TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS
Connecting Children

Project CONEC

TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS: Connecting Children
Baseline Study of the Project PHCE 0432 Stronger Systems to Protect Child Victims of OCSE (2022)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Creating a safer Online Environment for every Child Project aims to protect children of all ages and genders in the target communities of Taguig City, Bohol, and Cebu in the Philippines from online sexual exploitation. To address OCSE, the project will focus on strengthening local child protection systems at various levels. Local governments will be influenced and equipped to implement programs and deliver appropriate services to child victims in a sustainable manner. This includes strengthening child protection mechanisms in communities and schools, as well as increasing the capacity of the social service workforce and other duty-bearers to provide OCSE-related information and services, which can also be facilitated through referral pathways. Children (boys and girls) and adult community members will be educated on OCSE to increase protective behaviours and engage them as active participants in the protection of boys and girls in their families and communities. They will be encouraged to conduct their own community-based activities to contribute to public education and advocacy. Other community stakeholders, such as local civil society organisations and the private sector, will also be educated and mobilised to collaborate with and/or support the local governments and the communities in combating OCSE. Given that poverty is the most compelling push factor for the prevalence of OCSE, a social protection package that includes education support, sustainable livelihoods, and employment referrals will be made available to OCSE victims and their families.

This study was commissioned to establish baseline data for the set of indicators outlined in the project's results framework. The baseline results will be used as a measurement to monitor the project's progress against the set indicators over the course of the project implementation. The baseline study was carried out in three cities, namely Cebu, Mandaue, Taguig, and in four municipalities in Bohol province including Dauis, Panglao, Calape, and Tubigon. A mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, particularly document review, surveys, focus group discussions (FGD), and key informant interviews (KII), were employed to gather data in order to understand the communities' current condition in relation to the project's Theory of Change. *Check here for the full version of the [study](#).*

MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

I. PROJECT OUTCOME/OUTPUT INDICATORS

OUTCOME 1

Children, their families, and the communities have an increased awareness and capacity to prevent and respond to OCSE

OUTCOME 1.1

Description of evidence that children, families and communities have increased awareness and capacity to prevent and respond to OCSE/SE.

Survey results show that the overall awareness of OCSE among child respondents is **moderate** with an average score of **6 out of 10** on the knowledge scale. This indicates that children are aware of the phenomenon but lack in-depth knowledge about OCSE. Children are unaware that OCSE is a family-based crime in which traffickers or facilitators are related to the victims. Hence, they also believe that the perpetrator in OCSE is usually a stranger. On the other hand, they are well aware that OCSE is a punishable crime and that producing and selling sexually explicit images or videos involving children online is illegal. They also know that OCSE happens to all children, not just girls. Thus, while children had not heard of or were unfamiliar with the terms OCSE/OSEC, they were aware of the occurrence, albeit with limited knowledge of OCSE.

Similarly, parents/community members have a **moderate** level of OCSE awareness with an average score of **7 out of 10** on the knowledge scale. It is slightly higher than the children's OCSE awareness level, although it falls within the same moderate range. Parents, like child respondents, are unaware that the perpetrator/facilitator of OCSE could be a family member, relative, neighbor, or someone they know. Thus, they are also unaware that OCSE is a family-based crime in which traffickers are related to victims. This is critical because OCSE incidents in the Philippines occur in private homes and neighborhoods. Parents' lack of awareness may indicate a failure to monitor their children's online and offline activities. Moreover, all parents are aware that OCSE is a criminal offense and that it is illegal to create and sell sexually explicit content of children online.

Data from focus groups show that children and parents currently have limited capacity to respond to OCSE due to their lack of understanding about the issue. Parents demand that the local government launch public awareness campaigns against OCSE.

Project CONEC

TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS: Connecting Children
Baseline Study of the Project PHCE 0432 Stronger Systems to Protect Child Victims of OCSE (2022)

OUTCOME 1.2

of OCSE/SE cases reported by children and community members

10 SE/OCSE cases were reported by the children in 2022. Nine of these cases were in Bohol with the following breakdown: three in Panglao, three in Calape, two in Dauis, one in Tubigon, and a case in Mandaue City.

9 SE/OCSE cases reported by parents/community members in 2022. Four of these incidents occurred in Mandaue City, two in Cebu City, two in Dauis, and one in Panglao, Bohol.

Most children (95%) and parents/community members (82%) are unaware of OCSE cases in their barangays, municipalities, or cities.

OUTPUT 1.1

Increased children's and community's awareness in preventing and addressing OCSE

# of vulnerable children participated in awareness raising sessions on OCSE issues — **0**
# of community members participated in awareness raising activities — **0**
# of boys/girls/youth participated in advocacy campaigns for OCSE issues — **0**

68% of children expressed willingness to participate in activities that will help them protect themselves and prevent OCSE.

70% of parents/community members also affirmed their willingness to participate in project activities aimed at preventing and protecting their children from OCSE.

OUTPUT 1.2

Improved and sustained child, youth and parents' participation in local governance processes through either multidisciplinary teams, quick response teams and established community or school-based child protection mechanism

# of supported children and youth advocating for OCSE prevention at different levels (local, sub-national, national, regional, and international) — **0**
# of supported parents/caregivers advocating for OCSE prevention at different levels (local, sub-national, national, regional, and international) — **0**

Children have a low level of involvement in activities that promote children's rights and welfare in their schools and communities.

Parents were not involved in community activities that promote children's welfare.

OUTPUT 1.3

Mechanisms for children's participation and peer support in community initiatives and decision-making processes are created or maximised

# of mechanisms created /maximised for children/young people's participation in decision-making process at the community level — **0**

Children and youth participate in decision-making at the community level by being involved with and represented in community structures such as the Local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPC), Barangay Development Council (BDC), and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), as well as children and youth groups in communities and schools such as student councils, faith-based children/youth groups, and community-based children/youth organizations including other NGO-supported children/youth groups. These various local structures provide a forum for children and youth to express and discuss the issues and concerns they face while also developing solutions or ideas to solve these problems.

Only **21%** of children knew a child or children involved in the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC) in their community.

Around half of the children **(46%)** did not know any children who were BCPC members.

OUTCOME 2

Local service providers and community and/or school-based child protection mechanisms have the capacity to address OCSE cases

Description of ways in which child protection mechanisms have the capacity to address and respond to OCSE cases.

Local governments have varying capacities to confront various challenges when responding to OCSE. The lack of skilled and dedicated personnel capable of handling OCSE cases, as well as

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Baseline Study of the Project PHCE 0432 Stronger Systems to Protect Child Victims of OCSE (2022)

inadequate financial resources, made it difficult for LGUs to prioritize OCSE prevention and response alongside competing development priorities. While all LGUs are willing to respond to the OCSE issue, they have low confidence and are hampered by a variety of factors such as a lack of technical capacity to address OCSE, a weak referral mechanism, fragmented efforts, a lack of collaboration with other agencies, and the fact that frontline agencies are still in the learning process of dealing with OCSE, as in the case of Cebu City. Some local governments in Bohol indicated that their involvement is limited and determined by available budget and political priorities.

Both Cebu and Bohol received trainings and seminars to equip stakeholders on how to protect children from OCSE, with Cebu receiving more technical assistance and capacity building support since several international NGOs have been implementing anti-OCSE initiatives in Cebu City for nearly a decade compared to relatively new OCSE interventions in Bohol.

OUTPUT 2.1

Local service providers (e.g., social workers, para social workers, law enforcement, health workers, other relevant duty bearers) and child protection workers are trained to deliver, prevent, respond, and reintegrate programmes and services and coordinate with target communities.

# of LGU/Private sector service providers participated in capacity needs assessment - **0**
# of service providers or government officials trained - **0**

Local government frontliners, with the exception of Cebu City, have limited technical knowledge and capability in handling OCSE cases. The monitoring systems vary by area. Both Dauis and Mandaue City lacked a monitoring system. Mandaue City referred OCSE cases to the National Bureau of Investigation because it is still in the process of establishing a system. Those who did have a monitoring system followed different procedures when dealing with OCSE cases. In Cebu City, these cases were handled at the barangay level, as immediate police intervention could exacerbate the victim's trauma. Reports were processed and evidence was verified at the barangay level in Tubigon. Procedures in Panglao and Calape include proper coordination with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

OUTPUT 2.2

Referral pathways established/strengthened especially involving professionals and the private sector.

# of stakeholders trained on the referral pathway - **0**
# of times the referral pathways are utilized - **0**

Cebu and Bohol responded that they have a referral pathway in place; however, the referral mechanisms vary across different areas.

These mechanisms involve referring the cases to enforcement authorities like the NBI and PNP, and agencies trained to handle OCSE cases such as DSWD and NGOs.

A collaborative relationship and coordinated response among pertinent agencies, service providers, and LGUs are crucial to addressing the gaps. The respondents also highlighted the role of parents in preventing OCSE.

OUTPUT 2.3

Multi-disciplinary teams or Quick Response Teams with community involvement are created/strengthened and are functional

# of multi-disciplinary teams or quick response teams created/ supported - **0**
# of inputs on child right policies and laws given to decision makers of government - **0**

The protocol for the case management of child victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation was observed in all areas of Bohol and Cebu. However, they do not have a dedicated Multi-disciplinary Team for OCSE. They recognized that case management requires a multidisciplinary approach because children require access to a variety of services to meet their needs. To help the child, various agencies and professionals must work together. The case manager, who is a social worker, collaborates closely with the PNP and other relevant professionals in the case, such as a doctor, a representative or social worker from a temporary shelter, a lawyer, and a mental health professional.

The Philippines has a robust legal framework to promote child protection, including preventing OCSE. The country recently passed groundbreaking legislation to tackle OCSE. RA 11930 or Anti-Online

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TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS: Connecting Children
Baseline Study of the Project PHCE 0432 Stronger Systems to Protect Child Victims of OCSE (2022)

Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) became law on July 30, 2022. It modified the Anti-Pornography Act or RA 9775 to give it more teeth in protecting children from online sexual exploitation, disregarding any form of consent from the child. Its key provisions include expanding the responsibilities and accountability of social media platforms, electronic service providers, and internet and financial intermediaries; producing, willingly accessing, and knowingly sharing any form of child sexual abuse and exploitative material is punishable under this law; providing law enforcement with additional tools when surveilling and investigating OSEC cases; providing protection and guarantees for child OSAEC victims; and creating the National Coordinating Center against OSAEC and Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Material under the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking.

Cebu City, Mandaue, Taguig City, and Tubigon have existing policies and programs protecting children. They have established partnerships with NGOs to combat OCSE. Cebu City has partnered with the Department of Education's Alternative Learning System (ALS) Unit to provide therapy sessions for child abuse victims, as well as opportunities for them to socialize and participate in youth-led activities. For local service providers in Cebu and Bohol, their programs are typically focused on prevention and advocacy campaigns against OCSE.

OUTPUT 2.4

Child protection related trainings and learning sessions especially on Trauma Informed Care are developed/adopted and implemented

# of service providers trained on child protection and/or trauma-informed care

Service providers, including social workers, law enforcement personnel, and court officials in Cebu City and Mandaue received more child protection-related trainings than those in Bohol. The NGOs provided the former with trainings on improving case handling and reporting, case detection and case management, managing physical and mental effects or defense mechanisms for victims, legal background on OCSE, and trauma-informed care. There were trainings on OCSE and case reporting in Bohol, but none on trauma-informed care.

OUTCOME 3

Gender and child sensitive child protection and OCSE/SE related services are inclusive, available, and accessible to children and their families

Description of ways in which child protection mechanisms have the capacity to address and respond to OCSE cases.

The different service providers, including law enforcement personnel, court officials, and social workers indicated that the current child protection system is gender responsive and child-friendly. They all adhere to child-friendly and gender-responsive protocols. For PNP WCPD, their child-friendly protocols include having a child-friendly space with toys in their office and conducting the investigation or interviewing the victim behind closed doors. The investigation and reporting/blotter are kept separate from other crimes to guarantee privacy and confidentiality. They disaggregate their OCSE reports by age and sex to determine victims' varying needs. They ensure that children's welfare is upheld and protected at all times. They also coordinate and ensure MSWD's presence, especially if a child or children are involved during the investigation.

Courts also follow child-sensitive processes during legal proceedings, such as prioritizing and expediting cases involving children to reduce lengthy trials, plea bargaining, and accepting videotaped in-depth disclosure interviews with child victims as admissible evidence in court to prevent re-traumatization.

The DSWD provides shelter for child survivors. It offers separate housing for girls and boys and provides for their different needs. Some NGOs run aftercare centers that cater to specific age and gender groups of children based on their expertise. When a victim is referred to a center, there is a protocol in place that prohibits relatives from visiting the victim for a period of time in order to facilitate the victim's healing process. Prior to reintegration, the victim will not be returned to the community/family until the social worker has completed a thorough parenting capability assessment report.

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TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS: Connecting Children
Baseline Study of the Project PHCE 0432 Stronger Systems to Protect Child Victims of OCSE (2022)

OUTPUT 3.2

Child protection programmes and specialised services extended to children at risk that will include case management and MHPSS (mental health and psychosocial support) utilising referral pathways that involve the local Social Welfare Offices and other agencies as well as relevant NGOs and institutions;

# of boy/girl OCSE victims or at risk receiving appropriate services (i.e., MHPSS, legal advice, health service, community-based, shelters, others based on case management assessment) - **0**

As the primary social protection agency and the chair of the Inter-Agency Council Against Child Pornography, the DSWD assists OCSE and trafficked individuals through its various programs and services. The DSWD has joined forces with the LGUs, particularly the Local Councils for the Protection of Children and NGOs, to raise awareness, prevent, and detect OCSE cases as early as possible. The DSWD also takes custody of rescued OCSE victims and provides psychosocial interventions.

Some of its programs include the Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons, Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS), 4Ps, and residential care facilities.

OUTPUT 3.3

Strategies for identifying vulnerable families are developed, assessed, and are referred to for appropriate assistance including Sustainable Livelihoods and Employment Support and skills trainings.

# of family members with children vulnerable to exploitation participated in livelihood skills trainings — **0**

The 4Ps program is the government's conditional cash transfer grant for extremely poor households, with the goal of breaking the cycle of poverty by keeping children aged 0-18 healthy and in school, enabling them to have a better future. Beneficiaries are selected using the National Household Targeting System, or Listahanan, after a survey of the factors affecting their living conditions such as ownership of assets, type of housing unit, level of educational attainment of the household head, and access to water and sanitation facilities.

Beneficiaries must meet the following requirements in order to receive cash grants: children must attend school, have regular health check-ups, have their growth monitored, and receive vaccines. Pregnant women must receive prenatal care, and their births must be attended by professional health workers. Parents or guardians are required to attend monthly community-based Family Development Sessions to learn about positive child discipline, disaster preparedness, and women's rights.

OUTPUT 3.3

Social Protection Package (SPP) for Children who are "more at risk" of OCSE created and disbursed containing social protection measures (e.g., education or scholarship support and related expenses; monthly groceries, cash for work or cash for training, livelihood support, shelter repair, health services) that will enable them to overcome hardships and aid in recovery and reintegration.

# of Clear written guidelines for use — **0**
# of boys/girls at risk of OCSE received educational services (i.e., meals, transportation allowance, monthly groceries, and school supplies) — **0**
# of at risk / child victims received scholarship support — **0**

DSWD's **Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons** is a comprehensive package of programs and services designed to meet the psychosocial, social, and economic needs of the beneficiaries. It is carried out in collaboration with other relevant agencies, such as the Department of Justice. These programs include case management and services for trafficked persons. Direct service assistance provided to trafficking victims includes financial assistance for employment, financial assistance while undergoing skills training, capital assistance, and referral to employers and/or business partners. Other services provided to victims or witnesses include board and lodging, documentation, and other incidental costs. Following the rescue, victims are also given educational and medical assistance, as well as hygiene kits. The DSWD provides temporary shelter to victims to cope with traumatic experiences as well as those with ongoing court cases. There are separate units for male and female victims.

The DSWD's **Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS)** program is a social safety net or stop-gap measure aimed at helping individuals and families recover from an unexpected life event or crisis. It can assist them in meeting their basic needs such as food, transportation, medical, educational, burial assistance, and psychosocial intervention.

Project CONEC

TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS: Connecting Children
Baseline Study of the Project PHCE 0432 Stronger Systems to Protect Child Victims of OCSE (2022)

II. INCIDENCE AND MAGNITUDE OF OCSE IN PROJECT AREAS

Overall, reliable data on OCSE cases is lacking. For example, while Cebu City collects extensive data on OCSE incidents, underreporting is common for a variety of reasons. To begin with, measuring the prevalence of OCSE is difficult due to its complexity, hidden, and online nature. It does not help that OCSE data are not centralized, are typically not electronically managed, and are spread across multiple government agencies, making data even more difficult to consolidate.

According to the Disrupting Harm in the Philippines report, an estimated **two (2) million children in the country**[1] were victims of severe cases of online sexual exploitation and abuse in a year. These figures highlight the great deal of effort that has to be made to safeguard children from online sexual exploitation. However, official OCSE statistics from the PNP Women and Children's Protection Desk (PNP WCPD) show relatively low figures, with some areas such as Bohol recording no OCSE cases at all.

Although there has been an increase in awareness of OCSE over the years, this baseline study shows that a significant portion of the population, both children and parents/community members, is still unaware of the OCSE issue, which may contribute to underreporting of OCSE incidents, among other factors. This finding is echoed in previous OCSE research, which cites children's lack of awareness of the types of behaviors that constitute OCSE. Another barrier to OCSE reporting is a lack of knowledge of reporting processes. While the study results show that children are willing to report OCSE incidents in theory, they lack the knowledge and support networks to seek help. Many are unfamiliar with service providers in the community who help OCSE victims. Moreover, a "culture of silence" also exists, which has an impact on the timely reporting of OCSE cases. Based on earlier studies, child victims resist disclosing OCSE incidents for a number of reasons, including shame, the stigma associated with sexual experiences, and the fear of victim-blaming. Reporting is also more difficult for children when a family member is involved as an offender or facilitator of OCSE, which could end in the imprisonment of parents or relatives.

1. *ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF. (2022). Disrupting Harm in the Philippines: Evidence on online child sexual exploitation and abuse. Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.*

Cebu City has comprehensive data on OCSE according to the PNP WCPD report. In 2020-2022, Cebu City reported **85 OCSE cases**, recording the highest in 2020 among females at **51%** and among adolescents **aged 13-17**. The majority of the cases were recorded in Barangay Lahug at 38%.

Bohol has been identified as a hotspot for OCSE based on the International Justice Mission Report 2020. However, there is no official recording or reporting of cases from 2020 onward.

Taguig City is also one of the country's hotspots for online child sexual exploitation. There are no official statistics on OCSE cases in the city, most reports are based on news accounts. According to a 2015 MetroNewsCentral.net report, since 2014, the Taguig City government, in close collaboration with the Philippine law enforcement agencies, IJM, and US Homeland Security Investigations, has rescued 43 children who had been sexually exploited online.

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TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS: Connecting Children
Baseline Study of the Project PHCE 0432 Stronger Systems to Protect Child Victims of OCSE (2022)

II. EXISTING ORGANIZATIONS AND SECTORS IN THE COMMUNITIES AND THEIR RELEVANT PROJECTS OR PROGRAMMES

The government has social protection programs intended to protect livelihood and employment against hazards and sudden loss of income. These include labor market intervention, social insurance, social safety nets, and social welfare. More specifically, the DSWD has programs addressing OCSE, such as Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons and Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS).
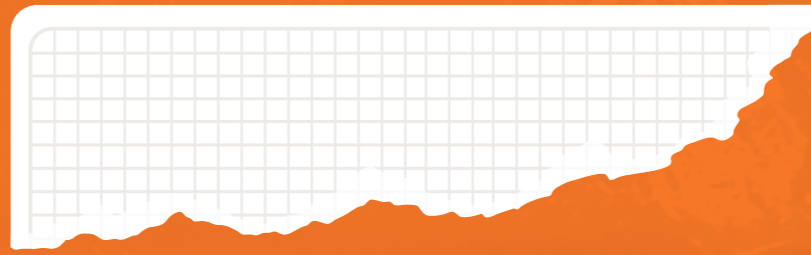
Compared to Bohol, NGOs, and CSOs have implemented more OCSE-related programs in Cebu. The programs in Cebu covered rescue operations of OSEC victims, prosecution and aftercare; training on child protection, human rights, and trauma-informed care; advocacy against OSCE, education and training on child rights, child sexual abuse, and cyber safety; psychosocial or behavioral counseling; and medical examination.

To meet the needs of OCSE survivors, the government, through the DSWD, established the Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons, OCSE awareness mainstreamed in the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, and the 1343 Actionline Against Human Trafficking. Enforcement authorities also have specialized units to act on the investigation of trafficking cases. These are the PNP Women and Children Protection Center, PNP Anti-Cybercrime Group, and the National Bureau of Investigation Cybercrime Division.

IV. CURRENT CAPACITY OF THE LOCAL COUNCILS FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN (LCPC) AND LOCAL POLICIES AND ORDINANCES TO ADDRESS OSEC
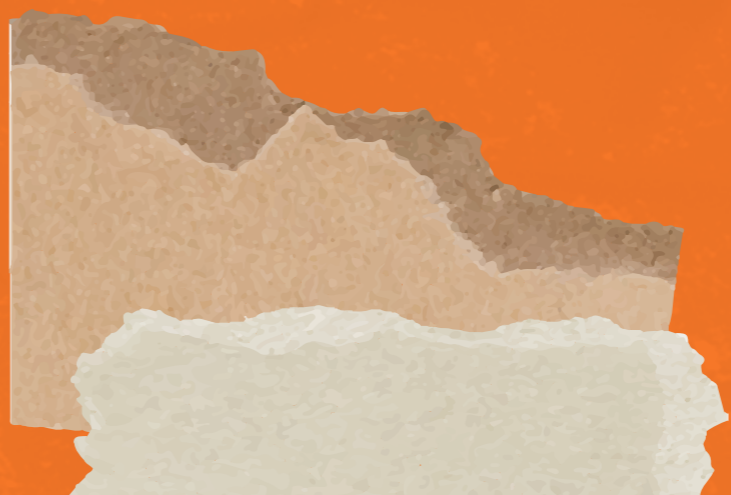
As required by law, there are Local Councils for the Protection of Children (LCPC) in place across all project areas. The level of functionality and capacity of LCPCs, on the other hand, varies. The functionality of the LCPC is based on the support of the local chief executive and the composition of the council, which changes every three years due to elections. Cebu and Mandaue have the most active and capable LCPCs, which are backed by relevant policies and investments. However, local governments' overall OCSE prevention and response are constrained by a lack of funds as well as skilled and trained personnel capable of carrying out programs and activities that address this issue.

In March 2023, Cebu City recently enacted the City Ordinance 2677, or the Creation of Cebu City Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking and Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (CCIACT-OSEAC) under the Mayor's Office. The functions of CCIACT-OSEAC are to formulate a comprehensive and integrated program to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons, child pornography, and online sexual abuse and exploitation of children; monitor and document cases of trafficking, child pornography, and online sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the city; undertake an information campaign against trafficking and online sexual abuse and exploitation through the establishment of an information and education team; and recommend relevant policies or legislative measures to the Sangguniang Panlungsod.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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Baseline Study of the Project PHCE 0432 Stronger Systems to Protect Child Victims of OCSE (2022)
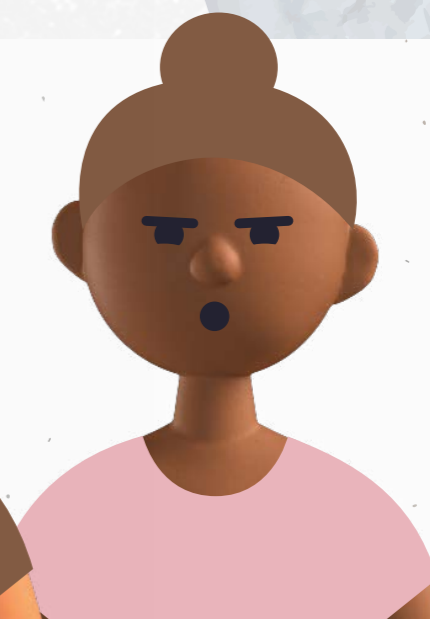
Findings indicate that children and parents have a moderate understanding of OCSE. Hence, they require more knowledge and skills to be better equipped to prevent OCSE and sexual exploitation. As such, the project should consider the following:

Create a long-term social and behavior change communications (SBCC) strategy that focuses on raising OCSE awareness, including the nature of OCSE and its effects on the child, family, and community; and its identification and prevention, as well as promoting positive online safety practices and correcting common internet beliefs among parents and children, such as "no touch, no harm" and viewing the internet as a safe place to meet new friends.
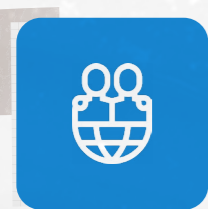
Develop SBCC materials that are age- and context-appropriate, focusing on practical tips to increase online safety among children and encourage reporting of cases. Engage the target audience (children and parents) in developing key messages and identifying creative and innovative ways to communicate these messages.

Maximize the use of technology, including social media platforms to raise OCSE awareness and prevention, as well as to reach out to more children. Engage youth advocates and children in the design, creation, and dissemination of social media content that will attract and engage their peers. Social media posts should be appealing to the target audience and contain only key messages.

With the passage of the Anti-OSAEC Law, the project should engage and collaborate with private sector stakeholders such as internet service providers, social media companies, telecommunications providers, and the traditional media to raise OCSE awareness and prevention.
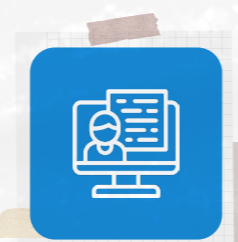
Increase public awareness about OCSE and proper internet use in schools, communities, churches, and families. Instead of organizing separate activities, integrate OCSE awareness activities and strategies into existing community activities (e.g., Empowerment and Reaffirmation of Paternal abilities (ERPAT), Mother's Class, 4Ps training, Parent-Teachers Association meetings, Senior Citizen meetings) and leverage engagement with organized groups (e.g., women's groups, 4Ps, Pag-asa Youth Association of the Philippines (PYAP), Sangguniang Kabataan, student councils, churches, senior citizens) in the community as avenues for awareness-raising activities, particularly for parents and children.

Educate leaders on child protection and OCSE at the barangay level. Help activate and strengthen the local council for the protection of children, as well as conduct education campaigns on OCSE-related legislation. As a preventive measure, have barangay officials conduct home visits to discuss OCSE with parents and children.

Provide technical assistance and capacity building support to local governments and local child protection structures, particularly at the barangay and municipal level, in developing programs, projects, and activities, including the development of local policies to address OCSE, and strengthening OCSE referral and case management systems.

Support and advocate for local government law enforcement authorities to create an organized, centralized, and digitally managed database of OCSE/SE cases that includes age and gender disaggregation data.

Prioritize initiatives that strengthen the family to prevent OCSE. Apart from promoting the well-being of families and children, creating economic stability in the home is crucial. Project interventions should aim to assist low-income families in finding gainful employment or establishing small businesses to promote economic security at home and to prevent and respond to OCSE. Family strengthening sessions and livelihood support to families should be among the interventions.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Reliable data on OCSE cases is lacking.

Measuring the prevalence of OCSE is difficult due to its complexity, hidden, and online nature. It does not help that OCSE data are not centralised, are typically not electronically managed, and are spread across multiple government agencies, making data even more difficult to consolidate.

Filipino Families are unaware of the OCSE Issue.

Although there has been an increase in awareness of OCSE over the years, both children and parents/community members are still unaware of the OCSE issue, which may contribute to underreporting of OCSE incidents, among other factors.

Community members have a lack of knowledge on OCSE reporting processes.

While the study results show that children are willing to report OCSE incidents in theory, they lack the knowledge and support networks to seek help. Many are unfamiliar with service providers in the community who help OCSE victims. Moreover, a "culture of silence" also exists, which has an impact on the timely reporting of OCSE cases. Based on earlier studies, child victims resist disclosing OCSE incidents for a number of reasons, including shame, the stigma associated with sexual experiences, and the fear of victim-blaming. Reporting is also more difficult for children when a family member is involved as an offender or facilitator of OCSE, which could end in the imprisonment of parents or relatives.

Functionality and capacity of Local Child Protection services and LCPCs varies.

While it is required by law, the functionality of the LCPC is based on the support of the local chief executive and the composition of the council, which changes every three years due to elections. Local governments' overall OCSE prevention and response are constrained by a lack of funds as well as skilled and trained personnel capable of carrying out programs and activities that address this issue.

OUR CALLS TO ACTION

Break the norm of No touch, No Harm!

Promoting positive online safety practices and correcting common internet beliefs among parents and children, such as "no touch, no harm" and viewing the internet as a safe place to meet new friends.

Reach and provide children and youth practical tips to increase online safety among children and encourage reporting of cases.

Maximise the use of technology, including social media platforms to raise OCSE awareness and prevention, as well as to reach out to more children. Engage youth advocates and children in the design, creation, and dissemination of social media content that will attract and engage their peers. Social media posts should be appealing to the target audience and contain only key messages.

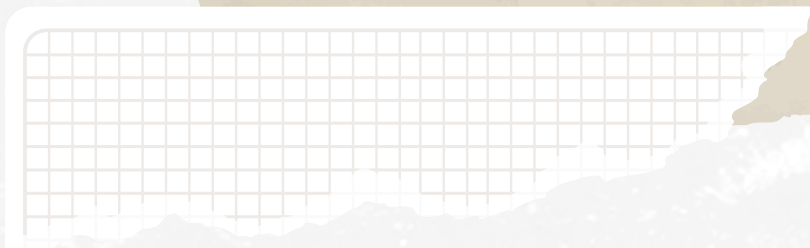### Educate leaders on child protection and OCSE at the barangay level.

Help activate and strengthen the local council for the protection of children, as well as conduct education campaigns on OCSE-related legislation. As a preventive measure, have barangay officials conduct home visits to discuss OCSE with parents and children.

Mainstream OCSE reporting. Make it accessible to all, leaving No One Behind.

Create an organised, centralised, and digitally managed database of OCSE/SE cases that includes age and gender disaggregation data.

Create economic stability in every child's home.

Poverty is still the greatest factor why children and community members engage in the cycle of trafficking and exploitation. OCSE services should include assisting low-income families in finding gainful employment or establishing small businesses to promote economic security at home and to prevent and respond to OCSE.

Increase investment in Child Protection and LCPCs.

Support to local governments and local child protection structures, particularly at the barangay and municipal level, in developing programs, projects, and activities, including the development of local policies to address OCSE, and strengthening OCSE referral and case management systems.

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