

Situational Analysis of Child Prostitution in Iligan City*
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INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Children are said to be the future of the nation. For them to become better and effective adult members of the society, they are sent to school at the age of 6 to 18 years for the much needed training and education. Ironically, in most developing countries, like the Philippines, children work as family breadwinners, or to augment family income as indicated by their increasing number on the streets, factories, and farms. (PDI, Dec. 27, 1990). Experts expressed that the growing number of children participating in livelihood activities can be attributed to the worsening economic conditions in the country. Instead of being in school, these children are engaged in various types of occupations. They are scavengers in Smokey Mountain, cane cutters in Negros, vegetable planters in La Trinidad Valley in Benguet and muro-ami divers in Cebu and Palawan, to cite a few examples. Many of the poor young Filipino children are joining the labor force despite a law banning child labor. (PDI, Dec. 27, 1990).

In rural areas, poor families generally involve their children in farm work and household chores. This is expected because these families cannot afford to hire farm labor and/or household helpers. Urban poor children are living in more dangerous situations compared to their rural counterparts. Denied of the basic right to a normal healthy way of life because of extreme poverty, children are robbed of their dignity when they become victims of prostitution. In a civil society, allowing children to engage in commercial sex trade is unforgivable.

Children born to poor and marginalized families tend to become victims of prostitution. The ILO Report (1994) shows that the most disadvantaged regions of the country, where poverty, unemployment, landlessness and armed conflict combine to deny children and their families the prospect of a secure future, are natural target areas for unscrupulous recruitment agencies. Marginalized families who could not find employment in the urban areas tend to resort to any means in order to survive. They are easily deceived and lured by “false promises and cash incentives” offered by illegal recruiters. Children who could not work as factory workers or domestic servants generally end up as victims of prostitution.

In Iligan City, reports reaching the Office of Department of Labor and Employment, Region XII show that the number of children engaged in commercial sex trade is increasing. This problem was brought to the attention of Child Labor Program-Technical Working Group (CLP-TWG) of Iligan City Project Implementation Committee (PIC). Ten (10) members from different line agencies - DOLE, CSWD, PNP, DILG, CHO, PIA, and NASLU, formed a team and conducted an ocular

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survey of nightspots in the City on March 12, 1997. The group headed by the PIC-chairman, has visited eleven (11) entertainment establishments. Of the total number of female entertainers (61 GROs) interviewed, around 19 or 31 percent belong to age group 14-18 years old. The ocular survey yielded limited information and covered only those who are visibly employed as guest relation officers or waitresses in Karaoke Bars. The data, though limited, have shown evidence that there are children employed in places where the probability of the occurrence of prostitution is high.

In view of the above circumstances, the Department of Labor and Employment, Region XII expressed the need to verify and validate the involvement of children in prostitution. Hence, the study was undertaken for this purpose.

1. 2 Importance of the Study

The study is in line with the commitment of DOLE XII and UNICEF to protect and ameliorate the plight of child workers or youth trapped in the bondage of prostitution. These children live in very difficult situations already divested of their dignity and future even before reaching the age of adulthood.

This study is expected to generate data on the nature and causes of prostitution in Iligan City. The findings may be used by the City government to formulate specific areas of action that can effectively minimize, if not totally eliminate children's participation in commercial sex trade and to help those who are already victims of prostitution.

1. 3 Objectives of the Study

Generally, this research project is designed to do a situational analysis of Child prostitution in Iligan City. Suggestions and recommendations for alternative strategies to lessen and prevent the involvement of children in the commercial sex trade shall be likewise generated.

Its specific objectives are:

1. to determine the patterns of child prostitution in terms of magnitude and distribution and its causes;
2. to determine people's perception of the extent of the problem of child prostitution;
3. to find out the responses of the government and non-government agencies in terms of programs to avert the cases of child prostitution in the area;
4. to describe the characteristics of children who are victims of prostitution, their families and their communities;

5. to come up with recommendations for alternative measures to respond to the problem of child prostitution in the area.

1.4 Review of Related Literature

Very limited data are available on the matter of child prostitution. Cases are reported on children who are sexually abused. Similarly, reports on the cases of child workers, street children, scavengers and juvenile delinquencies exist. There are several studies conducted about the health and nutrition status of poor families and their children, living in urban squatter areas. In an article written by Constantino C. Tejero (Sunday Inquirer Magazine: May 29, 1994) entitled The Crimes of Children: Anthem for Doomed Youth “, the case of a 14 years old female child engaged in prostitution was featured. The author as “slim, dusky, rather tall describes the girl for her age, and relatively good looking, averaged two clients a night.” The average monthly income generated by the girl in this activity is P 7,000. It was also revealed in this article that the girl was a user of solvent and marijuana and could finish five bottles of beer. The girl cited in this case was a stay-in of the National School for Girls, Marilac Hills, Alabang. This institution, according to the author, has a mixed population of youths with behavioral problems, youth offenders with qualified thefts as the usual offense, those engaged in prostitution and a host of other questionable characters, e.g., the sexually abused, stowaways, battered women, unwed mothers and their babies.

The Manila Bulletin dated May 9, 1996, reported that “ the Thai-based End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT) pressure group estimated that the Philippines has around 300,000 children working as prostitutes, although Filipino estimates are lower.”

The book, “ Women of a Lesser Cost “ written by Chant and McIluaine (1995) provided some data on the characteristics of sex workers in Cebu and Boracay. The preference for Teenagers and younger women often leads to under-age recruitment and falsification of data or the actual age of the applicants. The study also revealed the partiality of foreign customers of entertainment establishments in Cebu for young women (14-18 years old) because they are regarded as having the “best bodies”, “fresh” and “clean” - less likely to have diseases.

The proliferation of commercial sex industry in the Philippines is generally attributed to the increasing number of entertainment establishments in almost all urban cities of the country such as nightclubs, Karaoke Bars, disco pubs, massage parlors, casas/brothels and streets of red light district. Added to this structure is the promotion of tourist spots in the country like beach resorts, water falls, hidden springs and the like. “ The Philippine government had been so compliant in allowing sex tourism in the country that it had wiped out opportunities for legitimate tourism.” (Burgmann, Mla. Bulletin, May 9, 1996).

In review of literature on child prostitution, though inadequate, revealed that young girls engaged in the flesh trade because of economic reasons, negligence of parents, lack of decent job opportunities and the flourishing business of sex trade in metro-cities and tourist spots in the country.

1.5 Review Methods and Materials

The study employed qualitative methods in data collection namely: (1) Review of existing documents/records from service statistics such as the Office of Social Welfare and Development Services; City Health Office; Church-based NGOs and other agencies that extend services to victims of prostitutions; (2) Interview of Key informants who have direct contact with child prostitutes and have shown willingness to help the victims; (3) Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) of individuals with knowledge of children who are engaged in commercial sex trade and the child sex workers, and (4) Case Study of selected child prostitutes.

Two researchers from MSU-IIT in Iligan City participated in the data gathering. They conducted interviews with key informants, consisting of fifteen (15) individuals who come from GOs and NGOs like the City Health Office, DOLE District Office, Quarantine Office, Barangay Council, UCCP; Business Establishment, Press Club, PNP, Ranao Women and Children Resource Inc., Cultural Affairs Office, National High School; and Philippine Coastguard Office. They also did case studies of five (5) child prostitutes.

The review of existing records from service statistics was expected to generate data on:

- (a) the patterns of child prostitution in terms of magnitude and distribution;
- (b) the responses of the government and non-government agencies on child prostitution problem in the area;
- (c) the socio-economic characteristics of child sex workers, their families and communities.

However, the offices of OSWDs, City Health, DOLE XII, Church-based NGOs and other sources yielded very limited information. No effort has been exerted yet to fully document the cases of prostitution involving children in the area in terms of magnitude, distribution and responses of GOs and NGOs to the problem.

A one-page interview guide was developed and used for the conduct of interviews with selected key informants. It includes questions that elicited data on the respondents' perceptions of the extent and causes of child prostitution in the area; the government and non-government agencies programs extended to victims of child prostitution; and their recommendations on how this particular problems can be effectively responded to.

The focus group discussions (FGDs) entailed two (2) groups of participants. The first FGD was composed of GOs and NGOs representatives. This was held on September 25, 1997 at the Manila Cristina Hotel, Iligan City. The following day, September 26, another FGD was conducted with children who are engaged in the sex trade. The research team had decided to hold the FGD at the Maze Park where the participants were given freedom, privacy and ample time to express and articulate their experiences as commercial sex workers.

It took about three (3) months to complete the case study due to the following reasons: (1) The case study writers had a hard time convincing the victims to submit for interviews because of

time constraints on the part of the latter. These children work during night time and sleep during daytime; (2) The live-in partners of the respondents strongly refused the case study activities, thus the interview sessions were done only in their absence; (3) The case study included sensitive topics which require longer time to document the causes, condition, problems and experiences of the victims of prostitution.

Five (5) child prostitutes were interviewed for the case study documentation in order to gather qualitative data regarding themselves, their families and the communities where they live. These data pertain to the problems of the victims and causes of prostitution.

1. 6 Locale of the Study

Iligan City is strategically located on the northeastern coast of Mindanao, bounded by the provinces of Bukidnon and Misamis Oriental, Lanao Norte province of Central Mindanao, Cagayan de Oro City and Lanao Sur province of ARMM.

It is the base of ten heavy industries engaged in the production of various capital and intermediate goods such as cement, steel, refractories, poly vinyl chloride, resin and caustic soda. These industries include the following: SMC-Iligan Coconut Oil Mill; National Steel Corporation (NSC); PILMICO Foods Corporation; Granexport Manufacturing Corporation; Iligan Cement Corporation; National Power Corporation; Refractories Corporation of the Philippines; Mabuhay Vinyl Corporation; Maria Cristina Chemical Industries and Mindanao Portland Cement.

Iligan City is endowed with twenty (20) waterfalls and nine (9) springs including the famous Maria Cristina Falls, Tinago Falls, Limunsudan Falls, Hindang Falls, Dodingan Falls; Mimbalut Falls; Timoga springs and Bagong Silang Spring.

The City has a land area of 77, 575.82 hectares covering 44 barangays. Its total population was 273,004 in 1995 (NSO). Majority of its inhabitants are Cebuanos. In 1994, NSCB XII reported the per capita income (PCI) of P 13,846 for the City. Majority of the labor force members belong to the industrial and service sector. The labor force participation rate is 60% which is lower compared to the rate of 70.86% of Lanao Norte province where Iligan City is located. The unemployment rate was computed at 10% (NSO, April 1995). The poverty incidence of Iligan City was recorded at 36% (Ibon Philippines Profile, 1st ed. 1996).

Barangay Saray

The barangay is considered a squatter area located along the coastal waters of Iligan City. It consists of 18 puroks, with a total population of 13,189, classified into 6,612 males and 6,577 females. In 1991 (NSO) the location of squatters and number of families are: Pier - 28

households and Saray Home Defense Association (SAHOMDA) within the road right of way - 118 households. The Department of Agriculture, Iligan City has reported a total of 85 fishermen residing in the community.

Some of its physical structures and social amenities include the following:

- Six (6) nightspots
- Three (3) Day Care Center
- One (1) health center
- A barangay hall
- Seven (7) churches of different faith
- Four (4) sectarian schools of different educational levels
- One (1) cockpit

Barangay Saray is one of the depressed communities identified by the City Government for the Social Reform Agenda - Minimum Basic Needs Approach (SRA-MBN) for poverty alleviation program. It is noted that the participation rate of children in all sorts of occupation is high. Elementary children are engaged in vending activities in the nearby market and port area. Some young girls, driven waywards by the negligence of their parents are engaged in the flesh trade. Major occupations by the residents of the barangay are tricycle/trisicad driving; laundrying, peddling, operating a sari-sari store or cheap eateries and working as laborers in the port area.

Among the social problems of Barangay Saray are: drug addiction (users and pushers); child labor, prostitution (young and adult women are involved); preponderance of homosexuals (both male and female); alcoholism and gambling, family problems emanating from womanizing, family violence, and unpaid debts.

Barangay Santiago

The barangay has a land area of 110,42 hectares distributed to 13 puroks. As of 1995 NSO data, its total population was 5,593. Of this number, 2,835 are males and 2,748 are females. The total number of households was 1,123 (NSO, 1995). Some of its social amenities include the presence of four (4) churches of different religious practices; one elementary school; one high school; one day care center, two basketball courts, and a billiard hall.

The garbage dumping site of Iligan City is found in this barangay. The major social problems of the community are poverty, scavenging, drug addiction, child labor and prostitution.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Child Prostitutes. Children (usually working children or professional students) who occasionally turn to commercial sex to supplement their daily income or to earn money to pay for school expenses. They work in night spots engaging in sex work or as “pick-up girls”. They are children in brothels who are deprived of their rights to freedom of movement, privacy, education, and health. They belong to age bracket 12-18 years.

“*Pick-up girls*“. These children are fetched by their customers at a designated place which is usually inside a Karaoke bar or cheap restaurant.

“*Dampa girls*” - A term originating from street children. They are girls who use drugs and indulge in other vices and who eventually end-up as prostitutes.

“*Pimp*” - An individual who facilitates the transaction between a prostitute and a customer.

“*Akyat-barko*“ *Girls*-. Child prostitutes boarding a foreign vessel through a banca or pumpboat, accompanied by their parents or their pimps. The girls usually wave their hands and ask the customer on board if they want their services. As soon as mutual agreement is reached, these girls would board the ship and stay for a while.

“*Strikers*“. Prostitutes who roam the public plaza at night in search of clients.

II. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

A. Patterns of Prostitution: Magnitude and Distribution

The motives and circumstances of child prostitution vary throughout the world - to pay for school fees, provide for daily needs, or have their freedom of movement curtailed and forced to work in brothels. But the United Nation and other similar interaction and human rights groups recognize no excuses in their condemnation of child prostitution as a “contemporary form for slavery “ (Bruce, 1996)

In Iligan City, various forms of child prostitution have been observed. Though some difficulties were encountered in ascertaining the exact number of children engaged in prostitution, the data gathered revealed quite a number of them, specifically concentrated in the depressed barangays of the City.

The key informants noted that the involvement of these girls in commercial sex is not apparent, but they believe that a sizable number of them are in this kind of work. According to a PNO Officer, “ that there are child prostitutes in Iligan City is a fact; but we have no exact figures. Based on raid operation figures, on the average, of the 30 prostitutes rounded up by policemen, one third of them are children,” A barangay official, likewise disclosed that in this barangay alone, at least 20 children are sex workers.

The sex workers are referred to as: pick-up girls, “ akyat-barko girls “, “ dampa girls “, guest relation officers (GROs) and others working on contact basis. GROs are usually found in Karaoke Bars. They move from one place to another particularly when the demand for them is high. About 30 of them (according to one key informant) even possess cellular phones to facilitate easy contact. The teenagers are noted to have more clients than those in their late

twenties. The peak season for these girls is when foreign vessels dock in Kiwalan and tourist abound in Iligan City.

All five respondents in the case study admitted that they have experienced boarding a foreign vessel as “ akyat-barko “ sex worker. Their clients are foreigners like Americans, Greeks, Italians, Chinese, Japanese and Koreans. According to them, their income ranges from P 500 - P 1,500 per night. This “ akyat-barko “ activity is facilitated by ‘bugaws “ or pimps. The girls also claimed that they have live-in partners and they use shabu, drugs or rugby (in the absence of shabu or drugs). They resort to the prohibited drugs to rid themselves of any inhibition in indulging the wishes of their clients.

The usual hang-outs of these girls at night are the streets, public plaza and cheap karaoke bars/night spots/eateries. They find solitude during the day in their rented dwellings located along the coastal barangays of Iligan City. These barangays, according to the key informants, include Saray, Kiwalan, Mahayahay, Tambakan, and Santiago.

Table 1. Magnitude and Distribution of Child Sex Workers According to Child Victims and Key Informants

	Child Victims (Case Study and FGD)	KEY INFORMANTS (FGD & Interviews)
1. Type of child sex Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pick-up girls - strikers - “akyat-barko” - “dampa” girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pick-up girls - “akyat-barko” girls - “dampa” girls - strikers - Guest relation officers
2. Magnitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relatively many 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not apparent, but relatively many - on the average, of 30 rounded-up victims, 1/3 are children - at least 20 in one barangay

3. Where they can be found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Streets - Public plaza - Cheap night spots/ - karaoke bars/ - wharf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - public plaza - cheap night spots - karaoke bars
4. Where they live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - coastal barangay of Iligan (Saray and Santiago) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coastal barangays (Mahayahay, Saray, Tambakan, Kiwalan, Santiago)

B. Characteristics of the Child Prostitutes

The data showed that the ages of the girls engaged in commercial sex vary from as young as nine (9) years old to 18 years old. Two case study respondents admitted that they started engaging in commercial sex at the age of 13, while the three others, at the age of 16.

The respondents described these girls as young, attractive, innocent-looking with very strong sex appeal. Though many have stayed in Iligan City for a considerable period of time, their places of origin are Davao, Butuan, Zamboanga, Cagayan de Oro, Ozamis, Bukidnon and Cebu. They are lured to the city by perceived economic opportunities brought about by the presence of industries. These girls are generally stow-aways and school drop-outs coming from poor families or broken homes. Some of them have been sexually abused either by a brother, an employer, step father or other blood relative. A case study respondent narrated how she was repeatedly raped by her three (3) older brothers for almost 6 years.

In terms of educational attainment, the children generally have low level of education. The respondents, however, expressed admiration for the diligence and resourcefulness manifested by these girls, particularly college students even in their work to be able to complete their studies and ensure for themselves a better and more decent future.

Table 2. Perception of Child Characteristics According to Child Victims and Key Informants

CHILD CHARACTERISTICS	PERCEPTION OF	
	CHILD VICTIMS	KEY INFORMANTS
1. Age when started as sex worker	13 – 16 years old	Can not be ascertained
2. Age at the time of the conduct of study	11 – 18 years old	9 – 18 years old

3. Place of origin	Cebu, Iligan	Davao, Butuan, Cebu, Cagayan de Oro, Iligan, Ozamis, Zamboanga, Bukidnon
4. Physical Appearances	Young, pretty	Young, good looking, Strong sex appeal
5. Educational attainment	Elementary, High School Graduate	Generally, low level of Education; some are college students
6. Economic characteristics	Very poor with relative Large family size Single parent No permanent job	Poor families Live in squatter area No permanent job Belong to low income Groups

C. Impact and Factors Contributing to Child Prostitution

The literature on sexual exploitation of children catalogues a host of economic, social and cultural factors believed to underlie the phenomenon. A review of these materials suggest that no single scenario adequately explains the many forms of exploitation that arise in different regions of the world. In the developing countries, poverty and economic disparity appear to be associated with the problem of child prostitution, interspersed with the attitudes and values of people.

As Iligan City emerges to become the industrial center of Central Mindanao, urbanization and modernization influences begin to impinge to the structures of society and the lifestyles and values of the people. Iligan City is fast transforming the nature and extent of social relationships, alienating people from each other and making contractual relationships and utilitarian orientation predominate in community life. The presence of industries attracts rural families to converge in the cities and avail of education and livelihood opportunities.

One of the social costs of modernization in the society is child abuse. In recent years, incidents of family violence manifest the sorry plight of children in Iligan City. Children suffer abuse and neglect as they become victims of economic exploitation perpetrated by their own parents or through the enticements of other adults, peers, or crime syndicates. Some end up in prostitution.

What are the causes of child abuse? What factors contribute to this problem? The findings of the study show the issue to be multi-faceted ranging from the family influences to the economic, political, and educational factors.

Family Disorganization. The family as the basic unit of society, is expected to attend to the well-being and bonding of each members. When parents die, separate or inflict physical violence on the children, the family begins to disintegrate. The children leave home, stow-away or live with relatives and friends. The uncertainties of independent living make them easy prey to exploitation.

Poor Economic Conditions. Poverty seems to be the main culprit of child prostitution. Most children of poor families are pushed into the trade as parents become unable to provide for their economic welfare. Rural families flock to the cities in search of “greener pastures”. But the social and economic upliftment remains unrealized due to their lack of education and skills. Jobs are difficult to find. Thus, they are forced to settle in squatters’ areas. Most parents cannot send their children to school. For the family to survive, the children resort to commercial sex. As shown in this study, in some cases, prostitution enables them to continue their studies in high school or college.

Proliferation of Entertainment and Tourism Spots. As more and more entertainment facilities like bars, videoke hang-outs, tourist spots, and other entertainment services proliferate, opportunities for commercial sex increase. This is aggravated by the government’s policy of attracting tourist in the country.

Inadequate Implementation of laws. The Philippines is a signatory of international conventions on the rights of the child. Various laws and ordinances relevant to the child’s well being also exist. But as pointed out by the key informants, the concerned governmental agencies lack the will to implement them. Cited as example is the poor regulation of karaoke bars and night clubs which proliferate in Iligan City.

Unresponsive Development Framework. The key informants attribute the poverty situation to the priority given by government to infrastructure development programs rather than on social services.

The interplay of the above-mentioned factors results to the worsening problem of child prostitution in Iligan. The key informants view this phenomenon as a menace to society since the study revealed that prostitution is very much related to addiction, criminality, spread of sexually transmitted diseases and corruption of values of the family and society.

D. Government and Non-Government Organizations’ Responses to Child Prostitution Problems

The problem of prostitution in Iligan City elicited varied reactions among local leaders. The city government enacted a series of resolutions to contain and regulate the operation of

nightclubs, bars, cocktail lounges, massage clinics, lodging houses and similar establishments to control the spread of venereal diseases.

In 1964, City Ordinance No. 50 was issued by the city government, “prohibiting prostitution, association of sexual intercourse with prostitutes, procurement of prostitutes for men’s lust, provision of facilities for sexual intercourse with prostitutes and other forms of vagrancy or tolerating their commission and providing penalties therefore.” More than a decade later, City Ordinance No. 1242 was passed directing owners of the establishments to refrain from hiring entertainers who have not undergone proper examination or test for venereal diseases and issued health clearance or certificate for this purpose. Section 5 of the ordinance states that “It shall be unlawful for any employee of a nightclub, bar, or similar establishment to work by not wearing the health pink card or clearance or certificate”. In 1989, the Sangguniang Panlungsod, passed Resolution No. 192 regulating the operations of nightclubs, bars, massage clinics, hotels, lodging houses and other similar establishments in the day. This came about as a result of the increase of population due to the expansion of factories and industries in the area. To promote hygiene and sanitation and safeguard the health of the residents of the city, City Ordinance No. 1851 was enacted amending section 9 of City Ordinance No. 1252, increasing the penalty imposed on violators. This ordinance is still used as basis of the city government in regulating the operations of entertainment establishments.

According to the members of the Child Labor Program-Technical Working Group based in Iligan City, the monitoring of night spots is regularly conducted to prevent the hiring of minors. The key informants are aware of the Ordinance requiring prostitutes to undergo weekly health examination and be issued “pink cards”. But the program is confined only to adult women who are engaged in commercial sex. The child prostitutes belonging to age groups 13-17 are not covered at all. The Ranao Women and Children Resource Center Inc. extends services to children who are victims of rape. The Regional Social and Welfare Development Services Office, through its Crisis Center, likewise, attends to victims of sexual abuse/rape and battered children. The City OSWD activities conducted are designed to help in their rehabilitation. The office also provides services to street children through its Silongan project. Obviously, no specific project or activity is being undertaken on the cases of children who are engaged in prostitution. The DOLE XII District Officer admitted difficulty in identifying and tracing the whereabouts of these “girls”. He lamented that practically all corners of the city have videoke bars where children aged 18 and below are hired as guest relation officers. But there is no way ascertaining if these children are really engaged in prostitution. All key informants however, declared that drugs and prostitution go together and that in Iligan City, especially in depressed communities, there are drug pushers and users.

E. Key Informants Recommendation for Action

To effectively respond to this social problem confronting the city, the key informants formulated the following recommendations:

A. The City Government

1. Should establish a “Crisis Center” where abused children can be provided with food, shelter, education, counseling, as well as livelihood training and recreation.
2. Undertake massive campaign against drugs.
3. Conduct saturation drive against pimps.
4. Pass legislation barring children from entering karaoke bars and strictly implement it.
5. Review the ordinance regulating entertainment and tourist establishments and ensure strict implementation.
6. Agencies like the DSWD, DTI and other non-government organizations should coordinate in strengthening programs in line with the creation of livelihood for depressed communities.

This livelihood program should really respond to the needs of the people and provide skills training which can meet demands of established market.

The current livelihood program needs streamlining to effectively address the problems of depressed communities.

B. Since parental neglect is one of the major factors identified in this problem, concerned agencies such as schools, churches and government and non-government organization should:

1. Conduct massive values education campaign using various strategies on such topics as: a) parental responsibility; b) sex education; and c) family relations.
2. Intensify programs on effective parenting targeting the depressed communities.

C. The national and local governments should review their priorities, to underscore the importance of social services in the development programs.

F. Case Study on Child Prostitution

This section of the report presents the case studies of children victimized by prostitution. Five case studies were conducted in Iligan City to gather qualitative data on the characteristics of the victims, their families and communities. The names of the respondents were changed to ensure confidentiality. Two case study respondents live in Barangay Saray, while the three others were residents of Barangay Santiago.

Case Study 1:	MJA, 16 years old Barangay Saray, Iligan City
Case Study 2:	Marieta D., 18 years old Barangay Saray, Iligan City
Case Study 3:	Candy C., 18 years old

Case Study 4:	Barangay Santiago, Iligan City Imee, 18 years old
Case Study 5:	Barangay Santiago, Iligan City Lucille, 17 years old Barangay Santiago, Iligan City

Only Case Study 1 & Case Study 5 will be tackled in this section. For the other case studies contact the authors through the e-mail address mentioned below the title of this research.

CASE STUDY 1: MJA

MJA is 16 years old, a female and has finished Grade 6 at Villaverde Elementary School. She is a Roman Catholic, an Iliganon by birth, and the second child in the family. Her elder brother, who is already married, spent for her education from Grades 1 and 2 at the North Central Elementary School, and from Grades 3-5 at the Villaverde Elementary School. When still very young, she sold spices in the market. Unable to bear the cruel treatment she was often subjected to by her mother, MJA ran away from home. She learned to drink and a boyfriend who eventually impregnated her.

At present, she is staying with a live-in-partner, a first-degree cousin. She has already two kids, a two- year old girl, and an 8- month old boy. She is three months pregnant with her third child, the father of whom she does not know.

MJA's live-in partner a pedicab driver, showed pity and offered to help her. He regarded as his own the first two children she had with other men.

The couple live with MJA's mother. They pay P500 to P600 per month as house rental. The money for her baby's milk she gets from the tips of customers. In times of dire need, she gives a ring to a favorite customer (a doctor by profession in his 30's), favorite in the sense that he appeared kind and considerate to her.

Her two children are with her husband's aunt, and cousin in Cebu, who do not know about MJA's occupation. After sometime, however, she got homesick and returned to her mother in Iligan City. The mother did not waste time to exploit her again. After five months of abstaining from prostitution, she indulged in it once more and got pregnant. The live-in partner joined her in Iligan City.

The elder brother of MJA is 25 years old, a non-professional and works as a fish vendor, while his wife, who is a college graduate, is an overseas contract worker in Saudi Arabia. According to MJA, her brother is a good person, as he wanted her to finish her schooling. The brother welcomed MJA and her partner, but he shows no kindness to their mother who is responsible for being a prostitute.

Her father died when she was five years old. She remembers him working as a checker in IMASCO.

MJA said that her mother is 42 years old, a native of Surigao. She works as a pimp to many young prostitutes who frequent the City Plaza. She never saw her going to church nor praying. Her mother used to be a prostitute before she got married. The mother has lived-in with six men, whom she fought or quarreled with whenever they could not give her money.

As a pimp, the mother is considered tough and “respected” by those who know her. She was once convicted of murder and spent time in Muntinlupa. She was granted pardon in 1985.

The mother of MJA is addicted to shabu. She does not only tolerate the illegal profession of her daughter, but she also acts as her pimp most of the time. According to MJA, five days after she gave birth, her mother offered her to customers, she herself sought.

Her mother and husband are not on speaking terms. At one time, the husband asked her to stop working as a prostitute. The mother objected and told her to separate from her husband. MJA gave in to her mother’s wish. In the meantime, the husband started living with another woman and planned to depart from Iligan. Unable to bear this news, MJA attempted suicide by drinking three sachets of lanit (a kind of poison used in fishing). Help came at the right time and she survived. She and her husband were reconciled and resumed their interrupted life as common law husband and wife. The cold shoulder treatment that husband and mother-in-law accorded each other changed to violent fights. This happens whenever MJA is beaten by her mother. The husband has a wound in his hand inflicted by the knife wielded by his enemy, the mother in law.

Since MJA is still below 20 years of age, it is the mother who takes all her earnings from the flesh trade

MJA always pray to God to enlighten her mother and set her on the right path of life.

MJA vividly recalled her experience as a child. At 12 years old, coming home from school, she saw her mother and a male married neighbor entwined. The neighbor’s mouth was on her neck, and her mother was moaning. Thinking that her mother’s life was in danger, she called for help from the neighbors and responded by laughing when they saw the incident. She was beaten up by her mother.

In 1993 (13 years old) she was de-virginized by a man who employed her as a “yaya”. She was also offered to others. As payment, she was given a black t-shirt and a pair of short pants. She kept this secret from her mother for three months, who upon learning about it pushed her to prostitution. It was also this time that the mother resumed her former trade as a prostitute.

In 1994, she worked in a massage parlor in Cagayan de Oro. She came to know SG, a prominent businessman in the area. The man paid her P3, 000 to P 4, 000 each time he used her, he even offered to house her. She turned down the arrangement because she did not want to leave her mother. The relationship lasted for four months and ended when she became pregnant with her first boyfriend and live-in-partner.

It was SG who initiated her to the use of drugs. Now she and her mother use shabu. She also occasionally receives novaine injection.

After SG of Cagayan de Oro, a succession of sugar daddies followed. In the massage parlor where she worked, being used as a prostitute was an extra income. She and other girls were lined up in a room with a one-way mirror. The customers select the girls. Sometimes, a couple of girls would be chosen by a customer. The price was P 1, 500.

At present, she works as a prostitute on the sly, as she does not want her husband know that she is still in the trade. Asked why she has to go on despite her dislike for the profession, she said that she could not refuse her mother, especially if the latter asks her for food or payment for house rental. Her feelings for her mother are ambivalent, alternating from pity to hatred. She feels she has to help her mother for she is constantly reminded to show “utang na loob” (debt of gratitude) to her.

In her profession, the least amount she gets is P 300.00 while the biggest is P 1,500. The average is P 500.00 per transaction.

Asked about her perception of the trade, she said it is “the dirtiest of all dirty things in this world”, and she feels ashamed about it. In fact, even up to now, she does not allow anyone to kiss her on the face. When she is “istrikta”, the mother reprimands her and tells her “Puslan pa man nga mamurikat, kinahanglan nga may-ayo ka”. Her mother teaches her how to respond to the advances of the customer so the latter would keep on coming back; otherwise, an irate customer might hurt her.

She also tells of student customers, both from the college and high school. The asking price is P 500.00. She and some other companions are invited to houses or to night swimming parties where sexual intercourse usually takes place. She admitted preference for young customers. She likes “uyab-uyab”.

MJA is also an akyat-barko prostitute, the National Steel Corporation and the Kiwalan areas being her business locations. Sometimes, the prostitutes converge at Marin’s near the port area. When foreign boats are at anchorage (not even docking yet), about 7 women of varied ages on board a pump boat go around the ship, waving and offering their wares. The pump boat man is paid P 50.00 for the effort. MJA experienced staying on a ship for 5 days at \$100/day, with free food and the comfort of a cabin and soft bed.

The business transaction with a crew starts with the question “Do you like me?” While on board, the akyat-barko prostitute who has “anchored” herself with a crewmember must not pair with other men; otherwise, jealousy among the men flares up.

As an akyat barko prostitute, she counts among her customers: Americans, Greeks, Japanese, Chinese and Koreans. She finds Americans to be the most generous (\$100 to \$250 plus tips and other things).

Some female students are engaged in prostitution. MJA claimed that she knew of one who finished nursing while others are already married. She noted that these girls comportment looks proper and form thus giving impressions that they come from respectable families.

Asked if she is infected with any sexually transmitted diseases, MJA said that for protection she uses medicines like penbritin, albotrin and pneumycin. Being a minor, she could obtain these drugs only through the help of her mother.

Prostitution is also a hazardous profession. There is always the possibility of encountering sadistic customers. She experienced this ntwice all from Filipinos. Once she was taken to a comfort room and beaten on the head, face, stomach, and thighs. For these she was paid P 1, 000.

Another encounter was with a group of 20 young men celebrating a birthday party in a house with a swimming pool situated outside the city. She was accompanied by another prostitute. They had access to cocaine and other prohibited drugs. MJA and her companion lost consciousness. They were found on the street by the police. She concluded that they must have been thrown there by those who attended the party. They were hospitalized for three days. Upon recovery, they found their bags and money gone.

According to MJA, most of the women report to the City Health Office for the regular smearing.

She regrets running away from her brother’s protective haven and not taking her studies more seriously.

She dreams of managing a small business, having a house of her own and being able to send her children to school. At present, she wants to be a tindera or mananahi and shows willingness to undergo any training to pursue this end.

CASE STUDY 5: LUCILLE

Lucille, a Cebuana, is 17 years old, the fifth child in the family of seven. She was born in carbide Village, Iligan City. She has finished first year high school.

Lucille father's died in 1997. The mother works as a laundry woman (labandera). The family is composed of three boys and girls. They are:

Eldest- 30 years old, male, grill maker with two children, his wife tends a sari-sari store.

Second- 22 years old, male, married with children, a "triskad" driver, his wife tends a sari-sari store

Third- 19 years old, female, second year college taking up nautical engineering at Iligan Capitol College, through the support of maternal aunt.

Fourth- 18 years old, female, second year high school, being sent to school by a paternal auntie

Fifth- the respondent

Sixth- 16 years old, male, second year high school; being supported by a maternal aunt.

Seventh- - 15 years old, female, fourth year student of Iligan City National High School.

The family used to be registered members of a certain religious denomination. Now, only the mother and the eldest son who are active members.

The mother is aware of Lucille's work. She merely advised the daughter to be careful and not to let her elder brother know about it. Lucille gives her P 500.00 weekly.

Lucille was driven away from home by her thirty years old brother for not being a good follower of their church. She sought refuge among her friends who introduced her to the flesh trade. For five times, she saw her 22 year old brother (second in the family) soliciting the services of a prostitute at the city plaza. Until the time of interview, Lucille has not been seen by her brother for the pimp mediates for her and the prospective customers. But once she almost had this brother as a customer when she saw him negotiating with her pimp. She hid herself. The brother was given another prostitute.

Lucille has been at the plaza nightly from Monday to Sunday for more than five months, now. She and her barkada (Grace, etc.) go together to the "work area" led by the pimp. Her services are often in demand. She has her own set of regular customers.

The biggest amount she got so far is P 500.00, but on the average she earns P200.00. she does not accept propositions to stay overnight with the customer.

Many of her customers are plant workers and government employees who are married. She avoids students as customers. She considers them as “gold diggers” for the understandable reason that do not any income.

Lucille is also an “akyat barko” at Acamac, Iligan City.

She has not tried being a guest relations officer (GRO).

She used to invest a portion of her income in jewelries. But she gave up after losing almost all of these valuables due to her carelessness and the thieves in their barangay.

She has not personally experienced any occupation-related problem. Asked about how she feels being used by different men, she claims that it means nothing to her (bale wala sa iyaha). She is enjoying life with her barkada although sometimes troubles due to jealousy break out when the boyfriend of one is “stolen” by another.

Her ambition in life is to acquire appliances like electric fan, “Sing Along”, etc. just like her friend Imee. She has no plan of going back to school. She does not have any boyfriend at present. She has a lot of admirers but she keeps them at bay (salig-saligan lang).

She knows how to manicure and pedicure but is not inclined to pursue this occupation. She is interested in cooking, though. In fact, she is the cook in their barkada.

III. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was undertaken in response to the increasing concern on the problem of child prostitution in Iligan City. With funding from UNICEF, DOLE Region XII has commissioned the Socio-Economic Research Center of Notre Dame University (SERC-NDU) to conduct a situational analysis of this phenomenon in the area. The study aims to gather data on the patterns of child prostitution in terms of magnitude, distribution, and its causes; the peoples perception of the extent of the problem; and the programs prepared by a government and non-government to avert the cases of child prostitution in the city. It also seeks to generate recommendations for alternative actions in dealing with the problem of child sex workers.

The research technique employed in this study is a combination of: (a) review of existing records/documents from service statistics office; (b) interview of key informants; (c) focus group discussion (FGD) and (d) case study of five (5) child prostitutes.

The major findings are:

1. The number of children engaged in the sex trade could not be ascertained, but they are relatively many. They are known as “pick-up” girls, “akyat-barko” girls, “dampa” girls and guest relation officers (GROs). Their ages range from 9-18 years. They hail from various cities/provinces not far from Iligan City such as Butuan, Cagayan de Oro, Ozamis, Zamboanga,

and Cebu. They establish residence in Iligan City. These girls are young, pretty, and with strong sex appeal. Most of them have not completed high school education, while some are students who support themselves in college. The main reason for going into prostitution is economic survival (poverty). These children are also victims of sexual abuse. Their families are poor and marginalized. They live in the depressed coastal barangays of Iligan City.

2. The community's perception on the causes of child prostitution in the area varies from poverty to the government's pursuit of development on the national and local levels at the expense of social services. The presence of Karaoke Bars, massage parlor, night spots and similar establishments induce young girls into prostitution. This can also be attributed to the tourism policy being implemented in Iligan which calls for the development of falls, springs and parks. Some children are pushed by their parents to prostitution because of poverty, while those who are neglected by their parents end-up in the streets and become prostitutes in order to survive. It is also noted that prostitution is closely associated with drug addiction. The depressed coastal barangays of Iligan serve as haven for those who are involved in commercial sex and drugs.

3. The government responses to child prostitution are limited to raids and monitoring of entertainment establishments in the city. According to the City Ordinance 1242, the City Health Office conducts a weekly physical examination of women sex workers. The office issues "pink cards" to those who are negative of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) so that they could go on working in the entertainment establishments. The OSWD, on the other hand, has put-up a Crisis Center for children who are victims of sexual abuse/rape, and Silongan for the street children. These children are properly attended to and assisted based on their needs. The Ranao Women and Children Resource Center, Inc. also extends services to children who are rape victims.

The major role of the legal system in the prevention of child prostitution is underscored in several international conventions. As a signatory to these documents, the Philippines is duty-bound to protect and enhance the rights of women and children.

Recommendations:

To some extent, the government shows compliance as manifested by the formation of task forces, etc. but an important aspect that needs to be addressed is to penalize those responsible for the exploitation of children, i.e. the pimps and drug pushers.

The local government in cooperation with the national agencies should review its law enforcement and program implementation (e.g. livelihood) procedures to protect children from being victimized; to wit:

1. Conduct saturation drive, particularly in identified barangays against pimps and drug pushers;
2. Review procedures for the issuance of “pink cards”
3. Implement programs and undertake activities designated to minimize, if not totally stop child prostitution and to help rehabilitate those who have been victimized and exploited;
4. Initiate programs and projects involving NGOs leading to the institutionalization of activities for the protection of children; and
5. To explore possibilities of conducting massive information campaign, with the participation of concerned school and church institutions, employing various strategies for the protection and enhancement of the rights of women and children.