

Street children in the Philippines

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Street Children in the [Philippines](#) is a significant problem. According to the 1998 report, entitled "Situation of the Youth in the Philippines," there are about 1.5 million **street children in the Philippines**. Everyday, at least a street child is seen walking along the streets, looking for a place to stay. ^[1]

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Statistics

Highly-visible' children in the streets: Manila (3,266), Quezon (2,867), Kalookan (1,530), and Pasay (1,420). Luzon regional totals: 1,557 (highly visible), 22,728 (estimated total). Visayas regional totals: 5,291 (highly visible), 40,860 (estimated total). Mindanao regional totals: 22,556 (highly visible), 138,328 (estimated total). Approximately 70% are boys. [2]

Defining Filipino street children

According to the Stairway foundation there are three different categories of street children: children on the streets, children of the streets and completely abandoned children.

"Children on the streets" make up approximately 75% of the street children in the Philippines. These children work on the streets but do not live there, having a home to return to after working. Some of them even continue to attend school while working long hours on the streets.

In contrast, "Children of the street" on the other hand make their homes on the street. They make up 25%-30% of the street children in the Philippines. These children often create a sort of family among fellow street children. Some of them still have family ties, but do not visit them and some even see these ties as bad.

"Completely abandoned children" have no family ties and are entirely on their own for physical and psychological survival. They make up about 5%-10% of the street children in the Philippines. [3] [4]

Demographics

Angeles

The Department of Social Welfare and Development has more than 1500 children registered in Angeles city as street children. In reality, the number is much higher.[5] Street Children in Angeles are at risk in the notorious Fields Ave from [pedophiles](#) hounding the entertainment area. [6]

Manila

It is estimated there are 85,000 street children in Metro Manila alone. [1] [7]

Davao

The Davao City Local Development Plan for Children (2003-2007) says that in 2000, Davao had 1,505 street children. This figure more than doubled the following year to 3,213. According to the child-rights group Tambayan, most of the city's street children belong to gangs, of which there are now some 150.[8]

Amerasian Street Children

Pearl S. Buck International foundation estimates there are 52,000 [Amerasians](#) scattered throughout the Philippines with 5,000 in the Clark area of Angeles. "The majority of the children have been abandoned by their American fathers," said Jocelyn Bonilla, the manager of the Pearl S. Buck center in Angeles City. [9]

Problems facing street children

Drugs

The most common substances are inhalants, like solvent/rugby and cough syrups, followed by marijuana and shabu. Marijuana and shabu in particular are drugs that are shared with friends whenever one barkada member is lucky enough to have money to buy them. Moreover, many street children take more drugs more than once, some as often as a daily intake of solvent/rugby. [3]

Health Problems

Generally, street children are thin, untidy, and undernourished, hardly equipped to survive the hazards of everyday living and working on the streets. Some of the hazards they face include sickness, physical injuries from vehicular accidents, street fights, harassment from both extortionists and police, sexual exploitation by pedophiles and pimps, exposure to substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases. [3]

Conditions

Matthew and Michael Canoy have lived with their grandmother Francisca Polgo, 56, since their mother skipped town seven years ago. Matthew, 12 and Michael, 13, have never met their American father, reportedly a U.S. Marine. The two brothers and their grandmother used to sleep on cardboard boxes in the back of a three-wheeled cart, called a trike, which served as their home. Now they use the trike as a "sari-sari" store from which they sell fruit and other miscellaneous convenience store items to earn their livelihood. Their dwelling is a box about 6 feet long, 4 feet wide and 7 feet high. It is constructed of scrap metal, wire mesh and other scavenged materials. It has one bed inside upon which all three sleep. The rest of the space is jam-packed with their belongings. [10]

Prison

Street Children as young as 10 years old are often imprisoned under the Vagrancy Act, ending up in the same cells as adult prisoners, including young girls with male adults. They are often sexually and physically abused by prisoners and guards and are forced to clean out the toilets and cells. They are prone to catch TB from sleeping on damp floors and being in close confinement with sick adults. They often do not have their own imprisonment recorded. [7]

Legal Action

A class action suit was filed in 1993 on their behalf in the International Court of Complaints in Washington, DC, to establish Filipino American children's rights to assistance. They have been consigned to live on the streets in hovels or slums in unimaginable poverty. The case did not prosper. The court ruled that the children were the products of unmarried women who provided sexual services to US service personnel in Olongapo, Subic Bay and Angeles City and were therefore engaged in illicit acts of prostitution. Such illegal activity could not be the basis for any legal claim. [4]

Summary Execution Of Street Children

Many street children were in danger of [summary execution](#) during the Marcos Government. [11] In the Philippines the most blatant form of violence against children is summary execution. In Davao City, 39 children in conflict with the law have been killed by the vigilante groups since 2001. Most of them were killed after being released from police detention cells.[12]

Human rights groups said the killings have become an unwritten government policy to deal with crime, largely because of an ineffective criminal justice system and the tendency of the authorities to take shortcuts in the administration of justice. The execution-style killings are openly endorsed by local officials, strengthening the long-running suspicion that the death squads were formed by the government.[13]

Child Prostitution

Child prostitutes are used by both foreign sex tourists and paedophiles as well as local people. Many Street Children are lured into prostitution as a means of surviving, others work in order to earn money for their families. A variety of different factors contribute to the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the Philippines.[7]

Rooted in poverty, as elsewhere, the problem of [Child Prostitution](#) in Angeles was exacerbated in the 1980s by US bases in Clark, Angeles, where bars employed children who ended up as sex workers for American soldiers. [14] Street children are at particular risk due to the fact that many of the 200 brothels in Angeles City offer children for sex.[15] Of 1.5 million streetchildren in the Philippines, 60,000 are prostituted, according to 1996 statistics of the Philippine Resource Network.[16]

Sexual Exploitation By Pedophiles

Angeles Police had to rescue 36 children as young as 6 years old from the notorious Fields Ave to protect from being exploited by suspected [pedophiles](#) hounding the entertainment area. Angeles Police Women's and Children's Section Chief Myrna Latorre said the rescued children were brought to the City

Social Welfare and Development (CSWD) for disposition. She said most of the rescued children were turned over to the Bahay Bata Center, an institution taking care of orphans and abused children. The other children, Latorre said, were brought to a government rehabilitation center in Magalang, Pampanga that is being run the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) called Haven. [6] A 13 years-old child recalls how she was trafficked into a brothel in Angeles where she had to service up to 15 pedophiles every night. [17]

HIV/AIDS and STDs

There is no HIV testing for children in the Philippines but 18% of the Street Children contract sexually transmitted infections (STIs). [7]

NGO`S AND Projects To Help

Loving Care Street Kids Foundation

Offers three free meals a day to impoverished children in [Pampanga](#). The center also offers programs and events for social interaction, and helps children with their educational costs for tuition and school supplies. Offers free meals to the thousands of children left homeless on the streets on Angeles city. [10]

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Street Contact For Children

This project entails regular contact by dedicated social workers with groups of street children. The workers relate with the children to win their trust, offer legal and personal protection against acts of abuse by the authorities and work to release the children from jails and holding cells or to get charges against them dismissed. The project provides basic needs such as clothes, food, medical help and shelter when needed. Efforts are made to contact parents and enable the child to visit the parents. Part-time work for older children is provided when possible. [4]

Bahay Bata Center

An institution taking care of street children, orphans and abused children in Angeles City, Philippines. The Bahay Bata centre was founded to take care of street children by providing a home, education and spiritual guidance for them to face the future.[18]

Subic Bay Children's Home

Subic Bay Children's Home providing a home for the street children of Olongapo City, Philippines. Subic Bay Children's Home seeks to provide a channel through which local churches and individuals can extend a helping hand to destitute, unwanted, unloved, troubled boys and girls in providing them a home, understanding, and Christian guidance.[19]

Tiwala Kids and Communities

Tiwala Kids and Communities provide a safe environment for street children of Legazpi City, Philippines. Tiwala runs a centre for street children and a foster placement program. Tiwala's vision is to rescue, restore and raise-up children who have been abandoned and are living on the streets, and provides these children the opportunity to live on a farm where they can be rehabilitated. [20]

See also

[Children in jail in Philippines](#)

[Department of Social Welfare and Development \(Philippines\)](#)

References

[^] *a b* [Street Children - Philippines](#)

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