

**International Development Committee**  
**Sexual Exploitation in the Aid Sector**  
**Written Evidence by International Justice Mission**  
**August 2020**

**About International Justice Mission**

International Justice Mission's global team of lawyers, social workers and investigators partner with governments and local authorities in 13 countries to help identify survivors of violence and exploitation, and ensure they receive the support and assistance they require, whilst also working with law enforcement and prosecutors to tackle impunity by making sure laws are enforced.

IJM has spent more than 20 years on the front lines fighting some of the worst forms of violence: land theft, modern slavery, online sexual exploitation of children, police abuse of power, and child sexual assault. To date we have supported local authorities to help more than 50,000 people out of slavery and oppression.

We have seen that when local justice systems are equipped to proactively identify survivors and hold traffickers to account then the prevalence of slavery falls dramatically, in some cases by as much as 86%.<sup>1</sup>

**Recommendations**

The UK Government should seek to strengthen the capacity and ability of local public justice systems to hold perpetrators to account for the sexual abuse of children. Tackling impunity will both serve to deter perpetrators from committing crimes (including international aid workers) and provide confidence to survivors that their cases will be taken seriously and resolved quickly.

**Tackling Sexual Exploitation of Children**

IJM has worked extensively to tackle the sexual exploitation of children in a variety of contexts around the world. We have consistently seen that when local law enforcement agencies are trained and equipped to proactively hold perpetrators of violence to account and to protect survivors the prevalence of abuse falls dramatically.

IJM has found significant reductions in the prevalence of child sexual abuse when local authorities proactively pursue a victim-centric approach to investigating and prosecuting sexual exploitation. By ensuring the public justice system works more effectively to hold perpetrators to account, it is possible to achieve long-term, sustainable change.

Deterrence can be achieved when the justice system fairly and visibly enforces just laws. By doing so, and by treating survivors in a trauma-informed manner, it is possible to shift the balance of power away from perpetrators, and to those who are vulnerable. Survivors must

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ijmuk.org/documents/studies/philippines-csec-program-evaluation.pdf>

have confidence that local authorities will act to restrain their abusers and offer meaningful protection.

Ensuring strong, systemic protection for the most vulnerable in society is particularly important in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, in which many people have been more at risk of abuse and exploitation, and justice systems have been hindered in their ability to respond.

New trends have emerged from the crisis: for example, IJM and international law enforcement agencies are concerned about an increase in the online sexual exploitation of children. Governments and authorities around the world must take this opportunity to examine the effectiveness of protection for the most vulnerable in society. Public justice systems must be strengthened to ensure that there is accountability for those who would perpetrate exploitation, abuse and violence.

## **Uganda**

### **Background**

In 2009, the World Bank approved a \$190 million loan to the Government of Uganda for the Uganda Transport Sector Development Project (UTSDP), aiming to boost the economy by upgrading a 66.2km gravel road in western Uganda. The project sought to improve livelihoods by increasing access to markets and creating job opportunities.

In 2014 and 2015 it became clear that there was an increase in sexual abuse, connected to the infrastructure project. Women and children were suffering sexual abuse and exploitation, including sexual assault by project workers against schoolgirls, resulting in unintended pregnancies and an increase in women contracting HIV/AIDS. Most of these crimes were committed by project construction workers.

In response, the World Bank and Government of Uganda committed funds to the Emergency Child Protection Response programme.

### **IJM's Involvement**

IJM was contracted to help improve case management of sexual violence against children cases and provide legal counselling. IJM worked with the Uganda police, community-based service departments and prison officers to conduct specialised investigation and response to sexual violence against children.

### **Results**

#### *Casework Support*

IJM provided casework-specific support to identify gaps in case management that had led to case failures; provided training and mentorship; and helped build links between key case management actors (e.g. police, prosecution and the Community Based Services Department). IJM provided high level support to the Police on over 15 cases, providing

advice and planning to assist investigations with the goal of closing them in the coming months.

IJM also provided in-depth support on approximately 7 cases that served an intentional training purpose. In one case involving 3 survivors, IJM provided relevant officers with training on evidence gathering and guidance on psycho-social support. With support, the children were able to give quality evidence to support the prosecution.

One significant roadblock to concluding some of the cases in court was that some districts are so remote that they have no High Court. To hear cases from these rural areas, the courts schedule all criminal trials from these districts during a specific session in order to reduce costs of transporting witnesses the long distance to court. Sessions may only be held a few times a year in the High Court covering ten or more separate districts, creating significant backlog. By the time cases are heard, child survivors and family members may struggle to testify with the same accuracy and effectiveness, and many witnesses do not have the immediate means to reach the court before being reimbursed for travel costs.

To address this challenge, IJM sponsored a 10-day High Court criminal session to be held in one of the remote districts where witnesses struggled to make the long journey to court. This 'mobile court' heard 17 cases in a month, resulting in 12 convictions with sentences ranging from 4-20 years.

#### *Linkage Building*

Regular monthly district meetings provided an opportunity to build case management linkages among actors and develop joint action plans on specific cases.

One case involved a 2-year-old girl, whose mother was threatened from other community members after reporting the incident to police.

At a joint meeting, IJM explained that in Gender-Based Violence cases involving threats, a second complaint for threatening violence should be lodged and pursued by the local police: perpetrators and their supporters are therefore made aware that threats will not be tolerated and that police will act to protect those reporting crime.

Police responded to the threat, whilst district staff and IJM supported the mother with psycho-social support enabling her to pursue a new charge. This joint response yielded positive results, and the community and local police pledged to support the family while the defilement case proceeded.

IJM's stakeholders identified a key case management challenge: files must travel 70km to reach the State Attorney and courts. Cases often fail because of the lack of communication across this distance. IJM therefore organised a special meeting to bring together regional-level judiciary and prosecution staff to discuss these issues directly.

#### *Case Management Training Development*

IJM helped develop a case management training. This has focused on developing material specific to managing cases of sexual violence and ensuring that training participants will

help to develop case management processes that are appropriate to their context and available resources.

## **The Philippines**

### **Background**

In 2001, the US Trafficking in Persons Report identified that a significant number of adults and children were being trafficked internally in the Philippines for commercial sexual exploitation. This report also concluded that there were no laws that specifically prohibited human trafficking and prosecutions were rare.

Despite enacting the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, 2003, there were still very few arrests and prosecutions of traffickers.

### **IJM Involvement**

IJM launched programmes in Manila in 2003, Cebu in 2006 and Pampanga in 2012. The purpose of each of these projects was to reduce the prevalence of the commercial sexual exploitation of children by addressing specific gaps in the local public justice systems. This was focused around three outcomes:

1. Increased capacity, will, and mandate of regional and national Philippine law enforcement to investigate and intervene in suspected sex trafficking cases
2. Increased quantity and quality of child sex trafficking prosecutions in the Philippines, resulting in an increase in the number of convictions
3. Increased capacity of Philippine government and private social service providers to support sex trafficking survivors immediately post-rescue, provide trauma-informed care and reintegrate sex trafficking survivors into local communities

Each project had three key phases:

1. Collaborative Casework

IJM built relationships with relevant stakeholders, gained a better understanding of who the victims and perpetrators are, and identified the gaps in the system. IJM experts provided support to local public justice systems in individual cases.

2. System Reform

In partnership with the Philippine Government, IJM helped to build and implement a plan to address the gaps in the public justice system and improve performance. During this phase, IJM continued to provide support for individual cases.

3. Sustaining Gains

Monitoring and evaluation to determine whether the gaps in the system have been sustainably addressed.

## **Specific Support**

Some of the specific activities IJM assisted with during the projects:

- The Philippine National Police created regional anti-trafficking units
- IJM provided the anti-trafficking units with capacity building trainings, logistical support and technical assistance
- IJM provided intelligence to the Police and anti-trafficking units
- From 2007 to 2015, there were 216 IJM-supported raid and rescue operations, of which 196 were focused on child sex trafficking (130 in Cebu, 34 in Manila, and 31 in Pampanga)
- With support from IJM, anti-trafficking police went from investigating street-based trafficking to conducting raid and rescue operations in entertainment establishments (larger sex trafficking operations)
- From 2003 to 2015, IJM-supported the rescue of 777 children who were being sexually exploited commercially; of which 759 were children rescued from sex trafficking (352 were in Cebu, 273 in Manila, and 134 in Pampanga)

## **Results**

IJM commissioned Crime and Justice Analysts to measure the prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the three project areas, both before and after the programme. This involved time-space sampling to identify child victims.

*Cebu:* In 2010 IJM identified a 79% reduction in the availability of children for commercial sexual exploitation.

*Manila:* In 2016, IJM identified a 75.4% reduction in the prevalence of child sex trafficking.

*Pampanga:* In 2016, IJM identified an 86.23% reduction in the prevalence of child sex trafficking.

To read more about these projects, you can view the full Programme Evaluation [here](#).

## **Cambodia**

### **Background**

By the early 2000s, Cambodia was known as a child sex tourism destination for paedophiles from other countries. In 1999, ILO's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) reported more than 15% of those working in the sex industry in Cambodia were between 9 and 15 years of age. By 2001, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported approximately 3,000 women and girls from southern Vietnam were trafficked into Cambodia on an annual basis, of which 15% were reportedly girls 15 years of age or younger. Cambodia experienced both cross-border trafficking and internal trafficking from rural to urban areas.

## **IJM Project**

IJM focused on three areas from 2004-2014 (Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville.) Using a similar model to the Philippines, IJM worked to identify gaps in the public justice system before partnering with law enforcement and local authorities to improve. IJM decided to focus on two specific goals to achieve this:

1. Increased performance of the Cambodia's National Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Police (AHTJP Police) to identify and rescue victims, arrest suspects, and treat victims appropriately
2. Increased performance of the Department of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation (DoSVY) and the private aftercare network to refer victims and provide quality aftercare services

## **Results**

Using prevalence studies, IJM found that from 2012 and 2015, the prevalence of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) in commercial sex establishments declined by 73% in the three project areas.

Other best practices have been introduced, including:

- Increased capacities of the police to suppress CSEC, and to facilitate collaboration among government agencies to provide crisis care and quality aftercare to CSEC victims following police raids and rescue
- CSEC survivors identified and provided with protection and access to quality aftercare, and monitored for recovery
- CSEC survivors provided with legal advocacy and to promote child friendly police and court proceedings

You can read the full report about IJM's work in Cambodia [here](#)