

## **Business on the Frontlines VIII, 2016 Trafficking in persons, Philippines**

Human trafficking is a tragedy that plagues many parts of the world, including the Philippines. In the Philippines, there are approximately 300,000 to 400,000 women and 60,000 to 100,000 children trafficking victims annually. As an international child sponsorship organization with little experience or programming in this space, World Vision in Philippines as BOTFL conduct an exploratory investigation of the causes, drivers, facilitators of child sex trafficking.

### **What was the problem?**

For generations, it has become customary for Filipinos to leave their villages, their home islands, and even their country for improved work opportunities. Indeed, perhaps 10 million Filipinos work overseas, with many more migrating to urban areas. Regrettably, hidden within these legitimate massive migration lies the dark stories of those lured from home, who then fall through the society's cracks into sex trafficking.

### **What did we do?**

Prior to the in-country visit, the team's extensive research efforts revealed just how little data exists regarding child sex trafficking in Philippines. Review of Internet and other marketing materials regarding sex tourism offerings combined with detailed examination of personal stories published by survivors enabled the team to develop both a rudimentary supply chain for child sex trafficking and high level income statements for the perpetrators of this crime.

On the ground, the team conducted over 100 interviews in Manila, Mindanao, Cebu and Tacloban with local and national government officials, judges, NGO staff, religious leaders, educators, businessmen, governors, mayors, and even victims, illegal recruiting agents, massage parlor owners, pimps, and drug dealers. The team developed three distinct business models for the market for sex with children: 1) the traditional street-level prostitution, 2) the organized crime syndicate model and 3) the developing cyber-trafficking.

### **What was the turning point?**

Despite the best efforts of multiple NGOs and government agencies to address the child trafficking in Philippines, this remains as an enormous tragedy. The majority of current interventions focus on either advocacy or rescue and rehabilitation. Interventions for prevention are either informal or not yet implemented. Finally, despite interviews with experts in the field and the team's own data gathering, no one could articulate the reasons why one family's children are trafficked while their neighbors' are not.



*Child sex trafficking survivors, Mindanao, 2016, Photo Daniela Gonzalez Balaguer*

**What was the recommendation?**

The team’s collaboration with World Vision harnessed the unique strengths of both organizations. World Vision is respected for its expertise in advocacy, community engagement, and child protection. As a major research university, Notre Dame possesses the infrastructure needed to take on major research efforts. The joint BOTFL-WV team proposed to conduct potentially the first ever Randomized Control Test (RCT) in child trafficking, in order to collect data and design long term interventions that help to prevent the child trafficking in Philippines. The team helped WV apply for a competitive Innovation Fund grant proposal.

**What actually happened?**

Without BOTFL help in building a basic understanding of the workings of the child sex market, World Vision leaders would not have made a major strategic commitment to preventing child sex trafficking. World Vision and Notre Dame are currently collaborating on both further research initiatives and also creating a SMS platform to gather data on cases of the child trafficking.

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