

Combating Human Trafficking in the Philippines

Human trafficking is a major problem facing the Philippines... affecting as many as 100-thousand kids across the country. Well know rescued kids are taking their traffickers to court with the help of one advocacy foundation. Let's take a look.

STORY:

They appear happy and relaxed but behind the laughter is a terrible secret. These children are all victims of child trafficking in the Philippines. They've been given shelter at this safe house in Manila where they're taught skills to help rebuild their lives.

Poverty is the main reason children end up victims of trafficking.

One victim thought she had secured a cleaning job abroad for 400 U.S. dollars a month. Instead she was destined for a life of prostitution. Her identity has been hidden for her protection. She was picked up by the authorities and bought to the safe house.

["Zorayda", Trafficking Victim]:

"I know that I'm still a child, and I also know that it's wrong for children to work, but I did it only because I want to help my parents."

The children are also given psychological counseling by trained professionals. Rebecca Ballesteros is a social worker at the center. She says fighting between the country's Military and Muslim separatists adds to the children's vulnerability.

[Rebecca Ballesteros, Social Worker]:

"It's what makes things difficult, especially with the ongoing war. What would you rather choose to do: die, stay in the war zone, or find a job somewhere else? That's the vulnerability the recruiters take advantage of."

The Philippines has anti-trafficking legislation but efforts to combat the problem are hampered by crippling corruption and lack of resources.