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# FREE FROM ONLINE VIOLENCE

## A call for empowering and safe digital spaces for children



Plan International Philippines and Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD) implement **SAFE Online**, an EU-funded project that seeks to tackle online sexual exploitation of children and promote a digital environment free from violence and abuse.

## ABOUT SAFE ONLINE

Technology has become an integral part of people's day-to-day lives—the rise of digital era has given us the opportunity to communicate with our loved ones, facilitate meaningful discussions even with people from across the globe, and support and promote advocacies that align with our personal beliefs.

Social media provides spaces where people, including children and youth, are free to speak up, express themselves, and lead change in their respective communities. However, with our lives increasingly moving online, it's important to acknowledge that the virtual world is a vast and unregulated space that may put children and young people at risk. This is why, now more than ever, it is crucial that we take immediate actions to protect children and young people from the threats of the online world.

Plan International Philippines, together with Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD), is implementing **SAFE Online** (Systems Approach For Ensuring Online Safety and Empowerment of Children and Young People), an EU-funded project. The SAFE Online project seeks to protect children and young people from online sexual exploitation and violence.

The project aims to empower children and young people to protect themselves and their peers from the threats of the online world and influence them to take collective action through lobbying for policies that will uphold strong protective measures.

The SAFE Online project is being implemented in the city of Manila and Bacoor in Cavite and the municipalities of Mayorga and MacArthur in Leyte given the at-risk communities and reported cases of online abuse. ■





# FACILITATORS' TRAINING ON DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AND ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN (OSEC) EDUCATION

In alignment with its aim to empower children and young people to become agents of change and influence child protection system actors to uphold strong protective measures against OSEC and online violence, the SAFE Online project was designed to be participatory where the project's beneficiaries work alongside Plan International Philippines and the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD) in achieving the overall goal of the project.

Part of the project's undertaking is the capacity building of children and young people, parents, caregivers, community leaders, child protection system actors, and private sector partners. With this, a series of Training of Facilitators on Digital Citizenship and Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) Education were conducted in the cities of Manila and Bacoor, Cavite, and in the municipalities of MacArthur and Mayorga, Leyte from August to November 2022. The 3-day Training of Facilitators aims to equip the participants with the knowledge and skills to effectively train other people in their respective communities.

Using the participatory learning approach, the participants are expected to contribute to the learning process building on their knowledge, skills, and experiences. ■



A participant from the Philippine National Police (PNP) explains to his fellow participants the role of the adults and communities in protecting the children and youth from various online harms to prevent OSEC and online violence.



Children and young people participate in a workshop session during the Facilitators' Training on Digital Citizenship and OSEC Education

## SAFE ONLINE COMMUNITY ROLLOUTS

As part of SAFE Online's commitment to eradicate online sexual exploitation and abuse of children through collective action, the *Digital Citizenship and Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) Education* workshops were rolled out and were attended by over 1,000 children and young people and over 2,000 child protection system actors.

The attendees consist of community leaders, healthcare workers, teaching and non-teaching personnel, police officers, lawyers, and parents—all hopeful and dedicated to keep children safe from the threats of the digital environment. The workshop's objective is to strengthen the community-based child protection mechanisms in the covered areas—which includes designing efficient and gender-transformative processes for handling child abuse cases. ■



Trained CAY Facilitator, John Paul, extending the importance of setting the participant's account into private as a protective measure of children while accessing the internet. Part of the speakers of the event are the ten (10) trained CAY facilitators, Police Executive Master Sergeant (PEMS) Alexander Jimenez of Manila Anti-Cybercrime Group, and CDF-CSO Capacity Building Lead-Felyrose Tolledo.





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SAFE Online Community Rollouts



Willynda Ebero, a SAFE Online Facilitator, discusses the different internet slangs to the community members of MacArthur, Leyte.



Chief Prosecutor Fiscal Johnny Ompong of Bacoor City - DOJ discusses the “Katarungang Pambarangay” and Violence Against Women and Children as a refresher course to the barangay staff of Molino III headed by Chairperson Apolonio Advincula Jr. The course is attended by the staff from Lupon Tagapamayapa, Barangay Council for the Protection of Children, VAW, and Kasambahay Desk. During the course, Plan International through the project SAFE Online project orients the staff about the Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) and the salient points of R.A. No.11930.

# WORKING TOWARDS A VIOLENCE-FREE ONLINE COMMUNITIES THROUGH LOBBYING AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

Plan International Philippines has been heavily involved in the consultations about the salient provisions of the recently passed Republic Act No. 11930 also known as the “Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials (CSAEM) Act.”

Joining other child and human rights organizations, Plan International Philippines shared good practices and lessons learned relevant to the implementation of the said law during a briefing with Senator Risa Hontiveros (the author and sponsor of the bill), the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), the Philippine National Police (PNP), and tech giant Facebook Philippines on July 27, 2022.

With the recent passage of R.A. No. 11930, Plan International Philippines along with other members of the Child Rights Network (CRN), hopes that the provided suggestions during consultation series be taken into consideration and can support the proper implementation of the law. ■



[From left to right: National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), Plan International Philippines, Sen. Risa Hontiveros, the Philippine National Police (PNP), and Facebook Philippines discuss the salient features of the R.A. No. 11930 during a round table discussion.]



# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT IN ERADICATING ONLINE VIOLENCE

Plan International believes that children and young people should be free to be themselves in the digital world—they should be able to maintain social connections, campaign for social good, and develop positive digital footprints for themselves and for others.

This is why SAFE Online continuously conducts consciousness-raising workshops and seminars specifically designed to inform children and young people of their rights, as well as empower them to foster healthy relationships in online spaces. With this, SAFE Online hopes that children and young people, as well as their parents and guardians, will appreciate that the online world is a place for them to find their voice, explore their identities, and support each other positively. ■



Jhecris, 12 years old, one of the participants of poster making contest of Barangay 740, Manila. Jhecris showcases her output displaying her conviction that children must be enjoying their right for a safe environment while also enjoying their childhood life. Jhecris put into artwork her call to stop Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) and cyber bullying which directly affects children like her and her peers.



## 2022 WRAPPED SAFE ONLINE HIGHLIGHTS

NOV 21, 2022

### Child Participation in the House of Representatives' Celebration of Children's Month

The House of Representatives celebrated the National Children's Month last November 21, 2022.

Plan International, in collaboration with the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development (PLCPD) and the Child Rights Network (CRN), supported the celebration by mobilizing one of its child partners Crystal of Barangay Molino II, Bacoor City, Cavite to deliver a Keynote Address in relation to the celebration's 2022 theme of Empowering Children.

The CRN together with the House Committee on the Welfare of Children released the event advocacy slogan: "CRN and the 19th Congress: Empowering Children." Crystal keynote message highlighted the role of legislators in improving the overall wellbeing of all Filipino children, especially of those deemed most vulnerable. ■





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2022 Wrapped: SAFE Online Highlights

**NOV 26, 2022**

## Special Consultation with Children on Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR) of R.A. No. 11930 or Anti-OSAEC and Anti-CSAEM Act

In celebration of National Children's Month, Plan International Philippines and its partner organization PLCPD participated in the special consultation with children from all over the country on the salient features of the Republic Act No. 11930 and the specific provisions in the draft Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) that affect children and young people.

The SAFE Online Project's youth facilitators spearheaded the discussions among their fellow youths and presented their comments and suggestions on the IRR in plenary. ■



**NOV 30, 2022**

## Country Visit of UN Special Rapporteur on the sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children, Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh

Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh, UN Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material, visited the country on November 30, 2022, to assess the situation and the progress made by the Philippine government in combating and preventing the sale and sexual exploitation of children in the light of international human rights norms and standards.

The UN Special Rapporteur visited the country at the request of the Philippine Government to gain first-hand understanding of issues related to her mandate, in particular measures taken to uphold and protect the human rights of child victims of sale and sexual exploitation.



From left to right: Ms. Rosadel Ronquillo, BCPC Desk Officer of Barangay Molino II, Jhasper (16 y/o), Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh, UN Special Rapporteur, Crystal (17 y/o), Richelle (17 y/o), and Riove (14 y/o)





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**2022 Wrapped: SAFE Online Highlights**  
Country Visit of UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children, Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh (November 30, 2022)

During her visit, the UN Special Rapporteur convened a closed-door meeting with Plan International child and youth facilitators to know their feelings and learnings, and the challenges they face on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Four (4) Youth Facilitators from Barangay Molino II, Bacoor City have had the opportunity to discuss the issues and experiences of children related to cyber safety and campaign against OSEC as advocates, with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Exploitation of Children, including child prostitution, child pornography, and other child sexual abuse material, Ms. Mama Fatima Singhateh.



Jhasper, 16 years old, share one of the questions asked during the discussion –

*We are also asked about our opinion on solutions-recommendations and we share that not only children in school but street children should be taught about their rights including cyber safety and protection, and there are parents who neglect their child/children – some are not prioritized by their family, not properly guided by parents, or no time at all.*



## About PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organization that advances children's rights and equality for girls. Working together with children, young people, our supporters, and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children.

Plan International has been building powerful partnerships for children for over 80 years and is now active in more than 75 countries. The organization has been working in the Philippines since 1961. Plan International Philippines' main base is located in Makati City.

Its areas of operations for programming are in Metro Manila, Occidental Mindoro, North Samar, West Samar, East Samar, Southern Leyte, Central Mindanao, and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).



## About PLCPD

The Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development Foundation, Inc. (PLCPD) was established in September 1989 by a group of forward-looking legislators as a non-stock, nonprofit, membership-type organization of legislators from the Senate and House of Representatives working together for the enactment of laws conducive to population and human development.

These legislators are united by a legislative agenda in the following areas: women's rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights and the prevention of violence against women and girls; children's rights; rural development; and tobacco control.

### For more information, contact:

**Ma. Sheila N. Estabillo** (+632) 813 0030  
Project Manager ✉ PHLpartnerships@plan-international.org  
SAFE ONLINE Project 🌐 plan-international.org/philippines