Appendix III: Letter to the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council

January 30, 2020

Hon. Tricia Clare A. Oco
Executive Director
Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council
56 Matintinman Street, Teacher’s Village East,
Quezon City, Philippines 1101

Re: Impact of “Drug War” on Children

Dear Atty. Oco:

I am writing to you on behalf of Human Rights Watch, a global non-governmental organization that monitors violations of human rights by state and non-state actors in more than 90 countries around the world, including the Philippines.

We would sincerely appreciate receiving the benefit of your knowledge and expertise in response to our questions below.

Human Rights Watch has recently conducted research on the impact on children of the government’s “war on drugs.” We interviewed 46 people – 30 children; 24 adults who are either parents, relatives, or guardians to those children; and 12 individuals from several non-governmental organizations and government offices – for this research.

Among those who have perished in the “drug war” are children who were either targeted in police operations or were struck by gunfire during drug raids. The impact of the “drug war,” however, goes beyond the physical violence inflicted on these children.

The children told us of the trauma they suffered after witnessing the killing of a parent or other loved ones. Several were forced to go into hiding or relocated to other communities because they feared for their lives. A number of children stopped going to school because of a lack of finances caused by the loss of the family breadwinner. Several experienced bullying in school and in their community because of the stigma of alleged drug use within the family. Some children were forced to live in extreme poverty and have had no choice but to work full time at too young an age. Some ended up living in the streets, further exposing themselves to violence and other harm.
Human Rights Watch is committed to producing material that is well-informed and objective. We hope you or your staff would be able to provide written answers to the questions below so that your views and responses are accurately reflected in our reporting. In order for us to take your answers into account in our forthcoming report, we would appreciate a written response by February 28, 2020. If you have any questions about this request, please do not hesitate to contact me at [redacted].

Thank you very much for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Phil Robertson
Deputy Asia Director
Human Rights Watch

Please send your reply by email or fax to:

Racquel Legenwood
Asia Coordinator
Human Rights Watch
1275 K Street NW, Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20005
QUESTIONS FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OCHO:

3) Does the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC) have specific programs or policies for the children left behind by victims of the “drug war”? Have any programs or policies been created specifically to address the impact of “drug war” killings on child dependents of victims, many of whom live in poor communities? If so, when were these programs established and what was the role of the JJWC in formulating them?

2) If such programs exist, please provide details about the activities and how they are carried out. For example, do programs provide financial assistance, such as funeral/burial costs (beyond the assistance already provided by the DSWD for indigent persons), health expenses, or other assistance?

3) Has the JJWC ever been consulted by the national government and/or agencies tasked with pursuing the “drug war” to address the impacts of the campaign on children? If so, please provide information about these consultations, including when they happened, who was involved, what was discussed, and what concrete outcomes came from the consultations.

4) Have families affected by “drug war” killings been covered by the government’s conditional cash transfer program? If so, how many victims or their families have received such assistance and what is the total sum of cash provided? Please provide an appropriate breakdown of any transfers made so the amount paid in individual cases can be determined.

5) Did the JJWC provide support for the psychological and mental health needs of children and families directly affected by the “drug war”? If yes, what program interventions have been done, and how many persons have benefited from such support?

6) Did the JJWC make regular site visits to residences of children left behind to ensure that their specific needs are being taken care of? If so, please provide additional information about the methodology behind these visits, and the result of the visits.

7) Has the JJWC liaised with other government agencies tasked with the welfare of children, such as the Department of Health and the Department of Education, to discuss the impact of the anti-drug campaign on children and the interventions needed to help those children? If so, when did these engagements occur and what were the specific outcomes of this coordinated engagement? Did any specific programs to help children arise from these liaison efforts and if so, please describe those programs?

8) Has the JJWC actively sought to protect the children of “drug war” victims, for instance by making sure that shelter is provided to children who have no dependents, or acted on their behalf in cases where these children facing bullying in school or their community, have had to drop out of school to work, or are compelled to live in the streets?

9) Please provide any additional information that you think would be helpful for Human Rights Watch to fully understand how the Philippines is assisting the child dependents of victims of the “drug war.”

Thank you for your time and attention to this inquiry.