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**Documenting Cases of Violence Against Women,
Particularly Trafficking and Prostitution**
by
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ABSTRACT

In the last 10 years, CATW-AP has evolved a gender-responsive standardized computer format in documenting cases of trafficking and other forms of violence against women (VAW) in cooperation with 30 partner NGO organizations in the Philippines and around 150 organizations in Indonesia, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Pakistan. It was the first project that involved trafficking and prostitution survivors as partners in documentation of cases.

CATW-AP convened consultations with groups of survivors to develop gender-responsive terminologies of human rights violations, relevant to the issues of trafficking and prostitution. These categories were incorporated into the software which, previously were biased towards civil liberties and political rights only. In subsequent years, CATW-AP included categories of violations of women migrants' rights, girl-children's rights, reproductive and sexual rights, to further modify the human rights documentation system (HURIDOCS) adapted from Geneva.

Using the HURIDOCS as a common standardized format across the Philippines, other than Asia as a whole, Filipino women's groups were able to generate significant indicative data on VAW, particularly profiles of victims and perpetrators of trafficking and prostitution. These data have been used to successfully lobby for local ordinances/laws on domestic violence and to pass the national anti-trafficking law in the Philippines in 2003.

Trafficking and Prostitution Data as Gender Statistics

In search of a general situationer on trafficking of Filipino women, CATW-AP embarked on a 12-region research on trafficking cases as reported to government agencies, NGOs and survivor groups, in 2003. The diagnostic study was primarily for the purpose of determining "high-risk areas to trafficking", which will be prioritized for training and the establishment of preventive mechanisms, such as the barangay-based *Bantay-bugaw*, by this organization.¹ Taking off from the definition of trafficking as proposed in then still anti-trafficking bill, CATW-AP conducted key informant interviews and review of secondary data. We then found more cases reported to NGO'S than to government agencies. Most of the latter have no category of trafficking in their databases. Even prostitution is confined to child

¹ *Bantay-Bugaw* or trafficker-watch mechanisms are set up in source, transit and destination areas by CATW-AP in cooperation with local government units and NGO's to prevent the victimization of women and children by pimps and illegal recruiters. Education of the community people and mandated agencies, as well as inter-agency cooperation are the main strategies. The first conviction under RA 9208 was made in a pilot *Bantay-Bugaw* area of CATW-AP, Zamboanga City, where the LGU attests that the project laid the grounds for early intervention and tight inter-agency coordination on cases, facilitating the conviction.

prostitution. This is understandable given that the country's legal framework when it comes to prostitution focuses on the victimization of children.

NGOs – migrants' rights groups, children's groups focusing on trafficking, prostitution survivor groups and women's groups working on the issue of trafficking and prostitution – had quite a wealth of data on trafficking, despite the fact that the anti-trafficking law was not passed yet at that time. But with government agencies, CATW-AP had to sift illegal recruitment and disappearances data to determine those cases which involved the elements of acts, means and purpose of exploitation.

Women registered in social hygiene clinics were included in the statistics, based on the United Nations framework that the act of receiving a person, through abuse of vulnerability, for the purpose of sexual exploitation is an act of trafficking, regardless of the presence or not of a third party. The element of "force" was immaterial, following the definition of trafficking under the UN Protocol where consent is immaterial, therefore covering all acts of prostitution as trafficking. The result was a total number of 6,298 victims of trafficking across the country. However, this number only includes those brought to the attention of NGO's or government agencies. As we know, victims of violence, especially sexual violence are still silenced by the stigma they suffer from coming out with their experience. Further, many of the victims who came to report talk of 50 or more of their women companions trapped in trafficking or prostitution situations, so one can deduce as to how much number the baseline may be multiplied.

An apparent limitation in establishing a respectable estimate is finding where and how cases are hidden. Looking at the demand side may be an answer: getting the numbers from the bars, nightclubs and other destination points. Brothel and other forms of trafficking, however, remain underground. Extrapolating the number of male users of prostituted women and children may also be done from surveys. Referencing precursor studies internationally, the male buyers outnumber the victims by 100:7. This is where the help of you, gender statisticians, in the audience is needed.

Controlled Sources in the Universe of Trafficking and Prostitution Cases

CATW-AP may be the broadest unity of women, human rights and migrants' groups fighting trafficking and all forms of sexual exploitation. Before the passage of the law, it remained as the single resource coalition on trafficking cases, with direct assistance groups

receiving cases. It is important to recognize, however, that children's groups such as ECPAT and Visayan Forum generate their own data on child trafficking.

To systematize its database, CATW-AP has evolved a gender-responsive standardized computer format in the last 10 years for documentation of cases of trafficking and other forms of violence against women (VAW). CATW-AP convened consultations with women's groups, including survivors, to develop gender-responsive terminologies of human rights violations, relevant to the issues of trafficking and prostitution. These categories were incorporated into the software which, previously were biased towards civil liberties and political rights only. In subsequent years, CATW-AP included categories of violations of women migrants' rights, girl-children's rights, reproductive and sexual rights, to further modify the human rights documentation system (HURIDOCs) adapted from Geneva and render it useful for other women's groups working on various issues of women's human rights violations.

The software has been shared in trainings with 30 member and partner NGO organizations in the Philippines and around 150 organizations in Indonesia, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Pakistan.

Using the HURIDOCs as a common standardized format across the Philippines, other than Asia as a whole, Filipino women's groups were able to generate significant indicative data on VAW, particularly profiles of victims and perpetrators of trafficking and prostitution. These data have been used to successfully lobby for local ordinances/laws on domestic violence and to pass the national anti-trafficking law in the Philippines in 2003.

This year, given resource constraints, we involved only 10 member organizations of CATW-AP focused on trafficking and prostitution to generate data on the issues. They were mostly survivor groups who recorded the data in paper formats as intake forms when they receive cases from the victims who seek their help. While more agencies, both governmental and private have started work on trafficking since the passage of the law, systematization of case documentation across such agencies has yet to happen. CATW-AP sustained its documentation work among member organizations, equipped with historical understanding of the trafficking concept now enshrined in both the UN Protocol on Trafficking and the Philippine Law on Trafficking, Republic Act 9208. CATW-AP is also armed with the gender-perspective, taking off from an integrated structural analysis of women's issues, direct experience in assisting victims including counseling, as well as engagement with law enforcers in prosecuting perpetrators. The 10 survivor and anti-

trafficking groups are strategically located in the three major islands of the Philippines with a wide scope of mandate: Buklod in Central Luzon, Batis-Aware (involving migrants/returnees from Japan) and Bagong Kamalayan in the National Capital Region, Visayan Forum in Bicol and Eastern Visayas, Forge in Cebu, G-WAVE in Negros Oriental, Lawig Bubai in Davao del Sur and Norte, Sidlakan in Gen. Santos, Tisaka in Cagayan de Oro and Lumah Ma Dilaut in Zamboanga.

Concepts and Methods from Human Rights and Gender Perspectives: Social and Cultural Considerations (Categorizations)

Let me be specific on the unique characteristics of this documentation. First, the cases of violence against women were recorded from a human rights perspective. Therefore, rights violated and methods of violence are identified and categorized based on women's experiences, including those unnamed gender-specific rights yet to be enshrined in conventions, such as violations of the right to personal integrity by pornography. Methods of violence were enumerated in picklists, including numerous sexual acts previously not made visible as methods of violence inflicted on women. Where available, relevant national laws are identified and international standards are invoked.

Second, the cases are recorded from a gender perspective, with recognition of the situation of gender inequality and therefore the vulnerabilities of the women as victims are identified, which includes belonging to an ethnic or religious group, being Amerasian and the like. The victims' profile format is sensitive to the particularities of women's situation. For example, the reality that women victims of violence may be living in with a common law spouse, or that their sexual orientation may be a factor, are things considered in their profile. The categories of occupations as produced in Geneva were also modified to remove 'prostitution' as maintained by the International Labor Organization as "work", since the Coalition advocates that prostitution is a women's human rights violation. Instead, an additional field for sources of income was included, enumerating numerous forms of informal work in which most women vulnerable to trafficking and prostitution are found. These are particular realities that are often denied in recording profiles of women, especially considering those vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Still, during actual documentation, the survivor documentalists are limited by the "tediousness" of the paper formats and required fields of the software. But as they were also trained as counselor and para-legal workers, they are completely aware that information cannot be extractive and may only be completed after a long series of sharing. Thus, a lot of

the categories mentioned above were also not satisfactorily filled up to be able to come up with significant nuances in the numbers.

But over-all, the HURIDOCs data produced from June 2006 to May 2007, the total number of victims of trafficking and prostitution reached 287. Of the total number of victims, 43.6% of those with known date of birth were minors at the time of their victimization, the youngest of whom is a 10-year-old girl. Fifteen percent (15.33%) have unknown date of birth. This is a limitation expressed by the survivors in terms of getting such details, as they tend to focus on the events. Also, the survivors felt that most who are minor-looking refuse to reveal their age for fear that their parents who induced them to prostitution might be prosecuted.

As regards civil status, 212 or 73.86% of the total number of victims are single, but 76 or 35.85% of this number have dependents. Of this number, 49 or 64% have 2 or more dependents.

Indigenous women trafficked came from the following ethnic groups: B'laan, T'Boli, Kaulo, while the Moro's are Maranao, Mandaya, Badjao, Sama, Manobo and Lumad. Documentatlists in the areas where the ethnic groups are concentrated opine that the culture of silence in the ethnic groups prevent women and their families from reporting victimization to trafficking and prostitution.

Patterns of trafficking are mostly domestic, women and girls are recruited to prostitution from the rural areas to the cities in NCR, Laoag, Cabanatuan, Dagupan, Olongapo (host to the most number of cases: 31), Angeles, Batangas, Cavite, Cebu, GenSan, Kidapawan, Davao and Zamboanga. Most were brought to prostitution directly while a few have worked as domestic helpers prior to being recruited to prostitution. Trafficking across border brings women to slavery like and debt-bondage conditions in Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Syria. But still more are brought to prostitution in the pretext of employment or marriage to Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Hongkong and Cyprus.

Trafficking to Japan took on a different character since requirements for entertainers to leave have been made stricter. Filipino women are married off to Japanese nationals, and the former's visa are paid for. However, cases reveal that women are eventually transferred to the sex industry, especially when they could not pay off their debts to the Japanese.

Origin areas are Central Luzon (Pampanga, Zambales) with 16 cases coming from there. In Mindanao, Davao surfaces as the biggest source area with 10 cases.

The recruiters are mostly women, known to victims as their own relatives. Only 39.6% of the perpetrators are male. However, the women did not count the customers among perpetrators. Also, only 149 of the 287 victims were able to name their perpetrators. Most of those named were their pimps or recruiters. Only two named the juridical organization or prostitution establishment as perpetrator. Other perpetrators named are police officers, soldiers, a judge, a governor, a city councilor, barangay captain, and bar owners.

There is also a field for interventions which showed that the services offered to the victims were mostly counseling, legal assistance, informal education and temporary shelter. CATW-AP itself is able to facilitate formal education, professional therapy and medical services, other than the above. Even the governmental agencies approached by the victims lacked livelihood alternatives, health services, options for formal education, long-term therapy, and housing.

There were resounding complaints from the victims about insensitive care from government agencies.

Concluding Statements

The data were collectively analyzed by the consortium, although completion of nuanced data and deeper analysis are ongoing. A significant number of the women were minors when they were victimized, especially those in prostitution. This related to their early sexual abuse experiences, which in counseling processes with the organizations reveal the erosion of their sense of self, considering themselves as 'damaged goods' who think to themselves: "why not earn from this, since I'm used daily anyway." The ones trafficked to domestic servitude or slavery-like conditions would be the ones who are in the age of majority. Preventive mechanisms such as raising the age for home-service workers (HSWs) could be helpful.

The context of trafficking and prostitution can be gleaned from the character of the source areas, which figure consistently low in human development indices. This is the context of poverty and armed conflict. In some ethnic communities, there are still arranged

marriages from which the girls escape. This pushes them to go with recruiters and land in trafficked situations.

Host or destination areas are characterized by high tourist influx. Most of the consumers are local but Buklod lists American soldiers among the demand sector.

Gender Statistics Fostering Political Action

Being the first project that involved trafficking and prostitution survivors as partners in documentation of cases, this has become an empowering process for the survivors. They are in the best position to gather exhaustive data as they meet the victims in their organizing and assistance work, the victims trust them, and the survivors understand the dynamics of trafficking and prostitution to be able to interpret and analyze the data sharply.

It built their capacity to systematize and appreciate documentation of cases in the context of their entire advocacy and self-empowerment programs. The use of information technology, while at first intimidating, also developed their confidence in using it as a tool to expedite their work. However, greater work has to be done in continuing to build their skills and monitoring gaps in their documentation.

Ultimately, the documentation results will be used as a platform for pushing the anti-prostitution bill which will complement the anti-trafficking law, in ensuring that all victims of prostitution are protected and provided holistic and long-term services, while all perpetrators are effectively identified and prosecuted.