

Committee on the Application of Standards

Date: 19 May 2025

Governments appearing on the preliminary list of individual cases have the opportunity, if they so wish, to supply on a purely voluntary basis, written information before 19 May 2025.

► Information on the application of ratified Conventions supplied by governments on the preliminary list of individual cases

Philippines (ratification: 2005)

Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)

The Government has provided the following written information.

Institutional and Strategic Framework

The Government reaffirms its commitment to combat trafficking in persons for both labour and sexual exploitation, particularly affecting women and girls. The Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), composed of 28 government agencies and civil society organizations, implements the 2023–2027 National Strategic Action Plan anchored on four pillars: Prevention, Protection and Reintegration, Prosecution, and Coordination. Training and awareness-raising campaigns on the Plan are undertaken across the country.

The IACAT established thematic inter-agency committees to tackle priority trafficking issues, including advocacy, organ trafficking, illegal adoption, irregular migration and overseas Filipinos.

At the local level, the Government established Local Committees on Anti-Trafficking and Violence Against Women and Their Children (LCAT-VAWC) across 57 provinces, 127 cities, and 1,237 municipalities. These committees implement anti-trafficking initiatives, especially in rural and remote areas, by monitoring cases, facilitating victim identification and referral, and conducting community-based prevention and reintegration programmes. Over 28,292 Barangay Violence Against Women Desks have been set up nationwide to provide immediate assistance to victims. These committees are strengthened with the revision of DILG-DSWD-DOJ Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2022-001, Series of 2022, and have been tasked to strengthen grassroots vigilance and direct service delivery, particularly to women and children in rural and conflict-affected areas.

The Barangay IACAT programme was redesigned into a three-day grassroots activation campaign to promote community vigilance, and increase awareness on trafficking in persons (TIP). Through structured anti-trafficking modules, the programme engages local officials,

barangay workers, youth, and residents to empower communities in preventing and responding to trafficking.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) also issued Memorandum Circular No. 2024-094, integrating Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation (OSAEC) and Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials (CSAEM) indicators into the Child-Friendly Local Governance Audit (CFLGA). Additionally, the DILG issued Memorandum Circular No. 2024-140, which provides local government units (LGUs) with detailed guidelines for enacting an ordinance to address OSAEC-CSAEM at the community level.

The IACAT, in partnership with the International Justice Mission (IJM), is developing the IACAT Protect Portal, a web tool designed to enhance the collection, management, and analysis of TIP cases from the current Prosecutors' TIP Case Management System. This will support law enforcement and prosecutors through monitoring and managing TIP cases more effectively.

The IACAT has strengthened the operations of the 1343 Actionline by partnering with a third-party service provider to serve as a channel for victims and the public to report incidents of TIP and other related cases. From 2022 to 2024, the hotline received a total of 5,433 calls, resulting in the verification of 100 actual cases and assistance given to 53 victims.

As of June 2024, the Philippines has maintained a Tier 1 ranking in the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report for nine consecutive years. This reflects the country's sustained efforts in combating trafficking and forced labour.

Law Enforcement Measures and Penalties

The Government has improved law enforcement and prosecutorial action against traffickers. From 2022 to 2024, the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) conducted 1,179 anti-TIP operations, resulting in the rescue of 2,350 victims and the arrest of 982 suspects. In 2023, the NBI and PNP investigated 417 trafficking cases, while the Department of Justice (DOJ) prosecuted 264 alleged traffickers, 217 for sex trafficking and 47 for labour trafficking. In 2024, the DOJ prosecuted 444 TIP cases, achieving an 85 per cent case disposal rate. From 2022 to 2024, courts secured 636 TIP-related convictions, 362 under the TIP Act and 274 under related laws, including the Cybercrime and OSAEC-CSAEM laws. Of the 394 individuals convicted, 57 were for labour trafficking.

Convicted traffickers received sentences ranging from four years to life imprisonment and fines ranging from 50,000 to 8 million Philippine pesos. An additional eight convicted traffickers were sentenced to prison terms ranging from six months to life imprisonment and fined 500,000 to 4 million pesos.

The courts also applied plea bargaining mechanisms, particularly in cases involving online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) to expedite case resolution and minimize trauma for child victims.

The passage of Republic Act No. 11862, or the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2022, strengthened the legal framework by expanding the definition of trafficking, enhancing law enforcement authority, and removing restrictions on initiating prosecution. Prosecutions and convictions were enhanced with DOJ Department Circular No. 15, Series of 2024, that institutionalized a case build-up process, and strengthened coordination between prosecutors and law enforcement agencies.

Complicity of Law Enforcement Officials

To address issues regarding corruption and complicity of law enforcement officials, one police officer was prosecuted for cyber-facilitated sex trafficking and another for assisting a suspected trafficker in evading prosecution; 103 immigration personnel were investigated for alleged involvement in trafficking activities, resulting in the dismissal of 63 individuals; following allegations of official complicity in a large-scale online scam operation exploiting over 730 potential labour trafficking victims under the guise of the Philippine Offshore Gaming Operations (POGO), a municipal police chief and 26 other officers were discharged and investigated for “neglect of duty” .

The IACAT adopted the Anti-Corruption Guidelines in 2023 through Resolution No. 001, Series of 2023, which provides a framework for identifying, monitoring, and addressing corruption-related risks across the entire trafficking chain from recruitment and document processing to border control and prosecution. The IACAT also implements the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for identifying and monitoring trafficking-related corruption cases, which include reporting mechanisms and employee suspension guidelines and implemented with the assistance of the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission (PAOCC) and the Presidential Anti-Corruption Coordinating Council's (PACC) active participation.

Reforms at the Bureau of Immigration (BI) include data sharing with other agencies, reimbursement for unfair offloading, and body-worn cameras. The BI strengthened its institutional framework by enforcing a “one-strike” policy for officials involved in trafficking or corruption cases and by rotating immigration officials at ports of entry and departure to stop corrupt networks from growing.

Protection and Assistance to Victims

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) continues to provide comprehensive protection to trafficking victims through the Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons (RRPTP), which assisted 6,044 survivors from 2022 to 2024, 67 per cent of whom were women, many from rural areas.

In 2023, the Government allocated 24.9 million pesos to the RRPTP to ensure continuous delivery of these services. The DSWD also operates 44 residential care facilities across the country, serving trafficking and other vulnerable victims.

The IACAT operates the TIP Centre, a multipurpose facility exclusively utilized for possible TIP victims. From 2021–24, the TIP Centre assisted 1,091 (198 of whom were foreign nationals) possible trafficked victims providing them with temporary accommodation, food and security.

In 2024, the expansion of the TIP Centre in Mandaluyong and the establishment of the Bahay Silungan sa Paliparan (BSP) accommodated 100 more individuals and 30 individuals, respectively, significantly increasing the capacity of the Government to extend assistance to victims.

Victim identification and referral mechanisms were also strengthened through the IACAT's Operation Centre (OpCen), a support unit to investigation and prosecution. From 2022 to 2024, the Centre has assisted 1,389 victim witnesses with their attendance during court hearings and legal conferences. Additionally, 34 victims who became witnesses were found by the OpCen to testify in court and help with the successful prosecution of trafficking cases.

Migrant Workers and Forced Labour

The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) continues to strengthen its efforts to protect overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) from abusive practices and reduce their vulnerability to trafficking and forced labour. In 2023, the DMW intensified regulatory actions, filing 4,521 administrative charges and 14 recruitment agencies' licences were revoked for engaging in prohibited practices.

The DMW established a "whitelisting" policy that limits the employment of Filipinos only to foreign companies and agencies with good standing in order to prevent exploitation and encourage safe migration. Welfare Officers have also been sent overseas to monitor the working conditions and safety of OFWs. Additionally, the DMW provides mandatory Pre-Employment (PEOS), Pre-Departure (PDOS), and Post-Arrival (PAOS) orientation seminars to ensure that workers understand their rights, host country laws, and how to access assistance abroad. Migrant Workers Offices (MWOs) at Philippine Embassies and Consulates operate 24/7 as the first point of contact for distressed OFWs, providing legal and welfare services. The DMW also regularly issues public advisories to warn against fraudulent recruitment and high-risk job offers.

From mid-2022 to early 2025, the DMW assisted 962 OFWs who were victims of forced labour in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Myanmar. The Government provided them with assistance totalling 48 million pesos. These rescues were supported through the Migrant Workers' Aksyon Fund, a dedicated fund that provides emergency financial aid for repatriation, legal services, psychosocial support, shelter, and livelihood reintegration. Complaints filed by OFWs have resulted in criminal and administrative sanctions, including the revocation of licenses and blacklisting of abusive recruiters and employers.

To promote labour standards and workers' welfare through international cooperation, the Government has forged 63 bilateral labour agreements with 36 destination countries, including 10 in the Middle East. In 2024, the Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Combating TIP with Qatar, and a pending Memorandum of Arrangement with New Zealand is expected to enable reciprocal sharing of TIP-related information.

The Government reinforced its institutional mechanisms through the creation of the Inter-Agency Committee on Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos, which focuses on strengthening responses to trafficking involving repatriated Filipinos, improving port-based operations, centralizing data collection, enhancing information sharing, and integrating the Technical Working Group on Departure Formalities into a Special Committee on Overseas Filipinos. In 2024, the IACAT also established the Inter-Agency Committee on Irregular Migration Corridors (IACIMC), tasked to conduct research on trafficking and smuggling routes by sea, particularly in high-risk provinces.

Further, from 2023 to 2024, the BI implemented proactive border control measures to prevent trafficking and exploitation. In 2023, 34,353 Filipinos were stopped from departing the country because of false information, incomplete documentation, or other signs of human trafficking. In 2024, out of 8.49 million departing Filipino passengers, 1.11 per cent were referred for secondary inspection by I-PROBES Officers, resulting in 29,776 (0.35 per cent) being denied departure due to incomplete or fraudulent travel documents.

On 22 July 2024, during his State of the Nation Address, the President halted POGO operations nationwide, later formalized on 5 November 2024 through Executive Order No. 74. This move emphasized the Government's firm stance against criminality linked to offshore gaming and reaffirmed its commitment to protecting at-risk populations against human

trafficking, coerced labour, and related abuses tied to POGOs. In 2024, four high-profile raids and rescue missions secured the safety of 1,005 victims, 622 (59 per cent) of whom were foreign nationals from China, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Indonesia, while also leading to the arrest of 108 traffickers, and the disruption of organized crime networks. The Anti-Money Laundering Council intensified financial investigations, freezing 276.9 million pesos in assets and filing 63 counts of money laundering tied to the OSAEC.

The Committee of Experts' observation for the Government to protect migrant workers particularly women, and ensure that they are not placed in a situation of vulnerability, underscores the urgency of cooperation between sending countries and destination countries where cases of abuse have been reported. It is acknowledged worldwide that the Philippines has one of the most complete and progressive labour migration institutions among labour-sending countries. However, overseas Filipino workers still suffer incidents of abuse. For this reason, the responsibility of destination countries to do their share in combating forced labour should equally be emphasized.

Conclusion

The Government has demonstrated sustained and concrete efforts to eliminate trafficking in persons and forced labour, both as a labour-sending and labour-receiving country. Given these efforts, the Government respectfully requests that the Committee consider the foregoing developments and exclude this case from the list for examination.