



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Philippines: Human trafficking

Version 1.0

November 2022

Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in the [Introduction](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into 2 parts: (1) an assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note - that is information in the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw - by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies:

- a person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- that the general humanitarian situation is so severe that there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of serious harm because conditions amount to inhuman or degrading treatment as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iii\) of the Immigration Rules](#) / Article 3 of the [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#)
- that the security situation is such that there are substantial grounds for believing there is a real risk of serious harm because there exists a serious and individual threat to a civilian's life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in a situation of international or internal armed conflict as within [paragraphs 339C and 339CA\(iv\) of the Immigration Rules](#)
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- a claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case's specific facts.

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate and balanced, which is compared and contrasted where appropriate so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture is provided of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

The inclusion of a source is not, however, an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote. Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the bibliography.

Feedback

Our goal is to provide accurate, reliable and up-to-date COI and clear guidance. We welcome feedback on how to improve our products. If you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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Assessment

Updated: 22 November 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

1.1.1 Fear of persecution and/or serious harm by traffickers or other non-state actors because the person is a (potential) victim of trafficking ((P)VoT).

1.2 Points to note

1.2.1 This note refers to victims of modern slavery which focuses on, but is not restricted to, cases where a person has been trafficked to the UK for forced labour.

1.3 Modern slavery

1.3.1 Decision makers should note that guidance for competent authority staff in any part of the UK who make decisions on whether or not an individual is a potential victim/victim of modern slavery for the purpose of the National Referral Mechanism is set out in the [Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance](#) for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and non-statutory guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland. The guidance is also aimed at staff:

- within public authorities who may encounter potential victims of modern slavery; and/or
- who are involved in supporting victims

1.3.2 Decision makers also must note that if a person has a 'positive conclusive grounds' decision, a grant of discretionary leave may be considered. For further information, see [Discretionary leave considerations for victims of modern slavery](#)

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1.4

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2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- 2.1.3 In cases where there are doubts surrounding an person's claimed place of origin, decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 2.2.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 2.2.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention, Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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2.3 Convention reason(s)

- 2.3.1 Potential victims of trafficking (PVoT) are not considered to form a particular social group (PSG) within the meaning of the Refugee Convention.
- 2.3.2 This is because they do not share an innate characteristic, or a common background that cannot be changed, or share a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience that a person should not be forced to renounce it and they do not have a distinct identity in the Philippines because the group is not perceived as being different by the surrounding society.
- 2.3.3 Women and children who have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation are likely to form a PSG.
- 2.3.4 This is because they do share an innate characteristic, or a common background that cannot be changed (their past experience of being trafficked) and are likely to have a distinct identity within Filipino society because of prevailing societal attitudes towards women and child victims of sexual trafficking.
- 2.3.5 In the absence of a link to one of the 5 Refugee Convention grounds necessary for the grant of refugee status, the question is whether the particular person will face a real risk of serious harm sufficient to qualify for Humanitarian Protection (HP).
- 2.3.6 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.3.7 For guidance on Humanitarian Protection see the Asylum Instruction, [Humanitarian Protection](#).

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2.4 Risk

- 2.4.1 In general, a person is unlikely to be at risk of reprisal or re-trafficking by their original traffickers. Victims of trafficking from poorer rural areas and those from the Muslim Mindanao region may be more vulnerable to re-trafficking due to societal pressures and financial incentives from their family or community. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that their profile and circumstances are such that on return they would be vulnerable to abuse or re-trafficking which would amount to serious harm. Each case must be considered on its facts.
- 2.4.2 The Philippines is a source country for human trafficking abroad of men, women and children where victims are forced to work in domestic, construction and other industries, including in the UK. During 2021, there were a total of 75 Filipino potential victim of trafficking referrals within the UK with the majority being for labour and/or domestic exploitation (see [Trafficking victims and traffickers](#)).
- 2.4.3 Traffickers use the promise of fake job positions abroad to exploit migrant workers and Filipinos already working or living overseas, of which the UN estimates there are over 10 million (see [Trafficking victims and traffickers](#)).
- 2.4.4 Victims, including children, are also exploited within country into forced labour, domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. Figures from 2018 from the Global Slavery Index estimate that approximately 784,000 people live in modern slavery in the Philippines, although these figures do not indicate the number of trafficked persons (see [Trafficking victims and traffickers](#)).
- 2.4.5 Online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) is common, with the Philippines being one of the largest known sources of OSEC. Most cases of child online exploitation are carried out by family members. Lockdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic have increased cases of OSEC (see [Trafficking and modern slavery victims in the Philippines](#)).
- 2.4.6 Women and children from the Muslim Mindanao area, where Islamic separatist groups operate, those who have been internally displaced due to conflict and disasters and those from rural communities can be particularly vulnerable to trafficking (see [Trafficking victims and traffickers](#)).
- 2.4.7 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.5 Protection

- 2.5.1 In general, the state is able and willing to offer effective protection. However, each case will need to be considered on its particular circumstances. A person's reluctance to seek protection does not mean that effective protection is not available. The onus is on the person to demonstrate that the state is not willing and able to provide them with effective protection.
- 2.5.2 The state is signatory to key international human rights instruments, has domestic legislation that prohibits sex and labour trafficking, and proscribes penalties of up to life imprisonment and fines of up to approximately £74,000 for such acts (see [Legal status](#)).

- 2.5.3 The US Department of State (USSD) continues to assess that the government of the Philippines fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking as set out in the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2000. Despite the Covid pandemic affecting anti-trafficking enforcement capacity in 2021/early 2022, the government increased victim protection efforts, including identifying more victims than in 2020 (See [Anti-trafficking state and non-state agencies](#)).
- 2.5.4 Although sources indicate that there is corruption among some police and immigration officials who accept bribes to facilitate trafficking crimes, the government has taken steps to address this, including drafting processes to identify and monitor trafficking-related corruption cases. Whilst there are some corrupt officials there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case in general and there were some investigations and prosecutions during 2021/2022 of police officers and other officials in respect of trafficking offences (see [Police effectiveness](#), [Protection](#) and [Corruption](#)).
- 2.5.5 The state investigates, prosecutes and convicts traffickers, imposing significant prison terms commensurate with other serious offences, to the majority of those sentenced under the anti-trafficking act. Statistics provided in the USSD TiP report state that between April 2021 and March 2022 the government-initiated prosecutions against 298 alleged traffickers, while 1,297 were pending and 56 traffickers were convicted. The judicial process was able to continue to operate throughout the Covid-19 pandemic with the use of online court filings and proceedings. Victims of trafficking are awarded compensation by the courts, to be paid to them by the traffickers, although few victims receive damages owed to them (see [Prosecution](#)).
- 2.5.6 Between April 2021 and March 2022, the government identified 1,802 potential victims of trafficking. According to the US Trafficking in Persons report (the TiP) the Philippines Department for Foreign Affairs assisted 2,575 potential victims of human trafficking in 2020 and 431 potential victims in 2021 all of whom had been identified by overseas missions. The government maintained 44 residential facilities across the country that provide a range of services, predominately for women and children. The government also provided medical services and reintegration assistance, including skills training (see [Government shelters](#), [Government assistance in country](#) and [Government assistance overseas](#)).
- 2.5.7 The government had social workers based in several overseas missions and funded shelters and temporary accommodation for victims of trafficking at 9 overseas missions (see [Government assistance overseas](#)).
- 2.5.8 In addition to state support, there are a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which operate throughout the country to provide support, integration and training opportunities to victims of trafficking and modern slavery (see [Government assistance in country](#) and [NGO Shelters and assistance](#)).
- 2.5.9 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.6 Internal relocation

- 2.6.1 In general, there are parts of the country where a person would not have a well-founded fear of serious harm and it will be reasonable for them to relocate but each case must be considered on its facts.
- 2.6.2 The Philippines is an archipelago of around 7,640 islands, with a diverse population of approximately 114 million people. Citizens do not face any legal restrictions in freedom of movement within the Philippines although people from areas affected by violent conflict, such as the Mindanao, may be subject to checkpoints and curfews (see [Internal relocation](#)).
- 2.6.3 Victims of trafficking may be able to internally relocate to escape a localised threat of exploitation however, this may depend on their circumstances, the nature of the threat and how far the threat would extend. Returned victims of trafficking may be vulnerable to further exploitation.
- 2.6.4 For further guidance on internal relocation see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.7 Certification

- 2.7.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.7.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

Section 3 updated: 25 October 2022

3. Law and policy

3.1 International human rights instruments

3.1.1 The Philippines has ratified, the following conventions:

- Convention against Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography (CRC-OP-SC)¹.

3.1.2 The Philippines signed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN; a political and economic union of 10 member states in Southeast Asia) Convention against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP) in 2015 which entered into force on 8 March 2017. The government of the Philippines explained the aim of ACTIP is ‘...to increase and support prevention efforts by focusing on discouraging both the demand and supply that fosters the exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking.’²

3.1.3 See also [Prevention](#).

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3.2 Criminal law

3.2.1 The [Republic Act 9208: Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003](#) defines trafficking³. In 2012, the Republic Act 9208 was amended through the [RA10364, also known as the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act](#)⁴.

3.2.2 According to the Commission on Filipinos Overseas Primer information leaflet on [‘Republic Act 9208 as amended by Republic Act 10364’](#)⁵ dated January 2020, the penalties for violations of the RA 9208 as amended by the RA 10364, are:

| Act | Penalty |
|-----------------------|--|
| Acts of trafficking | 20 Years imprisonment and a fine of Philippine Peso (P) 1,000,000 to P 2,000,000 (approximately £15,000 - £30,000[where £1.00 = 63.9 Pesos ⁶]) |
| Attempted trafficking | 15 years imprisonment and a fine of P 500,000 to |

¹ OHCHR, [‘Ratification Status for the Philippines’](#)

² OHCHR, [‘Seventh periodic report submitted by the Philippines under articles...’](#), 21 March 2022

³ PCW, [‘Republic Act 9208: Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003’](#)

⁴ ILO, [‘Republic Act No. 10364’](#), 23 July 2012

⁵ CFO, [‘Primer on Republic Act 9208 as amended by Republic Act 10364’](#), January 2020

⁶ Xe.com, [1 GBP to PHP - British Pounds to Philippine Pesos Exchange Rate](#), 27 September 2022

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| | P 1,000,000 (approximately £7,500 - £15,000) |
| Accomplice liability | 15 years imprisonment and a fine of P 500,000 to P 1,000,000 (approximately £7,500 - £15,000) |
| Accessories | 15 years imprisonment and a fine of P 500,000 to P 1,000,000 (approximately £7,500 - £15,000) |
| Acts that promote trafficking | 15 years imprisonment and a fine of P 500,000 to P 1,000,000 (approx. £7,500 - £15,000) |
| Qualified trafficking | Life imprisonment and a fine of P 2,000,000 to P 5,000,000 (approx. £30,000 - £74,800) |
| Violation of confidentiality | 6 years imprisonment and fine of P 500,000 to P 1,000,000 (approx. £7,500 - £15,000) |
| Use of trafficked person | Prision correccional [suspension from public office, from the right to follow a profession or calling, and disqualification from the right to vote ⁷] or imprisonment of 6 months and 1 day to 6 years and P 50,000 to P 100,000 fine (approx. £750 - £1,500) If involves sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct with a child: Imprisonment of Reclusion Temporal (12 years + 1 day- 20 years ⁸) in its medium period to Reclusion Perpetua (30 years) and P 500,000 to P 1,000,000 (approx. £7,500 - £15,000) |
| Use of trafficked person | If it involves carnal knowledge of or sexual intercourse with a male or female trafficking victim, use of force or intimidation against the victim deprived of reason or an unconscious victim, or a victim under 12 years of age: Reclusion Perpetua (30 years ⁹) or imprisonment of 20 years and 1 day to 40 years and P 1 million to P 5 million fine (approximately £15,000 - £74,800) |
| Use of trafficked person | If committed by a foreigner: -Deportation and permanently barred from entry into the country |
| Use of trafficked person | If committed by a Public Official: -Dismissal from service, disqualification, and imprisonment. |

3.2.4 In March 2022 former President Duterte signed into law [Republic Act Number 11648](#), which provides for stronger protection against rape and increased the age of sexual consent from 12 to 16 years of age¹⁰.

⁷ [Revised Penal code of the Philippines](#), 8 December 1930

⁸ [Revised Penal code of the Philippines](#), 8 December 1930

⁹ [Revised Penal code of the Philippines](#), 8 December 1930

¹⁰ Official Gazette, '[Republic Act No. 11648](#)'

- 3.2.5 The 'Ninth periodic report submitted by the Philippines government under article 18 of the Convention' to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), dated 4 October 2021 noted that:
'The Anti-TIP Act, as amended, penalizes any person, who introduces or matches for money, profit, or material, economic or other consideration, any person or any Filipino woman to a foreign national, for marriage; or offers or contracts marriage, real or simulated, for the purpose of acquiring, buying, offering, selling or trading him/her to engage in prostitution, pornography, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, involuntary servitude or debt bondage. Online matchmaking is specifically penalized by the Anti-Mail Order Spouse Act, which was enacted into law in July 2016. Under the said Act, it prohibits matching or offering a Filipino to a foreign national for marriage or common law partnership on a mail-order basis or through personal introduction, email, or websites on the internet.'¹¹
- 3.2.6 The US State Department, 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines, 19 July 2022 (USSD TiP report 2022), which covers the reporting period of 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, stated 'The 2003 and 2012 anti-trafficking acts criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of up to 20 years' imprisonment and fines of between 1 million and 2 million pesos [approximately £15,000 - £30,000]. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape.'¹²

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3.3 Labour law

- 3.3.1 Freedom House noted in their report 'Freedom in the World 2022', covering events in 2021, that: 'The legal minimum wage in the agricultural sector in some regions falls far short of what is necessary for a family to avoid poverty. Violation of minimum-wage standards is fairly common. There is a wide gap between the salaries of top executives and their employees.'¹³
- 3.3.2 The Exodus Road, a non-profit organisation who partners with local law enforcement agencies working on trafficking cases, noted in March 2022 that: 'The labor code in the Philippines allows parents to decide if their children can work before they turn 15. This means that sometimes, kids are working starting at age 6.'¹⁴

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3.4 Policy measures and programmes

- 3.4.1 In July 2021 former President, Rodrigo Duterte, declared that July would become "National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Awareness Month", the country already observed "World Day Against Trafficking" on 30 July every year¹⁵.
- 3.4.2 The US DoL report published in September 2021 noted that:

¹¹ CEDAW, '[Ninth periodic report submitted by the Philippines under article 18...](#)', 4 October 2021

¹² USSD, '[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)' (pg 447), 19 July 2022

¹³ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2022](#)', 28 February 2022

¹⁴ The Exodus Road, '[Human Trafficking in the Philippines](#)', 15 March 2022

¹⁵ PNA, '[July declared Anti-Trafficking in Persons Awareness Month](#)', 7 July 2021

‘During the reporting period, the Department of Justice implemented a pilot initiative with the aim of introducing measures and policies to address human trafficking in public procurement and supply chains. In October, the program held its first webinar introducing several anti-human trafficking initiatives in public procurement policy and supply chain management. The webinar also introduced government officials to modern slavery concepts and how government procurement policies can be used to combat human trafficking.’¹⁶

3.4.3 The same report further noted:

‘During the reporting period, the Supreme Court issued "Guidelines on the Conduct of Videoconferencing," which permitted OSEC cases to use Video-In-Depth-Interview kits which, as a result, helped to protect 109 OSEC victims from appearing in court; thus helping to prevent re-traumatization of victims [...] In addition, the Department of Justice issued its first advisory on plea bargaining in human trafficking cases, and the increased use by courts of such pleas—particularly in OSEC cases—significantly decreased the time to case resolution, further reducing the potential for re-traumatizing child victims. [...]’¹⁷

3.4.4 The USSD TiP report 2022 stated that: ‘The government continued to implement its 2017-2021 national action plan (NAP), which expired in December 2021; the government began developing an updated NAP at the end of the reporting period.’¹⁸. The same reported noted that ‘The government did not make efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts. DOJ continued to introduce government officials to initiatives aimed at addressing human trafficking in public procurement and supply chains.’¹⁹

3.4.5 The 'Ninth periodic report submitted by the Philippines government under article 18 of the Convention' to the CEDAW, dated 4 October 2021, noted:

‘The State also developed the Guidelines on the Referral System, a practical guide for anti-trafficking advocates on how to effectively and efficiently handle TIP cases... Complementing the guidelines is the Victim Witness Information Sheet which provides a roadmap on the whole spectrum of TIP, with the end goal of providing a more efficient delivery of services to survivors – whether it be from the point of rescue, prosecution, and eventually, recovery and reintegration.’²⁰

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Section 4 updated: 22 November 2022

4. Trafficking victims and traffickers

4.1 Drivers and types of trafficking

4.1.1 The Exodus Road, a non-profit organisation which partners with local law enforcement agencies working on trafficking cases, noted in March 2022 that: ‘With one of the largest migrant populations in the world, male Filipino

¹⁶ US DOL, ‘[2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor](#)’ (pg 1064), 29 September 2021

¹⁷ US DOL, ‘[2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor](#)’ (pg 1067), 29 September 2021

¹⁸ USSD, ‘[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)’, 19 July 2022

¹⁹ USSD, ‘[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)’, 19 July 2022

²⁰ CEDAW, ‘[Ninth periodic report submitted by the Philippines under article 18...](#)’, 4 October 2021

migrant workers are typically exploited in the fishing, shipping, construction, manufacturing, and agricultural sectors while females are exploited in domestic and hospitality roles. Children of both genders are subject to sex and labor trafficking, many of whom have been sold by family members.²¹

- 4.1.2 ECPAT, an international NGO network whose work focused on ending the sexual exploitation of children, noted in their country monitoring report published in 2021 that: 'Apart from poverty, the main causes of child trafficking in the Philippines are low economic development in communities of origin, gender inequalities, limited employment opportunities, large family sizes, inadequate awareness among families, and sex tourism.'²²
- 4.1.3 A report published by the OMCT in October 2022 states that:
'Traffickers exploit women and girls from rural communities, areas affected by conflict and disaster, and impoverished urban centers for the purposes of sex trafficking, forced domestic work, forced begging, and other forms of forced labor around the country... The most recent data from the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), which implements a national Recovery and Reintegration Program of Trafficked Persons (RRPTP), shows that from 2017 to late 2021, sexual exploitation remains the most prevalent type of trafficking reported to the authorities, followed by forced labor... In addition, newer forms of trafficking and sexual abuse have appeared recently in the form of live-stream sexual abuse trade and online recruitment. According to a report by UNICEF, the Philippines has become the global epicenter of the live-stream sexual abuse trade...'²³
- 4.1.4 The same report noted that:
'Many women and girls continue to be victims of human trafficking due to poverty and deeply embedded discriminatory views of women that also seep into policy development. These policies and practices are vestiges of colonial rule and religious influences that continue to permeate the social, economic, and political environment in the country. In turn, they enable crimes amounting to torture to continue being committed against women and girls.'²⁴
- 4.1.5 The USSD 2021 report on human right practices published in April 2022 noted that: 'Impoverished IDPs were highly susceptible to human trafficking networks.'²⁵
- 4.1.6 The US Department of Labour report on the worst forms of child labour, published in September 2021 noted that: 'Children in the Philippines are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including in commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes as a result of human trafficking... Children, primarily girls, from rural communities are subjected to trafficking domestically in urban centers and tourist destinations for the purposes of domestic work and

²¹ The Exodus Road, '[Human Trafficking in the Philippines](#)', 15 March 2022

²² ECPAT, '[Philippines – Country Monitoring Report](#)', 2021

²³ OMCT – World Organisation Against Torture (Author), PAHRA - Philippine Alliance for Human Rights Advocates (Author): '[Women break the silence: Gender-based torture in Asia](#)', 2022

²⁴ OMCT – World Organisation Against Torture (Author), PAHRA - Philippine Alliance for Human Rights Advocates (Author): '[Women break the silence: Gender-based torture in Asia](#)', 2022

²⁵ USSD, '[2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Philippines](#)', 12 April 2022

commercial sexual exploitation.²⁶

4.1.7 UN Women's report 'Gender at the Nexus of Violent Extremism and Trafficking in Persons in Muslim Mindanao' published in June 2020 noted:

'Aside from poverty and conflict-induced migration and trafficking in persons, many communities feature the distinct issue of debt bondage, which drives both trafficking in persons and recruitment into armed or extremist groups, and is steeped in the socio-economic inequalities in Muslim Mindanao... As one interviewee pointed out, many families in Muslim Mindanao are indebted to wealthier families or clans, often over land. Women, then, are coerced into providing free-of-charge domestic work. They can often only escape this slave-like work through emigration. In fact, recruiters from Manila target these vulnerable populations strategically. This requires deep, local knowledge and may indicate a much more interconnected network than is currently known.'²⁷

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4.2 Age and gender of victims of trafficking

4.2.1 The Exodus Road, a non-profit organisation which partners with local law enforcement agencies working on trafficking cases, noted in March 2022 that '[m]en, women, and children are exploited from rural communities, conflict and disaster zones, and impoverished urban areas.' The same report notes that women and children are among the most vulnerable to trafficking²⁸.

4.2.2 The Borgen Project, a not-for-profit- organisation focused on poverty and hunger, noted in an article from 2019 that: 'Children are at great risk for human trafficking in the Philippines. Estimates determine that 60,000 to 100,000 children are victims of human trafficking in the Philippines. These children either go to work in child sex rings in the Philippines or work abroad as prostitutes.'²⁹

4.2.3 A report published by OMCT in October 2022 notes that: 'From 2017 to September 2021, the RRPTP assisted a total of 3,109 victims of sex trafficking and a further 2,911 victims of other forms of forced labour. Of the victims of sex trafficking, there were 380 boys and men and 2,729 girls and women. When it came to victims of labor trafficking, there were 1,802 girls and women and 1,109 boys and men...'³⁰

4.2.4 The USSD TiP report 2022 stated that:

'The government lacked a reliable mechanism to consolidate statistics on the total number of victims identified and assisted. The government reported identifying 1,802 victims, compared with 1,534 potential victims identified in the previous reporting period. Of the 1,802 victims identified, traffickers exploited 535 in sex trafficking, 501 in forced labor, and 766 in unspecified exploitations; 551 were male and 1,251 were female. The Department of

²⁶ US DOL, '[2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor](#)' (pg 1059 - 1060), 29 September 2021

²⁷ UN Women, '[Gender at the Nexus of Violent Extremism and Trafficking in...](#)', June 2020

²⁸ The Exodus Road, '[Human Trafficking in the Philippines](#)', 15 March 2022

²⁹ The Borgen Project, '[10 Facts About Human Trafficking in the Philippines](#)', 6 September 2019

³⁰ OMCT – World Organisation Against Torture (Author), PAHRA - Philippine Alliance for Human Rights Advocates (Author): '[Women break the silence: Gender-based torture in Asia](#)', 2022

Foreign Affairs (DFA) reported identifying 248 potential Filipino trafficking victims abroad from July to December 2021, primarily in the Middle East and Asia, compared to 2,429 in the previous reporting period. In addition to victims identified by the government, NGOs and an international organization reported identifying 985 sex trafficking victims (228 men, 742 women, 197 boys, and 545 girls) and six adult female labor trafficking victims during the reporting period.³¹

- 4.2.5 The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) noted that following lockdowns related to the Coronavirus pandemic there had been reports that cases of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC), involving children aged 12 and below, had increased³².

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4.3 Victims trafficked abroad

- 4.3.1 UN Women's report 'Gender at the Nexus of Violent Extremism and Trafficking in Persons in Muslim Mindanao' published in June 2020 noted: '... It is also not known how many of the approximately 10 million Filipinos and Filipinas who work or live overseas are directly affected by trafficking in persons. What is clear, however, is the ongoing feminization of migration and its links to trafficking in persons in Muslim Mindanao. Indeed, in 2018 the number of female overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) from Muslim Mindanao was significantly higher at 2,900 than that of their male counterparts at 1,200.'³³
- 4.3.2 Freedom House noted in their annual report 'Freedom in the World 2022' that: 'The Philippines is a source country for human trafficking, with some Filipinos taken abroad and forced to work in the fishing, shipping, construction, or other industries, or forced to engage in sex work. The country's various insurgent groups have been accused of using child soldiers.'³⁴
- 4.3.3 The UK Home Office's National Referral Mechanism (NRM) statistics, stated that for 2021 there were a total of 75 Filipino potential victims of modern slavery referred to the NRM. Of the 75 referrals 53 were related to labour and/or domestic exploitation³⁵.

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4.4 Trafficking and modern slavery victims in the Philippines

- 4.4.1 The Global Slavery Index's statistics from 2018 state that approx. 784,000 people in the Philippines live in modern slavery although this number does not give an accurate indication of the number of trafficked persons³⁶.
- 4.4.2 Online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) is common. The USSD TiP report and the IWPR [Institute for War and Peace Reporting] both noted that

³¹ USSD, '[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)' (pg 448- 449), 19 July 2022

³² IWPR, '[Philippines: Sweeping Violence Under the Carpet](#)', 27 May 2020

³³ UN Women, '[Gender at the Nexus of Violent Extremism and Trafficking in...](#)', June 2020

³⁴ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2022](#)', 28 February 2022

³⁵ UK Home Office, '[National Referral Mechanism statistics](#)', 3 March 2022

³⁶ Global Slavery Index, '[Country Data](#)', 2018

children who are subject to online sexual exploitation, normally no older than 12, are forced to perform sexual acts in front of a webcam, with such acts reportedly making approximately £76, the equivalent of a poor family's monthly income^{37 38}.

4.4.3 Freedom House noted that: 'Children have been reported working as domestic laborers.'³⁹

4.4.4 The Exodus Road, a non-profit organisation which partner with local law enforcement agencies working on trafficking cases, noted in March 2022:

'The Philippines is one of the largest known sources of online sexual exploitation of children, and it is estimated that of the 50,000 Filipino children employed as domestic workers in the Philippines almost 5,000 are under 15 years old. In total, estimates say that between 60,000 and 100,000 Filipino children are impacted by labor trafficking or sex trafficking.

'... Many of the sex tourists in the Philippines come from wealthy, developed countries and are often convicted or charged sex offenders in their home countries. However, Filipino men also purchase commercial sex acts from trafficked children.

'... The recruitment of child soldiers also remains a huge issue in the Philippines, in particular on the southern island of Mindanao where radical separatist groups operate. Armed, non-state groups such as the Maute Group, the Moro National Liberation Front, and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters recruit child soldiers, while the Islamic State is reported to subject women and girls to sexual slavery.'⁴⁰

4.4.5 A report from ITV News stated that '...on 25 May 2020, the Philippines Department of Justice confirmed a 264% increase in OSEC reports since the beginning of the pandemic.'⁴¹(see also [Modern slavery victims within the Philippines](#)).

4.4.6 IWPR noted that in some cases relatives, including parents, exploited children by forcing them to commit sexual acts in front of a webcam⁴². An ITV News report stated that: 'According to research done by the International Justice Mission, the Philippines is the largest known source of online sexual exploitation cases (OSEC) in the world, and 83% of cases of child sexual exploitation on the internet in the country are carried out by family members.'⁴³

4.4.7 The ECPAT report 'Disrupting harm in the Philippines' published in 2022 noted that:

'According to Disrupting Harm household survey data, in the past year alone, 20% of internet-using children aged 12-17 in the Philippines were victims of grave instances of online sexual exploitation and abuse. This includes being blackmailed to engage in sexual activities, someone sharing their sexual

³⁷ USSD, '[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)' (pg 450), 19 July 2022

³⁸ IWPR, '[Philippines: Sweeping Violence Under the Carpet](#)', 27 May 2020

³⁹ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2022](#)', 28 February 2022

⁴⁰ The Exodus Road, '[Human Trafficking in the Philippines](#)', 15 March 2022

⁴¹ ITV News, '[Month-old babies among Philippines' modern slavery victims as...](#)', 13 October 2021

⁴² IWPR, '[Philippines: Sweeping Violence Under the Carpet](#)', 27 May 2020

⁴³ ITV News, '[Month-old babies among Philippines' modern slavery victims as...](#)', 13 October 2021

images without permission, or being coerced to engage in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts. Children were most commonly subjected to OCSEA via social media. Considering the large population of internet-using children in the Philippines, the results from this nationally representative survey reveal the extent of this threat for children. According to Disrupting Harm estimates, when scaled to the size of the population, this represents an estimated two million children who were subjected to any of these harms in just one year.⁴⁴

4.4.8 ECPAT, an international NGO network whose work focused on ending the sexual exploitation of children, noted in their country monitoring report published in 2021 that: ‘...it is estimated that 60,000 to 100,000 children are trafficked annually in the Philippines through both cross-border and internal trafficking. The Philippines Department of Social Welfare and Development estimates that out of 200,000 children living on the streets of Manila, at least one tenth are victims of trafficking.’⁴⁵

4.4.9 The USSD TiP report 2022 stated that:

‘Traffickers exploit women and children from rural communities, conflict- and disaster-affected areas, and impoverished urban centers in sex trafficking, forced domestic work, forced begging, and other forms of forced labor in tourist destinations and urban areas around the country, and traffickers exploit men in forced labor in the agricultural, construction, fishing, and maritime industries, sometimes through debt-based coercion.

‘... Indigenous persons and many of the approximately 340,000 internally displaced persons in Mindanao are at risk of trafficking, including through fraudulent promises of employment.’⁴⁶

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4.5 Traffickers’ profiles and recruitment methods

4.5.1 The Borgen Project noted that: ‘Traffickers commonly target individuals who are either from indigenous communities or are living in more rural areas. They usually offer jobs as maids, waitresses or entertainers to trick individuals into trusting them. This tactic preys on the desperation of many economically disadvantaged individuals.’⁴⁷

4.5.2 The Exodus Road noted that:

‘Native Filipinos are usually involved in the recruitment stage of human trafficking. Often, perpetrators are family members of trafficked individuals or corrupt state officials. Organized crime groups in the Philippines oversee the smuggling networks and subsequent trafficking. They link with the owners of nightclubs or karaoke bars in the destinations where the girls are deployed, most of whom tend to be nationals of the country of destination.

‘... The most common human trafficking recruitment method is false promises of job placement. Traffickers prey on the economically disadvantaged, using debt-based coercion or the promise of work to lure

⁴⁴ ECPAT, Interpol & UNICEF, ‘[Disrupting Harm: Philippines](#)’, 2022

⁴⁵ ECPAT, ‘[Philippines – Country Monitoring Report](#)’, 2021

⁴⁶ USSD, ‘[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)’ (page 449- 450), 19 July 2022

⁴⁷ The Borgen Project, ‘[10 Facts About Human Trafficking in the Philippines](#)’, 6 September 2019

their victims. Many migrants leave the Philippines voluntarily, only to be exploited sexually or financially in the destination country. Employers often confiscate all travel documents to prevent them from leaving.

4.5.3 'In many cases, victims are recruited to work as "entertainers" but end up being forced to work as strippers, night-club hostesses, and prostitutes. In January 2021, traffickers fraudulently recruited Filipino domestic workers to work in the United Arab Emirates but instead forced them into domestic work in Damascus.

4.5.4 'Online recruitment is another common tactic, particularly when it comes to online exploitation of children. One in every three internet users in the Philippines in 2020 was a child. That increased internet usage by minors increases their vulnerability to grooming and online exploitation. Social media in particular is an increasingly common venue for recruitment.'⁴⁸

4.5.5 The USSD TiP report 2022 report stated that:

'NGOs and government officials continue to report cases in which family members sold children to employers for domestic labor or sexual exploitation, and there are reportedly hundreds of thousands of children involved in selling and begging on the streets at risk to trafficking.'

'...A significant number of Filipino migrant workers become victims of sex trafficking or labor trafficking in numerous industries, including industrial fishing, shipping, construction, manufacturing, education, home health care, and agriculture, as well as in domestic work, janitorial service, and other hospitality-related jobs, particularly in the Middle East and Asia but also in all other regions. Traffickers, typically in partnership with local networks and facilitators and increasingly using social networking sites and other digital platforms, recruit unsuspecting Filipinos through illegal recruitment practices, such as deception, hidden fees, and production of fraudulent passports, overseas employment certificates, and contracts, to exploit migrant workers in sex and labor trafficking.

'...Traffickers also use student and intern exchange programs and fake childcare positions, as well as porous maritime borders, to circumvent the Philippine government and destination countries' regulatory frameworks for foreign workers and evade detection. Traffickers exploit Filipinos already working overseas through fraudulent employment offers to work in another country. Traffickers sometimes take advantage of the absence of adequate immigration personnel at smaller airports in the Philippines.

'... The traffickers are often parents or close relatives who operate in private residences or small cyber cafes, and many child victims, girls and boys, are younger than 12 years. Identified hotspots for this form of sex trafficking in Luzon and Visayas include Iligan, Lapu-Lapu, Pampanga, Quezon City, Malabon, Pasig, Taguig, and Caloocan.'⁴⁹

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Section 5 updated: 26 October 2022

⁴⁸ The Exodus Road, '[Human Trafficking in the Philippines](#)', 15 March 2022

⁴⁹ USSD, '[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)' (page 449 - 450), 19 July 2022

5. Treatment of trafficking victims

5.1 Discrimination and stigma

- 5.1.1 Jessica Taylors "The Fine Line of Determination: Supporting the Agency of Filipina Sex Trafficking Survivors", published in 2019 noted that: 'It is not easy for these Filipinx, who have traveled away from their homes for better opportunities to leave these opportunities when they become difficult. To return home without money or income to their home communities leaves them to fac [sic] high levels of social stigma and rejection from their own family members.'⁵⁰
- 5.1.2 UN Women's report 'Gender at the Nexus of Violent Extremism and Trafficking in Persons in Muslim Mindanao' published in June 2020 noted: 'Given the religious structure of Muslim Mindanao, stigma and shame prevent reporting on trafficking in persons. Furthermore, children forced into overseas work are less likely to report the facilitators of trafficking in persons if those are their parents. As a result, abused women and girls reportedly undergo the hardship of the journey multiple times. The social pressures combined with the financial incentives in these cases can outweigh the threat to their own well-being in their decisions.'⁵¹
- 5.1.3 The ECPAT report 'Disrupting harm in the Philippines' published in 2022 noted that: 'One frontline worker noted that "Societal factors have an impact on vulnerability to OCSEA [online child sexual exploitation and abuse] because it somewhat allows the abuse by not discussing it or by even stigmatising the victims which discourages a victim to report." ... Additional factors include stigma of reporting OCSEA cases especially when they involve a family member and the belief that technology is just for the younger generation...'⁵²
- 5.1.4 OMCT – World Organisation Against Torture and PAHRA - Philippine Alliance for Human Rights Advocates, report 'Women break the silence; Gender-based torture in Asia', published in 2022 noted that: 'In addition, most victims of trafficking do not fit the stereotype of an ideal victim who generates sympathy, as many appear complicit or appear to cooperate with their traffickers. This impacts how communities, including criminal justice professionals, treat women in need of help, who are not identified as victims. It is then not surprising that there is an entrenched culture of victim blaming in the Philippines. A victim, who was groomed for sexual exploitation from the time she was a minor, revealed to the author, who represented her before court, that when she filed her complaint with the assistance of a CSO, she almost withdrew the case. Initially grateful that a female prosecutor was handling the case, she was shocked when they had remarked, "how can that be a victim, she wanted it". This remark produced a feeling that she was less of a victim and more a willing participant to her exploitation. In turn, she began to blame herself for her victimization.'⁵³

⁵⁰ Taylor, Jessica, '[The Fine Line of Determination: Supporting the Agency of Filipina...](#)' (2019).

⁵¹ UN Women, '[Gender at the Nexus of Violent Extremism and Trafficking in...](#)', June 2020

⁵² ECPAT, Interpol & UNICEF, '[Disrupting Harm: Philippines](#)', 2022

⁵³ OMCT, PAHRA '[Women break the silence; Gender-based torture in Asia](#)', 2022:

5.2 Re-trafficking

5.2.1 CPIT was unable to find recent information relating to victims of trafficking being subject to re-trafficking on return to the Philippines in the sources consulted (see [Bibliography](#)). The following sources provide some information relating to victims of trafficking being re-trafficked but is more than 2 years old and may not be reflective of the current country situation.

5.2.2 Project Lantern (PL), a three-year project which took place between 2007-2010 aimed at reducing the availability of women and children for sexual exploitation in Metro Cebu, reviewed the status of victims rescued by law enforcement and provided aftercare and assistance by the International Justice Mission (IJM). A report on the project noted that in the first year and a half of PL 94 victims had been rescued by law enforcement.

5.2.3 The report went on to note that:

‘... of 94 victims rescued by law enforcement in the first year and a half of PL, social workers were able to confirm that 58 (62% of total rescues) had not been re-trafficked two years after rescue. Of the remaining 36, 15 had been re-trafficked and social workers were unable to confirm the status of the other 21. Most of the clients whose status IJM social workers could not confirm came from households without a home phone number and were known to change their mobile phone numbers regularly without informing their contacts, including social workers.’⁵⁴

5.2.4 Sarah Gross wrote an academic thesis on ‘Human Trafficking in the Philippines: Victim Acquisition and Exit Strategies’ published in December 2017 in which she interviewed 13 Filipino victims of trafficking; the thesis noted that:

‘... The findings of the study revealed the majority of the Filipina women entered and exited the trafficking environment within a year, with the average age of entry and exit being 18. While clear patterns could not be determined concerning the amount of time in the trafficked environment, the levels of fear of trafficker, and relationships with other victims in the trafficking ring, and resiliency factors, it was clear that there was a relationship between law enforcement intervention and the exiting of the trafficked environment. None of the participants returned to their trafficked situation after they were detained by PNP officials and taken to DSWD's Haven for Women for shelter and rehabilitation. Moreover, the two participants who reentered into human trafficking twice did not return to trafficking after PNP officers detained them. In fact, one of the participants who reentered human trafficking twice admitted she did not realize she was being exploited until PNP officials detained her. Thus, law enforcement intervention was successful in reducing revictimization of trafficked victims.’⁵⁵

⁵⁴ IJM, [‘Cebu-Project-Lantern-Results-Summary_2021-02-05-070909.pdf \(windows.net\)](#)

⁵⁵ Sarah Gross, [‘Human Trafficking in The Philippines: Victim Acquisition and...’](#), December 2017

6. Protection

6.1 General effectiveness of police

6.1.1 The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Country Information Report on the Philippines, published on 23 August 2021 noted:

‘The Philippine National Police (PNP) is structured as a national police force with specialist commands that cover geographic areas and specific kinds of crime, including child sex abuse, crimes involving women, and counter-terrorism operations. Recruits receive one year of initial training, followed by three to six months of additional training in a specific area. While police are generally competent, they lack resources and capacity, and have poor coordination with other agencies.’⁵⁶

6.1.2 The USSD 2021 report on human right practices published in April 2022 noted that: ‘The law provides for an independent judiciary; although the government generally respected judicial independence, pressure, threats, and intimidation directed at the judiciary from various sources were reported by NGOs.’⁵⁷

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6.2 Anti-trafficking state and non-state agencies

6.2.1 The USSD TiP report 2022 noted that:

‘The Government of the Philippines fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. The government continued to demonstrate serious and sustained efforts during the reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore the Philippines remained on Tier 1 [fully meets the US’ [Trafficking Victims Protection Act’s minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking](#)]. ... Although the government meets the minimum standards, it did not report vigorously investigating labor trafficking crimes that occurred within the Philippines or take adequate steps to investigate and arrest individuals suspected of purchasing commercial sex from trafficking victims, nor did it provide training for labor inspectors on indicators of human trafficking. The government prosecuted and convicted fewer traffickers, and it did not report holding accountable officials allegedly complicit in human trafficking crimes.

‘...The government slightly decreased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. ...The government did not report the total number of anti-trafficking operations and investigations of illegal recruitment as it did in prior years; however, it reported 168 law enforcement-led anti-trafficking investigations, compared with 248 anti-trafficking operations and 233 investigations of illegal recruitment in the previous reporting period.

‘... The DOJ continued to oversee and support operations and training for 24 interagency anti-trafficking task forces ... Designated prosecutors led the task forces with the assistance of prosecutors who worked on trafficking cases in addition to their regular workloads; they were responsible for enhancing law enforcement efforts and ensuring the reporting, referring, and

⁵⁶ DFAT, ‘[Country Information Report The Philippines](#)’ (paragraphs 5.4), 21 August 2021

⁵⁷ USSD, ‘[2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Philippines](#)’, 12 April 2022

filing of trafficking cases. IACAT continued to use the prosecutor's trafficking case management system to monitor case progress and outcomes. Through continued operation of the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center, the Philippines National Police (PNP) Women and Children's Protection Center (WCPC) and the National Bureau of Investigation Anti Human Trafficking Division partnered with foreign law enforcement agencies and an international NGO to improve the effectiveness of investigations of OSEC. The PNP led the investigation of most OSEC cases and operated regional WCPC cyber protection units focused specifically on OSEC crimes. The government reported cooperating with the several foreign governments—including Australia, Ireland, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—on trafficking investigations, primarily involving OSEC.

'Government agencies continued to report the need for additional anti-trafficking law enforcement personnel, funds for operations, and equipment for forensic analysis of digital evidence due in part to the extremely high volume of cybercrime tips related to child sexual exploitation the DOJ Office of Cybercrime received, totaling more than 3 million in 2021.

'... NGOs reported police did not take sufficient steps to investigate and arrest purchasers of commercial sex, including foreign sex tourists and those who purchased commercial sex acts from trafficking victims, and often did not question customers who were present during operations in entertainment establishments.

'... The lack of a centralized database tracking illegal recruitment and human trafficking continued to hamper the government's efforts to prevent trafficking and hold traffickers accountable. Observers stated the government did not adequately fund and staff the labor inspectorate, and the government did not report providing training for labor inspectors to identify indicators of trafficking, which may have impeded the government's ability to identify potential cases of forced labor.

'... The government slightly increased efforts to prevent trafficking. [Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking] IACAT, the lead coordinating body responsible for overseeing and monitoring implementation of the government's anti-trafficking efforts and which the secretaries of [Department of Justice] DOJ and [Department of Social Welfare and Development] DSWD chaired and co-chaired respectively, met regularly to share information and coordinate policies. Three NGOs participated as members of IACAT, which also involved additional NGOs, private sector representatives, and survivors in technical working groups and other fora. In partnership with an NGO, IACAT created a working group that met to consider the creation of a formal council for trafficking survivors to advise and make recommendations to the government on anti-trafficking policies.

'... The government—including IACAT, its member agencies, and antitrafficking regional task forces—both independently and in partnership with civil society, held national, regional, and local-level trafficking awareness-raising campaigns targeting community leaders, local officials, potential migrant workers, and the general public on human trafficking indicators, potential risk factors, and the various forms of trafficking.

‘...In December 2021, the president signed Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) Act, which elevated [Philippines Overseas Employment Administration] POEA to an executive department. The government officially formed DMW in February 2022 and mandated it to oversee law enforcement action against illegal recruitment agencies, create a database to track recruiters involved in trafficking crimes, and raise awareness of trafficking indicators among migrant workers.’⁵⁸

- 6.2.2 See also [International human rights instruments](#) and [Criminal law](#)

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6.3 Law enforcement training

6.3.1 In February 2019 a press release regarding the opening of the first Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC) noted that: ‘During January 2019, the UK [National Crime Agency] NCA trained agents from the Philippine National Police and the National Bureau of Investigation. The training and equipment will increase Philippine law enforcement ability to gather evidence against perpetrators in the Philippines.’⁵⁹

6.3.2 The Philippines government statement to the seventh periodic report to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN CESCR), published on 21 March 2022 noted that:

‘To enhance the law enforcers’ appreciation and understanding on [trafficking in persons] TIP, various anti-trafficking trainings, meetings, and seminars were conducted in recent years. These include (a) Inter-agency Council Against Child Pornography Meeting with a focus on strengthening implementation of RA 10929 or the Child Online Safeguarding Policy; (b) Safer Internet Day for Children 2021 Kick-Off Activity; Boses ng Kababaihan Laban sa Pang-aabuso sa Pangisdaan (“Women’s Voices Against Abuse”) where policy and advocacy work on combating TIP using a gender lens was discussed among government and law enforcement agencies; and (c) the 47th UN Human Rights Council Meeting on Non-Punishment of TIP Victims.’⁶⁰

6.3.3 The USSD TiP report 2022 noted that: ‘The government (both independently and in partnership with civil society organizations) trained police, prosecutors, judges, immigration officers, and other officials on various topics, including anti-trafficking laws, proactive investigation strategies, and identification of trafficking victims.’⁶¹

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6.4 Criminal investigations, prosecutions and convictions

6.4.1 In 2015 the Women and Children Protection Center (WCPC), which operates within the Philippines National Police (PNP), was restructured to become a specialised Anti-Trafficking unit⁶². The WCPC perform various tasks including counter-trafficking intelligence, assisting local police in human

⁵⁸ USSD, [‘2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines’](#) (pg 447- 449), 19 July 2022

⁵⁹ British Embassy Manila, [‘Launch of the Philippine Internet Crimes Against...’](#), 27 February 2019

⁶⁰ OHCHR, [‘Seventh periodic report submitted by the Philippines under articles...’](#), 21 March 2022

⁶¹ USSD, [‘2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines’](#) (pg 448), 19 July 2022

⁶² WCPC, [‘HISTORY’](#), undated

trafficking investigations and conducting rescue operations of victims of trafficking⁶³.

6.4.2 In 2019 the Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center (PICACC) was launched. According to a press release in February 2019

‘The PICACC is a collective effort to combat child exploitation across the Philippines by law enforcement – the Philippine National Police Women and Children’s Protection Center (PNP WCPC), the National Bureau of Investigation Anti-Human-Trafficking Division (NBI AHTRAD), the Australian Federal Police (AFP), and the United Kingdom National Crime Agency (UK NCA); in partnership with non-government organization, International Justice Mission (IJM).

‘...The PICACC will ...[provide] a national and international support element to those involved in combatting the online exploitation of children. This will eventually involve connectivity with, and enhanced capabilities for, the regional offices of PNP and NBI.’⁶⁴

6.4.3 The US DoL report published in September 2021 noted that:

‘During the reporting period [January 2020- December 2020], law enforcement officials conducted 176 co-ordinated anti-trafficking operations involving 237 minor victims, which led to the prosecution of 172 defendants charged with the trafficking of children, and 81 defendants convicted for offenses related to the worst forms of child labor, including OSEC. From April 2020 to March 2021, the government also convicted 34 traffickers under the anti-trafficking act and related laws, resulting in the courts sentencing 16 traffickers to sentences of life imprisonment, and assessed fines ranging from \$80,000 to \$100,000 [approx. £66,000 - £83,000].

‘The courts convicted a further 20 suspects of OSEC-related crimes. In one notable case, the government convicted U.S. citizen David Timothy Deakin to life imprisonment and a [US]\$40,000 [approx. £33,000] fine for "large-scale qualified trafficking in persons," making this case the very first OSEC conviction of a foreigner in the country. Criminal law enforcement also seized the largest amount of digital evidence related to OSEC in the Philippines to date.

‘During the reporting period, the government failed to take law enforcement action against officials who facilitated the production of fraudulent identity documents or were otherwise complicit in human trafficking.

‘Philippine law allows judges to award civil compensation to human trafficking victims from damages arising from being trafficked, but victims rarely receive this restitution since perpetrators often lack sufficient assets to pay. However, in cases for which perpetrators are financially able to pay this penalty, many are able to evade doing so due to ineffective, slow court procedures.’⁶⁵

6.4.4 The below table, taken from the UN CESCR report submitted by the Philippines government, published on 21 March 2022, shows the number of

⁶³ WCPC, ‘[WCPC Functions](#)’, undated

⁶⁴ British Embassy Manila, ‘[Launch of the Philippine Internet Crimes Against...](#)’, 27 February 2019

⁶⁵ US DOL, ‘[2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor](#)’ (pg 1067), 29 September 2021

trafficking cases nationwide as reported by the Philippines National Police (PNP).

PNP report on cases of trafficking nationwide (2017–July 2021)

| <i>Purpose</i> | <i>2017</i> | <i>2018</i> | <i>2019</i> | <i>2020</i> | <i>2021(Jan–July)</i> |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Sexual Exploitation | 132 | 223 | 116 | 152 | 39 |
| Forced Labor | 58 | 39 | 6 | 9 | 0 |
| Engaging in armed activities | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Slavery | 0 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Others (Qualified TIP) | 41 | 26 | 28 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 234 | 300 | 151 | 161 | 39 |

Source: PNP

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6.4.5 The below table, also taken from the seventh periodic report, shows the number of rescued victims nationwide from 2017 until July 2021⁶⁷.

PNP report on rescued victims nationwide (2017–July 2021)

| <i>Category</i> | <i>2017</i> | <i>2018</i> | <i>2019</i> | <i>2020</i> | <i>2021 (Jan–July)</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Male adult | 104 | 102 | 53 | 30 | 3 | 292 |
| Female adult | 310 | 460 | 372 | 400 | 55 | 1,597 |
| Male minor | 78 | 107 | 47 | 50 | 39 | 321 |
| Female minor | 278 | 370 | 257 | 187 | 90 | 1,182 |
| Total | 770 | 1,039 | 729 | 667 | 187 | 3,392 |

Source: PNP

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6.4.6 The same UN CESCR report explained:

‘To further eliminate the anti-trafficking especially involving women and children, the Philippines continues to implement strictly the provisions of RA 9208 as amended by RA 10364 or the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Act. As a result, there has been a notable decrease in trafficking nationwide from 2017 to the first semester of 2021... while women and young girls are disproportionately affected by trafficking in persons, there is an overall decrease in the number of victims, consistent with the decrease in the number of trafficking cases...’⁶⁹

6.4.7 The ECPAT report ‘Disrupting harm in the Philippines’ published in 2022 noted that:

‘The primary law enforcement actors at the national level in the Philippines are the Women and Children Protection Center under the Philippine National Police and the Anti-Human Trafficking Division of the National Bureau of Investigation, assisted by the Office of Cybercrime under the Department of Justice. (PH-RA8) The Philippine Internet Crimes Against Children Center helps to consolidate and prioritise case referrals from different international

⁶⁶ OHCHR, [‘Seventh periodic report submitted by the Philippines under articles...’](#), 21 March 2022

⁶⁷ OHCHR, [‘Seventh periodic report submitted by the Philippines under articles...’](#), 21 March 2022

⁶⁸ OHCHR, [‘Seventh periodic report submitted by the Philippines under articles...’](#), 21 March 2022

⁶⁹ OHCHR, [‘Seventh periodic report submitted by the Philippines under articles...’](#), 21 March 2022

law enforcement agencies and other sources.⁷⁰

6.4.8 The USSD TiP report 2022, which covers the reporting period of 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, stated that:

‘The government-initiated prosecution of 298 alleged traffickers (377 in the previous reporting period); these included 62 labor trafficking defendants, 224 sex trafficking defendants, and 12 defendants for unspecified exploitation. The government reported 1,297 prosecutions remained ongoing from previous reporting periods. The government convicted 56 traffickers—46 for sex trafficking, five for forced labor, and five for unspecified forms of exploitation—compared with 73 convictions in the previous reporting period. Courts sentenced nearly all traffickers convicted under the anti-trafficking act to significant prison terms, ranging from four years to life imprisonment, and fines ranging from 500,000 to 10 million pesos [approx. £7,400- £148,000.]

‘Courts continued to use plea bargaining in human trafficking cases, particularly in those involving the online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC), which significantly decreased the time to reach case resolution and further reduced the potential for re-traumatizing child witnesses in trials, many of which involved traffickers who were family members.

‘In response to the pandemic-related restrictions in 2020, the Supreme Court continued to facilitate the court filings and proceedings through email and video conferencing as authorized in a circular issued in 2020, which enabled the government to secure some trafficking convictions through video conferencing; however, equipment and stable internet connections were not consistently available, especially for victim-witnesses. Additionally, pandemic-related lockdowns at various points of the reporting period delayed in-person law enforcement actions due to personnel shortages, increased health protocols, and mandatory quarantines.

‘... Slow moving courts, the need for additional training on handling digital evidence in hearings and trials, and too few prosecutors also hindered the effective and timely prosecution of trafficking crimes.

‘...The government did not report any orders of restitution paid by traffickers to victims of trafficking, and NGO observers reported that although judges continued to award victims compensation for damages, victims almost never received damages in practice and courts lacked effective mechanisms to collect damages from traffickers.’⁷¹

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6.5 Witness protection and legal aid

6.5.1 The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) Primer (information leaflet) on the trafficking act 9208 as amended by act 10364 noted that: ‘...Trafficked persons shall be provided with free legal services which shall include information about the victims’ rights and the procedure for filing complaints, claiming compensation and such other legal remedies available to them, in a

⁷⁰ ECPAT, Interpol & UNICEF, ‘[Disrupting Harm: Philippines](#)’, 2022

⁷¹ USSD, ‘[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)’ (pg 447- 448), 19 July 2022

language understood by the trafficked person.⁷²

6.5.2 The USSD TiP report 2022 stated that:

'...The government continued to support victims who served as witnesses during trials and hired three additional victim-witness coordinators during the reporting period. Seven regional task force victim-witness coordinators provided trauma-informed support and assistance, including by providing continuous support throughout the criminal justice process, to 476 victims (130 in 2020). One trafficking victim entered the witness protection program in 2021 (11 in 2020), which included housing, livelihood and travel expenses, medical benefits, education, and vocational placement. In addition, DOJ operations center personnel continued to provide transportation and security protections for victims to participate in case conferences and hearings. Police and prosecutors continued the use of recorded child victim interviews at the inquest stage and in some trials, which reduced the number of times officials interviewed victims and the potential for re-traumatizing children who served as witnesses. The government also reported increasing the use of financial and digital evidence to prove trafficking and OSEC crimes in court, reducing the reliance on victim testimony and decreasing potential re-traumatization of child victims.'⁷³

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6.6 Corrupt officials

6.6.1 In March 2021 news site France24 reported that Philippine immigration bureau had: '...launched an investigation into allegations that some of its officers were involved in the trafficking of 44 women to work in Syria.' The women involved in the case travelled on tourist visas from the Philippines to Dubai where they had been promised work. The report noted that '...After their 30-day visas expired, they were forced to go to Damascus where they were sold to employers for as much as [US]\$10,000.'⁷⁴

6.6.2 The Exodus Road report on trafficking in the Philippines noted that: 'In many states where human trafficking occurs, officials involved in law, diplomacy, and immigration processes facilitate or are themselves complicit in trafficking. Some reports assert that corrupt officials carry out fake raids on commercial sex establishments to extort money from managers, clients, and victims and that embassy employees exploit their domestic workers in exchange for government protection.'⁷⁵

6.6.3 The USSD TiP report 2022 noted that during the reporting period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 there were ongoing investigations and prosecutions of police officers and other officials in respect of trafficking offences. The report noted:

'The government did not report any convictions of government employees complicit in human trafficking crimes during the reporting period. Corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns,

⁷² CFO, '[Primer on Republic Act 9208 as amended by Republic Act 10364](#)', January 2020

⁷³ USSD, '[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)' (pg 448- 449), 19 July 2022

⁷⁴ France24 '[Philippines probes immigration officers over trafficking women to Syria](#)', 24 March 2021

⁷⁵ The Exodus Road, '[Human Trafficking in the Philippines](#)', 15 March 2022

inhibiting law enforcement action during the year. Observers reported police and immigration officials, especially at lower levels, accepted bribes to facilitate or ignore trafficking crimes, including tampering with or producing fraudulent travel documents. An international organization reported the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) unlawfully recruited and used one child soldier in a support role during the reporting period. The Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) drafted [standard operating procedures] SOPs on the identification and monitoring of trafficking-related corruption cases, which included reporting mechanisms and employee suspension guidelines.

'...Officials, including those in diplomatic missions, law enforcement and immigration agencies, and other government entities, allegedly have been complicit in trafficking or allowed traffickers to operate with impunity. Some corrupt officials allegedly accept bribes to facilitate illegal departures for overseas workers, operate sex trafficking establishments, facilitate production of fraudulent identity documents, or overlook illegal labor recruiters.'⁷⁶

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Section 7 updated: 28 September 2022

7. Government and NGO assistance

7.1 Government shelters

7.1.1 In December 2020 the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) opened their first shelter which caters for victims of trafficking. The shelter is based in Manila and provides temporary shelter for trafficking victims. The shelter is also a one-stop service centre for reporting potential cases of trafficking, providing referrals and can also provide counselling services to victims^{77 78}.

7.1.2 The 'Ninth periodic report submitted by the Philippines government under article 18 of the Convention' to the CEDAW, dated 4 October 2021, noted:
'The Pursuant to Section 16 of the Anti-TIP Act, the State established temporary shelters for TIP victims. These shelters include: the Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking (IACAT) Tahanan ng Inyong Pagasa (IACAT-TIP) Center or the IACAT Shelter of Hope Center; Bahay Kanlungan sa Paliparan or Temporary Shelter at the Airport; and the residential care facility for male victims of trafficking. The IACAT is also working with NGOs that have facilities catering to trafficked victims and providing temporary shelters and protective care services.'⁷⁹

7.1.3 The USSD TiP report 2022 noted that:

'The government reported providing all identified victims with direct services or referrals to various protection services, including shelter provisions of basic needs, medical care, education assistance, psycho-social counseling, and livelihood assistance. The Department of Social Welfare and

⁷⁶ USSD, '[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)' (pg 447 & 449), 19 July 2022

⁷⁷ DOJ, '[Inauguration of the First IACAT TiP Center for Trafficked Persons](#)', 16 December 2020

⁷⁸ USSD, '[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)' (pg 448), 19 July 2022

⁷⁹ CEDAW, '[Ninth periodic report submitted by the Philippines under article 18...](#)', 4 October 2021

Development (DSWD) continued to implement the national referral system, maintained the national recovery and reintegration database, and operated 44 residential care facilities that provided services to victims of trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Of these facilities, 24 served children, 13 served women, four served older persons, one served men, and two operated as temporary processing centers. The government allocated 24.8 million pesos ([US]\$485,990) to implement DSWD's recovery and reintegration program for trafficking victims, compared with 22.9 million pesos ([US]\$448,760) in 2020.

.... In 2021, the [IACAT Manilla] center provided 482 potential victims, including 83 children, with temporary accommodation prior to their referral to other shelters pending the results of COVID-19 testing. The government continued efforts to finalize the construction of a shelter for men in region nine, where armed conflict continued. DSWD referred trafficking survivors to the local social welfare and development office in their community for follow-up services, which observers noted often lacked the personnel and resources to provide individualized case follow-up. Staff permitted adult victims residing in shelters to leave unchaperoned, provided there were no threats to their personal security or psychological care issues.⁸⁰

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7.2 Government assistance in the Philippines

7.2.1 The CEDAW report submitted by the Philippines dated 4 October 2021 noted that:

'The State's Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons (RRPTP) provides services such as case management, support to victims and witnesses, and shelter for victims-survivors. From 2015–2019, the RRPTP has served a total of 9,332 trafficked victims, of which 64.2 per cent were females, and 35.8 per cent were males. The State's victim assistance covers all victim survivors of trafficking regardless of age, sex, and nationality. Hence, foreign victims have the same access to all services provided to domestic victim-survivors.'⁸¹

7.2.2 According to the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) Primer information leaflet dated January 2020 the following services are available for trafficked persons to aid in their recovery and re-integration into society:

- temporary housing and food facilities
- psychological support and counselling
- free legal services
- medical or psychological services
- livelihood and skills training
- educational assistance to a trafficked child
- 24-hour call centre for crisis calls and technology-based counselling and

⁸⁰ USSD, '[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)' (pg 448), 19 July 2022

⁸¹ CEDAW, '[Ninth periodic report submitted by the Philippines under article 18...](#)', 4 October 2021

referral system⁸².

7.2.3 The Commission on Filipinos Overseas Primer also noted that victims of trafficking who suffered physical/psychological injuries, serious trauma and other conditions related to being a victim of a violent crime may be eligible for compensation through the Victim Compensation Program⁸³.

7.2.4 IACAT through its Advocacy and Communications Committee (ADVOCOM) launched the [1343 Actionline](#) in 2011. According to the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) the action line is a: '24/7 hotline facility that responds to emergency or crisis calls from victims of human trafficking and their families.'⁸⁴ The USSD noted that the IACAT hotline had identified 36 potential trafficking cases in 2021 and all of those cases had been referred to law enforcement and the victims had been referred to services⁸⁵.

7.2.5 The CFO noted that:

'The 1343 Actionline can be reached from any point in Metro Manila and from the provinces using the Manila area code 02. Aside from accessing it through a local telephone line, the 1343 Actionline has expanded its services to provide the following modes of reporting of trafficking-related cases:

1. Website reporting - www.1343actionline.ph
2. Email – 1343actionline@cfo.gov.ph
3. Mobile application – 1343 Actionline
4. Social media account
5. Global Toll-free Actionlines in 5 countries (Australia +611800250924, Japan +814422132883, Singapore +58001012846, US/Canada +18773348727).⁸⁶ (see also [Government assistance overseas](#))

7.2.6 The US DoL report stated that: 'Although some specialized resources exist to assist victims of human trafficking, the Philippines lacked sufficient programs to care for and rehabilitate children who have been victims of OSEC. In addition, there are not adequate programs to provide insight on the impact of OSEC on child victims.'⁸⁷

7.2.7 The USSD TiP report 2022 stated that:

'DSWD referred trafficking survivors to the local social welfare and development office in their community for follow-up services, which observers noted often lacked the personnel and resources to provide individualized case follow-up... Such specialized assistance services, as well as reintegration follow-up services and job training and placement, remained inadequate to address the needs of adult trafficking victims.

'... [Department of Foreign Affairs] DFA, in collaboration with the [Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking] IACAT and its member agencies, implemented whole-of-government procedures to ensure interagency

⁸² CFO, '[Primer on Republic Act 9208 as amended by Republic Act 10364](#)', January 2020

⁸³ CFO, '[Primer on Republic Act 9208 as amended by Republic Act 10364](#)', January 2020

⁸⁴ CFO, '[Primer on Republic Act 9208 as amended by Republic Act 10364](#)', January 2020

⁸⁵ USSD, '[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)' (pg 449), 19 July 2022

⁸⁶ CFO, '[Primer on Republic Act 9208 as amended by Republic Act 10364](#)', January 2020

⁸⁷ US DOL, '[2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor](#)' (pg 1071), 29 September 2021

coordination of services for repatriated Filipino trafficking victims.⁸⁸

- 7.2.8 In the Government of the Philippines' submission to the Voluntary National Review for the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, it was noted that:

'The Philippines remained in Tier One in the US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. However, the availability and quality of protection and assistance services for trafficking victims, particularly specialized shelter care, mental health services, access to employment training and job placement, and services for male victims need improvement. Likewise, technology-enabled platforms for information dissemination on trafficking issues as well as the capacity of LGUs in anti-trafficking conventions also need enhancement. Moreover, although the Philippines fully meets the minimum standard for the elimination of trafficking, it has to increase its capacity to investigate, prosecute, and convict complicit officials and labor traffickers, and support for specialized protection and assistance services for child victims of cyber-facilitated sex trafficking. Community reintegration services, including trauma-informed care, employment training, and job placement for survivors also need further development.'⁸⁹

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7.3 Government assistance overseas

- 7.3.1 The Commission on Filipinos Overseas Primer of January 2020 noted that: 'For victims of international trafficking, the [Department for Foreign Affairs] DFA shall provide free legal assistance and counsel to pursue legal action against his or her traffickers, represent his or her interests in any criminal investigation or prosecution, and assist in the application for social benefits and/or regular immigration status as may be allowed by the host country.'⁹⁰

- 7.3.2 The USSD TiP report 2022 noted that:

'The government continued to deploy DSWD social workers in Philippine diplomatic missions in Hong Kong, Kuwait, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

'DFA allocated 1 billion pesos [approximately £14.8 million], similar to the amount allocated in 2020, for the Assistance to Nationals Fund (ATN), which covered assistance such as airfare, meal allowance, shelter, medical care, and other needs of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). DFA reported dispersing 62.8 million pesos [approximately £932,000] from the ATN, compared with 28.38 million pesos [approximately £428,000] in the previous reporting period.

'DFA provided nine Philippine overseas missions with funds to support shelters or temporary accommodations for Filipino trafficking victims awaiting the resolution of their cases or their repatriation. In 2021, DFA reported assisting 431 potential victims of human trafficking identified by overseas missions (2,575 in 2020), of which the majority experienced illegal recruitment. DSWD social workers, responsible for assisting distressed

⁸⁸ USSD, '[2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines](#)' (pg 448), 19 July 2022

⁸⁹ Govt of the Philippines, DFA, '[Philippines' Submission of the Voluntary...](#)', p.9, 6 April 2022

⁹⁰ CFO, '[Primer on Republic Act 9208 as amended by Republic Act 10364](#)', January 2020

overseas Filipinos and their families, assisted 536 victims of trafficking or illegal recruitment, compared with 1,133 in 2020.

‘Social services provided to OFW trafficking victims included coordination with the host government, contract buy-out, shelter, provision of personal necessities, medical aid, financial assistance, payment of legal fees, repatriation, and referral to appropriate agencies. With donor support and in cooperation with an NGO, the IACAT operated the Task Force Against the Trafficking of Overseas Filipino Workers, which assisted 248 Filipino domestic workers repatriated from the Middle East, from July to December 2021, who reported experiencing indicators of trafficking.

‘... [Philippines National Police] PNP and the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) also continued to operate hotlines, and the DFA Office of Migrant Workers Affairs maintained a HELP Facebook page for Filipinos working abroad who were in distress and their families to request assistance. In partnership with an international organization and an NGO, IACAT began developing an online mechanism to provide migrant workers with access to frequently asked questions to help triage claims and link migrants with existing grievance mechanisms.

‘...The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) overseas labor officers continued to review overseas Filipino workers’ labor contracts and assist them with labor contract violations and allegations of abuse.’⁹¹

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7.4 NGO Shelters and assistance

7.4.1 Listed below is a non-exhaustive list of organisations who provide shelter and assistance to victims of trafficking in the Philippines:

- [C.U.R.E. Foundation, INC.](#) is a Christian based organisation based in Cebu, who work with local law enforcement and international NGO’s to provide shelter in ‘Rancho ni Cristo’ for child survivors of online exploitation⁹²
- [Destiny Rescue](#), a US based Christian organisation, work alongside local law enforcement to identify and rescue in-country child sex trafficking victims⁹³
- [The Exodus Road](#) partner with law enforcement to remove children being exploited in sex trafficking⁹⁴
- [Love146](#), a non-profit organisation who focus on child trafficking and exploitation, operates 2 safe homes in the Philippines for children recovering from trafficking⁹⁵
- [Made in Hope](#), a Christian NGO, provide livelihood skills training and employment for victims of trafficking⁹⁶

⁹¹ USSD, [‘2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines’](#) (pages 448 to 449), 19 July 2022

⁹² Cure Foundation, [‘C.U.R.E. Foundation, INC.’](#), undated

⁹³ Destiny Rescue, [‘Fighting child trafficking in the Philippines’](#), undated.

⁹⁴ The Exodus Road, [‘Human Trafficking in the Philippines’](#), 15 March 2022

⁹⁵ Love146, [‘Philippines Survivor Care’](#), undated

⁹⁶ Made in Hope, [‘SheWORKS’](#), undated

- [Renew Foundation](#), a Christian NGO which provides residential, social and health care programmes to victims of trafficking⁹⁷
- [Together in Hope](#), a charity working with impoverished communities provides anti-trafficking education to help prevent human trafficking⁹⁸
- [Voice of the Free \(VF\)](#), provides education and skills to victims of exploitation and trafficking. They also try to raise awareness among young people of the vulnerabilities they face and increase families access to local services to try to help prevent factors which can lead to trafficking and exploitation of young people⁹⁹.

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Section 8 updated: 4 October 2022

8. Freedom of movement

8.1 Demography and geography

8.1.1 The Philippines is an archipelago of around 7,640 islands¹⁰⁰, with a diverse population of approximately 114 million people¹⁰¹.

8.1.2 According to the CIA World Factbook the most populous areas are ‘... northwest and south-central Luzon, the south-eastern extension of Luzon, and the islands of the Visayan Sea, particularly Cebu and Negros; Manila is home to one-eighth of the entire national population.’¹⁰²

8.1.3 Minority Rights noted that main minority groups are: ‘Tagalog (24.4 per cent), Bisaya/Binisaya (11.4 per cent), Cebuano (9.9 per cent), Ilocano (8.8 per cent) Hiligaynon/Ilonggo (8.4 per cent), Bikol/Bicol (6.8 per cent) Waray (4 per cent), other local ethnicities (26.1 per cent) (2010 census).’¹⁰³

8.1.4 According to World Atlas:

‘Up to one-third of the Philippines, population resides within Metro Manila. The metropolitan area comprises 16 cities, including the three most populous cities in the country, namely Quezon, Manila, and Caloocan. Metro Manila is particularly populous because it is the seat of government as well as the country’s cultural, educational, and economic hub. Besides the three cities above Davao and Cebu cities complete the list of the five biggest cities in the Philippines.’¹⁰⁴

8.1.5 According to Britannica Mindanao Island is the second largest and is located in the southern part of the archipelago. The same source went on to note:

‘Mindanao is a Muslim outpost in the predominantly Roman Catholic Philippines. ... The autonomous region of Muslim Mindanao—consisting of territory in western and southwestern Mindanao along with a number of nearby islands, including Tawi Tawi and Jolo—was established in

⁹⁷ Renew Foundation, ‘[about us](#)’, undated

⁹⁸ Together in Hope, ‘[Anti-Human Trafficking](#)’, undated

⁹⁹ Voice of the Free, ‘[4 Pillars](#)’, undated

¹⁰⁰ National Geographic ‘[Know before you go: the Philippines](#)’, undated

¹⁰¹ CIA, ‘[World factbook- people and society](#)’, last updated 20 September 2022

¹⁰² CIA, ‘[World factbook- people and society](#)’, last updated 20 September 2022

¹⁰³ Minority Rights, ‘[Philippines-World Directory of Minorities & Indigenous...](#)’, updated May 2020

¹⁰⁴ World Atlas, ‘[Biggest Cities In The Philippines](#)’, undated

1990.

‘Mindanao also has the largest concentration of ethnic minorities in the Philippines. They include the Magindanao, Maranao, Ilanun, and Sangil; all are Muslim groups sometimes collectively called the Moro. Groups usually found in the uplands include the T’boli, Subanon, Bukidnon, Bagobo, Mandaya, and Manobo. Another important group is the Tiruray, whose religion is a mixture of Christian, Muslim, and local beliefs.’¹⁰⁵

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8.2 Internal movement

8.2.1 The DFAT report stated that: ‘Filipino citizens face no legal impediments to relocating within the Philippines... Internal relocation options can be limited by the absence of family connections or the lack of financial resources.’¹⁰⁶

8.2.2 Freedom House, in their Freedom in the World report, noted that: ‘Citizens enjoy freedom of travel and choice of residence, except for in areas affected by violent conflict. Although martial law in Mindanao ended at the start of 2020, the military continued its counterterrorism measures, which included checkpoints and a curfew.’¹⁰⁷

8.2.3 The USSD 2021 report on human right practices published in April 2022 noted that the constitution provides for freedom of internal movement and that ‘... the government generally respected these rights.’¹⁰⁸

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8.3 Exiting the country

8.3.1 On 10 January 2012 the Philippine Bureau of Immigration (BI) began implementing the [Guidelines on Departure Formalities for International-Bound Passengers in All Airports and Seaports in the Country](#)¹⁰⁹. The guidelines were introduced with the aim to reduce human trafficking and resulted in all international-bound Filipino travellers being screened prior to departure¹¹⁰.

8.3.2 Open Democracy noted in an article from November 2021 that:

‘Strict screening of international-bound Filipinos primarily focuses on those leaving the country as tourists, which is assumed to be the primary channel for illegal recruitment, human trafficking, and undocumented migration. Profiling is central to the monitoring of Filipino tourists, and their financial resources, current employment, levels of education, appearance, demeanour, and destinations are all closely scrutinised. Based on subjective assessment, immigration officers determine whether a Filipino traveller is a ‘bona fide’ tourist or someone traveling with a “doubtful” intent. Those who fall in the latter category are not allowed to depart.’¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Britannica [‘Mindanao | island, Philippines’](#), undated

¹⁰⁶ DFAT, [‘Country Information Report The Philippines’](#) (paragraphs 5.20 & 5.21), 21 August 2021

¹⁰⁷ Freedom House, [‘Freedom in World 2022’](#), 24 February 2022

¹⁰⁸ USSD, [‘2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Philippines’](#) (Section 2d), 12 April 2022

¹⁰⁹ Republic of the Philippines- Embassy of the Philippines, [‘Departure Formalities’](#), undated

¹¹⁰ Open Democracy [‘Exit denied: women losing the right to leave in the...’](#), 2 November 2021

¹¹¹ Open Democracy [‘Exit denied: women losing the right to leave in the...’](#), 2 November 2021

8.3.3 The USSD 2021 report on human rights practices published in April 2022 noted that:

‘Government limits on foreign travel were generally based on security or personal safety factors, such as when a citizen had a pending court case, or to discourage travel by vulnerable workers to countries where they could face personal security risks, including trafficking or other exploitation. The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration manages departures for work abroad. It requires overseas workers to register and receive predeparture screening, training, and certification before traveling, and seeks to ensure that future overseas workers deal with legitimate, licensed recruitment agencies.’¹¹²

8.3.4 The USSD TiP report 2022 noted that:

‘The BI Travel Control and Enforcement Unit continued to screen departing passengers and deferred the departure of 13,805 passengers (11,706 in 2020), including 683 potential victims of trafficking, due to incomplete or suspicious travel documents or misrepresentation. BI stopped six foreign registered sex offenders from entering the country.

‘... The government processes approximately 2.3 million new or renewed contracts for Filipinos to work overseas in nearly 170 countries each year; however, temporary travel restrictions related to the pandemic prevented many Filipino workers from departing for overseas employment.’¹¹³

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8.4 Treatment of returnees

8.4.1 The 2021 DFAT report, in the section that assessed conditions for returnees generally not specifically victims of trafficking noted that:

‘Under normal circumstances, thousands of Filipinos enter and leave the country every day, especially for work abroad. People who return to the Philippines after several years’ absence are unlikely to face adverse attention on their return on account of their absence, with the exception of those involved in international crime or terrorism. Filipinos who overstayed their work or tourist visas, or breached visa conditions in other countries are returned to the Philippines with no attention paid to them by authorities. DFAT is unaware of any mistreatment or surveillance of failed asylum seekers; it is highly unlikely the Filipino government would be aware a returning person was a failed asylum seeker.

‘The International Organization for Migration (IOM) assists voluntary returnees, mainly trafficking victims, and Philippine’s authorities cooperate with the IOM in these arrangements.’¹¹⁴

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¹¹² USSD, [‘2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Philippines’](#) (Section 2d), 12 April 2022

¹¹³ USSD, [‘2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Philippines’](#) (pg 449), 19 July 2022

¹¹⁴ DFAT, [‘Country Information Report The Philippines’](#) (para 5.24 & 5.25), 21 August 2021

Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToR, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Legal Status
 - Legislation
 - Criminal law
 - Labour law
- Prevalence of trafficking
- Profiles of trafficking victims and traffickers
 - Trafficked victims
 - Traffickers
- Action to combat trafficking
 - Prevention
 - Raising awareness
 - Police training
 - Protection
 - Prosecution
 - Corruption
 - Avenues of redress
- Government and NGO assistance
 - Shelters and services
 - Provision of mental healthcare
- Freedom of movement
 - Internal relocation
 - Treatment of return
- Risk of re-trafficking

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Version control

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **22 November 2022**

Official – sensitive: Start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: End of section

Changes from last version of this note

First version of a CPIN for the Philippines on this topic.

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