

WCST AS A PHENOMENON

1. What exactly is Webcam Child Sex Tourism (WCST)?

Webcam Child Sex Tourism, also known as WCST, is when adults pay to direct and view live-streaming video footage of children in another country performing sexual acts in front of a webcam. The nature of those performances varies depending on the requests of predators. Child victims of WCST in the Philippines report that they pose naked, show intimate body parts, masturbate, and sometimes have sex with others at the request of predators in another country who pay to view and direct these sexual acts.

WCST is the confluence of two forms of child sexual exploitation: child pornography and child prostitution. Thus, international laws and most national laws prohibit WCST, but, despite that fact, this form of child sex abuse is growing increasingly common.

2. How widespread is this phenomenon?

It is estimated that tens of thousands of children are victims of WCST in the Philippines alone. Due to the nature of the phenomenon, there is a shortage of accurate statistics; WCST leaves almost no evidence, and children rarely report these crimes to police. However, the estimate that tens of thousands of children are victims of WCST is confirmed by several expert sources.

United Nations and the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation estimate that there are 750,000 predators connected to the Internet at any given moment. We believe the global demand for WCST is at least that large.

3. In what countries does WCST occur?

WCST is known to take place on a large scale in the Philippines, but there is no compelling reason to believe that WCST does not also occur in other countries, particularly in South East Asia, where Internet access rates are climbing and there is a well-developed criminal infrastructure around child sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

4. Is the problem spreading?

With rising global Internet usage rates and a huge international demand for all forms of online child sexual exploitation, WCST is spreading very rapidly throughout the Philippines. In the Philippines, child prostitution is generally more common in urban areas, but with Internet access rates growing steadily in rural areas of the country, we are seeing evidence that children in rural areas are now also being exploited through WCST. And as criminals recognize potential revenue streams in the WCST trade, it is likely that WCST will soon grow into a larger, more intractable industry that is dominated by organized criminal syndicates. That is the unfortunate progression we have observed in the child pornography trade, which is now a multi-billion dollar industry.

5. Where do you predict WCST will spread?

The terrifying thing about WCST is that it can occur in any country that has weak child protection policies where impoverished families and vulnerable children have Internet access. Internet access continues to spread throughout the developing world, and as criminals and impoverished families begin to recognize the vast global demand for WCST, they will be faced with financial incentives to exploit children using webcams.

6. Is WCST really an “industry”?

When compared to child pornography and child prostitution, which are often run by organized criminal syndicates, it is not clear that WCST has yet been “industrialized” to the same extent. We refer to WCST as a “phenomenon” or a “trade” because we believe it has not yet grown to the extent that it can be characterized as an industry. But we have seen a rapid increase in the number of large-scale WCST operations, often run by foreigners and with links to human trafficking.

The WCST trade is growing very rapidly, and we predict that without intervention, WCST will rapidly grow into an uncontrollable global industry.

7. What is the difference between grooming and WCST?

Grooming is the process by which predators try to establish an emotional connection or friendship with a child for the purpose of coercing them to engage in sexual acts. It commonly happens within the borders of a country. Unlike grooming, WCST is based on a financial transaction between a predator and a child victim or the adult holding power over a child victim. In that sense, WCST more closely resembles child prostitution than grooming.

Furthermore, WCST is transnational in that child victims live in developing nations and predators are most commonly from wealthy nations. WCST always involves payment in exchange for a child’s performance of sexual acts in front of a webcam, whereas grooming relies mostly on psychological manipulation.

8. How are children forced into the WCST trade?

Sometimes parents or family members coerce children to engage in WCST. Sometimes children are trafficked and held captive in “dens” with other kids who are forced to perform sexual acts in front of webcams. Sometimes child prostitutes sell webcam sex shows to predators around the world in order to supplement the income they make through street prostitution. For more information, please refer to Terre des Hommes Netherlands report, which is available for download on this site.

9. How old are most child victims of WCST?

We cannot offer an average age because there are few reliable statistics available. Based on our research and the findings of Terre des Hommes Netherlands’ partners in the field, the age of child victims of WCST ranges from 6 to 17 years old. News reports from the Philippines indicate that infants and babies

have also been rescued from exploitation through WCST, but, while we believe that to be true, Terre des Hommes Netherlands has not directly confirmed that.

For more information, please refer to Terre des Hommes Netherlands report, which is available for download on this site.

10. Are victims mostly boys or girls?

Both boys and girls are victims of the WCST trade because predators around the world pay to view webcam sex shows performed by children of both genders.

11. How much money do children earn through WCST?

Our research suggests that predators will pay between \$10 and \$100 USD per show. The amount of money a child actually receives depends on several factors, including whether transactions are made through a pimp or a middleman, how long the show lasts, the nature of the performance, etc.

12. What kinds of sexual acts are children asked to perform?

During the 10-week research period in which we posed on public chat rooms as prepubertal Filipina girls, predators asked us to perform a broad range of sexual acts including smoking cigarettes while naked, masturbation, eating feces, having sex with older men, and having sex with family members.

13. What effects does performing sexual acts in front of webcams have on children?

Terre des Hommes Netherlands' recently published research and experience in the Philippines shows that WCST has profound and permanent psychological effects on child victims. Children often suffer depression, anxiety, and aggression, which can manifest in physical illnesses and nightmares. Among several other effects, child victims often develop an abnormal understanding of sexuality and relationships. Children who are trafficked and held captive in dungeon-like "cybersex dens" may also endure physical abuse and neglect. For more information, please refer to Terre des Hommes Netherlands report, which is available for download on this site.

14. If there is no physical contact during WCST, how severe is the trauma on children?

The absence of physical contact between predators and victims does not reduce the severity of the psychological trauma that WCST has on child victims. WCST gives predators direct access to vulnerable children for a small fee, which means they can abuse victims in other countries more easily and more frequently than ever before. Repeated sexual exploitation is extremely damaging to children.

15. Isn't this the fault of victims' parents?

The circumstances that may lead parents to involve their children in the WCST trade are often complex and horrific. Some parents do not fully understand that, despite the absence of physical contact, this

exploitation is severely traumatizing to children. We do not seek to place blame; rather, we try to focus our efforts on finding solutions. By educating communities on the psychological effects that this exploitation has on child victims, we hope to convince parents that WCST is never an answer to their financial problems. Terre des Hommes Netherlands also offers vocational training to parents and young people to provide long-term financial alternatives to child exploitation.

16. What is the alternative for these children to gain an income?

To protect victims of sexual exploitation, Terre des Hommes Netherlands provides shelter, health and psychosocial care, counseling, education, and vocational training. This allows children to develop into independent adults, to facilitate their return into society, to maximize their chances in the labor market, and to help them regain control over their lives. Given that poverty is one of the main factors contributing to the sexual exploitation of children, we also offer parents the opportunity to increase their income by providing access to savings and credit schemes.

17. How much money do you need to successfully rescue child victims of WCST?

This is difficult to answer and it can only be determined on a case-by-case basis. In general it can be stated that rehabilitation of victims and their reintegration back into society is a lengthy, often painful and costly process. In addition, the process is preceded by the equally vital phase of reaching out to these children, finding and identifying them, gaining their trust and unconditional acceptance of having to change their behavior—a necessary condition to successful treatment.

However, just as an indication, Terre des Hommes Netherlands is currently supporting a shelter for victims of sexual exploitation in Cebu City in the Philippines at an annual cost of some 100,000 Euros.

18. How long does it normally take to rehabilitate a child victim of WCST?

Once a child has become a victim of sexual abuse, rehabilitation can take many years. It is a long, painful, and labor-intensive process for children to overcome the trauma and psychosocial consequences of such abuse. Given the complexity of rehabilitating and reintegrating individual victims of sexual exploitation, Terre des Hommes Netherlands applies additional strategies to fight the roots of the phenomenon of WCST. We invest in education, training, and capacity enhancement to prevent sexual exploitation, we seek justice for the victims, offer legal aid, and we train and assist police, public prosecution offices, and justice departments. Terre des Hommes Netherlands also seeks to influence policy makers on local, national, and international levels to adopt, ratify, maintain, and enforce legislation to prevent child exploitation and to protect victims of such unacceptable practices.

19. Are there criminal organizations involved in WCST?

It is hard to say at this point. Recently, there have been several news reports on police raids of locations where children were held captive and forced to perform WCST. It is unclear whether these are isolated operations or linked to larger criminal networks. But we fear that without global action, WCST will attract more involvement by organized criminal groups as we have seen in the developmental history

of the child pornography, child prostitution, and human trafficking industries.

20. Can you accurately estimate how many websites exist online that feature children or minors performing sexual acts in front of webcams?

No. During the course of this research, Terre des Hommes Netherlands found hundreds of websites upon which WCST commonly takes place, but that is likely just the tip of the iceberg. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation claims that there are 40,000 public chatrooms on which child predators are active and we saw during our research that predators seek to engage in WCST on chat rooms. Additionally, we know that WCST commonly takes place on adult webcam sites, dating sites, and on social networking sites. As WCST becomes a more frequently occurring crime, one can be sure that the number of websites on which predators engage in WCST will continue to rise.

21. On what websites is WCST taking place?

WCST takes place on many dating sites, public chat rooms, social networking sites, and adult webcam sites. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation states that there are more than 40,000 public chatrooms alone on which child predators lurk. In order to prevent predators from visiting the sites on which we found children offering sexual performances, we are not publicizing the names of those sites. But we have turned over the evidence we collected on those sites to law enforcement agencies in the countries in which the sites are based.

22. Is WCST also happening via mobile phones?

Internet-connected mobile phones with cameras are now more prevalent in developing countries than Internet-connected computers. Although we did not specifically investigate the use of mobile phones in the WCST trade, there is no reason to believe that WCST is not sometimes taking place using mobile phones. Particularly as new messaging and social networking applications emerge, mobile phones will make WCST an increasingly easy means of sexually exploiting children.

WCST AS A CRIME

23. How many predators engage in WCST, and how did you come up with an estimate?

We do not know how many predators engage in WCST, but the United Nations and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation estimate that there are 750,000 predators connected to the Internet at any time. Also, each year, an estimated 1 million predators travel to developing nations to sexually abuse children. Because WCST is much easier and cheaper than traditional child sex tourism, we predict that many more predators are engaging in WCST and they are likely doing it much more frequently. For more information, please refer to Terre des Hommes Netherlands report, which is available for download on this site.

24. How many predators have been convicted for the crime of WCST?

As far as we know, only six predators in the world have ever been convicted for engaging in WCST as paying consumers. But, during our research over 10 weeks on public chat rooms, more than 20,000 predators seeking webcam sex shows from prepubertal children approached our four researchers. And that is likely just a fraction of the total number of predators seeking to engage in WCST. We identified and collected evidence against 1,000 of them. It is clear that governments and law enforcement agencies can and must do more to enforce the existing laws prohibiting this form of online child exploitation. For more information on the six predators who have been arrested for engaging in WCST, please refer to Terre des Hommes Netherlands report, which is available for download on this site.

25. Are all webcam child sex “tourists” pedophiles?

Not necessarily. Pedophilia is a psychiatric disorder characterized by a long-term primary sexual attraction to prepubertal children. Webcam child sex tourists can include a much larger population that includes pedophiles as well as adults seeking sexual performances from anyone, including extreme minors. That group of adults may not have a “long-term” or “primary” sexual attraction to prepubertal children, but they may just be unscrupulous and perverted enough to pay to view webcam sex performances by children when the opportunity arises. The United Nations and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation estimate that 750,000 predators are online at any moment, but that may only be the tip of the iceberg when it comes to estimating the true size of the global demand for WCST.

26. Why is there such a high demand for WCST?

Terre des Hommes Netherlands believes that there are two main reasons for the growing popularity of WCST. First, WCST allows predators to interact with child victims and direct their sexual performances. In that WCST allows direct interaction between predators and victims, it is comparable to child prostitution and child sex tourism. But unlike child sex tourism, WCST does not have the physical risks or expenses associated with traveling abroad to engage in child sex tourism. Secondly, viewing sexual performances that are live-streamed via webcam does not leave permanent records on predators’ computer hard drives. Unlike viewing and downloading picture and video files

depicting child abuse, which are stored on a computer and can be recovered by investigators, viewing WCST leaves few, if any, traces of evidence.

27. Does the “supply” of children offering webcam sex shows affect the “demand” for WCST?

Yes. Looking at this phenomenon from an economic perspective, we believe that the supply influences the demand and visa versa. Addressing only one side will not effectively reduce the growth of WCST—a solution requires stopping both the supply side and the demand side. Terre des Hommes Netherlands normally focuses on helping the victims of exploitation who compose the supply side of this trade. We hereby call on governments around the world to stop the demand for WCST by implementing proactive investigation policies and dedicating the resources necessary to catch and identify predators who are funding this abuse. As law enforcement agencies in developing nations are working hard to find those responsible for forcing children into WCST, we hope that governments of wealthier nations will also start fighting the demand side of the problem.

For more information, please refer to Terre des Hommes Netherlands report, which is available for download on this site.

28. Is WCST a crime?

Yes. WCST is strictly prohibited by international laws as a form of sexual exploitation of children. Terre des Hommes Netherlands researched the national criminal codes of 21 countries and found that most countries have laws that either directly prohibit WCST or they have laws that can be interpreted as prohibiting WCST on the grounds that WCST is a form of child pornography and/or child prostitution, depending on the legal definitions of those two crimes in each country. Paying to view a sexual performance by a minor is widely prohibited around the world.

For more information on the legislative framework around the world that prohibits WCST, please refer to Terre des Hommes Netherlands report, which is available for download on this site.

29. At what point is an online conversation between an adult and a child defined as an offense?

It depends on the laws in the countries of both people involved. Some countries have laws prohibiting adults from conversing with minors about sex. Some countries prohibit “enticing” a minor to engage in sexual conduct. Other countries outlaw showing obscene images to minors, and most countries prohibit viewing sexual images and sexual performances involving minors. Thus, WCST is illegal in most countries. During our research, a person was considered a predator the moment he or she asked for, or accepted, a sexual performance from the researchers posing as prepubertal girls.

30. Are there also countries in which WCST is legal?

There are countries that may require amendments to their existing laws in order to provide stronger legal grounds for the prosecution and conviction of predators engaging in WCST. However, most countries’ national criminal codes already have laws that either explicitly outlaw WCST or laws against child pornography and child prostitution that can be interpreted as also outlawing WCST.

For more information, please refer to Terre des Hommes Netherlands report, which is available for download on this site.

31. How severe is the punishment for predators engaging in WCST?

It depends on the country. Some national laws that we believe can be interpreted as outlawing WCST establish very severe punishments for offenders. For example, the Mexican Federal Criminal Code prohibits “any type of actual or simulated sexual acts” with minors and establishes a possible punishment of 12 to 16 years imprisonment in addition to a large fine and psychiatric treatment. In the United States, a 54-year-old man named Jeffrey Herschell was sentenced to 12 years in a federal prison for engaging in WCST with minors in the Philippines.

32. If WCST is such a new phenomenon, why is it already illegal in most countries?

WCST is a combination of child pornography and child prostitution, which are already illegal in most countries. The laws of most countries are written using broad enough language to outlaw newly emerging and future forms of child sexual without specifically outlining the exact method in which that exploitation takes place.

For more information, please refer to Terre des Hommes Netherlands report, which is available for download on this site.

33. Are all predators seeking WCST men, or are there also female predators?

There are also female predators. Research on pedophilia suggests that some women show long-term sexual attraction to prepubertal children. The percentage of females among the 750,000 predators estimated to be online is unknown, but Terre des Hommes Netherlands’ research confirmed the existence of female predators seeking to engage in WCST.

34. I have feelings of sexual attraction toward children, where can I go to seek help in suppressing my urges?

There are several organizations that provide counseling and support for people struggling to resist urges to sexually abuse children. We urge you to contact them now.

35. I know an adult who pays to engage in WCST, what should I do?

We urge you to immediately contact your local police department.

OUR PROPOSED SOLUTION FOR WCST

36. What is your proposed solution?

Terre des Hommes Netherlands proposes that governments around the world adopt proactive law enforcement policies that promote the use of proactive investigation techniques and provide resources for law enforcement units to patrol Internet hotspots where WCST is known to take place. Those hotspots include online dating sites, social networking sites, public chat rooms, and adult webcam sites. We have tested and proven the effectiveness of a proactive investigation technique that involves posing as prepubertal children on public chat rooms and luring predators who are seeking webcam sex shows from children into providing identifying information. If four researchers can identify 1,000 predators in 10 weeks, we believe law enforcement agencies can catch 100,000 by the end of 2014.

37. What can governments do?

Governments should adopt policies that give their law enforcement agencies the mandate to proactively search for predators seeking to engage in WCST on public online places known to be hotspots for child abuse. Terre des Hommes Netherlands is offering all law enforcement agencies our assistance in the form of an extensive Investigation Toolkit that explains our proven-effective method of finding and identifying online predators. Furthermore, we are offering law enforcement agencies the operational software for Sweetie1000 and training in how to use it.

38. Do law enforcement agencies have time to stop WCST?

We are not sure if law enforcement agencies have time for this. But when children as young as six years old are being sexually exploited by predators around the world, policy makers must *make* time to stop it. It is up to governments to adopt proactive policies that provide law enforcement agencies the time and resources that they require to stop this abuse.

39. Why do most governments have reactive policies in place?

Reactive law enforcement policies mean that police and law enforcement agencies do not investigate child exploitation until a crime is reported. In the case of WCST, child victims usually do not report the crimes. That is often because children are intimidated and fearful of consequences or they and their families depend on the income generated through webcam sex performances. The reliance of law enforcement agencies on child victims to report these crimes is based on an outdated model of online child exploitation, which addresses crimes related to online grooming by predators, but fails to respond to exploitation through WCST.

40. Do you blame the police or the existing laws for the rise of WCST?

No. Most countries already have laws that ban WCST and Terre des Hommes Netherlands has the

highest respect for law enforcement units working to stop child abuse and exploitation. The rise of WCST is not a result of weak existing laws or a lack of effort by police forces—it is the result of most governments’ reactive investigation policies, which prevent law enforcement agencies from doing more to enforce existing laws and stop WCST. Reactive law enforcement policies must be replaced by proactive ones.

41. If WCST is such a big problem, why is the United Nations not doing anything about it?

In 2005, the United Nations was one of the first to report on the emergence of WCST. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children works tirelessly to pressure governments to ratify and implement international standards protecting the rights of children. The UN was also responsible for the creation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols. But the UN is not a law enforcement organization—it does not have the mandate to take action against predators and other criminals involved in the WCST trade. It is up to national governments and law enforcement agencies to crack down on WCST by enforcing their existing laws and adopting proactive investigation policies.

42. Aren’t there any other organizations that are actively doing something about predators engaging in WCST?

Yes, there are. It’s clear that several law enforcement agencies have taken steps to address online child sexual exploitation, but as far as we know, only six adults in the world have ever been convicted for paying to view webcam child sex shows. It appears that most law enforcement agencies focus on cases that involve predators “grooming” children in the same country. As WCST is a international phenomenon that often goes unreported, the current policies remain ineffective.

THE CAMPAIGN

43. What was your motivation for beginning this campaign?

We have seen firsthand the damaging effects that WCST has on child victims. We have heard the terrible stories of abuse and exploitation told by children as young as six years old. In some countries, including the Philippines, this phenomenon is growing so fast that we are confronted with its impacts on a daily basis. It soon became clear that WCST was growing out of control and that helping victims and educating communities about the dangers of WCST would not do enough to combat its rise. For this campaign, we decided to directly address the demand side of the WCST trade, which is fueling the growth in the number of child victims. But we expect governments and law enforcement agencies around the world to adopt and implement proactive investigation policies that will combat the global demand for WCST.

44. What exactly do you want to achieve with this campaign?

We want to end the perception among predators that the Internet is a lawless space where they can freely abuse children. We want to instill in predators a fear of being caught and punished for crimes they commit against children, even if those children are located in other countries. To do this, we need to pressure governments around the world to adopt proactive investigation policies and enforce the existing laws against online child abuse.

45. How are you planning to achieve this?

By mobilizing citizens around the world. We hope to reach as many people as possible with our message and to gather at least 1 million signatures on our petition. By mobilizing the world, we can put more pressure on governments to change their current reactive policies toward online child exploitation to proactive policies, which will increase the presence of law enforcement agencies on Internet hotspots where we know WCST occurs on a regular basis.

46. Shouldn't Terre des Hommes Netherlands focus on rescuing children, rather than playing the role of police?

Absolutely! We have always focused on rescuing children and that is what we will continue to do. But we have a responsibility not only to help children who have been victimized, but also to help future generations of children who will fall victim to WCST if this problem is not urgently addressed by governments around the world. This campaign strategy was the most effective way to bring the issue of WCST to the world's attention and to publicize our proposed solution. We are asking law enforcement agencies around the world to take over the fight against the global demand for WCST by applying proactive investigation policies and techniques. When this happens, Terre des Hommes Netherlands can focus entirely on assisting child victims. Local police and law enforcement agencies in most wealthy nations focus on investigating instances of online grooming that take place within the borders of their country, but they are not focused on online child exploitation in which children and predators are in

different countries. That policy must change so children everywhere are protected.

47. Aren't you worried that this campaign is counterproductive? Isn't WCST a relatively safe alternative to street prostitution?

While WCST may be physically safer than street prostitution, our research and experience indicate that the psychological damage that WCST has on victims is profound and permanent. Some child victims of WCST are trafficked and imprisoned in "cybersex dens," and other children are forced or coerced by their family members to offer webcam sex shows, partly because it is perceived as a "safer" way to make money. But the main reason that this campaign is effective is the fact that street prostitutes are only a fraction of the total number of child victims of WCST. WCST occurs in urban areas known for child prostitution, but it is also spreading to rural areas where child prostitution is not common. This is because children with Internet access can be exploited by predators from all over the world, regardless of their physical proximity to predators. This expands the reach of predators beyond just child prostitutes to all vulnerable children with Internet access.

48. Won't this campaign increase the number of predators seeking WCST?

It is possible that predators will learn about WCST from this campaign, but the only way to stop the growth of WCST is to raise global awareness about it and to address the problem directly. Exposing this phenomenon will inspire people to urge their governments to adopt proactive investigation policies. We also believe that this campaign will convince predators that they cannot commit these crimes with impunity.

49. Why didn't you confront the predators directly by showing them the effects that their behavior has on child victims?

The goal of our campaign is to pressure governments to adopt and apply proactive investigation policies in order to identify and stop predators. Additionally, we aim to inform the world about WCST and the traumatizing effects it has on children. Predators are also a part of the target audience of this campaign. They will see the effects of their crimes as well as the global efforts to stop them. They will also see that the Internet is not a lawless space where they can freely abuse children.

50. Do you really expect that law enforcement agencies will be able to catch 100,000 predators before the end of 2014?

Yes. We have absolute faith in the ability of law enforcement agencies around the world to stop crimes against children when they have the mandate and resources to do so. If four Terre des Hommes Netherlands researchers were able to identify 1,000 predators in only 10 weeks, we know that law enforcement agencies around the world can catch at least 100,000 before the end of 2014. Terre des Hommes Netherlands has presented evidence in our research report showing that the global demand for WCST is enormous and that it is easy to identify predators seeking to engage in WCST on public chat rooms and other online spaces. We believe that the universal adoption of proactive investigation

policies will allow the world to take major steps toward stopping this growing form of online child exploitation.

51. If a proactive investigation policy is the solution, then why don't you just pressure governments to change their policies? Why are the petition signatures necessary?

Most governments don't yet recognize WCST as a priority because it is a relatively hidden and unknown form of child exploitation. Terre des Hommes Netherlands decided that mobilizing public opinion on a large scale is the most effective way to pressure governments to adopt proactive investigation policies. A global movement toward positive change is always stronger than the pressure of a single NGO.

52. If someone was convicted seven years ago for engaging in WCST, why do you refer to it as a "new" form of child exploitation?

WCST emerged during the last decade. About seven years ago, when the first conviction was made, WCST was in its infancy and today it is a rapidly expanding, global phenomenon. While it has existed in some form for a few years, the explosion of its popularity is very recent, due in large part to the recent rise in Internet access rates in developing countries. Despite the fact that a predator was convicted seven years ago for engaging in WCST, most governments have still not adopted investigation policies that effectively address the growth of WCST.

53. What was the role of the other partners that Terre des Hommes Netherlands worked together with on this campaign?

During this campaign, Terre des Hommes Netherlands worked in partnership with Google and Avaaz. Avaaz mobilized citizens of the world to sign a petition that urges their governments to take action against WCST. And Google helped us tell the world this story through their YouTube Nonprofit Program. We are extremely grateful to Avaaz and Google for investing so much time, effort, and expertise in this campaign to protect children.

54. How good are the statistics that you refer to in your research report?

The statistics we used in our report have been provided and confirmed by reliable sources, including governments, NGOs, law enforcement agencies, and/or United Nations agencies. Because of the nature of WCST and the fact that it has emerged so recently, precise quantitative data is not always available. When we couldn't find hard data, we relied on estimates provided by reliable organizations or sources with expertise in this field.

55. What are you planning to do with the signatures that you are collecting?

We are planning to deliver the petition signatures to government agencies in charge of justice around the world. By working together with Avaaz we hope to collect a large number of signatures to show

policy makers our common desire to stop these horrific forms of child exploitation before they evolve further. We believe that the signatures of so many people will move decision makers to take stronger action against predators seeking WCST.

56. Shouldn't action also be taken against the financial side of the WCST trade?

Yes. There has been some work by a number of coalitions of credit card and money transfer companies to reduce the ease of transferring money to pay for online child exploitation. But, while those initiatives are helpful, it is impossible for them to identify what each international transaction is paying for. We know from our field research that anonymous international money transfers are easy to perform. As practices in online child exploitation evolve, we hope financial institutions will find new ways to block the transactions made to pay for child exploitation. But we believe that the bulk of the effort to combat online child exploitation is the responsibility of governments and law enforcement agencies.

57. Is there anything else I can do besides signing the petition?

Yes, besides signing the petition you are able to help us by sharing our story via social media and asking others to sign the petition.

REGARDING THE UNDERCOVER RESEARCH

58. How much time did you spend identifying predators online?

Four Terre des Hommes Netherlands researchers spent a combined total of 1,600 hours over the course of 10 weeks working to identify 1,000 predators. But we spent almost a full year researching the phenomenon of WCST, learning about the situation on the ground for child victims in the Philippines, developing a strategy to identify predators, researching the legality of our study and the legal frameworks prohibiting WCST around the world, and developing the computer model of Sweetie.

59. How exactly did you track down the identities of predators?

During chat conversations with predators, they would provide small bits of information. Using the information trails that most people leave on the Internet, we could trace the clues predators provided us to online data that revealed their identities.

The exact method of gathering information from predators and connecting it to online data has been outlined in a comprehensive Investigation Toolkit, which we have shared with law enforcement agencies around the world.

60. Why do the police not already use this method?

Many police and law enforcement agencies apply proactive investigation techniques, including sting operations. For example, in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, law enforcement units have identified and arrested online predators using similar techniques to the one we used during this research. However, only six predators in the world have ever been convicted of engaging in WCST. More predators must be stopped from abusing children this way.

61. What sorts of chat rooms did you go to?

We mainly gathered information on chat rooms that were tailored to children and teens and we avoided chat rooms with explicitly erotic themes. We have shared the names of the chat rooms on which we conducted this research with Interpol and other law enforcement agencies, but we are not publicizing the names of any chat rooms.

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation has estimated that there are 40,000 chat rooms on which child predators pose a threat to children, so the sample of chat rooms on which we gathered information is likely representative of the norm.

62. How did you start a conversation?

Terre des Hommes Netherlands never started conversations with people on chat rooms. We waited for individuals to initiate conversations with the four researchers who were claiming to be prepubertal children. Once that happened, the researchers reminded the individual that he was chatting with a child. If predators requested or accepted an offer to view a child perform a live webcam sex show, the

researchers began working to identify them.

63. What kind of information did you collect on those predators?

We saved all communication with predators, including chat conversations and webcam footage. We also compiled all relevant information on predators that could be found online. The Internet increases the opportunities available to predators seeking to abuse children, but it also offers a number of tools that can be strategically used to catch and identify them.

The Investigation Toolkit, available to all law enforcement agencies, offers a full explanation of how Terre des Hommes Netherlands collected information.

64. What is the difference between your method of identifying predators and hacking?

We identified predators by finding publicly available information on online databases, including social networking sites, online phone books, social networking sites, and search engines. We compared pictures found online with screen captures taken from webcam conversations with predators. The difference between hacking and the method we used is that our method is totally legal and it respects norms of individual privacy. Our method of identifying predators is a highly effective way for law enforcement agencies to lawfully identify online predators.

65. What did you do with the identities of the 1,000 predators and the evidence you collected against them?

We grouped the predators by country and we sent all the information and evidence to Interpol to distribute to local and national law enforcement agencies in the 71 countries in which those 1,000 predators live. What these law enforcement agencies do with the information is up to them. Terre des Hommes Netherlands no longer possesses any information on those predators and we will not make any identifying information public.

66. What exactly did a person have to do or say to be included on your list of predators?

A person had to complete two steps before they were considered predators and before researchers began trying to identify them. First, they had to approach a researcher who was posing on a chat room as a prepubertal child—researchers used chat names that clearly indicated their age (10), gender (female), and location (the Philippines). It was clear that individuals who approached the researchers were interested in interacting with a 10-year-old child. To be certain, researchers again reminded individuals that they were speaking with a 10-year-old.

Second, the individual had to request or accept an offer to view a webcam sex show performed by a 10-year-old. Researchers asked individuals to pay to view the performance. At that point, we considered the individual a predator and we began to work to identify them. Predators included on the list were at least 18 years of age.

For more information, please refer to Terre des Hommes Netherlands report, which is available for download on this site.

67. Did you ever agree on sexual demands, and what exactly did you show these predators.

Yes. We did not always refuse to perform the sexual acts that the predators requested in order to convince predators of our cover story or to extract more information from them. It was necessary to play a convincing role in order to get the information we needed.

We never showed any sexual images. In fact, during most of our interactions with predators, we never showed any images at all, relying mostly on words. Sweetie only appeared with clothes on. She was used to gain the trust of predators, but the moment that we had gotten enough identifying and incriminating information from a predator, we closed the connection.

68. Were all conversations sexually explicit?

No, on rare occasions individuals were only interested to know why such a young child would be on a public chat room. However, roughly 99% of all conversations we had on public chat rooms were sexually explicit in nature.

69. Did you ever ask for money, or did you receive it?

We always asked predators to commit to pay a specific amount of money in exchange for a webcam sex show, but no money was ever actually sent or received. The expression of willingness to pay for a webcam sex show was enough to prove that a predator was serious about wanting to engage in WCST. Receiving money would have complicated our research, both practically and legally.

70. Are there differences between the conversations you had with predators?

Yes, there were huge differences between conversations we had with different predators. Some conversations were friendly in tone and others were angry and aggressive. Some predators asked about the hobbies and lives of our alter egos before eventually asking for webcam sex shows, while other predators were only interested in talking about sex. Some predators talked about wanting to form an emotional as well as sexual connection with a child, while others wanted only to sexually dominate children. Among the most disturbing predators we interacted with were the ones who admitted to having sexually abused children in the past and the ones who described their future plans to visit developing countries in Asia to engage in child sex tourism.

71. Can you describe the kind of person you encountered most frequently? If your list could be boiled down into one person, what would he be like?

If anything, our list shows that there is no typical profile of an online predator. The 1,000 predators we identified varied in backgrounds and communication styles from very direct and aggressive types to polite, friendly types with good jobs and families. We found that our previous stereotypes of online predators were quickly dismantled by the diversity of the predators with whom we interacted. The one common theme we noticed was that most predators live in developed countries.

72. How many men did you identify?

We identified 999 male predators and 1 female predator.

73. Do you have proof that you caught 1,000 people?

Yes. The information collected by Terre des Hommes Netherlands on the 1,000 predators was compiled and grouped by country. We handed over all files and information to Interpol, who will distribute it to local and national law enforcement agencies. It is, therefore, no longer in our possession, but we can prove that we caught all of these people.

74. Does the location of the predators you identified tell us anything about where most predators live?

The findings of our research suggest that most predators seeking to engage in WCST come from wealthier nations. Furthermore, Filipino child victims of WCST whom Terre des Hommes Netherlands has interviewed say that most predators who pay them for webcam performances are from Europe, Australia, and North America.

However, it is not possible to extrapolate conclusions from our data to state that one specific country has a higher number of child predators than another country.

75. Are all predators careless with their personal information?

No. During our research, some predators were extremely careless, while others hid their identities very well. However, most people seemed less hesitant to give out some small clues, such as e-mail addresses or Skype names, which could be connected to identifying information online. That makes it possible to identify predators without breaking any laws or privacy norms and without hacking computers.

76. How easy is it to find predators online?

Predators are very easy to find online. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates that there are 40,000 chat rooms on which predators lurk.

77. Is this method of investigation legal?

The investigation technique we used in this research was a variety of the “sting operation,” and it is entirely legal for our researchers to conduct such operations. However, some countries do not allow their law enforcement agencies to use sting operations. But there are a variety of other proactive investigation techniques available. Essentially, proactive investigation means that law enforcement agencies detect crimes and prosecute perpetrators without relying on victims to report crimes.

78. Is this technique of catching predators not a form of entrapment?

No. Our strategy in chat rooms was a derivation of a traditional investigation technique called a “sting operation.” Entrapment occurs when law enforcement agents pressure a person to commit a crime who would not otherwise be willing to commit that crime. Sting operations involve using a lure and creating an opportunity for offenders to commit a crime—an opportunity that individuals inclined to commit a crime will inevitably take. There is no pressure or inducement involved in sting operations, as it is a passive technique of catching offenders who are already inclined to commit a crime.

79. During your research, did you ever hack the computers of predators?

Never. Terre des Hommes Netherlands does not believe in hacking because it is illegal and it is against our values. Despite the terrible crimes of these predators, laws and the principle of personal privacy must be respected.

80. How can you be sure that you didn’t get anyone into trouble who doesn’t deserve to be in trouble?

Terre des Hommes Netherlands stands 100% behind the work we have done. There is no doubt in our minds that any of the 1,000 individuals on our list are predators who threaten the wellbeing of children around the world.

We believe that a person can be considered a predator if they initiate a conversation with someone whom they believe to be prepubertal child and agree to pay to view a sexually explicit webcam show performed by a child. Our objective was to identify people whom we believed beyond any reasonable doubt to be predators and to prove the effectiveness of our investigation technique as a solution to this problem.

As further proof of the intentions of these predators, most of them sat naked behind their webcams, or confronted us with extreme sexual requests, or attempted to send us pornographic images. It is up to law enforcement agencies to use the evidence that we provided them on the 1,000 predators and it is up to judges to determine whether that evidence is admissible in court.

81. If the men you were speaking to were not actually speaking to a minor, did they actually commit a crime?

Predators who actively attempt to sexually exploit someone claiming to be a prepubertal child demonstrate the intention to commit sex crimes against real children. The answer to this question depends on the laws of the country in which a predator lives, but according to the laws of most countries, these predators have committed serious crimes.

82. Were these predators really looking for a young child to abuse?

Yes. All of the individuals with whom our researchers interacted on public chat rooms initiated conversations in response to seeing the researchers’ chat names, which indicated that they were

prepubertal Filipino children (e.g., “10 f Philippines”). Whether or not this was predators’ initial plan when they logged in to the public chat room is irrelevant because they made the decision the moment they saw the researchers’ alter ego online.

83. Is it possible that some of the predators were not specifically looking for this, but simply came in contact with you and accepted your offer?

Absolutely. But the predator always initiated contact. This means that they would have read the researchers chat names (e.g., “10 f Philippines”), understood that they were prepubertal Filipino children, and started a conversation. It was always their choice and they could have refused to engage in sexual conversation.

84. Is it possible that a predator was unaware of the age of your alter ego?

No. During each conversation, researchers followed a standardized protocol. That protocol required that researchers explicitly remind individuals on two separate occasions that they were chatting with a prepubertal Filipina girl. In addition, researchers used chat names that indicated the age, gender, and location of their alter egos (e.g., “10 f Philippines”).

85. Did you capture screen shots and webcam footage of predators without their consent?

Indeed. We have no obligation, legal or otherwise, to get consent from predators while capturing their still or moving images when they voluntarily show themselves to strangers on public chat rooms.

86. Do you want to reduce Internet privacy to protect children from predators?

No. We value privacy both online and offline and we have no interest in seeing Internet privacy standards lowered. This campaign was based on the desire to protect children from predators, but we believe that the sphere of personal privacy must be respected. That is partly why we will not publicize the names of the 1,000 identified predators. It is also why our investigation was conducted exclusively in public online spaces and the identifying information of predators was collected using only publicly available records and data provided by the predators themselves. There is no need to reduce privacy in the struggle to end WCST.

87. How does the 3-D animation work?

Sweetie was created using cutting-edge animation technology that is also used in Hollywood films. First, her face and body were modeled to resemble a 10-year-old Filipina girl. In that model, specific points were marked at which her joints and muscles move. Then we used motion sensors to record the exact sequence of motions that a person performs while chatting with people online—typing, smiling, frowning, looking up, down, and side to side. Those motions were captured and recorded from a human model wearing motion sensors and the motion sequences were programmed into an application that controls the way Sweetie moves on command. We used a control board that had pre-programmed motions and facial expressions, so while the researchers chatted with predators, predators would see

Sweetie typing while the researchers typed to ensure precise timing.

88. Did anyone think that the 3-D model was not real?

No. Everyone who encountered Sweetie, the 3-D model, appeared to believe that she was a real Filipina girl. Before using Sweetie in chat rooms, we tested convincingness of her appearance on staff at Terre des Hommes Netherlands and on external observers. All sources confirmed that Sweetie would be effective in her role.

89. Did you only work with Sweetie?

No, we mainly used no images or technology, relying only on telling predators a story—that we were 10-year-old Filipina girls. Sweetie was used later in the research process to compare the effectiveness of using a high-tech 3D model in gaining information from predators with the effectiveness of the low-tech method using only alter egos. We assume that most police units will not have access to 3D models with which to conduct this kind of investigation, so our Investigation Toolkit is based mainly on our experience using alter egos.

90. Why did you need Sweetie, wasn't an alter ego enough?

We conducted most of this research using only alter egos. Sweetie was not an essential part of the operation. But she made it easier for our researchers to persuade predators to supply identifying information, because it offered “confirmation” that they were really interacting with a prepubertal child. Sweetie was mainly used to give a face to the tens of thousands of child victims of WCST that our campaign aims to protect, and to show law enforcement agencies how proactive investigation techniques can be used to identify and stop online predators.

91. Can this be done without using high-tech animation?

Yes. Most of our research and undercover operations were conducted without the use of Sweetie. However, using Sweetie simplified the process and helped persuade predators that they were interacting with a prepubertal child. That led predators to more quickly divulge personally identifying information.

92. Did anyone ever try to stop you from doing what you're doing?

Yes. On very rare occasions, individuals in chat rooms would advise us to leave the chat room to find a more suitable environment for young children. They expressed concern that chat rooms were dangerous places on which predators seek to harass children.

93. What was it like to talk to all these predators online about sex with children? Was it psychologically difficult?

It was enormously stressful to interact on a daily basis with child predators. The constant stream of sexual requests from predators who believed they were chatting with prepubertal children was hard to process. But during the research process researchers had regular psychological support from trained professionals, and they strongly believed that this difficult project was essential to raising global awareness about the growth of WCST.

94. Is the research that Terre des Hommes Netherlands has conducted on WCST accessible to the public, and how can I get the Investigation Toolkit?

Our research report on WCST is free to the public and it is available for download on our website (www.terredeshommes.nl) and on our YouTube page (www.youtube.com/sweetie). The Investigation Toolkit is only available to employees of law enforcement agencies. We also offer training workshops for employees of law enforcement agencies around the world who seek to gain practical knowledge about how to apply this proven-effective proactive investigation method.