

# Community Perspectives on Child Labor Trafficking

A Study Examining Existing Knowledge and  
Awareness in Select Areas in the Philippines



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## ACRONYMS

ATIP	Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act
BCPC	Barangay Council for the Protection of Children
CLT	child labor trafficking
CPC	Child Protection Compact Partnership
CWC	Council for the Welfare of Children
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
FGD	focus group discussion
IACAT	Inter-agency Council Against Trafficking
ILO	International Labour Organization
LCAT-VAWC	Local Committee on Anti-Trafficking and Violence Against Women and Children
LGU	local government unit
NGO	non-government organization
OSEC	online sexual exploitation of children
PNP	Philippine National Police
VAWC	violence against women and children
WVDF	World Vision Development Foundation

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, or otherwise known as the Palermo Protocol defines child trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child below 18 years old for the purpose of exploitation. The definition of exploitation here captures a wide variety of offenses committed against a child, but it can be broadly placed into two categories: child trafficking for forced labor and child trafficking for sexual exploitation. Labor exploitation is only one of the many horrendous purposes for child trafficking, albeit it is one that is often overlooked and misunderstood (Development Services Group, 2016).

**This research brings specific attention to the issue of children who are subjected to labor trafficking in the Philippines.** In particular, this research aims to achieve the following objectives: (1) to describe and assess the efforts of the government and other key stakeholders to prevent and address child labor trafficking; (2) to examine community's awareness of child labor trafficking, including their perceptions toward children engaged in different types of labor; and (3) to assess community's awareness of the existing structures and mechanisms in place to report cases of child labor trafficking in their communities.

This research focused on two major cities in Central Visayas, Philippines: Cebu City and Mandaue City. Overall, 408 children and 434 adults/parents participated in the survey, 190 participated in 21 focus group discussions, and 15 key informants from different line agencies mandated to address child trafficking were interviewed for the research.

### Child Labor Trafficking



also referred to as forced child labor, is “a form of trafficking in persons the purpose of which is to **subject children to forced labor**. Any person who engages in recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing or obtaining a child for the purpose of forced labor has committed this crime”

(U.S. Department of State 2017).

“Child labor trafficking includes situations in which the child is in the custody of someone other than an immediate family member who **requires the child to perform work that financially benefits that person**, as well as situations in which a parent provides a child to others who subject the child to forced labor in which **the child does not have the option of leaving the employment**. Children subjected to forced labor are usually inadequately cared for and not allowed to attend school and are often abused”

(U.S. Department of State 2017).

## STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This research is structured as follows: the Introduction provides a background on child labor trafficking, information about the Child Protection Compact Project, and the primary objectives of the research.

This is followed by Child Labor Trafficking in the Philippines: An Overview which systematically presents related studies and data from line agencies. First, the section defines child labor trafficking. Then it moves to the child protection landscape in the Philippines; the specific legal frameworks; and government and nongovernment actors, programs, and interventions which focus on addressing child labor trafficking. It also discusses the conditions of Filipino children subjected to labor trafficking based on limited available data and literature. Finally, it cites some of the limitations in the current efforts to combat child labor trafficking in the Philippines.

The Methodology section describes the research areas, data analysis tools used, and the protocols observed to ensure that the rights and privacy of respondents were protected in the course of the research. It also discusses the limitations that arose from the research.

Then the report provides a Profile of Research Areas: Cebu City and Mandaue City. This section details how Cebu City and Mandaue City, both first income class and highly urbanized cities in Central Visayas, have also been documented in previous reports as strategic locations for child trafficking perpetrators (Dela Serna et al 2017; ILO 2007).

Presentation of Data and Findings from Communities details the perspectives of communities on child labor trafficking. The section is arranged as follows: (5.1) socio-demographic profile of respondents; (5.2) community awareness on child labor trafficking; (5.3) community awareness on existing laws and interventions related to child trafficking; and (5.4) their attitudes in reporting potential child labor trafficking cases, including the barriers to actual reporting.

The interpretation of data is presented in the Discussion section where findings were highlighted and implications on prevention efforts on child trafficking based on evidence were stated.

The final section is Conclusion and Recommendations. Considering the perspectives of communities on child labor trafficking, this section proposes actionable items for key actors such as the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking member agencies, local government units, and the CPC project implementers.

## KEY FINDINGS

- This research finds that the **Philippines' legal framework to protect children from trafficking and labor exploitation is robust** and adequately responds to international instruments and standards. However, **implementation at the local level remains a work in progress.** Assessment reports of current government initiatives show gaps in identifying children subjected to labor, trafficking database management of cases, collaboration among agencies and committees, capacities of frontliners, and awareness campaigns against child trafficking at the local level.
- **Lack of data and empirical evidence remains a significant challenge** in making an informed and nuanced understanding of child labor trafficking in the Philippines, especially uncovering the recruitment process and the much-needed rehabilitation and reintegration for survivors.
- **Communities have limited knowledge of child labor trafficking and the laws and interventions in place to prevent and address it.** Awareness-raising interventions, in particular, should target children, especially the most vulnerable, as evidence suggests that almost all of them are not aware of child labor trafficking and the laws and mechanisms in place to protect them.
- **Communities are more knowledgeable about child labor than child labor trafficking.** This existing community knowledge on child labor could be used as an entry point to expand the knowledge of communities on child labor trafficking. The task then is **to explain and clarify the overlaps and differences between child labor and child labor trafficking.**
- **Child labor trafficking is also commonly associated with child sex trafficking.** While there are cases that both abuses simultaneously happen, awareness-raising projects and materials should clarify the difference between the two to enhance detection of cases at the community-level.
- **Anecdotal accounts from adults and children reveal some forms of child labor trafficking in the research areas but local reporting is still low.** This study also uncovered barriers to actual reporting such as the prevalent view that child abuse is a family matter resolved privately.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into consideration the insights from communities, this research then urges policymakers, non-government organizations, and the public to pay urgent attention to child labor trafficking. Below are recommendations to key actors addressing child labor trafficking.

### Recommendations for IACAT and member agencies:

- Assess current data collection, reporting, and monitoring system for child trafficking and identify its gaps such as in detecting cases of child labor trafficking. Quality data is key to effective planning and implementation of interventions to prevent and address child labor trafficking; achieving this will also require strengthened collaboration and partnership among agencies.
- Build more empirical evidence on child labor trafficking cases by engaging universities across the country to conduct studies. Such studies could identify hotspots in the country by forming vulnerability indicators, as well as showcase best practices on prevention and interventions especially at the community level.
- Develop and institute a comprehensive preventive education program for child trafficking at the national level that not only targets the youth but all those who interact with children such as teachers who could recognize early signs of troubled homes.
- Lobby for the strengthening of trafficking indicators in the child-friendly local governance audit.

### Recommendations for local government units:

- Organize and/or strengthen local child protection structures in developing programs to prevent and address child trafficking. Anchoring efforts to existing child protection structures would ensure that anti-child labor trafficking initiatives are holistic.
- Include child trafficking as a priority issue in local development plans. Pass local ordinances on child trafficking and allocate funds specifically for programs, projects, and activities on child trafficking preventive education and frontline capacity building.
- Target out-of-school children and youth and those vulnerable to child labor trafficking in the programs of Technical Education and Skills Development Authority to provide them with the skills that could help them find financially viable jobs.
- Provide livelihood grants to support the economic empowerment of households, particularly of mothers and women caregivers, to increase their financial capacities to address household shocks which force them to engage in child labor trafficking.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendations for local government units:

- Engage various sectors (churches, transport groups, cooperatives, women's groups, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, children, and youth groups) in anti-child trafficking initiatives to increase reach, especially if challenged with parents' participation in these orientations. Alternatively, include child trafficking orientation in existing training and seminars (e.g. Family Development Session of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, Empowerment and Reaffirmation of Paternal Abilities, Mothers Class) or as a requirement for accessing local government unit (LGU) programs and services. Mobilize the Sangguniang Kabataan in leading initiatives that engage children and youth.

### Recommendations for CPC Partnership implementing agencies:

- Develop a social behavior change communication program that addresses misconceptions, attitudes, negative cultural norms, and practices that enable and perpetuate child trafficking.
- Emphasize and promote the “Standards in Building Communities that Protect Children from Trafficking” among partner LGUs to serve as a guide in developing plans and programs to combat child trafficking.
- Strengthen capacities of local government frontliners and local child protection structures in developing sound policies and programs. Implementing agencies can also support LGUs in providing technical skills to out-of-school children and youth and economic opportunities to vulnerable families.
- Tap existing children and youth groups in the community to support preventive education campaigns on child trafficking. Train peer educators and counsellors who can help in identifying child survivors of trafficking among their peers.
- Engage the Department of Education and schools in the campaign against child trafficking. Develop lessons or modules on child trafficking that teachers can integrate into their subjects, particularly in Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao.



CPC staff and primary school students during one of the awareness raising activities

# I. INTRODUCTION

## I.1 BACKGROUND

Since 2003, the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (UN General Assembly, 2000) or otherwise known as the Palermo Protocol, is one of the documents used by different state actors in their efforts to eliminate child trafficking. It defines child trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child below 18 years old for the purpose of exploitation.

The definition of exploitation here captures a wide variety of offenses committed against a child, but it can be broadly placed into two categories: child trafficking for forced labor and child trafficking for sexual exploitation.

The Philippines, being a signatory to the UN Palermo Protocol, has identified a variety of acts of child trafficking in Republic Act (RA) 9208 (as amended by RA 10364) or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act. RA 9208 broadly defines forced labor as all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, involuntary servitude, and debt bondage, including recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.

It is important to highlight here that child labor trafficking or forced child labor does not require movement from one place to another to occur. As emphasized by the U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (2017):

Forced child labor occurs when a child is in the custody of someone other than an immediate family member who requires the child to perform work that financially benefits that person, as well as situations in which a parent provides a child to others who subject the child to forced labor in which the child does not have the option of leaving the employment.

As mentioned above, labor exploitation is only one of the many purposes for child trafficking, albeit it is one that is often overlooked and misunderstood (Development Services Group 2016).



World Vision, IJM and LGU partners commit to support the campaign against child labor trafficking

The **Palermo Protocol** points to three elements to establish the crime of labor trafficking: actions, means, and purpose.

- 1 Acts pertain to the recruitment, obtaining, hiring, providing, offering, transportation, transfer, maintaining, harboring, or receipt of persons, with or without the victim's consent or knowledge, within or across national borders.
- 2 Means is when the offense is committed by use of threat, or of force, or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of position, taking advantage of the vulnerability of the person, or the giving or receiving of payments to benefit the consent of a person having control over another person.
- 3 Purpose is related to the reason an individual is being exploited, which in the case of labor trafficking is for forced labor or other services including slavery and involuntary servitude.

## 1.2 ABOUT THE CPC PARTNERSHIP

In April 2017, the United States and the Philippine governments signed the Child Protection Compact (CPC) partnership, a bilateral agreement to address child labor trafficking (CLT) and online child sexual exploitation of children (OSEC). The CPC Partnership is the “first of its kind” in the Asia Pacific region (US Embassy in the Philippines, 2017a).

Ultimately, the CPC Partnership is reflective of the “shared concern about the harmful and lasting impact of online sexual exploitation of Filipino children—especially when undetected—and a mutual interest in partnering to improve efforts to prevent children from becoming exploited in domestic servitude or other forms of child labor trafficking” (US Embassy in the Philippines, 2017b).

Through the US Department of State and the Philippine Department of Justice's Inter-agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), both governments pledged strong commitment to materialize the partnership's four-year implementation plan, with activities primarily focused in major cities in the National Capital Region and Central Visayas.

The CPC Partnership's objectives are three-fold (US Department of State, 2017). First, it aims to support the government's efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict child traffickers. The second objective focuses on increasing the capacity of government and civil

society in providing specialized child protection services. The third objective seeks to prevent OSEC and CLT by improving existing community-based mechanisms. All of these objectives build on the improvements and ongoing efforts of the Philippine government and civil society to address and prevent trafficking in persons (US Department of State, 2017b).

The CPC Partnership is implemented by IJM, WVDF, The Salvation Army, and World Hope International. WVDF's focus is on strengthening existing community-based mechanisms for identifying and protecting child victims of online sexual exploitation of children and child labor trafficking, including domestic servitude, and preventing these crimes. The organization takes a collaborative and community-centered approach in the prevention of CLT and OSEC by working closely with the LGUs of Taguig City, Cebu City, Mandaue City, Lapu-Lapu City, the Municipality of Cordova in Cebu, faith-based organizations such as Alliance of God's Servants in Taguig Inc., Rock of Refuge and other evangelical churches, University of San Carlos, civil society workers, parents, and most importantly, children.

### 1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research aims to bring attention to the issue of forced child labor. The primary data collected examines communities' awareness on child labor trafficking, including their perceptions of the existing community-based mechanisms to protect children and prevent child labor trafficking. The research focused on two major cities in Central Visayas, Philippines: Cebu City and Mandaue City.

Specifically, this research has the following objectives:

- to describe and assess the efforts of the government and other key stakeholders to prevent and address child labor trafficking;
- to examine communities' awareness of child labor trafficking, including their perceptions toward children engaged in different types of labor; and
- to assess communities' awareness on the existing structures and mechanisms in place to report cases of child labor trafficking in their communities.

While commitments to international cooperation and partnerships have been initiated to protect children from trafficking, the prevention of this human rights abuse and exploitation begins at the community level, which is the core of collective life. International actors recognize that prevention efforts need to empower local communities to recognize and address child labor trafficking. For example, **communities can serve as the eyes and ears to report child labor trafficking, while they can also put pressure on national and local law enforcement agencies to make it a priority** (US Department of State, 2018). Hence, the research design fundamentally ensured that the voices of children, parents, caregivers, and local-level stakeholders were central to the data gathering and analysis.

This report should be read alongside the "Community Perspectives on Online Sexual Exploitation of Children" as prevention and punishment of OSEC is the other component of the Child Protection Compact.

## II. CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING IN THE PHILIPPINES: AN OVERVIEW

### 2.1 DEFINING CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING

In the Philippines, the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 provides the legal parameters of what labor trafficking means, clarifies the basis for documenting and categorizing cases as involving trafficking, and recognizes acts of trafficking as criminal offenses with corresponding penalties. It defines common acts of labor trafficking as follows:

- Forced labor refers to the extraction of work or services from any person by means of enticement, violence, intimidation or threat, use of force or coercion, including deprivation of freedom, abuse of authority or moral ascendancy, including any debt-bondage or deception work or service extracted from any person under the menace of penalty.
- Slavery refers to the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.
- Debt bondage (or bonded labor) refers to the pledging by the debtor of his/her personal services or labor or those of a person under his/her control as security or payment for a debt, when the length and nature of services is not clearly defined or when the value of the services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt.
- Involuntary servitude refers to a condition of enforced and compulsory service induced by means of any scheme, plan or pattern, intended to cause a person to believe that if he or she did not enter into or continue in such condition, he or she or another person would suffer serious harm or other forms of abuse or physical restraint, or threat of abuse or harm, or coercion including depriving access to travel documents and withholding salaries, or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 as well as the Palermo Protocol makes a clear exception when a child victim is involved. The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, adoption or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation or when the adoption is induced by any form of consideration for exploitative purposes shall also be considered as “trafficking in persons” even if it does not involve any of the means mentioned. In other words, a child trafficking victim does not need to establish the presence of force, fraud and/or coercion for the trafficker to be convicted. This exception ultimately highlights the vulnerability of a child to abuse of power—by recruiters, employees, and even parents.

In the Philippines, concerned government agencies, particularly the DOLE, keenly monitor child labor trafficking as it is also considered one of the worst forms of child labor. RA 9231 or An Act Providing for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Affording Stronger Protection for the Working Child (amending RA 7610) provides regulations on working children and stiffer penalties to persons who push children to engage in any of the worst or hazardous forms of child labor. While this law recognizes legal exceptions which allow children to work, child labor trafficking is absolutely prohibited as it is considered one of the worst forms of child labor. Worst forms of child labor are “work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children” (ILO-IPEC, 2004 p. 16). Not only do these forms of child labor violate the fundamental rights of the child, they also inhibit their development through its adverse effects. Among the worst forms of child labor are the following as identified by RA 9208 as amended by RA 10364:

- all forms of slavery, as defined under the Anti-trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 or practices similar to slavery such as sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labor, including recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- the use, procuring, offering or exposing of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; or
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for illegal or illicit activities, including the production and trafficking of dangerous drugs and volatile substances prohibited under existing laws

It should be noted that under Section 4 (k) of RA9208 as amended by RA10364, all the worst forms of child labor are considered trafficking for purposes of exploitation of children. In other words, all forms of child labor are now acts of trafficking in persons under the Philippine law.

## 2.2 THE NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION LANDSCAPE TO COMBAT CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING

For the past four years, the Philippines has been categorized as a Tier I country by the US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report (US Department of State, 2020), indicating that “the government has made sustained and substantial progress in its efforts to combat the problem that meet the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act minimum standards”. This means that laws and policies are in place and updated, anti-trafficking coordinating bodies have been created, key government agencies are actively involved in addressing trafficking through issuances, programs, and projects, and partnerships have also been forged with non-state actors to implement anti-trafficking initiatives.

### 2.2.1 Legal frameworks

As mentioned in the previous section, the Philippines is a signatory to the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. Aside from this, the Philippines has also ratified other international instruments that protect the rights of children against abuse and exploitation as elaborated in Table 1.

In response to these international commitments, particularly the UN Palermo Protocol, laws have been enacted in the Philippines to safeguard children from abuse and exploitation, including labor trafficking. Primary among these is RA 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons (ATIP) Act of 2003, amended by RA 10364 or the Expanded ATIP Act of 2012.

**Table 1. Applicable domestic laws related to OSEC**

International convention	Specific provisions related to child labor trafficking
Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor	Defines the worst forms of child labor to include: 1) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflicts; 2) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; and 3) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties
Convention on the Rights of the Child	Articles 32, 34, and 36 stresses that every child must be protected from every form of economic, sexual, or any other kind of exploitation
Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	Article 3.1 enjoins state parties to “criminalize the domestic or transnational sale of minors committed by an individual or by an organized group for the purposes of sexual exploitation, removal of organs, forced labor
Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts	Article 4: “Armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of 18 years.”
Sustainable Development Goals	SDG 16.2: End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children  SDG. 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking, and sexual and other types of exploitation.

Source: Author’s compilation

Key provisions of the expanded ATIP law include the mandate to establish and implement preventive, protective, and rehabilitative programs that address trafficking in persons (Section 16) and the creation of IACAT. Additionally, child labor trafficking is also addressed in other legislation such as RA 7610 or the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation, the Discrimination Act of 1992, and RA 9231 or the Anti Child Labor Act of 2002.

### 2.2.2 Key actors responding to child labor trafficking

The Inter-agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) is the primary inter-agency body created by RA 9208, as amended by RA 10364, whose mandate includes coordination,

monitoring, and overseeing of the implementation of the act, formulation of a comprehensive and integrated program to address trafficking in persons, and coordination of programs and projects of member agencies and other partners to effectively combat trafficking in persons. IACAT is headed by the Secretary of the Department Justice and co-led by the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, with the secretaries or heads of the following agencies as members of the council.

Non-government organizations (NGOs) representing women, overseas Filipino workers, and children are elected by the council for a three-year term.



#### Interagency Council Against Trafficking

- Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs
- Secretary, Department of Labor and Employment
- Secretary, Department of the Interior and Local Government
- Administrator, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration
- Commissioner, Bureau of Immigration
- Chairperson, Philippine National Police
- Chairperson, Philippine Commission on Women
- Chairperson, Commission on Filipinos Overseas
- Executive Director, Philippine Center for Transnational Crimes
- Coalition Against Trafficking in Women–Asia Pacific (non-government organization representing the women's sector)
- Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute (non-government organization representing the overseas Filipino workers' sector)
- International Justice Mission (non-government organization representing the children's sector)

In addition to IACAT, other councils and committees that tackle children's concerns include the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), the Committee for the Special Protection of Children under Department of Justice, the National Council Against Child Labor and the Inter-agency Committee on Children Involved in Armed Conflict.

### 2.2.3 Policies and issuances related to child labor trafficking

National policies and strategies are in place to support the government's mandate to protect children against different forms of abuse and exploitation, including child labor trafficking. Child 21 or the Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children (2000–2025) serves as the framework for all programs, activities, and initiatives for children.

The IACAT also formulates the periodic National Strategic Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons to provide an overall roadmap to the implementation of RA 9208. The third and current strategic action plan covering 2017–2022 builds on the gains from the previous plans and uses a rights-based and results-based approach to addressing human trafficking focusing on four key results areas: (1) Prevention and Advocacy; (2) Protection, Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reintegration; (3) Prosecution and Law Enforcement; and (4) Partnership and Networking. The third action

plan aims to address key thematic issues including forced labor, online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC), and child labor trafficking (CLT).

Combatting child labor trafficking is also included in the Philippine Program Against Child Labor Strategic Framework (2017–2022) which aims to achieve a child labor-free Philippines and seeks to remove at least 630,000 children from child labor by 2022 (US Department of Labor, 2019).

In accordance with laws and policies, IACAT member agencies have released various issuances to operationalize the implementation of anti-trafficking efforts. Recognizing the important role of LGUs in the prevention of trafficking, the Department of Interior and Local Government released Memorandum Circular No. 2006-172 entitled "Strengthening LGU's efforts to combat trafficking in persons". In 2017, IACAT Resolution 03-2017 set forth a set of "Standards in Building Communities that Protect Children from Trafficking", which was endorsed by the Department of the Interior and Local Government through MC 2018-53. A Joint Memo Circular No. 2019-01: Revised Child Friendly Local Governance Audit has also been released.

Key protocols were also created to guide case management and investigation of cases, including the justice department's Committee for the Protection of Children Resolution No. 1 – 2013: Protocol for Case Management of Child Victims of Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation and the National Bureau of Investigation Standard Operating Procedures for Trafficking Investigations.

### 2.2.4 Programs, projects, and initiatives

Various government programs and interventions have been developed to cater to the needs of child trafficking survivors, as follows:

- Sagip Batang Manggagawa, which aims to respond to cases of child labor in extremely abject conditions. It employs an inter-agency quick action team for detecting, monitoring, and rescuing child laborers in hazardous and exploitative working conditions.
- Child Labor Prevention and Elimination Program is the anti-child labor program of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) that includes advocacy, awareness raising, and livelihood initiatives.
- HELP ME Convergence Program to Address Child Labor aims to implement a sustainable and synchronized response against child labor in the Philippines. It adopts a community-based approach to answer the child laborers' call to "HELP ME," an acronym that stands for Health services and medical assistance, Education and training, Livelihood opportunities for parents of child laborers, Prevention, protection, and prosecution, Monitoring, and Evaluation.
- 1343 Actionline Against Human Trafficking was launched in March 2011 as a 24/7 hotline facility responding to crisis calls from human trafficking victims and their families and venue for the public to report cases of human trafficking.
- Recovery and Reintegration Program for Trafficked Persons is implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and IACAT that provides recovery and reintegration services to human trafficking survivors.
- DSWD's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program or 4Ps has also included a child labor module in its family development sessions for program beneficiaries.
- Strategic Helpdesks for Information, Education, Livelihood and other Developmental Interventions for Child Laborers.
- Residential care facilities or shelters for victims of child trafficking in Cebu Province have been established by both government and NGOs, including the DSWD 7 Regional Haven, HerSpace, My Refuge House, Cebu Hope Center, My Bonita Home for Girls, FORGE Boys' Home, Welcome House, and Good Shepherd Home Recovery Center.

Many international NGOs are also collaborating with the government and local civil society organizations to implement programs aimed at addressing child trafficking. These include International Justice Mission, WVDF, The Salvation Army, and World Hope International as implementors of the CPC Project.

### 2.2.5 Local child protection structures

At the local level (i.e., region, city, municipality, and barangay), child protection structures and mechanisms are created to address children's issues, including child trafficking. LGUs are mandated to create Local Committees/Councils Against Trafficking, Local Child Labor Committees, Local Councils for the Protection of Children. Local PNP-Women and Children Protection Desks and Barangay Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) Desks are also present to cater to cases of trafficking in persons. The Department of Education's Child Protection Policy mandates all schools to set up Child Protection Committees to respond to issues and concerns of children.

## 2.3 CONDITIONS OF FILIPINO CHILDREN SUBJECTED TO LABOR TRAFFICKING

As will be discussed in the following section, establishing the prevalence and conditions of children subjected to labor trafficking in the Philippines remains a significant challenge because of a multitude of factors including "methodological difficulties" (ILO & UNICEF, 2015) such as the lack of synchronized and systematized government strategy in collecting cases of child labor trafficking (Fuentes & Nanaman, 2012) and cases being hidden by families to avoid legal sanctions and fear of facing retaliation from "big time" perpetrators (Dela Serna, Ferrer, & Abocejo, 2017). Despite these challenges, this section presents some of the available case studies and empirical evidence from the literature on child labor and child trafficking to capture the conditions of **Filipino** children who are subjected to labor trafficking, while also mapping empirical gaps for further research.

There have been studies which attempt to understand child labor trafficking albeit the scope is limited to one locality in the Philippines and utilize secondary quantitative data from line agencies. For example, the study of Fuentes and Nanaman (2012) finds cases of children who were subjected into forced labor in Iligan City, Lanao del Sur, located in Southern Philippines, through the data they collected from the Philippine National Police (PNP) Women and Children's Complaint Desk. Of the 40 victims of trafficking in persons registered in the PNP database, they reported that most of the known cases are "minor girls who were trafficked for the purpose of domestic servitude and forced labor with the promise that they have jobs in Sabah, Malaysia" (Fuentes & Nanaman, 2012, p. 4). Given its strategic location and proximity, several provinces in Mindanao, particularly Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, are known as the Philippines' "backdoor" for illegal transshipments and trafficking to and from Malaysia. For example, there have been previous reports of some Filipina women forced and trapped to work in inhumane conditions in Malaysia after taking the dangerous "backdoor" route (Hofileña, 2007), and it is alarming that children have also fallen prey to this illegal recruitment scheme (Fuentes & Nanaman, 2012).



Photo taken during the Child Protection Compact (CPC) orientation with LGU representatives

Meanwhile, in Cebu City (which is one of the research areas of the study) Dela Serna et al. (2017) find that cases of forced labor gradually increased in the city from 2012 to 2014. They did not present an age-disaggregated data of forced labor cases, but they inferred that “children workers and other groups in the informal sector” are likely to be victims of forced labor (Dela Serna, Ferrer, & Abocejo, 2017, p. 98). Clearly, both these studies are local in scope and the nature of data does not provide an in-depth understanding of how trafficking occurs (especially the recruitment process). Despite this limitation, studies such as these help glean insights as to the nature of data made available among line agencies and how else it can be improved.

One study published by DOLE and UNICEF (De Vries et al., 2003) documents the experience of 24 girl-children subjected to labor trafficking who came from the Visayas region and found themselves working in Metro Manila, Bulacan, and Olongapo City (areas found in Luzon region). The study utilizes a qualitative method to document the recruitment process and reasons of children for joining the recruiter. The girls were interviewed while they were in temporary shelters undergoing rehabilitation after being rescued by the National Bureau of Investigation, PNP, LGUs, and DOLE. They reported that 11 were subjected to domestic work, 8 in entertainment work, while 5 were employed in a factory. At its core, poverty pushed these children to join trafficking recruiters. The study also pinpointed the lack of a “monitoring structure to track down the recruitment activities of illegal recruiters as well as the movements of children between geographical areas” (De Vries et al., 2003). While the study was conducted in 2001 and

many policy changes have been implemented two decades since, its many recommendations remain relevant today such as the need to conduct a community-based information campaign to prevent child labor trafficking, which is the focus of the CPC Partnership.

Another way to understand the conditions of children subjected to labor trafficking, especially the undocumented cases, is to identify who are most vulnerable among the population of children. In other words, one can infer by looking at the demographic profile of those who are vulnerable to be subjected to labor trafficking. The ILO (2007) study conducted remains a relevant jump off point to pursue this. By analyzing the national survey data results of child labor and children away from home from the National Statistics Authority (currently known as Philippine Statistics Authority), ILO came up with the Child Trafficking Vulnerability Assessment Model and pinned down individual-, household-, and community-level determinants of child trafficking. At the level of individual determinants, they found that children vulnerable to trafficking are those ages 15 to 17 years of age, who are about to become officially part of the labor force, and have started working at a much younger age. With this data, ILO concluded that “the probability of being trafficked rises with age, but rises significantly as a child approaches working age” (ILO, 2007, p. xiii). They also found that girls make up the majority of children subjected to labor trafficking and they inferred that this might be due to “the demand for female-dominated occupations such as housekeeping and jobs in the service sector” (ILO, 2007, p. xiii).

At the community-level, ILO also noted that it is not the poorest municipalities (i.e., 5th class municipalities) in the Philippines which are highly vulnerable to child trafficking, but those who are from lower-middle income class (4th class). They inferred two possible reasons for this. One is that this income class “has an idea of what an improved financial status means and desires it, has access to opportunities that can secure status for them, and has enough courage, confidence, or risk-taking abilities to pursue it” (ILO, 2007, p. 173). Another reason could be that a trafficker chooses to recruit “not the ignorant or the least skilled” to ensure that the child could still perform work” (ILO, 2007, p. 173). It becomes apparent then why children who are subjected to labor trafficking are mostly from rural areas (De Vries et al., 2003) or those victims of disasters and armed conflict flocking to the city to help their families rebuild their lives (Accountability Hub, n.d.).

The phenomenon of child domestic work in the Philippines is crucial to note here as family networks and relatives often are important in the recruitment process in the hopes of making migration less risky to the child (Heskell et al., 2012). There are clear

differences between child domestic work and child labor trafficking, but given the hidden nature of child domestic work—with some empirical evidence showing that some of the children are in live-in arrangements with their employers—they are vulnerable to abuse, violence, exploitation, and trafficking (OSCE 2010).

Children who are victims of child labor trafficking also share similarities with children who have long been engaged in labor. These children function as a form of “insurance” especially among families who have no assets or savings. Aldaba et al. (2004, p. 221) argue that “the child is considered as insurance during desperate situations because of the lack or weak social protection programs in the community and in the macroeconomy, by and large.” In other words, the phenomenon of child labor trafficking can also be seen as a form of “coping mechanism” (Aldaba et al., 2004) especially among communities that lack economic development and social protection. In such cases, ILO (2007) warns that these children could be seen as “role models” in the community, implicitly encouraging to follow

## Child Labor Trafficking



Photo was taken during the Child Protection Compact awareness raising activity in one of the partner schools

the paths of children subjected to labor trafficking, “especially if they are perceived as economically successful... hiding the real picture of exploitation” (ILO, 2007, p. 33).

Thus far, the available literature and data from government agencies that profile the conditions of Filipino children subjected to labor trafficking remain limited. Available studies are focused on trafficking operations that involve movement from one place to another which is facilitated by family members, acquaintances or small networks of employers (see ILO 2007).

It is important to broaden our understanding of child labor trafficking to not only be limited to these situations, but also in cases of children in in custody of a person other than their family wherein they are forced to do exploitative work.

To date, no research has been published yet that solely focuses on child labor trafficking in the Philippines. Most of it is subsumed under the broader issue of child trafficking (e.g., Dela Serna, Ferrer, & Abocejo, 2017; Fuentes & Nanaman, n.d.; ILO, 2007) or different forms of child labor in the Philippines (see Camacho, 1999).

The next section discusses the reasons for this and the challenges of establishing the prevalence of child labor trafficking in the country.

## 2.4. LIMITATIONS IN THE CURRENT EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING

### 2.4.1 Establishing the prevalence of child labor trafficking

Child labor statistics (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015) in the Philippines reveal that majority or 92.8% of children engaged in child labor are working in hazardous working conditions, particularly in agriculture, construction, mining, informal sector, deep-sea fishing, and pyrotechnics. Child laborers are mostly boys (63%) aged 15 to 17 years old. As they grow older, their school attendance decreases, from 91% school attendance for 5 to 9 years old to 86.7% for 10 to 14 years old. Almost half (47.3%) of child laborers aged 15 to 17 years old have left school.

While child labor is a long-standing issue in the country, the severity of child labor trafficking, however, provides a poignant case as to why the nature of this crime should be examined in depth. However, it seems that child labor trafficking cases are subsumed under the broader category of child labor issues in the Philippines. For example, the current categorical label “Forced labor, including domestic work, [...] as a result of human trafficking” (US Department of Labor, 2019) used in the assessment of child labor in the country only shows approximation, and therefore leaves one to interpret that not all forced labor cases were a result of human trafficking. Another example is the record provided by the Philippine government to the

Special Rapporteur report submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2012. In the report, it cited that DOLE rescued “223 victims from conditions of forced labor or other labor-related violations” (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2013). These examples show that there is a lack of appropriately disaggregated data on child labor trafficking, which has important implications, for example, in filing legal charges against perpetrators and providing appropriate interventions and protection for survivors.

Meanwhile, in reported cases of child trafficking, child sex trafficking “dominates the narrative,” inadvertently sidelining other forms of child trafficking particularly cases of children subjected to forced labor (Walts, 2017). Globally, the United Nations Office of Drug and Crime (2018) reports that trafficking for sexual exploitation remains to be the most detected form of human trafficking at 59% while only 34% of detected trafficking victims were exploited for forced labor. In the Philippines, available statistics indicate that child sex trafficking is more prevalent than child labor trafficking (US Department of Labor, 2019). Child sex trafficking may be more widespread, and duty bearers might not be seeing the full extent of the child labor trafficking problem if sex trafficking cases are more likely to be identified than others forms of human trafficking. Child rights scholar Walts (2017) shows how child labor trafficking is sidelined in the existing US data collection measures under its anti-trafficking legislation and child welfare systems, mechanisms, and law enforcement, making child labor trafficking an “invisible” crime in their context. This raises alarm, but the intention is not to downplay the severity of child sex trafficking but to ensure that one should not be prioritized over the

other as a matter of policy and implementation, thereby helping duty bearers to improve their efforts.

Child labor cases, in fact, do exist, and part of the problem is that existing data sets on child trafficking do not disaggregate child labor trafficking and sex trafficking, combining both most of the time. From January to June 2019, the National Bureau of Investigation rescued 49 minors from 22 anti-trafficking operations through their regional offices and the Anti-Human Trafficking Division (NBI 2019). In 2018, the agency also rescued 101 minors from 22 anti-trafficking operations. However, no aggregated data on the types of trafficking cases (whether for labor or sexual exploitation) were provided. Meanwhile, datasets provided by IACAT to the research team reveal that as of June 2019, 32 minors had been rescued during their anti-trafficking operations. However, the nature and type of labor trafficking cases were not elaborated in the dataset.

The deficiencies in effective data collection are one of the foundational issues that limit duty bearers in the Philippines to advance policy intentions and efforts to protect children from labor trafficking. Good data creates research-informed policies and improved services for children who are victim-survivors of child labor trafficking. To achieve this, the Council for the Welfare of Children and UNICEF Philippines (2016) recommend the need to strengthen the coordination among agencies and councils to have a systematic data collection on child protection issues, including child labor trafficking. In other words, better coordination is key to effective data collection and management.

### 2.4.2 Limitations of current anti-child labor trafficking implementation efforts

At the level of implementation, the multitude of challenges is apparent among LGUs, yet they are also the “most strategic venue” where interventions to raise awareness of child labor trafficking as a problem could be lodged and prioritized (ILO, 2007). Existing studies find that local implementers fail to effectively carry out anti-trafficking programs because of limited or lack of funds, facilities, and personnel (Guanzon & Calalang, 2004; ILO, 2007). Such a finding speaks to the broader dilemma that some LGUs do not prioritize financing of child protection services, more so, anti-child trafficking programs, given competing development priorities. As mentioned in the previous section, the law mandates LGUs to include funding to implement ATIP programs and services in their annual appropriations. LGUs can source out funds for ATIP initiatives from the 5% gender and development budget and the 1% local councils for the protection of children fund. However, a recent study by the Council for the Welfare of Children finds that only about half (49.8%) or 21,790 LGUs (provincial, city, municipal, and barangay) have established local councils for the protection of children and only 9.5% or 4,156 LGUs have a functioning local council for the protection of children.

Among the other issues confronting the implementation of community-level child protection programs that also affect efforts to combat child trafficking are as follows (Cuenca, 2010; CWC & UNICEF Philippines, 2016):

- Local Councils for the Protection of Children and Local Committee on Anti-Trafficking and Violence Against Women and Children are either not in place, not functional, or not fully functional.
- No separate budget allocated for child protection.
- No unified program for child protection.
- Local social workers take charge of all social development programs in the locality.
- Child protection service providers lack skills to implement prevention programs.
- Services and programs for children protection depend on resources, with lower-income LGUs having lesser budgets.

### 2.4.3 Challenges to reporting of child labor trafficking

Public education campaigns that can help inform the most vulnerable i.e., children, youth, and caregivers about child labor trafficking are only beginning to gain ground, but the effort confronts the bigger challenge of shifting existing practices in the community on reporting child labor trafficking and other cases of child abuse (Agustin et al. 2018; CWC and UNICEF Philippines, 2016).

For example, the results of the National Baseline Study on Violence Against Children (CWC and UNICEF Philippines, 2016) indicate that disclosure of abuse and help-seeking among children is low. Less than 5% of the children said they reported to authorities.

Those who disclosed mostly approached their friends and mothers, and a few sought help from professionals (i.e., teachers, guidance counselors).

As to why children did not consult, 34.4% did not see it as a problem, 15.8% were shy or afraid to consult, while 15.9% thought they can solve the problem on their own.

The literature documents various reasons behind the hesitation to report child abuse, and among these is a lack of knowledge on child protection services at the community level. For example, the Council for the Welfare of Children and UNICEF Philippines (2016) find that only 3 in 10 children were aware of child protection services in their community, and only 30.5% of these identified or utilized women and child protection units.

These studies suggest that community-based interventions should indeed be at the forefront of effective prevention and suppression of child labor trafficking.

Communities must be empowered to take on this role, but this begins by understanding their awareness and knowledge of child labor trafficking as a problem and their roles in identifying and responding to potential victims and perpetrators. In this regard, this research aims to contribute to the discourse by providing the perspectives of communities on the issue, including parents, children, and duty bearers in Cebu City and Mandaue City.



## III. METHODOLOGY

By employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, this research seeks to understand the perspectives of communities on child labor trafficking and their awareness and assessment of existing interventions in place to identify, prevent, and report child labor trafficking. Findings from the different tools, as applicable, were compared to triangulate results. The rest of this section describes the research areas, the data analysis tools used, and the protocols in place to ensure that the rights and privacy of respondents were protected in the research process.

### 3.1 RESEARCH AREAS

The research was conducted in six villages (or “barangays”) in the two cities covered by the Child Protection Compact project in Region 7: barangays Kamputhaw, Labangon, and Tejero in Cebu City and Tipolo, Mantuyong, and Paknaan in Mandaue City. Barangay is the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines, headed by a barangay chairperson and the seven members of the barangay council. In some barangays, there are two smaller administrative zones called sitios and puroks.

### 3.2 RESEARCH METHODS

The following methods were used to gather the data.

The data collection tools are available on the project’s Google Drive folder which can be accessed by clicking this [hyperlink](#).

#### 3.2.1 Household and child survey

Parents and children aged 10 to 17 were the respondents of the household and child survey. The survey was divided into two parts.

The first part was administered to parents or adult representatives in the households, who were asked the following specific topics: (i) household’s demographic profile, (ii) housing characteristics and assets, (iii) livelihood and household activities, (iv) social protection, (v) awareness on child labor trafficking and mechanisms to report it, and (vi) education and aspirations for children.

The second part of the survey was administered to the 10–17 year-old children in the households. They were asked about (i) community associations they are engaged in, (ii) awareness on child labor trafficking and mechanisms to report it, and (iii) education and aspirations. Only the children aged 10–17 years were asked to answer the survey given that this is the age group nearing but not yet part of working age groups and which previous research reports on child trafficking also found to be most vulnerable to forced labor (ILO, 2007). More details on the household and child survey questionnaire are found in the annexes.

The questionnaire was translated to the local language to ensure a better understanding of the questions among target respondents. Pre-testing of approved tools and mock surveys were facilitated to check the quality of translations and validity of the questions. The research team utilized the mobile data gathering tool, Kobo Collect, for efficient survey data collection. The data was uploaded to the main server which only the primary researcher had access to.

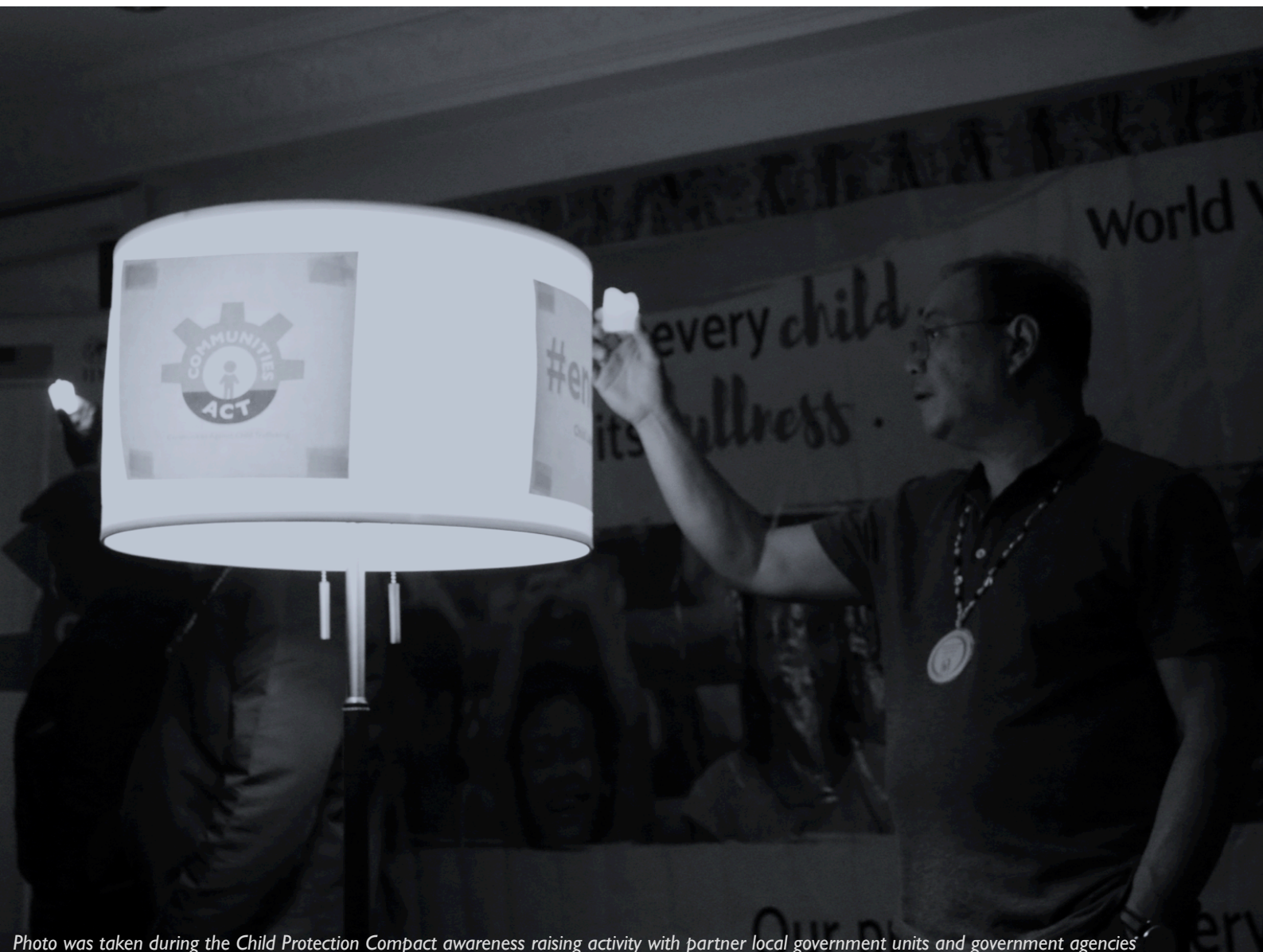
## Household sampling

A two-step sampling method was used to carefully identify and select the respondents for the survey. First was the cluster sampling to identify zones within villages, and second was interval sampling to identify household respondents within zones. Figure 1 illustrates the two-step sampling method.

Within each village or barangay, a cluster or area sampling was conducted to identify the zones to include in the survey. The main criteria for selecting the cluster or area are the proximity to barangay centers and the number of households. In total, the team identified three zones in each barangay.

From cluster sampling, the research team employed interval sampling to randomly select the respondent households within zones. In each zone, the research team requested the

Village leader to provide the complete list of households which was used for the interval sampling. The sampling interval was calculated by dividing the number of households in the cluster by the number of households needed for the sample. Households selected through the interval sampling were then assessed if they fit the criteria of having 10–17 year-old children in the family and if they also gave consent to be interviewed. If this is not the case, the enumerators looked for the next household on the list that fit the criteria.



Initially, the total survey sample size for respondents who were children was calculated at 408 respondents (204 per city) at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. After data checking and cleaning, a total of 434 completed surveys were considered in the final analysis. Table 2 shows the distribution of actual respondents of the survey.

**Table 2. Distribution of Survey Respondents**

	City	Male	Female
Adult household representatives / parents	Both cities	49	385
	Cebu City	26	193
	Mandaue City	23	192
Children	Both cities	181	227
	Cebu City	93	111
	Mandaue City	88	116

### 3.2.2 Focus group discussions

Semi-structured focus group discussions (FGDs) were carried out with 11 groups of parents and 10 groups of children ages 10–17 years to understand their knowledge, perceptions, and experience of child labor trafficking in their communities. In each FGD, an average of nine respondents participated. In total, 88 parents and 102 children participated in 21 FGDs as shown in Table 3.

FGDs were conducted to substantiate and/or validate the results of the quantitative data collected. A facilitator's guide with questions translated to the local dialect was developed for each focus group sector.

**Table 3. Distribution of FGD Participants**

City	FGD with parents		FGD with children	
	Number of FGDs	Number of participants	Number of FGDs	Number of participants
Cebu City	5	38	4	42
Mandaue City	6	50	6	60
Total	11	88	10	102

### 3.2.3 Key informant interviews

Interviews were conducted with selected key informants to map the existing policies, programs, and community-level efforts to prevent, identify, and report child labor trafficking in the study areas.

Table 4 provides the list of key informants interviewed. In total, 15 key informants from different line agencies and LGUs were interviewed. At the provincial level, representatives from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and DSWD Region 7 were consulted. At the city level, the research team interviewed each representative from the following agencies: City Social Welfare Development, PNP, Department of Education, the child labor committees.

At the level of communities, the research team consulted village officials such as the Village Chairperson and focal persons of the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC) or Gender and Development, and Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) Desks. They were also consulted about their experiences and the challenges they encountered in preventing and addressing child labor trafficking.

### 3.2.4 Review of secondary data

The research team also collected and reviewed data on the incidence of child labor trafficking from reports of line agencies and local government units, where available. Primarily, these data were collected from the DSWD, PNP, and the Department of Justice.

**Table 4. List of Key Informants**

	Agency	Cebu City	Mandaue City
Provincial level	DOLE Region 7, DSWD Region 7	2	
City-level	CSWD	1	1
	PNP	1	1
	Representative of C/ MCPC and/or C/M Child Labor Committees	1	-
	DepEd	1	1
Barangay-level	Brgy. Chairperson/ Kagawad on Children/ BCPC Focal/VAWC Desk Officers	3	3
Total number of key informants		15	

### 3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Survey data completed through Kobo Collect and submitted online were downloaded, cleaned, and checked for consistency before finalizing the list of valid respondents. SPSS software was used to generate descriptive statistics from the quantitative data collected from the household and child survey. Data from the key informant interviews and FGDs were transcribed, translated, and organized in an Excel matrix. Content analysis using Nvivo was used to look for themes and patterns in the qualitative responses.

### 3.4 ETHICAL PROTOCOLS

The following safeguards were put in place to protect the privacy of respondents and confidentiality of data gathered:

#### Pre-fieldwork

- The research team was oriented on World Vision's Child Protection Policy.
- A confidentiality clause was included as part of the contract of service signed by the research consultant with World Vision.

#### During fieldwork

- Before the conduct of surveys and interviews, respondents were made fully aware of what the study is for and about. After this introductory process, they were asked if they were still willing to be part of the research and if they had questions.
- All data collectors informed respondents that they can refuse to answer questions and stop the interview at any time.

### Post-fieldwork and data analysis

- Only the research team lead had access to transcripts and databases, secured in password-protected laptops.
- Aggregated and/or anonymized information was used in the writing of reports.

### 3.5 LIMITATIONS

Some of the barangays did not have a complete household list for the sampling. The research team resolved this by conducting manual interval sampling among households in the selected areas.

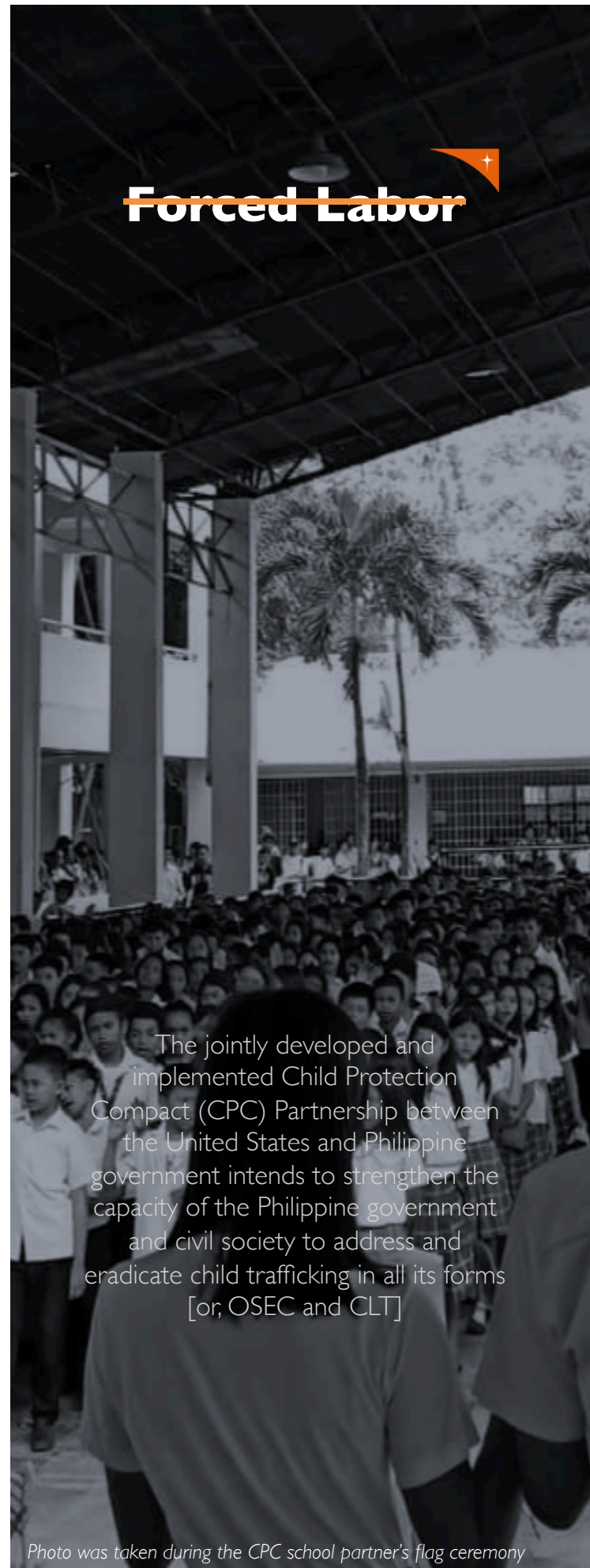
Also, this study did not gather primary data from survivors of child labor trafficking themselves. Instead, the research team asked communities if they observed child labor trafficking cases happening in their communities. However, observed cases are different from reported and verified cases, so the data here should be seen as approximations rather than direct evidence.

Finally, during surveys and interviews, the research team first asked the communities' awareness on child labor rather than directly asking about child labor trafficking. This approach helped compare community awareness on child labor in relation to child labor trafficking and their sources of information on this. However, one limitation that arose was that the definition of child labor trafficking was derived top-down rather than bottom-up and could have influenced the responses of respondents. This was resolved during FGDs as the research team

triangulated the results of the survey and also had the opportunity to inquire in-depth about people's perception of child labor trafficking and how they think it is similar and different from child labor and other crimes against children.

### 3.6 COMMUNITY VALIDATION

In May and June 2020, World Vision Development Foundation (WVDF) hosted online community validation to present the findings of both OSEC and CLT research and sought the feedback of various stakeholders and members of communities where both studies were conducted. For the CLT research, village officials from all barangays were represented as well as officials from the Cebu City LGU. Representatives of different government line agencies such as the City Social Welfare and Development and Department of Education were also present. Student leaders from different high schools also joined the discussion. Some of the discussions and recommendations during the community validation were included in this report.



The jointly developed and implemented Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership between the United States and Philippine government intends to strengthen the capacity of the Philippine government and civil society to address and eradicate child trafficking in all its forms [or, OSEC and CLT]

## IV. PROFILE OF RESEARCH AREAS: CEBU CITY AND MANDAUE CITY

The research was conducted in six barangays in the two cities covered by the Child Protection Compact Project in Region 7: Kamputhaw, Labangon, and Tejero in Cebu City; and Tipolo, Mantuyong, and Paknaan in Mandaue City. Cebu City and Mandaue City are both first class and highly urbanized cities in Central Visayas but have also been documented by previous reports as strategic locations for child trafficking perpetrators (Dela Serna et al., 2017; ILO, 2007).

### 4.1 CASES OF CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING IN CEBU CITY AND MANDAUE CITY

Cebu City serves as the provincial capital of Cebu and the regional center of Region VII. It is a focal point for commerce and trade and is home to the country's second largest shipping port. Known as the "Queen City of the South," Cebu City is a key tourism gateway in the Philippines because of its proximity to major tourist destinations both in the province and the Visayas region, since it is easily accessible through the Mactan International Airport, the Cebu International Port, and the Cebu Baseport Domestic Zone and its sub-ports. Cebu City is one of the major hubs for the business process outsourcing industry. It has a land area of 315 square kilometers and is divided into 80 barangays. Based on the 2015 Census, it is the 5th most populated city in the Philippines with a population of 922,611. Around one-third (31.85%) of this are children ages 14 and below and 20.63% are youth ages 15 to 24 (PSA, 2017).

Only seven kilometers away from Cebu City, Mandaue City is a bustling industrial hub widely known for being a center of manufacturing of furniture, food and beverage, and metalwork. It is home to about 20,000 industrial and commercial businesses, including multinational manufacturing companies. Mandaue City is also a key transport link that connects the islands of Cebu and Mactan, in close proximity to the Mactan International Airport and the Cebu International Port. It has a total land area of 25.18 square kilometers divided into 27 barangays. Mandaue City has a population of 362,654 in the 2015 Census, with an average growth rate of 1.75% (2010–2015). The city has a relatively young population, 31.21% of which are children ages 14 and below and 20.52% are youth ages 15–24 (PSA, 2017).

Previous research reports reveal that easy transport connectivity alongside the problem of inequality and poverty makes these two cities very conducive as a point of entry and exit for "human illegal transshipment," so much so that Cebu City has been considered to be among the five infamous places in the country for human traffickers (Campo, 2013; Dela Serna et al., 2017; ILO, 2007). Dela Serna et al. find in their analysis of government reports and databases from 2010 to 2014 that children and women are the most vulnerable to human trafficking in Cebu City. Their study also finds that reports of forced labor in Cebu City have increased gradually from 2010 to 2014, "most likely affect[ing] children workers and other groups in the informal sector," but remains hardly detected compared with other cases of human trafficking (Dela Serna et al., 2017, p. 98). However, the study did not

disaggregate data on forced labor by age to determine how many of the forced labor cases involved minors. For this study, the research team attempted to collect this data to determine the number and type of child trafficking cases in the areas covered by the project as seen in Table 5.

As shown in Table 5, from 2017 to July 2019, DSWD Region 7 reported that 28 minors from Cebu City and Mandaue were rescued from child trafficking. However, these are mainly cases of child sex trafficking and online sexual exploitation of children. No cases of forced labor had been reported since 2017. When probed during key informant interviews as to why there were no cases reported on children subjected to forced labor, representatives from the agency shared that child labor trafficking is often not reported because it is considered more as child labor

and not as a form of trafficking. Child labor related cases are thus usually referred to DOLE and the LGU and forwarded to DSWD if the child needs temporary shelter or focused rehabilitation.

#### 4.2 LOCAL EFFORTS AGAINST CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING

Both Cebu City and Mandaue City have local ordinances on anti-trafficking in place as shown in Table 6. However, only one of the six barangays enacted an ordinance implementing the provisions of Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act. Nonetheless, representatives from barangay units cite other ordinances such as curfews and prohibition of students in internet shops during school hours as their community’s measures to counter trafficking of children.

**Table 5. Cases of Child Trafficking in Project Areas From 2017 to 2019\***

City	OSEC			Prostitution			Forced Labor		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Cebu City	6	2	12	6	4	0	0	0	0
Mandaue City	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8	2	12	9	4	0	0	0	0

\*Note: The 2019 data only covers cases from January to 31 July 2019  
 Source: DSWD Field Office 7

**Table 6. List of Ordinances**

Level	Ordinance
City	Ordinance No. 2163 or the Cebu City Anti-Trafficking in Persons Ordinance
	Ordinance 11-2009-534 or the Mandaue City Anti-trafficking in Persons Ordinance
Barangay	Barangay Paknaan Ordinance No. 5 S. 2012—An ordinance implementing and enforcing the provisions of RA No. 9208 otherwise known as the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 and its implementing rules and regulations

### 4.3. LOCAL PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES RELATED TO CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING PREVENTION

LGUs are implementing various programs, projects, and initiatives to prevent and protect children from abuse and exploitation. However, rather than targeting child labor trafficking, LGUs subsume the issue under their overall effort to protect children from different cases of abuse. Their efforts to combat child trafficking, meanwhile, primarily focuses on child sex trafficking.

City-level social welfare and development offices have initiated awareness-raising activities on human trafficking, occasionally in partnership with the Department of Education. These offices also provide protection and reintegration services for survivors of child trafficking.

Barangay leaders, in partnership with NGOs, also implement awareness-raising activities such as orienting communities on child labor and human trafficking. They also organize community watch groups and child rights advocates to monitor any child abuse cases in

their communities, including child labor trafficking.

A number of NGOs are also present in these communities to strengthen BCPC structures by providing trainings and capacity building to LGU officials on how to identify and manage child protection issues such as child labor trafficking.

### 4.4 LOCAL CHILD PROTECTION STRUCTURES

The core structures tasked to help prevent child labor trafficking in communities are the Local and Barangay Council for the Protection of Children and the Local Council on Anti-Trafficking and Anti-Violence Against Women and Children. The research team assessed if the cities and barangays have functional child protection structures shown in the Table 7 below.

Both cities have established Local Councils for the Protection of Children and Local Council on Anti-Trafficking and Anti-Violence Against Women and Children, which are structures required to protect children from exploitation including child labor trafficking.

**Table 7. Presence of L/BCPC, LCAT, and VAWC Desks in Research Areas**

LGU	L/BCPC	VAWC Desk	LCAT
Cebu City	✓	✓	✓
Brgy. Kamputhaw	✓	✓	×
Brgy. Labangon	✓	✓	×
Brgy. Tejero	✓	✓	×
Mandaue City	✓	✓	✓
Brgy. Paknaan	✓	✓	✓
Brgy. Tipolo	✓	✓	×
Brgy. Mantuyong	✓	✓	×

The BCPC plays a key role in preventing child abuse in communities, and all barangays have existing BCPCs. However, it should be noted that the data gathering coincided with post-barangay election, hence some of barangay chairpersons expressed that they were in the process of reorganizing their BCPCs with the support of World Vision.

It is also important to note that all barangays have a desk to report Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC), while only Barangay Paknaan, however, has established a Barangay Council Against Trafficking created through their barangay ATIP ordinance.

According to LGU key informants, one of the major challenges in implementing programs, projects, and activities to address child labor trafficking is limited cooperation from parents. LGUs have expressed difficulty in getting parents to attend community gatherings, including those that talk about trafficking.

Some also pointed that many parents only attended gatherings when incentives were provided. Other barangays shared that the budget allocation for activities that address children’s issues were often limited. Barangay Labangon noted the underreporting of cases of child labor trafficking because community members were not aware of the laws. As mentioned earlier, the BCPCs in some barangays were still in the process of reorganization at the time of data gathering. As such, the functionality of these structures could not be established.

Barangay representatives signified the need for enhancement and refresher trainings on child labor trafficking laws and case management for their personnel and BCPC members. Additionally, they highlighted the need to raise awareness on CLT among parents and children through orientation and information, education and communication materials.

**Table 8. Challenges and Recommendations in Implementing CLT Initiatives Identified by LGU Key Informants**

	Challenges/ Gaps	Recommendations
Cebu City		
Brgy. Kamputhaw	Budget for activities; Space for activities ; Uncooperative parents	Trainings on CL for barangay personnel and community members; Youth trainings/ activities; Monitoring (house to house); Livelihood program for parents
Brgy. Labangon	Underreporting of cases because community members are not aware of laws	Training of barangay frontliners on case management; Seminar for parents and children on child rights and laws; IEC materials on TIP and CLT
Brgy. Tejero	Uncooperative parents (they would only attend community gatherings if there are incentives)	Trainings on laws for new barangay personnel; Awareness-raising seminars for parents and children; IEC materials such as posters and tarpaulins
Mandaue City		
Brgy. Paknaan	Need practical interventions	Enhancement/refresher seminars– orientation of new laws
Brgy. Tipolo	No data	No data
Brgy. Mantuyong	Uncooperative parents; Parents are the violators of child labor	Information dissemination campaign to each zone in the barangay, per household head; Provide incentives; Scholarships for indigents; Support to children of detained/ jailed parents

## V. PRESENTATION OF DATA AND FINDINGS: FROM COMMUNITIES

This section presents the perspectives of communities on child labor trafficking collected through household surveys, FGDs, and interviews with key informants. The section is arranged as follows: (5.1) socio-demographic profile of respondents; (5.2) community awareness on child labor trafficking; (5.3) community awareness on existing laws and interventions related to child trafficking; and (5.4) their attitudes in reporting potential child labor trafficking cases, including the barriers to actual reporting.

### 5.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

#### 5.1.1 Adult respondents

Majority of the adult respondents were females (89%), married or in a common-law relationship (79%), and between the age range of 31 to 50 years (68%). About 91% were locals of Cebu province while the rest were migrants from nearby provinces such as Bohol, Iloilo, and Negros. More than half (56%)

reached secondary school, while 9% graduated from college.

Data on residence ownership shows that about half of the households surveyed were informal settlers in government lots. There were more respondents living in informal settlements in Mandaue City (56%) compared to Cebu City (44%). In terms of household composition, on average, every family had six members, which is higher than the national average of 4.4 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2016). Most parents (88%) lived in the household with their children. For those households with parents who were away, most of them were working elsewhere, abroad or in other cities.

Table 9 shows that finances was the most pressing concern of adult respondents, followed by health, and safety and security. A third of the households were single-earners and 9% of household heads did not have jobs. For those households with a source of income, more than half fell below the poverty threshold. In order to augment their income, 4 in 10 households reported having loans. Those who had loans borrowed from savings groups (40%), microfinance institutions (10%), friends (9%), and money lenders (8%).

**Table 9. Most Pressing Problems Identified by Adult Respondents**

	Cebu City	Mandaue City	Both cities
Finances	97%	100%	98%
Health	62%	56%	62%
Safety and Security	42%	43%	43%
Relationships	34%	30%	32%
Vices	17%	13%	15%

### 5.1.2. Child respondents

Majority of children surveyed were female (56%), ages 11 to 14 years (48%) and 15 to 17 years (30%). Almost all of the children respondents attended school (94%) at the time of survey, and majority of them were in junior high school. The 6% who reported not attending school identified lack of money to pay for school expenses as their primary reason for failing to attend school.

Some of the children reported that they were engaged in different types of work. More specifically, 16% (or 64 cases) of child respondents participated in household economic activities as shown in Table 10. Majority of these working children were earning by scavenging (64%). Some were doing street vending (22%) or domestic work (9%). Majority of these child laborers worked almost every day (64%). When asked for the reason in engaging in child labor, these children reported that they wanted to help their parents pay for their everyday necessities such as food and used their income as school allowance.

It is crucial to note that both parents and children had high regard for education.

Majority of parents and adult respondents, for example, noted that their dream for children in their households was to finish their studies (93%) followed by having a stable job (43%). Children also dreamed about completing their education (77%) and having a stable job (44%).

### 5.2 COMMUNITY AWARENESS ON CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING AND CHILD LABOR DISTINCTIONS

As mentioned in the Methodology section, the issue of child labor was the entry point used to ask respondents about child labor trafficking. This was noted as a limitation of the study since it could have influenced how respondents understand child labor trafficking. However, this approach provided an opportunity to find out if communities understood child labor trafficking less compared to the issue of child labor alone.

**Table 10. Type of Work Some Children Respondents Reported Engaging in (N = 64)**

	Cebu City	Mandaue City	Total	
			N	Percentage
Scavenging	21	20	41	64.06
Street vending	9	5	14	21.88
Domestic work	3	3	6	9.38
Construction work	0	2	2	3.13
Begging	1	0	1	1.56
Total	34	30	64	100

More than half of the adults (52%) reported hearing about the issue of child labor. These adults associated the issue of child labor as children working but not yet in the right age to work (“Bata nga gipatrabaho nga wala pa sa saktong edad”). Others identified the reason why these children were engaged in child labor, that it was primarily because of the need to earn income for the family. When asked to identify their sources of information on child labor, majority of adult respondents who were aware of child labor learned about it from watching TV (70%), listening to radio (29%), in seminars or trainings (26%), and from their neighbors (20%). Some parents also reported that they were aware of the issue because it was happening in their community.

Notably, many respondents identified child labor as prohibited (“bawal” or “hindi puwede”) since they considered it a form of child abuse. When also asked if they would allow their children to work, majority (87%) responded in the negative (the remaining 3% answered “not sure” but this was not

elaborated). The remaining 10% argued that they would allow their children to work to supplement household income and so the children could pay for their school expenses. FGDs validated these survey findings as some parents further reasoned out that it was acceptable for children to work when the family was financially challenged as long as the work was light and it still allowed children to go to school.

Figure 5 shows that the number of adult respondents aware about the issue of child labor was almost the same as the number of adults who reported being aware about the issue of child labor trafficking. More specifically, 49% of parents said they had heard about the issue of child labor trafficking, but it also worthy to note that almost half were not aware of it.

Majority (76%) of the adult respondents learned about child labor trafficking from watching television. Some also heard about the issue from their neighbors (21%), on the

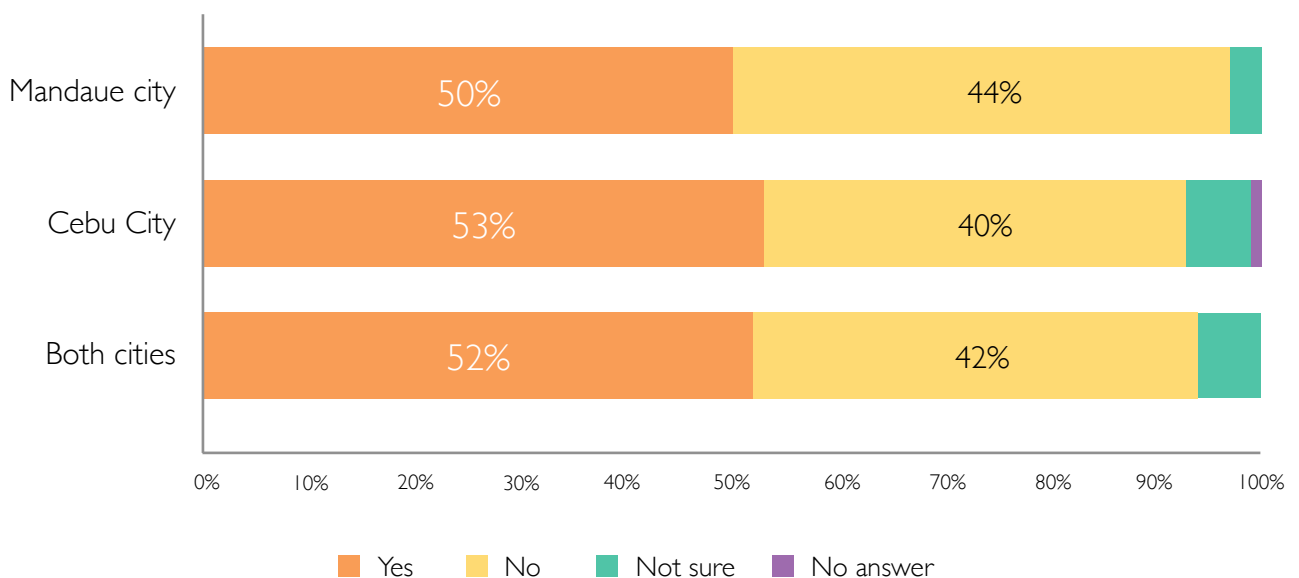


Figure 2. Awareness of Adults on Child labor

radio (20%), and in trainings and seminars (18%). A few respondents in Cebu City read about it in newspapers and on the internet or social media.

However, parents underscored different elements that distinguished child labor trafficking from child labor, with the word

cloud (see Figure 4) providing an overview of the common words (both in Filipino and Bisaya) used to describe child labor trafficking. Some of these words include gipugos (forced bata (child), trabaho (labor or work), patrabahuon (forced to work), baligya (to sell), ginikanan (parents), dili (should not be done).

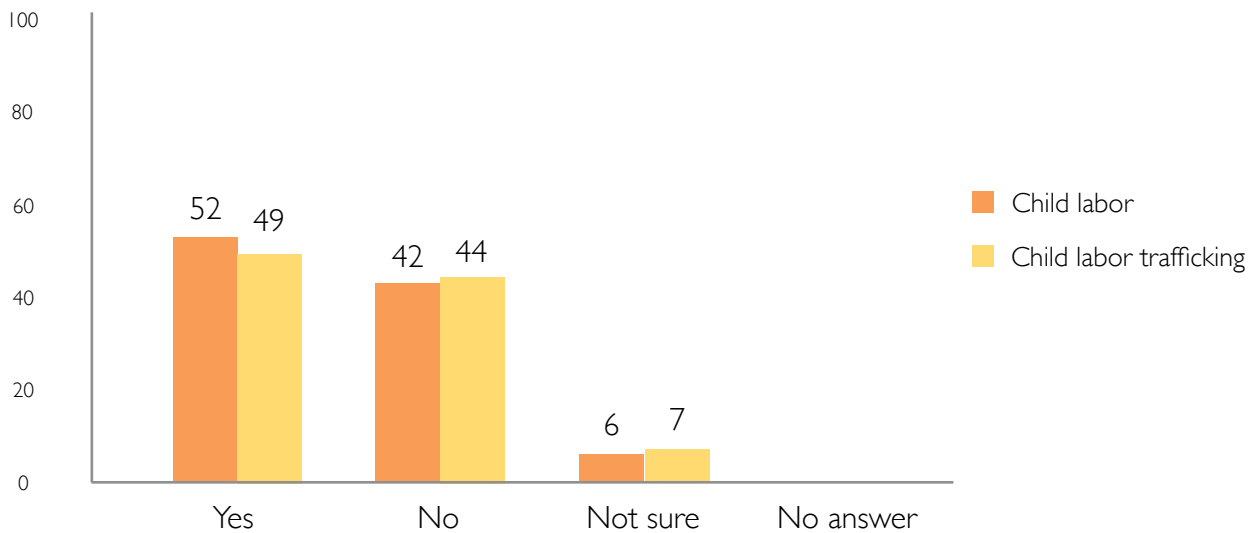


Figure 3. Comparison of Adults' Awareness on Child Labor Trafficking in Relation to Child Labor (Percentage)



Figure 4. Commonly Associated Words Used by Adult Respondents to Describe Child Labor Trafficking

Child labor trafficking is understood as such when the trafficker’s acts include selling (“ibaligya”), recruiting (“girecruit”), and transporting to another place (“dad-on sa laing lugar.”) A few respondents also note that these children often experienced abuse, were not compensated or their salaries were directed to parents, and are restricted from going out. While the means of child trafficking identified are forced labor (“gipugos”) or by kidnapping. These adult respondents note that the element of being forced or coerced to work was more pronounced in their notion of child labor trafficking compared to child labor.

Meanwhile, the identified purposes for CLT were varied, but among them were cybersex, prostitution, illegal drugs, forced labor, construction, begging (i.e., recruited by syndicates), and domestic work. Majority associated CLT with child labor and child sexual exploitation (including prostitution, OSEC, and child pornography). This finding suggests that the

dominant narrative associated with child labor trafficking was for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Children are much less aware about child labor than their parents and other adults in the household. Only 16% of children surveyed were aware of child labor and vaguely described it as children who are working (“Mga bata na nagtatrabaho”). Of these, 17% expounded that child labor meant children who are forced to work, sometimes as sex workers or to engage in child pornography. Some of these children shared that child labor happened because their parents needed help in meeting their basic needs.

During FGDs, children further elaborated on the element of force and inappropriateness of age with regard to child labor. Some also associated it with physical and sexual abuse including rape and incest, while very few children thought it pertained to abortion.

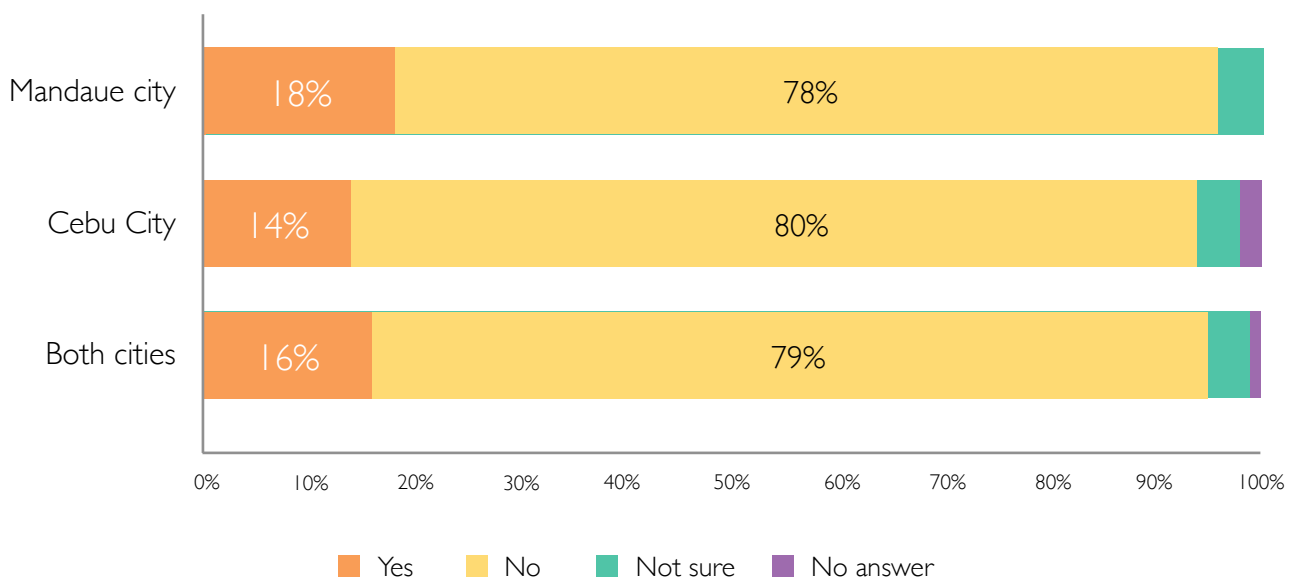


Figure 5. Children’s Awareness on Child Labor

Mainstream media remains to be the primary source of information of children on child labor. More specifically, 55% of children surveyed reported hearing about child labor on television, 37% in schools, and 20% on social media.

Only a small portion (7%) of the children surveyed in both cities said they have heard about child labor trafficking, while the majority (88%) said that they were not aware of it. Half of the children who had heard about CLT learned about it from watching television, while a considerable number received information on CLT from school announcements (43%) and from social media (33%).

Of the 7% who reported hearing about child labor trafficking, 27% associated it with children or minors who were forced to work (“gipugos sa trabaho”). The word cloud below reveals that “gipugos” or use of force was among the commonly associated words used to describe child labor trafficking (Figure 7).

Other words frequently mentioned are bata (child) or pagpapatrabaho (forced to work).

Findings also show that those aware of child labor trafficking confused it with child sex trafficking. In particular, 20% noted that it involved sexual exploitation of children, including prostitution and child pornography. FGD results in Cebu City show that children also associated child labor trafficking with trafficking of overseas Filipino workers, organ selling, and producing child pornographic materials.

Key informants from different government agencies and local government units were aware about the issue of child labor and child labor trafficking.

When asked what they knew about child labor, key informants talked about cases they had observed in their own communities. For example, some cited that in Barangay Kamputhaw, children worked as motorcycle drivers (or “habal habal”), car watchers, and

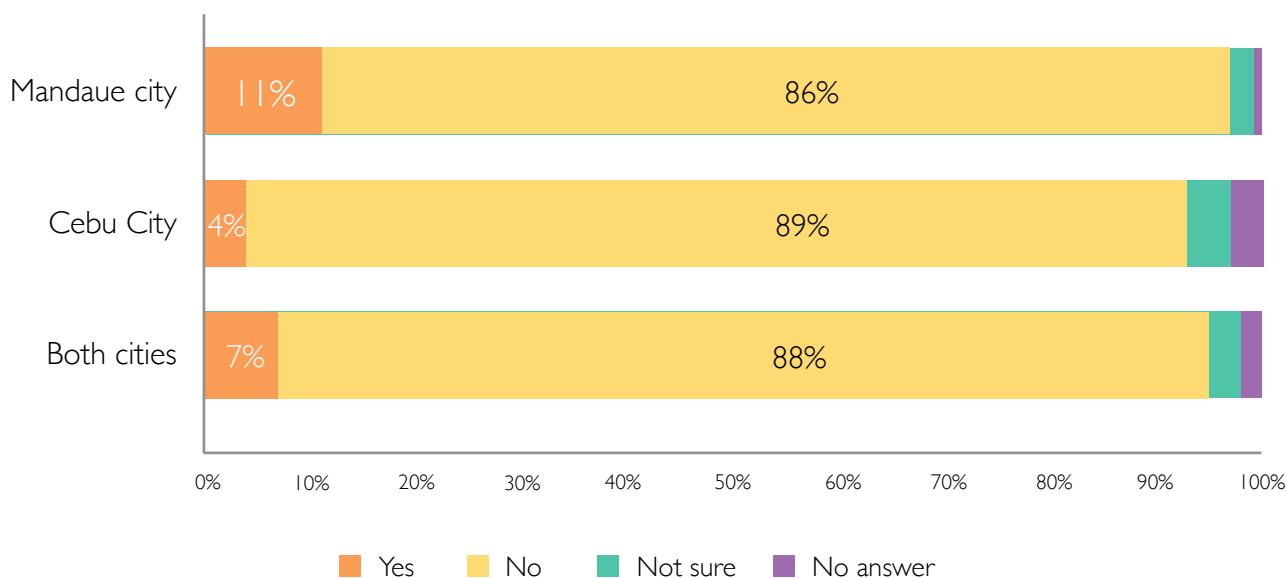


Figure 6. Children’s Awareness on Child Labor Trafficking



curfew enforcement, the Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act, and children in conflict with the law. The FGD with parents in Barangay Paknaan also revealed that they were aware of the prevailing barangay ordinance against human trafficking, which was Barangay

Paknaan Ordinance No. 5 S. 2012—An ordinance implementing and enforcing the provisions of RA No. 9208 otherwise known as the “Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003” and its implementing rules and regulations (this point was also mentioned in section 4.2).

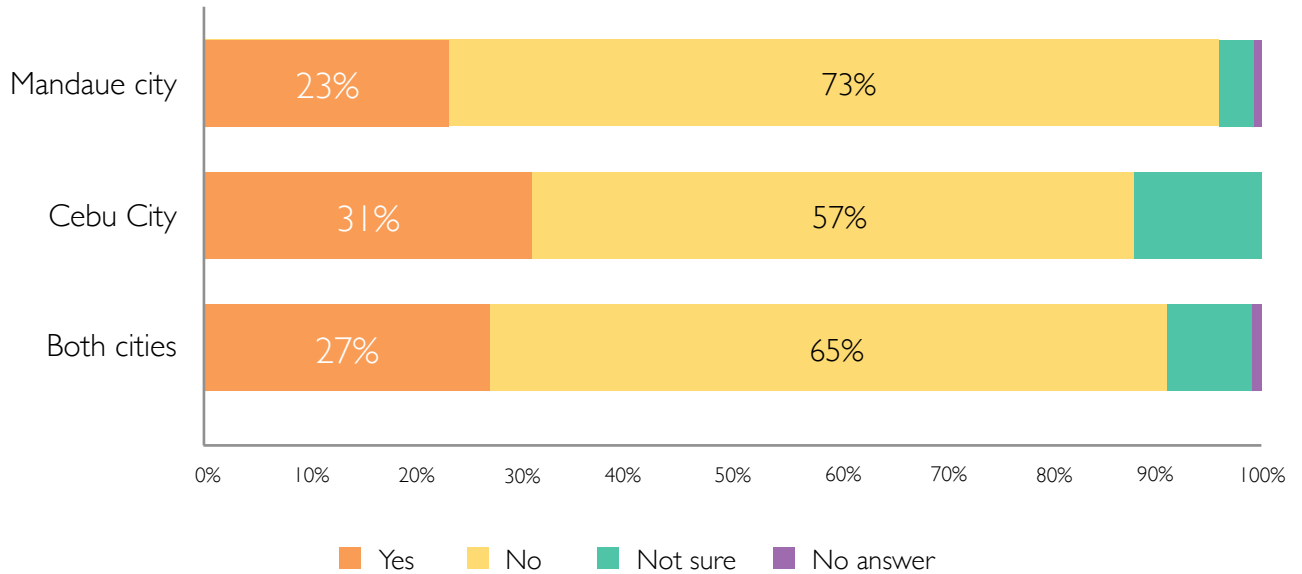


Figure 8. Adults’ Awareness of Existing Laws and Local Ordinances Addressing Child Labor Trafficking

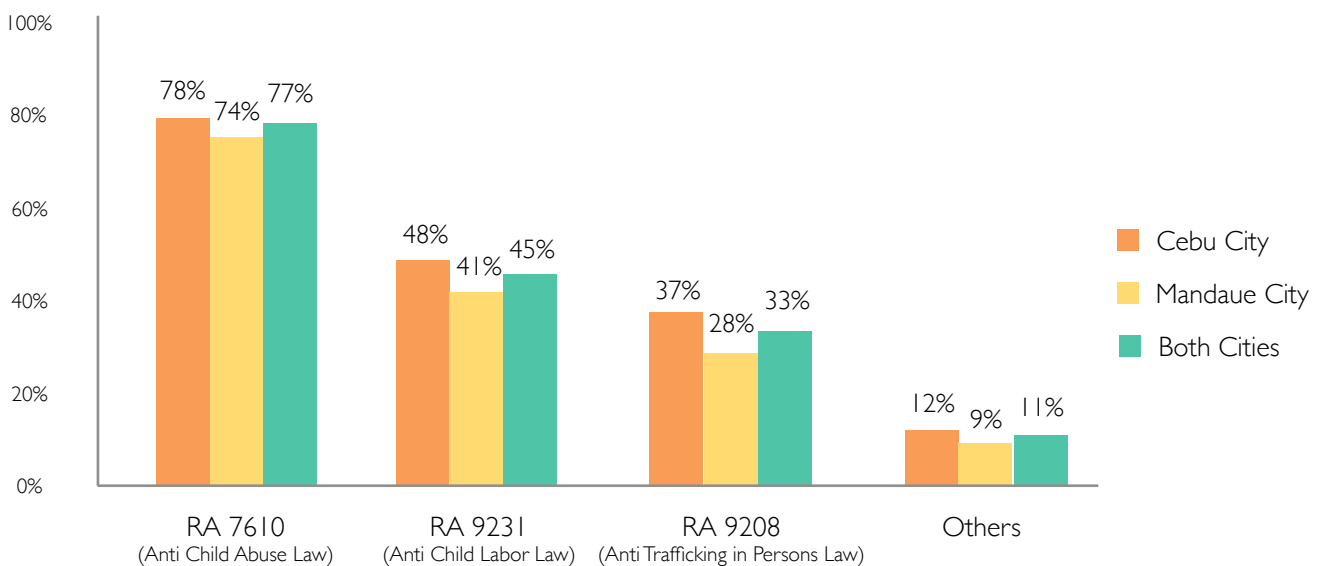


Figure 9. Adults’ Awareness of Different Laws Related to Child Labor Trafficking

Among surveyed children, only 4% said that they were aware of laws or local ordinances that protected them against child labor trafficking (see Figure 12). Of this number, 71% mentioned the anti-child abuse law and only 18% mentioned the anti-trafficking in persons

law, while three children in Cebu City also cited the anti-child labor law. During the FGD, children repeatedly shared that they were not aware of laws on child labor trafficking, except for some children in Mandaue City who said they had heard of it through the DSWD and Bantay Bata.



Figure 10. Children’s Awareness of Laws Related to Child Labor Trafficking

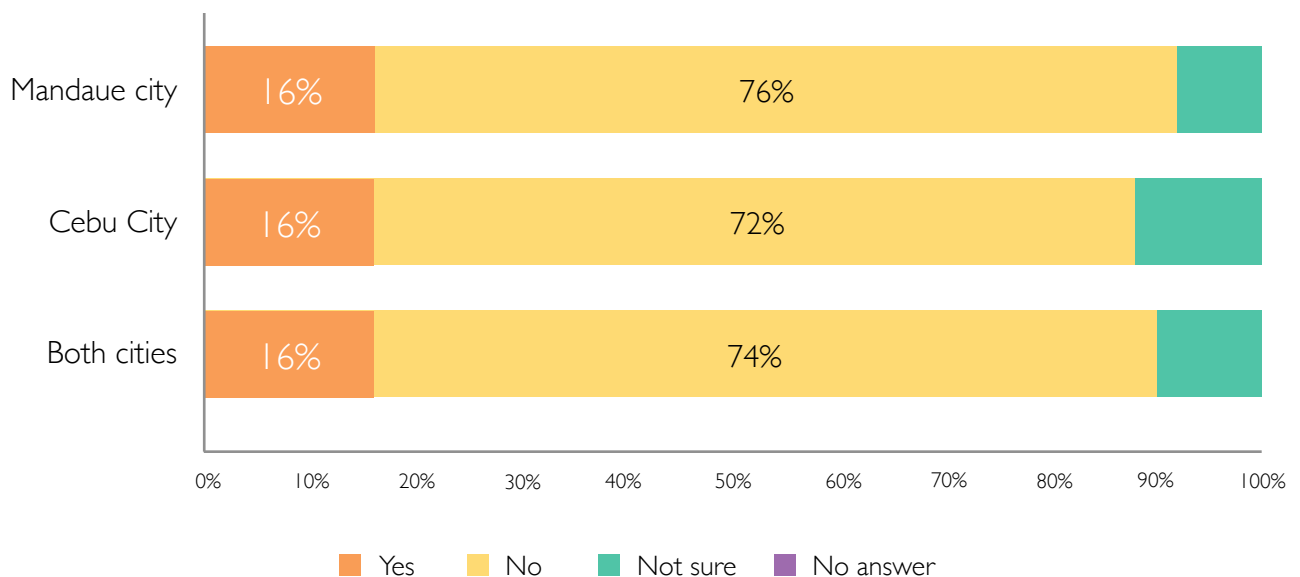


Figure 11. Adults’ Awareness of Child Labor Trafficking Prevention Programs and Activities

In the household survey, a list of local government programs and activities directly or indirectly addressing child labor trafficking were enumerated to examine communities' awareness of the prevention and intervention aspect of child labor trafficking.

Survey results show that only 16% of adult respondents were aware of programs or activities addressing child labor trafficking (see Figure 11). These were in the form of trainings and seminars (26%), ordinances (12%), and community watch groups (18%). Very few of adult respondents (7%) reported seeing information, education and communication materials on child labor trafficking.

FGDs with parents also reveal differences in terms of awareness of prevention programs and activities per barangay. For example, in one of the barangays in Cebu City, parents shared that they had not heard of any programs on child labor trafficking such as awareness raising being conducted by their village officials, and it was their first time to hear child labor trafficking in the FGD. In

another barangay in Mandaue, some parents reported attending DSWD-sponsored seminars, possibly through 4Ps-related activities. Other parents also noted activities which, by and large, supported children's welfare such as sports programs, livelihood, medical missions, and programs against illegal drugs.

Almost all children, meanwhile, were not aware of any government programs preventing and addressing child labor trafficking. Only 4% of the child respondents reported that they knew about it (see Figure 12). The FGD with children across different barangays revealed the same results except in Barangay Labangon, where children remarked that there were programs run by the DSWD and charity institutions run by nuns for child victims of abuse.

The household survey also included a specific question on communities' awareness of different child protection structures. More than half or 60% of the parents surveyed in both cities reported that they were aware of

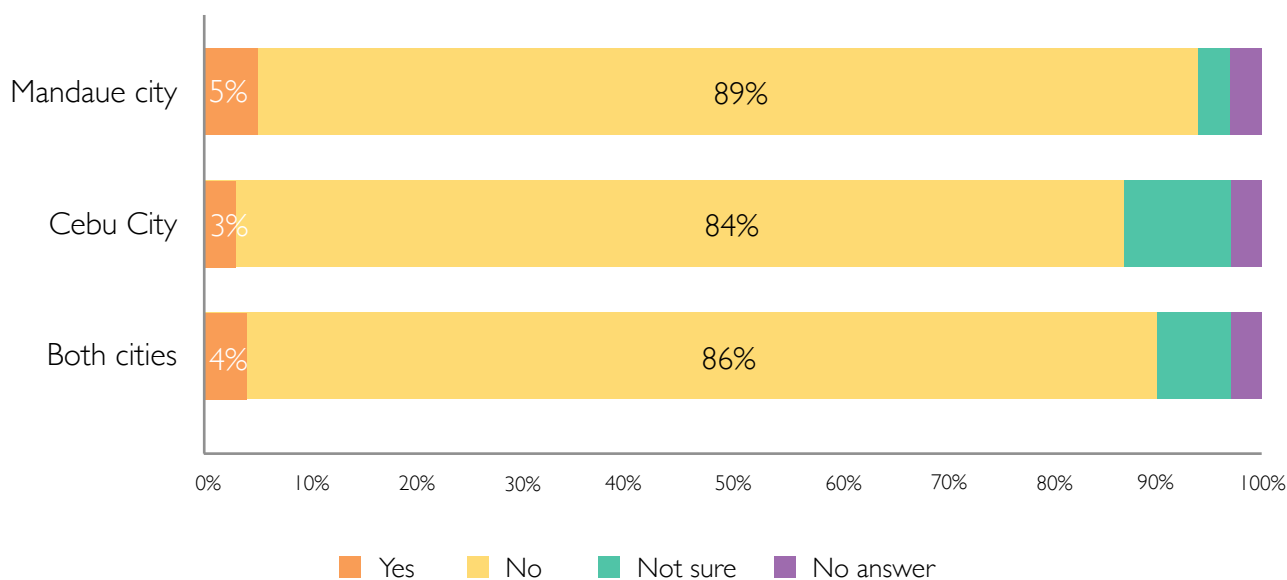


Figure 12. Children's Awareness of Programs Addressing Child Labor Trafficking

the BCPC in their areas, while 70% reported that they knew the presence of VAWC in their barangay. More than half of parents surveyed (55%) were also aware of child protection committees existing in their children's schools.

On the other hand, survey data shows that many children were not aware of the child protection mechanisms in their communities and schools. Only 26% of children knew that their barangay had a BCPC and 32% were aware that their barangay had a VAWC Desk. Nearly half (44%) of the children also reported that they knew about a Child Protection Committee in their schools.

#### 5.4 COMMUNITY ATTITUDES ON REPORTING OF CHILD LABOR TRAFFICKING CASES

The research team also asked both adult and child respondents if they have seen children recruited for forced labor in their communities. In the survey form, a list of child labor trafficking acts was enumerated and defined, and the respondents indicated if they observed such cases occurring. The respondents were cautioned, however, that these cases had yet to be verified and the reason for asking the question was to examine how communities would respond and report such cases to respective authorities.

Survey results show that both adults (18%) and children (11%) observed the use of children in illicit activities such as drug trafficking in their community. This was followed by observed incidents of trafficking of children for forced labor, including domestic work and forced begging.

FGDs became crucial avenues for parents to share anecdotal evidence of child labor trafficking that was happening in their community. Some parents from both cities, for example, reported seeing child beggars, who they claimed to be allegedly connected with syndicates, but these children were not from their villages. Some parents from Mandaue City reported that they knew children in their villages who were recruited to work in bars, while one was recruited to work in Manila, with the child ending up as a porter (“kargadora”). Another parent also shared a story about a child who was working but whose full salary was collected by his mother. These FGD participants who shared stories of forced labor remarked that these children were even their close family friends. For example, one parent from Barangay Labangon talked about her acquaintance who, eager to help her family, accepted her uncle's job offer without fully knowing what her exact job would be. Some parents in Barangay Tejero, meanwhile, reported that they observed some children being used as drug peddlers in their own communities.

Parents also shared anecdotal evidence of children allegedly forced to do live shows online for foreigners. They said these children received PhP 500 (USD 10) for dancing in front of the camera, while a “pimp” would receive the money from their foreign customers.

It is interesting (albeit also alarming) to note that during the FGD with children, some reported cases of children being used in drug trafficking and forced begging. The researcher noted uneasiness among children when they mentioned instances of drug trafficking as

some of them knew peers who may be directly involved. Thus, the researcher decided not to probe the matter further and instead diverted the discussion to another topic so as not to cause the children any more distress.

The survey also asked adults and children if they would report cases of child labor trafficking if it happened in their communities. Parents were specifically asked “What would you do if your children or other children in your community become victims of child labor trafficking?” The question was slightly changed for children, i.e., “What would you do if you find that a friend is a child labor trafficking victim?”

Majority (83%) of parents and adult respondents said that they would report to authorities, while 6% said they would rather not interfere, while 4% said they would be unaware of what to do.

For those who said that they would report child labor trafficking cases, their authorities of choice were the barangay chairman (60%), police (49%), and the DSWD (43%). Very few considered reporting to barangay-based structures such as the Violence Against

Women Desk Officers (9%). The FGD results show otherwise, as parents pointed out that child labor trafficking cases be reported to barangay leaders first, and then to the police and the DSWD.

Meanwhile, around half of the children (53%) surveyed said that if a friend became a victim of child labor trafficking, they would report the matter to authorities.

These children noted that the authorities they should approach are the PNP (60%), barangay captain (49%), and the DSWD (19%). Only 13% said that they would tell their parents. This finding is interesting to note given the

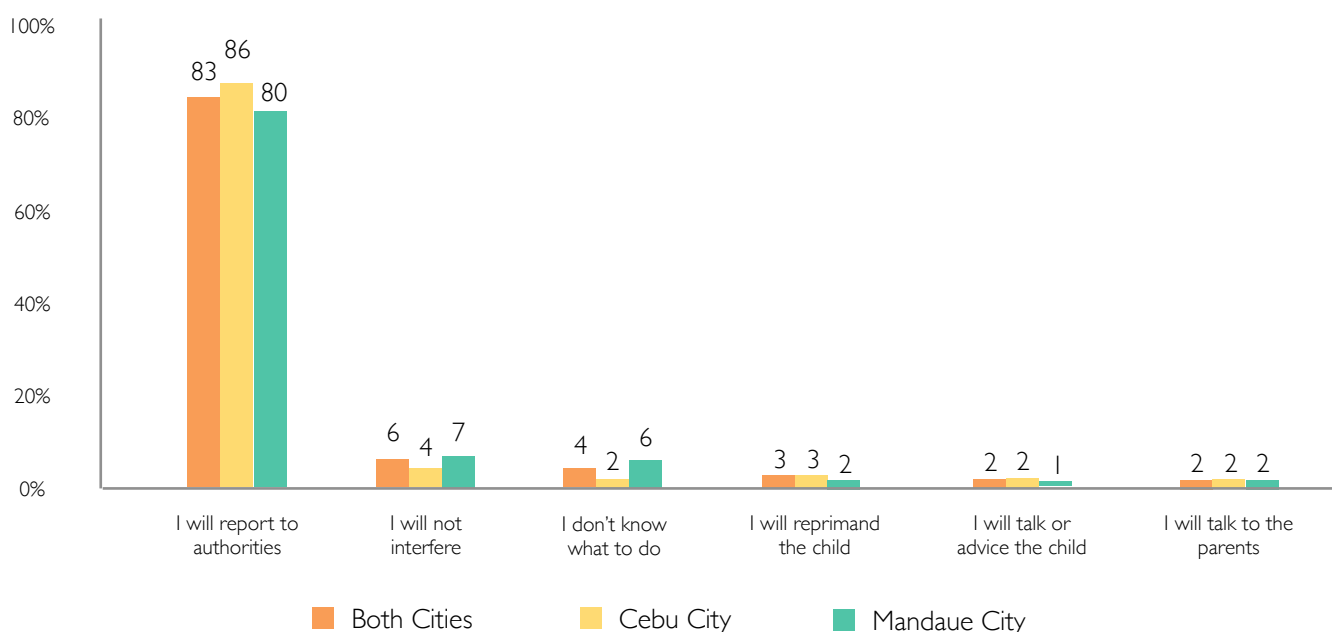


Figure 13. Adults’ Decisions to Report Child Labor Trafficking Cases

assumption that parents are the closest “authoritative figure”; it would thus be easy for children to seek their parents’ help in reporting the case. This finding can be interpreted in many ways: (i) The nature of the common child labor trafficking cases observed, i.e., drug trafficking warrants police interventions. (ii) Children are afraid to involve their parents given the potentially severe backlash when these types of crimes are reported. (iii) Children may find themselves playing an active role when reporting the crime.

Thus far, this research finds that communities had observed cases of child labor trafficking in their neighborhoods although these were mainly presented through anecdotal evidence (as discussed in section 5.3.1), and their intention to report these cases was high (as discussed in section 5.3.2). However, these findings also beg the following question: why

does intention not translate to actual reporting of child labor trafficking cases?

The parents’ FGDs find that there are multiple barriers to actual reporting. First was the belief that child labor trafficking was a family issue; thus, reporting a case meant getting involved and eventually creating a backlash against them, such as being accused of gossiping (“chismosa”). The Council for the Welfare of Children and UNICEF Philippines (2016) noted in their previous report that “the culture of silence” or the reluctance to speak out on issues of violence against children in communities is one of the pressing challenges to actual reporting, as Filipino parents treat it as a private problem that should be resolved within the family.

Another barrier to actual reporting was the lack of trust in respective barangay leaders. Given that barangay chairpersons play a very important role as authority figures who should receive child labor trafficking reports, community confidence toward their ability should thus be paramount. Finally, others said they were afraid that traffickers might harm their family if they found out that they reported the case.

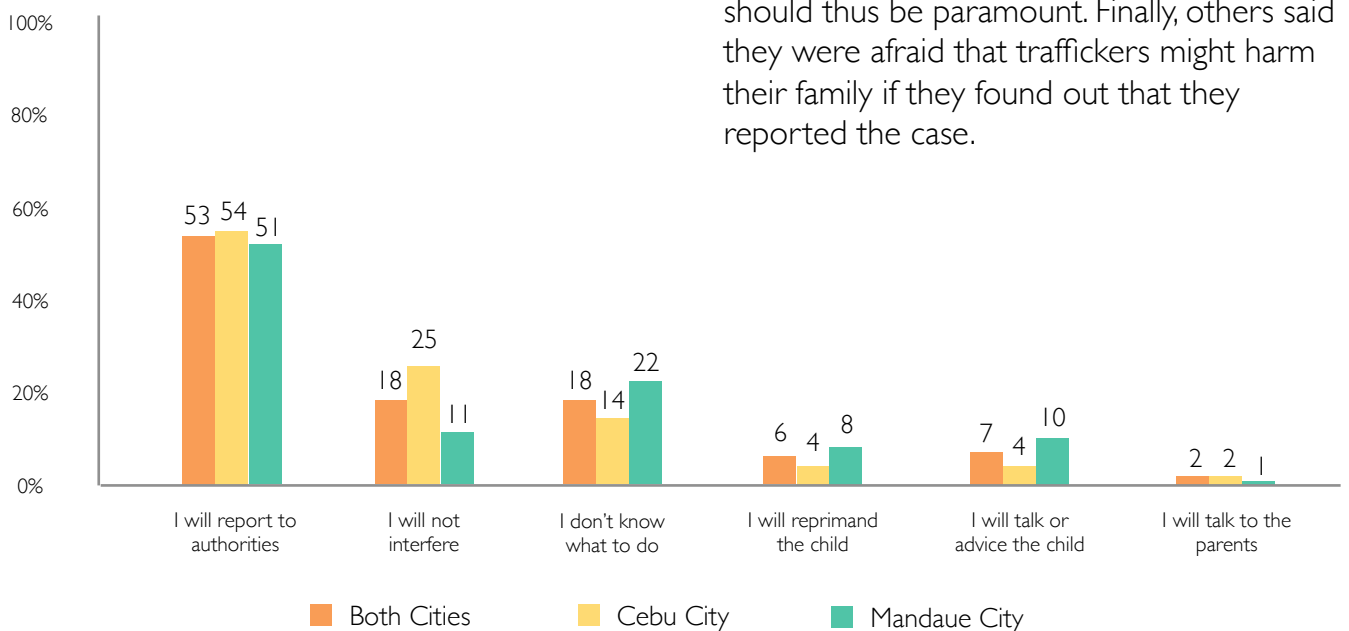


Figure 14. Children’s Decisions to Report Child Labor Trafficking Cases

## VI. DISCUSSION

This study's findings show that communities have limited awareness about child labor trafficking, including the efforts, laws, and policies aimed to address and prevent it.

Quantitative data from this study shows that more than half are not aware or not sure of the issue of child labor trafficking. Nonetheless, the qualitative data yielded insights on how communities understand child labor trafficking. As mentioned in the previous section, adults could identify different elements of child trafficking: the acts, such as the selling, recruitment, and/or transporting of children to another place; the means, such as the use of force or kidnapping; and the presence of exploitation and abuse. This finding shows that using the Acts–Means–Purpose framework to explain child labor trafficking is helpful in teasing out what child labor trafficking is and what it is not, therefore helping communities suspect any recruiters by investigating the presence of such elements and responding accordingly.

The findings on children's level of awareness on child labor trafficking are more troubling,

selling. If awareness campaigns on child labor trafficking need to start somewhere, this study's findings suggest that it should urgently begin with children, who should be listened to about their concerns and be made aware of the dangers of trafficking and the "false promises" of traffickers.

While not all respondents are familiar with child labor, data shows that communities are more knowledgeable of child labor than child labor trafficking. Their familiarity with child labor may be the result of the decades-long crusade of government and non-government organizations to end child labor in the Philippines through information campaigns and child protection programs. This familiarity with child labor issues can be used as an entry point to expand the knowledge of communities on child labor trafficking. These two issues have overlaps as discussed in Chapter II, but they also have crucial differences in terms of severity, determinants, and government response to perpetrators. The task then is to explain and clarify the overlaps and differences between child labor and child labor trafficking.

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Almost all of the children surveyed reported that they were not aware of child labor trafficking (nor child labor).

The qualitative data showed that those aware of child labor trafficking associated the issue with other forms of child abuse such as sexual exploitation, child pornography, and organ

Another finding that is crucial to point out is that communities, including key informants interviewed, confuse child labor trafficking with child sex trafficking.

This could probably show how anti-trafficking campaigns often focus their attention on survivors of sexual exploitation, thus taking child labor trafficking out of the purview of anti-trafficking interventions (Waltz, 2017). While sexual exploitation can happen simultaneously with labor exploitation (US Department of Labor, 2016), the difference between the two should be clarified especially at the community level. Such clarification is urgently needed to help communities identify children who are subjected to labor trafficking and other potential victims in their communities that might not conform to their stereotyped notions surrounding trafficking, such as boys subjected to forced labor and slavery. As mentioned in the previous section, the intention here is not to downplay the urgency and severity of child sexual trafficking, but to improve anti-trafficking efforts by helping them detect labor trafficking cases as much as sex trafficking.

To protect themselves from trafficking, communities must be aware of who to approach and what resources are available (CPC & UNICEF, 2016). However, data shows that almost all children and adults were not aware of the laws that protect them from trafficking and the child protection mechanisms available in their communities. Representatives from barangay LGU also urged the need for enhancement and refresher trainings on anti-trafficking laws and case management.

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This study also shows that communities recognize that they serve as “eyes and ears” for reporting suspected child labor trafficking cases.

Both children and adults identified the PNP, barangay captain, and the DSWD as key authorities to whom they should report cases. This evidence suggests the need for the PNP and DSWD to be more reachable to the public by disseminating their contact information so that communities can easily contact them to anonymously report suspected cases. The protection of those who reported cases is important to highlight as communities shared that they were afraid of potential risks from reporting child labor trafficking (Dela Serna et al, 2015) such as being accused of “gossiping” or meddling in a private family issue.

Overall, the analysis of data from communities presented here aims to provide insights on localizing prevention of child labor trafficking. However, the data should be interpreted in light of some limitations. Firstly, it is important to re-emphasize that the research chose to ask respondents about child labor first before delving into child labor trafficking.



Photo was taken during a workshop on child labor trafficking prevention with LGU representatives

This approach could have influenced parents' and children's understanding of child labor trafficking rather than allowing them to gain insight on the issue from the ground up. Secondly, the survey did not focus much on the recruitment aspect of child labor trafficking, which could have helped clarify if communities had a stereotyped notion of a "trafficker" and appreciated how they think recruiters attempted to gain their trust (ILO, 2007). Lastly, the research did not disaggregate the data based on gender which could have been important in unpacking how girls and boys thought they were affected by child labor trafficking.

The role of communities in safeguarding children from exploitation and abuse before it happens cannot be overemphasized.

Awareness campaigns should indeed empower and help children protect themselves, but these efforts can only do so much if there are no interventions that support children's ambitions to finish their education and eventually find stable jobs. This is important to underscore as data also shows that parents and children gave premium to education and employment to achieve a life beyond poverty. Awareness-raising campaigns should keep this reality in mind so that the goal goes beyond sensitizing communities about the rights of children, into realizing exactly how this awareness could help children achieve their dreams for themselves, their families, and communities.



Project poster: EMBRACE – Empowering and Brighter Response Against Children's Exploitation

## VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research examined the issue of child labor trafficking in the Philippines, casting a light on existing efforts to address and prevent child labor trafficking, and calibrating community awareness on the issue of children subjected to labor trafficking. By conducting interviews, FGDs, and key informant interviews in select barangays in two major cities in the province of Cebu (Mandaue City and Cebu City), the research attempts to answer the following questions: (i) What are the efforts of the government and key stakeholders to prevent and address child labor trafficking? (ii) Are communities aware of the issue of child labor trafficking and how do they understand it? (iii) Are communities aware of existing structures and mechanisms to prevent and report child labor trafficking?

This research finds that the Philippines' legal framework to protect children from trafficking and labor exploitation is robust and adequately abides by international instruments and standards. Since the enactment of RA 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 (as amended by RA 10364), the Philippine government has made strides in addressing human trafficking such as provision of stiffer penalties to traffickers and adequate support to survivors, most especially women and children. However, implementation at the local level remains a work in progress. Assessment reports of current government initiatives show gaps in identifying child labor trafficking survivors, database management of cases, collaboration among agencies and committees, capacities of frontliners, and preventive education at the local level.

This study notes that the LGUs of both Cebu City and Mandaue City are already implementing anti-trafficking ordinances, but only one of the six barangays studied has a local ATIP ordinance. Nonetheless, village officials point to other ordinances such as curfew and prohibition of students in internet shops during school hours as measures to counter trafficking. By and large, these efforts could address child protection issues in the community. However, stringent efforts are still needed to address the severity and complexity of child labor trafficking as a crime.

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Communities have limited knowledge of child labor trafficking and the laws and interventions in place to address it.

In particular, awareness-raising efforts should target children, especially the most vulnerable, as evidence suggests that almost all of them are not aware of child labor trafficking and the laws and mechanisms in place to protect them. Child labor trafficking is also commonly associated with child sex trafficking. While there are instances showing that both abuses simultaneously happen (US Department of Labor, 2016), awareness-raising activities should clarify the difference between the two to enhance case detection at the community level.

Anecdotal accounts from adults and children reveal some forms of child labor trafficking in research areas, but local reporting is still low. This study uncovered barriers to actual reporting such as the prevailing view that child abuse is a family matter that should be resolved privately. Nonetheless, parents and children identified that cases of child labor trafficking should be reported to the PNP, DSWD, and the barangay captain, underscoring the important role these actors play in managing cases of child labor trafficking.

The lack of data and empirical evidence remains a significant challenge in making an informed and nuanced understanding of the child labor trafficking problem. Hence, as much as this research provides insights on communities' perspective on the issue, more questions remain, particularly on the experience of children who are subjected to labor trafficking.

Taking into consideration the insights from communities, this research then urges policy makers, non-government organizations, and the public to pay urgent attention to child labor trafficking. Below are recommendations to key actors addressing child labor trafficking:

### Recommendations for IACAT and member agencies:

- Assess current data collection, reporting, and monitoring system for child trafficking and identify its gaps such as in detecting cases of child labor trafficking. Quality data is key to effective planning and implementation of interventions to prevent and address child labor trafficking; achieving this will also require strengthened collaboration and partnership among agencies.
- Build more empirical evidence on child labor trafficking cases by engaging universities across the country to conduct studies. Such studies could identify hotspots in the country by forming vulnerability indicators, as well as showcase best practices on prevention and interventions especially at the community level.
- Develop and institute a comprehensive preventive education program for child trafficking at the national level that not only targets the youth but all those who interact with children such as teachers who could recognize early signs of troubled homes.
- Lobby for the strengthening of trafficking indicators in the child-friendly local governance audit.



Photo was taken during the Child Protection Compact awareness raising with children and youth representatives

### Recommendations for local government units:

- Organize and/or strengthen local child protection structures in developing programs to prevent and address child trafficking. Anchoring efforts to existing child protection structures would ensure that anti-child labor trafficking initiatives are holistic.
- Include child trafficking as a priority issue in local development plans. Pass local ordinances on child trafficking and allocate funds specifically for programs, projects, and activities on child trafficking preventive education and frontline capacity building.
- Target out-of-school children and youth and those vulnerable to child labor trafficking in the programs of Technical Education and Skills Development Authority to provide them with the skills that could help them find financially viable jobs.
- Provide livelihood grants to support the economic empowerment of households, particularly of mothers and women caregivers, to increase their financial capacities to address household shocks which force them to engage in child labor trafficking.

### Recommendations for local government units:

- Engage various sectors (churches, transport groups, cooperatives, women's groups, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, children, and youth groups) in anti-child trafficking initiatives to increase reach, especially if challenged with parents' participation in these orientations. Alternatively, include child trafficking orientation in existing training and seminars (e.g. Family Development Session of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, Empowerment and Reaffirmation of Paternal Abilities, Mothers Class) or as a requirement for accessing local government unit (LGU) programs and services. Mobilize the Sangguniang Kabataan in leading initiatives that engage children and youth.



Photo was taken during a workshop on child labor trafficking prevention with LGU representatives

### Recommendations for CPC Partnership implementing agencies:

- Develop a social behavior change communication program that addresses misconceptions, attitudes, negative cultural norms, and practices that enable and perpetuate child trafficking.
- Emphasize and promote the “Standards in Building Communities that Protect Children from Trafficking” among partner LGUs to serve as a guide in developing plans and programs to combat child trafficking.
- Strengthen capacities of local government frontliners and local child protection structures in developing sound policies and programs. Implementing agencies can also support LGUs in providing technical skills to out-of-school children and youth and economic opportunities to vulnerable families.
- Tap existing children and youth groups in the community to support preventive education campaigns on child trafficking. Train peer educators and counsellors who can help in identifying child survivors of trafficking among their peers.
- Engage the Department of Education and schools in the campaign against child trafficking. Develop lessons or modules on child trafficking that teachers can integrate into their subjects, particularly in Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao.



*Photo was taken during the flag ceremony in one of the CPC partner schools*

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