



**ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS PROGRAM
IN THE PHILIPPINES**

**A QUARTERLY REPORT FROM THE ASIA FOUNDATION
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ANTI-TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS PROGRAM
Increasing Information, Communication, and Collaboration to Prevent Domestic and International Trafficking of Filipinos and Protect Victims
Quarterly Report 01 October to 31 December 2006

This quarterly report covers activities from October 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006 under the Anti-Trafficking Program of The Asia Foundation entitled ***Increasing Information, Communication, and Collaboration to Prevent Domestic and International Trafficking of Filipinos and Protect Victims*** through a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with grant number AID 492-A-00-06-00034. The grant covers the period from October 1, 2006 to September 30, 2008.

Background

The Philippines is one of the leading sources of migrant workers in the world. As of December 2003, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration reported 7.76 million (documented) Filipinos working abroad. Although many of these workers travel abroad and undertake their assignments as planned, a significant number of Filipinos fall prey to traffickers. These traffickers make false promises of good jobs, but in fact recruit them for sex-work and/or exploitative labor – including child labor. There are well-documented studies on the worst forms of child labor, which are chilling. While accurate numbers of Filipinos who end up being trafficked are not available, estimates are in the tens of thousands annually.¹

To address this serious problem, the Philippines has taken some significant steps in recent years. It was one of the first countries in Asia to pass a definitive law against trafficking (in 2003). The law mandated the creation of the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), composed of representatives from government agencies and nongovernmental organizations, to coordinate a collaborative response to trafficking and to oversee the implementation of the law. With the new anti-trafficking law in place, from 2002 to 2006, The Asia Foundation (the Foundation), with support from the East Asia Pacific Bureau of the U.S. Department of State (DOS-EAP), worked with both governmental and nongovernmental organizations to implement the new Anti-Trafficking Law. The project supported the IACAT to conduct Strategic Action Planning, which resulted in a draft National Strategic Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons to coordinate the activities of governmental and nongovernmental anti-trafficking agencies. With project support (through WomenLEAD, a Filipino law group), judges and prosecutors have been trained on how to prosecute anti-trafficking cases under the new law. This national training was complemented by a program to empower victims of trafficking to access justice through the legal system and to understand their rights under the new anti-trafficking law.

¹ The U.S. Department of State's 2006 Trafficking in Persons Report's global estimates range from 600,000 to 800,000 persons trafficked across international boundaries, with 80 percent being female and up to 50 percent minors. (<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/>)

Local-level anti-trafficking activities included community-based trafficking prevention initiatives in at-risk areas and the operation of integrated halfway houses for trafficking victims. With funding from the United States Department of State, the Foundation supported the Visayan Forum Foundation (VF)² to establish two halfway houses in the Manila and Davao ports. The halfway houses provide temporary shelter, repatriation, referral, and telephone hotline counseling services to victims. The Foundation's support to VF has facilitated inter-agency cooperation on prevention, protection, and reintegration of victims of internal trafficking in the Philippines. Indeed, VF's three-pronged anti-trafficking strategy was hailed as an international best practice in the State Department's TIP report of 2005 and the strategy has been extended to other parts of the country.

As a direct result of these strategies, in the last three years, more than 8,000 women and children received protective care services through the Port Halfway House. VF and its partners filed 12 cases involving 46 victims/survivors under RA 9208 (Anti-trafficking Law of 2003) and an additional four cases under the Child Trafficking Provisions of RA 7658 (An Act Prohibiting the Employment of Children Below 15 Years of Age in Public and Private Undertakings). These partnerships now include a broad spectrum of partners from the government, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, service providers, shipping companies, local government officials, vendors, stevedores, and employers and business associations.

Despite these important steps by The Asia Foundation, as well as other initiatives by concerned groups, serious gaps in combating trafficking remain. Currently, there is no comprehensive anti-trafficking database. Such basic information as current laws and regulations and directories of services for victims is not readily available, nor is it easy to exchange information that can facilitate better communication and coordination among actors to stop trafficking. An IACAT Strategic Planning Workshop in 2004 cited lack of a central database as a serious impediment to effective coordination between relevant agencies on repatriation and protection. Ability to share information and cooperate with agencies and organizations in destination countries is even worse.

Although the major trafficking routes to other countries are well known, there have been inadequate efforts to educate Filipino workers before they leave the country to understand the risks of being trafficked or how to protect themselves after they reach their destination. Education about safe migration is badly needed.

While there have been many awareness raising campaigns in the country, there remains much to be done to mobilize local communities and local government officials to take responsibility for educating those planning to migrate in search of work or to organize to prevent trafficking. Similarly, while there have been some effective efforts to prevent trafficking of people

² Visayan Forum Foundation is a Philippines-based NGO working to empower Filipino migrants, especially those working in the invisible and informal sectors, like domestic workers and trafficked women and children. It is most known for its pioneering and documented work on domestic workers in the Philippines, especially in pushing for the Domestic Workers' Bill or the *Batas Kasambahay*. It is also in the forefront of providing services to trafficking victims through its Halfway Houses in major Philippine Ports. In 2005, its halfway house program, which was initially supported by The Asia Foundation, has been cited as an international best practice by the US TIP Report because it was able to mobilize public and private sector partnerships in attacking trafficking in Philippine ports.

through the country's ports—some of which have been supported by the Foundation—there has not been a concerted effort to prevent trafficking at airports, which are the main departure points for workers going abroad. The public-private partnership with the domestic shipping industry to combat trafficking needs to be replicated with the airline industry.

Program Description

The goal of the program is to prevent trafficking of Filipinos and protect victims within and across borders. The Program has three objectives:

1. To develop domestic capacity to prevent trafficking and protect victims;
2. To mobilize public and local government support for anti-trafficking efforts; and
3. To strengthen coordination and collaboration among United States Government (USG)-funded anti-trafficking projects.

To achieve these objectives, the Foundation will undertake a range of interventions, including:

- Developing domestic capacity to prevent trafficking and protect victims through:
 1. conduct of a study of trafficking at airports;
 2. establishment of help desks and anti-trafficking task forces at airports;
 3. capacity building of anti-trafficking groups; and
 4. research on implementation of Anti-Trafficking law.
- Mobilizing public and local government support for anti-trafficking efforts through:
 1. mobilizing local communities to prevent trafficking; and
 2. media campaigns and increased media reportage of trafficking issues;
- Strengthening coordination and collaboration among USG-funded anti-trafficking projects through:
 1. monthly coordination meetings among Asia Foundation partners and other USG-funded anti-trafficking groups to discuss project updates, mechanisms for collaboration, etc;
 2. focus group discussions and anti-trafficking forums in collaboration with USG-funded anti-trafficking partners; and
 3. Annual National Anti-Trafficking Conferences (2007 and 2008) in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking.

Below are the activities of the first quarter.

Developing domestic capacity to prevent trafficking and protect victims

This objective includes the whole range of capacity-building activities with the project partners. It includes:

- ***Study of Trafficking at Airports.*** The Foundation will support a short study to illuminate how people are trafficked through and at airports to inform the design of the transit center, help desks, and safe houses that will be established by the Visayan Forum Foundation in partnership with the Manila International Airport Authority. The study will also inform training and public education initiatives.
- ***Establishing Help Desks and Anti-Trafficking Task Forces in Airports.*** The Asia Foundation will provide start-up funds to the Visayan Forum Foundation for the half-way house at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA). The Foundation will support Help Desks and train Inter-agency Airport Task Forces to work with the half-way houses to identify potential and actual trafficking victims, send them to the half-way houses for shelter, and arrest traffickers. The Foundation will also support training for staff of the help desks and train members of airport task forces. Training topics will include: orientation on what is trafficking; how to identify vulnerable people; what to do when trafficking is suspected; and how to organize an intervention to protect victims and/or arrest traffickers.
- ***Capacity Building of Anti-Trafficking Groups.*** Capacity building activities include: ASoG's Advocacy Training; BRIDGES's technical assistance on program management and organizational development; the Foundation's financial management training; VSO Bahaginan's technical assistance on Basic Volunteer Management; VFR's Basic Fund Raising Course and mentoring select NGOs to help them effectively diversify funding sources; PMFI's media training; and CCJD's writing workshop.
- ***Research on the Implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Law.*** The Foundation will collaborate with the IACAT to conduct an independent short-term assessment of the implementation of RA 9208 – the gains and gaps of the first five years of implementation.

Highlights (01 October – 31 December 2006)

- From October 1 – December 31, 2006, the Foundation conducted numerous meetings with its project partners to develop programs and proposals. On November 16-17, 2006, officers of PMFI, Probe, VSO, Foundation for Communication Initiatives (who was not able to join the first partners meeting), Newsbreak, VFR, VF and CCJD attended The Asia Foundation-organized Grant Management Seminar in Tagaytay. Those who were unable to attend will send participants to the Grant and Financial Management Seminar to be held on February 7-9, 2007.
- On December 6, 2006, in connection with objective to establish help desks at airports, Visayan Forum Foundation conducted the first of a series of Joint Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) – Visayan Forum Workshop on Airport Policies and Anti-Trafficking Issues, at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Complex. MIAA personnel, law enforcers deployed at the NAIA, and members of the NAIA Task Force Against Trafficking attended the session. Representatives from The Asia Foundation, the U.S. Embassy, USAID, and the International Labor Organization addressed the group. During the workshop, participants listed the specific needs to

combat trafficking at the NAIA, primary of which are their need for more information sharing and training on anti-trafficking.

Mobilizing public and local government support for anti-trafficking efforts

• *Mobilizing Local Communities to Prevent Trafficking*

The Foundation will coordinate with the national leaders of the League of Provinces of the Philippines, League of Cities of the Philippines, League of Municipalities of the Philippines, Liga ng mga Barangay ng Pilipinas, League of Vice Governors of the Philippines, Vice-Mayors League of the Philippines, Provincial Board Members League of the Philippines, Philippine Councilors League, National Movement of Young Legislators, Lady Local Legislators League and Pambansang Pederasyon ng mga Sangguniang Kabataan (collectively known as Leagues) to facilitate meetings with local stakeholders so that they could become allies in advocating for local-level responses to the trafficking issue. Some of the local responses could include: local-level ordinances to address trafficking in persons; budget allocation for local mechanisms to address trafficking in persons; and livelihood projects for women survivors. In addition, The Asia Foundation will collaborate with a network of elected women councilors in raising awareness of the trafficking in persons issue among elected women officials. The Foundation, in collaboration with the representatives of anti-trafficking groups, will provide orientation seminars on trafficking in persons for the network of elected women councilors in order for them to effectively work for local ordinances to implement anti-trafficking programs in the communities they serve.

Highlights (01 October – 31 December 2006)

- In December 2006, the Foundation had met with IACAT representatives to discuss plans for creating a model local –level ordinance against trafficking, which could be presented to the Leagues in anti-trafficking road show campaigns. IACAT will form a technical working group (TWG) to develop the model ordinance.

• *Media Campaigns and Increased Media Reportage of Trafficking Issues*

The Foundation will support a number of media partners to conduct a well-orchestrated media campaign to increase awareness of trafficking and generate public support for anti-trafficking programs. Specifically, it will work with:

- Probe (TV) to create a documentary film;
- Newsbreak (print and online newsmagazine) to feature stories on trafficking in persons;
- Center for Community Journalism and Development (CCJD), to produce compelling stories on human trafficking, and provide community journalists with an online forum for their stories on human trafficking;
- Foundation for Communication Initiatives (FOCI), to produce radio infomercials on trafficking issues; and

- Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas (KBP) for the strategic airing of the TIP radio infomercials, as well as provide opportunities for TIP resource persons/Speakers Bureau to have discussions on the issue in several prominent radio programs.

Highlights (01 October – 31 December 2006)

- From October – December 2006, the Foundation met with the media partners mentioned to discuss the project, specifically the plan for a media campaign. All have expressed interest in the project, and agreed to send proposals. A media campaign against trafficking is scheduled to commence on the second quarter of 2007.

Strengthening coordination and collaboration among USG-funded anti-trafficking projects

For this objective, the Foundation will convene its anti-trafficking partners, as well as other USG-funded anti-trafficking groups in order to strengthen the collaboration and coordination amongst the partners and the various stakeholders (government agencies, local officials, community members, and other NGOs). The Foundation will convene the various stakeholders in order to have a coordinated approach in addressing the issue of trafficking in persons, e.g., how to increase convictions through collaborative working relations among law enforcement officers, local government officials, business groups, religious leaders, medical professionals, counselors, shelter home managers, livelihood trainers, NGO representatives, government social workers, and other members of the community. The Foundation will link its anti-trafficking partners and other USG-funded anti-trafficking groups with various media groups and non-traditional partners in order to create media mileage and generate private sector support for the anti-trafficking activities.

Highlights (01 October – 31 December 2006)

- On October 13, 2006 The Asia Foundation conducted the first Partners' Meeting. The primary purpose of the meeting was to introduce the project to prospective grantees and partners and outline their potential activities. Eleven organizations were represented, including Ateneo School of Government (ASoG), BRIDGES, Center for Community Journalism and Development (CCJD), Interagency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), Newsbreak, Probe Media Foundation (PMFI), Probe Productions (Probe), Unlimited Productions (UPI), Venture for Fund Raising (VFR), Visayan Forum Foundation (VF), and VSO-Bahaginan (VSO). Funding partners USAID (including its ROLE project) and the US Embassy were also represented by Ms. Teresa Robielos and Mr. Barry Fullerton respectively. Maribel Buenaobra, Managing Program Officer of The Asia Foundation, presented to prospective partners the project background and objectives. Prospective partners gave brief introductions about their organizations and their plans according to the project.

The planned activities include the following:

- ASoG will provide capacity-building on Advocacy for anti-TIP NGOs;
- BRIDGES will provide NGOs with technical assistance on project management and organizational development;
- CCJD will provide training on technical writing to NGOs and community journalists and produce articles focusing on the trafficking issue and feature these on community newspapers and online;
- IACAT will produce local ordinances and other mechanisms to prevent trafficking and advocate them at the local government, research on the implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Law (RA 9208), and conduct an annual Anti-Trafficking Conference;
- Newsbreak will publish articles on the trafficking issue in its magazine and post them online;
- Probe Media Foundation will provide training to NGOs on facing the media, messaging and communications;
- Probe Productions will produce documentaries on trafficking and air the material on ABS-CBN and ABS-CBN News Channel;
- UPI plans to produce infomercials;
- VFR will train anti-TIP NGOs on fund raising and fund management
- VF will conduct research on trafficking in airports, build a held-desk and half-way house at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, and organize a task force against trafficking at the airport (or assist any existing one);
- VSO will conduct a training on volunteer management for anti-TIP NGOs; and
- The Asia Foundation will coordinate all the activities to maximize the efforts and the results, conduct Financial Management Training for its partners and anti-TIP NGOs who are in partnership with USAID and the U.S. Government, and organize quarterly focus group discussions about trafficking so that partners will have a better knowledge about the current issues concerning trafficking.

All participants have agreed to submit to the Foundation their proposed activities, and meet with the Foundation staff individually to discuss the details of the partnership. The Foundation, in the meantime, will await USAID approval, and meet with the partners when the work plan has been approved.

Other Activities

Highlights (01 October – 31 December 2006)

- The Foundation submitted the project annual work plan to USAID on November 15, 2006.
- Letters of Agreement are being drafted for the project proposals approved by the program officer.

Next Steps

With the approval of the project annual work plan, the Foundation shall conduct a second partners meeting to lay out specific activities per objective as well as timelines for the first year (until September 2007). The Foundation and IACAT have agreed to hire a coordinator to assist the IACAT Secretariat in organizing all its activities and liaise with funding agencies, IACAT members, anti-trafficking NGOs, and other actions of the council. The person is expected to be hired by February 2007.

A Grant and Financial Management Seminar will be held on February 7-9, 2007 in Tagaytay City. Participants will come from project partners and anti-trafficking organizations who are partners of USAID and US Embassy.

For the next quarter, the Foundation will hold individual meetings with the partner organizations as well as prepare and issue letters of agreement with the partner organizations to begin the implementation of the project activities.