

Programme launched to stop online exploitation of children in the Philippines on Safer Internet Day

In line with the Safer Internet Day celebration, Terre des Hommes Netherlands and its partner organisation, Bidlisiw Foundation, will be launching the Safety for Children and their Rights OnLine (SCROL) programme in the Philippines on 17 February 2023. Through its collaboration with local organisations, communities, government bodies and the internet and tech industry, the three-year programme aims to ensure that all children are protected from online sexual exploitation and are in a safe family and community environment.

According to a report published by ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF in 2022, 20% of internet-using Filipino children aged 12-17 experienced online sexual exploitation and abuse in 2021. If scaled to the population, the said report estimates that as many as two million children could have experienced grave instances of online sexual exploitation and abuse in the Philippines.

"Widespread poverty, compounded with the effects of the pandemic, continue to entice people to utilise digital platforms to earn money, including engaging in the online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC). Combatting OSEC will entail working together with different stakeholders to enhance existing prevention and response mechanisms", said Ms. Eva Maria Cayanan, Country Director of Terre des Hommes Netherlands in the Philippines.

"Children who were abused and exploited online may show signs of frequent risky behaviours partnered with mental health problems which may result in unhealthy relationships. Through the implementation of the SCROL Project, we plan to empower children to be proactive and to report cases of abuse and exploitation, raise the awareness of parents and communities on children's rights and OSEC, influence the private sector, and capacitate law enforcement agencies to ensure effective and efficient response to OSEC", added by the Bidlisiw Foundation.

The online sexual exploitation of children remains to be an urgent issue that necessitates Terre des Hommes Netherlands in the Philippines to continue collaborating with children, families, communities and government agencies to penalise perpetrators and increase the protection of children. Engaging the private sector especially the tech industry, the travel and tourism sector, and manufacturing companies is also instrumental in the development of innovative solutions to address the issue.

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Note to Editor:

Terre des Hommes Netherlands aims to prevent child exploitation, to remove children from exploitative situations and to ensure that these children can continue their development in a safe environment. The organisation focuses on sexual exploitation of children, the worst forms of child labour, child trafficking and migration, sexual and reproductive health and rights and on child protection in humanitarian crises. For each of these forms of child exploitation, Terre des Hommes is developing and implementing projects and programmes through local partners and one of these is the SCROL programme, which is funded by the Dutch Postcode Lottery (NPL) and it is implemented in four countries: Cambodia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Kenya.