



# **STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RESPONSE AGAINST ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING**

**CASE STUDY: PHILIPPINES**

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## ABOUT INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

International Justice Mission is a global organization that protects people in poverty from violence. IJM partners with local authorities in 24 program offices in 14 countries\* to combat slavery, violence against women and children, and police abuse of power against people who are poor. IJM works to rescue and restore victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and help strengthen public justice systems. In the Philippines, IJM combats online sexual exploitation of children which is a form of sex trafficking - a modern day slavery.

Learn more at [IJM.org](https://ijm.org) and [osec.ijm.org](https://osec.ijm.org)

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## DISCLAIMER

Photos of survivors taken with consent. Their identities are obscured to maintain confidentiality.

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## ABOUT THE COVER PHOTO

*School children in one of the CPC Partnership's covered communities participate in a training designed to equip them with abilities to protect themselves from online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking. Photo by WVDF.*

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

**BCPC**

Barangay Council for the Protection of Children

**BLGU**

Barangay Local Government Unit

**C-ACT**

Communities Against Child Trafficking

**CCG**

Community Care Group

**CCPA**

Community Child Protection Advocate

**CLT**

Child Labor Trafficking

**CoMSCA**

Community Managed Savings and Credit Association

**CP&A**

Child Protection and Advocacy

**CPC**

Child Protection Compact

**CSEM**

Child Sexual Exploitation Material

**DILG**

Department of Interior and Local Government

**EMBRACE**

Empowering and Brighter Response Against Children's Exploitation

**FBO**

Faith-Based Organization

**IACAT**

Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking

**IJM**

International Justice Mission

**ILO**

International Labour Organization

**IP**

Internet Protocol

**LCAT-VAWC**

Local Council Against Trafficking and Violence Against Women and Children

**LCPC**

Local Child Protection Council

**LGU**

Local Government Unit

**NGO**

Non-Government Organization

**NCMEC**

National Center for Mission and Exploited Children

**OSEC**

Online Sexual Exploitation of Children

**RCACL**

Regional Council for the Protection of Children

**TIP**

Trafficking in Persons

**WVDF**

World Vision Development Foundation

# Background

In October 2017, the U.S. and Philippine Governments launched the Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership, a bilateral agreement to jointly develop and implement a plan to combat online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) and child labor trafficking (CLT) in the Philippines. The partnership aimed to strengthen the capacity of the Philippine Government and civil society to prosecute and convict child traffickers, expand child protection services, and enhance community-based prevention mechanisms.

The U.S. State Department awarded International Justice Mission (IJM) and its consortium, World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF), Parenting Foundation of the Philippines and NORFIL Foundation, as implementers for the partnership's prosecution, foster care, and prevention objectives. Working with the Government of the Philippines, IJM focused on supporting activities related to law enforcement, prosecution, and aftercare. In addition to IJM's aftercare support for survivors of online sexual exploitation of children, Parenting Foundation of the Philippines and NORFIL Foundation worked closely with the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development to identify and address critical gaps in service provision for survivors within the foster care system.

To strengthen prevention and local-level response, IJM partnered with WVDF which specializes in community-led child protection systems. Among others, WVDF provided technical support to local governments and civil society to strengthen community-based mechanisms for identifying and protecting child trafficking victims and preventing these crimes from occurring. This case study focuses on this community component of the CPC Partnership. It highlights the important role of the community in combatting online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking; documents the strategies, challenges and lessons learned in strengthening existing community-based mechanisms; and shares replicable best practices and key learnings.



*Caring Families Training roll-out in Mandaue City. Photo by World Vision.*

## Objectives of the Child Protection Compact Partnership

Objective 1: Increase the number of successful victim-centered investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of OSEC and CLT cases.

Objective 2: Strengthen government and civil society capacity to identify and provide comprehensive services for victims of OSEC and CLT, including both girls and boys, sibling groups, persons with disabilities (PWD), and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) children, from identification through protective care, community reintegration, and long-term follow up services.

Objective 3: Strengthen existing community-based mechanisms for identifying and protecting child victims of OSEC and CLT, including domestic servitude, and preventing these crimes.

### Objectives supported by World Vision

Objective 1.3: Strengthen existing community-based mechanisms for identifying and protecting child victims of OSEC, and preventing this crime.

Objective 2.1: Strengthen existing community-based mechanisms for identifying and protecting child victims of labor trafficking, including domestic servitude, and preventing this crime.

Objective 2.2: Strengthen government and civil society capacity to identify and provide comprehensive services for victims of CLT.



*OSEC survivor and advocate Joy (left, not her real name) together with her IJM social worker. Photo by IJM.*



# The Situation

## ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

Online sexual exploitation of children crimes, including the trafficking of children to create child sexual exploitation material (CSEM), are growing rapidly around the world, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, 65.4 million images, videos, and other files related to child sexual exploitation were reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).<sup>1</sup>

In the Philippines and other countries, traffickers sexually abuse minors for paying sex offenders, who remotely direct and view the exploitation live from the other side of the world. Under the CPC Partnership, IJM led a study on the nature and scale of online sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines. Released in 2020, the study revealed that the Philippines is a global hot spot for this crime, but also an emerging leader in the fight against it.<sup>2</sup> Based on 2010-2017 data from global law enforcement, the Philippines was the largest known source of cases of online sexual exploitation of children.

The study also found that the estimated prevalence rate of internet-based child sexual exploitation in the Philippines more than tripled within three years – from 43 out of every 10,000 Internet Protocol (IP) addresses used for child sexual exploitation in 2014 to 149 out of every 10,000 in 2017.

Alarmingly, the study also revealed that the median age for victims of this crime in the Philippines was only 11 years, and that 41% of local traffickers were biological parents of the victims while 42% were other relatives.

## CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING

To date, no research has been published yet that solely focuses on child labor trafficking in the Philippines. This specific crime is subsumed under the broader issue of child trafficking or different forms of child labor in the Philippines. Existing data sets on child trafficking also do not disaggregate child labor trafficking and sex trafficking, combining both most of the time. Available literature and data from government agencies that profile the conditions of Filipino children subjected to labor trafficking remain limited.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, a 2007 study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) provides key insights into the CLT situation in the Philippines. By analyzing the national survey data results of child labor and children away from home from the National Statistics Authority (currently known as Philippine Statistics Authority), ILO came up with the Child Trafficking Vulnerability Assessment Model. They found that children vulnerable to trafficking are those ages 15 to 17 years of age, who are about to become officially part of the labor force and have started working at a much younger age. They also found that girls make up the majority of children subjected to labor trafficking.<sup>4</sup>

## GAPS IN COMMUNITY RESPONSE

WVDF commissioned studies that examined existing community knowledge and awareness on online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking. While adults were generally aware of online sexual exploitation of children, awareness among children left much to be desired. Very few adults and children were aware of community-based programs that address online sexual exploitation of children. This reflects the lack of interventions against these crimes at the community level.

While the Philippines has a robust legal framework to protect children from trafficking and labor exploitation, implementation at the local level remained a work in progress. Communities had limited knowledge of CLT and the laws and interventions in place to address it. CLT was not defined nor comprehensively understood; hence, there was difficulty in the identifying and reporting cases. Assessment reports showed gaps in government initiatives to identify children subjected to labor and manage database of trafficking cases.<sup>5</sup> Gaps also existed in inter-agency collaboration, capacities of frontliners, and awareness campaigns against child trafficking at the local level. Limited public investment and budget allocation for prevention of and response to OSEC and CLT were also generally observed at the local level, as were gaps in services and service delivery.

Literature suggests that communities did not have focused projects on OSEC and CLT. For example, efforts to address online sexual exploitation of children fell within the broader category of child protection activities and anti-trafficking initiatives of local government units (LGUs). However, despite their strategic role in preventing this crime, some LGUs did not have clear programs against OSEC and CLT nor funding allocation for anti-OSEC and -CLT services.

# Strategies and Results

While IJM worked with the Philippine government and other partners to increase law enforcement and prosecution response, WVDF set out to strengthen existing community-based mechanisms, employing a systems approach for protecting child victims and preventing online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking from occurring. Target communities were identified; namely, Taguig City, Lapu-Lapu City and Municipality of Cordova for OSEC; and Mandaue City and Cebu City for CLT. For each of these communities, three *barangays*<sup>6</sup> were identified as focus areas. WVDF identified key community actors; developed training modules; conducted research and developed handbooks; and launched campaigns to strengthen local response against these crimes. To sustain community efforts, WVDF engaged legislators and decision-makers to strengthen related national and local policies.

CPC Partnership Focus Areas	
OSEC	CLT
Taguig City Municipality of Cordova Lapu-Lapu City	Mandaue City Cebu City



A session with school children in Taguig City. Photo by WVDF.

## Selection Criteria for Barangays

### Indicators

- High Risk in CLT/OSEC cases. (push and pull factors) – 30%**
  - # of reported/observed cases through the City Social and Welfare Development (CSWD) and Philippine National Police (PNP)
  - # of reported/observed cases with parents or relatives as perpetrators
  - Identified as “hotspot” barangay (i.e. tourist, drug-trade, or presence of labor intensive industry)
- Economic Condition of Families (can be obtained through the existing data of LGU) – 20%**
  - Capacity of parents to financially support the basic necessities of their children (i.e. educational or health support)
  - Limited access of the parents to employment opportunities (types of job in the area; security of tenure)
  - Poverty incidence among household population and magnitude of poor families
- Political Will of the Government (City Mayor down to Barangay Level) – 20%**
  - List of ordinances and level of enforcement
  - Functionality of the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC) and related structures – factors to be considered are attendance, activities, representation in their respective communities
  - BCPC's relationship with other line agencies.
  - Willingness of BLGU to work with service provider (WVDF)
- Involvement of Other Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) working on CLT/OSEC – 15%**
  - Existence of other FBOs and NGOs working on CLT/OSEC prevention – factors to be considered are their existing modules, activities and partners
- Security, Peace and Order in the Area (for the safety of the Project Implementers) – 15%**
  - Reported threats from the community to service providers

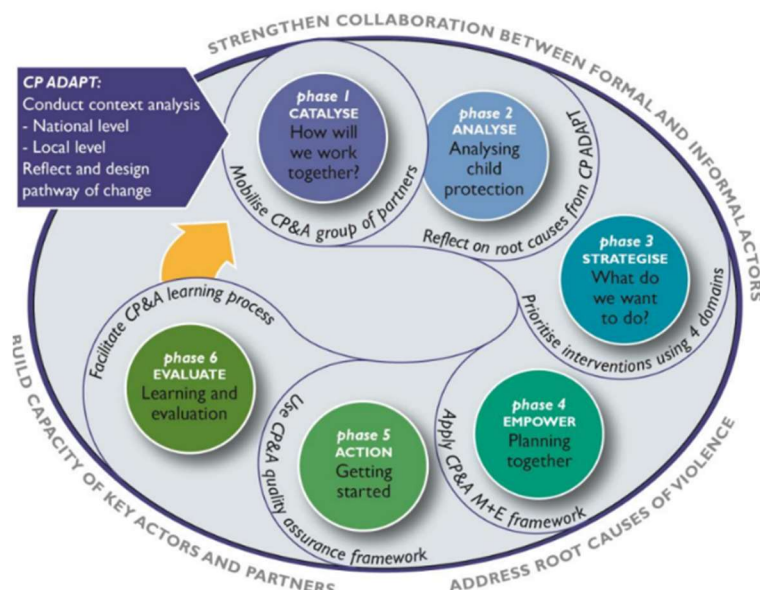
Selected Barangays		
Cordova Municipality	Lapu-Lapu City	Taguig City
1) Ibabao	1) Basak	1) Tuktukan
2) Cogon	2) Kalawisan	2) Wawa
3) Catarman	3) Babag	3) Sta. Ana
4) Dapitan	4) Looc	4) Bambang
5) Bangbang	5) Pajo	5) Ususan
		6) Lower Bicutan
		7) Calzada

## THE CRITICAL ROLE OF COMMUNITIES

A baseline assessment conducted as part of the CPC Partnership noted that online sexual exploitation of children has a root cause in family and community values. Hence, engaging community stakeholders was identified as a key strategy in combating these crimes. The assessment report recommended increased community awareness about online sexual exploitation as a crime. It also recommended increased engagement from the community to address incomplete reporting of cases.

These were exactly the type of gaps that WVDF's Child Protection and Advocacy (CP&A) project model aims to address. Under this model, community stakeholders are engaged to address the root causes of violence against children. By building capacity and increasing collaboration between formal and informal child protection actors, a protective environment that cares for and supports all children, especially the most vulnerable, is established.

WVDF defines formal protection actors as those filling roles that are established or sanctioned by the government and guided by laws, regulations and policies for protection. They include both those directly working on protection (police, social work department, criminal justice) and indirectly (schools and health). They are government-mandated authorities with the responsibility of responding to protection incidents; informal protection actors are those that do not have government mandates for protective functions. Instead, they are shaped by attitudes, values, behaviors, social norms and traditional practices in society. These groups and organizations vary by context and can include faith communities or faith-based organizations, tribal and religious groups, community-based organizations, and child, adolescent or youth organizations.



WVDF's Child Protection and Advocacy (CP&A) Methodology and Process. Illustration by WVDF.

WVDF's *community perspectives* research shows that communities recognize that they serve as “eyes and ears” for reporting suspected child labor trafficking cases. Alongside increased global collaboration to combat child trafficking, strengthening community response was strongly recommended.

## IDENTIFYING KEY COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

WVDF identified community stakeholders who play critical roles in combating online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking. These key actors at the local level had awareness and capacity gaps around which WVDF designed training modules and awareness campaigns. Engaging these stakeholders was vital to strengthen community-based mechanisms to combat OSEC and these crimes.

## Children and Youth

The CPC Partnership was forged for the protection of children; hence, engaging children and the youth was essential to the project. However, they were not considered as mere passive stakeholders but active participants in any development process. Guided by its Safeguarding Policy, Rights-based approach and Child Participation protocols, children and the youth were mobilized throughout the project cycle to increase the reach of OSEC and CLT awareness campaigns in schools and communities.



*School children participate in an EMBRACE campaign activity in Taguig City. Photo by WVDF.*

## Parents and Caregivers

Poor family values being a strong contributory factor to online sexual exploitation of children, it was crucial to educate parents and caregivers about the crime's impact on children and their role in their children's well-being. With majority of OSEC traffickers restrained in the Philippines being parents and trusted relatives, engaging parents and caregivers was a key intervention. The project sought to affirm the roles of parents and caregivers as the first responsible for care and protection of children.

## Local Government Officials

Strengthening community-based mechanisms against online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking required support from formal local child protection structures. The role of local child protection councils (LCPCs) – particularly the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC), chaired by the *punong* barangay (village chief) – was indispensable in project activities aimed to raise awareness and capacitate community stakeholders. It was equally important to engage the Local Council Against Trafficking and Violence Against Women and

Children (LCAT-VAWC), which coordinates and monitors the implementation of Republic Act No. 9208 (Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003) and Republic Act No. 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004) at the local level.

## Faith-based Organizations (FBOs)

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) played an important role in rolling out the Caring Families methodology, a training designed to equip families to create a safe and loving environment for their children's well-being. FBO partners shared rich learning experiences with their ministry circles and outreach. By engaging the faith communities, WVDF recognizes their significant role in building a protective environment for children and their integral part in any community, therefore they are deeply affected by the effects of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence, as well.

## Community Volunteers

Organizing community watch groups requires dedicated community volunteers who are educated about online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking and the laws against these crimes. Community volunteers work alongside other stakeholders to create and strengthen a protective environment that cares for and supports all children.

## CAPACITATING KEY COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

After identifying key local stakeholders to engage, WVDF developed training modules to capacitate them.

## Empowering Children through Life Skills to Prevent OSEC and CLT

This training was designed to help equip children, aged 12 to 17, with abilities for adaptive behavior to protect themselves from online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking. It aims to educate children about their rights and their vital role in combating these trafficking crimes. Participants were informed about the impact of these crimes and about child-friendly reporting mechanisms. Supported by the Department of Education, school based anti-OSEC and -CLT campaigns reached 7,556 students. These campaigns also contributed to the strengthening of schools' Child Protection Committees, equipping teachers and school personnel on OSEC and CLT prevention and response.

"I am the type of person who is always concerned with my friends. I offer a listening ear if they want to talk about their problems or share my snacks if they haven't brought some. What I learned in World Vision strengthened me to advocate more for the welfare of my fellow children."

Janelle, student

"Youth empowerment is the key to fight child labor trafficking. When they are informed and empowered, they have a better chance to protect themselves from abuse and exploitation."

Angel, student

### Caring Families: A Call to Parents to Act on Online Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Labor Trafficking

This training was designed to equip families to create a safe and loving environment for their children's well-being. Participating parents and caregivers attended sessions on responsible parenthood and were educated about laws penalizing online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking. Participants were also taught practical ways to protect their children against online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking. This training capacitated 2,720 parents on responsible parenting.

"We are covering topics about children's rights in our Values subject but what we learned from the CPC project is more in-depth. Seeing how World Vision values the life of every child inspired me to look in my school and find ways to impact the lives of my students, aside from empowering them academically."

Anabelle, parent and teacher

"The lessons we learned from the CPC trainings have imparted to us wisdom on how to deal with parents and children in our community. It also gave us wisdom to understand the reason behind a person's behavior. In our outreaches, we are gradually incorporating Caring Families modules to parents. It really helped us in opening doors in reaching more families."

Jaime Pantilo Alag, parent

### Strengthening LCPC and BCPCs on OSEC and CLT Prevention

LCPC and BCPC members were educated about OSEC and CLT as forms of child trafficking, highlighting it as a crime punishable under the Philippine laws. They were oriented to their roles and responsibilities to combat this worst form of child abuse. The training sought to increase their knowledge on the impact of these crimes on child victims and build the capacity of BCPC and LCAT-VAWC Desk Officers to identify child victims; take appropriate action once cases are identified; and facilitate the reintegration of child victims of trafficking into their communities. For OSEC, a total of 12 trainings were conducted, benefiting 203 LCPC and BCPC members and resulting in 9 functional BCPCs with a program on prevention of online sexual exploitation of children. For CLT, a total of 8 trainings were conducted, benefiting 90 LCPC and BCPC members.



Community leaders attend the Strengthening BCPC on OSEC Prevention training in Cordova, Cebu. Photo by WVDF



Stakeholders attend a session on re-organizing the BCPC held in Mandaue City, Cebu. Photo by WVDF

## Training of Trainers for Caring Families: A Call to Parents to Act on OSEC and CLT Prevention

FBOs played an important role in rolling out the Caring Families methodology. They shared rich learning experiences on the anti-OSEC and -CLT advocacy journey with their ministry circles and outreach relationships. Throughout the CPC project, FBOs conducted 45 trainings that capacitated 1,808 parents and caregivers. Apart from the academe, the faith-based organizations (FBOs) partnering with the CPC project have committed to continually cascade the roll-out of Caring Families in their outreach and to their constituents.

## Strengthening CCGs on OSEC and CCPAs on CLT

WVDF gathered volunteers to form Community Care Groups (CCGs) or Community Child Protection Advocates (CCPAs) against online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking. They were educated about these crimes, their impact on victims, and existing Philippine laws penalizing these crimes. Volunteers learned about their roles and responsibilities in eradicating these crimes, with emphasis on local prevention campaigns. The project successfully trained and mobilized 15 community-based groups (CCGs and CCPAs) with a total of 245 volunteers representing the different sectors of society becoming actively engaged in prevention activities. These volunteers were dubbed Community Child Protection Advocates (CCPAs) in CLT areas and Community Care Groups (CCGs) in OSEC areas. They worked closely with the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC) in conducting prevention campaigns, monitoring and referrals.

## LAUNCH OF COMMUNITY CAMPAIGNS

To strengthen project momentum and commitment of partners, WVDF launched two campaigns: Communities Against Child Trafficking (C-ACT) and Empowering and Brighter Response against Children's Exploitation (EMBRACE). Designed to strengthen community-level child protection approaches in OSEC and CLT prevention, these campaigns supported in identifying and building capacity of community-based child protection actors with a mandate to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children. EMBRACE was rolled out in Taguig City while C-ACT covered Metro Cebu. Covered communities' commitment and active support helped in the successful launch and implementation of these campaigns.

These flagship campaigns resulted in different OSEC and CLT prevention initiatives, especially in the covered schools. C-ACT school-level campaigns were student-led initiatives that included spoken-poetry, slogan designing, poster making, and video awareness production. The campaign also motivated most of the BCPC and GAD (Gender and Development) focal persons to intentionally integrate CLT and OSEC prevention activities during National Children's Month Celebration with corresponding budget allocation from the local government.

Ensuring gains beyond these campaigns, covered communities incorporated OSEC and CLT prevention into their BCPC plans and/or annual work plan and budget.



Youth leaders and CPC partners gather during an EMBRACE activity in Taguig City. Photo by WVDF.

## RESEARCH AND GUIDEBOOKS

To inform interventions at the community level, WVDF commissioned research studies that examined, among others, existing community knowledge and awareness of online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking as well as ongoing efforts of government and key stakeholders. Besides training, essential guidebooks were also developed to capacitate duty-bearers and service providers.

### Community Perspectives on OSEC and CLT

WVDF commissioned research studies to examine existing knowledge and awareness of OSEC and CLT. These studies also serve as an additional reference for stakeholders, with key recommendations on how to combat both crimes.

For OSEC, the research covered Taguig City in Metro Manila, and Lapu-Lapu City and Cordova municipality in Cebu province. Overall, 611 children and 618 adults or parents participated in the survey, 179 participated in 31 focus group discussions, and 12 key informants from different line agencies mandated to address OSEC were interviewed for the research.

For CLT, the research focused on two major cities in Central Visayas, Philippines: Cebu City and Mandaue City. Overall, 408 children and 434 adults/parents participated in the survey, 190 participated in 21 focus group discussions, and 15 key informants from different line agencies mandated to address child trafficking were interviewed for the research.

### Guidebook for Duty Bearers in Responding to Cases of OSEC and CLT

This reference material discusses legal frameworks related to online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking, and the various institutional support for children existing at the local and national level. It also discusses the roles of different duty bearers, particularly the BCPC. It also outlines the Protocol for Case Management of OSEC and CLT to help barangay officials understand what they can do when victims of online sexual exploitation of children, child labor trafficking, and child abuse need intervention from the barangay. The guidebook includes an appendix of sample ordinances to protect children from child labor trafficking and online sexual exploitation, including the establishment and reconstitution of the BCPC.

## Handbook on Services for CLT Victims

In response to the identified knowledge gap on CLT at the community level, WVDF produced a comprehensive guide for service providers in the local government units and relevant government agencies. It covers the point of reporting and identification up to the protective care as well as long term follow up services that hope to assist the child-victim to being reintegrated back to the wider community. It highlights existing government policies and programs that address trafficking in persons (TIP) and, more importantly, underscores the different local and community-based mechanisms on child protection. This handbook resulted from a series of consultations with the Regional Council for the Protection of Children (RCACL-7). The 24 participating agencies identified their roles in responding to the needs of victims of child labor trafficking, and these roles are stipulated in the handbook. The handbook has been endorsed by the RCAC-7 for utilization to all line agency members.

## ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT

WVDF considered sustainability at the start of the project. To ensure that the gains achieved in combatting online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking would go beyond the CPC Partnership, WVDF engaged policymakers to institutionalize key interventions. World Vision Philippines' Advocacy Department joined the ongoing discussions on the Anti-Trafficking in Persons bill during a May 2021 session of the Republic of the Philippines Eighteenth Congress. World Vision shared key findings from the research on the Community Perspectives on Child Labor Trafficking, resulting in crucial provisions added to the drafted sub bill.<sup>7</sup>

World Vision's contributions reflected in the drafted Anti-Trafficking in Persons sub bill:

### On programs that address trafficking in persons,

LGUs are encouraged to provide livelihood grants to support the economic empowerment of poor households, in order to increase their financial capacities and address household shocks, which force them to engage in trafficking.

## On composition of National Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking

Added Department of Education, Secretary

## On the functions of the council,

WVDF recommended regularly assessing current data collection, reporting, and monitoring systems for trafficking, identifying gaps, and conducting studies with other stakeholders such as LGUs, civil society, and the academe to build more empirical evidence on trafficking cases.

The sustainability drivers evident in the CPC project include ownership, partnerships, and local/national level policy advocacy.

### Ownership

Concerned barangay local governments (9 OSEC areas and 6 CLT areas) have integrated OSEC and CLT prevention in their BCPC plans and/or Annual Work plan and Budget. This reflects their increased commitment to prioritize protection of children against these threats. Organized CCGs and CCPAs (15 in total) have also been acknowledged by the local government, as evident in increased representation at local councils (e.g., child advocates).

### Partnerships

Partnering with key agencies and institutions has helped advance advocacy to combat online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking. WVDF and IJM's partnership enabled the project to address gaps not only in law enforcement, prosecution, and aftercare services but also in preventive activities at the national and local level. Further, WVDF's community interventions are expected to yield community case referrals for law enforcement partners and IJM.

Aside from government and civil society partners, WVDF established partnerships with key academic institutions. They facilitated Memorandums of Understanding with the University of San Carlos (USC) and University of Southern Philippines Foundation (USPF) in Metro Cebu. These universities committed to integrate modules on these crimes into their curriculum, which would extend capacity-building activities for students beyond the life of the CPC project. They also allocated a budget for community-based awareness activities on online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking through their

Community Extension Programs. These universities seek to continue partnering with WVDF beyond the CPC project.

Apart from the academe, FBO partners have committed to continually cascade the roll-out of Caring Families to their constituents.

### Local and National Level Policy Advocacy

CPC Partnership efforts led to the formulation and/or strengthening of national laws and local ordinances to protect children from online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking. At the local level, below are some of the ordinances reviewed and actions initiated:

- “Ordinance No. 004-2013 series of 2013 Ordinance Regulating Businesses Engaged in Money or Value Transfer Services within the Municipality of Cordova, Cebu”
- “Ordinance No. 002-2015 series of 2015 Ordinance Creating the Cordova Council for Anti-Trafficking in Persons (CCAT) Providing for their Compensation, Duties and Responsibilities and Appropriating Funds Therefore”
- “Ordinance No. 2019-39 An Ordinance Providing Financial Incentive to Informants for Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) Within the Municipality of Cordova, Cebu in the Amount of Twenty Thousand Pesos (P20,000.00)”
- “Institutionalization of Safer Internet Day every February in Lapu-Lapu City and Development of Child Help Application”

At the national level, WVDF provided input to the draft sub bill strengthening the country's Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law through key amendments.

### Membership in Key Councils

Through its membership as one of the NGO representatives in IACAT-7 and RCACL-7, WVDF has an opportunity to continue monitoring and working with partners to combat these crimes. The project also establishes WVDF as a key player in national-level advocacy initiatives on prevention and response to OSEC and CLT, sustaining its active roles and engagements within various national networks and coalitions such as Philippine Joining Forces Alliance, Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking and Council for the Welfare of Children, among others.

# Key Challenges and Solutions

Two major challenges arose affecting the implementation of activities strengthening community-based mechanisms: changes in local government leadership in focus areas as a result of local elections; and the COVID-19 pandemic. This section also briefly discusses WVDF's responses to these challenges.

## CHANGE OF PHILIPPINE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

The 2019 local election resulted in newly elected local officials. Hence, World Vision allocated time for courtesy calls and project re-orientations. Specifically, there was a challenge in the child labor trafficking T area due to the new administration and head of the City Social Welfare Office who was not receptive to the CPC partnership. In response, World Vision conducted a re-organization and CLT orientation to the new LCPC members through the support of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG). By working through DILG, World Vision ensured LCPC functionality by working through a different local government unit.

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The pandemic brought major changes in the vulnerability landscape, impacting the well-being of children and families within the country. As a result, the project reallocated funds for the provision of PPE to frontline workers, especially community partners who were engaged in the project monitoring. With the onset of the pandemic, face-to-face activities were strictly prohibited with the lockdown that necessitated changing the project's implementation timeline. The project adapted by adjusting implementation strategies that involved maximizing online platforms.

# Lessons Learned

Certain approaches proved instrumental in the successful strengthening of community-based mechanisms against online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking. WVDF identified key learnings drawn from its experience capacitating local stakeholders to identify and protect child victims and prevent these crimes.

- **The systems approach to child protection and community development program approach provided a strong foundation towards community empowerment.**

In mobilizing community stakeholders, WVDF and partners employed a development approach, which ensured sustainable change through increased ownership, capacity and commitment of the community. The CPC project empowered duty-bearers and other local stakeholders to negotiate, plan and manage interventions against these crimes. They included crucial child protection strategies in community action plans and budgets, reflecting increased ownership.

- **Community Managed Savings and Credit Association (CoMSCA) is an effective platform in organizing community volunteers and sustaining their engagement**

One of WVDF's economic development approaches, CoMSCA is a simple savings and loan facility in a community with little access to formal financial services. CCPA and CCG members who were also engaged in CoMSCA continued to meet regularly (weekly or bi-monthly). Besides CoMSCA-related matters, members also allocated time to discuss red flags relating to online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking and monitor reports from the communities. CoMSCA also proved helpful in sustaining the engagement of CCPA and CCG members during the onset of the pandemic, as it helped provide them financial relief.

*School children participate in a school-level campaign, learning about Child Labor Trafficking. Photo by WVDF.*



- **Membership in key local councils helped strengthen the latter's commitment towards combating online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking and widen CPC's reach.**

During the CPC project implementation, World Vision established its presence in the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT-7)<sup>8</sup> and Regional Council for the Protection of Children (RCACL-7). These regional councils were instrumental in the formulation of the *Guidebook for Duty bearers in Responding to OSEC and CLT* as well as the *Handbook on Services for CLT Victims*. They also endorsed these resources for utilization by all council members. These regional councils' events also enabled World Vision to increase the project's reach.

- **The ceremonial launch of C-ACT and EMBRACE campaigns increased the momentum and commitment of partners to end online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking**

The launch made a laudable impression on the actors in the child protection space, specifically agencies and international NGOs concerned with these crimes. As a result, there were several unplanned results with new and current partners reaching beyond CPC areas. These include (a) formation of child rights advocates in schools, even the non-pilot areas and (b) integration of OSEC and CLT awareness in regional partner-led activities covering a larger populace.

## Potential For Replication

WVDF's implementation of the CPC project was anchored on its Child Protection and Advocacy (CP&A) model, which has the following key features:

- Collaboration between formal and informal child protection actors, especially children and youth and faith actors
- Capacity building of key actors and partners
- CP&A group ensures that root causes for violence against boys and girls are addressed
- Empower children, strengthen families, partner with communities and influence government

This model allows for contextualization, as it requires collaboration with existing formal and informal actors to gain a deep understanding of contextual CP threats or issues and their root causes. It is designed to target the underlying cultural and religious beliefs, attitudes and norms, making it a model adaptable in any context.

Learn more about the CP&A model:

- [https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Child\\_Protection\\_Advocacy\\_PM.pdf](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Child_Protection_Advocacy_PM.pdf)
- <https://www.wvi.org/development/publication/child-protection-advocacy>



School students take part in an Empowering Children training session in Cebu City. Photo by WVDF.

# Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. *By The Numbers*. Viewed and retrieved from <https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline> on Nov. 3, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> International Justice Mission, et. al (2020) *Online Sexual Exploitation of Children: Analysis and Recommendations for Governments, Industry and Civil Society*. Viewed and retrieved from [https://ijmstoragelive.blob.core.windows.net/ijmna/documents/studies/Final-Public-Full-Report-5\\_20\\_2020.pdf](https://ijmstoragelive.blob.core.windows.net/ijmna/documents/studies/Final-Public-Full-Report-5_20_2020.pdf) on Jan. 25, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF), (2020). *Community Perspectives on Child Labor Perspectives on Child Labor Trafficking: A Study Examining Existing Knowledge and Awareness in Selected Areas in the Philippines*. P. 21.

<sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization, (2007). Child trafficking in the Philippines: A situational analysis. [http://www.ilo.org/manila/publications/WCMS\\_572268/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/manila/publications/WCMS_572268/lang-en/index.htm)

<sup>5</sup> World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF), (2020). *Community Perspectives on Child Labor Trafficking: A Study Examining Existing Knowledge and Awareness in Select Areas in the Philippines*. P. 54.

<sup>6</sup> A barangay is the smallest political unit in the Philippines.

<sup>7</sup> Act On Strengthening The Policies On Anti-Trafficking In Persons, Amending For The Purpose Republic Act No. 9208 Otherwise Known As The Anti-Trafficking Act Of 2003, As Amended By Republic Act No. 10364 Otherwise Known As The Expanded Anti-Trafficking Act Of 2012, And For Other Purposes

<sup>8</sup> Region 7, also known as Central Visayas, consists of provinces Cebu, Bohol, Siquijor, and Negros Oriental; and highly urbanized cities Cebu City, Lapu-Lapu City, and Mandaue City.



*Survivor of online sexual exploitation of children Rosie (not her real name).  
Photo by IJM.*



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