

The Filipino Children in Prostitution

A Worst Form of Child Labour

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For:
International Labour Organisation (ILO)
International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)
Manila, Philippines

December 2001

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Introduction

ILO launched its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) in 1992 to help countries combat child labour through action programmes, research, policy development, capacity building and advocacy. From a core of less than 10 countries, IPEC has grown into a global alliance now operating in more than 90 countries worldwide.

Two years later, the Philippine government expressed its commitment to initiate action to fight child labour through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ILO-IPEC. The Philippine ILO Indicative Framework for Action of 1994 was among the first country efforts to identify the priority target groups of working children. The 1995 national survey of working children conducted through the National Statistics Office (NSO) served as an important tool for advocacy, particularly looking at the magnitude of child labour in the country.

In June 1998, the Philippines ratified ILO Convention 138 (on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment) in order to spur action at total but gradual abolition of child labour. However, it was recognised by the major stakeholders that the goal of Convention 138 would take a longer time. Considering that there are worst forms of child labour that need immediate action, the country subsequently ratified ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in November 2000.

This made the Philippine government to enter into a commitment for immediate and particular kinds of action through the development of legislation and programmes of action on the elimination of:

- a) All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- b) The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- c) The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaty; and;
- d) Work which, by nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

The Time Bound Programme

The Time-Bound Programme or TBP approach was designed to assist the member States with an integrated approach in implementing the ILO Convention 182. “The TBP combines sectoral, thematic, and country-based approaches. It links action against child labour to national development policy. It aims to prevent and eliminate in each country all incidence of the worst forms of child labour within a defined period of time.” (*ILO-IPEC, April 2001*)

The conduct of assessment studies forms part of the preparatory activities leading to an initial assessment of the appropriateness and feasibility of including three priority child labour groups for the TBP.

This cursory research study, therefore, forms an important part of the initial preparations to aid ILO-IPEC in assessing the appropriateness and feasibility of “**children involved in prostitution**” as a sector to be prioritised for its Time Bound Programme.

1. Anchor Information

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The research was undertaken primarily, to understand the complexities of the problem by initially looking into the existing information obtained from secondary and collateral sources from government service agencies, NGOs and individuals.

It is also the intention of this research to present the children in prostitution within the perspective of its **strong trade foundations** as well as some of its social bases involving gender relations and the unequal relations between parents and children. Lastly, it aims to illustrate the wide range of circumstances of those children in prostitution; and to draw attention to the economic and social bases that sustain the sector.

Specifically, the cursory study aims to

- a. To map a profile of children involved in prostitution, including the existing discourse on the economic and social root causes, and operations that contribute to the proliferation of the issue;
- b. To identify areas where the incidence is reportedly high within the selected regions of the study;
- c. To collect existing discourse that present the negative effects and the risks faced by children involved in prostitution;
- d. To lay out potential programmes and legislations that can contribute to the eventual elimination of the involvement of children in prostitution.

1.2 Methodology, Scope and Limitations

The three-month study involved literature review of some 30 published and unpublished materials written or produced from the years 1988 - 2001. These include primers, case reports, and academic discourses, as well as local and regional research papers and programme reports. Some literatures were also sourced out using the World Wide Web. Time and resource limitations, however, prohibited this research in accessing more documents and salient information.

The study also made use of key-informant interviews from government and non-governmental service agencies. Actual interviews were conducted with social workers, street educators and children in prostitution (aged 15-17) in Kalookan, Pasig, Quezon, Bacolod, and Davao cities.

The criteria in selecting the areas covered in this study were based on the capacity of the research team in gathering the necessary information through their immediate networks and the areas covered by their on-going programme activities in the National Capital Region, Regions 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 11. Access to other documents and resource persons from other regions was made through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Social Technology Bureau and the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) Bureau of Women and Young Workers (BWYW).

1.3 Definitions

Overlapping definitions at the onset provided problems in deciding which materials are relevant for this study and its purposes. The term/s “children in prostitution”, at one point or another, interpose/s with other sectoral issues on children. The category of street children, for example, overlaps with the category of “children in prostitution”. In turn, most of the characteristics describing street children are mostly conveyed in describing “freelance” children in prostitution, including their vacillating and mobile nature.

“Prostituted children”, “child prostitutes” and “child sex workers” are the more popular ‘labels’ coined in some of the documents when referring to children involved in prostitution. One must note however that these labels are **actually attempts to make the programmatic and policy responses fit in particular organisation biases**. Meanwhile, streets educators interviewed in this study, referred to these children based on how the children themselves call each other in reference to the activity of “selling sex”. Among these are “pokpok”, “casa girls”, “puta”, and bar girls. Note too that these terms place them (the children) in the same situation as the adult prostitutes.

More recent documents (again with specific reference to peculiar organisation programme and policy biases particularly welfare and development groups) refer to children in prostitution as a segment of broader headings, such as commercial sexual exploitation of children, that is commonly associated with sexual abuse.

This study adapted the following definitions based on international standards, national legislations and some NGO publications:

Children in Prostitution refers to “children under the age of 18” (*UN CRC/Convention 182*), “whether male or female, **who for money, profit, or any other consideration or due to the coercion or influence of any adult, syndicate, or group, indulge in sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct**” (*RA 7610*) “including hiring, employment, persuasion, inducement and/or

coercion of child to perform in obscene exhibitions or indecent shows, whether live or in video or film” (*Dela Cruz, et al, 1997*), and for “the production of pornography or for pornographic performances.” (*Convention 182, Art 3b*).

Child labour is the **gainful employment of children below fifteen** (15) years of age, for wage and / or other forms of remuneration, whether on full time or part time basis in formal or informal sectors involving the production of goods or rendering services. Child Labour hampers the holistic development of a child, and threatens the child’s fundamental rights to life. (*ERDA/ILO-IPEC 2001*)

Hazardous work is defined in the ILO Convention 182 not **so much by its nature, but by the effect the circumstances under which it is carried out may have on children**, i.e. harm to their health, their safety or morals.

The Department Order (DO) No. 4 Series of 1999 issued by the Department of Labour and Employment provides a more detailed description of undertakings that are hazardous, i.e. “work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse, such as in a) lewd shows (strip teasers, burlesque dancers and the like, b) cabarets, c) bars (KTV, karaoke bars, d) dance halls, e) bath houses and massage clinics, e) escort service, and f) gambling halls and places.

2. Discourses and Data

Children in Prostitution is a Trade Issue

Prostitution as a “trade”, while considered illegal in the Philippines, continues to grow. However, the underground nature of the trade makes it very difficult to determine its magnitude and economic significance. Despite this, anecdotal reports from the DSWD lean towards the information that more and more young girls and boys are drawn into the sex services (prostitution business) and there is growing demand for such services.

In more ways than one, the involvement of children in prostitution demonstrates strong economic foundations as well as social bases. The scale of children involved in prostitution has increased to an extent that the sexual exploitation business of children has already assumed the proportion of an industry and has directly and/or indirectly contributed in the employment, family income and in the over-all economic growth of the country.

The seeming complexity of the prostitution business has been described in some publications in the language of trade, i.e. “product”, the “business”, and the “buyers”:

2.1 The Product: Child Sex for Sale

There are different “products” categorised according to the type of work a particular child performs; the location of work, the nature and class of clientele, and the level of visibility of their operations.

Girls comprise majority of the victims. “That girls and women are labelled as having a low status in the society permits and perpetuates their sexual exploitation. While this has been an accepted reality in the society, the prevalence of boys, patronised / victimised by paedophiles / pederasts should also highlight the demand side of sex trade. Most parents perceive that boys have nothing to lose if they indulge in prostitution since they will not get pregnant anyway.” (*Primer on CSEC, November 2001*)

The low status of girls and women in society permits and perpetuates their sexual exploitation. “Sexism (also labelled as patriarchy, male domination, sex-gender system, paternalism and male supremacy) has contributed to the proliferation of prostitution business to involve children in the country because of the high premium placed on “innocence”, “sweetness” and “virginity”. Machismo values emphasise

conquests, *thus providing a market for young girls – for prostitution, pornography and trafficking. (*Balanon, August 2000*)

The ECPAT report in 1994 found different kinds of children in prostitution in Cebu City. They were classified as a) pick-up girls loitering in the streets at night waiting for customers; b) casa (brothel) girls staying locked up in prostitution dens; c) bikini-bar-girls entertaining guests and customers by dancing on an elevated platform wearing skimpy bikinis; and, d) karaoke-bar-girls sitting at the customer's table and assisting in taking orders, as well as encouraging customers to sing. Most of the bar girls claimed to be older than 18 years old but were actually younger. (*del Rosario, et al, January 2000*)

A. “Product” Types

Other types of the sex trade take other forms depending on needs, location and the customers. The NGO TALIKALA in Region XI, describes the children in prostitution as follows:

1) Freelancer/Striker

Having no permanent place of work, the freelancer or strikers hang around in places where potential customers can pick them up. These places are usually the streets, and lately such places also include malls, shopping areas, theatres, and beaches. They usually work with pimps who negotiate the price for them. They liken themselves to “pangangahoy” - picked up from among the woods and later sold.

2) Akyat-Barko

The work for these children is seasonal, dependent on whether there is a ship that docks. The girls, together with the pimps, ride “pump boats” to meet the customers in the cabin. This type of work is usually a “packaged deal”, that is, the price paid for by the customer includes doing the laundry, cooking, aside from the sexual service given.

3) Prosti-Tuition

Like the Akyat-Barko, the Prosti-Tuition is a seasonal work for children in prostitution. Their numbers increase during the periods of enrolment and examinations because they use the money they earned to pay for tuition fees. Most of the time, they are “offered” or “sold” through referrals by friends to wealthy businessmen, executives, and in desperate times, to drivers, vendors and teachers.

4) Dancers

They work in clubs where they dance to the sexy or erotic music on stage. They wear skimpy outfits which they remove piece-by-piece as they dance. After each performance, they line up in a glass door, (they usually call it “aquarium”) while the customers pick their choice of girl. They earn through “commission” from ordered drinks by customers, the fee they are paid for dancing, and “outing fee”, the payment given when the customer takes a girl out and brings her to a nearby hotel for sexual service.

5) Masahista

This group works in massage parlours. The girls are usually 17 to 18. They offer sexual service in massage parlour, or sometimes perform “home service” through phone-in customers.

6) Guest Relation Officer (GRO)

The girls serve as a company for customer who want to sing (usually in the Executive Rooms or Private Rooms provided in Karaoke Bars/KTVs) and who need someone to talk with. Depending on the customers’ interest, such activities as singing and story telling, lead to sexual activities.

7) Sistemang Palit (Barter)

The girls offer sexual service in exchange for money or goods. For instance, in places near the coastal areas, sexual service is given in exchange for fish. “Isang salop, isang gabi” or in exchange for cans of sardines in evacuation centres where food rations are scarce. In Cavite, there is the so-called “Isang balde, isang putok” among coffee farmers.

8) White Slavery

This is the worst form of prostitution children get involved in because the girls become sex slaves in sex dens (casas). The favourite victims are children who are still virgin because their services are more expensive. This is operated by huge network of syndicates.

9) Sexually Abused and Trafficked Children

This is a systematised form of sexual abuse on children and women. The women are travelled from region to region, and are threatened, abused and later driven into prostitution along the way.

B. Where They Are Located

The following tables present the incidence of children in prostitution as observed (estimates) by street educators, local government officials, social workers and NGO staff involved in providing interventions / services to this specific sector:

1) National Capital Region

Location	Places where CPs are Frequently seen during work	Numbers	Age Range	Gender	Source
Manila	Malate,	50	13-17	Mostly females	Child-hope/ADNET Street educators
	Divisoria	20			
	Binondo	20			
	Blumentrit	30			
	Tayuman	15			
Kalookan City	3 rd Avenue	30	16-17	All females	Tahanan Sta. Luisa MAP Foundation
	Monumento	30			
	Maria Clara Street	5			
Quezon City	Quezon Avenue	50	14-17	Mostly Females	Children's Lab Kabalikat
	Quezon Circle	27			
	Timog	10			
	Cubao	25			
	Balintawak	10			
Pasig	Plaza	15	14-17	Mostly Females	PETA
Paranaque	San Isidro	3	15-17	All females	Barangay Social Worker

2) Region I

Location	Places where CPs are Frequently seen during work	Numbers	Age Range	Gender	Source
La Union	San Fernando, Plaza, Beach, Ports	10	16-18	All females	Social Action Centre of La Union
Baguio City	Session Road, Parks	10	17	All females	Elementary Principal/ Street Educator MAP Found

3) Region III

Location	Places where CPs are Frequently seen during work	Numbers	Age Range	Gender	Source
Angeles City	Balibago, Check Point	4 children rescued	14-16	All females	IMA Foundation
San Fernando	Centro, Plaza	5	14-16	All females	Municipal Social Worker
Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Olongapo	Plaza, Downtown Area	60 rescued from 96-2001)	15-17	All females	Bantay Bata Hotline

4) Region IV

Location	Places where CPs are Frequently seen during work	Numbers	Age Range	Gender	Source
Laguna	Sta. Cruz, San Pedro, Calamba, Pagsanjan	15	16-18	All females	DSWD
Romblon	Odiongan	4	15-17	All females	PSWDO
Palawan	Puerto Prinsesa, El Nido, Coron,	5	16	All females	DSWD
Batangas	Batangas City, Nasugbu,	20	16-18	All Females	MSWDO

5) Region VII

Location	Places where CPs are Frequently seen during work	Numbers	Age Range	Gender	Source
Cebu City	Colon, Onquera, Ermita	70	13-17	Mostly females	FORGE Foundation
Toledo City	City Proper, Bars	25			
Lapu-Lapu	Lapu-Lapu	20			
Mandaue City	Proper	20			

Region XI

Location	Places where CPs are Frequently seen during work	Numbers	Age Range	Gender	Source
Davao City Cagayan de Oro General Santos City	Magsaysay Park, Boulevard, Palengke	200	13-17	Mostly females	Tambayan TALIKALA

2.2 The Business Where Everyone Earns Except the Child

Children treated like commodities in prostitution provide substantial income and employment to those directly and indirectly involved in the prostitution business. The prostitution business covers various types of establishments, including beer houses, bars, hotels, motels, tourist agencies, saunas, health clinics, cyber cafes, and malls. The more organised establishments have a proprietor or manager who define the kind of sex service adult sex workers and children in prostitution would perform. They often use pimps or “mamasans” (male and female floor managers in establishments) who are paid to put the children in prostitution in touch with clients.

Meanwhile, the “independent operators” or intermediaries like the hotel waiters and room boys, health officers who issue health clearances, security guards in malls and parks in one way or the other profit directly or indirectly in the prostitution business. In some media and NGO reports reveal that some police officers also profit from commercial sex services provided by the children.

As the demand for children in prostitution grows in the country, the supply also becomes more organised. Recruitment agents, mostly coming from the cities, occasionally and seasonally bring boys and girls across borders from poorer neighbouring regions to the urban centres. The communities where the children live are also becoming more systematically involved following the seasonal work in the rural areas.

A. Recruitment Patterns

Farm children workers, for example, usually become potential earners only during planting and harvest seasons when the demand for labour in the field is high. Hence, to augment the family income after these seasons, the children seek for other

works to adjacent communities, usually in vegetable plantations, or work as domestic helpers. This is also the period when recruitment by nightclub agents is massive.

The children are initially recruited to work as domestic helpers, before they eventually land in “red-light areas”, under the control of an adult pimp (who in some reports were once children in prostitution themselves). They are usually recruited with the use of deception, false promises and case incentives and are sourced from the most disadvantaged regions in the country.

A key informant in the study revealed that his hometown in Padre Burgos, Southern Leyte is a ‘breeding ground’ for children in prostitution.

“This has been going on for almost 15 years now. Children who have completed grade six are the ones usually recruited for this kind of work. They are recruited initially as domestic helpers in Manila but are made to end up working in bars and discos in Pasay City.”

What is interesting in this revelation is the fact that the work has become an “income-generating programme” for the said community. Consequently, it has become an encouraged and accepted culture, so that children no longer want to complete their studies because of the seeming opportunity provided by the business.

In all, the whole sex business and the web of its activities that involve children in prostitution not only provide substantial income and employment for those directly and indirectly participate in the prostitution business but it also serves as a mechanism for redistributing income particularly through income remittances from urban to rural areas. This serves as a survival mechanism for coping with poverty and as a method of compensating for the lack of social welfare and income maintenance programmes for the large segments of the society.

The conscious trafficking of children for prostitution is very difficult to prove because it is hidden under the protection, mostly, of the police and some powerful government officials. This issue was highly emphasised in the literature where there are references to prostitution as a “sex trade” or an “organised industry”. Michel Tan of HAIN illustrated this in his work in 1987: “Politically, prostitution in the Philippines has always been one of these “semi-legal” professions controlled by a complex underworld mafia-type network that includes our so-called law enforcers and government officials.” (*UP-CIDS, August 1997*)

Major urban growth centres and cities have established “regular” areas such as streets or compounds where the prostitution businesses overtly operate. Some of the more known and popular red light areas are Ermita, Mabini and Malate in Manila, Timog, Cubao, Quezon Memorial Circle, Quezon Avenue and Araneta Centre in Quezon City and the Airport Road in Pasay City. Police reports surveillance and

monitoring activities in these areas. Occasionally raids and saturation drives are conducted when there are public complaints and reports of “illicit dancing”. There are even media documentations in the conduct of these operations. However, for some “unseen hands or force”, the prostitution business continue to exist.

There are no documents that illustrate how much the recruiters, pimps and nightclubs earn in the sex trade. However, NGOs and street educators say that nightclubs get 60 percent of the earnings of every child involved in prostitution. Peter, a street educator in Kalookan said that if the pimps can provide for themselves imported watch, clothes, mobile phones, perfumes and buy themselves expensive cigarettes and liquors, they should be earning that much.

“We don’t know where the nightclub owners live. What we know is that they are supported by big time politicians who also earn from this trade.”

Cecile Oebanda (Visayan Forum Executive Director) narrated that a recruiter earns (at least) 1,000 pesos per child. That is why the tendency for recruiters is to recruit more in order to earn more. There is however, no evidence that can show if recruiters continue to receive money from nightclub owners.

B. Hours of Work and Remuneration

The children who are kept in “casas” or an underground place, practically work full time. Depending on the number of their customers, they render sexual services beyond eight hours. They do not receive their earnings in full; they share their earnings with their handlers, commonly called “mama-sans” and pimps. The bulk of the child-victims’ earnings are usually spent for personal care and hygiene, such as facial soap and make-up, body lotion, clothes, etc. (usually sold by the owner of the establishments at a much higher price); as well as for health maintenance (regular physical and medical check-ups). The rest are kept as savings, either for their families or for their future. (*A Primer: The Framework of Action Against CSEC, November 2001*)

On the other hand, interviews with children who work in nightclubs say that they generally experience harsh working conditions. With work usually beginning in the afternoon and lasting up to the wee hours of the morning, they often have to face middle-aged clients who exhibit sexual perversions. Some of the children do not even receive any share from their earnings because the owner or manager keeps the money for them. Under such circumstances, the child victims have no idea how much money they were able to receive from their customers. It is, therefore, not unusual to see many of them incurring debts for purchase of clothes, underwear, perfume, and toiletries, which had been bought for them by the owner, manager, or pimp.

A government task force against trafficking in children rescued 21 prostituted teenagers between the ages of 13 to 17 from a slavery of gang that operated the sex dens in bars and restaurants, which are common fronts of child prostitution. "The girls were made to dance naked and perform other sexual acts by the beer house owners. The owners themselves pimped the girls and even led them to the nearby motel," said Pedro Roque Jr., Chief of the National Bureau of Investigation in Cabanatuan City. The children were now being cared for by the government social workers. (*Today, 19 July 2001*)

In the town of Daet, Camarines Norte, four out of nine videoke bars/pub houses have extreme nude shows. Most of the performers are girls whose ages are between 15 and 17. Their income usually depends on the number of drinks or beverages (amount ranging from 30 to 80 pesos per bottle) ordered by the customer. The type of stage dancers also varies, depending on the dancers' kind of performance. The highest paid performers are those performing nude show dancing that include acrobatic show and play dancing with male customers on the stage. The lowest paid dancers are those performing while wearing only "two-piece" attire. Nude shows usually start at 10:00 pm and end at 2:00 am.

Lastly, freelancers do not earn fixed income. To earn more, they do away with pimps and do the transactions themselves. Nevertheless, everyday they face the threat of man made (police, pimp and peer harassments) and natural (night air and rain) dangers, from late afternoon to sometimes shortly before sunrise, when "income" opportunities and payment for services are much lower.

C. More Risks and Dangers

The work is perhaps the most dangerous and most inhumane. Long hours, low rewards, deprivation of childhood development opportunities, lack of love and affection, and others ensue. Damages that are glaring enough to make the ILO place the situation of children in prostitution among the worst forms of child labour. A child in this situation works without pay, works excessive hours in isolation or at night, is exposed to grave safety or health hazards, is at risk of physical violence or sexual harassment, and works at a very young age.

A joint report of the GOP-UNICEF in 1990 states that "working children are exposed to varying types of exploitation and hazardous conditions which do not only threaten their physical well-being but also restrict their educational or psychosocial development, thereby undermining their chances for better adult life."

Fulltime jobs with long working hours stunt the child's physical growth. Inadequate remuneration forces the child to work long hours in order to earn more.

The necessity of dealing with different people (adults, peers and younger children) who often take advantage of the child's vulnerabilities puts excessive physical and social strain upon the child. Ill-treatment from these people also lowers the child's self-esteem. (*Dela Cruz, et al. 2001*)

In the case of children in prostitution in Cebu, ECPAT noted the increase in sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among sex workers. The STDs were prevalent among girls and women whose age range was from 15 to 34 years. Furthermore, the study said that "prostituted children can easily contract STDs because of their sensitive and delicate biological systems . . . Another danger is the threat to their lives if and when they decide to quit the trade . . . which is specially true to those who are handled by sex syndicates and those housed in casas . . . others encounter sadistic customers . . . who force them to perform perverse sexual act. (*del Rosario et al citing ECPAT 1994*)

A staff of PREDA Foundation in Olongapo City narrated his observations on some of the children in their centre who got involved into the sex trade.

"They feel sad of course. They're ashamed. That is the first thing that is being lost whenever abuse happens. They feel they are 'dirty' inside them. They feel angry. They want revenge (hence some of them become abusers themselves when they grow without rehabilitation). Some even blame themselves."

Children in this kind of work suffer traumatic experiences -- physically, developmentally, socially and psychologically. The children are vulnerable to a variety of problems, such as distorted sense of values and a negative outlook of people or of life in general. Feeling of low self-esteem, inadequacy and mistrust of others are particularly common. They are branded as morally reprehensible, ostracised by their families and communities. Many of the children victims are denied of their rights to education, are school dropouts and are frequently denied the opportunity for entering or continuing in mainstream education. (*Balanon, August 2000*)

Studies conducted by IPEC in 1996, Samson (1987) and Carandang, et al (1993) cited how children in prostitution cope and deal with the physical and emotional stress they frequently experience. Such coping mechanisms include a) substance abuse, b) materialistic and consumerist attitude, c) self-indulging in materialistic pursuits, and d) rationalising their social unsanctioned behaviour.

2.3 The Buyers: The Users

The buyers or users who are usually depicted in most of the literature on child prostitution are foreign, military personnel or paedophiles arriving as tourists (*Alforte, 1994 cited in Dela Cruz, et al, 1997*). However, there are conspicuous indications that

local customers represent the majority of the users. These are Filipinos coming from all classes and occupations in the society.

Direct interviews conducted with children in prostitution revealed that in Kalookan, the customers are usually jeepney and taxi drivers. The children are paid 50-200 pesos for a 'blow job' and 350 to 500 for actual sex. In Quezon City, the customers are usually (dressed like) middle-class men who can pay from 1,000 to 2,000 pesos for short-time sex which usually lasts for three hours. Meanwhile, in Cebu, the children are paid 20 to 100 pesos, and in some cases, merely paid with a bottle of rugby for a one-hour sex play. Further, a situationer of sex industry in the town of Daet, Camarines Norte revealed that most of the customers who frequently visit the nightclubs are "gold miners".

Customers also use other exploitative bargaining leverages that allow them to pay even lower. Condom use (and or its un-use) for example determine price. Hours before sunrise also make the "customer-less" child's price cheaper. Worst, coercion to report to authorities and threat of or actually physical harm also forces the child to provide the sex service for free.

Commercial sexual exploitation should be seen within the framework of "triangular network of abusers" i.e. "the supplier", "the user", and "the protector". This kind of framework undermines the involvement of the child. "This means that the apparent acquiescence of the child is the product of the manipulation of the network. It also suggests that there is a complex, sometimes organised network of abuse". (*dela Cruz, et al, 2001*)

Cullen and Hermoso (*cited in dela Cruz, et al, 1997*) also observed that "protectors" could also be "users". This shows the tendency of the activities of the members of the network to overlap. The "user" usually becomes a "supplier". One person can be both "user" and "supplier". The two protect each other's interests and function as "protectors".

2.4 Visible Yet Invisible

While both national and local government line agencies and the NGO community report agree that there is an increasing number of children involved in prostitution in the country, they also recognise that information about this sector remains to be scarce because there is no real and un-biased comprehensive study on the incidence of children in prostitution. Also consider the following:

A. Misreporting

An NGO working for children in prostitution in Davao City revealed that children involved in prostitution use bogus documents when securing health permits from the Municipal Health Clinics that enable them to work in establishments. The children use fake names and increase their age to 18 in order to secure the “pink card” often required by nightclub owners for the regular sex workers. Such practice also becomes a way out for the children whenever they are reprimanded by police officers during ‘saturation drives’ or police raids, as attested to by a child involved in prostitution in Kalookan City:

“When reprimanded by police officers or sometimes by social workers, we just show our cards and tell them that we are clean and we don’t have AIDS. Sometimes they don’t ask for the cards anymore because we know them. Some police officers are our friends and they believe us when we tell them that we’ve been to the clinics for our weekly health check up.” (Apple Gin – Child Sex Worker)

B. Miscounting

The difficulty in getting that data about children in prostitution is clearly indicated in the documents reviewed in the study. Most of the available materials reviewed tend to be descriptions, and are limited to observations and only indications about areas where child entertainers and prostitutes are rampant. *“Most of the materials on children in prostitution were estimates with no strong statistical foundation. In turn, the data can be confusing.”* To illustrate this, the following was lifted from the study of UP Centre for Integrative and Development Studies (UP-CIDS) conducted in August 1997:

Children in Prostitution in the Philippines

Estimate (Nationwide)	Year	Source, Date of Publication
20,000	1987	ECPAT-Phil, 1992
20,000	1988	Manlongat, 1988
50-60,000	1991	ECPAT-Phil, 1992
50-60,000	1991	DSWD (in Salinlahi, 1994)
50-60,000	1991	O’Grady, 1992
40,000	1992	NGOs (in UNICEF/GRP, 1992)
60,000	1993	ECPAT-Phil (in NGO Coalition, 1994)
60,000	1994	DSWD (in Alforte, 1994)
60,000	1995	(NGOs (in DSWD, 1995)
60,000	1996	Dionela, 1996
75,000	1997	UNICEF (in Cueto, 1997)

“The incidence and prevalence of children in prostitution are grossly unreported due to its underground nature.” There is much to be done in the providing for a more systematic and accurate documentation of children in prostitution. To date, the government report presented by DSWD to the organising committee in the 2nd World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation for Children held last December 2001, continue to hold the following data:

“There are no exact numbers of children who are sexually exploited and in the sex trade. The estimates are from 60,000 to 100,000 prostituted children (both boys and girls). However, if only one child is exploited in the sex trade, it is one too many, for we know that far more children are involved.” (*CSEC: A Multi-Sectoral Approach to Recovery and Reintegration, Presented by Asst. Secretary Lourdes G. Balanon, October 2001*)

The invisibility of ‘children in prostitution’ needs further illumination, considering that almost all of the local social worker officers interviewed in this study recognised the fact that while there is an increasing number of children in prostitution in their respective areas, these children remain to be underreported and are difficult to reach because their jobs are invisible. They are unregistered and vaguely show up in statistical studies.

C. Denying and Ignoring

Even the local governments do not have the actual count of children in prostitution.

“We know there are children in prostitution but we don’t have official documents to prove that. It is an issue that is ‘unspoken’ probably because prostitution in our society is becoming an accepted, if not legal, in our society.” (*Edna Jazul, Barangay Social Worker, Barangay San Isidro, Paranaque City*)

The information collected in this study show that the prevalence of children in prostitution is higher in the urban growth centres (mostly cities), where there are higher opportunities for employment and income. The streets have become the choice of spot for the freelance children in prostitution where they can pick up clients. The streets also provide the place where they can play while waiting for customers. Many hang around in video game arcades while others prefer to sit and chat in street food stalls. The malls are also the potential choice because these places are packed with potential customers. Anecdotal evidence indicates that those who operate in malls have no need of pimps. The mall restrooms are the favourite spots of customers because those are where the young sex workers perform what they call “diskarte” or

“hada””. However, establishment owners, operators and security officers vehemently deny prostitution activities.

D. Pseudo- Visibility

Prostitution in the Philippines, despite being illegal, continues to exist and “normalise” because it hides behind other services to gain public acceptability. New forms of packaging prostitution business such as bars and nightclubs converted to Karaoke Rooms, Sing-A-Long Lounge, and Cyber Café Rooms. More recently, there has been proliferation of Guest-Relation-Officers (GROs) and Dance Instructors (DIs) in hotels and restaurants. The prostitution business has become more innovative and discreet. Some has made use of modern technology to avoid detection. In the big malls in Metro Manila, pimps with mobile phones deliver children to give sex to clients. Taxi drivers are also important link between the child in prostitution and the clients.

2.5 Why Children Continue to Involve in Prostitution

A. Globalisation and the Philippine Economic Programme

The new development in economic orientation has created shifts in lifestyles among institutions and individuals as market competition; borderless economies and consumerism are accentuated. In effect, globalisation contributed to the further widening of gap between rich and poor, as the latter could not cope with the increasing cost of basic commodities. This situation is exacerbated by the depreciation of Philippine currency that triggered sharp increases in the costs of basic commodities that affected the low-income sector of the society. In turn, drove more people (including children) to find work to augment their income.

B. Poverty

Children in prostitution come mostly from poor, often large, rural families. Poverty is the major reason why they need to earn a living. Many of them come from chronically and economically disadvantaged families and, therefore, have little access to opportunities for alternative sources of income. Driven by poverty, the children enter the sex trade to earn a living for them or are forced by their families in order to survive.

Not all children are “duped” into the world of prostitution. Some pragmatically choose it as the only way out of poverty. A few even become relatively well off.

However, the vast majority are victims. Children in prostitution in Cebu mostly come from Cagayan de Oro, Bacolod, Davao, Samar-Leyte and Iloilo. This, however, was just a passage point for these children before they eventually go to Manila, Angeles and Olongapo City; places where they expect to earn more.

C. Natural and Man Made Disasters

The Philippines is a disaster prone country with an average of 30 typhoons per year. As a result, more and more families are displaced from their homes and from places where they could earn their living. Armed-conflict, on the other hand, greatly affects the family structures and the development of children. In Davao Oriental, the sharp slump in the prices of copra and continuing armed hostilities between government and rebel forces continue to force the Mandaya Lumads out of their homes.

Many of the displaced Lumads from Cateel, Baganga, Boston, Caraga and Manay towns found their way to the urban centres of Southern Mindanao, such as Davao and Tagum Cities. Reports revealed that many of these Lumads, who are girls aged 10 to 15, eventually land in beer houses as sex workers. *(PDI, 18 September 2001)*

D. Weak Family Support

The weak support provided by the family results in children turning to the streets. They leave their homes because of parental neglect and abuse. Once in the streets, they become vulnerable to drugs, and later on, to prostitution. Haley Atienza of FORGE Foundation in Cebu City narrated the stages children get into before they are forced into prostitution:

“They are often engaged first with two or three livelihood activities in order to survive before they are eventually introduced into the sex trade. They start as street children, selling flowers and cigarettes. Later they get involved in selling ‘rugby’. Then they themselves become rugby users and get hooked into the habit. That’s when they are recruited into the sex trade.”

E. Abuse in the Home

There is strong evidence, as asserted by DSWD, that there is sexual abuse in the home and this vastly increases the abused child's risk in involving into prostitution. Their own relatives abuse some of them. Some are even pimped by their own parents to work in the sex trade because of poverty while others simply joined their peer groups in prostituting themselves

F. Sex Tourism

Studies on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children have pointed to the significant role of the tourism industry (particularly sex tourism) in luring children into commercial sex. While tourism contributes to the economic coffers of the country, it has also become an instrument in the further exploitation of children and women. *(DSWD, 1998)*

The increase in the sexual exploitation of children is attributed to the fear of HIV/AIDS. The sex trade in children is well established, because of the influx of sex tourists and the existence of sex tours catering to Japanese, European and other Caucasian tourists. *(CATW Fact Book, citing Sol. F. Juvida, "Philippines - Children: Scourge of Child Prostitution", IPS, 12 October 1997)*

Sex tourism represents a high profile segment of the sector, with males from Western countries, Japan, Taiwan and China coming to the Philippines on specially organised sex tours. Such tours were organised as part of a package deal involving "interlocking interests between air carriers, tour operators and hotel companies which led to the formation of a new type of conglomerate specialising in the production of packages of services in tourism and trade *(Lin Lean Lim, quoting De Dios, 1991)*

Documented cases on CSEC indicate that the incidence of prostitution, pornography and trafficking of children was higher in areas considered as tourist destinations. Among the most popular sex tours destinations in the country include Pagsanjan, Palawan, Boracay, Aklan, and the Cities of Baguio, Olongapo, Batangas, San Fernando, Angeles, Manila, Bacolod, Cebu, Davao and Zamboanga. *(CWC, 2000)*

G. Socio-Cultural Values, Beliefs and Practices

Against the backdrop of poverty, neglect, abuse and exploitation, are values, beliefs and practices that perpetuate the "normalisation" of prostitution as an alternative activity. Lost of virginity, being male, young people's expected subservient roles in the family and other such practices make children in fact believe that "making money" by selling body won't matter any. *(IPC 1988).*

3. Policy Context

3.1 The International Arena

The Philippine government is a signatory to various International Conventions and Declarations upholding the right of the child to special protection from all forms of abuses, neglect, exploitation and discrimination. Major international policy includes:

- a. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- b. Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation.
- c. World Summit for Children
- d. ILO Convention No. 138
- e. ILO Convention No. 182

3.2 Existing National Laws to Protect Children

- a. The Philippine Constitution of 1987, ensures the right of children to assistance and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development;
- b. Philippine National Development Plan: Direction for the 21st Century (Philippine Agenda 21), serves as the blueprint for sustainable development;
- c. Child and Youth Welfare Code (PD 603), defines the rights of children, the rights and liabilities of parents and the role of community, schools, religious institutions;
- d. The law on Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act (RA 7610) enacted in 1992 has specific provisions on child prostitution.

“Penalties are imposed up to life imprisonment and death (in cases of children raped below 12 years old) on those who engage in, or promote, facilitate or induce child prostitution, to those who commit the act sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct with a child exploited in prostitution or subject to other sexual abuse and those who derive profit or advantage there from. This also includes the manager or owner of the establishment where prostitution takes place, or if the sauna, disco, bar, resort, place of entertainment or establishment serving as a cover to which engages prostitution in addition to the activity for which the license has been issued to said establishment.”
(Balanon, 2000)

To date, the Philippine government, in partnership with the NGOs, has taken important legislative and organisational initiatives to address the needs of child-

victims and those at risk of commercial sexual exploitation. Among the mechanisms for addressing the problem of children in prostitution were legislation, documentation of cases and judicial proceedings, and implementation of programmes for the protection, prevention and rehabilitation of children victims.

Other relevant national policies are:

RA 7658 Special Protection of Filipino Children – Prohibits the employment of children below 15 years old in public and private undertakings, amending for CSEC policies, Section 12, Article VIII of RA 7610

RA 3915, Revised Penal Code, Article 340 – Declares unlawful the promotion or facilitation of the prostitution or corruption of underage persons to satisfy the lust of other persons.

Cebu City Municipal Board Ordinance No. 228 – Prohibits minors of any sex below 18 years old to wander, saunter, or loiter on any public or private place within the limits of Cebu City after 12 midnight and before 5 a.m.

Davao City Children’s Welfare Code (City Ordinance No. 2491) – A landmark legislation that promotes the protection and welfare of children in the City. It facilitated the creation of the Council for the Welfare of Children for CSEC.

3.3 Proposed Laws to Address Children in Prostitution

Senate Bill 750 seeks to consolidate child labour protective legislation, regulates the work conditions of young workers, restates government’s responsibility for basic education, training and welfare services for young workers, and institutionalises the child labour committee and requires regular monitoring and reporting of the child labour situation in the country.

Senate Bill 75. An act instituting a children’s welfare fund for the protection and rehabilitation of abandoned, abused and sexually exploited children, amending for this purpose Republic Act 7610, otherwise known as “The Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act”.

Senate Bill 1882 An act penalizing the employment of children in any public or private undertaking or occupation which is considered hazardous to the child’s life, safety, health, morals, or which unduly interferes with the child’s normal development.

Senate Bill 131. An Act creating the office of TANODBATA and providing funds thereof.

House Bill 385 or Decriminalisation of Vagrancy and Prostitution for Children 18 Years Old and Below, Act of 1995 – Decriminalises vagrancy and prostitution for children aged 18 and below, amends Article 202 of the Revised Penal Code, and provides rehabilitation programmes and funding thereof or.

House Bill 2387 – Classifies the offence of child prostitution and other sexual abuses, as defined under Section 5, Article 111 of RA 7610, as heinous crimes, thereby increasing the penalty from reclusion perpetua to death.

House Bill 2332 – Further amends Article 340 of the Revised Penal Code, by including the undue commercial sexual exploitation of children in sexually explicit activities in the definition of the crime of corruption of minors. The penalty is also modified accordingly.

**All proposed laws not acted upon during an incumbent Congress automatically lapse and must be filed again in the next Congress. Otherwise, they cannot be considered pending.*

4. Existing Responses

Both government and non-government organisations have not been totally inutile in addressing the problem.

4.1 Government Response

The **Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC)** is the apex agency of the Philippine government for the protection, welfare and development of children. It was created in 1974 by virtue of the Presidential Decree 603 also known as the Child and Youth Welfare Code.

The CWC took the lead in preparing and development of the Five-year Philippine National Plan of Action Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation for year 2000-2004 soon after the Philippines participated in the August 1996 World Congress held in Stockholm, Sweden. The plan was eventually approved last 22 November 1999. This framework is part of a long-term 25-year plan called Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development For Children, 2000-2005 or Child 21: A Legacy to the Filipino Children of the 21st Century. The category of children in worst forms of child labour, including children in prostitution, fall under the heading of Children in Need of Special Protection (CNSP).

The **Department of Social Welfare and Development** is also a major player in addressing the issue of children in prostitution through its Child Protection Section or ChiPS. Through various agencies, the DSWD provides programmes ranging from rescue to reintegration. For instance, DSWD provides psychosocial services to children rescued from abusive, hazardous, or exploitative conditions of work. The DSWD puts in its protective custody to children rescued from prostitution and trafficking. It conducts intake and medical evaluation after which the parents or relatives are informed about the child's whereabouts and situation

Hotlines, as in Bantay Bata or Child Watch of major TV networks and the Crisis Intervention Units of the DSWD, are open 24 hours to encourage victims and the public to report cases of child abuse and exploitation.

The Guidelines for Media Practitioners on the Reporting and Coverage of Cases Involving Children was also developed in consultation with media practitioners. This seeks to balance the role of media in public information and education with the rights of children to privacy and special protection within the framework of the Philippine justice and social welfare system.

Therapy centres in three major cities with the support of Sweden have been specifically set up for the recovery of child survivors where intake, assessment and therapy sessions are conducted. These centres are also used for training, supervision and research. (*Balanon, 2001*)

The **Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)** implements the policy on protection of children in labour force. The Quick Response Teams such as “Sagip Batang Manggagawa” or Rescue the Child Worker collaborate closely with the Child Protection Units of government hospitals. The recovery process is facilitated with a humane and child sensitive handling of the rescue operations. DOLE in collaboration with UNICEF developed and published “Handling Worst Forms of Child Labour: Handbook for Implementers”.

The Institute for Labour Studies is an attached agency of DOLE that specialises in policy research, networking and information dissemination. The agency has greatly contributed in advocating for child labour issues through its research publication on the Child Labour in the Philippines. To date, the agency, in partnership with ILO-IPEC, venture to help build capacities of programme implementers to effectively design, manage and evaluate child labour projects.

In 1997, the Philippine Government, in particular the **Department of Tourism (DOT)**, signed the Manila Declaration on the Special Impact of Tourism, under the auspices of the World Tourism Organisation. This is the government’s commitment to prevent and control tourism related abuse and exploitation of people particularly women and children and other disadvantaged groups.

The DOT, with the support of ILO-IPEC, has started to campaign against child prostitution to draw both the private and public sectors’ awareness and concern. This is done through the issuance of administrative measures imposing sanctions over tourist establishments that fall under its accreditation. Concrete actions implemented are the revocation/cancellation of accreditation and the blacklisting of establishments that have promoted and facilitated activities of prostitution. It also has created a Surveillance and Monitoring team through its Tourist Security Division, which is tasked to go around the country to monitor activities of tourists’ establishments to prevent activities of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The DOT hosted series of fora to major destination sites in the country and emphasis on the eight anchor destinations. The programme, “Advocacy on Child Labour Towards National and Community Ownership and Responsibility” is envisaged to respond to the progressive elimination of child labour.

The agents of the law, particularly the **Philippine National Police and the National Bureau of Investigation**, have recognised the need for special services to abused children. Again, considering that the sector of children in prostitution is mixed

up with child abuse issue, protection and services needs have to be further qualified. Law enforcers, however, have taken steps to ensure the well-being of the child and avoid further traumatisation. The PNP and NBI have endeavoured to train personnel on the procedures for child abuse cases and educate them on the rights of children. In 1993, “The Police Handbook on the Management of Cases of Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances” was published and distributed to the police force. However, cases of police abuses on children continue to be documented.

4.2 Private Responses

There are several models of responses providing programmes and services for children and their families. Majority have to do with advocacy activities, community outreach to promote children’s rights, value formation, educational assistance, skills/vocational training, psycho-social interventions such as counselling, referral for psychological and medical care, residential care for child victims, legal assistance to facilitate filing of cases, parent effectiveness service and livelihood programmes for parents.

There is a national coalition of NGOs, for example, that actively addresses the issue of child sexual exploitation through advocacy and public awareness, research, and documentation. The coalition is composed of Childhope Asia, the Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse (CPTCSA), Defence for Children International (DCI), Salinlahi, Christian Children’s Fund (CCF), the National Council for Social Development (NCSD), and STOP Trafficking in Filipinos.

A major key player in this coalition is the End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT-Philippines). ECPAT was instrumental in putting forward the issue of CSEC as well as in demonstrating models on how to involve children in mainstreaming the issue in the past two international gatherings i.e. the 1996 CSEC World Congress in Sweden and the 2nd World Congress in Japan last December 2001.

Some NGOs also conduct rescue operations together with the police and DSWD. They ensure the safety of children, refer them to hospitals for medical treatment, and refer them to other agencies for other needs, conduct their own rehabilitation and reintegration programme. The Kamalayan Development Centre, for example, takes a step further by conducting not only rescue attempts but also surveillance work through its community organisers and contacts. Their rescue efforts are based on information gathered from their surveillance work and from reports of concerned people. The rescued children are brought to DSWD centres for protection. *(dela Cruz, et al., UP-CIDS 1997)*

NGOs, such as Virlian Foundation, Bahay Tuluyan, Kabalikat, Alay pag-asa, Serra Center, Caritas Manila, PREDA Foundation, also provide direct services ranging from prevention to rehabilitation.

Other emerging models, such as the initiative of The National Union of Workers in the Hotel Restaurant and Allied Industries (NUWHRAIN) recognises the contribution of its 6,000 members in combating child labour in the tourism industry. The union has initiated a project, in partnership with the ILO-IPEC, in conducting action research, trade union leaders conference on child labour, training and advocacy initiatives. Influencing policy through practice has been a major task of the union. In the past, NUWHRAIN has played an important role in the adoption of Convention 172 by the ILO on working conditions in hotel, restaurant and similar establishments. It has recently published “In the Heat of the Night: Combating Child Labour in the Tourism Industry” in order to come up with a clearer picture of child labour in tourism industry.

4.3 Joint or Multi Sectoral Responses

The UNICEF Child Protection Programme under the Fifth Country Programme for Children (1999-2003) was designed to address key child protection issues of exploitative and hazardous labour, sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation; armed conflict and other forms of organised violence. Responses include preventive actions and early interventions, rescue, recovery and reintegration assistance, network building and supporting a comprehensive system of justice for children.

The University of the Philippines-Philippine General Hospital (UP-PGH) has established a child protection unit (CPU) in collaboration with the DSWD and the Advisory Board Foundation to provide rapid diagnosis and evaluation, direct and medical care, and continuing case coordination with the DSWD social workers. The DSWD helped the CPU to set up a referral centre. The referral centre set up a network of health care systems, justice system, law enforcement, and social services. The DSWD also assists the CPU into protective custody and provide transportation for the children rescued in prostitution.

ADNET or Network of Advocates for Children’ Welfare Development, Inc. models a community-based initiatives in preventing, protecting and rehabilitating girls and boys in prostitution. It has evolved a Task Force Against Child Prostitution in Kalookan City that particularly engage the barangay leaders, youth, parishes, schools, NGOs, POs and government agencies to reduce the incidence of children in prostitution.

In all, the Philippine government has been quite successful in prosecuting paedophiles, under the Philippine laws and extraterritorial laws. However, evidence gathering and getting testimonies of children victims, their families and other witnesses are long and tedious processes. To date, the country has only one conviction of a person promoting sex tourism.

4.4 Examining Existing Responses

Taking a closer look however on the responses provided by both government and non-government organisations may be the key to creating better programmatic responses with the end goal of eliminating, if not reducing the problem by a significant number.

Time and again, valid issues are raised as to how child prostitution can be addressed.

A. Recognising the Economic base of Prostitution

The growth of the children in prostitution as a sector should be perceived within the economic development of the country. While the growth of the sector is closely tied to economic progress, it would be interesting to know whether this is an intentional policy of the country to promote prostitution as an economic activity. However, government policies, such as the promotion of tourism, employment, and the relative silence on the over all underground economy including prostitution, may have encouraged the growth of the involvement of children in prostitution.

B. Programmatic Dead-ends and gaps

However, dangerous assumptions and myths can also put purposive development actions into a stand still. An example of this is the claim that government and NGO workers are not able to completely remove the children because “*they cannot compete with the higher earnings the children get from the trade*”.

As a result, conflicting advocacy messages and services arise.

Women’s vs. Children’s Issues

Women’s issues are ideally congruent to that of the children, but dead-ends occur whenever the issue of prostitution as a trade is raised. The sensitive debate on

the legalisation of prostitution for example affects actions geared to address the problem of child prostitution, by way of setting an age limit for sex workers.

Women's development workers are still silent on the issue when asked if "*it is actually possible to stall the child's 'activity' until he or she is 18*" (Abella 2001). In turn child rights advocates tend to always be at the receiving end instead of proactively initiating action against child prostitution.

Talking to the other Market Players

While the centre of child development work is undoubtedly the child, very little communication plans are directed towards those who profit and gain from children in prostitution, i.e. establishment owners, pimps, managers, parents and the customers. Information on laws, and subsequent alternatives are not provided to the other market players.

Temporary Palliatives

The child in prostitution is definitely a victim. However, a victim does not and must not necessarily be just a recipient of pity. Development workers agree that programmes can be palliative in nature, where and when many children who are "rescued" actually find their way back to the streets, in another bar or in another city, where they can "start" anew and actually increase earning.

Other palliative responses that come in conflict with the real issue generally come from specific health services. STD, HIV/AIDS surveillance and education (and now the most recent Adolescent Reproductive Health Programmes and Services) have overshadowed the cause for elimination by *just equipping the child involved in prostitution with protection skills i.e. condom use and customer negotiation skills, instead of getting out of the trade.*

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

To approach children in prostitution as a trade issue is important because it is not just the individual child who is involved in prostitution but also their families who rely on their earnings. There are also the commercial businesses that are directly or indirectly involved in the industry. The economic bases also comprise other powerful interests that control and maintain the structures within the sector.

None of the past studies on child prostitution has ever looked at prostitution as a trade. Moreover, children who are involved in this otherwise exploitative economic activity are perceived differently. Everyone agrees that it is indeed an exploitative activity. As a consequence, the identified players are limited to the abusers and the victims. Against this backdrop though, the economics of prostitution cannot be seen.

As a result, the “victim” who is a child may not actually realise that he or she is a victim. On the other hand, the “abuser” may not actually realise that he or she is an abuser. Instead, the “abuser” may think that he or she actually provides the child and his / her family a way out of poverty, while the “victim” may think that he or she is actually on his / her way out of poverty.

Meanwhile, development workers who still think and work within the “abuser – victim” dichotomy actually misses out a lot of advocacy, policy and programme opportunities.

Therefore, it is important to:

5.1 Make the Children in Prostitution Visible

It is imperative to come up with a comprehensive research on the situation of children in prostitution, with explicit links between micro-macro contexts. The study should come up with an overall baseline situation of children in prostitution in the Philippines. The research study should draw attention to the economic and social bases that sustain the sex sector. To discuss from the basically dispassionate viewpoint the issues and concerns to draw out the relevant implications and suggestions for legislation, policies and programmes affecting the sector in general and the child in prostitution in particular.

There should be a more comprehensive study on the depth, range and operation of prostitution business, including their networks and supporters in order to identify effective interventions and to eventually to put a stop to the child prostitution business.

Once and for all, the issue should come out in the open to gain public acknowledgement and recognition so that the public themselves can address the issue at individual and organisational levels. More research studies should be undertaken and disseminated in the local language, and conscious effort should be pursued in communicating the information to children.

5.2 Educating the Periphery: Eliminating the Demand for Children

It will also be interesting to find out how the peripheral actors can be “educated”. Establishment owners, managers, pimps, mall operators, security guards, hotel clerks, waiters, room boys and everyone else may not actually know that they are part of the problem.

The customers should also be discouraged through public education. Campaigns against the prostitution business and the ill effects it brings to children can easily fit in with the existing campaigns and education programmes in the country. The ECOP model could be an effective way to educate mall owners, hotels and restaurants to help combat the involvement of children in the prostitution business. Campaign materials, such as posters, advocacy messages in LRT/MRT tickets, credit cards, and hotels/restaurants information materials can also be effective means to remind and educate customers.

The majority of the customers are also Filipinos. Strong cooperation and action at the community level is crucial in the campaign against prostitution business that involves children. The Barangay Council for the Protection of Children can be a potential structure/system to educate the communities. Parenting Education and church-based education programme can also be utilised in reducing and eventually eliminate the demand angle of prostitution business that involves children.

Children who roam and dwell in the streets of urban centres are more likely to get involved into prostitution because of their regular exposure to the trade. Going directly to where children are found is one of the important ways of providing direct services. This is referred to as “street education” which is “a protective approach in providing children the services in the street such as counselling, referral to health centres, hospital and social hygiene clinic and health education.

5.3 Strengthen Family Stability in Preventing Abuse, Exploitation and Trafficking of Children

The families should be strengthened because they are the immediate environments of children where they can be protected. They are also the venue that influences the quality of the children’s life experience, thus affecting their growth and

development as human beings. It is, therefore, important that actions addressing capacities, knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes of families that may precondition situations in putting children in difficult circumstances are considered, especially on the prevention aspect.

Included in these programmes are efforts to support and educate parents, community members, care providers and youth on the issues that encourage children to involve in prostitution. The objective is to create awareness on the importance of the caregivers' role in relation to supporting children's growth and development, and to change attitudes, beliefs and practices. Ultimately, these programmes empower caregivers in ways that will improve their care of and interaction with children and enrich the immediate environment within which children live.

The presence or absence of family ties and the quality of family relationships are key factors in the protection and care of children and in the prevention of abuse, exploitation, violence and neglect. A key strategy to build and strengthen family stability is to promote responsible parenthood and family life.

5.4 Support Programmes That Encourage Children's Participation In Fighting Against Prostitution Business the Involves Children

All actions on the issues of children in prostitution should take into account the perspective of the children and their families, and should be based on the principle of 'best interests of the child' and on a sound understanding of the complexities of their situation.

Programmes should include more mobilization of young people to promote and protect their rights against issues and contexts that encourage children to involve in prostitution.

5.5 Linkages, Partnership and Complementation of Approaches

To maximise impact and to try to avoid negative unintended effects, programming should try to take action through more than one type of intervention and to make explicit linkages between them. These may include anti-poverty measures, public awareness raising, education, psychosocial interventions, policy influencing and advocacy.

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www.preda.org

www.childprotection.org.ph

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