

More Precious than Diamonds

OUR FIGHT AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING
AND CYBERSEX CRIME IN THE PHILIPPINES



CAPTIVATING

JULY TO DECEMBER 2022

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JULY TO DECEMBER 2022

Impact

STOP CYBERSEX CRIME

- » **18,269 people** reached through distribution of infographic materials in schools, community education, and online campaigns and activities
- » **Over 600 community advocates composed of teachers, community leaders, and representatives of organizations** were trained to be more vigilant and equipped in reporting cases of abuse as well as taking steps to prevent OSAEC.

ERADICATING POVERTY THROUGH MICROFINANCE

- » **25 women** successfully repaid their loans and are now considered poverty-free
- » **63 new women** added in the past six months
- » **1,996 women** with loans
- » **81 active loan groups**

MANILA SLUM PROJECT

- » **70 out-of-school children** being stabilized back into school

THE BLESSED HOUSE

- » **6 survivors** of Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) were successfully reintegrated
- » **Four women and their 3 children** are currently supported at The Blessed House
- » **All four women** are employed in the sewing enterprise
- » **Two women with two dependents** are completing family therapy to ensure their families are ready to care for them

Journey TOWARDS HOME

There's nothing like a home coming after a long journey. And recently for three OSAEC (online sexual abuse and exploitation of children) survivors, being welcomed home by their aunt and uncle was such a joyful, long-awaited reunion. After supporting these girls through their court cases against their perpetrators and providing therapeutic support, our team on the ground coordinated with local community leaders to ensure the girls' ongoing safety would be monitored.

We at Captivating are passionate about prevention of other children being exploited in a nation where cyber crime is rampant. Local teams have been hands on in running awareness campaigns in schools, community groups and training ambassadors touching thousands.

Captivating has also recently launched with our local partners the **Manila Slum Project** which will see impoverished children who beg on the streets supported to attend school. We have a vision to see children educated and to break the cycle of homelessness and hopelessness.

Thanks for being a part of this next exciting chapter in our Captivating story.

Blessings,



Kate Brown
Captivating | Program Manager - Philippines



KEY SPONSORS

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STOP CYBERSEX CRIME AND TRAFFICKING *through Education*

With the reopening of schools and resumption of face-to-face classes in the Philippines, our team is back on track conducting online safety awareness campaigns in person. We are able to engage with **23 schools** in Metro Manila, and the Luzon and Visayas regions. Combining on-the-ground efforts and virtual campaigns, we have reached **over 18,000 Filipino children, parents, teachers, school officials, and community leaders.**

To ensure that we are reaching the poorest-of-the-poor and at-risk communities, we have partnered with other organizations who share the same advocacy of fighting online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC). Through online efforts, government and law enforcement bodies such as the National Bureau of Investigation Anti-Human Trafficking Division and branches of the Philippine National Police Women's Desk Department have also discovered and connected with us. This helps in effectively expanding the reach of the team.





Our social worker, Jhemma, talks about OSAEC



Parents participating in one of our OSAEC awareness campaigns



Ma'am Emelie sharing our OSAEC information and activity booklet with her former colleagues

Advocacy Grows

IN CENTRAL LUZON

Region 3 or Central Luzon is where the provinces of Pampanga and Zambales – two known hotspots for human trafficking – are located. In a gathering of local community leaders in the said region, our social worker was invited to give a talk on the issue of human trafficking and online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC) in the Philippines.

The event was aimed at strengthening the local leaders' response against abuse of women and children. More than 200 community leaders including policemen committed to work together in protecting women and children in the Philippines.

Aside from local law enforcers, we are continuously reaching schools in the region as well through passionate advocates. Ma'am Emelie, a retired teacher, previously attended one of our online awareness campaign trainings. Since then, she has been using her own resources and time distributing our OSAEC information and activity booklet to schools. With a strong belief in our advocacy to protect children from being exploited, she has helped train and reach more than 100 teachers and 2,000 students.

This is one inspiring example of a rippling effect of our advocacy. We hope to build up and empower more advocates that will help promote awareness and fight human trafficking with us.

Empowered to Act

Despite the lockdown restrictions imposed due to the pandemic, our on-the-ground team in the Philippines continued to partner with schools and community leaders to distribute OSAEC information booklets to poor and at-risk areas and conduct online awareness campaign trainings.



Our team with leaders and children from the community

In a recent meeting with community leaders, they shared how the booklets have been helpful and how it empowered community members to report cases of abuse. In September, they received two reports and were able to assist the victims to safety.

In another instance, one of our partner schools called our team to report a case of one of their grade 6 students. The student, who hasn't been attending school for a couple of days, sent her teacher a message saying that she was being abused at home. Applying what they've learned from previous trainings, the teachers took a screenshot of all evidences and reported it immediately to the police.

Our team coordinated with a partner shelter in Metro Manila so they can be ready to give immediate care to the child once rescued.

OSAEC as a family-based crime poses many difficulties – from report and rescue, to rehabilitation and reintegration. As such, cooperation and awareness among members of the community are important not only in preventing but also in responding when the need arises.



Protecting THE MOST VULNERABLE

Many families from slum areas in Metro Manila get relocated to far-flung provinces in the Philippines. Although they are given housing privileges in these relocation sites, the lack of employment or source of income pushes many of them to go back to Manila, where they beg on streets and live again in the slums. This makes many children vulnerable to online sexual abuse.

Our team visited two relocation sites and engaged with 300 children, majority of whom haven't heard of the serious issue of OSAEC. During one of the visits, one boy kept asking questions, "Why are they doing this to kids? Why are there people who would do this?" Young as he is, he could not believe how this is possible and why there would be people who would do this even to their own children.

Our team carefully explained why they shouldn't allow themselves to be exploited and the steps they can take to protect themselves. We encouraged them to be vigilant and taught the older children how they can protect their younger siblings and other younger children in their community.

The growing problem of OSAEC in the country is a sad reality Filipino children are exposed to, and should be protected from.





ERADICATING POVERTY THROUGH

Microfinance

Typhoon season in the Philippines usually starts in the second half of the year. From August to September, the northern part of the country was hit by two strong typhoons with storm signals reaching the highest possible. As majority of our microfinance clients are still recovering from the lockdowns, our microfinance staff made extra efforts to visit the clients and ensure that they are safe and doing well.

The microfinance program aims to directly address the problem of extreme poverty, decreasing the attraction to high-risk practices of migration to find work – where women and children are forced to enter the sex trade and/or be exposed to cybersex crime.

With the difficulties brought about by the pandemic and inclement weather, we are still grateful that we are able to make it through and even expand. Together with our on-the-ground partner, we continue to assist entrepreneur moms to improve their way of life. By providing loans and instilling the importance of savings, we want these mothers to manage their income and expenses effectively. Consequently, this will help them make better decisions towards sustainability.

Saving FOR HER FAMILY'S Future

Rosalie is a member of the newest microfinance group in their community. She and her husband take care of several chickens in their backyard. With her first loan, they invested in a better type of chicken feed that will improve their poultry's health and egg production. This will give them higher income as they will have more eggs to sell and a chance to raise more chickens.

Rosalie shares that having savings is very important as they are a big family with six children. Their eldest is still in senior high school while the youngest is still at nursery level. As their children grow, they know that their expenses will also continue to grow, more especially since face-to-face classes are starting to resume. She is grateful to be part of the Microfinance Program as she seeks to increase their income and save more for her family's future.



Strengthening

BUSINESSES & FAMILIES

Here is Racquel with her youngest daughter who is only two years old. Racquel joined our Microfinance Program this year. She sells her homemade peanut butter and atchara (fermented papaya) in her community. With her husband's construction work requiring him to be away from home, it is important for Racquel to be present at home for their two young kids. Her eldest is just in elementary school. She is blessed that her business allows her to do just this.

With the increase in orders for her homemade goods, she is grateful to have found a microfinance program that gave her the capital she needed. Her homemade goods are gaining reputation as she's receiving more orders from new customers and bigger orders from her loyal ones. We are excited to see how Racquel's business will grow from here.

With the rise of online threats against children in the Philippines, it is important that parents are present with their young children. With businesses like Racquel's that allow her to spend most of her time at home, we are also helping her strengthen her bond with her children and protect her family from such threats.



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT FOR *Small Businesses*

Julie Ann joined the Microfinance Program in September and has been appointed secretary of her women's group.

Julie Ann sells street food on the sidewalk near a basketball court, a good spot for her business with high foot traffic. With the help of microfinance, she was able to purchase the cooking equipment and supplies she needed for her business. She is now looking forward to using her second cycle of loan to upgrade her equipment and add more items to her menu.

This business has allowed Julie Ann to help her husband provide for their family of four. She manages to attend to her business while also taking care of their two young kids.

We encourage mothers like Julie Ann to improve their business so they can better provide for their families. This is very helpful especially with the huge increase in commodity prices in the Philippines due to inflation.

Commitment TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES

In the years our Microfinance Program has operated, we have encountered clients who become delinquent – delaying in their payments – or simply drift away. Despite this, we want to continue serving those who stay committed. One of them is Erna, a loyal member of her microfinance group.

Erna is now eligible to receive the highest loan amount of PHP 30,000 [553 USD], and has saved up more than PHP 12,000 [221 USD] with no past due. Even during times when she has to visit relatives in other provinces, she makes sure to send her weekly payments. Through her rice retailing store, she was able to help her children finish their studies. The tricycle she stands by is also one of the fruits of her labor, with the help of microfinance.

Our team continues to reach out to our women clients, even difficult ones, to help them finish their commitments. We greatly appreciate our staff who have patiently and tirelessly followed up in meetings with their groups. Our Microfinance Program is still here today because of committed clients, passionate staff, and generous partners all working together for the community.





A Model Community

In the province of Bataan, where our Microfinance Program mainly operates, we started another women's group in Barangay* Roosevelt. This is now the sixth group that we have opened in this area alone.

We are grateful for this community and how they have been committed to fulfilling their obligations and following the program's policies. We want to recognize communities that are performing well by prioritizing them in our growth journey. We value not only their financial commitment but also their moral standing. The women's groups serve as avenues to strengthen the community and foster harmonious relationships among mothers. We believe that these women can be agents of change in their communities.

**barangay is the smallest administrative unit of the local government*

Self-Sustainability FOR OUR PARTNER

Our on-the-ground partner in the Philippines, Honor 1000 Movement, aims to generate their own income to decrease ongoing reliance on Captivating. This will be achieved through three income streams: (1) Microfinance profits, (2) Sewing Social Enterprise, and (3) in-country fundraising.

We are glad to share with you that over the past six months, we have seen a steady growth in microfinance collections. More clients are also coming in although the impact of these new clients on the income is not yet significant as they are still on their first loan cycle. The team has also agreed to reduce operating costs as we gear up to add new clients and groups in 2023.

The Blessed Sewing Social Enterprise has been progressing steadily – keeping existing partnerships and building new ones both local and abroad. From July to December 2022, the sewing enterprise earned a total of 3,714 AUD.

Goal: By 2024, Honor is able to fund 45% of its total operating budget.

- July 2021 to June 2022: 25% of total operating budget **(ACHIEVED)**
- July 2022 to June 2023: 35% of total operating budget **(ON-TRACK)**
- July 2023 to June 2024: 45% of total operating budget

One of the women at The Blessed House sewing orders for a huge mall chain



A DISPLAY OF

Life & Dignity

REGAINED

A huge mall chain has been ordering sewn products from The Blessed Sewing Social Enterprise. We are proud to see the works of the women from The Blessed House on display and available in one of the major branches of the said mall chain!

Employment skills are an integral part of our support to human trafficking survivors. This ensures that they are able to provide for themselves and rebuild a life of dignity.

We are also proud to share that seeing the quality work of the women and the rest of the sewing team, the sewing enterprise continues to receive orders from the mall chain. This means more of the women's work will be available all over the Philippines and that we are widening the reach of our advocacy to promote a life of dignity for young women in the country.



GROWING BUSINESS & Advocacy

Over the past six months, The Blessed Sewing Social Enterprise has continued strengthening its network of partners both local and abroad, allowing it to earn a steady income and employ women from The Blessed House.

An independent Korean surfing and swimwear brand has recently partnered with the sewing enterprise. Hyun Joo Suh, the founder of the brand, stumbled upon our advocacy years ago and is very eager to partner with us.

During her recent visit to the Philippines, she met with our team and had a meaningful time discussing our advocacy and the social enterprise. She placed her tote bag orders, and after finalizing the samples, the first batch was shipped right away.

We are grateful for individuals and companies who are committed to supporting our program while spreading awareness and helping stop human trafficking.



A local company providing sewing services to different clothing brands in the Philippines first engaged with our team while seeking for services to make cargo pants for a well-known department store. After successfully delivering the pants orders, more orders for blouses and loungewear dresses were placed.

A local clothing company is also ordering from The Blessed Sewing Social Enterprise. And just this past quarter, a startup business owner also tapped the team to make shorts and dresses for his clothing brand. These products will be shipped and sold in the United States. The team made patterns and samples that were approved immediately. For the first batch of orders, a total of 155 products were sewn.

These new partnerships, along with the existing ones, have been steady income streams for the sewing enterprise, allowing it to continue giving employment to survivors of human trafficking.



Mothers and aspiring members of the Microfinance Program attending the Compulsory Group Training



Our staff from the Microfinance Program

Gearing Up **FOR A STRONGER MICROFINANCE PROGRAM**

To help reduce operations costs, our team has decided to transfer the Microfinance Office to the old Blessed House aftercare facility. This allows the team to refocus resources on increasing clients and microfinance groups.

In line with this, the Microfinance team conducted Compulsory Group Training (CGT) for aspiring members. In August, the team conducted training to 10 new women clients. These women have passed the credit investigation process and attended the group meetings to ensure their capacity to repay loans and their commitment to weekly gatherings of their microfinance groups. After completing the training and the necessary requirements, the women received their first loan which they can now use to start or grow their own business.

We are grateful that after two years of strict lockdown and pandemic restrictions, small businesses are getting back up. We are excited to meet more moms who are eager to start their journey to becoming poverty-free. Likewise, the microfinance staff are motivated to work and achieve our sustainability goals.



The new Microfinance office at the old Blessed House

MANILA

Slum Project

We are pleased to introduce our newest project in the Philippines – the **Manila Slum Project**. We aim to see **education secured for 200 out-of-school children** in Manila slum communities, who are at significant risk of abuse, human trafficking, and cybersex crime. This includes 30 students showing high potential not only in school, but in starting a change in their community.

As of writing, our on-the-ground team has started meeting with local leaders, preparing the necessary documents, and conducting a survey with 100 families to identify our first batch of beneficiaries.

From these 100 families, we have identified **70 families** who are really in need of our assistance. In choosing these 70 beneficiaries, we considered:

- Households earning less than PHP 100 [1.82 USD] per day
- Households or children often seen selling or begging in the streets
- Children who are in elementary level
- Households with single parents



COMMUNITY'S PRESSING NEEDS

Yheng is the community leader who has been assisting our team on the ground. She has lived in the community for 42 years and is currently working as a community health worker. She accompanies our team to parts of the slum area that are not often reached by other groups for help.

During one of our visits, she shared that two of the most pressing needs of the people in the community are access to education and employment opportunities. Most parents earn their income doing laundry work, driving public transportation, or working as a parking attendant. Due to financial difficulties brought about by lack of employment or a stable source of income, many families are unable to send their children to school.

Yheng expressed her gratitude and appreciation for the time and effort we exert to really talk to families and visit their homes to know more about them and their needs.

Yheng (left of photo in blue), accompanying one of our staff during an interview



Yheng (middle) with our PH team



Reintegrated OSAEC survivors meet with our social worker for continued monitoring and support

THE Blessed House

Schools have reopened in the Philippines during the second half of the year. Thus, our field partner in the Philippines made sure that all the women at The Blessed House are enrolled and equipped with school supplies and uniform to prepare them for school.

Education is just one of the many services we provide at The Blessed House to victims and survivors of trafficking and online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (OSAEC). We believe that education plays a key role in ensuring that survivors are not revictimized and in helping them regain their confidence as they build new friendships and equip themselves with knowledge and skills they can use to grow as productive individuals.

In line with this, we are happy to share that all 15 women and dependents who were reintegrated in 2022 are continuing with their education and employment. This includes six OSAEC survivors referred to us during the pandemic. It was a long journey but we are happy that they are now cared for by their relatives. We will continue to assist them in their legal cases and extend support to the relatives.

All names in the stories that follow were changed for privacy and protection.

Education

A PATH TO SUCCESS

Two recently reintegrated women survivors finished their senior high school education. Another woman, reintegrated almost two years ago, passed her board exam and is now on her way to being a full-fledged policewoman.

This is a crucial measure of success for us: that whatever they've started inside our restoration shelter, they are able to continue on by themselves and succeed even more in their chosen fields.



Double Celebration

We celebrated Karen's (name changed for privacy) 7th birthday. Everyone at The Blessed House contributed to make the simple yet wonderful celebration happen – the older women made Karen's dress while the others cooked delicious food.

Karen, together with her younger brother and her mom who is deaf and mute, was rescued from online sexual exploitation when she was only five years old. The whole family stayed at The Blessed House where they received care, legal assistance, and support while seeking for a family to care for them.

Just a few days after Karen's birthday, our team drove them to another province, transitioned them to their new family and enrolled Karen in her new school.

Looking for an alternative care for an OSAEC survivor alone is challenging, so to be able to find a family who will take care of a whole family of survivors is indeed a victory.



CONTINUOUSLY MOVING FORWARD

In our January to June 2022 update, we shared the story of siblings and OSAEC survivors Rachel, Kat, and May, and their legal case against their mom, the perpetrator of abuse.

After the court decision and guilty verdict on their mom in June 2022, our team immediately worked on the final procedures for the girls' reintegration. We made sure to coordinate with local leaders so they can assist us in monitoring the safety and continued development of these young women.

Since being reunited with their aunt and uncle, it has been an adjustment period for the whole family. To assist them during this time, our team has been in constant communication with the girls and their aunt to provide emotional support.

We've also connected their aunt to the Department of Social Welfare and Development in the Philippines to inquire regarding financial assistance the government provides foster families.

This kind of support for reintegrated women and their families has been very crucial in ensuring that the women won't be revictimized and that they will continue on with their education and/or employment.



YOU CAN BE INVOLVED *Today*

Contact info@captivating.org

Donate to this project through our website www.captivating.org and receive tax deductible receipts for Australia, US, NZ, or Hong Kong donations.

Speak up and spread the word about these projects to your family, friends, and business networks.

If you have any query regarding this report, please contact ashley@captivating.org



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