Transforming Social Norms to Protect Children Online:

SaferKidsPH Action Research on Changing Social Norms for Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC)

Warning:
SaferkidsPH Action Research on Changing Social Norms for Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) identifies norms that contributes to the increasing incidents of OSAEC. At times in the study, there may be some distressing details that are written including stories from the respondents on sexual violence, which may be difficult to read. You are encouraged to monitor your responses and engage with the study in ways that are comfortable. Please seek psychological support for acute distress.
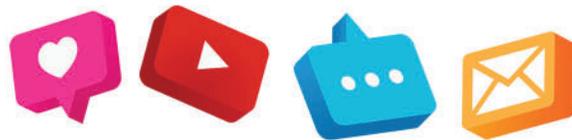
Transforming Social Norms to Protect Children Online: SaferKidsPH Action Research on Changing Social Norms for Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC)

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Acronyms

CSAEM	Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Material/s
FGD	focus group discussion
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICT	information and communications technology
IJM	International Justice Mission
KII	key informant interview
LGBTIQ+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or questioning and other terms
OSAEC	Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children
RA	Republic Act
SBC	social and behaviour change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Message

In the Philippines, internet use has increased dramatically. Filipino children as young as five have access to the internet, as highlighted in this study. While this provides immense benefits to the children's potential, it also exposes them to exploitation and abuse. According to the *United Nation's Children Fund (2022)*, the Philippines remains a source of child abuse materials that are being distributed internationally.

Since 2019, Australia and the Philippines have been working together to strengthen the country's child protection system. Through SaferKidsPH, we help educate families and communities so they can better protect children from online sexual abuse and exploitation (OSAEC).

Australia spearheaded this important study to identify existing social norms and beliefs that contribute to OSAEC within families and communities. Understanding these norms is essential in shaping policies to better protect our communities. The insights gained from this research have already been instrumental in modifying SaferKidsPH' advocacy efforts and community interventions to promote positive practices that enhance child protection.

This study would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of the SaferKidsPH consortium and *Plan International*. We extend our deepest gratitude to all those involved in this critical work. Through our collective efforts, we move closer to ensuring a safer environment for all children, both online and offline.

H.E. HK Yu PSM, FCPA (Aust)
Australian Ambassador to the Philippines

Message

The surge of digital communication and social media in recent years has transformed how we connect and express ourselves, even with people from across the globe.

However, this digital transformation has also given rise to concerning trends, particularly the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children. In the Research, ECPAT International, and the Interpol reveals that 20 per cent of Internet-using children, aged 12-17, in the Philippines were subjected to this egregious child rights violation. Alarmingly, 23-38 per cent of these children do not tell anyone and fewer than 4 per cent of children who are victims report to the police or to a helpline. This clearly shows the urgent need to address social norms that allow this scrouge to prevail and make it a top priority for the government.

This report, conducted by SaferkidsPH through UNICEF and in partnership with Plan International, delves into the research on the social norms surrounding online sexual abuse and exploitation of children in one community in the Philippines. It explores the complex interplay between technology, societal attitudes, and individual behaviors, shedding light on the dynamics that both contribute to and hinder efforts to address this pressing issue.

The findings offer invaluable insights into the community's awareness, perceptions, and experiences, highlighting the urgent need for collective action. This report serves as a call to action and a guide for individuals, community leaders and members, local government, non-government organizations, children and youth to address the norms around online sexual abuse and exploitation.

We hope these insights will not only inform actions at the individual and community levels but also inspire a national dialogue that fosters social behavior change, empathy, and proactive engagement. UNICEF is committed to working with children and their families, government, both at the national and subnational levels, and all other actors to strengthen child protection systems.

Children in the Philippines are suffering in silence. Their cries unheard and their pain unseen. We must break this silence. We must listen to their voices and safeguard their right to protection from violence, abuse and exploitation—online and offline. We must ensure positive social norms are promoted, so every child can live in safety and with dignity and enjoy the benefits of cyberspace free from all forms of violence and harm.

This is not just a moral imperative; it is our collective responsibility.

Oyunsaikhan Dendevnorov
Representative
UNICEF Philippines

Message

The fact that online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC) continues to occur is heartbreaking. Understanding the factors that contribute to why and how it is still occurring is vitally important, so that we can work more effectively to prevent OSAEC.

This report on "**Transforming Social Norms to Protect Children Online: SaferKidsPH Action Research on Changing Social Norms for Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children**" does exactly that – help all of us better understand the contributing factors.

The research is timely and useful as it shines a light on the social norms that contribute to the online and offline sexual abuse and exploitation of children within our communities. The report highlights that while many in society are aware of the problem, they choose to remain silent due to fear of familial repercussions and societal stigma. This culture of silence highlights the urgent need for increased community awareness and improved reporting mechanisms.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the SaferKidsPH consortium—UNICEF, Save the Children, the Australian Embassy, and my colleagues at The Asia Foundation, for continuing to work together to address these challenges. My thanks also to Plan International for undertaking this research and helping all of us better understand social norms so that we can improve our programming responses. I hope that this research contributes to dismantling the barriers that prevent reporting, and to creating a supportive environment where children can thrive, free from exploitation, and with their well-being and security safeguarded.

May this action research serve as a guide in engaging communities and fostering open dialogue to promote helpfulness, empathy, and a collective effort to address this shared problem.

Mr. Sam Chittick
Country Representative
The Asia Foundation Philippines

Message

In today's fast-paced digital world, the safety and well-being of children demands our utmost attention. Our organization envisions a world where every child can enjoy their rights and is protected from harm.

We are driven by a deep sense of social responsibility to lead this action research on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC). This study is more than an academic endeavor; it's a crucial step in uncovering and addressing the urgent, often hidden dangers our children face online. With the rapid growth of technology, children are spending more time online, making them increasingly vulnerable to content-related risks, abuse, and exploitation. This study aims to shed light on these issues by outlining social norms that exacerbate OSAEC within the community and proposing effective behavioral and social strategies to safeguard young people, especially girls and young women, and support those who have been victimized.

 At Plan International Pilipinas, we are dedicated to fostering a safe and supportive environment where children, young people, parents, and community leaders can all actively contribute to empowering and protecting our youth. We are committed to turning the insights from this study into actionable strategies. By staying informed, consulting with children, and collaborating with parents, community leaders, telecommunications companies, and social media platforms, we can work together to create a safer online environment.

As determined optimists, we aspire to create meaningful and timely social change in response to challenges of the online realm. This research represents our collective efforts to protect our children from online threats and build a supportive, informed community. It stands as a testament that together, we can make a difference in their lives.

With sincere appreciation,

Ana Maria Locsin
Executive Director
Plan International Pilipinas

Message

The borderless and private nature of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC) poses significant challenges for service providers in their efforts to detect, prevent, and respond to these crimes. While poverty remains a primary driver, we must also acknowledge how deeply rooted social norms obstruct reporting and hinder help-seeking behaviors, contributing to the ongoing prevalence of OSAEC.

To effectively combat this issue, it is crucial to explore the various factors within our communities, including peer influences, family dynamics, and social networks. Additionally, we must consider how intersecting factors—such as gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status—affect children's safety and vulnerability.

The Social Norms Action Research offers vital insights into dismantling these harmful social norms. The SaferKidsPH Consortium is dedicated to leveraging this research as a critical resource for service providers, civil society organizations, and all stakeholders committed to safeguarding children. Together, we can ensure that, for and with children, no child is left vulnerable to exploitation.

Atty. Alberto Jesus T. Muyot
Chief Executive Officer
Save the Children Philippines

Executive summary

Aided by the widespread use of digital technologies such as mobile apps, online payment methods, social media and websites, online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC) have become pervasive in the Philippines. In 2023, the Philippine Department of Justice – Office of Cybercrime received over 2.7 million CyberTipline reports from the United States' National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, most of which concerned the possession, manufacture and distribution of Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials (CSAEM).

OSAEC, as defined by Republic Act 11930 or the Anti-OSAEC and Anti-CSAEM Act of 2022, is the use of information and communications technology to abuse and/or exploit children sexually, which includes cases of offline child abuse and/or exploitation combined with an online component. The 2022 Disrupting Harm Study conducted by the United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF), ECPAT International and Interpol reveals that one in five internet-using children in the Philippines aged 12 to 17 are subjected to online sexual abuse and exploitation, representing an estimated two million children a year when scaled to the population. The study further showed that approximately 23 to 38 per cent of children who are OSAEC victims do not tell anyone about the incident while only about 0 to 3 per cent report the incident to the police or to a helpline.

With support from the Australian Government, SaferKidsPH through UNICEF partnered with Plan International to conduct action research on changing social norms for OSAEC to inform social and behaviour change programming. Conducted in July 2022 to March 2023, the research utilized a mixed methods approach, including surveys, interviews, focus group discussions and literature review. Research participants included 253 individuals, comprising parents/guardians, children and key informants from Barangay 702 of Manila City, the target area of the action research.

Factors contributing to vulnerability to OSAEC

The action research results show that children in the Philippines have an almost similar pattern of internet use: they begin using the internet as early as the age of five and as late as the age of 15. Their easy access to digital technology makes them vulnerable to OSAEC. Some children were offered money in exchange for a sex photo or video or offered gifts or money in exchange for a personal meeting for sex. Moreover, more boys (65 per cent) than girls (58 per cent) encountered sexually laden messages online while more girls (42 per cent) talked about the incident with their friends and more boys (38 per cent) kept it to themselves.

Poverty and its attendant problems – unemployment, low income and congested housing – which fosters parental neglect and peer influence are among the identified factors that contribute to children's vulnerability to OSAEC. At the community level, certain norms that govern one's beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards online activities deter reporting of abuse by victims and families, leading to a culture of tolerance and non-mindfulness.

The other identified drivers of violence that affect gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) of children in the community include age and parent-child relationship. The intersectionality of violence against children and violence against women contribute to the victimization of children and women at home, community and online. Findings show that history of violence, fear and shame, and unlawful exercise of authority and power over children (and women) are contributory factors to women and children's victimization.

Parents' and guardians' roles in OSAEC prevention and child protection are extremely important. Both the mother and father make decisions for children on matters related to online practices – in some cases, the mother assumes certain roles to a greater degree than the father.

Knowledge and beliefs on OSAEC

Many parents and guardians can identify possible signs related to OSAEC, which may be a result of their exposure to broadcast and social media since there has been no formal session to raise community awareness on OSAEC conducted in the barangay. A broad majority of survey respondents, children or adults, believe that cybersex poses harm to children even in the absence of physical contact. Contrasting this finding with the 2018 reference study,[1] parents and guardians are increasingly acknowledging the detrimental effects of cybersex on children.

Moreover, nearly all adults also disagree that whatever happens during a sex video call is private between the caller and the child (91 per cent). Three of four adults believe that online sexual activities are not 'normal' occurrences in the community (76 per cent) and that many parents do not give foremost priority to having money for their family's daily sustenance, regardless of whether it comes from illegal activities (76 per cent).

Children have a good knowledge of OSAEC and its ramifications and show positive traits or characteristics that can reduce their vulnerability to it. The statement 'online sex is okay because the child's real identity is not revealed' received the highest percentage of disagreement among children – 76 per cent for girls and 80 per cent for boys. Similarly, a broad majority disagree with 'It is not harmful or dangerous to engage in sexual chatting with a stranger online' (78 per cent for girls and 72 per cent for boys for both statements).

While three out of every four girls (75 per cent) disagree that whatever happens during a sex video call is private between the caller and the child, only 56 per cent of boys felt the same way. Similarly, more girls (70 per cent) than boys (58 per cent) disagree that personal wants and desires can be easily obtained from engaging in online sexual activities. More boys (66 per cent) than girls (48 per cent) disagree that there is a level of social tolerance permitting online sexual exploitation of children in their community.

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[1]   UNICEF, Plan International and University of the Philippines–Manila, Technical Report on the Effectiveness of a Community Intervention to Change Social Norms Related to Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2019.

The role of social norms

The social norms that exacerbate OSAEC in the community are: (1) OSAEC as taboo; (2) non-interference in private, family matters; (3) victim-blaming and stigma; and (4) gender roles and expectations. These norms affect monitoring, reporting and timely response to online and offline sexual abuse and exploitation of children because of non-cooperation and non-mindfulness of the individuals or families concerned.

Discussion about OSAEC is taboo in the community – while the act itself is not socially acceptable, the common response to it is that of tolerance and non-mindfulness. Family matters are considered private matters. While OSAEC cases were allegedly especially pervasive at the height of the coronavirus pandemic, no such case was reported in the community, though suspected cases were discussed through the rumour mill. This may be due to the lack of information dissemination on OSAEC in the community and the absence of a community-based mechanism that makes case reporting possible. Moreover, survey findings show that one in three adults (31 per cent) believe that although people in the community are aware that many young people are engaged in online (and offline) sex, they deny or dismiss it as a problem, so they do not report or do anything about it.

Many of the barangay residents are related by blood (or are magkakamag-anak) and live near each other. Often, they are united in their belief that anything that brings 'shame' to the family should be kept hidden from others, and that the family's name or reputation should be always protected. Thus, any abuse perpetrated against a family member by someone in the same family is often not disclosed in public or reported. Individuals who may know about the abuse are afraid of reporting it because it might destroy their relationship with the family concerned, or worse, they might put themselves in harm's way. Three of four adult survey respondents (76 per cent) believe that people must mind their own lives and not involve themselves in their neighbours' business.

The stereotyped roles for women and children also influence their treatment and vulnerability to abuse. Although women's role in family decision-making is recognized within the community, women are still expected to perform stereotyped roles at home, such as child rearing and domestic chores. How society views women and children often dictate how they are treated, which is passed on to the next generation. Approximately half of the parents/guardians agree that violence against women is often not reported because it is considered a private matter, and only the involved partners should address it. Two out of three parents/guardians (65 per cent) think that women and children experiencing domestic violence keep it hidden due to feelings of shame or embarrassment. Similarly, they believe (67 per cent) that victims of violence do not report the abuse out of fear of not being believed.

Developing a Social and Behaviour Change Strategy

There is a need to highlight countervailing norms in Philippine society to address the community challenges related to OSAEC: from apathy to sensitivity; from inaction to action; and from indifference to compassion and empathy for others. There is a need to promote the values of *pakikipagtulungan* (helpfulness), *pagpapakita ng pag-alala o pakikiramay* (showing concern, empathy or sympathy), and *pakikipag-isa sa pagsugpo ng problema ng barangay* (being united in efforts to solve a community problem). For the social and behaviour change strategy, it is important to:

- strengthen the capacity of parents/guardians on positive child discipline, including how to mentor or coach children. While they can distinguish signs related to OSAEC, measures should be taken to encourage translating this knowledge into action, including properly monitoring children's internet use. The barangay government, for instance, may organize separate dialogue sessions with adults and children and elicit concrete suggestions on how to respond when potentially risky behaviours occur amongst children, challenging gender-related norms and the taboo surrounding OSAEC.

- monitor cases of violence against women and children by tapping and training change monitors representing different sectors. Capacity building may be done on identification, risk or danger assessment, and referral for legal and social support services, thus challenging the practice of victim-blaming.

- develop localized information dissemination on OSAEC, particularly on social norms that facilitate OSAEC and on available protective systems and mechanisms.

- craft key messages that will encourage community involvement in child protection-related issues and counter the notion that child abuse is a private matter, including the development of gender- and age-differentiated messaging on OSAEC. Train change agents to deliver, monitor and record the responses to the behaviour change messages and steps to address OSAEC.

- develop gender-sensitive programs to empower children and promote their rights.

- provide families with healthier or acceptable options to deal with economic hardships by providing livelihood support.

Background of the study

Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) remains pervasive in the Philippines. In 2023, the Philippine Department of Justice – Office of Cybercrime received over 2.7 million CyberTipline reports from the United States' National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The cyber tips were primarily on the online sharing, re-sharing and selling of Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials (CSAEM).

The 2022 Disrupting Harm Study conducted by the United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF), ECPAT International and Interpol reveals that one in five internet-using children aged 12 to 17 in the Philippines are subjected to online sexual abuse and exploitation. This represents an estimated two million children a year, when scaled to the population. The study ranks the Philippines as the country with the highest number of OSAEC victims among the 13 participating countries. The study further showed that approximately 23 to 38 per cent of children in the country who are OSAEC victims do not tell anyone about the incident while only about 0 to 3 per cent report the incident to the police or to a helpline.[2] Such findings point to the need to address social norms around OSAEC.

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[2] ECPAT International, International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) and UNICEF, Disrupting Harm in the Philippines: Evidence on online child sexual exploitation and abuse, Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, 2022.

Action research

The SaferKidsPH Program is an Australian Government initiative in partnership with UNICEF, Save the Children Philippines and Asia Foundation that aims to contribute to ending OSAEC in the Philippines. SaferKidsPH through UNICEF partnered with Plan International to conduct action research on changing social norms for OSAEC to inform social and behaviour change programming strategies for local stakeholders and duty-bearers. A key gap in Child Protection Programming, social and behaviour change is deemed an important strategy to support parents, caregivers and, most especially, children in nurturing protective behaviour, including the identification of risks and adoption of protective behaviours such as reporting and accessing child protection services.

The action research seeks to contribute to the aspirations of Child 21 by developing an effective social and behaviour change toolkit. The toolkit will support children's and young people's self-protection and the vital role of child protection system actors in enabling a protective environment against exploitation and violence. The multi-stakeholder research approach is based on participatory communication for development strategies, which focused on the articulation of risks, attitudes, norms, abilities and self-regulation of children and young people and their environment.

The action research also aims to contribute to the effective implementation of Republic Act (RA) 11930 or the Anti-OSAEC and Anti-CSAEM Act, and other plans and programs for children and youth, particularly in support of social and behaviour change to promote non-violent social norms and behaviours that protect children and adolescents from violence.

Research objectives

The action research will serve as a baseline for understanding the changing social norms for OSAEC to inform social and behaviour change programming strategies for local stakeholders and duty-bearers. The findings from this research may be used to measure changes in the social behaviour of the target individuals and groups brought about by the behavioural change communication strategy to be developed and implemented in the research area. The research findings will also inform the design and implementation of the communication plan for a behavioural change strategy to: change social norms, beliefs and attitudes; ensure gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI); and, most importantly, protect children and youth from online sexual abuse and exploitation.

The action research framework comprises the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), GEDSI and the Socio-Ecological Model of Behaviour Change (see Annex A for a detailed discussion).

The objectives of the action research are:
1. Validate the assessment of the 2018 study undertaken by UNICEF, Plan International and the University of the Philippines–Manila of the geographic, demographic, economic, technological and political factors that contribute to the vulnerability of individuals and communities to online sexual abuse and exploitation.[3]

2. Understand the drivers of violence in the communities, which affect the rights of children to be protected from all forms of violence (including drivers such as peer group influence, family relationships, parental love and care, and social networks).

3. Understand the intersectionality of factors that contribute to violence against children at home, in the community and online, affecting GEDSI of children.

4. Assess community beliefs, attitudes, values and other forms of social norms, including gender and cultural practices, that hinder child protection, particularly OSAEC.

5. Assess children's views regarding child rights and child protection, sexual and reproductive health and rights, moral values, preferences and behaviour, and child abuse, including OSAEC.

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[3] This was a two-phase community intervention study that analysed social norms surrounding OSAEC in two urban communities in Manila – Barangay 775 and Barangay 702. Both communities were selected because these were considered 'hot spots' by government authorities for incidences of child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Research methods

Given that the action research aims to validate the 2018 reference study on OSAEC, it was conducted in Barangay 702 of Manila City – which is one of the two barangay research sites of the reference study. UNICEF and Plan International worked in close collaboration with the City Government of Manila and Barangay 702 officials for the conduct of the action research in July 2022 to March 2023.

The research process comprised several stages, as follows.

- Review of relevant Programme documents. A review of relevant literature and studies on OSAEC, including the 2018 reference study, was conducted, from which some study variables and indicators were drawn. Data about the community (Barangay 702) were also gathered to facilitate a better understanding of the factors that contribute to OSAEC.

- Observance of research ethics practices. The following steps were undertaken:
    - Submission of the action research's Inception Report to the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC) Ethics Review Board.

    - Formation of the Research Advisory Group, composed of several child-focused non-governmental organizations and government agencies,[4] to provide overall direction to the research, including the review and adjustment (if necessary) of the methodology to ensure good research quality and the safety of research participants and others who may be affected by the conduct of the research.

    - Training on safety and safeguarding protocols for the research team.

- Community orientation. A community orientation was held with barangay government and parent leaders prior to the start of data collection to further discuss the research objectives, methods and processes. A major recommendation was to increase the minimum age for child respondents – from 10 to 12 years old. According to the community leaders, children younger than 12 years may not yet know about OSAEC and participation in the study might arouse their curiosity and interest to learn about sex.

- Survey interviews. Survey interviews were conducted with a random sample of 253 individuals (or about 150 families representing parents or guardians with children): 127 parents or guardians (109 women and 18 men) ~~and 126 children aged 12 to 17 years (60~~ girls, 60 boys and 6 representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer or questioning and other terms or LGBTIQ+). One child with disability agreed to be interviewed with the mother's consent.

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[4] This includes the Inter-Agency Council Against Child Pornography and the Council for the Welfare of Children. The government agencies include the Department of Justice – Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking, Department of Education and Department of Information and Communications Technology, among others.

In comparison, the 2018 reference study participants comprised adults and children aged 13 to 50 years. As in the current study, the participants belonged to a general population of internet users and non-users and were not identified based on past experiences of OSAEC, whether as victims, perpetrators or enablers. The survey interview instrument used for the current study included questions regarding: (1) factors influencing children's exposure to OSAEC; (2) manifestations of OSAEC; and (3) beliefs, attitudes and perceptions towards OSAEC.

Since the action research limited its sample selection to parents with children aged 12 to 17 years old only, some 2018 study participants no longer met this criterion. Moreover, the current study focused only on Barangay 702. Although the 2018 study and the current action research did not cover the same participants, inferences may be made on some results, particularly on the community factors contributing to OSAEC. In the 2018 study, only one social norm – customs and habits that people practice because other people expect them to do so – was identified.[5]

- **Case profiles.** Case profiles of five children, drawn from the list of participants in the 2018 survey, were produced, focusing on their family and individual situations and exposures to OSAEC. The case profiles were limited by the amount of time available for the interviews and the interviewees' willingness (and level of comfort) to disclose certain information.

- **Focus group discussions (FGDs).** The FGDs aimed to gather participants' perceptions about OSAEC (i.e., its nature, causes and effects), including prevailing social norms that contribute to it, nature and quality of agency/organizational support and contributions to child protection-related efforts, and suggestions on how to prevent further OSAEC incidents.

  Two in-person FGDs were conducted. The participants were selected in close consultation with the barangay government. The FGD with parents and guardians had 14 participants aged 30 to 51 years old (12 women and 2 men), representing the different alleys of Barangay 702 and two participants from the 2018 study. The FGD with children had 13 participants aged 12 to 17 years (8 girls, 4 boys and 1 representing LGBTIQ+); eight of them were aged 12 to 14 years while the other five, 15 to 17 years; all were enrolled in school.

- **Key informant interviews (KIIs).** KIIs with seven individuals representing local governance, social service, education and the national youth assembly were conducted. The KIIs delved on the kinds of support (i.e., material, funds, etc.) and the strategies or interventions their organizations provide, and their perceptions on the usefulness of the support, strategy or intervention in preventing OSAEC.

- **Validation session.** A validation session was held with representatives from Barangay 702, Manila City's Department of Social Welfare, UNICEF, Plan International and members of the Research Team, including field interviewers, to present the initial findings, conclusions and recommendations from the action research.

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[5]   UNICEF, Plan International and University of the Philippines–Manila, 2019.

OSAEC in the Philippines

From 2014 onwards, the widespread use of digital technology (i.e., websites, mobile apps and online payment methods) has helped accelerate the proliferation of online sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the country. In response, child-focused and allied organizations, including UNICEF, pursued concerted and relentless advocacy efforts to pass legislation protecting children from OSAEC. At the national policy level, a comprehensive approach to OSAEC was adopted with the National Response Plan to Address Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (2017–2020) and the National Plan of Action to End Violence against Children (2017–2022). However, the unabated growth of OSAEC cases only indicates the need for better mechanisms and support for the realization of these frameworks.

In 2022, RA 11930 or the Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials (CSAEM) Act was passed into law.[6] The law defines OSAEC as the use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a means to abuse and/or exploit children sexually, which includes cases of offline child abuse and/or exploitation combined with an online component. This can include, but is not limited to, the production, dissemination and possession of CSAEM; online grooming of children for sexual purposes; sexual extortion of children; sharing image-based sexual abuse; commercial sexual exploitation of children; exploitation of

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[6] The Anti-OSAEC and Anti-CSAEM Act of 2022 complements earlier child protection laws in the country: RA 9775 or the Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009 and RA 10175 or the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012.

children through online prostitution; and live-streaming of sexual abuse with or without the consent of the victim. UNICEF has stressed that while abuse starts in the digital space, it can lead to physical prostitution.[7]

In 2023, the Philippine Department of Justice – Office of Cybercrime received 2,722,140 CyberTipline reports from the United States' National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, representing a 7 per cent increase from 2022. Nearly all cyber tips concerned the possession, manufacture and distribution of CSAEM.

OSAEC in the Philippines – where, as several studies find, almost all reported cases involve the production of CSAEM, including livestreaming of child sex abuse – is very gendered: an IJM-led, 2020 study found that 86 per cent of victims were girls. The reasons behind this high prevalence are complex and vary from the personal (i.e., children who experience bullying are more likely to turn to online 'friends') to the familial (i.e., the level of poverty in the household or access to devices and the internet) to societal, which covers issues ranging from the "inefficiency of governmental poverty-reduction programmes" to "the absence of perceived conflict between sexual exploitation and significant social norms."[8]

A 2022 study by UNICEF, ECPAT International and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) found that one in five children aged 12 to 17 years in the Philippines suffers from grave instances of OSAEC. When scaled to the population, this translates to 2 million children in a year. This finding adds to concerns that the pandemic has heightened the vulnerability of children in the country. Among children who experienced OSAEC on social media, Facebook or Facebook Messenger were by far the most common platforms where this occurred, accounting for more than 90 per cent of cases. Children also cited TikTok, Twitter/X, Instagram and Snapchat. Very few reported the abuse to authorities. Abuse was most often committed by individuals not known to the child, according to the study.[9]

Social norms and other risk factors

Apart from the risks brought about by the pandemic, there are also systemic issues that exacerbate OSAEC in the country. Stigma and discrimination as well as poverty and its concomitant problems are commonly cited in the reviewed literature.

Societal risk factors include the glorification of pimp culture, objectification of women and girls, gender bias, and widespread use of the internet and social media.[10] In the 2018 reference study, several factors contributed to the initiation and persistence of online activities leading to OSAEC in the selected communities. At the individual level were socio-demographic characteristics such as

[7]   Pasion, P., 'Philippines top global source of child pornography – UNICEF', Rappler.com, 13 December 2017.
[8]   International Justice Mission, et al., Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Philippines: Analysis and recommendations for governments, industry and civil society, 2020.
[9]   ECPAT, INTERPOL and UNICEF, 2022.
[10] Greenbaum, 2014, as cited in Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, United States Department of Justice, Literature Review: Commercial sexual exploitation of children and sex trafficking, 2014.

age, gender, socio-economic status and the absence of productive things to do among children who were mostly out of school. Peer group influence and parent-child relationships were the observed drivers of OSAEC at the interpersonal level, while at the community level were the norms that govern one's beliefs, attitudes and behaviour towards online activities that lead to OSAEC. Societal risk factors included a lack of political will among community leaders to implement child protection laws, ordinances, policies and programmes.[11]

Moreover, the risk factors that contribute to OSAEC among people (especially children) with disabilities are: lack of access to services due to poor disability awareness and a failure to include their respective access needs in service design; experience of stigma and discrimination – their ill-treatment being 'legitimized' by differing cultures and beliefs; and community-condoned abuse with negative attitudes seemingly empowering perpetrators to conduct physical, sexual and emotional abuse at will.[12]

Other risk factors, mainly at the individual level, that increase children's and youths' vulnerability to OSAEC include sexual or physical abuse or maltreatment; being runaways or homeless; system-involvement, such as with the juvenile justice and child welfare systems; being LGBTIQ+; substance abuse; earlier pubertal maturation; and early adversity experiences.[13]

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[11] UNICEF, Plan International and University of the Philippines–Manila, 2019.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Wright Clayton, E., Krugman, R. and Simon, P., eds., *Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States*, Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies, The National Academies Press, Washington, DC, 2013.

Findings

Box 1. Barangay 702 demographic profile

Location and land area
- Barangay 702 is in Ma. Orosa Street, part of Zone 77, District V of Manila City.

Population
- 3,342 in 2020 or 0.18% of total Manila City population; -0.64% growth rate from 2020 to 2015
- Age-dependency ratios: 44 young dependents and 4 older persons (i.e., senior citizens) for every 100 working-age persons
- Median age: 25

Child population
- 2015 Philippine census data: Children aged 10 to 24 years comprised 29.58% of the barangay population – ages 10 to 14 at 9.93%; 15 to 19 at 8.97%; and 20 to 24 at 10.68%.

Source: UNICEF, Plan International and University of the Philippines–Manila, 2019; Barangay 702 local government, Barangay 702 Community Profile.

Figure 1. Profile of action research respondents

126 CHILDREN — 60 boys, 60 girls and 6 belonging to the LGBTIQ+ group

Average age: 14 years (same for girls and boys)

Education: 57% are in Grades 7–10, mostly enrolled in a public school

Living situation:

With both parents	21
With one parent	18
With older siblings	17
With both parents and siblings	15
With relatives	10
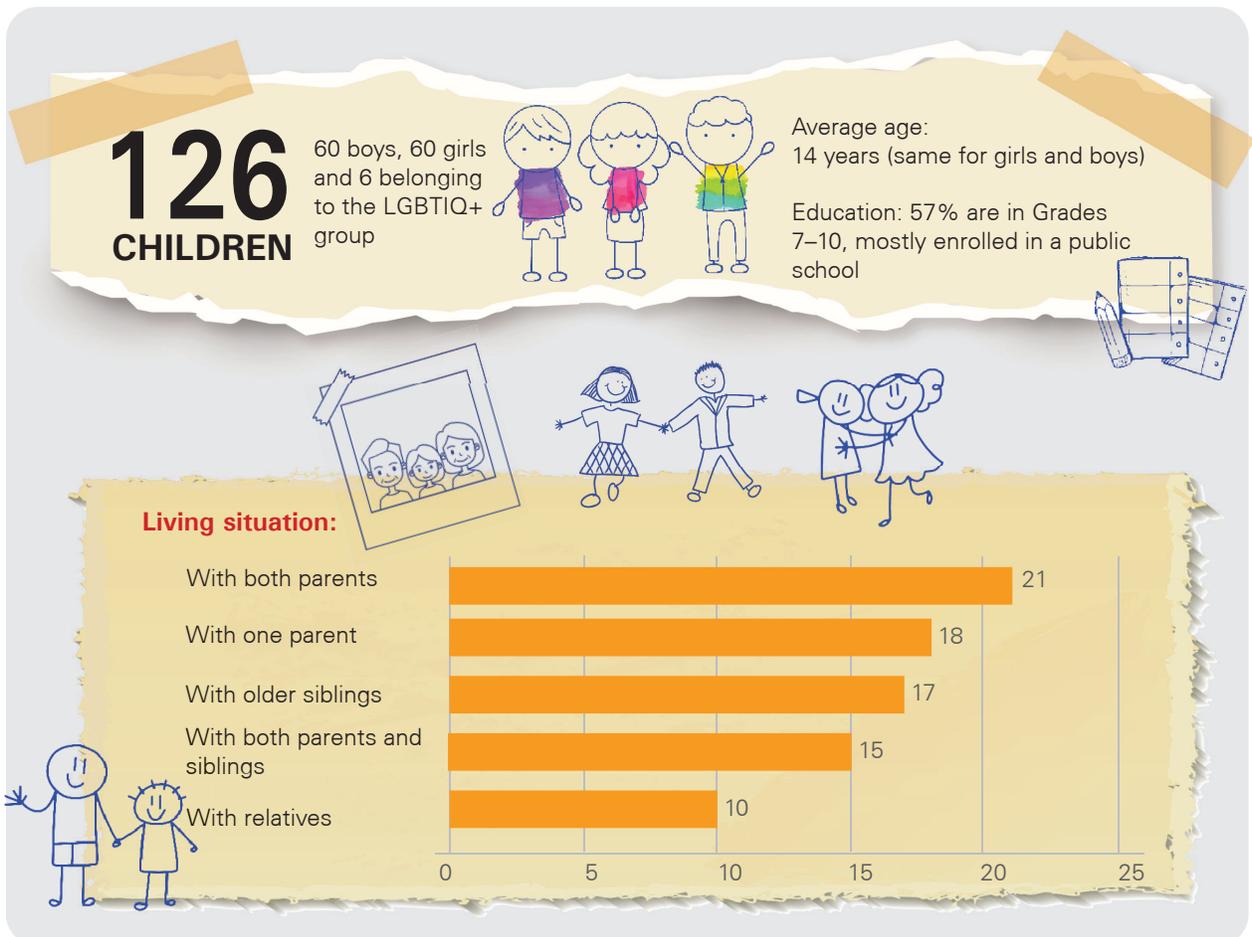
Internet exposure:

- Begins internet use as early as age 5 and as late as age 15; Facebook is the social networking site frequently visited by most (97%); 95% use a mobile phone

- Common reason for internet use:

chatting with friends
65% OF GIRLS AND BOYS

education
70% OF GIRLS

gaming
78% OF BOYS

Average time of internet use:

LGBTIQ+
8 hours

Girls
7 hours

Boys
6 hours

PARENTS AND GUARDIANS
127 adults (86% women, 14% men)

Age:	25 to 73 years (respondents and their spouses)
Education:	Around a third reached Grades 7–10 and another third reached college; many of them had spouses who graduated from high school (31%) or had reached college (23%)
Average household size:	About 4
Average monthly family income:	14,547 pesos, much lower than the January 2023 per capita poverty threshold of 28,871 pesos
Children:	- No. of children: Average of 4 or ranging from 1 to 10; parents or guardians tend to an average of 2 children 17 years and below - Children's schooling: 54% to 67% have children currently in school; 9 have children with disability; 2 children with disability were out of school
Employment:	An average of two working or employed members per household; more respondents and their spouses were employed before than during the pandemic (from 60% to 45% and from 61% to 47% respectively); are mainly engaged in sales or vending while some are massage therapists; many respondents have spouses who are taxi or grab drivers or construction workers

Living conditions:	-	51% own either the house or the lot they occupy, are house and lot owners (24%) or tenants/renters (22%); they have been living in their community ranging from less than a year to 67 years; 62% have not resided in a place outside their present community; most barangay residents are related to each other by blood
	-	Housing structure: 64% have houses made of cement and wood; the rest have houses made either of wood (21%) or cement (15%)
	-	No. of rooms: 55% have a one-bedroom house while the rest have an average of two bedrooms; of households with more than 1 bedroom, 51% have a separate bedroom for girls
ICT use:	-	Commonly cited channels of communication: mobile phone (92%); social media (83%), particularly Facebook; television (45%); and radio (13%)
	-	% share of individuals using the internet: 95%, higher than 2020 national figure of 72.3%a
	-	Average daily rate of internet use: 7 hours

Note: Department of Information and Communications Technology as cited in USAID, 'Sector Details', <https://idea.usaid.gov/cd/philippines/information-and-communications-technology-ict>.

Children's exposure to OSAEC

District V, where Barangay 702 is situated, has the highest number of 'Children in Need of Special Protection' (CNSP) cases in Manila City from 2018 to 2022. OSAEC is one of the program categories of CNSP, falling under 'Child Trafficking'. In 2022, almost all (98 per cent of 1,075) CNSP cases in District V involved Children in Street Situation. Not one child trafficking/OSAEC case was reported during this period.

'Cursing', marital fights, use of harsh tongue and gossiping are among the common occurrences in the neighbourhood. The common modes of communication are group chats and 'chikahan' points at every alley. 'News' is spread fast through gossip. Some consider the grapevine or rumour mill as a 'very helpful' source of information in emergencies. The group chat, however, is silent about occurrences of child abuse and exploitation in their community. As expressed by the adult respondents, they fear that the offending party might get back at them should they interfere in their family's affairs (*see Box 1 for the demographic profile of Barangay 702 and Figure 1 for the profile of research respondents*).

Girls and boys vary in their exposures to OSAEC.

Among child survey respondents, girls and boys vary in their exposures to OSAEC.[14] More boys (65 per cent) than girls (58 per cent) encounter sexually laden messages online. More girls talk about the incident with their friends (42 per cent) while more boys (38 per cent) keep it to themselves. Only close to one fifth (21 per cent) share the incident with their parents. Some were offered money in exchange for a sex photo or video (four girls, one boy and two LGBTIQ+) or offered gifts or money in exchange for a personal meeting for sex (three girls, three boys and two LGBTIQ+).

The child respondents share an almost similar pattern of internet use: they begin using the internet as early as the age of five and as late as the age of 15. Their easy access to digital technology makes them vulnerable to OSAEC. For instance, a 16-year-old girl was offered via Instagram to engage in a sexual activity. At first, she was sent a 'play-button' video and then later asked to share nude photos online. She decided to block the person by using the privacy setting of the online platform. A 17-year-old boy, who spends four to five hours playing online games or doing web searches on his phone, shares an incident wherein someone viewed his post in 'My Stories' and offered him 'wampipti' (referring to 150 pesos in exchange for sex). He also shares that he felt very uncomfortable when he accidentally opened a notification to view the same app and saw gory scenes, such as a hit-and-run and persons being slashed or killed, etc., saying that he finds these emotionally disturbing.

Other children have joined Facebook group chats, and some such groups have sent sexual images and videos to their members. In one case, a four-year-old child had clicked the 'vigolife' site, which contained sexually explicit images or videos. OSAEC also happens when using online dating apps: some foreign contacts initially build a trusting relationship with children, who they later press to undress to prove that they are indeed female or male.

Many of the children spend an average of eight hours per day on online games such as Mobile Legend, Roblox and Call of Duty, among others. Some shared instances of clicking on pop-up sites or links they encounter while gaming and then seeing distasteful images, such as live sex acts. In one LGBTIQ+ site, there were photos or videos of nude people. They were asked to 'accept' the invitation to the pop-up site or link so that they can continue viewing the lewd images. Although they did not specifically mention any invitation from a fellow gamer for online sex, being lured to engage in online sex is not a remote possibility.

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[14] Participants in the validation session pointed out that boys tend to spend more time with peers, tend to be lazier and more disobedient, and are more likely to engage in misdemeanour or unruly behaviours.

Factors contributing to vulnerability to OSAEC

Poverty and its attendant problems – unemployment, low income and congested housing – which fosters parental neglect and peer influence are among the identified factors that contribute to the vulnerability of the children to OSAEC.[15] Some adult FGD respondents believe that material deprivation has forced some families to allow their children to engage in paid work, sometimes regardless of source – out of need and not because it is morally or socially acceptable – as corroborated by the survey results where 20 to 26 per cent agreed to statements of a similar notion (*see Annex Table B.4*).

On parental neglect and peer influence, half of the adults (50 per cent) agree that children with friends who engage in online sexual activities tend to do the same because of either influence, trust or envy. Among the reasons cited by child FGD participants for OSAEC are: (1) the strong need for attention by those who share sexual images; (b) the desire to destroy another person's reputation; (c) the need to satisfy one's curiosity and to experiment; and (d) for those in a relationship, the girl being comfortable with and trusting of her partner who entices her to share sexy photos, which they could use later to blackmail her once their relationship is over.

The intersectionality of violence against children and violence against women contribute to victimization of children and women at home, community and online, affecting gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) of children. Findings show that history of violence, fear and shame, and unlawful exercise of authority and power over children (and women) are contributory factors to women and children's victimization. How society views women and children often dictate how they are treated, which is passed on to the next generation. Abuse tends to be repeated due to non-reporting or non-resolution of cases.

Among adult survey respondents, close to half (44 per cent) concur that many women in their community who are in a relationship have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.[16] Two out of three (69 per cent) concur that children who grow up in families where there is violence are susceptible to similar abuse and violence. Among the child survey respondents, there is greater ambivalence among boys than girls regarding the statement 'I have not experienced any abuse from my own family': 40 per cent of boys disagree/strongly disagree while 25 per cent agree/strongly agree; and 33 per cent of girls disagree/strongly disagree and 50 per cent agree/strongly agree.

The proximity of Barangay 702 to a tourist district frequented by foreign tourists is also identified as a factor contributing to vulnerability to OSAEC. Another factor is the lack of information dissemination on OSAEC in the community. FGD participants said that there have been no discussions about OSAEC nor have there been actions taken to prevent and address OSAEC in their community.

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[15] Key informants affirmed this, saying that the 'abandoned and neglected children' are the most vulnerable to OSAEC because they needed to fend for themselves.
[16] Among the main causes of violence against women are alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, financial instability and jealousy.

The role of social norms

The social norms that exacerbate OSAEC in the community are: (1) OSAEC as taboo; (2) non-interference in private, family matters; (3) victim-blaming and stigma; and (4) gender roles and expectations. These norms affect monitoring, reporting and timely response to online and offline sexual abuse and exploitation of children because of non-cooperation and non-mindfulness of the individuals or families concerned.

> *Three of four adults believe that people must mind their own lives and not involve themselves in their neighbours' business: the social norm that considers OSAEC as a private, family matter.*

Discussion about OSAEC is taboo in the community – while the act itself is not socially acceptable, the common response to it is that of tolerance and non-mindfulness. Family matters are considered private matters. One in three adults (31 per cent) believe that although people in the community are aware that many young people are engaged in online (and offline) sex, they deny or dismiss it as a problem, so they do not do anything about it. While OSAEC cases were allegedly especially pervasive at the height of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, no such case was reported in the community, though suspected cases were discussed through the rumour mill. This may be due to the lack of information dissemination on OSAEC in the community and the absence of a community-based mechanism that makes case reporting possible.

Many barangay residents are original settlers – having been born in the community and have lived with the same neighbours and friends for several years. Many are related by blood (or are *magkakamag-anak*) and live near each other. Often, they are united in their belief that anything that brings 'shame' to the family should be kept hidden from others, and that the family's name or reputation should be always protected. Thus, any abuse perpetrated against a family member by someone in the same family is often not disclosed in public or reported.[17] Individuals who may know about the abuse are afraid of reporting it because it might destroy their relationship with the family concerned, or worse, they might suffer confrontation with (or retaliation from) the offending party. Three of four adult survey respondents (76 per cent) believe that people must mind their own lives and not involve themselves in their neighbours' business.

The stereotyped roles for women and children also influence their treatment and vulnerability to abuse. Although women's role in family decision-making is recognized within the community, women still wrestle with stereotyped roles at home, such as child rearing and domestic chores. Approximately half of the parents/guardians agree that violence against women is often not reported because it is considered a private matter, and only the involved partners should address it. Two

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[17] One case exemplifies this: a family member who was taking illegal drugs sexually abused his sister. The family decided to hide and not report the incident to authorities and just settle the matter among themselves.

out of three parents/guardians (65 per cent) think that women and children experiencing domestic violence keep it hidden due to feelings of shame or embarrassment. Similarly, they believe that victims of violence do not report the abuse out of fear of not being believed (67 per cent). More than half (58 per cent) agree that the community quarantines during the COVID-19 pandemic and their social and economic impacts increased the exposure of women to abusive partners.

Gaps between perceived and actual norms

The survey interviews polled the child and adult respondents' beliefs, attitudes and perceptions towards OSAEC. As with the 2018 reference study, the survey was designed to uncover misperceptions, or gaps between actual and perceived norms, within the community in line with the Social Norms Theory. The theory states that individuals incorrectly perceive that the attitudes and behaviours of others are different from their own when, in fact, these are similar because individuals assume that the most memorable and salient, though often extreme behaviour, represents the behaviour of the majority[18] (*see Box 2 for a description of the theory*).

Box 2. Social Norms Theory

Peer influence, and the role it plays in individual decision-making around behaviours, is the primary focus of Social Norms Theory. Peer influences are affected more by perceived norms (i.e., what we view as typical or standard in a group) rather than on the actual norm (the real beliefs and actions of the group). The gap between the perceived and actual is a misperception, and this forms the foundation for the social norms approach. Social norms interventions aim to present correct information about peer group norms to correct misperceptions of norms. Social Norms Theory can be very effective in changing individual behaviour by focusing on changing misperceptions at the group level.[a]

When individuals incorrectly perceive that the attitudes and behaviours of others are different from their own, upon assuming that the most memorable and salient, though often extreme behaviour, represents the behaviour of the majority,[b] this may lead them to adjust their behaviour to that of the presumed majority by adhering to the pseudo-norms created by observing such memorable behaviour. These exaggerated perceptions, or misperceptions, of peer behaviour will continue to influence the habits of the majority if they remain unchallenged.[c]

Source: [a]Behavioural Change Models: Social norms theory, <https://sphweb.bumc.bu.edu/otlt/mph-modules/sb/behavioralchangetheories/BehavioralChangeTheories7.html>; [b]Berkowitz, 2000 as cited in InfoScipedia, Social Norms Theory, <www.igi-global.com/dictionary/social-norms-theory/58126>; [c]Perkins, H. W, The Social Norms Approach to Preventing School and College Age Substance Abuse: A handbook for educators, counselors and clinicians, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2003.

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18 Berkowitz, 2000 as cited in InfoScipedia, Social Norms Theory, <www.igi-global.com/dictionary/social-norms-theory/58126>.

Beliefs and perceptions on OSAEC

Figure 2 details the adult respondents' beliefs and perceptions on OSAEC. Nearly all do not agree that cybersex is harmless for children because there is no physical contact involved (92 per cent) and that whatever happens during a sex video call is private between the caller and the child (91 per cent). A marked departure from the 2018 findings on norms, parents and guardians are increasingly acknowledging the detrimental effects of cybersex on children. This may stem from respondents' exposures to repetitive and cyclical messaging across platforms and influence circles.

Three of four adults do not agree that online sexual activities are 'normal' occurrences in the community (76 per cent) and that many parents give foremost priority to having money for their family's daily sustenance, regardless of whether it comes from illegal activities (76 per cent).[19]

However, three of four adults agree that people must mind their own lives and not be involved in their neighbours' business (76 per cent). The results reveal a high level of knowledge among the respondents about the features of and their own community's reactions to OSAEC.

Figure 2. Adult respondents' perceptions on OSAEC

Big proportions (ranging from 57% to 92%) of adult respondents, regardless of gender, disagree/strongly disagree that:

Cybersex is harmless for children because there is no physical contact involved.	92%
Whatever happens during sex video calls is private between the caller and the child.	91%
Online sexual activities are normal occurences in the community.	76%
Many parents give foremost priority to having money for their family's daily sustenance, regardless of whether it comes from illegal activities.	76%
Responding to online sexual exploitation of children is not among the priorities of community leaders.	69%
Online sex work provides easy and large sums of money.	65%
Many parents did not actually want their children to do online sex work but had no choice because they (parents) lack education and work skills to get a legal job.	65%
Engaging in online sex can be an opportunity for establishing a relationship with foreigners for a better life here or abroad.	61%
Some families have legitimate reasons for allowing their child/ren to engage in online sex.	61%
Although people in the community are aware that many young people are engaged in online (and offline) sex activities, they deny, or dismiss them as a problem so they do not do anything about it.	60%
Many young people in the community who are out of school are likely to resort to online sex work as a pastime or hobby.	57%

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[19] Additionally, three of four adult respondents (77 per cent) disagree that there is not enough information in the community on where to report or who to talk to about domestic violence.

Many (ranging from 65% to 76%) agree/strongly agree that:

People must mind their own lives and not be involved in their neighbours' business	65%
Online sex work involving children is more prevalent now than before the pandemic	76%
Photos and videos can spread in social media and be seen by multiple viewers as these can be recorded and downloaded	69%
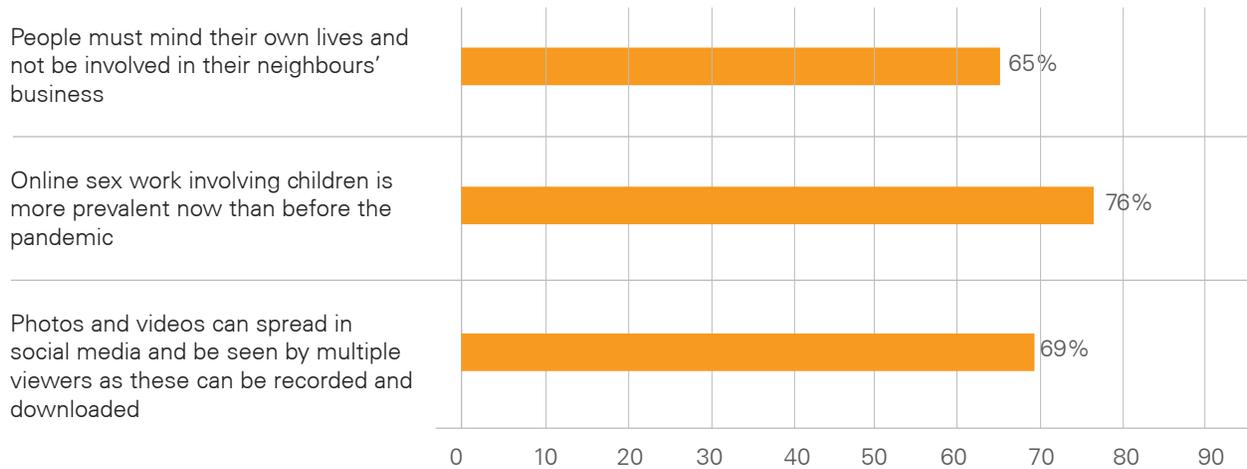
A broad majority of respondents, children or adults, disagree that cybersex is harmless for children because there is no physical contact involved.

Parents' and guardians' roles in OSAEC prevention and child protection are extremely important. The adult respondents were polled on children's habits and behaviours that are possible signs of their abuse and exploitation. The results provide a good indication of their ability to identify possible effects of OSAEC. Many disagree/strongly disagree that it is normal for children to display the following behaviours:

- using drugs or drinking alcohol (80 per cent).

- being alone and non-communicative most of the time (80 per cent).

- not reporting to school or dropping academic performance (78 per cent).

- showing sexual behaviour not in line with their age or stage of development (75 per cent).

- having unexplained relationships with older people online who are non-family members (71 per cent).

- having unexplained money or frequently taking part in activities requiring money (74 per cent).

- having unexplained gifts such as expensive clothes or a mobile phone (71 per cent).

- reading materials showing abusive messages or with sexualized content (70 per cent).

- staying out late with peers or not returning home (66 per cent).

- making a change in appearance or borrowing clothes from others (62 per cent).

- changing online habits – e.g., spending more time online or only being online in private (58 per cent).

- helping family earn money to help with daily sustenance (55 per cent).

- always tired (53 per cent).

Rather, normal behaviour includes children being mentally, physically, psychologically and socially able to respond to stresses and challenges that may push them to engage in OSAEC.

Moreover, almost all (91 per cent) of the adult respondents agree that parents/guardians usually set rules for children about what they can do inside and outside the home. Both mother and father make decisions for children on matters related to online practices. In some cases, the mother more commonly assumes certain roles than the father. These include decisions on what child photos, videos or other materials to produce or share online; how to protect children from online sexual abuse and exploitation; learning and sharing about the dangers of self-producing images and texting; ensuring safe internet practices of children by monitoring sites that have sexualized content; and when and how children should engage in paid work (see Annex B for more detailed results of the survey interviews).

Table 1 presents child respondents' views about OSAEC. The statement 'Online sex is okay because the child's real identity is not revealed' received the highest percentage of disagreement/strong disagreement among the children – 76 per cent for girls and 80 per cent for boys. This is followed by the statements 'Cybersex is harmless for children because there is no physical contact involved' and 'It is not harmful or dangerous to engage in sexual chatting with a stranger online' (78 per cent for girls and 72 per cent for boys for both statements).

While three out of every four girls (75 per cent) disagree/strongly disagree that whatever happens during a sex video call is private between the caller and the child, only 56 per cent of boys felt the same way. Similarly, more girls (70 per cent) than boys (58 per cent) disagree/strongly disagree that personal wants and desires can be easily obtained from engaging in online sexual activities.

More girls (75 per cent) than boys (56 per cent) disagree that whatever happens during a sex video call is private between the caller and the child.

Girls are more ambivalent (34 per cent agree/strongly agree while 40 per cent disagree/strongly disagree) on whether many parents in their community give foremost priority to having money for their family's daily sustenance, regardless of whether it comes from illegal activities; half of the boys (50 per cent) disagree/strongly disagree with the statement. Similarly, girls are more ambivalent on whether facilitators of online sex are often a child's relative/family member who forces the child to perform in front of a web camera and communicates with and elicits potential customers (43 per cent agree/strongly agree while 42 per cent disagree/strongly disagree); 60 per cent of boys disagree/strongly disagree with the statement.

More boys (66 per cent) than girls (48 per cent) disagree/strongly disagree that there is a level of social tolerance permitting online sexual exploitation of children in their community.

Children's beliefs can either protect them from or make them vulnerable to OSAEC. Both girls and boys have a good knowledge of OSAEC and its ramifications, with some gender differences in responses in certain views (*see Table 1*).

Table 1. Distribution of child survey participants by their views about OSAEC

Gender	Mean[1]	Strongly disagree/disagree	Strongly agree/agree
I know of children in my community who record and share sexual images on their own initiative or at the request of another person.			
Boys	2	60%	17%
Girls	2	60%	11%
LGBTIQ+		3	n=3 n=2
Mobile phones are often used to produce sexual content that is shared via text, chat or social media platforms online.			
Boys	3	22%	37%
Girls	3	47%	30%
LGBTIQ+	3	n=3	n=3
Sexual content is shared with a boyfriend or girlfriend, other peers or people they are communicating with.			
Boys	2	55%	22%
Girls	2	63%	6%
LGBTIQ+	3	n=5	n=1
Children's motivation for sexting can vary: • soliciting compliments or attention and affirming a commitment to someone			
Boys	3	38%	38%
Girls	3	48%	32%
LGBTIQ+	3	n=3	n=3
• peer pressure or influence			
Boys	3	43%	35%
Girls	3	40%	22%
LGBTIQ+	3	n=2	n=3

Gender	Mean[1]	Strongly disagree/disagree	Strongly agree/agree
• wanting to experiment; curiosity			
Boys	3	54%	
Girls	3	43%	28%
LGBTIQ+	3	n=2	n=3
• feeling gratified in a sexual relationship			
Boys	3	48%	27%
Girls	2	50%	20%
LGBTQ+	3	n=2	n=3
Sexting is not problematic as children often understand the potential consequences of their behaviour and take measures to hide identifying information.[2]			
Boys	2	55%	29%
Girls	2	60%	28%
LGBTIQ+	2	n=5	n=1
Facilitators of online sex are often a child's family member who forces the child to perform in front of a web camera and communicates with and elicits potential customers.			
Boys	2	60%	23%
Girls	3	42%	43%
LGBTIQ+	2	n=3	
In my community, there is a level of social tolerance permitting online sexual exploitation of children.			
Boys	2	66%	11%
Girls	2	48%	15%
LGBTIQ+		2	n=3 n=2
Livestreaming of child sexual abuse is against social norms.			
Boys	4	30%	59%
Girls	4	27%	58%
LGBTIQ+	3	n=3	n=2
Cybersex is harmless for children because there is no actual physical contact.			
Boys	2	70%	12%
Girls	2	78%	7%
LGBTIQ+	2	n=2	n=1
Whatever happens during a sex video call is private between the caller and the child.			
Boys	3	56%	21%
Girls	2	75%	2%
LGBTIQ+	3	n=4	n=2
Online sex is okay because the child's real identity is not revealed.			
Boys	2	80%	7%
Girls	2	76%	5%
LGBTIQ+	2	n=5	n=1

Gender	Mean[1]	Strongly disagree/disagree	Strongly agree/agree
Online sex work provides easy and large sums of money.			
Boys	3	48%	35%
Girls	3	53%	27%
LGBTIQ+	3	n=3	n=2
Photos and videos can spread in social media and be seen by multiple viewers as the video can be recorded and downloaded.			
Boys	4	27%	60%
Girls	4	21%	65%
LGBTIQ+	4	n=1	n=4
Many young people in my community are out of school and therefore resort to online sex work as a pastime or hobby.			
Boys	3	50%	23%
Girls	2	52%	17%
LGBTIQ+	2	n=4	n=1
Many parents give foremost priority to having money for their family's daily sustenance, regardless of whether it comes from illegal activities.			
Boys	3	50%	20%
Girls	3	40%	34%
LGBTIQ+	3	n=4	n=2
Chatting over the internet is the best way to pass time.			
Boys	3	23%	51%
Girls	4	23%	62%
LGBTIQ+	4	n=1	n=5
It is not harmful or dangerous to engage in sexual chatting with a stranger online.			
Boys	2	72%	10%
Girls	2	78%	4%
LGBTIQ+	2	n=5	n=1
Personal wants and desires can be easily obtained from engaging in online sexual activities.			
Boys	2	58%	7%
Girls	2	70%	15%
LGBTIQ+	2	n=5	n=1
Friends have only a little influence on why young people engage in online sexual activities.			
Boys	3	45%	31%
Girls	3	48%	28%
LGBTIQ+	4	n=4	

Notes: 1 The mean of responses: 1 – strongly disagree; 2 – disagree; 3 – can't tell; 4 – agree; 5 – strongly agree. 'Can't tell' responses are not presented in the table. Given the very small number of respondents who are LGBTIQ+ (n=6) and persons with disabilities (n=2) respondents, they are excluded from the statistical computation. 2Sexting is creating, sharing and forwarding sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images through mobile phones and/or the internet.

The child respondents were also asked about their views on child rights and child protection, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. They identified the following needs and problems of children in their barangay: poverty; unemployment; parental neglect; early pregnancies; lack of barangay support, especially to children's education; and certain behavioural issues of children, such as being disrespectful of elders and engaging in vices like illegal drugs.

Notably, based on interviews with parents and guardians, the community does not discriminate against children with disability or who identify as LGBTIQ+. Two children though have stopped schooling because of their disabilities. The barangay government does not have concrete programs, activities and facilities that support children with disability.

Regardless of sex or gender, many children show positive traits or characteristics that can reduce their vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation. Majority of them:

- find that living in a safe and secure environment is important for them (95 percent for girls and boys).

- feel confident about their capacity to change their life for the better (95 per cent for girls and 91 per cent for boys).

- believe that children/youths have rights that must be upheld (88 per cent for girls and 84 per cent for boys).

- always find time to bond with their family (87 per cent for girls and 77 per cent for boys).

- have learned and been able to resolve problems or misunderstandings with their family (73 per cent for girls and 70 per cent for boys).

- can openly express their feelings through healthy dialogue with their family (67 per cent agreement/strong agreement for girls and 75 per cent for boys).

- can talk about and openly express guilt and shame with their family (67 per cent for girls and 60 per cent for boys).

- prefer to make their own decisions and do what they feel is right for their wellbeing (68 per cent for girls and 73 per cent for boys).

- can stay away from peers who continue to pressure or influence them to involve themselves in online sex (67 per cent for girls and 65 per cent for boys).

Many children show positive traits or characteristics that can reduce their vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation.

While children recognize their rights to make certain decisions to protect their wellbeing and to live in a safe and secure environment, parents and guardians believe that they should set the rules and decide on what children can do inside and outside the home. These may not necessarily be contradictory perspectives since decision-making is situational, in the sense that there are certain decisions that children can make on their own (e.g., what course to take in college) or with guidance from parents/guardians.

Perceived situations of women and children

Among the adult respondents, 86 per cent of whom are women, more than half disagree that men more than women are expected to make major decisions for the family (60 per cent) and that men enjoy higher status and privilege compared to women (57 per cent). While there is recognition of the need for women and men to share in family decision-making, women and girls still wrestle with stereotypes in, for example, the roles they are expected to assume. Two out of every three adults agree that girls and women are more likely to have their mobility severely limited, thus resulting in more time spent within the home than men and boys. There is ambivalence among the respondents on whether the roles of girls and women are largely limited to childcare and household duties (43 per cent agree and 52 per cent disagree) and on whether it is normal for men to show dominance, strength and independence (42 per cent agree and 47 per cent disagree).

Validation of the 2018 study

The current research validates some findings of the 2018 study – that age, social norms, parent-child relationship and socio-economic status are among the community drivers of OSAEC. This research finds that poverty, unemployment and parental neglect have contributed to OSAEC. In addition, the prevalence of some beliefs or perceptions about OSAEC have prevented the reporting of incidents of abuse by victims and their families. Peer influence is also a contributory factor to OSAEC, though majority of children have expressed confidence in their ability to veer away from peers who pressure them to engage in online sex.

Developing a Social and Behaviour Change Strategy

The findings of the action research informed the development of a social and behaviour change strategy for local stakeholders and duty-bearers to change social norms, beliefs and attitudes; ensure GEDSI; and protect children and youth from online sexual abuse and exploitation. The development of the strategy is in line with the Socio-Ecological Model of Behaviour Change *(see Annex A for its description)*.

Among the salient findings used in developing the strategy are:

- Respondents' good level of knowledge about OSAEC, its signs and ramifications despite the lack of awareness-raising activities to prevent its occurrence in the community.

- Reporting of OSAEC cases is constrained by prevailing community beliefs that it is taboo to discuss OSAEC and that OSAEC is associated with feelings of stigma, shame and fear – 'shame' for the victims and their immediate family and 'fear' for anyone who would intervene as their life may be put in danger. The notion that OSAEC is a private, family matter and prevailing gender roles and expectations have also constrained case reporting, prevention and response.

- Interrelated factors that influence OSAEC prevention and response. For instance, parents or guardians are compelled to spend more time in paid work due to poverty, thus devoting insufficient time to care and attend to their children's psycho-emotional needs. The lack of parental care drives children to seek solace and comfort in the company of peers, offline or online, and, in some cases, make them vulnerable prey to strangers. Compounded by prevailing social norms, such circumstances derail efforts to prevent, if not eliminate, OSAEC.

There is a need to highlight countervailing norms in Philippine society to address the foregoing challenges: from apathy to sensitivity; from inaction to action; and from indifference to compassion and empathy for others. To promote the values of *pakikipagtulungan* (helpfulness), *pagpapakita ng pag-alala o pakikiramay* (showing concern, empathy or sympathy), and *pakikipag-isa sa pagsugpo ng problema ng barangay* (being united in efforts to solve a community problem). For the social and behaviour change strategy, it is important to:

- capacitate parents/guardians with positive child discipline, including how to mentor or coach children. While they can distinguish signs related to OSAEC, measures should be taken to encourage translating this knowledge into action, including properly monitoring children's internet use. Challenging gender-related norms and the taboo surrounding OSAEC, the barangay government, for instance, may organize separate dialogue sessions with adults and children and elicit concrete suggestions on how to respond when potentially risky behaviours occur amongst children.

- monitor cases of violence against women and children by tapping and capacitating change monitors representing different sectors. Capacity building may be done on identification, risk or danger assessment, and referral for legal and social support services, thus challenging the practice of victim-blaming.

- develop gender-sensitive programs to empower children and promote their rights.

- provide families with healthier or acceptable options to deal with economic hardships by providing livelihood support.

- develop localized information dissemination on OSAEC, particularly on social norms that facilitate OSAEC and on available protective systems and mechanisms.

- craft key messages that will encourage community involvement in child protection-related issues and counter the notion that child abuse is a private matter. Train change agents to deliver, monitor and record the responses to the behaviour change messages and steps to address OSAEC. Developing gender- and age-differentiated messaging on OSAEC is also recommended. Younger children, for instance, lack awareness of sexual and reproductive health and rights. The proposed key messages are thus outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Social and behaviour change strategy for OSAEC: Key messages

Social norm	Key message	For whom
OSAEC as a topic is taboo.	*Walang tamang panahon upang pag-usapan ang OSAEC. Maaaring ngayon o bukas makalawa ay malagay sa peligro ang ating mga anak.* (There is no right timing to talk about OSAEC. Maybe now or the day after, our children may be put at risk.)	• Barangay government • Parents/guardians
Parental neglect is a major driver of OSAEC.	*Ang anak ay inaalagaan, hindi pinababayaan. Nakasalalay sa ating mga magulang ang kanilang kinabukasan.* (Children should be taken care of, not neglected. Their future depends on us, their parents.)	• Parents/guardians
OSAEC victims do not report the abuse because of shame and fear of its possible consequences.	*Huwag manahimik at matakot. Nasa kamay natin ang kaligtasan ng iba pang mga kabataan.* (Do not be silent and fearful. The safety of other young people is in our hands.)	• Parents/guardians • Children
OSAEC is a private family matter. No one else should intervene.	*Sugpuin ang OSAEC upang wag magdusa ang mga kabataan. Sila ay ating kayamanan, kailangan silang protektahan.* (Stop OSAEC so that young people will not suffer. They are our treasure; they need our protection.) *Nararapat lamang na mahalin natin ang ating pamilya. Ngunit may iba ring pamilya na nagmamahal at naghahangad ng kaligtasan ng kanilang mga anak. Sa ating kawalang-bahala, baka sila mapahamak.* (It is right to love our family. But there are also other families who love and wish to protect their own children. Our indifference may put them in danger.)	• Barangay government • Parents/guardians
Victims of abuse are to be blamed because of the way they dress and present themselves.	*Ang biktima ng pang-aabuso ay kailangang suportahan, hindi dapat sisihin.* (Victims of abuse should be supported and not be blamed.)	• Barangay government • Adults • Children

Annex A. Research framework

Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

Change can be effectively realized when the HRBA approach is applied. According to a UNICEF publication on HRBA, the approach has a two-fold objective: 1) to empower people (rights-holders) to claim and exercise their rights; and 2) to strengthen the capacity of the actors (duty-bearers) who have a particular obligation or responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the poorest, weakest, most marginalized and vulnerable, and to comply with these obligations and duties. The HRBA is a tool to reach the poorest and most vulnerable. It allows the views of rights-holders to be taken into account in such communities through active engagement and participation, providing comprehensive understanding of the problems at hand and their causes and consequences. In sum, HRBA is a tool for empowerment: one that acknowledges that the situation of people cannot change for the better without people's ownership.[20]

Closely related to the concept of HRBA is the GEDSI approach. The Australian Government refers to GEDSI in relation to cyber and critical technology. GEDSI consists of efforts to ensure people from all backgrounds, including women and gender-diverse people, people with disability and people facing other forms of marginalisation, can equitably access, use, contribute to, influence and benefit from the design, development and governance of cyber and critical technology.[21] A GEDSI lens is used to prevent unintended harm, exclusion and further marginalisation of at-risk groups and to promote their rights, equitable opportunities and benefits.[22]

The GEDSI approach addresses inequalities: through a contextual analysis of gender and power relations, meaningful participation and representation of the vulnerable sectors, employing the 'do no harm' approach; by looking at the intersectionality or the inter-links of factors compounding an issue; and by incorporating GEDSI into the organization's culture, structure and staff attitude, and ensuring access to services and opportunities. Both HRBA and GEDSI seek the participation and empowerment of the vulnerable and marginalized sectors in their development process. For this research, GEDSI is viewed from the child rights lens.

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[20] UNICEF Finland, Introduction to the Human Rights Based Approach: A guide for Finnish NGOs and their partners, 2015.
[21] Australian Government – Cyber Cooperation Support Unit, Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Strategy, 2021.
[22] Ibid.

Socio-Ecological Model of Behaviour Change

The 2018 reference study used the Social Norms Theory to describe the community norms associated with OSAEC. The theory defines social norms as rules we follow not only because we believe other people do the behaviour, but also because we perceive that other people expect us to do the same. Social norms, therefore, depend on both empirical and normative expectations. The individual ascribes to a social norm partly because she/he thinks that "other people expect me to". [23]

UNICEF notes that social and behaviour change (SBC) aims to empower individuals and communities and lower structural barriers that hinder people from adopting positive practices and societies from becoming more equitable, inclusive, cohesive and peaceful. SBC encompasses any set of strategies and interventions that influences drivers of change and supports local action towards better societies. It helps development practitioners and policymakers design more effective programmes for reducing poverty and inequity, blending scientific knowledge with community insights to, most importantly, expand people's control over the decisions that affect their lives[24] (*see Figure A.1*).

A key to SBC is communication. It is important to create opportunities for people to gather and reflect on how they can best support the concerned sectors (children, families) by providing them with the information they need to act accordingly. The SBC is the strategic use of communication approaches to promote changes in knowledge, attitudes, norms, beliefs and behaviours. It refers to the coordination of messages and activities across a variety of channels to reach multiple levels of society, including the individual, the community, services and policy. An SBC strategy is the document that guides the design of interventions, establishes intended audiences, sets behavioural communication objectives and determines consistent messages, materials and activities across channels.[25]

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[23] UNICEF, Plan International and University of the Philippines–Manila, 2019.
[24] United Nations, 'Human Rights', <www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>.
[25] John Hopkins Center for Communication Programmes, Social and Behavior Change, <https://ccp.jhu.edu/what-we-do/expertise/social-behavior-change>.

Figure A.1: Socio-Ecological Model of Behaviour Change
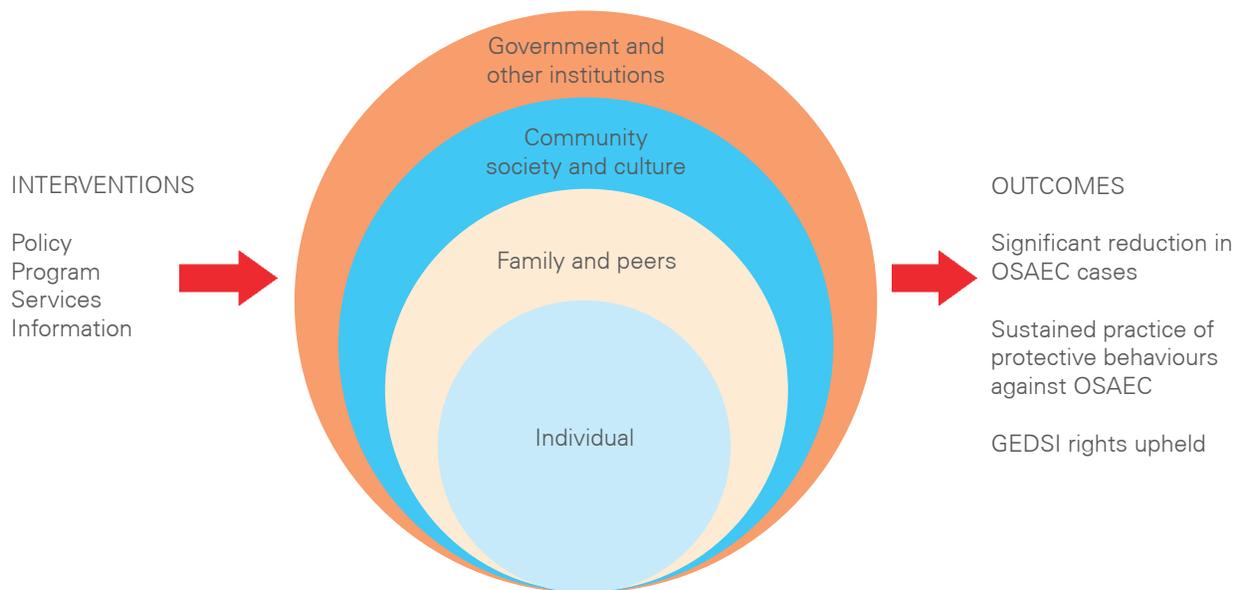
As depicted in Figure A.1., the four levels of influence interact to affect behaviour: individual, family and peer networks, community and institutions.[26]

- At the *level of the individual*, behaviour is affected by factors within the individual (i.e., knowledge, attitudes, skills, emotions and beliefs).

- At the *level of family and peer networks*, individual behaviour is affected by a person's close social and family circle. This includes influence from peers, spouse, partner, family and social support.

- At the *level of community*, influences from the situational context in which the individual lives and in which social relationships are nested. The characteristics of the context are associated with risk and protective factors and include leadership, access to information, service provision, social capital and collective efficacy.

- At *social/structural level*, the larger, macro-level environment which can either promote or deter behaviours.[27]

It is important to have a broad perspective of the anticipated changes in the social norms and protective behaviours of the target sectors, which will ensure that appropriate measures and indicators are integrated even during the baseline stage.

[25] Glanz, K. and Bishop, D. B., 'The Role of Behavioral Science Theory in Development and Implementation of Public Health Interventions', Annual Review of Public Health, 2010, pp. 399–418.

[26] SBCC for Emergency Preparedness Implementation Kit, 'What is Social and Behavior Change Communication', <https://sbccimplementationkits.org/sbcc-in-emergencies/learn-about-sbcc-and-emergencies/what-is-social-and-behavior-change-communication>.

Annex B. Selected data from survey interview and FGD results

Objective 3: Understand intersectionality of violence against children and violence against women that may contribute to victimization of children and women at home, community and online.

Factors contributing to marginalization and victimization of children at home, community and online

Table B.1. Distribution of adult respondents by perceived situations of women and children in the community

Statements	Total N = 126	
	Agree	Disagree
In our community, many women in a relationship have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.	44%	28%
Women and children who suffer from domestic violence keep it a secret because of feelings of shame or embarrassment.	65%	28%
Women and children who are victims of violence do not report the incidence (of abuse) for fear of not being believed.	67%	28%
Lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic impacts have increased the exposure of women to abusive partners.	58%	20%
In our community, men enjoy higher status and privilege compared to women.	31%	57%
Violence against women is often not reported because it is viewed as a private matter and that no one except for the partners involved should do something about it.	50%	43%
Children who grow up in families where there is violence are susceptible to similar abuse and violence.	69%	24%
There is not enough information in our community on where to report or who to talk to about domestic violence.	16%	77%
Men more than women are expected to make major decisions for the family.	35%	60%
Parents usually set rules for children about what they can do inside and outside the home.	91%	6%

Note: 'Can't tell' responses are excluded from the tabulation.

Table B.2. Distribution of adult respondents by majority response to tasks or activities mainly performed by family members

Tasks or activities	Majority response
Making decisions on how to raise and discipline children	Both father and mother (57%)
Teaching and reminding children of family rules and traditions	Both father and mother (46% Mother (44%)
Taking care of younger children	Mother (57%)
Performing domestic chores inside the house (cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing clothes, etc.)	Mother (54%)
Performing other household duties that require going out of the house (fetching water, buying something at a nearby store, selling food or non-food items, etc.)	Mother (43%) Both father and mother (18%)
Earning a living for the family	Both father and mother (31%) Father (30%) Mother (24%)
Deciding on what internet sites to visit	Mother (31%) Both father and mother (30%)
Deciding on the type of recreational activities to engage in	Mother (32%) Both father and mother (29%)
Choosing friends to spend time with	Mother (37%) Both father and mother (23%) Both male and female child (20%)
Deciding on what child photos, videos or other materials to produce or share online, including in social media	Mother (36%) Both father and mother (31%) Both male and female child (14%)
Learning how to protect children from online sexual abuse and exploitation	Mother (38%) Both father and mother (37%)
Establishing online communication with strangers who offer friendship and/or gifts to the child	Mother (35%) Both father and mother (35%)
Learning and sharing about the dangers of self-producing images and sexting	Both father and mother (43%) Mother (37%)
Ensuring safe internet practices of children by avoiding sites that have sexualized content	Both father and mother (42%) Mother (39%)
Regularly attending meetings called by community leaders	Mother (62%) Both father and mother (14%)
Being a member of a sector-based organization in the community (e.g., children, women, senior citizens, persons with disability, etc.)	Mother (43%) No one (32%)

Tasks or activities	Majority response
Rendering community service related to child and/or family welfare	Mother (49%) No one (30%)
Reporting domestic violence cases to the proper authority	Mother (41%) Both father and mother (25%) No one (20%)
Deciding on when and how children should engage in paid work	Mother (39%) Both father and mother (35%)
Deciding on children's future (e.g., what course to take, what to do with life in the future, etc.)	Both father and mother (39%) Mother (28%)

Objective 4: Assess community beliefs, attitudes, values and other forms of social norms, including gender, and cultural practices related to child sexual abuse and child protection.

<u>Manifestations of OSAEC</u>

Legend: 1 – Strongly disagree 2 – Disagree   3 – Can't tell   4 – Agree   5 – Strongly disagree

Table B.3. Distribution of adult respondents by perceptions of children's online habits or behaviours

Statements	Mean	SD/D	SA/A
Has unexplained relationships with older people online who are non-family members	2	71%	18%
Has a change in her/his use of words/language	3	32%	57%
Has been showing sexual behaviour which is not in line with her/his age or stage of development	2	75%	12%
Has shown changes in her/his online habits – for example, spending more time online or only being online in private	3	58%	31%
Has unexplained gifts such as expensive clothes and mobile phone	2	71%	17%
Has unexplained money or frequently takes part in activities requiring money	2	74%	13%
Has shown changes in mood, behaviour and/or eating habits	3	47%	42%
Is always tired	3	53%	34%
Has been staying out late with peers or not returning home	2	66%	21%
Has made a change in her/his appearance or has been borrowing clothes from others	2	62%	23%
Has not been reporting to school or has dropped her/his performance at school	2	78%	10%

Statements	Mean	SD/D	SA/A
Has been using drugs or drinking alcohol	2	80%	7% (n=9)
Has been reading materials that show abuse messages or with sexualized content	2	70%	18%
Has been helping family in earning money to help with daily sustenance.	3	55%	37%
Has been alone and non-communicative most of the time	2	80%	11%

Note: 'Can't tell' responses are excluded from the tabulation.

Beliefs, attitudes and perceptions towards OSAEC

Table B.4. Distribution of adult respondents by perceptions of OSAEC

Statement	Total N = 126	
	Agree	Disagree
Cybersex is harmless for children because there is no actual physical contact.	3%	92%
Whatever happens during a sex video call is private between the caller and the child.	5%	91%
Online sex work provides easy and large sums of money.	25%	65%
Photos and videos could spread in social media and be seen by multiple viewers as the video could be recorded and downloaded.	65%	31%
Many young people in the community who are out of school are likely to resort to online sex work as a past time or hobby.	28%	57%
Online sexual activities are 'normal' occurrences in the community.	15%	76%
Many parents give foremost priority to having money for their family's daily sustenance regardless of whether it comes from illegal activities.	20%	76%
Many parents did not actually want their children to do online sex work but had no choice because they [parents] lack education and work skills to get a legal job.	25%	65%
Children with friends who do online sexual activities would tend to do the same because of either influence, trust or envy.	50%	44%
Engaging in online sex work can be an opportunity for establishing a relationship with foreigners for a better life here or abroad.	29%	61%
Some families have legitimate reasons for allowing their child/ren to engage in online sex.	26%	61%

Statement	Total N = 126	
	Agree	**Disagree**
People must mind their own lives and not involve themselves in their neighbours' business.	76%	20%
Responding to online sexual exploitation of children is not among the priorities of our community leaders.	22%	69%
Although people in the community are aware that many young people are engaged in online (and offline) sex activities, they deny or dismiss it as a problem, so they do not do anything about it.	31%	60%
Online sex work involving children is more prevalent during than before the pandemic.	69%	17%

Note: 'Can't tell' responses are excluded from the tabulation.

The following tables combine the responses of adult and child respondents to some statements related to OSAEC.

Table B.5. Distribution of combined responses of adult and child respondents to OSAEC statements

Cybersex is harmless for children because there is no actual physical contact.

Level of perception	Boys (n = 60)	Girls (n = 60)	Adults (n = 127)	Total (N = 247)
Strongly disagree	32%	38%		17%
Disagree	38%	40%	92%	66%
Can't tell	18%	15%	5%	11%
Agree	12%	2%	3%	5%
Strongly agree		5%		1%
Mean	2	2	2	2
Standard deviation	0.986	1.032	0.403	0.759

Whatever happens during a sex video call is private between the caller and the child.

Level of perception	Boys (n = 60)	Girls (n = 60)	Adults (n = 127)	Total (N = 247)
Strongly disagree	25%	38%		15%
Disagree	33%	37%	91%	64%
Can't tell	20%	23%	5%	13%
Agree	13%	2%	5%	6%
Strongly agree	8%			2%
Mean	2	2	2	2
Standard deviation	1.241	0.825	0.467	0.828

Online sex work provides easy and large sums of money.

Level of perception	Boys (n = 60)	Girls (n = 60)	Adults (n = 127)	Total (N = 247)
Strongly disagree	25%	30%		13%
Disagree	23%	23%	66%	45%
Can't tell	17%	20%	9%	14%
Agree	18%	7%	26%	19%
Strongly agree	17%	20%		9%
Standard deviation	1.439	1.484	0.871	1.193
Mean	3	3	3	3

Photos and videos could spread in social media and be seen by multiple viewers as the video could be recorded and downloaded.

Level of perception	Boys (n = 60)	Girls (n = 60)	Adults (n = 127)	Total (N = 247)
Strongly disagree	12%	13%		6%
Disagree	15%	8%	31%	22%
Can't tell	12%	13%	3%	8%
Agree	25%	22%	65%	45%
Strongly agree	36%	43%		19%
Standard deviation	1.417	1.436	0.928	1.201
Mean	4	4	3	3

Many young people in the community who are out of school are likely to resort to online sex work as a past time or hobby.

Level of perception	Boys (n = 60)	Girls (n = 60)	Adults (n = 127)	Total (N = 247)
Strongly disagree	23%	22%		11%
Disagree	27%	30%	57%	43%
Can't tell	27%	32%	16%	22%
Agree	20%	10%	28%	21%
Strongly agree	3%	7%		2%
Mean	3	2	3	3
Standard deviation	1.157	1.142	0.874	1.017

Many parents give foremost priority to having money for their family's daily sustenance regardless of whether it comes from illegal activities.

Level of perception	Boys (n = 60)	Girls (n = 60)	Adults (n = 127)	Total (N = 247)
Strongly disagree	22%	18%		10%
Disagree	28%	22%	76%	51%
Can't tell	30%	27%	3%	15%
Agree	15%	17%	20%	18%
Strongly agree	5%	17%		5%
Mean	3	3	2	3
Standard deviation	1.142	1.344	0.813	1.060

Note: Given the very small numbers of LGBTIQ+ (n=6) and persons with disability (n=2) respondents, they are excluded from the statistical computation.

Objective 5: Assess peer group influence, family relationships, parental love and care, and social networks, including internet social networks.

Children's self-image and family relationship

Legend: 1 – Strongly disagree (SD)   2 – Disagree (D)   3 – Can't tell   4 – Agree (A) 5 – Strongly agree (SA)

Table B.6. Distribution of child respondents by responses to statements on self-image and family relationship

Statements	Mean	SD/D	SA/A
I am able to openly express my feelings through healthy dialogue with my family.			
Boys	4	15%	75%
Girls	4	17%	67%
LGBTIQ+	4	n=1	n=4
My family and I always find time to bond together.			
Boys	4	12%	77%
Girls	5	2%	87%
LGBTIQ+	5		n=6
I am able to talk about and openly express guilt and shame with my family.			
Boys	4	25%	60%
Girls	4	15%	67%
LGBTIQ+	5	n=1	n=5

Statements	Mean	SD/D	SA/A
I have learned and been able to resolve problems or misunderstandings with my family.			
Boys	4	15%	70%
Girls	4	10%	73%
LGBTIQ+	4	n=1	n=5
I am able to stay away from peers who continue to pressure or influence me to involve myself			
in online sex.	4	17%	67%
Boys	5	15%	65%
Girls	4	n=1	n=5
LGBTIQ+			
I have not experienced any abuse from my own family.			
Boys	3	40%	26%
Girls	4	33%	50%
LGBTIQ+	4	n=2	n=3
It is important for me to live in a safe and secure environment.			
Boys	5	3%	95%
Girls	5	2%	95%
LGBTIQ+	5		n=6
I prefer to make my own decisions and do what I feel is right for my wellbeing.			
Boys	4	18%	73%
Girls	4	22%	68%
LGBTIQ+	4	n=1	n=4
I believe that children/youths have rights that must be upheld.			
Boys	4	5%	84%
Girls	5	4%	88%
LGBTIQ+	5		n=6
I feel confident about my capacity to change my life for the better.			
Boys	4	5%	91%
Girls	5	-	95%
LGBTIQ+	5		n=6

Note: 'Can't tell' responses are excluded from the tabulation.

Objective 6: Assess children's views regarding child rights and child protection, sexual reproductive and health rights (SRHR), moral values, preferences and behaviour, and child abuse, including OSAEC.

<u>**Children's needs and problems**</u>

FGD participants were asked what the needs and problems of children/youth are in their community. Their responses are as follows.

	Adult participants	Child participants
Economic	• *Poverty* • *Unemployment:* As a result, parents cannot provide a good future for their own children.	• *Poverty:* As a result, children are unable to go to school and their basic needs are not met. • *Unemployment:* Parents are unemployed. Some employed parents usually spend their income on vices or in repaying debts.
Social (health, education, family relationship and behavioural issues)	• *In conflict with the law:* Some children/youths are involved in theft, robbery, physical injuries. • *Behavioural issues:* Some children/ youths are lazy and disobedient. Others are engaged in vices like drinking alcohol, smoking and illegal drugs. • *Early pregnancy:* Many girls became pregnant during the pandemic; others got married to escape from family obligations (e.g., taking care of siblings, etc.). • *Education-related issues:* Many were out of school, especially during the pandemic. They expressed difficulty with the online/modular mode of learning; some children/ youths are not serious with their studies. • *Parental neglect:* Some parents have neglected their children because of the need to earn a living, or they were into vices, including taking illegal drugs.	• *Drug dependence:* Some children are incarcerated/ sent to prison or are not living a good/ productive life while others suffer from mental health issues. • *Behavioural issue:* Some children disrespect the elderly. • *Early pregnancy:* Children's image and future (especially girls) are shattered as they are blamed by many critics for what they have done. They are also unable to continue with their studies. • *Parental neglect:* Parents are unable to monitor or supervise and give time, attention and advice to their own children. As a result, children are engaged in riots or suffer physical injuries.

	Adult participants	Child participants
Technology	• Children/youths prioritize online games (e.g., Mobile Legend) over their studies.	
Political		• *Lack of barangay support:* The lack of support from their barangay can affect children's studies, especially if people are noisy and the environment is dirty.

Key societal beliefs on values of girls and boys

Table B.7. Distribution of adult respondents by perceived roles of women/girls and men/boys

Statement	Total N = 126	
	Agree	Disagree
The roles of girls and women are largely limited to childcare and household duties.	43%	52%
More boys than girls tend to engage in risky sexual behaviours.	50%	31%
Girls and women are more likely to have their mobility severely limited, thus resulting in more time spent within the home than men and boys.	65%	27%
It is normal for men to show dominance, strength and independence.	42%	47%
In our society, girls of every age are more likely to be excluded from education than boys.	20%	71%

Note: 'Can't tell' responses are excluded from the tabulation.

OSAEC prevention

FGD adult participants shared the following messages regarding the prevention of OSAEC:

- *Kailangang sugpuin ang sexual abuse dahil dumarami na ang mga kabataang naha-harass ng mga dayuhan. Dapat siguro simulan sa mga magulang na nagpapabaya sa kanilang mga anak.* (There is a need to stop sexual abuse because of the increasing number of children/ youths who are being harassed by foreigners. It should start with parents who neglect their children.)

- *Kailangang sugpuin para din sa kapakanan ng aming mga anak.* (OSAEC should be stopped for the sake of our children.)

- *Dapat talaga nating sugpuin ang OSAEC, katuwang ang barangay, upang maging ligtas ang ating mga kabataan.* (It is really a must to control OSAEC in partnership with the barangay for the safety of our young people).

- Dapat sugpuin dahil sa maraming kabataan ang naaapektuhan. Kayamanan natin ang kabataan kaya dapat natin silang pangalagaan. (OSAEC must be stopped because many young people are being affected. They are our treasure, and they should be taken care of).

- *Kailangang sugpuin ang OSAEC at karapatan ng mga bawat bata ang proteksyon laban sa OSAEC upang maging ligtas ang mga bata sa pang-aabusong sekswal, pisikal, mental at emosyonal at mawala ang mga krimeng may kaugnayan sa OSAEC.* (There is a need to stop OSAEC: it is the right of every child to be protected from OSAEC and be safe from sexual, physical, mental and emotional abuse. There is a need to stop OSAEC and have crimes related to OSAEC eradicated).

- Upang hindi lumala ang sitwasyon patungkol sa OSAEC. (So as not to aggravate the situation related to OSAEC).

- *Para wala ng kabataan na mapahamak at maging biktima ng OSAEC.* (So that no young people will be harmed and will become victims of OSAEC).

- *Kailangan nating bantayan ang ating mga anak kasi baka maranasan din yan ng ating anak.* (We need to protect our own children because they themselves might experience it (OSAEC)).

- *Kailangan kasi kung hindi baka maging salot o sakit ng ulo ang mga kabataan at makasanayan nila ang ganoong paraan sa madaliang pagkakaroon ng pera.* (Prevention is needed because if not, some young people may become a menace or a headache, and they may get used to doing it (OSAEC) to earn easy money).

- *Para sa ikakaayos ng mga kabataan na naligaw ng landas.* (For the protection and rehabilitation of those young people who have lost their way).

Transforming Social Norms to Protect Children Online:

SaferKidsPH Action Research on Changing Social Norms for Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC)

#SAFERKIDSPH

SaferKidsPH, an Australian Government initiative, is delivered through the pioneering consortium of Save the Children Philippines, The Asia Foundation and UNICEF to reduce the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the Philippines. SaferKidsPH works with children and their families, the Philippine Government, civil society and the private sector to ensure that children are safe and protected online.

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