



**STOP**

**SEX TRAFFICKING  
OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**



# SEX TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN IN THE PHILIPPINES

## What is child trafficking?

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation.

UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime

A child is anyone under the age of 18 years.

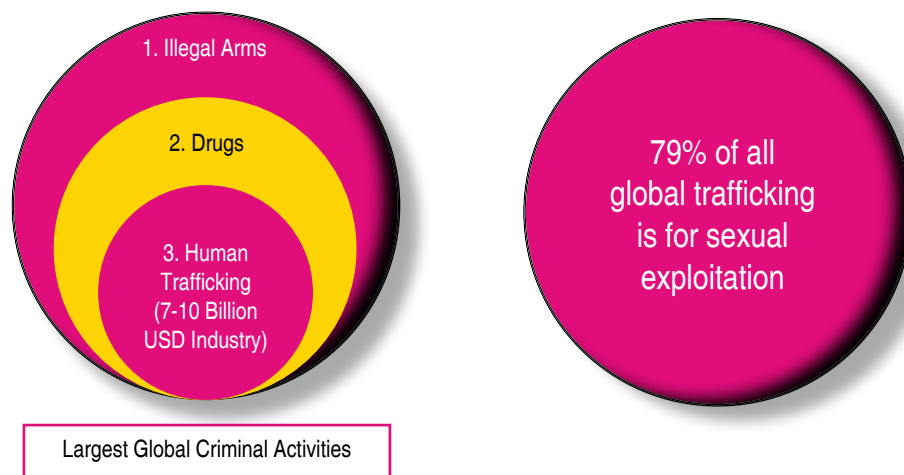
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

## What's the problem?

### GLOBAL SEX TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is a complex phenomenon fueled by the tremendous growth in the global sex market. Exploitation is driven by poverty, uneven development, official corruption, gender discrimination, harmful traditional and cultural practices, civil unrest, natural disasters and lack of political will to end it.

The number of child victims trafficked worldwide for sexual exploitation or cheap labour on an annual basis is 1.2 million.<sup>1</sup> Human trafficking, the third largest international crime, following illegal drugs and arms trafficking, is believed to be worth billions of dollars each year. Driving the trade is the demand for commercial sexual exploitation. Seventy-nine percent of all global trafficking is for sexual exploitation.<sup>2</sup>



### CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN THE PHILIPPINES

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government agencies estimate that in the Philippines alone, 60,000 to 100,000 children are trafficked annually (through both cross-border and internal trafficking), and most of these are girls to be sexually exploited.<sup>3</sup> The victims are predominantly girls between 14 and 17 years old who come from the more impoverished parts of the country.<sup>4</sup>

The Philippines Social Welfare Department estimates that there are up to 200,000 children on the streets of Manila, and that at least one tenth are victims of trafficking.<sup>5</sup>

The Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development states that the annual average increase of prostituted children is 3266. The Philippines also ranks fourth in the world in terms of countries with the highest number of prostituted children.<sup>6</sup>

## Who gets trafficked?

Internal trafficking is a major concern in the Philippines. Adults and children are trafficked domestically from poor, rural areas in the southern and central parts of the country to major urban centres, especially Metro Manila and Cebu, but also increasingly to cities in Mindanao. A significant percentage of the victims of internal trafficking are from Mindanao and said to be fleeing the poverty and violence in their home areas.<sup>7</sup>

Victims are usually sent to places where bars and video/karaoke establishments cater to tourists, or they are offered false jobs in restaurants, factories and households in Manila. Once they reach their destination, they may be locked up, drugged, forced to provide sexual services and heavily guarded. Children trafficked for labour purposes are also reported to be sexually abused by their employers.<sup>8</sup>

For children trafficked abroad, Malaysia and Japan are the primary receiving countries. Philippino women and girls are also trafficked for sexual exploitation to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Africa, North America, and Europe.<sup>9</sup> The Philippines is also a transit point for trafficking victims from the People's Republic of China.<sup>10</sup>

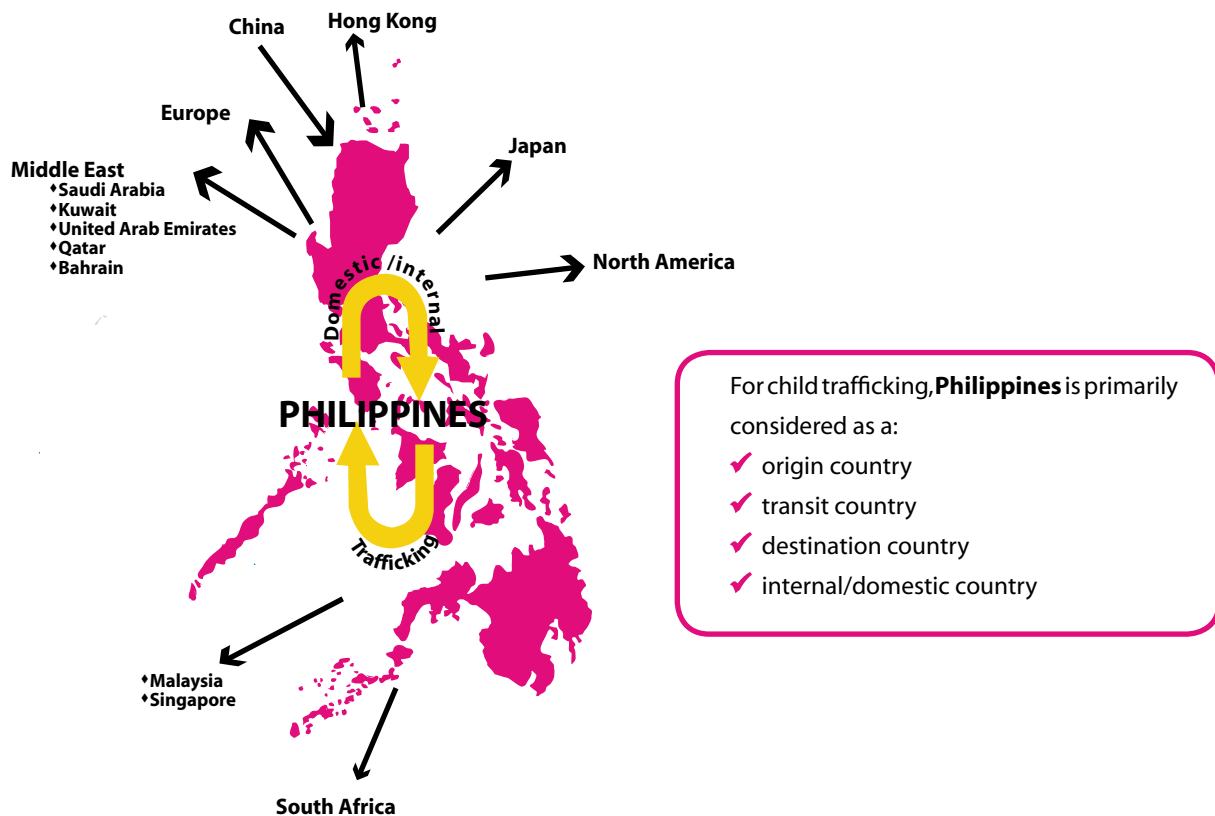
The demand for sex drives child sex trafficking globally, while poverty, a high unemployment rate, a cultural propensity towards migration, a weak rule-of-law environment, and sex tourism all contribute to significant trafficking activity in the Philippines.

Children are especially vulnerable to being trafficked because they are often less educated, easy to overpower and easy to convince that they must do what an adult tells them to do. Children may also be in a position where they believe they must help to support their families and may be sold or sent abroad by family members to do so. Street children, children in refugee camps, children whose family and community life has been disrupted and do not have someone to look out for them are all especially vulnerable to human trafficking.

Children may be at greater risk of trafficking from places where they are less protected. This may be because the law is weak or not properly enforced, or because children are less aware of the risks of trafficking and are more easily deceived. Countries are considered:

- 'Sending' or 'origin' - from where children are sent;
- 'Transit' - where the children might be moved through and temporarily kept on the way to their final destination; and
- 'Receiving' or 'destination' - where the children finally end up.

Depending on the reason for trafficking, some countries might be only sending, while others might be both sending and transit. The Philippines is primarily a sending country, but it is also a transit and destination country for trafficking in children for sexual purposes.



## CASE STUDY

### Teenage girl trafficked to Manila

Julia was 17 when a man approached her on the street in General Santos, a city in the southern Philippines, and offered her a job as a housemaid in Manila. She was promised a monthly salary of US\$55, a large sum for a girl whose parents earn less than half that amount in a month. All the man asked of Julia was that she lied about her age and left that same night. Together with four other teenage girls, Julia boarded a passenger ship bound for Manila. Julia was rescued from her traffickers when a fellow passenger learned that the girls were going to be sold to a prostitution den and promptly reported the situation to the authorities.<sup>11</sup>

## Who creates demand?

Traffickers prey on children and young people to meet the sexual demands of paedophiles and people who pay for sex. Any person who patronises the commercial sex market may end up sexually exploiting a child. There is actually no common profile of perpetrators who sexually exploit children – they may be young, old, married, single; they come from all kinds of socio-economic backgrounds and work in all kinds of professions. In the Philippines, child sex abusers are both foreigners – mainly Japanese, Chinese, Korean, European and North American - and local men, including military, taxi drivers, politicians, police, businessmen, and students.<sup>12</sup>

### CASE STUDIES

#### **Korean child sex abusers in the Philippines**

A field survey of prostitutes in the Philippines revealed that some male South Korean college students reportedly seek out female minors and exchange sex for a place for the girls to live. Sixty-eight per cent of the prostitutes surveyed said that they were physically abused by their South Korean “clients”. They testified that many Korean men were “obsessed” with having sex with minors, and that they tend to refuse to wear condoms. There have also been reports of female Filipino minors being rescued from Korean-run brothels in the Philippines.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Girl trafficked into ‘cyber sex den’**

Police rescued sixteen-year old ‘Marina’ and at least a dozen other girls from a suspected “cyber sex den” in Bacoor, Cavite. Weighed down by mixed feelings of relief, guilt and shame, Marina felt thankful that she would no longer have to perform sexual acts in front of the camera for customers abroad. Marina blamed herself for allowing it happen in exchange for a few thousands pesos that she sent to her family.

Marina said she was recruited in her home province as a waitress only to find out later that there was no restaurant waiting for her. With nobody to inform and no resources to make a getaway, she was forced to stay and work at the sex joint.<sup>14</sup>

## Who are the traffickers?

In the Philippines, people involved in trafficking include syndicates, foreign gangs, relatives and friends of the victim, and also recruitment agencies.

There is anecdotal evidence that some lower-level officials such as customs officers, border guards, immigration officials and local police have received bribes from traffickers or have otherwise facilitated trafficking.<sup>15</sup>

### CASE STUDIES

#### **Immigration officer apprehended for child sex trafficking**

On 17 September 2008, an officer of the Bureau of Immigration at Ninoy Aquino International Airport was apprehended for her alleged role in aiding the trafficking of 17 Mindanao minors to Syria and Jordan. A city prosecutor later dismissed the charge against the officer because of insufficient evidence, but filed trafficking charges against two accomplices.<sup>16</sup>

### American, Filipina bar owners arrested on charges related to child sex abuse

In March 2008, police arrested an American national and his Filipina wife, and rescued 12 minors they allegedly employed as waitresses, during a raid on the suspects' bar in Barangay Basak, Lapu-Lapu City. Another American and an Australian, were also detained after allegedly meddling in the rescue effort. Lapu-Lapu City police said that the Australian, Macky Douglas, 54, was found with a naked worker of the bar inside a VIP room and had in his possession a video camera and six pictures of naked females, all minors.<sup>17</sup>

## How can we stop the trafficking of children?

### LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- More decisive action must be taken by the Government to eliminate child abuse and exploitation in identified tourist destinations, including fostering international and regional cooperation to track down the increasing number of victims and perpetrators of online child pornography.
- More training of law enforcement officers and prosecutors is needed on the use of the anti-trafficking law and increased prosecution of those exploiting victims, including public officials who profit from or are involved in trafficking.
- The Philippines must adopt the *ASEAN Declaration against Trafficking in Persons, Particularly Women and Children*. While the Philippines has ratified the main international conventions related to the trafficking of children, it must properly report on and comply with the recommendations of the governing bodies as it agreed to do as a signatory to the relevant conventions.

International Conventions/Laws	Date of Ratification by the Philippines	Date of Reports Submitted	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for the Philippines
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	21 August 1990	Initial report: 21 September 1993 2nd report: 23 April 2003 Next report due 19 September 2007 but has not yet been submitted	The Philippines Government must sufficiently meet recommendations from the previous report concerning the minimum age of criminal responsibility and sexual consent, and the lack of a comprehensive juvenile justice system. Other recommendations include establishment of local councils for the protection of children; strengthening the investigation of individual complaints filed by children in a child-sensitive manner; establishing additional mechanisms for data collection, disaggregated by age for all persons under 18 years, gender, urban and rural areas and by those groups of children who are in need of special protection and promotion of the CRC; and systematic training of professional groups working with, and for, children, such as judges, lawyers, law enforcement personnel, teachers, school administrators and health personnel.

International Conventions/Laws	Date of Ratification by the Philippines	Date of Reports Submitted	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Recommendations for the Philippines
Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	28 May 2002	28 June 2004 but has not yet been submitted	N/A
The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress & Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women & Children	28 May 2002	N/A	N/A
ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour	28 November 2000	N/A	N/A

## PREVENTION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING AND VICTIM PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

- Standards of care, including training for service providers for trafficked children should be adopted and disseminated widely, and programmes and services for the recovery and reintegration of survivors of child trafficking should be established and/or improved.
- Programmes and services providing alternative sources of livelihood to families in areas affected by political unrest are needed to help prevent child trafficking.
- Public awareness activities to prevent child trafficking must be increased.
- Mass media must uphold the principles indicated in the *Guide for Media Practitioners on the Reporting and Coverage of Cases Involving Children*. As a partner in the promotion of child rights and child protection, media is encouraged to relay consistent rights-based messages through a balanced approach when covering cases of child victims of exploitation and trafficking.
- Child victims of trafficking must be provided with health and psychosocial care, vocational training, legal counseling and repatriation/reintegration services; regular counseling sessions must be provided for families of reintegrated children.
- Nationwide birth registration to prevent the falsification of passports and other legal documents must be fully implemented, as this is a valuable protective mechanism against child trafficking.
- Research and documentation on the issues and cases of child trafficking must be continued, including establishing a systematic structure on the documentation and reporting of cases.

## TO REPORT A SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD TRAFFICKING, CONTACT:

**Bantay bata 163** is a child helpline available 24 hours a day, in five of the 17 regions in the Philippines. To report an incident of trafficking, dial: 163.



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## MORE INFORMATION

- ECPAT Philippines: [ecpatphi@i-manila.com.ph](mailto:ecpatphi@i-manila.com.ph)
- ECPAT International: [www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)
- The Body Shop and ECPAT Stop Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign : [www.thebodyshop.com/stop](http://www.thebodyshop.com/stop)





## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> UNICEF, *UNICEF calls for increased efforts to prevent trafficking of children*. 16 June 2007. [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_40002.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_40002.html)
- <sup>2</sup> UNODC. *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. 2009. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>
- <sup>3</sup> Humantrafficking.org. *Philippines*. Information accessed on 11 March 2009 from: <http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/philippines>
- <sup>4</sup> ECPAT Philippines and Terre des Hommes-Netherlands. *Endangered Generation: Child Trafficking in the Philippines for Sexual Purposes*. 2004.
- <sup>5</sup> Ng, Rolando. 'Music therapy to save children from Manila's streets'. Reuters. accessed on 11 March 2009 from: <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/nation/youth/02/25/09/music-therapy-save-children-manilas-streets>
- <sup>6</sup> Child Protection in the Philippines. *Facts and Figures*. Information accessed on 12 March 2009 from <http://www.childprotection.org.ph/factsfigures/index.html>
- <sup>7</sup> US State Department. *2008 Human Rights Report: Philippines*. 2008.
- <sup>8</sup> ECPAT Philippines and Terre des Hommes-Netherlands. *Endangered Generation: Child Trafficking in the Philippines for Sexual Purposes*. 2004.
- <sup>9</sup> Humantrafficking.org. *Philippines*. Information accessed on 11 March 2009 from <http://www.humantrafficking.org/countries/philippines>
- <sup>10</sup> US State Department. *2006 Human Rights Report: Philippines*. 2008. 2006.
- <sup>11</sup> Conde, Carlos. 'Shipments of children, a darkly growing trade,' *International Herald Tribune*, 9 April 2005. Accessed 11 March 2009 from: <http://carlosconde.com/2005/04/09/shipments-of-children-a-darkly-growing-trade/>
- <sup>12</sup> ECPAT Philippines and Terre des Hommes-Netherlands. *Endangered Generation: Child Trafficking in the Philippines for Sexual Purposes*. 2004.
- <sup>13</sup> 'Sex trade in Southeast Asia sees increase of Korean males'. *The Hankyoreh*. 6 December 2006. Accessed 11 March 2009 from: [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/176492.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/176492.html)
- <sup>14</sup> 'Child pornography: Evil that preys silently on poor Filipino children'. *GMA News.TV*. 18 November 2008. Accessed 13 March 2009 from: <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/134282/Child-pornography-Evil-that-preys-silently-on-poor-Filipino-children>
- <sup>15</sup> US State Department. *2008 Human Rights Report: Philippines*. 2008.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> 'Police arrests American, Filipina wife for child labor in Lapu-Lapu resto-bar'. *Sun-Star Cebu*. 17 March 2008. Accessed 11 March 2009 from: <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/static/ceb/2008/03/17/news/police.arrests.american.filipina.wife.for.child.labor.in.lapu.lapu.resto.bar.html>



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