National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Explotation of Children in the Philippines

FINAL REPORT

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National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation
of Children in the Philippines

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Contents

List of figures and tables

Acknowledgement

Message

The digital era we live in has made it possible to be interconnected regardless of physical distance. Even the most remote areas of the globe are in contact with metropolitan areas and vice-versa. The digital revolution has brought knowledge and information at our fingertips with incredible speed and it's in all our interest to bring equity to the use of new technologies and bridge the digital divide.

While the rapidly evolving digital environment is exceptionally promising, it has also paved new ways for crimes and violence that threaten the safety of children. One of the most egregious form of online violence is Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC).

OSAEC is a hidden, complex, and almost borderless crime that is overlooked by many, but sadly experienced increasingly by many of the most vulnerable Filipino children. Its detrimental and lasting impact to children can be immeasurable. The 2015 National Baseline Survey on Violence Against Children (NBS-VAC) revealed that one in two children are victims of online violence and that boys are equally or more vulnerable to girls. The results of the NBS-VAC have prompted us to look closer into the issue of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the Philippines by conducting the National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in the Philippines. This Study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the problem by looking more closely into the characteristics of child victims, offenders, the role of the private sector, and the challenges in ensuring an adequate response.

This Study has become even more relevant considering that the vulnerabilities of children and their families have even increased because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Children and youth are more at risk of OSAEC during containment measures as they spend more time online. Also, the economic shocks caused by COVID-19 may push families belonging to the most disadvantaged background to resort to negative coping mechanisms, including OSAEC.

The National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children sheds light into the nature, scope, and drivers of OSEAC and aims at further guiding government, civil society organizations, international organizations, and other stakeholders in developing programmes and policies to more effectively prevent and respond to this issue.

UNICEF is committed to working with children and their families, government, and all actors active in the child rights community to address OSAEC so that all children will be able to enjoy the benefits and opportunities afforded by the Internet, free from all forms of online violence and harm.

Oyunsaikhan Dendevnorov
Representative
UNICEF Philippines

Message

The evolving society has been developing an innate awareness towards violence, exploitation and abuse against children. It has been a continuing advocacy of the government and the public to prevent and create vast awareness on violence and abuse as this may occur, not only in a child's home, but in various scenarios. With the ever- changing society, forms of abuse and violence has been growing as well that may also be attributed to the emergence of technological literacy among the society. Hence, the conceptualization of Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC).

In current times, children are more involved in utilizing technology on a daily basis as evidenced by various studies. With the large number of people experiencing poverty in the Philippines, poverty and lack of education have been identified as contributing factors to the sexual exploitation and abuse to children who are 5 to 14 years of age, be it online or offline.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is one of the lead agencies in protecting the social welfare of Filipinos especially the members of the vulnerable group. It has been the DSWD's advocacy to protect the social welfare and rights of families and their children. With the support from other government agencies and external stakeholders, gradual improvements in addressing and preventing OSAEC have been evident.

Laws and/or regulations governing OSAEC cases (i.e., Republic Act No.9775 and Republic Act No.10175) are in place, however, there is still a need to improve the government and stakeholder's response, not only to perpetrators who, about 75% to 85% of the time, happen to be relatives or are close acquittances, but more importantly, the victims of OSAEC as well.

This study provides key information in addressing challenges encountered in responding to OSAEC cases and fill these gaps for more effective child protective services. Given that sexual online abuse is a very complex phenomenon, the community, together with both private and public sector, should continue to be integrated in the efforts to prevent OSAEC instances and improve existing child protection system.

The prevention and eradication of OSAEC cases begins in our homes together with the collective effort of those members of the private sector, especially those utilized as platforms by the perpetrators, and the public sector, especially the law enforcements and agencies concerned with online platforms.

Atty. Aimee S. Torrefranca-Neri
Undersecretary
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List of Acronyms

ACG — PNP Anti-Cybercrime Group
BCPC — Barangay Council for the Protection of Children
BJMP — Bureau of Jail Management and Penology
BSP — Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
CEOP — Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command
CPP — child protection policy
CWC — Council for the Welfare of Children
DOJ — Department of Justice
DICT — Department of Information and Communication Technology
DSWD — Department of Social Welfare and Development
ECPAT — End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
EO — executive order
FGD — focus group discussion
IACACP — Inter-Agency Council against Child Pornography
IACAT — Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking
ICT — information and communication technology
ISP — Internet service provider
KII — key informant interview
LGU — local government unit
NBI — National Bureau of Investigation
NGO — non-government organization
OOC — DOJ Office of Cybercrime
OSAEC — Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children
OSEC — Online Sexual Exploitation of Children
PNP — Philippine National Police
RA — Republic Act
UNICEF — United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNODC — United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Definition of Terms

The following relevant terms are defined based on Republic Act No. 7610 of the Ninth Congress: An Act Providing for a Stronger Deterrence and Special Protection Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination, Providing Penalties for its Violation and for Other Purposes; Republic Act No. 9775 of the Fourteenth Congress: An Act Defining the Crime of Child Pornography, Prescribing Penalties Therefore and For Other Purposes; and the Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse - Adopted by the Interagency Working Group in Luxembourg, 28 January 2016.

Child refers to a person below 18 years of age, or over, if unable to fully take care of or protect himself/herself from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation or discrimination because of a physical or mental disability or condition, and whether the person is acting in the online environment or offline.

Child pornography refers to any representation, whether visual, audio, or written, or a combination thereof, by electronic, mechanical, digital, optical, magnetic or any other means, of a child or children engaged or involved in real or simulated explicit sexual activities.[1]

Child abuse refers to the maltreatment, whether habitual or not, of a child, which includes any of the following:

    a. Psychological and physical abuse, neglect, cruelty, sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment;

    b. Any act by deeds or words that debases, degrades or demeans the intrinsic worth and dignity of a child as a human being;

    c. Unreasonable deprivation of his or her basic needs for survival, such as food and shelter; or

    d. Failure to immediately give medical treatment to an injured child resulting in serious impairment of his or her growth and development, or in his or her permanent incapacity, or death.

Child exploitation refers to children, male or female, who for money, profit or any other consideration or due to the coercion or influence of any adult, syndicate or group, indulge in sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct—they are deemed to be children exploited in prostitution and other sexual abuse. In particular, it refers to:

    a. Engaging in, or promoting, facilitating or inducing child prostitution, which includes, but is not limited to:

        i. Procuring of a child prostitute.

        ii. Inducing a person to be a client of a child prostitute by means of written or oral advertisements or other similar means.

        iii. Taking advantage of influence or relationship to procure a child as prostitute.

        iv. Threatening or using violence toward a child to engage him as a prostitute.

        v. Giving monetary consideration, goods or other pecuniary benefit to a child with intent to engage such child in prostitution.

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[1] The use of the term "Child Pornography is recommended to only be limited to discussion on legal cases cognizant that it remains to be the term used in the current legal framework both local and International. However, pursuant to recent developments, i.e., Luxembourg Terminology Guidelines and the Declaration on the Protection of Children from all Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse in ASEAN, it is highly recommended to use child sexual abuse/exploitative materials in other settings and discourse. There are several ongoing initiatives in Congress to amend relevant laws on OSAEC which include replacing child pornography to online sexual abuse/exploitative materials.

b. Those who commit the act of sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct with a child exploited in prostitution or subject to other sexual abuse.

c. Those who derive profit or advantage therefrom, whether as manager or owner of the establishment where the prostitution takes place, or of the sauna, disco, bar, resort, place of entertainment or establishment serving as a cover or which engages in prostitution in addition to the activity for which the license has been issued to said establishment.

Commercial sexual exploitation is a commercial transaction that involves sexual exploitation which covers not only the sexual abuse of a child but remuneration in cash or in kind. It covers prostitution, trafficking, and pornography.

ICT-facilitated child sexual abuse encompasses sexual abuse regardless of where the abuse occurred, as long as the initial contact was conducted through information and communication technology (ICT), e.g., online, through text messaging, or chats.

Internet cafe or kiosk refers to an establishment that offers or proposes to offer services to the public for the use of its computer/s or computer system for the purpose of accessing the Internet, computer games or related services.

Internet service provider (ISP) refers to a person or entity that supplies, or proposes to supply, an Internet carriage service to the public.

Offenders or Perpetrators – In the context of sexual exploitation of children, offenders or perpetrators include

a. **the consumer or client** – the individual using the child for his/her sexual gratification (in cases of exploitation in exchange for money or any other consideration or the promise of such), with or without the involvement of an intermediary;

b. **the facilitators** – the individuals/entities whose conduct facilitates or aids and abets the commission of the sexual offense against the child (sometimes referred to as "intermediaries"). In sexual crimes against children, this person can be a trafficker, making the child available for sexual exploitation; and

c. **the exploiter** – the individual who receives the benefit or payment for the sexual exploitation, e.g., a third party (often the intermediary), a relative, or the "client" or "consumer".

Online child sexual exploitation includes all acts of a sexually exploitative nature carried out against a child that have, at some stage, a connection to the online environment. These include the following (but are not limited to):

a. Sexual exploitation that is carried out while the victim is online (such as enticing/manipulating/ threatening a child into performing sexual acts in front of a webcam);

b. Identifying and/or grooming potential child victims online or through other forms of ICT with a view to exploiting them sexually (whether the acts that follow are then carried out online or offline);

c. The distribution, dissemination, importing, exporting, offering, selling, or possession of child sexual exploitation; and

d. Knowingly obtaining access to child sexual exploitation material online (even if the sexual abuse that is depicted in the material was carried out offline).

Sexual exploitation of children refers to the abuse of a child wherein some form of remuneration (i.e., protection, drugs, shelter, medical support) is involved and the perpetrators benefit in some manner such as monetarily, socially, politically, etc.

Sexual extortion of children is a form of extortion that is sexual in nature and that the act is carried out against a child. It is the blackmailing of a person with the help of self-generated images of that person in order to extort sexual favors, money, or other benefits from her/him under the threat of sharing the material beyond the consent of the depicted person (e.g. posting images on social media).

Sexual grooming is a process by which a person prepares a child, significant adults, and the environment for the abuse of this child. Specific goals include gaining access to the child, gaining the child's compliance, and maintaining the child's secrecy to avoid disclosure. This process serves to strengthen the offender's abusive pattern, as it may be used as a means of justifying or denying their actions (Craven, 2006).

Sexual harassment is defined as sending sexual comments, invitations or images directly to a recipient, or posting these in the online environment where they are available to potential receivers. The perception of messages as being harassment is influenced by the explicitness, intrusiveness, and repetition of verbal or graphic stimuli, personal attitudes, and sensitivities of the recipient (Barak, 2005).

Sexual solicitation is defined as requests to engage in sexual activities or sexual talk or to give personal sexual information that were unwanted or, whether wanted or not, were made by an adult (Mitchell, 2001).

Streaming is a technology that consists of playing data before the entire file has been transmitted, sending the information directly to the computer or device of the recipient (via a webcam, audio interface, etc.) without any need to save the file onto a hard disk (although streaming material can also be recorded and saved to a file). Unless the content is deliberately recorded, it is only available on one occasion and leaves no trace on the device once it has been viewed. In relation to online child sexual exploitation cases, most of the incidents that relate to live streaming involve real-time production and transmission of the audio/video data through the webcam at the victim's end.

During a healing exercise, a girl expresses through drawing in one of the facilities for OSAEC victims.
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Executive Summary

Background and Objective

The Philippines has emerged as the center of child sex abuse materials production in the world, with 80% of Filipino children vulnerable to online sexual abuse, some facilitated even by their own parents (UNICEF, 2016). Some of the sociocultural, social, cultural and economic factors contributing to the high concentration of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC) in the country are English language literacy, availability and ease of access to technology, well-established financial transaction facilities, and absence of perceived conflict between sexual exploitation and significant social norms. This study looks into the phenomenon of OSAEC in the Philippines, from the child's exposure and rescue, to the reporting and prosecution of cases, and the intervention provided to the child. The study objectives were classified into four main areas: a) child victims, b) offenders, c) private sector, and d) case resolution and management. This was done to produce a data-driven guide for policy makers and various stakeholders who are invested in preventing and combatting the said phenomenon. The different institutions and agencies that respond and cater to the child

victim survivors and their families may also apply the research team's recommendations when developing better programs and interventions.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study that employed key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and document review as data-gathering methods. Twenty-two OSAEC cases coming from four different regions were identified purposively. The research team conducted 129 KIIs and FGDs with key informants who had knowledge and experience in handling OSAEC cases, as well as community members (e.g., parents, youth, teachers) in communities where OSAEC is known to be prevalent. Overall, there were 133 KIIs and 16 FGDs conducted, with a total of 149 transcripts that were coded and prepared for the NVivo analysis. At least two staff coded the transcripts to ensure the reliability of the process. A thematic approach was utilized in analyzing the study findings.

Key Findings

1. OSAEC is a complex phenomenon that needs to be tackled from a multi-disciplinary approach through the concerted effort of different government units at the national and local levels, non-government agencies, international agencies and organizations, and inter-agency councils.

2. The rescue, investigation, and the trial process also affect the child victims. The whole OSAEC experience has an impact on their psychological well-being, sense of safety and control, and view of the world. In many cases, the negative impacts of the rescue and separation from their family are worse than the impact of the actual online exploitation and abuse, especially for those who did not feel harm from online exploitation. The dependence on testimonial evidence in the Philippine court system bears heavily on how OSAEC cases are decided. Several respondents raised concerns about this practice, with particular regard to how the child's recounting of his or her experience when in court can cause trauma. The length of the grooming and the quality of the relationship of the child with the facilitator and/or the perpetrator can also influence the degree of trauma that a child goes through in court.

3. Offenders, i.e., facilitators and perpetrators entice children to participate in sexual abuse and exploitation both online (using social media and chat rooms) and offline (in school and community settings that child victims consider as familiar and safe).

4. Free online connectivity, the widespread use of cellphones, the irresponsible use of technology, and insufficient computer literacy of children and their parents pose threats of exposure to OSAEC-related activities. Furthermore, online payment facilities offered by banks and electronic payment services by mobile phone companies are surfacing as the new mode of monetary exchange for the conduct of OSAEC-related activities.

5. Certain cultural beliefs also contribute to the spread of OSAEC such as a) if the children are untouched, they are not harmed; b) OSAEC provides easy money and almost everyone does it; c) children are expected to help the family financially; d) one should not interfere in the affairs of other families; and e) technology is only for the younger generation to learn.

6. Programs such those involving physical and mental health and educational services are essential in nurturing the children involved in OSAEC cases. Child victims who were rescued and provided aftercare services were successfully reintegrated and have even become advocates of OSAEC prevention. However, there is little application of and information on community-based rehabilitation programme for children rescued that requires further study or research.

7. Civil society organizations fill the gaps in the services provided by the local government. They provide additional support such as creating assessment centers, establishing hotlines dedicated to OSAEC, empowering the youth through the roll out program, providing linkages for employment, and ensuring that OSAEC programs will continue even if public officials are changed after elections.

8. The enactment of Republic Act 10929 that allows access to free Wi-Fi in public places is seen by some key informants as posing further problems related to OSAEC, unless some checks and balances are put in place. Despite the increase in risks posed by RA 10929, the private sector considers more Internet access as a good thing. While the "design of the technology itself can make it vulnerable" for exploitation in facilitating the occurrence of OSAEC, some sectors have considered the use of technology to help mitigate the problem. Technology can be used as a medium for raising public awareness about OSAEC, setting up helplines that the community can use to report possible OSAEC activities, filtering content delivered through the web, semi-automated detection of content in materials shared online, and analysis of chat logs.

Recommendations

For Protecting Children against OSAEC

a. Create an integrated framework for responding to OSAEC-related cases covering the continuum of interventions—from prevention, identification, reporting, rescue, trial, and after care —that will involve the review of existing laws and policies and promotion of effective collaboration among different government and non-government agencies. Adopting an integrated framework is a prerequisite for a more efficient and integrative collaborative work of the different stakeholders.

b. Protect children from psychological harm. Develop a child-sensitive rescue protocol that prevents the victim from experiencing more trauma. Temporary shelters for victims—from rescue to inquest—are also needed. During investigation, acceptance of digital evidence presented by law enforcement as sufficient to prosecute the alleged offender can spare the child victim from testifying in court. Children should also be protected from media coverage of OSAEC cases.

c. Have mental health professionals, i.e., licensed psychologists and guidance counselors provide appropriate psychosocial interventions for victims. Strengthen services in halfway homes to quickly provide the children a sense of safety and security even before they are transferred to shelters. More importantly, there is merit to study optimization of relevant laws that encourage community-based approaches such s the Foster Care Act. This ensures that children rescued have other placement options and are not only endorsed in alternative residential facilities but are supported in home environment setting.

For Family and Community

a. Provide a reform program that aims to rehabilitate parents who were involved in OSAEC cases.

b. Provide sustainable livelihood programs for families in the community and inculcate the value of hard-earned money acquired legally.

c. Conduct programs for families and the community to educate them on how to deal with children who will be reintegrated so that the children will not experience secondary victimization and will thrive despite their OSAEC experience.

d. Spread public awareness across schools, communities, churches, and families on proper Internet use; the nature of OSAEC and its impacts on the child, the family, and the community; and its identification and prevention.

e. At the barangay level, educate leaders on child protection and OSAEC. Strengthen the local council for protection of children and carry out information campaigns on OSAEC-related laws. Have barangay officials visit homes as a measure of prevention and intervention.

For Case Resolution and Management

a. Allow for less stringent requirements in obtaining search warrants when dealing with OSAEC cases.

b. Provide continuous training
    i.   to address relocation of trained law enforcement staff;

    ii. on terminologies and the use of search engines to spot OSAEC cases;

    iii. for investigators on evidence required by courts;

    iv. for prosecutors and judges on OSAEC laws and on authentication of electronic/digital evidence;

    v.   for National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police on protocols for investigating OSAEC;

vi. for their counterparts in provinces and/or regions to address accuracy of reports on detection, investigation, and case build-up;

vii. for lawyers on effective presentation of digital evidence so it can become admissible in court; and

viii. for social workers on enhancing the design of intervention programmes from the rescue to aftercare, which could include placement of children.

c. Propose rules to make OSAEC cases an exception to the Anti-Wiretapping Act because some evidence is deemed inadmissible with respect to this law.

d. Significantly increase efficiency in securing evidence, rescuing victims, and coordinating with other agencies.

e. Adopt standard terminologies that cut across government and non-government service providers, making clear how child pornography, cyber-bullying, and online grooming are defined and reflected in law. This is to ensure that stakeholders have a harmonized understanding of the various forms of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

f. Protocols for each phase of the case management system (from reporting to aftercare with specific roles of all involved parties) should be explicitly defined, understood, and followed across the country to make OSAEC response sustainable. Internal protocols in organizations may exist but may not be clear as to when the case is to be taken to the next phase or service provider (e.g., referral of a small NGO to the police). One area that can be studied is on aftercare where children are in community-based rehabilitation programmes, in order to understand the level of support and security that must be given for children rescued and the homes that will care for them.

For Government and International Partners

a. Enhance information-sharing of all agencies involved (including courts) on OSAEC cases through a centralized database system for prevention and monitoring.

b. Strengthen secretariat and coordinative functions of the Inter-Agency Council Against Child Pornography (IACACP) to ensure facility in information-sharing, resource mobilization, and linking with other like-minded organizations and councils; provision of support to member organizations; and monitoring of the implementation of the council's strategic plan.

c. Provide logistical support for law enforcement agencies dealing with OSAEC (i.e., increase operational budget and budget for purchase of needed equipment).

d. Expand OSAEC-related satellite offices in the regions (e.g., address congested facilities).

e. Provide debriefing and regular psychosocial services for first responders and child advocates (including house parents in shelters) to prevent secondary trauma or vicarious traumatization and burnout among those involved in OSAEC.

f. Enforce provisions in the law requiring financial institutions and remittance centers to act on OSAEC-related transactions.

For UNICEF

a. Continue to conduct research on OSAEC so that more evidence-based recommendations for prevention, identification, and response can be made, including the impact and application of community-based rehabilitation programmes as opposed to alternative residential facilities.

b. Support awareness-raising and capacity-building programs for regional, local service providers, and local officials (from provincial to barangay levels).

c. Support advocacy and information campaigns for targeted stakeholders who are not aware of OSAEC but are in a position to influence change.

d. Support the production of a more harmonized, integrated guidebook in handling OSAEC cases to include non-government players, based on a more focused and in-depth study of case management processes.

A young boy, victim of sexual exploitation, uses mobile phone at his home with this sibling in one of the hot spots communities in the Philippines. © UNICEF Philippines/2019/SNoorani

Introduction

The National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) in the Philippines aims to collect data on the nature and scope of OSAEC in the country, its causes, drivers, and contributing factors. This is meant to guide policy makers and other stakeholders in coordinating efforts and designing intervention programs that lead to a better response to and prevention of the problem. Government agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders may utilize the study findings for developing, improving, and implementing laws and regulations, creating programs to respond to the needs of children and their families, and mapping advocacy plans and projects.

The project was conducted under the following assumptions:

1. The project recognized that the development of information and communication technology (e.g., easy Internet accessibility, affordable computers and mobile devices, and social media platforms) has played a vital role in the proliferation of OSAEC.

2. A global multi-sector campaign is on-going to address the problem of OSAEC, which involves country leaders, law enforcement agencies, members of the ICT industry, and civil society organizations committed to global action for child protection and safety.

3. There is a need to come up with an evidence-based national study on OSAEC, the results of which will be geared toward coming up with systemic and integrated interventions for the victims and their families, and with recommendations that will prevent the abuse.

Ethical considerations stipulated in the UNICEF protocol developed by the University of the Philippines National Institutes of Health (UPNIH) were strictly followed. Likewise, De La Salle University's ethical guidelines and procedures were considered in project implementation.

Research Objectives

Overall, this study looked into the phenomenon of OSAEC in the Philippines from the child's exposure and rescue, to the reporting and prosecution of cases, and intervention provided to the child. In doing so, it is believed that prevention measures can be further strengthened. The objectives were categorized into four main areas:

1. Child Victims: To describe the profile, characteristics, sociocultural environment, and experiences of victims of OSAEC, and how these experiences impact their development, psychosocial functioning, and relationships;

2. Offenders: To describe the characteristics of offenders of OSAEC in the Philippines;

3. Private Sector: To identify the role of the private sector (financial sector, Internet service providers, network providers, and application developers) in facilitating and mitigating online sexual abuse and the exploitation of children;

4. Case Resolution and Management: To identify current challenges encountered by law enforcement agencies, social workers, and the courts in the management of OSAEC victims.

Research Questions

Following the objectives, the specific research questions are as follows:

1. Child Victims
   a. What are the profiles, characteristics, and experiences of child victims of OSAEC?

   b. How do the victims access the Internet and how do they use information and communication technology (ICT)?

c. What is the impact of the experiences of the child victims on their development, psychological functioning, relationships, self-esteem, and worldview?

d. What are the roles of the family and the community in the context of promoting and/or preventing the occurrence of OSAEC?

e. What are the social norms that contribute to the OSAEC phenomenon that occurs in the Philippines?

f. What are the child protection systems in place that can assist OSAEC victims?

2. Offenders
    a. What are the profiles (characteristics, experiences, and motivations) of the offenders, perpetrators, and enablers?

    b. How do these offenders gain access to potential child victims?

    c. What are the mechanics of operations of the offenders (perpetrators and enablers), including the mechanisms by which they engage with the victims, the network providers, and the money transfer agencies?

    d. How do the offenders/perpetrators access OSAEC materials in the Philippines through IP tracking and newspaper reports?

    e. How do the enablers and offenders of OSAEC in the Philippines engage Internet service providers (ISPs), network providers, app developers, and other stakeholders?

3. Private Sector
    a. What is the private sector's perception of and level of awareness about the problem of OSAEC in the Philippines?

    b. What is the private sector's perception of and level of awareness about the laws, guidelines, and regulations on OSAEC?

    c. What are the different modalities of technology that have facilitated the occurrence of OSAEC?

    d. What are the efforts of the different stakeholders to address the problem?

    e. What are the potential problems, issues, and gaps that might hinder the implementation of these efforts?

4. **Case Resolution and Management**

    a.   What are the gaps and/or weaknesses in the legal framework for the protection of children against online sexual abuse and exploitation?

    b.   What are the challenges faced by service providers in relation to victims of OSAEC?

    c.   What are the roles of the various actors (government agencies, private sector) in responding to OSAEC?

    d.   What are the identified gaps in responding to OSAEC-related problems?

Review of Related Literature

Digital communication has allowed people to connect with each other, regardless of geographic distance, through the Internet. This benefit, however, has brought with it a new set of threats to personal safety, because malicious users have utilized this same service to find their victims. Termed "cybercrime", the use of technology has facilitated the conduct of crimes that have become more hostile and challenging, particularly in the aspects of sexual extortion and child sexual exploitation online (Europol, 2015). The ease of access and use of ICT has enabled instances of abuse and exploitation to affect children (UNICEF, 2011). In a recent global survey conducted by UNICEF (2016), children and adolescents acknowledged their vulnerability to sexual abuse online and reported that they would be worried if they received comments and requests with sexual themes. With developments in technology, an increasing level of Internet literacy and adoption, and the expansion of connectivity, online child sexual exploitation is indeed an evolving phenomenon (Europol, 2015).

In the Philippines, the 2014–2015 Cybercrime Report of the Department of Justice (DOJ) stated that most of the reported cyber-related crimes in 2014 accounted for online child abuse, specifically involving child sex abuse materials. Furthermore, the report revealed that more than 2,000 suspected accounts related to sexual extortion of children were traced to the Philippines. As the national government increases its focus on cybercrimes, victims and other concerned citizens start to report such incidents to law enforcement agencies (PNP-ACG, 2013). Furthermore, UNICEF reported that the Philippines is considered as one of the top source countries producing child sexual abuse materials.

OSAEC usually occurs with the use of webcams and communication software, through media such as chat rooms, email, and even social networking sites. It involves a cybercriminal who initiates communication of a sexual nature with the victim and persuades the latter to engage in sexual behavior while being recorded and transmitted via the Internet.

Reported Cases of OSAEC in the Philippines

Almost all of the reported cases of OSAEC in the Philippines involve the production of child sex abuse materials, including live streaming of child sex abuse. Other forms of OSAEC such as grooming, sexual extortion of children, and peer-to-peer abuse seem to go unreported. For this reason, the study focuses on the production, dissemination, distribution, receipt, and possession of child sex abuse materials. However, it should be noted that the lack of reported cases of sexual extortion of children and of peer-to-peer abuse does not mean that they do not exist.

The production of child sex abuse materials proliferates primarily among poverty-ridden communities: where people live in slums, and alcohol and drug abuse are common; where parents are typically unemployed or have unsecured jobs; and where unsupervised children usually play in the streets (Brown, 2016). An example of an OSAEC case was reported in Taguig in 2014 where a mother was arrested in her household for selling her own daughter and son for cybersex during an entrapment operation of the NBI (Carvajal, 2014). In the same year, with the assistance of the US Homeland Security Investigations Manila Attaché, an individual was arrested for producing child sex abuse materials online and four minor females were rescued while negotiating about price and the sexual shows they would perform (OOC, 2015). In 2015, the NBI rescued eight children from a Filipino online sex den operator in Taguig and arrested the accomplice mother of three children who were allegedly forced to participate in sexual activities and given money as a reward for their compliance (Agency France-Presse, 2015).

Efforts to eliminate cybersex dens in other parts of the country were also strengthened as the DOJ revealed that such operations have become rampant in the Visayas, with parents making their own children pose nude and shooting obscene videos for online clientele (Tamayo, 2013). Six children were rescued in Cebu, where a couple took photos of the children naked using an electronic gadget and allegedly sending the pictures to a foreign national (Tudtud, 2016). A mother of one of the rescued children recounted that she was unaware of her neighbor's criminal activities and recalled that her daughter had been visiting the suspect's house just to play with their children (Gitgano, 2016).

The first cybersex case in Davao in which minors were involved was reported in the news (Velez, 2014). The same news article noted that the suspect was at first the only one performing lascivious acts; however, the client began to ask for children so the suspect later involved her two daughters and nieces in the act. Gabriela, a women's advocacy group, argued that the inefficiency of the government's anti-poverty programs has led to an increase in child pornography syndicates, mostly involving European pedophiles in Mindanao (DavaoToday.com, 2016). With five counts of syndicated child pornography and many other offenses, an Australian national was arrested in Northern Mindanao for setting up his cybersex operations, enticing children to have sex with him, and recording and selling such acts to online viewers (Lopez, 2016).

Discussions on OSAEC have relied heavily on case data presented by several NGOs and local police departments rather than by peer-reviewed papers (Quayle, 2016). Moreover, scandalous news headlines and media stories about online predators have recently been the only way for the public to become aware of online threats to children (Acar, 2016; Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Ybarra, 2008).

Similar to the experiences of many countries, only cases that are known to the Philippine National Police (PNP), DOJ, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and other related government organizations, and those that have been reported by the local media are what inform the public, academics, and even policymakers. There is thus a need for more local evidence-based reports of the characteristics and occurrences of technology-mediated child sexual abuse. Likewise, further research on the behaviour patterns of victims and offenders, including prior experiences and attitudes, are warranted (Acar, 2016; DeMarco, Cheevers, Davidson, Bogaerts, Pace, Aiken, Caretti, Schimmenti, & Bifulco, 2017; Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Ybarra, 2008).

Classification of Online Behavior related to Child Sexual Abuse

Within the context of technology, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation are two different terminologies in that sexual exploitation may not directly add to the physical harm brought against a child, but rather to the harm that results from making a child a sexual object (Quayle, Loof, & Palmer, 2008). Online child sexual abuse and exploitation is a much more wide-ranging, multi-faceted, and challenging phenomenon (Gallagher, Fraser, Christman, & Hodgson, 2006). This is probably the reason why the majority of the literature prior to the release of the Luxembourg Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse in 2016 did not distinguish between terminologies and referred to the terms interchangeably.

Offense-specific processes such as online grooming of children or solicitation of children for sexual purposes have been considerably neglected in the literature, as researchers focus largely on offenses directly related to child sex abuse materials (Craven, Brown, & Gilchrist, 2006). Thus, attention has to be paid to the growing trend of using the Internet to contact children for the purposes of sexual abuse, trafficking or for sexual exploitation in travel and tourism.

Sexual Harassment, Solicitation, and Grooming

Essentially, OSAEC includes a variety of online sexual crimes, offenses, and activities that can be easily distinguished from adolescent sexual behaviors in the sense that these activities fundamentally suggest coercive engagement and developmentally inappropriate behaviors (Quayle et al., 2010). A combination of traditional ideas of online sexual harassment, solicitation, extortion, and grooming is used to describe online child sexual exploitation (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command [CEOP], 2013; Europol, 2015; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2015). Online sexual harassment covers a wide range of behaviors, from making sexual remarks (e.g., dirty jokes) to sexual attacks (Quayle et al., 2010). Concerns have also been raised over children involved in "sexting", or the sexual communication of text and images that could be permanently accessible to sexual abuse offenders (Wolak & Finkelhor, 2011). Young people may produce self-generated indecent material that can be acquired by the offenders through online solicitation, where children are offered money or gifts (Europol, 2015). Offenders solicit or ask the child to engage in online sexual talk and oftentimes sexual activities, implying clear overlaps between harassment and solicitation (Quayle et al., 2010).

On the other hand, there is little understanding about sexual grooming and its underlying dynamics, processes, and stages, with incidents of adults befriending and exploiting children via the Internet continuing to rise (Craven et al., 2006; Kloess, Beech, & Harkins, 2014). Generally, online grooming is committed by fulfilling the demands of the abuser and, thus, preparing a child for sexual abuse and exploiting sexual materials (Acar, 2016; Craven et al., 2006). Online grooming does not necessarily involve explicit sexual conversation in cyberspace, but the intention is to sexually abuse the child in the real world (O'Connell, 2003), even if not all activities result in physical meeting (DeMarco et al., 2017).

To ensure the child's compliance, offenders may employ various strategies such as persuasion, coercion, threats, blackmail, and bribery (Kloess et al., 2014; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Beech, & Collings, 2013; Wolak et al., 2008; O'Connell, 2003). Another key part of the grooming process is the use of a webcam, not only to capture indecent images of the victims but also incite them to see lewd photos and watch graphic videos (CEOP, 2013). Through grooming, the offender's sexual fantasies are turned into reality (Whittle et al., 2013). To some extent, friendship and trust between the child and the abuser has been subtly established (CEOP, 2013). In return, many victims confess love or admiration toward the offenders (Wolak et al., 2008). Because grooming behaviors involve more intimate relationships and less physical harm, disclosure and even conviction become problematic (Craven et al., 2006).

It is imperative to note that child sexual abuse and extortion online may consequently lead to commercial distribution of child abuse materials (Europol, 2015). Possession of such materials becomes advantageous for the abuser to make monetary demands (Acar, 2016).

Commercial Sexual Exploitation

According to Article 2(c) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2002), child pornography refers to "any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child, the dominant characteristic of which is depiction for sexual purpose." Clearly, child pornography is not an isolated case and may implicate sexual abuse of children (Teunissen, 2012; Trinidad, 2005). However, materials (e.g., photos of semi-naked children) that indicate sexual interest in children or their being sexualized by offenders may not necessarily be reflected in the legal definition of child pornography (Kope, 2004). Accordingly, child sexual abuse material has recently become the widely used term for sexually explicit representations of children due to its weight on the exploitative nature of the content as compared to child pornography per se (UNODC, 2015). Producing, disseminating, and accessing such materials are indeed forms of child victimization (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children [ECPAT], 2014). Visual materials gathered through exploitation and solicitation are often used in child pornography and circulated online (Acar, 2016). Furthermore, indecent photos of children continue to increase across the Internet, particularly in emails and social networking sites (CEOP, 2013; Krone, 2004). According to Mitchell and Jones (2013), commercial sexual exploitation of children emphasizes the involvement of financial profit, regardless of the scale and nature of the offense (e.g., from solicitation to grooming to child pornography).

Child Victims of OSAEC in the Philippines

Varrella (2017) summarized the sociocultural and economic factors contributing to the high concentration of child sex abuse materials in the Philippines: English language literacy, availability and ease of access to technology, well-established financial transactions, and absence of perceived conflict between sexual exploitation and significant social norms. Furthermore, the Internet is now known to be a dangerous place for children as it is the perfect venue for perpetrators to take advantage of a person's online profile for sexual exploitation and abuse (ECPAT, 2014; Wolak et al., 2008). Live streaming of child sexual abuse is particularly hazardous and difficult to criminalize because there is hardly any trace of offensive material as it does not require downloading or storage of content, and children can move from one hidden place to another as long as there is Internet access through a mobile device (Varella, 2017). All children are at risk of exploitation over the Internet (Ospina et al., 2010). Certain characteristics of children serve as contributing factors to make them more vulnerable in such activities. Recently, UNICEF (2016) reported that adolescent boys are less likely to value privacy and security than adolescent girls. According to the US National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (2010), commercial sexual exploitation of children victimizes not only boys and girls but also transgendered youth.

Age is one primary factor that is considered as a predictor of vulnerability that relates to the kind of exploitation that children usually encounter. Basically, young children have little to no choice as to whom they associate with (Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak, 2005). Those age 10 or below are prone to become the subject of child abuse images, since they are very compliant to the requests or commands of their authority figures (UNODC, 2015). Similarly, children at this age are still dependent on their caregivers, such that sexual abuse may be performed by a family member (Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak, 2005). The perpetrators take pictures and videos for commercial sexual exploitation and sometimes engage children in commercial sex at a very young age (UNODC, 2015). On the other hand, children who have not yet reached the adolescent stage are vulnerable to another kind of exploitation that involves communicating with strangers through the Internet (Wolak et al., 2008).

The stage of life at which adolescents are driven to expand their social network shows that they are satisfied in taking risks, express emotional bonds with others, and motivated to acquire knowledge about sex, making them vulnerable to sexual exploitation (Ospina, Harstall, & Dennett, 2010). These are considered as normal developmental factors, but perpetrators take advantage of them to make sexual advances. Due to their risk-taking characteristics, they practice self-generating indecent imagery (CEOP, 2013) as well as make their personal and sensitive information readily available in order to gain new friends or possible intimate partners. These activities put them at risk of becoming targets for exploitation (Mitchell et al., 2005). This is affirmed by Wolak et al (2008), who indicate that adolescents' vulnerability is often due to impulsiveness, immaturity, and inexperience. Furthermore, Internet cafés—where adult supervision is absent—are seen as risky venues where children can be exposed to sexual materials and solicitation (ECPAT, 2014). However, a child's refusal to follow the commands of perpetrators can be seen as a passive yet effective method to combat sexual exploitation (Acar, 2016).

Aside from developmental factors, there are other contributing causes that make adolescents vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. These include social isolation, parental conflicts, history of physical abuse, and symptoms of depression (Ospina et al., 2010; UNODC, 2015; Wolak et al., 2008).

According to UNODC (2015), children who feel rejected by real-life friends and experience bullying in the community with no one to seek help from often turn to online friends as substitutes. They entrust their personal information even to strangers they have only met on the Internet. Parental conflicts that cause adolescents to run away from home can also lead them to succumb to sexual exploitation in order to meet their basic needs (Ospina et al., 2010). Moreover, children who have experienced abuse and possess symptoms of depression have much lower self-esteem, such that they are more easily taken advantage of by perpetrators (UNODC, 2015; Wolak et al., 2008).

There are several researches that have identified the contributing factors to the vulnerability of children, but only a few studies have been able to investigate the effects brought about by exploitation (Whittle et al., 2013). These studies have concluded that not all victims are willing to talk about their abuse, while some either deny that the abuse even took place or are led to blame themselves rather than despise the offender. According to Quayle (2016), the difficulty in interviewing victims of sexual exploitation due to their reluctance to disclose is a major challenge for researchers in exploring the effects of this phenomenon. Nonetheless, there are victims who have been able to disclose the effects of this abuse in their lives.

Sexual abuse exists in both the digital and analog worlds, and cyberspace has become the extension of children's physical and real world (Teunissen, 2012). In their study, Whittle and colleagues (2013) noted that half of the victims they spoke to convey negative psychological impact and perceived long-term effects on their lives brought about by sexual exploitation. These deep-rooted and dramatic implications include, but are not limited to, emotional and social consequences (ECPAT, 2006). Furthermore, the impact of online sexual abuse and exploitation is complex and diverse, but there is a lack of understanding of how such abuse affects children (ECPAT, 2008). Real consequences, however, may occur if the abuses go beyond the realm of online offenses. These may include physical injury, pregnancy, unsafe abortions, and contracting sexually transmitted diseases (ECPAT, 2006). In addition, children and their families are targets of perpetrators' threats, harassment, and violence before and during court trials (ECPAT, 2017).

Well-being, and mental health in particular, has become one of the primary concerns of the implications of sexual abuse (ECPAT, 2014). Basically, sexual abuse is an experience that can lead to disorders and symptoms (Finkelhor & Berliner, 1995). The degree of internalization of this experience depends on the nature of the abuse, the child's previous life experiences, the level of support from family, peers, and immediate environment, and the child's resilience (ECPAT, 2008). As such, children form a restrictive and negative system of personal constructs that they use to comprehend future events and other people's behavior (Trivino, 2002). Some of the participants may feel grief, guilt, and fear (ECPAT, 2008) as well as the possibility of acquiring feelings of aggression, lack of confidence, and problems in trusting others, and experience a sense of lost innocence (Whittle et al., 2013). A feeling of disgust about the experience may also occur especially if the experience involves commercial sex trade (Laguisma-Sison, 2002). Furthermore, perpetrators often leave psychological damage,

which leads the victims to engage in self-harm (Acar, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2005) and experience panic attacks (Whittle et al., 2013) that increase the potential for suicide attempts (Europol, 2015). Sexual abuse of children may also impact adult sexual functioning in the long run, such as sexual disturbance and dysfunction (Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, DaCosta, Akman, & Cassavia, 1992).

Most sexually abused children reported embarrassment in dealing with the people around them, especially with their parents after they reveal what happened (Whittle et al., 2013). Likewise, they developed a fear of bullying such as "gay-bashing" and "slut-shaming" (Acar, 2016). Adults, particularly those who are involved in the justice system, fail to see the child beyond the image of a sex worker or troubled teen (ECPAT, 2017). Health and well-being have become a concern, as well as children engaging in improper online conversations (ECPAT, 2014). Indeed, being victims of online child sexual abuse and exploitation affects them in terms of how they define and determine friendship (ECPAT, 2008). Moreover, children and youth who have been victimized, particularly by the commercial sex trade, have limited options for accessing social services such as education and employment (Swaner, Labriola, Rempel, Walker, & Spadafore, 2016). Loss of education, skills training, and employment opportunities are considered longer-term social consequences (ECPAT, 2006). Regrettably, these socioeconomic essentials are usually not the ones that are easily delivered (Swaner et al., 2016).

Role of the Family

Family also plays an important role for the victims of sexual exploitation. Any conflict within the family can be risk factors that make the child prone to sexual exploitation (Mitchell et al., 2005; UNODC, 2015). According to Protacio-Marcelino et al (2000), child abuse in the Philippines in general is caused by poverty, urbanization, and family disintegration where children often come from large and poor families headed by a single parent (Brown, 2016). Parents or family members become motivated to produce sexual abuse materials involving their children to earn income, which they then decide to turn into a business (UNODC, 2015). Furthermore, children may personally choose to engage in survival sex just to be given food and shelter, as the family cannot provide these basic needs (Mitchell & Jones, 2013).

The child's upbringing has been viewed as a contributing factor in his or her becoming a possible target or a perpetrator of sexual exploitation (Ospina et al., 2010). It is reported that individuals who are involved in this activity had a prior history of physical or sexual abuse from parents or other family members (Mitchell et al., 2005). This experience affects their emotional regulation and even results in low self-esteem, which makes them more vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Studies on offenders' characteristics also reveal that there are family members and adult relatives such as grandparents, uncles, and step-parents who perpetrate child abuse (Mitchell et al., 2005). In families where child sexual abuse occurs, authoritarian parents treat their children as possessions. Children who are powerless in this kind of system may be forced to engage in online sexual activities to satisfy their emotional and financial needs and, for some families, to satisfy an addiction. Children believe that these dysfunctional behaviors are normal among families, and this develops into a pattern. But families can also be a protective factor for the child who is being abused. One online

behavior study revealed that adolescents with high levels of social support were likely to seek help when they received sexual requests (DeMarco et al., 2017). Furthermore, family support appears to contribute substantially to the healing process of a sexually abused victim (Whittle et al., 2013). With social support, the child's negative reaction due to victimization may be minimized (Acar, 2016). Rehabilitation programs that involved family during therapies were found to be effective because the children were provided enough support to overcome the negative impact of sexual exploitation in their lives (UNODC, 2015). A recent study, however, revealed that families usually do not prefer to go through a problematic criminal proceeding; instead they wish to settle the sexual exploitation cases unobtrusively, which may lead to a cycle of continuing abuse if specialized care and counseling needs were not met (ECPAT, 2017).

Perpetrators of Sexual Exploitation

Commercial sexual exploitation and abuse of children are considered as an established crime (Europol, 2015). The Internet has provided opportunities for perpetrators to explore, express, and engage in deviant sexual activities (Kloess et al., 2014). The nature of perpetrators is not clear-cut and they do not necessarily form behavioral patterns (Teunissen, 2012). However, literature has revealed that perpetrators may be perceived as violent and sadistic; conversely, they are patient enough to develop relationships with their victims and to lure them, even offline (Wolak et al., 2008). They know what to say to their victims in order to gain their trust, arouse their sexual curiosity, or establish authority over the children to do sexual activities for commercial exploitation (Mitchell et al., 2005). Moreover, these perpetrators are, to some extent, different from those who are convicted by contact sexual abuse because they are skilled and educated (Wolak et al., 2008). The study of Mitchell et al (2005) of perpetrators' characteristics discovered that perpetrators had previous jobs that gave them access to children. Nonetheless, it has been proven that these perpetrators are also motivated by their sexual gratification to exploit their victims and have been found to possess child pornographic materials (UNODC, 2015; Kloess et al., 2014).

Interestingly, the perpetrators have personal characteristics that influence them to commit acts of sexual exploitation. There have been studies showing that these perpetrators are socially isolated and experience intimacy deficits, which they try to satisfy online (Craven et al., 2006). Also, these perpetrators have a history of problems, especially related to early childhood sexual experience; adult sexual abuse has also been associated with most offenders (Wolak et al., 2008). It was thus important to explore the motives that influence the act because they vary, especially with regard to the kind of sexual exploitation perpetrators commit. It was suggested that perpetrators' early childhood sexual experiences limited them in controlling their urges and understanding their emotions, which often led them to seek satisfaction even in deviant ways. Because appropriate adults could not provide them sexual satisfaction, perpetrators' sexual needs were met by deviant sexual arousal (Craven et al., 2006; Ward & Hudson, 2008; Ward & Siegert, 2002).

Studies also convey the significance of the perpetrator's gender in sexual exploitation. According to UNODC (2015), male perpetrators typically act on the "practical" aspects of child sexual abuse, since they are much more able to exert physical force on them and demand obedience through violence. It has been well-documented that the pattern of organized child sexual abuse involves male

perpetrators abusing boys, and cases deviating from this pattern occurred occasionally (Gallagher, 1998). In the same study, women are found to be the ringleaders (Gallagher, 1998) and are much more involved in operating the business of commercial sexual exploitation of children (UNODC, 2015). According to Altamura (2017), women are unquestionably much more involved in Internet-mediated crimes than people perceive. Women also recruit targets by establishing "friendship" to gain the potential victim's trust (Acar, 2016), or disguising themselves as religious and/or relief workers during post-disaster operations (Childs, 2016). These actions can be attributed to coercion or coaxing by a man who is ultimately responsible for the crime (Martellozzo, Nehring, & Taylor, 2010). In fact, males recently have become the ones who lure adolescent girls on the Internet as targets for exploitation (UNODC, 2015). It is important to note that, by grooming not only children but also their families and local communities, perpetrators have managed to present themselves as posing no risk to children (McAlinden, 2006). There are differences in techniques and strategies of exploiting children online, but the behaviors (e.g., desensitizing the child until they are psychologically and physically groomed) as well as the purpose for exploiting their victims remain consistent across environments (Whittle et al., 2013).

Role of ICT in OSAEC

Technology has become an integral part of people's daily lives. With rapid development, access to technology has increased the risks and threats to children who go online. On the other hand, continued advancement in technology can also be utilized to provide a wide array of solutions to OSAEC, from detection to tracking, monitoring, blocking, reporting, and even promoting awareness and education. Online platforms and services that may be used as a medium for and against OSAEC can be classified into four categories: (1) search engines such as Google; (2) social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook; (3) resource-sharing sites for photos and videos, including email systems, messaging and chat applications, and cloud file storage facilities; and (4) online payment facilities.

The NetClean Report 2015 highlighted that 90% of the respondents stated peer-to-peer and file sharing as the most common means of distributing child sexual abuse materials, while 37.9% reported social media as another distribution mechanism. Other channels include the Dark Net, instant messaging, and cloud-based services. The growing number of social media platforms and apps available on mobile phones has led to an increase in self-produced materials, grooming, and portraying children engaged in sexual behavior. Fast Internet connection has also increased cases of live streaming videos. The report further noted that the availability of encryption and anonymization technologies enables perpetrators to avoid detection, thus making the task of finding them more challenging. Moreover, there is an increased use of the Dark Net for hosting and distributing child exploitation materials.

The Dark Net or the deep web is a section of the Internet that is not available on standard search engines such as Google (Cox, 2015). It is an underground network where "anything can be bought and sold with virtually no risk to be caught" (ECPAT, 2015), such as drugs, weapons, and even OSAEC materials. A well-known Dark Net is Tor, originally created in 2002 by the US Naval Research Laboratory. Tor provides two main services to the public: anonymizing a web site and anonymous browsing by concealing a person's identity online. These sites are created to allow the public to enjoy

anonymity through increased privacy and security during their online surfing activities. However, Cox (2015) points out that criminals also use these technologies to stay undetected while improving the efficiency of their criminal activities.

Because the underground network has adopted a complete "no censure" philosophy, filtering and blocking strategies do not affect these sites. Thus, online markets and forums involving the exchange of child sexual abuse and exploitation materials have found refuge in the Dark Net, especially by offenders who want to stay hidden and undetected. A study of websites that use Tor's anonymizing technology at the University of Portsmouth also reported that more than 80% of Dark Net traffic is devoted to visits to hidden sites that contain OSAEC materials (Dredge, 2014; Cox, 2015), where viewers can watch videos from anywhere in the world while remaining anonymous.

Payments through these underground networks have also become untraceable. While previous online payment modes using credit cards and bank accounts enabled government agencies to track perpetrators and offenders, the availability of alternative digital anonymous currencies such as Bitcoin has rendered the task more difficult in recent years (Smedley, 2016). These have further supported the flow of OSAEC materials through the deep web.

Thorn (2014) compiled a set of non-prescriptive and sound practices that government agencies and private organizations may adopt in order to prevent, identify, report, and remove child sexual exploitation and abuse content from various online platforms. These practices include a mechanism to allow the public to report incidents of child sexual abuse using online platforms, and accessibility of child pornographic materials online; a tracking system to log sites (URLs) with reported cases, to temporarily block access to these sites, and to eventually remove these sites once the cases have been verified; a keyword list of child sexual abuse materials to help companies identify online content; and an automated, semi-automated, or manual mechanism for screening materials uploaded into a photo sharing or video sharing site.

Various technology-based mechanisms are available to safeguard children from accessing harmful content. The first mechanism uses content-control software to filter content and restrict materials that are delivered through the web, email, and other file sharing platforms. Different levels of content control can be implemented: at the national level, government agencies can impose policies and laws on Internet censorship based on different goals—such as child online safety, a controversial political agenda (such as the "Great Firewall of China")—by imposing search engine filters; at the ISP level, the ISP can restrict the content that they deliver to their clients; at the organizational level, company administrators can limit access to certain data by its personnel. Even schools can impose limitations to content available to students through network-based filtering; the library to its patrons; parents to their children's computers; and at the lowest level, an individual imposing restrictions of his or her own accord through client-side, browser-based filters.

Framework

This study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, recognizing that an individual's development is influenced by the entire ecological system within which he or she grows (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The microsystem, which is the first subsystem, includes such settings as family, peer group, school, and perpetrators, with whom the child has prolonged and immediate interactions. On an individual level, Carandang's Rubic's Cube model highlights the importance of understanding children's development physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually, and spiritually (1987). The mesosystem, the second subsystem, consists of how the relations between the family and peer group, peer group and school, and family and perpetrator, influence the child victim's development. The next subsystem is the exosystem, which encompasses the link between the family and the neighborhood (community, private sector, NGOs, remittance centers, telecommunication companies), case responders (NBI, judges, prosecutors, etc.), and other social services that contribute to the child victim's growth. The fourth system is the macrosystem, composed of the culture and customs, economic state, laws, values, religion, belief system, lifestyle, social norms, and technology use where the child victim lives. The last system is the chronosystem, which includes change or consistency over time, both in the developing child and in the environment where he or she lives. It could be milestones and setbacks in the family (new jobs for parents, new school, parental separation, death in the family, etc.) or developments in the country (advancement in technology, promotion of social media, promotion of tourism). These different systems and how they interact are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Bronfrenbrenner's Ecological System showing the influence of different subsystems in the development of children who have experienced online sexual abuse and exploitation (OSAEC).
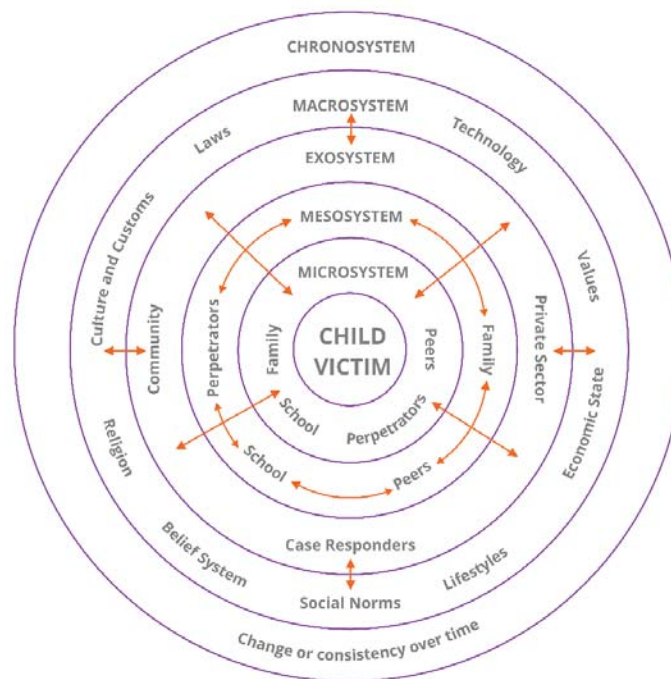
In this study, at the center of the system is the child who has experienced online sexual abuse and exploitation. The influence of the people, institutions, events, laws, culture, and social norms in his or her environment have helped in understanding the child victim. However, in understanding the child, his or her inner voice must also be heard (Carandang, 1996). Unfortunately, due to ethical considerations and concerns about protecting the children (and also being mindful of the child safeguarding framework adopted by this study's researchers), no interviews were conducted with children, and children's experiences were narrated mainly from the perspective of their case managers and house parents.

Attention was given to identifying what steps or actions are pursued in raising awareness about online sexual abuse and exploitation of children, and learning about the efforts taken to provide justice and intervention, and eventually, reintegration of child victims into their respective communities, regardless of the kind of abuse and exploitation they may have experienced. The roles and responsibilities of each actor were identified in the framework. The links (or lack thereof) of organizations and actors were established to have an overall perspective of how they operate and possibly relate to one another. Gaps in the relationships were also determined to identify and implement interventions that prevent online sexual abuse and exploitation of children. In order to understand the systemic nature of OSAEC, the Case Analytic Framework as a process approach was used (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. A systems approach to OSAEC case resolution and management.

Context [CON] Identification [IDE] Reporting [REP] Rescue [RES] Trial [TRI] Aftercare [AFT]

Investigation
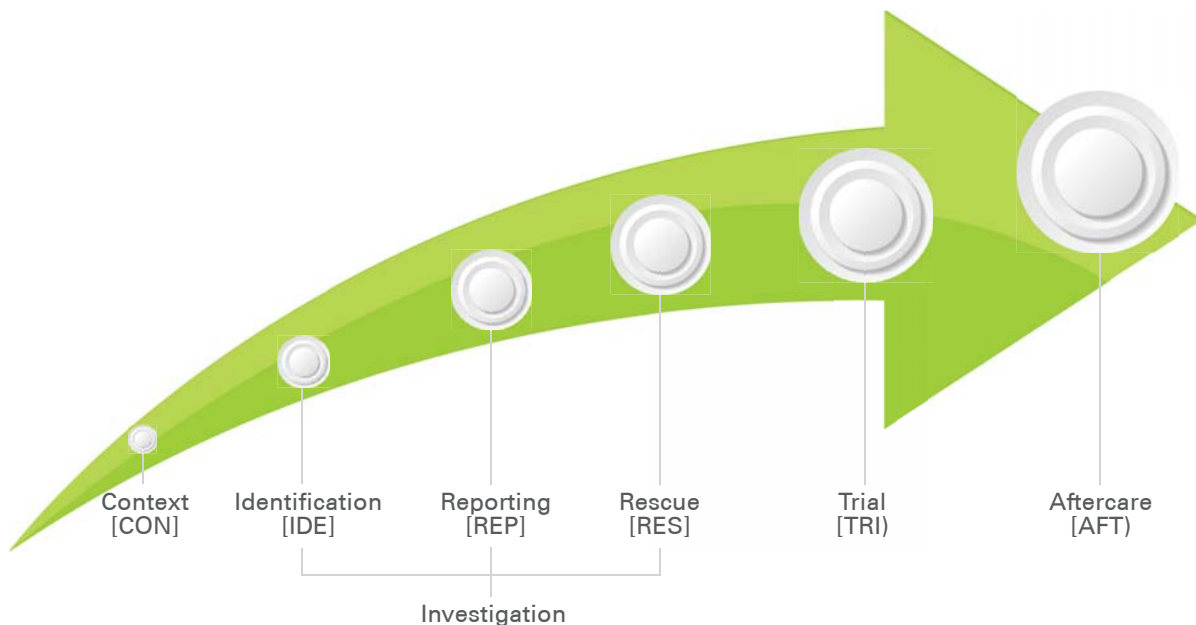
Girls practice their lessons during a computer literacy class at a dormitory and national training school for girls in a city in Metro Manila, Philippines. @UNICEF Philippines/2016/SNoorani

Research Methodology

This section describes the methods to systematically collect data on the nature and scope of OSAEC in the Philippines. Of specific research interest are data on child victims, offenders, the role of the private sector, and case management and resolution.

Qualitative Research

Key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions, (FGDs), and document review were utilized as data-gathering methods. Using a qualitative approach, interview and FGD transcripts were analyzed to arrive at themes describing the different aspects and contexts of the child victims' respective situations.

Key informant interviews and focus group discussions (of national and local government and private sector respondents and community members, e.g., parents, youth, and school teachers) where

OSAEC occurs. KIIs and FGDs are in-depth individual and/or group interviews with people who are considered knowledgeable in their respective fields within a community or organization. Their first-hand knowledge and understanding relevant to the topic provided insights into the nature of the problem and raised potential solutions through their recommendations.

For this study, KIIs and FGDs were used for representatives from different communities, concerned government agencies, and private companies to determine what is being done to detect, capture, and prevent perpetrators from victimizing children; identify the roles of each key player in promoting information dissemination about OSAEC cases; and study the different child safeguarding protocols that can help the victims in their recovery.

Document review or analysis (e.g., policy documents, documentaries, and newspaper reports). A document review is a way of collecting data by reviewing existing records about the topic at hand. Given this study's limitations, this document review and evaluation was essential in understanding the cases of perpetrators and victims in order to include their perceptions and beliefs in the analysis.

As part of the interview process, a data collection protocol kit was designed to guide and prepare the interviewers before, during, and after an interview. The protocol kit included the interviewer's code of conduct, information about the research, and an informed consent form for the respondents (case managers, house parents, social workers, and other stakeholders such as neighbors, community, barangay officials, court employees, government agencies, and private sector individuals).

Respondents

Utilizing Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, the team investigated the entire social community connected to OSAEC cases to picture where it happened, why it happened, how it happened, and identify the enabling factors that unknowingly facilitate the activity in order to find ways to prevent it from happening to other children.

Twenty-two OSAEC cases from four different regions were identified purposively for this study. Child victims who are siblings were considered as a single case, so there is no one-on-one correspondence between the actual number of child victims and the number of cases reported here. Four cases came from Pampanga, five from Cagayan de Oro, seven from the National Capital Region (NCR), and six from Cebu. In coordination with case managers and house parents of the various institutions approached for this study, these cases were included based on the following criteria: a) the online sexual abuse and exploitation happened to a child below 18 years of age; b) subjects in the cases came from different age groups and different regions of the country; and c) key agencies and institutions consented to data gathering. The child victims' respective case managers, houseparents, lawyers, and rescuing team of responders (including law enforcers and social workers) were interviewed to shed light on the identified cases. In the purposive sampling, none of the case managers from the four regions were able to share any interventions or experiences where the children were placed in foster care homes, kinship care or non-institutionalized alternative residential care.

Due to limitations as a result of concerns about data privacy and protection of victims' identity, the team mostly relied on collateral informants for data collection, and only two former OSAEC victims were actually interviewed (these victims were already above 18 years old at the time of the interview). Most of the information about the survivors came from the various case managers and house parents in frequent contact with them. This is in accordance with the child safeguarding framework adopted by this study, and with the suggestion of the funding agency and the Research Advisory Board upon knowing about the difficulties and challenges of obtaining access to the children themselves.

Purposive sampling was employed in recruiting respondents. As mentioned, the team managed to source 22 cases, making a conscious attempt to have an equal number of males and females coming from different parts of the country, but was then limited by whatever cases had been handled by the case managers and house parents that the team interviewed. It is to be noted that the case managers engaged in this study did not share with the investigators of any case where the child-victim was being rehabilitated while in a foster home or kinship care. Thus, most of the cases were of children in alternative residential care facilities. Some of the victims/survivors have already been reintegrated into their respective communities, but most of them still have ongoing cases filed in court. The current age of child victim survivors ranges from 1 to 23 years.

The research team conducted KIIs and FGDs with resource persons who had knowledge and experience in handling OSAEC cases, as well as key informants (e.g., parents, youth, teachers) from communities where OSAEC is known to be prevalent. Overall, there were 133 KIIs and 16 FGDs conducted for the study, as summarized in Table 1.
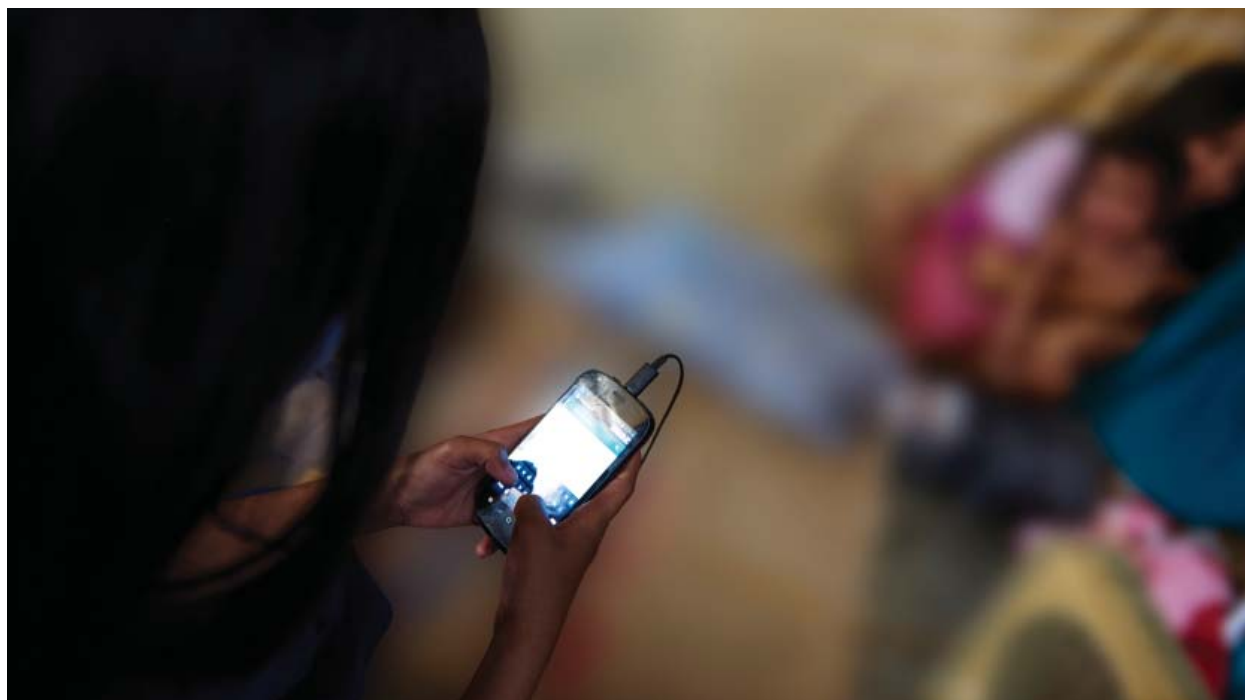
A young girl child, sister of a victim of sexual abuse, uses a cellphone at her home in a poor community in the Philippines. © UNICEF Philippines/2019/SNoorani

Table 1. Summary of FGDs and KIIs

	Respondent	Number of KIIs/FGDs
Case	Victim	4 KIIs
	Perpetrator	5 KIIs
Rehabilitation and Aftercare	Family	2 FGDs
	Case Manager	10 KIIs
	House Parent	27 KIIs
	Psychologist	2 KIIs
Rescue and Litigation	Social Worker	25 KIIs
	Law Enforcer	1 FGD & 7 KIIs
	Investigator	1 KII
	Lawyer	5 KIIs
	Prosecutor	4 KIIs
Community	Teacher	1 FGD
	Youth	2 FGDs
	Barangay Representative	4 FGDs
	Judge	1 KII
	Church-based organizations	2 FGDs
Private Sector	TelCom	1 FGD & 4 KIIs
	Network	1 KII
	Internet Café	1 KII
Government	Local Officials	2 KIIs
	Barangay Officials	9 KIIs
	National Agencies	3 FGDs & 26 KIIs
Others	Researcher	1 KII

Data Gathering Procedure

Data gathering was conducted after all the instruments had been finalized and improved. Field coordinators were tasked with following up letters of permission sent to local government unit (LGU) officials in the field research sites where the OSAEC incidents happened and setting up interview appointments over three-day periods for the research team members. The team members proceeded to the sites, accompanied by the study's respective field coordinators. Before each FGD or interview, respondents were provided with the protocol kit, which included the interviewer's code of conduct, information about the research (Plain Language Statement), and an informed consent form for their signature. Interviews and FGDs generally lasted from 45 minutes to 2 hours. Data gathering was done from January 2018 to February 2019.

Addressing Ethical Considerations

Child exploitation and abuse, in whatever form, is a sensitive issue. Thus, ethical considerations must be addressed to safeguard all parties involved in the conduct of this research. The following steps were taken to ensure that the respondents came to no harm because of the research:

1. It was anticipated that distress may be felt by the interviewees who have to recount their experiences of handling online sexual abuse cases, as well as the interviewers who will hear these stories. Stress debriefing was conducted with the interviewers and interviewees when necessary.

2. Maintaining confidentiality of all the interviewees was strictly observed. Confidentiality contracts were signed with researchers regarding storage and use of audio recordings.

3. All interviewees agreed to sign an informed consent form signifying their approval and willingness to participate in the study.

4. To ensure adherence to ethical standards, the study went through a thorough review process with respect to scientific content and compliance with applicable research and human subjects' regulations under the Research Ethics Office of De La Salle University Manila, whose Ethics Committee reviewed and approved the study's scope, protocols, and procedures.

Data Analysis Strategies

This study on OSAEC in the Philippines is primarily a qualitative research study. All the voice recordings of the KIIs and FGDs were transcribed verbatim, resulting in a total of 149 transcripts that were prepared for NVIVO software analysis. This involved coding data sources to categorize material into themes or "nodes," organizing the data's themes, and assessing the data to gather descriptive information about the cases being studied. The first step in the qualitative data analysis, which is the coding of the data, used an initial shortlist of codes developed by the project's team of researchers. These codes were then attached to data strips using the NVIVO software. The coding of transcripts was done by at least two coders to ensure the reliability of the process. A different research team member then reviewed the process, themes, and codes.

After coding, the research team generated analysis reports per content theme and per attribute, first of the child victims and then of the OSAEC perpetrators, using the NVIVO program. The goal of the qualitative data analysis was to characterize the operational process of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children, and the behavior patterns of both victims and offenders. The results intended to guide policy makers and other stakeholders toward coordinated efforts and intervention programs that lead to a better response to and prevention of the OSAEC problem.

Validation and Peer Review Process

To ensure the validity and accuracy of the initial findings, meetings with the study participants were conducted simultaneously on 29 January 2019 in Pampanga, Cagayan de Oro, and Cebu; and on 30 January 2019 in the NCR. Thirteen participants came from Pampanga, composed mostly of social workers, a few houseparents, and a psychometrician. In Cagayan de Oro, the six participants who attended the validation meeting were a mix of social workers, a PNP officer, an NBI officer, a psychologist, and a lawyer. Half of the 10 participants in the Cebu validation meeting were social workers, while the rest were houseparents. Finally, 16 participants came to the NCR validation meeting, composed of representatives from the Netherlands Embassy, state prosecutors from the DOJ, a representative from the Council of the Welfare of Children, social workers, a psychologist, a PNP ACG Officer, IACACP Secretariat, International Justice Mission, a representative from a telecommunications company (telco), and a representative from the National Youth Commission.

Using the "member-checking method", comments and suggestions gathered from the validation meetings were incorporated in the write-up of the final report. Five experts from different fields who are knowledgeable on OSAEC also evaluated the document to complete the review process.

Holding hands, a counsellor walks a young girl child through the outdoor space at a dormitory and national training school for girls, in a city in Metro Manila, Philippines. ©UNICEF Philippines/2016/SNoorani

Key Findings

This section introduces the OSAEC phenomenon in the Philippines by describing it from the perspective of the different informants, ranging from child survivors, caregivers, community, law enforcers, and government officials. Their perception of the extent of OSAEC activities in the country, and how the different modalities of technology have supported the evolution of OSAEC into varying forms, are likewise discussed. These serve as a foundation in the presentation of the detailed findings, beginning with the individual child victims and their family and community, followed by the perpetrators, the private sector, and their roles in the promotion and prevention of OSAEC. Findings related to institutional laws and policies, and the case management system, are then presented to complete this description.

Landscape of OSAEC in the Philippines

Awareness and Perception of OSAEC in the Philippines

An ECPAT International describes "online sexual exploitation as most commonly includes grooming, live streaming, consuming child sexual abuse material, and coercing and blackmailing children for sexual purposes" (ECPAT International, n.d.). Within the context of modern technology, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation are considered as two different terminologies in that sexual exploitation may not directly add to the harm brought against a child, but rather to the harm that results from making a child a sexual object (Quayle, Loof, & Palmer, 2008). While the majority of the literature does not distinguish between terminologies, it should be noted that online sexual abuse and exploitation of children is a much more wide-ranging, multi-faceted, and challenging phenomenon (Gallagher, Fraser, Christman, & Hodgson, 2006). OSAEC usually occurs with the use of webcams and communication software through media such as chatrooms, email, and even social networking sites. It involves a cybercriminal who initiates communication of a sexual nature with the victim and persuades the latter to engage in sexual behavior while being recorded and transmitted via the Internet. Children exploited in prostitution and through other forms of sexual abuse are coerced or influenced by an adult, syndicate, or group to engage in sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct for money, profit, and any other form of remuneration.

In the Philippines, different stakeholders give their own interpretation of OSAEC. As a cybercrime, it refers to the use of an electronic medium, such as a computer or computer network, to conduct online communication and transactions that victimize vulnerable children, as defined in RA No. 10175 or the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012. Anything that involves online predators communicating with minors via the Internet with malicious and sexual intent and content, whether consensual or not, is considered by the private sector as OSAEC. Here, the offender may be a foreigner and may not necessarily be physically present in the country.

OSAEC is also seen as a cyber-enabled crime. These are traditional crimes that are committed using ICT or the Internet and punishable by the Revised Penal Code of the Philippines and special laws. Some key informants consider cybercrimes as organized crimes that have a commercial aspect involving actual victims of abuse or exploitation in the exposure, exchange, trade or sale of child exploitation materials. The media can come in different forms, including photographs, videos, and live streaming through applications that range from email to chatrooms and social media platforms. This commercial exploitation can be equated to human trafficking, where the primary victims are children, with money as the primary motivation.

There are also those who perceive OSAEC to be child pornography done online, with possibly elements of sexual and physical abuse. Not all, however, subscribe to this description, as there are parents and victims who claim the absence of physical and sexual abuse since no touching and penetration occur. In other cases though, cybersex is performed with the child. These activities occur in private homes, usually in poverty-ridden communities.

Perception of the Extent of OSAEC in the Philippines

OSAEC appears to have been recognized as a unique issue only in the latter part of the 2010s, such that some respondents in this study were still not aware of the particular nuances and concerns involving this problem. This is evident in the way the stakeholders initially defined and subsequently recognized it, which overlaps with what one social worker termed as traditional sexual exploitation:

> The first was a hybrid OSAEC cases (sic). There was this prostitution, so it was traditional, mixed with, they were advertised through the Internet on the web. So I said it's hybrid, a mix of traditional and online sexual exploitation. The second, through cybersex, a child being peddled or sold through the Internet by the mother for a fee. Different foreigners or buyers exploiting the child online.

The exploitation can occur along a continuum of offline–online sexual exploitation and abuse. It is exemplified by the previous statement, where the respondent also mentioned that while exploitation involves cybersex, it was still a "hybrid" act "because there was rape." Moreover, while the sex acts involving children were being videotaped, other children who were also naked watched the proceedings in the same room. One respondent mentioned that online sexual exploitation of children is another form of prostitution. Some girls see this as a way to move out from working in the bars to online dealing.

Nonetheless, as more and more stakeholders become aware of this phenomenon, the understanding of OSAEC also becomes more clearly defined. According to one respondent, it is children being sold using computers, cellphones, and through any kind of platform like chat on Facebook and online conversations.

Even before the increase in Internet use, technology-based child pornography was already prevalent. For instance, offenders took nude photographs and videos of child victims and saved these on compact discs (CDs) to be sold formally (i.e., in photo and printing services shops) and informally (i.e., in kiosks, markets, and along streets). Since 2009, NGOs have been aware of Internet cafés that promote cyber pornography and cybersex activities but have not been able to address these due to lack of a mandate and unclear parameters when it comes to handling crimes of such nature.

In an interview with a government official, it was revealed that 58% of the Philippine population is already connected to the Internet, with Filipinos spending an average of nine hours online per day, the most time spent by users globally. The 2018 PH Kids Online study funded by UNICEF reports that one-third of the surveyed respondents started using the Internet at age 9, frequenting social media sites, notably Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. Mobile phones are the primary means by which these children connect to the Internet through prepaid subscriptions with telcos as well as access at home, in schools, and free Wi-Fi in public places (e.g., coffee shops and malls).

Key informants enumerated varying reasons for the presence of and the perceived continued rise in the number of OSAEC cases in the country. From the community standpoint, this is generally seen to be influenced by the public's increasing online connectivity, lack of family cohesiveness, lack of education, and poverty. From the standpoint of law enforcement agencies, the increased ability to detect such incidents online has brought to light the cases that they must subsequently investigate. The proliferation of materials promoting online safety and the recent news of the conviction of offenders may have also contributed to the public's awareness about the presence of OSAEC activities.

Key informants contend that as free public access to the Internet increases, the risk of exposure of children to OSAEC-related activities also increases. The widespread use of cellphones compounded by the irresponsible use of technology and insufficient computer literacy may be the primary reasons for this heightened risk. Families (users) do not realize that once they upload something online, it will be there "forever." The design of the technology itself can make it vulnerable to misuse, especially for those who do not know how to use it responsibly. Even if photos and videos have been taken down from one social media platform, a copy can still be found somewhere online because people who saw the video may have (automatically) downloaded the file and shared it with their online friends.

This persistent storage of photos and videos that have been shared via the Internet "can bring moral degradation and could ruin the children's future when they grow up" (Dizon, 2018). Accidental and non-accidental exposure of children to sexually explicit materials online may happen in Internet cafés and public places where low-cost Internet access is available, i.e., on PisoNet devices. Differing social norms and beliefs may lead the community to dismiss the viewing of such materials as harmless to children due to the absence of physical contact.

Lifestyle in the Philippines is also seen as a contributing factor. The overseas Filipino workers (OFW) phenomenon has been reported as an enabler in prompting children to become involved in OSAEC activities. Because these children are separated from their parents, they often lack the proper guidance needed to make good decisions. However, one can argue that even in poor communities, children are often left unsupervised by parents who have to attend to younger children and meet daily subsistence needs. These unsupervised children are at risk of becoming OSAEC victims. It has also been observed that human trafficking increases in areas affected by calamities. Given that the Philippines is considered as one of the most vulnerable countries in terms of natural disasters, the implications involving OSAEC are thus quite alarming.

Different Technology Modalities that have Facilitated OSAEC

While the benefits of technology adoption are expanding, the risks and dangers associated with accessibility to online resources and the Internet are also rapidly increasing, thereby heightening children's risks from OSAEC. Figure 3 illustrates how the evolution of technology adoption has led to the transformation of OSAEC.

Figure 3. Evolution of technology and corresponding forms of OSAEC.

Tech-based child pornography

- Offenders take nude photos and videos of victims

- Offenders sell these materials through photo shops and CDs

Tech-enabled child pornography

- Online access via Internet cafes, PisoNet, or home-based system using hardware (computer/laptop, camera, network router) and software (email, chatroom, video streaming)

- ISPs, Banks and Remittance centers

Cybercrime

- Mobile devices

- Free Wifi

- Social media platform with chat/messaging/ photo and video sharing

- E-payment channels (online banking, Smart Padala/GCash/PayMaya/Bitcoins)

- Dark Net

OSAEC's early roots can be traced to technology-based child pornography, where the availability of low-cost digital cameras and storage such as CDs enabled offenders to take nude photos and videos of victims and save these on CDs, to be sold through street vendors, photo shops, and CD stores.

Subsequently, technology-enabled child pornography emerged from the proliferation of personal computers (desktops and laptops), networks, and routers, and the ease of setting these up in peoples' homes. Children, parents, and offenders have been given the capability to self-produce video materials, possibly with sexual content. This is further supported by the establishment of ISPs

that provide affordable packages for home connectivity. On the other hand, Internet cafés and even PisoNet providers allow those who cannot afford their own personal computers to still access the Internet.

In this technology-enabled era, OSAEC-related incidence can be monitored through red flags such as children who come and go in pairs or groups to a place that has no evident form of entertainment except perhaps a home-based computer set-up, children frequenting money transfer centers, and poor communities that have foreigners who interact with or groom children through civic activities.

As hardware technology advances so do software applications that enable the public to stay connected despite geographic distance, by exchanging emails, tweets, and posts with their families and friends using social media platforms; joining chat rooms for synchronous communication and interaction; and even streaming videos. The ubiquity of advanced computing devices, fast Internet connectivity, social media platforms, and alternative payment channels has facilitated the access, production, and transmission of child sexual exploitation materials, leading authorities to classify them as a form of cybercrime.

Cybercrimes enhance threats and dangers to children. Placing a mobile phone in the hands of every child to allow for easy Internet access, either via a telco service or from the government's free public Wi-Fi program, poses a higher risk from OSAEC. The growing number of social media platforms and mobile phone apps enables children to self-produce their materials, sometimes with sexual suggestions, which they can easily share through their social media accounts. Children also frequently engage in online chats not only with their peers, but even strangers whom they know only by pseudonyms, thus further increasing their chances of befriending potential offenders.

As one key informant stated, pornography has always been there but OSAEC is computer-facilitated, making it difficult for law enforcers to keep pace with. The continuing advancements in technology, low-cost mobile devices, and provisions for free online connectivity in public places lead to a never-ending race for the government and concerned organizations to mitigate OSAEC. The lack of properly trained personnel and resources for monitoring and detecting OSAEC-related cybercrimes further compounds the problem. The crimes have spread through the help of wireless technology, where online users who may already be engaged in OSAEC activities cannot be effectively tracked by law enforcers.

While the Dark Net did not surface as an alarming issue in any of the key informants' interviews, its potential threat to children should not be discounted. A 2014 study conducted by the University of Portsmouth reported that visits to websites offering child abuse-related materials account for more than 80% of Dark Net Internet traffic (Dredge, 2014). In a related report by Greenberg (2014), however, Tor pointed out that child sexual abuse material represents only 2% of the estimated 45,000 hidden websites hosted by this platform. Still, the ease by which technology is accessible to the public, combined with economic and social phenomena, and increasing public awareness and prosecution of OSAEC cases may force offenders to seek the Dark Net as a haven for conducting their illegal activities.

Child Victims

This section describes the profile, characteristics, and experiences of OSAEC victims and survivors as narrated by various key informants, social workers, lawyers, law enforcers, house parents, and other responders and stakeholders who are responsible for preventing this phenomenon. There were also adult survivors who shared their past experiences as OSAEC victims.

Profile and Characteristics of Children

A review of online news and articles by Hernandez, Lacsina, Ylade, Aldba, Lam, Estacio, and Lopez (2018) from 2011 to 2015 indicated that OSAEC cases took place in nine regions in the Philippines, with child victims' ages ranging from 18 months to 17 years. Their review likewise found that the some of the first few cases happened in Olongapo City, Cordova (Cebu), Cagayan de Oro City, and Davao City. In this study, informants and child victims came from four different regions: Region VII (Cordova municipality and Cebu City in Cebu province), Region X (Cagayan de Oro City in Misamis Oriental), Region III (Angeles City in Pampanga), and NCR (Quezon City and Taguig City). Key figures and stakeholders representing national agencies, LGUs, and international and non-government organizations would sometimes describe cases outside of the four regions. In this regard, the profile described in this study is based on the combined experience of the respondents.

Although it is difficult to determine the exact number of OSAEC cases in the Philippines, a common observation among key informants is the increasing number of reported OSAEC cases in general. They have also observed that the child victims are getting younger. The reported profiles of the victims, who are rescued and who are still in the community, do not form a homogenous group. Rather, they are composed of children of different ages and genders. In this national study covering four major Philippine cities, the victims' ages at the time of the abuse and exploitation range from 5 to 14. There were a few cases of toddlers—those 3 years old and below—being brought to child-caring institutions as they were reportedly put at some risk as well. One social worker said that she started handling an OSAEC case in 2010. Currently, the same social worker admitted that 40%–50% of her case load includes OSAEC-related cases.

While reported victims in the past were mostly girls, there have lately been cases of boys who have been victimized. One interviewee also talked about cases of *baklang bata* (gay boys) who are asked to perform sexual acts in front of a computer. There are also quite a number of victims who are either siblings, cousins, friends or classmates. This may reflect the perpetrator's goal of targeting a group of children who may easily be influenced by peer pressure or by what is deemed as model behavior by adults in the community.

With regard to their families, many informants described that these children "came from poor, dysfunctional families." They were living either in slums and depressed areas or in the streets. Many parents did not have a regular job. Some are sidewalk vendors and some live in the streets. There are likewise some cases in which child victims do not necessarily come from poor families. Dysfunctional families refer to those families with parents who may be separated or conflicted, leaving the children without guidance or supervision. In rare cases, for those whose families are

relatively well-off, intact, and with positive relationships, the parents or family members of the victims were not aware of their children's involvement in OSAEC-related cases.

In general, OSAEC victims are not perceived to be significantly different from other children in terms of their physical attributes and personality traits. However, it is important to note that the experiences of the children vary depending on their age, contexts, and circumstances. For older children who had some knowledge of what they were involved in, their primary motivation was to help their family financially. There were some who see this as a job. There were also cases where older children sought friends online, making them more vulnerable and at risk from online sexual abuse and exploitation. For the younger ones who were oblivious to what they were being asked to do, they reportedly did not have any idea of what was going on and were simply obeying their parents or the adults whom they trusted. According to some social workers and house parents, they were simply following what the other children were doing.

There were some cases when victims did not see themselves as victims and even perceive themselves as being superior to other children in the shelter. They claimed that they were only forced to be in the shelter, but they have other options to choose from. One respondent pointed out that in conversations with some teenagers who are working in bars, OSAEC is seen as an option that they can get into when they do not want to work in bars anymore. One of the volunteers from a faith-based organization added that some bar girls got involved in OSAEC because they became pregnant and needed to work at home.

The OSAEC Experience

Similar to the experience of victims of offline trafficking, OSAEC victims' experience is described as a "roller coaster ride," with many ups and downs. Two differences are noted, though, and both are important reasons why the cases are handled differently. First, OSAEC victims are generally younger than offline trafficking victims. Second, perpetrators or facilitators of OSAEC cases can be charged only when they are caught in the act, unlike in offline trafficking, on account of the amendment of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, where cases can be filed against offenders even if children have not been trafficked as such (i.e., the act has not been consummated) and even when they are still being recruited. These differences influence the kind of psychological, personal, and legal interventions provided for OSAEC victims. The OSAEC experience—from the recruitment to the abuse and exploitation—in the context of the child victim's family and environment is described below.

Motivation. In many cases, for facilitators, poverty was the primary motivation for getting into OSAEC. For the older children, they and their parents were either promised education or money. One informant mentioned that a parent told her that they were paid Php 500 to Php 5,000 for each show that involved their children, although most offenders refused to reveal the exact amount paid. For example, younger children were usually lured into the offender's house with candies and chocolates. Very few received money themselves, or if they did, it was less than what was promised. Lacking awareness of the consequences of what they were doing, some of the younger children were simply obeying their parents and following their instructions.

Recruitment and grooming. There are different ways children are lured into online sexual abuse and exploitation. Many reported cases were facilitated by the children's parents, relatives or members of the community who know the children personally. One key informant at the national level reported that "about 75 to 85% (of the offenders) are family members, relatives or those who are close to the victims in the community." This finding validates the review of Hernandez et al. (2018) indicating that most of the local offenders, or what are also referred to as facilitators, are family members, particularly mothers. Parents were involved in more than half of the cases cited in this study. All the cases reported by the different key informants took place in private homes, either in the house of the children, their relatives, or family friends who served as facilitators of the abuse and exploitation.

There were also cases reported when some adolescent victims were lured by their friends with the promise of earning money. Given the financial rewards, many adolescent victims continue to share and trade compromising photos and videos of themselves. One social worker narrated how some adolescent victims described their experience:

> It usually began with a positive intent, like, she was able to- or she got into the trade, it begins with sending nude photos, so she got into the trade because her mom needed help to pay electricity bills … And then it continued, then the succeeding ones would be, she stayed because it allowed her to buy her own clothing, her own … luxury items.

The start of the OSAEC cycle can be the school. Classmates recruited the victims, who initially did not know what it was all about. For some, they were invited by their friends for a sleepover. Their friends would usually ask them if they would like to have money. Clearly, most of the victims were influenced by what they were told by their peers and were unmindful of their actions. To them, what was important was the money they would get and saw nothing wrong in what they were doing. A social worker narrated:

> Sinasabi nila, sa umpisa daw ini-invite lang sila sa kaibigan nila na doon matulog. Napunta na doon sa ini-invite na, "Gusto mo bang magkapera? May ano dito. Mag-posing posing ka lang ng ganito (They claim that at the beginning their friend invites them for a sleep over". Their friends would ask, would you like to earn?).

The parents did not know that this online sexual abuse and exploitation was happening to their children at school, while teachers found out through their students. Apparently, the children themselves neither knew nor understood what was going on. In one case, the OSAEC cycle was perpetuated by someone in a position of authority. As reported by one service provider:

> The parents did not know that this was happening and the kids also did not understand what was happening. And ah- they just participated because there was some powerful adult that facilitated it to continue. So, in this case, the child is powerless, the child did not choose to be part of it. And the child is still very, very young to also exercise any authority whatsoever. Basically, what happened was there was a person who really perpetuated the exploitation, who initiated it and perpetuated it.

One service provider shared the rising trend of cases where parents are not aware that their child is involved in online pornography. In a survey about parents' mediation and supervision of children's online activities, majority of parents claimed to be making efforts to safeguard their children from the risks of Internet use. The problem is that these parents usually lacked the digital and technical skills required to be able to properly monitor their children's online activities (Philippine Kids Online Survey, 2019). This finding is consistent with what one respondent from the current study said:

> They did not understand the whole dynamics because that is what all these parents shared in common, no, whether they were for the younger kids or for the adolescent children, they were un- un- or undereducated, hanggang elementary lang yung natapos nila (they are elementary graduates). And then, they do not understand how the Internet works. They do not understand that once you put something in the Internet it can stay there forever.

The way the children are groomed varies depending on the circumstances and context of the recruitment. For many, children are promised financial support for their educational needs. One social worker cited an example:

> Pina-aral pa yan sa international school, and then talagang well-provided ang kanilang material needs, kaya nga itong mga bata na 'to nung magte-testify hirap na hirap din kasi akala nila parang good man si… (She was enrolled in an international school and then all the materials were provided, that is why these children had a hard time testifying against the perpetrator because they think he is a good man)

For younger children, they may be enticed by a family member, relative, or friend to do certain activities by offering them food, usually candies and chocolates. These children do not seem to see that there is something wrong when they are asked to pose in front of a camera, or take off their clothes, or sit down on the lap of another person.

Online abuse and exploitation. Contrary to the common notion that OSAEC cases happen in Internet cafés or on PisoNet, most reported cases happen privately, usually in the perpetrators' houses. There were reports that some transferred from one house to another so they could not be tracked down. According to one lawyer:

> Itong mga bata, naririnig din namin sa mga testimony nila, sila ay… hindi lang sa isang bahay pumupunta, marami silang pinupuntahan . . . yung mga bata, marami silang dinu-duty-han na bahay (we hear from the children during their testimony how they moved from one house to another, that they were on duty in different houses).

Based on interviews of social workers, older children were paid as low as Php 200 to as high as Php 5,000 depending on what they were asked to do. Some acts do not involve touching, but some do. A social worker narrated some of these activities:

> Per show, depende sa gravity nung pinapagawa. Kasi dun sa mga cases nila, pwede, yung una, show lang tapos tutuwad-tuwad ka … pero meron talagang sexual abuse, may ginagawa din… merong kukuhaning isang batang lalake na ido-do talaga niya yung batang babae, so hindi totoo na walang touch. Hindi ka tinatouch nung nasa screen but you are being touched by someone (per show depending on the gravity of the what was being asked; in some cases, they were asked to bend over but there were times when sexual acts were performed; it is not true that there is no touch; the person viewing does not touch the child on the screen, but the child is being touched by someone).

Rescue, investigation, and aftercare. Apart from the online sexual abuse and exploitation, the experience during rescue and case investigation bears on the children. This phase is like a transition: after rescue, child victims are provided with better living conditions and several services to help them recover from the OSAEC experience. These services include a shelter or safe house, counseling and psychotherapy, family psychoeducation, capacity building/training, education/scholarship, medical benefits, legal assistance, and livelihood. A social worker stated that

> Meron kaming medical services, psychological services, dietary services, and here social service, productivity service … socio-legal … livelihood … halimbawa, kami. Magra- rug-making kami dito. Rugs o yung mga trapo (We have medical services, psychological services, dietary services, and here social service, productivity service…socio-legal…livelihood… for example we do rug making).

In most cases, it is during aftercare that they realize that they were victims—that their parents or relatives did something wrong to them. Initially, children thought that what their parents asked them to engage in was good since it led to a more comfortable life. Through the interventions however, they realize that the OSAEC experience had negative psychological effects on them. One of the respondents echoed a statement coming from a child victim by saying, "realizations naman niya na 'paglabas ko hindi na ako magiging biktima kasi noon hindi ko po alam na bawal po pala iyon' (She realized that 'when I leave here I will not be a victim anymore because before I did not know that it was illegal')."

In some cases, religion played a role in the child victims' recovery. In one family, religion was even a deciding factor for them to continue with the intervention. According to one staff of a shelter providing interventions for OSAEC survivors: "Noong nalaman ng mama…parang ang nakapagconvince sa mama, 'yung nalaman niya na Born Again 'tong center na 'to (When the mother was informed that the center is a Born Again center, she was convinced)."

The respondents identified some issues in aftercare interventions. These include the space in the shelter, training of the service providers, and limited services. One of the concerns in providing shelter is the lack of space and insufficient awareness that children who suffered from online sexual abuse and exploitation have different psychological needs from children with other conditions (e.g., children in conflict with the law). Combining these children in one shelter can significantly affect their adjustment and recovery. Describing her experience, one social worker stated:

> Kasi nanggaling din po ako doon sa admission dorm. Naghandle din ako doon. Mas maganda doon kasi at least magsa-start muna sila ng ganun, unlike na isasabak mo sila kaagad sa maramihan, ang adjustment nila ang malayo. Mahihirapan agad sila mag adopt (I also came from the admission dorm. I also handled children there. It is better there because they will start with that. Unlike when you mix them with others, the adjustment will be far to reach. It will be more difficult for them to adopt).

Another issue is the service provider's lack of training in handling child victims of online sexual abuse. Specifically, they need training in behavior management of children, especially those who experienced trauma.

The aftercare challenges were not only from the service providers but also from the victims' families. Some families do not avail of the aftercare services offered to them. Despite efforts from line agencies and LGUs, some families discontinue the intervention programs. One government social worker expressed that when the service is for free, the families do not commit to the sessions because they do not lose anything.

> Admittedly that's something we still need to work on because what's happening right now is we give follow up sessions but people don't come to the follow up sessions and I think that's also one of the gaps or one of the problems—that you provide free counseling service.

Another possible reason why families do not invest time and effort in interventions is that they lack appreciation for and understanding of the intervention program. Some families attend sessions because they were told to do so without really understanding the purpose and value of the intervention programs. Worse, they even perceive the program as a source of their insecurity. One of the social workers explained this further:

> Majority of the survivors and their families are undereducated. So despite giving them interventions and exposing them to more knowledge, if you do not communicate this properly… what I'm saying also is that there are programs for them but are communicated to them in a manner that they can understand. That is their insecurity—that they cannot understand. They tell me that they feel bad because they cannot relate to people. So they will not admit during a forum that "I do not understand, can you please repeat?"

Attendance in livelihood programs was also not appealing for some of these families since they already experienced getting easy money from their OSAEC experience. It will be difficult for them to see the value of having a steady source of income if they know there is a much easier alternative with higher monetary gains.

Reintegration. It is the goal of each shelter to reintegrate the child. However, the child's reintegration back to his or her family and community is also a challenge. One concern is that not all children have relatives who are psychologically and financially capable of taking care of them. In cases like these, children are obliged to stay in the shelter.

According to one social worker, since OSAEC is relatively new compared to other forms of child abuse and exploitation, the process of how to reintegrate such child victims is not yet well established. There are no standard indicators of readiness to leave a shelter and no proper assessment of readiness is available. What they usually offer before allowing them to leave the shelter is psychoeducation. The social worker stated, "Yung mga parents or entire family doon sa OSAEC nag-conduct ng psychoeducation. Hindi namin ma-charge yung mga survivors sa OSAEC kung hindi mag-uundergo yung pamilya. Silang lahat nag psychoeducation (The parent or the entire family of OSAEC receive psychoeducation. The survivors of OSAEC will not be discharged if their families will not undergo psychoeducation. All of them go through psychoeducation).

Another concern regarding reintegration is that some child victims do not want to be reintegrated anymore with their families and just want to stay in the shelter or live independently. This is especially true for children whose perpetrators were their own parents. One social worker expressed, "Kaya nga minsan sila ayaw na nilang bumalik sa lugar nila. Maghanap nalang sila ng independent living. Kaya yung ibang bata they opted na doon na lang sila sa ibang shelter kaysa bumalik doon (That is why they do not want to go home. They would rather seek independent living or stay in the shelter than go back)."

Accessing the Internet, ICT, and Social Media

As early the 2010s, child protection workers were already aware of pornographic materials usually captured via photographs or recorded via videotape. Even then, while these activities were illicit, they were not totally hidden.

At present, the most common forms of recording are via camera or camcorder. The children's performances are either being streamed live or recorded for later use, and not all of them are aware of this. Furthermore, still shots from these recorded performances can also be sold or distributed. It has also been reported that pictures of children are taken while they are naked.

Both victim and facilitator (i.e., the parents selling the images) view the act of sending nude pictures as a relatively harmless way to earn money, since they get paid between Php 50.00 to Php 500.00. This is what sets apart a case as commercial sexual exploitation—the exchange not just of money, but also of material such as pictures through electronic means like videos sent through emails.

Exploitation may also occur for unwitting victims who may willingly take videos of themselves, only to find these posted online. One key informant narrated the following:

> There was this young girl, studying in a well-known university and under the guise of a boyfriend–girlfriend relationship, was convinced to take a video of herself performing (a) nude show or taking a bath and under the guise of that relationship, she sent those videos and it was posted to the websites.

Incidents of exploitation happen both in homes as well as in public places. In the latter, exploitation may happen almost in plain sight, i.e., children are taken to an Internet shop and forced to put on a "show" in front of the computers' cameras. In most cases, the younger children were not the ones who used the computer and accessed the Internet.

In extreme circumstances, exploitation leads to even more catastrophic outcomes. For example, in a locally well-known case involving a foreign national as the main abuser, exploitation and abuse (both physical and sexual) of children captured and sold through the dark web, resulted in the known deaths of at least two children, one of whom was just 18 months old.

Customers gain access to children through computers and social media portals such as Facebook. Some minors facilitate the connections themselves in order to directly contact the clients, while clients can also locate these minors through Facebook. One informant described this as "the new form of prostitution." That is, they are constantly on Facebook live: to gain clients, chat with prospective customers, and then agree to meet up, eliminating the intermediary. Or, in the case of foreigners finding and contacting them through Facebook, there is a process of "slow grooming" wherein they are remitted money in exchange for their sending naked pictures. According to the respondents, the lure of money facilitates this process.

Facebook has been clear in its Community Standards that it automatically takes down any images or videos of sexual content. To circumvent these standards, offenders and their targeted child victims initially meet on Facebook then continue the transaction via personal email accounts (where the victims send pictures) or a link that allows the perpetrator and the child victims to conduct video chats through another platform, usually with connections to the Dark Net.

There are also instances where the school serves as a venue for recruiting victims through classmates as peers. This might be especially true for adolescents who, by virtue of their being in the developmental stage, makes them more amenable to taking risks with the prospect of a reward. A key informant reported:

> … it was packaged in a positive manner online. … there was this video that went viral about a student who was getting money from a foreigner… They're like, ah, you can get money from foreigner! So they had this raw lightbulb that came on and people bought the idea.

The act seemed innocuous enough at first, as they just get invited to pose online for money, with the activity being seen as fun because it is their friends who invite them (sama ka sa akin; join me) but they do not know what the whole operation is all about. In effect, peers who recruit other children are OSAEC victims themselves. Typically, schoolmates or classmates get to know about peers whose photos have gone viral and find out that these child victims were paid money for having such photos sent to clients online. The victimized children tell their friends about their experience, and the other children decide to try and get money in exchange for similar acts online, which opens up opportunities for recruitment.

Apart from directly reaching out to customers, a more common way children are accessed is through adults who facilitate the transaction, such as family members or people whom the children know. It seems that these facilitators do not perceive any harm in the activity as the children are not touched suggestively, but are instead just photographed or made to put on a "show." There are cases of children and teens who already live with the perpetrator or stay with them often, and are thus easily available when they need to be featured online. A government social worker shared this story:

> Minsan, pag walang school nandun sila sa bahay ni perpetrator naglalaro lang, so, anytime na... tatawagin sila ng perpetrator sa room, papasok lang sila, yun (When there is no school, since the school system here is on a half day basis only, they are in the perpetrator's house just playing while waiting to be called by the perpetrator inside the room).

The typical social media and video calling platforms that the general public uses are also the means by which foreign customers get in touch with facilitators to establish a link with the child victims. Aside from Facebook, these platforms include Messenger and Skype. However, once a transaction progresses, the parties involved may engage in more covert communications. A government worker said that:

> ... they can move on to a more private setting for their transactions ..... we have probably, a couple of cases that involve the dark web that's even the deeper, more, not usually common platforms that people use.

One adult survivor of childhood sexual exploitation and abuse learned to use and access the computer as well as mobile phones at age 12, when she was taught by her facilitator/abuser to do so. During her stay with her facilitator/abuser, she accessed the computer mainly as a subject in front of the video camera, being watched by "customers" where she performs sex acts, and which she refers to as her job.

Gadgets and the web demystified and motivations for engaging in OSAEC

The use of gadgets has become a ubiquitous part of daily life. Even in early childhood, access to these gadgets has become rampant. In fact, Internet access is pervasive in any barangay. Some of the respondents believe that smartphones demystify technology by facilitating communication and

allowing easy access to the Internet, which also puts children at risk from online sexual exploitation. One key informant from the private sector noted that:

> because of the technology now is so friendly, user friendly, that even an 8 year old child can use. No, not even 8, starting at 3 they could use it… Before, probably 10 years before, when we need a laptop or we need to open up, We don't even allow them to touch a computer then 10 years ago, much less turn it on and click.

Respondents acknowledge that nowadays, Grade 1-level children already have access to computers either through their homes or in school. Likewise, due to the almost limitless access to Internet sites, some children become exposed to pornographic sites either intentionally or by accident, i.e., watching cartoons that actually contain adult material. This may then normalize the experience and perhaps lessen the inhibition of children who are readily exposed to sexually explicit material. Thus, they may also be less cautious about invitations to engage in what they commonly see on the Internet (such as various sexual acts). An even bigger challenge is the use of gadgets in transmitting data, e.g., pictures, because this further lessens the likelihood of monitoring illicit activities involving children.

On the other hand, these social media accounts may also be fulfilling needs of children to explore as well as to connect. However, and as mentioned earlier, it has been used to access adult material: for example, some respondents note that children access pornographic sites in public places such as Internet cafes where there is virtually little to no adult supervision.

Nevertheless, these sites can also be used as a lifeline. For example, one survivor who was generally restricted by her abuser/facilitator to access the Internet while in the abuser's home created her own Facebook account to connect with her classmates, perhaps lending some normalcy to her life.

Impact of OSAEC Experience on Child Victims

OSAEC and its consequences shakes up the children's experience of who they are as well as the world around them: they lose their innocence and their sense that the world is a safe place. Recovering from the experience of being victims and becoming survivors and advocates is a long and complicated road. Many factors determine the overall gravity of the effect of this experience. Apart from the online sexual abuse and exploitation, the child's age, relationships with the perpetrator/facilitator, and their view of OSAEC activities appear to influence their psychological functioning differently as well. This section describes the impact of the different stages of OSAEC on the various facets of a child's life, according to the study's various responders and stakeholders. The first part discusses the child's reactions and behaviors upon rescue, investigation, and in the shelter. This discussion is followed by how the child's psychological make-up is affected by the experience of abuse and exploitation, and aftercare.

The issue of OSAEC's impact on the child is quite complex, which involves the experience of the online sexual abuse and exploitation, the child's age, relationship to the perpetrator/facilitator, and the child's view of the OSAEC activities themselves.

The type of online sexual abuse and exploitation contributes to the different reactions of children. For example, in the case of a 12-year-old girl who eventually died, she was said to be pleading for help while she was being sexually and physically abused, and this was all captured on video. On the other hand, in the case of some children the impact at the time may not be categorized as necessarily distressing. One lawyer observed that: "I notice in the videos, when the victims were performing cybersex, they were so innocent. They were even smiling."

Age may be a factor that determines the depth of impact of the experience. For example, a psychologist working with exploited children typically notes that children lose trust in themselves and the world around them. However, she also reported handling a young child who was exploited as a baby but remained seemingly unaffected:

> I think (name of young child) for me, is unique because among all the people
> … that I worked with, all the kids that I observed in that group, (she) is the
> one who maintains to be happiest and who still has that sense of innocence
> and trust towards her environment.

Another factor that seems to affect the impact of OSAEC is the child's relationship to the perpetrator or facilitator. For children whose parents are involved to some extent (either as perpetrators or facilitators), the outcome is more complex. First, it was observed that some may simply block out the experience in order to protect themselves psychologically. Second, they experience multiple losses especially if their parents were somehow accessories to the exploitation. They lose their home, their parents, and their sense of security. Some who had lived a seemingly comfortable life may experience the loss even more poignantly.

Finally, when they are rescued or removed from where OSAEC happened, the separation from the parents affects them negatively because they are also objects of attachment, which contributes to difficulties in adjusting to life in the shelter, which is where most rescued victims of OSAEC end up.

Still another crucial factor that affects the impact of online sexual abuse and exploitation on the child appears to be their perception of the experience. For some, since they are not being touched and even benefitting materially, they consider their perpetrators as helpers and providers. The child victims do not perceive the act as abusive because there is no physical contact: they are just simply being watched. Also, since they profit from the activity, they do not see the transgression in it.

Impact of rescue on child victims. While online sexual abuse and exploitation affects the children's sense of who they are, other factors peripheral to the event also seem to have an impact, including the circumstances surrounding their rescue.

Prior to rescue, several child victims saw nothing wrong with online sexual abuse and exploitation, believing these to be normal. This normalization of OSAEC may result from inappropriate socialization within their families and communities. The greater the grooming of perpetrators, the less they are perceived as sources of abuse. A social worker of a private shelter said:

> Sa pagtingin niya sa mga panahon na yun, tinulungan siya, pinag-aral siya, binigyan ng tulong yung family niya, sinulatan pa nga niya po yung trafficker parang humihingi siya ng tawad (At that time, she thought she was being helped with her studies and her family. She even wrote her trafficker seeking forgiveness).

As such, it is not unusual for the victims (who do not really see themselves as victims) to express resentment toward rescuers (whom they also do not perceive as rescuers) because they do not identify any wrongdoing. Some would even attempt to defy rescue by escaping from shelters they are sent to, to go back to their families where the exploitation occurred in the first place.

Stakeholders noted various physical, emotional, and behavioral observations during the rescue. Since rescues are sudden in nature, the rescuing team typically brings in children without their own clothes, saying "kasi nung binitbit nila, wala nang bihis ng damit (when the children were rescued, they did not have a chance to change their clothes)." In places where there are halfway houses, the transition from home to shelter may be more tenable: that is, having a chance to come to terms with their new situation appears to have a better effect.

Emotionally, typical reactions of rescued children include fear, sadness or anguish, and anger, especially if they benefit from OSAEC activities. These emotions may run contrary to adult expectations that children would be grateful for being delivered from their predicament. This happens, for instance, if they are taken away from their attachment figures who also happen to be perpetrators or facilitators.

Similarly, many child victims are not observed to show any anger or ill feelings toward parents who are perpetrators. However, it is not unusual to see their anger directed not just at themselves but at others as well.

Because children are different from one another and their experiences vary as well, their reactions are entirely their own. These include behaviors they may manifest. Some show strong resistance and cry during rescue, while others are more toned down and show low energy but are non-cooperative just the same. Still, other children may seem confused (balisa, tulala) and do not recall any of the incidents that their perpetrators are accused of.

While the process of keeping children safe from OSAEC is understandable, especially if it means removing them from abusive environments, it is also quite expected that they may have mixed feelings about this. For example, it was reported that some children—especially the younger ones—do not understand the need for separation from their family. Most stakeholders shared that "Hinahanap talaga yung…magulang nila (The children look for their parents)". Thus, some voice their confusion in this regard, especially if it involves separation from primary attachment figures like their parents.

They ask, "Bakit niyo kami hinihiwalay sa aming magulang? (Why are you separating us from our parents?)". To cope with this, some children may erroneously believe that their parents (some of whom are perpetrators) will come back to get them: "Kukunin na ako ng papa ko. Aalis na kami (My father will come and get me. We will leave this place)."

Perhaps the separation makes the children realize the fact that they are different from other children and highlights that their situation is unusual. What a number of children seem to miss most from their homes (even the ones where OSAEC took place) are the simple daily interactions experienced with family. No matter how understanding and accommodating alternative homes are, perhaps these do not compare to the apparent sense of normalcy brought about by living in one's own home. A social worker of a government shelter shared how some children feel about being separated from their parents:

> Nami-miss ko yung kumain kami sabay nila mama po... magkakapatid yun po... tapos yung uutusan ka na, 'dayday maghugas ka', 'sige po mamaya', ganun... minsan pagagalitan ako kasi minsan di ako nakikinig (I miss the meals where we eat together with my mother and siblings and they tell you to wash dishes, and I say "later" and sometimes they scold me for not listening).

Moreover, there are also child advocates—who were assigned to care for these children especially in shelters—that acknowledged these behaviors as well as the psychological impact that may be due directly to OSAEC and the subsequent rescue. For these children, the experience has created a tremendous amount of conflict. On one hand, they know that they are doing this because they are helping the family earn a living. On the other hand, they also know that what they are doing is wrong but they are unable to resist because the family depends on them. Thus, when they get rescued, they express gratitude for being relieved of this conflict and burden.

The negative impacts may manifest in adverse behaviors observed in the shelter. One social worker reported an instance of a child displaying sexualized behavior (naghuhubad... nagpapakita ng pwet; taking off his clothes and showing his buttocks to others).

Likewise, there are instances where OSAEC victims were made to live under deplorable conditions. A member of a rescue team shared the following:

> Yung isa pa meron pa siyang dog chain dito sa leeg na may padlock. Nung narescue namin sila ang papayat, sakitin (the other one had a dog chain with a padlock around their neck. When we rescued them they were thin and sickly).

Thus, the OSAEC experience has certainly left many of the children affected. While there are those who are able to seemingly adjust to their new setting, keen adults will notice the possible scars left by such an experience. Furthermore, those children who eventually come to understand that OSAEC is atypical and wrong experience a sense of betrayal, especially if the perpetrator or facilitator is a family member.

Impact of investigation and disclosure. Once they have been rescued from the environment fostering OSAEC, children are presented with new challenges. Apart from having to adjust to a new place and living with other people, they are now also placed in a position where they need to take a stand against identified perpetrators or facilitators.

Even with the knowledge that their perpetrators (whom they may be attached to) did wrong, the children still worry about the consequences of their testimony (e.g., their perpetrators going to jail). Thus, the challenge for social workers and psychologists is to find balance between seeing justice served and also serving the security needs of the child under their care. The following transcript reflects the dilemma that a child faces: "Kapag nag-testify po ba ako, makukulong po ba yung nanay ko? (If I testify, will my mother go to jail?)."

Age may again be a factor contributing to difficulty in disclosure especially among younger child victims, probably because of speech complications, a limited attention span, and little comprehension of the situation. One lawyer reported that "I have cases where the survivors are 6 years old, 7 years old and 8 years old, and at that age they are not able even to process what happened to them, much less verbalize it in court."

There is also a question as to whether requiring court testimonies would be beneficial to such young children:

> The system is still heavily reliant on victim testimony and think that's a challenge because it's not all the time to the best interest of the child to go to court, that's a traumatizing event for anyone, more so for a child, to go to court in front of strangers and try to recount the abuse and exploitation.

Older children, with greater awareness, may disclose more easily, but may also experience more negative effects like anger, presumably as a result of this awareness. The longer the child is exposed to OSAEC, the more challenging the disclosure since the child is not aware that he or she was wronged in any way. The material benefits of engaging in online sexual activities make it difficult for them to find fault in the situation. One social worker observes:

> Yung batang matagal nang naka-expose sa experience na ganito, parang mas matagal yung time na kailangang i-consume ng worker preparing him, explaining to him na, 'Mali ang lahat ng ginawa sa iyo.' 'Hindi po. Nagkaroon nga ako ng magandang cellphone, eh.' Yung isa binigyan ng BMX na bicycle. It was a new experience for him. Kung mga nanay at tatay lang, hindi naman ma-afford (For child victims exposed to the experience longer, it takes time for workers to process that something wrong was done to them. They would deny and say "No, I even received a nice cellphone." Another child is given a BMX bicycle. It was a new experience for him. His mother and father would not be able to afford these.).

Issues on disclosure. The level of disclosure among the child victims varies. There are some who easily open up and reveal vivid memories of the incident, and service providers find these responsive children a relief to work with. On the other hand, some children are a challenge to work with. In more than half of the cases, not much substantial evidence is revealed at the time of inquest following rescue. As one lawyer shared:

> Kung yung mga under trauma, kaka-rescue mo lang pero kailangan mo pa kasi ng statement nila kasi gusto mo mag-inquest… yung makuha dun walang laman…hindi sila magsasalita about sa crime… maybe in my experience that's 3 in every 5 cases (During inquest, when one may need to get the statement of those who were just rescued and hence are under trauma, one may not get much. They would not talk about the crime. In my experience, that's 3 in every 5 cases).

How the investigation affects the child is manifested in several disclosure issues such as the accuracy of account, trauma, and trust. Accuracy in remembering and revealing event details can be a problem among these children. There are interviewees who have witnessed children giving false accounts. As a respondent points out: "Mayroon naman dito na mag-a-add sila ng kwento. Fabricated yung mga ano nila (There are those who add to their stories. These are already fabricated)". Another respondent cites a case involving a child who initially claimed to join a sleepover and it took this child one year after the abuse to disclose what actually happened. For some cases, having existing evidence will likely facilitate faster disclosure and refute cover-up statements. This is how one shelter social worker talked to a child under their care:

> Anak, mali yata yung mga deklarasyon mo. Kasi ganito yung sinasabi mo pero mayroon kaming hawak na ebidensya. So no questions asked. Kitang-kita mo na totoo… without that, she will continuously deny it. 'Hindi po totoo yan. Wala po akong ganyan. Hindi po ako pinapag-pose ng ganyan (My child, your declaration is false. You say one thing, but we have evidence proving otherwise. The truth is out. Without that, she will continuously deny it and say "That's not true, I was not made to pose that way.").

Some very young victims cannot recount the incident because they could not remember it. This could possibly be a defensive response to trauma, but there were also reported instances of child victims being drugged to alter their consciousness. One social worker related:

> May mga pinainom sa kanila at tsaka hindi na nila alam kung ano ang nangyare, so, yun na lang na video ang mag-ano kung ano talaga ang nangyare, kasi sila hindi nila maalala (They were made to drink something so they do not know what happened. It's only the video that contains an account of what really happened, because these children could not really remember).

Trauma is another contributing factor to failure to disclose, and the challenge is to establish a direct relationship between OSEAC and the trauma itself. Relevant stakeholders attempt to interpret children's behaviors in relation to the OSAEC experience, but the issue of what exactly causes the trauma remains unclear. According to one lawyer handling the case for a group of exploited children:

> We need to check on the status of the child. Just like in my cases, children, without us knowing, if we don't check on the social workers or shelters handling them, they are suffering from trauma. If we see them here, we won't notice that because we are not experts. One way is we communicate with the experts like the psychologist. Just like in the case of one in (named a place in Metro Manila), I asked the psychologist: "Why is it that she is not talking?" So the psychologist said that "silence is also trauma; failure to reveal is also silent trauma," so at least I was also able to present the psychologist to court.

Many would assume instantly that OSAEC is the direct or only cause of trauma. Therefore, the normal response is to immediately rescue the child. However, as pointed out earlier, it is also possible that the act of rescuing can also be temporarily traumatic for the children. As one social worker reported,

> Dapat talaga magkaroon ng delineation yung kung sino yung sasama sa rescue … Dapat iba yung social worker na nasa rescue, iba yung social worker na nag-iintay doon sa center. Hindi mo maiiwasan, nandoon yung trauma, yung takot. Kahit no matter what we say na, "O anak, kami ay helping person. Kami ay kakampi. Hindi kami kalaban. We are doing this for you." But still, nadoon yung trauma (There should be a guideline on who will be part of the rescue. The social worker that will be part of the rescue should be different from the one who will wait in the center. It is inevitable to have trauma and fear. Even if you say, "Child, we are here to help. We are your allies, not your enemies. We are doing this for you." But still, trauma is there).

Children who are traumatized may identify the loss of control over their situation more strongly. A police officer admitted:

> Kasi ang first na pupunta doon ay mga SWAT, so naka-uniform lahat-lahat. May baril pa, so minsan hindi nagsasalita… Pwedeng matakot ang bata 'pag sinabihan na pulis ako (The first who goes there are the SWAT, all in uniform. They have guns so they [the victims] will not talk…The children might be afraid if they are told that I am a police officer).

This is where police officers value the presence of social workers. Aside from being part of police procedure, having social workers at the police interview seems to make the children more comfortable during disclosure. In addition, these children may have a misconception about the rescue operation itself. When perpetrators are caught, victims think that they are also part of the crime. There is no notion that they are being rescued from their perpetrators.

Moreover, the trial process may also be quite upsetting especially for young children because, as a lawyer reported, some victims are traumatized by being in court, where they may run into their perpetrators. Assurances that they are safe and that the suspect is not present are deemed helpful in this regard.

Still, it is recognized that by providing a recovery and reintegration program, children can begin to open up about their experiences. This is true for child victims of various ages, from middle childhood to adolescence. The reticence is attributed to trauma. Stakeholders know that giving children time and developing a trusting relationship are key elements to helping children reveal their experiences.

The last important issue during investigation and disclosure is trust. Service providers may not expect these children to disclose immediately mainly because of trust issues. As such, there is a need to exert effort in rapport-building to establish trust among the children. This takes a lot of patience because at times, it takes several months or even one year or more before these children disclose substantial information. Providing a safe environment for these children will in time facilitate disclosure, which may also mean ensuring the presence of a support person or persons. A social worker shared a strategy to help in the disclosure process:

> "So ang ginawa po namin, tinanong ko po sya kung sinong house parent ang gusto nyang kasama at magiging komportable po sya pag nagsalita kasi yun din po yung sinuggest (What we did was ask the child who among the house-parents he or she wishes to be with and to whom would he or she feel comfortable with if he or she will be asked to speak)."

OSAEC often creates trust issues in children, yet it also teaches them to be more vigilant in the presence of probable perpetrators, and be more aware of their environment. They are also taught not to be easily persuaded by smooth talk.

Disclosure involves establishing the trust and confidence of the child. The task of service providers is to form a level of rapport where the child would feel safe enough to disclose, and this process may take some time. Here, confidentiality and sensible handling of children are needed to ensure the building of trust. A social worker as a service provider explained:

> "Siyempre, minsan, hindi agad-agad mag-open up yung bata sa 'yo eh, so, i-ano mo muna yung anxiety niya...dapat kaibiganin mo muna, dapat ma-feel at home siya sa'yo, yung feeling safe siya, hindi siya iju-judge, hindi siya pandidirihan...so, dahan-dahan (Sometimes the child would not immediately open up. One needs to reduce their anxieties, to befriend them, to make them feel at home and safe. The child should feel that he or she is not judged nor scorned and this happens slowly)."

Some victims may also be selective as to whom they would disclose. Others would not reveal their experience in court session halls but would instead open up to their service providers. Some would instead reveal information to their peers at the center. However, they may also be cautioned about making these disclosures because in some instances their peers, also fellow victims, would betray

their trust especially when conflicts in their relationship arise. Some victims are not amenable to repeated questionings especially when family members are the facilitators and would plead with their service providers: "Ate pwede ba, huwag niyo ng balik balikan" (Can we please not go back to that?) or "Ang dami na ninyo na nagtanong sa amin" (There have been so many of you who interviewed us). This happens because the children are already tired of and overwhelmed by the whole exercise. One volunteer of a faith-based organization expressed:

> "Minsan nakaka disturb lang na kunyari na interview na ng psychologist and then tinatanong pa rin kung anong nangyari and then pag nalipat na sa psychiatrist … tatanungin kung paano nangyari like na rewind sya and then antoher, pagkatapos, on the same day, nilipat sya tapos ininterview ulit (Sometimes, it is disturbing that a psychologist already asked what happened and then a psychiatrist will also ask the same question.)"

There is a need to respect the victims' rights in terms of how much they want to reveal and accept the modality by which they disclose. For example, some children would prefer art therapy to reveal their experience instead of verbalizing it. One child advocate also notes the sentiments of several victims who acknowledge their breached privacies:

> According to the victims who testified in our cases, they are sad because people in the world looking or viewing their images are already sharing them with everyone, feasting on their nude bodies. It's sad according to them because they are innocents and they did not know the consequences that would result from what they did.

As such, this advocate tries to enforce the rule of law to protect the children's privacy by regulating media access to and coverage of these cases. She attests to the value of not opening testimonies to the public to prevent the children from being subjected to further condemnation and bullying. She also deliberates carefully, expresses caution, and reflects on the possible dangers of media coverage on OSAEC cases.

Disclosure is double-edged for the victims of OSAEC. While it is important so justice can be served, it is a difficult process for the children for the reasons discussed. Following are some recommended strategies to ensure that disclosure is mindful of the child victims' rights, needs, and issues.

Impact of living in the shelter. There appears to be a process of change in terms of how the children see themselves once they have been rescued and the justice-seeking process and providing safety and shelter have commenced. Again, the speed of recovery from both the experience of OSAEC and rescue depends on many factors. Likewise, it seems that the practice of adjustment to their new life, which often starts when they are safely in shelters, also contributes to a reorganization of their sense of self.

Stakeholders such as house parents or social workers surmise that children may not favor the structure of the shelters which they perceive as limiting their freedom. Incidents of internalizing behaviors such as sadness (e.g., crying all the time) and self-harm have been reported. Still, some

child victims do not manifest behavior irregularities as though OSAEC had no impact on them. Observers in shelters note that these children tend to have an easy-going temperament or function well just like one who belongs to the top of his or her class. Among those affected, their distress level varies: while some victims become highly distressed by the experience, manifesting depression and suicidal tendencies, several child victims often lack the awareness that their rights have been transgressed, which may contribute to their lowered distress level.

Children's adjustment to the shelter does not seem to be related to the length of exploitation that they have experienced. As one social worker put it, the level of attachment to their families (some of whom may have been the perpetrators or facilitators themselves) may be more of a factor in their adjustment. Individual differences as well as the living conditions and relationships they have left behind can also be determinants of adjustment in the shelter. Some have initial trouble adapting by avoiding shelter activities and other children or acting out harming others; eventually most learn to adjust in about one to two weeks, due as well to the center's activities. For the caregivers, the indicators that the children have adjusted include their increased cooperation as well as manifested independence in navigating their daily life in the shelter. Still, issues remain for those who continue to long for home ("kailan ako uuwi?"). Others even throw tantrums, especially when their parents have not visited for a while. On the other hand, there are those who (as mentioned previously) retain some loyalty to the perpetrator who may have been an object of attachment, and their adjustment issues usually arise when they need to talk about what happened to them. One of the limitations of the study is that there was no opportunity to compare the findings with the experience and the rehabilitation cycle of children who were placed in a foster home or kinship care and not a residential facility.

Because all children are different, the way that they may demonstrate these individual differences may also emerge once they have adjusted to their new lives. House parents have reported that some children are doing well academically. They are also able to participate actively in the upkeep of their home. Of course, for better or worse, shades of who they are still emerge. Some children reportedly showed similar attitudes they had when they were in their own homes—caretakers report that children who have been used to being rewarded materially for performing tasks also show this in the shelter.

The role of child advocates (social workers, house parents) in shelters. Being in shelters facilitates changes in these children's worldview, such as realizing that what they were doing was wrong after all. However, it takes a while for these changes in worldview to take effect, and shelter personnel who orient these children need to be very patient as they deal with this challenge since it means a shift in the children's existing values and belief systems.

Child advocates are thus placed in a unique position to effect positive changes in these children's lives once they transition from being victims (of OSAEC and the rescue and trial process) to survivors (who want to move on from that experience).

For example, the victims' views regarding integration change once they become aware that they were exploited. A prosecutor shares her insights on the need for local government support for these children:

> Some of my victims told me: "… don't bring me back to my community because I might do it again." That's why, the support of the local government to stop this (OSAEC) from recurring…that of accepting them to the community…To be re-integrated back to their normal state. I think it really matters.

Sense of control among child victims. One of the most salient features in the experience of each child victim is their loss of control. Initially, because some children do not understand the wrongdoing and exploitation inherent in the OSAEC experience, there are those who begin to realize this only during rescue. Unusual as the OSAEC experience may be to the typical child, for those who are in it, this has become part of their way of life. Thus, the disruption in their world does not simply come from being OSAEC victims but also from how they are taken from their homes, placed in shelters, go through the legal trial process, and await the decision that determines their fate. They may thus cling to the only sense of control they have of the world. This may be why disclosure is such a difficult task, both for the child who is required to do it, as well as for the child advocate who has to elicit it. While individual differences again manifest, for some children, holding on to the story that represents the life they had before may be the only way by which they have some sense of control in a world that suddenly makes them feel so powerless and vulnerable.

The motivation for engaging in OSAEC appears to be complex. In young children (i.e., pre- and school age), the decision is largely in the hands of people in charge of their care such as their parents. Being children, they simply obey what their elders tell them. Commerce and poverty, and in some cases parental vices such as drugs, are perceived to drive the parents to push their children in this direction. The element of choice for younger children does not seem to be a factor when engaging in OSAEC. A social worker noted:

> Madalas nila itong ginagawa kasi ang mga bata ngayon ay sumusunod din sa nakakatanda sa kanila… nakakaawa iyong mga bata dahil kahit ayaw nila, tinutulak sila ng kanilang pamilya dahil sa hirap talaga ng buhay (This is often done because children are trained to follow their elders… though they might not like it, they are forced by their families due to poverty).

> For me, I do really believe that it's because of drugs kasi mostly sa news when they are interviewed, they are drug addicts. I have one there na nai-interview ko talaga…sabi nya pinipilit sya ng mama at papa nya para sa drugs (She was forced by her mother and father, in order to support their drug use).

However, such may not always be the case for older children, especially adolescents who control their use of computers and other resources. In fact, it seems that getting into OSAEC activities serve both functions of connecting with others (as mentioned earlier) as well as economic gain, which fulfill strong needs for control and a sense of self-worth. Both motivations occur at the same time in

these cases. Thus, it is not always unheard of that adolescents themselves seem to willingly engage in these activities or invite others to do so.

> Usually the teenagers nowadays think and act like they're adults…sa palagi nila pag-chat, they already have the idea paano sila magkakapera through the Internet. With the exchange, some of the foreigners will ask you.. Dapat nude ka, nakahubad ka… teenagers na nag-e-engage, they think it like a normal na lang… relationship. Even just chat, chat lang, kasi women are vulnerable eh. Madali silang magka trust eh (Teenagers nowadays think and act like they're adults… by being on chat all the time, they learn how to make money. With the exchange, some of the foreigners will ask you, "you should be nude"… and teenagers engage because they think it is normal. They also easily trust).

As they stay in shelters, victims experience regulated communication with family members, mostly only through texts or calls, sometimes through the Internet, using the shelter's communication facilities. In a way, this gives the child some sense of control. Reacting to this set-up, a former child victim who was interviewed prefers face-to-face interaction as she says: "Meron po akong communication, kaso communication kasi sa salita lang. Mas maganda kasi sa personal (We communicate but only through words. It would be better to communicate in person)."

However, child advocates such as social workers need to strike a balance between helping the child victims maintain some ties with their previous life, i.e., through monitored visitations while also ensuring that their communications are supervised, especially in the case of a child with a parent who may have been in some way involved in the exploitation. The importance of separating the children from their families and the mandate of monitoring communication was explained by a respondent:

> They need to be separated from the suspects or families of the suspects because the tendency of the family or relatives of the suspects is to convince the children to withdraw, or not to tell the truth or to suppress…. This person or the visit must be supervised so that they would not influence the testimony of the victim.

The child who is in the middle of the system that wants to protect them and the family that they leave behind sometimes bears the burden of disclosure, which may be perceived (by themselves and their families) as a betrayal, and of withholding, which may be perceived (by the system) as siding with the perpetrators and facilitators.

The child victim's sense of safety. Rescuing the child from the hands of the perpetrators does not mean the victim is already safe from harm. The shelters protect the children from being victimized again, but not from the psychological harm that could still happen, since the public can still view and share the sex abuse materials. Continuous sharing of these photos and videos can cause re-traumatization among victims. Deleting the files from the computers of the perpetrators and their clients is not enough because according to information technology experts, uploaded photos and

videos are hard to delete totally from the web, especially those that are stored in the cloud. One of the social workers expressed her concern over the sharing of these materials:

> I asked her was the video ever taken down. She said she's not sure. And so I explained to her why it's important, why that's a relevant information… inexplain ko sa kanya. What if makita yan ng anak niya or somebody and nakakakilala sa kanya (I explained it to her. What if her future son or daughter or anyone who knows her sees the video)?

A roller coaster ride of emotions. It is important to note the changes that children experience, from the time they were recruited to the time of rescue and up to the time they were brought to the shelter. The children were generally described as "normal and active like most other children" ("masigla, pero pag gumalaw naman po sila parehas lang normal"). However, many respondents, particularly those involved in the rescue and rehabilitation of these children, observed noticeable behaviors during rescue, such as the children being tired and sleepy. As such, they could not give a detailed account during the interview with law enforcers.

Stakeholders observed different emotions among OSAEC victims such as confusion, fear, and anger while being rescued. As one social worker pointed out, "Pag rescue, galit po talaga sila (during rescue, the children were really angry)." They get angry when they are rescued as they did not want to be separated from their family. From the time of rescue to the time they were brought to the center, the children were observed to be too tired, sleepy, and at times hungry. When questioned about what happened, they tended to keep quiet. When they arrived at the center, they were observed to be confused and sad at the same time. Most social workers and house parents claimed that the first two weeks were a period of adjustment for the children. Their longing for family—particularly their parents—became more evident as they stayed longer in the center, and they displayed mixed emotions e.g., "masaya, malungkot, nagagalit (happy, sad, angry)." Some children ran away because of boredom, according to a social worker. From the narrative of those who have worked with these children, the abuse happened more than once and continued until the time of rescue.

Sense of the world. In the aftermath of the OSAEC experience and rescue, children do not only undergo a revamp and reorganization of their sense of self. The sense of their place in the world also undergoes some sort of transformation. This section describes the experience of how their sense of self interacts with the world that they encounter. One sees that it is not just their internally felt experience of themselves that changes, but also the way in which they see the world around them, from the time of exploitation to the time of recovery.

Addressing the emotional attachment to perpetrator. As children go through the process of reshaping and understanding their relationship with the world around them, child advocates may need to be aware that their facilitators or perpetrators either have, or continue to have, a positive psychological and emotional hold on the children. Thus, the children may not easily "tell on" these people because of their previous relationships. These children could feel the need to protect their perpetrators from punishment under the law as a result of their disclosures.

There are several conflicting emotions involved that most likely inhibit articulation and disclosure. For instance, there is fear that their disclosure will put close kin in legal trouble. The greater the attachment to the perpetrators, the more difficult it will be for victims to disclose and they will be ambivalent and uncooperative in the investigation. The attachment is more ingrained if the accused are the children's parents, as the sense of betraying parents and family is strong.

Another respondent also cited how some of these children escaped from the social services shelter because they do not want to become witnesses, while other relatives who were probable witnesses declined to testify because they prefer not to be involved in the case. Such may be disappointing to the personnel involved in the case because the perpetrators will not be brought to justice despite their efforts.

Addressing the sense of shame. Once the victims become aware of the wrongdoing inherent in OSAEC and how their rights have been violated, there is a sense of shame that emerges, especially regarding how the outside world perceives them. This might be especially true for older children who are testifying, dealing with evidence of their participation, or being reintegrated. In the first instance, child advocates are very careful about not re-traumatizing the children as they retell their story. Furthermore, many are aware that anything posted on the Internet stays there perpetually. The older they get, the more they feel ashamed and embarrassed about the idea that their naked images and illicit acts will always be on the Web. Finally, this shame also continues once they return to their homes. Some may be reluctant to reintegrate because they may not know how to answer questions from their community (e.g., classmates, teachers, neighbors) regarding the reasons for their disappearance (such as when they are rescued and sheltered during trial), and fear the ostracism and censure in the process.

Resiliency in the face of OSAEC: Picking up the pieces

Children's resilience is reflected by the eventual social behaviors that emerge as they become adjusted to their new life in the shelters. They begin to form new attachments with other children and adults (e.g., house parents) in their new environments. House parents begin to see them as just like any other child in the shelter; that is, they could be very friendly, are healthy, and exhibit a good appetite. Even the negative social behaviors that emerge in the shelter are seen as more typical of their being like normal children. For example, tensions arise between the children when they skip chores assigned to them or when they influence others to become truant in school. Among teenagers, cliques may form and bullying may happen (e.g., taunting someone with curly hair or dark skin).

After a while and when there has been some separation from the OSAEC experience, it seems that the children are able to find coping strategies to help them push forward with their lives. One way that they show this is when they reach out to or help others in a similar situation, because they themselves have been empowered. For example, one respondent reports a clear improvement in one of their teenage children who used to be indifferent about what happened to them. When they became aware of what happened, they became involved in setting their life direction such as wanting to finish school. Another respondent noted that when she learned about her rights, including the

right to be happy and to be a child, she gained a sense of her own strength and confidence. Many long to recover and have a better life so they could help their families. They also know that they do not need to handle their problems on their own. Strategies such as talking to other survivors, asking for help from trusted adults (e.g., psychologists from the shelter), and expressing their emotions through writing (e.g., a diary) are all adaptive ways they have found to deal with their experiences. Getting outside help in the form of psychotherapy is also deemed helpful because children undergo a noticeable change in attitude. As one social worker reports, "makikita mong gumaan na yung itsura niya" (you could see an improvement in her demeanor).

Separating and bouncing back from the OSAEC experience also has other positive consequences. There have been documented cases indicating the risk that previous victims become facilitators of OSAEC themselves. Thus, rescue and recovery become even more crucial and those who live in shelters, through appropriate processing, become increasingly aware that life without OSAEC is possible: "ang realization at the end ng mga bata is ah ma'am di pala pwedeng basta kami magpicture" (The realization of these children is that they cannot allow themselves to simply have their pictures taken). This may then facilitate a willingness to learn and expand social awareness to include the family system. One shelter staff shared:

> Kasi sa social consciousness 'yung mayroon dito kaming bata na nakita talagang ano 'ma'am mag-aaral ako'...nag-eexplore na s'ya … p'wede pala akong tulungan ng local government para makakuha ng scholarship… 'magtatapos po ako ng pag-aaral para hindi ganito…yung aming buhay.' … At saka 'yung mga kapatid n'ya s'ya mismo 'yung nagle-lead doon sa parang s'ya 'yung naging leader ng group (Because of social consciousness, there's this child who said she would study to live a better life. She explored and learned about scholarship opportunities offered by the government. She also became a leader to her siblings.).

Another factor that hastens their recovery and improves coping is continued connection with non-offending loved ones (e.g., the visits of their grandparents or other relatives).

Children also report a variety of self-regulation strategies for coping. These include doing pleasurable activities like sleeping, listening to music, reading, praying, playing basketball, painting, dancing, drawing, and playing the guitar. These are some of the activities mentioned across different shelters. A sense of achievement such as passing the Alternative Learning System (a program of the Department of Education for out of school youth) also helps them cope and feel better about themselves.

For those who are ready to come to terms with the OSAEC experience, knowledge equips them with a sense that perhaps they are in control, and not merely victims of their circumstances. Finally, harboring a sense of hope appears to be another positive coping mechanism for survivors of the OSAEC experience. This hope is manifested in the concrete dreams of their future, such as finishing their studies, finding a career they love, and relieving their family from poverty.

Preserving relationships with non-offending parents and/or caregivers and monitoring after reintegration. Some victims whose perpetrators are not direct family members also learn the importance of being open to their parents. This heightens the sense of safety and protection. By being open, these children would now value listening to their parents. At the same time, it is recognized that post-reintegration monitoring of the non-offending parent and/or family member needs to continue, because the long-term effect of this experience is negative. That is, some may continue to lead lives in poverty and face challenges such as early pregnancy.

Role of the Family in the Promotion of OSAEC

Family members play several roles in promoting online sexual abuse and exploitation. Case managers and house parents claim that most of the perpetrators are the parents themselves, who exploit their children by taking their images or videos and uploading these online in exchange for money. Some parents are not the actual abusers but they play the role of facilitators and inculcators. Parent facilitators are those who offer their children to perpetrators.

In some cases, the parent facilitators eventually become perpetrators after realizing that they could profit directly from exploiting their children. However, there are some parents who do not directly offer their children to perpetrators but they inculcate the idea that engaging in sexual activities online (e.g., posing and performing naked in front of the camera) is acceptable. One case manager metaphorically explained this by saying:

> Kasi bata e, di ba Ma'am? Para siyang empty glass na kapag nilagyan mo ng juice, akala mo yun na yung perfect. Kahit may kulay siya, 'yun ang pure water. Parang sa kanila kasi, parang akala 'yung mali nagiging tama dahil tinuro ng magulang nila (Because she is a child, right? She is like an empty glass. When you put juice you would think it is perfect. Even if it has color, the child will think it is pure water. For them, whatever is wrong becomes right if the parents say it is right).

Other than parents, relatives such as uncles, aunts, and siblings become involved in OSAEC. Some relatives act as inculcators, facilitators, and perpetrators as one key informant stated, "A lot of family members are involved. If not the actual persons have facilitated these online shows, but knowledge that this had been going on right under their noses…so, the family dynamics here is very crucial." In one of the cases, the parents entrusted their children to their uncle. They were initially unaware that the uncle instilled in them the idea that watching pornography is normal. The social worker narrated, "It was found out that the boy pala, iniwan lang sa uncle, kasi the parents are abroad, tapos araw-araw na nanonood sila ng, kasi ano din siya, sexually exploited siya, nanunuod ng porn. So naging norm na nung bata (They found out that the boy was left with the uncle because the parents work abroad. They watch porn every day. He was also sexually exploited too. So it became the norm for the boy)."

Role of the Community in the Promotion of OSAEC

The promotion of OSAEC extends outside the family. Some community members serve as protectors and promoters of online sexual abuse and exploitation because of the benefit they get from it. Some perpetrators develop networks in the community to make sure that their activities will continue even after they are apprehended. An interview with a police officer explained this scheme by saying, "Kasi paminsan 'yung website nila, pinapasa din nila. Halimbawa mahuli yung isa, pinapasa nila sa isa na kaibigan (Sometimes they pass on their website to others. If they got caught, they will pass it on to a friend)."

There were also reports that the victims themselves act as peer recruiters for the perpetrators. They encourage other children to join them in engaging in online sexual activities to earn money.

One psychologist also mentioned that there are community members that can be considered bystanders. These are the ones who are aware that OSAEC is prevalent in their community and can even identify those who are involved but choose to be quiet about it.

Role of Family in the Prevention of OSAEC

Based on data, most families of victims are involved in promoting OSAEC, but there are those families who put a lot of effort in preventing it. Some parents provide guidance by instilling awareness in their children and instructing them on the proper use of technology. One community member expressed, "Parents should also raise awareness among children as young as pre-school. It should be developmentally appropriate."

The family itself plays an important role in the child victim's proper reintegration into his or her family. Agencies that look after the welfare of children prefer that child victims are reintegrated to their families provided that security measures, an adequate support system, and opportunities for livelihood are in place. One of the service providers in a government shelter claimed, "Pag may family na kayang i-provide 'yung security measures, nag-encourage kami sa kanila na mas maganda yung bata sa mga magulang kasi mas madali yung recovery… maraming mga support system (If there are families who can provide security, we encourage them to take care of the child because the recovery is faster)." With the help of families, child victims can cope better and have a lesser chance of returning to OSAEC activities.

Role of Community in the Prevention of OSAEC

One of the community's major roles in preventing OSAEC is information dissemination. Some LGUs do this by educating members of the community (e.g., parents, youth, teachers) about human trafficking and child abuse through conferences, fora, and means that are creative such as contests.

Another task of the community is monitoring OSAEC activities. This includes community leaders (e.g., barangay captains, purok leaders, barangay council for the protection of children) conducting

constant surveillance. Internet shops are monitored to ensure children's compliance with curfew. Some community members also mentioned being trained and given guidelines by some international and non-government organizations regarding mechanisms for reporting OSAEC cases, such as watching out for certain red flags, e.g., "Kasi di ba, ano nga, sa seminar … kung may mga palatandaan. Halimbawa, kubo lang siya, pero bakit may ganun (Internet connection) sa bahay niya (In the seminar, they are taught about signs. For example, the house is just a nipa hut, yet they have an Internet connection?)" Here are other examples from community members when identifying children at risk:

> "Makakilala kung ano yung mga bahay na may ganun, kahina-hinala … Halimbawa, yung kaklase niya, alam mo namang di naman that rich, pero ba't araw-araw bago gadget (Identify houses that have something that may be suspicious. For example, you know someone who is not rich but has different gadgets everyday)."

Aside from monitoring, the community through its leaders can come up with local ordinances that protect children from the risks of online sexual abuse and exploitation. For example, in one barangay in Pampanga, the rule that children below 18 years cannot enter Internet shops during school hours is strictly enforced. As one community member narrated, "yung aming barangay captain talagang binabawalan ang pagpapasok ng mga kabataan sa mga Internet shops lalo na talaga kapag ito ay mga minor pag po kasi mga report na ganoon pinapagreport po 'yung may-ari sa barangay hall at kung kinontinue niya ang pagpapapasok sa mga ganoong kabataan eh ipasasara po 'yun bibigyan po sila ng closure (our barangay captain strictly disallows children from entering Internet shops. The owner of the shops is asked to report to the barangay once children are caught in their premises)."

The community is also involved in the child's reintegration, ensuring that responsible parents will take care of the child and prevent re-victimization. In this regard, the local government conducts parenting capability assessment among parents who are willing to adopt these children.

Civil society organizations in the community also support local government in its prevention, rescue, and aftercare programs by filling in gaps in service delivery. One volunteer from a faith-based organization explained:

> In terms of like partnering with churches, faith-based organizations and ministries, sa beginning lang yung medyo challenging. Its educating part pero once na pinasukan na ng pastor, ng pari, nag eengage na, nagrerespond. Kaya nga karamihan nagkukuha ano yung gap na hindi napoprovide ng government (In terms of partnering with churches, faith-based organizations and ministries, it is only challenging at the start…once pastors and priests get involved, [the organizations] engage and respond. Most of the time, it fills the gap in the services of the government.)

Sociocultural environment by which OSAEC occurs in the Philippines

The occurrence of OSAEC may be attributed to and reinforced by the sociocultural environment (i.e., social norms, living conditions, and common beliefs) in which they exist. In the Philippines, these cases are present because parents and family members normalize OSAEC-related activities since these do not involve physical touch. As one of the case managers shared: "Wala naman daw physical touch. Bakit daw kailangan pang dalhin sa DSWD or bakit kailangan silang ikulong? Hindi naman daw nahahawakan yung mga bata, so mahirap i-break sa mga family yung ganoong culture o pagtingin (There is no physical touch involved. So why should they be brought to DSWD or imprisoned? There is no physical contact with the children, so it's difficult to break the kind of culture or point of view a family might support)."

Commonly, OSAEC occurs in poverty-stricken areas where parents note the lack of opportunities to obtain proper employment. Thus, the desire to earn easy money prompts engagement in OSAEC-related activities, where a single performance results in an enormous sum of money. A social worker attested: "Ang bilis dito ng pera papadala ka lang ng pictures ng ano, hindi naman hahawakan yung anak mo, papadalhan mo lang ng hubad na pictures bibigyan ka lang ng $30–$60 (Generating income is quick. You just send pictures, your children are not touched. You just send pictures and you are given $30–$60 dollars)." Because of such a simple and profitable transaction, parents and relatives tend to become facilitators or perpetrators of OSAEC. Since the family needs the money, the children are put in that kind of situation without being aware that something wrong is being done to them.

People thus continue OSAEC-related activities in the hopes of having a comfortable life, which includes the provision of basic needs, education, and financial security. One of the case managers shared: "That's acceptable and can make their lives better because that's usually how the parents think… Ah, I would engage my children in pornography… because they think that it will help the family."

Ultimately, children are viewed as vulnerable to being abused and exploited since they have no way of telling right from wrong. A houseparent validated this by saying, "Pag sobrang bata hindi pa nila alam na hindi normal yung pinapagawa sa kanila ng magulang nila, o minsan akala nila wala lang (When they are very young, children do not understand that what their parents are doing to them is not normal or sometimes they think it's nothing at all)." It becomes easy to make children do things using bribes such as toys, prizes, and privileges. The perpetrator, who usually has moral ascendancy over the child, makes it difficult to be resisted or disobeyed even if the child is being asked to do something wrong.

To add to this inherent vulnerability is the culture-bound expectation that children should help their family financially, especially among the poor. This belief somehow takes away the guilt from parents who offer their children to offenders and provides older child victims a justification for their involvement in OSAEC. One houseparent said,

> Tingin ko ma'am ano, meron siyang connect dun sa pagtingin ng mga Pilipino
> na yung anak mo ay pinanganak mo para eventually tumulong sa iyo parang

> ewan ko po pero dati meron kasing issues na ganun… parang si nanay at si tatay parang nagpapadami ng anak pa marami ang tutulong sa kanya in the future, tapos karamihan din parang ano…parang pag eldest ka (I think this is related to the belief of Filipinos that the purpose of having children is for them to help the family financially. The mother and the father intentionally produce many children so that they will get a lot of support, especially from the eldest).

Keeping the peace in the community can also be a norm that is both advantageous and disadvantageous in relation to OSAEC. "Hindi naman tayo napeperwisyo" (we are not disturbed anyway) can help explain why neighbors who know about OSAEC in the community do not report it. Most Filipinos also believe that one should not interfere with the affairs of other families. A culture of silence, therefore, perpetuates the crime just to keep the peace.

It is also a common excuse for adults not to learn about technology because they are old already, believing that it is just for the younger generation. As one key informant expressed: "So, what is lacking in the family is definitely the knowledge of how the Internet can be a gateway for their children to be exposed to inappropriate materials." Because of this, adults cannot protect children from online sexual abuse and exploitation.

Child Protection Services

Despite the terrible experiences that OSAEC victims have endured, there are fortunately a number of agencies, institutions, and individual service providers who are involved in the identification, reporting, and rescue of these children, ensuring their protection and safety as well as supporting their needs.

Cases are sometimes identified by merely engaging in conversations with people around the alleged perpetrators and victims; people such as neighbors, teachers, and other community members also report to the authorities. Other cases are discovered through telephone calls or text messaging as "anonymous reporting." Though not much is reported online, there was one account that had mentioned the use of Facebook in case identification.

At times, undercover personnel would also disguise themselves as potential customers to obtain valuable information that could further their investigation. For instance, a social worker from an NGO explained how this undercover method was used to identify perpetrators:

> So meron akong undercover na foreigner then nagpanggap ako as driver. Nagmeet kami sa isang mall. Sinabi niya sakin na ganito, 'oh sige dun sa isang bata P10,000, eh may sinama siya na friend niya, ganun din inoffer din niya yung anak niya. So tatlong bata yun. So after nun sabi niya na, tinanong ko ano bang offer niya sabi nila wala daw sexual contact basta taking of images lang for one night. (I had an undercover accomplice who was a foreigner while I pretended to his driver. We met in a mall. The mother told

me, "Okay, P10,000 for the child" then she brought with her another mother who also offered her child for the same price. In all, there were three children. I asked what they can do and the mother said "no sexual contact, just take images for one night").

Furthermore, social workers also identify OSAEC-related information they come across during their routines or scheduled activities, even though such information was not necessarily intended for investigation or obtaining referrals.

This collaboration among community members-turned-volunteers, social workers, barangay officials, and law enforcers operates as a multidisciplinary team that responds to the OSAEC victims' calls for help.

Other than forming a multidisciplinary "quick action" team, further coordination with other agencies and relevant professionals is done to broaden the scope of monitoring, investigations, and rescue operations. Foreign agencies such as the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the British, Australian, and Canadian Embassies, Homeland Security, and UNICEF assist in these key activities. Local agencies that are also very much active in anti-OSAEC operations include the DSWD, MSWDO, CSWDO, WCPD, VAWC desk officers, RCB, BCPC, and PNP. These local agencies are called upon to assist in taking referrals, obtaining testimonies, conducting rescue operations, receiving victims for protection, and other legal proceedings. Partner NGOs such as the International Justice Mission (IJM), Preda Foundation, Yakap International, Gabriela, Touch Foundation and others also contribute by providing sources of information or legal services. Intelligence agencies such as the CIB and IACAT are also often contacted relative to OSAEC investigations, surveillance, and assessment of potential leads and reports. Lastly, journalists and media personnel are included in operations at times to fully document processes, obtain information, and even provide assistance in related projects.

After being rescued and before testifying in court, the child victims are brought to DSWD-managed shelters where they are provided for. Some shelters, however, only offer temporary accommodations and these child victims have to be moved somewhere where they can stay longer. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of information on utility of foster care homes or kinship care as places rescued children are referred to. The present study, in its purposive sampling, was only able to trace OSAEC cases where victims were placed in shelters which currently appears to be a common practice of Government. This merits a revisit of the care continuum and an investment of resources to encourage and support rehabilitation and intervention for children rescued who are placed in safe homes in the communities instead of alternative residential facilities.

Aside from shelters, some faith-based organizations provide OSAEC assessment centers, which have a different function from processing centers. A community member explains:

"Iba po yung processing center at saka yung OSAEC assessment center so once the child has been rescued, by law dapat kunin muna yung bata, yung processing there should be a 72 hour para ifile yung case against the perpetrator so part of the documentation would be to interview yung bata within those 72 hours para ma file yung case sa Department of Justice...

hindi masyadong child-friendly so narecognize yun...After na ifile yung case, dadalhin ang bata sa assessment center, yun po yung thorough na assessment for the child. May medical team yan, may psychologist, nurses, doctors, and even psychiatrist and social worker who would be assessing yung iba't ibang aspeto nung bata physical, psychological, community and family... kung saan best dalhin yung bata after that thorough assessment so yun yung kaibahan (The processing center is different from the OSAEC assessment center so once the child has been rescued, by law a case should be filed against the perpetrator within 72 hours and for documentation purposes, the child must be interviewed within 72 hours so the case can be filed in the Department of Justice...that is not child-friendly and that was recognized...After filing the case, the child will be brought to the assessment center where thorough assessment of the child will be done. There is a medical team, psychologist, nurses, doctors, and even psychiatrists and social worker who will be assessing the child's physical, psychological [condition], [the] community and family [context]...decide where is the best place for the child, so that is the difference)."

Programs and services that cater to the physical health of these child victims include provision of medicines, immunization, and check-ups by partner pediatricians, barangay nutritionists, and health workers. Meanwhile, access to mental health and psychosocial programs and services not only help the child victims to recover from the OSAEC experience but also prepare them beforehand when testifying in court. These include the provision of psychotherapy by an in-center or partner psychologist; exercises to improve their socialization, self-confidence, self-awareness, and decision-making; and mechanisms to help them cope.

Many centers and NGOs also give educational assistance to the children so they can continue with their schooling. While some children are sent to school on a regular basis, others are enrolled in an Alternative Learning System (ALS). These centers also receive aid from external sources such as the Australian Embassy to support programs and services for the child victims, to ensure their holistic development, allow them to engage in recreational activities, and prepare them for real-world careers in the future.

Primarily, the service providers who carry out these social involvement programs and counseling or therapy are psychologists, medical nurses, social workers, and even house parents.

Social workers play a variety of roles relative to their services for child victims. These roles are highlighted during the rescue and aftercare phases. Upon rescue of the child victims, the social workers are present to gather and organize the child victim's personal information when they are taken into the center. Then they make sure these children understand why they are brought to the center and taken away from their parents. They also ensure that these children feel safe and are not threatened or intimidated by others, especially authority figures. As these social workers are also responsible for managing the cases of these children, they are required sign a sworn statement as part of the protocol.

During aftercare, the social workers continue to ensure the safety and development of these child victims. They evaluate the programs these children participate in, certifying that it would be to their advantage and betterment. These social workers also assist other healthcare service providers, particularly the psychologists, who cater to the children's psychosocial needs.

Lastly, in terms of family reintegration, the social workers further evaluate the household through family assessment reports. An interviewee explained, "Yung social worker sa center, sila yung mag-assess kung 'yung bata is ready for reintegration, kung puwede na sila ibalik sa family (The social worker at the center will assess if the child is ready for reintegration—if he or she can be returned to his or her family)."

As another service provider, the psychologist provides psychotherapy, counselling, and other psychosocial services to child victims and even parents. Some even testify in court. Most of the psychologists are on call and will have to see the child victims in their respective centers. One respondent highlighted the role of the psychologist by saying, "The help does not stop there because you have to consider their psychosocial needs—they have closure, they have to move on in their lives… so, there are experts who handle the children—psychologists…"

House parents also have a duty in line with the care and safety of OSAEC victims. The highlight of the house parents' roles and responsibilities include escorting the children (usually when they are in school) and serving as substitute parents. A case manager shared, "Meron pong isang house parent na naka-assign sa school. So siya yung nagsusubaybay doon, siya po yung nakikipag-usap sa teacher (There is one house parent assigned to the school. She is the one monitoring the child and talks to the teacher)."

Advocacy

Some victims who have already recovered from the trauma they experienced shared the transformation process from being a victim to being an advocate. Going abroad to speak is one of the ways by which they share their experience in order to inspire others who have gone through the same experience, increase awareness of victims' plight, and help prevent others from being similarly exploited. Among the recommendations that one recovered OSAEC victim gave are for children to be responsible in using the computer, to beware of people they meet online, not to trust too easily, set a time limit on the use of gadgets, put more effort into studying, and listen to parents. The advocate added that parents have a significant role to play in explaining to their children the dangers of human trafficking, including exposure to pornographic materials on the Internet. Finally, the advocate called for the police to set good examples to the youth about proper conduct and behavior.

Psychoeducation and prevention through coordination with schools

Psychoeducation is one of the most common services provided in areas with OSAEC cases. There is a need to educate the victims' families and their communities about their significant role in either

preventing or promoting this phenomenon. The victims of OSAEC themselves need to be informed of their rights and be aware of the violation of these rights, as many of the victims tend to view the practice merely as a profession and source of livelihood. To motivate the victims to seek justice, they have to realize that what had been done to them was wrong and that they had been abused.

In terms of prevention, there are already systems in place to educate the youth on identifying warning signs and protecting themselves from such abuse and exploitation. As one member of an NGO shared:

> So it's more of investing really on the future generations. So we have the I-Fight Movement, schools have this. We are trying to educate young people on how to protect themselves, identify red flags at the same time don't be part of the demand side...it's really hoping that the next generation would be more educated and they know how to protect themselves from that.

As can be read from the above interview excerpt, coordination with schools provides a major avenue to prevent OSAEC. Here, barangays and NGOs involved in the campaign against OSAEC conduct information drives for parents and the youth. Schools would have prevention programs in the form of contests and concerts against human trafficking, where NGOs would also host forums and distribute booklets about human trafficking, related laws, and their implementing rules and regulations. Recognizing the important role that schools play in preventing OSAEC, study respondents raised the need for teacher training on how to handle children who approach them and disclose the abuses they experience, which is considered one of the major gaps that needs to be addressed.

Coordination with Local Agencies

Local agencies and government and non-government organizations collaborate with each other in the fight against OSAEC. For example, in rescue operations, the PNP, CSWDO, and the barangay are usually involved. In some entrapment operations, especially in areas identified to be OSAEC "hotspots" the barangay would sometimes be left uninformed about the planned rescue to avoid alerting the perpetrators and giving them a chance to escape. However, in most cases, a courtesy call to the barangay is required. Case conferences and awareness drives that help prevent OSAEC are a result of collaboration among NGOs, government agencies (such as the NBI), and schools (with the help of the Department of Education).

Empowering Families and Communities

The common goal of groups involved against OSAEC is to empower families and communities (e.g., by giving lectures about sexual exploitation) so they act meaningfully to dispel the idea that it is acceptable to subject children to online sexual abuse and exploitation. Families and communities are at the forefront of this campaign, as some case referrals would actually come from community members themselves. At the barangay level, tanods and staff undergo training to enable them to spot red flags that hint at the possible occurrence of OSAEC. Counseling programs such as "Parent

Effectiveness Service" are also offered to improve parenting skills and to make parents aware of their responsibilities to their children. Parents have a crucial role to play in preventing OSAEC, i.e., enforcing simple rules such as limiting their children's use of computers.

The public should also be a major target of awareness campaigns on respecting the rights and dignity of children, as misinformed people tend to blame victims for their circumstances.

Some of the existing ways to prevent OSAEC include having a community watch that would be vigilant about warning signs of sexual abuse and exploitation. Structures in the community are created and parents are empowered to take care of their children by giving them access to government programs and economic opportunities. This may be considered a grassroots approach to the problem, as human trafficking tends not to be just a criminal and human rights issue but also an economic issue. Broadening the parents' opportunities for livelihood is directed at elevating their economic situation, thereby making them less likely to allow their children to be abused and exploited for profit. As OSAEC tends to be normalized in communities and families, it is imperative to educate the parents about the effect of such activities on their children: that it is a form of trafficking and therefore punishable by law.

Faith-based Organization Services

Community members who belong to faith-based organizations can also help OSAEC victims and their families by filling the gaps in government's social services delivery. Aside from creating OSAEC assessment centers, some of them establish dedicated hotlines for OSAEC where people can report cases. They also have a program called "Roll Out" where they empower the youth by involving them in the campaign against OSAEC. One representative from a faith-based organization described the Roll Out program:

> We teach them 9 lessons, very focused on OSAEC and then we did this last year, part of our prevention because we realized there's no material and there are different meanings and understandings on it so we gathered ourselves with experts, with people who know about it and we got writers to write a way na maiintindihan ng mga youth kasi (that the youth will understand because) the strategy is to train 15 to 24 years old because we believe in the empowerment of the youth that they can influence the younger generation. In terms of gap in age, they are near them than adult teaching children so that is the purpose so we train the youth advocates selected from the community. They are volunteered by either their churches or schools or their barangays. So we have various types of children, young people between 15 to 24. They train on this, we practice their understanding of OSAEC and in the process also, they may or may not be victims. They may have exposure and then once they commit they will have to echo this, we call this, roll out so last year they were able to roll this out to about a thousand children in Dasmarinas City and the process is they have a mentor. The mentor is an adult. One who

> understands the efficacies, laws, system of governance. We also say that if
> someone discloses to you, call an adult because that adult will be the one to
> respond and not you because we do not want to burden them.

Another service that they provide is networking. They coordinate with companies and get their commitment to hire victims of OSAEC, especially those who will no longer return to their families.

Lastly, faith-based organizations ensure the continuity of programs after elections. Most of the time, when local government officials are replaced, OSAEC programs are set aside if the new officials have different priorities. What the faith-based organizations do is to convince new officials to continue the programs.

Research Dissemination and Policy

Conducting research on OSAEC in order to bring about policy reforms and document best practices and lessons of different stakeholders is equally important. As an NGO director shared:

> So, the other pillar that we have is the policy, so this is the policy and our
> resource center. We try to document researches. It's really about knowledge
> generation. Our dream is whatever we learn along the way we want to share
> so that others do not, you know, make mistake that we did.

Offenders

Profile of Offenders[2]

Offenders' ages vary: based on key informant interviews, arrested and convicted offenders are aged 17 to 62 years. One interviewed offender was 17 years old when he learned about and engaged in cybersex, and later on he became an operator himself. There are also minor offenders noted to be recruiting their classmates or friends and facilitating the booking online, while some female teenage

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[2] According to the terminology guidelines, "offender" and "perpetrator" tend to be the most frequently used terms to refer to individuals having allegedly committed or been convicted of committing sexual offenses against children. In accordance with major dictionaries, the term "offender" takes on the principal meaning of a person who commits/is guilty of a crime. The term "perpetrator" appears to take on a slightly broader meaning, referring to a person "who carries out a harmful, illegal, or immoral act" as well as someone who has been convicted of committing such a crime or act.

Determining the appropriate term to describe an individual's involvement in a sexual offence against a child should be based on two considerations: (i) the individual's role in perpetrating or facilitating the sexual offense against the child and (ii) the status of the individual in the possible criminal proceedings related to the sexual offense against the child, taking into account the specificities of national legislation.

The term "facilitator" (also known as the "intermediary") refers to the individual whose conduct facilitates or aids and abets the (sometimes commercial) contact sexual offence against the child. The facilitator may be, but is not necessarily, the person who receives the benefit or payment for the sexual exploitation of a child. The facilitator may be a taxi driver, a hotel receptionist, a family member, or anyone putting an abuser in contact with a child for sexual exploitation, whether she or he is paid for this "service" or not. It can also include the private sector in the domain of ICT and financial services.

offenders mentioned by key informants were groomed by their foreigner partners and recruited other child victims. In the documentary "Catching a Monster" (2018), Brown notes that "XXX even recruited his girlfriends, just teenagers themselves, to procure his child victims." Another informant noted that consumers of OSAEC materials are mostly old foreign nationals, many of whom are Australians.

Offenders/perpetrators can be male, female or members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. Three interviewed offenders are male. One is gay and had foreigner partners who he met online. Female offenders include mothers of victims, wives or girlfriends or live-in partners of perpetrators or female friends of the child victim. Three of the interviewed offenders are married and have children. Their children were either cared for by relatives or were under DSWD custody after they were arrested. The children of the 62-year-old offender are all grown up and employed. Only one offender is single and has no children. YYY, the Dutch national convicted of rape and qualified trafficking in persons, is married to a Filipina based in Misamis Oriental according to an informant, while XXX, an Australian also convicted of rape and human trafficking, had young Filipina live-in partners.

Male offenders who are married normally have spouses who are also involved in OSAEC. The wives of the interviewed offenders also faced legal charges and are now convicted. Their level of involvement varies. Some of the wives knew of their respective husbands' online activity but had no direct participation in cybersex. The wife of one offender participated in the transactions by claiming the customer's payment from the remittance center.

One interviewed offender stated that it was his wife who got him into the cybersex business after she worked in the cybersex industry in Pampanga and had a relationship with a foreigner.

All of the interviewed offenders live with their immediate family (i.e., with a wife and children for those married; with parents and siblings for the unmarried offender). One offender also lived with his extended family including a child neighbor who he had exploited sexually. Another offender allowed their helpers and their families to live with him. It is not uncommon for family members including parents, in-laws, and siblings of the offender to get arrested and prosecuted for having knowledge of OSAEC operations at home, even if they were not directly involved in its operation.

The parents of YYY's partner's nieces were allowed to live with their aunt in good faith, i.e., the parents did not know that the husband of the children's aunt was a child molester.

Two of the interviewed offenders were college undergraduates. One was a high school graduate while the other did not mention his educational background. The 18-year old live-in partner of XXX, as noted by an informant, did not finish school. All those interviewed had sources of income prior to engaging in OSAEC. One interviewed offender was a call center agent and his family also managed a sari-sari store. One worked as a printing operator while another convicted offender was a tricycle driver. Another offender mentioned that his wife had a regular office-based job while he earned from making videos featuring animal cruelty. These offenders eventually gave up their jobs when they started earning from cybersex operations. Key informants noted that some of the facilitators were unemployed or had lost their jobs. Others were gainfully employed, including one offender who was

reported to be a retired engineer, while another worked as a tourist guide. The live-in partner of XXX was a former sex worker who agreed to live with XXX thinking he was rich and well-off.

All four interviewed offenders operated locally and facilitated OSAEC or recorded videos at home. One interviewed offender was arrested in Navotas where he lived; another operated in Taguig and was arrested with his wife. Two of the interviewed offenders previously lived and worked elsewhere but moved to a location (e.g., Taguig City) where they learned the trade and started operating a cybersex den. An informant who is an NGO worker also noted that many offenders operated in the privacy of their own homes and own at least one computer unit:

> "Mas magandang gawin kasi talaga sa bahay e. Mas matagal mong maitatago, unless na may magreklamo... lalo na pag sa computer, isa lang, siyempre hindi naman maano... dahil private nga sasabihin pang family lang yan pero, minsan sa ano talaga karamihan talaga niyan sa bahay (It's really better to do the cybersex activities at home because it can be kept hidden for a longer time, unless someone files a complaint. Especially if operations are done via computer; it can easily be said it's just for family use. Actually, most of cybersex operations are really done in homes)."

Others really invest in its operation and use more than one unit. A PNP-WCPC officer noted a case where they rescued children and retrieved three laptops being used by the facilitator in OSAEC operations.

According to interviewed law enforcers from the PNP, WCPC, and PNP Anti-Cybercrime Group, the facilitators are normally closely related to child victims. Referring to their operations in Cordova, the offenders had one child, one relative, and a neighbor engaged in their cybersex operations. The interviewer noted that most cases involve children who are the facilitators' relatives. All four interviewed offenders and perpetrators are Filipinos, while the clients are mostly foreign nationals. Interviewed police inspectors shared OSEAC cases they handled involving German, French, American, and British offenders. Some of the clients also distribute OSAEC materials. There were foreign nationals who came to the Philippines to escape from crimes committed in their home country and then established OSAEC operations here. According to an informant, Australian perpetrator Peter Scully operated in more than one location. He was first identified in Cagayan de Oro City but the first batch of OSAEC cases was reported in Malaybalay, Bukidnon where the warrant for his arrest was issued. He was also reported to have victimized children from Surigao. YYY, from the Netherlands, operated in Misamis Oriental where he settled with his Filipina wife and exploited his wife's nieces. A key informant noted that they have quite a few cases where foreigners come to the Philippines and set up an OSAEC hub, e.g., the NBI case of Dicken, an American, who lured children to his house.

Some Insights on Offenders

Two interviewed offenders admitted to having used drugs previously or during the act of OSAEC. One offender confessed that he was a shabu user (shabu is a mixture of methamphetamine and

caffeine prevalent throughout Asia). Another claimed he quit drugs and other vices, except alcohol, when he got married. Another offender denied using drugs but admitted that he is into alcohol and gambling.

All interviewed offenders do not consider themselves to be technology-savvy but have basic knowledge of computers for simple daily use. Another interviewed offender said he learned how to operate computers only through hands-on experience and a basic knowledge of English.

Interviewed offenders were also persons known to the child victims and either members of their respective families or the communities where they lived. There were claims that many residents in their communities were also engaged in OSAEC, in effect normalizing the offense.

All interviewed offenders claim to have been driven to engage in OSAEC out of their need to provide food and shelter for their respective families. Some even pointed out that they themselves were "victims" because their impoverished economic circumstances pushed them to engage in such activities.

It is also noteworthy that interviewed offenders claimed that there were instances when parents voluntarily offered their children to be models for the offenders' online shows. There was a prevailing sense that no harm was being done to the children because only videos were being taken of them as they were walking around naked, engaged in sex play among themselves or touching themselves. However, there were occasions wherein the adult offenders themselves were documented while engaged in explicitly sexual acts with children so they can charge money for online viewing.

In cases where the offenders were parents themselves of the child victims, they expressed regret or remorse not because they had in effect violated their children through OSAEC, but because their actions resulted in incarceration and subsequent separation from their children.

Experiences of Offenders and Their Previous Criminal Activities

An experience common to OSAEC offenders is their having been introduced to cybersex by friends or family members, and their eventual realization that OSAEC is a way of getting money that is easier than their livelihood (tricycle driving or employment as rank-and-file employee). OSAEC operations typically ran over several years before the offenders were apprehended. Foreign offenders were males who fled from their respective governments for criminal activities done in their home countries.

Some of the offenders were former child victims of online sexual abuse and exploitation. One interviewed offender was introduced to cybersex while still a minor, learning from a previous gay relationship and from other gays and women in the community who were involved in cybersex. The female partners of male foreigner offenders like XXX were victims themselves who were exploited by their partners.

One interviewed offender started OSAEC operations on his own after he gained experience chatting with foreigners and getting paid for it. He said he was initially driven by curiosity while he was still

in college. Another interviewed offender started with online games where he met gamers from other parts of the world. There he chatted with someone who offered him money in exchange for posting videos of animals being tortured and killed.

After learning about the cybersex trade from neighbors and participating in related activities, the third interviewed offender decided to start his own operation that served as his primary source of income. He said that he became motivated to engage in cybersex activities and recounted that using computers for cybersex work was a lucrative practice where he lived, so he eventually stopped driving a tricycle for income. He also eventually continued cybersex work on his own. He and his group had several computers; when he was arrested, five units were confiscated from him. He was the one operating their computers.

The fourth interviewed offender stated that his wife influenced him after she had been exposed to OSAEC activities from her previous work in Pampanga and after having a relationship with a male American.

All of the interviewed offenders conducted OSAEC operations from 5 to 8 years before they were apprehended. Two of these offenders stated that they staggered their operation based on their need for money. The facilitators who are foreign nationals such as YYY and XXX had previous criminal cases in their home countries before coming to the Philippines: YYY had a prior conviction for sexual abuse of minors and other criminal cases in the Netherlands (Orias, P. J. F., 2018), while XXX was involved in investment and IT scams in Australia and went into hiding in the Philippines according to the documentary entitled "Catching a Monster" (Brown, 2015). A lawyer informant also mentioned the fraud case against XXX in Australia, disclosing that XXX was accused of estafa, and that he was running away from his financial crimes when he first came to the Philippines.

Motivations of Offenders

According to informants, most of the offenders engage in OSAEC as a source of income since OSAEC is easy money. One interviewed offender said that the money he earned from OSAEC activities is used to support his family as well as buy drugs.

Some informants pointed out that poverty is a driving factor for engaging in OSAEC. Case managers interviewed noted that it was easier for parent-perpetrators to make their children participate in cybersex because they are conditioned to think this is a way for them to help the family fulfill their basic needs, e.g., for food, or if someone in the family is sick, they post a video and send it to a foreigner who will pay money that they can use to buy medicines.

Sense of Culpability of Offenders

OSAEC is typically packaged as an amoral activity, that it merely provides an option for getting money, and that it is not altogether bad because others are also doing it. All of the offenders had experience with cybersex prior to engaging in OSAEC, with their having tried cybersex out of

curiosity. Almost all the offenders typically attributed blame to external factors or persons other than themselves for their criminal OSAEC act. There was also a tendency for the offenders to claim innocence because no evidence of their guilt was obtained at the alleged crime scene. The belief that the children were not harmed in cases where there was no physical contact between the offender and the child victim was also cited as a reason for their engaging in OSAEC as acceptable. When parents were the offenders, there also seemed to be a belief among them that the children's "work" doing OSAEC modelling was necessary as such activities actually helped sustain their families.

Some of the convicted offenders come across as not feeling any guilt over the crime they have committed. Two offenders interviewed for this study denied culpability by insisting that there is not enough evidence to convict them.

Another believed that he is innocent, hoping that he and his cohorts can be set free because law enforcers were not able to retrieve any videos or pictures of children from their computers.

Some offenders were inclined to play down the effects of OSAEC on their child victims. When asked what they think the child victims feel when they were used for sexually exploitative activity, one offender claimed that it does not affect the children, arguing that for them, it's just like playing games. Another noted the children's consent, saying that when he asks the children if it's acceptable for them to do cybersex activities, they agree because they say they need the money.

One key informant talked about how some parents believe in "no touch, no harm" by sharing one case that they handled, where the offender was a mother—who was about 4 months pregnant—who dismissed the notion of abuse and exploitation because her child was not touched. The key informant noted that even if there was no physical touching, there probably was a psychological effect on the child victim.

YYY denied guilt by stating that the acts committed against the children were for medical purposes and not sexual exploitation. Only one interviewed offender admitted guilt and remorse over his wrongdoing: "Hindi ko pa iniisip yung kalayaan kasi mas matagal pa yung... kasi kasalanan talaga namin yung ano eh, talagang maling-mali, pinagsisihan ko na talaga yung nagawa ko (I am not even thinking of freedom, because I know I will be in jail for a long time. It's really my fault, I know it was very wrong, and I really am remorseful over what I did)."

Some offenders engage in victim playing by placing the blame on the system, law enforcement, or the customer for using the material for sexual purposes without them knowing. He added, "PETA ang mga complainant mam eh, kontrobersyal nga na kaso 'yan, isang kaso sa Pilipinas, gusto nilang... makulong yung taong gumagawa, pinerahan nila yung mga bata, binayaran (It was PETA that filed a complaint against me. My case was a controversial one; what they really wanted was to have someone prosecuted. they actually just gave money to the children so I would be found guilty and put in jail)."

Another offender blamed the NBI: "Na-tiyempohan ako na kumu-quota sila dun sa Internet na ganun... na kumagat ako dun sa ano nila... pain nila...sobra pong pinalaki lang po ng NBI" (NBI had a quota for apprehensions they had to meet. I unfortunately took the bait and they caught me engaged in cybersex activities; but NBI actually exaggerated the incident.)

One offender believed that someone from DSWD brainwashed his daughter into filing a case against him and his wife. According to him, this DSWD person was the aunt of a boy who had gotten his under-aged daughter pregnant. To stop them from filing a case against the boy, he said that his daughter was advised to file a case against them for cybersex activities.

Access of Offenders to Child Victims

Facilitators of OSAEC can use their own children, nephews and nieces, and children of neighbors, friends, and classmates to engage and remain in the cybersex industry.

Facilitated by parents. It is common to hear about OSAEC cases where at least one or both parents serve as the perpetrator. There are cases where the mother started as the "model" herself until her customer asked for a younger model and the mother obliged by offering the nearest child she could access: her own. Another perpetrator who has been involved in OSAEC for 8 years mentioned that parents were the ones who came to him and referred their children. There was also the case of another convicted perpetrator whose domestic workers (housemaid and laundry woman) immediately offered their children when they learned that the offender needed subjects for the video he was making for foreign clients. The parents did not seem to realize the harm this would bring to their children because all they needed to do was to play with animals (e.g., water snakes) while they were on camera.

Many key informants also emphasized the parents' role in expediting the online sexual exploitation of their children. This is common in hotspot areas where cyber pornography has become a cottage industry and where their own homes are made into sex dens. According to a Cebu-based social worker: "Mostly it happens na talaga sa bahay…we were amazed that this house was too small but they have their appliances, they have the computer…hindi na masyadong mahalata… easy na lang kasi yung cellphone pwede na maka access ng Internet (Mostly, it happens in the homes. Their houses are so tiny, but their appliances are complete. They even have a computer. Nowadays, it is not so obvious and evident… even mobile phones can access the Internet)." Several informants, including an LGU psychologist based in Cagayan de Oro, have repeatedly said that parents do not realize the harm OSAEC brings to their children: "Their concept is I'm just filming. There's nothing wrong, my child is not harmed."

Some foreigner offenders target potential child victims by courting single mothers. The single mother typically allows her children to live with her and her offender-partner, who provides for her children's education.

Facilitated by relatives. Foreigner offenders get access to Filipino children through their Filipina live-in partners or wives. Their female partners approach the children's parents, offering them help by "adopting" their children and promising a better life for them by providing for their basic needs and education. These offenders target random children on the street or victimize their own relatives (i.e., nieces and nephews) like in the case of Jouke Mulder's Filipina wife (2CDO). Some offenders would take care of the child of an economically deprived relative and promise to send her to school but, in return, the child will serve the family as a domestic worker. In their home, the child is easily lured or

coerced to engage in cyber pornography. When a relative is the one who recruits or takes custody of the child, the parents normally consent, believing that the child is in good hands and will be treated well by their own relative.

When a foreigner offender uses "adoption" as his modus, someone serves as an intermediary aside from his intimate partner. Informants mentioned that in some cases, a relative of the child's mother (e.g., a cousin or an uncle) would inform her of a foreigner who wanted to adopt or help raise Filipino children, including sending them to school. Normally, the mother accepts the offer in good faith, since she wants to give her child better chances in life. Some of these relatives gain financially from the referral.

Some of these relatives are not fully aware of the offender's intention and would even help the parent reclaim her child after they learn about the abuse and exploitation. A psychologist from a CDO LGU gave information about one case that she handled (all names of persons mentioned during the interview were not their real names). "ZZZ's cousin told her there's this foreigner who says he wants to adopt children because he's searching for meaning in his life so he's looking for children to give them a brighter future. ZZZ, out of her desperation, believed, especially because the information came from the cousin and, having the best of intentions for her child, surrendered XYZ to this foreigner. This also relieved Andy of the burden of having to care for Tina so, ZZZ was put at ease by the thought that XYZ's future with the foreigner was going to be a bright one. ZZZ then goes on with her life for a few months. Later on she receives a tip from the same cousin who referred her and XYZ. The psychologist narrated that the cousin said to ZZZ, "I think you need to take XYZ away. So I'm going to help you…I'm going to get Tina, you have to meet me at this hour and then you have to leave, you have to hide. So they met up, the cousin returned XYZ to ZZZ and then ZZZ hid until XYZ was rescued by authorities that took both XYZ and ZZZ into custody."

Key informants noted that OSEAC has become a "family business" for some local facilitators: parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents are involved in the operation and are offering young members of their family to foreign clients. Interviewed police inspectors shared the case they handled:

> Nagfile kami ng search warrant, October 2012 inimplement namin. Nakarescue kami together with DSWD…siguro 9 na mga batang lalaki and 11 na mga elders na kinasuhan namin…pero magpapamilya, kamag-anak, pinsan, uncle… yung mga bata talagang, pinapakita mga pictures nila na naka bold yung batang lalaki (We filed a search warrant, and on October 2012, we implemented rescue operations together with DSWD. We saved 9 young boys, and filed cases against 11 adults in their families, including cousins, uncles, relatives; there were pictures of naked young boys).

Facilitated by peers. Adolescent victims-survivors were also reported to be lured by their peers and classmates who are engaged in OSAEC, who would invite them to a sleepover at their house where the victim-survivor was exposed to cybersex activities. The victim-survivor was invited to join in, enticed by the opportunity to earn money: "Sa umpisa daw ini-invite lang sila ng kaibigan nila na doon matulog. Napunta na doon sa ini-invite na 'gusto mo bang magkapera? …mag-posing posing ka lang ng ganito… (Initially, they were just invited to sleep over. Then they were asked 'Do you

want to have money? Just pose like this. . .')." Some informants are wary about the fact that OSAEC recruitment can happen in schools, with students doing the recruiting. An LGU psychologist from CDO noted, "So, what I'm seeing now is that the school is becoming an avenue for recruitment…" OSAEC is thus packaged as an amoral activity: it merely provides an option for getting money, and it is not bad because others are doing it.

When peers are involved in cybersex, the challenge is that they communicate with each other directly through social media such as Facebook where they can easily recruit others or facilitate booking online: "Hindi mo sila makikita kasi peer to peer ang communication nila sa Internet eh (You won't see them, because they communicate via social media on the Internet)." As one informant implies, the technology is used not just in convincing peers to participate in OSAEC but also in maintaining control over the victims as their engagement in OSAEC can be used to blackmail them or shame them online. The CDO-based psychologist said:

> So what happened was that there was this video that went viral about a student who was getting money from a foreigner…the child got referred to my office because the teachers, there was a leaked photo, leaked by the friend of the child and the teachers were alarmed so they referred her…when I talked to the parent, the parent had no idea what the child was doing.

Grooming the Victims

Offenders easily lure child victims to their house under the pretext of playing with toys and/or playing with the offender's child or children. On the other hand, facilitators approach child victims—especially those living on the streets—and offer them food and/or toys, according to an informant involved in the prosecution of the XXX case. This was where the child victims were introduced to and groomed for cybersex activities by posing for the camera until they were asked to perform in front of the webcam at the client's request. Unwittingly, the children comply, while their parents are oblivious to such activities.

There were instances when male foreigners groom teenage girls and make them believe that they were in a special boyfriend–girlfriend relationship. They were also being used to lure other girls to the offender's apartment just to have fun while in an orgy. Apparently, the foreigner is aware that he is not allowed to engage with local children, so he asks his young partner to do the recruiting for him. The recruited girls do not know that their sex party was being recorded or streamed live to a client.

XXX also groomed his young girlfriends and eventually used this emotional attachment to make them recruit children for sexual abuse, in exchange for his affection and love. These young Filipinas were loyal to XXX and clearly in love with him, as he was outwardly a kind person.

According to an informant, some offenders film or take photos of innocent children taking a bath outside of their home and use it as OSAEC material without the knowledge of the children and their parents.

Once children are groomed, some of them stay in the industry because of the money they earn from it, approaching the offender to express their interest in cybersex activities and even pleading to be hired as performers. These children "service" not just one offender's household but several other offenders' households.

Offenders who were foreigners not only groomed individual victims but also communities by establishing cordial relationships with the locals and engaging in communal activities to earn their approval. But grooming the community is not exclusive to offenders who are foreigners. Informants noted that there are Filipino perpetrators who orient and train parents on computer use and online sexual activities as a livelihood option, to help "improve their lives."

Mechanics of Offenders' Operations

Reading through the transcripts, it can be noted that none of the interviewees were involved in the Dark Web, and that they were all able to conduct their OSAEC activities through the usual social media platforms (specifically Facebook), easily accessing the Internet through their smartphones and WiFi connections. The exploitation feature of OSAEC was also made easier because of technology, since various remittance centers (specifically Western Union) readily made available the online remittance of money between places in the Philippines and overseas.

There are several variables to consider in trying to understand how offenders operate. These include the nature of the OSAEC activity, its frequency, length of exploitation, payment form, number and age of child victims, and the location of the activities.

There are three phases in the process of online sexual abuse and exploitation: (i) activities of engagement, where the offenders initially try to connect with and encourage participation of the potential victim; (ii) actual abuse and exploitation, where the offenders involve the victim in an online performance; and (iii) post-engagement, where the offenders conduct activities to either continue or discontinue the abuse and exploitation of the child victim.

During engagement, offenders have different modes of connecting with and encouraging participation of the victim. Some offenders establish a romantic relationship with the prospective victims: one Filipino American courted a girl online and became her boyfriend, but when the abuse happened, she broke off the relationship.

In this case, the offender endeared himself to the prospective victim by showing that he longs for comfort and affection. Other offenders create a friendly atmosphere with the prospective victim by giving treats such as candies so that they would eventually do what they are asked.

Posing as a child or as some other pleasant and admirable individual to gain access to their target victim via popular social media sites is also another manner of pursuit.

For example, perpetrators lure children on Facebook to go to Taguig, a popular local "tour destination." Actually, it is a form of sex tourism. The perpetrator even promises to send the children to school and provide free accommodation, but they end up becoming house help. Ultimately, they are asked to chat with men online.

Other offenders would be introduced to potential child victims through a network of friends instead of presenting themselves as random online strangers. After chatting frequently online and establishing a friendship, the offenders would ask their victims to take their clothes off so they can take pictures, sometimes even offering payment in exchange for the naked display. There are some instances that after the offender has gained the victim's friendship they would be asked to go with them and participate in sexual activities.

Some offenders even offer to provide for the victim's educational needs, which allows for a longer engagement with the offenders. As mentioned in earlier parts of this report, another way to establish the relationship is by employing the victim as a domestic helper where they will eventually be abused and exploited.

Once the victims are closely involved in the offender's operation, there are different sorts of sexual acts being asked of them, i.e., showing the naked body, private parts, playing with different animals, wearing a specific attire, or participating in an orgy. The victims do these while being photographed or recorded, which will then be traded for money.

The victims who were photographed and/or filmed were clueless as to where the material ended up, since they were told that "it's only a picture, nothing bad will happen." Only when they were rescued did they realize that those photos and videos were already made available to everyone, with no chance of retrieval: DVDs were being sold on the sidewalk, pictures were being accessed in Japan. It is only when they understand that they have absolutely no control over those pictures do they grasp the seriousness of their actions.

Offenders would do anything that the clients request, just to please them. For example, according to one social worker, the perpetrator they had caught had an obsession with feces. A review of the perpetrator's video at DSWD showed her (the child victim's aunt) asking the child to defecate. What the perpetrator did was to put the child in an upside down defecating position, to stimulate the anus. The child's dignity was obviously affected, and it took a while before bowel movement happened.

According to another key informant, perpetrators do different acts of unimaginable physical and psychological abuse to the victims, considering that the victims were mostly girls and the ages range from 1 year to 17 years. Such abuses may include the live streaming of child sexual abuse, online showing of the victims naked (Walker,2016; acg.pnp.gov.ph, 2016; rappler.com, 2014), young children engaged in sexual acts with aggravated rape, taking pornographic images of children, and showing a child in pain while being abused (Pineda, 2018).

In her report, Sutton (2016) vividly described other actions that the perpetrators had done to their victims. This included (i) a 5-year-old girl hung upside down as she was being raped and tortured, with two accomplices; (ii) sexually abusing a baby, and filming the torture and rape of young girls

as the perpetrator made them dig their own graves; (iii) a perpetrator filming the rape of his 11-year old female victim, then afterward strangling her to death then burying her body under the floor of a house he was renting (It is believed the victim in the film is named Barbie, who was taken from her family at 5 years old by one of perpetrator's cohorts. In the video, she screams and cries as she is beaten, raped, tortured, and defiled by the perpetrator and his two masked accomplices. They used hot wax, a lighter, barbed wire, and sex aids, and even submerge her in water to torment her); and (iv) the abduction, rape, and torture, of girls, who were also held captive and made to wear dog collars and chains for 5 days (There was a video recording of the girls also being forced to dig their own graves, but they were reportedly let go out of guilt).

On the other hand, some offenders offer marriage to the child victim. For example, if they like the girl targeted for OSAEC, they will carry on a conversation anywhere from 1 hour to 5 hours. No part of the body is shown online, and offenders will not even let the child dance. Merely talking with the client will earn the child income for the day. If the child and the perpetrator meet face-to-face, the perpetrator will take the child with him and will make the child a spouse. An informant from PNP-WCPC confirmed that some convicted pedophiles from other countries tried to enter the country to personally meet the children they have previously engaged with online.

The frequency and duration of exploitation varies according to the types of activities that offenders engage in. OSAEC can happen infrequently, when offenders have nothing to do, or as often as daily and as much as five times a day. It can also happen as quickly as just flashing a part of a naked body such as nipples and/or breasts, or as drawn out as five years, depending on the transactions and/or the offender's relationship with the victim.

When victim abduction is involved, the exploitation can last for 3 to 5 days. According to a social worker who was interviewed, there was a case where both the foreigner and his live-in partner committed abuse as the children were tied up for five days.

On the other hand, some incidents of abuse lasted four years, with the offender being involved in the lives of the children, i.e., the offender provides support for the victim's schooling, as the defining point of the relationship. The client's payment to the offender was facilitated through money transfers or remittances via Western Union, MLuillier, Money Gram, credit cards, postal bank etc. The amounts ranged from $30 to $60 per person to as much as $500 to $1,000 for a 1-hour video, for example. Another interviewee even said that any offer can go as high as $10,000 per view depending on the seriousness of the client's request (sunstar.com.ph,2018; acg.pnp.gov.ph,2016; news.com.au,2016),

From the client's remittance, the offenders pay P1,000 per hour for the models. The amount of payment can reach up to P2,500 – P3,000 per day or P90,000 per month and almost a million per year. According to the interviewee, they divide all the clients' payments, including the share meant for the children.

A social worker noted the facilitators' preference for younger victims because many of these children would prefer candies or toys as payment. There is no specific number of children involved in the operation of offenders especially as the numbers might change based on the victims' relationship or interaction with the offender. Often, the number of child victims ranges from 1 to 3 children, and they are mostly family members.

The Internet plays a vital role in the mechanics of the offenders' operation: telecommunications providers such as Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT) and Globe Telecom offer high-speed and low-priced Internet that allows offenders to remain anonymous by simply setting up operations inside their houses. Some offenders pay only the minimum amount of Php1,700–Php2,000 per month for good service connections, while others hack to get free Internet. There are also some clients who pay for the cost of full Internet subscription.

Offenders can also access the Internet through computer shops in their villages or neighborhoods. In one setup, the first floor of the computer shop was allotted for games and online chats while the second floor had private rooms.

According to a forensic expert from PNP-ACG, easy Internet access, the use of smartphones in conducting OSAEC activities, the use of untraceable prepaid SIM cards, free public Wi-Fi, and the dynamic IP make their work all the more challenging.

Pictures or images, videos, live streaming, and chatting are some of the methods used for OSAEC and promoted via social media platforms (Facebook), emails (Yahoo mail, Gmail), messaging applications (Yahoo Messenger, FB Messenger, and Skype), and dating websites (Filipino Cupid, CamFrog, Asian Dating, Sexy Asian). Some offenders are technologically savvy that they are able to manipulate photos and videos, since these can be used as digital evidence once caught. A lawyer informant narrated a case against XXX who had tampered with the evidence by disguising the voices of the people in the video and making them wear masks. The lawyers also did not know if the videos were digitally enhanced, or whether the background scenes or the video of the torture were changed. Eventually, the perpetrators were identified by the voices and their use of the Visayan language. Also, they were able to identify XXX based on his private parts, which were visible in the video.

There were cases where the victims would go directly to the offenders' place even in their school uniforms after being engaged to participate in OSAEC. At times offenders would take pictures of their victims wearing little to no clothing. The pictures will then be sent to their clients through emails or as attachments while chatting online. One interviewee cited the case of YYY whose common-law wife was a Filipina who was able to convince her children and nieces to come with her. One of the victims was only 6 years old and already sexually abused. A perpetrator, who was in the Philippines on a tourist visa but had since returned to his country of origin in Europe, emailed a picture of the child victim to YYY. The International Law Enforcement agent was able to obtain the picture as evidence against the perpetrators because emails in their country are filtered for any material on child pornography.

Study respondents mentioned cases where pictures of child victims were being developed in local community photo shops in Pagsanjan, Laguna. These were not reported to the police because the respondents thought that it was not illegal, and the photo shop employees were treating it as a regular transaction just like they would for any paying customer.

Most often, offenders took pictures and recorded videos of OSAEC activities simultaneously, with the child victims being shown doing nothing, touching animals, or performing a well-defined task in

the sexual activity. One interviewee noted cases where children on the street were invited to have fun and enjoy having sex or participate in a sex orgy without knowing that they are being recorded on camera.

The videos were then stored in computers and copied on CDs for mass production and selling online. The CDs were sold locally on the streets of Quiapo, Manila and internationally as far as the Middle East and European countries. Copies of the videos can be sent online or delivered through courier like FedEx.

Offenders also made use of live streaming, where they would connect with clients in different parts of the world through teleconferencing. Whether operating out of their home or a computer shop, the offenders would bring the victims in front of the camera and ask them to perform such activities as showing parts of their bodies, e.g.,breasts or actual cybersex, i.e., performing sexual acts in from of the camera linked to the Internet. According to another interviewee, this was clearly sexual exploitation, not just by the people who watch them but also by the person who manipulates them to do sex acts while being watched.

Chatting plays an important role in the activities of an OSAEC offender. They engage with prospective victims and clients on social media platforms by chatting with them. There were cases where the offender poses as a child, a woman, or somebody else in order to connect with their victims and earn their trust. They would then offer money in exchange for the child victims showing their half-naked or naked bodies. The attractive photos and profiles on Facebook catch the attention of other children who make friend requests to the perpetrators, who just keep accepting friend requests. Eventually the perpetrator—an older Italian—would ask a prospective child victim to take off her clothes and offer her payment for doing so.

Offenders also used online chatting to communicate with their clients. There were cases where offenders used chat rooms to know more about their clients' requests. The clients would give scripts on how the videos would play out, what the victims would do or what type of victims they would like to see, e.g., a pregnant woman. There were also cases where chats between offenders and victims led to kidnapping.

Communication between offenders and clients was not limited to chatting and other social media platforms: email was also used to place orders and track payments.

Offenders have used financial services firms in their OSAEC activities to collect payment from their clients and pay some of their victims. These include remittance centers such as banks, online systems such as PayPal, and money transfer agencies.

The offenders email their clients to request payment for their services and the amount is either deposited in their bank account or sent through money transfer facilities. The latter is the preferred remittance method because of less restrictions when claiming payments: most of the remittance centers do not check claimants' identification cards and instead ask for the serial number to confirm payouts.

Some facilitators use Bitcoin accounts in addition to PayPal and local remittance centers to receive clients' payments.

Private Sector

The private sector plays a crucial role in both facilitating and mitigating OSAEC in the country, as depicted in Figure 4.

In the context of OSAEC, private sector players include telecommunication companies and Internet service providers (ISPs), Internet cafés, banks and remittance centers, non-government organizations (NGOs), international agencies, and private individuals. Most private sector entities work collaboratively with government through its regulatory bodies such as the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) and its attached agencies, the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), and the National Privacy Commission (NPC); as well as its implementating bodies, e.g., the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and local government units (LGUs).

Figure 4. Roles of the Private Sector in the Promotion and Prevention of OSAEC
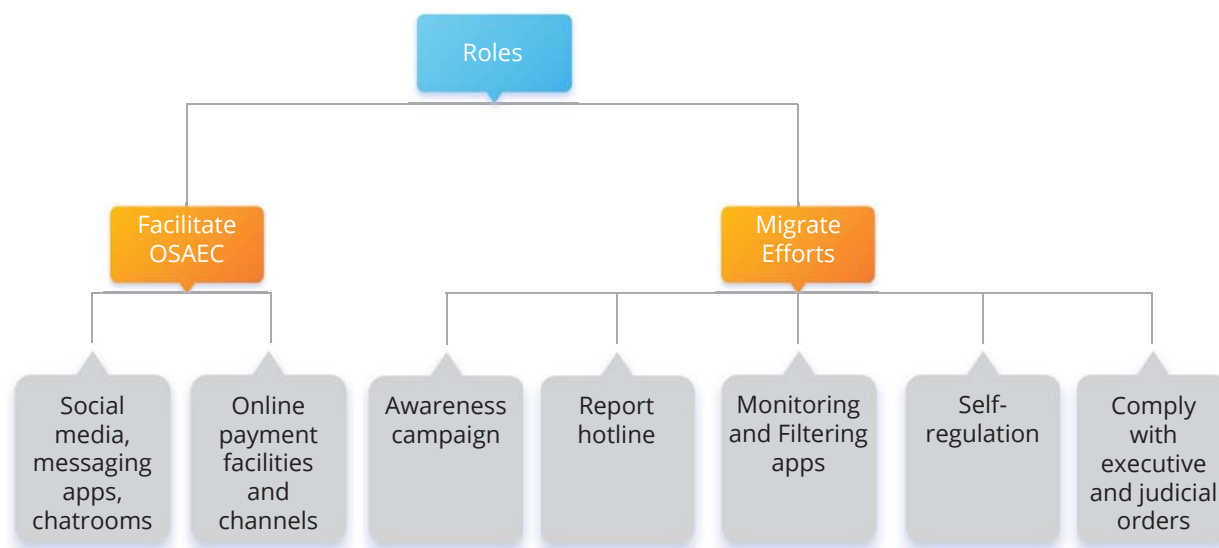
Role of the Private Sector in Promoting OSAEC

Private organizations in the technology sector may inadvertently be portrayed as facilitators of OSAEC when they are used as a medium for transmitting child sexual abuse material. Their roles include (1) providers of Internet services; (2) operators of Internet cafés; (3) developers of software applications and communication tools that include social media platforms, messaging applications, video streaming tools, and chat rooms; and (4) providers of online payment channels and services.

Internet service providers. Telecommunication companies give free data access to certain social media platforms such as Facebook, messaging applications such as Facebook Messenger and Twitter, and video streaming sites such as YouTube in an effort to maintain customer loyalty as well as increase their subscriber base. Combining these with the enabling policy environment provided by RA 10929, children with their own mobile devices are thus given unsupervised access to the Internet anytime and anywhere, which increases their risk of exposure to OSAEC. In interviews with private sector respondents, it has been intimated that technology does help in the proliferation of child pornography.

Use of Internet cafés and PisoNet. Public access to the Internet from contact points such as PisoNet establishments and Internet cafes "caters to those who do not have space for personal computer at home, who do not own any device," as stated by a key informant of this study. Managers of Internet cafés function as regulators and set rules on computer and software use, including software that will allow him or her to monitor the sites that a user is visiting, and limit access to certain sites upon his or her discretion. In this light, the informant says that "the manager's values define what the shop may or may not allow the child to do."

While Internet Cafes may have managers who can regulate content through installation of technological safeguards, this is not assured nor standardized in the absence of a local ordinance or a clear policy from a national agency. This possibility of regulation is totally absent in online platforms such as PisoNet where a user is left to navigate the facility without any form of guidance or regulation. Thus, the manager or owner of PisoNet computers may or may not impose any rules and restrictions on the sites that child patrons can access. The length of time that the child uses the computer is based on the amount of money the child has; this transfers control from the owner to the child. Typically, for those with no personal computer or Internet access at home, PisoNet establishments and Internet cafés are the children's first encounter with the Internet.

Social media platforms and messaging applications. The additional online functionalities of social media and messaging apps lead to the further sharing, distribution, and even live streaming of OSAEC videos and related materials. Chat rooms, especially those that are integrated in online games, allow players to anonymously meet one another and engage in various forms of interaction, from simple chatting to exchanging virtual artifacts and trading, and sharing private account information that allows gamers to become social media friends online and later on, offline. Some even use encryption and anonymization technologies and go to the Dark Net to avoid detection. Children who have stopped going to school, run away from home, or who are left unsupervised by their parents and guardians, allowing them to access the Internet from morning until evening, are in grave danger of being involved in OSAEC.

The lack of sufficient computer literacy among private individuals is also a cause for alarm. A number of reported cases revealed that OSAEC usually takes place at home, with family members and neighbors as perpetrators. At home, a personal computer (either desktop or laptop) and a network router allow one to easily connect to the Internet and access online applications. The low-cost connectivity packages further make such a setup affordable even in poor communities. Even if family members are not the perpetrators, their general lack of knowledge about how computers work further compounds the problem. As one key informant elaborates, "Families (users) do not

realize that once you upload something online, it's there forever." Even if photos and videos have been removed from one social media platform, most devices are set to automatically download a copy of these files onto the recipient's storage, which makes it possible that a copy of the picture or video is still somewhere on the World Wide Web because people shared it with others. The rampant posting and sharing of media files may also cause accidental exposure of adolescents and children to sexually explicit materials online.

Online payment channels. While frequent money transfers made through banks and remittance centers can be used as red flags for identifying possible OSAEC activities, online payment facilities offered by banks and electronic payment channels through mobile phone companies are surfacing as the new mode of monetary exchange for the conduct of OSAEC-related activities. This promotes the easier transfer of money among facilitators and perpetrators while reducing the ability of regulatory bodies and law enforcement agencies to monitor and control such transactions. The added secrecy afforded by such online technologies, e.g., creation of fake identities or accounts with pseudonyms, increases their appeal to individuals involved in illicit trades such as OSAEC.

Emerging threats. As technologies to support online transactions continue to develop, they pose an emerging threat against efforts to combat OSAEC that has not yet surfaced from the key informant interviews. The Dark Net—a portion of the Internet that is not publicly available— has an impending impact in how our law enforcement agencies, already depleted in human resources and technical knowledge, can cope with monitoring and preventing OSAEC. The "no censure" philosophy of this underground network renders useless the filtering and blocking of illegal sites, allowing the exchange of child sexual abuse and exploitation materials to freely take place under a blanket of anonymity.

New online payment platforms or networks such as PayPal and Bitcoin provide an alternative to traditional methods such as credit cards and money orders. They allow the electronic transfer of money between accounts held by online vendors, auction sites, and commercial users. Because the accounts are created online, no physical verification of the account owners take place, which permits account holders to hide behind pseudonyms. Similarly, digital anonymous currencies like Bitcoin enable underground networks to flourish behind a curtain of hidden names.

Addressing these risks. Technology companies and financial institutions can play a major role in the fight against OSAEC by helping the government prepare for these new technologies. These can be in the form of policy re-formulation that considers children as major users of technology, training of law enforcement personnel in using the technologies and understanding possible ways by which the technology can be misused, and public awareness campaigns on the benefits as well as the potential dangers of such technologies.

Role of the Private Sector in the Prevention of OSAEC

While the design of the technology itself can make it vulnerable to exploitation in facilitating OSAEC, some sectors acknowledge that the use of technology can also help mitigate the problem. These technology-based prevention measures include (1) raising awareness, (2) integrating in K-12 curriculum, and (3) monitoring content.

Raising awareness. Non-government organizations are using Facebook and Twitter (e.g., #StopChildPorn) to educate and to raise awareness about OSAEC, and to offer helplines for victims and their families. Communities and private citizens can also use these channels to report possible incidents of OSAEC. DSWD uses its social media pages to promote related programs. By sharing their advocacies online, the DSWD believes that others may develop a similar mindset relative to online protection and get the community to participate as well. A spokesperson from their office states that "…if negative material can be propagated online, why can't positive material be propagated online?"

Through its Digital Thumbprint Program, Globe, in cooperation with Optus and SingTel, conducts training workshops on cybersecurity, safety, online responsibility and leadership, and empowerment to educate Filipino youth about the impact of their online behavior.

Figure 5 illustrates how technology such as PisoNet can be misused to facilitate OSAEC-related activities but can also be used to help raise awareness about OSAEC. Stakeholders should acknowledge that technology is here to stay and will continue to affect the everyday activities and interactions of people.

Figure 5. PisoNet as a facilitator and mitigator of OSAEC.
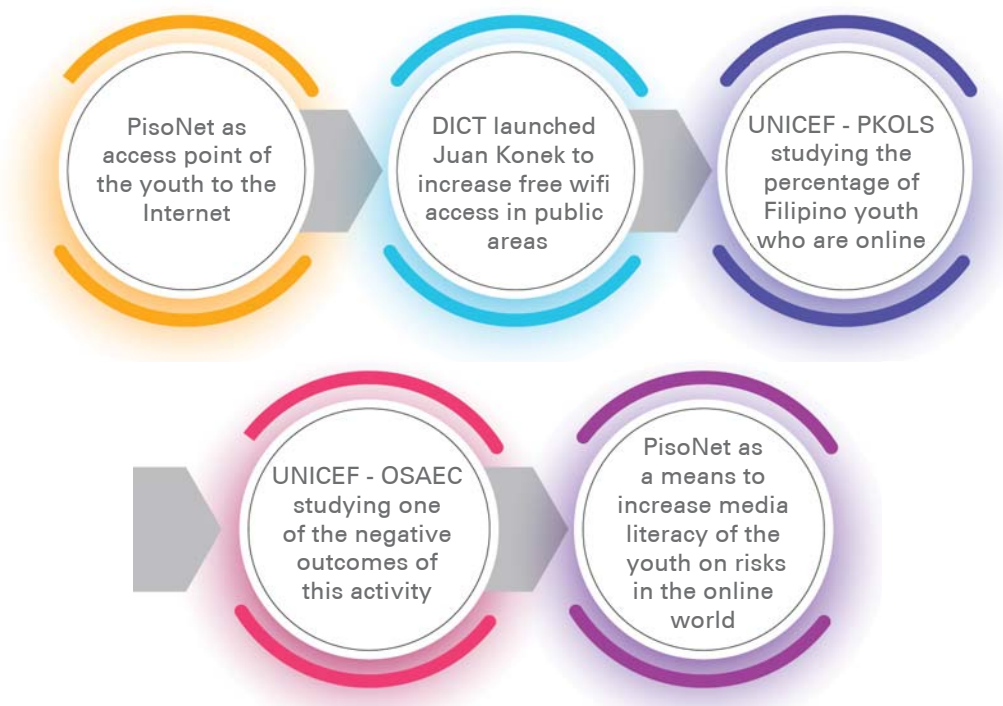
Curriculum integration. Technology adoption has both positive and negative impacts on our lives and that of children. No amount of laws, policies, and guidelines can ever be enough to combat the OSAEC threat. As illustrated in Figure 1, constantly progressing technology and the equally changing manifestations of technology-enabled crimes warrant a more proactive approach to address this problem. Even people's cultural norms are changing as a result of technology adoption.

The more sustainable solution is in properly educating the youth on the benefits and risks of accessing World Wide Web. Cyberspace has become the extension of the children's physical and real world (Teunissen, 2012).Values education on proper social behavior in the physical world should acknowledge that a new form of social interaction is also occurring in the virtual world. As children spend more time online for their education and entertainment, they should be properly taught how to be good individuals in the online community. This education should at home where the family structure establishes the sociocultural foundation that should be carried over to the larger community. Online rights and responsibilities such as respect for privacy, freedom of expression and universal access, and even the basic "do not talk to strangers" prescription, should continue to be taught even in the digital age.

Monitoring content. Telecommunication companies, while restricted by the Data Privacy Act to monitor content that passes through their network and share subscriber information, resort to other strategies in order to help in the fight against OSAEC. Globe Telecom, for example, partners with content providers like YouTube for Kids to give a thematic service centered on educating younger children, preventing them from just freely exploring all videos in the platform. PLDT, on the other hand, gives parents the ability to monitor and manage Internet access of their children at home.

Technology companies also subscribe to a set of guidelines to help address the challenges in mitigating OSAEC. Facebook has put in place a system of reviewing content that has been reported to them and takes action accordingly. International organizations such as UNESCO also mobilize governments, the private sector, civil society, and the technology community for "the complementary development and application of shared principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures, and activities that shape the evolution and use of the Internet."

Technology-based solutions are available to help safeguard children from accessing harmful web content. These mechanisms include content control software, content inspection using artificial intelligence, and keyword trends analysis. Content control software can filter content and restrict materials that are delivered through the web, email, and other file sharing platforms. Meanwhile, regulating content can span across several levels: at the national level, where government agencies impose policies and laws on Internet censorship (especially access through public Wi-Fi) to promote child online safety; at the ISP level where content delivered to clients is restricted; at the community level, where schools can limit content available to students through network-based filtering; and at the family level, where parents can impose restrictions through their browsers.

Content inspection can either be manual or automated. Manual inspection is not only subjective but is also time-consuming and taxing for someone examining the content. Software tools that utilize artificial intelligence are currently being developed to conduct automated inspection and do away with human intervention. However, depending on the materials being examined and the

criteria set by the programmers or administrators, the accuracy of the inspection software raises credibility issues with the public. Another alternative involves using augmented intelligence, where the software makes an initial analysis and flags potential problems, while an individual verifies and decides on the content in question.

Content inspection is not limited to materials that are shared online through social media platforms. Other applications can integrate content inspection features such as surveillance systems to monitor user behavior, image processing technologies to detect nudity in the materials that are uploaded to photo sharing and video streaming sites, and analysis of chat logs for potential grooming and exploitation in the message threads. However, data privacy and confidentiality considerations must be put in place to address ethical issues posed by the use of such technologies on public sites and platforms.

Potential risks in over-use of technology-based solutions. While technology offers much promise in addressing the challenges in detecting OSAEC, one key informant expressed caution in this regard:

> Kasi sometimes there's a tendency to rely too much on technology to solve the problem, actually. Ako, from my perception, going to old-fashioned police work, can do already a lot. Some people, nagtataka ka ba kung ba't kumalat yung child sex dun sa Cordova sa Cebu, isa sa mga malls dun sa Mactan Island, nakita-kita mo mga puti-puti hawak yung mga bata. (Sometimes, there a tendency to rely too much on technology to solve the problem. From my perception, old-fashioned police work can already do a lot. Some people wonder why child sex spread in Cordova, Cebu. In one of the malls in Mactan Island, you will see (foreigners) holding the hands of [Filipino] children.)

The private sector also employs non-technology based mechanisms that include self-regulation of one's processes and services, and compliance with executive and judicial orders. Facebook, for instance, instituted community standards to define acceptable content that can be posted on their platforms (https://transparency.facebook.com). They enforce policies on the removal of child sexual exploitation-related materials from their platforms by dedicating resources that can automatically detect the presence of such materials, and make use of a reporting facility to receive reports from the community (https://transparency.facebook.com/community-standards-enforcement). They also assist the government and legal entities by providing data to support investigative activities (https://transparency.facebook.com/government-data-requests).

Case Resolution Management

This section describes how OSAEC cases are managed and resolved using the legal framework. Case resolution involves the conviction of the offenders, which is generally believed to be a deterrent to online sexual abuse and exploitation. On the other hand, case management starts from the identification and reporting of the cases and ends with the provision of aftercare services, which go beyond shelter life. For OSAEC victims, re-integration of the child survivors with their family is the ultimate goal.

Identification and reporting. OSAEC-related incidents are brought to the attention of law enforcement agencies through reports from the victims themselves or their families, leads from concerned citizens and the community, and referrals from international agencies.

Incidence reports from the community. Numerous avenues are available to the public to report possible cases of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, and for victims to seek assistance. Within local government units, barangays have established the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC) and/or Violence against Women and Children (VAWC) specifically to handle reported incidents involving children. Law enforcement agencies have designated the Women and Children Protection Center (WCPC) and the Anti-Cybercrime Group to handle reports of violence involving children, undertake surveillance and monitoring of suspected offenders, initiate rescue operations of victims, provide child-friendly space for conducting interviews, and conduct investigations against offenders. Technology-based solutions have also been put in place through social media platforms (#StopChildPorn), support hotlines (1343), and email reporting. For instance, citizens can send emails to organizations such as ECPAT when they come across child exploitation materials online. Social media platforms such as Facebook have also taken steps to build a safer online community by providing a facility where users can report inappropriate content that can be reviewed and subsequently removed by their team.

However, law enforcement agencies currently face a reality where not all police stations (especially those in rural areas) have a dedicated WCPC or women's desk. Where one is present, the assigned law enforcers may not have ample training nor sufficient technology resources to enable them to conduct proper investigations. A key informant cited the inability to investigate the presence of online materials due to poor Internet connectivity at the police station, and the inherent difficulty in detecting online crimes. While IJM does provide training in detection and case build-up by sourcing materials from social media, one key informant opined that only the law enforcement agencies from the NCR and other highly urbanized regions have benefitted from such trainings.

Proper dissemination and awareness campaigns are needed to inform the public that such channels for reporting OSAEC incidence are readily accessible. Visits to some barangays and local police stations indicate the presence of process flow diagrams for public information, although in certain situations OSAEC cases are classified together with other types of violence-related reports. Some localities have also implemented awareness programs that empower communities to become more vigilant in reporting OSAEC incidents. The involvement of NGOs has also increased so that when they recognize a potential case, they can refer it directly to WCPC or IJM, and even work with them to address the incident in the locality. Thus, NGOs devoted to children's protection and welfare complement police efforts and provide the help and care needed by child victims.

However, empowering the community comes with a challenge: to establish a quick response child protection system, the community needs to be capacitated to allow them to identify and immediately act on rescuing a potential victim. Some neighbors shared that

> Hindi naman pwede isumbong. Siyempre, parang nakikisama ka na lang.
> Ang katuwiran na lang siguro dahil "hindi naman ako nakakaperwisyo sa iyo,
> di kita pineperwisyo, wala akong ibang taong pinepurwisyo, sarili ko lang."

Kaya siguro ganun na walang nakakapagsumbong din (We could not report incidents because we're supposed to cooperate. The family of the victims would think "I do not bother you, I do not bother other people, only myself." Hence, people do not make reports).

Incident reports from the victims. When victims approach barangay officials, the latter accompany them to the local police stations to file the report that will initiate investigation procedures. It should be noted, however, that the jurisdiction to handle such reports lies with the local authority where the incident took place; thus, it is unavoidable that the case may be forwarded to another precinct to abide by this administrative requirement.

Schools are another channel by which child victims can seek help, where children can report the presence of inappropriate content that they may have inadvertently come across while online. School teachers should thus have ample training to respond to such cases, i.e., being aware of the incident reporting process while at the same time offering appropriate guidance to children who may have been traumatized by the experience, or advising children on how to respond when they encounter abusive materials online or are involved in possible grooming by strangers through their online social media accounts.

It was noted that despite having these referral and reporting systems, the process is mostly reactive. The community must take on the responsibility of informing the proper authorities should there be indications of possible exploitation and violence. The nature of OSAEC——where victims are mostly minors and the mode of operation is through online platforms—warrants a proactive approach. Unlike traditional crimes like theft and physical violence, crimes committed online cannot be detected unless there is an explicit monitoring of suspected offenders and their online activities. Moreover, the ability of perpetrators and offenders to use technology to exploit victims and to disperse sexual exploitation materials efficiently and even anonymously through online channels further increases the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in identifying OSAEC-related activities. As expressed by a key informant:

Ito yung mga kaso na bihira ka lang makakita ng complainants, because maybe the victims are minors… and online, hindi mo makikita na ang isang suspect ay nag-cocommit ng crime." (These are the cases with very few complainants, maybe because the victims are minors … and online, you will not see the suspect committing the crime.)

In addition, many incidents of online sexual abuse and exploitation are not reported and subsequently, family members do not file cases as most them feel indebted to the perpetrators. One participant narrated that "Parang di na nagfile ng kaso 'yung tatay kasi parang may utang na loob daw po 'yung father sa foreigner (Maybe they did not file a case anymore since the father felt indebted to the foreigner.).

Case referrals from international agencies. Cybercrime is trans-border, trans-national crime. Majority of the referrals come from international law enforcement agencies, including the US FBI, US Homeland Security Investigation, UK police, UK National Crime Agency, Australian Federal Police,

Royal Canadian Police, and National Coordination Bureau of the Netherlands. The private sector, including Internet service providers and technology companies, refer suspected child pornographic and exploitation materials that go through their system to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). The NCMEC is a US-based NGO that is authorized by law to receive such referrals and forward the information to various jurisdictions around the world where there is reference to subjects of a particular country. Cases involving Filipino children are thus referred by these international agencies to IJM, Department of Justice-Office of Cybercrime (DOJ-OOC), NBI or PNP-WCPC, which then continue the investigation.

The Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 has designated DOJ-OOC as the point of contact of NCMEC and receives a cyber tip line report when either the offender or the offended party is located in the Philippines. DOJ-OOC receives a monthly average of 2,500 to 3,000 cyber tip line reports from NCMEC. The reports are graded using a four-level scale depending on the gravity and the urgency, or the need to rescue and the need to act upon the specific report. Currently, DOJ caters to tips graded as level 1 or 2, which are categorized as eminent or the ones that need attention. Tips graded as level 3 or 4 are only for information purposes and may even not contain child pornographic material.

Once DOJ-OOC receives a cyber tip line report with grade level 1 or 2, the operation then proceeds as follows: the officer-in-charge at DOJ-OOC evaluates the NCMEC report and assigns a specific investigation agent to assess its validity. Assessment is done through technical surveillance of the social media account and physical surveillance if geographic data is known, which is used to determine if the report is an actionable case. During this assessment, OOC works with other government agencies as follows: (1) the Bureau of Immigration is notified if it involves a travelling sex offender; (2) coordination is done with NBI or PNP based on the reported location, because PNP has more regional offices; (3) coordination is done with the local DSWD which supervises the care given to rescued child victims; and (4) a search warrant and/or a warrant of arrest is sought from the courts.

The quality of the referral is a factor in considering the next step to be done, i.e., conduct investigation and entrapment, or proceed with the use of search warrant and rescue. Because of the lack of human resources to process all the reports, OOC has to prioritize the cyber tip line reports that need urgent attention. Those reports that it cannot handle due to volume are transmitted to NBI or PNP, who will assume the responsibility of assessing if the reports are actionable cases. These are usually reports that will entail more information gathering.

Proactive measures in reporting cases. For example, law enforcers in Cagayan de Oro conducted rescue operations to remove children from streets during the prescribed protected hour (10pm–6am) and bring them to shelter. Here, the rescued street children are given therapy, counseling, and assessment to surface the deeper problem of why they stay on the streets during curfew.

Apart from these referrals and reports, law enforcement agencies also conduct their own online investigations to discover the presence and the possible exchange or transmission of child pornographic materials, and to identify potential child victims of sexual exploitation. Technology companies such as Facebook can complement these measures by utilizing advances in artificial intelligence research in order to analyze photos and videos uploaded through their platforms to

assess whether they contain inappropriate, sexual content. Technology companies can also analyze chat logs to determine if there are any OSAEC-related transactions that take place on their social media platforms.

While members of the community have observed changes in the lifestyle of the family of OSAEC victims and are aware that the children are being exploited, they could not report these directly because the abuse happened inside the family's house. One informant noted these lifestyle changes: "Bago siya naggaganun wala naman talaga, hirap na hirap sila. Ngayon ang bahay niya dalawang palapag na, nakabayad na ng bahay, nag-aaral ang mga anak." (They used to be poor. But now they have a 2-storey house, they can pay their rent, and the children are going to school.)

Responding to reports and referrals. Responding to reports of possible OSAEC activities pose certain risks to law enforcement agencies. Thus, when an incident is reported, precautionary measures are taken to gauge the risks prior to responding to the report. These include assessing if the location has been reported as a drug operation site for possible connection between OSAEC and drug-related activities.

Case buildup prior to launching a rescue operation is also an important consideration, especially for those reports that can lead to prosecution in court. The manner by which the law enforcer acted on the case and the actions taken in response to the call will matter during prosecution.

Philippine law enforcement agencies also work closely with international agencies such as INTERPOL to carry out investigations involving offenders that are foreign nationals. Again, such approach is reactive; the criminal justice system only responds upon receiving such reports. In one of the cases, the offender has already been convicted and imprisoned in the Netherlands for child abuse-related cases. After his release, foreign law enforcement agencies tracked his whereabouts for nine years until they located him in Manila. Then the NBI was informed to implement necessary actions to rescue the victims. According to the Netherlands police liaison officer, they have different warning systems for suspected offenders, e.g., red notice for someone who is wanted for arrest, or green notice for someone with no case yet but poses a threat to society, especially children, due to prior convictions and reports. These notices are issued to NBI so that the suspected offenders can be stopped at the border.

Arrest and rescue. Procedures for arresting perpetrators commence after OSAEC-related information has been reported. In handling a case, the agent properly documents every step, including making affidavits of surveillance and arrest when warranted. Gathering of evidence is crucial in the arrest and filing of charges against perpetrators.

Great care is taken in gathering and securing evidence so that it will be preserved and remain uncontaminated, as these are scrutinized in courts. An NBI agent describes the procedures in securing evidence:

> "Documented lahat kasi kung hindi yan documented 'pag nabanggit mo yan lahat sa affidavit mo hahanapin ngayon yan...kahit yung surveillance, undercover operation namin after nuon babalik kami

> sa office, ipo-process na namin lahat...so lahat walang questionable. Kapag nakita ng defense yung documents namin sabihin nila na matibay yung case nila." (Everything is documented because if it is not and it is included in the affidavit, they will look for it [in court]. Even after our surveillance, undercover operation, we go back to the office to process everything so all [evidence] will not be questionable. When the defense sees our documents, they will say that their case is strong.)

Trial of the case. The trial period varies from six months to a year before conviction, but some can even last as long as five years. During the trial, the prosecution offers testimonial evidence (i.e., from different people involved in the case, including the victim, rescuing officer, rescuing social worker, and others), object evidence, and documentary evidence. Then, the prosecution offers its formal offer of evidence to the court, to consider whether the evidence is admissible. Once this is done, the prosecution rests its case. The defense is then given time to present its evidence and file a formal offer of evidence to the court. IACAT would also be consulted at times whether or not the prosecution would settle for plea bargaining to resolve a specific case.

Use of plea bargaining. Plea bargaining is used in resolving some OSAEC cases. Perpetrators plead guilty but are given a short sentence instead, which is anywhere from 15 to 20 years. The following is an example from a lawyer informant:

> There was a plea bargaining after two child victims testified but in those cases, there were also three sisters, victims, also a daughter. The accused here, husband and wife, mother and relatives, so all the five of them pleaded guilty to the charges. I filed about 20 charges but there was a plea bargaining. We just dropped some of the charges but we did not agree to the reduction of penalty, so there was life [sentence].

Challenges in trial. Withdrawal, desistance, and out of court settlement happens when a child victim is not in government custody and is offered money by the perpetrator.

Another challenge is the dismissal of a case against a perpetrator because of lack of evidence and/or technicality. One example is the failure to read or issue the Miranda rights to the perpetrator. Details such as these affect OSAEC cases, and law enforcement agencies must continuously be reminded of the proper procedures when handling cases.

Jurisdiction, anonymity of transactions, and consent of the minor are some considerations used for critical arguments in the process of filing OSAEC cases. As a lawyer informant shared, he had one test case on the area of jurisdiction, where the arrest, exploitation, or OSAEC activities happened in Jurisdiction A and the undercover agent posing as customer in an entrapment operation was in Jurisdiction B. He tried to file the case in Jurisdiction B where the undercover agent was. It was successful because a conviction was made, the argument being that because of the advent of computer technology, the mere viewing of activities in one area will already cause its acquisition

in Jurisdiction B. The existing rules concerning libel cases apply: jurisdiction is vested in the place where you can view the publication.

Another consideration for critical argument is the anonymous nature of the transactions in OSAEC cases, such as manipulating the suspects' account and hiding usernames or even email addresses. Technology-based examinations or eyewitness accounts can readily solve this as there may be witnesses who can identify whether or not those persons really used those accounts in question, while digital forensic examination results can verify OSAEC-related transactions.

A final argument in OSAEC cases is when the defense will usually say that the victims agreed or gave their consent. However, consent is immaterial according to the law especially as it involves children.

Conviction. During the promulgation, the judge reads the verdict and sentence, in the event of a guilty verdict. Once convicted, the accused can appeal. The case is also automatically reviewed by the Supreme Court, because it carries a penalty from reclusion perpetua to death.

Laws, Guidelines, and Regulations Protecting Children against OSAEC

The existing laws which serve as bases for prosecuting OSAEC cases are (1) RA 9775 (Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009); (2) RA 7610 (An Act Providing for Stronger Deterrence and Special Protection against Child Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination); (3) RA 9208 (Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003); (4) RA 10364 (Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2012); (5) RA 9231 (An Act Providing For The Elimination Of The Worst Forms Of Child Labor and Affording Stronger Protection For The Working Child); (6) RA 9344 (Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006); and (7) RA 10175 (The Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012).

While no single law punishes crimes on OSAEC, key informants agree that that there are sufficient laws on child protection and that convictions can still be secured using these laws. Also, despite the absence of standard terminologies across these laws, a key informant further praised these laws, claiming that "We have good laws, we have good policies...they are bordering on poetic." In her Senate privilege speech on ending online sexual exploitation of children delivered last 14 March 2018, Senator Loren Legarda also reiterated that the country has enough laws that consider online sexual exploitation of children as illegal, including the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, which she authored.

As defined in RA No. 9775, child pornography includes visual and audio formats that are stored through electronic and digital means. The possession of any form of child pornographic material with the intent to sell, distribute, publish, or broadcast is considered unlawful. The law also obliges the public, including ISPs, to report any forms of child pornography to the PNP or the NBI. In a recent forum on child pornography held in August 2018 in San Fernando, Pampanga, keynote speaker Atty. Eunice Mina, chief of the Legal Services Bureau of DSWD, stated that "When an Internet service provider fails to report, preserve the evidence, or refuse to grant authorities access to software file, it is also considered a criminal act" (Romeo, 2018). The obligation to report, however, should not be

construed as a requirement for an ISP to monitor the content of any communication from any of its users or subscribers, which was affirmed by key informants from the ISPs and the NTC.

What is interesting to note is that RA No. 9775 also mandates all ISPs to "install available technology, program or software to ensure that access to or transmittal of any form of child pornography will be blocked or filtered." The presence of such a provision in the law acknowledges that children are one of the major users of the Internet and helps in ensuring that they do not inadvertently access inappropriate content. However, the implementation of this mandate confuses stakeholders, as the installation of any form of filtering software would entail the need for (manual or automatic) content monitoring. NGOs and government agencies consider this provision as a directive for ISPs to block sites containing child pornographic materials in an effort to help mitigate OSAEC. ISPs, on the other hand, claim that filtering software is expensive, and raise the question as to who should bear the cost of purchasing such technology.

The availability of inexpensive mobile devices and the installation of advanced communication network infrastructure has led to their widespread use by the masses, including children. While technology is meant to solve some identified societal needs, its adoption can also cause problems. RA No. 10175 was enacted specifically to focus on the challenges posed by technology adoption. The Cybercrime Prevention Act expanded the definition of child pornography to encompass those unlawful acts that are committed through a computer system and imposes a penalty that is "one degree higher than that provided for in Republic Act No. 9775." Such a move supported a key informant's observation that "each law acknowledges the existence of the other," where RA 10175 defines different forms of cybercrimes which include OSAEC, its penalties are described in RA 9775.

RA 10175 further led to the creation of two government agencies to specifically handle cybercrime-related offenses: (1) the Office of Cybercrime within the DOJ that is designated as the central authority on all matters related to international mutual assistance and extradition; and (2) the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center (CICC) which is an inter-agency body tasked to coordinate with concerned agencies on the formulation, enforcement, and implementation of the national cybersecurity plan. The National Cybersecurity Plan 2022 was officially announced in May 2017 and incorporates strategies and programs needed to establish a cybersafe Philippines. Among these programs is Digital Parenting, which encompasses various activities to develop a cybersecurity-educated Filipino family.

Key informants also stated that RA No. 10175 gave law enforcement agencies the authority to perform real-time collection, preservation, disclosure, seizure, and examination of computer data. To complement this law, the DOJ-Office of Cybercrime developed a set of guidelines in collecting electronic and digital evidence for law enforcement agencies and in using electronic and digital evidence for judges, magistrates, and prosecutors.

The enactment of RA No. 10929 that allows access to free Wi-Fi in public places is seen by some key informants as posing further problems related to OSAEC, unless some checks and balances are put in place. Despite the increase in risks posed by free Wi-Fi access, the private sector considers more Internet as a good thing. Through the cooperation of telecommunication companies, NGOs, and government agencies, provisions were added to this law to inhibit access to pornographic websites

and develop standards and mechanisms that are consistent with existing laws for the protection of children online. These provisions help the private sector mitigate OSAEC-related problems by providing safeguard mechanisms and standards that can prevent children from becoming victims of online sexual abuse and exploitation.

At the LGU level, Section 12 of RA 9775 authorizes the city or municipality to monitor and regulate the establishment and operation of Internet cafés and kiosks. This is evident in cities, municipalities, and barangays where ordinances mandate that school-age children are not allowed to go to Internet cafes during school hours unless accompanied by a guardian.

In the implementing rules and regulations of RA 10364 or the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2012, there are provisions to prevent the child from being re-traumatized when they are repeatedly asked to recall their experience. Under the law, children are only required to attend one hearing in court in order to testify. Pertaining to penalties for convicted perpetrators, one prosecutor stated

> I'm very happy to say that the penalties are okay and I will not really move for the reduction of its penalty—life. Especially with children. Other jurisdictions would say, I think your law is very harsh. Yeah, because it's life. In other countries, it's just years. Here, it's really life. So, I'm so happy.

While existing laws in the country such as the Anti-Child Pornography Act do not provide jurisdiction when the perpetrators are foreign nationals, international laws such as the Protect Act of 2003 are in place that enable the private sector and NGOs in the Philippines to file cases that are out of their jurisdiction. They work together with foreign government agencies and international NGOs to share resources and locate and arrest foreign perpetrators. In a number of child cases reviewed in this study, LGUs relied on case referrals from foreign agencies as the Philippines generally lacks both the capacity and the technology to monitor OSAEC-related activities.

Study informants identified a number of problems with the existing laws: (1) there are several independent initiatives on child protection that are in place that the public may not be fully aware of, (2) there is no standard definition of terms, and (3) there is a lack of compliance with mandates. Despite the presence of multiple laws addressing child pornography, there is no overall child protection policy that covers all issues, including OSAEC. Furthermore, the laws are mostly reactive, containing provisions on how to respond to the problem once it has occurred, rather than stipulating mechanisms to proactively prevent the problem from occurring.

The lack of a standard definition for key terms and concepts such as child online protection and OSAEC further makes it difficult for inter-agency communication and collaboration. There is also a need for stronger implementation of the mandates defined under these laws such as the installation of filtering software and the proper collection and storage of digital data to be used as evidence in court. These issues impede the dispensation of justice and result in many unresolved cases. Finally, rapid advancements in technology force lawmakers to continually keep pace to ensure that Philippine laws against child abuse and exploitation remain relevant.

Child Protection Policies

One informant pointed out that "the absence of regulations (on Internet use) make children vulnerable." The presence of a child protection policy (CPP) can "provide guidelines for organizations to create safe environments for children" by "clearly defining the actions required to keep children safe." Such a policy "demonstrates an organization's commitment to children and ensures public confidence in its safe practices." The CPP defines appropriate procedures and guidelines for recording and reporting abuse, and provides for child protection training for those who work with children.

DepEd, as the primary agency in charge of drafting education-related programs and policies, has been mentioned as a potential lead agency that can mandate all schools to implement a CPP, as well as require the integration of online safety in the basic education curriculum. In fact, DepEd Order No. 40 s. 2012 on the Policy and Guidelines on Protecting Children in School from Abuse, Violence, Exploitation, Discrimination, Bullying and Other Forms of Abuse, also known as the "DepEd Child Protection Policy," is a step toward protecting children from all forms of violence while in the school premises. It also authorizes private schools to promulgate their own policy and protocol for reporting and managing cases of abuse and exploitation that are consistent with the DepEd CPP.[3]

In this policy, child protection refers to "programs, services, procedures and structures that are intended to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination and violence." While the policy establishes the penalties imposed on teachers and other school personnel for alleged or actual acts of child abuse and violence, cyberbullying is currently the only highlighted online violence therein. The policy thus lacks specific provisions to monitor and address cases of online sexual abuse and exploitation and access to inappropriate content.

Other organizations that have children as users or recipients of their services should also develop their own guidelines on child protection that support the prevailing laws. These include telecommunication companies, news outlets, and online platforms where children watch videos and interact with others.

News agencies that are members of Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP) adhere to a manual of journalism standards and a code of ethics that prescribe guidelines on how to cover news stories involving minors, highlighting the importance of prioritizing the child's best interest. These standards are aligned with the provision of the DOJ and UNICEF in handling and broadcasting stories about violence that involve women and children, as cited in the Guide for Media Practitioners on the Reporting and Coverage of Cases involving Children.

Law enforcement agencies recently developed a set of guidelines for investigating cases and complaints, and responding to incidents of OSAEC. These guidelines include the need to make a separate holding room in the police station available to the child victims and the need to maintain the victims' rights to privacy and confidentiality through the use of a pink blotter and the non-disclosure of the child victim's case to media.

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[3] As of this printing, the DepEd is finalizing a Supplemental Policy to its CPP that further increases online protection for children on account of the ongoing Learning Continuity Programming.

Non-government agencies who deal with OSAEC victims also have child protection policies that are in the best interests of the child. These include refraining from forcing services on the child when the child is neither willing nor ready to receive such services, as a way of respecting the child's space and his or her ability to cope.

Across local government units, BCPCs are given the crucial task of localizing programs and policies to protect children's rights. One such program is the recognition of the online safety concerns of children who frequent Internet cafés. Some cities, municipalities, and barangays have imposed local ordinances to restrict school-age children from visiting such places during school hours unless they obtain permission from their teachers to do research and other school-related work. They may even require the presence of an adult or guardian to supervise computer use. For their business permits to be approved, computer shop owners are now required to install a device to prevent minors from accessing pornographic sites. In some barangays, computer shops are also mandated to operate only until 10 pm. Violation of these resolutions may result in paying fines for the first two offenses, and a confiscation of equipment and revocation of barangay clearance to operate for the third offense. However, a key informant pointed out that the policies differ depending on the awareness of the local government officials and community regarding OSAEC.

Some cities in tourist areas also implement ordinances that prohibit children from entering hotels and resorts with an adult with whom they do not have blood relations. The accompanying adult is also required to provide proof of identity. By failing to implement these rules, businesses can stand to have their license to operate revoked. These ordinances may also mandate that an adult traveling with a child that is not his or hers should also be able to present an affidavit or authorization letter from the parents. Furthermore, an inter-agency collaborative group comprised of ECPAT, LGUs, and the Department of Tourism is also lobbying for the drafting of a local ordinance that requires all tourism-related establishments to come up with their own CPP and develop a training program that enables their staff to implement such a policy.

There are also existing city ordinances that obligate the parents to closely monitor their children. A curfew is set for minors at the barangay level, and barangay tanods are tasked with ensuring that no minors can be seen on the streets after curfew hours. Parents should pay the fines and pick up their children once they are caught loitering after curfew.

The confidentiality of information in shelters and institutions that house children should also be strictly upheld. House parents, who are often in direct contact with these children, are expected to be aware of how they interact with and discipline the children to avoid being charged with abuse themselves. RA 9523 or the "Act Requiring the Certification of DSWD to Declare a Child Legally Available for Adoption" also stipulates certain provisions in relation to adopting and placing children in private homes. Institutions and shelters that are designated as "child placing agencies" coordinate with LGUs in order to find homes for the children, with adults fit to stand as the minors' parents. This is done through a parenting capability assessment. Children who are ready to be reintegrated and who have no relatives to take them in are declared as legally available for adoption (either local or intercountry) through an administrative process. As consistently raised in this study, there is little information on how RA 10165 or the Foster Care Act of 2012 has been implemented to provide

children rescued an alternative home setting. This merits a closer scrutiny by the Government on how this can be integrated to its protocols relevant to the care continuum for OSAEC victims.

Despite these initiatives, during the 2016 Philippine Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children it was raised that "The Local Councils for the Protection of Children (LCPC) are the primary local structures that formulate policies and implement child protection programs in cities, municipalities and barangays. However, many LGUs have either no LCPC or have non-functional LCPCs. The organization of LCPCs at all levels depends mainly on the initiative and support of the local executive (mayor, barangay chairperson)." This confirms a key informant's sentiment that an LGU will only support these programs and activities when it is a priority advocacy of the local officials.

Similarly, mixed feedback is observed with regard to the national government's motivation to develop and put in place stronger child protection policies. While some government officials may be aware of the existence of OSAEC cases in their provinces, this is not motivation enough for them to act on and resolve the issue. Key informants named two senators as the prime movers for supporting the mitigation of OSAEC: Senators Paolo Aquino IV and Loren Legarda. According to the informant, Senator Legarda had advocated stricter implementation of penalties for such crimes against children. The issue is not in the lack of laws, but rather in the enforcement of these laws.

NGOs subscribe to the Convention of the Rights of the Child, an international treaty that talks about protecting children from all forms of abuse and exploitation. From this treaty, NGOs then develop their own set of guidelines to support child victims under their care. Visayan Forum, for instance, has a number of stipulations on child protection that include giving the child the right to decide on his or her case, and guidelines on the proper way to handle the child, e.g., do not harm the child, do not use demeaning and degrading words to a child, and respect the child's faith and culture. Another NGO, the Stairway Foundation, conducts a review and revision of its CPP every 3 years. Currently in its fourth version, the policy undergoes a process of risk analysis to enable the foundation to add new policies such as the recently included social media policy. The policy is also contextualized in the job description of every staff member, e.g., only social workers and house parents are allowed to enter the children's dormitories.

Gaps and Weaknesses in the Legal Framework

Among the identified weaknesses in the legal framework for the protection of children are (1) the perceived overlapping laws and mandates of agencies handling OSAEC, (2) the lack of enforcement of these laws and their respective sanctions to compel the private sector to cooperate on OSAEC cases, and (3) the gaps in court proceedings.

Perceived overlap in laws, mandates, roles, and, responsibilities of agencies handling OSAEC. Key informants repeatedly made reference to RAs 9775, 7610, 9208, 10364, and 10175, as well as RA 10929 or the Free Internet Access in Public Places Act of 2017.

Key informants cite RA 9775 as laying the foundation for the establishment of a legal framework in the Philippines that considers child pornography as a crime and imposes the penalty of *reclusion perpetua* (life imprisonment). An informant supported this by saying:

> Noong nagkaroon ng batas at saka mas naging formal at naging stronger yung pag-address ng OSAEC by our law enforcement agencies. (The creation of the law further formalized and strengthened our law enforcement agencies in addressing OSAEC.)

RA 7610, as one of the earliest laws on child protection, already includes special provisions on how to respond to human trafficking, especially of minors. However, child pornography itself was not properly defined until the enactment of RA No. 9775. In the DOJ's August 2015 Advisory on Online Sexual Abuse, it was noted that "Section 4 (c) (2) of RA 9775 categorized the unlawful or prohibited acts defined and punishable by RA 9775 or the Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009, committed by, through and with the use of information and communications technologies shall also be covered by the relevant provisions of the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 (RA 10175)." The advisory further mentioned that "in Disini vs. Secretary of Justice, the Supreme Court upheld that the Section 4 (c) (2) of the Cybercrime Law merely expands the scope of the Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009 to cover identical activities in cyberspace;... and that in theory, nothing prevents the government from invoking RA 9775 when prosecuting persons who commit child pornography using a computer system."

A key informant mentioned that RAs 9208 and 7610 are usually applied to OSAEC cases, and offenses committed under these laws are non-bailable and thus exact heavier perpetrator accountability. While these laws guide the prosecution of OSAEC cases, some respondents believe that having a particular law on OSAEC can clearly indicate specific provisions on the compensation of child victims.

In this regard, a respondent judge attests that when decisions are made on OSAEC cases, the court resolution includes damages for the child victim. However, some interviewees say that the child victims do not necessarily get compensated. It was also noted that some of the victims' parents who reported and filed cases face a dilemma when the perpetrator is not jailed and merely deported to their home country: justice for child victims is thus not served.

The Philippines is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC). However, according to a key informant, there are insufficient laws in the Philippines against child pornography, unlike in the US, for example, has the Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to End the Exploitation of Children Today (PROTECT) Act of 2003, which has enhanced penalties for individuals engaging in sex tourism with children, both within the United States and in other countries. Less than 50 countries have an extraterritorial clause in their laws, and this is apparently lacking in the case of the Philippines. A respondent mentioned:

> The thing with the present state of Philippine law is there's no specific penal statute that defines OSAEC or that penalizes OSAEC. You cannot

find a Republic Act that defines online sexual exploitation of children. What we have are different laws on children others not specific to children that we use as legal basis in court...we are able to get convictions using these laws, so, in that regard they may be sufficient but the challenge is in a system that is not used to dealing with crimes or offenses that involve really young children, complicated by the use of the Internet and information and communications technology.

One of the recommendations is to exempt online child abuse cases from the Anti-Wiretapping Act because wiretapped evidence is deemed inadmissible.

Given that there are many laws covering OSAEC, several offices are mandated to perform distinct functions. Under Section 20 of the Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009, the Inter-Agency Council against Child Pornography (IACACP) was established to draw up a comprehensive plan to prevent child pornography in the country. The DOJ-OOC is an active member of IACACP (as chaired by the DSWD Secretary) and serves as the focal agency for cases concerning online child pornography.

RAs 9208 and 10364, on the other hand, established the Inter-Agency Committee Against Trafficking (IACAT) and chaired by the Secretary of Justice promulgates rules and regulations and implements programs to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons. Since 2016, the DOJ-OOC has also been designated as the Cyber-Trafficking Unit of IACAT because of the significance of information and communication technology in facilitating human trafficking.

Section 23 of RA 10175 designated the DOJ-OOC as the main office that deals with international mutual assistance concerning cybercrime and cyber-related cases. In this regard, part of its function is to help collect evidence and act on referrals for investigation and prosecution of cybercrimes. Other authorities under the Cybercrime Prevention Act are (1) the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center (CICC), an inter-agency body under the Office of the President that is tasked to formulate and enforce the national cybersecurity plan; (2) the National Bureau of Investigation-Cybercrime Division (NBI-CCD) that investigates cases on child pornography and OSAEC, among others; and (3) the Philippine National Police-Anti-Cybercrime Group (PNP-ACG) with its nine regional anti-cybercrime offices throughout the country.

According to interviewees, confusion ensues because agencies dealing with OSAEC are perceived to have overlapping mandates, e.g., trafficking cases conducted online are confused with cybercrime cases. This confusion also results in work overload since the offices handling OSAEC investigations and referrals (e.g., DOJ-OOC and NBI-CCD, NBI-Anti-Human Trafficking Division) have limited human resources.

The confusion and lack of standard procedures also brings about difficulties in identifying where referrals are made. According to one study participant, when a report comes from international organizations other than NCMEC, there may be confusion as to whom to refer the case. There have been times when the same case was referred to two different law enforcement agencies, which resulted in a duplication of efforts until the two agencies sat down and agreed to work on the case together.

The question of whether to include a non-investigating unit (such as DSWD) or not in OSAEC cases is also a key issue. As far as some law enforcers are concerned, while the inclusion serves a purpose in terms of coordination, it may result in a delay in the process.

Challenge of law enforcement on the private sector. Another flaw in the legal framework is its ability to compel the private sector (i.e., ISPs, telcos) to cooperate with law enforcement on OSAEC. Legislation providing minimum penalties for uncooperative service providers is outdated. ISPs justify their non-compliance to any request of data as upholding an individual's right to privacy.

Section 9 in RA 9775 mandates ISPs to file reports with the proper authorities in the event that their systems are being used to transfer child pornographic materials. This is complemented by the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) Memorandum Circular No. 01-01-2014 entitled "Guidelines for Internet Service Providers in the Implementation of Republic Act 9775 (Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009)" stating that all ISPs shall notify the PNP and NBI within seven days from obtaining facts and circumstances confirming that child pornography (of any form) is being committed using its facility.

Telcos and ISPs rail against these provisions as they ask who should provide the software and cover related expenses because of the high purchase and installation costs of monitoring software. Keeping track of SIM card ownership is likewise troublesome, because prepaid SIM cards are not registered. Even if a bill has been passed to make the registration of prepaid SIM cards mandatory, telcos are likely to oppose such a move, given the additional cost that they would incur to keep track of all these subscriptions.

The ambiguous wording of the law is also seen as a loophole in obtaining private sector cooperation and involvement in addressing OSAEC. For example, ISPs say that the term "proper authorities" is unclear: it can either mean the NBI, PNP, or the courts. When such authorities request ISPs to provide information on those who access child pornographic materials, questions are raised on whether or not a search warrant is needed. Some interpret it as a mere request; therefore, the ISPs are not obliged to do so or it could mean that no warrant is needed as it is a mere request. Others interpret such authorities as including the courts; therefore, law enforcement agencies (i.e., the NBI and PNP) would require a court warrant for investigations involving evidence from ISPs. A government respondent notes

In the rules to be promulgated by the Supreme Court (for cybercrime warrants), there is an apparent ambiguity with regard to the "proper authority" that has to be cleared. It is stated that when it comes to child exploitation case or any case concerning a child, if the law enforcer requests the ISPs, then the ISPs should comply even without a need for a court order. So we are waiting for the promulgation of the said rule, so that the ISPs can no longer justify their refusal because of the apparent ambiguity in the law.

Currently, ISPs not complying with the order to block websites that show child pornographic materials are fined only P200, according to a respondent. Respondents are of the opinion that an NTC resolution is not enough to compel ISPs and telcos to help fight OSAEC, whose cooperation will be a big help to investigators given their ability to provide IP addresses that can serve as leads

and sources of evidence. However, one law enforcement agent provided a reality check on this ideal, sharing that

> Nakakuha pa ako ng court warrant, sinerve ko doon sa PLDT, Smart Bro. Sagot nila it's a dynamic account so we cannot pinpoint kung sino ang gumagamit. We are looking for a needle in a haystack (I was even able to get a court warrant that I served to PLDT, but they said it's a dynamic account so they cannot pinpoint who used it.)

An information campaign may have to be pursued among legislators on OSAEC and child protection laws, and the roles of government agencies and the private sector in OSAEC so they can come up with legislation that includes concrete sanctions. This need is emphasized when a respondent recalled an incident in one of the hearings at the House of Representatives, when a legislator questioned the IACACP and DICT representatives about the legal basis of NTC or DICT to request blocking of pornographic sites.

Gaps in court proceedings. There are also a number of challenges in meting out justice for OSAEC victims. These challenges pertain to (1) the rules of court, (2) appreciation of forensic evidence by prosecutors and judges, (3) logistics and equipment support in hearing OSAEC cases, (4) lack of prosecutors, and (5) delays in resolving cases.

Rules of court. The dependence on testimonial evidence in the Philippine court system weighs heavily on the manner by which OSAEC cases are decided. Several respondents raised concerns about this practice, particularly regarding the trauma that the child can suffer when made to recount his or her experience in court. A respondent mentioned

> …the system is still heavily reliant on the victim's testimony and I think that's a challenge because it's not all the time to the best interest of the child to go to court, that's a traumatizing event for anyone, more so for a child to go to court in front of strangers and try to recount the abuse and exploitation that that child had undergone…..there has got to be a way to still get convictions, ensure perpetrator's accountability, and yet spare children from having to undergo through this traumatizing event. I recommend using videotaped forensic interviews instead of the children having to testify. It still depends on which judge will hear the case. Sometimes they will accept it but when they rule it's not given as much weight as when the actual child testifies…it's in the rules…it's just a matter of implementing.

Another service provider stated,

> ...the Philippines is 95% dependent on eyewitness testimony and that's got to change because crimes are becoming more and more removed from eyewitness testimony and more circumstantial but there's no way you can get circumstantial conviction here in the Philippines because judges just won't do it.

Some judges have shown more sensitivity to child victims who need to provide a testimony by creating a child-friendly space within the court. However, such a practice is not standardized. Nevertheless, there are other ways by which courts can hear and try OSAEC cases without re-traumatizing child victims by having them appear and testify in court. A number of respondents think that a forensic expert or social worker can be asked by the courts to verify evidence instead. For example, one respondent said

> Changing the mindset that you don't have to see a child, there are other ways of proving the crime than placing a child on the stand. Specially in cases where you also have digital evidence, there are photos thereof, there's a computer where forensic experts are able to cull child sexual exploitation material….we don't have to have the child be put on the stand and have him or herself identify his or her photos. Perhaps a social worker can do that or the forensic expert can.

As cases can usually take a long time to resolve, the use of plea bargaining—where the accused pleads guilty to a lesser offense—is seen as a means to hasten case resolution. Of the 11 convictions in Manila for OSAEC, 10 were under plea bargaining. Informants suggested that plea bargaining be included in the rules of court and that the courts set up reasonable standards for plea bargaining that would set appropriate penalties and incentives to plea bargain before the victim has to file a case. This would protect the victim by not having them testify especially for those victims whose parents are their perpetrators or facilitators. For reference, international standards on imprisonment for this type of crime is 10 to 15 years (which may be significant for a facilitator).

Appreciation of digital forensic evidence. There is a prevailing sentiment among law enforcers and lawyers that digital forensic evidence should be appreciated in the courts where OSAEC cases are filed. However, the experience of some lawyers who have tried presenting forensic interviews in courts but could not get convictions based solely on these may also cause trepidation about doing away with testimonial evidence.

According to one respondent, there still exists divergent views on how to authenticate digital evidence and what kind of digital evidence is admissible in court. The rules on electronic evidence and authentication are already in place but their implementation varies in practice. For example, in one court, a judge would allow a lawyer who presents screenshots of text messages and an undercover police officer who testifies on the printed screenshot; but other judges would want to see the actual phone where text messages are presented as evidence. There have even been instances when an application for a warrant to search digital evidence has been denied. Some lawyers handling OSAEC cases have tried presenting forensic interviews in court but could not get convictions based solely on these interviews:

> One of my colleagues tried it…but that resulted in an acquittal of the perpetrator…there might be other things that might have contributed to the acquittal but based on the decision, there was a discussion as well on videotaped forensic interviews and my sense is that there's still a requirement to present the child.

Likewise, there seems to be a need for more prudence in showing digital evidence such as videos and photos extracted from a phone or laptop in court. Although showing all the videos and photos extracted from a device may indeed help establish the guilt of the accused under trial, it can also lead to negative psychological effects on the people who see it in court, such as the lawyers and court staff.

However, digital evidence is not always infallible, and prosecutors must always bear in mind that the strength of the case build-up is crucial. There have been occasions where data from the seized devices yielded negative results for any pornographic material.

Logistical and equipment support. Courts should have the facilities (e.g., working computers, video and audio equipment, cameras) for electronic evidence to be presented in OSAEC cases. In an interview with a judge, it was confirmed that an NGO previously sponsored the installation of video streaming equipment in the judge's chamber to allow for electronic evidence to be presented. However, the equipment did not work and the video evidence was not used.

The lack of funds for purchasing, operating, and maintaining such equipment for courts curtails efforts at resolving OSAEC cases. To add, some respondents note that the limited knowledge of court personnel on the technical terms and concepts related to digital evidence also poses a hindrance to appreciating its value in OSAEC case proceedings.

Lack of prosecutors. Not having enough prosecutors is seen as a concern among those filing OSAEC cases. Prosecutors are overloaded with case complaints and often prioritize inquest proceedings, leaving little time for other activities such as attending hearings. During one of the interviews, it was mentioned that there are currently 16,000 open prosecutor positions. There is a need to invest in hiring more prosecutors (and judges even) as this has an impact on the number of cases heard and the speed in resolving OSAEC cases.

Delays in resolving cases. There are delays in resolving some OSAEC cases because of the postponement of hearing for months due to a lawyer's non-appearance or the judge being ill. The delays are also associated with how a judge evaluates evidence and the volume of cases that he or she is handling. Tactics of the defense counsel to postpone trial and arraignment are another cause of delay. These tactics involve convincing the family to withdraw the case. Also, when the perpetrator's side cannot argue against the strong evidence presented, the defense counsel will resort to raising questions on proper procedure in the conduct of arrest or the authenticity of the evidence, especially if it is digital evidence, saying that it is manufactured. The length of the proceedings and judicial delays are also identified in the capacity gap analysis of stakeholders (Legarda, et al., 2015) as among the problems in the fight against OSAEC.

Stakeholders in Addressing OSAEC-Related Problems

Addressing OSAEC-related problems entails a multi-disciplinary approach and involves the concerted effort of different government units both at the national and local levels (e.g., government's justice system or prosecution arm, law enforcement, judiciary, and social work), non-government agencies, as well as international agencies and organizations, and inter-agency councils.

These stakeholders coordinate in handling OSAEC cases, which begin upon receiving a referral of a possible OSAEC case. This continues on to the investigation of the case, as well as the rescue and aftercare of victims. Concurrent with the rescue and aftercare is the arrest, case filing, and trial of the accused offender. These steps, along with the roles of the various stakeholders in each step, are detailed below.

Identification and reporting. The process starts with the reporting of possible OSAEC cases, which can happen through three likely channels: international agencies (i.e., NCMEC, foreign law enforcement agencies), NGOs, and local communities.

A major source of referral is the National Center for Missing and Endangered Children (NCMEC). NCMEC is a US NGO which is authorized by law to receive reports from Facebook and Google in case their sites are used to transfer child pornographic materials. As the point of contact for the Philippines, DOJ-OOC receives cyber tip reports—at an average of 2,500 to 3,000 reports per month—directly from NCMEC for offenders or offended parties located in the Philippines. These reports are then graded across four levels, depending on the gravity and/or urgency of the situation. Levels 3 and 4 are merely informational and sometimes are not really child pornographic material, while Levels 1 and 2 are reports that require immediate attention.

Upon receipt, the OIC director evaluates the report and notifies the Bureau of Immigration if it concerns a travelling sex offender. The DOJ-OOC also coordinates with the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) or the Philippine National Police (PNP) depending on the report's location (PNP having more regional offices in the Philippines) and the local office of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

Other referrals come from international law enforcement agencies based in North America, Europe, and Asia, who coordinate with their Philippine counterparts regarding these cases. These include the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), US Department of Homeland Security (HSI), Royal Canadian Police, Australian Federal Police, New Zealand Police, Royal Malaysia Police (in coordination with the Malaysian embassy), and others.

Case referrals also come from community-based NGOs, especially from the Visayas region. According to a respondent, around 50% of intelligence reports reaching national law enforcement agencies come from NGOs.

Cases are also identified from direct complainants, which may include the victim's family, concerned citizens, and the victim himself or herself. Referring parties typically approach law enforcement agencies, the social work offices, and/or international organizations that work closely with law enforcement in handling OSAEC-related cases. Law enforcement agencies also have some people assigned in communities to take notice of such cases.

Investigation. After receiving referrals, law enforcement agents investigate the case, which then leads to the rescue of victims and arrest of offenders. During the investigation phase, the law enforcement agent conducts an initial technical surveillance online in order to verify the identity of the victim and the offender. An investigation does not have a specific timeline and is dependent on whether

the agent believes he has gathered enough evidence against the offender to file a case. The agent then conducts further surveillance, including undercover operations, upon receiving an authority to investigate from their superior.

Once substantial evidence has been gathered on the suspect's identity and nature of OSAEC activities, the law enforcement agent goes undercover and conducts an on-site or physical surveillance of the suspect's location. When the suspect's exact location has been established and the presence of child victims has been confirmed, the law enforcement agency then plans for the arrest of the suspect and rescue of the victims. Part of the operation entails officers acting as a decoy, such as paying for a show and setting an appointment for it. However, even before the show can start the rescue is conducted and the suspect arrested.

Rescue. Rescue operations are a concerted effort of different agencies. It should be noted that the law mandates the presence of social workers during rescue operations to assist in dealing with the child victim.

For the investigation to move into the rescue phase, two possible routes may be taken. First is through a buy-bust or entrapment, which aims to catch the offender in the act. For a buy-bust to be successful, the specific place where OSAEC is occurring and where the victims are must be identified. During an entrapment, the arrest of the suspect and rescue of the child victims are conducted simultaneously. It has its own risks though, since the operation may put the child victim in harm's way.

The second route is through the use of a search warrant. The law enforcement agency files for a search warrant with the courts, since agents are forbidden to enter the premises without one. A major consideration in filing for a search warrant is knowing the specific location of the place to be searched, since it cannot just be a general location. Applying for a search warrant takes more time and may be subject to other factors. For example, depending on the law under which the search warrant is being applied, the judge may require certain units of law enforcement to be present when the search warrant is used (e.g., anti-cybercrime, women and children's protection). Likewise, since obtaining a search warrant takes longer, it also tends to delay the process of providing relief to the victim. A search warrant is valid for 10 days upon its issuance.

Evidence gathering and processing. Cybercrime units of law enforcement agencies are in charge of retrieving and processing the evidence related to the case such as tapes, videos, and cellphones, among others. The Supreme Court has established guidelines on how digital evidence contained in the device (e.g., cellphone, computer hard drive) needs to be preserved. One example is that law enforcement agents should only use the image file copy from the device when studying the evidence. Evidence gathering and processing is a crucial step in OSAEC cases, because a case may be dismissed if evidence was not properly secured and processed.

Digital evidence secured from a search warrant can already be subjected to a forensic examination. However, law enforcement agents need to secure a court warrant before they can process digital evidence gathered from an entrapment. This is because the court is in charge of the evidence seized, and failing to obtain a warrant to process the digital evidence means that such could not be presented during the trial. The original device and all copies of data extracted from it are given back to the court.

Arrest and case filing. After the suspect's arrest, law enforcement agents are given 36 hours to file a case with the public prosecutor's office, which is under the DOJ. Within this time frame, they need to prepare their affidavits (e.g., as arresting officer, as police decoy), which include the details of the operation. The case file includes attachments such as the affidavit from the child victim, spot report, list of seized items, and others. Failure to file a case within 36 hours can result in a case of arbitrary detention being filed against law enforcement and the suspect being released.

Cases can be filed two ways: one is through a preliminary investigation conducted by the public prosecutor. This includes interviewing the child victim, reviewing the case build-up of the law enforcement agents, and reviewing how the evidence was gathered. Based on the results of this investigation, if the public prosecutor finds probable cause, then there is a basis for filing the case in court. Otherwise, the case will be dismissed.

Another is through an inquest, which is an informal investigation of a suspect who is arrested and detained without an arrest warrant, conducted before the case is filed in court. During the inquest, law enforcement agents provide evidence from the online engagement and entrapment.

Once the public prosecutor files the case in court, the clerk of court assigns the case to the appropriate court (e.g., family court) depending on the offense, and raffles the case among the judges within the court. The DOJ prosecutor handles the case for the victim and leads the prosecution team even when there are other lawyers assisting the prosecution (i.e., the victim's private counsel)

In filing a case, the fiscal prepares a document that details the charges against the accused, or the latter's violations of specific crimes or offenses. In some instances, the fiscal will add one or more violations to the cases already identified by the law enforcement agents in their initial filing, in order to strengthen the case against the accused. Complainants are typically the family members, but when family members cannot be located or do not want to get involved, the rescuing law enforcement agent or social worker can serve as the complainant in the case. Where family members are involved in the case (e.g., as facilitators), complaints may also be filed against them.

A public attorney is assigned to handle the case for the offender when the latter cannot pay for a private lawyer. During the arraignment the charges are read, to which the accused will plead guilty or not guilty. When the accused pleads not guilty, the next step is to have a pre-trial, where both the prosecution and defense agree on certain stipulations that will no longer be required to be proven in court.

Trial. During the trial, the prosecution offers testimonial evidence (i.e., versions of different people involved in the case, including the victim, rescuing officer, rescuing social worker, and others), object evidence (e.g., digital evidence seized from the gadgets and computers), and documentary evidence. Then the prosecution gives its formal offer of evidence to the court, for the court to consider whether the evidence is admissible. Once this is done, the prosecution rests its case. The defense is then given time to present its evidence and file their formal offer of evidence to the court.

During the promulgation, the judge reads the verdict and sentence (in the event of a guilty verdict). Once convicted, the accused can appeal.

Aftercare. One of the first things that need to be done to establish the child's sense of safety is to provide temporary shelter that can serve as alternative family care. Upon rescue, child victims undergo an interview by the law enforcement agent in the presence of a social worker. This interview will form the child victim's affidavit which will be included in the case.

After the initial processing, the child victims are transferred to DSWD-run temporary shelters. The social worker assesses the child victim's situation and deems whether or not it would be better for the child to stay in the shelter for longer-term care or return to the community. When there is no perceived threat to the child's safety and when the child victim's family is not involved in the case and is capable of caring for the child, then the child may be reintegrated with the family even as the case is ongoing. In some instances, the social worker finds other relatives who are more capable of looking after the child. In others, the social worker coordinates with NGOs with whom the child victim can stay.

Case management and rehabilitation. While the child victim is in a government social welfare shelter, a case manager (usually a social worker, or the rescuing social worker even) is assigned to his or her case. The case manager ensures that all the needs of the child victim are taken care of. These include providing for the child's education either through home study, enrollment in a public school, or alternative learning system. Older teenagers are also prepared for independent living.

The social worker also coordinates with law enforcement and the prosecutor in relation to the case filed against the offender. In this regard, the social worker readies the child physically, emotionally, and psychologically in preparation for case filing and in giving a testimony.

Likewise, the social worker partners with the child's family to ensure that they will be able to take care of the child once he or she is reintegrated. This includes providing counseling to the family and assisting them with livelihood options. Other forms of assistance such as medical and burial assistance may also be provided according to need. The government social worker continues to monitor the family through home visits even when the child has been transferred to another shelter, in order to prepare for his or her eventual reintegration once the case is resolved.

At the shelter, a mental health professional—either a registered psychologist (RPsy) or a registered psychometrician (RPm)— provides counseling for the child. According to a key informant from DSWD, its Social Technology Unit (STU) has developed a module for anti-child pornography which they had pilot tested in the community. In the residential facilities, there is also a psychosocial care program that is part of the healing interventions for OSAEC victims. Once a child is discharged, counseling may still continue if this is recommended by the psychologist. In other instances, the child victims are sent to a psychologist in private practice or a hospital for individual and/or group therapy. Some children also undergo a psychological assessment when deemed necessary. The church and other faith-based organizations also play a vital role in rehabilitating these children.

Efforts of the Different Stakeholders to Address OSAEC

In September 2016, DICT hosted an International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Workshop on Child Online Protection as a venue to share

experiences and strengthen awareness on child online safety through a multi-stakeholder approach. One of the findings from this workshop is that there exist several independent initiatives that other stakeholders in the country may not be fully aware of. One key informant noted that "We have many good efforts to address the issue, unfortunately it is kind of fragmented," and recommended the need to "map out who's doing what and facilitate convergence." In fact, in her report to the Senate last March 2018, Senator Legarda stated that "the Philippines is taking the lead in combatting trafficking in Southeast Asia being the only Southeast Asian country to achieve Tier 1 ranking in the Trafficking in Persons Report of the US Department of State."

Stakeholder efforts against OSAEC can be broadly classified into six categories: (1) policy development, (2) establishment of specialized units and agencies, (3) conduct of capacity and capability training, (4) raising public awareness, (5) addressing gaps through advocacy programs, and (6) participation in research studies and meetings to inform policy development.

Policy development. These efforts are mostly geared toward establishing child protection policies across social sectors and conducting research for policy reforms. Some NGOs draft and review CPPs in the Philippines and design codes of conduct for clinicians and staff when working with child victims. Others provide inputs in the drafting of legislation on establishing a sex offender registry, child protection against sex offenders, and requiring DICT to include safeguard provisions in the Free Public Wi-Fi law by prohibiting access to pornography. The foundation also lobbied for a child protection law in tourism-related establishments, as well as legislation that requires all tourism-related establishments to create their own CPP, train their staff, and report how the policy was implemented.

Multiple institutions collaborate to develop policies and guidelines such as defining the roles and responsibilities of each unit (e.g., judge, police, social worker, barangay) involved in the multidisciplinary approach of handling child abuse cases. Moreover, LGUs implement their own ordinances, e.g., Mandaue City mandates additional requirements for money remittance services.

Telcos are involved in the development of CPPs as well. Smart, in compliance with the Data Privacy Act, made adjustments in managing subscriber information to protect their privacy and ensure that the information is not inadvertently or purposely disclosed to people who have no authority to access them. Meanwhile, PLDT has introduced a facility that enables parents to monitor and manage their children's Internet access, regulating Internet usage and blocking potentially dangerous websites at home. Globe partners with content providers such as YouTube for Kids to give a thematic service that centers on educating younger children to prevent them from freely exploring all videos in the platform.

Social media platforms such as Facebook are furthering their efforts toward online safety for children by developing community standards and guidelines to safeguard children from accessing harmful content while using these platforms. While Facebook acknowledges that "the (cultural) norms are different in each region, where European cultures are more accepting of nudity than many communities in Asia," their standards do say that "a photo depicting any child nudity would have always been taken down." However, taking down inappropriate content is not automatic, but is subject to review after they receive reports from the community. Facebook further notes that it is

also exploring the use of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence to look at photos and videos and flag content that their team should review as a way of supplementing public monitoring of inappropriate content.

Establishment of specialized units and agencies. These units focus on addressing the different challenges when dealing with OSAEC and the needs of the victims and their families. At the local level, the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC) and Violence against Women and Children (VAWC) create plans and programs particular to child protection (e.g., nutrition month, teenage pregnancy). They also have facilitated the passing of local ordinances such as prohibiting school-age children to access PisoNet and Internet cafés during class hours, unless they are accompanied by a guardian. These ordinances also include prohibiting children from entering hotels and resorts with adults to whom they are not related by blood.

LGUs and NGOs have also recognized the lack of child-friendly spaces in police stations and the crowded facilities of DSWD where rescued victims are usually brought, thus possibly adding to their trauma. This led to the establishment of assessment centers such the Children and Women Center or Survivor Center as temporary spaces where newly rescued survivors of OSAEC can be placed for 1 to 3 months. In the assessment center, rescued child victims can be interviewed and given comprehensive assessment that includes medical treatment and psychological debriefing as immediate interventions while determining the best possible options for them. Non-perpetrator family members are also interviewed in these centers to determine if the victims can be re-integrated back to their family, brought to a shelter, placed in foster care, or adopted.

Capacity building. Several international and local agencies offer training programs to guard against OSAEC. These agencies include UNICEF, AAPTIP, Internet Crime Against Children (ICAC), United Kingdom National Crime Agency (UK-NCA), ICMEC, Microsoft, INTERPOL, FBI, and the Netherlands police, as well as local agencies like the DOJ, DSWD, and IACACP. Topics range from cybercrime and electronic evidence for judges and digital forensics investigation for law enforcers. Such programs are aimed at enhancing the abilities of local law enforcers in identifying evidence on digital media pertinent to a live case, and improving the delivery of credible digital evidence that can be presented in court trials and result in more convictions.

DSWD also initiates wellness programs for social workers via trauma-informed care and psychosocial training modules developed in cooperation with IACAT and ECPAT. Training developed with UNICEF and rolled out through the regional inter-agency council with the barangay-level VAWC is multidisciplinary in approach because it involves social workers, LGUs, and investigators in efforts to strengthen collaboration and coordination among these responders in their communities.

The Stairway Foundation has spearheaded the coming together of NGOs across the country to create the Break the Silence Network that provides a series of capacity building programs to foster the establishment of child protection resource centers that deliver awareness campaigns and local training as well as organize different stakeholders in a given locality. A framework for mutual information sharing between NGOs and LGUs and large-scale information dissemination and education on the issue of online child sexual abuse and exploitation has also been developed, which the partner organizations can customize to fit their respective cases or programs. Data and

experiences from the previous cases can then be analyzed to better contextualize and enrich the framework.

Telcos such as Smart and Globe have also initiated efforts to educate the public on data privacy and cyber-citizenship. Continuous support for local initiatives to sustain OSAEC-related training programs is needed to reduce OSAEC incidents in the frontlines, in light of the rapid advancement and widespread adoption of technology in the everyday activities of Filipinos. Support must also be provided to explore other avenues for efficient access to training resources for preparedness against OSAEC.

Raising public awareness. There is also a multisector effort to raise public awareness on online sexual exploitation. Several private companies, especially telcos, have launched programs that advocate safer Internet use among the youth. For instance, Globe Telecom's Digital Thumbprint Program is a modular training approach designed to promote public safety among students through the practice of "good behavior" online. In coordination with DepEd, Globe plans to integrate this program into the basic education curriculum. Another telco, PLDT, has created a digital literacy program called InfoTech in partnership with the University of the Philippines (UP)-Open University. The program is offered to high school teachers and students to educate them on how to use computers, software, and the Internet, social media etiquette, and cybersecurity.

In the public sector, DICT conducts caravans in key cities around the country to educate millennials on the proper use of smartphones. DSWD makes use of their social media pages to make the public aware of their programs and other social services. Furthermore, as part of the 2018 National Children's Month celebration observed every November, the DSWD Region VII office has started a campaign across four schools in Lapu-Lapu City and Cordova, Cebu to prevent the proliferation of child abuse cases and highlight the risks of irresponsible use of different social media sites to children.

There are also policies and practices that institutionalize proper and safe Internet use. The Data Privacy Act demands that companies and institutions educate and assure their customers on how to protect their personal information online. In addition, Proclamation No. 417 has declared every second Tuesday of February as Safer Internet Day for Children of the Philippines. During this day, programs and events are carried out to educate children on how to safely navigate the Internet. These cross-sector efforts at public awareness-raising are commendable, but it should be pointed out that the campaign against OSAEC should begin at home and in school. In this regard, parents, guardians, and teachers must also be cognizant that OSAEC threatens children's welfare and dignity. This is an area where church-based advocacy groups can play an active role.

Conducting and participating in research. In 2015, the Council for the Welfare of Children conducted a national baseline study on violence against children, which includes violence that occurred in cyberspace. Government officials also form committees to conduct research in relation to issues that involve the family, women, and children in aid of legislation that would protect them.

International organizations also play a crucial role in leading as well as funding research to determine gaps in the efforts to mitigate OSAEC. For instance, UNICEF conducted a Capacity Gap Analysis of Stakeholders on the protection of children from online abuse and exploitation to provide

understanding of the policies, practices and challenges faced by the judiciary, prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, and the community in protecting children from online abuse and exploitation. UNICEF also funded DSWD in assembling a compendium of good practices to address online sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Furthermore, UNICEF, along with The Asia Foundation, conducted a Family Court Inventory that aimed at determining the procedural obstacles children face in seeking justice in the courts; whether court processes and mechanisms are victim centered and child sensitive; and to evaluate the practicability of existing laws and procedural laws relating to child victims and witnesses.

Other efforts. These include the development of a referral mechanism based on international law enforcement agencies' referral structures and contextualizing it locally. There are also sectors that focus on aftercare services providing human resources. For instance, the Asia Foundation provides counselors, psychologists, and art therapists to victim/survivors of OSAEC. The Stairway Foundation runs a community assistance program in Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro, through its family home program or temporary shelter for street children.

Aside from their individual efforts, NGOs such as IJM and the Visayan Forum also work with different government agencies when it comes to referrals, rescue operations, and aftercare services to monitor the child victims and provide the necessary interventions to help them recover and reintegrate to their families and communities.

Though it is commendable that different NGOs have their respective initiatives to address the issue, there is a need to organize and consolidate them. According to one respondent, one of the findings from the DICT ASEAN ITU Summit was that the efforts against OSAEC are fragmented. The challenge is that there is a lack of communication among the many individuals and groups in the effort. The question of duplication in programs thus comes up. There is a need to map out all these efforts to create a unified system of agencies mitigating OSAEC.

Identified Gaps and Challenges in Responding to OSAEC

Despite the efforts of numerous public and private sector stakeholders involved in handling OSAEC cases, Microsoft cites that about 270,000 child sexual abuse materials continue to be uploaded to the Internet daily out of a total 1.8 billion uploaded images. Of this number, only seven child victims are identified according to INTERPOL. A number of reasons may account for this discrepancy: (1) a general lack of awareness; (2) challenges faced by law enforcement; (3) challenges faced by service providers, specifically the social workers, case managers, and aftercare service providers; and (4) problems in inter-agency collaboration.

Lack of awareness. The lack of awareness and knowledge on OSAEC among its victims, their families, and the community may contribute to its continued proliferation. Misconceptions can also lead to further harm for its victims, such as when they are judged for their participation in the crime. Many children may not understand that they are already being victimized. Some may have been drugged, severely traumatized, or may even be too young to remember. An unclear definition of sexual exploitation also compounds the low rate of identifying cases. Some victims do not want to

report the incident; others do not understand why they need to be separated from their families after the incident. They are afraid because their parents are involved and they do not want to betray their families. Parents of victims also get mad and become uncooperative during rescue operations. In Filipino culture, it could be considered taboo for the family to report OSAEC. When there is nobody to assist the child or support the case, the case will be dismissed or archived.

For the youth, the dynamics of online sexual abuse seem to be different. They learn how to use new technology very quickly such that they become more technology-literate than their parents and guardians. While they can easily use devices to gain access to the Internet, they do not know how to keep themselves safe online. Moreover, they do not seem to understand why it is not safe. Their curiosity and the availability of tools may have enabled those who are highly skilled to learn on their own how to dismantle firewalls and other security features, and even access the Dark Net.

Social norms in the family structure are also changing. Absentee parenting has led to a lack of proper guidance and monitoring. Coupled with the need to earn more in the face of ever-increasing household expenses, parents may no longer have as much time to be fully present for their children, much less supervise their online activities. Parents and guardians may even be unaware of the dangers that the Internet poses.

The child victims' immediate community may also play a significant role in the persistence of OSAEC. Knowing the red flags to look out for at the individual and community level may lead to an increase in OSAEC case reporting. Cases happen at home or school, supposedly the safest places for children. Yet it is difficult for law enforcement agencies to monitor Internet use in private homes. Meanwhile, schools' lack of proper knowledge on using the Internet as part of classroom teaching and the continued insistence that computer education be treated as a separate subject also hinder the opportunity to disseminate information about OSAEC and how students can stay safe online. Furthermore, the presence of entertainment or business establishments (i.e., Internet cafes) in a particular area makes it difficult to manage OSAEC especially if the owners do not cooperate. In some cases, the communities protect the operator because they earn from the exploitation.

Challenges faced by law enforcement agencies. OSAEC cases pose certain challenges to law enforcement agencies due to the nature of the digital evidence that can be used in courts. These challenges include the strength of the evidence against the perpetrators, limitations in technical knowledge and digital forensics skills, and lack of updated technological tools.

The strength of the evidence is one of the main factors that can make or break a case against the accused in an OSAEC case. The public prosecutor will likely dismiss a case with weak or insufficient evidence, which in itself could be due to inadequate investigation or case build-up of law enforcement agents. Thus, there is a need to strengthen the case build-up before the evidence is presented to the prosecutor, so that there is a greater likelihood of the case progressing. According to one interviewee, "kadalasan ganun ang ginagawa ng pulis eh, automatic filing of case, wala naman masyadong malinaw na ebidensya" (oftentimes the police file a case automatically, even when there is no clear evidence).

The strength of the case build-up may hinge on the digital evidence that is gathered from ICT equipment, i.e., images and chat logs that are stored in mobile phones and computer hard drives. Inadequate handling of such devices to extract the data can result in data loss. Likewise, mishandling of data extraction can lead the courts to question the validity of the data and may eventually disallow its use in court proceedings.

The means by which OSAEC crimes are perpetuated necessitates that service providers are also updated on the current trends in ICT. However, law enforcement agents generally are not technologically savvy: not only are they unskilled in handling digital evidence, but they are also unfamiliar with ICT terminology that is needed in understanding the evidence. This observation extends not only to law enforcement agents but to court personnel as well. Thus, one interviewee emphasized the need to have an ICT expert among law enforcers and the judiciary, in order to orient the other agents on information technology-related matters.

Currently, few agents in law enforcement have been trained in digital forensics. In this regard, some service providers that work on OSAEC-related cases have had to tap human resources from intelligence agencies abroad in order to move a case forward. Compounding the problem of agents' limited digital forensic skills is the unavailability of the technology on-hand to extract and process digital evidence. The cost of such technology vis-a-vis available funds is a major issue. As such, even when plans for upgrading the technology are made, these are not always followed through on time.

Even when the law enforcement agency has the trained personnel and appropriate equipment to conduct digital forensics, advances in technology also cause challenges in data extraction. For example, some of the newer cellphone models used by the offenders are not compatible with the existing equipment (e.g., password cannot be bypassed), which again brings up the need to seek assistance from foreign counterparts.

Moreover, even when digital evidence has been extracted properly, showing this evidence in court may also prove difficult due to the limited capacity of computers in court. Old computers may be unable to support the large file sizes that contain the digital evidence, hindering the presentation of such files during the trial.

Respondents to this study validated and added to the challenges regarding the investigation and prosecution of OSAEC-related crimes. These challenges include; (1) lack of human resources, (2) lack of empowerment of law enforcement agents, (3) having limited or outdated equipment, (4) having limited funds for OSAEC cases, (5) lack of training, (6) reassignment of trained enforcers, and (7) delays in investigation.

The respondents described the lack of human resources as a result of the sheer volume of caseloads overwhelming the limited number of agents that work on the cases. To illustrate, one agency (NCMEC) alone sends 100 to 150 reports a day. There are currently only two investigation agents in DOJ-OOC, with each case respondent handling 50 cases. Five personnel from IACAT serve as additional support for these cases that go through DOJ-OOC.

There is also a discrepancy between the volume of evidence to analyze and the number of agents to investigate cases, which leads to delays in processing evidence. Moreover, the agents have a broad scope of work and even multitask to accommodate the demands of the local government and their main duty of law enforcement. According to the respondents, they specifically lack specialists to handle highly technical concerns in computer forensics and additional staff in the local unit to conduct office errands.

espondents also perceive a lack of empowerment of law enforcers: law enforcement units are not trusted to perform their duty. For example, applications for search warrants by investigators can be denied depending on the judge's interpretation of applicable laws. In one instance where a search warrant was requested under RA 10175 (Cybercrime Prevention Act) because the law enforcers will have to deal with computers for evidence, judges in Visayas and in Manila denied warrants on the basis of error and inapplicability of the law that the search warrant was based. Thus, there are instances when law enforcers would no longer resort to requesting search warrants because of the delays this poses in providing victim relief.

There is also a difference noted between the perspectives of the investigator and the judiciary on what is necessary in conducting an investigation. Judges expect that law enforcers enter residences in an undercover capacity to identify devices used and where they are located, as part of the evidence. As one respondent working on OSAEC cases said, "that is something well beyond what is reasonable, putting the whole case at risk for being burned. The reason why you're holding a search warrant because it's a private location, to go in a private location is very, very risky."

According to another respondent, law enforcement units are required by the court to provide certainty for a search warrant to be approved, so the police needs to go to the location undercover. According to one prosecutor, "They wanted the sure thing, because they don't want to sign a warrant that comes back and say there's nothing inside, wherein the Western law enforcement that's okay, you may be wrong. The warrant is you have enough reason to invade on that person's personal privacy based on 51 percent. [But] Here, you need to be absolutely certain. It's too high above standard to expect law enforcement to do."

Respondents also pointed out that setting up another unit for coordination only slows down the process. Instead of fully authorizing the law enforcement agency, they include those agencies that do not have law enforcement powers in the coordination, which may delay victim relief.

Law enforcement agents also have limited and outdated equipment. With constant technological advancement, perpetrators of OSAEC have devised ways to keep their crime from being detected. Perpetrators now have better facilities such that they no longer need a physical den to execute the act, making it more difficult for law enforcement to discover and investigate the crime. Some law enforcement units also mentioned the lack of vehicles to use in surveillance as a challenge to their investigation. Even slow Internet speed in precincts and offices interferes in the entrapment procedures. One participant shared that the outdated equipment in their own office limits their ability to implement whatever training in computer-related investigation they undergo.

This problem of having limited and outdated equipment seems to result from the insufficient funds for OSAEC cases. As reported, there is no fund specifically allocated for OSAEC cases, only for a more general budget item of cybercrime. The increase in the number of OSAEC cases needs a corresponding increase in the budget for operations, infrastructure, and equipment. However, this appears to have been neglected in budget allotments such as for overtime pay, vehicle and fuel for operations, and even show money for entrapment operations. The lack of a budget for OSAEC-related activities is also another reason why very few slots for training are given to their personnel. To compensate for limited funds, law enforcement agencies such as the NBI need to partner with NGOs such as IJM for logistical support. Partner NGOs, for example, can lend their vehicles for rescue operations to law enforcement agencies as surveillance vehicles because they cannot be identified as belonging to the latter. The fuel for these vehicles is, at times, even personally provided for, again due to budget constraints among law enforcement agencies. NGO partners also even provide meals for survivors and agents after a rescue operation.

NGOs may also provide the marked money for entrapment because of lack of funds for operations. There have even been instances when the money used for entrapment would come personally from the agents assigned to the OSAEC case. Sometimes, this money is not retrieved, or if it is retrieved, it is considered as part of the evidence presented in the case. There are no distinct allowances or cash advances for this type of expense because money for anti-OSAEC operations is allotted from a pool of funds for other law enforcement activities.

IACAT, for its part, has experienced a 90% increase in its budget for maintenance and other operating expenses, from Php5,000,000 in 2010 to Php94,568,000 in 2017. However, IACAT is a coordinating body and only one agency that handles both trafficking and OSAEC cases. More funding support is needed for an implementing agency such as NBI, which conducts actual surveillance and rescue operations of child victims of online sexual abuse and exploitation cases.

The insufficient budget allocation for OSAEC and child protection leads one respondent to view child protection in the Philippines as merely an add-on program:

> ...Wala kasi talagang budget ang gobyerno for child protection (There is really no government budget for child protection)...the child protection system in this country is a rider program...because it's on top of what other people are doing. [for example] lahat ng social workers ng gobyerno (all social workers of the government)...they're responsible for everything from elderly to conditional cash transfers to lahat (everything) ...part of the service is also educational and emergency assistance...government budget for that is at the most 5,000 pesos. They think of it as an advocacy. So if it's an advocacy, that means wala siyang budget, wala siyang personnel kaya sabi ko rider (So if it's an advocacy, that means there's no budget, no personnel, that's why I refer to it as a rider).

Although respondents have received some training on OSAEC, these have either been limited, not intensive enough, or not so specific to what each unit needs. What the respondents mostly raised was the need for further capacity building in investigation skills such as finding the right evidence that is court-admissible; specialized training in handling, securing, and presenting electronic evidence; and technology-related skills. They also pointed out the need to capacitate LGUs in their monitoring. Updates in OSAEC trends and the perpetrators' usual operations have to be provided as well, since law enforcers also face difficulty in recognizing and understanding the perpetrators' use of disguised words or terms.

Law enforcement agencies also face the challenge of agents already skilled in handling OSAEC cases moving out due to reassignment or promotion. Such personnel changes result in placing people with less OSAEC training to handle such cases. This is also one reason for suggesting the continuous training of agents who deal with OSAEC cases.

Lastly, agencies face constant delays in case investigation. For example, police units have not been able to act on some referrals from international law enforcement agencies for more than six months. Four factors seem to contribute to the delay: the perpetrator, the operation itself, the victim, and the law enforcers.

The perpetrator sometimes tends to be too careful, thus prolonging the negotiation. Given their skills as well, they could easily remove evidence such as OSAEC-related pictures, videos, and other materials. Verifying the perpetrator's identity is also difficult. Money remittance centers sometimes take a long time to provide information about the perpetrator's address. Another factor may be the operation itself, which may encounter delays in receiving endorsement from the court and thus sets back other aspects of the operation. The victim factors into the delay when their identity and/or location are not easily detected. Once they are rescued, delays arise when the victim hardly provides information about the crime, or when the family or community is uncooperative. Agents themselves can be a factor in the delay when their concurrent administrative functions interfere with their investigation. For example, most police officers simultaneously perform clerical, monitoring and planning, and other non-police tasks apart from fulfilling their investigative duties.

Challenges faced by service providers. Service delivery gaps continue to pose challenges to social workers, case managers, and aftercare service providers, which may hinder their efficient and effective response to the OSAEC victims. These identified gaps are consistent with the findings in the capacity gap analysis study conducted by Legarda et al.(2015).

Social workers. Service providers also encounter similar challenges as law enforcement, including limited personnel and training, and insufficient resources. According to study participants, too few social workers work on OSAEC cases. Given that their presence is required during a rescue operation, this adds to their other OSAEC-related responsibilities, especially when they are also handling non-OSAEC cases. In addition, they find it difficult when the training they receive, which is usually Western in approach, sometimes does not align with the culturally sensitive context of OSAEC in the Philippines. Participants also specified other training needs such as information on OSAEC legalities and skills in identifying victims in the community.

Likewise, service providers from government state that no specific budget is allocated for OSAEC, thus survivors are usually merged with other residents in centers (e.g., victims of trafficking, physical and sexual abuse, and others). They also find it difficult to look for a safe place for conducting interviews with child victims right after rescue. The same concern about resources was raised among NGOs, especially in terms of the need to generate funds for continued operations. According to one respondent, a national assembly on OSAEC cases was supposed to be held but was instead cancelled due to limited finances for staging the event.

Case managers. There are instances when an OSAEC case is referred to a service provider that lacks the mandate to handle it at a given time. This can be a result of information gaps and insufficient protocols for case management.

One of the gaps in addressing OSAEC is that some service providers do not have the mandate to investigate. For example, cases that are directly referred to a social welfare agency will still need to be brought up with a law enforcement agency before the case can be investigated. This step is often overlooked, which leads to delays in the process of helping the victims. Moreover, even if some organizations have the personnel and skills to conduct their own investigation into OSAEC crimes, they eventually need the help of law enforcement agencies once the case progresses into a possible entrapment or rescue.

The lack of a mandate for service providers may be related to the bigger issue of the lack of awareness of OSAEC case management protocols. For example, existing protocols for child protection in relation to child pornography may not be applicable to OSAEC. This contributes to lags in handling the case, such as when service providers do not know how to handle digital evidence when these are submitted to them.

In addition, even if certain agencies have their own internal protocols in place, the protocols for collaboration with other service providers may be absent, which also leads to delays in the progression of cases.

Aftercare service providers. In terms of caring for the victims, service providers have learned over time that the dynamics and the needs of OSAEC victims are different from child victims of other infractions such as physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and trafficking.

The present practice is that victims from these different cases are usually housed in one shelter and may be receiving the same kind of psychosocial programs. This implies that some psychosocial needs of OSAEC victims are not being fully addressed. There is a need to review existing aftercare service programs and perhaps create one specific to OSAEC victims in order to fully serve their needs. As one interviewee shared, "iba pala yung dynamics ng victim ng OSAEC, so yung traditional psychosocial care natin, medyo ano, lacking siya, hindi siya totally applicable." (The dynamics of an OSAEC victim are apparently different, so our traditional psychosocial care is rather lacking and may not be totally applicable.)

Sharing of best practices between social workers in government and NGO shelters may be one way to address this gap. Long-term NGO shelters where OSAEC victims are transferred have their own

rehabilitation and reintegration programs which, in some cases, are different from the programs in government shelters. For example, one interviewee shared that the thrust of their program is to strengthen the child's relationship with the family, even if the family members are the perpetrators. They have found that such an approach yields positive results, both in restoring the child's relationship with his or her family as well as in serving justice.

Along with ensuring the safety and security of child victims, it is becoming apparent that the safety and security of OSAEC service providers and law enforcement agents also needs to be provided for. As one participant stated, "safety and security for the team especially that we are at the forefront, we are working closely with the police. And so try to imagine if a rescue happens in slums and you go through this very small alleyway and the risk of being attacked by the community members is very high."

Aside from ensuring their physical safety, there is also a need to maintain the service providers' sense of psychological safety during the entire process. Vicarious traumatization is a real threat among service providers who deal directly with OSAEC victims. This means that the people working with the victims are also prone to distress as they hear of the child's experiences and see the pictures and videos of these children's ordeals. This can affect their worldview and influence behavior changes, such as becoming more irritable and scared. McCann and Pearlman (1990) believed that prolonged exposure to traumatic material may lead to damaging effects similar to post-traumatic stress disorder among soldiers who experienced war. One interviewee stated:

> To be honest, when I was handling all these cases, hindi naman ganun karami compared to her but I know na the vicarious trauma that they stirred it, na I didn't know na yun yung term before and then recently. So for sure, all of the other prosecutors are going through it. They just pretend that they're strong or they're just pretending na kaya ko pa. (To be honest, when I was handling all these cases, they were not as many as compared to her, but I know the vicarious trauma it stirred. I didn't know the term before...so for sure, all of the other prosecutors are going through it. They just pretend that they're strong or they're just pretending that they can still handle it.)

Some NGOs provide psychosocial care for their workers through debriefing sessions with a psychologist. At times, this service is extended to government workers involved in the case. However, this is not standard practice and some law enforcement agents and service providers are left to deal with trauma by themselves.

Another common challenge that case managers experience is dealing with the child during interview, which often happens right after the rescue because law enforcers only have a limited time to conduct the inquest. Most of the time, the child is not yet ready to speak or may have unreliable or changing statements. Furthermore, staff from different agencies, such as social workers, prosecutors, and police, repeatedly conduct interviews, which may not be beneficial for the child. Dealing with very young children is also a challenge for most social workers.

Respondents also raised the issue of the lack of shelters to accommodate all OSAEC survivors. Likewise, it needs to be examined if reintegration with the community is the best action to take. In some instances, it may conflict with the interest of law enforcers since they need the child's statement to proceed with the investigation. Lastly, service providers find it challenging to interview uncooperative family members. When a rescue also involves the child's separation from family, especially for young survivors, it poses added difficulty in mediating the process.

One possible approach to address lack of shelters is for Government to study how community-based rehabilitation can be optimized for children rescued instead of the current practice of housing them in shelters. This is an area fertile for further study and support.

Challenges in inter-agency collaboration. Handling OSAEC requires different parties to work together for a common case. Inter-agency collaboration refers to the process of engaging key stakeholder groups in an integrated effort to address OSAEC. There is a need to strengthen this, given challenges that are noted in the following areas: (1) lack of streamlined coordination processes, (2) duplication of efforts among offices with overlapping mandates, (3) lack of institutionalized information-sharing, and (4) bureaucratic red tape.

Based on the participants' experiences, the main problem in having a streamlined coordination process is the lack of a clear definition of the roles and jurisdiction of those units addressing OSAEC. This is reflected in the lack of communication when performing procedures that involve other agencies. For example, social services have already been devolved to LGUs, which may help explain why there is confusion as to who is in charge of the child victims' aftercare and where the funds for aftercare support would come from. Since some LGUs are not included in the rescue operation, they do not have knowledge about the case until it has been reported in media or the child victim's case has been filed, and the child victim is referred to them for aftercare. Respondents from LGUs stated that cooperation can be enhanced when they are made to know their responsibilities in a case beforehand.

As regards budget allocation, it is perceived that reasonable standards have to be set in terms of how much agencies can use for specific operational purposes. As such, delays in requesting a budget for immediate use may also be prevented. Another challenge highlighted was the need for specific procedures and appropriate coordination during unexpected and challenging situations, such as when it is the child who sends material online and there is no apparent perpetrator.

In dealing with OSAEC cases, another challenge in inter-agency collaboration is the lack of institutionalized information sharing, which was also part of the findings in the capacity gap analysis conducted in 2015 by Legarda, et al. Study participants suggested that coordination can be facilitated when there is a system or software that will centralize all information that all the concerned agencies can access. When this centralized database is accessible to all concerned agencies (including the courts), communication and monitoring can be easier and less traumatic for child victims. Another concern raised was the lack of a database to monitor the foreigners entering and staying in the country. Since a number of perpetrators are foreigners, there should be a way to monitor them and prevent their possible escape.

Almost all of the cases reported and recorded in the Philippines are reported by foreign law enforcement agencies because the government does not have the capacity to actively look for child sexual abuse materials at a national level. Cases coming from National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) typically involve foreign perpetrators, but there may well be cases involving Filipino perpetrators that are not being looked for and hence go unreported.

Likewise perceived as a challenge is when service providers in the shelter do not get updates about the case they are handling. Institutionalized information sharing, on the other hand, may pose ethical issues, especially regarding confidentiality. The sharing of information sometimes conflicts with the social workers' practice of confidentiality because some officers and even local chief executives want the children's names so they and their parents can be reprimanded. In addition, there seems to be difficulty in balancing confidentiality and information dissemination, especially at the barangay level. Local enforcers tend not to inform LGUs and barangay officials before an impending operation to prevent potential leak in information. Even media is prohibited from covering the operation even if they insist on the public's right to know and freedom of information.

Bureaucracy is also an issue in inter-agency collaboration. One challenge often emphasized in the entire process concerns reporting. There is a sentiment among the respondents that when the government adds agencies or institutions that do not have direct law enforcement power in dealing with OSAEC—such as DSWD and DOJ-OOC—it only prolongs the procedure. Another problem raised was the difficulty in prioritizing between the need to rescue and the obligation to make a courtesy call with the LGU. Also, in previous cases, the compensation from foreign governments for victims is delayed because of bureaucracy and protocols, according to one respondent (partly due to the requirement for mutual legal assistance critical in criminal investigations and prosecution involving foreign offenders). Some actions also appear to be politically motivated as some government officials want their names to be included in a program or project. Rather than having better organized procedures to hasten victim relief, these are reasons given for saying that bureaucracy tends to delay it.

The presence of NGOs has changed the way responses and assistance are provided to victims of OSAEC. However, resistance by LGUs may force NGO stakeholders in OSAEC to find creative ways to be part of the investigation. They set up frameworks or safeguards with the local police to ensure that they are covered by government authority to actually be part of the investigation process. Unfortunately, a majority of these NGOs and people's organizations operate mainly in urban centers, and only a handful work in geographically isolated and disadvantaged communities. Some barangays do not have an operational VAWC or BCPC desk with trained personnel to respond to victims of child exploitation. In some barangays, it is not a priority of the barangay chairman to address cybersex dens in their jurisdiction perhaps due to lack of education, awareness, stigma, or lack of budget and human resources.

Despite having multiple agencies and units within PNP and NBI dedicated to OSAEC, many cases are still left unaddressed due to insufficient personnel, resources, and budget. While a separate WCPC desk is available in cities and municipalities in urban areas, few are properly trained in investigating OSAEC cases and handling digital evidence. The lack of appropriate resources also leads to a reactive approach to OSAEC; law enforcement agencies cannot monitor for possible occurrence

of online child exploitation. Law enforcement agencies rely on the support given by international agencies who report any ongoing OSAEC incident involving foreign nationals that involve Filipino victims. During rescue operations, funding and logistics support are usually provided by NGOs, which include meals for police officers and transportation costs. The need for better facilities has been reiterated many times and this is especially important given the rapid pace of technology development. The more technology becomes sophisticated, the more online victimization becomes probable.

Ethical violations can also occur during an operation such as mistakes in handling the victim's story properly may lead to inadvertent disclosure of his or her identity and the details surrounding the case, thus, compromising the confidentiality and privacy of the victims and their families.

Challenges faced by the private sector. The private sector is also faced with challenges even with the presence of multiple laws that declare OSAEC a crime. There is still a need to clarify existing laws and policies, as well as the roles of the private sector in anti-OSAEC efforts. Furthermore, private sector players lack protocols and contextualized child protection policies that will enable them to respond to and handle OSAEC incidences. While NTC was established to regulate the operations of telcos, full compliance with these regulations with respect to monitoring and blocking of content cannot be implemented due to the need to uphold freedom of expression and data privacy. Agencies that need information regarding subscribers need to show a court order because privacy laws prohibit telcos from disclosing information without proper procedures. Even with a court order, telcos still cannot monitor the content of private messages, either in the form of SMS or social media posts and can only monitor traffic and provide call detail records or Internet data records to determine the frequency and timestamps of information exchange. The lack of technical capabilities and limited infrastructure also hinder the telcos' capacity to pinpoint and trace the IP addresses of cell sites. One sector alone cannot fight OSAEC. The government needs the private sector to provide the technical competence and resources, while the private sector needs the government to enforce the proper laws, policies, and regulations in order to fight OSAEC.

Summary and Conclusion

Understanding the OSAEC Phenomenon: A Systemic and Integrated Approach

In order to understand the nature and scope of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC) in the Philippines, including its causes, drivers, and contributing factors, this study uses a systemic and integrated approach in both data collection and analysis. To the researchers' knowledge, this is the first study that has simultaneously looked at all aspects of OSAEC: the child's experience, the perpetrator's profile, motivations, and characteristics, the role of the private sector in facilitating and mitigating OSAEC, and the issues and challenges in case resolution and management experienced by law enforcement agencies, social workers, and the courts.

This is a systemic and integrated approach for the following reasons. First, these four areas are analyzed using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). In Bronfenbrenner's framework, the child who has experienced online sexual abuse and exploitation is part and at the center of the system; at the same time, it recognizes the role and the influence of the people, institutions, events, laws, culture and social norms in understanding the child victim. The individual is not seen in isolation but as part of the system. The OSAEC victims are part of their family, their community, their province, the Philippines, and the global community.

Second, a systemic approach is necessary in analyzing systems and process and how they interplay together rather than looking at individual cases. The Capacity Gap Analysis of Stakeholders Report (Legarda, et al., 2015) identified policies and practices that the judiciary, prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, and communities use in the protection of children from online abuse and exploitation, as well as the challenges they face. This national study goes beyond the stakeholders—it looks into the experiences of the child victims, the offenders (perpetrators and facilitators), and the various processes and systems involved in the perpetuation of OSAEC.

Third, data was obtained from different stakeholders involved in both the prevention and response to OSAEC cases. The resource persons in this study were from both the government and private sector, and from different levels: community, regional and provincial, national, and global. The combined narratives and information given by the various players, the child victims and their families and communities, the offenders, and the stakeholders are weaved into a story beginning from the child's experience of abuse and exploitation, to the identification and reporting of the incident, the rescue of the child vis-ŕ-vis the capture of the offenders, to the trial and resolution of the case, to the rehabilitation of the child.

In sum, the respondents in the study—social workers, law enforcers, prosecutors and judges, barangay and community leaders, child carers and advocates, and perpetrators— acknowledge that online sexual abuse and exploitation of children is a complex phenomenon with many key players and stakeholders engaged and involved in prevention and response. While there have been many initiatives and efforts by different agencies to address this problem, reports still show that the Philippines is the hub for OSAEC. Poverty is the common identified culprit as people are lured to engage in OSAEC because of easy money. Poverty can also be seen as part of a structural macro environment existing in a country like the Philippines. Lack of employment opportunities for parents and the desire of children to help support their families also give way to this phenomenon. Because of poverty, involvement in OSAEC became a norm for most people struggling to survive from financial crisis.

Some of the victims who needed to be provided with education, and children wanting to have better material things such as clothes and school supplies, easily fall prey. There is even a case where a child victim was allowed by her parents to go with the offender from their home in the province to the NCR with the promise of putting her through school. This shows that local migration also takes place with OSAEC. Advancement in technology, availability and accessibility of Internet, free Wi-Fi, and ease of money transfer all contribute to facilitating this crime. In this country, owning a mobile phone is the norm regardless of age and economic status. In the current Philippine situation, several gaps and challenges exist at different phases of the response component. The number of OSAEC

cases has increased significantly, although there is no consolidated data that keeps track of the reported cases, rescue, convicted cases, and successful reintegration.

Summary of Key Points: The OSAEC Phenomenon

OSAEC is a complex phenomenon that has emerged during the digital age and puts any child—regardless of age, gender, educational status, and family background—at risk. OSAEC involves a confluence of factors such as poverty, ease of access to the Internet, lack of family cohesion, and an insufficient awareness of proper behavior in cyberspace. Its complexity thus requires a more integrated response that considers the needs and issues of various players: the children and their parents, the community, the private sector, government agencies, international and non-government organizations, and the society at large.

Below is a list of relevant findings that illustrate the OSAEC phenomenon in the Philippines as seen through the lenses of its different players:

The Child Victims

- Poverty is seen as the primary factor that drives engagement in this kind of activity. However, each child victim experiences sexual abuse differently and is affected (whether physically, emotionally, psychologically or behaviorally) differently as well, depending on several factors that include age, type of online sexual abuse experienced, relationship to perpetrator/facilitator, and perception of the online sexual abuse and exploitation activities.

- Child victims are affected not only by the abuse and exploitation but by events that transpire after the abuse. These events include the rescue act, investigation, and the trial process, all of which entail disclosure. The whole OSAEC experience takes a toll on their psychological well-being, sense of safety and control, and view of the world. In many cases, the negative impact of the rescue and the victims' concomitant separation from their family are worse than the impact of the actual online exploitation and abuse, especially for those who did not perceive the online exploitation to be harmful. Aftercare intervention (e.g., physical and mental health activities, education services) and parenting programs are thus essential in nurturing children involved in online sexual abuse.

- OSAEC has become so prevalent that it is already considered the norm in many areas in the country. Other factors that could have added to the normalization of OSAEC include a) the vulnerability of children and the expectation that they should help their families, b) adherence to the culture of silence or not interfering into the affairs of other families, c) stigma of reporting OSAEC cases especially if these involve a family member, and d) the belief that technology is just for the younger generation. In this regard, it is essential to consider the role of social norms in influencing the behavior of children, their parents (whether or not they are perpetrators), and community leaders, and how these norms contribute to OSAEC.

Offenders

- Offenders are persons usually known to the child victims and survivors, and are often members of their respective families (parents, uncles, aunties, siblings) or communities (neighbors, older children). Children are enticed to participate in OSAEC activities online (using social media and chat rooms) and offline (in school and community settings that are familiar and considered as safe by the child victims).

- OSAEC activities are typically conducted in offenders' homes, making it difficult to monitor and catch them in the act. Also, offenders know how to elude detection using electronic means to hide their identity and how to cover their tracks when claiming payment from consumers of their OSAEC materials.

- Economic gain is what primarily drives offenders to commit OSAEC. Many of them do not feel remorse over engaging children for such abuse and exploitation. Offenders also claim that, since the children are often filmed while at play, no harm is being done to them.

The Private Sector

- The private sector may inadvertently promote the conduct of OSAEC activities when their platforms that utilize advanced communication technologies, e.g., social media applications and online payment channels, are used to facilitate the exchange of OSAEC materials and OSAEC-related transactions. This, combined with the availability of free WiFi in public places (as a result of RA 10929), has furthered the breadth and depth of OSAEC and made the challenge to address the issue more difficult for concerned agencies in both the public and private sectors.

- While the "design of the technology itself can make it vulnerable" for exploitation in facilitating OSAEC, some sectors have considered the use of technology to help mitigate the problem. Technology can be used as a medium for raising public awareness about OSAEC, for setting up helplines that the community can use to report possible OSAEC activities, for filtering content delivered through the web, for semi-automated detection of content in materials shared online, and for analysis of chat logs.

- In terms of policy responses, provisions were added to RA 10920 to inhibit access to pornographic websites, and to develop standards and mechanisms that are consistent with existing laws for the protection of children online with the cooperation of telecommunication companies, NGOs, and government agencies.

The Public Sector (Law Enforcers and the Judiciary)

- There are a number of challenges in meting out justice for OSAEC victims. These challenges pertain to (a) the rules of the court especially with regard to the nature of testimonial

evidence, i.e., requiring the child victim to recount his or her experience in court may cause more trauma; (b) appreciation of forensic evidence by prosecutors and judges; (c) logistical/ equipment support in hearing OSAEC cases; (d) lack of prosecutors; and (e) delays in resolving cases.

- The identified weaknesses in the legal framework for the protection of children include (a) perceived overlapping of laws on OSAEC and mandates of anti-OSAEC agencies; (b) lack of enforcement of sanctions to compel the private sector (i.e., ISPs, telcos) to cooperate with law enforcement on OSAEC cases; and (c) gaps in court proceedings.

- Ultimately, OSAEC case resolution and management entails a multi-disciplinary approach and involves the concerted effort of different units of the government both at the national and local levels (e.g., government's justice system or prosecution arm, law enforcement, judiciary, social work, barangays). These public sector institutions need to further collaborate with NGOs and the private sector, international agencies, and inter-agency councils to ensure that the full force of the law is brought to bear on perpetrators and offenders. These actors coordinate in handling OSAEC cases, which begin upon receipt of a referral or report of a possible incident of online child sexual abuse. This continues on to the investigation of the case, as well as the rescue and aftercare of victims. Concurrent with rescue and aftercare are the arrest, case filing, and trial of the accused perpetrators and offenders.

- Efficacy of aftercare is an area that can benefit from deeper study, particularly the integration of community-based rehabilitation in the current menu of child protection services for OSAEC victims. This is also to address the often-complained lack of shelters for rescued victims and in recognition of global evidence that encourages decrease of utility of alternative care facilities. Cognizant of the nuances of the victimization process on OSAEC, there is great potential for further analysis of possible benefits of community-based aftercare.

A girl weaves a bag during a workshop in an NGO based facility. © UNICEF Philippines/2019/SNoorani

Recommendations

Combatting OSAEC is a responsibility of everyone who has children, works with children, and cares for children. In this regard, the study proponents are proposing an integrated and systemic approach in understanding and responding to OSAEC cases, comprising three phases: Prevention, Identification, and Response (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Process flow of a systemic and integrated response to OSAEC
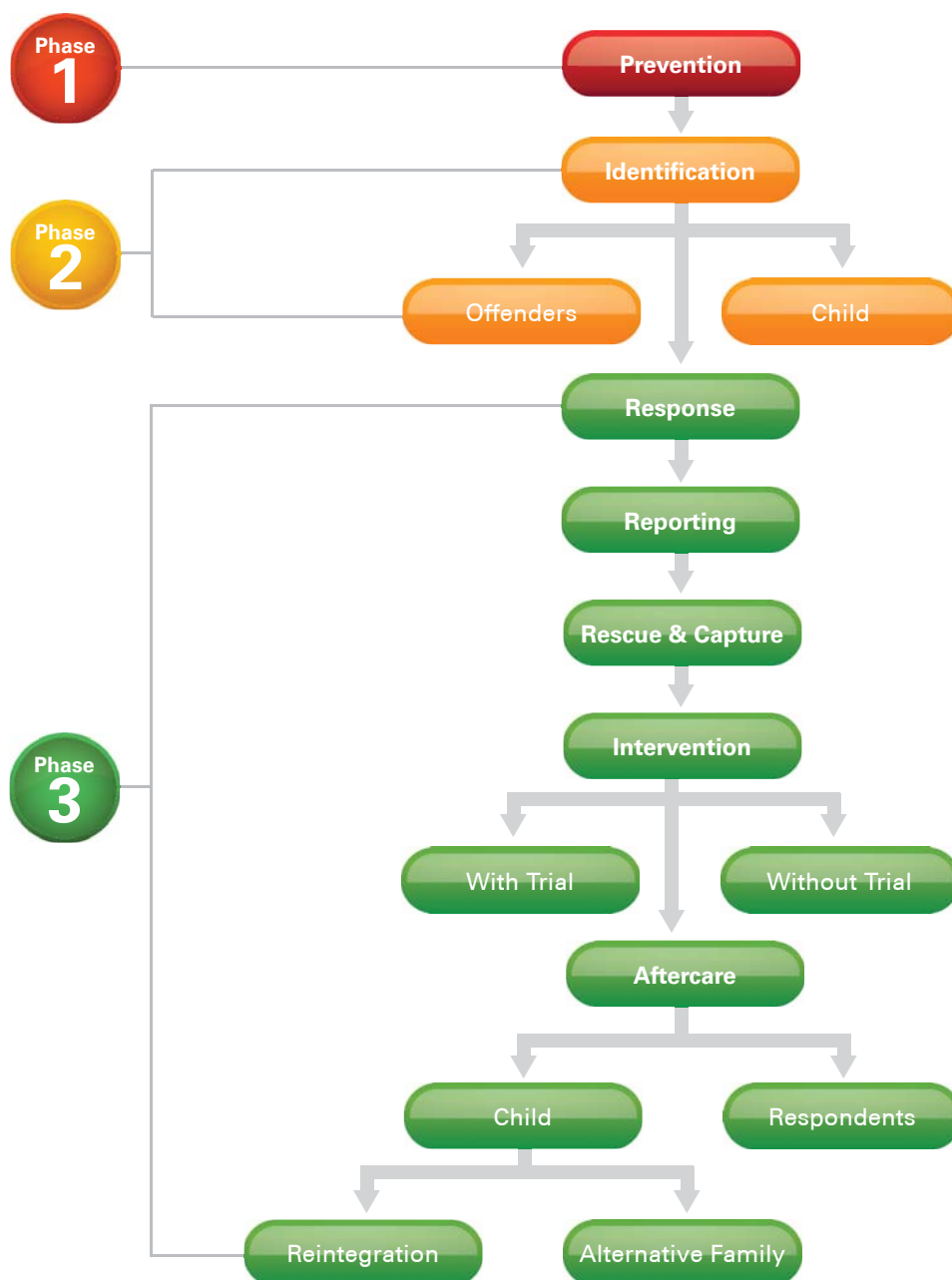
A Three-Phase Integrated and Sytemic Response

These lines of defense against OSAEC can protect the children, especially those who are at risk. The first level of defense involves the individual and his or her immediate family and community. This level of defense advocates that child protection begins at home, in neighborhood, and in school. Programs on information literacy and ethical use of technology should be developed, both for children, their parents, caretakers, guardians and teachers. Schools, in cooperation with DepEd and/ or of their own accord, and as part of the environment that nurtures the overall well-being of the child, should take proactive moves to integrate this program into the basic education curriculum.

Figure 7. Line of Defense vis-a-vis Socio-Ecological Model
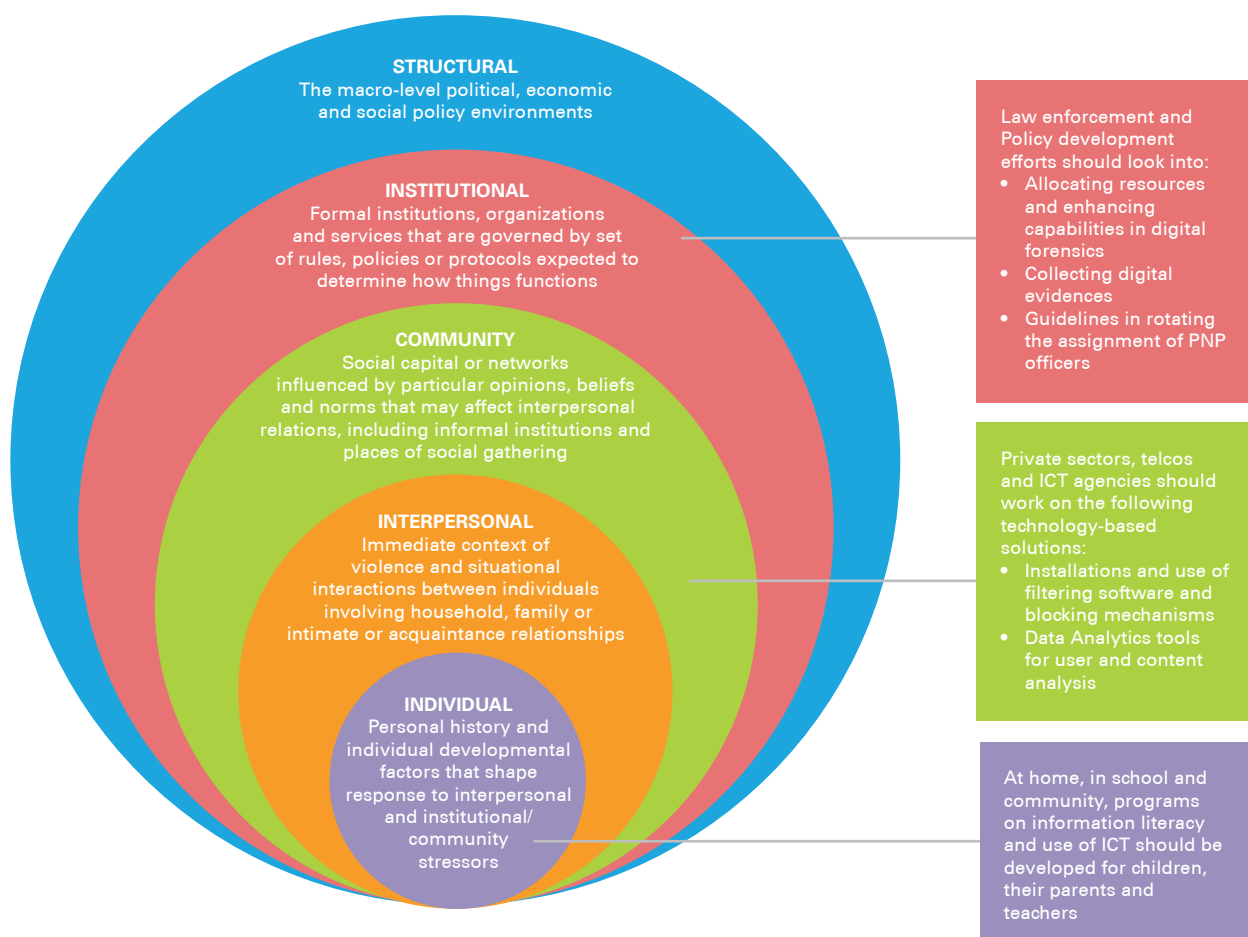

STRUCTURAL
The macro-level political, economic and social policy environments

INSTITUTIONAL
Formal institutions, organizations and services that are governed by set of rules, policies or protocols expected to determine how things functions

COMMUNITY
Social capital or networks influenced by particular opinions, beliefs and norms that may affect interpersonal relations, including informal institutions and places of social gathering

INTERPERSONAL
Immediate context of violence and situational interactions between individuals involving household, family or intimate or acquaintance relationships

INDIVIDUAL
Personal history and individual developmental factors that shape response to interpersonal and institutional/ community stressors

Law enforcement and Policy development efforts should look into:
- Allocating resources and enhancing capabilities in digital forensics
- Collecting digital evidences
- Guidelines in rotating the assignment of PNP officers

Private sectors, telcos and ICT agencies should work on the following technology-based solutions:
- Installations and use of filtering software and blocking mechanisms
- Data Analytics tools for user and content analysis

At home, in school and community, programs on information literacy and use of ICT should be developed for children, their parents and teachers

The second level of defense involves telecommunications and technology companies whose platforms are used for the conduct of online activities. These companies should adopt an active defense stance by not only utilizing software filtering applications to monitor and mitigate the occurrences of OSAEC on their platforms, but also to use advanced computing technologies that can help detect and flag inappropriate content as well as perform analytics to determine correlation among the types of users, content and access with the demographic information of the victims and the perpetrators.

The third level of defense involves the law enforcement agencies, the judicial system, and policy-making bodies. The advanced technologies used by offenders should warrant the need to allot sufficient resources that can sustain the training and acquisition of resources to ensure the capabilities of our law enforcement agencies in digital forensics, and the use of such to expedite court proceedings and case resolution. The judicial system should formulate and enact relevant policies that acknowledge the continuous and rapid advancements in technology, through collaboration with ICT units of the government, specifically DICT and its attached agencies, NPC and NTC.

One set of this study's recommendations—those that pertain to the prevention phase—is framed following the social-ecological model of UNICEF. This is done to illustrate alignment and continuity between the model and the proponents' own approach, as well as consistently emphasize the need to view and understand OSAEC in the context of the prevailing social system in the Philippines and the dynamics of the actors involved in the OSAEC phenomenon (see Figure 7).

The Social Ecological Model is being referenced as a framework for understanding the multifaceted and interactive effects of personal and environmental factors that determine behaviors prompting OSAEC, and for identifying behavioral and organizational leverage points and intermediaries within and across agencies in order to combat OSAEC. There are five nested, hierarchical levels of the model: Individual, interpersonal, community, organizational, and structural (or policy and/or enabling environment). Again, this study's recommendations with regard to preventing OSAEC are framed via the social-ecological model.

Prevention

At the Individual and Family Level

— **Strengthen parenting programs to enhance parent–child relationships.** Regular parenting workshops and training need to be conducted at the barangay level so that more thorough discussion and awareness raising can take place. Aside from the usual parenting issues such as communication and positive disciplining, adding topics on the benefits and risks in the use of digital technology as well as responsible Internet use can be included. Other areas that may need to be considered include the following:

    a. Parents also need to be informed about OSAEC and the risks their children are subject to whenever they go online. Many child advocates also talk about how relationships between children and their parents need to be strengthened. A parenting style that is both loving and firm is believed to be a strong foil to the proliferation of OSAEC.

    b. Parents should be equipped with skills in identifying red flags related to online sexual abuse and exploitation. They should know when their children become potential victims of OSAEC and where they can seek help in such cases.

At the Community Level

- **Formulate and strictly implement local ordinances** that support national laws, policies, and guidelines in both in the prevention and response to OSAEC cases.

- **Develop information, education, and communication materials on OSAEC prevention.** These can be posters, videos, or other forms of visual media that can be distributed in the community.

- **Involve barangay officers, community leaders, and the church in OSAEC awareness campaigns.** Local governments can incorporate the best practices of faith-based organizations in their programs such as creating assessment centers, establishing hotlines dedicated to OSAEC, empowering the youth through a roll out program, providing linkages for employment, and ensuring that OSAEC programs will continue in case public officials are replaced after elections. Increase readiness of communities to identify, design and implement community-based rehabilitation programmes for children victims.

- **Enable barangay-level institutions.** Educate barangay leaders on child protection and OSAEC. Strengthen the Local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPC) and make further moves to ensure the presence of the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC) in all barangays. Have barangay officials conduct home visits as a possible intervention in the community. Strengthen the information campaign on OSAEC-related laws among community members, the barangay tanod, and the local police. Community-based Internet café owners and operators, as well as remittance center operators, should also be made aware of how OSAEC can occur through their services.

At the Level of Institutions

- **Adopt an Integrated Child Protection Framework in the Digital Age.** While there have been many efforts by various stakeholders toward the prevention and response to the increasing number of victims of online sexual abuse and exploitation, many of these are independent and sometimes unrelated initiatives. An integrated framework covering the different facets—from prevention, identification, reporting, rescue, trial, to after care interventions—need to be in place with clear guidelines, mandates, and accountabilities.

- **Adopt standard terminologies that cut across government and non-government service providers.** It is important to disseminate clear definitions of child pornography, cyberbullying, and online grooming as reflected in the laws. For inter-agency stakeholders and responders to effectively collaborate, they need to understand the terminology as this affects response and interventions. Understanding the Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, adopted by the Interagency Working Group in Luxembourg on January 28, 2016, is an important step toward this direction. Conducting forums or workshops that clarify the terminologies and include specific examples should be done on a regular basis.

- **Develop and adhere to child protection policies that address OSAEC-related issues.** Together with the Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Justice (DOJ), and Department of Education (DepEd), law enforcers, child protection specialists, and advocates who play a role in OSAEC prevention and response need to formulate policies that will protect children from online sexual abuse and exploitation. These policies need to be based on an integrated framework and may include, but are not limited to, the following:

  a. Provisions on the strict implementation of child-safeguarding measures online in different settings, including schools, offices, public places, homes, and with personal gadgets. For instance, policies to filter and block age-inappropriate content should be formulated and disseminated in these settings. Mechanisms for reporting the presence and exchange of such materials should be put in place. This means that everyone should also be mindful of how adults communicate with children electronically, such as taking photographs of events where children are involved.

  b. Strengthen collaboration of agencies, schools, and professionals by developing effective and efficient referral systems with a clear definition of roles and common goals. A well-coordinated, consistent information campaign by inter-agency councils will also be helpful in this regard (e.g., developing standards in preparing printed and online materials). Protocols for each phase of the case management system (from reporting to aftercare, with specific roles for all parties involved) should be explicitly defined, understood, and followed across agencies at the national and local levels to make OSAEC response sustainable.

  c. DepEd, as the primary agency in charge of drafting programs and policies in relation to the education of Filipino children, has been mentioned as the potential lead agency in mandating all schools to implement a child protection policy, as well as requiring the integration of online safety and cyber-citizenship in the basic education curriculum, in the light of how technology has become integrated into everyday activities.

- **Law enforcement and prosecution.** The study findings continue to validate the capacity gap analysis results in terms of the disparities in the legal system, hence the following recommendations:

  a. Include a provision that requires remittance centers, financial institutions, and online payment channels to act on OSAEC-related transactions and implement measures for strict compliance.

  b. Strictly enforce the laws on obligating the public, including ISPs, to report any forms of child pornography to law enforcement agencies, and to install available technology tools that will block or filter inappropriate content. The government and the private sector must decide on issues regarding the cost for purchasing needed technology and the strict implementation of such technology as a preventive strategy.

- **Utilize technology for advocacy purposes,** particularly as a means to raise awareness through coordinated efforts in information dissemination and proper education.

- **Allocate a sufficient budget** for all OSAEC efforts and initiatives at the national, local and community levels to be sustainable. This includes a budget to set up working, efficient, updated, and upgraded infrastructure.

- **Include Digital Technology or Online Education in the school curriculum.** It is important that students as early as grade school are educated about the proper use of computers and the Internet. They need to appreciate both the benefits and risks involved when they go online. They need to be given concrete guidelines on all the safety measures in the use of Internet and the proper values and behavior of a good cybercitizen.

The importance of research needs to be emphasized in the programs of the various agencies that are mandated to prevent and respond to OSAEC cases. Research findings can provide evidence-based programs and interventions for the prevention of OSAEC.

The above recommendations can be spearheaded by IACAC-P in coordination with appropriate national government agencies.

At the Structural Level (Policy and/or Enabling Environment)

- **Address gaps in the legal system.** Review, amend, and harmonize as necessary the existing laws, national and local policies, and regulations that are supportive of the cause of OSAEC victims, to clarify terms and mandates on how to respond specifically to OSAEC.

Identification

- **Strengthen BCPCs and/or Violence against Women and Children (VAWC) efforts at the community level** to handle reported incidents involving children Have a dedicated WCPC or women's desk particularly in the rural areas and provide assigned personnel with ample training and sufficient technology resources to enable them to perform their jobs, e.g., conducting investigations.

Response

Reporting

Strategies for responding to OSAEC start with the correct identification of cases. Identification and reporting of both victims and offenders go hand in hand: one cannot report cases unless these are correctly identified.

- **Improve training among law enforcers in investigating cybertips and community reports on OSAEC.** This can include monitoring tweets and social media posts, considered as varying forms of OSAEC help lines; checking OSAEC cases with the use of a centralized database; and conducting surveillance for dubious online transactions involving minors or the presence and exchange of inappropriate content.

- **Upgrade law enforcement technology.** Technology upgrades will significantly help in identifying, gathering, and processing evidence; expediting rescue operations; and coordinating with other agencies. There is a need for stronger implementation of the mandates defined under the law such as the installation of filtering software and the proper collection and storage of digital data to be used as evidence in court.

Child Rescue Operations Concurrent with the Capture of Offenders

- **Harmonize protocols for each phase of the case management system.** Protocols from reporting to rescue and aftercare with specific roles of all involved parties should be explicitly defined, understood, and followed across all agencies to make OSAEC response sustainable. Internal protocols in organizations may exist, but it is not clear when a case is taken to the next phase or who the service provider is (e.g., referral of a small NGO to the police).

- **Apply a child-sensitive rescue protocol.** Protocols that make the impact of rescue operations less traumatic to child victims can also reinforce their trust in rescuing parties and facilitate the process of seeking justice. These protocols may include selecting first responders on the scene whose presence would have the least negative impact, designating social workers who are also trained in OSAEC to work hand-in-hand with law enforcement, and making these social workers available in the event of rescues.

- **Build capacities of frontliners and technology users.** Study participants reported that most of them do not have enough skills to respond to OSAEC cases. Regular training should thus be conducted on proper investigation and rescue, preserving evidence, and monitoring online incidence. Technology companies should support government agencies through policy development, resource sharing, and sustainable training programs in the light of new technologies that may impact OSAEC, e.g., cryptocurrencies and the Dark Net. Families and responders should also be taught on the best ways to take down or delete videos from the Internet, because their continued existence in online platforms can cause further trauma to victims.

- **Provide concessions to expedite rescues.** Child rescue operations concurrent with capture of offenders have a more liberal approach and should thus have less stringent requirements in obtaining search warrants when dealing with OSAEC cases.

- **Require temporary shelters.** Temporary shelters for victims whose parents or other relatives are the OSAEC perpetrators themselves are also needed and should be provided from rescue to inquest. Many NGOs have started to set up assessment centers which should be made available throughout the country for as many children as possible.

- **Support utility of community-based mechanisms.** Government is encouraged to study and implement alternative modalities of rehabilitation that are outside alternative residential care facilities and support implementation of related legislations such as the Foster Care Act. A policy review in the area of aftercare in community settings could be considered.

Trial

- **Capacity building to facilitate trial.** These programs can include (i) increasing knowledge and skills in handling OSAEC cases (e.g., familiarization training on RA 9208 and its different interpretations and remedies for prosecutors); (ii) training on terminologies and the use of search engines to spot OSAEC cases; (iii) continuing professional development to address the constant relocation of trained staff (for IACAT); (iv) orientation on OSAEC laws (for prosecutors and judges); (v) authentication of electronic/digital evidence and guidelines in investigating OSAEC (for PNP and NBI operatives); (vi) detection, investigation, and case build-up skills; and (vii) skills in effectively presenting digital evidence in such a way that it is made admissible in court.

- **Reduce involvement of children in trials.** Respondents have posed questions as to whether requiring children to testify in court would serve their best interests. Thus, finding alternate ways of securing the children's testimonies and also identifying circumstances that would ensure their privacy are of utmost importance, to prevent their re-traumatization.

- **Protect children from media coverage of OSAEC cases.** There is value in not opening testimonies to the public to prevent the child from being subjected to further shaming and bullying. Media coverage of OSAEC cases (especially being broadcast on TV) need to be regulated for the child's protection.

- **Develop child-sensitive court trial and hearing protocols.** It is important that court trials and hearings are sensitive and responsive to the needs of children. This may include child-friendly courtrooms and facilities that address children's safety, protection, and privacy.

- **Other procedural, administrative, and operational considerations** include the following:

  a. Expand OSAEC-related satellite offices across the whole country.

b. Have the courts appreciate and accept digital evidence as sufficient to prosecute alleged offenders, in order to spare the child victim from testifying.

c. Review considerations used for critical arguments in the process of filing OSAEC cases such as jurisdiction, anonymity of transactions, and consent of the minor. Review considerations for use of plea bargaining as part of the rules of court to speed up the resolution of OSAEC cases.

d. Provide logistical/equipment support in hearing OSAEC cases.

e. Hire more prosecutors to hasten OSAEC case resolution.

Aftercare and Reintegration

- **Strengthen services in halfway homes.** Given that the transition point from halfway homes to shelters has some positive effect on the children survivors, firming up psychosocial services at these haflway homes to promptly provide the children with a sense of safety and security may also make for a more seamless reintegration.

- **Enhance implementation and support for foster or kinship care and community-based rehabilitation.** This ensures that children rescued have other placement options and are not only endorsed in alternative residential facilities but are supported in home environment setting.

- **Provide appropriate psychosocial interventions for the survivors.** Appropriate psychological services (performed by licensed psychologists) should be provided in shelters and in communities for the child victims' healing and recovery may also prevent them from eventually become perpetrators themselves. Empowerment training should also be provided as an intervention, involving the development of life skills such as decision making and critical thinking.

- **Design and implement a parent reform program.** Rehabilitation programs can also be developed for parents who were involved in OSAEC cases. Most parents and other community members who became facilitators were convinced that what they did was not wrong or illegal since there was no "touching" involved. This norm can be changed if parent reform programs can be implemented, and these can also complement the psychosocial interventions for the child victims.

- **Provide sustainable livelihood programs for families in the community.** Convincing families to be involved in livelihood programs can be a challenging task since they were already earning easy money from their OSEAC involvement. It is thus not enough to introduce new livelihood programs; families should also be taught the value of hard-earned money acquired legitimately. One way to establish and sustain such programs is to develop cooperatives where several families operate a community-based enterprise. This way, they can also monitor and keep each other from reverting to their illegal ways.

- **Implement reintegration programs for families and the community.** The family and the community should also be educated on how to deal with children who will be reintegrated so that the children will not experience re-traumatization and that they will grow positively despite their abusive experience.

- **Arrange debriefing and regular psychosocial services for first responders and child advocates.** There are frequent accounts of secondary trauma or vicarious traumatization and burnout among those involved in OSAEC, from first responders to house parents in shelters. To ensure that the children continue to be attended well, those who are charged with their safety and care need to be nurtured as well. Periodic psychosocial processing must be made mandatory for these workers. Mechanisms to allow them respite from work may also be necessary. Likewise, those who are new to working with child victims of online sexual abuse and exploitation need to be thoroughly oriented on what to expect, especially in terms of the possible vicarious traumatization that may occur. Recognizing the signs and knowing what to do in such cases can go a long way in ensuring that services for children are always provided by first responders and hild welfare advocates who are also well cared for.

- **Harmonize protocols for each phase of the case management system.** Protocols from reporting to aftercare with specific roles of all involved parties should be explicitly defined, understood, and followed across all agencies to make OSAEC response sustainable. Internal protocols in organizations may exist, but it is not clear when a case is taken to the next phase or who the service provider is (e.g., referral of a small NGO to the police).

Other Recommendations

- **Maintain UNICEF's role as lead agency against OSAEC.** As the initiator of this research undertaking, UNICEF should continue to take the lead in engaging different stakeholders, experts, and the general public to continue the discourse on preventing, minimizing, and addressing the problems brought about by OSAEC. In this regard, UNICEF is encouraged to

    a. continue to conduct research on OSAEC so that more evidence-based recommendations for prevention, identification, and response can be made.

    b. support awareness-raising and capacity-building programs for regional and local service providers and local officials (provincial to barangay levels);

    c. support advocacy and information campaigns for legislators who are not aware of OSAEC; and

    d. support the production of a harmonized, integrated guidebook in handling OSAEC cases that includes non-government players and is based on a more focused and in-depth study of case management processes.

- **Encourage alternative recreational programs.** To keep children from using gadgets most of the time, encourage alternative recreational programs such as organized sports activities, arts workshops, or skill building that can be eventually be parlayed as an income-generating trade (e.g., handicrafts). Government agencies such as TESDA and the Philippine Sports Commission can be tapped to provide these programs.

- **Facilitate access to education.** To further counter the "easy money" mentality that anchors OSAEC, government should provide free or affordable education to child victims of online sexual abuse and exploitation. Parents should then be actively encouraged to have their children take advantage of such an opportunity.

A summary of these recommendations can be found in Table 2. A coherent theme should be noted in that all initiatives need to have concrete implementing guidelines and mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and follow through.

Finally, there is a need to collaborate among stakeholders in crafting OSAEC-response programs targeted at specific audiences. Examples of such programs may include the following:

a. A parenting program delivered using existing government structures such as DSWD's 4Ps, focused on how parents can effectively monitor their children's use of gadgets such as mobile phones, tablets, laptops, and desktops, to prevent and respond to threats to their children's safety from potential OSAEC offenders and perpetrators.

b. A program for communities through community development efforts of barangay health workers, on how to collectively respond to known or suspected OSAEC perpetrators residing in their communities, and to protect their children from these persons (who might also be their family members).

c. A program through schools that teaches students to detect and respond to online threats to their safety and well-being.

d. A program designed and targeted for out-of-school youth, street children, and other youth who are vulnerable to OSAEC that discusses behavior change strategies, e.g., how to say "No" to invitations of suspicious strangers to meet online or in person.

e. A rehabilitation program specifically designed for OSAEC offenders during their incarceration.

f. A program to successfully reintegrate offender-parents and their children once parents' prison sentence has been served.

g. A debriefing program for front-line persons dealing with OSAEC rescue/capture operations.

h. A program specifically designed for legal personnel handling OSAEC cases, on ensuring that a child victim's well-being is safeguarded during the offender's litigation process, and that attention is paid to the OSAEC frontliners' own well-being. Such programs may be designed with the help of professionals in the fields of social work, forensics, and clinical psychology.

Table 2. Matrix of Recommended Efforts

	Prevention	Identification	Response
Institutional	• Adopt an integrated Child Protection Framework in the Digital Age • Adopt standards in terminologies • Develop and adhere to Child Protection Policies that address OSAEC • Address gaps in the Legal System • Utilize technology to prevent and combat OSAEC • Allocate sufficient budget for OSAEC • Include Digital Technology or Cybersafety in the curriculum in schools	• Strengthen BCPC or VAWC to detect and handle OSAEC cases	**Reporting** • Upgrade Law Enforcement technology **Child Rescue Operations** • Protocols for each phase of Case Management System • Child-sensitive rescue protocol • Capacity building of frontliners and technology users **Trial and Child Victim's Involvement** • Capacity building • Expand OSAEC-related satellite offices in the regions • Court appreciation and acceptance of digital evidence **Child Victim** • Reduce involvement of children in trials • Protect children from media coverage **Aftercare** • Strengthen services in halfway homes • Provide appropriate psychosocial interventions for survivors • Enhance use of community-based rehabilitation programmes
Community	• Formulate and implement local ordinances • Develop communication materials on OSAEC • Involve and educate community leaders on child protection		• Debriefing and regular psychosocial services for first responders • Harmonize protocols for each phase of case management • Support implementation of foster or kinship care, including provision of security for the same.
Individual and Family	• Parental education		• Parent reform program • Sustainable livelihood programs • Reintegration programs

Challenges and Limitations of the Study

Online sexual abuse and exploitation of children is a complex phenomenon that involves different systems and subsystems. Although the original plan was to interview different respondents for each case, including the families of the victims, offenders, members of the community, and all those involved in the rehabilitation and aftercare of the survivors, rescue and case litigation, the team did not meet this target, given the challenges in recruiting willing and available respondents for each case. Many respondents chose not to give details about their knowledge of some cases, mindful of confidentiality and data privacy issues. Representatives of targeted private sectors (e.g. Remittance Centers) were also hesitant to accept interviews and share their protocols due to their strict adherence to the data privacy act. It should be noted that data collection had been done at the time the Data Privacy Act was in the news, and respondents tended to have many different interpretations of the law. Thus, despite having leads for OSAEC-related cases, our interviewees representing the rehabilitation, aftercare, rescue and litigation of child survivors shared only general information due to the confidentiality of the cases. In relation to this, identifying child victims and perpetrators was also challenging, given that some had ongoing legal cases filed. Another difficulty encountered was getting family members and community members to participate in the study.

Despite OSAEC being a widespread phenomenon in the Philippines, this study only covered four regions in the country. The 22 cases identified are mostly those that are currently handled by the DSWD. Except for two adult respondents who were formerly victims of OSAEC, victim survivors were not really given a chance to share their stories, since it had been agreed that no child would be interviewed, and also since most of the cases identified still had ongoing legal cases. This is also consistent with the child safeguarding framework adopted by this study. Therefore, the report on child victims was based on reports and perceptions of adults (e.g. case managers, house parents) who worked closely with the children. Finally, conducting a full case study was not made possible due to the abovementioned concerns about data privacy and confidentiality. Thus, the complete picture of a case became difficult to analyze.

National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children

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