Online Risks
Filipino Children Face Today

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Artwork by Stairway Kids

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Foreword and acknowledgements:

Sexual abuse and exploitation of children has always been a problem. However, along with the rise of technology and advancements in communication new forms of sexual abuse and exploitation have evolved, and ease of accessibility has increased the risks and dangers to children. Children need to be protected from harm of sexual abuse and exploitation, which requires information and education on risks, along with raised awareness on protective behavior, in our physical world as well as online.

As a child protection organization, Stairway has been working on the issue of child sexual abuse for more than 15 years. Having developed creative and effective tools and methodologies for child sexual abuse prevention education, the organization has strived to make the issue an agenda of multiple stakeholders. However, it was only after participating in a regional conference facilitated by the Center for Exploitation and Online Prevention (CEOP) back in 2007 that our organization recognized that there was a whole new and extremely fast growing trend in the use of the internet and technology in perpetration of child sexual abuse.
The scope and the gravity of this technology related threat to children's safety came to us as a revelation, and we responded by immediately launching the creation of a localized online safety program to complement our existing child sexual abuse prevention program.

The study we present to you here is based on years of work on the issue of online child sexual abuse. Even though it does not present itself as a very formal research, we hope that it will make a useful contribution to the limited amount of data and literature to be found on this subject in the Philippines. Most significantly, we hope it will help create a renewed sense of urgency for any relevant stakeholder to prioritize enhanced prevention efforts to protect children against technology related crimes.

We would like to thank our partners in the Break the Silence network for making this research possible through administering the survey with children respondents from different parts of the Philippines. Your participation and continued partnership is much appreciated.

Lars C. Jorgensen
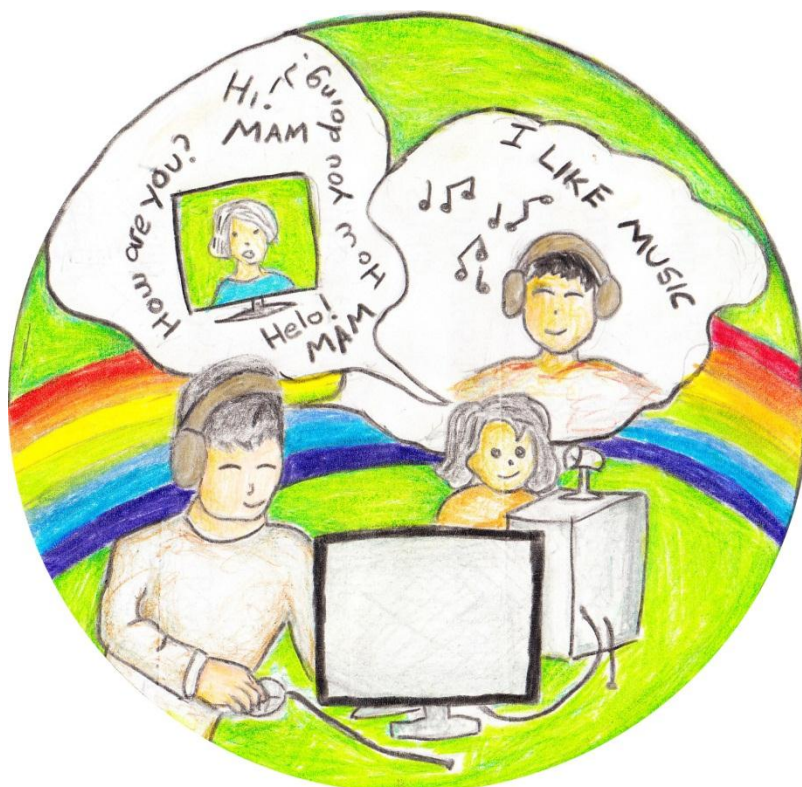Executive Director
Stairway Foundation, Inc.

Methodology and sources

The information contained in this study is culled from several exploratory studies that Stairway has conducted over the past 6 years;

- A 2007 Online research documenting online risks to children vis-à-vis the issue of child sexual abuse.
- A 2009 research on online risk and risk taking behaviors of children targeting 755 grade 5 and 6 students in a semi-rural municipality in Cavite.
- An updated 2012 research on online risk and risk taking behaviors of children targeting 3,500 children aged 10-12 years old in different regions in the Philippines.

Another significant source of information was culled from our own anecdotal experiences with regards to how children view and use the internet via the online safety sessions that Stairway has conducted, which has reached thousands of children and stakeholders.

Aside from the information coming from Stairway, other sources include online information as cited.

The Nature of the Internet vis-à-vis child protection

There are many ways in which a child can be sexually abused and exploited: in person (e.g. through prostitution), through images (e.g. pornographic photos and videos), and through internet and communications technology (e.g. the internet, 3G cell phone technology, Bluetooth, etc.).

The internet has increased the risk of sexual abuse and exploitation of children due to two of its features: *accessibility and anonymity*.

Accessibility

In terms of accessibility, the rise of the internet has meant that access to information has reached unprecedented levels. Considered as a double edged sword, the internet is popularly considered the leading source of information, both positive and negative. The early Internet was used by computer experts, engineers, scientists, and librarians.[1] But today, even children as young as 4 or 5 years old have the capacity to access information all over the internet as technology becomes more affordable and more accessible. There are specific instances wherein children can be exposed to pornography, and to different degrees, be directly sexually abused over the internet. Access to violent pornography and the more mainstream pornography websites can be encountered by children through a simple search done through any of the popular search engines (Google, Yahoo, etc.) A search query for the word "sex" in Google churns out about **206,000,000** search results with moderate filtering on. All of the websites displayed in the first page of the search results are from pornographic websites. Although offering age based "safeguards" for access, these safeguards are utterly useless, as a 10 year old can easily click on the "I am 18 years old or older" button, pass the validation process and be exposed to all sorts of pornography the web has to offer.

Another factor impacting accessibility is the access of children to the internet in a developing country like the Philippines, where swarms of children inside internet cafés is the norm. In a study conducted by Stairway Foundation in 2009 amongst 755 school children in the Philippines aged 10-11 years old , it was found out that *70% of the respondents access the net on a regular basis, and 66% of them accessed the internet though internet cafés unsupervised.* [2]

In an updated 2012 survey, we found out that 89% of 10-17 year olds accessed the internet, with 43% accessing from Internet Cafes, and 27% at home.[3]

Mobile internet is also an emerging trend in the Philippines as prices of Wi-Fi capable phones are going down, and free Wi-Fi hotspots are becoming more and more common today. Major malls, coffee shops, schools and other establishments offer Wi-Fi as a free value added service. Quiapo church in Manila offers an unsecured password free Wi-Fi access as of this writing. Statistics place the *Philippines ranking 10th among all countries using mobile internet, according to admob.*[4]

Our online safety sessions for children also reveal that it is not uncommon nowadays specially for urban high school students to carry a wifi enabled phone.

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[1] *http://www.walthowe.com/navnet/history.html*
[2] *Gauging Internet Usage Risk among Children. Stairway Foundation, 2009 unpublished*
[3] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*
[4] *http://tonyocruz.com/?p=2866*

Our 2012 survey showed that 41% of our respondents have tried accessing the internet thru their mobile phones. [5]

Anonymity

In terms of anonymity, the perceived impersonal nature of the internet causes children to take risks they would not ordinarily take in face to face interpersonal encounters, not realizing that the risk of abuse remains. During our online safety sessions for children, we ask why they generally don't see the dangers of putting up information over the net. Most of them say that they don't see the danger since "it is only a computer screen you're looking at". The anonymous nature of the internet also dictates that some children don't necessarily see that the values they uphold in the offline world should still hold true in the online world.

Online child sex offenders also use the anonymity of the internet in order to have access to children. Some of them, as we encountered in the chat component of our research, would take on vague identities that would make detection very hard, while others would use their real identities, complete with identifying photos and profiles [6]. One can only speculate that such boldness would stem from a sentiment that there is a low probability that they would be apprehended or anyone would pursue them, despite the fact that they can be identified.

Online Child Protection Risks

Sexual abuse through Pornography
Pornography takes many forms, including soft porn, moderate porn, violent pornography, child pornography (child sexual abuse images), and other categories and sub-genres. There are too many deviations even to mention.

These different forms of pornography are readily accessible with today's level of access to information via the internet, and one important facet we have to understand is that the internet does not discriminate whether the person looking at the images is an adult or a child.

Exposure to pornography
Based on the information we got from children during our online safety sessions, exposure to online pornography has taken the place of traditional media pornography (print, optical media) for first time exposure.

In a 2009 survey of Grade 5-6 students, we asked them if they saw pictures of naked people online. 77% of the respondents said they haven't seen any yet, while 23% said they have seen naked photos of people online. [7]

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[5] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*
[6] *2007 Stairway Foundation Research on Online Child Sexual Abuse unpublished*
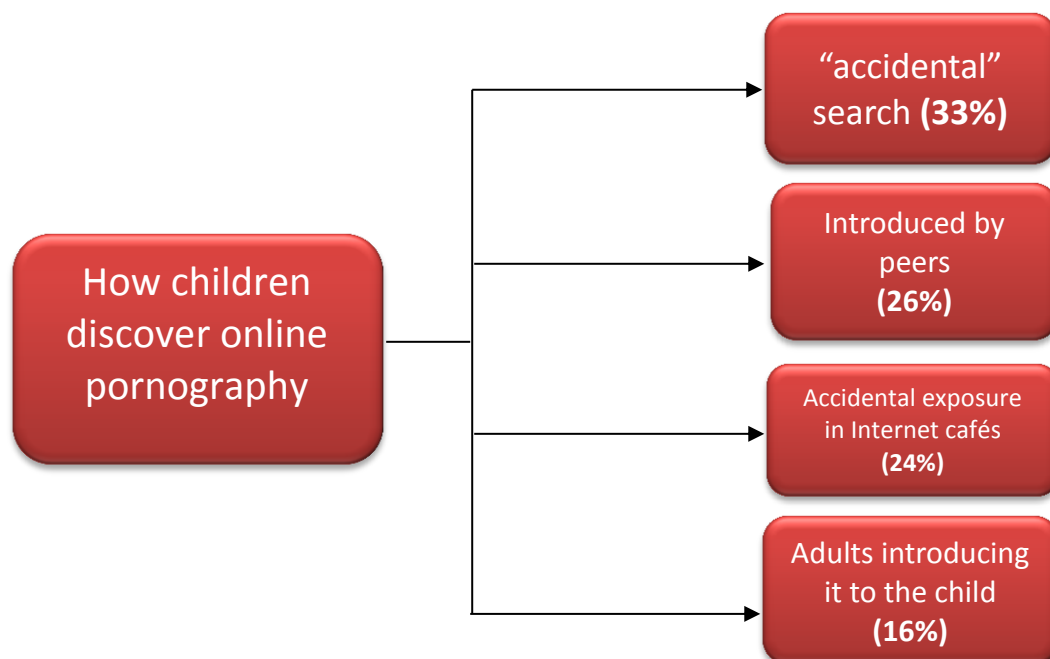[7] *Gauging Internet Usage Risk among Children. Stairway Foundation, 2009 unpublished*

Our 2012 survey shows that 49% *of those in the 10-12 years old age range have seen online pornography, while* 72% in *the 13-17 years old age range have seen online pornography.*[8]

The numbers are quite concerning considering that these children are at an age, wherein they are naturally curious about sexuality issues, and the "information" they get from online pornography is more than likely to develop a lens of objectification of women.

Another discovery from the same survey is <u>how</u> they discovered or were introduced to online pornography.

Online exposure is usually facilitated in 4 manners;

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                                              ┌─────────────────────┐
                                              │     "accidental"    │
                                              │   search (33%)      │
                                              └─────────────────────┘
                                              ┌─────────────────────┐
                                              │   Introduced by     │
┌─────────────────────┐                       │      peers          │
│   How children      │                       │      (26%)          │
│   discover online   │───────────────────────└─────────────────────┘
│    pornography      │                       ┌─────────────────────┐
└─────────────────────┘                       │ Accidental exposure │
                                              │  in Internet cafés  │
                                              │       (24%)         │
                                              └─────────────────────┘
                                              ┌─────────────────────┐
                                              │ Adults introducing  │
                                              │  it to the child    │
                                              │       (16%)         │
                                              └─────────────────────┘
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Accidental searches happen when children browse the web, or do research, and a search query brings them search results pointing to adult pornography websites.If the computer being used by the child has moderate to no filtering, the risks of accidental exposure increases.

Exposure is likely to happen in an internet café environment wherein adult costumers are allowed to access pornography websites, even in the presence of children within the establishment. Children see the pornography websites that these adults access, and they themselves, because of curiosity, would also access them. Another factor why children have exposure in Internet cafés is when the operators of these establishments do not periodically clean the browsing history of

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[8] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*

their web browsers. A child who would type in a web address, depending on the level of access to pornography websites by previous costumers, would be recommended websites that might include those which are pornographic in nature.

Peer introduction is one of the most common ways by which children are introduced to pornography. Usually, a classmate or a friend would give a website link or would enjoin the other child to watch porn online with him/her. The peer introduction to pornography is nothing new only the medium has changed.

The most disturbing method involves adults introducing online pornography to children. Some men view the introduction of pornography (whether they be online or not) to be a form of passage to "manhood" for boys. Others would use pornography as a strategy to desensitize and sexualize the child (grooming) with the purpose of doing contact child sexual abuse.

Another factor is the lack of monitoring children's online activities, while they are in an internet café.. 43% of those aged 10-12 said they were not being monitored while 51% of those aged 13-17 said they were not being monitored.[9]

The Top 3 online pornography mediums seen by children are Pictures (33%), Videos (26) and animation (19%).

During our Online Safety sessions, we have encountered children as young as 7 and 8 years old, who are very much familiar with pornographic websites and volunteer website urls when asked. An extreme case of exposure was during an online safety session in Caloocan in partnership with the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), when one high school student said that their exposure to pornography was when they accessed the Brgy computer, which was offered free for students, and the home page was set to a pornographic website.

Today's on-line pornography inundates children's minds with graphic messages about their bodies, their own sexuality, and those of adults and children around them. [10] The more extreme sites, which are still easily accessible, portray rapes and dehumanize women, potentially leaving the child viewer with a very distorted perception of any form of sexual intimacy.

Children being victimized by being part of the materials themselves (Child sexual abuse materials)

One study shows that are as many as four million websites worldwide showing images of children being sexually abused and exploited[11]. Child pornography causes many types of harm to children, both directly to the children depicted and indirectly to the children viewing it. Child Porn also poses a serious threat to children going online, as images depicted in these websites may show children abused seemingly in

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[9] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*
[10] *Dr. Garry Brooks, The Centerfold Syndrome, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1995*
[11] *http://www.tgdaily.com/content/view/44008/118/*

a non-violent way (i.e. showing children, or actors depicting children as enjoying the sexual abuse), thus, affecting children's perception of what constitutes abuse. As medium changes (from print, to video to the internet), the basic message of pornography to children as stated above doesn't change. A more disturbing aspect is a link relating children who view pornography also have the tendency to view having sex with people doesn't necessarily dictate that they feel affection towards the other person These views are amplified when the pornography viewed is more realistic.[12]

In our 2012 survey, 42% *said that they have seen children in online pornography while 28% were asked to strip (be naked) online.[13]* This points us to the fact that child pornography is indeed accessible online, even by children, and that offenders are grooming children to engage in risk taking behaviors that might lead to the production of child pornography.

The existence of astronomical numbers of child pornography sites points to the fact that there is huge demand for such materials. The higher the demand, the more perpetrators will go to extremes in order to involve children in this trade. It is indeed a vicious cycle.

Some might argue that children are resilient enough in the sense that not all children, who are exposed to pornography, exhibit any of the effects mentioned above. However, we must take into consideration that the effects mentioned are documented risks. Thus, the more we can minimize these risks the better off are our children.

Side-note: Pornography offline

The availability of pornography, including child pornography, is however, not limited to the internet. A rather large source also stems from pirated videos available in the streets. A quick walk amongst the streets of Metro Manila or any other local market will yield an area of concentration wherein one can buy the latest movies, including pornographic materials ranging from soft porn, to hard core porn or even pornographic animations. An informal research done by Stairway Foundation revealed that child pornography is also available amongst these pirated movie hawkers, sometimes offering it freely, but more often in a more discreet manner. Those that are advertised as child pornography usually contain videos that are also viewable/downloadable over the net.[14] Typically, you would have producers of child pornography that would come to the Philippines and recruit children in order to shoot and produce child pornography. However, an emerging trend is the incidence of children "producing" or making the materials themselves thru online risk taking behaviors, which include, but is not limited to;

- Posting photos and videos online of themselves nude or having sex

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[12] *Journal of Communication (Vol. 56 No.4 pp 639-660)*
[13] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*
[14] *Stairway Foundation Research on the availability of child pornography DVDs in selected areas in Manila unpublished*

- Doing webcam shows
- Sexting (sending out nude photos or videos of themselves to other people)
- Based on our 2012 survey, 7% of our respondents said that they practiced sexting.[15]

Amongst the materials gathered in the Stairway research on availability of child pornography in the streets include the following samples:

Child Abuse Collection Vol. 3.:
There were 10 films in one DVD. The front and back cover featured preteen girls around 10-12 years old, naked and in graphic poses. The titles of the films, as indicated on the cover, are:
- *Two Fresh Young*
- *I Love Tia Erotica*
- *Face First*
- *Fresh Out School*
- *I Hate You*
- *Black in Asian*
- *Unleashed*
- *Erotica*
- *Eat my Dust*
- *Mercedez Take Control*

Live Shot
- *The cover did not indicate how many films were in the DVD.*
- *The front and back cover featured pictures of preteen girls around 10-12 years old, naked and in graphic poses.*

Calumpit Scandal/Binibining San Jose
- *The cover did not indicate how many films were in the DVD.*
- *The front and back cover featured pictures of teenage girls (~15-17 years old), naked and in graphic poses.*

Pinay Qatar Scandal
- *There were 24 films in one DVD.*
- *The front and back cover featured teenage girls naked in graphic poses (both Asians and Caucasians).*

Maricar Lopez Sex Video
- *There were 24 films in one DVD.*
- *The front cover picture featured a teenage girl around 12-14 years old, in a sexy pose. The back cover had pictures of teenagers or young adults naked and in graphic poses (all Asians).*

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[15] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*

Innocent Hs-Abuse

- *There were 3 films in one DVD.*
- *The CD cover featured pictures of preteen Caucasian children aged 8-10 years old in sexy poses.*
- *The titles of the films were not indicated on the cover.*
- *Partial text on the cover state: " Do not be afraid to look at them…they won't hurt you…"*

There were much more materials gathered. The content of a majority of the films obtained was adult porn (the video files themselves), but all covers featured children in sexualized poses, naked or engaged in sexual intercourse. This is a clear indication that the demand for child pornography is high. 2011 data obtained from the Optical Media Board during the 2012 Inter-agency council against child pornography strategic planning states that:

> *Out of 8,000 sacks of confiscated pirated DVD movies, 427 sacks were child pornography. The confiscated child pornography DVDs had an estimated street value of Php37 Million.[16]*

Risk taking behavior in Social Media

One rising concern is the inappropriate use of social media. Facebook, one of the leading social networking sites has over "300 million active users" worldwide[17]. *Although children under 14 are not allowed to set up accounts in these social networking websites, children can easily circumnavigate these limitations. There are now 12,528,400 Filipinos using Facebook, or nearly 14 percent of the country's population. The numbers continue to go up. ComScore reports the Philippines is the nation most engaged in social networking. As of end-March 2010, there were already more than 10.5-million Facebook users in the Philippines[18].*

Our 2012 survey showed that 86% of children aged 10-17 years old had Facebook accounts.[19]

At an age where it's important to be popular, children, and mostly teenagers today see social networking sites and accepting as many online friends as possible as one sign of popularity. A 14 year-old with 200 Facebook friends might be more popular than a classmate with "only" 100 friends. Publishing photos, putting up journals, profiles indicating phone numbers, addresses, etc., leads to one scary reality: children generally don't see the dangers involved in putting up such information online, and online predators know that and exploit it.

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[16] *OMB presentation, Inter-agency council against child pornography strategic planning, Travellers Hotel, Subic.July 23 – 27, 2012*
[17] *http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics*
[18] *http://tonyocruz.com/?p=2866*
[19] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*

Some children do not have the capacity to take **control** of their private digital information or even have the concept of what private digital information is. During our online safety session, we ask children the following questions;

Is it ok for people in general to see your photos on the net?

How about if they save them?

How about if they edit them?

For the 1st question, children would generally say "yes it's ok" and give various reasons like "that's the very reason why we post photos online so that other people can see them". However, when we ask them if other people can save their photos, majority of them said "No". And when further asked if other people could edit these photos, all of them said "No". As we can see, there is a discord with regards to how children handle and view their personal information. Some of them cannot see the connection that if other people can see your photos, it means that they can save these photos, and if they can save these photos, then they can edit them as well. During our online safety session we have to constantly remind children that taking control of their private digital information starts even before sharing over the net.

Traditionally, child sex offenders have to go thru great lengths in order to secure information from target children, such as full names, birthday, address, who their friends are, hobbies and interests, etc. But, with today's Social Media culture of personal information sharing, which includes children and young people, this is now offered without any great effort to the child sex offender.

And with the advent of chat features being integrated to major social media sites like Facebook, direct real-time communication adds up another dimension of potential risks.

Two major Social media behaviors contribute to the risk children face: Having a public social media profile, and "friending strangers". A public social media profile is a social media account with no level of privacy. Any random internet user will see details of the social media account (like pictures, personal info, etc.), while friending strangers involve adding people they don't know personally into their social media accounts.

During our 2009 survey, we found out that 44% of our respondents had public Friendster accounts[20] *(Friendster was the biggest social media site back in 2009, just like what Facebook is now).*

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[20] *Gauging Internet Usage Risk among Children. Stairway Foundation, 2009 unpublished*

In our 2012 survey, we found out that 45% of our respondents had Public FB profile while 20% said they didn't know whether they had a private or public FB profile. 53% also add friends in FB even if these were strangers [21]

Another social media trend is the rise of location based social media sites like 4square, and facebook's location function, wherein users can "check-in" on the location they are in, to let their online friends know where they are. This is confirmed via the phones GPS (geographical positioning satellite) module. Facebook has also adopted a similar location based feature. Letting other people know where you are in real time opens up risks because of the culture of children and young people today of treating the "friending" system in social media as a measure of popularity (the more contacts/friends, the better) even if it means adding up people they don't know personally, as mentioned before.

27% of our respondents in the 2012 survey indicated that they were using the "places" function of Facebook.[22]

Chatrooms and private chats

Chatrooms and private chats thru popular instant messenger clients like Yahoo messenger and social media sites like Facebook are some of the more popular online activities of children.

*We found out that **41%** of children today prefer Facebook chat over other chat clients like yahoo messenger.[23]*

In order to document the risks that children face when entering into chatrooms, Stairway conducted a research that documents what happens to a child in these chatrooms and private chat conversations. The said study was part of the *2007 Stairway Foundation Research on Online Child Sexual Abuse.*

- *Was done in Yahoo Chat at the Pinoy Chat rooms.*
- *An online persona of a 14 year old girl was created, but in reality, this was a Stairway staff pretending to be a 14 year old girl.*
- *Chat sessions were done last August 30, Sept 8, Sept 9 and Sept 19 2007 from around 10:00pm onwards*
- *Each chat session had a protocol of always letting the other person explicitly know that the "girl" was 14 years old at the start of the chat session.*
- *In no way did the "14 year old girl" suggest sexual conversation*
- *The "14 year old girl" always told the other person that she felt uncomfortable when sexualized conversations started*

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[21] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*

[22] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*
[23] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*

Chat logs were also recorded and in some cases, screen video captures were done in order to supplement chat log documentation. The research gave us the following results. Out of more than 20 conversations;

- 100% of those who initiated private chat sessions with the "*14 year old girl*" presented themselves as male adults.
- 100% were first time conversation with the "*14 year old girl*".
- Over 80% initiated sexualized conversation with the "*14 year old girl*" by introducing sexualized language, asking her to engage in sex chat, and exposing their private body parts via webcam.
- The commonality observed with those that engaged her in sexual chatting was that they all employed techniques such as *disensitization*, *rationalization*, and making sure that she was in an environment with no adult present. An example is provided below.

14 year old girl (12:10:41 AM): what?

Chatter Man A (12:10:54 AM): location

14 year old girl (12:11:12 AM): 14 f Manila. you?

Chatter Man A (12:11:19 AM): 18

Chatter Man A (12:11:26 AM): bakit gising k pa (why are you still awake?)

14 year old girl (12:11:33 AM): wala lng..(no reason)

Chatter Man A (12:11:34 AM): pa view (I want to view you)

14 year old girl (12:11:39 AM): wala me cam (I don't have a cam)

Chatter Man A (12:11:45 AM): picture

14 year old girl (12:11:57 AM): sorry wala din (sorry, no pic also)

Chatter Man A (12:12:08 AM): friendster

14 year old girl (12:12:35 AM): meron (I have one)

Chatter Man A (12:12:42 AM): ano tingnan ko (what is it? I'll look)

14 year old girl (12:12:48 AM): why?

Chatter Man A (12:13:28 AM): para makita ko picture mo un lang (so that I can see you're pic)

14 year old girl (12:13:40 AM): ayoko, di nmn kita kilala (I don't want to, I don't know you)

Chatter Man A (12:14:20 AM): ok lang naman un for public d b (that's ok, its publicly available

right)

14 year old girl (12:14:39 AM): tunay na friends ko lng nakakakita ng friendster ko eh (only true friends of mine see my friendster)

Chatter Man A (12:14:53 AM): gawin mo n ako tunay (make me you're true friend)

14 year old girl (12:15:34 AM): antok na me, bye (I'm already sleepy, bye)

Chatter Man A (12:15:39 AM): wala k hed set (Do you have a headset?)

Chatter Man A (12:15:52 AM): view mo ako (view me)

14 year old girl (12:16:17 AM): why?

Chatter Man A (12:16:29 AM): virgin k pa (are you a virgin?)

14 year old girl (12:16:39 AM): huh? 14 lng me noh, syempre! (I'm only 14, of course!)

Chatter Man A (12:16:51 AM): tulog n b parents mo (are you're parents asleep?)

14 year old girl (12:16:56 AM): oo (yes)

Chatter Man A (12:17:08 AM): wala k nkasama jan (you don't have anyone else with you there?)

14 year old girl (12:17:15 AM): wala, room ko to eh (no one, this is my room)

14 year old girl (12:17:52 AM): yuck ano yan! (yuck what's that!)

14 year old girl (12:18:29 AM): bastos! (pervert!)

Chatter Man A (12:19:02 AM): d bastos yan (this is not pervertion)

Chatter Man A (12:19:08 AM): pag dalawa lang tayo (when its only the two of us)

14 year old girl (12:19:23 AM): bakit, ano ba pag dalawa lng tayo? (why, what's the difference when its only the two of us?)

Chatter Man A (12:19:41 AM): mas masarap lalo pag nag usap sa sex (its better when we talk about sex)

Chatter Man A (12:19:45 AM): try mo (try it)

14 year old girl (12:19:50 AM): 14 lng ako, ayoko (I'm only 14, I don't want to)

Chatter Man A (12:19:56 AM): ok lang un (its ok)

14 year old girl (12:20:04 AM): bata pa ako ayoko (I'm young, I don't want to)

Chatter Man A (12:20:06 AM): computer lang naman (Its only through the computer)

14 year old girl (12:20:16 AM): kahit na. Nakakatakot (no matter, its scary)

Chatter Man A (12:20:25 AM): hindi wala un (its ok)

14 year old girl (12:20:36 AM): ayoko, basta (I don't want to)

Chatter Man A (12:20:38 AM): pag k off ko d wala na (When I turn it off, it would go away)

Chatter Man A (12:20:50 AM): view mo uli (view it again)

14 year old girl (12:20:59 AM): eh, kadiri eh (its gross)

14 year old girl (12:21:21 AM): ayaw (I don't want to)

Chatter Man A (12:21:36 AM): mas malaki n (its bigger already)

14 year old girl (12:22:14 AM): ayoko bastos u (I don't want to you're a pervert)

Chatter Man A (12:22:16 AM): sarap yan (This is delicious)

Chatter Man A (12:22:45 AM): d bastos pag dalawa tayo (its not perversion when its only the two of us)

Chatter Man A (12:23:03 AM): pag nakiliti k rin (when you get tickled)

Chatter Man A (12:23:37 AM): nasa room k pa mag isa (are you still in ur room alone?)

14 year old girl (12:23:50 AM): kuya please stop na

14 year old girl (12:23:54 AM): ayoko na po (I don't want to)

Chatter Man A (12:24:03 AM): nakikiliti k n ba (do you feel tickled now?)

14 year old girl (12:24:10 AM): please po.

Chatter Man A (12:24:18 AM): try mo lang (just try it)[24]

*chat names have been replaced to avoid name similarities with actual persons living or deceased.

All of the chatters who engaged our online persona into sexualized chatting focused on introducing sexualized conversation, downplayed any apprehensions of "mishi" and made sure that the child didn't had any adult with them. Sans a more long term study, it is postulated that there will be offenders who will be contented with online encounters like these, and that there will be offenders who will eventually try to meet up with the child in order to facilitate contact child sexual abuse. *In the 2009 survey of grade 5-6 students, 22% of respondents said that they had an EB with an online friend. [25] (Eyeball – meeting with the person in the real world)*

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[24] *2007 Stairway Foundation Research on Online Child Sexual Abuse unpublished*
[25] *Gauging Internet Usage Risk among Children. Stairway Foundation, 2009 unpublished*

Other emerging trends

Text Clans
One trend that is specific to the Philippines is the existence of text clans. Text clans are organized by 1 person or a group of persons in order to form a "text" group. They recruit members depending on the criteria of their text clan. Some accept based on interests, while some based on location, but majority based on age bracket. All text clans are based also on network coverage (eg. Smart, Globe, Sun).

22% of our respondents in the 2012 survey said they were textclan members.[26]

The main risk involves the communication between Children and Adult, the usual Eyeballs (actual meet-ups) being organized and the serving of alcoholic drinks during these eyeballs. There have been documented cases of these eyeballs eventually leading up to sexual abuse of children.

30% of the respondents who said they were textclan members said that their textclans had adult members also, 24% attended EBs of their text clans and 7% said that EBs would include consuming alcoholic drinks. [27]

Cyberbullying
Cyberbullying as a violation of children's rights is just slowly being noticed in the Philippines. But ever since the emergence of social media as an accessible tool for children and young adults (Friendster), some form of cyberbullying has been in existence. It is only now with the increased utilization of social media that cyberbullying has emerged as a noticeable trend.

- *Facebook: 93.9%*
- *Twitter: 16.1%*
- *LinkedIn: 1.9%*
- *Internet Use: 29.7%*

"Social network penetration is incredibly high in the Philippines, reaching 95%. Facebook is the country's most popular website, more so than Google, and has a penetration rate of 93.9%. The Philippines is also the eighth most popular country for Twitter use on a global scale, with a penetration rate of 16.1%. The popularity of photo sharing has increased by 46% in the country in one year, largely due to

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[26] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*

[27] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*

Facebook. Social networking is so popular among Filipinos, the country has been nicknamed "The Social Networking Capital of the World."[28]

The biggest concern with cyberbullying is the fact that bullying doesn't end in school, but also continues even when the child goes home. It is also far more reaching as the audience is larger, and is not limited to the immediate peers of the child. The cyberbully can also remain anonymous as cyberbullies can create fake profiles in order to ridicule a particular child.

39% of our respondents experienced some form of cyberbullying.

30% their photos were edited, 22% received direct threats while 17% didn't specify what form of bullying they have received online. [29]

Majority of cyberbullies were their own classmates (42%), followed by children they also know, but from other schools. 19% said that they did not know personally the cyberbullies, but the names were displayed while 19% said the bully was anonymous. [30]

And based on the sharing during our online safety trainings, there have been incidences that wherein even adults in authority (teachers, house parents in center-based NGOs) have been targets of attacks by cyberbullies (and these cyberbullies were students/children in care). Unfortunately, as of this writing, we yet have to pass a law on cyberbullying.

Online and network games

Whenever one goes to Internet cafés in the Philippines, one can observe that the primary costumers would be groups of young children and teenagers. Based on informal interviews with Internet Café owners, the majority of costumers engage in online and network games, with internet access for browsing and social media access coming in second. Boys aged between 8-16 years old are the typical profile of children engaging in these online and network games.

Online games are usually Role Playing Games where children have to develop online characters by having these characters "level up". Leveling up would entail playing the character for a certain period of time in the online world and collecting game experience and items. The more experience, the faster the leveling up, and a high level character means a stronger character. Items (depending on the nature of the online game) are collected in order to assist in the online role playing game. Addiction to online games are being reported with children going online for extended periods of time. We have also encountered children who were so

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[28] http://asiancorrespondent.com/54475/philippines-named-the-social-networking-capital-of-the-world-indonesia-malaysia-amongst-top-10/
[29] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*
[30] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*

engrossed in the leveling up of their character that they would hire "pilots" – people who for a fee, would play another person's character in order for the said character to continuously level up. There have also been reports of children buying and selling online game characters and items.

Network games on the other hand doesn't require an internet connection, but are rather played through local area networks of the computer shops. Children would form teams (usually 5 per team) and play against each other. Popular network games include CS (Counterstrike) a military style 1st person shooter and DOTA (Defense of the Ancients), a fantasy strategy game. These team competitions would most of the time involve betting money (around 100 per team member). Addictions are so high that children would tell us "*Pag DOTA, puyatan at butasan ng bulsa*" (*If you play DOTA, you lack sleep and you run out of money*).

How do we respond?

Children need to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation, including pornography and online threats. First we will discuss some things to consider when communicating with children. Second, we will discuss some effective tools that can be used to educate and raise awareness, and lastly, we look at the Philippine law enforcement response to the problem.

Communication Considerations

The way in which we communicate with children about the risks of sexual exploitation is as important as what we communicate, if we are to hope that they will heed what we say. Before directly giving tips on responding, we have to face certain realities. Any legitimate prevention material that we can show our children in order to raise their awareness against pornography and sexual exploitation is beneficial to them as compared to the violence and sex that children today are being exposed to through the internet, television and cinema. We shouldn't also underestimate children's resiliency, in particular, when exposed to questionable materials. Most of the time children worry more about their parent's reactions rather than seeing the materials themselves, as revealed in the anecdotal experiences we have acquired during our online safety sessions for young children and teenagers. This information comes from the thousands of children we have encountered conducting our "online safety sessions". It says a lot about how there is a very evident communication/technology and cultural barrier between parents and children when talking about online and general child protection issues.

Based on what children have told us, there are two general types of attitudes parents possess when it come to the issue of online safety. The first type of attitude is that parents who are completely oblivious to the dangers and do not provide any opportunity or means of talking to their kids about online safety. One reason for this might be that although they know that there are apparent dangers online, they downplay these dangers themselves because they also believe, like their children, that it is not as dangerous as compared to any physical harm like being mugged or abducted.

The second type of attitude is parents who exhibit extreme paranoia and deprive children the appropriate opportunity to access information via the internet for fear of their children being exposed to the dangers. These are parents who have privacy issues unto their children's online life, etc. Needless to say, neither type of reaction will provide the most satisfactory results in teaching children how to develop protective behavior when they exhibit online risk taking behaviors or encounter pornography online, or if they are being groomed by an online predator. Adopting a

middle-ground attitude is what we recommend as a strategy in dealing with children with regards to the issue of education and awareness on online protection.

There is a real gap existing between children sharing their online problems with their parents. Majority of those in the 10-12 year old age range share their online problems with their parents (43%), while majority in the 13-17 year old age range shared these with their classmates (27%) and parents (26%)[31]. There is a need to bridge this gap.

Parents are not the only ones who have the responsibility to educate children about risks, and sometimes they may not take their responsibility seriously. As such, other child care providers such as teachers, youth leaders, etc. must do so as well.

When conducting sessions with children, it is important not to "lecture" them on what not to do. If we become too "preachy", then it is already a lost cause. Children generally understand better when you talk at their level. Thus, a child care provider raising awareness on issues like these should know what is "in" for children nowadays. He/she must know the culture, so that he/she can create a more effective dialogue with kids. The general online safety session we do for children revolves around general concepts of talking about what is fun online, what are the risks involved and how to stay safe/in control.

Tools

There are a number of tools that can be used to educate children about sexual exploitation, including pornography and online risks. This paper will address the following tools: Online Safety Messages, Internet Filtering Software, Stairway Foundation's Online Safety Sessions, and Stairway Foundation's Animations.

Online Safety Tips

Children should be made aware of the following safety tips when using the internet with regards to pornography and online social activities:

- Remind them to be selective in giving out personal information over the internet, such as mobile phone numbers, street addresses, birthdays, etc. It would be alright to post personal information if for example they know personally all of their contacts in their social networking sites. Or if they make this information private, so only trusted contacts can access.
- Remind them that not all people over the internet are really who they claim to be. Explain to children that some people will make them feel special in order to establish trust for eventual abuse.
- Tell them that if they don't feel comfortable with a particular question or conversation, they don't have the obligation to answer that question or

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[31] *2012 online safety survey Stairway Foundation, unpublished*

continue the conversation, and that it is their right to reject anything that they don't feel comfortable with.

- Help them understand that having online friends is ok, but they have to remember that they should not forget that they still have friends in the "offline" world. And having 5000 FB friends is not really "cool".
- Always assure them that if they feel confused, scared or angry, they can approach you and talk to you about anything, and that you would understand and face the concerns with him/her.

These are just few of the tips adults can discuss with children. The most important thing is to maintain an open line of communication between the parent and the child, and make the child feel that there is not one thing that is so bad that he/she can't talk to you about it.

Filtering Software

The above online safety tips can be supplemented with other protective and preventive tools such as filtering software that can be installed for free on any personal computer. One good product is the "K9" software[32] created by Bluecoat labs. K9 is freeware and filters out pornographic and other questionable websites over the internet. Another is Windows live family safety, which is built in Windows 7. It is, however, important to note that using tools such as these should only be done hand-in-hand with the process of helping the child understand why it is dangerous for a child to be exposed to such materials over the internet. Not doing so would only mean that the child would just look for other means of accessing these materials online.

Stairway Foundation's Online Safety Sessions

Stairway Foundation conducts online safety sessions for children as well as adults, particularly for organizations working with children.

Stairway's online safety sessions focus on three main areas of discussion.

The first part is talking about the fun things that can be done over the internet. This includes talking about social networking sites, chatting, online games, etc. By doing this, the child care provider can make the children feel that he/she also understands the culture of the internet, and that he/she can relate to the children.

The second part involves talking about the risks and dangers of the online world. Children are presented with situations and are asked to identify the potential risks and dangers. This is done without sensationalizing these dangers and potentially putting them off.

The third part deals with discussing safety reminders over the internet, similar to the Online Safety Tips discussed above. It is very important to note that in talking with

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[32] http://www1.k9webprotection.com/

children, we should always converse at their level, so that they feel that they can open up to us. When likely barriers in communication are taken into consideration we maximize the potential of reaching out to them.

Stairway Foundation Animations

In Stairway Foundation's work on raising awareness on the issue of child sexual abuse, we have found out time and time again that the right tools make a world of difference. To that end we have produced a series of high quality animations that are entertaining, engaging and educational. The animations communicate important lessons to children in a non-threatening way that they can readily understand and relate to. They speak to children at their level and in a story form that is a more effective way of communicating with children than just lecturing to them. Our first animation called "Daughter" deals with incest. The second is called "A Good Boy" and deals with pedophilia. Both have been great tools for discussing the issues. The right tools should clearly communicate the issue, while at the same time facilitate a venue for discussion. The creation of this venue for discussions needed both for adults, and children.

Our third animation, "Red Leaves Falling", deals specifically with the issue of child sex trafficking and child pornography. In the same tradition as our first two animations, we use this film in order to talk to adults and young people about the issue of child sex trafficking and child pornography perpetrated thru the use of the internet and technology.

Conclusion

The internet and eventually any new communication technology will be part of children's live, this is what we have to accept. Blocking all pornographic sites and controlling with whom our children communicate online are not very feasible options, as most teenagers can easily bypass basic filtering software, and keeping an eye on them all the time would further alienate children. The best strategy is to build up their online protective behaviors in order for them to recognize when and where there are risks online, and how to manage these risks. Institutions should also think about online child protection, whether they be government or non-government.

It's basically the same principle with offline child protection. We recognize that there are certain risks children faces, which as adults we must minimize to our best ability. At the same time we develop the protective behavior of children, and enhance protection initiatives through institutional approaches.

About Stairway Foundation and the author:

Stairway Foundation Inc. is a non-stock, non-profit, non-government child care organization located in Puerto Galera, in the island of Oriental Mindoro, Philippines. It was established in 1990 by Lars C. Jorgensen and Monica D. Ray as an alternative program for the most marginalized and endangered street children in the Philippines. It works actively with networks to raise awareness on Children's Rights and Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation prevention using innovative tools such as its animation toolkits.

The author, Ysrael C. Diloy, is part of Stairway Foundation as one if its' Advocacy and Training Officers. He has been with Stairway since 2005. Prior to that, he worked in government and as a community facilitator for students in an outreach program under a Philippine University. He has a bachelor's degree in Community Development and considers his work with children a natural progression from his development practice. One of his main contributions to the organization is the development of its Online Safety program, which was based on training, online research and talks with children and young adults. Ace, as called by friends, professes not be an IT or social media expert, but rather a common netizen, who maintains an active online life. His active online life keeps him abreast with trends and cultures in a world that many adults have little insight into, which again helps him further develop Stairway's online safety program.

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