validate responses on the key questions measuring trafficking of children to produce CSEM. During the back-checking, validated answers were reflected and treated as the final answer.

Although the purpose of the household survey was to capture the networks of respondents and the hidden populations within them, supporting questions on respondent demographics and on-line behavior were also captured and can be found in the results section.

## Limitations



### Network Scale Up Method (NSUM) Survey: Scope and methodological limitations

The household surveys did not ask for all types of child exploitation known by adults. The study examined a specific form of online sexual exploitation of children which involves the trafficking of children to produce CSEM. This type of exploitation usually involves livestreaming of exploitation occurring in all types of platforms and applications including end-to-end encrypted (E2EE) platforms. Specifically, the study looked at three elements present in trafficking of children to produce CSEM:

- A trafficker in close physical proximity (in the same place) as the child who is being exploited.
- The exchange of compensation (usually money but in some cases material things) between the trafficker and another person, in exchange for CSEM.
- Newly produced (including online livestreaming) CSEM.

There are some important limitations of this study to note.

The terminology used in the survey was carefully considered. Since the respondents

may not recognize technical terminology thus more descriptive terminology was required to clarify what type of behavior is being referred to. Efforts were taken to confirm that the integrity of a question's intention and meaning was maintained through the different translations and ensured that the meanings did not shift in the cultural context.

In the sampling procedure, Region 4-B or MIMAROPA<sup>53</sup> was removed as most of the sample areas in the region are islands. Provinces in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao<sup>54</sup> were also removed due to security assessments and protocols. Replacements for the provinces from these two regions were methodologically selected according to sampling protocols to still obtain replacement municipalities or cities with the same profiles that would represent the rest of the regions in the Philippines.

There are some additional ethical considerations that IJM may wish to reassess in future replications. First, the project implementation partner Ipsos had an organizational protocol of limiting the respondents' age up to 60 years old due to the risk of Covid-19 and other communicable diseases to which senior respondents would have an increased vulnerability. However, due to previous research conducted by Rights Lab, the experiences of the SDAG, and the perspectives given by survivor consultants, it was strongly suspected that older household members would know a lot about the patterns of trafficking of children to produce CSEM within the household and community. Therefore, Rights Lab and Ipsos negotiated extending the maximum age to 65. When the results were processed, we had very low rates of 60–65-year-olds reporting knowing of a perpetrator or victim (2 out of 209). Rights Lab's survivor engagement team raised this with the survivor consultants, and it was advised that senior members of the community would have increased ideas of loyalty and would be less likely to report due

<sup>53</sup> Region IV-B or also known as MIMAROPA comprises provinces of Occidental Mindoro, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan. <https://psa.gov.ph/classification/psgc/summary>.

<sup>54</sup> Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao or BARMM comprises provinces of Basilan, Lanao Del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Maguindanao Del Norte and Maguindanao Del Sur. <https://bangsamoro.gov.ph/>.

to ‘protecting the family/community reputation’. Future surveys should consider whether the cultural context of other Asia Pacific countries would reflect this and question whether the risk of exposure to senior respondents outweighs the low likelihood they would share knowledge with enumerators.

### Network Scale-Up Method Biases

NSUM approach is subject to three main biases that have been present as well in several other studies.<sup>55</sup> These are *barrier effects*, *transmission bias*, and *recall bias*. In using the approach by Killworth, solutions to these biases were applied to this study.

*Barrier effects* are violations of the random mixing assumption in NSUM which refers to the assumption that individuals from the hidden population have an equal chance of interacting with individuals from the general population. This means that individuals in the hidden population have the same probability of being in the network of every respondent as they are equally spread in the population.

The assumption of random mixing is important in NSUM because it allows for each respondent’s contribution to the estimate of the hidden population’s size to be independent of other respondents, a property that is crucial for subsequent modelling. The assumption of random mixing may not always hold true in practice, and it is known that there are systematic differences in the way that individuals associate with each other. Social networks exhibit a tendency to form cliques, but weak friendship ties that people have can be very informative.<sup>56</sup> This means that individuals in the hidden population are more likely to be in the networks of

individuals that are similar to them. This is known as the homophily effect. A suggestion to deal with this effect is to use larger samples to capture the real occurrence of the hidden population.<sup>57</sup> This adjustment is associated with higher resource costs, however, and not always feasible.

*Transmission bias* is a problem of visibility and reporting. It arises when the respondent may not know the full number of people in the hidden population in their personal network because the people in those categories do not expose their membership to the respondent.<sup>58</sup> Populations that are stigmatized such as those who are involved in trafficking will suffer highly from this effect, unless this is accounted for in modelling.

An approach using people connected to the hidden population defined as ‘alters’ was proposed to produce quantitative estimates, however, with hidden population where there is a criminal aspect like in this project, the learnings of this ‘Game of Contacts’ method cannot be readily applied.<sup>59</sup> This problem of transmission is almost equivalent to the false reporting of respondents on the number of people they know in a category in order to avoid being associated with the hidden population or protect their privacy. In both cases, the number reported by the respondent is not the true occurrence of the hidden population in their network, so estimates are biased. The particular case of false reporting is more commonly known as a response bias and is a common problem in survey research and has to be dealt with in survey design.

*Recall bias* describes the difficulty for respondents to report the number of people they know in a category in the given survey time. Although this is common in surveying,

<sup>55</sup> McCarty, C. et al. (2001) “Comparing Two Methods for Estimating Network Size,” 28–39. Bernard, H.R. et al. (2010) “Counting Hard-to-count Populations: The Network Scale-up Method for Public Health,” *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 86(Suppl 2), pp. ii11–ii15.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/sti.2010.044446>. Feehan, D.M., Hai Son, V. and Abdul-Quader, A. (2022) “Survey Methods for Estimating the Size of Weak-Tie Personal Networks,” 193–219.

<sup>56</sup> Granovetter, M.S. (1973) “The Strength of Weak Ties.” *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), pp. 1360–1380. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2776392>.

<sup>57</sup> Laga, I., et al (2021) “Thirty Years of the Network Scale-up Method.” *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 116(535), pp. 1548–1559. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01621459.2023.2165929>.

<sup>58</sup> Bernard, H.R. et al., “Counting Hard-to-count Populations: The Network Scale-up Method for Public Health,” ii11–ii15.

<sup>59</sup> Salganik, M.J. et al. (2011) “The game of contacts: Estimating the social visibility of groups,” *Social Networks*, 33(1), pp. 70–78.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socnet.2010.10.006>.

in NSUM studies it has been noticed that people tend to underestimate the number of people from large categories and overestimate the number of people from small categories.<sup>60</sup> It has been suggested that people's responses will suffer from a logarithmic bias associated with the size of the population in question.<sup>61</sup>

These three biases informed the survey design of this study, including the NSUM approach adopted to estimate the national prevalence of trafficking of children to produce CSEM which were specified earlier in the "Victim Estimate Approach" and "Trafficker Estimate Approach" sections. As noted in *Table 1* (Selected Known and Unknown Population), key with respect to our designed survey instrument is that there were four sets of unknowns regarding trafficking of children to produce CSEM being asked of the household respondent:

- Children forced to produce non-livestreamed CSEM
- Children forced to produce livestreamed CSEM
- Adults forcing children to produce non-livestreamed CSEM
- Adults forcing children to produce livestreamed CSEM

The number of children forced to produce non-livestreamed and livestreamed CSEM were added together to estimate the number of victims of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines. While the number of adults forcing children to produce non-livestreamed and livestreamed CSEM were added together to estimate the traffickers. Models used to reduce the effects of the biases are detailed in Appendix B (Network Scale-Up Models).

#### Dealing with Respondent Underreporting

One of the known biases in household surveys such as in this study was that people would be

concerned about privacy and not report contacts in their personal network who are involved with the trafficking of children to produce CSEM. Therefore, NSUM was chosen for this reason; to add a layer of anonymity between the respondent and people they were concerned about reporting. Additionally, the Ipsos survey team would prompt respondents during the survey multiple times if necessary to reassure them that numbers and not names are being asked. Despite this, it was reported by Ipsos that people would visibly seize up when asked sensitive questions about trafficking of children to produce CSEM, suggesting that they knew someone involved in this crime; however, they would report knowing none. As a result, all modelling approaches for prevalence estimation had to account for this lack of reporting.

Rights Lab utilized IJM's collaborative casework data which they found to be useful to determining the extent of underreporting. These IJM-supported Philippine police-led operations were incidents or planned events involving IJM casework teams coordinating with government officials to enforce the laws on trafficking of children to produce CSEM, and operations involved police bringing victims to safety and arresting suspects. The number of victims brought to safety and suspects arrested were recorded by IJM and the difference between these numbers and the numbers reported in the survey could form a feasible bridge to the true prevalence of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines. Additional information from the casework data was used to come up with a ratio between the number of victims and the number of suspects arrested. Overlap between sample areas surveyed and the areas where IJM had supported Philippine police-led operations in can be used to determine underreporting.

<sup>60</sup> Zheng, T., Salganik, M.J. and Gelman, A. (2006) "How many people do you know in prison?" *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 101(474), pp. 409–423. <https://doi.org/10.1198/016214505000001168>.  
McCormick, T.H., Salganik, M.J. and Zheng, T. (2010) "How Many People Do You Know? Efficiently Estimating Personal Network Size."

*Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 105(489), pp. 59–70. <https://doi.org/10.1198/jasa.2009.ap08518>.

<sup>61</sup> Killworth, P.D. *et al.* (2003) "Two Interpretations of Reports of Knowledge of Subpopulation Sizes." *Social Networks*, 25(2), pp. 141–160. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-8733\(02\)00040-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-8733(02)00040-0).

## Fieldwork Limitations

The utmost priority during survey implementation was to collect accurate and high-quality data without compromising the safety of field staff. Therefore, in case of any issues or occurrences that may have limited the survey implementation, Ipsos considered adjustments to the implementation with guidance and approval from IJM and Rights Lab. Some of Ipsos survey teams encountered security and safety issues such as known presence of armed groups and military camps due to cases of insurgency. These sample barangays had to be replaced with another area using the same sampling design and criteria.

During the final stages of survey implementation, storms and flooding hit

some parts of the provinces in the North Luzon, Bicol region, and Visayas region which led to replacement of other sample barangays.

Another limitation was securing a permit to conduct surveys. The field team took all necessary steps advised by the local officials to be able to proceed with the study. In some cases, barangays had to be replaced since local officials were asking for copies of the survey questions.

Other limitations were related to logistics such as long travel time between areas and poor network signal to efficiently transmit data from the field to Ipsos headquarters. Although limitations were present during the study, the researchers were able to address concerns and resolve situations that may have affected data collection and quality.



# FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

\*Child actor;  
not an actual survivor

## Estimating the Prevalence of Trafficking of Children to Produce Child Sexual Exploitation Material

The next section presents the key findings and observations from the national household survey and the focus group discussions using the methodologies shared earlier in this report for the study period, 2022, in the Philippines.

Nearly **half a million** Filipino children were trafficked to produce new sexual exploitation material in 2022.



\*Child actor;  
not an actual survivor

### Key Finding #1: Prevalence estimates of child victims

- In 2022, one child in every 100 Filipino children in the Philippines were victims of trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material.
- The estimated number of children trafficked in 2022 to produce child sexual exploitation material is 471,416.

# Nearly **quarter a million** adult Filipinos trafficked children to produce new sexual exploitation material in 2022.

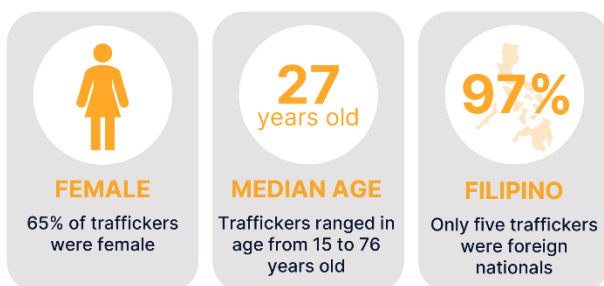
\*Actor; not an actual perpetrator

## Key Finding #2: Prevalence estimates of adult traffickers

- The estimated number of adult traffickers of children who produce child sexual exploitation material is 232,444.
- This means about three out of every 1,000 adults in the Philippines trafficked children to produce CSEM.
- The study also estimated that for every trafficker who produced CSEM, there are three and a half child victims who were sexually exploited.

These numbers confirm characteristics of trafficking to produce CSEM across *Scale of Harm*, IJM's 2020 online sexual exploitation study, and IJM's casework data:

### 2020 OSEC STUDY



### SCALE OF HARM



### IJM CASEWORK DATA





## Survivor Engagement: Findings from Focus Group Discussions



The first focus group discussion (FGD) was held in November 2022 to gain comprehensive understanding of the impact of trafficking of children to produce CSEM upon communities within the Philippines, how it is currently understood in those communities, and the opinions of the survivor leaders from the Philippine Survivor Network on current efforts to address it.

The second FGD was held in April 2023 which particularly focused on presenting the results of the household survey. Survivor leaders were asked to reflect on the results and were asked a series of questions in areas where Rights Lab and IJM researchers wanted additional input to aid their understanding. The following are results from the FGDs conducted among survivor leaders from the Philippine Survivor Network.

The results from the first FGD are based on the following themes that emerged from this discussion: 1) awareness and understanding of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines; 2) the normalization of trafficking of children to produce CSEM and efforts to conceal activities related to the crime; 3) culture of reporting of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in communities; 4) contributing factors or enablers of trafficking of children to produce CSEM; 5) current efforts to address trafficking of children to produce CSEM by authorities; and 6) broader reflections on participation in the research process.

The results from the second FGD are based on general themes regarding trafficking of children to produce CSEM that emerged, including possible reasons for non-disclosure of trafficking of children to produce CSEM by survey participants, different models of exploitation, and the meaning and implications of the survey results.

The following results from the FGDs are based on the consolidated findings from field notes and survivors' recommendations. Direct quotations from the FGDs are highlighted to amplify the voices of survivor participants.

-  1. Various **social** and **cultural factors** contribute to **low levels of reports** made to law enforcement, particularly in circumstances where potential witnesses or reporting parties in the community have existing relationships with traffickers. Some of them are relatives and neighbors who do not want to “meddle” in the affairs of others and choose to remain quiet about it.
-  2. Current **community efforts** and capacity at the local law enforcement and barangay level are **inadequate** in preventing and reducing the trafficking of children to produce CSEM.
-  3. There are several intersecting reasons why survey respondents might not have wanted to disclose knowledge of traffickers or victims when taking the survey. These include **social** and **cultural** issues associated with **family** and **community loyalty**, as well as being fearful of traffickers (including the risk of being implicated themselves as beneficiaries of this form of trafficking).
-  4. Some traffickers try to **conceal** their activity by using **falsified details** online and selecting **physical locations** where they are unlikely to be disturbed.
-  5. Trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material is perceived as a **financially lucrative activity**.



6. Awareness and understanding of adults sexually abusing children to sell livestreams, images, and videos in the Philippines **varies** between people, and work is needed to **educate** and build understanding about specific issues linked to creating new child sexual exploitation images and videos, including livestreaming.



7. There is a **lack of understanding** regarding how some online behaviors constitute **exploitation**, particularly in circumstances where demand-side offenders pay children and adolescents directly for child sexual exploitation material online.



8. *Scale of Harm* drawing additional attention to the crime is a **mechanism** to help address it and help other **young people** feel **seen** and have a **voice**.



9. Not everyone surveyed would likely be aware of the **specifics** of this form of abuse as **different terms** are used locally (such as: *show, cybersex, internet, taking pictures, "chat chat," "nagtrabaho sa iyang office sa kwarto" [working in her office in the room], cyber, and child abuse*) to refer to the crime and behaviors associated with it, including terms that **minimize** the harm.

Community-based responses and interventions to trafficking of children to produce child sexual exploitation material in the Philippines

During the FGDs, there was a substantial amount of discussion about social and cultural factors that impact upon levels of reporting trafficking of children to produce CSEM by potential witnesses in the community. Survivor participants noted that this was, in part, due to a culture in the Philippines of not “meddling” in the affairs of others.

*“There are communities where people would not really meddle in their neighbor’s affairs. These people would just let the authorities find out about OSEC happening*

*in the community and wait for them to do action.”*

For obvious reasons, those with connections or involvement in trafficking to produce CSEM themselves might not want to disclose such activity.

*“Respondents’ estimated number is lacking since they were probably scared to answer and some of them were probably involved in OSEC as well and afraid that the authorities will find out and put them in jail.”*

This idea of a climate of fear was corroborated by another participant, who reiterated that people “could be afraid” to disclose trafficking to produce CSEM. A survivor participant discussed how they were afraid to discuss or report their own victimization:

*“...in my case, I am afraid to speak up, but I also feel sorry for the perpetrator when I think about their own family. There is really a time when we would feel sorry for the perpetrators despite knowing that they are wrong. This is true especially for young children who are scared and can be easily carried away with simple words from their perpetrators. Especially here in the Philippines, instead of speaking up about it, people would just cover up due to lack of options.”*

Others suggested that loyalty to their families and people that they know was an important factor that influenced non-disclosure.

*“The perpetrators or victims are also thinking about the scandal it will bring to their families. Others do not want to destroy their family and will prefer to just be silent about it instead of speaking up.”*

The reasons reported for non-disclosure were often quite straightforward but influenced by a range of factors. A participant highlighted how cultural and community factors meant that while people might discuss trafficking of children to produce CSEM generally, they would be wary of doing so in front of outsiders or people who might be perpetrators or victims of the crime themselves. This was linked to the issue of reputational risk, where people could be wary of bringing negative attention towards their families and friends.

*“Sometimes, people know about OSEC, but they do not see it as an illegal activity, especially those who are involved and do not want to implicate their families in bad reputation.”*

For other participants, ambivalence towards trafficking of children to produce CSEM appeared to be a factor, with one participant suggesting that “some people really do not care or do not want to meddle in other people’s affairs.” A survivor participant added that others were able to justify OSEC on moral grounds and covering up for perpetrators:

*“Others do not want to accept the fact that what they are doing is actually wrong. They are just thinking that it is okay to do it since they are not violating the physical bodies of children since they are only engaging online. They are covering up for each other to continue doing all their illegal OSEC activities.”*

Survivor participants thought that local government interventions and initiatives to prevent and reduce trafficking of children to produce CSEM from happening in communities were lacking and noted that there are “gaps in the justice system and existing local interventions on the ground.”

Community-based understanding of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines

During the FGDs, survivor participants spoke of the “severe impact” of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines, noting how they felt that not everyone understood the forced and coercive nature of exploitation. Perceived levels of understanding related to trafficking of children to produce CSEM were generally quite low. They suggested that although people were generally aware of online sexual exploitation happening within their communities, awareness regarding the issue specifically was not widespread, and that more work was needed to educate and aid understanding of the issue.

*“Being victimized by OSEC creates brokenness in family relationships, mental health issues, and negative self-perception knowing that some people might see you differently when they hear that you are a victim of OSEC. People do not know that it was not your choice to be involved in OSEC. They did not know that a victim was just coerced by another person to do these sexual activities.”*

Survivor participants discussed how other forms of exploitation were normalized in the Philippines and drew particular attention towards the online grooming of Filipino children by demand-side overseas offenders. One spoke of how such offenders were being referred to using the Filipino slang “AFAM” (meaning “a foreigner assigned in Manila,” and typically used to describe white foreigners who provide lucrative business in clubs and bars). The participant went on to discuss how social media was being used to normalize the practice of engaging in relationships with overseas offenders online.

A survivor participant perceived that traffickers themselves were connected to one another, and open to sharing the contact details of foreign demand-side offenders with others:

*“In many cases, people who know about OSEC are also the same people who are involved in the crime. This kind of involvement is also through connection. For example, when a trafficker has a regular foreign client, he/she would refer it to other trafficker so that person would also benefit from the money that they could earn through OSEC.”*

Survivor participants also asserted that this exploitation is somewhat known within the communities:

*“OSEC is an open secret in some communities, while in others, OSEC is really hidden through various ways such as dark set up, private rooms, etc. Through dummy social media accounts, perpetrators communicate with foreign sex offenders.”*

Survivor participants clarified that they understood perpetrators would falsify their personal information online to conceal their identities, and described the use of dummy social media accounts by traffickers:

*“Usually, parents are the traffickers who sell their children. They do this by using a different name or a dummy account as well. Perpetrators do OSEC activities anytime and anywhere they want to. They do not disclose to foreign sex offenders that the kids they are selling are their own children.”*

Another survivor participant discussed the visibility of trafficking to produce CSEM due to the presence of consumer goods that might normally be financially unattainable, such as having home Wi-Fi or a full desktop computer set-up, particularly in cases where someone is known to be unemployed or to hold a job that is not computer dependent. It was suggested – consistent with the literature – that the money made by trafficking to produce CSEM might

be spent on visible house renovations. Participants went on to discuss that although these elements were visible, and people within the same household would likely know what is happening there, not all bystanders would necessarily discern from these indicators that exploitation is present:

*“Usually, people would not notice what is happening inside the homes of people who engage in OSEC. But people like us (people with lived experience) who are well aware of OSEC, we can tell if something strange is happening such as dark lighting, having a full computer set up, and other similar obvious indicators of OSEC activities. Of course, people within the same household know about what is happening.”*

Perpetrators may also move the location of their operations to avoid detection:

*“Perpetrators would do this in their own homes, then would sometimes transfer to another place so they would not get caught and so the neighborhood would not be suspicious.”*

Contributing factors or enablers of trafficking of children to produce CSEM  
Many of the survivor participants recognize that impoverished communities are more vulnerable to engaging in trafficking of children to produce CSEM, such as those in “slum” areas or where unemployment is more common. Nonetheless, a survivor participant pointed out that everyone could be vulnerable to being victimized by this exploitation:

*“OSEC does not always happen in squatter areas. This crime happens anywhere as long as there is a room or a dark place where they can do or perform OSEC. In some cases, people already know about the*

*perpetrator's job and what they will ask of the victims to do. But in other cases, or places, they do not exactly know what the victims will do during the time of abuse. As long as the place has a good internet connection or signal, OSEC can happen in that place."*

Survivors discussed the perception that financial gain was a primary motivator for those perpetrating trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines. Participants described that it was perceived as easy and fast money for those who might struggle to find decent legitimate employment. A survivor participant suggested that the financial benefits were significant contributors in overcoming any moral objections they might have against this exploitation:

*"Once the perpetrators are attracted by money, they would not give a second thought about it, they would not think it is wrong, and they would just engage in it."*

Participants discussed how much money was made in transactions between traffickers and foreign demand-side offenders, with figures between PhP200 (\$3 USD) and PhP15,000 (\$300 USD) mentioned, depending on the nature of the agreement being made. Participants generally indicated that they believed this exploitation to be extremely lucrative for those facilitating the trafficking – and suggested that offenders do so repeatedly, despite the potential risks of being

caught, spending money on shopping for luxuries, funding house renovations, and to party, in addition to their daily needs.

*"The [transaction] amount depends on the request [particular sexual acts] of foreign sex offender or how many children are involved in the crime. It usually ranges from PhP800 to PhP2,000 for just one child, PhP5,000 (USD\$100) for two children, and around PhP10,000 to PhP15,000 for three to five children."*

Broader reflections on participation in the research process


Overall, the survivor participants provided positive feedback on their experience and participation in *Scale of Harm*. One of them reflected:

*"This study is very helpful! Especially this is groundbreaking in the Philippines and there are many OSEC victims here. This is why I did not hesitate to join this FGD when I received the invitation. Because I know we were not the only ones who were victimized by OSEC. Some victims are just quiet because they do not know yet what to do. Therefore, I think this research can be helpful in opening their minds. I am just so happy that this research is conducted in the Philippines since OSEC is very rampant here."*

## Findings from the Household Survey

Although the purpose of the household survey was to capture the networks of respondents and the hidden populations within them, supporting questions on respondent demographics and online behaviors were also captured. The following provides an insight into the data captured:

1. The **gender split** of the respondents matched that of the population of the Philippines.
2. The most common response for **civil status** was “married” in all municipalities surveyed.
3. The modal class response for **education** was “to high school level” in 96% of municipalities surveyed.
4. **Smart** was the most reported **internet provider** of survey respondents.
5. The most common response for **household ownership** was “own outright” in all municipalities surveyed.
6. Given that this type of trafficking does not happen without the **internet**, it is important to note that **92%** of survey respondents reported having used the internet.
7. **82%** of people reporting trafficking of children to produce CSEM lived in **urban areas**.
8. **19** was the most common **age of respondents** reporting knowing people involved with trafficking of children to produce CSEM.
9. **Females** were slightly more likely to **report** knowing people involved with trafficking of children to produce CSEM than males.
10. Single people were the most likely to report knowing people involved with trafficking of children to produce CSEM.

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a child's eye, looking slightly to the left. The eye is dark and has a bright reflection. The surrounding skin and hair are out of focus.

# **RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

\*Child actor;  
not an actual survivor

## Scale of Harm Recommendations

While the Philippine government and relevant stakeholders have made significant progress, the *Scale of Harm* findings demonstrate the need for accelerated action in the Philippines and in demand-side countries (e.g., U.S., U.K., Australia, Canada, EU) to combat the trafficking of children for livestreamed child sexual abuse and CSEM production. Equipped with prevalence estimates, the Philippine government and all relevant stakeholders can shape future goal setting and enhance the overall strategy to combat this form of online sexual exploitation of children. The *Scale of Harm* findings highlight the urgent need to intensify offender deterrence efforts through law enforcement and other local means, incorporate safeguards and preventative technology in live video-chat apps and platforms, enhance tech sector detection and reporting of first-generation or new CSEM, and ensure the financial sector promptly detects, reports, and blocks suspicious transactions, while sharing intelligence from suspicious transaction reports with law enforcement. Here are recommendations based on the *Scale of Harm's* findings:



### **RECOMMENDATION #1** **Cultivate community-based reporting.**

Implement national and local strategies to increase local community reports.

**Government, NGOs, community leaders, LGU officials, and the public should cultivate increased reporting of trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material from the community and support efforts to deter traffickers.**

The *Scale of Harm* findings showed that trafficking to produce CSEM is widespread across the Philippines and underreported by the community. This scale, coupled with the hidden nature of the abuse, the young age of victims, the role of family perpetrators, and social and cultural factors such as not “meddling” in the affairs of others, necessitates increased community-based reporting. During focus group discussions,

survivors shared that there is an unwritten “consensus” not to report the production of CSEM and livestreaming in some communities, particularly where perceived incidences are believed to be high. Despite people knowing about trafficking of Filipino children for CSEM production in the community, it is not discussed openly. Community leaders and Local Government Units (LGUs) should seek to debunk the myths that livestreaming the sexual abuse of children or selling new CSEM photos and videos is a “family matter”, or an acceptable way to earn money, or that reporting is inappropriate.

Moreover, efforts to increase opportunities to report suspected child sexual exploitation in the community should be promoted because communities play a crucial role in protecting children before it happens. More defined reporting mechanisms at the community level are needed. Incentivizing reporting by ensuring privacy, confidentiality, and even anonymity of those making reports is consistent with survivor leader FGD results. Survivors explained that community members are often afraid to report exploitation, avoiding involvement since they may know the traffickers.

Survivors recommended additional capacity building among local officials to effectively prioritize and address cases of trafficking to produce CSEM, including via livestreaming. There is a need to provide technical support to local governments and civil society to strengthen community-based mechanisms for identifying and preventing online sexual exploitation of children. Community Watch Groups can be organized and trained, and community-based monitoring systems can be established. Awareness campaigns can help encourage communities to become more vigilant and help community members to access reporting mechanisms. Barangay Councils for the Protection of Children (BCPCs) can be given technical assistance to strengthen their systems for collecting and reporting data on online sexual exploitation of children to the mandated police units.





## RECOMMENDATION #2

### Enhance criminal justice response.

Holding offenders accountable is crucial for establishing a stronger deterrent and reducing prevalence.

**Alongside increased community-based responses, Philippine law enforcement efforts at the national, regional, and local levels should intensify to apprehend and prosecute more traffickers, thereby creating deterrence while safeguarding victims. Demand-side law enforcement should hold accountable more demand-side offenders too.**

Philippine law enforcement actions against trafficking to produce child sexual exploitation material are commendable, given limitations in staffing and resources. Still, Philippine law enforcement should intensify their enforcement interventions. The Philippine government can evaluate potential institutional, staffing, or budget enhancements to expedite effective investigations, increase arrests of suspected traffickers, and bring more victims to safety. For instance, if the Philippine National Police - Women and Children Protection Center (WCPC) became a National Operating Support Unit (NOSU), it would have greater budget, staffing, and resources to combat this crime nationally in line with its mandate, and in coordination with local police units.

Similarly, the National Bureau of Investigation Anti-Human Trafficking Division (NBI-AHTRAD) is tasked with investigating trafficking of children to produce CSEM offenses across the Philippines but remains a small team with personnel only in Metro Manila. Expanding the capability of NBI-AHTRAD and regional NBI offices to respond to these cases, through increased

personnel, funding, and equipment will result to more arrests and more victims brought to safety, creating greater deterrence and relieving children of ongoing abuse.

Demand-side governments, including the U.S., U.K., Australia, Canada, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and other European nations,<sup>62</sup> from which offenders fuel trafficking to produce CSEM, should intensify their efforts to identify, arrest, and hold more offenders accountable. Accountability includes ensuring offenders receive a prison sentence commensurate to the harm they caused and pay restitution or compensation to Filipino survivors, supporting survivor recovery. Offender progression should also be examined to, as much as possible, prevent men from desiring to consume child sexual exploitation images, videos, and livestreams in the first place.

There is a scarcity of data on the number of arrests, prosecutions, and restitution orders for offenders who create demand for this crime. Yet those cases will not only lead to accountability for demand-side offenders, but when shared as referrals with Philippine law enforcement can support investigations, victim safeguarding, and trafficker identification. Continued close international law enforcement collaboration through the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC) will thus significantly support increased enforcement operations. As of August 2023, PICACC has supported the arrest of 131 suspects and safeguarding of 644 victims and at-risk individuals.

Finally, new Philippine Anti-OSAEC (online sexual abuse and exploitation of children) and Anti-Trafficking laws enhanced the authority of investigators to conduct thorough analysis of electronic communication devices. Philippine law enforcers' use of this

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<sup>62</sup> See Anti-Money Laundering Council. (2023). Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in the Philippines: An Evaluation Using STR Data (July 2020 – December 2022) (reporting that since 2015, the top sources of OSAEC-related remittances in terms of volume and PhP value include the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada), <http://www.amlc.gov.ph/16-news-and-announcements/454-online-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation-of-children-in-the-philippines-an-evaluation-using-str-data>.

Between 550,000 and 850,000 people in the U.K. alone pose sexual risks to children, according to the National Crime Agency. <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/online-is-the-new-frontline-in-fight-against-organised-crime-says-national-crime-agency-on-publication-of-annual-threat-assessment>

investigative technique will increase intelligence regarding additional victims and demand-side offenders for sharing to their counterparts in demand-side countries. Proactive sharing of referrals by both demand and source-side law enforcement creates a “referral loop” that nets greater numbers of offenders earlier in their offending. Earlier accountability could drive deterrence and, crucially, reduce the months or years that children suffer abuse.



**RECOMMENDATION #3**  
**Implement robust community-based efforts.**

Additional local efforts are required to prevent, frustrate, and disrupt.

**Alongside increased law enforcement interventions, additional local efforts to prevent, frustrate, and disrupt the trafficking of children to produce CSEM should be deployed through robust community-based norms change and sensitization.**

Philippine law enforcement efforts should be supplemented with other interventions to prevent, frustrate, and disrupt offending that may never be subject to investigation. These additional preventative solutions will help protect children from sexual exploitation and reduce prevalence.

Community sensitization through survivor leadership and advocacy can accelerate norms change leading to local deterrence. Survivor leaders can highlight the devastating harm to victims from online exploitation, raise awareness, and create a sense of urgency in the community. LGU ordinances can embed resources and prioritization at the local level, signaling to perpetrators that their days of impunity are over and offending carries enforcement risks.<sup>63</sup> As of July 2023, 15 LGUs across the Philippines have passed local ordinances localizing the Anti-OSAEC law; every LGU should do likewise. A multifaceted

<sup>63</sup> IJM has provided training and consultation to support the passage of LGU ordinances. See <https://www.ijm.org.ph/articles/ijm-works-with-local-lawmakers-to-strengthen-child-protection-in-communities>

approach will support greater prevalence reduction than law enforcement alone.



**RECOMMENDATION #4**  
**Enforce Anti-OSAEC Law tech provisions.**

Ensure tech companies use technology designed to prevent or disrupt livestreamed child sexual abuse, including manufacturers of camera-enabled devices.

**The Philippine government should enforce and, if needed, enhance regulations mandating the use of safety by design technology designed to detect, prevent, and disrupt the production and distribution of livestreamed child sexual abuse and other CSEM images and videos at scale.**

The *Scale of Harm* findings reveal that nearly half a million Filipino children have fallen victim to this appalling form of sexual abuse and exploitation, with close to a quarter of a million adult perpetrators. Shockingly, today, there are minimal technological barriers that prevent traffickers from livestreaming the sexual abuse of Filipino children using popular video-chat applications and platforms through camera-enabled devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops. For instance, in 2022, Australia’s eSafety Commissioner issued legal notices to seven tech companies, mandating them to report on their efforts to combat child sexual exploitation on their platforms. The report uncovered “that the providers are neither taking action to detect CSEA in livestreams (insofar as any of these could be regarded as livestreaming services) or taking action to detect CSEA in video calls or conferences.”<sup>64</sup> It is imperative that all companies employ the most advanced available technology to combat child sexual abuse material (CSAM) in both images and recorded/live videos.

Critical safeguards and preventative technology should be integrated into live video apps and platforms to prevent the production of new child sexual exploitation

<sup>64</sup> eSafety Commissioner, *Basic Online Safety Expectations: Summary of industry responses to the First mandatory transparency notices*.

material. The sheer scale of livestreamed child sexual abuse in the Philippines necessitates such technological prevention in video-chat apps and platforms on which child sexual abuse is produced and transmitted live. Fortunately, sophisticated safety technology trained on Internet Watch Foundation data already exists that can detect and prevent the streaming of child sexual abuse, such as SafeToWatch, with or without a report.<sup>65</sup> And the Philippine Survivor Network has publicly called for the tech sector to use such technology.<sup>66</sup>

The Philippine government should therefore ensure robust enforcement of and compliance with new Anti-OSAEC law provisions requiring tech companies to “install mechanisms or measures designed to prevent, detect, respond or report” child sexual abuse and exploitation material and “install available technology, program[s], or software to ensure that access to or streaming of violations of this Act will be removed, blocked, or filtered.” [Republic Act 11930, Section 9(a)(6), emphasis added]. Companies operating in the Philippines should be required to report to the Philippine government their compliance with this provision, considering the shocking scale of livestreamed child sexual abuse of Filipino children.

The Philippine government should also explore the use of existing or enhanced regulations to require manufacturers of camera-enabled devices, such as phones, tablets, and laptops, to embed safety technology on devices designed to prevent and disrupt livestreamed child sexual abuse. Today’s phones are not “safe by design” precisely because they are built without any technology intended to prevent child abuse images and videos from being taken or streamed.

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<sup>65</sup> See SafeToWatch, a real-time video & image threat detection technology, capable of determining whether visual data represents CSAM. The machine-learning algorithm can trigger several possible actions, such as obscuring harmful images, disabling image capture/recording/transmission, etc. <https://safetonet.com/safetowatch/>

<sup>66</sup> See letter of the Philippine Survivor Network to the European Parliament and European Union Council: [https://www.ijm.org.ph/assets/resource/PSN\\_Letter\\_to\\_EU\\_Parliament\\_and\\_Union\\_Council.pdf](https://www.ijm.org.ph/assets/resource/PSN_Letter_to_EU_Parliament_and_Union_Council.pdf)

The tech sector should also improve timely detection, reporting, and deterrence of new or “first-generation” CSEM images and recorded videos, and suspected trafficking to produce CSEM, to facilitate swift action to safeguard victims and apprehend suspects. IJM is prepared to support such efforts by providing our updated 2023 product, “*Tech and Financial Sector Indicators of Livestreaming Online Sexual Exploitation of Children*” to interested companies or regulators, along with related consultation.<sup>67</sup>

Tech companies, including telecoms, can play a positive role in combating child sexual exploitation in the Philippines. For instance, Philippine’s largest fully integrated telecom company PLDT Inc. (PLDT) and its wireless subsidiary Smart Communications, Inc. (Smart) supported the *Scale of Harm* project by providing anonymized and aggregate data and information relevant to IJM and the Rights Lab’s ongoing analysis to develop more localized insights. Moreover, PLDT and Smart reported blocking over 586,000 URLs and about 1.3 billion user attempts to access online materials linked to child sexual abuse or exploitation, with Globe Telecom also blocking access.<sup>68</sup> Kumu, a social entertainment app, also provided information to support data scoping efforts for the project.

This is significant because unfettered access to child sexual abuse images and videos online may help normalize the sexual abuse of Filipino children in the community as more people consume such digital content and become desensitized to it. While blocking access to this illegal and harmful content is critical, there is an urgent need to go upstream and adopt more preventative approaches as discussed above.

<sup>67</sup> Interested parties may email [endosec@ijm.org](mailto:endosec@ijm.org) to request the product.

<sup>68</sup> The Geneva Internet Platform Digital Watch Observatory, “A collective effort: Philippines fights online child sexual abuse.” 12 June 2023, <https://dig.watch/updates/a-collective-effort-philippines-fights-online-child-sexual-abuse>.



**RECOMMENDATION #5**  
**Expedite detection, reporting, and blocking of suspicious financial transactions.**

Private sector efforts are pivotal to gaining timely intelligence on suspected traffickers, supporting law enforcement intervention, and preventing abuse.

**Banks and money service businesses must act with urgency to implement effective transaction monitoring to detect suspicious payments indicative of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC), apply enhanced due diligence if suspicions exist, expedite suspicious reporting, and block payments involving known or suspected offenders and traffickers.**

Trafficking to produce CSEM is a commercial crime – without payment there is no incentive for criminals to abuse children. Survivor leaders shared that traffickers usually receive money through money service businesses in their local communities and assign a household member with a valid identification card to collect in cash the payments sent by foreign offenders before abuse is committed and streamed online.

An April 2023, Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) report reveals that in 2022, AMLC received from financial institutions 92,200 suspicious transaction reports (STRs) relating to OSAEC.<sup>69</sup> AMLC further reported that they analyzed 182,729 OSAEC-related STRs with an aggregate amount of PhP1.56 billion from mid-2020 to the end of 2022, which is equivalent to over \$27,000,000 USD. Per AMLC, 81% of these are incoming foreign remittances, with the U.S., U.K., Australia, and Canada being the top sending countries in volume and PhP value since 2015. The number of STRs shared with law enforcement is unknown.

<sup>69</sup> Anti-Money Laundering Council. (2023). Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in the Philippines: An Evaluation Using STR Data (July 2020 – December 2022), <http://www.amlc.gov.ph/16-news-and-announcements/454-online-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation-of-children-in-the-philippines-an-evaluation-using-str-data>.

**This is a staggering amount of money remitted to the Philippines, apparently for the sexual abuse and exploitation of Filipino children.**

In light of the prevalence of this financially motivated abuse of children, Philippine money service businesses, principally remittance companies, should improve transaction monitoring capability to identify payments indicative of OSAEC. This means applying all child exploitation typologies and monitoring behavior over time and not just single transactions. They should collaborate with law enforcement and advocacy groups to understand and adapt to evolving trends. To assist the AMLC and law enforcement, STRs should capture all available information, not just the minimum required, to provide actionable intelligence. Moreover, banks and money service businesses should treat suspicious child exploitation payments like terrorist financing or fraud by striving to detect and report within five days of activity, not the current 50 to 100 days typical of anti-money laundering reporting.<sup>70</sup>

Beyond expedited reporting, banks and remittance companies should agree with regulator protocols for the delay or even blocking of suspicious payments. As a commercial crime, the absence of payment to traffickers can prevent livestreaming of abuse, thus safeguarding Filipino children from sexual abuse. Therefore, if there are any suspicions, money service businesses should apply greater scrutiny to the transaction *before releasing payment*. Such enhanced due diligence could include seeking additional information substantiating the relationship between the party sending money and the person collecting the payment. Such simple questions can act as a deterrent without creating a burden for legal payments.

<sup>70</sup> Australian Government (AUSTRAC). (2019). Combating the sexual exploitation of children for financial gain: Activity indicators, [https://www.austrac.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/Fintel%20Alliance%20\\_Financial%20Indicators%20Report\\_Combating%20the%20sexual%20exploitation%20of%20children.pdf](https://www.austrac.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/Fintel%20Alliance%20_Financial%20Indicators%20Report_Combating%20the%20sexual%20exploitation%20of%20children.pdf). See “SFF 2022 FinTech For Good.” Singapore FinTech Festival. May 12, 2022. Video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xia8H781yu0>.

Finally, establishing and strengthening cooperation among the financial sector, AMLC as the financial intelligence unit, and law enforcement will support timely sharing of actionable intelligence to aid law enforcement. Timely identification of traffickers and their victims will erode the environment of impunity, disrupt the trade and act as a deterrent. Active collaboration between AMLC and Philippine and foreign law enforcement can maximize the usefulness of intelligence to support investigations leading to children brought to safety and offenders restrained. It must be stressed that the payments ecosystem will continue to evolve. Regulators, banks and remittance companies will need to monitor these changes and adapt monitoring and deterrence as criminals seek to circumvent controls and detection.

The financial sector must act with urgency with suspicious transactions related to online sexual abuse and exploitation of children by detecting suspicious payment patterns, blocking such payments, expediting reporting, and proactively collaborating with law enforcement.



## **RECOMMENDATION #6** **Demand-side governments should urgently pass online safety legislation with survivor consultation.**

Legislators should champion survivor experiences.

### **Online safety legislation can facilitate the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation online, including abuse streamed in video calls and other CSEM production.**

Critically, it can require tech companies to detect, report, and remove child abuse material online, including new or “first-generation” CSAM. While individual companies have made promising commitments and taken some positive actions, children need tech spaces governed by industry wide standards for safety by design that prevent harm, along with proactive detection, reporting, and removal of child sexual abuse. At the very least, jurisdictions like the EU should ensure that tech companies are *allowed to* engage in voluntary actions to detect, report, remove and block CSEM within the EU, pending the passage of robust regulation.

Lawmakers in the United States,<sup>71</sup> United Kingdom,<sup>72</sup> and European Union<sup>73</sup> should courageously seize the moment to pass substantial online safety legislation increasing protections for children and transparency by tech companies in developing technology safe by design. Online sexual exploitation survivors from the Philippine Survivor Network<sup>74</sup> are advocating for passage of these bills, writing letters, and speaking directly to governments about their lived experiences and how these laws could

<sup>71</sup> EARN IT Act: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/1207>. See REPORT Act: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1540>. See Preventing Child Sex Abuse Act: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/724>. See Kids Online Safety Act: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/3663/text/is>. See STOP CSAM Act: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/1199/text>

<sup>72</sup> UK Parliament, “*Online Safety Bill*.” <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137>.

<sup>73</sup> European Union, “*Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse*.” <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2022%3A209%3AFIN>

<sup>74</sup> See “*Philippine Survivors Urge EU Parliament and Council for Stronger Legislation*.” 25 April 2023, <https://www.ijm.org.ph/articles/philippine-survivors-urge-eu-parliament-and-council-for-stronger-legislation>.

See “*Survivors Call for Action - Online Safety Bill*.” April 2022, <https://www.ijmuk.org/stories/survivor-letter-to-uk-government-online-safety-bill>.

significantly reduce and prevent traumatic abuse. In fact, on September 13, 2023, a leader from the Global Survivor Network testified before a U.S. Congress committee on the need for improved safeguards online to protect children through online safety legislation.<sup>75</sup> Survivors have unique insights into systems that work and do not work. Legislation informed by survivor consultation and expertise can more comprehensively meet the safety needs of children.<sup>76</sup> *Scale of Harm* reminds us all why these laws are urgently needed.



**RECOMMENDATION #7**  
**Further survivor-informed research is critical.**

Investigate the normalization of online sexual exploitation of children for financial gain.

**Survivors propose future research studies should investigate the normalization of online sexual exploitation of children, particularly demand-side offenders engaging in online relationships with children and local traffickers who seek financial gain.**

Future research studies should contribute to understanding financial aspects of

livestreaming and how private sector data can aid measurement research. For instance, studies that focus on the following will offer invaluable insights: i) behaviors and progression of demand-side offenders who pay for and direct new CSEM production and ii) adults who produce CSEM for financial gain.

Data collaboration among the private sector, academia, government, and NGOs may offer greater understanding of the scale of trafficking to produce CSEM in other countries, among other forms of child abuse online. Anonymized, aggregate, and privacy-preserving private sector data collaboration from financial, social media, live-video, and telecommunication companies can be utilized for future research and measurement studies. Government requirements for tech transparency and reporting could support the use of private sector data to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the problem.

Most critically, like *Scale of Harm*, people with lived experiences should be integral to research such as the design, data analysis, and interpretation of results.

<sup>75</sup> International Justice Mission, “IJM Testifies on Exploitation of Children Before House Judiciary Committee.” <https://www.ijm.org/news/ijm-testifies-on-exploitation-of-children-before-congress>. See “Children Are Not for Sale: Examining the Threat of Exploitation of Children in the U.S. and Abroad.” House Committee on the

Judiciary. September 14, 2023. Video, 59:00:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7S14zTIRI9c>.

<sup>76</sup> International Justice Mission, “We’re Closer to Protecting Kids from Sexual Abuse Online.” <https://www.ijm.org/news/were-closer-protecting-kids-sexual-abuse-online>.



\*Child actors;  
not actual survivors

## Conclusion

Since 2011, efforts by the Philippine government, in collaboration with stakeholders like IJM and many others to combat the trafficking of children to produce CSEM have been proactive. Government agencies, NGOs, and others recognized the urgency to address an emerging crime that harms young children. IJM is witness to the reality that multi-stakeholder efforts have resulted in significant progress in law enforcement, survivor rehabilitation, trauma-informed prosecutions, improved legislation, awareness-building, survivor leadership, community mobilization and more. While the national prevalence of the trafficking of children to produce CSEM was not measured before all these efforts, there is a likelihood that prevalence would be even higher today had early interventions not been initiated.

The *Scale of Harm* study results are a stark reminder of the urgent need for global action to protect children from severe sexual abuse and exploitation. Globally, we are facing a crisis point where children are being sexually abused at a large scale, all for the sake of adults who exploit these abuses by consuming images, videos, and livestreams, treating them as if they were commodities for sale or movies for rent. The individuals involved in trafficking in the Philippines, who are seeking quick cash, and those demand-side offenders

who are satisfying their sexual perversions by consuming CSEM, need to be identified and restrained on a much larger scale than what is currently being done. *Scale of Harm's* recommendations emphasize the role of law enforcement in the Philippines and demand-side countries. They call for efforts to bring victims to safety and deter offenders. Additionally, we stress the urgent role of tech companies and financial institutions in disrupting and preventing abuse. Finally, the recommendations highlight the unique importance of local communities and survivor leaders in changing social norms.

At our fingertips are scalable solutions and interventions to sustainably protect children, ensuring their access to justice, deterring offenders, and utilizing safety technology to disrupt and prevent technology-facilitated abuse. Children require courageous leaders from governments, technology and financial institutions, civil society, and local communities to prioritize child protection, setting aside all excuses and overcoming any barriers. When this occurs, children in the Philippines and worldwide will be protected from 'pay-per-view' sexual abuse.

And when today's *Scale of Harm* is reduced tomorrow, we will be here to tell that story.



# APPENDICES

\*Child actor;  
not an actual survivor



## Appendix A: Secondary Data Methodology Development and Study Implementation

The secondary research objective of *Scale of Harm* project was to produce program insights on the nature of trafficking of children to produce CSEM, secondary data continues to be examined to provide municipality-level information capturing the occurrence and behaviors of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines. IJM has worked with private sector partners Philippine-based Smart telecoms and an international remittance company, who provided data to support counter- trafficking of children to produce CSEM data gathering and analysis efforts. Additional administrative and population data through other partners, including publicly available data, will contribute to municipality-level program insights.

### Methodology Development of Secondary Data

To strengthen national NSUM survey data, a plethora of secondary datasets were explored to identify novel indicators of trafficking of children to produce CSEM for further assessment. In addition to the NSUM survey as the principal approach, four secondary datasets were deemed critical; requiring further investigation during implementation to determine whether these datasets may act as proxy indicators to estimate national prevalence of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines. The datasets identified were financial transaction data, national proxy telecoms data, proxy electronic service provider data, government administrative and official survey datasets. Alongside prevalence estimates, these datasets propose to provide operational intelligence to inform IJM's program since these secondary datasets referred to trafficker behaviors. Below displays how each dataset could be used for estimating national prevalence based on scoping the datasets during the methodology development.

#### Financial datasets

The use of financial transaction data, and suspicious transactions report (STRs) data were considered valuable for understanding trafficking of children to produce CSEM. Financial datasets may provide insights into trafficker behaviors through suspicious transaction reports contained in financial transaction data. Financial data offered the potential of identifying remote offenders through suspicious transaction reports to compute statistics on transactions received by implicated beneficiaries by municipality.

#### Telecoms datasets

Telecoms datasets were sought to show internet behavior and usage in the Philippines by municipality. Telecoms data provide potential insights into cell connectivity, bandwidth usage, speed and patterns, frequency and duration of video calls. Furthermore, telecoms data could indicate how communities are connected to show whether they are isolated and how they may be connected to demand side offenders. Many additional variables will be generated from raw telco data including average social network size, average network centrality, average short-distance, and long-distance mobility patterns (as proxies for social isolation and migration).

#### Electronic Service Provider Data

Electronic Service Provider (ESP) data were considered to provide insights into livestreaming behavior. ESP data were thought to support prevalence estimates and understand the role of livestreaming in trafficking of children to produce CSEM. The data set sought to focus on livestream usage patterns, frequency and penetration across the Philippines.

#### Government Administrative and Official Survey Data

During methodology development, an important set of contextual factors or 'enabling conditions' for trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines were identified. These factors can be

summarized as: widespread poverty where legitimate means of income are scarce; a drop-off in education attendance; high internet access rates; internal and external migration, and cultural norms that obligate victims to support their family including financially. These contextual factors may help explain the variance in trafficking of children to produce CSEM across municipalities and can be thought of as ‘vulnerability’ factors of this exploitation.

The extent to which each dataset could be used for national prevalence estimates, both independently or combined with other datasets, were considered more comprehensively during implementation. The next section details the implementation of the developed method, which shifts from scoping the datasets to application and evaluating whether the data can be utilized to achieve *Scale of Harm’s* objectives.

### Implementation of Secondary data: Understanding Trafficking of Children for CSEM Production in the Communities

In addition to *Scale of Harm’s* primary objectives, the study is further exploring how secondary data sources may offer highly localized, municipality-level data on trafficking to produce CSEM locations and occurrence rates. Secondary data will not be the main basis of estimating national prevalence but potentially could bring operational data and insights to the current observations and indicators of what trafficking of children to produce CSEM looks like across municipalities. These estimates may provide greater detail to support the IJM program and Philippine government.

Secondary data will be assessed depending on categories, granularity, and level of available information to evaluate its potential in predicting prevalence of trafficking of children to produce CSEM by municipality

when combined with household survey and IJM casework data using machine learning analysis (MLA) developed by Rights Lab. The MLA should find relationships between existing prevalence estimates produced from the household survey and 20 different secondary data streams.

The application of the NSUM method to divisions lower than countrywide is that the ‘unknown’ and ‘known’ groups (see *Table 1*) need to have accurate, available figures at the required divisions. This data does not exist at the required level of detail for each of the 1400+ municipalities in the Philippines to date. Therefore, an alternative approach will be used to generate the municipality level estimates from the national level estimates.<sup>77</sup>

The following approach can only be used on the municipalities surveyed as it draws from respondent data. To generate the size of the known groups required for scale up, the survey embedded questions on the occupations of people in the households. The meant that we could estimate the number of people in the occupational groups that form the known groups. This approach is taken from recent work that tries to solve this problem in settings where administrative data is not collected or is not reliable (Feehan et al., 2022). The caveats to this are:

1. The size of the known groups forms the basis of NSUM and has to be accurate, however, the size generated in this method will be estimates.
2. Not all of the known groups were recorded in the households surveyed for each municipality.
3. Any sparsity in the reporting of the target groups will lead to a large margin of error in the estimates.
4. This approach can only be used on the municipalities surveyed.

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<sup>77</sup> To note: the summation of all municipality level estimates will not equate exactly to a single national level estimate, however it should occur within the estimated range for national level prevalence.

For the remaining municipalities, two methods are to be explored. The first is an untested approach known as partial pooling and the second is a machine learning approach (MLA) that uses combinations of secondary data will be employed to extend the estimates to the remaining municipalities.<sup>78</sup>

It is envisaged that either one or both of these approaches will enable the generation of estimates of the trafficking of children to produce CSEM for all municipalities that were not included in the ground survey. MLA allows extrapolation of estimates based upon the ‘ground-truth’ prevalence data from surveyed municipalities, determining the relationship between estimates and ‘out of sample’ municipality characteristics. This permits projections of prevalence to be established in municipalities for which survey data have not been collected (supervised learning).

Characteristics for out-of-sample municipalities, indicative of risks in trafficking of children to produce CSEM, will be derived from proxy variables collated across a range of domains (multi-view), including financial transactions, telecommunications, internet usage, socio-demographics, geospatial data, administrative and official survey, and night light data. Rights Lab will test a wide range of combinations of statistical/machine learning methods and models.

To generate municipality level estimates, the MLA relies on being able to find relationships between the estimates obtained for the prevalence of trafficking of children to produce CSEM and the different secondary data streams. The secondary data streams were compiled with this in mind and knowledge of the factors that are known to be associated with trafficking of children to produce CSEM.

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<sup>78</sup> Laga, I., *et al.* (2023) “A Correlated Network Scale-up Model: Finding the Connection Between Subpopulations.” *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, pp. 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01621459.2023.2165929>.

In total, over 20 different data streams have been compiled to be used in the MLA to produce municipality-level information:

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
|    | Population and demographic data   |    | Road network                              |
|    | National information and communications technology (ICT) household survey |    | Land cover                                |
|    | Birth and marriage registration   |    | Healthcare sites                          |
|    | Poverty incidence   |    | Social Amelioration Program (SAP)         |
|    | Conflict incidents  |    | Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) |
|   | Relative Wealth Index   |   | Money service businesses (MSBs)           |
|  | Commuting zones   |  | COVID-19 response                         |
|  | Healthcare workers  |  | Migration                                 |
|  | Municipal tax and income expenditure                                      |  | Telco data                                |
|  | Schools   |  | Suspicious financial transactions data    |
|  | Night-time lights   |   |   |

Secondary datasets continue to be investigated beyond *Scale of Harm's* national prevalence result detailed in this report.

## Appendix B: Network Scale Up Method (Models)

The model extends the Killworth estimator that models the number of people in group  $k$  that respondent  $i$  knows as:

$$y_{i,k} \sim \text{Binom}(d_i, \frac{N_k}{N}) \quad (1)$$

Figure 4. NSUM Equation: Model 1

Where  $d_i$  is the degree of respondent  $i$ ,  $N_k$  is the size of group  $k$  in the population and  $N$  is the total population size. This model effectively assumes that the number of people in group  $k$  that respondent  $i$  knows is binomially distributed with probability  $N_k/N$ . This is a basic estimator with very few assumptions, namely that respondents are independent and that the probability of knowing someone in a group is the same for all respondents.

The first model built on the basic estimator is the degree model and it forces the degree of the respondents to be lognormally distributed. This is represented using the formula  $d_i \sim \text{lognormal}(\mu, \sigma^2)$  where  $\mu$  and  $\sigma$  are the mean and standard deviation of the distribution. These parameters are both sampled from a uniform distribution with the bounds (3, 8) and (0.25, 2) respectively. This is to reflect findings that degrees are typically between 20 and 3000. The choice of distribution is reasonable considering the research on people's degree size done by prior social network studies and to some extent the results of this project showed that the number of under 18's people know is similar to a lognormal distribution. This model on its own is not enough to account for the biases that occur in NSUM. The subsequent models discussed are built on this first adjustment.

The second model proposed by Maltiel in 2015 is a barrier model that deals with the barrier effect of NSUM where people in the hidden population are not equally spread in the network of individuals.<sup>79</sup> This model assumes that the probability of each person knowing someone in the hidden population varies and is not the same as the percentage of the total population that is in the hidden population. This gives the model:

$$y_{i,k} \sim \text{Binom}(d_i, q_{i,k}) \quad (2)$$

Figure 5. NSUM Equation: Model 2

Where  $q_{i,k}$  is the probability of respondent  $i$  knowing someone in group  $k$ . This probability is modelled as a Beta distribution whose  $\alpha$  is initially set to the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) of Killworth  $N_k/N$ . This adjustment is reasonable and could plausibly be enough to model OSEC, however the fact that some people may not report people they know in the hidden population means that this model is not sufficient in *Scale of Harm*.

<sup>79</sup> Maltiel, R. *et al.*, "Estimating Population Size Using the Network Scale up Method," 1247–1277.

The third model addresses the fact that people may not accurately report people they know in the hidden population. This transmission model attempts to estimate the probability of a person reporting someone they know in the hidden population. The key parameter in this model is commonly called the transmission parameter and is denoted by  $\tau$ . This parameter is multiplied to the probability of knowing someone in the hidden population to give the probability of reporting someone in the model here:

$$y_{i,k} \sim \text{Binom}(d_i, \tau_k \frac{N_k}{N}) \quad (3)$$

Figure 6. NSUM Equation: Model 3

The  $\tau_k$  parameter is sampled from a Beta distribution that is initially uniform. The full model combines all the previous models and is what was used in *Scale of Harm*. It accounts for all the known biases of NSUM and is therefore the most reliable method for modelling the reports given by the survey respondents.

The full model combines all the previous models and is what was used in the *Scale of Harm* project. It accounts for all the known biases of NSUM and is therefore the most reliable method for modelling the reports given by the survey respondents.

## Appendix C: Ethics

The process of ethics review and approval is summarized below. The key principles of the protocols implemented in the study were adapted for all the research activities including national household surveys, focus group discussions with survivors, and analysis of secondary datasets.

### Process of obtaining informed consent from the research participants

The research participants for this study included household survey respondents and the survivors during focus group discussions. Informed consent was obtained from all research participants. Details on how informed consent was obtained and how the research participants were informed about their participation in the study are discussed below.

#### Survey Respondents

During the survey implementation, informed consent was requested upon identification of an eligible household survey respondent, where the enumerator asked for them to confirm they are a legal adult (18 years old and above), and whether they would consent to participating in a survey about their household, and internet use and safety. Upon agreement with the consent form, survey respondents were provided with further information on the details of the study, and how the information they provide would eventually be used. Enumerators were provided with training and a full protocol to determine the age of respondents to ensure that only adults were surveyed.

Specific considerations were made regarding the positioning of the survey as one about internet behavior and online safety. Trafficking of children to produce CSEM was only mentioned as part of a broad list of topics included in the survey, which also asked questions around general internet use and education. The participants were fully

informed on the specific nature of the questions being asked of them – focused on internet behavior and online safety.

The study acknowledged that positioning the survey explicitly as such may have deterred some people from participating and exposed those that do participate to the threat of retribution from others within their communities, should word spread that the survey was regarding trafficking of children to produce CSEM. Should reference to violence/exploitation within the survey have caused participants to ask questions about the specific nature about its inclusion in the survey, enumerators were trained to explain that *one* of the surveys purposes is to “understand whether, and how, violence and exploitation affects communities in the Philippines as part of our research into internet behavior and online safety”.

Survey respondents were further informed that the survey contains questions about their household, education level, demographics, internet access, their occupation, the “network” of people they know, their internet use and the internet use of those they know. As the questions primarily ask survey respondents for information about people they know, are aware of, their networks, we consider that the study involves no more than minimal risk of physical and psychological harm to the survey respondents themselves.

## Survivor Focus Group Discussion Participants

In engaging survivors as participants of focus group discussions, consent forms and information sheet about the study were informed and co-designed by survivor consultants to ensure that it includes all the necessary information and ethical measures needed to be implemented.

Survivor participants went through a standard informed consent procedure which includes discussion of all details written in the study information sheet and consent form before asking if they agree or not. The information sheet included all relevant information about the purpose of the study, significant role of survivor engagement, components of participation including potential risks or benefits of taking part in the research, confidentiality and privacy, research team and ethical board's contact information, and appropriate remuneration for their participation which covers all expenses and resources needed by the survivor participants. Survivor participants were asked to respect the privacy of the other participants by not sharing their input outside of the focus group. The consent form included all these information and protocols.

## Beneficence

The study followed the principles of ("do good; do no harm"). Steps were taken to ensure that the study would not undermine or endanger the survey population. Participants were informed that there was to be no direct benefit or compensation for their involvement. This is standard practice in large scale household surveys.

The results will be used to better understand the scale and magnitude of trafficking of children to produce CSEM in the Philippines. The results of the survey will influence future interventions by IJM and other stakeholders in the Philippines, and it is expected that the publication of the results will draw significant public attention to the issue.

Procedures relating to participants' right to withdraw from the research

It was not possible for respondents to withdraw their responses once they had completed the survey, as their contact details and other personal information was not collected. Participants were informed of their ability to stop and withdraw from the survey at any point during their participation. This information was included on the information sheet and was communicated verbally to participants before they gave consent to participate. Meanwhile, the survivor participants had the right to withdraw at any time, without having to give a reason.

Confidentiality, anonymity, and non-traceability of research participants

We did not collect personal contact information to protect the confidentiality of survey respondents. No information that explicitly linked individual survey respondents to their answers was recorded. Only aggregate results from the survey will be published so that it is not possible that an individual can be identified based on their answers. Results from the survey are computed at the national level. All project outputs went through an identity disclosure risk analysis, following guidance provided by the U.K. Data Service.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> UK Data Service, "*Disclosure Assessment*." <https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/learning-hub/research-data-management/data-protection/disclosure-assessment/>.



## Data Storage and Management

Survey enumerators of Ipsos were subject to following institutional fieldwork guidance, safety policies and hazard checklists, and completed fieldwork record forms in line with Ipsos standard procedures.

A data management plan was created for the project.

### Survey collection

Surveys were primarily collected using tablet computers – completed by survey enumerators based on the verbal responses of respondents. Data was collected in a program and backed/up and uploaded to a secure online backup service at the end of each day.

### Storage and retention of survey data

As no personal data were collected, survey data will be retained indefinitely, for a minimum of five years to ensure that there is adequate time for reporting and publication (including comparative analysis with future surveys).

### Focus Group Data

Focus group discussions had their audio recorded using a built-in recording functionality associated with the teleconference software. Copies of the audio were uploaded to Rights Lab's secure site at the earliest convenience following the conclusion of the focus groups. Local files were then destroyed. Facilitations made written notes during the focus groups. These were stored on the Rights Lab's secure site.

### Storage and retention of survivor focus group data

Written and signed consent forms were collected from each focus group participant. Scanned copies were uploaded and securely stored on the Rights Lab's secure site. Efforts were made during note taking and analysis to ensure that information shared verbally by participants during the focus groups was not personally identifiable, and that any information that may identify them or another is anonymized or removed (such as reference to names, places, etc.). Signed

consent forms and information sheets (including participant names) will be retained for 12 months following the project's conclusion and will then be destroyed. Participant contact details were not requested or recorded.

### Secondary data

All data received by the Rights Lab were aggregated and anonymized and did not contain personal data (such as IP addresses, account numbers). Data was transferred and stored according to the terms of individual data sharing agreements with the data owner(s). At minimum this included ensuring that data is shared and stored using the Rights Lab's secure site, with data access granted only to the direct research team. Data was/is retained according to the terms of the data-sharing agreements held with each institution, at minimum until the end of the project.

## Potential Risks to Research Participants

All potential risks to both participants and researchers such as distress or trauma due to the sensitivity of the topic or potentially uncovering cases of abuse or exploitation were considered in the ethics. These are detailed in the following section.

### Survey respondents

#### Nature of the survey

There was a small risk that due to the nature of some of the questions, that survey respondents may learn about the specific nature of the survey (to investigate trafficking of children to produce CSEM). To minimize the risk of such an event, survey enumerators were sensitivity trained to ensure the following:

- The survey respondents were aware of their right to skip questions they do not want to, or are uncomfortable answering, and that they may stop the interview.
- Interviews were conducted in safe places, in private and out of earshot from others, where possible.

- Enumerators were provided with a list of local and national services that are available to share with participants.
- If they reveal current or ongoing abuse, ask for help, indicate that they do not feel safe, participants will be provided direct contact with a geographically proximate social worker and/or local law enforcement authorities.
- The sampling strategy was made clear to prospective participants at first contact, to ensure they did not feel ‘singled out’ by the research/ enumerators. The outlined process for informed consent reinforced that participation was voluntary and did not have bearing on their access to healthcare, support services, etc.

### Distress and trauma

In the unlikely event that a participant experienced distress or trauma during the course of completing the survey, enumerators were instructed and trained to follow a distress protocol. The distress protocol includes several steps, including pausing and ending the interview, that aims to mitigate against harm should either researcher or participants indicate that they are distressed (see diagram below). The distress protocol was developed by Andrea Nicholson (Rights Lab / School of Politics and International Relations) and has been implemented as part of several projects related to trafficking and exploitation, and research involving at-risk or vulnerable populations.



Figure 7. Distress Protocol During Survey Fieldwork

## Disclosure of abuse

Answering questions about exploitation/violence among people they know, and within their networks and communities could have led participants to disclose past ongoing abuses about themselves to enumerators. If such disclosure was to occur, in the case of past experiences, enumerators were trained and instructed to share details of support services that may be available to assist, and in the case that a participant indicates ongoing abuse, provision has been made to ensure they are referred directly to a local social worker. Contact was made with local services prior to the commencement of the research so they are aware of the research, and so that referral pathways were clear to enumerators, and that information was accurate and up to date.

Lists of services were curated to ensure that the nature of the survey was not inadvertently revealed, and so lists of services included those not necessarily linked to violence and exploitation, but other free programs, health initiatives and amenities that are on offer in the Philippines. Embedded within this broader list were services specific to violence/exploitation victimization. Lists were contextual to the area of the Philippines being surveyed.

Direct referrals would have been offered should a participant have indicated that they did not feel safe in their present living situation, or if they became visibly upset during the interview. Direct referrals would put the respondent in direct contact support services. Referrals were not forced up participants who do not wish to report abuses. Participants who meet the following criteria will be offered a direct referral:

- Those who become visibly upset during the interview (tearful, angry, shaking, difficulty breathing, etc.).
- Those who indicate that they do not feel safe or that they are in immediate danger.
- Those who indicate that they are currently being exploited, exposed to violence, or abuse, or who have experienced

exploitation, violence, or abuse within the last 12 months.

- Those who ask for help (regardless of whether they disclose violence, abuse, or exploitation).

If participants were to have requested direct referral, their contact information will be requested by the enumerator – including a name and safe-place where they can be reached by the service provider. Information would not be passed on without the participant's explicit consent. Enumerators were provided with instruction and training on available services. Personal information would not be retained by the enumerators as part of the research.

Abuses were revealed in aggregate form through the survey (through answering questions such as 'how many people you know who...'). In these cases, it was not possible to offer individual level support or referral – however enumerators offered lists of relevant health and other services linked to the topic of the survey.

## Survivor participants

Protocols for trauma-informed approach to recruiting focus group survivor participants and to responding within discussions are in place to pre-empt and to address any distress that might arise during the engagement. During the focus groups, survivors were not asked to recount or reflect upon their own experiences of abuse or exploitation, but instead about their general knowledge about trafficking of children to produce CSEM and their understanding of the project results.

The key measures that were taken to ensure that re-traumatization risk is reduced both prior to these engagements and addressed within FGDs are the following:

1. The FGDs were *co-designed* (sessions goals and structure and format) *with survivors* and then will be *led by survivors*. The research teams' prior work with survivors (both at Rights Lab and IJM) has demonstrated that this significantly increases

participants' sense of safety and ease within engagements.

2. The FGDs were conducted in a *local language* and led by survivor leaders with support of IJM.
3. Survivor participants within FGDs were encouraged to pause at any time during the discussion as necessary, and to leave the meeting room at any point without needing to provide any reason or justification.
4. IJM ensured that qualified aftercare staff reach out to any survivor participant who needs to leave the room so they can undergo necessary support, including being offered the chance to leave the engagement with full support and without having to provide any reason.
5. IJM had established criteria for the selection of potential participants from its existing network of survivors.
  - Some members from this network of survivors have already participated in previous focus groups for other studies about trafficking of children to produce CSEM and are therefore aware of the potential trauma triggers that may arise during the discussions.
  - IJM prioritized inclusion of survivor participants who are advanced in their restoration process (as deemed by qualified IJM aftercare staff) or those who are already capable of coping with trauma triggers.
  - IJM ensured that the potential survivor participants are of legal age (18 years old and above) who really want to be engaged in the activities and are fully consenting to the engagement.
  - After each session, there were always a debriefing among the survivor participants to process any thoughts, emotions, and distress that may have been caused by their participation.

This was facilitated by the Senior Lead, Aftercare – Survivor Leadership and Advocacy of IJM.

#### Researchers and enumerators

The researchers especially enumerators were also potentially at risk of experiencing psychological distress and trauma during survey implementation due to the sensitivity of the topic, especially if there are unexpected actual cases of exploitation/violence that will be uncovered by the study.

Ipsos ensured that the right fieldwork personnel were selected with careful consideration of age, gender, language, qualification, and experience. During recruitment, Ipsos thoroughly screened field teams, especially enumerators, to make sure that they did not have any experience and involvement in trafficking to produce CSEM to avoid triggers and conflicts as they implement data collection. Field supervisors and Ipsos Project Management monitored the field teams daily and check for their mental and emotional well-being. Interviewers, supervisors, and other field personnel who will feel emotionally and mentally strained the project will be replaced immediately and will be endorsed to a facility or center listed in the available services for psychological debriefing and counseling as needed. All affected enumerators were to be relieved from their posts and replaced immediately should there be any distress among them, and they were to be endorsed to IJM for a debrief.

Enumerators went through a training program prior to project implementation. The training will cover the following topics:

- Background on the purpose of the study, its design, and the data collection process
- A review of the questionnaire and interview technique
- Sampling procedure, and assignment of sampling areas
- Procedures for maintaining confidentiality of participants
- Procedures to attain the conformed consent of participants

- Sensitivity towards study participants
- Maintaining privacy during the survey
- Support services and referral
- Potential risks to participants, and their mitigations
- Interviewer safety, including lone working procedures, fieldwork risk assessments and hazards, etc. (e.g., including minimizing women enumerators interviewing male participants (and vice versa), and where possible we will match enumerators and participants based on sex
- Quality assurances and quality control during data collection
- Protecting human subjects
- Electronic data collection processes

IJM provided a discussion on safeguard and well-being protocols during the training to ensure that there are trauma-informed approaches in case of any triggers or safeguard issues related to trafficking of children to produce CSEM during the study implementation.

### Protecting Confidentiality

Each survey was assigned a unique identifier that specified the date of collection, the municipality, barangay, and sample area where it was completed. The numbers did not correspond directly to house or street numbers, and so it would not be possible for anyone outside of the research team to resolve the location where the survey was completed. Identifier codes will only be used to assist in the geographical aggregation of data during analysis. As there is no personal identifier, it will not be possible to link individual participants back to their responses once they have completed the survey.

All members of Ipsos' research team, especially the enumerators, were asked to sign a non-disclosure or confidentiality form to ensure that they honor confidentiality of the research and its participants.

### COVID-19 Protocols

This study abided by the COVID-19 guidelines within all geographical areas of fieldwork, and it was recognized by the implementation team that it was their responsibility to ensure updated/current guidance was used when in the field. Timing was important and current regulations were double-checked at the time of fieldwork. Changes to pandemic protocols were implemented as required, including where necessary postponing fieldwork and/or seeking other means with which to collect/create data as appropriate and subject to (re)submission/approval. Moreover, the study respected Covid-related measures within fieldwork settings (e.g., such as when public transport, or indoors) and researchers adhered to local regulations including wearing of masks during interview.

Protocols in case of spike in COVID-19 cases in the target survey areas

Ipsos followed a set of standard fieldwork guidelines on survey operations during Covid-19 pandemic as part of compliance in the protocols of global health authorities and the Marketing and Opinion Research Society of the Philippines (MORES).

As part of the safety protocols, sampling plan required that the selection of random starting point for each sample spot/*barangay* should be at least a block away from any health facilities (e.g., hospitals, health centers). This is to avoid any exposure of survey teams to facilities with high risk of Covid-19 infection.

In case of a community COVID-19 outbreak, interviewers were asked to monitor and report to their supervisors for possible next steps, including cancellation of fieldwork in that particular sample spot if needed. In worst case where a sample area has to be replaced, Ipsos project management team will provide another *barangay* as a replacement sample spot which should be four to five *barangays* away from the replaced *barangay* where COVID-19 outbreak was reported.



**IJM**

## **INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION**

International Justice Mission (IJM) is a global organization that protects people in poverty from violence. IJM partners with local authorities in 31 program offices in 16 countries to combat slavery, violence against women and children, and police abuse of power against people who are poor. IJM works to rescue and restore victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and help strengthen public justice systems.

**[WWW.IJM.ORG](http://WWW.IJM.ORG)**

IJM's Center to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children protects children in the Philippines and scales the fight against this crime globally. The Center leverages and shares effective practices and models from IJM's Philippines program to enhance justice system and private sector responses to online sexual exploitation, resulting in sustainable child protection and offender accountability.

**[WWW.IJM.ORG.PH/CENTER](http://WWW.IJM.ORG.PH/CENTER)**