

# Children and hazardous work

Victoria Rialp

# in the Philippines

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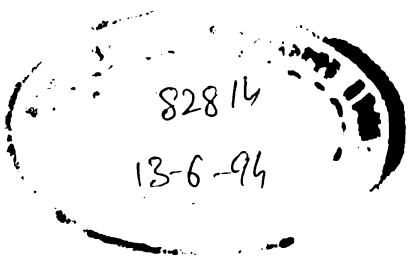
# **Children and hazardous work in the Philippines**

Victoria Rialp

International Labour Office Geneva

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# Preface

The International Labour Office has long been concerned about the problem of child labour and backed early attempts by governments throughout the world to eliminate it through legislation. But despite these efforts, the phenomenon remains — flourishes even — in most parts of the world. As the complexity of the causes and effects of child labour have become better known, so the Organization has encouraged the development of far broader forms of intervention which go well beyond the legislative.

The present study by Victoria Rialp, currently with UNICEF, was commissioned by the ILO with a view to improving our understanding of the various measures which are being tried and could be tried to deal with child labour, especially in hazardous occupations and industries. Rialp documents the historical change in emphasis in the Philippines from intervention through legislation to direct action at the local level, by examining efforts to eliminate child involvement in prostitution and Muro-ami deep-sea fishing. The choice of these two occupations was guided by the fact that they have been the recent targets of intensive campaigns both nationally and internationally. An assessment is made of the crucial role of advocacy, public awareness-raising and community mobilization in the fight against child labour. But the choice was also influenced by the fact that both occupations present major risks to children. Over the years many of the children recruited into the fishing

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fleets have fallen ill or been injured and some have been killed. Child prostitutes have been subjected to degrading, illegal and sometimes violent treatment which has left them both physically and psychologically damaged. There are no simple solutions to the problem, and policy-makers and child welfare experts the world over need to learn a great deal more about how prohibition of child labour in dangerous occupations can be brought into effect. The Philippine case shows how creative and versatile means can be employed to attract children away from such activities.

The Philippine case also demonstrates the multiplicity of forces working on the supply and demand for children's labour. Sometimes the lack of viable sources of income for adults drives parents to condone their children's involvement in activities that present considerable personal risk. In many instances, parents in the Philippines were found to have encouraged their children to become involved in prostitution and deep-sea fishing. Sometimes children are recruited into occupations that adults themselves would not enter, on the grounds that they are too poorly paid, insecure or dangerous. Finally, children are sometimes drawn into such activities because they are in exclusive possession of certain qualities that are much sought after by adults. For example, children can be far more effective workers than adults because they are faster and more agile. And their involvement in prostitution is due to the demand among certain adults for access to the particular qualities of childhood sexuality.

In situations such as these, prohibition or strict law enforcement alone is hardly a solution, since it is likely to result in the severely increased impoverishment of the family or a growth in clandestine activity. For example, campaigners in the Philippines have always been well aware that bringing an end to child prostitution could also depress the tourist trade, thereby reducing crucial income in poor communities. Also, driving tourists suspected of exploiting children sexually out of one town does not stop them from operating elsewhere. The campaigns have had to confront the fact of family dependence on child income and the overall shortage of alternative employment opportunities for adults. In the Muro-ami fishing communities particularly, income-generation programmes have been developed in a bid to reduce this dependence.

## *Preface*

The advocacy campaigns described in this study were by intent extremely specific and had very well-defined objectives. Extensive research was undertaken into the living and working conditions of children engaged in Muro-ami fishing and prostitution, and a great effort made to learn about the economic and social circumstances of the communities where these activities were concentrated. This enabled campaigners to understand the problems and needs of both the child labourers and their families. This research was a vital tool of advocacy, guiding policy and providing information for dissemination through the media. The aim was to assist groups of children felt to be most at risk, rather than try to reduce or eliminate child labour overall in the Philippines. This policy of targeting especially vulnerable groups was shown to be highly effective and is one that could perhaps be adopted in other countries. An analysis of the child labour market nationally would reveal the most hazardous and exploitative occupations and these could become the focus of more detailed assessment and, eventually, of practical intervention.

Another element in the struggle against child labour in hazardous occupations which emerges as being very important in this study is collaboration between different agencies and interest groups. Government action alone is not enough, given the sheer scale and complexity of the problem. Moreover, governments are not always aware of or willing to tackle problems at the community level. The Philippine campaigns highlight the critical role that can be played by the media, non-governmental agencies and religious and community groups in the push for social change. Multi-agency task forces were formed to manage the campaigns; research on child labour and media exposure of the issues were used to inform and persuade both the Government and the general public; and community groups were engaged in direct action locally.

It is also becoming increasingly clear that there is need for collaboration, not just among national groups, but also beyond national boundaries. Many of the activities most dangerous to children have an international dimension. For example, while the children themselves may come from one country, demand for their services often originates in



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another. In these cases, something has to be done to bring an end not only to the supply of children but also to the demand. Sometimes children are even trafficked across frontiers in order to satisfy a particular market. Child prostitution in the Philippines and a number of other countries has an international dimension, in that it is closely linked with foreign tourism. While its incidence can be reduced by boosting the economies of affected communities and educating the public, this study shows how important it is that information on offenders be made available to local immigration authorities and other officials by the countries from which they originate. Of course, the problem would be even more effectively controlled if, rather than having to deport offenders from the Philippines, they were dealt with directly under the laws and provisions in their own countries.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Jo Boyden of Children in Development, Oxford, for helping us in the editing of this manuscript.

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# 1. Child labour in the Philippines

## Statistics on working children

A high percentage of children in the Philippines work, although estimates of the total vary between 3 and 8 million, depending on the definitions used. Enrolment statistics from the Department of Education, for example, for the school year 1984 to 1985 suggest that during this period roughly 2.7 million children and adolescents aged 7 to 16 years were not attending school and were therefore most likely working. Of course, this is probably a serious underestimate, since the large number of children who combined work with study should be added to this figure.

Another, more accurate, calculation places the number of working children between the ages of 5 and 14 years at 5 million, or 19 per cent of the total labour force. This figure is based on the assumption that "... the potential child labour force consists of some 13.1 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 . . . Children between the ages of 0 to 4 years do not work, a percentage of children who are in primary school probably work part time as well, and the remaining children who are not in school probably work and are most likely to be in the 5-14 age bracket" (Dionela, 1986, p. 18). Of the 5 million working children in the Philippines between 5 and 14 years of age, about 3.9 million (or 77 per cent) live in rural and 1.1 million (23 per cent) in urban areas.

## Rural child labour

**A**lthough data on rural child labour are scarce, research indicates that roughly 70 per cent of rural children are unpaid family workers who help out either on the farm, preparing the soil, planting, weeding, fertilizing, harvesting, or tending animals, or in a family enterprise, minding a store, running errands or producing handicrafts. A further 18 per cent are waged labourers such as domestic or farm workers or industrial “helpers”. Three per cent are self-employed and are engaged in the sale of agricultural produce or other goods, or in the provision of services. Employment of children usually occurs during peak periods of the crop season, such as planting or harvesting, when even school pupils absent themselves from classes to attend to farm work.

Because rural children generally form part of the family labour force and share the produce with adult household members, the exploitative character of their work derives largely from the semi-feudal conditions in which rural populations are embroiled. Thus, like their families, children who work in rural areas are usually seriously underpaid, unprotected, and powerless in a system dominated by powerful landowners controlling large properties. Many such children suffer from malnutrition, anaemia, respiratory ailments and parasitic diseases and as a result of poor nutrition and heavy manual work at an early age, grow up physically stunted. Muro-ami fishing is among the more dangerous and exploitative activities involving rural children.

## Urban child labour

**O**f the conservative estimate of 1.1 million working children below 15 years of age in urban areas in the Philippines, about 900,000 are engaged in manufacturing or industry, mostly in small-scale garment and woodworking enterprises, or in services such as domestic labour or sales. They generally work long hours in poor, unhealthy and crowded conditions and receive less than a third of the legislated minimum wage. Piece-work, apprenticeship and subcontracting arrangements keep

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wages down and are used to control the children, who have little access to schooling and enjoy little, if any, protective or welfare benefits.

The most visible of all groups of child workers in the urban context are those engaged in vending and the provision of services on the streets. It is estimated that there are over 100,000 of these children nationwide, with some 75,000 in Metro Manila alone, and that they constitute about 3 per cent of the child and youth population of major urban centres. Generally belonging to large, low-income families in which parents are unemployed or irregularly employed, the children contribute, on average, as much as 30 per cent of household earnings. They are to be found at busy crossroads and in markets and bus stations, selling cigarettes, sweets, newspapers, or flowers, shining shoes, guarding parked cars, or scavenging for recyclable refuse. Some also engage in petty theft and, increasingly, in prostitution and drug trafficking.

Spending on average between eight and 12 hours a day on the streets, these children are constantly exposed to the rain, heat and dust, and to traffic accidents, street violence and police harassment. In compensation for their labour and for taking such risks they earn a meagre average of 11 to 20 pesos (US 50 cents to one dollar) a day. Quite apart from the physical hazards they encounter, street children suffer increasing separation from their families and from the normal networks of social support and are prone to psychological problems resulting in distorted values, low self-esteem, and emotional stress. Moreover, since they spend most of their time out of school, working on the streets in unskilled jobs, their employment options for the future are poor.

## Trends

The 1980s have seen an increase in child labour in the Philippines and the indications are that this trend will continue in the immediate future. As in most developing countries, the phenomenon is rooted primarily in poverty.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the dramatic increase in child labour in the 1980s — when the country reeled under the most severe economic crisis in its post-war history — was no surprise. The poor were the hardest

hit. Industrial activity contracted and unemployment levels rose, and while real incomes plunged, prices of basic commodities spiralled upwards. The overall result was a marked increase in poverty, especially in Metro Manila. Services such as health care, social welfare assistance, education and food aid, which normally cushion the impact of economic crisis, were cut back drastically, leaving the poor with even fewer resources on which to survive.

The initiatives of the new Government, which assumed power in 1986, hold some promise for modifying the economic, social and political structures that gave rise to the exploitative conditions under which many Filipino children work. The alleviation of poverty, employment generation and social justice are important goals of the Government's development plans. Initiatives such as agrarian reform, industrial diversification, increased expenditure on education and social services, however, are generally hampered by limited resources and poor implementation.

Meanwhile, for the next decade at least, the majority of Filipino families will continue to live below the poverty line and will thus continue to put their children to work. Even the most optimistic forecasts project that it will take five years of recovery before the country will return to the economic conditions that prevailed in the late 1970s before the crisis.

NOTE

<sup>1</sup> In discussing the factors affecting child labour, the study made by the Institute of Industrial Relations of the University of the Philippines (1986, pp. 85-86) sums up the issue thus:

... [Child labour] is often a response by the household to the need to satisfy basic requirements. Children with unemployed parents or children whose parents do not have social security must work to help in the family's struggle for survival.

The involvement of children in work is a family decision which can be explained only in terms of the relationships between the household and the labour market. However, there are a number of other possible determinants in children's economic participation: the opportunities locally for attending school and the perceived returns from education relative to work are important factors, as are the levels of technology in industry and the cost of labour . . .

This study, as well as other more recent studies on street children and working children reinforce previous findings that poverty is the most pervasive factor in child employment. Child workers are usually to be found in households with a monthly income below P1,000, much lower than the present poverty line estimated at P2,000-P2,500 a month for a family of six in an urban centre, barely sufficient to meet basic food requirements. In such a situation, the need for family members to earn additional income is urgent, with the pressure especially marked in large families (seven or more members).

## 2. Situation analysis: Recognizing the problem

### The case against prostitution and Muro-ami fishing

Prostitution and Muro-ami fishing exemplify the extremely dangerous and exploitative occupations in which many children in the country are engaged today. Not only are these activities objectively harmful, but they are considered socially and morally unacceptable. The call to abolish child labour is more strident in respect of these occupations than it would be perhaps with others, principally because of the public's perception of the extremely hazardous working conditions they entail.

However, both prostitution and Muro-ami fishing are relatively more lucrative — promising higher, easier and faster financial returns — than other economic activities involving children. Both the families and the children themselves see the financial gain as compensating for the risks involved. Moreover, child labour in Muro-ami fishing, which is concentrated in southern Cebu, and in prostitution, which is common in towns such as Pagsanjan in Laguna, is seen as integral to the local economies; children are perceived as valuable economic assets crucial not only to their families but also to the local community as a whole.

Public outcry against involving children in prostitution and Muro-ami fishing has been instigated, or at least encouraged, by concerns not



always related to child protection *per se*. Quite apart from welfare considerations, there is a desire to: protect the country's image abroad (particularly against embarrassing reports by the foreign media); safeguard public morals (the traditional justification for the war against prostitution); protect the country's environment and natural resources (in the Muro-ami case); and end the exploitation of the adult Filipinos in the labour market.

Thus, the factors underlying the moves to abolish child labour in these two activities and the circumstances impelling its retention are very strong opposing forces. It is for this reason that discussion of the experience in recent years in the area of advocacy — among the public and especially among the children and families directly involved — provides interesting insights and indicates important lessons that may assist similar campaigns in other parts of the world.

## Child labour in Muro-ami fishing

### The industry

That children are involved in Muro-ami fishing became a matter of public concern only recently, in 1986. Studies of the working and living conditions of these children were prompted by the public outcry following the showing of the film *Slave ships in the Sulu Sea* on American and Australian television and the publication of several articles on the subject in various Philippine daily newspapers.

The most important study was undertaken at the suggestion of the International Labour Office by the Department of Labour and Employment's Bureau of Women and Young Workers. Visits were made to the home villages of the fishing crews in the island province of Cebu and on board the Muro-ami fishing vessels operating off the island of Palawan in the western Philippines. Secondary sources on child labour were drawn on and interviews held with officials of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Labour and Employment.<sup>1</sup>

### *Situation analysis*

Muro-ami (a Japanese term referring to the kind of net used) fishing was introduced into the Philippines by the Japanese in the 1930s. Hundreds of swimmers and divers and a moveable bag net with two detachable wings are used in this method to catch elusive reef fish that are especially difficult to harvest by other means. Data for the period 1960 to 1975 show that, compared to other commercial fishing methods, Muro-ami consistently yielded the largest catch, competing with trawl fishing for efficiency. The same data, however, indicate that the annual catch is declining because of damage to coral reefs, silting due to the denuding of forests, pollution and overfishing. Yet, despite this trend, the operation's present annual profit is conservatively estimated at over 20 million pesos (US\$1 million).

Commercial Muro-ami fishing is monopolized by a partnership between the Frabal Fishing Corporation and the Abines Muro-ami Fishing Corporation. Of total sales, 70 per cent accrue to the Frabal group, 10 per cent to the Abines family and 20 per cent to the crews. The product is exported and the industry accounts for 2 per cent of the total annual fish output nationally.

The corporation employs between 7,500 and 8,000 workers, three-fourths of whom come from two small villages — Oslob and Santander — in the southern part of Cebu province in central Philippines. In this area 65 per cent of the population derives its livelihood from Muro-ami fishing, which is practised off the western coasts of Palawan island in the South China Sea in western Philippines. The fishermen spend ten months a year on board a vessel manned by around 300 to 500 people, the majority of whom are children and youths.

. . . The divers, . . . undertake the most hazardous tasks performed in the whole operation, diving to a depth of 100 feet to attach the nets to coral reefs. The lowest rank in the Muro-ami hierarchy is occupied by the swimmers, whose main function is to drive the fish towards the net by using a scareline . . . Although most functions are open to all ages, children and youngsters between the ages of 12 to 14 form the bulk of the swimmers and divers. The more experienced and better qualified among them — those between 17 and 24 years old — become divers. Needless to say, the swimmers and divers are the most vulnerable groups in the whole operation in terms of income and the physical risks they incur (Van Oosterhout, 1988, p. 113).

## Hazards to children

The diving and swimming operations in themselves pose serious dangers to the young fishermen. The diving equipment consists only of wooden goggles, long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Four to five divers drown each season. Injuries such as ruptured eardrums are common. Moreover, the nets and scarelines attract needlefish and sharks, which, according to the fishermen, often attack.

Congested and unsanitary conditions and poor food on board the fishing vessels lead to frequent illness among fishermen. Coughs, headaches, fever and gastro-enteritis are common complaints. Fishermen are compelled to toil 12 to 15 hours a day, swimming or diving, to complete between 6 and 10 cycles of work, which consist of setting the nets, driving the fish and retrieving the catch. They must work even when they are not feeling well, since any cycle that a fisherman misses is automatically deducted from his pay.

The fishermen and the operators share the profits — calculated unilaterally by the latter — at the end of the season. Before the 30 per cent share due to the Abines family and crew is paid, deductions are made for the cost of food, cooks' salaries, transportation, medicine, the rental of small boats, the purchase and maintenance of fishing equipment and other expenses. The fishermen are then paid from the balance according to their rank and individual performance. Estimates suggest that the swimmers (usually beginners) receive a lump sum of between 2,000 and 6,000 pesos, while divers earn around 8,000 and middle managers 20,000 pesos. Loans and advances paid to the fishermen and their families are deducted from individual entitlements after payment rates have been set.

## Recruitment of children

The discontent caused by the manner and amount of share payments, coupled with the difficult and dangerous working conditions, has over the years made the recruitment of adults increasingly problematic for the operators. Thus, despite the law setting the minimum age for

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employment in deep-sea fishing at 18 years, they have resorted to recruiting children and young teenagers.

Many children join the Muro-ami operation voluntarily, believing that it will enable them to contribute to family income and acquire necessary occupational skills. Many more, though, are forced to leave school and enter the occupation because of financial problems in the family. Around half of school-age boys in Oslob join Muro-ami after completing only the 4th or 5th grade, although some return to school at a later date. In spite of the harsh and exploitative conditions, the children do not generally perceive the work in a negative light, but rather as part of the process of growing up. Turnover among child and teenage workers is low and most remain in the industry an average of four years before either returning to school or seeking employment in Manila or Cebu.

### Community dependency on Muro-ami

Research indicates that a very complex relationship of dependency has developed between the fishing communities of Oslob and Santander and the Abines family. The latter wields considerable political and economic power in these villages, employing local people with a total of 20,000 dependants. In addition to their fishing enterprise, the family also owns the bus and ferry lines, farms 200 hectares of coconut land, and runs general stores, clinics, banks and the rice and corn outlets assigned by the Government's National Food Authority locally.

Because the fishermen receive their share payment only after completing a ten-month contract, their families are compelled to take credit in kind in local shops, under a system called *vale*. In addition to a cash advance of 300 pesos made upon recruitment, families are entitled to a monthly *vale* of one bag each of rice and corn and a sack of pigfeed, obtained in the Abines shops. These amounts are then deducted from the fishermen's end-of-season share. Sometimes the *vales* exceed total income and the fishermen are forced to sign up for the next trip in order to repay their debts. The fishermen may also obtain loans from the Abines family to cover exceptional expenditures such as medical fees. These may be repaid either in cash or, more often, with political loyalty.

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The Abines are therefore highly respected locally as both employers and patrons, providing credit and social security when people are in need. The poor conditions of work and low pay are not generally attributed by the local populace to the family, but to the agents who make the contractual arrangements directly with the fishermen.

## Child prostitution

### Major characteristics of child prostitution

It is estimated that at least 20,000 minors are engaged in prostitution in the Philippines. While the majority are in the 14 to 16 age group, younger children are also involved. Most child prostitution is concentrated in squares, parks, commercial and tourist centres, bars, night-clubs, theatres and motels in the major urban centres such as Metro Manila, Cebu City and Bacolod City. Outside the major cities, child prostitutes are found mainly in tourist centres such as beach resorts and close to the two large United States' military installations, Clark Air Base in Angeles City and Subic Naval Base in Olóngapo City.<sup>2</sup>

Most of these children come from Leyte, Samar, Masbate and Bicol provinces, which are among the poorest in the country. Some, especially those from rural villages, are deceived into entering the trade by procurers who promise them legitimate jobs in the city as domestic workers or sales clerks. They end up as captive labour in brothels or hotels. Others are street workers from urban slums, who start out by selling cigarettes and other goods or shining shoes, and are eventually enticed into prostitution by leaders of sex rings or by other children engaged in the activity. They become involved largely because prostitution pays well. In tourist centres and close to military installations adult and child prostitution is an important factor in the local economy. In these areas, parents may encourage, or even pimp for, their children so as to boost family income.

Many of the pimps are the same age as the prostitutes and many are themselves in the trade. Some child prostitutes are self-employed

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though. In urban centres children are generally part of small sex rings operating on the streets and in public parks. Given the illegal nature of their activity, most children depend on the “protection” they receive from their pimp or manager and from the police and others. Some, though, enjoy little or no protection and may be forced out of the group in the event of an arrest.

Each prostitute averages one to two clients per day, although this may increase to as many as four during peak tourist seasons. The majority of clients are Filipinos, followed by Americans, Japanese, Europeans, and Australians; most are between 20 and 40 years old, a smaller proportion being between 40 and 60 and most are businessmen, office workers or military personnel; few are students. The children generally paint a positive picture of their customers as a good source of income. However, while some say their clients are kind and generous and maintain steady relationships with them, others complain of over-demanding or sadistic treatment and the majority claim to have had both bad and good experiences.

### Working hours and income

Most children engage in prostitution in addition to their usual street vending activity. Thus, they may sell sweets or flowers by day and their sexual favours during the evenings or early mornings. They report working eight or more hours a day, seven days a week, with less than four hours a day for sleep in many cases. Half of them also attend school.

Earnings vary widely, depending on the place they work from, the time allotted to the client, the client’s nationality and the type of sexual service rendered. For services lasting a few hours, children may earn anywhere between 20 and 300 pesos per client — with a median around 90. By spending half a day or a whole night with a client, they can earn as much as 400 pesos, with a median of around 150. While some children negotiate their own fees, others are paid on terms agreed by the pimp and the customer. There is no discernible pattern of sharing of earnings between the children and their pimps or managers, although

some children hand over as much as half of their income. In addition to cash, children involved in prostitution receive payment in the form of food, drinks, clothing and other gifts. Children who chance upon tourists on a spending spree may be treated with a visit to the cinema, holidays at the beach, expensive toys, or even household appliances.

### The “pompoms” of Pagsanjan

A particularly striking example of child prostitution occurs in the town of Pagsanjan, in Laguna. Historically famous as a resort because of its breathtaking waterfalls and spectacular rapids set amid lush mountain forests, Pagsanjan became known also as the world’s latest “paedophile capital” in the early 1980s. According to the estimates of some local citizens, there were in 1983 as many as 3,000 children involved in prostitution in the town. The children involved in this activity — known locally as “pompoms” — are mostly young boys between 9 and 14 years old and they cater mainly to male homosexual tourists. Not all of the pompoms are from Pagsanjan; many come from neighbouring towns or other tourist areas such as Manila, Puerto Galera in Mindora or the Bicol region.

The Government’s tourist development campaign in the late 1970s and early 1980s resulted in an influx of foreign visitors to the Philippines and the proliferation of what have become known as “sex tours”. Pagsanjan, already a popular tourist area, was placed under the administration of the Philippine Tourism Authority, which constructed new hotels, improved the road to Manila and regulated all facilities and activities connected with tourism in the area. At the height of the tourist drive, the visitors — 90 per cent of whom were foreigners — numbered an average of 700 daily, reaching over 1,000 daily at weekends and during the holiday season. But a slump developed in the early 1980s, with arrivals decreasing to barely 1,000 per week by 1986.

With the decline in tourism, the townspeople were forced to seek alternative sources of income. They had lived traditionally by tending farmland for absentee landlords, undertaking contractual piece-rate work on coconut farms, or in small copra-drying or shelling plants and

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ferrying tourists upstream to the waterfalls and downstream through the rapids. Some local people say that the economic difficulties of the early 1980s left the community very vulnerable to the free-spending habits of visiting paedophiles.

Others argue that the town was already predisposed to child prostitution prior to this period. They cite the activities of a prominent and wealthy Filipino publisher, since deceased, who spent his vacations in Pagsanjan with a circle of young male companions who “befriended” local boys. They also point to the fact that both during and after the Second World War, the United States Army maintained a depot in nearby Santa Cruz town and made Pagsanjan their rest and recreation centre. Others see the choice of Pagsanjan as the locale for the filming of *Apocalypse now* as perhaps the major causal factor, in that it established the town as a centre for the international paedophile community. The filming took five years, during which time, it is rumoured, the film crew and their hangers-on vented their sexual needs on the town’s young boys.

Pagsanjan came to be known as one of the places where child prostitutes were most readily available and was advertised in tourist magazines and travel guides, such as *Spartakus* in Holland and *Desert patrol* in France, produced by international networks of gay and paedophile organizations. These publications extolled the “brown-skinned beauties” of Pagsanjan. The town became heavily dependent on the trade; the townsfolk on the income from foreign tourists and the parents on the earnings of their prostitute children. In many cases, it is the parents who urge their children to befriend paedophile tourists.

A pastor who has led the crusade against prostitution in Pagsanjan since 1984 classified the paedophile tourists in three groups:

... The top category is the wealthy paedophile who procures a constant supply by buying entire families. He does this by providing the families with a new house, appliances, furniture and often a source of income like a jeepney or a small business. What he actually offers is “instant prosperity” and a new lifestyle in exchange for the use of the boys.

The second category of paedophile is less affluent, but provides his pompom with expensive gifts like bicycles, motorbikes, cassette decks, and household appliances. He is unable to make more substantial payments, so his relationship with the family is “less secure”.



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The third class of paedophile has no wish for a long-term arrangement but “pays as he plays”, ranging from a casual encounter for an average of P20 to a whole night for P200. He procures his boys through the services of the pimps who hang out in the 6 boy hotels of the town which cater to foreign tourists (Logarta, 1986, pp. 42-43).

## Hazards to children

Children engaged in prostitution are vulnerable to physical pain and injury, especially when they are maltreated by sadistic customers. They are also exposed constantly to contagious diseases, particularly those that are sexually transmitted. Few of these children have access to, or seek, medical attention; even when symptoms of diseases such as gonorrhoea manifest themselves, they tend to opt for self-medication. They are also likely to smoke, drink and take drugs and to suffer low self-esteem and other psychological problems such as a distorted sense of values and a materialistic world view in which it is believed all people can be “bought”. Many are also extremely promiscuous.

Yet, despite the physical and psychological risks, most children involved in prostitution do not see themselves leaving the trade for another occupation because the earnings are high. In Pagsanjan, the pompoms justify their activities on the grounds that many other children are also involved and that their families benefit. Some children claim that they gain a sense of security and affection through prostitution that they would otherwise not receive. However, many also express a desire to finish their schooling and to become professionals of good standing or to set up their own businesses.

## Earlier responses

### Legislation

Early policy on child labour in the Philippines focused on legislation. The Labour Code provision on the employment of young workers sets the minimum age for employment at 15 years. Children under 15 may

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work only if under the sole responsibility of their parents or guardians. Those between the ages of 15 and 18 can be employed for a given number of hours, during set periods of the day — as determined by the Secretary of Labour — provided that their employment does not interfere with their schooling. But the Code prohibits the employment of anyone below 18 years of age in work deemed hazardous and under the law Muro-ami fishing falls into this category.

Prostitution, on the other hand, is not covered by the Labour Code. Even though the children themselves perceive prostitution as a legitimate form of work, it is not generally defined as such by the State. Instead, child sexual exploitation is covered by the Revised Penal Code.<sup>3</sup>

The first comprehensive legislation on child and youth welfare and the first provision for a bill of rights for children and youth was promulgated in 1974, as Presidential Decree No. 603. The Child and Youth Welfare Code specified the rights and responsibilities of children below 21 years and of their parents, and outlined provisions for children with respect to the home, the Church, school, the community and the State. It afforded state protection for special categories of children below 21 years of age such as the dependent, neglected and abandoned, the physically and mentally disabled and offenders. A Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) was created to serve as the national coordinating body for planning, implementing and evaluating child and youth programmes run by both governmental and non-governmental agencies.

With respect to working children, articles 107 to 115 of the Child and Youth Welfare Code added terms and conditions not covered by the Labour Code. These require employers to submit reports on, and maintain a register of, child employees. They also provide for children's right to self-organization and collective bargaining and entitle them to a range of welfare services.

In the early 1980s, public outcry over the growing incidence of sexual exploitation of minors by foreign tourists resulted in the introduction of certain new measures by the Government. Among the more relevant were:

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- (a) A Bureau of Tourism Services (BTS) Circular No. 11 issued by the Ministry of Tourism in 1982. This directive prohibits minors from loitering in hotel premises or booking into a hotel unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. The manager of the hotel is liable for any violation.
- (b) The Metro Manila Commission (MMC) Ordinance No. 85-04, implemented in December 1985, provided penalties for child prostitution and/or sexual exploitation in Metro Manila. Under this Ordinance, any person who facilitates or induces the prostitution and/or sexual exploitation of minors through deceit, coercion or other means for his or her benefit will be punished accordingly.
- (c) A Parliamentary Bill (No. 4311) was introduced (although never passed) to provide stronger deterrents to child prostitution by imposing stiffer penalties for those responsible for the sexual abuse of minors.

On the whole, early public policy failed to admit to or take action on child involvement in Muro-ami fishing, and in the case of child prostitution, implicitly condoned it in the interest of promoting tourism. Indeed, under the martial law administration, the implicit government policy was to deny development problems in general — and in particular, to deny the social problems brought about by poverty, inequity and injustice.

In this repressive atmosphere, it was not politically expedient to speak of, much less seriously investigate or act on, issues dealing with exploitation — whether of the peasantry, the working class, or the poor in general, or of children in particular. Evidence of glaring problems such as the high rates of severe child malnutrition and prostitution were consistently met with strong protest and denials by the Government. Discussions and studies on poverty and exploitation were construed to be the work of left-wing radicals determined to undermine the regime. Anyone who exposed these issues was labelled subversive and subject to arrest and punishment by the authorities.

Because the public position at this time was that there were no serious social or economic problems in the Philippines, or that those

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that did exist were not grave, it followed that the Government saw little or no need to enforce the provisions to protect Filipino children from labour law violations or sexual exploitation. Inspection systems hardly existed. In instances where violations were clearly present, law enforcement agents tended to look the other way. It was also not uncommon for them to extort money from violators. Thus, so long as they could pay bribes, both the children engaged in prostitution and their pimps enjoyed the protection of local officials and the police. Known foreign paedophile tourists would also bribe immigration officials to ensure that they could move about in the country unhindered.

As for Muro-ami fishing, the matter was, in the words of a DOLE official, "untouchable". The Frabal-Abines group were too powerful and too well-connected to be challenged. Again, the Government's attitude was that the problems of environmental destruction and labour exploitation were both insignificant and unsubstantiated.

The returns in hard currency from both Muro-ami fishing and tourism overrode concerns about the possible harmful effects on, or exploitation of, the fishing families of Oslob and Santander, or the children of Pagsanjan.

### Early non-governmental initiatives

It was up to the non-governmental sector to call attention to and take up the cudgels for the country's disadvantaged children. In 1984, they took deliberate and concerted steps to protect street and sexually exploited children. The Council of Welfare Agencies Foundation of the Philippines (CWAFFPI), together with a network of 30 social development, civic and religious organizations, created the Committee on the Endangered Child. This body began to arrange meetings and promote the exchange of experiences, training and resources among 15 governmental and non-governmental agencies concerned with street and sexually exploited children.

In addition, some 60 organizations that had become incorporated into a nationwide network called STOP (Stop Trafficking of Filipinas Foundation) organized a committee on child prostitution in 1984.

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Through its Subcommittees on Social Services, Legislation and Multi-media Communications, STOP aimed to heighten awareness of the problem of sexual abuse of street children and the many other facets of child exploitation, provide legal protection for child victims and initiate or strengthen services and programmes for street children who had been sexually exploited. The network has always tried to collaborate closely with and influence key government agencies — such as the Departments of Justice, Foreign Affairs, Tourism, Education and Culture, the Commission on Immigration and Deportation, and the National Bureau of Investigation — in the campaign against child prostitution.

At the same time, very substantial initiatives were being taken by local people in Pagsanjan to stem the growing menace of foreign paedophiles exploiting children in their town. By mid-1984 they had organized a Council for the Protection of Children of Pagsanjan which was comprised of church groups, educators, professionals, concerned local residents and local leaders. The Council has waged a consistent advocacy campaign at the local, national and international levels, to combat the sexual exploitation of Pagsanjan's children.

Most of the advocacy activities on behalf of exploited children in the Philippines which continue to this day were initiatives or spin-offs of initiatives taken by the non-governmental (and a few governmental) groups that began to campaign on the issue in the early 1980s.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Discussion and analysis of the problem and current efforts with respect to child labour exploitation in Muro-ami deep-sea fishing are based on: (a) Van Oosterhout, Henk, 1988, and Bureau of Women and Young Workers, 1988; (b) "Special Report: Muro-Ami — Profit in Exploitation", a consolidation of information on Muro-Ami compiled by the Bureau of Women and Young Workers and published as a special chapter in Dionela et al., 1986; (c) consultations with staff of the Bureau of Women and Young Workers, Department of Labor and Employment; (d) field reports of the inter-agency monitoring team to Palawan, June 1987 and June 1988; and (e) special reports by Danguilan-Vitug, in *Mánila Chronicle*, 16 March 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Discussion and analyses of the situation, current programmes and policy recommendations with respect to child exploitation in prostitution are based principally on: (a) Magno, Susan F. et al., 1986; (b) Aquino, Emilio R., 1987; (c) consultations with members of the Task Force on Pagsanjan and with the Executive Director of the Council for the Welfare of Children, Maria Elena Caraballo; (d) relevant material from Stop Trafficking of Filipinas Foundation (STOP) and Council of Welfare Agencies Foundation of the Philippines (CWAFFPI).

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<sup>3</sup> Of which the more salient provisions on sexual exploitation are contained in:

Chapter 2 — Rape and acts of lasciviousness: Article 335: When and how rape is committed;  
Article 336: Acts of lasciviousness

Chapter 3 — Seduction, corruption of minors and white slave trade; Article 337: Qualified rape;  
Article 338: Simple seduction; Article 339: Acts of lasciviousness with the consent of the  
offended party; Article 340: Corruption of minors; Article 341: White slave trade.

### 3. Policy analysis: The role of advocacy

#### Efforts to date

##### A multifaceted approach

Among the more significant advocacy tools and activities that have been seen to yield positive results — in terms of increasing public awareness of, inspiring public action on, and reducing child involvement in the hazardous activities of Muro-ami fishing and prostitution — are the situation studies, investigative reporting by the media and the activities of local community groups and task forces.

These different efforts have complemented each other well, the message of one reinforcing that of the others. Thus the sober, objective findings of situation studies on children's exploitative work conditions have generally confirmed and strengthened the more emotion-laden denunciations made by civic watchdog groups or the media. Government officials, sensitive to public indignation, have been goaded into creating ad hoc consultative committees, or task forces, to look further into the problems and recommend ways of alleviating them. These ad hoc groups tend to take their responsibilities very seriously and utilize further research and media support to pressure government into action.



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As the problem of child exploitation has become more visible, a growing portion of society has begun to participate in the general debate concerning its causes and consequences and the appropriate solutions. Mobilizing the community has meant encouraging children to speak up, persuading teachers and social workers to be more alert to probable child victims, convincing parents of the real dangers to their children of these activities, compelling public officials to enforce the law or enact new legislation and making sure that the media reports on who is or is not doing what they should to protect children.

### National situation studies

Prior to 1984, research on working children had dealt primarily with their participation in and contribution to household economic activity and with the employment of youth in the formal sector of the economy. The exploitative aspects of child labour were not of special concern. The mid-1980s, however, saw the beginnings of a public desire to understand better the situation of working Filipino children.

By the early 1980s, as the crushing effects of the economic crisis became more evident, the airing of issues related to poverty, social inequity and exploitation became more frequent. Political turmoil also triggered a wave of open protest against the Government from the hitherto silent and complacent middle and upper classes. The public became more ready to point out the defects of Government — the problems which government policy had either caused or precipitated, as well as those it refused to acknowledge or deal with. It is within the context of the people's general political awakening that the situation of Filipino children living in poverty and working in dangerous, exploitative circumstances, began to be more openly discussed and more systematically investigated.

One important impetus was the creation in 1985 of a collaborative project on street children by the Ministry of Social Services and Development, the Council of Welfare Agencies Foundation of the Philippines, a network of non-governmental organizations, and UNICEF. Initially the project was programmed to undertake comprehensive situation studies



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on children living and working in the streets. These studies were to serve as the basis for sound programme planning and development and for advocacy and awareness-raising. But because street children were seen as only one segment — though perhaps the most highly visible — of the population of children at risk of exploitation, the scope of the studies was eventually broadened to include all groups who were potential victims. By the time the joint project was formally launched in April 1986, two in-depth studies were well under way. Both were produced in mimeographed form in August 1986.

The first study, *The faces of child labour in the Philippines* (Magno et al., 1986), was undertaken by a group of 13 full-time researchers associated with the country's leading universities and social research institutes. It looked in some detail at the broad context of child labour nationally, as well as its specific nature and character in different sectors of the economy.<sup>1</sup> The study was based on interviews with 448 children. Of these, 214 worked on the streets in activities such as vending and prostitution, 137 were involved in agriculture in the production of sugar and rice and 97 were employed in the garment and handicraft industries. The findings were presented by sector and the analysis centred on such issues as children's productive contribution to family and society, the role of work in the socialization of children, the relationship between schooling and employment, the impact of work on child welfare and the socio-economic determinants of children's participation in the workforce.

The second study, *Children under especially difficult circumstances: The Philippine scenario* (Dionela et al., 1986), was conducted primarily to aid the planning and programming exercises undertaken jointly by the National Economic and Development Authority (the central planning body) and UNICEF as part of its Third Country Programme of Cooperation. The study was aimed at identifying the groups of children most at risk nationally and locating them by city and province, so that they, their families and communities could be more directly targeted in both UNICEF and government programmes. The study focused on three categories of children: those suffering exploitation, such as working, street and sexually abused children; those involved in

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armed conflict and those requiring special protection, such as children of tribal communities and migrant and disabled children.

Its objectives were to determine the nature and extent of the problems faced by these groups. It had to be established how many children there were in such situations, who they were and what their living and working conditions were like. It was also important to understand the correlates and causes of the children's circumstances and to ascertain their needs, problems and aspirations. In addition, the study aimed to assess the current responses of not only government, but also of non-governmental organizations and community groups to these children, review existing legislation affecting them and determine possible areas of improvement. Finally, it was to recommend policies, strategies, and programmes that would respond effectively to the realities and needs of these children.

The study relied less on primary data than did the one on child labour and more on an extensive review of existing literature, limited observation of the situation of various priority categories of children, consultations with both governmental and non-governmental agencies and interviews with selected child welfare officials, parents and children participating in existing programmes. It also incorporated a special study undertaken by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Women and Youth Workers on child labour in Muro-ami fishing.

From the outset, these studies were intended to serve as tools for advocacy and in this respect they have proved very effective. A few weeks after they were completed, UNICEF convened a series of special meetings with the more prominent journalists from the national newspapers and magazines, to disseminate their major findings. The studies were welcomed as rich sources of information on the crisis facing Filipino children that could be put to effective use in investigative journalism. The weeks preceding 6 October 1986 — Universal Children's Day — saw a spate of media reports on children based on the studies and a five-day television series on sexually exploited street children was organized by the Presidential Office of the Mass Media.

On Universal Children's Day itself, an alliance of non-governmental organizations concerned with children's issues called Salinlahi

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organized a procession of children which met outside the Presidential Palace at Malacanang. The participants dramatized for President Aquino their most pressing problems — the same as those expounded in the studies — in mime and music. Over the next few months, the studies were cited in numerous newspaper reports, on television and radio shows, in magazine articles and in policy pronouncements by public officials, including those pushing for new or stronger legislation on child protection. They also precipitated further research on similar themes.

Perhaps the most significant influence of these studies on public policy can be seen in their contribution to the work of a national Task Force created by the President in June 1986 for the protection of exploited children. The study on children in especially difficult circumstances, for example, became the basis for the “Proclamation 20: A National Plan of Action for the Protection of the Filipino Exploited Children” made by the Government in March 1987.

### Local situation studies

Situation studies carried out locally have also been found particularly effective as advocacy tools in generating community interest and action on behalf of street children and children engaged in prostitution. This strategy of using research as an advocacy tool is cited as the first important lesson learned in the street children project in Olongapo City, upon which work in 15 other cities was subsequently based (Caluyo and Salvador, 1988).

While at the national level, situation studies tend to be conducted by professional social researchers and academicians, the investigators at the local level generally include social workers from either governmental or non-governmental welfare agencies, members of the police force, school teachers, medical staff from public health centres and community leaders and others who are already in touch with especially disadvantaged children. The children themselves, their parents, the employers, and the ordinary people on the street are also invited to join, along with representatives from the media, lawyers, employees of the Mayor's office, influential local residents and church leaders.

**BOX ONE**

A case study report on the street children project in Olongapo City describes the experience as follows:

... What has been achieved during the period under review (1983-87)? What lessons can be learned?

— Database on street children/inventory of existing programmes. A situation analysis on the city's street children has been completed. Using action-oriented and participatory methods, the situation analysis has generated community interest and action for and on behalf of street children. The formation of the city working committee on street children is a concrete result of the situation study. The working committee, in turn, has made use of the findings of the situation analysis in their subsequent activities: advocacy and social mobilization, programme development, human resource development, and technical assistance.

The general outcome has been that local groups who take it upon themselves to arrive at a better understanding of children living in dangerous circumstances discover that a real problem exists. They also learn that the causes are identifiable, that the number of children involved is manageable — in that they are able to locate, count, and establish contact with these children — and that therefore the problem is tangible and not simply a matter of meaningless statistics. Moreover, they come to realise that a number of individuals and groups are already actively trying to deal with the problem, sometimes to great effect. Occasionally information is elicited directly from the children themselves. This makes investigators even more committed to serving the children well because they cannot help but be moved and convinced by their forthright and poignant testimonies.

**Box Two**

In a discussion on community-based strategies for advocacy, Leopoldo Moselina (1989) of the coordination group of the joint Street Children Project, describes the process thus:

Experience in three cities has demonstrated that the process of conducting situation analysis using participatory, conscientizing, and action-oriented research methodologies is an effective means to generate community interest and action for and on behalf of street children.

Participatory, in the sense that various sectors of the community and the street children themselves are active participants in the situation study. This is premised on the following basic assumptions: (a) the phenomenon of street children is a structural problem, and not an isolated phenomenon, which concerns the whole community and the larger society; (b) that people, even the ordinary men in the streets and the street children themselves are capable of doing situation analysis — research therefore does not only belong to the province of the professionally trained social scientist or social development worker; (c) that relevant knowledge and understanding of social situations, particularly that of the street children, can be arrived at with the active participation of the children themselves, who for a long time have remained mere objects of study by social science practitioners and social development professionals.

Conscientizing, because the situation study is aimed at generating critical awareness of the problem, its root causes, its relationship with other problems/issues with the end in view of seeking creative and constructive actions to meet the problem.

Action-oriented: A situation analysis that claims to be participatory and conscientizing is necessarily action-oriented. While it does not provide an immediate blueprint for action, the situation analysis can unfold the context within which specific strategies and techniques can be formulated. Given the participation and investment of self in the course of the situation analysis, all parties concerned should be able to translate into action whatever new insights and reflections that will emerge from the analysis.

The whole process is therefore one of a series of action and reflection (praxis) which starts with: (a) insertion/immersion into the concrete situation of the street child followed by (b) analysis/reflection, (c) decision/commitment, and (d) planning/action . . . The process is continuous but does not simply retrace old steps but breaks new grounds and new possibilities. (The concept of praxis — series of action and reflection — was developed by Paulo Freire.)

Undertaken in this way the situation studies become public documents in the broadest sense — of common knowledge and collective ownership among the various sectors of the population involved in undertaking them. The problems which emerge from the investigations are therefore no longer just those of a few isolated groups, but become a collective responsibility, necessitating a collective response. Participants in the process come to realize that on the one hand they have all contributed to the problem either by direct action or by default and on the other they have something to contribute to the solution. Participation also encourages non-governmental and governmental groups that have traditionally opposed or been hostile towards each other to collaborate, apportioning tasks according to their respective competences and experience.

## Media involvement

### The Pagsanjan case

With both child prostitution and child involvement in Muro-ami fishing the media have been very effective in heightening public awareness, maintaining public vigilance and inciting public action. A good example is provided by the Pagsanjan case, which merits detailed discussion.

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Media attention on the plight of Pagsanjan children engaged in prostitution began in earnest in 1985. One of the principal catalysts in this instance was a Protestant pastor, the Reverend Rock Castillo, who, fresh from theology studies in Melbourne, Australia, was assigned to the Pagsanjan Evangelical Church. He had first heard about the town's reputation as a centre for paedophile tourist activity from people he met whilst a student in Australia. He had dismissed these comments as conveying a false and negative image of his country. However, as pastor in Pagsanjan, he came face to face with the reality of what was then estimated to be about 3,000 young boys who regularly sold themselves to foreign tourists, mostly Australians.

Castillo helped organize ROAD, or Rural Organization and Assistance for Development, to campaign against paedophilia and child prostitution in Pagsanjan and bring the issue to national and world attention. ROAD directed its first efforts at the Australian public, with whom Castillo had developed some affinity, on the grounds that many Australians were involved. On 30 March 1985, the magazine *Melbourne Age* carried a feature-length article entitled "Monsters in shorts and thongs". It described the problem of prostitution in Pagsanjan and stressed the Australian connection. An Australian television network also sent a crew to Pagsanjan to produce a documentary about the problem. Entitled *Children of shame*, it was shown throughout the continent on the top-rating Australian programme *60 minutes* on 7 July 1985. The interest generated by the documentary prompted another leading Australian programme, *The National*, to send its own crew to the Philippines and several follow-up stories appeared in Australian newspapers.

The response was both immediate and strong, with many Australians writing directly to ROAD expressing their personal shame at the situation. Protestant Church groups voiced collective protest against the activities of their countrymen and aid agencies sent donations to ROAD, encouraging them to continue the fight. One of the most positive results of the media campaign was a submission by the Victoria Police Force to the Philippine immigration authorities which consisted of a list of known Australian paedophiles who, they said, should not be permitted entry to the country.

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Media interest from other countries followed. Singapore's ABC Network interviewed the children in Pagsanjan and produced a documentary series on the subject. A Swedish company also made a film and *Asiaweek Magazine* published an article, "AIDS in the Philippines", which dealt at length with child prostitution in Pagsanjan.

The local Philippine media also began to take notice of the situation. Manila's Channel 7 television station, the only national network not then controlled by Government, broadcast an investigative report nationwide. *Panorama*, the weekly magazine of the main national daily newspaper, published two incisive articles in its 9 June 1985 issue entitled "What makes a paedophile?" and "Child prostitution: The tribe of lost souls".

**Box Three**

In "What makes a paedophile?" Ceres Doyo wrote about the reasons why European and North American tourists come to the Philippines looking for sexual gratification with young children:

. . . The social milieu in rich countries has a lot to do with the spawning of paedophiles. It also goes without saying that the stark social and economic situation in the Philippines has much to do with the paedophiles coming. It takes two to tango, as the saying goes. There are no buyers where there are no sellers. But the sad thing about it all is that while the paedophiles can pack up and go after their adventures in "children's paradise", the kids they have used and paid (if they pay at all) are left with stigma and trauma that will haunt them all their lives.

The gradual breakdown of sexual taboos in First World countries as reinforced by media has emboldened closet perverts to meet their needs more openly and more frequently. Worse, even more "normal" adult males who are expected to get attracted to adult females are now looking to much younger "playmates" — children.

Child pornography in the paedophiles' countries of origin has pushed them into taking Asian sojourns. It is in Asia,



particularly in the Philippines and Thailand, that their young objects of delight can be had for peanuts and where there is less fear of being discovered, mocked or punished. They have heard about child prostitutes in covert conversations back home, they have also read about and seen them in sleek advertising catalogues.

In her article "Child prostitution: The tribe of lost souls" Araceli Lorayes wrote of "the push and pull, the sieve and weave" factors that accounted for the sudden growth of sexual activity involving children in the Philippines.

. . . For paedophiles, the paramount push factor — aside from the internal pressures to satisfy their inclinations — would be the fact that in their countries of origin, the laws on the corruption of minors are both strict and enforced. They are drawn to the Philippines by the mildness of Philippine laws and laxness of implementation. The Revised Penal Code punishes the corruption of minors with no more than imprisonment of one to six months and a fine of P100 to P500, or both fine and imprisonment. Under PD 603, the Youth and Child Welfare Code, parents who lead a minor into an immoral or destitute life may be punished by imprisonment of not more than two months or a fine of not more than P200 or both.

In fact, the light penalties . . . have been so publicized in European documentaries that the ironic result has been a higher influx of paedophiles into the Philippines . . .

For the children, particularly in the urban areas, the great push factor is poverty — not merely the lack of money, but also its brutalizing effect on the individual and its corrosive effects on the family. The majority of child prostitutes started out as cigarette or *sampaguita* vendors to supplement family income when they were enticed into prostitution either by friends already engaged in it or by teenage pimps. Other children ran away from unbearable homes where they were maltreated. . . So desperate is the struggle to keep body and soul together that provision of the most basic creature needs evokes a pathetic gratitude . . .

And the sieve factor? Why, nothing else but the government agencies charged with the enforcement of laws or implementation of rules and regulations.

In the television show *Tell the people*, a young girl prostitute revealed that bribes paid by her teenage pimp ensured protection from arrest, or speedy release. In one of the statements of a Pagsanjan restaurant, she said that she once saw a Metrocom car parked outside a house maintained by a paedophile, but certainly no arrest was made. Police officials claim that it is difficult to obtain hard evidence against paedophiles because they must be caught in the act and this would involve barging into their hotel rooms. Matters are hardly improved when the tourism minister is quoted as saying that "what a tourist does in his hotel room is none of my business"; such a remark, if made in the context of a discussion of the problem of child prostitution, seems to indicate an ignorance of the pertinent laws and regulations governing his industry . . .

And then we have the weave of failings, attitudes and values that have allowed this practice to flower. Greed, in its most cynical and heartless form. Callous indifference. Ignorance on the part of parents and children on the anatomical and psychological effects of child prostitution. But also — let us be honest about it — cultural conditioning. Enshrined in the Filipino mentality are certain attitudes — that one has children in order that they can repay one with service later on, that one's child is his to do with as he pleases. Thus, a child whose "trade" benefits his parents is only fulfilling his filial duty. Allied to this travesty of Filipino values is the belief that, in the case of boys, *walang nawawala sa kanila* (nothing is lost in terms of virginity) whereas the virginity of the girl must be protected at all costs.

In August 1986 the campaign was intensified when a three-part series on the crusade against child prostitution by the people of Pagsanjan was printed in the magazine *Mr. & Ms.* Written by a prominent writer, Lita Torralba Logarta (1986), the series provided a lengthy account of the

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local campaign, describing how Pagsanjan first became the target of the international paedophile community, how children are enticed into prostitution, the dangers to which they are exposed and how parents and the children themselves think and feel about the situation. The series went on to discuss the activities undertaken by local people from the start of the campaign, the advances and the setbacks they had experienced and the Government's response to their efforts. The author also outlined the more important policy directions that are necessary to ensure that both the local campaign as well as national efforts continue to have positive results.

ROAD began to publish its own magazine — *Crossroads* — at this time. It carried articles about child prostitution by theologians, sociologists, medical professionals and lay people and also reprinted reports on the subject from local and foreign publications. Overall, 1986, the year that the two in-depth situation studies on children were published, saw a significant increase in local media coverage not just of child prostitution but also of the wider issues of child exploitation.<sup>2</sup> During 1987 the media began to focus attention more on the programmes that attend to the needs of and create alternatives for exploited children, even as it continued to expose the wider implications of these children's problems.<sup>3</sup>

The year 1988 brought renewed attention to Pagsanjan as the arrests and voluntary deportation of suspected paedophiles made the headlines. By this time the local residents' groups, the nationwide Task Force on Pagsanjan and the relevant government authorities, had obtained detailed information about the international network of paedophiles and had developed comprehensive dossiers on many of its members and their operations. Other articles in print and a number of radio and television programmes focused on the increasingly difficult question of what the future holds for those children who have already been victimized.<sup>4</sup>

Between April and May of 1989, numerous news reports and features again appeared in the press and on television talk shows, as the Philippines hosted a two-week regional Asian conference on street children, organized by Childhope, an international network of non-governmental organizations, together with UNICEF and a number of local groups.

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Media presence was strong during the conference, both inside and outside the convention halls, more especially because a quarter of the participants were street children. President Aquino formally opened the event with an announcement that her administration was assigning 20 million pesos (1 million dollars) to assist non-governmental initiatives on behalf of Philippine street children. Among the significant outcomes of the conference was a public statement of commitment from the members of the media that had participated in or covered the event, announcing the establishment of their own advocacy group for exploited Filipino children, to be called PRESSHOPE.

### The Muro-ami case

In the case of Muro-ami fishing, media interest has not been consistent. However, it was important at the start of the campaign in calling public — and especially government — attention to the problem, in that it was the film *Slave ships in the Sulu Sea* which first incited national indignation. Unlike the groups fighting against child prostitution, who deliberately used the media to promote their cause, those concerned with child exploitation in Muro-ami fishing were — at the outset at least — fairly cautious about media exposure. They feared that, given the strong forces opposing them, media coverage might have the opposite effect from that intended, polarizing rather than uniting public opinion. As an official of the DOLE, the director of the Bureau of Women and Young Workers, put it, the group's priority then was to study the facts and issues thoroughly — and this was best done in a low-key manner. Only after the group was fairly satisfied that an adequate analysis of the situation had been made would they publish and disseminate their findings and recommendations.

More recently, news reporting on Muro-ami fishing has been noteworthy in the critical analyses it has provided about the real dilemmas faced by the Government in its attempts to remedy the problems associated with the industry. Filipino newspapers have covered the public debate about the advantages and disadvantages of banning Muro-ami operations altogether, on the grounds that it is highly exploitative of

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labour (especially of children), destroys coral reefs, depletes fishing grounds and discourages tourism.

## Activities of civic and watchdog groups

### Pagsanjan

By 1984 enough people in Pagsanjan were sufficiently angry about the problem of child prostitution to want to fight against it and force local officials to become involved. The formation of the Council for the Protection of Children in Pagsanjan (CPCP), a local inter-agency committee set up under the Child and Youth Welfare Code by Presidential Decree 603 as one of a network of such bodies established in every village in the country, provided the opportunity to organize collective effort. The Council was made up of local officials as well as a number of local residents who were already concerned with the issue and church and campaign groups.

The main aim of the CPCP has been to inform and educate the community about the dangers its children face. The principal objective was to try to change the attitudes of the townspeople, especially those parents who welcomed the foreigners and persuaded their sons to associate with them. The Council has used several methods, some of them relatively unorthodox, in its work of educating the community and keeping undesirable tourists away. At the height of the national and international media campaigns, posters were put up announcing their cause all over the town. A large sign was also placed at the entrance to the town stating "We protect our children from sex exploitation (paedophiles)", with a warning below which read "Paedophiles keep out!". The day after it was erected, the sign was found defaced and discarded in a muddy rice field. Council members retrieved, cleaned and repainted the sign and put it up again. The group also tried pinning notices up in hotels, restaurants and other public places warning of the ill effects of prostitution and especially of the risk of AIDS. Not surprisingly, these notices were unpopular with tour operators, pimps, the

families of the child victims and others whose livelihood was affected. Several notices were defaced or even burned and one by one, they all eventually came down.

Among the more effective of the CPCP's initiatives was their effort in convincing local schoolteachers and officials, and parent-teacher associations, that they could play a pivotal role in containing child prostitution in the town. Seminars were organised for some 170 schoolteachers, who discussed the dangers of sexual activity for children and the ways that they could confront the problem in the classroom. Teachers became more involved in detecting child victims and in motivating schoolchildren to be wary of paedophiles. They started discussing the many problems associated with prostitution as part of the regular elementary and high school curricula. Volunteer counsellors befriended the child victims with a view to helping them extricate themselves from their liaisons. Doctors and nurses taught the children about the dangers of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and of drug addiction, and offered them medical attention.

The efforts to make children — whether the potential or actual victims of paedophiles — aware of the risks involved in prostitution have paid off. Many children have opted to leave the trade and join the programmes set up for them by groups such as the CPCP and ROAD. Until only a few years ago, being a pompom was something to boast about, but it has gradually become something to be ashamed of. While the number of pompoms active in 1984 was placed by the Reverend Castillo at 3,000 (a figure which certain members of the CPCP consider to be inflated, preferring the more reasonable estimate of 1,000), the consensus locally is that there are only 300 or so today. Thus, most of the children from Pagsanjan have withdrawn from the activity. However, the crusaders are now even more concerned that, in spite of all their efforts, there remain some 300 pompoms in the town and at least 34 foreign paedophiles.

Children have been organized into support groups centred around recreational and cultural activities, such as theatre groups and the drum and bugle corps. They also run refreshment kiosks and raise pigs and poultry to generate income and have been involved in higher profile

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activities such as marching around the town in street rallies, carrying placards which say “Ma, Pa, don’t sell us to the monsters”, and protesting their ill treatment by adults. They have also picketed the Manila offices of the Commission of Immigration and Deportation, calling for the deportation of paedophiles they have identified as having victimized them.

The Council recently began to use measures with stronger shock value in order to have impact on those parents and local leaders who have so far been resistant to their campaign. Many parents and local officials had reasoned that no real harm came to the children because the tourists were simply being friendly and generous. To disprove this argument, the CPCP exhibited in parent-teacher association meetings and community assemblies, magazines and photographs confiscated from some of the tourists who have been apprehended and deported. These photographs — many of which are of boys from Pagsanjan and many of which were intended for use in pornography magazines abroad — show the child victims engaged in lascivious acts with their Caucasian “friends”. By showing this material, the members of the Council hoped to convince parents that friendships with paedophiles are not as innocent as they had imagined. The new approach has had tremendous impact: many audiences have come to understand what really goes on between the boys and their tourist companions. One local official, for example, after seeing the material at a meeting, declared: “Before, I did not know what these paedophiles did and I didn’t mind. After seeing the pictures, I now find them disgusting”.

### Pushing for government action

In conjunction with its continuing information and education campaign, the CPCP works to persuade local and national officials to deal more effectively with the tourists. The Council has an arrangement with the National Bureau of Investigation and the immigration authorities expediting the surveillance, apprehension and deportation of suspected tourists. Petitions and formal complaints filed by the Council with the national authorities encourage them to take action. At the local level, the

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CPCP works very closely with the Department of Social Welfare and Development, particularly in assisting child victims and rehabilitating their families.

One magazine article discussed the difference the concerned residents of Pagsanjan had made to their own lives and to the lives of the town's children:

... One group of vigilant citizens in Pagsanjan has shown that, in spite of government indifference, concerted action can make a difference. In Pagsanjan we swallowed our pride and endured the humiliation of having the name of our *illustrado* (sic) town tarnished because of its association with child prostitution. But we expose this evil so that other towns can learn from our experience. Because of our campaign we have received reports that paedophiles now consider this town too "hot" so that they have started to avoid us. And there you have it. So long as citizens retain their capacity for indignation, and act on it, there is still hope to salvage (in the original, beneficent sense of the word) the tribe of the lost souls that are the child prostitutes of the Philippines (Lorayes, 1985, p. 49).

### Absence of citizens' action in Muro-ami

With respect to the exploitation of child labour in Muro-ami fishing, action at the community level has been conspicuously absent and local mobilization is only now beginning. Pressure has, however, from the outset been exerted on government authorities by national civic groups who form part of the Task Force on Muro-ami, which is made up of organizations working on behalf of exploited children, environmental protection and labour rights.

The first attempt to mobilize the community was a series of dialogues organized by the Task Force with the mothers of those children in Oslob and Santander who were involved in fishing. These were called "leadership training seminars" and consisted essentially of awareness-raising exercises, involving discussions of the groups' perceptions of what they as mothers and community members could do to improve their own situation and that of their children. The mothers identified their need to find more productive work and higher incomes in order to bring an end to their dependence on child labour in Muro-ami fishing and they began to discuss alternatives suggested either by themselves or by the Task



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Force members. So far these dialogues have led to the creation of small projects in soap-making, weaving and pig rearing, with government teams extending soft loans and training in production.

More recently, the Task Force initiated talks with the mayors and other officials of Oslob and Santander and with the Cebu provincial government, all of whom have indicated a greater openness to seriously considering alternatives to employment in Muro-ami. The provincial government in particular has expressed its readiness to extend more and better services to the two towns.

## Initiatives by political leadership

### National Task Forces on Pagsanjan and Muro-ami

Advocacy efforts by vigilant civic and church groups and concerned government officials have heightened public awareness of the exploitative situations in which many Filipino children live and work to such a degree that by 1986, when the new Government assumed power, the clamour for change was sufficient to elicit a clear response from a more open administration.

For example, the organization STOP in June 1986 pushed for and obtained the national Government's commitment to bringing an end to the sexual exploitation of children. This commitment was subsequently extended to other groups of disadvantaged children. On 3 June 1986 President Corazon Aquino signed Proclamation No. 20, declaring the period June 1986 to May 1987 the Year of the Protection of Filipino Exploited Children.<sup>5</sup> The Proclamation cited the factors which had prompted its issuance and in doing so demonstrated the powerful influence the strong and consistent advocacy work of the civic and non-governmental organizations had exerted on government policy.<sup>6</sup>

The President created an inter-agency Task Force under this Proclamation, composed of both governmental and non-governmental organizations, to prepare a national plan of action and to mobilize resources for and monitor its implementation. The Task Force was instructed to

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direct its programmes and activities towards the objective of developing national awareness of the problems of child abuse and exploitation and generating commitment nationally to their prevention. Thus, in the Proclamation "all ministries, agencies, offices and other instrumentalities of the Government" were called upon to "support and/or implement programmes, projects and activities for innocent Filipino children who are victims of exploitation, abuse, or aggression, including their rehabilitation, as well as for the prevention of similar crimes on other children".

A subsequent Proclamation specified that the inter-agency Task Force would include three non-governmental organizations: STOP, the Council of Welfare Agencies Foundation of the Philippines and the Child Welfare League of the Philippines. It was also to incorporate UNICEF and a wide range of government bodies.

A Secretariat to the Task Force was organized by the Ministry of Social Services and Development. Between September and December of 1986 the Task Force drafted a national plan of action and constituted five committees to formulate more specific plans according to the five categories of children it identified as being in need of special attention. These categories were: child victims and the children of victims of armed conflict, together with the children of tribal communities; disabled, abandoned, abused and neglected children; working children; street and sexually exploited children and young offenders and drug-dependent children.

The Task Force cited the findings and recommendations of situation studies commissioned by the joint project (CWAFPI-MSSD-UNICEF) on children in especially difficult circumstances, as forming the basis for the national plan of action. The Task Force held a series of meetings at which the plan was debated and refined, until in December 1986 the final draft was completed.

In March 1987 the Government published the National Plan of Action on the Protection of the Filipino Exploited Children. The plan called for intensified implementation of ongoing programmes and services, as well as the introduction of new initiatives. In June 1987, when the Proclamation was to cease to be operative, the Task Force would be

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subsumed under the Council for the Welfare of Children as a permanent special committee. The Council thus assumed responsibility for the promulgation and monitoring of Proclamation No. 20: National Plan of Action and specific measures to protect working and sexually exploited children were included.

### Plan of action on working children

The plan of action on working children called for a review of legislation, policy and standards to identify those most needing immediate revision and to recommend new measures, where appropriate. It also called for strengthened labour legislation, with more effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, an improvement in the situation of child domestic workers and the organization of child workers in selected industries. Finally, the plan provided for stricter regulations on the employment of children and young workers in the entertainment industry.

The progress report submitted by the Council for the Welfare of Children in April 1989 — entitled “Proclamation 20: Programme Plan of Action and Extent of Implementation According to Categories of Children” — stated that the Department of Labor’s review of legislation, policies and standards on child labour was an ongoing activity. No conclusive results or recommendations were indicated. Meanwhile, the Department of Labor, particularly the Bureau of Women and Young Workers, in its effort to strengthen enforcement of labour legislation and standards, had conducted a series of regional-level consultative meetings with workers, together with representatives of different economic sectors in their respective regions. These meetings were convened to work out more efficient methods for monitoring compliance with labour laws, such as the issuing of business licences and permits, to be implemented with the support of employers and local and municipal offices.

The Bureau had also published in late 1988 an analysis of the situation of child domestic workers. Another set of studies on the living and working conditions of children in specific industries in and around

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the Metro Manila region was under way, on the basis of which action to organize children and improve their working conditions was to be formulated.

#### Plan of action on street and sexually exploited children

The action plan outlined a series of objectives and activities in the areas of prevention, rehabilitation and protection of sexually exploited children that were to be introduced over a period of two years. STOP, the Council of Welfare Agencies Foundation of the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare Agencies Foundation of the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Philippine Information Agency and the Metro Manila Commission were nominated as the key implementors.

The preventive measures focused on advocacy, value clarification, parent effectiveness, spiritual formation, income-generation and crisis intervention. The objective of advocacy was to make members and leaders of the *barangays* (villages), schools, church and parish groups, law enforcement agencies and media and professional organizations aware of the situation of sexually exploited children and obtain their support in preventing the problem and in rehabilitating and protecting the children. The plan called for information to be provided for these groups and for them to be targeted by education programmes. To this end, the various communication media were mobilized and utilized. It also stressed the need to strengthen already existing STOP branches throughout the country and to establish new ones in those areas where the majority of children involved in prostitution come from.

Another objective was to help parents and guardians and the endangered children themselves to be able to analyse their own values and to identify what it is in their lives that they wish to change and the steps needed to initiate such change. To aid this process, the plan indicated that value clarification sessions should be held with parents, guardians and children. Closely connected with the question of value formation is parent effectiveness and the third major objective in the area of preven-

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tion was to enable parents and guardians to demonstrate awareness of their roles and responsibilities in relation to their children and identify ways to strengthen their parental skills. In support of this goal, parent effectiveness seminars were to be conducted. Spiritual formation seminars were also programmed to enable parents, guardians and children to demonstrate their belief in God and His teachings and be guided accordingly in their personal and professional lives.

Skills training was also to be given to parents and endangered children to enable them to increase their income and find alternative sources of livelihood. In addition, capital was to be provided for the creation of small businesses and training in small business management was to be given.

Another priority was for parents, guardians and their endangered children to be given access to relief services during crises. The plan called for meetings to be held to encourage existing child care agencies and parish and *barangay* groups to set up more 24-hour crisis intervention and drop-in centres in strategic areas in Metro Manila and other parts of the country. On the issue of rehabilitation, the plan aimed to increase the access of sexually exploited children to services and programmes. It listed as major priorities: to continue to campaign among child-care agencies for the expansion of their programmes and services for sexually exploited children; the mobilization of volunteer consultants who could provide technical and professional assistance to groups working with these children and the organization of groups of foster parents who would be duly licensed to provide temporary care for them as an alternative to institutionalization.

Under the general heading of "protection", the plan specified that orientation seminars should be held with law enforcement agencies and campaigns mounted to ensure the introduction of new legislation for the protection of children against abuse and exploitation. It also stated that pressure groups should work to ensure more effective implementation of existing laws and for the repeal or amendment of laws, ordinances and other legislation which have the effect of promoting the sexual exploitation of children. More specifically, pressure groups were to campaign for the passage of the Rabat Bill which outlined stiffer penalties for those responsible for such exploitation.

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The Council for the Welfare of Children reported on the implementation of the National Plan of Action in April 1989. It indicated that local Task Forces and Councils for the Protection of Children in all the major cities, tourist areas and towns close to the American bases had introduced activities in each of the priority areas identified by the plan. It also reported a significant increase in the number of alternative education, skills training and livelihood programmes in these areas. The report cited an expansion of residential care, temporary shelter and general outreach for sexually exploited children in almost all parts of the country. At the time of writing this report, about 8,000 children out of the 10,000 targeted were being reached by one programme or another under the plan. In 1988 there were about 6,700 children incorporated in formal and non-formal education activities; 3,800 were engaged in work or income-earning activities; 8,400 were involved in health and nutrition programmes; 8,200 were benefiting from cultural and recreational activities; 8,500 were receiving counselling; 4,000 were in drop-in centres and 540 in adoption and foster care programmes.

Partial success in child protection had been aided by the arrest of suspected paedophile tourists by the immigration authorities. But the Council's report stressed that full implementation was not possible because of inadequacies in the law.

### Special Task Force on Muro-ami fishing

The inter-agency Task Force on Child Labor in the Muro-ami Fishing Operation was created in July 1986 in response to a campaign against Muro-ami fishing mounted by a group of conservationists and scuba divers, the tourist department and a number of concerned non-governmental groups. The Task Force first organized a consultative workshop among representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations, pressure groups, the media, the academic community and international organizations such as the ILO and UNICEF. The workshop's principal recommendation was that in the long term, Muro-ami should be banned altogether. But it stressed that before such a ban could come into effect, the laws on the employment of minors

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should be implemented, thereby excluding children below 18 years of age from the Muro-ami fleets. The workshop also anticipated the adverse effects of an eventual ban on the lives of the fishing families and proposed the introduction of alternative means of livelihood and skills training. In the event, the Task Force pursued the prohibition on the employment of children under 18 years as a priority. However, it did not adopt the workshop's recommendation on the total ban on Muro-ami fishing — advocating instead improvements in the terms and conditions of adult employment and the introduction of alternative sources of income for both the children and their families.

During their visits to the fishing villages, members of the Task Force met with the fishing families and with other local residents, trying to convince them of the hazards to young workers of the Muro-ami operations. Although most parents admitted they knew of the dangers, they said they had little choice but to encourage their children's involvement, doubting that they would be able to find other viable employment in the area. Moreover, most felt completely beholden to and dependent on the Muro-ami operators.

Because the Government had no vessel of its own, and therefore had to rely on the Muro-ami operators for transportation to the fishing vessels, monitoring of the fishing fleet by the Task Force proved difficult. The owners were given sufficient warning of inspection trips to prepare for them and feign compliance with the recommendations. The Task Force thus changed its strategy and began negotiating directly with the operators for specific improvements in working conditions at sea. It also discussed the need to clarify the relationship between the vessel owners, the master fishermen and the ordinary fishermen, as well as to resolve and clarify the mode of payment of wages. More importantly, the Task Force obtained the explicit assurance of the operators that minors under 18 would no longer be recruited.

During this time, however, the Department of Agriculture proceeded to declare a total ban on Muro-ami fishing, giving the operators a grace period of six months to convert to the use of "legitimate and non-destructive" fishing equipment and methods. Violations were to be penalized with fines of between 500 and 5,000 pesos or with imprison-

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ment for periods from six months to four years. Despite the ban, the Muro-ami operations continued for another two years, following the granting of a special permit by the Department of Agriculture. The permit was extended several times and the Department authorities said that the extensions were given to determine whether the Muro-ami operators would indeed begin using modified scarelines, which reportedly minimize the damage to the coral reef.

Meanwhile, the Task Force insisted that the ban be lifted, use of a modified scareline enforced and the working conditions of fishermen improved. After the ban was declared, monitoring visits by the Task Force were resumed and some improvement in conditions aboard the vessels was noted. Clean drinking water was now available, as was first-aid equipment, the fishermen had received training in first aid and the vessels were generally cleaner and tidier. More importantly, the number of fishermen under 18 years old had dwindled to a mere handful. However, the inspecting team did find a few of the vessels' registers had been tampered with and the ages of some of the fishermen had clearly been changed. Thus, their reports repeatedly recommended that the operators submit the crew's birth certificates in order to verify their true ages. The group also suggested further meetings with the operators to push for the immediate implementation of other recommended improvements, particularly with respect to the amount and mode of payment of fishermen's wages.

In March 1989 the newspaper *Manila Chronicle* reported that in spite of the ban the operations were continuing. The latest permit had expired on 17 February 1989 and the Secretary of Agriculture refused to give any more extensions. The same article, however, did note that there had been a marked reduction in the number of children involved.

... Children, 8 years old and up, used to be massively recruited as swimmers and divers. They could be packed into the 170-foot vessels, they were agile, and demanded less pay. The number of minors into Muro-ami has declined, says Aura Sabilano, director of the BWYW (Bureau of Women and Youth Workers), after negotiations with the recruiting firm, the ABS Fish Traders Corporation (formerly the Abines Muro-ami Fishing Corporation), and after monitoring teams were sent to the field.



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The issue of child labour is non-negotiable. Abines is keeping their end of the negotiations. There has been a decrease in child labour, Sabilano said (Danguilan-Vitug, 1989; p. 8).

In May 1989 the Department of Agriculture issued a press statement, confirming its position that the ban on Muro-ami should be maintained and refuting the Task Force recommendations. Its policy was based on a surprise check on fishing vessels conducted by an inter-agency inspection team which had found many violations.

**Box Four**

In a press statement, the Department of Agriculture said:

A special team personally organized by Agriculture Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez, Chairman of the Presidential Committee on Anti-illegal Fishing and Marine Conservation, observed in great detail how Muro-ami fishing destroys coral reefs, exploits child labour and competes with subsistence fishermen for precious fish stocks in near-shore areas.

In a surprise operation conducted last week, a team from the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority, Philippine Coast Guard, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Local Governments, and volunteer organizations, caught red-handed a Muro-ami vessel fishing without a licence 2 kilometres from the island of Cabuli off the northernmost tip of Palawan. The vessel *F/V Dona Aurea B*, and its crew of at least 263 divers, including a number of minors, is owned by Frabal Fishing Corporation.

Photos and footages taken in the course of the *F/V Dona Aurea B* operation show that minors are still being harnessed as swimmers and divers. They also offer proofs that Muro-ami boats operate in areas close to the shore, refuting Frabal's claim that its fleet of vessels only exploit coral reef formations beyond the reach of small fishermen.

Equally revealing is the testimony of neutral divers that *F/V Dona Aurea B* is fitted with two kinds of scareline — rocks and two-chain links.

But the most intriguing is the testimony of neutral divers that chain links which are being trumpeted as causing only minimal damage actually cause considerable damage to the reefs. This jibes with the conclusion of scientists that anything with weight must not come in contact with the reefs.

If the findings of the *F/V Dona Aurea B* operation are diametrically opposed to the conclusion and recommendations of an inter-agency Task Force which earlier conducted on-the-spot monitoring of Frabal operations, it is mainly because of differences in approach. The said Task Force boarded Frabal fishing vessels, depriving its endeavour of the much-needed element of spontaneity and surprise. The special team created by Secretary Dominguez did its work unannounced, clandestinely and lightning-like, enabling it to observe actual Muro-ami operations.

Charges of fishing without a licence and in violation of an existing ban are now being readied against the owners of *F/V Dona Aurea B*. Muro-ami fishing ceased to be legal since February this year, more than two years after the Agriculture Minister Ramon V. Mitra voided it. We believe it should stay that way forever.

Overall, the activities of the Task Force undoubtedly resulted in significant reductions in child labour in Muro-ami fishing and the Bureau of Women and Young Workers estimates that the number of children involved dropped from an average of 700 in 1987 to about 50 in 1989. However, it continues to contend with the other more difficult issues of finding alternative employment for the fishermen's families and ensuring that implementation of the ban does not have an adverse effect on their working and living conditions.

## Special Task Force on Pagsanjan

Under the authority given it by Proclamation 20, the Council for the Welfare of Children in mid-1988 organized the Task Force on Pagsanjan to lend national support to the efforts of concerned civic groups, particularly the Council for the Protection of Children of Pagsanjan, ROAD and the Department of Social Welfare and Development, locally.

The Task Force on Pagsanjan has focused on a number of child protection and law enforcement issues. Primary among these is the continued and stepped-up apprehension of “undesirable aliens” who are suspected of sexually exploiting children. Under a working agreement between the Pagsanjan residents’ groups, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the National Bureau of Investigation and the Commission on Immigration and Deportation, the Immigration and Investigating Authorities can act on the basis of complaints filed with them locally. The authorities forewarn the Social Welfare Department of planned raids or arrests immediately prior to these operations, so that social workers can be on hand to attend to those children found in the company of suspects. Previously, scant attention had been given to the children themselves and they usually ended up being “rescued” by their pimps and further traumatized by returning to prostitution.

Another priority for the Task Force has been the surveillance and prosecution of suspected pimps by the National Bureau of Investigation and the immigration authorities, given that the arrests have yielded more extensive information on the networks of organised groups who sexually exploit children. The Task Force, however, continues to have difficulty in enforcing the Bureau of Tourism Services’ Circular prohibiting minors from loitering in hotel premises or checking into a hotel unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.

The Task Force has also taken it upon itself to promote debate and more serious study of the issues relating to the prosecution of parents who lead their children into prostitution. A subcommittee composed of social scientists, social workers, lawyers and concerned lay people is investigating several cases in Pagsanjan, assessing the possibility of helping families by rehabilitating them rather than punishing them

through prosecution. But the group has yet to come up with conclusive recommendations.

Another concern of the Task Force is to achieve a stronger lobby among national legislators for action on pending bills relating to the sexual exploitation of children. In general, the group feels that a more aggressive lobby should be initiated and it is now considering using shock tactics with legislators similar to those used with the more intractable residents of Pagsanjan. The Task Force believes that without such a strategy it will continue to be ignored by legislators who insist that the technical justification for passing these laws is as yet inadequate.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In its *statement of the problem*, the research group cited the following questions and objectives which they deemed significant for their investigations:

... Who are the working children? How do they enter the labour market under conditions of laws that prohibit the employment of children? What are the terms and conditions of their work? More specifically, are they paid? How are they paid given their physical limitation within the context of an economic structure that aims towards high production and profits? How do children themselves view their own participation in economic activities outside the home? What forms of control mechanisms are employed to maintain the acceptable labour input of children?

These questions provide the immediate impetus for an exploratory study which is designed to respond to the following objectives:

- (a) to determine the economic conditions of households of working children;
- (b) to unravel the processes of recruitment and modes of payment of children at work;
- (c) to investigate the physical conditions under which children work and how they respond to these conditions;
- (d) to characterise the kind of institutions which seek to employ children and how they are related to prevailing modes of production;
- (e) to determine how parents and other members of the communities view children's participation in the labour market and how the children themselves interpret their own role in maintaining the economic survival of their own households;
- (f) to formulate certain general propositions on child labour which can guide more diagnostic studies in the future.

<sup>2</sup> A partial listing of the more notable Filipino newspaper and magazine articles gives an indication of the extent of local media interest:

- February: "Secret agony of kids", *Sunday Times*  
"Young girls tell sad tales in Subic", *Neonlights*  
"Prostitution: A real evil, a madness", *Neonlights*
- March: "A halfway home for the "play-play" children", *Sunday Times Magazine*  
"Responsible parenthood in the city of sin", *Sunday Times Magazine*
- April: "Programme for street kids launched", *Manila Bulletin*

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- June: "Street children: An endangered species", *Sunday Times Magazine*  
 August: "Former street children aid government", *Manila Bulletin*  
 "The pastor and the paedophiles of Pagsanjan", *Mr. & Ms. Magazine*  
 October: "Children of a lesser God", *Sunday Inquirer*  
 "Caught in the crossfire", *Sunday Times Magazine*  
 "Street children of Metro Manila", *Panorama*  
 "Task force on child labour", *Phil. Daily Inquirer*  
 "The pain of the Filipino child", *Newsday Magazine Special Edition*

<sup>3</sup> Again a sample listing indicates the widening scope of media interest and support:

- February: "New hope for Manila's street kids", *Malaya*  
 "They were remembered, too", *Peryodiko Dabaw*  
 March: "17 pupils confess sex sessions with paedophile", *Manila Chronicle*  
 "The children of the streets", *Focus*  
 "Looking beyond poverty", *Focus*  
 "How much does government care?", *Focus*  
 "Home is a pushcart, a shanty, a slum", *Focus*  
 April: "Street school launched", *Manila Bulletin*  
 "Even out-of-school tots are entitled to dream", *Phil. Star*  
 July: "Centre provides comfort for children of the night", *Phil. Star*  
 August: "Child labour problem", *Evening Star*  
 October: "Children in crisis", *WE Forum*  
 November: "Street waifs learn 3Rs in school-without-walls", *Malaya*  
 December: Editorial: "Devouring our young", *Phil. Daily Inquirer*  
 "Most rural working children aren't paid", *Phil. Daily Inquirer*

<sup>4</sup> See, for example:

- February: Editorial: "Flesh of children", *Inquirer*  
 "Parents frantic over kids", *Phil. Star*  
 Editorial: "Santiago's crackdown on paedophiles", *Phil. Star*  
 "19 aliens in child abuse offer to leave", *Phil. Star*  
 "Child prostitution", *Phil. Daily Inquirer*  
 "Suspected paedophiles, deportation of 4 aliens urged", *Malaya*  
 April: "Street kids — Philippines' agony grows", *Phil. Free Press*  
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<sup>5</sup> Discussion and analyses based on "Proclamation 20 Task Force: National Plan of Action on the Protection of the Filipino Exploited Children" prepared by Proclamation 20 Task Force Committees/Secretariat, 11 March 1987; and on "Proclamation 20 Programme Plan of Action and Extent of Implementation According to Categories of Children" report of Council for Welfare of Children, April 1989.

<sup>6</sup> "Whereas, it is the policy of the State to promote the well-being and total development of Filipino youth and children, and to protect them from exploitation, abuse, improper influences, hazards and other conditions or circumstances prejudicial to their physical, mental, emotional, social and moral development;

Whereas, recent reports on rampant child abuse and exploitation, especially in Metro Manila and tourist spots throughout the country, have generated the righteous indignation of Philippine society and have inspired greater and coordinated efforts by both government and civic organisations towards a national plan of action integrating all programmes and services pertinent to the welfare and well-being of children;

Whereas, the United Nations has declared June 4, 1986 as 'International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression';

Whereas, the Government recognises the initiative of non-governmental organisations who have taken an active role even in the past as in the present in their crusade against child prostitution and exploitation, pornography and obscenity among our fellow Filipinos.

Now, therefore, I, Corazon C. Aquino, President of the Philippines by virtue of the powers vested in my name by law, do hereby proclaim the period from June 1986 to May 1987 as the Year of the Protection of Filipino Exploited Children."

## 4. Lessons learned in the campaigns

### Ingredients for success

In a real sense the Muro-ami and Pagsanjan campaigns are success stories. They have brought about significant reductions in the number of children involved in these hazardous activities. Thus, while it is estimated that there are still some 300 young boys engaged in prostitution in Pagsanjan, this is far fewer than were involved before the campaign was stepped up in 1985. In Muro-ami fishing, the Task Force monitoring visits also indicate that while previously children below 18 years old made up the bulk of the swimmers and divers, their number has now dwindled to around 50.

This is not to say that the campaigns have been a complete success, because child exploitation still exists. Nor is it to say that the problem will not re-escalate or reappear in another guise in the future. But this report has hopefully illustrated that to the degree that the campaigns have been organized, consistent, and responsive to the real needs of children and of their families, they have provided effective protection for children.

The people who have waged these campaigns generally attribute their effectiveness to a combination of five crucial factors.<sup>1</sup> These can be summarized as follows:

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- (i) the creation of a new or heightened public awareness about the exploitative nature and dangerous conditions of child prostitution and child labour in Muro-ami fishing;
- (ii) the creation of an openness to change (in terms of both behaviour and attitudes) among children, their parents and the people directly involved with them;
- (iii) the provision of alternatives for the children to enable them to disentangle themselves from their present occupations;
- (iv) the creation of alternatives for the adults, especially the parents, so that they may become less dependent on their children;
- (v) the provision of a minimum of protective measures for the children through mutually supportive local and national, governmental and non-governmental actions.

## Heightened public awareness

The groups involved in the campaigns knew that, unjust though it was, the burden of proof was on them and not on those who exploited the children. They had to gather the evidence concerning the dangers that children faced in these types of activities. The law may already declare such activities illegal and dangerous for children, but the people who mattered still had to be convinced.

These same crusading groups also had to show that even though the children are sometimes willing recruits, they are victims — generally misled or deceived by adults into the work with promises of immediate improvement in their lives or in the lives of their families. The children's expectations are that their labour will bring more money, greater security, a real opportunity to contribute to family income and welfare and greater acceptance from their parents and peers. Most children enter these activities only knowing little of what the work actually implies in terms of their physical safety and psychological well-being, their health and mental development. They are certainly unaware that they are restricting rather than expanding their employment options



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for the future. The campaigners had to demonstrate that once trapped in these activities, the children have to be rescued; it is extremely difficult for them to leave without assistance.

Stories about the painful plight of these children had to be well-documented, based as much on fact as possible. Even if incomplete, the information had to be solid and credible. The campaign had to produce a critical body of evidence that could not be ignored. Furthermore, once the information became available, it had to be brought to the attention of the right people, through the right channels. For instance, it was important that the documentary on Pagsanjan appeared on the prestigious and top-rating *60 minutes* show in Australia, that the local TV exposé appeared on the only station not then controlled by Government and that the investigative reports came out in the newspapers and magazines with the widest circulation nationally. The aim was to obtain publicity in those media whose audiences consisted primarily of the intelligentsia and policy-makers, all of whom, if properly motivated, could do something about the problem.

The situation studies on children in especially difficult circumstances and child labour, as well as the study coordinated by the Department of Labor on Muro-ami fishing, were all designed with a specific purpose in mind and were put to good use by their respective readership. For instance, they legitimized the plans of action drawn up by the Task Forces.

The experience in advocacy also demonstrated the need for sustained effort, for constantly and consistently reminding the public about the issues at hand, to ensure that they are not shelved as they are overshadowed by other topics that reach the headlines. One journalist put it succinctly in a report on child prostitution:

Indeed, action at last, on a problem that was brought to public attention two years ago. But the question is, how long can it be sustained? Legislation is passed, and even improved upon; the Prime Minister's office cuts through the inert layers of the bureaucracy, but experience has shown that the glare of publicity focused on a particularly odious evil always produces a flurry of official activity, an impressive hustle-bustle which then dies down once public attention shifts its focus. The consistent, persistent enforcement of laws, of rules and regulations, has always been the weak spot of government agencies . . .

When a solution to poverty is nowhere in sight, when official zeal loses its steam and when evil becomes banal so that the cop on the street sees not the humanity of the child peddling his flesh but a solution to his own economic problems, is it back to square one and apathy? (Lorayes, op. cit., p. 49).

## Creating an openness to change

Once public indignation has been aroused and the clamour for change grows, it becomes equally urgent to create an openness to such change on the part of the children who are to be freed from exploitation. This not only means that they must want to leave their work, but also that their parents must be ready and willing to take them back, or must agree to stop pushing them into such activities. Just how critical the attitudes of the children and their families are to a successful outcome becomes more evident when one considers their extreme dependence not only on the work but also on their employers. Both the children and their families are deeply threatened by the possibility of losing the employment and the highly paternalistic relationship it entails, largely because of the material benefits involved. But there are also certain emotional benefits arising from these ties, such as the false sense of caring and security that child prostitutes receive from pimps and clients, or the misplaced pride of the young Muro-ami diver pleased to be employed in a responsible adult occupation. Moreover, even though the children may wish for a way out of their predicament, they frequently believe they have no real choice but to remain. Young girls engaged in prostitution, particularly, tend to feel that they are doomed.

In the campaigns against child prostitution the need for the young victims to undergo a healing process enabling them to become free of their dependence and restore their sense of self-worth is stressed. In this respect the success of the programmes serving child prostitutes depends to a large extent on what are termed "counselling", "value clarification" and "spiritual formation" measures. These techniques are also used with the parents, with additional seminars on the themes of parent effectiveness training and family enrichment.

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The leaders of the campaigns against child involvement in prostitution and Muro-ami fishing tend to be driven by a powerful Christian zeal. They view their work not only as a struggle against the oppressive social and political forces of Philippine society, but also as providing for spiritual welfare. The Council for the Protection of Children in Pagsanjan, ROAD and the leading programmes in Metro Manila are all led by charismatic individuals who see themselves as full-time crusaders, acting out of a sense of social responsibility as Christians. Many were or are still linked to non-governmental organizations previously labelled as "subversive" by the martial law government and, while they openly espouse their religious convictions, may not necessarily enjoy the backing of any religious organization as such.

Among the more active people in the public sector have been: the Director of the Bureau of Women and Young Workers in the Department of Labor, who heads the Task Force on children in Muro-ami fishing; the Executive Director of the Council for the Welfare of Children, who heads the National Task Force on exploited children and the previous Commissioner of Immigration and Deportation. Like many others in the Government who are seriously concerned about child exploitation, they came originally from the private sector, joining the public out of a sincere desire to make a real difference in people's lives and to lend their support to President Aquino. Like the President, they view their work as a mission, believing it to be both their civic duty as public servants and their responsibility as Christians to protect those in society who are poor, weak or disadvantaged.

The following statements by people involved in what is widely considered as among the most effective of the programmes for sexually exploited children (the majority of which are supported by Church groups) reflect the conviction that Biblical teaching on love and living provides the principal impetus to their work:

" . . . The atmosphere we try to create is that of a home", says the Director of the Joint Project on Street Children. "The girls observe a schedule which includes both work and play, action and reflection, individual work and group work. Group activities which come in the form of arts and crafts, drama workshops, dance, singing, and ball games enable the children to channel their negative energies into positive experiences. Group work is also an occasion for the

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social worker to introduce "value clarification" to the girls. Here, she inculcates moral, spiritual and social values which can facilitate the healing of the children.

Our approach does not end with the child; it extends to her family. We provide counselling services to parents, motivating them on good parenting, child rearing, the rights of children, family planning and health care. There are cases when we provide financial assistance to families to help them economically and enhance their parenting capability. The aim is to work out a child's eventual reunion with her family." (Joint Project on Street Children, 1989, pp. 6-7).

" . . . A child prostitute must be coaxed out of the business", says Bessie (house parent in the Joint Project on Street Children). Those now in New Beginnings took the first step by attending Bible classes in the district given by a Protestant group. From there, they were referred to social workers from the Quezon City home who told them about New Beginnings. "We entice them here by saying we have a nice home, they would have new clothes and they would get a chance to study. You don't have to stay if you don't like it, we tell them. But try it out if you want a future", says Bessie.

She emphasizes that "the children must be presented with an attractive alternative, because no matter what we say, their lifestyle is attractive to them. In Mabini, they have lots of money and the chance to do what they want when they want. To them, they are giving up a lot to come here. . . . Besides a warm family life, the youngsters also receive a large dose of religion. They go through several days of a religious seminar that convinces them of God's love and prepares them to be more sensitive to Him . . .". She adds: "In the experience of many other organizations that have tried to deal with prostitutes, alcoholics and drug addicts, change comes slowly or not at all. Unless there's a conversion to God, it's almost useless working with such people. Without the help of the Lord, we would not be able to do anything for these children." (Pelaez-Marfori, 1986, p. 21).

## Creating alternatives for the children

**I**n Pagsanjan child prostitution declined significantly because many of the children involved chose to withdraw from the activity. They were helped to arrive at this decision by local school teachers, by Pastor Castillo and by many others who spent much time talking and listening to them and to their parents. Both the children and the parents stated that what they really needed were viable economic alternatives. For the children, this has meant not only finding other ways of spending their time and energy, but also having alternative employment. The organ-

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izing work of ROAD and CPCP is intended to help the children become involved in social, recreational, training and income-generating activities.

The children in the ROAD programme set up the Youth Organization for the Development of Pagsanjan, with the stated goal of helping their community to eliminate its dependence on child prostitution. This organization holds regular meetings, plans its own activities and is responsible for recruiting new members. Needy children receive some educational assistance and all receive quarterly health checks provided by volunteer medical teams.

As for the children from the fishing villages of Oslob and Santander, the Task Force has recommended alternative income-generating projects — including raising poultry, pigs and quail, and retailing fish — for those displaced. Training and credit and cooperative schemes are also planned, using a revolving loan fund. The community has repeatedly requested that a public high school be built, to enable the children to continue their education to secondary level. This proposal has still to be brought by the Task Force to the attention of the Department of Education. However, the Cebu provincial education authorities claim that budgetary constraints make construction of a new school very unlikely in the near future. The Task Force is now looking into possibilities of private or foreign funding for the construction as part of a larger development project proposed for the southern municipalities of the province.

## Creating alternatives for parents

**I**n Pagsanjan the CPCP and ROAD have helped parents find alternatives to economic dependence on child prostitution, although everyone concerned realizes that much more needs to be done in this area. ROAD has organized parents of former child prostitutes into an informal group which explores ways of helping other parents bring an end to the exploitation of their children. Livelihood projects such as poultry and livestock rearing, and small trading businesses backed by

training and credit have been set up and benefit some 250 families. Perhaps the most important measure for adult employment in Pagsanjan is the improvement by ROAD in the working conditions of the boatmen — this occupation being the traditional mainstay of the tourist industry in the town. ROAD has negotiated with hotel owners, tour operators and tourist officials to obtain fair conditions and pay for some 1,000 boatmen. There are around 2,000 boatmen in Pagsanjan, and their families comprise more than a third of the town's population, but more than half of the poor.<sup>2</sup>

In Oslob and Santander, this move has been paralleled by the Task Force's efforts to improve the working conditions of the adult fishermen employed in the Muro-ami operations. However, apart from the apparent compliance with the prohibition on employing children, little change can be seen in this area. The Task Force recommendations on these matters may of course no longer be relevant because of the recent government ban on the Muro-ami operations. Instead, the Departments of Agriculture and Labor and related agencies are struggling to come up with alternative sources of income for the displaced fishing families.

One proposal is to build an artificial reef dispersal system in which some 1,500 Muro-ami fishermen would be employed to assemble reefs made up principally of discarded rubber tyres strung together (Department of Agriculture and Department of Labor and Employment, 1989). These would be laid out along the coastal and coral reef areas — including those where the Muro-ami operations were once concentrated — where reef destruction has occurred. The project is expected to help replenish the fish population in time and enable the people of Oslob and Santander to benefit again from productive fishing grounds nearer their shores, where legal techniques can be used to great effect.

The project is planned to last two years and those involved would receive a daily subsistence allowance during this period. Former Muro-ami fishing vessels which cannot be transformed for use in other types of fishing may be hired by the project to transport raw materials and the finished reefs. The proposal also suggests that assistance in the form of soft loans should be given to younger fishermen and their families to enable them to set up small economic ventures such as the raising of

quail or retailing of fish. Two projects, soap-making and weaving, involving about 60 local women, have already been organized as a result of earlier efforts by the Task Force and these are due to be expanded to include more women's groups. More recently the Muro-ami Task Force has been negotiating with the provincial government of Cebu over proposed development projects for Oslob and Santander. These include the propagation of fruit trees, the paving of the road connecting Cebu proper to the southern municipalities — thereby cutting travel time by a third — and the improvement and expansion of Santander as the trading link between Cebu and the eastern side of the neighbouring island of Negros, thus increasing economic activity in the area as a whole.

## Protection measures

**A**nother element in the success of the Pagsanjan and Muro-ami campaigns has been their employment of legal measures. Although resort to law is generally rare, on the few occasions that it has been used to extend protection to child victims, it has without doubt had positive results.

For example, the efforts of the local Council for the Protection of Children in Pagsanjan to work closely with the National Bureau of Investigation and the Commission on Immigration have helped keep suspected paedophile tourists at bay. Thus, in the early 1980s around five such individuals were deported and between 1988 and 1989, 26 were arrested and opted for voluntary deportation. However, it is important to note that these arrests — which were made by the national authorities — have aroused the anger and resentment of the local authorities of Pagsanjan, who are protesting that harassment of foreigners is harming the tourist industry in the town and threatening the local economy.

In the case of the Muro-ami operations, the Bureau of Women and Young Workers has successfully negotiated with the recruiters that children below 18 years old should no longer be employed. It is interest-

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ing to speculate why the operators were so ready and willing to agree to this ruling. It may be that compliance with the prohibition on child labour does not entail any additional cost, because adult labour is no longer any more expensive than that of children. Moreover, the small improvements that have been made on board the vessels would have involved little cost for the employers because such expenses are normally deducted anyway from the fishermen's wages. The operators even offered their boats to the Task Force monitoring teams.

This show of good faith on the part of the operators could well have been made in the expectation that the Task Force might be persuaded to reiterate its recommendation to the Government to allow Muro-ami fishing to continue whilst better working conditions and a modified scareline are in force and prohibitions on child involvement enforced. Whatever the reasons, the exclusion of child labour from Muro-ami fishing has been substantially achieved by a simple declaration from the Department of Labor that it is prohibited under the law.

It should be added that to further strengthen and expand the protective net of the law, both the Pagsanjan and Muro-ami groups emphasize the need for increased collaboration and cooperation between non-governmental and governmental agencies and between local and national authorities.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Their experience also reinforces the findings of other similar initiatives as described in A. Bequele and J. Boyden (eds.): *Combating child labour*, Geneva, ILO, 1988.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the Reverend Castillo has been transferred out of Pagsanjan and the organizing efforts among the boatmen have not advanced significantly since his departure.



## 5. Constraints against success

### Public apathy

Continuing public apathy and a lack of political will nationally remain a challenge for the groups crusading against child exploitation in the Philippines. Even those people who now admit that there is a problem still believe that in the face of the widespread poverty in the country there is little that can be done and that, ultimately, other problems are more pressing. This attitude is most upsetting to the campaigning groups, particularly when they encounter it among legislators who they have been lobbying for several years to bring about changes in law. Another problem is the indifference of those government authorities who are explicitly charged with enforcing the law on child protection. For example, local officials in Pagsanjan are suspected of undermining the efforts of the CPCP and other groups to enforce the Bureau of Tourism's circular prohibiting minors from entering hotel premises without their parents or guardians.

Also, even though the Bureau of Women and Young Workers might like to see stricter monitoring of employers of children, it is constrained by the absence of a reliable inspection system. In its Muro-ami investigations, it was dependent on the operators and the regional labour office was reluctant to assume responsibility for monitoring the operations — justifying its position on the grounds of shortages of personnel

and finances, political problems and a perceived threat to personal safety.

Public indifference coupled with the lack of political support can have even more serious consequences. As groups like the CPCP succeed in fending off child prostitution in their own community, the problem is simply transferred to other towns — and thus the number of children affected in the country as a whole may ultimately not diminish. Public apathy has also allowed for the moves against foreign paedophiles to act as a smokescreen for the sexual exploitation of children by nationals — businessmen, government and corporate employees, military personnel, among others. At present, Filipinos constitute the bulk of the clients and research has shown that the children are generally worse off when they are victimized by their own countrymen.

## Constraints at family level

Those who provide assistance for the child victims cite working with the parents as one of the most difficult tasks they face. Given that the children usually enter hazardous occupations through some form of parental default, groups like the CPCP and ROAD in Pagsanjan and the Muro-ami Task Force realize that their primary challenge is to help parents assume full responsibility and care for their children and enable them to become less dependent on their labour. Recent assessments indicate that while the child beneficiaries of programmes for street and sexually exploited children are generally satisfied with and have benefited from the services they receive, the parents as a rule assert that the programmes have made little difference to their circumstances.

Programme personnel still need to establish the most effective ways of working with and supporting parents. Many programmes face the dilemma of deciding whether it is preferable to separate the children altogether from those parents that cannot be rehabilitated or to simply try harder to assist the families. Then again, they find that the most difficult families to work with generally suffer from a range of serious problems, some of which cannot realistically be resolved by the pro-

gramme. It is cases such as these that lead many groups to question the validity of attending to the symptoms rather than attacking the root causes of child exploitation and deprivation.

## Political and economic strength of the opposing forces

**A**nother major constraint in the campaigns is the continuing political and economic strength of those who perpetrate the exploitation of children in prostitution and Muro-ami fishing. Certain local officials and others with vested interests in Pagsanjan's tourist industry are said to be increasingly resentful about the campaigns against foreign paedophiles. They have taken the offensive, filing charges in court against members of the CPCP for alleged harassment of children. Those foreign paedophiles who still visit the town remain confident that their money and influence are sufficient to warrant the continued hospitality of at least some of the town's officials and families.

In Muro-ami fishing, the operators have virtually stopped recruiting children. But even though the whole industry has been declared illegal, it continues unabated. The Abines family is secure in the knowledge that the fishing families in Oslob and Santander are on their side. In May 1989, for example, DOLE personnel were hesitant to revisit the communities as planned, because they had received news that the angry residents had put up streamers in the main streets which read "We love Muro-ami". Also, significantly, one of the Abines family is a member of Congress and heads the Congressional Committee which deals with all questions pertaining to the fishing industry.

Another problem is that national public sector policy tends to undermine the campaign and indeed reinforces these exploitative activities, in that an explicit priority is given to tourism and export-oriented commercial fishing because of the high levels of foreign revenue they generate. There is always the temptation to assume the attitude that, given the present economic situation in the Philippines, the hard currency earnings from sex tourism and Muro-ami fishing are far too substantial to be

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eliminated; the hapless situation of a few thousand children caught up in these activities may seem inconsequential by comparison with the benefits accruing.

## 6. Conclusion: Opportunities for further action

Given what it has been possible to achieve over the course of just a few years of intensive work in advocacy, and given that the remaining constraints to eliminating or stopping future resurgence of child involvement in these two very hazardous activities are clearly identifiable, certain opportunities for further action present themselves.

The first possibility is to continue undertaking situation analyses and investigations, to ensure that the problem of child involvement in prostitution and in Muro-ami fishing remains in the forefront of the public's consciousness. Hopefully this heightened awareness will result in quicker and more adequate responses from both the governmental and non-governmental sectors.

For groups like STOP, CWAFFPI, the local CPCP in Pagsanjan, and the other agencies collaborating with them in the effort to combat child prostitution, the most relevant and immediate need of such investigative work is to assess the effectiveness of their own programmes. The intention of systematically monitoring and evaluating their activities is reflected both in the National Plan of Action and in their individual plans of action. However, little headway has so far been made in this regard. If existing programmes are to reach the many more children who need to be reached, and if they are to really make a difference to the lives of the children and of their families, much more has to be learned about the strengths of current efforts. Much also needs to be learned about

the gaps, so that more adequate programmes and services can be developed.

Another important need in the fight against both child prostitution and child labour in Muro-ami fishing is for a more comprehensive study of the political economy of the affected communities. Essentially, the truly viable means of enabling the fishing families to become less dependent on the labour of their children must be established. This implies that plans for improving the economic situation of the families must be integrated with those for the development of the community as a whole, which in turn must be set in the broader context of provincial and regional economic development. Both Pagsanjan and Oslob and Santander happen to be in regions of the country which are currently experiencing particularly high rates of economic growth. The opportunities for replacing tourism in Pagsanjan and fishing in Oslob and Santander as the primary economic activities must be more thoroughly studied, so that the local economies may continue to grow, but no longer at the expense of local children.

A third area in which investigation can be useful is in increasing public awareness of the fact that Filipinos and not foreigners are the main offenders in the sexual exploitation of Filipino children. Exposing this issue remains a major challenge for STOP, CWAFPI, the Council for the Welfare of Children and the concerned government agencies. More complete evidence on the subject might overcome the seeming indifference of national legislators, local governments and law enforcement agencies. Already, there is much data to build on, in terms of case studies and local situation analyses.

Media support and community education have proved crucial to conveying the campaigns against child exploitation to the public. Recent campaigns have succeeded in making the public aware that these problems really do exist. Future campaigns should perhaps concentrate more on making people understand that children need effective protection against exploitation. The crusading groups can take greater advantage of the openness of the present Government and its explicit commitment to preventing and reducing child exploitation in all its forms. Also, the Council for the Welfare of Children, made up as it is largely of

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government departments and agencies, could pursue more effectively its objective of obtaining concrete support and sustained action on behalf of exploited children. Similarly, the Task Forces on Pagsanjan and Muro-ami could exert greater pressure on and negotiate directly with those — particularly local officials, local police, local courts, town or village councils — who are charged with implementing protective measures for children.

It is evident that denouncing or banning child exploitation in prostitution and Muro-ami fishing will have little effect in the absence of viable economic alternatives for the children and their families. The campaign groups have agreed to call for greater emphasis and greater financial and technical support to be given to developing such alternatives. A priority for further action therefore is the identification of ways of generating remunerative employment not only for the child victims and their families, but also for the wider community. Consequently, the Task Forces are increasingly compelled to look beyond their limited membership and seek ideas and support from other groups who are more experienced in matters such as enterprise development, business management and local economic planning.

There is also a need to set the proposed economic alternatives within the broader context of the economies of Pagsanjan and Oslob and Santander and of the provinces and regions to which they belong. Conversely, provincial and regional development plans must take into account the urgent need to create relevant economic opportunities at the local level, with the immediate objective of eliminating dependence on exploitative child labour.

Creating new sources of income for the people of Pagsanjan, Oslob and Santander implies their participation in the restructuring of the economic life of their communities. For the children, particularly, this means having greater access to schooling, being better motivated to stay in school and having opportunities to earn whilst at school. For their families, and for the adults in general in these communities, creating alternatives implies gaining access to more remunerative employment and benefiting from less exploitative working conditions and more stable incomes.

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In the case of Pagsanjan, there may be important opportunities in the large-scale agro-industrial development being proposed for the province and the surrounding region. The prospects for significantly increasing municipal and provincial revenues through linkages with these schemes, such that they compensate for the financial loss likely to result from the demise of the sex tourism industry in Laguna, should be analysed and emphasized.

In Muro-ami, smaller scale and more appropriate methods of commercial fishing should be studied and implemented in the region. The Department of Agriculture seeks to support small-scale fishing and to see marine resources regenerated and every effort should be made to achieve these goals.

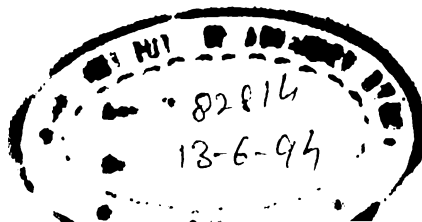
Any new employment sources that are developed locally must be replicable elsewhere or the problems of child exploitation will only move to other regions. The ban on child prostitution and child labour in Muro-ami fishing must be national, enforcement concentrating on the most vulnerable groups and communities. The relatively successful campaigns against child exploitation in Pagsanjan, Oslob and Santander have already resulted in the transfer of these activities to neighbouring communities. Thus, a number of *barangays* in Laguna continue to welcome foreign paedophiles and other small towns on the islands of Negros and Siquijor have now become recruiting grounds for the Muro-ami operations.

In the final analysis, there is no escaping the need for more structural changes in the economy and in the development initiatives promoted by Government. Ultimately, the Government must eliminate sex tourism as a major industry and source of dollar earnings and must also ensure that the Muro-ami operations cease.



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ILO-Child  
labour



# Children and hazardous work in the Philippines

Despite early attempts by governments throughout the world to eliminate child labour through legislation, the problem remains a grave one, especially in hazardous occupations and industries.

The historical change in emphasis in the Philippines from intervention through legislation to direct action at the local level is well documented by the author. Particular attention is paid to efforts to eliminate child involvement in prostitution and Muro-ami deep sea fishing.

The crucial role of advocacy, public awareness-raising and community mobilization are all highlighted in this study of the fight against child labour.

It is recognized that there are no simple solutions to the problem which is compounded by the low income and the limited employment opportunities.

Given the complexity of the problem, collaboration between different agencies, interest groups and the government is of crucial importance in tackling the issue and instigating social change.

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