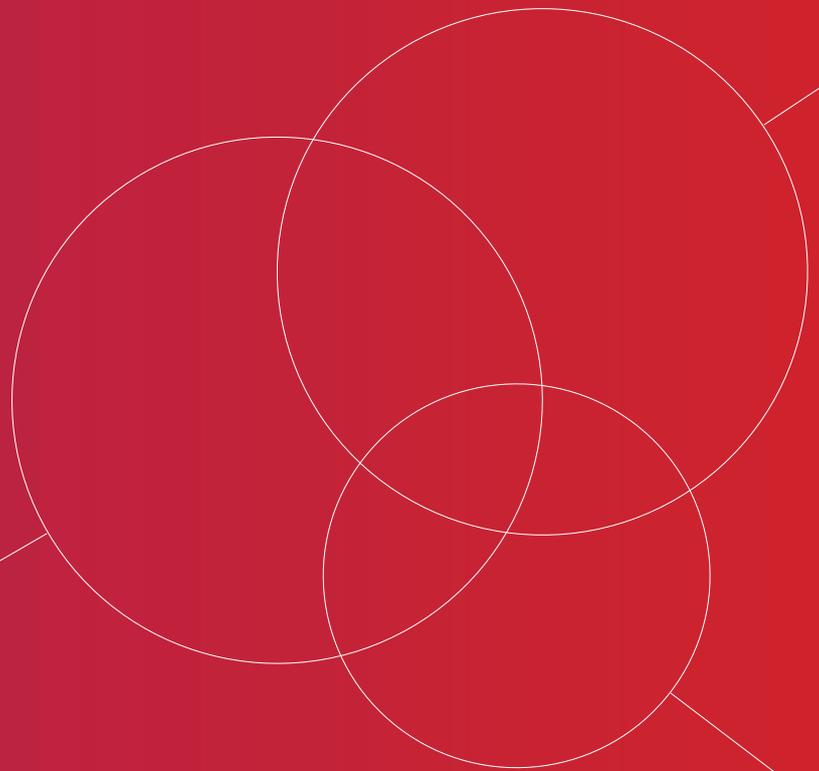


# Understanding OSAEC Trafficking in the Philippines

Analysis and recommendations for  
better detection, deterrence and  
prevention

Interim Report, October 2023



# Foreword

Rapid growth in Internet connectivity and technological innovation has brought children around the world increased opportunities for educational and social development. It has also made them vulnerable to online sexual exploitation. High-speed internet connectivity, increased availability of mobile devices and access to online payment mechanisms has given online offenders access to vulnerable children in countries where protections to counter this threat have not kept pace.

This is particularly evident in the Philippines - a global epicentre of Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) livestreaming. Worse still, vulnerability to OSAEC has only heightened throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, with International NGO IJM estimating nearly half a million Filipino children trafficked to produce new child sexual exploitation material in 2022 alone.

Despite the rapid proliferation of OSAEC cases in the Philippines and other low and middle-income countries in Asia and Africa, this phenomenon remains under-researched. This research project is the first of its kind, examining the “supply-side” facilitation of OSAEC activities in order to shed light on the situational factors, motivations and pathways to offending, and to inform practical strategies to improve the efficacy of protective and preventive approaches to this type of exploitation.

This interim report highlights the key features of supply-side OSAEC offending in the Philippines and the offence context - drawing attention to important drivers and contextual and contagion effects, as well as a number of psychological and cultural factors that help explain the prevalence of OSAEC offending in the Philippines. In the second year of the project we will be building on these findings, analysing interviews with convicted “supply-side” offenders and chatlog data to better interpret the varied individual, family, community, social and technological issues that motivate offenders to facilitate online sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines.

If we are to more effectively detect, disrupt and prevent this devastating phenomena, it is critical we bring a fresh understanding to what enables and motivates facilitation of OSAEC activities, both in the Philippines and in other similar settings.

Nicole Munns  
International Systemic Change Director

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# Executive Summary

Online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC)<sup>1,2</sup> has become more prominent in recent years with the growth in internet connectivity, access to mobile devices and online payment mechanisms. Vulnerability to OSAEC has only heightened throughout COVID19 lockdown, with foreign customers and local facilitators enjoying an unprecedented level of access to children.

While OSAEC has received increasing attention from authorities, academics and practitioners in recent years, extant research has typically focused on 'demand-side' offending in the West, with little attention to 'how' and 'why' OSAEC crimes are facilitated. Consequently, there is a dearth of literature and empirical understanding of the role of and profile of 'supply side' facilitators of OSAEC.

In 2022 Justice and Care partnered with International Justice Mission, Dublin City University and De La Salle University (Manila) to address this gap in understanding by carrying out a two-year study on the facilitation of OSAEC in the Philippines, a global epicentre of OSAEC live-streaming.

The project seeks to enhance our understanding of methods of OSAEC offending, to shed light on the situational factors, motivations and pathways to offending, and to inform practical strategies related to law enforcement investigation and technological and financial facilitation of this crime with a view to improving the efficacy of protective, deterrence, and preventative approaches to this type of exploitation.

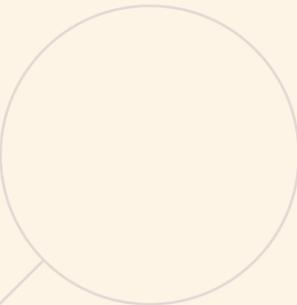
This report brings together findings from the first year of the project. This part of the study focussed on the implementation of a mixed-methods research design to produce a broad profile of key features of supply-side OSAEC offending in the Philippines and the offence context, with attention to possible determinants of these offences and avenues to offence disruption and prevention. To that end, the research team examined case-file records of convicted OSAEC Filipino offenders and conducted interviews with domain experts and professionals with direct experience of working on OSAEC, including key informants from law enforcement authorities, financial service companies, online platform providers, child protection agencies and local social workers.

## Corroboration with previous studies

In line with the existing literature, our data confirms that the country is indeed a 'hotspot' for OSAEC, with OSAEC activity taking place in both rural and urban areas. The majority of OSAEC facilitators are females aged 25-50, usually a family member or a trusted neighbour/friend of the victims, and many of them - including older minors - were themselves victims of exploitation in

<sup>1</sup> The Research Team has adopted this terminology following consultation with Study Partners and members of the Study Advisory Group. This decision gave consideration to the presentation of abuse and exploitation as both discrete and overlapping units of investigation in the research, and to the voice of survivors who acknowledge experiences of both abuse and exploitation.

<sup>2</sup> Our working definition of OSAEC includes both Information and Communications Technology-facilitated child sexual abuse and exploitation, e.g. instances where a perpetrator initiates contact online and abuses the child offline, as well as the sexual exploitation of children online involving the production, distribution and possession of child abuse materials (e.g. photos, videos, live-streaming) for a third party who is not physically present, in exchange for compensation.



the past. These facilitators tend to prey mainly on girls, who are significantly more likely to be exploited than boys; when boys are the victims of OSAEC, child-on-child or sibling-on-sibling abuse is common.

Also consistent with prior research, we found that facilitators' motivation to engage in OSAEC is primarily economic: most of them live in extreme poverty and must support large families. However, economic need is not the only motivation for OSAEC involvement: the lure of making 'easy money' is also a powerful motivator, especially when the earnings from this type of activity are much higher than those obtainable from regular employment or other sources of income. Contextual and/or contagion effects also play an important role in facilitators' decision to engage in OSAEC activities: in areas where there are precedents of OSAEC activity, facilitators learn about the financial 'advantages' of this type of criminal endeavour from other community members, particularly in neighbourhoods where levels of trust in authorities is low and reporting is unlikely.

## Novel insights

Nonetheless, our analysis also offered novel insights that complement and expand previous work in this area. For instance, we uncovered a – hitherto overlooked – association between the age of victim and relationship to facilitator: where a facilitator is a close family member, the child is more likely to be under the age of ten. By contrast, a trusted adult who is not a close family member is associated with more traditional commercial sexual exploitation presentation related to trafficking. There is also evidence of changing advertisement and recruitment patterns on the part of OSAEC facilitators, with older youth increasingly recording and posting highly sexualised content on social media platforms as a recruitment strategy for engaging with foreigners.

Additionally, our interviews revealed interesting psychological and cultural factors that – alongside economic considerations – help explain the prevalence of OSAEC offending in the Philippines. At the individual level, we found that both OSAEC perpetrators and facilitators rely on strategies for offence minimization that enable and sustain exploitative practices. An offence-supportive belief of perpetrators, for instance, is that the financial payments they make to the facilitators 'help' victims by contributing to education expenses or other material needs of those victimised. For facilitators, in turn, there is the strongly held fallacy of 'no touch, no harm', namely, that children experience no harm so long as they are not physically abused by foreign perpetrators.

These micro-level psychological 'justifications' for OSAEC are compounded by cultural norms (e.g., an unwavering respect for the decisions and behaviours of older family members, a generalised distrust in authorities, communal support for or at least tolerance for such activities) that act as barriers to crime reporting, and a long-standing history of inter-communal tensions that undermines the cooperation between regions on OSAEC-related issues. These factors, together with inherent procedural and administrative challenges that deter victims from pressing charges (e.g., concerns about privacy and uncertain support of advocates to assist in filing a report, the involvement of – and the requirement to visit – multiple offices to lodge a complaint) create obstacles to the prevention, disruption and deterrence of OSAEC perpetration in the Philippines.

## New avenues for investigation in our second stage of the research

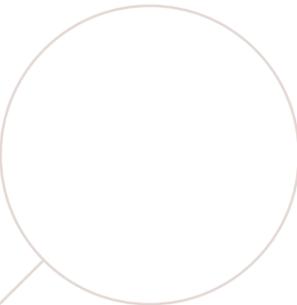
These preliminary findings open up new avenues for investigation that will be further explored in the second year of the project. This next stage will incorporate data from interviews with convicted OSAEC offenders, financial transactions and chat-logs between Filipino facilitators and – typically Western – OSAEC 'consumers' to develop more comprehensive behavioural profiles of supply-side offenders, identify opportunities for offence prevention and – ultimately – point to specific courses of action that financial services providers, social media platforms, law enforcement, and other relevant stakeholders should take to tackle OSAEC more effectively in the Philippines.

# Introduction

Rapid technological advancements, coupled with widespread poverty and economic disparity between facilitators and foreign offenders, are understood to fuel the supply of children for online sexual exploitation. However, little academic attention has been given to the situational factors, motivations and pathways of supply-side offenders facilitating the exploitation of vulnerable children.

Over recent years, the Philippines has concentrated law enforcement and judicial efforts on implementing strict sentencing for Filipino based facilitators of OSAEC. As a result, there is now a sufficient population of convicted supply-side offenders such that this research is possible.

In 2022, Justice and Care joined with the International Justice Mission (IJM), Dublin City University and De La Salle University, Manila to address this facilitator research gap and extend the existing body of literature. This study of convicted OSAEC traffickers in the Philippines has been developed to enhance our understanding of methods of, and pathways to, OSAEC offending, which will help inform practical strategies related to law enforcement investigation and technological and financial facilitation of this crime, and improve the efficacy and impact of protective, deterrence, and preventative approaches to this exploitation.



# Context to the Research

There are two strands to the research consisting of distinct work packages. This summary report presents findings from work package one (WP1). Under this first work package, information from a number of sources has been gathered and analysed by the research team. This involved one to one interviews with domain experts and professionals with direct experience of working on OSAEC cases facilitated by Filipino offenders at national and international level. These Key Informants, both in the Philippines and internationally, are from a range of backgrounds including law enforcement, financial services, online platform providers and child protection agencies. Interviews were also conducted with Local Caseworkers – individuals working in Filipino communities with victims, offenders and affected families where OSAEC crimes are commonplace – to understand how and why these crimes are occurring in their communities and what they believe needs to be done to address the problem and protect children through prevention.

Work package two (WP2) builds on findings from this initial study and will analyse interviews with convicted and incarcerated offenders. This will allow us to better interpret the varied individual, family, community, social and technological issues that motivate offenders to facilitate online sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines, to understand how these crimes are facilitated and, crucially, to identify ways in which they can be better detected, disrupted and prevented.

## What the Literature tells us about the Nature of the Problem

Among the countries in the Asia Pacific region, the Philippines has been labelled as ‘the global epicentre of the live stream sexual abuse trade’ where ‘many of the victims are children’ (Brown, 2018; Gill, 2021). Similarly, the country has also been dubbed as ‘centre of child sex abuse materials production in the world’ (UNICEF, 2016, Tarroja, et. al., 2021).

A systematic review by Ali, Haykal and Youssef (2021) reiterated that the primary gateway to access vulnerable children is online. This reinforces the role of digital platforms in prevailing CSAM production and distribution globally. The review also shows that many online platforms provide scheduled online CSA sessions including live-streaming that remain unidentifiable by law enforcement agencies. However, while the method may vary, the purpose remains the same.

The ECPAT Disrupting Harm in the Philippines (2022) report outlined the economic and socio-cultural determinants contributing to the level of OSAEC emanating from the Philippines. These included English language competence, ease of access to and widespread availability of internet based technologies, established international financial transaction flow and the absence of conflict between established social norms and acceptance of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Ramiro et al. (2019) conducted a study focussing on the drivers of OSAEC in the Philippines, with a particular emphasis on examining community norms. It found that there was a progression of activities from showing child sex photos through to live videos as well as sextortion. This activity was normalised by the young people who participated but at the same time regarded as disgusting. It was a source of “easy money” justified by the anonymity involved and the lack of physical contact. Furthermore, these online practices were tolerated in communities and unlikely to be reported to authorities.

The impact on child victims of the varied forms of child sex trafficking including online was examined by Miller-Perrin and Wurtle (2017) who reiterated that the children who fall prey to these types of sexual exploitation and abuse were of particular concern because of their vulnerability and the developmental impact of these experiences into adulthood.



## Work Package 1

A mixed methods research design was implemented, comprising both quantitative and qualitative components. The rationale for this approach was that it was descriptive and exploratory in purpose. Work Package 1 was designed to produce a broad profile of key features of supply-side OSAEC offending in the Philippines and the offence context, with attention to possible determinants of these offences and avenues to offence disruption and prevention. Data was collected via case file records of convicted OSAEC supply-side offenders held by an NGO in the region supporting Filipino law enforcement in prosecuting these crimes, as well as in depth interviews with Domain Experts both nationally and internationally as well as Local Caseworkers.

Analysis of these case files was conducted to assess offence characteristics and financial transaction and chat log data documenting interactions between convicted perpetrators and facilitators were analysed to investigate patterns of payments to Filipino facilitators. The de-identified case file data was drawn from a sample frame of 36 case file records for individuals convicted of OSAEC in the Philippines. Patterns were identified from the initial analysis related to victim and perpetrator socio-demographics. As these case files related to convicted offenders, there were also patterns related to law enforcement practice and judicial procedures.

In total, there were 21 interviews of Key Informants with 26 participants; eleven female and fifteen male (three of the interviews had two participants present, one had three participants present). All took place over Zoom. Participants represented a range of domains including law enforcement, government departments, NGO's, financial services, internet service providers and telecoms. There were 21 interviews of Local Caseworkers, with some taking place in person, and others over Zoom. Of that number, six worked as government social workers (i.e., as local social worker, rehabilitation centre social worker, or court social worker). Two other social workers were affiliated with non-government organisations that provide services to OSAEC survivors. Data from interviews with Key Informants and Local Caseworkers were analysed using Thematic Analysis.

# Key Findings

Data collected during Work Package 1 were both confirmatory of the findings from previous research, as well as offering novel insights on which initial recommendations are made. Additionally, findings informed the direction for further research in Work Package 2.

Three overarching themes were identified in the data collected from Key Informants and Local Caseworkers, with subsequent ancillary findings from the analyses of case file and financial transaction datasets:

1. Facilitation of OSAEC crimes in the Philippines
2. Extent of OSAEC in the Philippines
3. Challenges to Detection/Disruption/Prevention of OSAEC in the Philippines

## 1. Facilitation of OSAEC crimes in the Philippines

Findings from interviews with key informants and local caseworkers related to characteristics of Filipino based facilitators and their victims were consistent with the case file data analysis; some concurred with previously reported findings (e.g. IJM, 2020; UNICEF, 2020), whilst others signal new avenues for investigation and possibilities for detection and prevention.

### Characteristics of Facilitators

While some male involvement was reported, the majority of facilitators were reported to be female, usually a family member - mother, aunt or older sibling; if not a family member, then a trusted neighbour or family friend. Perceived trust of the facilitator was reported as a very important element of this type of abuse. The participants reported that the average age of facilitators is between 25 and 50 years. In the experience of Local Caseworkers who participated in this research, some facilitators may have been victims of OSAEC, which may be a pathway factor in the commission of new offences. Whilst most participants reported that children and young people themselves do not initiate OSAEC in the absence of a trafficker, two of the key informant participants working in an aftercare capacity with victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and exploitation reported that some older youth were engaging in OSAEC of their own volition, recording highly sexualised content on social media platforms and sharing it as a recruitment strategy for engaging with 'foreigners', the demand-side purchasers of OSAEC.

### Characteristics of Victims

Analysis of case file and interview data supported the contention that girls are more likely to become victims of OSAEC than boys, and that where boys featured in the abuse, child-on child or sibling-on-sibling abuse was common. Participants expressed concern that younger OSAEC victims were presenting more frequently (specifically, young, prepubescent children, under the age of 10). A pattern that emerged from the case file data analysis was that victims tended to be younger when the facilitator was a direct relative. In contrast, where the facilitator - acting as a recruiter - was a non-blood relative, victims tended to be older, usually an adolescent. In these instances it was not uncommon for OSAEC to be accompanied by forced prostitution.

### Motivation of Facilitators to Engage in OSAEC

*".....they are not worse people than anybody else. But it's just if you don't have...if you have nothing, and this is a way of getting something, it's...understandable.."* Child Protection Officer (Philippines)

The primary reason offered as to why people facilitate the exploitation and abuse of children was economic necessity. Extreme poverty was cited as a root cause, particularly in rural areas. Participants explained that many families are large and resort to OSAEC activities in order to support basic needs such as food, shelter and education.

However, poverty and economic disadvantage was not seen as a sufficient explanation in terms of motivation to engage in OSAEC activity. In other instances, participants reported that the lure of making "easy money" motivated individuals (including older minors) to engage in OSAEC. Furthermore, contextual and/or contagion effects also play an important role in facilitators' decision to engage in OSAEC activities, with motivation to engage in OSAEC reported to arise where precedent exists in relation to OSAEC activity in a neighbourhood, particularly where it is impoverished. In these instances, family members, neighbours and youth themselves may learn about the financial 'advantages' associated with OSAEC activity from other community members, often within neighbourhoods where levels of trust in authority is low and reporting is unlikely.

Interview participants reported that strategies for offence minimisation dominate the purchaser-facilitator interaction presentation. The relationships between the foreign perpetrators and facilitators were reported as being 'transactional' in nature in many instances, where minimisation of the impact and severity of the crime and offence-supportive rationalisations predominate. Participants described how perpetrators claim to be merely watching a screen at significant geographical remove from the child or children, or 'helping' the child by providing for their needs. Meanwhile, many facilitators view OSAEC as a way to earn money from geographically distant 'foreigners' in alignment with the "no touch no harm" fallacy (this is apparently reported by parents in particular) regarding the impact of online sexual exploitation and abuse on children.

There is also a certain level of detachment for facilitators as perpetrators are acknowledged as primarily from outside the Philippines.

## 2. Extent of OSAEC in Philippines

*"The Philippines is the number one producer of online child exploitation materials"* Law enforcement officer (Philippines)

There was general agreement that the Philippines is a "hotspot" for OSAEC with some interviewees agreeing it is the "epicentre" of international OSAEC criminality. Participants reported that OSAEC takes place in both rural and urban areas, with links to economic vulnerability in rural areas and a long-standing civil conflict. Participants reported that OSAEC is more difficult to detect in rural areas due to resource and capacity constraints, yet some perceived it as more common in these communities.

## Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic

*“.....it was an ideal situation. It was a perfect storm”*. International Intelligence Analyst

Interviewees described how the COVID-19 pandemic provided the “perfect storm” of conditions for OSAEC proliferation in the country, as people were confined to their homes with stay-at-home orders.

Participants reported that schooling took place online with a requirement to attend classes, so traditional protective education structures and avenues to reporting were compromised, while limited resources were available to purchase the devices or online access necessary to facilitate schooling. Many economic opportunities were severely curtailed; the tourism industry, on which many communities depended was decimated, with diminished opportunities to engage in work, particularly for those employed in this industry.

This increased exposure correlates with NCMEC Cybertipline Country Reporting which estimates an almost four-fold increase in child sexual exploitation reporting in the Philippines in 2021, on 2019 figures prior to the pandemic.

## Drivers for Facilitators to Engage in OSAEC

*“They just need a mobile phone and an internet connection. And.....they can basically send these materials abroad.”* Law enforcement officer (Philippines)

The primary driver of engagement is that the Philippines has a largely English speaking population, with a rich history of cultural connection to Spanish and U.S. influences - including a history of sex work and sexual exploitation linked to US military presence. Furthermore, participants reported that it is also a popular tourist destination due to its comparatively cheap tourist service offering. Additionally, participants reported that at a national level, widespread internet access that does not require technical expertise, coupled with relatively inexpensive devices, facilitates OSAEC, regardless of individual's means.

## Financial Dimensions of OSAEC Facilitation

The preliminary analysis of financial transaction data was linked to payments made by foreign perpetrators who had been subject to a conviction for OSAEC activity in a foreign country; primarily from developed, Western countries including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. These data revealed a number of features of the relationship between foreign purchasers of OSAEC and Philippines based facilitators and show consistency with other profiles of OSAEC-linked payments in the extant literature. The relationships in our sample were invariably short-term in quality, usually lasting for a maximum of 3 months in duration (the brevity of these interactions may reflect the fact that perpetrators were arrested). Despite their brevity, there is a pattern of increasing frequency of payments from foreign purchaser to facilitator, indicating a corresponding increase in engagement between purchaser and facilitator. Towards the end of the relationship payment amounts tended to increase as did their frequency; in many instances to daily or almost daily.

On average, each facilitator interacted with 14 foreign perpetrators over the time period reflected in the data, that is 2012 - 2019. However, at any given time the average perpetrator interacts with between 4 and 5 facilitators. The timing of the payment transfer in each case appears to be random. There are conflicting findings in extant literature related to the timing of payments, with some arguing that these are made during night time hours, others noting they are essentially random. Analysis of these data concurred with arbitrary patterns.

The majority of perpetrators use more than one payment provider (i.e. money remittance services) to transact with facilitators, the average being 2-3 different service providers. The interviews revealed three well-established platforms that feature in Filipino transactions, which aligned with those most commonly used in the sample of transaction data analysed. Even if perpetrators use just one provider there is variety in payment type ie. debit card, credit card, mobile phone transactions.

Additionally, perpetrators use various spelling formats for their name with different facilitators. Typical variations include how their surname is spelt or assuming a false name.

## 3. Challenges to Disruption/Deterrence/Prevention

A number of challenges were identified by interviewees related to the disruption, deterrence and ultimate prevention of OSAEC perpetration in the Philippines. These centre on legal constraints related to the right to privacy and confidentiality, as well as challenges in detection for law enforcement agencies and other child protection actors.

### Legal Constraints

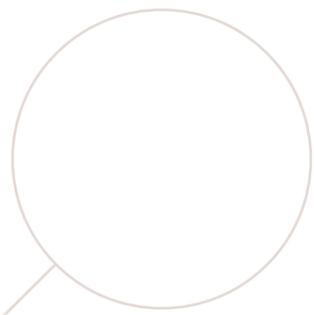
*“It's not a binary; privacy and child protection should not be a binary”* Director, International NGO

While it is generally acknowledged that the Philippines has a robust legal system in terms of breadth of protective privacy laws, there are a number of challenges inherent with this protection.

One of these challenges is that individual privacy is protected in the Philippines and this extends to offenders including those who have been involved in OSAEC, even in cases where children's privacy, bodily autonomy and wellbeing has been seriously compromised in the commission of OSAEC-related offences. Participants reported that a challenge remains in terms of balancing individual rights to privacy (particularly in criminal cases) with the need to respect individual and collective rights to protection from harm, particularly for children.

### Law Enforcement

*“We as law enforcement....there are rules of law that we should follow. But these bad guys bend the law and the rules. That's why they (facilitators of OSAEC in the Philippines) are always one step ahead of us.....”* Law enforcement officer (Philippines)



Participants reported a substantial discrepancy in the number of reported cases vs. actioned cases resulting from the requirement of law enforcement verification that an offence took place and the slow turnover of prosecutions - on average taking three to five years to complete, often with significant secondary consequences attaching for victims and survivors. The requirement for law enforcement to have “personal knowledge” that an offence has been committed (as opposed to just reported) has been addressed in Republic Act 11930. However, challenges remain in tracking and tracing facilitators and perpetrators as surveillance over a period of time may be necessary to secure evidence - across a large population with limited resources. Moreover, OSAEC victims/survivors are often separated from their families for periods of many years while prosecutions proceed, with variable access to temporary or medium term shelter, separation from siblings, disruption to education, and significant impacts on their social, educational, health and developmental prospects into the long term.

### Nature of the Crime

*“.....its like emptying the sea with a bucket....”* International Law enforcement officer

Due to the reported scale and clandestine nature of crime (taking place “behind closed doors”), coupled with the requirement for evidence to secure convictions, the current response from the authorities in the Philippines is largely reactive rather than proactive. A proactive, intelligence led approach to disruption and prevention with parallel emphasis on financial investigation and detection has been identified as ideal, but acknowledged to be challenging in terms of implementation.

## Contributions beyond State of the Art from Work Package 1

A number of findings provided insights beyond those reported in current literature:

- There is an association between the age of victim and relationship to facilitator. Where a facilitator is a close family member (i.e. mother, aunt, older sibling) the child is more likely to be under the age of 10. By contrast, a trusted adult who is not a close family member is associated with more traditional commercial sexual exploitation presentation related to trafficking
- There is some evidence of older youth recording and posting highly sexualised content on social media platforms as a recruitment strategy for engaging with foreigners
- There is emerging evidence of a contagion effect in communities where OSAEC is prevalent. This reflects limited trust in authority, a practice of Omertà\*, and community support for engagement in abuse activities
- Strategies for offence minimization are employed by both perpetrators and facilitators and appear to enable and sustain the commission of OSAEC related victimisation. For perpetrators the offence supporting belief that financial payments they make to the facilitators helps the child by contributing to education expenses, for example. For facilitators the strongly held belief of “no touch, no harm”; that if a child is not being physically abused by the foreign perpetrator then they have come to no harm
- Novel insights into barriers to reporting by victims included the bi-directional dependence of children and facilitators. Fear of disclosure by victims is two-fold. There is the fear of removing the families earning capacity if the facilitator is a close family member. Secondly, a strong culture of respect for older family members also contributes to a fear of reporting their engagement with OSAEC to the authorities.
- A further barrier to reporting are the inherent challenges in the process that deter victims from commencing the process with the requirement to present at multiple offices to file a report, concerns about privacy and uncertain support of advocates to assist in filing a report
- The Philippines is a staunchly Catholic country. As such pre-marital sex is discouraged and virginity highly regarded. Even when virginity has been taken during sexual abuse, there is still a stigma attached to this for the victim. Loss of virginity, whether voluntary or involuntary, carries with it such significant stigma that it can have deleterious effects on young girls' sense of self-worth and self-esteem. Our participants reported that some affected young girls get involved in the sex trade as they regard themselves as sullied
- There is a long history of external influence in the Philippines including Spanish and US. While these have been welcome for the most part there remain long-standing civil tensions in the country between different regions, that contribute to a lack of cooperation on OSAEC related issues
- Financial transaction data analysis offered novel insights into the contractual and transactional nature of the relationship between the foreign perpetrators and Filipina facilitators that warrants further investigation. With facilitators managing an average of 14 perpetrators, there is a need to better understand the processes involved in both engagement with the perpetrators, aggregation of payments and disbursement in communities
- There are new avenues of investigation to support the refinement of typologies for payments to the Philippines for work package 2. These are both confirmatory data sources in the findings from interviews with incarcerated facilitators and complementary with findings from triangulated data sources

\*This practice originated among the Italian Mafia and is a code silence about criminal activity particularly in relation to law enforcement

## Work Package 2 Directions

While the above-outlined initial findings, confirm some aspects of the limited state of the art evidence on the nature and presentation of OCSEA in the Philippines, they also signal a number of new insights related to the offence pathway, modus operandi and commission that require further investigation in the context of Work Package 2. It is envisaged that these investigations will inform tailored pathways to detection, disruption and prevention - including (but not limited to):

- Individual factors supporting entry into OSAEC activities at the level of youth and adults who become engaged in this activity, in addition to entry level factors affecting those who conform to the more traditional facilitator presentation
- Systemic and community level risks that leave children and young people vulnerable to OSAEC victimisation
- Victim recruitment strategies
- Strategies for concealment of OSAEC activity
- Barriers to community reporting at the level of victims/survivors, neighbours and community members, educators, etc.
- Offence supportive rationalisations which minimise and justify offence commission with a view to developing a counter-narrative that can support preventive messaging and associated campaigns in Filipino communities
- Profiles of payment arrangements and allied payment services between purchasers, facilitators victims and other beneficiaries (e.g. other family members or OSAEC linked community members) - with a view to refining the OSAEC-linked payments typology and identifying metadata signals to support enhanced detection of OSAEC-related payments for media and financial service providers

The Final Report presenting overall findings will be available for distribution in early 2024.

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