

New partnership, SaferKidsPH, addresses online child abuse

SaferKidsPH Program brings together a consortium of child rights advocates collaborating with the government, civil society, and private sector

MANILA, 15 April 2019 –Online child abuse is the leading cybercrime in the Philippines. New technologies, such as live streaming, are putting more Filipino children at risk of sexual abuse.

Australia is committed to advancing the rights of children and protecting them from exploitation, abuse, and violence. That is why the Australian Embassy in the Philippines has initiated the SaferKidsPH Program, a six year, AUD 8 million (PhP 298 million) commitment.

“Addressing online sexual exploitation and abuse of children is a global concern. SaferKidsPH reinforces our commitment to support the Philippine government’s efforts to address this complex form of human trafficking. SaferKidsPH will also work with the private sector and the community to develop the best solutions for a safer online environment for every Filipino child,” says Ambassador Steven Robinson AO, Australian Ambassador to the Philippines.

The program will provide grants to the Australian Federal Police, and the UNICEF-led consortium, which includes The Asia Foundation and Save the Children Philippines.

“Filipino children have a massive presence online. One in three Internet users is a child. While the Government has been trying to respond to the demand, breadth, scope, and agility of the technology — not to mention the extreme accessibility of digital platforms — there must be more that we can do together to protect our children,” says Julia Rees, UNICEF Representative, a.i.

The National Baseline Survey on Violence Against Children shows that nearly one in two children aged 13-17 experienced cyber violence. Atty Albert Muyot, Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children Philippines said the involvement of local government units, and community members, both adults and children, are key to protecting children from online sexual exploitation. “Children especially those in deprived situations are at risk of falling prey to online sexual exploitation. We need to increase public vigilance to prevent and reduce incidents of OSEC by strengthening child protection systems at the local level,” says Muyot.

The Consortium will support the Philippine government’s national plans, including the National Response Plan to Address Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children led by the DSWD Inter-Agency Council Against Child Pornography, and the Philippine Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children led by the Council for the Welfare of Children.

Sam Chittick, Country Representative of The Asia Foundation said this consortium combines the networks and expertise of UNICEF, Save the Children and the Asia Foundation together with the Australian Embassy to ensure that the voice of Filipino children navigating the justice system in the Philippines is heard, and together we can help break down barriers to access to justice.”

Aligned with the government's goal to end violence against children by 2025, SaferKidsPH will involve children, parents, schools, local groups, businesses, and media to promote online safety. It will strengthen investigation, prosecution and adjudication of cybercrime cases. It will also improve services to protect children in target hotspots.

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