



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

NURTURING SAFE SPACES FOR
STRENGTHENING THE COUNTRY'S CHILD
PROTECTION SYSTEM







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With the advent of a new leadership at ECPAT Philippines in 2022, we renewed our promises to keep children at the heart of our work. Buoyed by the positive signs of the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic which has undoubtedly exacerbated children's vulnerability to all forms of sexual exploitation, we dreamt again of a "world where children enjoy a life of human dignity and a safe environment where they can exercise and enjoy their rights to the fullest, free and secure from all forms of commercial sexual violence and exploitation".

We designed our next five years of operation 2023-2027, inspired by the wisdom of the past and the promise of the future. With a core of children and youth advocates who bring their passion, commitment and hope for a more dignified life for their peers and the next generation, our team of committed staff, partners and the donor community, we remained steadfast in creating a culture of change in the country's child protection systems.

The globalizing virtual environment for children has brought in new perspectives and context in addressing children's right to special protection from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation. We will remain undaunted in enabling children to claim their space and right to be protected from all forms of violence, as this is their inalienable right to realizing their full potential and dignity.

Our appreciation and gratefulness to everyone who have journeyed with us in 2022.


Ana Maria Dionela
Executive Director



**MESSAGE FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



WHO WE ARE

From a three-year global movement to End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism which began in 1991, ECPAT has evolved into a network of organizations in over 100 countries, working together to eliminate all forms of sexual exploitation of children.

ECPAT in the Philippines was one of the lead organizations that lobbied for the enactment of national landmark legislations which aid in the prosecution of criminals associated with sexual exploitation of children: Republic Act 7610 or the Special Protection of Children from Abuse, Discrimination and Neglect of 1992; Republic Act 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 and Republic Act 9775 or the Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009. Further realizing the importance of localizing these national laws to ensure implementation in vulnerable communities, ECPAT also pushed for the enactment of local ordinances in areas where it works. In 2016 and 2017, ECPAT Philippines successfully lobbied for the adoption of Anti-Child Sex Tourism ordinances, the first of its kind, in the province of Bohol and the municipality of Malay in Aklan, respectively. Today, ECPAT Philippines's programs and projects strategically aim to help ensure that these laws not only remain on paper, but are also efficiently enforced.

ECPAT Philippines' programs and projects fall under the four pathways to end Sexual Exploitation of Children (SEC): Prevention of Crimes; Promotion of Child Rights; Prosecution of Offenses; and Provision of Services. From raising awareness and capacities of stakeholders to helping victims access the criminal justice system, working simultaneously in these four areas has enabled us to target SEC holistically.



OUR VISION

ECPAT Philippines envisions a world where children enjoy a life of human dignity and a safe environment where they can exercise and enjoy their rights to the fullest, free and secure from all forms of commercial sexual violence and exploitation

OUR MISSION

Within the overarching framework of child rights, ECPAT Philippines, working in collaboration with duty bearers and other stakeholders will work towards a society where Filipino children are protected from sexual violence and freed from abuse and exploitation of all forms. As part of a global network of organizations and individuals working toward this cause, ECPAT Philippines will design and deliver projects targeted at strengthening systems for addressing prevention, care and protection of children.



INTRODUCTION

As the COVID-19 crisis showed signs of containment in 2022, significantly reducing mobility restrictions, ECPAT Philippines began to transition to a more flexible working environment to allow the face-to-face implementation of activities and onsite work while still complying with health protocols.

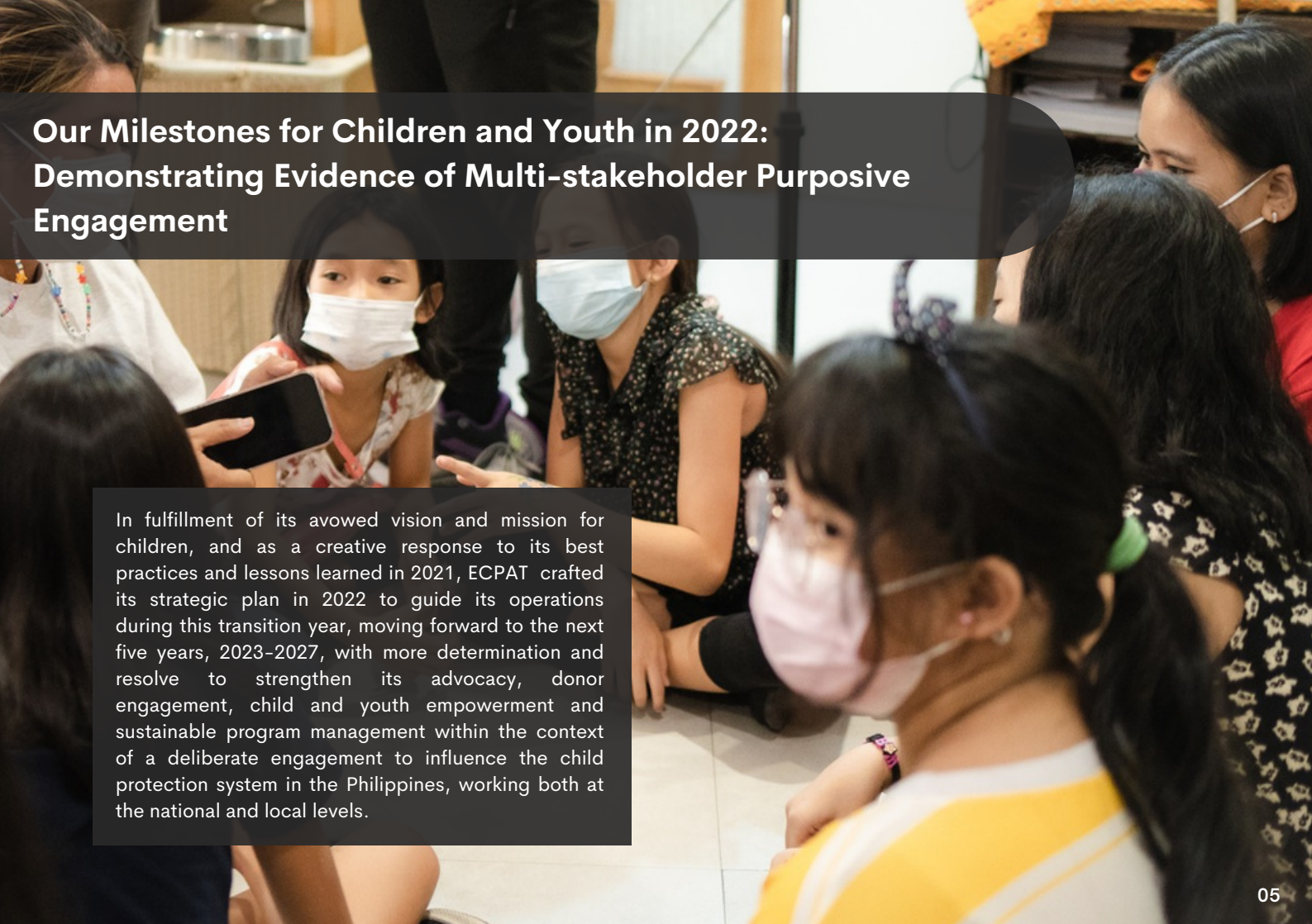
The lockdown induced a surge in cases of abuse and exploitation against children, pushing ECPAT Philippines to position itself more vigorously in implementing projects, seeking opportunities for sustained donor engagement, and strengthening other efforts to substantially contribute to child protection systems strengthening in the country.

Following the organization's change of management in March, a five-year strategic plan was immediately developed to ensure the organization's fulfillment of its objective to work towards a "world where children enjoy a life of human dignity and a safe environment where they can exercise and enjoy their rights to the fullest, free and secure from all forms of commercial sexual violence and exploitation."

Interventions needed from duty bearers and resolutions essential for rights holders were more clearly articulated as ECPAT Philippines continued to empower children and youth housed in their shelter and in partner communities, as well as initiate mutually reinforcing and sustainable engagements with local communities and in all levels of governance including relevant private sectors, faith-based groups, and other civil society organizations.

ECPAT strengthens its influence through its constant involvement in spaces that amplify children and youth's voices on child rights, including the protection of children from all forms of sexual violence, in various contexts, including in a humanitarian setting. It also contributed substantially to the passage of new laws safeguarding children from human trafficking and online child sexual exploitation and abuse and institutionalized its partnership with the Department of Tourism in support of its national initiative to make tourism protective of women's and children's rights. For this, ECPAT Philippines received awards and recognition from national and local government stakeholders.

The accomplishments and learnings in 2022 led to a determined effort to work on areas for enhancement in the coming years, especially in sustaining capacity-building initiatives for staff, children and young advocates, and other partners, ensuring proper implementation of projects and policies, strengthening collaborative and strategic donor engagements, and increasing capacities to enable ECPAT Philippines to expand and deepen its impact.



Our Milestones for Children and Youth in 2022: Demonstrating Evidence of Multi-stakeholder Purposive Engagement

In fulfillment of its avowed vision and mission for children, and as a creative response to its best practices and lessons learned in 2021, ECPAT crafted its strategic plan in 2022 to guide its operations during this transition year, moving forward to the next five years, 2023-2027, with more determination and resolve to strengthen its advocacy, donor engagement, child and youth empowerment and sustainable program management within the context of a deliberate engagement to influence the child protection system in the Philippines, working both at the national and local levels.



In 2022, ECPAT Philippines had to critically frame its new initiatives and review its past programs in the light of the findings showing the evolving context for sexual exploitation of children:

THE EVOLVING CONTEXT FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN



None of these contexts or manifestations are isolated, and any discussion of one must be a discussion of SEC Altogether

This evolving context called for the prioritization of two increasing trends of sexual exploitation- online child sexual exploitation and the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. ECPAT designed and proposed new programs in 2022 to address key challenges in these situations confronting children, resulting in new initiatives with targeted multi-dimensional and multi-level solutions to fight sexual exploitation of children.

What follows is a chronicle of ECPAT's program experiences in strengthening the country's child protection system in 2022.



Policy Engagement to Prevent Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism

The Disrupting Harm research[1] identified the Philippines as the preferred destination for traveling child sex offenders, with most cases involving the production of child sexual abuse materials and live streaming. And as travel restrictions eased in 2022, the government prioritized the promotion of tourism as a valuable strategy for economic recovery, initially encouraging local tourism and eventually opening the borders for foreign travelers. This, in turn, is expected to encourage technological advances to accommodate new travel and tourism products and services.

Based on the evidence gathered from the research, ECPAT Philippines actively worked with the Department of Tourism and its regional offices to conduct trainings and risk assessments with 1,040 tourism actors to determine the risks associated with sexual exploitation of children in the travel and tourism sector. Using a localized version of the risk assessment tool recommended by the CODE[2], ECPAT Philippines confirmed that only 36% of the offices assessed are safe for children, with a disturbingly high percentage of 120% determined to be at high risk of sexual exploitation of children.

ECPAT Philippines seeks to lobby for legislation to end the sexual exploitation of children in the travel and tourism sector, supported by existing laws on human trafficking and online sexual abuse and exploitation of children. This will be accomplished by reporting the findings from the risk assessment to national and local tourism actors, as well as providing them with critical recommendations aimed at addressing this urgent problem, such as:

- Continue to raise awareness among tourism actors about the vital link between the sexual exploitation of children in the tourism value chain;
- Capacitate tourism actors to develop and enforce their child protection policy within the tourism value chain;
- Institutionalize a reporting and response mechanism on child sexual exploitation among tourism actors in line with existing national protocols on child abuse;
- Develop the capacity of local government units to enact local ordinances to support national laws on human trafficking and online sexual abuse and exploitation of children, highlighting the role of tourism actors in preventing sexual exploitation in their value chain; and
- Mainstream the importance and affirmative action for public-private partnerships within the tourism sector.

[1] Funded by the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children through its Safe Online initiative, ECPAT, INTERPOL, and UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti worked in partnership to design and implement Disrupting Harm—a research project on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA). The study was launched in 2022.

[2] The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. It is a voluntary set of criteria that members commit to to keep children safe.



San Fernando, Pampanga awarded ECPAT Philippines as one of its active partners in ensuring a child-safe tourism

ECPAT demonstrated in one of its areas, Laguna Province, how its active involvement in the provincial Multi-agency Committee on Human Trafficking and Violence Against Women and their Children has resulted in 1) five provincial ordinances tackling anti-human trafficking, 2) ensuring child protection in tourism, 3) institutionalization of local and barangay councils for the protection of children, 4) ensuring protection of children against online sexual exploitation, and 5) overall protection of children from harm and various modes of sexual exploitation.

Through its various engagements in the legislative processes in Congress, ECPAT Philippines's technical inputs in two major national laws were integrated into the development and enactment of Republic Act 11930 (Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) and Anti-Child Abuse or Exploitation Materials (CSAEM) Act) and Republic Act 11862 (Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2022).

Creating a Continuum of Safe and Protective Services for Children At-Risk of and Survivors of Sexual Violence

Central to ECPAT Philippines's work is the provision of protective services to vulnerable children through its community and shelter-based services. In 2022, through its active engagement with donors such as Act CoS, DKA Austria, Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Vision Him Possible, TELUS, and Down to Zero Building Back Better Alliance, ECPAT Philippines's multi-sectoral child-focused services were able to reach 1,750 children most at-risk of sexual exploitation in four main partner communities located in Luzon (Quezon City, Taguig City, and Pampanga) and Visayas (Bohol).

These services were provided to children most at-risk and survivors of sexual exploitation as part of an integrated, holistic, empowering, and participatory program involving awareness-raising activities, capacity development, advocacy, and leadership skills development for young people and stakeholders in their socio-ecological environment.



the girls from ECPAT Home and some children from the communities during psychosocial activity.

At the ECPAT Home, eleven girls who experienced sexual violence are assured a safe space for healing and recovery with the care of a Social Worker and house parents who ensure that they receive specialized services ranging from psychological and medical care, physical nourishment, therapeutic and psychosocial services and activities, formal and non-formal education and training in functional skills. Survivors seeking justice were also supported in the legal process by connecting them with referring parties and legal experts.

Capacity Development of Duty Bearers in Child-Friendly Governance and Duties to Protect Children's Rights

In twenty-two local government communities where ECPAT Philippines worked in 2022, it ensured that it worked with mandated structures and established working committees to support the empowerment of children, parents, and communities, advance its advocacy toward the enactment of protective policies and services for children most at risk and survivors of sexual violence, improve child-friendly services, and uphold mechanisms that address children's rights, particularly their protection from various forms of sexual exploitation. ECPAT Philippines engaged with local bodies such as the Local School Boards, Local Development Councils at all levels, and Local Committees Against Human Trafficking and Violence Against Women and Their Children, among others. ECPAT pushed these structures to localize national laws and pass ordinances ensuring children's right to special protection.

Through these engagements, ECPAT was able to capacitate service providers, policymakers, local officials, and multi-disciplinary teams to have a deeper understanding of their roles and responsibilities in performing their mandates to guarantee children's rights. A total of 6,795 duty bearers comprising parents, teachers, church leaders, CSOs, local government officials and service providers, the private sector, and law enforcement were mobilized to take action against sexual abuse and exploitation of young people.

Parents of at-risk children, including beneficiaries of the government's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps), a social protection program, child survivors of sexual exploitation, and community members became aware not only of their responsibility to be the primary protectors of children but also learned about more child-sensitive approaches to parenting that could reduce the risks of child sexual exploitation in all settings.



Awareness raising activity with 4Ps members in Tubigon West National High School in Bohol



Empowered Youth and Children's Advocates Step Up the Fight Against Child Sexual Exploitation



Grade 7 students from Tubigon West National High school were oriented on UNCRC, OSAEC and Safety Tips

ECPAT Philippines continued to strengthen its core of child and youth advocates, the ECPAT Youth and Child Advocates (EYCA), to participate in and influence policies and programs that progressively address forms of sexual exploitation, specifically in areas of operation in Quezon City, Taguig City, Angeles and San Fernando in Pampanga, Bohol, Siquijor, Boracay, and Laguna.

5,912

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

increased their knowledge of their rights and the risks of sexual exploitation

2,310

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

participated in major national campaigns



Edmond one of EYCA shared his insights on how to strengthen children protection in the fight against OSAEC during Disrupting Harm research launching

557

Children trained on CSEC and how to report cases

154

Children trained in advocacy and campaign skills



Children and youth from the communities in QC joined the National Children's Month Celebration



EYCA - Bohol



EYCA-QC



Due to ECYA's efforts in promoting its advocacies, it has gained credibility and is now recognized as an active organization representing children's voices. They participated in and acted as moderators and reactors in fifteen consultation meetings and training sessions with government agencies and partner organizations, where they discussed crucial national issues besetting Filipino children. The views and ideas of ECYA representatives were heard by local and national leaders, councils for the protection of children, school administrators, local and international CSOs, the private sector, and other youth development organizations. Some of these major events covered the following issues:

- Electoral reforms
- United Nations Environmental Program
- 7th Philippine National Children's Conference
- Rights of Nature
- Consultation Workshop on Child Rights with Children for the Formulation of Philippine Development Plan (2023-2028)
- Launching of PLDT Home and Google's Be Internet Awesome

Photos of other activities conducted by the Children and Youth

eProtectKids

gain momentum

In 2021, ECPAT Philippines launched the eProtectKids Internet hotline—a platform that allows the public to report cases of child sexual exploitation, including harmful material dissemination. It is a child-friendly helpline that offers a secure space for children to seek help when facing risks and exploitation online. Reporting incidents of online exploitation can be intimidating for children and young individuals due to fear, shame, or uncertainty. Through the support of Meta and Techmatters, eProtectKids is able to serve as a child-friendly reporting mechanism where empathetic youth responders can encourage children to report cases without hesitation. It provides a reassuring environment where young individuals can confidently reach out for assistance.

The goal of the helpline is to ensure that no child suffers in silence and that they are aware of the support available to them. By fostering an atmosphere of trust and understanding, the helpline empowers children to let go of their fears and inhibitions and be able to seek help—knowing they will be met with care and protection.

ECPAT's commitment to safeguarding children is further asserted through the integration of this helpline in program development and implementation, thereby reinforcing the fight against online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC).

Due to additional support from Terre des Hommes Netherlands, the helpline began operating as soon as it was launched in November. Three trained youth volunteers from EYCA, with assistance from ECPAT staff, acted as first responders to reports and inquiries from the public. ECPAT integrated the popularization of this system through community education sessions targeting children, youth, and adults in ECPAT-supported areas. A total of 1,446 stakeholders were educated on using eProtect Kids as a reporting mechanism to make protective services more accessible.



Humaira from Techmatters is shown with the ECPAT Philippines' staff and the youth responders during their training session. The collaborative effort aims to empower the team, ensuring they are well-prepared to safeguard children through the eProtectKids helpline



ECPAT Philippines Joins the ICCAM & Content Assessment Training



Participants of the training, content analysts from various countries, gather together for a transformative learning experience. Their shared goal is to enhance their expertise and skills in combating online exploitation, making a positive impact in protecting children worldwide

In an effort to combat online exploitation and protect children from harm, ECPAT Philippines actively participated in a two-day capacity-building program organized by INTERPOL and INHOPE, who also assist in operating the eProtectKids internet hotline. The extensive training aimed to equip participants with essential skills in content assessment and the proficient use of the ICCAM (I see Child Abuse Material) platform.

The program commenced with INTERPOL experts sharing about their organization's mission and operations. Participants gained invaluable insights from the Crimes Against Children team and the pivotal role ICCAM played in their efforts to combat online sexual exploitation. Practical exercises including age assessment techniques and discussions on classifying Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) were also held to enhance participants' skills. Aside from technical training, the well-being of professionals engaged in this critical work was also addressed through the distribution of a staff welfare module.

The event expedited collaborative group discussions among INTERPOL, law enforcement agencies, hotlines, and other partners. In the process, regional challenges were tackled collectively, leading to enhanced cooperation in the fight against online sexual exploitation.



On the second day of the program, INHOPE took the lead in the discussions and presented an overview of their contributions to creating safer spaces online. Participants received a recap of CORE training, emphasizing the significance of efficient content tracing. The practical application of ICCAM in a controlled training environment was the highlight—enabling attendees to harness their capabilities in effectively countering digital offenders.

The gathering served as an avenue for hotline operators in Asia to share best practices, identify areas for improvement, and explore outlets for mutual support. The partnership between INHOPE and ECPAT Philippines was evident in their collaborative efforts to strengthen the fight against OSAEC.

Overall, the capacity-building initiative left participants equipped with vital skills and knowledge—fostering a stronger collective force against online exploitation. By nurturing collaborations between INTERPOL, INHOPE, law enforcement agencies, hotlines, and partners like ECPAT Philippines, the fight against OSAEC will continue to advance toward a safer digital landscape for children worldwide. Together, these dedicated entities stand united in their unwavering commitment to protecting the most vulnerable members of our society.



During the regional meeting, INHOPE takes the lead, highlighting their role in creating safer online spaces. Participants learn about content tracing and practical use of ICCAM to counter digital offenders effectively



UNICEF Integrates Child Protection Messaging in its CASHPLUS Response to Typhoon Odette in Bohol

Super Typhoon Rai (“Odette” in the Philippines) was the fifteenth and strongest typhoon to hit the Philippines in 2021, with Bohol being one of the most devastated provinces. The combination of COVID-19 and living in disaster-prone areas such as Bohol has both reinforced the aggravation of children’s already deteriorating health and well-being. As a response, UNICEF and DSWD-7 provided cash assistance to 7,000 vulnerable families in eight hard-hit areas of Bohol through the Humanitarian Cash Transfer (HCT) Plus program from April to December 2022.



Julita, 18 is thankful to have been able to afford nutritious food, medicine, and vitamins for her baby who got sick after Typhoon Odette


Aside from financial support, ECPAT Philippines was invited to share messages on child protection and provide mental health and psychosocial support. EYCA volunteers also raised awareness of families’ responsibilities in addressing children’s right to special protection under critical circumstances such as typhoons and other natural disasters. 9,584 (7,299 adults and 2,285 children) benefited from ECPAT Philippines’ efforts.



Alberto, 44 a father of 5 - his family is one of the beneficiaries of CASH Plus response.



EYCA volunteer Ferdie, advocating for families’ roles in safeguarding children’s rights during emergencies like typhoons and natural disasters.



"I dream for them to finish their studies and find a good profession in the future," wished grandma Virginia

Through the humanitarian cash assistance, Virginia was able to put up a small sari-sari store by her house in San Isidro. The cash aid also helped her buy her grandchildren nutritious food and school supplies.

ECPAT Selected to Work with the UN Joint Program on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Philippines

On 1 August 2021, the United Nations Joint Program (UNJP) the United Nations Joint Program was initiated between the United Nations and the Philippine government to promote human rights and address critical human rights issues in the Philippines. The program aims to work in six areas outlined by the Human Rights Council and was developed in cooperation with the government, the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP), and civil society actors.

In 2022, ECPAT Philippines was selected to be a member of the Technical Working Group (TWG) on National Mechanism on Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF) to monitor the Philippines' implementation of recommendations from the UN human rights treaty bodies.

ECPAT's involvement in the TWG will allow more opportunities to collaborate with the government and other civil society actors on the protection of human rights and the promotion of international conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The NMRF TWG developed a work plan to ensure its effective and efficient operations, which will enable cooperating organizations to:

- Provide regular technical advice, monitor progress, and report to key stakeholders;
- Seek advice from and engage with experts, including civil society actors, academia, government experts, international experts, and others;
- Analyze emerging human rights risks or concerns as well as opportunities; and
- Identify actions to address bottlenecks, emerging risks/concerns, and opportunities in enforcing our treaty obligations.



Ms. Ana Maria Dionela, shown here with United Nations and Government Officers, represented ECPAT Philippines at the Strategic Planning Workshop for the UN Joint Program on Human Rights

Meet Our Partners





ENDING THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN