CEBU, PHILIPPINES

THE PROBLEM: CYBERSEX TRAFFICKING

Cebu is a tropical tourist destination in the Philippines, known for its beautiful beaches and rugged mountain ranges—but there is a dark side underneath the beauty. IJM first opened an office to help authorities rescue girls from sex trafficking in bars, restaurants and along well-known streets. The government has made strides to combat the crime: One independent study found 79% fewer children being sold for sex in Metro Cebu after four years of IJM’s collaborative work. Today, cybersex trafficking of children is on the rise—predators anywhere in the world can search online and pay to direct live sexual abuse of young girls and boys.

IJM CEBU PROGRESS

130+ rescued from cybersex trafficking (since 2016)

620+ rescued from sex trafficking in bars, brothels and streets (since 2007)

120+ criminals convicted for trafficking crimes (since 2006)

THE FACTS

There are an estimated 750,000 predators online at any given moment.¹

Human trafficking is a massive global enterprise, generating about $150 billion a year—two-thirds from commercial sexual exploitation.²

Worldwide, about 70% of human trafficking victims are women and girls, and up to 50% are minors.³

¹UN, UNICEF, Walk Free, ILO, and IOM

²Ibid.

³Walk Free, ILO, and IOM
We rescue victims by helping Filipino authorities and international law enforcement agencies to identify and remove children from cybersex trafficking. Pedophiles anywhere in the world can pay to purchase child pornography or direct live sexual abuse.

We bring criminals to justice. We help police investigate and gather evidence so that traffickers and criminals facilitating online sexual exploitation are restrained. We help prosecutors press charges and build strong cases using all available evidence.

We restore survivors by creating individualized care plans for IJM clients. Cybersex trafficking victims can be under 2 years old, and there are more boys than in bar- or street-based trafficking. IJM social workers help place survivors in aftercare homes where they can return to school, take vocational classes, and receive ongoing therapy. In addition to providing direct client care, we are developing best practices and pioneering new tools for shelters handling cybersex trafficking cases.

We strengthen justice systems by providing hands-on mentoring for law enforcement, judges, and partner organizations that provide aftercare for sex trafficking survivors. The Philippines has strong anti-trafficking laws, and we are helping to train authorities on how to implement them against this new crime type.

“I am inspired by the social workers who don’t stop helping survivors like me…I too have a passion to help survivors see that there is hope after rescue, and that there are people who can help us if we let them.”

—Joy*

How IJM Cebu Combats Cybersex Trafficking

* A pseudonym. Child pictured on cover is not an actual victim; image taken with consent. All text and images © 2019 International Justice Mission.