



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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5 traffickers face up to 15 years in prison for child exploitation online

BISLIG CITY, SURIGAO DEL SUR – Five women who sexually abused and exploited children to make money online have been sentenced to a maximum of 15 years in prison. They pleaded guilty to attempted trafficking nearly three years after their arrest in local operations that stemmed from a referral by Australian authorities.

The Regional Trial Court Branch 14 in Bislig City issued its orders dated Feb. 21, 2023, after the five traffickers (names withheld to protect the identity of the victims) entered into plea agreements.

“These convictions are a powerful example of what international collaboration can achieve in holding perpetrators accountable for abusing and exploiting children. My hope is for these convictions to deter criminals and prevent the abuse and exploitation of children from ever happening in the first place. Prevention is vital in the fight against human trafficking,” said Prosecutor Clementino Rabor, Head of DOJ Regional Anti-Trafficking Task Force XIII, Caraga.

Lawyer and IJM Cebu Director Lucille Dejito said, “Plea bargaining can be a powerful child protective prosecution strategy that mitigates the risk of retraumatizing young victims who have already suffered so much. By sparing them the ordeal of testifying in court, we can help ensure that justice is served without potentially triggering the trauma of survivors on the stand. IJM commends public prosecutors who have timely leveraged plea bargaining from a position of strength to protect survivors while still holding perpetrators accountable with significant penalties.”

On August 20, 2020, local authorities arrested the traffickers in Bislig City following a referral by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) to the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC). The case referred involved an Australian national who was arrested for paying Filipino traffickers to produce and transmit child sexual abuse materials. An Australian court [sentenced](#) him to more than 15 years in prison in August 2022.

The operations in Bislig City also led to the rescue of 15 victims, 13 of whom were minors. Among them were children of some of the traffickers.

The operations were carried out jointly by the Women and Children Protection Center - Anti Trafficking in Persons Division (WCPC-ATIPD) and WCPC Mindanao Field Unit, alongside the Regional Anti-Cybercrime Units (RACU) 10, 11 and 13, and the Bislig City Police Station (BCPS).

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Region 13, City Social Welfare Development Office (CSWDO) of Bislig, Department of Justice Regional Anti-Trafficking Task Force 13, and International Justice Mission (IJM) also provided support for the operations.

Launched on February 27, 2019, the PICACC is a coordinating body between local and international law enforcement. Principally led by the Philippine National Police’s Women and Children Protection Center (PNP-WCPC) and the National Bureau of Investigation’s Anti-Human-Trafficking Division (NBI-AHTRAD), PICACC is supported by the Australian Federal Police (AFP), the United Kingdom National Crime Agency (UK NCA), the National Police of the Netherlands (Politie) and non-government organization, International Justice Mission (IJM).

To date, IJM has supported Philippine authorities in the conviction of more than 180 perpetrators for offenses related to the online sexual exploitation of children. IJM has also supported more than 320 operations, resulting in the rescue of over 1,080 victims.

To report information about online child sexual exploitation, contact WCPC at 0966-725-5961 (Globe) or 0919-777-7377 (Smart).

Notes to Editors:

- Under Philippine laws, the name and personal circumstances of the trafficked person or any other information tending to establish the identity of the trafficked person and his or her family shall not be disclosed to the public.
- The Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, also known as the Luxembourg Guidelines, prescribes the use of the term “child sexual abuse material” or “child sexual exploitation material” instead of “child pornography”. Sexualized material that depicts or otherwise represents children is a representation, and a form, of child sexual abuse and should not be described as “pornography.”

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[About IJM](#)

International Justice Mission is a global organization that protects people in poverty from violence. IJM partners with local authorities in 29 program offices in 17 countries to combat slavery, violence against women and children, and police abuse of power against people who are poor. IJM works with local authorities and governments to rescue and restore survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and help strengthen public justice systems so they can better protect people from violence.

Our 21 years of work in the Philippines led to a dramatic decrease in the prevalence of sex trafficking of children in bars and brothels—reductions ranging from 72%-86% in the cities where we partnered with local authorities. In 2016, IJM fully transitioned our program in the Philippines to combat online sexual exploitation of children, in particular the trafficking of children to create new child sexual abuse materials, including via livestreaming.

Learn more at osec.IJM.org.