

IDLO-UNODC-INL partner to localize and mainstream cybercrime training modules for justice sector agencies in the Philippines

Manila, Philippines - Ruth Tingcang of Leyte is a police investigator that has been working on a cyberscam case involving a cryptocurrency investment scam for the last 2 years. Her case, involving a cryptocurrency scam in Leyte, has been pending at the local court because of various delays. “It’s always hard to explain the intricacies of cybercrime to prosecutors and judges. The intense work hours on digital forensics and financial crime investigation sometimes seemingly do not matter to many of them. And that can be frustrating.”

This is not an isolated incident but is faced by many law enforcement agents working on cybercrime cases across the Philippines. Cybercrime-related incidents in the Philippines are one of the fastest growing crimes, with the Department of Justice noting that in 2023 alone, cybercrimes increased by 400 percent.

Law enforcement agents, prosecutors and court staff often handle a substantial workload and keeping up with new legal trends, legal updates, best practices and procedural updates to keep up with new cases such as cryptocurrency scams require time and other resources that may not be readily available for all.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Global Programme on Cybercrime with support from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) has been working together to localize and mainstream cryptocurrency investigation modules for justice sector agencies.

“Our common goal is to make it easier for justice sector agencies to be able to access materials that will help them better prepare for the challenge of investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating cybercrime cases.” said Mr. Daniele Marchesi, UNODC Country Manager for the Philippine Programme Office, during the opening ceremony of the ***Pilot test and workshop on the UNODC eLearning modules on cryptocurrency investigation for justice sector agencies*** held at the B Hotel, Quezon City on Tuesday, 24 September while speaking to representatives from the Department of Justice, Office of the Ombudsman, Anti-Money Laundering Council Secretariat, Office of the Court Administrator, Philippine Judicial Academy and officers from various cybercrime courts.

“INL is proud to support the collaboration between the Philippine government, UNODC, and IDLO in localizing and mainstreaming cybercrime training for justice sector agencies in the Philippines,” said INL Director Kate Riche. “This initiative is crucial in empowering our local law enforcement and judicial officials with the skills and knowledge needed to address the

evolving challenges of cybercrime. Together, we are committed to enhancing the country's capacity to safeguard its digital landscape and uphold justice for all Filipinos.”

Siavash Rahbari, country manager for IDLO Philippines also noted that "IDLO enjoys a productive partnership with UNODC globally, and it is a pleasure to reflect that locally here in the Philippines."

For his part, Dr. Joshua James, Regional Counter-Cybercrime Coordinator highlighted that “the collaboration builds on the many years that our organizations have worked together with the INL and the work that they do in the Philippines. Our work together is integral in ensuring that the Philippine justice system is inclusive and effective in addressing cybercrimes.”

Atty. Russel Olado who has recently been appointed as a regional trial court judge is thankful to have attended the pilot test – “Crypto currency scams were not taught in law school and just being here makes me more confident about having to face cases that involve crypto and other technologies in the future.”

With continued national and international collaborations like these, criminal justice practitioners like Patrolwoman Tingcang and Judge Olado will be able to spend less time fighting technology, and more time keeping their communities safe.