Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Philippines:

Analysis and Recommendations for Governments, Industry, and Civil Society

SUMMARY REPORT

Study Partners

International Justice Mission (**IJM**) in partnership with the U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (**TIP Office**) and the Philippine Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (**IACAT**).

With

Implementing Partners

- Department of Justice (DOJ), Philippines
- Philippine National Police Women and Children Protection Center (PNP WCPC), Philippines
- National Bureau of Investigation—Anti-Human Trafficking Division (NBI—AHTRAD), Philippines
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), United States
- National Crime Agency (NCA), United Kingdom
- The National Child Exploitation Crime Centre (NCECC), of the Sensitive and Specialized Investigative Services (SSIS) Branch, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Canada
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), United States
- Nordic Liaison Office for Police and Customs Cooperation (NLO), representing Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland

Study Advisory Group

- INTERPOL
- Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children
- Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT)
- International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC)

Research Team

IJM's research team contributing to this study included Rachael Jackson as research lead, Brianna Gehring as program lead and study manager, Dr. Ashley Russell as study coordinator, Dr. Kyle Vincent as contracted statistician, Nathan Sanger and Brandon Kaopuiki as law enforcement advisors, and data collectors: Kevin Bai, Astewaye Yigzaw, Eric Heintz, Chris Conrad, and Valerie Gleisberg.

The full research study can be found at ijm.org/studies.

Photos taken with consent. Many children pictured are actors and not victims of exploitation. Identities of victims have been obscured in order to maintain confidentiality.

"It is symbolic of a jigsaw puzzle –many of us hold different and important parts of the answer, but we must work together to develop a more holistic picture of these crimes ... This is what this report represents –a starting point to trying to answer complex questions concerning the online sexual exploitation of children –a start to putting together that complex puzzle by thinking about how we can use the data we have to help to protect children."

- Dr. Roberta Sinclair, VGT Secretariat Member

Key Definitions

Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) The production, for the purpose of online publication or transmission, of visual depictions (e.g. photos, videos, live streaming) of the sexual abuse or exploitation of a minor for a third party who is not in the physical presence of the victim, in exchange for compensation.

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

OSEC Trafficker Any person who sexually abuses or exploits a child through the means of the internet through offering CSEM and/or a minor or adult for the purpose of hands-on sexual exploitation in exchange for compensation. According to Philippine Law (RA10364), this facilitation is a trafficking offense, thus this report uses the term "OSEC trafficker" or "trafficker" for brevity.

OSEC Customer[1] Any person who provides financial compensation to an OSEC trafficker or child for any form of CSEM or for any in-person sexual exploitation of a minor. Customers in OSEC cases typically actively participate in the sexual abuse of the minor/s through requesting or dictating abuse to order in advance and/or directing abuse as it occurs via livestream.

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

[1] Both the sale (facilitation by the domestic "trafficker") and the purchase (offending by the foreign "customer") of OSEC are criminal acts that violate the human trafficking laws in the Philippines and the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (Palermo Protocol). For the sake of clarity and readability in this report, the terms OSEC Customer and OSEC Trafficker are used to differentiate between the roles of the criminals involved in this trafficking offense.

Introduction

OSEC is defined as "the production, for the purpose of online publication or transmission, of visual depictions (e.g. photos, videos, live streaming) of the sexual abuse or exploitation of a minor for a third party who is not in the physical presence of the victim, in exchange for compensation."

Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) is a complex, hidden crime that is particularly challenging for the global community to measure and address. The lack of global OSEC data, the inconsistency in data collection, sharing and analysis across agencies, and the complexity of internet-facilitated crimes has made it almost impossible to accurately study and understand this crime. Yet, accurate information about its nature and scale is critical for informing and measuring the impact of stakeholder interventions to protect vulnerable children from ongoing exploitation and more effectively prevent this crime. To both set a baseline of the existing global data and catalyze future research efforts, International Justice Mission (IJM) brought together leading agencies from across multiple disciplines as well as research experts to collaboratively take on this challenge: examine existing data sources and research methodologies in order to provide meaningful

information about this crime that would be valuable for understanding its scale as well as informing interventions to combat it.

This report presents the results of a 2019 study into the nature and scale of OSEC in the Philippines. This study was led by IJM, in partnership with the Philippine Government and a variety of stakeholders, under the U.S. - Philippines Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership between the U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Government of the Philippines. IJM is grateful for the extraordinary participation of the 14 partners representing governments, law enforcement, researchers, and non-governmental organizations, who generously shared their data and case histories, consulted on study methodology, and shared their expertise in the implementation and review of this study. This collaboration sets a strong foundation for future efforts to more effectively study and combat this global and local crime.

A Dangerous Side to the Internet

Access to the internet has brought increased opportunities to children across the globe. The internet provides access to information and new perspectives, learning, the global marketplace, and connections to friends and family who live far away. However, this access has introduced new risks and dangers to children. Child sex offenders who would prey on victims through in-person, contact abuse can now abuse children anywhere using the world wide web, and technology has created a marketplace where this abuse can now be bought and sold online.

As high-speed internet connectivity has spread across much of the globe, offenders adopted its use as an additional method through which to exploit children. This newer, technological form of exploitation provides offenders convenient access to minors from home, work, or anywhere their mobile devices can access the internet, and it has largely shielded them from law enforcement detection and intervention. Vulnerable children in developing countries – especially those with widespread internet access but insufficiently resourced justice

systems – have been targeted by online offenders in similar ways as they were previously targeted by traveling offenders.

Online crimes against children occur in many forms – sharing of abuse images, manipulating children online for abuse, sextortion, and trafficking. However, reliable, quality data on these crimes is lacking.

The immediate and repeated consequence of this lack of data is a reduced ability of electronic service providers (ESPs), law enforcement, and others to respond effectively to specific instances of abuse. The longer-term impact is that stakeholders are inhibited from understanding changes in specific online crime types over time and tailoring responses to fit. Nonetheless, accurate information about the nature and scale of these crimes is critical for informing interventions by law enforcement, NGOs, industry leaders, and others to protect vulnerable children from ongoing exploitation and more effectively prevent abuse over time.

From 2011 through the end of 2019, IJM's program has supported the Philippines in responding to 171 cases of OSEC, resulting in 571 victims rescued, 229 suspects charged, and 76 convictions.

Examining OSEC

This study aims to look into the issue of OSEC, a subset of internet crimes against children. For the purposes of this study, OSEC is defined as "the production, for the purpose of online publication or transmission, of visual depictions (e.g. photos, videos, live streaming) of the sexual abuse or exploitation of a minor for a third party who is not in the physical presence of the victim, in exchange for compensation."

This study addresses OSEC so that law enforcement, ESPs, NGOs, and other practitioners globally may have greater ability to understand and address it more fully. It is of great value for stakeholders to understand and combat all forms of internet crimes against children, and there is a growing body of work in this area. However, while much of the existing research and interventions targeting the prevention of online crime focus on the sharing of abusive images more generally, this study aims to examine a major source of new abuse material where child victims are exploited in situations of often ongoing and violent abuse, with traffickers feeding the demand for new material from customers around the world.

What marks OSEC as unique from other forms of internet crimes against children is its commercial element. In OSEC cases, typically an offender, referred to in this report as an "OSEC customer," sends payment via a money transfer agency (MTA) to the OSEC trafficker, who has access to children and abuses or exploits them to produce child sexual exploitation material (CSEM). This material is often transmitted via live-streaming video communications platforms. These acts constitute trafficking in persons, as defined by the Palermo Protocol.

Livestreaming and creating CSEM on demand allows for the remote OSEC customer to take an active role in creating the visual display of child sexual abuse and exploitation by directing the actions of the trafficker and exploited children. Major ESPs with livestreaming functionality typically do not monitor such data streams for possible CSEM. Because the livestream does not, by nature, result in a stored image or video file – the most commonly detected indicators of internet crimes against children – detection methods in common use do not typically recognize livestreaming OSEC. This results in the majority of instances remaining unreported. The evidence that does exist is often spread across different platforms including social media apps, MTAs, and computers/mobile devices, making it difficult for ESPs, law enforcement, and others to identify when this crime occurs.

Thus, to understand OSEC better, this study closely examines the available information across partners in the law enforcement and child protection space, illuminating a crime that occurs in the shadows and providing stakeholders with valuable information on where and how this crime occurs, with a particular focus on investigations of OSEC originating from the Philippines. This study looks at global data where possible, but narrows into the Philippines specifically because IJM works with the Government of the Philippines to support efforts to combat OSEC, and this study is a part of IJM's programming efforts there. Live-streaming OSEC is not unique to the Philippines, but it is believed to be more prevalent in the Philippines than in other countries due to numerous enabling factors such as widespread, inexpensive access to internet, a robust money transfer infrastructure, widespread English language proficiency, and the country's historic commercial sex industry impacting its reputation as a sex trafficking source country.

Methodology

This study examines data from across three major sources – CyberTipline reports submitted by ESPs to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), a survey of OSEC cases investigated by some of the law enforcement agencies engaged in the Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT), and the case files of OSEC cases originating in the Philippines that have been referred to or investigated by Philippine law enforcement agencies. Together, these data illuminate both the nature and scale of online sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines and provide a clearer understanding of the criminals and victims involved, as well as how and where crimes may be occurring.

The study has three major research objectives. Each objective was achieved through a separate study methodology. (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Research Objectives and Methodology

1 Estimate the baseline prevalence of internet-based child sexual exploitation (CSE) and OSEC in the Philippines

METHODOLOGY:

Employ a mark-recapture methodology with data from NCMEC CyberTipline reports to estimate the number and percent of Philippine IP addresses used for CSE generally and OSEC specifically.

2 Assess the nature of OSEC in the Philippines during the baseline time period

METHODOLOGY:

Conduct an in-depth case file review of OSEC cases investigated by Philippine law enforcement agencies, in order to gather data on the offending process and create offender and victim typologies based on previous cases.

3 Examine the Philippines as a global hotspot for OSEC during the baseline time period

METHODOLOGY:

Analyze data from global law enforcement agencies and from NCMEC CyberTipline reports that were classified as involving incidents of "online enticement" to better understand OSEC cases in the Philippines as compared to the global context.

# Estimating the Prevalence of Internet-based CSE and OSEC in the Philippines

This section presents the results of the analysis of the NCMEC CyberTipline reports identifying IP addresses used for CSE linked to the Philippines for the study period, 2010-2017.

IP Addresses Identified in CyberTipline Reports

There was a consistent, sharp rise in the number of IP addresses used for CSE linked to the Philippines between 2014 and 2017.

During the study period (2010-2017), a total of 125,032 Philippine-based CyberTipline reports matching the study criteria were reported to NCMEC. These CyberTipline reports identified 193,405 IP addresses used for CSE. Since 2014, there has been a consistent increase in the number of IP addresses used for CSE linked to the Philippines.

Figure 2. Number of IP Addresses Reported to the Philippines Weekly, 2010-2017
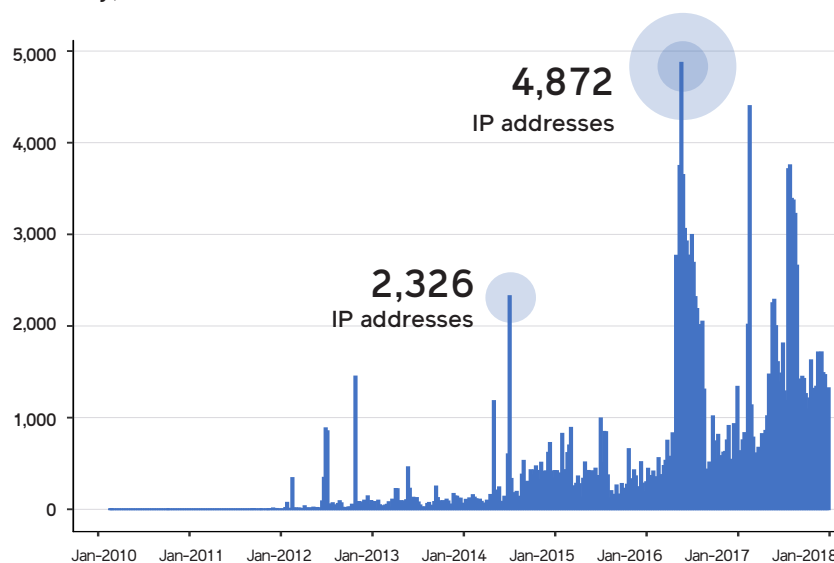
## Estimated Prevalence of Child Sexual Exploitation

The estimated number/prevalence rate of IP addresses used for CSE each year more than tripled between 2014 and 2017.

Based on the mark-recapture analysis, the estimated number of IP addresses used for child sexual exploitation (CSE) each year rose from around 23,333 in 2014 to 81,723 in 2017. This corresponds to a growth in the prevalence rate from about 43 out of every 10,000 IP addresses being used for CSE in 2014 to 149 out of every 10,000 IP addresses being used for CSE in 2017. Due to limitations in the data, it is not clear if this increase was reflective of an actual rise in the occurrence of the crime, a rise in the reporting of the crime, or both.

Figure 3. Estimated Number of IP Addresses Used for CSE in Each 365-Day Time Period between 2014 and 2017

Figure 4. Map of IP addresses linked to Philippines CyberTipline Reports identifying Internet Based CSE
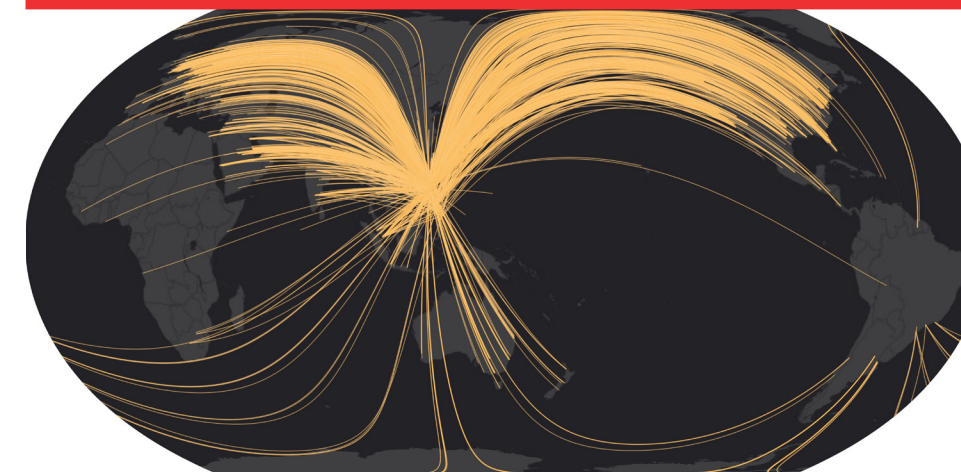
This map was created by IP addresses included in NCMEC CyberTipline reports to the Philippines, between 2014 and 2017. Lines show links between IP addresses in the Philippines and IP addresses identified in other countries by CyberTip ID.

Estimated Prevalence of OSEC

Due to inconsistencies in the quality of the data within the open-ended text fields in CyberTipline reports, it was not possible to estimate the percent of internet-based CSE that included suspected OSEC activity.

This study aimed to estimate the prevalence of OSEC by examining CyberTipline reports for apparent OSEC activity in the open-ended text field. However, the analysis found that it was not possible to classify the type of activity in the vast majority of CyberTipline reports. Additionally, none of the CyberTipline reports reviewed involved the sharing of livestreamed abuse. Because livestreaming of CSEM is not currently detected by ESPs, these instances remain unreported to NCMEC and to law enforcement.
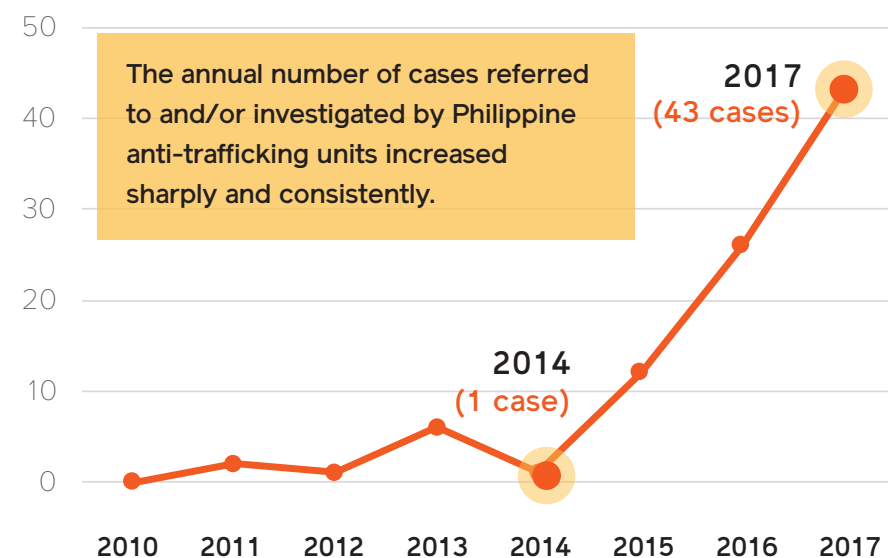
Assessing the Nature of OSEC

This section presents the results of the in-depth review of Philippine National Police Women and Children Protection Center (PNP WCPC) and National Bureau of Investigation—Anti-Human Trafficking Division (NBI-AHTRAD) OSEC case files between 2010-2017. A total of 92 case files were reviewed.

OSEC Case Initiation

INTERNATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

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

Figure 5. Number of OSEC Cases Referred to and/or Investigated by Philippine Law Enforcement by Year, 2010-2017

The annual number of cases referred to and/or investigated by Philippine anti-trafficking units increased sharply and consistently.

2017 (43 cases)

2014 (1 case)

OSEC Victim Typology

381 victims Philippine law enforcement agencies identified 381 victims in 90 OSEC cases investigated between 2011 and 2017.
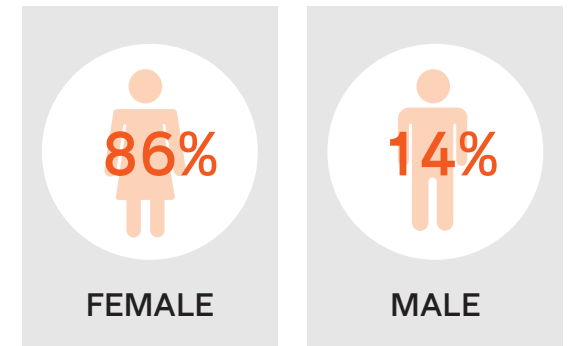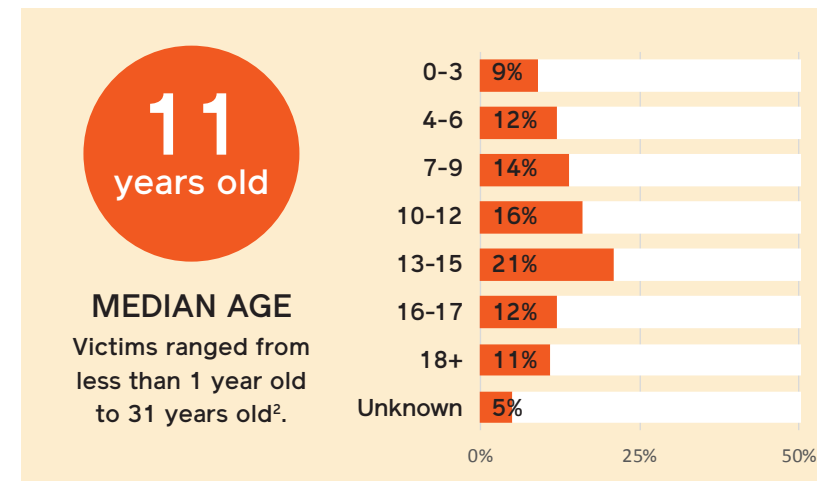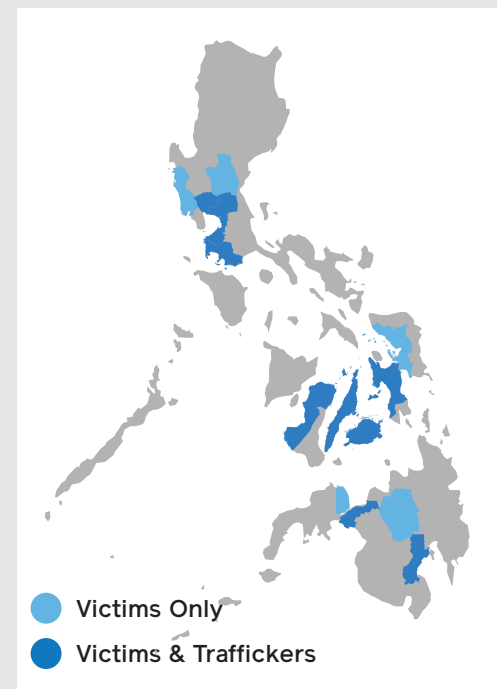
86% FEMALE **14% MALE**

11 years old

MEDIAN AGE

Victims ranged from less than 1 year old to 31 years old[2].

Age	Percent
0-3	9%
4-6	12%
7-9	14%
10-12	16%
13-15	21%
16-17	12%
18+	11%
Unknown	5%

0% 25% 50%

OSEC was usually a family-based crime.

Of the 217 victims where the relationship to the trafficker was known, the abuse was perpetrated by...

41% Biological parents **42%** Other relatives

- Of the 285 victims that had been rescued, about 96% were rescued at the same time as at least one other person.
- Of those rescued together, 40% were siblings, and another 13% shared some other familial relationship (e.g. cousin).
- The relationship between victims rescued together was unknown for 39% of victims.

4+ average victims per case with 10 cases involving 10 or more victims.

YEAR 1 YEAR 2 **Without intervention, the abuse often lasted for years.**

Among the 43 victims for whom the exact length of abuse was known, the average length of abuse was two years, ranging in length from two months to four years.

Figure 6. Locations of Victims Rescued and Suspected Traffickers Arrested

● Victims Only
● Victims & Traffickers

Notably, law enforcement has rescued victims in more areas than areas in which they have arrested suspects. This is indicative of a growing victim-centric approach to OSEC investigations, in which law enforcement appropriately prioritizes victim rescue and child protective actions, even when a timely arrest cannot be made.

[2] Although these victims are not minors (as required by the study's definition of OSEC), they are still considered to be trafficking victims according to Philippine law and were thus included in the analyses. All but two adult victims were identified in cases that also involved minor victims. The two adult victims that were not identified in a case that also involved minor victims were identified together and were both 18 years old at the time of their rescue.

Survivors of OSEC: What Do We Know?

SPOTLIGHT

IJM has assisted the authorities in the rescue of 571 children in 171 cases of OSEC in the Philippines[3]. In all these cases, IJM collaborates closely with the Philippine Government's Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and NGO partners to provide comprehensive, trauma-informed aftercare services, including collaborative case management, therapy, education and economic empowerment, and legal assistance.

As this study and IJM's casework experience has found, survivors of OSEC include more boys, younger children, and mixed-gender sibling groups than survivors of street and establishment-based child sex trafficking. This unique nature of OSEC victimization poses challenges for the restoration of victims, in particular for those whose families or relatives were involved in the exploitation and abuse.

Understanding the Challenges:

While there have been strong efforts to respond to the short and long term needs of OSEC survivors, there remains a need for expanded protective custody options for this demographic of children. In the Philippines, IJM and DSWD are collaborating closely to ensure that there are more safe placement options for mixed-gender sibling groups and boys. OSEC survivors have also included infants and toddlers. Options for this population are even more challenging as very young children may be more likely to experience positive aftercare outcomes in a family-based setting such as kinship or foster care; IJM, DSWD and partners are working together to expand and strengthen these care options for children while they await reintegration.

IJM and partners have also found that the safe reintegration of children back into their communities and families of origin can pose many challenges. Survivors often return into settings where family and community members tolerated or supported the crime without understanding or acknowledging the severe harm that OSEC causes. Reintegration without thorough safety assessments and support services in place for families and communities could leave children vulnerable to revictimization.

Survivors of child sexual abuse often experience complex trauma, which describes both exposure to multiple traumatic events (abuse, neglect, etc.) and the wide-ranging, long-term impact of this exposure. Complex trauma can impact a child's development and wellbeing, including cognition, physical health, and the ability to form secure caregiver attachments and healthy peer relationships.

The complex nature of OSEC as a crime presents additional challenges to trauma recovery. This includes an unknown element of potential ongoing revictimization; there is no clear 'end' to the abuse when images and videos continue to recirculate on the internet accessible to an unknown number of perpetrators. This may make it difficult for a survivor to resolve or identify an end to the abuse. The young age of many OSEC victims also makes disclosure of the abuse difficult. Not all survivors, especially very young children, are aware of what is happening to them during online exploitation or that they have even been exploited. As noted, a large percentage of cases involve trafficking by family members, which results in care challenges when survivors are removed from their homes and placed in protective custody. When parents and family members are involved in the abuse, this can result in confusion, betrayal, shame, and broken trust. Another layer of trauma involves child victims who may have been coerced or forced to engage in sexual contact with another child (including siblings) as directed to do so by a trafficker. Additionally, survivors often struggle with guilt when the abuser is a family member and is incarcerated, especially if they testified against them in the trial process.

As the Philippine Government and its partners are empowering OSEC survivors toward restoration, they are collaboratively developing approaches that will be valuable tools for serving victims in other contexts. To learn more about promising practices in the care of OSEC survivors and strengthening the continuum of care at individual, family, community and systems levels, see the full report of this study.

[3] As of the end of 2019.

OSEC Customer Typology

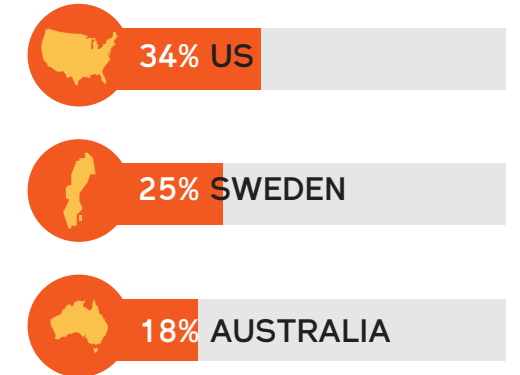Customer typology information is based on 44 case referrals with customer information.

MALE
All customers were men, ranging from 40 to 72 years old.

Customers tended to be from Western countries.

39% of cases involved customers who were known to have traveled to the Philippines at some point in their lives.

9% of cases involved customers with a known history of contact abuse of children in the Philippines.

34% US
25% SWEDEN
18% AUSTRALIA

OSEC Trafficker Typology

Trafficker typology information is based on 71 cases, involving 141 traffickers, investigated by Philippine law enforcement.

FEMALE
66% of traffickers were female.

27 years old
MEDIAN AGE
Traffickers ranged in age from 15 to 76 years old.[4]

96%
FILIPINO
Only five traffickers were foreign nationals.

An average of two traffickers per case. Of the 39 cases for which there were multiple traffickers...

All female traffickers 36%
All male traffickers 8%
All transgender traffickers[5] 5%
Female and male traffickers 51%
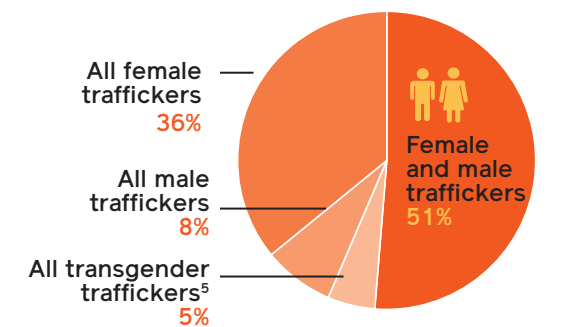
OSEC Offending Process

EN
ENGLISH
All traffickers communicated in English.

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

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

[4] Note: Philippine law provides for minor offenders (less than 18 years of age) to be classified as children in conflict with the law (CICL) and receive non-criminal interventions under the custody of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

[5] The term "transgender" is used to describe people whose gender presentation differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

A Crime With Global Impact:
People of the Philippines vs. Vilma,[6] 2016

OSEC is a global crime, in which a single OSEC trafficker can be connected with multiple OSEC customers from around the world and vice versa. This global reach can serve to complicate the law enforcement response. However, with strong global coordination among law enforcement agencies, a case starting with the investigation of a single perpetrator can cause a chain reaction, resulting in the arrest of multiple OSEC customers and traffickers and the rescue of many victims across the globe.
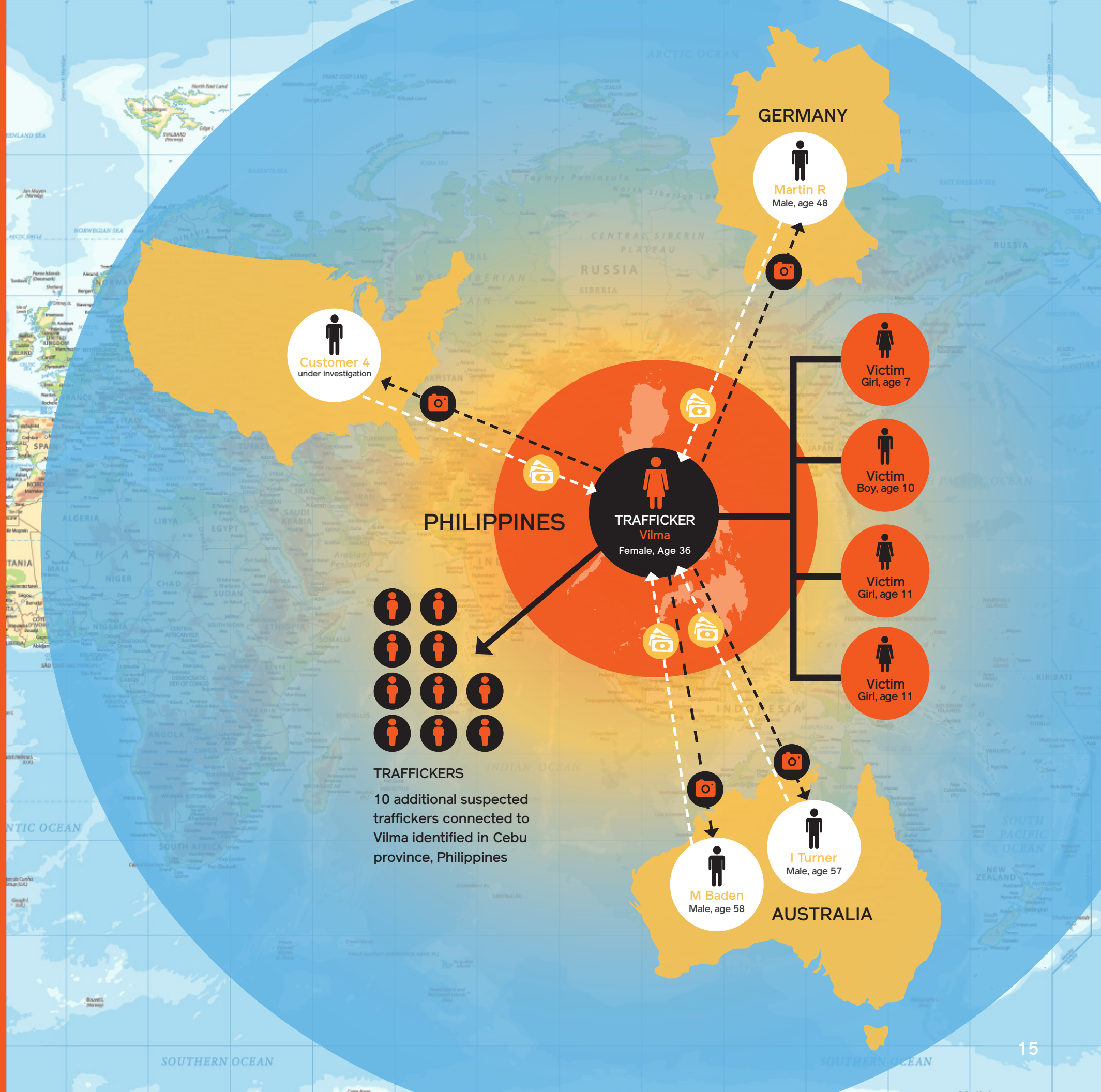
An emblematic example of this is the case of People of the Philippines vs. Vilma, 2016. The case originated when law enforcement in Australia arrested I. Turner, who was found to be purchasing CSEM from a trafficker in the Philippines. Australian law enforcement referred information about the OSEC trafficker to Philippine law enforcement who investigated the case locally, identifying Vilma and finding that she was providing recorded videos, photos, and live-streamed abuse of her own children to online offenders from the US, Australia and Germany. This material involved contact abuse directed by Vilma, as she communicated with the overseas customers in real-time. Vilma communicated with her customers around the world through popular video-enabled social media platforms and email, receiving payments via money transfer agencies.

In September 2016, The Philippines National Police arrested Vilma and rescued four victims – all of which were Vilma's own children.

Following Vilma's arrest, evidence collected by Philippine law enforcement helped to identify additional OSEC customers abroad and additional OSEC traffickers within the Philippines. Information on the customers was referred to the relevant countries' law enforcement agencies for follow-up. Investigations associated with Vilma's case resulted in the arrest and conviction of Martin R. in Germany for associated offenses in 2018, sentenced to four years and six months imprisonment; M. Baden in Australia for related charges in 2019, sentenced to seven years and four months imprisonment; and the conviction of I. Turner in Australia, sentenced to four years and six months in prison and eligible for parole after two years. Investigation of additional OSEC customers is still underway.

In 2018, Vilma was convicted and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. The four survivors received therapy and other services in the care of Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development and are now living with a member of their extended family in a formal kinship care foster family program.

[6] A pseudonym has been used in order to protect the identities of the victims in this case.

GERMANY

Martin R
Male, age 48

Customer 4
under investigation

PHILIPPINES

TRAFFICKER
Vilma
Female, Age 36

Victim
Girl, age 7

Victim
Boy, age 10

Victim
Girl, age 11

Victim
Girl, age 11

TRAFFICKERS

10 additional suspected traffickers connected to Vilma identified in Cebu province, Philippines

M Baden
Male, age 58

I Turner
Male, age 57

AUSTRALIA

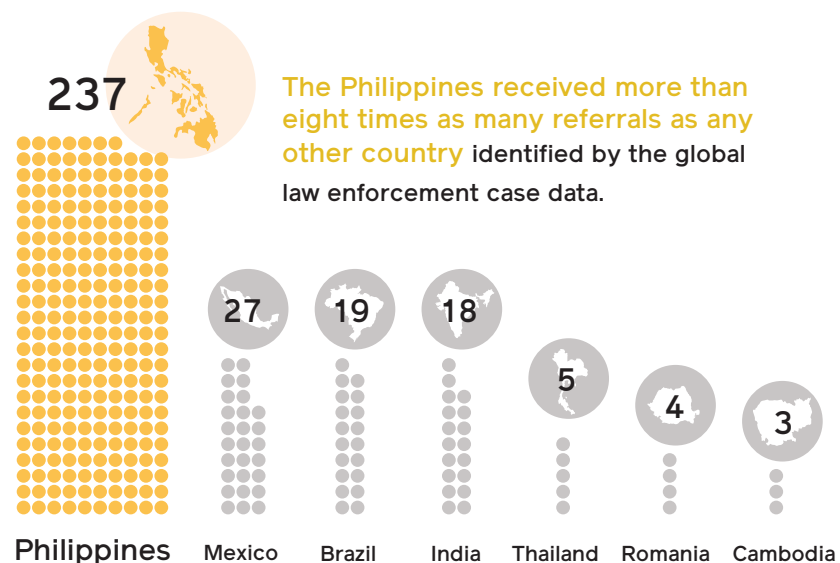# Examining the Philippines as a Global Hotspot for OSEC

This section presents the results of two separate data collection/analysis efforts: one exploring global data from law enforcement agencies on OSEC cases that had been referred from one country to another; and one examining NCMEC data on CyberTipline reports classified by NCMEC analysts as "online enticement" involving two or more countries. Both data collection efforts were focused on data from within the baseline time period (2010-2017).

Global Law Enforcement OSEC Case Data

According to global law enforcement data, the Philippines was the largest known source country of OSEC cases.

The data were disaggregated by country to which the OSEC case was referred. These data seemed to verify what OSEC investigators have long acknowledged—that the Philippines is an OSEC hotspot. The Philippines received more than eight times as many referrals as any other country identified by the global law enforcement case data. Failure to appear on this list does not indicate that a country does not have an OSEC problem, but presence on this list is evidence of at least some incidents of OSEC.

Figure 7. OSEC Source Countries Identified by Global Law Enforcement Case Data[7]

237 Philippines

The Philippines received more than eight times as many referrals as any other country identified by the global law enforcement case data.

27 Mexico
19 Brazil
18 India
5 Thailand
4 Romania
3 Cambodia

CyberTipline Reports Involving Online Enticement

The Asia Pacific region was the third largest source of "online enticement" CyberTipline reports.

CyberTipline reports containing instances of OSEC were most likely to be classified under the incident type "online enticement" if reviewed by a NCMEC analyst. The study examined the locations of "online enticement" CyberTipline reports made available to law enforcement agencies in two or more countries and found that the majority of "online enticement" CyberTipline reports matching the criteria (3,225) were made available to law enforcement agencies in North America. Europe had the second highest number (1,649) of multi-country "online enticement" CyberTipline reports. North America and Europe are known to be home to many OSEC customers but may have many OSEC traffickers and victims as well.[8] Asia-Pacific, the region in which the Philippines is located, had the third highest number (819) of multi-country "online enticement" CyberTipline reports globally. This region includes a mix of countries that may have a combination of OSEC customers and traffickers or victims (Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan) and countries that likely have far more OSEC traffickers and victims than customers (Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Cambodia).

Figure 8. Regions Receiving NCMEC CyberTipline Reports Involving Two or More Countries Related to "Online Enticement of Children"
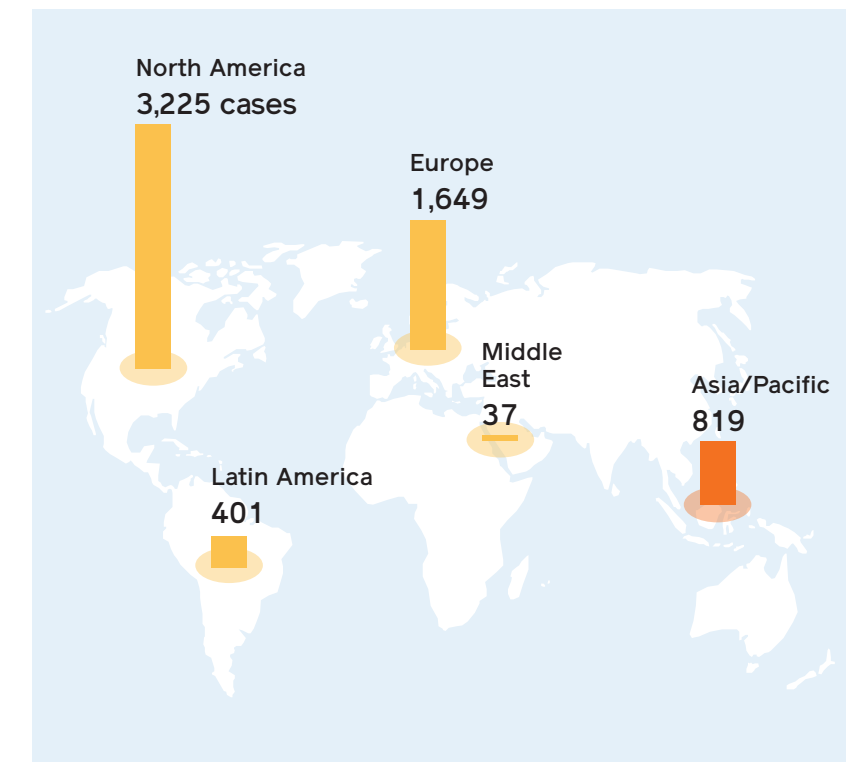
North America 3,225 cases
Europe 1,649
Latin America 401
Middle East 37
Asia/Pacific 819

Promising Practices in Prosecution

The typology of OSEC victims poses significant challenges in the trial process, both in safeguarding the well-being of survivors as well as in ensuring successful trial outcomes. IJM has advocated for measures that will prevent child victims from having to actively participate in criminal trials and has identified several promising practices in this field.

Plea Agreements

- A plea agreement, or plea bargain, is a measure allowed by Philippine law that can spare a child from relaying traumatizing experiences in open court. From the start of the IJM's OSEC program in 2011 through the end of 2019, a total of 76 convictions have been secured - 63 (83%) achieved through plea agreements and 13 by full trial (17%). Plea agreements in OSEC cases have been found to shorten trial lengths significantly, improve prosecution outcomes while still providing meaningful sentences for perpetrators, and protect child survivors from additional trauma.

Video In-Depth Interviewing – VIDI

- This reduces the number of times a child must provide testimony, can prevent the need for a child survivor to testify in front of his or her abuser, and reduces re-traumatization through the trial process.
- IJM has supported 53 cases with 111 instances of video-captured child interviews. Inquest prosecutors used 81% of these recorded interviews, protecting 90 children from potential re-traumatization associated with testifying in those proceedings.

Specialized Training – POSE

- The Prosecuting Online Sexual Exploitation (POSE) training was developed by IJM with support from the Philippine Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) and the U.S. Department of Justice.
- POSE's objective is to support law enforcement and prosecution front liners in their casework through application-based training. As of December 2019, 79 prosecutors and 45 law enforcers have received this training.
- From the first POSE training held in March 2018 through the end of 2019, there have been a total of 31 convictions secured by POSE-trained prosecutors. Apart from increasing competency in handling digital evidence, POSE has advanced and facilitated protective strategies in the prosecutorial system and collaboration between law enforcement and prosecution.

Recommendations

Overall, this study's findings suggest that OSEC is a serious and growing problem in the Philippines, perpetrated by a unique type of offender and affecting very young children. However, due to the lack of quality data that exists on OSEC and complexity of the crime, this study was faced with many limitations and barriers to better understanding this crime. This experimental study should be used as a catalyst for the global stakeholder community to continue prioritizing and improving data collection and analysis so we can collectively understand and effectively address this crime as well as the impact of our interventions.

These findings can be used by policymakers, practitioners, and others seeking to combat OSEC by informing interventions targeting this crime. A better understanding of the nature and scope of the crime helps improve law enforcement responses and social services for OSEC survivors. Below are some initial recommendations based on the study data and the experience of the study partners.

Many recommendations stemming from this research align with the WePROTECT Model National Response[9]. Where applicable, connected recommendations are noted below with a reference to corresponding Model National Response capability.

1 **The Philippine Government should continue scaling up the staffing and budget for its anti-trafficking law enforcement units, until they reach authorized levels at a minimum.**

The pervasiveness of OSEC, the dramatic increases in reporting of a range of child exploitation crimes, and the continued vulnerability of children are not problems that can be solved by law enforcement alone. Still, capable and adequate law enforcement is both effective in and essential to combating OSEC. The Philippine government should continue and expand its investments in law enforcement targeting OSEC by adding both personnel and financial resources to PNP WCPC—to achieve and support its current authorized staffing levels, at a minimum—and by providing similarly scaled-up resourcing to NBI-AHTRAD.

Model National Response Capability 4

2 **International and Philippine law enforcement agencies should maintain and build on the improved relationships and communication practices that exist between them to better hold perpetrators accountable and decrease criminal impunity globally.**

[9] WePROTECT Global Alliance. (2016). Preventing and Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA): A Model National Response.

In societies that highly value relationships, what outsiders perceive as "bureaucracy" might be rules designed to define and guide working relationships. Such barriers can be navigated and overcome through the establishment of genuine interpersonal relationships, resulting in accelerated work, improved outcomes, strengthened trust and communication, and targeted systemic enhancements. This is evident in the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC). The PICACC launched in 2019 as a joint initiative of the UK NCA, Australian Federal Police (AFP), IJM, PNP, and NBI—where law enforcement, NGO representatives, and foreign liaison officers come together to advance casework and build capacity. Foreign countries, particularly those from which the demand for OSEC originates, should assign full-time, long-term law enforcement liaisons to live and work in the Philippines, building the relationships that are essential to effective collaboration. The Philippine government should allow its investigators to informally collaborate with their foreign counterparts in OSEC investigations and revise existing rules prohibiting such communication.

Model National Response Capability 4

3 International and Philippine law enforcement agencies should ensure OSEC cases are routed to one of the Philippine anti-trafficking units (PNP WCPC and NBI-AHTRAD).

The production of CSEM, whether through OSEC or other means, is appropriately considered a serious trafficking-in-persons offense under Philippine law. While also a violation of other laws, OSEC should be recognized primarily as a trafficking-in-persons crime for two reasons: to leverage the possible deterrence of stronger penalties for traffickers, and to acknowledge the traumatic experiences and human dignity of trafficked children. PNP WCPC and NBI-AHTRAD are the operational law enforcement units with the training, resources, and nationwide mandates best suited for trafficking-in-persons investigations. Therefore, all OSEC cases should be referred to these units through the PICACC to maximize opportunities for each victimized child to be identified, located, and rescued, and for each trafficker to face swift accountability.

Model National Response Capability 4

4 Government and non-government service providers should ensure a collaborative, trauma-informed, appropriate, and holistic system of care exists to address the unique needs of OSEC survivors on an individual, family, and community level.

The young age of children, high percentage of perpetrating family members, and complicity of community members in OSEC presents challenges to existing systems of care for survivors of the crime. These challenges, coupled with the complex trauma that survivors of OSEC experience, necessitate a trauma-informed and holistic set of care options that address the needs of survivors. IJM and its partners[10] are collaborating to ensure that there is a strong system of care that: ensures collaborative case management from rescue to reintegration; provides secure and safe alternative care options for survivors removed from their families; addresses the immediate and long-term trauma impacts endured by victims; and strengthens family and community-based services so that a survivor can reintegrate safely with a reduced risk of revictimization. Based on lessons learned while providing support to victims, our team recommends that service providers gain a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics, vulnerabilities, and resiliency factors of children, families, and communities impacted by OSEC in their contexts in order to inform recommendations for a system of care that will holistically address the needs of these survivors.

Model National Response Capabilities 8 and 9

5 Child protective measures and trauma-informed care should be implemented throughout the prosecution process of OSEC cases to protect victims from re-traumatization.

The typology of OSEC victims as detailed in this report can cause significant challenges in the trial process, particularly in safeguarding the well-being of survivors while ensuring successful trial outcomes. Thus, prosecutors and other justice system officials should ensure that child protective measures are employed throughout the justice system process as much as possible. These measures include reducing reliance on victim testimony in court, use of child sensitive video interviewing, and consideration of plea agreements to achieve convictions without retraumatizing survivors.

In the Philippines, the policy of the law is to protect the best interests of the child at every stage of legal proceedings. The use of plea agreements to secure convictions and spare children from testifying against their parents, relatives, or trusted adults, honors this policy and should be maximized in accordance with law. Measures under the Rule on Examination of a Child Witness, including video-taped in-depth interviews, live-link testimony, and video depositions, should likewise be used to minimize victim re-traumatization at the inquest, preliminary investigation, and trial stages.

Model National Response Capabilities 5, 8, and 9

6 **Technology platforms should identify and implement means for proactive detection of livestreaming OSEC.**

Because common technologies—such as hash value matching and PhotoDNA—widely used to detect CSEM online are not designed to recognize newly produced material, most instances of OSEC remain undetected, unreported, and uninvestigated. The tech sector should innovate to develop and deploy new technologies and strategies—including computer vision and machine learning applications of artificial intelligence—to recognize indicators of OSEC offending and detect newly produced CSEM in all its forms, particularly in live video streams. Tech platforms should elevate the privacy interests of victimized children over those of platform users and prioritize detection of all CSEM as an essential business function.

Model National Response Capabilities 16, 18, and 19

7 **Entities from across sectors should collaborate to strengthen processes to identify and report potential OSEC activity.**

Traffickers and offenders use both communication platforms and money transfer services to commit their crimes, and they leave behind a digital trail of their activity. Tech companies, MTAs, and NGOs should collaborate to recognize indicators of OSEC offending on their platforms and cross reference datasets from other entities to improve detection of likely offenders and report criminal conduct as appropriate. This type of cross-sector collaboration can both protect ESPs' systems against Terms of Service violations and criminal misuse and serve to strengthen identification and reporting of suspected livestreaming OSEC.

Model National Response Capabilities 18 and 19

8 **Reporting of suspected CSEM on ESP platforms should be expanded and strengthened through mandatory reporting legislation in all States and the provision of higher quality information in reports.**

In alignment with the 2018 Child Dignity Technology Working Group Alliance recommendations, all States should enact national legislation requiring ESPs to detect, report, and speedily remove CSEM. Additionally, ESPs should prioritize protection of children on their platforms and report any available associated information as allowed by law, rather than the minimum amount required by law. By providing more complete information, ESPs can help remove obstacles to effectively identify offenders and victims. Furthermore, higher quality data will allow ESPs, law enforcement, and others to better recognize and respond to concerning issues and trends.

Model National Response Capabilities 12,16,and 17

9 **OSEC-related data owners, academics, technology designers, and OSEC experts should collaborate to conduct more research, increase our global knowledge about OSEC, as well as build the global stakeholder community's capacity to measure prevalence of the crime and impact of key interventions.**

The research team believes that this study has provided some new evidence to guide efforts to fight OSEC. We also acknowledge that the study has identified as many new/remaining questions as it has answered. Therefore, we also hope that this study will serve as a launching pad for the development of new research designs that can better answer some of the research questions we asked. To do that, the anti-OSEC community will need to work together with academics, technologists, and the owners of various types of OSEC-related data, including law enforcement, reporting platforms/hotlines, MTAs, social media sites, and more. IJM and its study partners invite others to critique and build on any of the methods presented in this report or to innovate from scratch to help the field better understand this crime.

Model National Response Capability 2

10 **All stakeholders should contribute toward an increase in international and cross-sector collaboration to protect children from online exploitation.**

This study highlights both the global nature of OSEC crimes and the corresponding global spread of stakeholders the crime touches from social media platforms, MTAs, law enforcement, NGOs engaged in responding, etc. This diversity, both geographically and across sectors, presents challenges in understanding the crime, identifying indicators and instances of it, and developing comprehensive responses to target it. A global crime necessitates a global, coordinated response.

Thus, impacted or engaged stakeholders should increase their investment and collaboration with others on this issue, sharing learnings, data, and best practices to improve the global community's ability to protect children online. Where applicable, stakeholders should 1) work with global bodies in this area such as the WePROTECT Global Alliance, The Virtual Global Taskforce, or the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2) participate in and convene other local and global forums to share learnings and coordinate efforts across sectors and 3) identify, resource, and implement innovative projects in cross sector collaboration.

The full research study
can be found at:
ijm.org/studies