# Human trafficking in the wake of disaster

## A phenomenon displaced

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
30th November 2023

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## Acknowledgements

# Abstract

Disaster is frequently cited as a driver of human trafficking, with claims that typhoons, earthquakes or tsunamis create a chaotic post-disaster environment ripe for traffickers to recruit their victims. Increased poverty, displacement and a breakdown of law and order are said to be theoretical contributing factors. However, there is little discussion in the literature on how post-disaster trafficking unfolds, coupled with a dearth of empirical evidence on the topic. Starting with the case study of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, this research tests the existing disaster-trafficking discourse through field studies which yield two key findings. First, it is argued that staying put in the 'central disaster zone' results in fewer trafficking risks than leaving it. This is due to humanitarian aid pouring into the worst-affected areas to meet individuals' basic needs, coupled with local officials' hyper-vigilance in the post-disaster environment. By contrast, moving to the cities to seek employment dramatically increases trafficking risks, because individuals often arrive at their new destination with few resources and no connections to seek bona-fide employment. Second, interviews with formerly-trafficked people at three trafficking shelters in the Philippines point to a strong link between disaster and human trafficking, but with a notable 'slow burn' effect. Many respondents indicated that disruption to their lives from disaster, sometimes as early as childhood, prompted a chain of events which ultimately resulted in trafficking many years later. Together, these findings paint a very different picture from the oft-held assumption that traffickers exploit people directly in a disaster zone, in the immediate aftermath of the event.

# CONTENTS

## Figures and charts

1. Number of incidents and deaths due to extreme events and disasters from 2010 to 2019. (Philippine Statistics Authority: 2020b)
2. Map showing Typhoon Haiyan's trajectory. (ReliefWeb EU/ Map Action/ UNOSAT: 2013)
3. Map showing the study area, with inner and outer disaster zones. (Created by author.)
4. (Map showing seismicity of the Philippines. (Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Centre, 2018b)
5. Photo of a group debrief session at one of the Good Shepherd Welcome House trafficking shelter sites, outside Cebu City.
6. Map showing number of internally displaced people in evacuation centres following Haiyan. (CCCM Cluster Philippines, 25th November 2013 based on data from DSWD/DROMIC)
7. Graphic representation of the disaster-trafficking infrastructure – process. (Created by the author.)
8. Graphic representation of the disaster-trafficking infrastructure – actors. (Created by the author)

## General acronyms and initialisms

| | |
|---|---|
| **DFID** | Department for International Development (UK) |
| **IDMC** | International Displacement Monitoring Centre |
| **IJM** | International Justice Mission |
| **ILO** | International Labour Organisation |
| **IOM** | International Organisation for Migration |
| **NGO** | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| **UNDRR** | United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction |
| **UNICEF** | United Nations Children's Fund |
| **UNODC** | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime |
| **UNHCR** | United Nations Refugee Agency |
| **UNICEF** | United Nations Children's Fund |

## Filipino-specific terms, acronyms and initialisms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Barangay** | Smallest administrative district in the Philippines Filipino term for a village, district or ward. |
| **CFO** | Commission on Filipinos Overseas |
| **CSWD** | City Social Welfare and Development Office |
| **DOLE** | Department of Labour and Employment |
| **DSWD** | Department of Social Welfare and Development |
| **NDRRMC** | National Disaster Risk Reduction & Management Council |
| **OFW** | Overseas Filipino Worker |
| **OWWA** | Overseas Workers' Welfare Association |
| **POEA** | Philippines Overseas Employment Administration |
| **UP** | University of the Philippines |

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

While the true prevalence of human trafficking is unknown due to its clandestine nature and under-reporting (Samarasinghe, 2008:122), it is clearly a major international business across the globe with annual profits estimated at US$150 billion (ILO, 2014). Latest figures point to nearly 50,000 detected cases of trafficking in 2018 (UNODC, 2020:25), with 71 per cent of those trafficked being female and 28 per cent children (UNODC, 2016). More than 40 million people are said to be trapped in modern slavery, one of the end results of trafficking (ILO, 2017), with traffickers taking advantage of economic need in more than half of cases (UNODC, 2020:9). Despite claims that any trafficking data represent the "tip of the iceberg" (Quirk and Thibos, 2018) due to the difficulties of obtaining full and accurate information, more and more cases are being detected with figures showing that the number of perpetrators being convicted has tripled since 2003 (UNODC, 2020:4).

Human trafficking is defined by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit" (UNODC website, Human Trafficking section). The strict definition, adhered to throughout this study, is set out in the widely-accept Palermo Protocol (UN Human Rights Office, 2000), as follows:

> (a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

> (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

(d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), much has been written about the drivers of human trafficking and factors that make individuals susceptible to recruitment. These include poverty, illness, and disruption to family units such as abuse or death (Aronowitz, 2009a:23). It is claimed that the wider globalised economy 'pushes' people out of poor countries with limited economic opportunities and 'pulls' them into developed nations with demand for cheap labour, with some migrants becoming exploited in the process (Bales, 2005:155). To this extent, human trafficking can be seen as 'migration gone horribly wrong in our globalised economy' (Chuang, 2006:138). As Jones et al assert: "Trafficking... can be regarded as one of the dark sides of globalisation." (2007:108)

**The research problem**

A particular inquiry into human trafficking surrounds its intersection with rapid-onset disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes or tsunamis. Claims that disasters increase the risk of human trafficking have become 'an integral part of the disaster narrative' (Montgomery, 2011:395) and have been made routinely by aid agencies and governments after most disasters since the 2004 Asian Tsunami (for example: IOM, 2014a; UNICEF, 2014; Burke, 2015 – see full list in Chapter 2: Literature Review). Yet, despite many offerings of theory repeated in the literature, there is a dearth of empirical evidence on the topic. This study aims to investigate the disaster-trafficking phenomenon and begin to fill this void of evidence through the case study of Typhoon Haiyan which struck the central Philippines in 2013 claiming 6,300 lives with a further 1,032 missing (NDRRMC, 2013:4), displacing four million, and affecting up to 16 million people (IDMC, 2014:2). Starting with the working assumption that the risk of human trafficking does, indeed, increase following a disaster, this dissertation will examine where, when and to whom these risks are heightened. As will be seen in the following chapters, this results in significant challenges to existing assumptions

that risks increase in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, in the worst-affected area.

As stated, existing theory in the literature asserts that conditions faced in the aftermath of a disaster can exacerbate known drivers of trafficking, increasing individuals' susceptibility to being exploited (full list of citations in 'The disaster-trafficking discourse', Chapter 2). However, little further explanation is offered in literature, the phenomenon has rarely been challenged, and – to the best of my knowledge – no empirical evidence has ever been offered to explain how it unfolds, or whether it is actually true (see section 'The Empirical Vacuum' in Chapter 2: Literature Review). A handful of authors have also challenged, theoretically, the link between disasters and trafficking with numerous concerns about flawed arguments across the trafficking literature generally (eg: Weitzer, 2015:224; Mahmoud and Trebesch, 2010:6; Bales, 2021; Zhang, 2009:178). These concerns include failing to reveal sources; repeating assertions without evidence; and treating unfounded claims, which contain caveats in the original sources, as fact in subsequent articles.

**The research question**

Based on the working assumption that the risk of human trafficking is, indeed, elevated in the post-disaster environment, the central research question is: *Why and how is human trafficking affected by the occurrence of disasters?* This, in turn, prompts a series of sub-questions, to be tested through fieldwork, which include:
1. *What known risk factors for trafficking are heightened in the post-disaster environment?*
2. *Who is most susceptible to these risks?*
3. *Where are trafficking risks most likely to increase – in the worst-affected area of a disaster, or elsewhere?*
4. *When do these risks increase – in the immediate aftermath of the event, or later?*
5. *What risks does a would-be migrant foresee when he/she consider engaging with an employer or migrant broker, and what risks are they prepared to take?*
6. *Would his/her propensity to take risks increase following a disaster?*
7. *Who are the traffickers in a post-disaster environment?*

8. *How does a trafficker's behaviour change following a disaster, and do they recognise the post-disaster environment as a moment to exploit individuals?*

9. *To what extent are law enforcement and protection structures weakened following disaster, and how might this contribute to an enhanced trafficking risk?*

10. *What steps were taken (such as awareness campaigns) by government or police to discourage employment or migration risk-taking following a period of disaster, and what impact – if any – did they have?*

These are all questions to help guide the literature review and subsequent fieldwork chapters. It should be noted from the start that this study relates primarily to internal trafficking within the Philippines, for reasons which are expanded upon later in the thesis. Nonetheless, the features of international trafficking, including displacement and the circumstances which created vulnerability in the first place, remain relevant to domestic trafficking – in other words, whether an individual faces trafficking at home or abroad, the situation which resulted in them becoming vulnerable to trafficking in the first place, with a special emphasis on disaster, is the focus of this study.

**Case study: The Philippines**

The Philippines was chosen as a case study to examine the linkage between disaster and trafficking because it is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world with frequent typhoons, tropical storms, monsoons, flooding, landslides, volcano eruptions and earthquakes (UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015). The nation is also cited as a 'trafficking hotspot' (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2019; US State Department, 2014; Reuters, 2018). Latest figures show that Philippine law enforcement identified 1,216 people who experienced domestic trafficking in 2020, compared with 1,443 people in 2019 (US Department of State: 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, Philippines, 2021). The trafficking of Filipinos abroad remains a huge problem, with nearly 2,500 Filipinos identified in 2020 who potentially had become victims of trafficking, primarily in the Middle East and Asia. In 2019, this figure was significantly higher at 6,772 (US Department of State, ibid.) before the Covid pandemic reduced or temporarily halted international travel. The vast majority

of recorded trafficking cases in or from the Philippines involved illegal recruitment, with fewer than ten identified as victims of sex trafficking. At the same time, the above report published on the US State Department website notes that the Philippines government "lacks a reliable mechanism to consolidate statistics on the total number of victims identified and assisted", so the true number is not known.

In terms of hazards, the Philippines experiences around 20 typhoons each year (Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Centre, 2018). The country is situated on the 'Pacific Ring of Fire' where there is a heightened risk of volcano eruptions and earthquakes. While there are around 200 deaths each year from disasters in the Philippines, this number rose to more than 7,000 from a single disaster in 2013 following Typhoon Haiyan (local name: Yolanda) which devastated Tacloban City in the central Visayas region (Ritchie & Roser, 2021).

**Figure 1:** Number of incidents and deaths due to extreme events and disasters from 2010 to 2019. (Philippine Statistics Authority: 2020b)
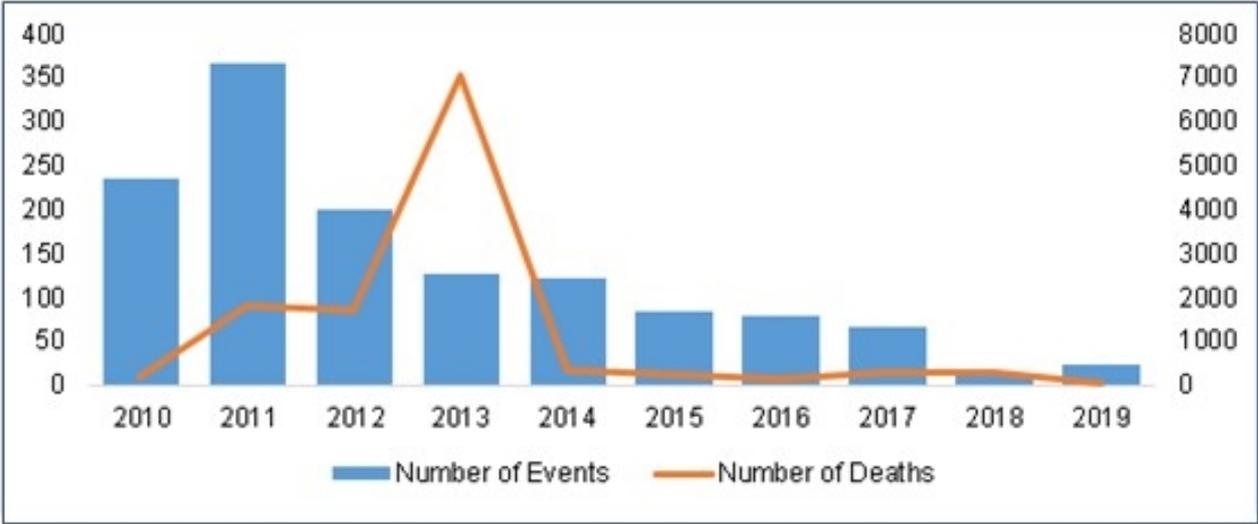


This huge and unusual disaster-related death toll can be seen clearly in Figure 1 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020b, citing Office of Civil Defence) which shows the historic nature of Typhoon Haiyan, and how it stands out from regular ongoing disasters experienced in other years. Huge swathes of Tacloban City, which had a population at that time of around 220,000 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013), were destroyed by Haiyan's storm surge (NASA Earth Observatory, 2013). The storm's

trajectory can be seen in Figure 2, passing through Tacloban City where the majority of the overall deaths occurred; and Cebu Island to the west where there were few deaths but huge damage to property and livelihoods. With such a pronounced impact of a weather-related shock focused in a relatively small and distinct geographical area, Tacloban City has therefore been selected to study the impact of Haiyan in what I have labelled the 'central disaster zone'. As scholars have noted, the Philippines "has become an important case study for understanding community resilience and vulnerabilities, as well as the intersection between poverty and hazards" (Daly, 2016:10).

**Figure 2:** Map showing Typhoon Haiyan's trajectory. (ReliefWeb EU/ Map Action/ UNOSAT: 2013)
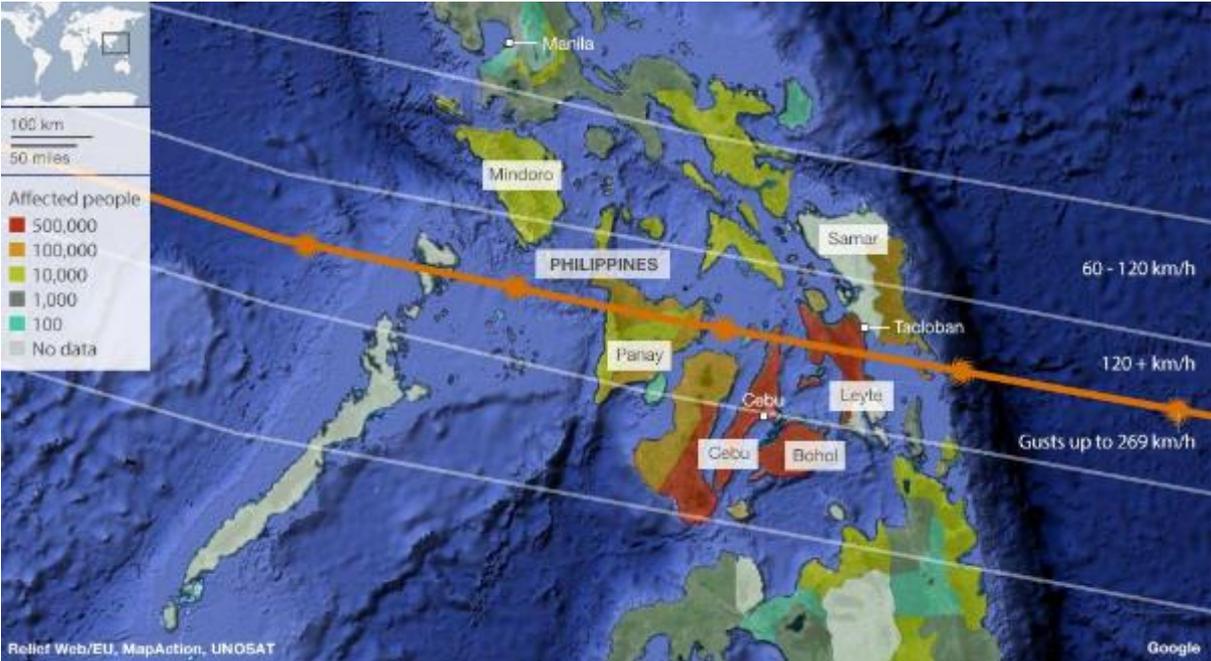
**Figure 3:** Map showing the study area, with inner and outer disaster zones. (Created by author.)



The distinction between the inner and outer disaster zones becomes important in subsequent chapters, so the map above in Figure 3 shows this active study area featuring the central disaster zone of Tacloban City, with the yellow line indicating areas worst-affected by Haiyan along the Leyte coastline, and the outer disaster zone of Cebu Island including the metropolis of Cebu City, the predominantly rural Samar Island, and the huge Philippine capital Metro Manila with a population of 13.5 million (NCR census, 2020) where thousands of evacuees arrived.

The choice of case study was also influenced by the fact that fluent English is widely spoken in the Philippines, reducing or eliminating the cost of translation; transportation and accommodation is inexpensive; and I had already acquired strong NGO, government and university contacts in the region after being based there with an international aid agency in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan as a media spokesperson. These contacts proved essential in gaining access to many interviewees, including formerly trafficked people.

**Methodology**

Three sets of field studies were conducted, which are presented in the thesis in the chronological order they were carried out. This reflects the evolving story of this research endeavour, which began by pursuing evidence of disaster-trafficking in the urban area where most devastation from the typhoon occurred; then moving geographically outwards, to the countryside and major cities as the search for evidence continued; and, finally, broadening the parameters of time to learn how disaster may have had an impact years after the event. The first set of interviews was conducted in June 2017 with government, social services, police and court officials, NGOs and academics in Tacloban City, to learn what was known about the disaster-trafficking link in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. The second set of interviews was conducted in November 2017 and July 2018. They cast the net wider to hear from interviewees in the 'wider disaster zone', including nearby Cebu Island, Cebu City, and the capital Manila (see Figure 3). Evidence for these first two studies was gathered through semi-structured interviews, with respondents' answers analysed and tested against current knowledge on the topic. The third and final set of interviews was carried out in June 2019 directly with trafficking survivors themselves. These interviews, with a total of 33 respondents, were conducted over the course of ten days at three trafficking shelters in Cebu, all run by the Good Shepherd Welcome House. As all respondents had experienced trafficking, a rigorous ethics review was conducted beforehand and a trained social worker was present throughout. These interviews revealed how trafficking became prevalent after slow-onset disasters, as well as major calamities, and how often many years and even decades had elapsed between the disaster event and the trafficking experience – even though a clear link between the two was present.

**Structure and signposting for the following chapters**

The Literature Review in Chapter 2 begins with definitions and caveats surrounding human trafficking, noting the specific wording of the widely-accepted Palermo Protocol and how the term 'trafficking' can be widely misused even by experts themselves. The chapter goes on to critically examine the existing volume of literature on human trafficking including its drivers and risk factors. The disaster-

trafficking discourse is then explored, noting widespread claims of post-disaster trafficking by the media, government and NGOs, followed by references to the phenomenon in literature. It is observed that all of the current academic writing on this disaster-trafficking link is theoretical, with no empirical research to date. Finally, the literature review goes on to explore what has been documented about human trafficking generally in the Philippines, before inquiring more specifically about post-disaster trafficking in the country.

The fieldwork methodology is set out in Chapter 3, presenting the numerous ethical considerations before the interviews with trafficking survivors were conducted. Observations about the fieldwork process are also discussed, along with implications surrounding the fact that only female respondents were interviewed; and the implications of the probable moral perception of sex work among the shelter managers and how this may have affected the research. This is followed by practical details including the study timeline and funding.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the fieldwork findings, each exploring a different angle of disaster-trafficking. First, Chapter 4 examines the phenomenon specifically through the lens of Typhoon Haiyan, exploring the tension between widely held assumptions that trafficking was rife in the worst-affected area of Tacloban City, and the facts that were actually known on the ground. Evidence was gathered from dozens of interviews with government and court officials, mayors, police officers, community leaders, aid agencies and academics. Piecing together all the information from these entities, all of whom were on the frontline of the disaster, it appears there were just four known trafficking cases related to this historic disaster. None of these resulted in prosecutions. Full details of these cases, and their significance surrounding the post-disaster phenomenon, is explored later in Chapter 4, prompting the over-arching question: With so many grand claims and assumptions about post-disaster trafficking (see numerous examples listed in 'The disaster-trafficking discourse' section, Chapter 2: Literature Review), why do inquiries with all known officials and experts from Tacloban City who worked in Haiyan's aftermath yield just four known cases of trafficking, and no prosecutions? Along with the widely-accepted reality that trafficking is under-reported, two new scenarios are also presented based on evidence from expert interviewees.

Chapter 5 broadens the research geographically, examining trafficking risks among those who left the central disaster zone and travelled to nearby cities to seek work. The findings from this chapter are reflected in the title of the thesis, 'A Phenomenon Displaced'. In other words, the phenomenon of disaster-trafficking is displaced from the central disaster zone to nearby cities and outlying areas, as those impacted are economically displaced to seek employment. This chapter also explores the assertion, which emerged during fieldwork, that post-disaster trafficking risks can be elevated in rural areas further afield, where there is weaker monitoring and less assistance from NGOs and the authorities.

The final fieldwork study, Chapter 6, presents the empirical research with formerly-trafficked people. The narratives offered by interviewees point to disaster being a strong driver of trafficking, even bearing in mind that disaster is a more prominent feature of day-to-day life in the Philippines than most other countries (Bankoff, 2003:162; UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015). The conclusion, Chapter 7, summarises the significance of these key findings to the wider literature, and sets out the thesis's contribution to knowledge. At the same time, the study's limitations are highlighted, with suggested next steps for research.

To conclude, this study will present the first empirical evidence, to my knowledge, on the link between disasters and human trafficking, and puts forward a new disaster-trafficking framework with many subtleties that add depth to current theory. Many distinct themes are explored and critically analysed including disaster, poverty, resilience, crime and corruption, trafficking and modern-day slavery, global and domestic migration, and forced displacement. More peripherally, the research explores the role of NGOs and advocacy efforts to prevent trafficking; technology and increased online trafficking; the role of international employment recruitment agencies; and the impact of climate change. With reports suggesting that disaster now displaces more people than war (IDMC, 2014), this area of research has important implications. Claims that natural hazards are set to increase (for example: Jones, 2016) make the need for knowledge even more pressing as policy-makers seek to empower and protect those affected by natural hazards around the globe. Understanding where the risks of post-disaster trafficking are likely to occur, and to whom, can prove a useful tool in this endeavour.

# Chapter 2

## Literature Review

This chapter critically examines the existing literature surrounding the theory that disaster can lead to an increased risk of human trafficking, serving as context to the central research question: *How and why does disaster increase the risk of human trafficking?* On paper, the disaster-trafficking theory is a compelling one because, as discussed throughout this chapter, scholars have pointed out how numerous trafficking drivers are heightened in the post-disaster environment such as poverty and displacement. However, these arguments are limited to theoretical literature because, as already stated, to the best of my knowledge and as observed by scholars, there is so far no empirical literature which specifically examines the disaster-trafficking nexus (Gurung et al, 2018:303; Goździak, 2014:58; Bowersox, 2018:5). This chapter starts with important definitions and widely-cited caveats about the study of human trafficking, based on a review of general trafficking literature. The next section moves on more specifically to the disaster-trafficking link with claims presented in the media and by governments and NGOs, and how these assertions are expanded upon by academics' theories. Finally, as a country noted as a trafficking source, transit and destination point for human trafficking (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2019) and as one of the most disaster-prone nations in the world (UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015), my chosen case study of the Philippines features in this literature review with a dedicated section towards the end of the chapter.

**Definitions and caveats**

Due to varying interpretations and frequent misunderstandings about human trafficking (UNODC, 2019), a clear definition is required at the outset of this study. The internationally-accepted Palermo Protocol presented in Chapter 1 (Introduction), will be used throughout this paper. To recap, for trafficking to have taken place an individual must have been recruited; the means of recruitment must have been coercion, deception or abuse of power; and the person in question must have been

exploited at the end of the process, usually without the wages they were promised and with restricted movement resulting in slave-like conditions. The trafficking protocol states that a child (anyone aged under 18) will be considered a victim of trafficking even if they have not been subjected to any of the 'means' set out in the definition above. Trafficking can take place within a country as well as across state borders (UNODC, 2022). Anti-trafficking laws in the Philippines centre around the Filipino Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, which uses the same definition of trafficking as the aforementioned Palermo Protocol. It should be noted that the focus of this PhD paper is on domestic trafficking, for reasons which will be expanded upon shortly.

The term 'trafficking' is frequently used incorrectly, including by experts themselves. For example, Tigno states: "To further complicate matters, illegal recruitment is often conflated with human trafficking. In fact, it is not uncommon for Philippine authorities to use the terms interchangeably" (2012:32). This has therefore been borne in mind throughout the research, ensuring interviewees understood the strict definition of the Palermo Protocol before each interview began. In almost every case, it was clear that government officials, law enforcement and NGO personnel I interviewed in the Philippines already had a firm grasp of the definition, were aware of the Palermo Protocol, and used the term correctly and consistently.

Bales asserts that human trafficking is synonymous with modern-day slavery (2012:252). Indeed, slave-like conditions must occur to meet the Palermo Protocol definition. Empirical evidence from the Philippines and elsewhere demonstrates that victims end up in conditions of exploitation and restricted movement with spurious debt to their paymasters (UNODC, 2003). As Shelley notes: "Most human traffickers have a commodity that they can exploit repeatedly [...] The exceptions are organs and children trafficked for adoptions that can be bought and resold for a profit only once" (2010:87). A key element of the Palermo Protocol, which determines whether or not trafficking has taken place, is whether the individual concerned has given consent or was coerced. A question which emerged frequently when analysing information given by respondents in field interviews for this dissertation was whether trafficking survivors needed to be coerced by a specific individual – or whether they could be 'coerced through circumstances'. In other words, in the context of the

trafficking interviews in Chapter 6, the following question emerges: Is actively deciding to enter sex work because of extreme disaster-induced poverty 'coercion through circumstances', thus meeting the threshold of human trafficking, even if the respondent expresses this during interview as an active choice? There is discussion on this issue from the UNODC which refers to the Palermo Protocol's provision of exploitation "through a position of vulnerability":

> The drafting history of the Protocol confirms that "abuse of a position of vulnerability" is to be understood as referring to "any situation in which the person involved has no real and acceptable alternative but to submit to the abuse involved": a circular definition that has not helped to clarify confusion among practitioners. No further guidance is provided and it is unclear what "real and acceptable alternative" actually means or how it is to be applied in practice (2013:3).

Further guidance attempts to clarify the issue of consent – and whether it can be treated as genuine in the context of trafficking survivors' individual circumstances:

> Relationship with consent: The Trafficking in Persons Protocol is unambiguous on the point that consent is irrelevant in relation to trafficking in children, or where any of the specified means have been used, where the victim is over the age of 18 years. In practice however, the issue of consent has indeed arisen in the context of abuse of vulnerability (APOV). In one country, for example, APOV is only considered relevant as a potential "means" where the victim had given his or her consent to the situation: it is the victim's vulnerability that is used to explain away and nullify the apparent consent. Alternatively, the presence of meaningful consent can change the nature of the crime at issue, from one of trafficking in persons to other crimes. In other countries, the relationship between APOV and consent will sometimes be an issue in situations where the victim does not explicitly identify as a victim. Practitioners generally agree that the use of "means" including APOV must be of a sufficiently specific and serious nature as to vitiate the consent of the victim (UNODC 2013:5).

It has been argued that, even where an individual expresses that they 'chose' to enter prostitution, this is not the case, with Tigno stating:

> Most progressive women's groups argue that prostitution is a 'structural issue related to patriarchy and poverty' and that no woman would consent to engage in sex work were she not forced by poverty and desperation (2012:30).

This is a relevant issue to be borne in mind throughout my field research, for example in the case of Mardie*, 19, whose house was damaged during a storm and

subsequently demolished, plunging the family into poverty. At this point, she states that she entered sex work "to have money for the family's needs". As sex work always results in abuse, and the family faced disaster-induced financial desperation and vulnerability, the respondent arguably faced no "real and acceptable alternative", as defined by the UNODC issue paper, to ensure the family's financial survival. Thus, with the element of coercion established, Mardie's situation can be characterised as human trafficking.

Those migration scholars who recognise the balance between structure and agency tend, according to Bakewell, to call on Giddens' theory of structuration (1984:146) where human agency and structure are in a complex relationship with one another. Bakewell observes that many social scientific theories on migration "rest on the assumption that migrants or potential migrants have a significant level of choice over their decisions to move" and that "studies will generally make a distinction between forced and voluntary migration" (2010:1690). The results from my study's fieldwork, presented later in Chapter 6, suggest that intense cultural pressures to provide for one's parents when in a state of poverty may mean that, while many choices to migrate or to accept risky employment are freely made in theory, and may be expressed by the respondent as a 'choice', in practice the individual was forced through culture or circumstances to take employment risks which resulted in exploitation. Similarly, leaving an abusive situation by travelling to another city in search of work, where trafficking subsequently occurs, is arguably not a migration choice made freely because the individual faced no reasonable choice but to escape the abuse.

As already stated, the focus throughout this paper is on domestic trafficking. While recognising the warning about relying on trafficking statistics (Samarasinghe, 2008:122), latest available global figures indicate that 42 per cent of detected victims were trafficked within their own country rather than internationally (UNODC, 2016). In the case of the Philippines, while it is known that widespread international trafficking occurs from the country (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2019; UNODC, 2003; Parreñas, 2006), it would be impractical to track down Filipinos who had been trafficked to other countries for this study, not least due to time and budget constraints. Furthermore, while current literature tends to focus on international

trafficking, there is little research on internal trafficking which requires more of scholars' attention (Gurung et al, 2018:303).

Turning to the definition of disaster, the UN and professionals working in disaster risk reduction are at pains to point out that there is no such thing as a 'natural' disaster, because a disaster is the effect of a natural hazard such as an earthquake, tsunami or typhoon. In other words, the hazard itself is not a disaster, but rather its impact which, to some extent, can be controlled or mitigated – for example, by lessening the impact of a natural hazard with stronger buildings, flood barriers, timely evacuations, or avoiding building in areas at risk of flooding. Thus, there is no such thing as a "natural disaster" and the phrase is not used in this dissertation, except when quoting text from others who have used it. The term 'disaster' is defined by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction as:

> A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts (UNDRR[1]).

While retaining its original remit of examining disaster-induced trafficking, my field research was expanded to include trafficked individuals affected by any environmental event which could be categorised as a 'disaster' as defined by the UNDRR, above. This includes slow-onset disaster or repetitive low-level events such as annual monsoons, flooding, or tropical storms which have a negative economic or social impact, disrupting family life and causing displacement or loss of earnings. A number of field interview respondents in Chapter 6 also cited fire as a disaster which proved a catalyst for trafficking, so – while it is made clear this does not usually relate to a natural hazard – this is also included in the disaster-trafficking connections analysed in Chapter 6.

Before embarking on this study, it should also be acknowledged that solid facts and figures on the true extent of trafficking, including where it takes place and how many cases occur, remain elusive and any attempt at collating data is described by Samarasinghe as pure guesswork (2008:122). This is because most trafficking takes

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[1] UNDRR Terminology: www.undrr.org/terminology/disaster

place undetected; data is not shared between countries, or even authorities (IOM, 2015); victims do not come forward because they are afraid of repercussions, they are ashamed or face stigma (Nykaza, 2009:319); aid agencies, governments and others may distort figures to further their own aims such as raising funds (Bales 2021:34); and statistics cannot be usefully compiled or compared because the definition of trafficking, as stated earlier (Tigno 2012:32) is interpreted inconsistently. Pressure from news outlets to provide numbers on human trafficking means "organisations feel compelled to supply them, lending false precision and spurious authority to many reports" (Feingold, 2010:10). This research paper, acknowledging the futility of obtaining accurate trafficking statistics, thus focuses solely on demonstrating how an *increased risk* of trafficking can occur in the post-disaster environment.

Data have nonetheless been compiled in cases which have reached the stage of prosecution and conviction. The UNODC's latest Trafficking in Persons Report, which collates data from 148 countries covering 95 per cent of the world's population, suggests there were 49,032 detected cases of trafficking in the year 2018, or from the most recent data available to researchers (2020:25). In the same period, 7,368 people were prosecuted and 3,553 convicted (ibid:25). Further recent data show that, of trafficking victims detected in 2016, 71 per cent were female and 28 per cent were children (UNODC, 2016).

**The current state of trafficking literature**

This section examines the current volume of trafficking literature as it relates to my central research question: *Why and how is human trafficking affected by the occurrence of disasters?* The general trafficking literature will be discussed first, before moving on to the specific intersection between trafficking and disasters. While there is claimed to be a dearth of empirical evidence surrounding the disaster-trafficking link (see 'The Empirical Vacuum', later in this chapter), there is a good deal of literature surrounding trafficking more broadly.

A clear set of trafficking drivers is presented throughout the literature. Poverty is repeatedly cited as one of the strongest catalysts, with "economic need" recorded as

a factor in more than half of recent court case summaries globally (UNODC, 2020:9). Aronowitz refers to the "socially deprived characterised by low income, poor education, and lack of employment" which are "typically circumstances of the poor" (2009a:23). Drivers of migration are largely related to poverty and the desire for economic improvement (Mahdavi, 2011:216) which become all the more pronounced following a disaster when household economies are shattered. This will be explored in more detail in the following section (the disaster-trafficking discourse). There are various theories attempting to explain how migrants cross the conceptual boundary into trafficking; in other words, how regular migration 'goes awry'. Mahmoud and Trebesch argue that "trafficking and exploitation are the sad but obvious consequence of migration pressure in a world of closed borders", leaning heavily on the notion that migration choices are based on economic prospects with more desperate circumstances leading to riskier decisions:

> Localities witnessing large-scale out-migration may be particularly disadvantaged in the first place, often suffering from poor economic development and weak institutions. In deprived areas, migration may be the only strategy available to increase economic opportunities and start a better life. This will have implications for preference set of those departing, as they may be more prone to take risks in the migration process, such as crossing borders illegally or accepting jobs in the informal sector abroad (2010:8).

Vulnerability within the family unit is seen as an additional risk factor for trafficking, including disruption to the family structure, as Shelley observes:

> Family homelessness, familial breakdowns, parental illness, divorce, death of a parent, and abandonment by the father often follow rural to urban migration. Alcohol abuse often becomes more common within families, including violence and sexual exploitation of women and children who often run away. Familial exploitation often becomes a steppingstone to abuse by traffickers (2010:53).

Many of these factors were observed not just as an additional risk, but as a central trafficking driver in my field studies presented in subsequent chapters, with deaths in the family, loss of livelihoods, illness or drug abuse all playing a role. This emerges as a strong theme in respondents' stories during my fieldwork, with trafficking survivors stating they felt forced to leave because of the abuse they faced in the family home following the disruption of disaster.

Structurally, it is noted that international traffickers "thrive in a globalised world because the legal controls are state based, whereas the crime groups are transnational" (Shelley, 2010: 116). Choosing illegal means to migrate such as smuggling increases the risk of trafficking because individuals can lose agency during the process and become controlled by the smugglers (Tamura, 2011:2), thus meeting the definition of trafficking. It is often during the transit phase that victims realise something is untoward. They may be held in safe houses and their documents confiscated (Busch-Armendariz, 2009:7), or unexpectedly handed over to another employer (Fitzgibbon, 2010:85). In other cases, it is not until they reach the final destination that documents are confiscated, wages do not materialise, freedom is restricted, debts to the employer mysteriously increase, and the job turns out to be something entirely different such as being forced into prostitution (UNODC, 2013:24). If visas have been deliberately left to lapse, victims may also be reluctant to leave their workplace because they fear detection and prosecution by the host country (ibid.). The majority of Overseas Filipino Workers are employed as nurses, domestic workers or carers (Martinez et al, 2022:1) meaning that many can be at the mercy of their employers and remain hidden behind closed doors abroad, where physical abuse and exploitative work practices can go undetected. This is discussed in the Philippine-specific section towards the end of this chapter.

**Exacerbating factors**

Unlike drug trafficking, human trafficking investigations in most places in the world are assigned to low-level police or teams who are poorly financed and lack expertise and who cannot pursue transnational crime networks (Shelley, 2010:297). Following the money trails of human trafficking is required to dismantle international crime networks; this is carried out successfully to combat the drugs trade, with 'prisons throughout the world filled with drug traffickers', but is rarely pursued for human trafficking (ibid:135). Even if the opportunity to prosecute arises, the author notes that many victims of trafficking do not wish to pursue charges because of fears over their own safety, and for family members back home (ibid:109).

Corruption 'oils the wheels of trafficking' to keep the process of exploitation running smoothly (Guth, 2010:157), with failure to prosecute meaning traffickers can continue

to act with impunity. When incidents are reported, corruption coupled with ineffective policing means they are rarely pursued (ibid:148). Indeed, corruption is an allegation made by interviewees in Chapter 5 of this study, regarding a failure to prosecute alleged traffickers in the central disaster zone of Tacloban City. In fact, Bales suggests that rates of corruption are the strongest predictor for trafficking in any given country (2007:9) Corruption is rife in the Philippines which ranks 117 out of 180 countries on the World Bank's corruption index (Transparency International, 2021). Indeed, the Philippines has been singled out alongside Indonesia, Russia and Pakistan as a country where corruption is linked to trafficking (Shelley, 2010:48). Border officials at Philippine airports and seaports have also been accused of allowing known trafficking victims to leave the country after being paid off by traffickers (UNODC, 2013). Bogus visas have also reportedly enabled Filipino trafficking victims to be added onto legitimate tour groups so they can freely leave (Shelley, 2010:105). Fieldwork findings from this study also suggest that corruption within law enforcement can perpetuate trafficking. For example, in Chapter 6 of this thesis, respondent Sheena*, 37, was arrested during a bar raid by police and imprisoned for two weeks even though she was, without doubt, a victim of trafficking. Such raids are frequently carried out when bar owners refuse to pay bribes to the police. It is clear that being imprisoned will worsen job prospects, self-esteem, social challenges and many of the factors that are known to increase the risk of trafficking. Thus, corruption has contributed towards elevating the risks of human trafficking. Furthermore, in a suspected trafficking case following Typhoon Haiyan, I was told by two separate and senior sources in the police, and the manager of a women and child protection facility, that a group of alleged traffickers were released from custody and the case was dropped by prosecutors after interventions from "influential people" (see Case 2, in Chapter 4 of this thesis). Corruption among law enforcement agencies can also be seen to perpetuate the vicious cycle of trafficking in cases presented in the forthcoming fieldwork.

**The blurred line of 'perpetrator and victim'**

The word 'trafficker' can conjure images of shadowy figures in the criminal underworld. However, recruiters need to win potential victims' trust and are more likely to be a neighbour, friend, or even a family member – an assertion borne out by respondents to this study, many of whom were recruited by friends. It has been shown that trust is more easily established from someone of the same ethnicity as the victim and who speaks the same language, with "the violation of trust, which occurs in every trafficking case... as devastating to the individual as the physical or psychological abuse" (Shelley, 2010:95). Traffickers even create fake modelling agencies to trick their victims by offering them false promises of employment (ibid:52). Victims of trafficking, often women, also sometimes become perpetrators themselves. Individuals who do this are known to get recruitment bonuses (ibid:97) though it must be recognised that some former trafficking victims carry out recruitment due to threats from their employers (Jones et al, 2007:112). Mahmoud and Trebesch suggest that "traffickers fish in the stream of migration" with more people leaving an area meaning that more people are at risk of trafficking (2010:2). Further models include those presented by Wheaton et al, who set out an economic theory in which traffickers "procure vulnerable individuals and sell them to employers" based on labour supply and demand decisions (2010:136). Joarder and Miller present a theory in which traffickers seek to exploit resource-constrained individuals, expecting extra payments to be 'moved up the queue' (2013:1341). Organised crime is said to play a significant role in human trafficking including in the Philippines (Santos, 2010a:24). There are numerous actors who benefit from the process of human trafficking, some directly and others peripherally, with many different entities involved (Bajrektarevic, 2000:67). An employer who receives a trafficked worker and sets out to deprive them of freedoms and wages benefits financially from slave labour on an ongoing basis. The 'middle man', or 'logistics specialist' who transports the migrant, usually benefits from a one-off payment (Shelley, 2014:7). Corrupt officials who take pay-offs instead of prosecuting traffickers benefit too (Guth, 2010:157).

**Challenges to trafficking theory**

Concerns have been raised about the quality of debate surrounding existing trafficking theory with an "information deficit widely noted in the literature" (Frank and Simmons, 2013:4). These concerns become even more pronounced when specifically examining the disaster-trafficking link, as will be discussed in the next section. However, in the general trafficking literature, critics have questioned the overall quality of some authors' material claiming that "the current discourse on human trafficking is driven by mythology rather than empirical research":

> A review of literature on sex trafficking since 2000 reveals that numerous articles have been published in scholarly journals but few are based on systematic primary data collection. Much of our current knowledge, including statistical estimates and characteristics of the trafficking business, derives from a handful reports issued by government and non-government agencies. With few empirical studies available, imagination seems to have filled the gaps of our knowledge. The problem was further complicated by a manifest (sometimes subtle) moral crusading agenda aimed at a deep-rooted and hotly debated social practice (Zhang, 2009:178).

While there appears to be no empirical research specifically on the disaster-trafficking link, the proportion of journal articles featuring empirical research in the general trafficking literature has certainly improved over the years. Research from Goździak and Graveline shows that just 18 per cent of journal articles featured empirical research between 1975 to 2007 (2015:12). This rose to 25 per cent when looking at the period 2008-2014. The authors go on to note:

> However, the phenomenon of human trafficking cannot be fully understood without good empirical data on the victims or the system of care established to assist them as well as on the perpetrators (ibid:13).

Another scholar examined 96 articles on human trafficking over a period of 17 years, and found that the majority – 62 per cent – were theoretical and did not contain any empirical findings (Okech, 2017: 109). It is claimed that many academic articles are "simply recapitulating the assertions of government agencies and global organisations" and four fifths of books on sex trafficking cite arguably flawed sources (Weitzer, 2015:224). Mahmoud and Trebesch conclude: "While theory is scarce, empirical evidence is even scarcer. There is very little systemic knowledge about

which households and regions are most vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking." (2010:6)

**The disaster-trafficking discourse**

Having examined the general trafficking literature to frame the forthcoming fieldwork chapters, the thesis now moves on more specifically to what has been written about disaster-induced trafficking. As previously stated, the starting point for this research is the oft-cited claim that disasters lead to an increased risk of human trafficking. This narrative is widely recited and used by many working in the NGO sector and governments (examples cited below), presented as fact which is often echoed without scrutiny in NGO reports and media interviews. Indeed, it is a refrain that I heard regularly while working for an international NGO in devastated areas of Tacloban City in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. As stated in the introduction, to the best of my knowledge there is currently no empirical evidence examining the link between disasters and trafficking. The disaster-trafficking discourse leans on a typical narrative that vulnerabilities are heightened in the aftermath of a disaster, plunging people into a state of economic desperation thus elevating their risk of exploitation. In the mind's eye, there may be a picture of a chaotic post-disaster scene with decimated communities and traffickers lurking on the sidelines as law and order breaks down. As fieldwork from this study will explore later, this scenario could not be further from reality. Indeed, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the area most affected by disaster is usually the focus of huge national government attention; law enforcement and local government officials are on their guard; and there is quickly a huge presence of international aid workers. This is despite the risk, as referenced in Chapter 4 of this thesis, of aid workers carrying out abuse or contributing to corruption themselves. Furthermore, as stated in literature and backed up by the fieldwork in this study, the shadowy figures presented as the trafficking brokers are often, in reality, 'friends', family, and formerly-trafficked people themselves. The IOM offers a succinct history of these claims:

> The first time the issue of human trafficking during natural disasters came into the spotlight was after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, when several child protection organisations began to notice an increase in child abductions for "adoption" in Indonesia. Though no cases could be directly attributed, various stakeholders, including civil society, academics and organisations, began to

conduct awareness-raising measures in areas at risk of human trafficking. This set a precedent for counter-trafficking efforts during emergency responses to natural disasters and since 2004, organizations including the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) have monitored trafficking trends and incorporated this issue into its Migration Crisis Operational Framework (2016:6).

To discuss the current literature specifically on the disaster-trafficking link, this section of the Literature Review first examines the 'empirical vacuum' of research on the topic. This also serves to highlight why it is important to start filling the void of evidence, and this PhD study's contribution to knowledge. Second, to set the scene for the disaster-trafficking discourse, examples of the claims by NGOs and government officials, echoed in the media, are presented. This shows the commanding way in which these claims are portrayed as fact across NGO reports and the media. The discussion of these claims in literature is then analysed, often 'trailing ahead' to the forthcoming fieldwork (Chapters 4 to 6) which test these assertions. Finally, I hone in specifically on the Philippines context, and even more tightly on Typhoon Haiyan, examining the claims in relation to this specific country and disaster.

**The empirical vacuum**

When researching the link between trafficking and disasters specifically, the literature becomes sparse. My literature search, covering the period up to July 2022, yields no peer-reviewed empirical articles at all on the disaster-trafficking link. As recently as 2018, a journal article states in the first paragraph:

> This link between natural disaster and human trafficking has been suspected in the past (Danailova-Trainor and Laczko, 2010; United Nations General Assembly, 2012) but to the extent of our knowledge, is yet to be studied empirically (Gurung et al, 2018:303).

The paper does not go on to do so. Goździak explains:

> Although the root causes of trafficking, including poverty, underdevelopment and a lack of viable livelihoods, are exacerbated by crises, empirical data corroborating the hypothesis that trafficking in persons will increase significantly during crises is lacking. Without outcome and impact evaluations

of existing anti-trafficking strategies, international and local actors will continue to design prevention strategies in an empirical vacuum (2014:58).

Adding to authors' concerns about this lack of research, Bowersox states:

> To the best of my knowledge, the connection between natural disasters and human trafficking has remained untested. This is probably in large part due to the lack of reliable quantitative data on the matter. Because of its inherently unseen nature, counts and accurate levels of trafficking are unknown. It is, however, possible to test whether or not a state's capacity to address this crime, that is, the ability to prevent its occurrence, prosecute the traffickers, and protect their victims, is affected by the occurrence of natural disasters (2018:5).

However, while statistics are impossible to verify, the connection between disasters and trafficking can indeed be tested. This research would clearly be impractical to undertake "in real time" in the post-disaster environment, not least because it is unclear at the moment an individual is recruited whether or not their offer of employment is deceptive or genuine, and whether it will ultimately lead to abuse or exploitation. Furthermore, it would be impossible – as a researcher – to be there at the moment this recruitment took place and to be privy to the circumstances. However, it *is* possible – as this thesis shows in Chapter 6 – to 'work backwards' and identify individuals in a trafficking shelter who cite disaster as a factor in their trafficking journey. While this cannot generate statistical or quantitative data, at least beyond the proportion of trafficking survivors who cite disaster as a trafficking catalyst within an individual shelter, respondents' answers will certainly test the disaster-trafficking assertion and offer valuable new empirical insights into the how it unfolds.

When looking at the current disaster-trafficking discourse, the claims emerge in several different places. First, there are widespread assertions of disaster-trafficking, usually in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, by some NGOs and government officials. Second, these are reported in the media. Third, there is acknowledgement of these claims in the literature, followed by significant theoretical conjecture. However, as a backdrop to these discussions, it should be acknowledged that the literature also raises concern that many of the claims may be exaggerated and fuelled by specific anxieties, or to 'shock the public' to raise funds. Montgomery, who examined claims about trafficking following four major disasters starting with the 2004

Asian Tsunami, believes that some disaster-trafficking claims may stem from Western fears about child abuse which are 'globalised and exported'. While the author does not dispute the disaster-trafficking phenomenon occurs in general, she states:

> Western anxieties have focused on the belief that child abusers are ubiquitous and child abuse a global problem which needs combating with great energy and vigilance. By exporting the problem, it not only becomes more urgent and universal, it also allows fears of child abuse to be discussed, reinforced and constantly validated. The repetition of unsubstantiated claims and unconfirmed reports and the lack of detail allow a blank canvas against which fears can be projected and magnified and which give credence to social anxieties back home. (2011:406).

Goździak and Walter also note the difference between claims in the media of developed countries, and perceptions in the areas the disaster has occurred:

> There seems to be a considerable difference between what media and advocates in the global North stress and what reports originating in the global South emphasise. After the Indian Ocean tsunami, when the media frenzy died down, UNICEF commissioned assessments of media reporting of the disaster which noted that local newspapers in Indonesia and Sri Lanka were very suspicious of stories of child trafficking from the beginning (2014:59).

It is notable, nonetheless, that fieldwork for this study shows that almost all community leaders, police, civil servants and NGOs interviewed in the Philippines believed that the trafficking risk following Typhoon Haiyan increased dramatically – despite a clear lack of evidence for this assertion. While it is on the periphery of the scope of this this dissertation to establish *why* local officials held these beliefs, it should be reiterated, as discussed in Chapter 4, that just four cases of post-disaster trafficking following Typhoon Haiyan were confirmed in Tacloban. It could be linked to the well-known narratives presented in the sources mentioned above (Childs, 2016; Branigan, 2013; Eimer, 2013; UNICEF, 2005; US Department of State, 2005; Aglionby, 2005; Atzet, 2010:510; CNN, 2010; SOS Children's Villages, 2019; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016; Gyawali, Keeling and Kallestrup, 2016:1) and applied locally, noting that Filipinos speak fluent English and frequently digest international news. Nonetheless, there was hyper-vigilance among local officials who were instructed to be on their guard against traffickers.

It is argued that a further motivation for exaggerating or fabricating post-disaster trafficking is to raise money for NGOs, by creating concerns about the fate of children which will shock donors or potential donors, spurring them to give money to combat or prevent trafficking. In the following excerpt, Bales says he received fund-raising communications from an NGO citing these claims following the 2004 Asian Tsunami, and adeptly sets out the typical assertions often heard in a disaster's aftermath – contrasted with the known reality on the ground:

> These alerts described how human traffickers were flooding into the coastal villages of Myanmar and taking children away for exploitation. The descriptions were vivid and included the use of helicopters and aircraft to abscond with stolen children. I had recently been in Myanmar and knew fairly well the realities of human trafficking there. I found it very hard to believe this tale of flying traffickers swooping in to steal babies, and fortunately did have a way to check the truth of it. A long-time colleague and friend in Myanmar was a key United Nations official, herself Burmese, and after some effort, I reached her on her satellite phone as she helped direct the relief efforts along the coast. There were no airplanes full of traffickers, nor helicopters, not even boats. My colleague explained that the infrastructure was destroyed, and debris blocked nearly all possible entry points. Yes, a UN helicopter had managed to land with the first group of emergency aid workers, but roads, airstrips, docks, harbours, and bridges were demolished or blocked. People were flowing out of the area, not trying to get in. The story of flying traffickers snatching children was just that – a story used to play on donor emotions and raise funds for the NGO (2021:34).

In a further observation, aligned with the aims of my own study, Bales states:

> I was struck by rapid spread of this idea – the certainty that a rush of trafficking and enslavement always and instantly follows a natural disaster. Why did this idea, this assumption, always flourish on the heels of a catastrophe? There seemed to be a rush to believe, an emotional investment in the drama of disaster, and the result was something akin to a moral panic (ibid:35).

The author then goes on to note that, despite myriad claims of trafficking after the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, a subsequent in-depth study by the Human Rights Center and the East-West Center, at the University of California Berkeley, found evidence of numerous human rights violations, but no trafficking cases (ibid:39). These concerns could, reasonably, prompt the question: Does disaster-trafficking occur at all – or is it simply an oft-repeated myth, created to stir up fears, raise money for NGOs to carry out disaster relief, playing all the while on the subliminal anxieties of a Western audience? It should be reiterated, however, that even the authors raising these

serious and legitimate concerns do not dispute that disaster-trafficking occurs. Rather, they take issue with the extent to which it does take place by disputing individual claims, and discussing the motivation behind these apparent exaggerations. The need to test the disaster-trafficking link with empirical evidence, and fill a known void of empirical evidence, therefore becomes even more pressing with these claims and counter-claims.

It is also worth noting that the dearth of empirical research on disaster-induced trafficking is in stark contrast to conflict-induced trafficking, which has produced a healthy volume of literature. There are undoubtedly parallels between conflict and natural hazards in terms of their ability to disrupt family structures, displace individuals, and destroy livelihoods resulting in poverty (Ferris, 2008:1), all of which are risk factors for trafficking.

**Presenting the disaster-trafficking claims**

As already stated, widespread claims about disaster-trafficking are frequently made by NGOs, government officials and others following large-scale disasters. To set the scene, examples are presented in the sections below.

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**Examples of disaster-trafficking claims in the media**

Police in India say they have uncovered a human trafficking network that has sent hundreds of young women from earthquake-hit areas of Nepal to the Gulf, where they were forced into manual labour and sex work. In a series of arrests 10 days ago, police at Delhi's main airport detained two airline staff and two suspected traffickers. They also took 21 young women into their care, seven from the airport itself – where they were being led onto a flight to Dubai – and the rest from a hotel nearby. "They were from very poor classes and were promised jobs with handsome salaries in the Gulf. They came from districts hit hard by the earthquake in [April]. It is this disaster that is most responsible," said Mohammed Ishfaq Haider, deputy police commissioner at the Indira Gandhi airport. – *Burke, J. 2015. News article in 'The Guardian' following the 2015 Nepal earthquake.*

Rajan Burlakoti, Child Protection Officer at UNICEF, said: "Traffickers impersonated aid workers, they pretended they were there to support the villagers and help families overcome the trauma of the earthquake. They actually approached the victims who were desperately waiting for relief and other assistance and they took advantage of their situation. They would somehow be some of the first ones who would make it to these people… would offer help but in

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return they would take their children away." *Blog in 'Stop the Traffick', 2017, relating to the 2015 Nepal Earthquake.*

Fears are growing for children orphaned in the tsunami disaster after a senior UN official warned of credible reports that criminal gangs in Indonesia are offering them for adoption or exploitation. Carol Bellamy, executive director of Unicef, said yesterday that organised syndicates were exploiting the crisis in Aceh province. "They have been using sophisticated technology such as SMS messages to people throughout this region offering children for adoption," she said, citing reports from Unicef's partner agencies in Indonesia. She continued: "Whether it is [for] adoption or exploitation purposes or sex trafficking, these are criminal elements so it is very important not to let them get a foothold." – *Article in the Guardian, UK.* (Aglionby, 2005)

Trafficking of children and human organs is occurring in the aftermath of the earthquake that devastated parts of Haiti, killed more than 150,000 people, and left many children orphans, Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive said Wednesday. "There is organ trafficking for children and other persons also, because they need all types of organs," Bellerive said in an exclusive interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour. He did not give specifics, but asked by Amanpour if there is trafficking of children, Bellerive said, "The reports I received say yes." – *CNN news report* (CNN, 2010)

Indeed, such claims emerged immediately after Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines such as an analysis piece, three months after the disaster, entitled "Lessons for combating human trafficking in post-calamity situations". The piece quotes Bishop Broderick Pabillo, convener of the Philippines' Interfaith Movement Against Human Trafficking, alongside most mainstream international NGOs and the British International Development Secretary, Justine Greening, warning about post-disaster trafficking in the context of Haiyan. The article states:

> Traffickers can also masquerade as aid workers or representatives of government-accredited employment agencies to recruit desperate survivors, sometimes in partnership with organised crime syndicates and corrupt officials. According to Elise Young, vice president for policy and government affairs of Women Thrive Worldwide, the poverty and instability that natural disasters leave in their wake can make such situations 'prime grounds for trafficking' (Parmanand, 2014).

**Disaster-trafficking claims by NGOs and government**

U.S. "horrified" at child trafficking in tsunami aftermath: Reports of rape, kidnapping and trafficking of children already victimised by the Indian Ocean tsunami are considered credible by the U.S. State Department, according to department spokesman Adam Ereli, who addressed the subject in a briefing January 5. The

United States is "horrified that thousands of children orphaned by this disaster are vulnerable to exploitation by criminal elements who seek to profit from their misery," said Ereli. International organisations and nongovernmental organizations have warned about the risk to unprotected children in the current chaotic environment of the tsunami-affected region. – *News release from US Department of State, 2005.*

Children's vulnerability is significantly increased when they are separated from their families, unaccompanied, orphaned or displaced following humanitarian crisis. Some people exploit the chaotic environment that follows a natural disaster to engage in criminal activities, such as selling children for the purpose of illegal adoption, forced labour or sexual exploitation. Special Rapporteur, Najat Maalla M'jid, speaking at the United Nations Human Rights Council – quoted by Singh, David (2012): *Child Traffickers Thrive on Disasters.* UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction press release.

When a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal in April 2015, it killed well over 8,000 people… In the desolation, chaos and widespread panic that followed, a surge in child trafficking was almost inevitable, just as it was after the 2004 tsunami in southern Asia, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa, the 2013 typhoon in the Philippines, and many other natural disasters besides. – *Article by Open University academic Anna Childs in 'The Conversation'.* (Childs, 2016)

Just over a year ago Nepal suffered a devastating earthquake. In the aftermath of the quake, child traffickers tried to abduct children who had lost their parents in the quake. The traffickers – often from overseas – came to Nepal to sell children into child labour, forced marriage and sexual slavery. The poorest people in Nepal were also targeted by organ traffickers who offered quick cash for people willing to sell their kidneys. – *Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016.*

The chaos in the aftermath of the January 2010 Haiti earthquake created an opportunity for unscrupulous individuals to exploit the most vulnerable. The number of desperate parents who were convinced to let their children leave with strangers after the earthquake is "the saddest lesson of this catastrophe," says Celigny Darius, National Director of SOS Children's Villages in Haiti. SOS played a key role in protecting children from being trafficked out of Haiti into the Dominican Republic in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. In the months and years since we have reunited children with their families, rebuilt schools, and helped families, and communities, recover from the tragedy. – *SOS Children's Villages, 2019.*

There is a growing body of evidence demonstrating that humanitarian crises can lead to an increase in trafficking in persons. The issue has recently gained international traction and there is now a growing recognition at the global level by States, UN entities, and other humanitarian actors that responding to trafficking in persons should be further strengthened as part of emergency humanitarian programming. This was reaffirmed in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016) and when the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2331 which urges States to take multiple actions in this regard. *ECOSOC, 2017:1.*

**Explanations in the literature of disaster-trafficking claims**

The types of disaster-trafficking claims presented above are discussed in the literature, with authors putting forward their own theories as to why, when and how the phenomenon occurs. Shelley's widely-cited book on human trafficking states:

> No single source supplies a large number of [trafficking] victims. However, recruitment is easiest during economic crises, natural disasters, and conflicts when there is a ready supply of potential victims. Only at this time does human trafficking resemble the drug trade (2010:94).

Those at particular risk of trafficking during crisis scenarios such as disasters are singled out as children separated from their families; single-headed households, 'particularly those headed by women'; female and child victims of domestic violence; and those who have already been trafficked before and are therefore vulnerable to re-trafficking (Klaffenböck et al, 2017:192). These observations, for various reasons, align with accounts from trafficking survivors interviewed for my study (Chapter 6), though I did not conduct research on risks facing children as all respondents in my field interviews were at least 18 years of age. Others particularly susceptible to post-disaster trafficking are "socially castigated groups, the poor, and the very old and very young… These groups have a higher exposure to risk (food insecurity, health issues, fewer economic opportunities, etcetera) and a lower capacity to cope" (Bowersox, 2018:3).

Continuing the theme of child trafficking, claims were made in the media about trafficking for adoption following the 2010 Haiti Earthquake (Delva, 2010; Cohen, 2018) and repeated more broadly by NGOs and the UN (Aglionby, 2005; Singh 2012). In the literature, Atzet points out: "During a crisis, the supply of available children increases, the demand for those children increases, and the intentions of those transporting the children is difficult, if not impossible, to assess. Allowing adoptions to take place under these conditions propagates the parade of horrors which the Hague Convention and Optional Protocol were created to avoid." (2010:510)

Movement in the wake of disaster is presented as a common risk factor for trafficking, as post-calamity conditions "force people to seek work far from home or to migrate to survive" (Sigmon, 2008:246). Those who move to cities often end up living in slums, according to the IOM:

> Without savings (sometimes lost due to natural hazards), an education or advanced skills and limited access to gainful employment, these migrants have minimal bargaining power to assert their rights and can become easy targets for exploitation. For migrants engaged in domestic work or in the construction sector, this issue is commonplace (2016:4).

This aligns with the findings of my fieldwork presented in Chapter 5, with interviewees saying low-skilled workers turning up in highly-urbanised areas with no connections, and their official documents lost – or, in the case of Typhoon Haiyan, literally washed away by the storm surge – seeking off-the-books employment from unscrupulous employers, which eventually led to human trafficking.

The link between smuggling and trafficking is also highlighted in the literature, stating that individuals in a humanitarian crisis "in physical danger or dire economic situations might be actively seeking out smugglers to facilitate their migration from crisis-affected areas" (Goździak 2014:58). As noted earlier in this chapter, smuggling can significantly increase the risk of human trafficking. It is also claimed that crises can be a catalyst for "large migration flows… creating an additional factor of vulnerability among affected communities including susceptibility to exploitation and trafficking" (IOM, 2012:2).

But to what extent have the disaster-trafficking claims above been investigated following specific disasters? After the Indian Ocean Tsunami, which struck on Boxing Day 2004 claiming up to 230,000 lives in 14 countries (US Geological Survey, 2004), widespread claims of child trafficking surfaced almost immediately (Aglionby, 2005; US Department of State, 2005; Nishiyama, 2005). However, subsequent investigations have raised doubts over whether the trafficking took place, or at least to what extent. Addressing the question of whether the rumours are true, Samuels' anthropological study concludes:

> Like the researchers who tried to track down evidence of trafficking in the post-tsunami months, I cannot conclude that large-scale child trafficking indeed took place, although based on the published accounts I think it is likely that at least some children have illegally been given up for adoption or placed in orphanages and boarding schools without a proper search for their family members (2015:230).

The author goes on to suggest that "the perpetual uncertainty about the truth of the rumours has inserted alternative, uncertain futures into parents' narratives of loss" (ibid:230). Similarly, after the Nepal earthquake of 2015, it was reported that traffickers "lured victims" through "false job offers, kidnapping through physical violence as well as false promises for education, leisure activities or relief support", with further claims that "victims were engaged in a romantic relationship by the recruiters or convinced to stay in monasteries" (Brülisauer, 2015:18). These observations are empirical in the sense that they are drawn from interviews with six experts including NGO communications officers and child protection officers, but the research does not glean information from individuals who experienced post-disaster trafficking themselves. Other scholars make direct claims about post-disaster trafficking, such as Gyawali, Keeling and Kallestrup:

> As Nepal mourns the one-year commemoration of the April 2015 earthquake and its aftershocks that killed more than 8,500 people and left thousands injured and displaced, other more hidden repercussions of the resultant chaotic environment need attention: the increased risk of human trafficking. Considering that natural disasters provide a milieu for this illicit trade, there is a need for a robust response from stakeholders (2016:1).

However, in reality, evidence about an *increase* in human trafficking looked uncertain in this disaster with a decline of trafficking rates in some districts (Nixon, 2018:79). Questions have also been raised about whether the Covid-19 Pandemic caused a rise in cases of human trafficking (Curbello, 2021) with a study highlighting that children have been "increasingly targeted by traffickers at the local level and online… for sexual purposes, forced marriage, forced begging and for forced criminality" (UNODC, 2021:8).

**Domestic versus international trafficking**

Guring et al suggest that trafficking within countries, rather than overseas, is more likely in the post-disaster environment:

> We argue that trafficking, in the aftermath of disasters, is likely to manifest within countries. Natural disasters create larger pools of vulnerable people. This increase in supply can make internal trafficking more attractive as transportation costs would be cheaper, especially if cross-border trafficking routes are obstructed or destroyed by natural disasters. Disaster-driven scarcity can lead to individuals becoming impromptu internal traffickers. In sum, there are fewer costs associated with internal trafficking after natural disasters (2018:303).

While the primary focus of my study is domestic rather than international trafficking, as already stated, there are many similarities between the two – particularly the circumstances which have resulted in individuals becoming susceptible to trafficking in the first place, which is the focus of my study – rather than the experience of exploitation at the destination. In the case of the Philippines, empirical evidence suggests the vast majority of migration is regular with trafficking victims leaving the country legally, and none-the-wiser about the fate that awaits them (UNODC, 2003:7). As the Philippines is a series of 7,000 islands, smuggling is a limited option because, apart some small boats from the southern part of the country via the so-called 'back door to Malaysia' (ibid:49), people must pass through major airports to leave the archipelago. Migration is a tried-and-tested coping mechanism in the Philippines, with the lure of working abroad so strong that qualified Filipino doctors retrain as nurses to secure overseas jobs and surveys indicating that a fifth of the adult population wish to migrate (Maruja, 2006). This is encouraged by the Philippines government which lauds those who take the bold step to work overseas as heroes who return essential remittances to keep the Filipino economy afloat (Tigno, 2013:98). Several prominent cases of abuse and slavery of Filipinos abroad, such as the deaths of Jullebee Ranara (Cabanban, 2023) and Joanna Demafelis (BBC, 2018) have raised the profile of trafficking risks facing overseas Filipinos. Figures collected from the Overseas Workers' Welfare Association (OWWA) for this study also highlight the true extent of the problem. Migration agencies or brokers in the Philippines frequently operate a "fly now, pay later" model for international work, paying all travel and administrative costs up front with a promise to the migrant that

all these expenses can be paid back later through earnings at the migrant's destination. This flips the balance of power instantly into the hands of the broker before the migrant has even begun their journey, leaving them little recourse if the broker decides to exploit. Often-dubious recruitment agencies will pay for a would-be migrant's flight and accommodation up-front, with the promise that these significant expenses will be paid back when the worker generates an income at their destination (Parreñas, 2008:1). This leaves the migrant little or no power to escape the situation if exploitation were to occur. Friebel and Guriev refer to this model as "intermediaries [who] finance the migration costs of wealth-constrained migrants who enter temporary servitude to repay the debt" (2006:1085). Indeed, I attended a recruitment fair in Tacloban City on one research trip with leaflets being freely handed out to attendees inviting them to work in the Middle East with all expenses paid. This event, attended by thousands of potential recruits, was held at the stadium which had served as an evacuation shelter following Typhoon Haiyan. Local government officials were also in attendance to ensure necessary checks had been carried out on these recruitment agencies, in an effort to lessen the risk of human trafficking.

A question also arises as to *where* specifically the risk of human trafficking increases following a disaster. This is discussed to a limited extent in the literature, with outlying, rural areas singled out:

> Post-disaster scarcity is likely to make vulnerable communities more susceptible to exploitation and trafficking. It is also likely that populations from rural areas of the country are more susceptible, as government relief may take longer to reach them. It is reasonable to expect governments to emphasize rescue and rehabilitation actions over anti-trafficking activities (the government's anti-trafficking duty is likely to function independently from the government's disaster response unit) (Gurung et al, 2018: 305).

My fieldwork in Chapters 4 and 5 makes the distinction between the 'central disaster zone' and the 'outer disaster zone'. This necessary delineation emerged from interviews with government officials, law enforcement, NGOs and academics based in the region who spoke of different risks facing disaster survivors in each area. More detail on this is presented in the empirical section of the thesis.

Those displaced by disaster are often relocated in temporary camps (IOM, 2016), which also increases the risk of trafficking. These temporary shelters were certainly used following Typhoon Haiyan (DSWD et al, 2014) with conditions cited by interviewees in my fieldwork as a risk factor for trafficking. This concern is highlighted by the IOM with claims that these settings "attract criminal actors and can become targets for human traffickers" (2016:3). Further detail on these camps are set out in the Philippine-specific section later in this chapter.

**Disaster-trafficking due to erosion of protections**

Part of the widely-held assumptions around disaster-trafficking is that traffickers are able to recruit their victims because of a break-down of law and order in the wake of calamity (Childs, 2016) with speculation that "the absence or collapse of a state system after an emergency potentially creates protection vacuums, making it easier for traffickers to exploit vulnerable victims" (Singh, 2012). However, this claim is challenged by Bowersox who analyses available data and concludes that disaster-trafficking is less likely in persistently disaster-prone countries:

> [Those countries are] more likely to better meet their responsibilities under the Palermo Protocols when faced with increased natural disasters. I argue that this is because of the often highly centralised and securitised responses to natural disasters that states utilize. These measures can, while not necessarily reducing vulnerability (i.e. addressing those social variants that make a person vulnerable), either help individuals and groups to cope or reduce their ability to move. Thus, the opportunity to traffic or be trafficked is reduced (2018:12).

The empirical findings of my research in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 corroborate Bowersox's theory, with the vast majority of evacuees from Typhoon Haiyan on tightly-controlled evacuation routes and other signs of strong – though clearly not total – control of post-disaster evacuation routes. One government official in Lapu-Lapu City near Cebu, describing the management of evacuation routes following Haiyan, told me: "You cannot just leave all by your own. Even if they [disaster survivors] say they have relatives, we check first before we let them go. We are very strict because there were instructions from the regional office to watch out, because these victims are easy prey for vultures who prey on the human trafficking [sic]". Meanwhile, a Filipino academic described to me the extent of monitoring and control following a major

disaster in the Philippines as so strict it was "quite scary". There is further discussion on these field interviews, and how they correlate with existing literature, in Chapters 4 to 6.

However, it is observed by other scholars that the erosion of law and order is, to some extent, inevitable in every country following a disaster, no matter how resilient the state and how competent the government authorities (Singh, 2012). It is this breakdown of order and introduction of chaos in a disaster's aftermath which heightens the trafficking risks, according to Bales:

> The first assertion is that disasters both end and begin trafficking and slavery activities. In the same way that disasters punctuate between business-as-usual and possible chaos, those involved in the commercial exploitation through control of people will adapt to a changing context. Chaos has long been understood as a context in which slavery flourishes. The disruption of a natural disaster may temporarily hinder the business of trafficking and slavery, but unlike most businesses, crime feeds on chaos, and new modalities of trafficking and enslavement will emerge. The second assertion is that there is a disaster 'snowball effect'. While the information coming from disasters is disjointed, meagre, and often confused, once a disaster is added to an existing situation of slavery and trafficking, and the number of persons highly vulnerable to enslavement is dramatically increased, then the volume of slavery crime will increase over time, only to shrink when law enforcement, public safety, and personal security recovers (2021:44).

One problem with this is that the vast majority of human trafficking goes undetected in the first place, even when the capacity of law enforcement is at full strength (Samarasinghe 2008:122; IOM, 2015; Nykaza, 2009:319). Bales also goes on to caveat his theoretical conclusions, published as recently as 2021, saying it is important to recognise "that this is initial and exploratory research". A further theory suggests that "human trafficking flourishes in the wake of natural disasters when there is lack of QoG (quality of government), specifically measuring ICRG Quality of Government, Government Effectiveness, Rule of Law, and Political Corruption Index" (Tu, 2018:47). Corruption, as stated earlier in the literature review, is said to be a significant exacerbating factor in human trafficking (Guth, 2010; Bales, 2007:88; UNODC, 2013) and featured both in my field interviews in Chapter 4 focusing on trafficking risks in the central disaster zone, where multiple sources stated that corruption resulted in a prosecution against alleged traffickers in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan being dropped; and in Chapter 6, where a respondent stated she

was imprisoned after being trafficked because a bar she was working in was raided, and the trafficked workers arrested, because the bar owners would not pay a bribe to the authorities.

Alongside the explanations and theories in literature about disaster-trafficking *from* affected areas, there are also discussions around trafficking *into* the disaster zone. This is linked to the need to rebuild in the affected area, and the use of slave labour where workers have been trafficked into the situation. One of the most notable cases is following Hurricane Katrina, where workers were needed to help reconstruct offshore oil rigs. Bales notes: "Responding to an acute shortage of skilled welders and pipefitters, within an environment of reduced worker protections, several US companies resorted to recruitment schemes that were fundamentally systems of human trafficking" (2021:38). The same author suggests that a similar situation could have occurred during reconstruction following the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami in the southern provinces of Myanmar (ibid:39). This clearly merits further investigation, though human trafficking *into* the disaster zone – while a valuable question when investigating the research question of *how and why the risk of human trafficking increases following disaster*, did not emerge as a theoretical line of inquiry until after I had returned from fieldwork; nor was it raised by any interviewees, or presented in any media, NGO reports or literature surrounding Typhoon Haiyan.

**The slow burn effect**

Despite references in the literature to trafficking vulnerabilities being increased following a disaster, there is little explanation as to when those risks are heightened. Reading the theoretical claims (see boxed out sections with disaster-trafficking claims above), one could easily assume that these were in the immediate aftermath of a calamity. However, the impacts of a disaster "may be felt not only in the immediate aftermath of a shock, but still months and years later. Thus, the wording in and after the disaster is understood to include a long-term perspective," according to Brülisauer (2015:2). While presented as a theoretical claim in the literature, this concept of disaster impacts being felt "months and years later" is a central feature of my fieldwork findings in Chapter 6, based on interviewees with formerly trafficked people in the central Philippines.

While many of the claims about disaster-trafficking relate to large-scale rapid-onset disasters, such as Typhoon Haiyan, my forthcoming fieldwork also examines the impact of lower-level disasters such as repeated flooding during annual rainy seasons. The IOM singles this out in a report, making a distinction between the rapid and slow-onset disasters, and their respective impacts:

> In the absence of academic studies or policy documents on the topic, anecdotal evidence from field practitioners reflected in grey literature indicate that […] sudden-onset disasters can cause unexpected loss of land and lives, and destruction of means of livelihoods, instantly plunging those without safety nets into poverty. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, displacement is likely to occur, giving space for traffickers to operate and exploit affected people, their desire for safety and search for means of income to help restore their lives. This may lead to either a sharp rise in human trafficking if the region already witnessed TiP or the creation of a new "hotspot" for human trafficking. The effect of sudden-onset events on TiP is often more clearly evident in comparison to the impact of slow-onset events (IOM, 2016:3).

Repeated low-level disasters creating vulnerabilities which lead to trafficking, often years after the event, are a notable narrative in my fieldwork findings in Chapter 6, the interviews with formerly trafficked people in Cebu City.

## Case study: The Philippines context

This section now delves into more detail about the case study of the Philippines. First, general trafficking risks in the country are discussed, followed by the ongoing impact of disaster on the country including Typhon Haiyan. Finally, building on the previous discussions in this chapter, the disaster-trafficking link is presented specifically as it relates to the Philippines and Typhoon Haiyan. This serves as important context for the forthcoming fieldwork chapters, with theories and claims which are tested in my interviews with government and court officials, NGO workers, law enforcement in Chapter 4 and 5, and trafficking survivors in Chapter 6. All of this relates back to the central research question: *Why and how does disaster increase the risk of human trafficking?*

Before going further, it is worth briefly revisiting the rationale for choosing the Philippines as the case study. To examine the link between disaster and trafficking, a

country which experiences both is required. The Philippines is cited frequently as a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking. Furthermore, I have strong contacts with NGOs, communities, government officials and academics after being based in the central Philippines in November 2013 as a media spokesperson for an international NGO in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. Indeed, without these contacts as a starting point, it would have proved impossible to gain access to many interviewees, especially people who had experienced trafficking themselves. Finally, English is fluently and widely spoken.

With poverty already noted in this Literature Review as a significant trafficking driver, and disaster having a more severe impact in poorer countries than wealthier ones due to a lack of resilience (Noy and duPoint, 2016:1), it is worth highlighting the state of poverty in the Philippines. In 2021, 23.7 per cent of the population lived below the national poverty line (Asian Development Bank, 2021) – a similar rate to Myanmar and Nepal. The nation is ranked as a 'lower middle-income country' and, while poverty fell from 23.3 per cent in 2015 to 16.6 per cent in 2018, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has severely affected progress in economic growth and poverty reduction (World Bank, 2022). The country ranks in the medium human development category in 115th place out of 188 countries (UNDP, 2015). Typical livelihoods, particularly on Leyte Island which is the geographical focus of my fieldwork, include coconut farming and fishing. People who hold these skills usually have few options for diversifying if their means of production is lost. On the island, as elsewhere in the Philippines, vast numbers of people continue to live in slums which are 'highly vulnerable to wind and flooding due to typhoons' (Blaikie et al, 1994:165).

To help understand the backdrop of poverty before Haiyan struck, Boyce's theory on 'mutually-reinforcing causes for people's vulnerabilities' in the Philippines can be drawn upon (2002:85), starting with unequal distribution of land, and people heading to the cities in search of livelihoods where they live "in poorly-constructed squatter settlements on stilts in the water's edge, in low-lying flood plains and wastelands, and on steep slopes" (Blaikie et al, 1993:165). Chambers also refers to the 'ratchet effect' where each disaster makes a population more vulnerable than the last and, consequently, less able to cope (1983:112).

As already stated, this thesis focuses primarily on domestic trafficking scenarios because of the impracticality – or indeed impossibility – of tracking down individuals who had left the country and succumbed to trafficking abroad. Despite the vagaries of statistics and definitions surrounding trafficking (Samarasinghe 2008:122; IOM, 2015; Nykaza, 2009:319; Tigno, 2013:20), internal trafficking is nonetheless widely reported in the Philippines with Leyte Island singled out as a hotspot (US State Department, 2014). Many organisations and individuals have attempted to collate statistics including the Global Slavery Index (2016) which claims on its website that there are 261,200 people enslaved in the Philippines representing 0.27 per cent of the country's population. Meanwhile, 90 per cent of female migrants from the Philippines are classed as 'vulnerable' and 3.1 per cent of the population is said to be at risk of trafficking (Guth, 2010:149). Victims are understood to come from predominantly impoverished rural areas such as the rest of the Visayas and Mindanao in the south. The capital Manila and the second largest city, Cebu also feature among known 'hotspots' (ibid:151). Molland, in his extensive research along the Thai/Lao border, warns however against focusing on so-called 'hotspots' and says that the logistics of trafficking are far more geographically fragmented (2012:66). Indeed, this warning will be reiterated by interviewees during my fieldwork in Chapter 5.

Despite an array of laws which theoretically shield Filipino migrants from exploitation, these are clearly not enforced effectively, victims do not know where to turn, and endemic corruption means that crime groups act with impunity and have even been embedded in government-approved agencies (ibid:150). Law enforcement agents are frequently helping traffickers rather than trafficking victims, cementing the topdogs' status and allowing them to re-offend with impunity. While a trafficking recruiter is likely to be local and even among the victim's own family or friends, the spectre of human trafficking by international gangs continues (Santos 2010a:24). Furthermore, Shelley believes that domestic laws are often ineffective as traffickers "thrive in a globalised world because the legal controls are state based, whereas the crime groups are transnational" (2012:116). Indeed, the risk of international trafficking – while not the focus of my research – certainly comes to the fore in the Philippines due to the extraordinary phenomenon of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), nearly ten million of whom are overseas at any one time (Commission on Filipinos

Overseas: 2012), many in isolated domestic helper roles which can carry a high risk of exploitation (Ramos-Carbone, 2012:28). It has already been noted in the literature that larger migration flows lead to more trafficking risks (Shelley, 2010:94; Mahmoud and Trebesch, 2010:2). To mitigate these risks and abuse, Filipinos were banned by their government from working in no fewer than 41 countries in 2011 following a number of high-profile abuse cases (McGeown, 2011). However, due to ineffective policing and corruption, much of this protection has failed in practice (Guth, 2010:156). The Philippines has signed the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers, and the Migrant Worker and Overseas Filipino Act of 1995 criminalises illegal recruitment, punishable by a six-year prison sentence (Samarasinghe, 2008:159). The list of protections goes on, with Tigno listing no fewer than ten government departments and institutions tasked with protecting Overseas Filipino Workers, not including local government units, NGOs and trade unions (2013:20). A further protection for migrants, established back in 1980, is that all Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) must attend a government-approved 'orientation course' before leaving the country, which includes warnings about the risk of trafficking (Tigno, 2013:152). These courses were taken by more than 30,000 Filipino migrants in 2008, a year for which statistics are available, and have apparently become a model for other countries to follow (ibid:160). However, the standards of these courses have been called into question, combined with the fact that seminars take place just before departure with excited participants noticeably failing to concentrate on the contents of the course (ibid:166). Observers also believe that successive Philippine governments may not protect citizens to the fullest extent because, turning to international trafficking risks, overseas workers send "badly needed foreign currency earnings to state coffers" (Samarasinghe, 2008:158). Remittances sent from overseas workers also play a significant role following disasters and provide a financial 'safety net' for affected families (Mohapatra et al, 2009:5). During fieldwork, I was shown a number of case summaries by the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) indicating that support had been provided to trafficking victims overseas, primarily in the Middle East. However, it was impossible with the available data to ascertain whether these individuals had migrated due to disaster.

**Empirical studies of trafficking in the Philippines**

There has certainly been a good deal of empirical evidence on human trafficking in the Philippines in the literature and NGO reports, dating back at least two decades, along with a highly-relevant, recent and detailed NGO-commissioned report that examines the risk of trafficking following disasters. Alburo-Cañete et al. interviewed 88 respondents about trafficking risks, with the aim of "understanding the conditions that amplify the risks to human trafficking in times of disasters" (2014:1), along with various recommendations for prevention and protection. The three-year project funded by Caritas Switzerland and Philippine NGO the JTI Foundation, was carried out by a consortium of three locally-based NGOs in Cebu. The respondents had either experienced trafficking themselves, or knew a person close to them who had done so. The authors set out to test two hypotheses: First, that coastal communities were more at risk from the impact of disasters; and second, that "there exists an intimate relationship between vulnerabilities to disasters and human trafficking" (ibid:1). They concluded that coastal communities around the Danajon Bank, an area east of Cebu in the central Visayas region of the Philippines, that coastal communities do, indeed, "exhibit relatively higher susceptibility to disasters and less adaptive capacity than non-coastal communities" with the following rationale:

> The data show that coastal communities actually have less access to basic services and public utilities such as water, power, and sewage services which in turn heightens their vulnerabilities. While in both coastal and non-coastal areas opportunities to diversify livelihoods remain limited with observably high unemployment rates, those residing in coastal communities have exhibited more resistance towards adapting to new forms of livelihood, whether through migration or otherwise, other than primarily fishing and trading. Their geographic location also makes them more susceptible to various natural hazards such as typhoons and strong storm surges (ibid:191).

These findings, although I discovered them after my fieldwork had already taken place, are important to help frame the interviews with trafficking survivors (Chapter 6). With access to "basic services and public utilities" highlighted prominently as a driver of vulnerability, it makes sense to inquire about these factors when piecing together the circumstances under which human trafficking occurred, along with a question about whether respondents lived in a coastal area – which I had already featured in the questionnaire. The significance of living on the coast, compared to

inland, continues with the authors' findings suggesting respondents from coastal communities experienced more psychological effects following disasters including depression, trauma and anxiety; and that gender-based violence was more pronounced too. Again, these findings align strongly with observations from my interviewees with government officials, law enforcement and NGOs in Chapters 4 and 5, and trafficking survivors in Chapter 6, who frequently stated that a rise in domestic violence caused by disaster, or the break-up of a family unit due to parents' post-disaster mental health issues, caused them to leave home out of desperation, moving to nearby cities with no contacts and no documentation to seek formal employment. At this stage, my findings indicated that individuals frequently sought informal employment with unscrupulous employers – leading to deception, coercion, exploitation and abuse which met the definition of human trafficking. As will be highlighted in the fieldwork chapters, this chain of events was ultimately sparked by a change in circumstances caused by disaster.

Awareness of trafficking, particularly the risks at a time of disaster, was low among respondents to Alburo-Cañete et al. (2014:192)'s study, as was awareness among government officials and personnel. The authors state that "less than half of respondents expressed familiarity with the anti-trafficking laws in the Philippines". This is contrary to the findings of my field research, though a possible difference is that I sought out interviewees who were directly and specifically involved in Typhoon Haiyan's aftermath, rather than government officials involved in a range of functions who may have less expertise in trafficking.

Delving into more detail, the authors concluded – in findings which align strongly with my own research, and appear not to be stated elsewhere in any literature or other NGO reports – that "the relationship between human trafficking is not direct" (ibid:14). They go on to explain:

> In other words, the severity of disaster does not directly and automatically cause a rise in human trafficking. It does however, have a direct impact on livelihoods, or rather the (in)ability of individuals or families to cope economically following the shocks and stresses arising from the experience of a disaster […] Once opportunities are diminished, such as in the event of a disaster, among the coping strategies employed is to look for work elsewhere

or grab whatever opportunity is offered in the absence or inadequacy of their usual means of living (ibid:194)

Analysis is also offered on *who* is most at risk noting that "disasters affect different groups in different ways. Poverty, age, gender, and educational attainment all contribute to risks to both disaster and human trafficking", with the most prominent catalyst being poverty (ibid:194). While not the focus of their study, the authors also offer analysis of Typhoon Haiyan, stating that "In the aftermath of super typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda, for example, lack of food, shelter, and other provisions have forced survivors to seek work or reprieve from their difficulties outside of their hometowns only to later on be trafficked and forced into prostitution or servitude" – though this latter statement is attributed to a 'Vera Files' news article (Arinto, 2014), syndicated by Yahoo News, quoting the Philippine National Police and NGOs.

On trafficking more generally, there are two other notable pieces of empirical literature available on the experiences of Filipino trafficking victims. The Filipino academic Rhacel Parreñas completed observational research at a bar in Tokyo alongside trafficked Filipinos, resulting in the book 'Illicit Flirtations: Labor, Migration and Sex Trafficking in Tokyo'; and a UNODC study contains 77 first-hand accounts from trafficking victims at their destination, primarily Japan and Malaysia (UNODSC, 2003). Shelley cites the Middle East as a notable destination where Filipino workers arrive expecting to be hired as domestic servants, only to find themselves locked into forced labour (2010:165). Some victims are repeatedly trafficked and, in empirical evidence involving Filipinos, are moved between businesses at their destination (UNODC, 2003:9).

Two further reports have also been produced by the Filipino researcher Aida Santos, both similar to one another with overlapping material, highlighting the prevalence of domestic violence and trafficking in the Philippines in two separate locations. 11 trafficking survivors were interviewed in the first report. The aim of the research was to create "a credible baseline data in selected project sites that show the magnitude of both actual cases and the vulnerabilities of women and youth to various forms of violence including trafficking, that can be used for policy and legislative reforms" (2010a:8). The studies conclude that statistics on trafficking cases "are low due its

underground nature" (ibid:37) and offer an insight into the prevalence of corruption, with trafficking allowed to continue due to police being bribed; and more training needed for service providers and law enforcement (ibid:42). While the report does not focus on disaster-trafficking, and examines the effectiveness of service providers and the lived experiences of trafficking and domestic violence survivors rather than the circumstances and risks that led to their trafficking in the first place, these reports can be singled out as valuable reading on an under-researched topic.

**History of disaster in the Philippines**

As mentioned in the rationale for this case study, the Philippines is exposed to an almost improbable array of natural hazards with 20 typhoons each year (Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Centre, 2018), flooding and tropical storms. There are also 300 volcanoes in the country, 22 of which are active (Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Centre, 2018b: 6). Almost all parts of the country experience earthquakes, with an average of 20 per day (ibid: 8), with the map below (Figure 4) showing the 'seismicity' – the frequency of earthquakes – across the Philippines. The archipelago is ranked globally as the ninth most disaster-prone country in the 2020 World Risk Index, and fourth most at risk in the Long-Term Climate Risk Index, which draws on data from 2000-2019 (UNDRR, 2021). It is estimated that 60% of the Philippines' land and 74% of its population is exposed to numerous hazards, listed as floods, cyclones, droughts, earthquakes, tsunamis and landslides (World Bank, 2021). In the past five years, 93 per cent of Filipinos have reported experiencing at least one typhoon and 78 per cent have reported experiencing more than one (Bollettino et al, 2018: 14). In the past three decades, 565 disasters have been recorded claiming a total of 70,000 lives and costing the economy $23 billion. It is predicted that the frequency and severity of disasters in the Philippines will increase (ibid), with researchers drawing on trends over a period of three decades up to the year 2012 showing a 147 per cent rise in ?calamities (Garcia and Hernandez, 2016: 74).

**Figure 4:** Map showing the seismicity of the Philippines. (Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Centre, 2018b)
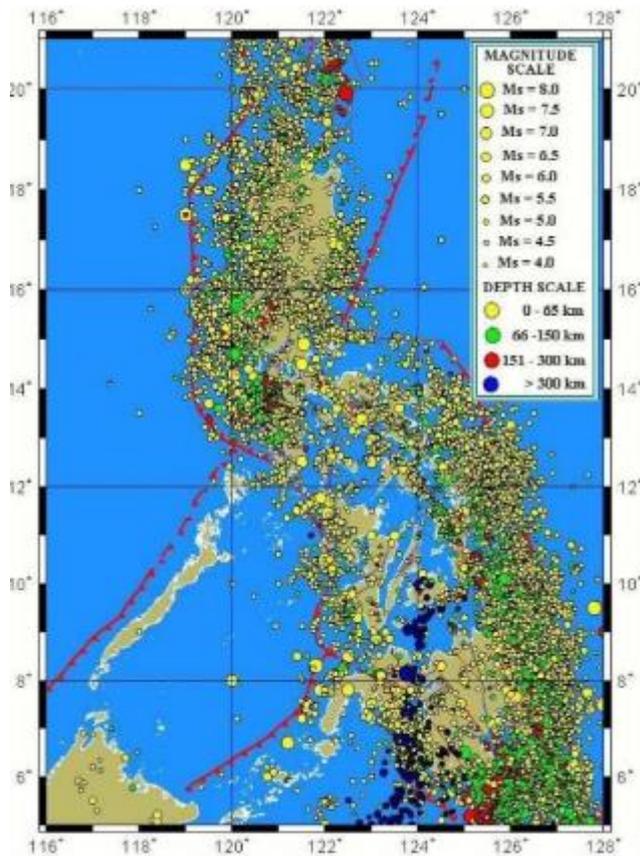


Bankoff describes the economic impact of this constant barrage of meteorological hazards as follows:

> Filipinos... have come to accept 'torrential downpours, typhoons and earthquakes as realities of life'; that theirs 'is a life particularly prone to calamity', one where they have hardly had time to bury their dead and pick up the pieces before the destruction starts again (2003:162).

With this in mind, researchers are warned against placing too much emphasis on a single disaster creating a massive change in circumstances, with Blaikie et al stating:

> There is a danger in treating disasters as something peculiar, as events that deserve their own special focus. It is to risk separating 'natural' disasters from the social frameworks that influence how hazards affect people, thereby putting too much emphasis on the natural hazards themselves, and not nearly enough on the surrounding social environment (1994:4).

The Philippines has experienced numerous high-profile disasters in recent history, notably the Naga Landslides in November 2013, which affected more than 8,000 people and claimed 77 lives, with a further 57 missing, in Naga City, Cebu; and Typhoon Mangkhut, also in September 2018, which affected 3 million people and claimed 82 lives in Northern and Central Luzon. In March 2018, more than 16,000 families were evacuated due to the eruption of Mayon Volcano, in the province of Albay. Another high-profile disaster, just over one year after Typhoon Haiyan, was Typhoon Hagupit, known local as Typhoon Ruby. Nearly four million people were affected across several regions, with 18 fatalities and more than 900 people injured (Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Centre, 2018b: 14-15). Going further back in time, Mount Pinatubo, in June 1991, was the largest volcanic eruption of the 20th Century with a death toll of 640, more than a million people affected, and 40,000 houses destroyed. Around a year earlier, in July 1990, the Luzon Earthquake killed nearly 2,500 people, affecting 1.5 million people (Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Centre, 2018). However, it is clear that Typhoon Haiyan, the initial focus of my research, remains the most devastating disaster, with a death toll of more than 6,000.

**Disaster response and resilience in the Philippines**

There has been significant development of the Philippine government's management of disaster over the years, with "rapid and comprehensive social welfare reform since 2007" resulting in "one of the most advanced social protection systems in the East Asia Pacific region, designed to help poor households manage risk and shocks" (Bowen, 2015:1).

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), situated under the Department of National Defense (DND), is primarily responsible for co-ordinating 'preparedness, response, prevention and mitigation, and rehabilitation and recovery' (Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, 2021: 27). Other government departments also have significant roles, with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is "prominently integrated into the national disaster risk management (DRM) framework,

taking the lead coordinating role in disaster response activities" (ibid:1). This was certainly apparent during my field interviews with government officials in Tacloban City and Cebu City.

Since 2017, the Philippine Congress has been discussing a law that would form a cabinet department dedicated to long-term disaster mitigation. This would be called the Department for Disaster Resilience, though these bills were still being discussed in both houses of the legislature (Antonio, 2023) at the time of submitting this dissertation. There is criticism that the creation of this new department would centralise control over disaster resilience even further, when in fact it should be devolved:

> Instead of consolidating power even more, it should be LGUs that would be further empowered through financial and technical support from the national government agencies and other sectors. Capacity-building measures must also be implemented for the benefit of local stakeholders in reducing disaster risks and enhancing preparedness (Algo, 2023).

However, others point to more favourable aspects of this proposed department, which would also focus on climate resilience, policy integration, and the establishing of a Disaster Resilience Research and Training Institute. This would support disaster resilience programmes at national, local, and community level, as well as providing open source data and co-ordination with NGOs and private organisations (IFRC, 2021).

It is claimed that lessons learned and reforms prompted by Typhoon Haiyan, back in 2013, have also improved the government's overall handling of disasters:

> [Typhoon Haiyan] spurred the Philippines to further develop its disaster management structures and resources by improving communication and institutionalising roles and responsibilities for national and international players. Thus, more recent floods, typhoons, and landslides have seen improved communication and coordination that mitigated impacts on lives and livelihoods (Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance. 2021: 80)

This includes more effective early warning systems and sharing information; and civil-military ordination with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and international

agents. The government is also said to have more awareness of early warning systems, evacuation procedures, and educating on safer building:

> The upshot has been mitigation of the impact of more recent floods, typhoons, and landslides as communities have had easy access to information via website and mobile phone applications. Moreover, building on growing evidence that acting prior to the onset of a predictable, severe hazard is significantly more cost-effective than traditional responses, the Philippines is encouraging and participating in projects related to anticipatory action (ibid, 2021: 80).

There is also the question of how these developments in responding to disasters may have helped prevent disaster-trafficking. As stated above, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) which supports trafficking survivors and conducts awareness campaigns, is strongly integrated into the country's disaster response efforts. It is also clear from field interviews later in this dissertation that DSWD staff make a clear and conscious connection between disaster and human trafficking. While the true impact of awareness campaigns is difficult or arguably impossible to measure, because trafficking statistics themselves are a consistent unknown meaning a possibly reduction in numbers could never be proven, the DSWD has been conducting awareness campaigns around the risks of trafficking following disasters for many years. For instance, an awareness campaign in Davao in the week before Typhoon Haiyan – which was therefore unconnected to this major disaster, and in a different geographical area – involved a high-profile event in a shopping mall targeting shopkeepers, schools, and taxi companies (Government of the Philippines, 2013). This initiative featured a partnership between the DSWD and the Inter-Agency Council Against Human Trafficking (IACAT).

**Response and resilience in relation to Typhoon Haiyan**

In the case of Typhoon Haiyan, the first stages of the relief operation launched by the DSWD focused on food and non-food items to meet urgent need, with more than five million food packs distributed by the end of December, along with mats, blankets, tarpaulins, clothing and hygiene supplies (Bowen 2015:2). The DSWD also ran 'food for work', and later 'cash for work', programmes, along with providing temporary shelter to those displaced (ibid:2). This was complemented by a huge response from

international NGOs, with at least 45 agencies implementing cash transfer programmes with four agencies alone distributing around US$34 million to 1.4 million people affected by the disaster (Hanley et al, 2014:54). It is arguably important to touch on the scale of support provided by the government and NGOs following Haiyan, as this is referred to in Chapter 4 as a reason why people were better off to 'stay put' in the central disaster zone where many needs were met in the immediate aftermath of the typhoon.

Nonetheless, the devastation caused by Haiyan was historic with more than a million homes damaged (DSWD, 2014:12), with a third of displaced people having lost their homes completely (Recuenco, 2014). In Tacloban City, more than a third of properties which were damaged belonged to the urban poor (City Government of Tacloban, 2014). Even a year after the typhoon, almost half a million people in 95,000 households were living in makeshift shelters, increasing families' vulnerability and eroding coping mechanisms (UNOCHA, 2014). Furthermore, it was noted that political factors were at play with a slow response from central government (Francisco, 2013a). The economic impact was equally devastating, resulting in extreme financial desperation experienced by many in the disaster's aftermath with up to six million workers from nine regions affected, of which 2.3 million workers were female (NEDA, 2013). Overall, income in the most severely-affected employment sectors was halved following the disaster, and reduced by up to 70 per cent in the farming and fishing industries (UNOCHA, 2013a:2). With poverty cited as a significant risk factor for trafficking (Aronowitz, 2009a:23), this provides important context to the forthcoming fieldwork chapters, along with disruption to education which was also referenced by respondents in my trafficking questionnaire as a long-term trafficking risk factor due to limiting career prospects and life chances in general. Following Haiyan, it is estimated that nearly 6,000 classrooms were severely damaged and almost 15,000 partially damaged in 2,905 public elementary schools and 470 secondary schools. Overall, there was an impact on 3,770 public schools, with more than 1.3 million students and 41,014 teachers affected, the majority of them women (NEDA, 2013).

The response to Haiyan inevitably involved counter-trafficking and awareness-raising measures with the IOM a prominent player, launching a "Victim-Centred Counter-

Trafficking Awareness" project in affected areas in cooperation with the Philippines' Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), and the US State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP) through the US Embassy in Manila (IOM, 2014).

As already stated, claims about human trafficking – particularly of women and children – emerged within days of Typhoon Haiyan, just as they had done following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami (Aglionby, 2005; US Department of State, 2005; Nishiyama, 2005), the Nepal Earthquake of 2015 (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016; Burke, 2015; Groves, 2016; Jones, 2015, UNICEF, 2015) and many others. As usual, none of these articles featured specific details to quantify the claims. Similar assertions are also presented in numerous NGO reports, with areas affected by the typhoon observing increases in prostitution and human trafficking, according to a study by grassroots organisations led by the anti-trafficking NGO Gabriela Philippines (IBON, 2015:11). The report states:

> Despite the influx of humanitarian assistance, many people are still struggling and have become desperate in the face of lost livelihoods, lack of shelter, and high costs of basic goods and services. Survivors interviewed shared that in the weeks following the disaster, many of the women who were left widowed with children to feed sold their bodies in exchange for cash and even relief goods (ibid:11).

The report findings also state that "some of the clients were said to have been staff of foreign NGOs as well as US and Korean troops stationed in the villages" (ibid:11). This claim will be revisited later during my fieldwork in Chapter 4, alongside the theory that populations affected by disaster may face fewer risks of trafficking and exploitation if they stay in the 'central disaster zone' where their basic needs are met – rather than migrate to nearby cities with no formal documentation, and no contacts to seek formal employment.

The DSWD also reported increased rates of human trafficking following Haiyan, with the aforementioned report by Filipino NGO 'The IBON Foundation' citing accounts of the DSWD "rescuing 50 victims of trafficking in disaster areas such as Tacloban City [and other areas], with most of them being minors. Two of the reported six cases are in Tacloban City." (2015:11) It should be borne in mind, however, that the source to

which these claims are attributed is from prosecutors and others in an article in the 'The Vera Files', a non-profit online news organisation in the Philippines (Olarte, 2014), rather than based on first-hand accounts.

**Further context: Disaster beliefs**

It is worth noting research around some Filipinos' beliefs on the cause of disaster. One example, albeit from 1991, is the public reaction to flash floods in the city of Ormoc, around two hours' drive from Tacloban on Leyte Island. In a survey, researchers found that 47 per cent of survivors attributed the disaster solely to supernatural causes, with a further nine per cent believing it was caused by a combination of paranormal, natural and human-induced factors (Alix, 1996:29). Meanwhile, the authorities had to intervene in the neighbouring island of Cebu several months later when predictions were made about a second disaster, apparently originating from a 'strange boy in a park' who had foreseen the Ormoc disaster and was warning of something even worse. The predictions were broadcast on radio stations and published on posters, later banned by the authorities due to mass hysteria (Bankoff, 2003:74). It is useful, to an extent, to bear these beliefs in mind during the forthcoming fieldwork. For example, one respondent in my field interviews, Joy*, 32, endured' the eruption of Mayon Volcano, forcing the family to leave their home and evacuate to a nearby city. Joy stated: "I was very sad with the disasters that I experienced. I thought it happened because I am a sinner."

**Conclusion**

To conclude, I return to the central research question of this thesis: *Why and how does disaster increase the risk of human trafficking?* As essential groundwork to begin answering this question, this chapter has presented the widespread post-disaster trafficking claims by NGOs and government officials which are echoed in the media, which have prompted the interest in examining this phenomenon. These claims are never backed up by any details or evidence, prompting questions about the true prevalence of post-disaster trafficking – and, indeed, whether the claims are even true in the first place. While critics argue that they are often exaggerated to raise funds for NGOs, or continually repeated to subconsciously play into Western

fears about child abduction, it is not generally disputed that post-disaster trafficking does take place to some extent. But this "extent" remains completely unknown because of the aforementioned futility of pursuing statistics on trafficking due to under-reporting attributed to stigma or shame, muddled definitions used by experts, and a lack of data sharing between and within governments (UNODC, 2019; Tigno, 2012:32, Nykaza, 2009:319; Feingold 2010:10; Samarasinghe, 2008:122).

Examination of the post-disaster literature started with discussion around trafficking writing generally, with exploration of known and oft-cited trafficking drivers – and how many of these can theoretically be heightened in the aftermath of a disaster, leading to an increased risk of human trafficking. The most prominent of these is poverty (Aronowitz, 2009a:23; Mahdavi, 2011:216; UNODC 2020:9) which is certainly known to increase in the wake of calamity (Goździak, 2014:59). A number of exacerbating factors for trafficking have also been presented, including perpetrators reoffending when they are not prosecuted due to victims' reluctance to report the crime because of stigma (Nykaza, 2009:319), and corruption 'oiling the wheels of trafficking' as offenders collude with the law enforcement, causing cases to collapse or fail to even reach prosecution (Shelley 2010:48; UNODC, 2013; Guth, 2010). It is also acknowledged in the literature that a lack of formal documentation when seeking employment can lead to further exploitation (Cusch-Armedariz, 2009:7). While this literature relates to documents being confiscated, it was certainly the case during Haiyan that important documents such as identity papers and qualification certificates were literally washed away during the storm surge, making it difficult to seek formal employment when most of these records are paper-based and difficult to replace.

Two notable subtleties also emerge in the literature review which will become central to my fieldwork findings in Chapters 4 to 6. First, an observation in the NGO paper by Alburo-Cañete et al., in a rare example of empirical research into the disaster-trafficking link, that there *is* a correlation between disaster and trafficking – just not a direct one (2014:193). That is to say, disaster exacerbates certain factors, especially poverty, which – in turn – force people to seek work which then leads to human trafficking. This aligns strongly with the findings of my interviews with formerly-trafficked people (Chapter 6) which demonstrated that the risk of trafficking is 'one step removed' from the disaster itself. Indeed, while the moment an individual was

trafficked can firmly be traced back to disaster as an initial catalyst, the trafficking event can take place a long time after the calamity due to the mounting effect of disaster-induced vulnerabilities over many years. The second observation, found in a paragraph of an IOM report, is the mention of slow-onset disaster. While most disaster-trafficking claims appear to focused on large rapid-onset events, such as typhoons or earthquakes which cause immediate devastation and hit the headlines, the report notes that the cumulative effect of lower-level, repeated disasters such as annual flooding or drought should also be borne in mind (IOM, 2016:3). As my findings in Chapter 6 will suggest, these can also elevate the risks of human trafficking as people migrate in search of work in a state of economic desperation.

After reviewing all available literature, there is apparently no evidence-based research in journals or books at all on the disaster-trafficking link – a point noted by several scholars who are investigating the topic (Gurung et al, 2018:303; Goździak, 2014:58; Bowersox, 2018:5). Questions also continue to be raised over the quality of evidence-based trafficking literature generally (Zhang, 2009:178; Goździak and Graveline, 2015:12; Okech, 2017:109; Weitzer, 2015:224; Mahmoud and Trebesch, 2010:6). Amid this 'vacuum of knowledge', there is clearly a need for further research to be carried out, indicating the opportunity for a valuable and meaningful contribution to knowledge by this PhD study.

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

This chapter sets out the fieldwork ethics, methodology, preparations, practicalities, challenges and limitations. As mentioned previously, the empirical research for this thesis was conducted in three parts. These are presented chronologically, in the order they were carried out, in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. This also represents the evolving story of the fieldwork process, starting in Typhoon Haiyan's epicentre of Tacloban City and conducting interviews there to establish what was known by government officials, law enforcement, NGOs and other experts about post-typhoon trafficking; then, after analysing the information obtained from these interviewees, moving out to peripheral areas where economically desperate migrants and evacuees sought work after Haiyan; and finally, broadening out the research further to include trafficking survivors from other disasters, over a much broader period of time, to piece together the link between disaster and human trafficking.

There were essentially two categories of interview. First, the 'agents of structure' interviewed in Chapters 4 and 5. Interviews from this cohort in the central disaster zone are presented in Chapter 4; and from the wider disaster zone, incorporating the nearby city of Cebu and also the Philippine capital Manila, along with outlying rural areas, in Chapter 5. Second, interviews were conducted with trafficking survivors at three trafficking shelters in the central Philippines, with these findings and discussion of their significance to the literature presented in Chapter 6. Both categories of interview – trafficking experts, and trafficking survivors – clearly required very different preparations and approaches, and will be presented separately in the forthcoming discussion. In terms of a timeline, the fieldwork for Chapter 4 was conducted in June 2017; the fieldwork for Chapter 6, covering a much wider area, was carried out during two separate trips in November 2017 and July 2018; and the interviews with trafficking survivors at three shelters in the central Visayas, all run by the same NGO, took place in June 2019. In reality, some of this work overlapped – in other words, some interviewees in the outer disaster zone were interviewed on the first trip which focused on the inner zone, and vice versa. This is primarily because I had to pass through Manila or Cebu to reach Tacloban, and stopped off in these

cities for interviews while in transit when opportunities arose. It is worth noting that securing contacts and making preparations for the trafficking interviews began almost immediately during the fieldwork process, because – inevitably and understandably – it took a huge amount of time and effort to identify trafficking shelters who would be willing to get involved in such research, with several failed attempts. This also involved many detailed discussions with shelter managers before the interviews themselves.

**Ethics**

As stated, most of the ethics considerations for this fieldwork were centred around the interviews with formerly-trafficked people. All of the respondents had – by virtue of the fact that they had been trafficked and were residing in a shelter to aid their recovery – been subjected to abuse and were therefore categorised as vulnerable, prompting the requirement for extensive ethics preparations and safeguards. Well before embarking on this fieldwork, a two-stage ethics review was conducted at SOAS in summer 2016. This review recognised that interviewees in the proposed trafficking research may give unprompted personal information such as health details, including HIV status, even if this is not relevant to the interview; and that confidential information, potentially including databases, could be offered by the trafficking shelters. The ethics review also gave consideration to potentially interviewing trafficking survivors under the age of 18, though this did not ultimately happen because the trafficking shelter involved was supporting residents aged 18 and over at the time of my research visit. The ethics review also recognised that the perpetrators, who had exploited or deceived respondents, were still 'out there' and represented a potential risk, such as retribution on the victim's family members or those already still in the trafficking situation, if any information about identifiable victims reached the public domain.

Tsai observed that few studies had ever examined the process of carrying out research with trafficked persons, and she identified four themes: the trust-building process; multi-layered relationships and managing expectations; situational responsiveness; and the emotional impact of the research process (2016:158). Tsai notes: "Ethically, it would be exceedingly difficult to justify conducting research with

currently trafficked people without helping to prevent their ongoing exploitation and abuse, if they wanted such assistance" (ibid:159). For my study, no people were sought or interviewed who were being actively subjected to trafficking at the time of the research. Indeed, tracking down such individuals would prove almost impossible. Interviews for this study were only conducted with those who had already exited the trafficking situation and were therefore no longer linked to traffickers who previously had power of control over them. However, the risk remained that trafficking gangs would not take kindly to knowing that someone was asking about their activities, even if these were historical. These risks were considered in advance, and I was repeatedly assured by trafficking shelter staff, who knew each respondent's individual situation, that there was no chance that taking part in this research would result in repercussions or any danger for respondents.

The first stage in the research process was contacting trafficking shelters, which was recognised as a central part of the study with initial contacts being made at an early stage. There are numerous well-established charities in the Philippines which support formerly trafficked people, including the internationally-recognised Visayan Forum and Gabriela, along with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) which offers a variety of interventions. The workload of these agencies is particularly dominated by the return of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) (Field interview with Visayan Forum, July 2018), around two million of whom are working abroad (Statista, 2022), with many experiencing trafficking and abuse at the hands of their employers, particularly in the Middle East (Shelley, 2010:165). Recognising the different stages of the trafficking process, Zimmerman and Watts note in their widely-cited guidance:

> The safest way to make contact with a woman who has been trafficked is to speak to her once she is clearly out of the trafficking situation. Often the most effective and secure means of communication is through a local organisation known to her and that she trusts, such as social service groups, shelters or refuges. The longer the time between her contact with the traffickers and the interview, the more likely she will be, and feel safe to disclose details of her experience (2003:8).

This is the process I followed, through contacting NGOs in the Philippines. Also with reference to the above guidance, the passage of time between the trafficking

experience and the interviews taking place was variable, with some respondents having exited the trafficking situation just a few months previously, and others having experienced trafficking many years before but were receiving long-term of follow-up support from the trafficking shelter as a non-resident.

It should of course be noted that numerous ethical considerations remain, even when conducting interviews in the supportive environment of a well-run trafficking shelter, with the aforementioned UN guidance observing that "a woman in a shelter or in her home may have valid concerns that co-residents, family members, neighbours, or others may overhear sensitive or stigmatising information":

> Interviews should be conducted in a secure and completely private setting, and carried out in total privacy. Non-governmental organisations or social support services are often among the safest options. Interviews should not be held in a location where persons pass by or may 'drop in' or where random interruptions may occur making the respondent ill at ease. Interviews in the presence of children may cause distress and trauma and may result in a woman's words being repeated to others (ibid:9).

It was for this reason that my trafficking research featured individual interviews, only coming together for group debrief sessions after these had taken place. These group sessions were carried out following all interviews, at the social workers' recommendation, to assess participants' wellbeing.

The same UN guidance, above, also warns of placing time pressures on the interview process, suggesting that "tight schedules are not practical or realistic and can push interviewers to take risks. Similarly, interviews should not be too long and emotionally draining" (ibid:10). This was borne in mind, particularly as my research trip was for a limited duration of ten days. After the initial period of preparatory work with the three local researchers, the individual interviews themselves were carried out with the 33 respondents over a period of six days, meaning that on average each interviewer worked at a realistic pace and conducted two interviews per day. The schedule also factored in travel time of around three hours in each direction to the out-of-town trafficking shelter, along with purchase of rice for the respondents which took several hours to organise.

Turning to further literature on the process of interviewing trafficking survivors, Duong, who carried out research with 31 trafficking survivors in Vietnam, notes that "there has been much of writing about research ethics in general, but there are few documents that focus on the ethics of human trafficking research in particular" (2015:172). Despite the limited volume of research on this specific topic, it is evident that there are numerous further issues to consider when dealing with such a highly sensitive issue. This includes clear warnings that researchers "may put trafficking victims who co-operate with them at risk" (Di Nicola, 2012:56). UN guidelines also warn that "although interviews with women who are in a trafficking situation at the time of the interview are often the most risk-laden, interviews with women who have left a trafficking situation also pose numerous risks to women's physical and psychological well-being" (Zimmerman and Watts, 2003:1). The literature also refers to the issue of vulnerability, with Farrimond stating that those who are resident in shelters as a result of their experiences fall into this category (2013:172). These include continuing to be watched or under surveillance of traffickers; owing money to traffickers; and facing stigma and rejection by their community (Zimmerman and Watts, 2003:2). In terms of psychological concerns, the guidance notes that respondents can be "vulnerable to extreme stress reactions once out of the situation and have relinquished previous psychological survival mechanisms; find that talking about the experience is to relive it; and believe that the services (or immigration status) depend on their compliance, and therefore agree to participate in an interview which they would otherwise decline" (ibid:2). To address these issues, ten guiding principles are presented which are: (1) Do no harm; (2) Know your subject and assess the risks; (3) Prepare referral information and do not make promises that you cannot fulfil; (4) Adequately select and prepare interpreters and co-workers; (5) Ensure anonymity and confidentiality; (6) Get informed consent; (7) Listen to and respect each woman's assessment of her situation and risks to her safety; (8) Do not retraumatise a woman; (9) Be prepared for emergency intervention; and (10) Put information collected to good use. The guidelines also go on to state:

> If approached in a sensitive and non-judgemental manner, many women benefit from having the opportunity to tell their story. Similarly, the greater the extent to which a woman feels she is respected and that her welfare is a priority, the more likely she is to share accurate and intimate details of her

experience. The factors affecting the security and well-being of a woman who has been trafficked are also the same factors that affect disclosure (ibid:3).

All of these factors and more were discussed at length with the shelter managers, both on a previous trip in July 2018, on two follow-up calls, and over two days before the interviews took place in June 2019. First, it should be noted that the lead local researcher on this project, as well as being an academic and lecturer in Cebu, was also a trained social worker with 20 years of experience working at the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in this region. She had also met many of the trafficking shelter residents before while working on a project called 'I have a voice' a few years earlier, which portrays the lived experiences of trafficked women in Cebu City (Reed & Latonio, 2015). Thus, the lead interviewer who was also acting as a translator, even though much of the research was conducted in English, was eminently experienced and trained in preparing respondents for these interviews, to avoid retraumatising, and to provide follow up support and intervention through the shelter if needed. On such a sensitive subject, the need to avoid re-traumatising interviewees was a prime consideration, as Zimmerman and Watts' guidance invites researchers to consider:

> Asking a woman to talk about experiences that were frightening, humiliating and painful can cause extreme anxiety. Many women feel ashamed of what they have done or what has happened to them. A woman's distress from an interview may occur during an interview, but may also emerge before or after. For many women it is stressful to anticipate an interview about their experiences. Women may also review and regret what they have recounted long after an interview has ended. For some, the entire process is traumatic. Questions should never be designed to provoke a strong or emotional reaction. Questions that will evidently cause distress or force a woman to reveal traumatic details unnecessary to understanding her experience should be excluded. Questions that insinuate negative judgements about a woman's decision, her actions or impugn her character should not be posed, e.g. What will your parents think of what you did? Do you think you are an immoral person? or Why did you agree to do those things? (2003:23)

Again, working with the social worker and shelter managers, questions were vetted to ensure these types of question were not asked. In the end, no changes were made to the questions, though some advice was given about the order in which they were asked, to prompt a smooth narrative of events from each respondent.

Informed consent was also sought from interviewees before my arrival, which was granted by the entire cohort. The local researchers also articulated, before each individual interview, that respondents did not need to answer questions they did not want to, and ensured that they understood they could withdraw at any time without any questions or penalty. Informed consent was sought before conducting interviews using the 'SOAS Participant Consent Form'[2] and SOAS data storage guidelines were followed throughout.[3] In the case of the trafficking interviews, the answers were recorded on paper copies, scanned quickly to avoid loss, and saved on a secure virtual drive with a password.

While the over-riding considerations when preparing for interview relate to respondents' wellbeing and safety, it is also observed that approaching the interview with the right mindset can result in a more meaningful exchange – and thus more robust research findings:

> Interviewers who approach a woman with preconceived ideas or emotions regarding a woman's experience, her reactions to what has happened to her, or her personality or character, will miss important information and overlook the unique nature of each woman's experience… While it is important to come prepared with questions in mind, the interviews that yield the most accurate portrayal of a woman's experience are those that are unstructured and responsive. This depends on an open mind and the listening and interpreting skills of the interviewer. For example, while interviewers should demonstrate understanding and concern, expressions of pity or sympathy may be inappropriate and unwelcome as many women do not wish to be treated as victims (ibid:10).

Recognising that all interviewees were female, and all had faced abuse through their trafficking destination of sex work, consideration should also be given to the gender of the interviewers because "in many cases involving trafficking, respondents have been betrayed, physically or sexually abused by men (i.e. family members, agents, employers, military), and may mistrust, feel ill at ease, or embarrassed to disclose personal details to a man" (ibid:15). At the same time, the guidance also notes that "in some cases, a woman may prefer to speak to a male, believing that another woman will be more judgemental, more condemning than a man or because the trafficked woman has been abused or exploited by a woman. Whenever possible, a

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[2] https://www.soas.ac.uk/researchoffice/-/
[3] http://www.soas.ac.uk/infocomp/dpa/dparesearch/

respondent should be asked if she has a preference". In this case, the lead researcher, the aforementioned social worker who had worked with many of the trafficking survivors before, was female, and her two research assistants were a female social worker based in Cebu, and a male researcher who was, in fact, the son of the lead researcher and had worked closely with the shelter before to conduct research, and was well-known by the shelter managers and known by some of the respondents. It was clear for me to observe, from the introductory meetings, that the shelter residents were at ease with the interviewers. As previously noted, I was also invited to sit in on the interviews, in a development that had not previously been anticipated. After making inquiries as to whether this was appropriate, whether it would be welcomed by respondents, and whether it may make interviewees less forthcoming, the shelter managers and lead researchers were insistent this would not be the case. Indeed, the ambiance was relaxed and – in true Filipino style – there was a good deal of noise, often laughter, and consistently colourful narrating during the interview process, despite the weighty and difficult topics being discussed.

Finally, having delved into stories of human trafficking which cause respondents to reflect on the many challenges they have experienced, wrapping up the interview in a positive way is recommended:

> Trafficking can cause a range of strong emotional and psychological reactions. After discussing their experience, some women will feel relieved to have talked about it, while others will feel worse about themselves, their situation, and their future. It is important not to leave a woman feeling ashamed and hopeless… Whenever possible, interviews should end in a positive manner.10 The interviewer may remind the woman of how well she coped in such difficult circumstances, perhaps using specific examples from her narrative, and that the information that she provided will be used to help others. For respondents who are not already under the care of professionals, or for those who need further assistance, interviewers should offer referral information and let the respondent know that these services will be there if and when she is ready to use them (ibid:11).

This sentiment was echoed independently by my lead researcher and the trafficking shelter, resulting in my closing interview question: "What achievement are you most proud of in life, and why?" While this question did not necessarily contribute to the central focus of the research, it did cast light on the importance of family values running throughout respondents' narrative answers, with many stating that they were

most proud of being able to provide for their own children and wider family, giving them a chance in life. This was followed closely by pride over educational attainments despite facing so many challenges, and being given the chance to catch up with missed schooling later in life.

Overall, it was therefore ensured that nothing published in this dissertation, or any aspect of the fieldwork, would put interviewees in danger. Strict anonymity has also been observed to avoid the risk of specific information leading to an individual's whereabouts or antagonising a former trafficker or abuser. Such a situation could result in repercussions for the victims' families, or other victims already held by the traffickers. This concern is enhanced in the Philippines because, as already stated, English is widely read and spoken.

After consulting with the trafficking shelter, as compensation for their time each respondent was provided with 5kg of rice and 500 Philippine Pesos (PHP), which totals around £7. At two of the trafficking shelter sites, which were supporting people at the latter stages of their rehabilitation, this money was handed directly to respondents to spend as they saw fit. In the case of the shelter supporting people at the earliest stage, many of whom had reportedly been dependent on drugs, this money was kept by the shelter who promised to disperse it when they moved to the second stage of rehabilitation. This was agreed with shelter managers in advance. No payments were made to the trafficking shelter itself, though a modest dinner was hosted at a local restaurant, requested by the shelter managers and paid for by me, following the field interviews which included a debrief, sharing my initial findings, and discussion of the process. The aforementioned widely-cited UN guidance suggests that "fees paid for an interview can sometimes cast doubt on the veracity of the information collected, especially if the sums offered are significant. On the other hand, it is important to compensate women for time, lost earnings, and other costs incurred, such as travel or childcare". In my case, it was discussed and agreed with the trafficking shelter managers that, taking these factors into account, the compensation was appropriate. While interviewing individuals under the control of traffickers prompts many considerations, such as whether the money found by pimps or traffickers could result in punishments (ibid 2003:20), these considerations were not relevant for interviews conducted in a trafficking shelter. It was made clear that no

further compensation for interviewees' time would be offered, and that I was not connected to any NGO which was able to offer remuneration of any kind. The academic Laura Tsai interviewed 30 trafficking survivors in the Philippines, also in Cebu City, for a six-month financial diaries study that was conducted with 30 survivors of sex trafficking and their family members to understand more about the 'challenges upon exiting human trafficking and re-entering the community'. In a thought-provoking journal article on the ethical considerations surrounding this research, she states:

> Once survivors and family members came to trust the interviewers, this was often accompanied by heightened expectations about the ways in which interviewers may be able to help participants and their families. In particular, some of the mothers of trafficking survivors who participated in the study had a difficult time understanding that the interviewers did not work for the referring NGOs or for the Philippines Department of Social Welfare and Development. As a result, it was important for the interviewers to revisit the informed consent procedure throughout the study and explain on numerous occasions the nature of their role and their independence from these organisations (2017:167).

During the course of my own interviews, I was told by one respondent about a trafficking case which had not been reported to the authorities. This is not unusual. Nonetheless, this was discussed afterwards with the social worker and shelter managers. It was agreed that there was not enough detailed information to make a coherent report – nor would it have been desirable to report the incident because the trafficking shelter, with trained professionals, would not do this unless the residents actively wanted to pursue a prosecution. Doing so without their consent would be disempowering, and would not be in their best interests.

During a debrief session, when respondents were invited to freely share their experience of the interviews and their observations, one respondent began to cry when recalling the break-up of her family. I was assured by the social worker and shelter managers that this was appropriate, that talking about the experiences such as this was encouraged, and that the respondent remains in the supportive environment of the trafficking shelter for any follow-up.

**Discussion: Presence of facilitators and trafficking shelter ethos**

The effect of the presence of the facilitators must also be considered, with open questions such as: *Were respondents' answered skewed by the facilitators' presence and status (for example, the shelter managers' religious beliefs, and one of the facilitators being a former social worker and now a senior academic)? One of the facilitators – while not a Nun – worked at the trafficking shelter. What impact did this have? What impact, if any, did the Good Shepherd's morality-based vision of sex work have on the research?* The primary purpose of my research at the trafficking shelters was to establish whether there was an apparent connection between disaster and human trafficking; and, if there was deemed to be a connection, to explain how the process unfolded. Care was taken, working with the facilitators, not to ask leading questions or to prompt interviewees to make this connection when there was none. It is difficult to imagine how the facilitators' presence would have an impact on respondents' answers in this regard – which involves relaying factual information about natural hazards, their impact, and the series of events leading up to human trafficking.

In terms of the morality-based vision of sex work, this was seen as peripheral to the over-arching question of how weather-related shocks relate to human trafficking. I never asked questions about the nuns' or trafficking shelter staff's moral view of sex work, nor was a view ever offered. This, of course, is not to say that it did not have a bearing on the research in one way or another. Exploring this further, one might speculate that a perceived judgement by interviewers, or the presence of shelter staff, could prompt respondents to down-play their involvement in sex work, or to speak of it in a shameful way due to the apparent moral views of the trafficking shelter managers. However, this appeared not to be the case with shelter residents invited to speak openly about their trafficking experiences – despite it being clearly emphasised at the outset of this research that they did not need to delve into details they were uncomfortable with, and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. It was clear to me, as I was present when many of the interviews were being conducted in English, that respondents spoke confidently about their experiences and did not appear to be concerned about potential judgement by the interviewers, the shelter staff – who had presumably heard their stories well before this time – or

by me. However, the final answer to the survey – which was designed to end the conversation on a positive note, having covered many serious topics including human trafficking – may arguably have been impacted. In response to the question 'What are your top three priorities in life?', it is noted that many – although not all – respondents cited 'God' as being important. However, it should also be taken into account that the Philippines is a deeply religious country, with an estimated 92.5 per cent of the population identifying as Christian, and a national census from 2020 showing that four fifths of the population identify as Roman Catholic (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023). A formal percentage of the population who practice their religion is hard to find, but it is clear after spending a short time in the country that churches are full, and that religion is taken extremely seriously. It would arguably therefore not be unusual for respondents to cite religion as being important in their lives, regardless of the views held and instilled by those who run the trafficking shelters.

It must also be borne in mind that one issue researchers are invited to consider, through the literature, is questioning the assumption that trafficking shelter managers have residents' best interests at heart and are not in fact exploiting them for personal gain. This risk is cited by Gallagher and Pearson:

> In countries around the world it is common practice for victims of human trafficking who have been "rescued" or who have escaped from situations of exploitation to be placed and detained in public or private shelters. In the most egregious situations, victims can be effectively imprisoned in such shelters for months, even years (2010:73).

This was clearly observed not be the case during fieldwork, with residents allowed to freely come and go, and to speak freely with the aforementioned Philippine social worker and academic – who is independent, and not directly connected to the shelter – without shelter managers present. Researchers are also used to use the information they obtain during interviews with trafficking survivors "in an ethical way", noting:

> The experiences related by a woman who has been trafficked should be gathered for a purpose. The enormous personal, social and health-related costs of trafficking in women places a moral obligation on the interviewer to make certain that the information collected is used to benefit an individual

respondent or brought to the attention to policy-makers and advocates – ideally both. Involving women's rights advocates or direct service groups is not only a good way to ensure that interviews are safe, interview techniques and interpretation are sound, and support systems are in place, but it can also help ensure in practical ways that the information collected is relevant. Importantly, interviewers must be certain that any information released publicly (e.g. reports, news releases, public statements, etc.) is not misinterpreted, and does not fuel prejudices or stereotypes that inflame or incite public opinion against trafficked women (ibid:27).

Noting the trafficking shelter managers' interest in the topic of disaster-trafficking, all geared ultimately towards supporting their residents, the first stage of this process was for me to share the initial findings of the research, which I did at the end of the field trip by giving a mini-presentation with the researchers. After the PhD process is completed, a copy of the dissertation will also be shared with the relevant sections highlighted. This is particularly important in this case because the nuns did grant permission on the basis that they wanted to know about the link between disasters and trafficking in relation to those they supported, and received no remuneration or any other benefit from the research apart from this. Thus, the requirement to share the findings carry extra weight because their desire to know about the disaster-trafficking phenomenon must be honoured. As far as longer-term benefits are concerned, while policy-makers are unlikely to read a PhD dissertation on a library shelf, nor is it technically within the remit of a PhD study to make policy recommendations, my forthcoming journal article submissions will endeavour to raise the issue and to complement other endeavours to understand the disaster-trafficking link more clearly.

It should also be recognised that publication on disaster-trafficking issues can also cause harm, as this illustration from the 2004 Asian Tsunami suggests:

> [This disaster] was followed by a host of humanitarian and developmental challenges. One, unfortunately, was brought on by irresponsible reporting to journalists by an international agency dealing with child protection, including child trafficking. Before any trafficking cases were substantiated with empirical evidence, the agency reported cases of child trafficking in tsunami-affected areas. As a result, there was a clampdown on adults who were legitimately trying to reach and assist the children of their deceased siblings and relatives – their own nieces, nephews, and cousins. Additionally, bringing attention to the issue of child trafficking took attention away from more immediate issues of much greater urgency and magnitude, including hunger and starvation, food

delivery logistical challenges, and disease and the need for medicine. Backlash from other development agencies underscored how the negative impacts of the unsubstantiated report to the press outweighed the positive intentions (UNIAP, 2008:14).

While a PhD study will receive far less attention than widespread media reports in the aftermath of a disaster, it should still be borne in mind that presenting new findings on an under-researched topic like disaster trafficking does carry responsibility, and a recognition that elements of the research could be seized upon by policy-makers, such as NGOs worker in the post-disaster environment or with trafficking survivors, in the future.

**Fieldwork part 1: Interviews with professionals involved in Haiyan's aftermath**

As stated, I conducted numerous interviews with professionals whose role involved identifying and supporting people at risk of human trafficking following disaster, specifically Typhoon Haiyan, and detecting and prosecuting offenders. My interviews were conducted first in the central disaster zone of Tacloban City, where most of the 6,000 deaths and most destruction occurred, with subsequent interviews in the wider affected area of Cebu Island and the Philippines' capital, Manila. Throughout, a number of key informants and contacts were invaluable in navigating bureaucracy and securing the meetings required. This included a senior academic in the University of Philippines' Tacloban Campus; and a fellow PhD student in Cebu City, and her husband who ran an agency providing services to NGOs. They freely provided a wealth of unconditional advice and access to contacts across Cebu City. For one trip, I was also able to join a team from the University of Nottingham, partnering with the University of the Philippines (UP), which co-incidentally was researching resilience in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan for a UK Government-funded project during the week I was present. This was a three-year project jointly carried out between the University of Nottingham and the University of the Philippines, funded by the ESRC and DFID, with the aim of "monitoring the effectiveness of the Typhoon Yolanda [Haiyan] relief efforts in the Philippines in relation to building sustainable routes out of poverty. The project focused on urban population risk, vulnerability to disasters and resilience in the aftermath of these shocks. Urban slum dwellers are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters. The key

themes of the project are vulnerability, risk, resilience and shocks in relation to paths in and out of poverty." The research notes that "urban slum dwellers are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters," with the key theme of the project being vulnerability, risk, resilience and shocks in relation to paths in and out of poverty. The researchers note:

> Vulnerability and risk are conditions that are heightened by poverty, and inform why and how poor people are exposed to natural disasters, whilst resilience informs how they coped and how coping strategies can be supported and risk lessened […] We will measure resilience over time and to test the extent to which the notion of 'Building Back Better' is credible.

While not directly related to disaster-trafficking, the vulnerability to disaster clearly overlaps with the themes of my research, and researchers were generous in sharing contacts which provided immediate access to local mayors and community leaders in remote areas outside Tacloban City which would otherwise have proved much more time-consuming.

In Tacloban City, officials were without exception generous with their time and, I found surprisingly, very open and willing to be interviewed. I began by simply turning up at clearly-marked government buildings, and asking to speak to the relevant officials. Arranging meetings in advance rarely worked as calls and emails were not answered or returned. However, I was advised by University of Nottingham colleagues to simply arrive at officials' doorsteps and interviews would almost always be granted. This turned out to be the case, with interviewees typically spending up to two hours talking. However, in the larger cities of Cebu and Manila, representing the wider disaster zone, officials' offices were set up in a much more formal way and I was always asked to submit a research request in writing weeks or months in advance. These invariably went unanswered, and the tactic of turning up on the doorstep to request interviews was usually declined as officials were busy or out of the office. This was particularly the case with the hard-pressed Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) which insisted upon a Freedom of Information Request to be submitted, before declining this on the basis that only Filipino citizens could apply. To get around this, the aforementioned PhD student and her husband introduced me to many key contacts including those within government departments, and provided a wealth of information. I also made several contacts during an 'anti-

trafficking week' in Cebu, during which a series of public events were laid on including street dramas, speeches, and music events, where key figures involved in anti-trafficking efforts could be identified and interviews arranged. Once again, this was down to good fortune as I had not known beforehand that this event was due to take place during the short time period I was there. These contacts included speaking to the Director of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) who had previously declined interview requests, but I was able to approach her after she gave a speech at an event; and contacts for other NGOs in Cebu City.

With the notable exception of two judges dealing with trafficking cases, all respondents agreed for interviews to be recorded on my mobile phone which, soon afterwards, were securely stored on a password-protected remote drive. In terms of data protection for this part of the fieldwork, during initial stages of the research I was seeking data to try to demonstrate an *increase* in human trafficking following disaster – an endeavour that I later conceded was futile amid the aforementioned lack of data due to victims not reporting because of shame or stigma; failure by authorities to investigate or proceed to prosecution; lack of data sharing between agencies and regional governments; and muddled definitions of human trafficking, including by experts themselves (Samarasinghe 2008:122; IOM, 2015; Nykaza, 2009:319; Tigno, 2013:20). However, during this stage of research the Overseas Workers' Welfare Association (OWWA) of Tacloban City agreed to copy a database list onto my memory stick of trafficking cases overseas involving the city's residents, without redacting any of the names or addresses. This was discovered later after downloading. I took action to delete personal details and to store the file on my password-protected remote drive.

**Fieldwork part 2: Interviews with trafficking survivors**

The first part of this Methodology Chapter discussed the ethical considerations surrounding interviews with trafficking survivors. Next, the process of securing the interviews and more practical considerations are presented. To secure interviews with trafficking survivors, I made several approaches to organisations which support formerly-trafficked people, including the large and internationally-recognised NGO the Visayan Forum. All those who were approached were initially enthusiastic about the

research topic. However, the Good Shepherd Welcome House in Cebu was the only shelter that was able and willing to arrange interviews in the required time period. The interviews with formerly-trafficked people in Chapter 6 were therefore eventually conducted, after several false starts, with 33 respondents at three trafficking shelters run by the Good Shepherd Welcome House in and around Cebu City in the central Philippines. The interviews, which I attended throughout, were led by three local facilitators including an experienced social worker, over the course of ten days in June 2019. The respondents' answers paint a collective picture of a complex web of social issues spanning education, abuse, cultural desire to be a breadwinner 'at any cost' – including an example of a girl working as a house maid at ten years old, and children looking after other children and taking responsibility well beyond their years. Their stories delve into issues such as drugs, incest and abuse in the household, parents' attitudes towards protecting their children, and weak rule of law. While trafficking affects all genders and can relate to any destination of exploitation, all those I interviewed were women, aged 18 to 52, who had experienced exploitation through prostitution. Details surrounding ethics, access and many other aspects of these interviews, are explored later in this chapter.

The interview questions, which can be found in the Appendix to this study, attempt to ascertain to what extent disaster, including the impact of slow-onset or repetitive smaller hazards such as annual flooding, contributed to trafficking and it invites respondents to provide a chronological narrative of their experience. An initial group session, to introduce me as the researcher and to recap on the purpose of the interviews, along with a prominent reminder that there was no requirement to complete the interviews and participants could freely withdraw at any time, preceded all individual interviews, and a validation and debrief session followed them. All participants agreed that the audio from these debrief sessions could be recorded, which helped significantly in capturing and writing up the sessions. I was also invited to take pictures of the proceedings. Naturally, the respondents' faces are obscured in any photos to protect their identities.

**Figure 5:** Photo of a group debrief session at one of the Good Shepherd Welcome House trafficking shelter sites, outside Cebu City.



The Good Shepherd Welcome House has several sites in and around Cebu City, supporting people at various stages of post-trafficking rehabilitation. The interviews were split between two centres in the city, one of which was a 'safe house' supporting people soon after trafficking which, somewhat bizarrely, can be found on Google Maps; and another drop-in centre which equipped people with livelihood skills in the latter stage of the rehabilitation process. The third centre was a residential shelter around an hour outside the city, which can be seen in the photograph above (Figure 4) to show the set-up of these interview sessions. At this particular centre, trafficking survivors are in the advanced stages of rehabilitation and livelihood skills training. Marietta Latonio, a trained social worker and university lecturer in Cebu, who facilitated this discussion, is pictured facing the camera. All of these centres were run by nuns, all of whom spoke fluent English and had travelled widely, stating that they knew anecdotally that many of the people they were supporting had faced trafficking risks due to disaster. They explained that they were interested in finding out more about the phenomenon but had been unable to devote any time to the topic, ultimately prompting them to agree to this research request.

A fellow academic at a major university in Cebu, who is a trained social worker with a career spanning several decades at the city's Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), paved the way for me to approach the nuns managing these

trafficking shelters. A date was eventually agreed upon, and the interviews were conducted with three facilitators, two female and one male, to ask questions and record the answers on the interview sheet. The female literacy rate in the Philippines is extremely high at 98.9 per cent (Philstar quoting UN, 2019) and, in practice, many respondents ended up filling out the paperwork themselves in English with guidance from the facilitator.

Originally, it was agreed that I would not be present in the room while the interviews were under way, but would be nearby in the premises to answer any questions or deal with any difficulties. However, from the first interview onwards, it was clear that the ambiance was relaxed and I was invited to attend all the sessions, and to ask supplementary questions if required. Respondents chose to use a mixture of English and the local language of their particular region, whether Cebuano from Cebu, Tagalog from Manila (resulting in the widely-spoken mixed language of "Taglish"), or Waray-Waray from the central Visayas region.

**Selecting respondents**

There were limited numbers of residents at the trafficking shelters, totalling just 33 overall at the time of my research visit, meaning it was not necessary to limit the number of respondents or introduce a selection process due to limitations of time or resources. Therefore, all residents at the trafficking shelters were approached beforehand by shelter staff about the interviews, and all had subsequently agreed to take part. The stipulation was that (a) participants should have been through an experience which met the definition of trafficking – as per the Palermo Protocol presented at the beginning of this paper, with the key features of recruitment, deception or coercion, and abuse or exploitation; and (b) participants must be aged 18 or over. It was clear from preparatory meetings with the trafficking shelter managers that all staff had a sophisticated understanding of what constituted 'trafficking' under the Palermo Protocol definition, which is also the definition used in Filipino law, and were aware of the existence of the Protocol itself which, as discussed, is often not well understood. Out of respect for those in the shelter, it was also agreed that if there were any residents whose experience did not technically constitute trafficking, they would be interviewed anyway to avoid them feeling

excluded alongside their peers, and that the findings of these interviews would be discounted later or used in other ways. However, as stated, it was soon clear that all respondents' experiences constituted trafficking as defined by the Palermo Protocol.

At the outset of this research endeavour, I was aspiring to interview trafficking survivors of both genders, who ended up in a range of trafficking situations due to the impact of disaster. However, it is noted that, in the end, all of the respondents involved in my research were women, and that all of these individuals had experienced exploitation and abuse through sex work. It is important to acknowledge, therefore, that this field research focuses on just one trafficking destination, recalling the observations of Shelley who notes: "Despite the disproportionate attention to sex trafficking today, contemporary victims of trafficking are more likely to be victims of labour trafficking, forced to serve as child soldiers, or trapped in domestic servitude." (2010:297) While it is clear that my research does little to redress that balance, it was impossible within the timeframe and resources available for this study, despite my attempts, to track down trafficking survivors who ended up being exploited in other destinations. As mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation, gaining any access to trafficking survivors was quite an undertaking which involved forging strong contacts, and a considerable element of trust from trafficking shelter management before the green light was given for this research.

A question therefore emerges at this point about whether *any* reference was made by respondents at the trafficking shelter to men or boys – thus broadening the gender aspect of this research. While my interviews in Chapters 4 and 5 refer to boys facing human trafficking, this information was gleaned from experts working to prevent human trafficking rather than from first-hand sources. So to answer this question, having read through the hand-written survey answers once again and listened to the debrief recordings, it is evident that respondents referred to husbands, brothers and fathers when asked about their family situations. Much of this is recorded in the testimony in Chapter 6. However, there was no reference to men or boys themselves being trafficked, or even being vulnerable to human trafficking.

**Data protection**

Audio from individual interviews was not recorded, as they were conducted with facilitators in three simultaneous breakout groups. However, as mentioned earlier, the debrief sessions were recorded, along with follow-up interviews I conducted, and these are stored securely on a virtual drive accessed with a password. Any notes and transcriptions of these sessions have been stored securely in the same way. Furthermore, throughout this thesis, the names of people who experienced trafficking have been changed to protect their identity and are marked with an asterisk in the first instance to indicate this. The pseudonyms were chosen by the respondents themselves, which also served as a 'lighter moment' during the introduction to the fieldwork, as observed by UNIAP's guidance on interviewing trafficking survivors:

> Academic researchers at Chulalongkorn University [in Thailand] interviewing trafficked persons have asked interviewees to pick a name they prefer to be called, many of whom selected names of pop stars. In addition to providing anonymity, the interviewee's fictitious name choice also provided researchers with an ice-breaker conversation about the name, to increase rapport and trust (2008: 21).

**Further observations about the fieldwork process**

From my experience of fieldwork during my NGO career, most interviews and discussions have been conducted through a translator, with a local colleague steering the questions and acting as a 'gatekeeper' to the interviewee who is often not forthcoming. These types of interviews can be described as taking place "at arm's length". Regarding the interviews for this study, the set-up was very different. As previously referenced, I was planning not to be present during the interviews because, after discussion with the shelter staff and local facilitator, the presence of a foreign male could be off-putting. However, on arrival, it was clear the ambiance was relaxed, the interviewees understood exactly what they were being asked and were willing to take part, and shelter managers immediately invited me to sit in. From a UK culture perspective, many Filipinos appear extrovert and can talk at length, in an animated and colourful way, about their personal circumstances. This was the case with many respondents, even on sensitive topics – which, from the point of view of collecting information, was of course welcome. Without exception, the interviewees

came across as intelligent and articulate – though clearly needing financial and emotional support following their trafficking experience. Many also had babies and young children, some of whom were present at the shelter, creating a noisy and helpfully informal environment.

Despite the serious nature of the topic, there were also many moments of humour prompted by the facilitators and respondents – in line with Philippine culture. For example, in the interview pictured (above) at a shelter in the countryside outside Cebu City, despite the weather being typically humid and the group sweltering in temperatures well over 30 degrees celsius, respondents refused to turn on the fan because, due to the open windows, a bird had started nesting inside the half-broken protective cage for the blades and they 'did not want to disturb nature' – resulting in several hours of interviews in the blazing heat, with birds loudly chirping above us from the ceiling.

The demeanour of respondents at the three 'debrief sessions', held after each set of interviews, was most interesting because the women interacted with each other, building on or disagreeing with each others' points. These sessions were advised by the shelter managers and social worker as a way of ensuring respondents were content with the interviews, and had not dwelt upon any issues which needed follow-up support in the supportive surroundings of the shelter.

Finally, at the out-of-town trafficking shelter after the interviews and debrief had taken place, managers explained that the residents were working on a drama production and invited me to see the latest rehearsal. It was a story about the 'evil lure' of money, and how this could lead to drug abuse. It was extremely dramatic and quite shocking, with the actors – who were the respondents I had just interviewed, and pictured in Figure 5 – screaming loudly, acting out mock violence, and throwing fake money around. It was explained that this was part of the rehabilitation process and coming to terms with their experiences.

**Research timeline and funding**

I undertook this PhD part-time, while working full-time throughout, including two years of work (unrelated to this research) based in Jordan and the Middle East. The study was started in September 2014, some ten months after Typhoon Haiyan, with the Upgrade Paper submitted two years later in September 2016. It was clear from the outset that, due to the fact I need to work full time, an extended period 'in the field' would not be possible, opting instead for several 'short and sharp' field trips which were as productive as possible – a point that was acknowledged during the upgrade process. The fieldwork period was from September 2016 until September 2018, when the aforementioned field trips were undertaken in June 2017, November 2017, and July 2018 to Tacloban and Cebu. Interviews were conducted to a limited extent in Manila, for example with the Visayan Forum and academics at the University of the Philippines' Diliman Campus – though, with such limited time on the ground, getting around the city is time-consuming with several hours of traffic jams to travel short distances, coupled with difficulty walking to destinations (or at least arriving at the destination with a tidy appearance of professionalism, which is required) due to humidity, pollution, and unsafe or partially-missing pavements along most routes. The interviews with formerly trafficked people, which took significant time to set up, were undertaken during a fourth field trip to Cebu in June 2019. For further context, I also spent a month in the area affected by Typhoon Haiyan in its immediate aftermath in November 2013 while working for an international NGO, and returned twice with journalists to cover the reconstruction efforts. During this period, issues were learned about and contacts made which formed the initial interest in and basis for this PhD research. The writing up period was initially due to take place from autumn 2018 to autumn 2020, with a possible extension year leading to a finish time of autumn 2021. However, students were granted an extra two terms due to Covid; and I was granted a further 'pause' of one term in January 2021, due primarily to the extra time needed to balance increased work generated by my NGO employer's huge global Covid-19 response, while simultaneously home-schooling two children during the UK's multiple pandemic lockdowns, bringing the revised finish time to September 2022.

The first three years part-time of the PhD were funded by my employer, the global aid agency World Vision UK. There were no conditions attached to the funding, which I

managed to secure from a 'professional development budget' which would otherwise have been spent on professional training courses. There was also an acknowledgement from my employer that scrutiny and potential criticism of aid agencies' post-disaster efforts could feature in the research. An £800 grant was also secured from Santander through SOAS, with no conditions other than the funds being spent on fieldwork during a stipulated time period, which it was. I funded the remainder of the part-time tuition fees and relatively modest fieldwork costs myself, opting for local hotels and airline tickets partially funded by accrued air miles.

**Security**

The southern Philippines, notably the island of Mindanao and city of Marawi, are unsafe due to conflict. While I have travelled to these areas accompanied by security with my NGO employer, fieldwork for this study was only carried out in the safer areas of the central Visayas. Crime is higher generally in the Philippines than in other south-east Asian countries, with high levels of street violence and robbery, sometimes involving weapons and firearms (UK Foreign Office, 2022). Nonetheless, there were no notable security concerns that would prevent a field trip.

# Chapter 4

## Lower trafficking risks in the central disaster zone:
## Interviews from Tacloban City

Tacloban City in the central Philippines, with a population of around 220,000 (PSA, 2013), bore the brunt of Typhoon Haiyan on the morning of 8th November, 2013. Most of the disaster's 6,300 deaths were caused by a huge storm surge which crashed into the city with the devastating and deadly effect of a tsunami. As stated in the introduction, claims that individuals, particularly children, were at risk of human trafficking surfaced in the media and on NGO websites within days of the disaster (Branigan, 2013; Childs, 2016; Eimer, 2013; IOM, 2013b and 2015a; Santos, 2014; Tang, 2013; IBON Foundation, 2015; Olarte, 2014). Yet, as with myriad similar claims following other disasters, no evidence was presented to back up these assertions. In an effort to begin filling this void of knowledge, this chapter presents my fieldwork from Tacloban City to explore, after the dust had settled, what was actually known about human trafficking in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan.

Before going further, the geographical distinction set out in the Methodology Chapter must be revisited. Overall, this study examines two zones referred to as 'the central disaster zone' and 'the outer disaster zone' (see Figure 3). The central zone, the focus of this chapter, examines what is known about post-typhoon trafficking in the devastated city of Tacloban and its immediate surroundings. Chapter 5 goes on to examine the outer zone including the Philippines' largest and second-largest cities, Manila and Cebu respectively, to which thousands of people from Tacloban evacuated. Thus, there is a distinction between trafficking within or from the most-affected area, which is presented in this chapter; and trafficking which involved migration or displacement to other areas, presented in Chapter 5.

**Fieldwork approach**

To recap from the Methodology chapter, this part of the fieldwork involved tracking down and interviewing the authorities, NGOs and academics in Tacloban City who would have come into contact with reported trafficking cases. Interviews were conducted with four politicians, eight civil servants, two prosecutors, two NGO workers and one academic from the University of the Philippines Tacloban College between 5th and 16th June 2017. These included the Regional Prosecutor for Region VIII, who is Chair of the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking; Tacloban City's Prosecutor; and officials from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Tacloban City Police, Woman and Children Shelter of Tacloban City, Tacloban Statistics Office, and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), Region VIII, which is responsible for preventing overseas trafficking of Filipinos. The Mayor of nearby Palo, adjoining Tacloban, which was severely affected by Typhoon Haiyan, a number of Barangay (local parish) captains, as well as NGO workers and academics in the city, were also interviewed. All officials agreed explicitly to be identified in this research. However, for the sake of safety and the theoretical risk of repercussions, I have retained only the names of prominent public figures who routinely address trafficking issues in the public eye – noting that my research will arguably not increase this risk. My interviewees, to the best of my knowledge, include all of the professionals who played any significant role, or would have any significant knowledge, of trafficking in the wake of Haiyan in Tacloban City.

As stated in the Literature Review, there is significant confusion – even among authorities and trafficking experts around the world – as to what constitutes human trafficking (UNODC, 2019; Tigno, 2012:32). However, it was evident that all of those interviewed for this field study had a firm grasp of the Palermo Protocol with its key features of recruitment through coercion, deception or abuse of power; and the end result of exploitation. Under this definition, anyone aged under 18 is considered to have been trafficked, regardless of whether they were coerced, deceived or an abuse of power was involved.

**Tendency to stay put**

While many residents left Tacloban City, the vast majority remained (Government of Philippines et al, 2014:2) despite huge swathes of the city being destroyed. This chapter examines the trafficking risk for those who stayed behind, with Chapter 5 devoted to exploring the same risks for those who evacuated or were displaced. To set the scene, several interviewees for this study highlighted why many members of the community tend to stay put, even after such a significant disaster. Filipinos are no strangers to severe weather events, with the country experiencing around 20 typhoons each year. However, Typhoon Haiyan was the strongest to make landfall anywhere in the world, and caused a historic level of destruction with more than a million homes damaged (ibid:12) and a third of displaced people having lost their homes completely (Recuenco, 2014), with around half a million people in 95,000 households living in makeshift shelters a year after the disaster (UNOCHA, 2014).

In terms of the desire to stay put, Ariane Nadela, from the Good Shepherd Welcome House trafficking shelter in Cebu City, explained to me: "Even if we are being told to evacuate, even being told to get out…. They will just rebuild, even near a river when it rains, it floods… even if that's that situation, Filipinos will still live in that case." Indeed, following Haiyan, many simply rebuilt ramshackle homes from the debris they found in the streets (Doyle, 2016). It is known that at least 17,000 people left Tacloban City soon after the disaster on evacuation flights (Brookings Institution, 2015:21) with many more making their own way on ferries. In a city with just over 200,000 residents, this is a significant number – representing around 10 per cent of the population, though evacuees were also from surrounding areas. However, Ted Jopson, Officer in Charge of Tacloban City's Housing & Community Development Office, made the point that most people who left Tacloban City in search of work did return:

> There was a survey on coastal areas with 14,433 families. 90 per cent came back, possibly more. [Of those who left,] most went to Mactan Cebu [a city on the neighbouring island of Cebu]. The population of Tacloban before Yolanda was 212,000 to 214,000. It is now [as of June 2017] 242,000 – so the population has gone up. (Field interview, July 2018)

One of the reasons for the increasing population cited by Jopson was numerous construction jobs on offer in the 'Yolanda corridor' from Samar to Leyte, which provided a 'window of opportunity' for some three years as reconstruction proceeded.

**Trafficking risks in displacement shelters**

With no savings, insurance, or capital to restart their businesses, many families faced no choice but to move away from the coastline, the source of their families' livelihoods for generations, and into temporary 'bunk houses' or squalid squatter settlements around Tacloban City (IOM, 2013b). As context on existing poverty in the area, figures indicate that the areas most severely affected by Haiyan already had incomes 75 per cent below the national average (Save the Children, 2014). Remedios G. Buna, City Social Welfare Officer, Tacloban City, described the conditions in these temporary shelters:

> There was no privacy. All family members were sleeping and abuses, including sexual abuses, took place. Even among family members – we have encountered cases. Two to three years after Yolanda, most victims were supported with food. [But] people didn't need to go out of the city – food and basic needs were enough. (Field interview, June 2017)

Such temporary shelters are said to heighten the risk of trafficking because they "attract criminal actors and can become targets for human traffickers" (IOM, 2016:3). While no trafficking cases have been formally reported from these 'bunk houses' following Haiyan, the conditions at these shelters in and around Tacloban City – and the risk of abuses taking place – came to the fore several times during interviews for this fieldwork. Figure 5, using data from the Philippine Government's Department of Social Welfare and Development on 25 November 2013, two-and-a-half weeks after Haiyan made landfall, shows the extent of displacement to the shelters (CCCM Cluster Philippines, 25th November 2013 based on data from DSWD/DROMIC. Cited in IDMC 2014:5).

**Figure 6:** Map showing number of internally displaced people in evacuation centres following Haiyan. (CCCM Cluster Philippines, 25th November 2013 based on data from DSWD/DROMIC)
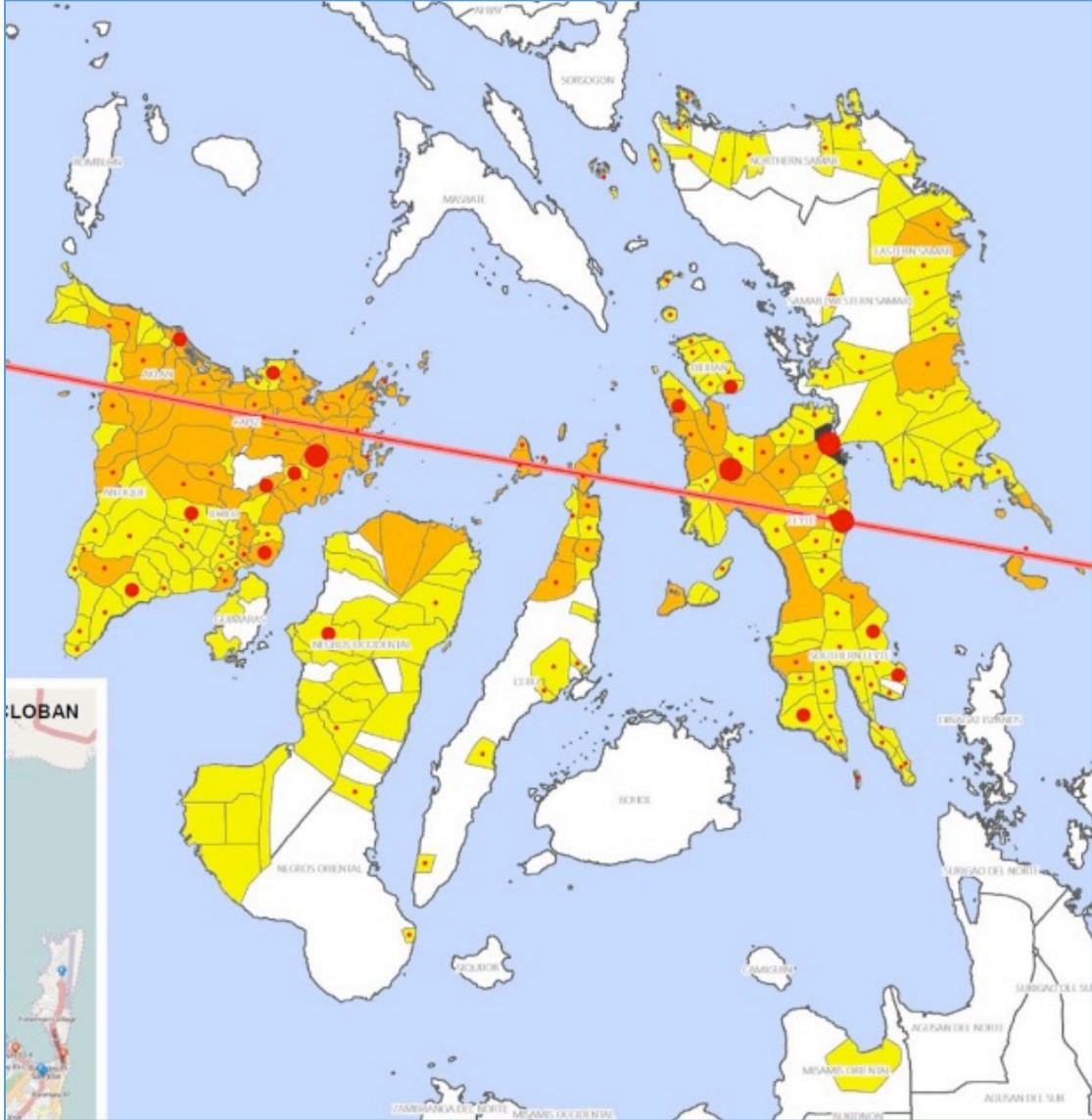


By October 2014, almost a year after Haiyan, only 36 per cent of temporary relocation sites near the city had 24-hour security; 23 per cent of sites had women-friendly spaces; and 34 per cent of sites had child friendly spaces. Roberto Golong, Tacloban City's Prosecutor, highlights these settings – as outlined in IoM reports from previous disasters – as a setting where physical and sexual abuse can occur:

> We had victims who were just placed in relocation centres. And, these relocation centres, they had so many families in one centre with no divisions, no CR (toilet) or whatever. They were just dumped in the relocation centres. They were not provided with certain facilities. If you put so many people in one

place, in the dark overnight, anything can happen. It did happen. (Field interview, June 2017)

Prosecutor Golong went on to explain that there were two cases of abuse in the shelters which reached the Prosecutor's Office and matured into court cases, but none which met the threshold of human trafficking, with its key elements of recruitment through deception or coercion, and abuse or exploitation. While it may be worth further investigating the risks of trafficking from these temporary shelters, there was no immediate evidence and I did not have the time or resources to track down those who stayed in them, also acknowledging that these individuals would have moved on by the time my inquiries were made. While trafficking risks in displacement shelters are thus acknowledged, which – if proven – would contribute to the research question of *why and how disaster increases the risk of human trafficking*, this is not explored further in this thesis.

**Existing claims on post-Haiyan trafficking**

Myriad claims which surfaced in the media, days after Haiyan, have been presented in the Literature Review (Chapter 2). A 'Four Months On' report from UNICEF suggested that 40 per cent of children in areas affected by the typhoon were already living in poverty, adding that 'trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence were among the most acute risks for women and children' (UNICEF, 2014:12). The Global Slavery Index 2014, the flagship report of the Walk Free Foundation, stated on its website that "reports suggest that the typhoon [Haiyan] directly contributed to at least two trafficking investigations". This assertion appears to be based on local media reports which are repeated in the US State Department's 2014 Trafficking in Persons Report as two "suspected cases of typhoon-related trafficking" investigated by the Philippines' Department of Justice (US Department of State, 2014:314). No specific details were provided.

Numerous post-disaster claims in international media included the UK's Telegraph which, five days after the storm, reported that 'up to two million children affected by Typhoon Haiyan were at risk of abuse or trafficking', with an article quoting Save the Children's Global Media Manager as saying: "Lone children in disasters are very

vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and trafficking. The first few weeks of any disaster are really critical in terms of putting children at risk. We know this from previous experiences." (Eimer, 2013). A week later, the UK's Guardian ran an article citing concerns from UNICEF about trafficking which was 'receiving reports of missing and separated children in Tacloban and Ormoc' (Branigan, 2013). Similar claims continued well into 2014. No specific details were provided to quantify any of these claims.

Nearly all officials I interviewed from frontline organisations and agencies in Tacloban City, when I asked them about the disaster-trafficking link, stated enthusiastically that this was a phenomenon they knew extremely well, and that trafficking following Haiyan and other disasters was a major concern. However, when prompted for specific examples, they struggled to produce evidence – with the exception of the four cases above gleaned from a handful of interviewees. A number of officials stated that this was the first time they had actually been asked for examples of the phenomenon, and that it made them question for the first time their own widely-held assumptions about the disaster-trafficking link. Here are some excerpts from interviewees' responses when asked about the disaster-trafficking connection:

> There is a link between disaster and trafficking, because disaster opens a kind of opportunity for vultures to prey on these helpless people, offering them initially food, shelter, without knowing that they will be lured into the illegal trade. So if you're asking whether disaster plays an important role, yes it does. Because, if you are a victim of disaster, there's no hope, there's no future, and somebody offers you something, which you believe initially is through good will. You can easily fall prey.
> *- Marcus Bao, Social Welfare Officer II, City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD), Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu Island*

> There is a very strong connection between disasters and trafficking. This is not just anecdotal, as we have three experiences already of big disasters. One was the Leyte landslides, more than ten years ago. Four days after that disaster, we were able to intercept around 30 girls who were originally from the area – who were accompanied by a recruiter heading to Manila. Upon investigation, some of them were actually recruited even in the evacuation sites. So that gives us red flags. Indeed, the traffickers are actually faster than other disaster efforts that we have. Every time there's a rise in vulnerability, especially in terms of disaster, there's a rise in cases of human trafficking. Because traffickers capitalise on desperation; they capitalise on the vulnerability of the people. And then the elements of the Palermo Protocol are there, of course, which relate to vulnerability. The abuse of power; economic

vulnerability. And whether a disaster is involved or not, you have to put emphasis on the context of the three elements of trafficking which are the transport, the means, and the result. I think it's very important for people to understand the elements. Because it's not only natural made, but man-made disasters that result in very vulnerable situations.
- *Cecilia Flores-Oebanda, Founder and President of the Visayan Forum anti-trafficking NGO*

People become poorer because of environmental disaster. Take the vendors along the street – if their business is hit by a typhoon, they will have to restart again. They will go back to begging. Even my sister, who lives in Leyte. They had a very good family – a very good economic level. But when their store caught fire, they had to start over again. Now both of them are working abroad. The effect of that calamity breaks the family – so they left their children here in the Philippines, so they could work abroad to build their life back again. Families can be disintegrated which really effects vulnerability, including vulnerability to human trafficking.
- *Marietta Latonio, academic and retired social worker in Cebu City*

## Fieldwork findings: Specific trafficking cases linked to Haiyan in the central zone

Theoretically, as discussed in the literature review, numerous trafficking drivers such as poverty, and increased vulnerability due to deaths or illness in the family, are exacerbated in the wake of disaster (Goździak, 2014:58; Shelley, 2010:53; UNODC, 2020:9; Aronowitz, 2009a:23). So, despite all of the concerns and claims presented above by NGOs, government and media, in which evidence to back up the assertions is apparently absent, were any cases of post-Haiyan trafficking uncovered at all? And if they were, can they be directly attributed to Haiyan in the context of a heightened risk of trafficking in the post-disaster environment? After piecing together all the information from my interviews, and despite the aforementioned grand claims about post-disaster trafficking, just four trafficking cases linked to Typhoon Haiyan were recorded by the city's authorities, police, prosecutors, social work department and NGOs. These are presented below. Just one of these four cases, the first of those presented below, appears to have been reported in the public domain. However, this case was based on a suspicion that later turned out to be unfounded.

**Case 1 – Discounted:** The first report of a suspected trafficking case, occurring one week after the typhoon, was subsequently dropped by the authorities as they concluded it was based on a misunderstanding. The circumstances were that a 16-year-old girl asked a man to enlist her as a family member so she could be allowed to board an evacuation flight from Tacloban City Airport, as unaccompanied minors were not allowed to leave the city. The man was reported to have agreed, and the fact that they were unrelated was detected during checks at a 'migration outflow desk' set up to monitor those being evacuated from the island. The man, an engineer, was questioned by police and the case was not pursued. Marissa Monge, Head of Women and Children Protection, Tacloban City Police, told me: "[The case was] filed at the Prosecutor's Office. The discussions involved a 16-year-old minor. But the subject was freed because he was only lending a helping hand to the girl. The girl's family was in Manila and she was insistent about going, and asked the guy if she could be listed on his paper. The girl and the suspect were not related, so they were held in Tacloban. The case was conducted at the City Prosecutor's Office, and he agreed [not to prosecute]. The suspect was an engineer by profession, in his twenties, and travelling with another colleague". Interestingly, further research shows that this case – which turned out not to have any merit as a trafficking incident – was the only one in Tacloban City to have been reported in the media with the headline: "Authorities detain two men suspected of trafficking 16-year-old girl in typhoon-hit Philippines" (Tang, 2013). The article goes on to repeat the oft-heard refrain about trafficking risks following disasters. The story states that "the authorities don't have the full picture yet", though no follow-up article can be found explaining that the case was subsequently dropped.

**Case 2 – 'Fake nuns' arrested:** In May 2014, six months after the typhoon, a group of women dressed as nuns were arrested by police at Abucay Bus Station in Tacloban City after reports from a concerned member of the public. The 'nuns' were with five girls from Samar Island who had been promised school places in Manila. A senior official from Tacloban City Police told me that the women could not produce satisfactory documentation, so the authorities did not allow the children to continue their journey. The suspects were arrested and held in custody, but later released without charge after a senior politician from Tacloban City, who reportedly knew the women, signed an affidavit confirming they were 'of good character'. A social worker

involved in the case told me: "The children were brought here, as this is the temporary shelter for them. And they [the nuns] said they were like an NGO. But, when we went into the details, they were not registered as an NGO with the Security and Exchange Commission. We filed a case, and they were put in jail for five to six months. However, because of some interventions of people who are influential, the case was dropped at the prosecutor level." In a subsequent interview with a legal expert in Cebu City, it was clarified that Philippine law does not allow defendants in an alleged trafficking case to be released due to an 'affidavit of good character'. Nonetheless, according to two interviewees in Tacloban City, this is the process that was followed in this instance.

**Case 3 – Sex work:** In a third reported case, alleged to have occurred in August 2014, seven months after the typhoon, a group of sisters from Tacloban City travelled to Abuyog on Leyte Island, on the coast south of Tacloban, to look for a job and were reportedly forced into sex work at a karaoke bar. This incident was linked to 'poverty and desperation after Typhoon Haiyan', according to the Woman and Children Shelter of Tacloban City. There is no record of a prosecution, and none of the officials interviewed who were aware of this case could say how it concluded.

**Case 4 – Wages withheld:** In a fourth and final post-Haiyan trafficking case, five boys under 18 secured a job in a warehouse but were not paid the minimum wage of Tacloban City. The Head of the Woman and Children Shelter of Tacloban City told me: "They landed a job in one of the warehouses to carry the goods from the truck to the warehouse and vice versa. They [the children] complained that they cannot bear any more of this kind of job because they are still minors. They were not paid fairly, according to the daily wage in Tacloban City. But they did not file a case. We rescued them from that warehouse, and the owner – through their lawyer – gave them their salaries." This case was said by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to be connected to poverty following Typhoon Haiyan, thus qualifying as a disaster-induced case of human trafficking.

**Discussion**

None of the three cases above, which were actively investigated and not discounted, represented traffickers seizing the moment directly after a disaster to recruit victims. All were several months later – at which point, clearly, there remained a huge amount of disaster-induced poverty, with many of the trafficking risk factors such as economic desperation, displacement, and disruption of family units at play, which as stated above are widely recognised as trafficking risks in the literature. It should be noted, however, that despite the strong suspicions of police and social workers, none of these cases made it to trial. At this point, it also worth emphasising the claimed role of corruption which allegedly caused one investigation to be abandoned, clearly to the consternation of those I interviewed. This echoes claims in the literature that corruption 'oils the wheels of trafficking' (Guth, 2010:157) with traffickers able to reoffend with apparent impunity (Bales, 2007:88). Also of note is the fact that all of the cases involved children, echoing the common NGO and media refrain that minors are most vulnerable following disaster (Olarte, 2014; Branigan, 2014; Cohen, 2018; Eimer, 2013; Evans, 2010; Jones, 2015). This also mirrors claims in the literature by Atzet who, referring to the Haiti Earthquake of 2010, states that during a crisis "the supply of available children increases, the demand for those children increases, and the intentions of those transporting the children is difficult, if not impossible, to assess" (2010:510).

**Why so few recorded cases in the central disaster zone?**

To summarise the cases above, said to be linked to Typhoon Haiyan, from the available information it is observed that two cases were proven but not prosecuted; a third case was proven, but the prosecution subsequently collapsed; and the fourth case was flawed from the start. So what do these cases tell us about post-disaster trafficking risks facing those who remained behind in the city, who may have been trafficked directly from, or within, this central disaster zone? Despite the grand claims and assumptions about post-disaster trafficking cited above by politicians and NGOs, echoed in the media, how can so few *localised* trafficking cases be known by the authorities in the wake of a huge and historic disaster like Typhoon Haiyan? How

does this contribute to existing knowledge on the topic, presented in current literature?

One plausible explanation for the low number of cases is the well-known phenomenon that trafficking can be clandestine and is under-reported, representing just the tip of the iceberg. As previously stated, efforts to collate accurate data are "pure guesswork" because most trafficking takes place undetected, and those impacted do not come forward because of shame or fear (Samarasinghe, 2008:122). Others do not choose to identify as victims, and therefore do not report the crime. The Head of the Women and Children's Centre in Tacloban City told me: "I cannot say how many [trafficking cases there have been] because many wanted to go to other places because of the chaos, because of disintegration. There were only food commodities given. Many don't have their houses. No jobs, no livelihood. You will only have food that comes from the government and some from NGOs." There may also be a lag time between the offence occurring, and the authorities hearing about it from the person involved. Indeed, it can take several years between a crime being committed and help being sought by victims, according to the regional Inter Agency Council Against Trafficking in Tacloban City. Nonetheless, this set of interviews was conducted in June 2017, some three-and-a-half years after the typhoon.

Supporting the point about under-reporting of trafficking crimes, it is notable that none of the three post-disaster trafficking cases I uncovered ever made it to trial, and thus were not reported in the public domain. This adds weight to Shelley's observation that cases are rarely pursued, even if the opportunity to prosecute arises (2010:135). This explanation was provided during my interview with Roberto Golong, City Prosecutor for Tacloban City and Chair of Regional Task Force on Human Trafficking:

> I know for a fact there were so many incidents of trafficking reported to Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), although these did not mature into actual cases filed with us. Perhaps the victim just gets lost, or cannot be identified, or the victim can no longer be found. Or the victim doesn't pursue the case. They fail to file the case with us.

The Literature Review also referenced ineffective policing and failures in judicial follow-up, with Guth stating that trafficking cases in the Philippines are marred by

corruption coupled with effectual policing which allows traffickers to re-offend with apparent impunity (2010:148).

In terms of a baseline of trafficking cases in Tacloban, Golong told me that that, before Haiyan, "typically one – sometimes no – cases were filed each month". As the cases above span the seven months after the disaster, there certainly cannot be claims of a dramatic increase. This is recognising, however, the overall futility of pursuing statistics on trafficking because of under-reporting due to shame or stigma, lack of consistent definitions, and a failure to investigate such crimes (Samarasinghe, 2008:122; IOM, 2015:6; Nykaza, 2009:319). However, these three cases – while it is difficult to lean on such a small sample – do positively point to a link between disaster and human trafficking. While neither the victims nor the perpetrators of the crimes in these cases could be traced, with the 'empirical evidence' resting on testimony of experts involved in Typhoon Haiyan's aftermath, this does nonetheless stand the test as new empirical research lending weight to the disaster-trafficking theory.

Even recognising under-reporting as a significant issue which will seriously reduce the number of trafficking cases detected in any scenario, it is still arguably surprising that just three valid trafficking cases were formally detected in such a historic disaster which affected up to 16 million people, displaced four million (IDMC, 2014:2), and claimed 6,300 lives with more than 1,000 missing (NDRRMC, 2013:4). The themes which emerged during this series of interviews, which could help to explain the surprising lack of trafficking cases, will now be presented.

**Theme 1: Community leaders' hyper-vigilance**

Most interviewees in Tacloban City stated strongly that they were aware of the concept of post-disaster trafficking and were on 'high alert' – thus evidently preventing the phenomenon from occurring in the first place. Remedios L. Petilla, Mayor of Palo, an urban area devastated by the typhoon just south of Tacloban City, told me that she ordered all of her staff to be on the look-out for suspected traffickers, and that she had personally driven away another group of suspected 'fake nuns' from her district (a different set of 'nuns' from the aforementioned group in Tacloban City), who were supposedly attempting to recruit children with the offer of school places.

This local awareness contrasts with assertions in current literature that disaster-trafficking claims are predominantly cited in western media and these beliefs about disaster-trafficking may not be held by experts or in those in the area affected (for example Montgomery 2011:405; Goździak and Walter 2014:59). As stated in the introduction, there does, however, appear to be a strong disconnect between individuals being aware of this link – and their ability to rationally back up this assertion with evidence. During interviews, the first question I broached was always whether the respondent knew about the disaster-trafficking phenomenon. Without exception, all nodded vigorously and stated that they did, particularly following Typhoon Haiyan. However, when prompted, they were unable to rationalise this or produce evidence – save for the four trafficking cases cited earlier. A local ABS-CBN news correspondent also appeared to be thwarted in her attempt to cover actual stories of trafficking, telling me:

> We tried to do stories on trafficking [after Haiyan]. But we ran the story only with a government official, without any actual case studies. We heard that trafficking had taken place in Magalanes and Anobong [two areas of Tacloban City]. We even spoke to a social worker who mentioned a victim – but they could not make contact.

A representative from the Inter Agency Council Against Trafficking in Tacloban City, agreed immediately that there was a strong link between Typhoon Haiyan and human trafficking, which her agency had focused on. However, when I asked for evidence on this assertion, she explained:

> If we're looking into the statistics, especially after Yolanda [Haiyan], we cannot say that there is an increase of cases on trafficking because our cases served are not merely because of Typhoon Yolanda, but because of other circumstances that made them fall prey to this social ill. But, outside Tacloban, especially in Manila, or at the National Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking, they are claiming – and other NGOs are saying – that there was an increase in human trafficking cases in Eastern Visayas, particularly because of the onslaught of Typhoon Yolanda.

While there is widespread awareness of disaster-trafficking among government officials, community leaders and NGOs, an official from the Woman and Children Shelter of Tacloban City, said there was little awareness among the general community:

> They are not very much aware. The government doesn't yet have enough funds, enough people, enough employees that would do the information dissemination on this. I wouldn't say that the government didn't do something… to inform them of this law. But, because of the big areas in Tacloban city, we have not saturated all barangays [districts or parishes] to give them the information.

The Inter Agency Council Against Trafficking in Tacloban City representative also spoke of huge advocacy efforts:

> We are conducting orientation to different community structures; to women, children in school, to local stakeholders – to local government agency offices, to different intermediaries like possible partners – civil society organisations. Also we are capacitating them, providing training on detection, action planning, so that these efforts are integrated to their local plans to lobby for funding support for them to have localised intervention, programmes and services to these concerns.

The overall picture, therefore, is of community leaders, officials, NGOs and law enforcement who are highly aware, in a theoretical sense, of the risk of post-disaster trafficking. They are hyper-vigilant and on their guard against suspected traffickers.

**Theme 2: Support in the 'central disaster zone' meeting basic needs**

A second theme that emerged during interviews with the aforementioned officials is that, despite the historic nature of this huge disaster, basic needs were met in terms of temporary shelter, food and water. Explained in the most basic way, this means that disaster-affected individuals, who were approached by traffickers trying to recruit in the immediate aftermath of the typhoon, would not need to take such risks and 'go with the trafficker' because they were able to survive with the resources they had at that moment. In other words, economic desperation – or desperation for food, water, shelter and basic services, at its most extreme – was not as pronounced, because these were being provided by the Government of the Philippines, bolstered by the huge international aid effort. It has already been theorised in the literature that a lack of aid can significantly increase trafficking risks in rural areas outside the main disaster zone (Gurung et al, 2018:305) – thus, conversely, one could assume that more aid would lessen the prevalence of trafficking. This is linked to the widely-cited trafficking driver of economic desperation (Aronowitz, 2009a:23; Mahdavi, 2011:216;

UNODC 2020:9) that spurs individuals to seek jobs and take employment risks whatever the costs, to meet their basic needs. The extent of aid pouring into the central disaster zone was set out in Chapter 2, noting, for example, that five million food packs had been distributed by the end of December (Bowen 2015:2) with basic supplies, and government and NGO-run cash-for-work programmes resulting in US$34 million distributed to 1.3 million people (Hanley et al, 2014:54).

At the same time, it should of course be acknowledged that this aid did not meet everyone's needs and was, in many cases, slow to arrive (Francisco, 2013a) with one NGO noting that despite the "influx of humanitarian assistance" many were struggling to survive including women who, "left widowed with children to feed, sold their bodies in exchange for cash and even relief goods" (IBON Foundation, 2015:11). To further balance the discussion, it is also necessary to highlight that abuse by aid workers themselves is recognised as a risk, along with other concerns about the international aid effort. One commentator observes: "Many internationals parachuting in were ignorant of the local context and specificities. The Philippine government and its neighbours in Asia and the Pacific, however, had seen enough. After the Sulawesi tsunami in Indonesia hit in 2018, the government effectively said to the internationals banging at the door, thanks but no thanks" (Alexander, 2020).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored what is known about trafficking within or from the 'central disaster zone', Tacloban City, where most of the deaths and devastation occurred following Typhoon Haiyan. A clear tension is presented between the grand claims about post-disaster trafficking in this conurbation which hit the international headlines – and the reality of known cases on the ground. At the time, media reports and NGO press releases claimed women and children were particularly at risk. Yet, several years on, this research has clarified that just two 'trafficking investigations' are referred to in subsequent government and NGO reports, without any specific details being cited about these cases. Piecing together information from extensive interviews I conducted in Tacloban City with authorities and NGOs, who were likely to have known about trafficking, it is possible to identify just four trafficking investigations.

One was immediately discounted, and none of the remaining three resulted in prosecution.

The chapter discussed the significance of these findings, seeking to justify why so few trafficking cases were reported. Alongside under-reporting from individuals due to shame, stigma or fear of retribution, and ineffective policing and corruption meaning that cases failed to mature to prosecution, two new scenarios came to the fore. These are hyper-vigilance from community leaders who drove away suspected traffickers before any offence took place; and large amounts of aid pouring into the disaster zone, arguably reducing the need for individuals to migrate and seek risky employment elsewhere which may carry significant trafficking risks.

The fieldwork thus begins to fill an acknowledged void of empirical evidence in current literature related to the link between disaster and trafficking. Second, it challenges assumptions or implications that traffickers may exploit people in a central disaster zone in the immediate aftermath of such events.

The features of these very limited number of cases do therefore endorse much of the current theory in the literature and may negate at least some of the concerns that "the current discourse on human trafficking is driven by mythology rather than empirical research" (Zhang, 2009:178). However, because the cases did not make it to trial, the evidence has certainly not been tested rigorously enough to say with certainty that trafficking crimes had been committed in these three instances. Finally, while the majority of residents stayed in the city and did not face a significantly elevated trafficking risk, others did leave on evacuation flights, or made their own way on ferries to neighbouring cities of Cebu or Manila. As Chapter 5 will now explore, it is clear that many of these individuals faced a significantly heightened risk of human trafficking in their new destination.

# Chapter 5

## Trafficking displaced:
## Heightened risks in the wider disaster zone

The preceding fieldwork chapter argued that the risk of human trafficking did not significantly increase in the 'central disaster zone' of Tacloban City in the immediate aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. This was due to widespread fears about the disaster-trafficking phenomenon prompting hyper-vigilance among local officials, and significant international aid and attention focused on this limited geographical area. However, bearing in mind the numerous theoretical assertions about post-disaster trafficking in the literature (eg: Atzet, 2010:510; Gyawali, Keeling and Kallestrup, 2016:1; Shelley, 2010:94), along with the previously-cited widespread claims in media and NGO reports, this prompts the question: If the risk of post-disaster trafficking did not increase significantly in the central disaster zone, *where* did it increase?

This chapter now 'widens the net' to consider heightened post-calamity trafficking risks farther away from the disaster's epicentre (see map, Figure 3). Here, the study must again sub-divide geographically into two distinct areas of the wider disaster zone: first, the urban centres of Manila and Cebu, the Philippines' largest and second-largest cities with populations of 13.5 million and almost one million respectively; and, second, rural outlying areas which received much less aid and assistance such as the southern part of Leyte Island, Samar Island, and Cebu Island which, again, can all be located on the study map in Figure 3. The death toll in these latter areas, such as Cebu Island, was minimal with 92 per cent of Haiyan's overall fatalities occurring on Leyte Island, mainly Tacloban City (NDRRMC, 2013:4). In terms of this study, these two areas – urban, and rural – are examined in relation to two distinct trafficking risks.

In cities, the risk is one of individuals migrating or being economically displaced from the worst-affected central disaster zone. A typical scenario described to me during interviews with the aforementioned government, law enforcement and NGO officials, and echoed by existing concerns in the literature, is that those who migrate to cities

without savings, education or advanced skills "can become easy targets for exploitation" (IOM, 2016:4). This creates a 'perfect storm' of risk factors, primarily economic desperation (Aronowitz, 2009a:23; Mahdavi, 2011:216). In the case of Haiyan, the IOM reported that almost half of those leaving Leyte Island had no means of financial support (2013b). Furthermore, a lack of identity documents led individuals to seek risky informal 'off the books' employment (UNODC, 2013). In fact, many essential documents were washed away or destroyed during Haiyan (OHCHR 2014:43) which dramatically increased these risks. These assertions will be tested during the chapter through field interviews.

For the outlying rural areas, the risk is one of populations staying where they are but becoming "more susceptible [to trafficking] as government relief may take longer to reach them" (Gurung et al, 2018:305), with the oft-noted trafficking driver of economic desperation (UNODC, 2020:9; Aronowitz, 2009a:23) once again coming into play. In reality, of course, individuals from the rural outlying areas may choose to migrate to the cities as well, along with those from the worst-affected central disaster zone.

Due to finite resources and time to carry out this field study, the research focuses predominantly on the cities, followed by a shorter section on the rural outlying areas. Finally, while this PhD study focuses on domestic rather than international trafficking, a short section on Overseas Filipino Workers is included towards the end of this chapter. The topic was raised by many of those interviewed, and helps to inform the wider picture of post-disaster trafficking, particularly as many of the same risk factors are at play.

**Fieldwork approach**

As set out in the Methodology Chapter, information on trafficking risks in the outer zone was sought through semi-structured interviews with government and law enforcement officials, NGOs, and academics in Cebu and Manila. These interviews were conducted with 11 individuals comprising two social workers with responsibility for anti-trafficking; the manager of a trafficking shelter with two sites in Cebu City, and a third site in a more rural area of Cebu Island; three NGO workers; four academics; and Cebu City's Chief Prosecutor, who also serves as the regional anti-trafficking co-

ordinator. It was not possible, with the time and resources available for this study, to track down and hear from trafficking survivors who were referred to by interviewees. Nonetheless, this series of interviews attempts to garner information from those on the front line of the disaster's aftermath who would have been the most likely to know about trafficking cases, mirroring the fieldwork methodology in Chapter 4 for the central disaster zone. However, unlike the previous chapter, this cannot claim to be an exhaustive list of officials dealing with trafficking cases because of the huge size of cities, and a much larger overall geographic area. Furthermore, as explained in Chapter 3 (Methodology), government officials were much harder to reach, with appointments and 'letters of recommendation' being required in advance of meetings and meeting requests frequently being declined or unanswered. Generally, interviewees were also less forthcoming due to the formality of busy government departments in major cities. As also stated in Chapter 3, fellow local academics with an interest in the research topic, and good local contacts, were invaluable in navigating bureaucracy and gaining access which would not otherwise have been possible.

## Background: Scale of displacement from the central disaster zone into the outer zone

There were two distinct ways to leave the central disaster zone of Tacloban City and its immediate environs. The first was evacuation flights laid on by the military; the second was regular migration on ferries, and domestic flights when they resumed from the damaged airport. In total, an estimated 4.37 million people – representing 30 per cent of the population affected by Haiyan – was displaced following the typhoon (Government of the Philippines, DSWD et al. 2014:21). Numbers peaked around three weeks after the disaster, dropping back to normal migration levels just over a week after that (ibid:17). Many people took evacuation flights in the typhoon's immediate aftermath, with 17,000 using free military evacuation flights to Manila from 15-22 November (ibid:21). These flights stopped on 27 November, two weeks after the disaster. Formal evacuation routes were created with temporary shelter, food and psychosocial and medical assistance offered at the reception centre in Villamor Airbase, Manila. Centres were also established in Cebu to support those crossing by ferry from Ormoc, on the western side of Leyte Island. Around 5,000 people per day

were taking this route, the majority from Tacloban, with most ending up in 'dispersed placement settings' outside evacuation centres (Government of the Philippines, DSWD et al. 2014:21). As I saw on previous visits with an NGO, the reality was that many were sprawling 'tent cities'.

In Cebu, a large island with a population of 4.4 million including Cebu City, there was widespread destruction with more than 110,000 damaged houses (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, 2013:4). However, in contrast to the central disaster zone of Tacloban, just 74 deaths were recorded (ibid:4) representing under one per cent of the total fatalities. Cebu is already claimed to be a 'trafficking hotspot' (Guth, 2010:151; Field interview with Ariane, Good Shepherd, July 2018) and a source and destination for trafficking.

**The evidence**

Contrasting with the findings from the central disaster zone, piecing together information gleaned from interviewees in the outer zone yields numerous cases of post-Haiyan trafficking – specifically, 25 people trafficked during seven incidents. All of these cases met the definition of trafficking according to the Palermo Protocol, and all are said to be driven by the circumstances surrounding Typhoon Haiyan. Just one of these seven cases, involving four children and a Canadian national as the alleged perpetrator, appears to have been reported publicly. Details on some of the cases gleaned from interviewees are scant and, as cited throughout this study, solid statistics on human trafficking are impossible to obtain (Samarasinghe, 2008:122). Furthermore, there is no centralised database for human trafficking cases in the Philippines, with different agencies – which do not necessarily connect with one another – recording cases separately. Nonetheless, through this series of interviews, it is possible to build a picture of post-Haiyan trafficking in the 'wider disaster zone' and determine whether there could claim to be a heightened risk following the disaster. These cases will now be presented, followed by a discussion on how they help to inform existing knowledge surrounding post-disaster trafficking.

**Case 1 – Manila. Eight children in a factory:** The anti-trafficking NGO, the Visayan Forum Foundation, says it supported 14 individuals who were trafficked as a result of

Typhoon Haiyan, including eight children who came to Villamore Airbase on an evacuation flight. They were recruited to work in a factory, but were not paid and their freedoms were curtailed – thus meeting the definition of human trafficking. Further details and documentation of this case were requested but not subsequently provided.

**Case 2 – Manila. Group of children from Bantayan forced into labour:** The Visayan Forum also dealt with a second post-Haiyan trafficking incident involving children from Bantayan Island, north of Cebu Island, which was badly hit by the typhoon. This was a case of forced labour involving a group of four boys and two girls who had arrived at the North Harbor in Manila. Again, details of the case were scant but were said to have involved leaving an area devastated by Typhoon Haiyan and a situation of economic desperation.

**Case 3 – Cebu City. Domestic helper from Leyte Island:** In a third recorded case of post-Haiyan trafficking, a 17-year-old girl from Leyte Island – which was severely affected by the typhoon – migrated to the Talisay, Cebu, in search of childminding work. However, according to information given to me by the anti-trafficking NGO Lihok Pilipina, she was held in a house by her employers against her will. Tess Fernandez, head of Lihok Pilipina, explains:

> She couldn't leave because it was a gated house, so she had no choice but to stay. Her parents thought that, since the family had been victims of Typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan), they couldn't send her to school anymore. She lost her relatives. Her parents moved to Cebu, but she stayed behind with her grandparents. Then she heard there was somebody looking for a babysitter. They said they were going to pay her well. In fact, she was brought to Cebu by the people who offered her the work and she was left there with three kids. She wasn't paid; she was cut off from civilisation. (Field interview, July 2018)

The case did not result in a prosecution though, according to Lihok Pilipina, they eventually let the girl leave the house and paid her wages when the police intervened.

**Case 4 – Panay Island. Another domestic helper from Leyte Island:** This case involved a 49-year-old woman whose home was flattened in the city of Ormoc, on the opposite side of Leyte Island to Tacloban City. She was hired as a domestic helper

with two other women, before an 'opportunity' arose. In a written case study, the aid agency World Vision quotes the woman as saying: "After one month, my boss' sister asked me and the other women to work in Iloilo for 3,000 pesos for just one month of work. My husband was against it, but it was only a month and we really needed the money." However, she explained: "We were trapped there for seven months with no pay. We were beaten badly, and she [the employer] threatened to kill us if we tried to escape." According to the NGO's account, she and the other two women were eventually rescued by village leaders when they discovered what had happened.

**Case 5 – Cebu City. Prostitution:** This case, as referenced by the Good Shepherd trafficking shelter in Cebu, involves a woman from Tacloban who came to Cebu to stay with her friend in search of work following Typhoon Haiyan. Her friend invited her on the premise of working as a nanny, but she was subsequently coerced and deceived into working in prostitution – thus meeting the definition of human trafficking. No further details were known by the interviewee.

**Case 6 – Cebu Island. Child abuse:** A Canadian national named Levis Talbot was charged under trafficking legislation after four girls, aged nine to 11 years old, were found by police in the room of his hotel in Cebu Island. At the time of research, this was an ongoing investigation. Prosecutor Gubalane, the City Prosecutor for Cebu, told me how the case was connected the poverty following Typhoon Haiyan:

> He travelled around that area, in northern Cebu, making friends with those victims of the disaster, giving them money to repair their houses, and giving food. That's one way Mr Talbot made friends with the families. We rescued the children in a small motel in Bogo City. We apprehended the Canadian national.

This is the only post-Haiyan case to have been reported publicly in the media, apart from the investigation in Tacloban mentioned earlier which was subsequently found to be invalid.

**Case 7 – Samar Island. Child labour involving five minors in bakery:** This incident three months after the typhoon in February 2014, recalled by a former Plan International lead on human trafficking following Haiyan, involved 27 students, boys and girls, recruited from a school in eastern Samar in the severely-affected districts of

Veloso and Legaspy. These areas sustained deaths from Haiyan and there was little to no employment in the area. They took up work in a bakery. After two months, one child returned and spoke with the interviewee about significant abuses, along with verbal and sexual harassment and withheld wages. They ate once a day and were sleeping in the bakery. In April 2014, the owner of the bakery was arrested but a prosecution was not pursued, with some of the children moving on to Manila.

**Discussion**

How are the cases above linked to Typhoon Haiyan, and how do they relate to the theory of elevated trafficking risks in the wider disaster zone? To summarise, the first two cases involved minors leaving the central zone. The first of these was on an evacuation flight directly after the typhoon. The second was 'regular migration' on a ship. Both sets of children arrived in Manila after leaving an affected area, and both faced trafficking through forced labour. It is evident that the disaster prompted these individuals to leave their home district, and it is apparent that the trafficking took place as a result of vulnerability faced by moving out of their respective communities.

Cases three and four also involve exploitation through forced labour, in this case relating to domestic helpers. This type of work, according to Shelley, can lead to victims being trapped in domestic servitude as the work is taking place behind closed doors (2010:297). In the first case, it is stated that the employers – who later emerged as traffickers – transported the 17-year-old girl, who was staying with her grandparents in a typhoon-affected area, from the home to her new place of work. The second case, involving a 49-year-old woman, follows a similar pattern.

The fifth incident involved a case of deception which resulted in prostitution – a scenario repeated many times over after other disasters, as set out in the field research with formerly-trafficked people in Chapter 6. The catalyst, in this case, was leaving the area affected by Typhoon Haiyan in search of work.

Case six involved child abuse by a foreign national, the circumstances of which support the assertion in literature that "recruitment [of trafficking victims] is easiest

during economic crises, natural disasters, and conflicts when there is a ready supply of potential victims." (Shelley 2010:94)

The seventh and final case also involved forced labour of children – though, unlike the first two cases, does not involve migration but – as in Case 6, albeit with very different circumstances – recruitment from a rural area affected by the typhoon.

As summarised so far in this chapter, just one case of post-Haiyan trafficking in the 'wider disaster zone' was publicly reported. This involved a Canadian national who was arrested for abusing three children. There is no record online of this case progressing to trial.

As in the previous chapter, it is surprising that with a disaster the scale of Haiyan – with more than four million people displaced, and over 6,000 reported deaths – more trafficking cases did not come to the fore. Nonetheless, it is clear that many more cases occurred in the wider disaster zone than the central disaster zone.

So what do these known cases tell us about an elevated trafficking-risk in the outer disaster zone, and – acknowledging an incredibly slim existing volume of research on post-disaster trafficking – how can they, alongside the rest of the research in this PhD paper, add depth or colour to the existing literature? First, it is apparent that human trafficking was more widely reported in the outer disaster zone than the central zone, with more than double the number of cases and many more individuals said to have been trafficked. However, it is difficult to add much weight to this point, having already stated statistics on trafficking are almost useless because of the crime's clandestine nature, under-reporting, muddled definitions, lack of effective policing and widespread corruption (UNODC, 2019; Tigno, 2012:32, Nykaza, 2009:319; Feingold 2010:10; Samarasinghe, 2008:122). In other words, many more trafficking cases would have been occurring in both the inner and outer disaster zones without the authorities' knowledge, as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Tacloban told me they suspected:

> There is a number of people from Region VIII (the area affected by Haiyan) who went to Pampanga [north of Manila] and Cebu, and they were lured. They thought they were working as a house helper but, unfortunately, many of these

choose to work in bars or in any establishment where there are indicators in trafficking in persons. (Field interview, June 2017)

Nonetheless, throughout this series of interviews in Cebu City and Manila, interviewees did touch upon common themes which help to inform the disaster-trafficking link, pointing to a significantly elevated trafficking risk in the outer disaster zone. They serve as useful additions to the wider volume of knowledge. These themes are set out below, and are further developed and tested in the following chapter by interviews with individuals who experienced human trafficking themselves.

While basic needs were provided to much of the population in the central post-disaster environment, as stated in the previous chapter, many decided to migrate in search of work. An interviewee from Tacloban's Social Welfare Office told me:

> Most commonly the jobs that were needed after Yolanda [Haiyan] were construction and carpentry, but not all people have the skills. So they go to other places in search of work. There were many who left Tacloban looking for a job to Cebu City, to Manila. Many wanted to go to other places because of the chaos, because of disintegration. There were only food commodities given. Many don't have houses. No jobs, no livelihood. You will only have food that comes from the government and some from NGOs. (Field interview, June 2017)

A report on displacement following Haiyan elaborates further:

> Initial and prolonged displacement was caused by the destruction or severe damage to homes that left millions homeless. More than 1.1 million houses were damaged, with about half of them destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Other reasons for leaving their homes included their lack of access to basic services and emotional distress according to those interviewed at transport hubs in Ormoc and Tacloban during the first weeks following the onset of the disaster (Government of the Philippines, DSWD et al. 2014:12).

**Tightly controlled evacuation routes?**

To what extent were economically vulnerable evacuees, in desperate need of employment, protected by the authorities both en route and afterwards? There were claims among officials in Tacloban (field interviews, June 2017) that there were attempts in the disaster's aftermath by 'unscrupulous employers' to solicit people for work in Lapu-Lapu City, a sprawling conurbation surrounding Cebu airport, which

was a stop-off point for evacuees on the way to Manila. However, other interviewees for this study claimed that the evacuation process was highly controlled with evacuees being driven by bus directly from flights on arrival in Cebu or Manila and held in secure areas, only allowed to leave once they could prove they had relatives to stay with or somewhere safe to go. A Social Welfare Officer from the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWD) in Lapu-Lapu City, the area which covers Cebu's airport, told me:

> You cannot just leave, all by your own. Even if they say they have relatives, we check first before we let them go. And those who eventually have trips the following day for Manila, we ferry them. We bring them to Mactan Airbase so they are not on their own, they are being brought by buses. We are very strict because there were instructions from the regional office to watch out, because these victims are easy prey for vultures who prey on the human trafficking [sic]. (Field interview, July 2018)

As one academic in Cebu told me: "The extent of monitoring and control [on evacuation routes] is quite scary, actually." The literature also points to disaster responses generally being "high centralised" with the military often mobilised (Bowersox, 2018:2). Nevertheless, claims abound that evacuees were free to leave other evacuation centres, including a social worker from Mandaue, a borough which neighbours the airport.

It is worth mentioning at this point that the trafficking literature (Guth, 2010:151), government and NGOs (eg: Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2019; US State Department, 2014; Reuters, 2018), and interviewees throughout this study, frequently refer to "trafficking hotspots". The author Sverre Molland cautions against using this term, warning that the logistics of trafficking are far more geographically fragmented (2012:66). Indeed, this warning was echoed by a prominent interviewee for this study, Prosecutor Fernando Gubalane, Chair of the Inter-Agency Council Against Human Trafficking and Public Prosecutor for Cebu City, who – during interview – was clearly irritated by widespread use of the term:

> We can't say 'hotspot'. Is there a scale, or a range, a universally accepted standard where this place is to be called 'hotspot' after 50 cases or 100 cases? The NGOs and partners say that human trafficking in Cebu is 'alarming'. And I tell them – if we say 'alarming', we should have a database, and a comparison to show that it's much higher in Cebu than other places. If

we look at particular data, or actual case numbers, then we might not really use that word 'alarming' or 'very prevalent' in Cebu. Because you cannot just make a declaration without data. (Field interview, July 2018)

This echoes the caution from Samarasinghe, whose point has necessarily been reiterated several times in this study, that any attempt at collating trafficking data is 'pure guesswork' because of its clandestine nature, and many other factors such as muddled definitions and under-reporting (2008:122).

## Economic desperation and broken families

The literature on human trafficking repeatedly cites economic desperation as a risk factor (eg: Aronowitz, 2009a:23). This was borne out by field interviews for this study, adding colour to these claims. Prosecutor Fernando Gubalane, Chair of the Inter-Agency Council Against Human Traffic and Public Prosecutor for Cebu City, puts it this way: "Anything that would affect a person's life economically – that person, the victim of disaster, may resort to anything or everything just to answer his or her needs." However, Ariane, case worker at the Good Shepherd trafficking shelter in Cebu City, believes poverty alone does not always explain the reasons behind trafficking. She believes 'distorted values' form part of the equation:

> Poverty is really, really evident. But for me, I've been working here for 11 years – and I also came from poverty. I would say that most of the cases are really caused by dysfunctional families. Broken families, where [for example] the father is a drug addict. I think it's also one of the reasons, besides from poverty, that we have distorted values. Because of poverty, and because culturally we are being asked to help, to give back to our parents, that leads most of the women to prostitution. To trafficking. That's most of the cases. (Field interview, July 2018)

Tess Fernandez, head of the anti-trafficking NGO Lihok Pilipina, told me of an inter-generational cycle, particularly in rural areas:

> Parents are willing to give them [their children]. We have been working with Plan International, and we were their partner in Samar. And I'm not surprised if they [parents] will push their children [into work]. There are people who do it out of desperation. There are others who just don't care. But, if you look at those people there, they also had the same experience as children, and nobody cared. So they don't have experience of caring. (Field interview, July 2018)

This can also be down to a lack of knowledge about trafficking risks, according to retired social worker and academic Marietta Latonio:

> Community isolation is a big factor. I have one case where most of these girls who are susceptible to trafficking are living in far-flung barangays [districts], far-flung areas where they do not have information about human trafficking. (Field interview, July 2018)

Jones et al, who have examined trafficking through the lens of globalisation, corroborate this assertion, suggesting that individuals often make choices in a vacuum of knowledge:

> Victims of trafficking, who are usually poor and often uneducated, are not in a position to discern beforehand that the promises of economic opportunity are, in fact, lies or gross exaggerations. Ignorance and naivety, along with dire economic circumstances, make these people vulnerable to traffickers. Indeed, human trafficking represents an acute intersection of vulnerability and exploitation (2007:113).

All of the scenarios above help to inform the case studies gleaned from these interviews in the outer disaster zone, including motivation to leave the central disaster zone in search of work, rural attitudes which may exacerbate trafficking risks, and the assertion that migration or displacement is clearly a risk factor for human trafficking (Mahmoud and Trebesch, 2010:8).

**Presenting the "slow burn" disaster-trafficking effect**

As will be borne out by the field research with formerly-trafficked people in the next chapter, some NGOs and officials emphasised that while disaster can be a catalyst for human trafficking, the trafficking event itself often does not take place until years later. In other words, a moment of calamity can trigger a chain of events which ultimately lead to an individual's exploitation. A case worker at the Good Shepherd trafficking shelter in Cebu City, where I conducted the trafficking interviews, told me during preparatory meetings:

> It [trafficking] is not a sudden thing. They become poor because of their situation. Especially in northern Cebu, they live in a small house. There's a storm. We can see in some cases, because of disasters that leads them to

poverty… When they grow up, it pushes them to work. Because of the poverty, their vulnerability – they are easy to lure. At some point, somebody invited them. Especially in our Mindanao cases, there are really people from Mindanao who work here in bars who kind of recruited women, because of poverty. They have no choice. Because, when they came here to Cebu, they didn't know anything. They don't know anyone, even a place. That's why they are forced to do the work. (Field interview, July 2018)

Often, as borne out by the subsequent trafficking interviews, disaster can spur domestic violence which, in turn, results in a household member taking employment risks to escape the situation. Tess Fernandez, Head of anti-trafficking NGO Lihok Pilipina, explained how this situation can unfold:

Some kind of disturbance such as disaster usually increases violence. Because, for example, if the father is helpless, and sometimes he cannot accept the helplessness, he just has to transfer the anger and all that insecurity to those he can bully.

This notion that the trafficking risk generated by disasters is not immediate chimes in with Brülisauer's theoretical assertion that post-disaster trafficking may take place months or years after the disaster event itself (2015:2). Chambers' theory about the 'ratchet effect', where families face increasing vulnerability with each disaster and are less able to cope with subsequent shocks (1983:112), also comes into play. Disrupted education was also cited by interviewees as a 'slow burn' risk factor for human trafficking, which can be a vicious inter-generational cycle as retired social worker and academic Marietta Latonio explains: "Low education of parents is a factor. I have one [trafficking] case where the parents themselves do not want [the girl] to go to school, because they, themselves, had no education. So they said, what is the importance of education to life? Therefore she was not educated." As noted in previous chapters, the disruption to education following Haiyan was enormous with 6,000 classrooms destroyed and many more damaged, with an impact on 1.3 million students (NEDA, 2013:11).

**Cultural coercion and agency**

The term 'cultural coercion' is one I have chosen to describe cultural pressure facing many individuals to provide financial assistance to their families. This emerged as a strong theme during this set of interviews, and was cited by many respondents as a catalyst for individuals taking employment risks which can subsequently morph into human trafficking during my interviews with formerly-trafficked people. A case worker at the Good Shepherd trafficking shelter, said: "Because of poverty, and because culturally we are being asked to help, to give back to our parents, that leads most of the women to be trafficked. That's most of the cases." Cecilia Flores-Oebanda, from the Visayan Forum NGO, elaborates on this culture:

> During the abuses, exploitation, because Filipinos, we have this culture of shame – we don't want our family to have to tell the community that we failed. And then, of course, if you have someone who works abroad – the family [back home] tends to show off. It's a status. There's so much expectation, actually, that picking the money off the tree and just sending it. A lot of victims don't even want to tell their stories, even to inform their families of their ordeal there. It's shame. And there's another thing about being fatalistic, accepting that [the abuse], it's part of their fate. (Field interview, July 2018)

A question inevitably emerges about why and how these women, despite suffering abuse and neglect from their parents or family members, still hold this strong desire to support them, financially and in other ways, 'whatever the cost'. Is this sense of sacrifice determined by gender – in other words, would a son tend to feel this same sense of obligation as a daughter? Do children feel the need to provide for their parents and 'pay them back' for their upbringing, regardless of how they were treated? A good deal of literature can be found on the pressures Overseas Filipino Workers face when providing for their families back home. While my research relates to a domestic rather than an international scenario, there are clear parallels to be drawn. To start exploring this phenomenon, it is worth noting commentators' observations about the value that families place on children, including 'economic value':

> Children are highly valued for many reasons including their economic contribution to housework and child care, financial additions to the family and support during the parents' old age. As early as the age of five, especially in

the rural areas, children take active roles in the families' production and maintenance activities (Medina, 2007: 360).

Indeed, ethnographers in the Philippines describe how "fulfilling one's financial and communication obligations can enhance intimacy and strengthen relationships within the family… highlighting the role of economic provision as an integral part of emotional nurturing" (Madianou and Miller, 2011). It is also pointed out that the Philippines does not have an effective social security system to support those in more senior years, meaning children are relied upon financially and practically. Culturally, children are expected to demonstrate *utang na loob* (a debt of gratitude) not only "for all the sacrifices their parents have made in the process of raising them, but for giving them life itself" (Abejo, 1995:139). The narrative surrounding this cultural pressure is further explained by Filipino researchers:

> Filipino children are likewise expected to obey parental authority and sacrifice individual interests to prioritise familial obligations… Otherwise, the son or daughter will be known as without *hiya* or without *utang na loob* — no honor or gratitude — signifying that one is not a "good" child, much less a decent person (Alampay and Jocson, 2012:164).

There must also be a note of recognition around gender. All of those interviewed in my research in Chapter 6, who had faced human trafficking, were women. Many had been girls at the time they had been trafficked many years earlier. What extra pressure do females face around the need to provide for their families, compared to men? While there appears to be limited Philippines-specific literature on this point, the International Organisation for Migration, in its paper 'Gender, Migration and Remittances', challenges the assumption that 'patterns of sending remittances are gender-neutral'. While this study relates to overseas workers and focuses on multiple countries, the pressures women face in supporting family members are certainly relevant in this situation, with the research noting that, globally, female migrants send around the same amount of money home as their male counterparts. However, it is noted that women tend to send a higher proportion of their income, even though they generally earn less than men (IOM, 2015c:2) – thus indicating an enhanced sacrifice to provide for others. These extra gender-related pressures to provide for one's family should be noted throughout the empirical research in the following chapter.

**A matter of agency**

When reflecting on the theme of cultural coercion, it is clear there is sometimes a fine line between 'choosing' to migrate, and being forced to. Individuals can surely be 'forced' by circumstances, rather than a person, to make choices which elevate their risk of human trafficking. Indeed, as referenced in the Literature Review, this subtlety is referenced in connection with the Palermo Protocol. The UNODC elaborates on the wording:

> The drafting history of the Protocol confirms that "abuse of a position of vulnerability" is to be understood as referring to "any situation in which the person involved has no real and acceptable alternative but to submit to the abuse involved": a circular definition that has not helped to clarify confusion among practitioners. No further guidance is provided and it is unclear what "real and acceptable alternative" actually means or how it is to be applied in practice (UNODC, 2013:3).

Breakdown of family units is already cited in literature as a risk factor for human trafficking, as Shelley observes:

> Family homelessness, familial breakdowns, parental illness, divorce, death of a parent, and abandonment by the father often follow rural to urban migration. Alcohol abuse often becomes more common within families, including violence and sexual exploitation of women and children who often run away. Familial exploitation often becomes a steppingstone to abuse by traffickers (2010:53).

Tess Fernandez, head of the anti-trafficking NGO Lihok Pilipina, explained during interview that many trafficking survivors she knows have used the disaster event as an excuse to escape negative and abusive family situations:

> There is already so much domestic violence in so many places. Disaster gives people a reason to leave that situation. (Field interview, July 2018)

Adding to this, retired social worker and academic Marietta Latonio, who has supported trafficking survivors throughout her decades-long career, explains that 80 per cent of those she met were sexually abused while they were still young, often by their fathers. Indeed, disaster serving as a catalyst to escape abuse within the household is a theme that continually emerges in trafficking survivors' stories in the following chapter, in a scenario described as 'anything is better than this'. Drug use is also repeatedly cited as an exacerbating factor, with only five out of 40 residents at

the Good Shepherd trafficking shelter at the time of my interviews not taking drugs in the run-up to their trafficking experience.

**Wider definitions**

One interviewee urged this study to consider widening the definition of 'poverty', pointing out it is not merely 'financial poverty' that can lead to human trafficking. Tess Fernandez, head of the anti-trafficking NGO Lihok Pilipina, explains:

> Poverty is not only material. Poverty could be hopelessness; it could be emotional; it could be psychological, if you don't even believe in yourself. Poverty is being neglected. And poverty is also spinning [out of control] – you don't know where to go, and you don't know how. So it's not only material, and there are a lot of people living in that kind of situation. And that's much more difficult to manage You don't care about tomorrow – you care about today. Every day. That's the kind of environment, especially in the slum areas. (Field interview, July 2018)

Similarly, I was strongly urged by those I interviewed to consider broadening the definition of 'disaster' when examining the disaster-trafficking link, as social Latonia explains:

> Disaster doesn't mean only calamities. It can also happen in the life stage – like, no employment, or death in the family. This could be a disaster. These are the things that really drive people to be easily victimised. (Field interview, July 2018)

A case worker at the Good Shepherd trafficking shelter elaborated on this notion of a shock causing a chain of events:

> We have some girls, because of the demolition in their area… it's really disaster. Relocation, displacement. They get the order of the plan, then all of the houses [in a slum] are demolished. Then they're living somewhere where they don't know anything at all. Their income, they don't have. So there is no other option – they will go to the bars. (Field interview, July 2018)

Having taken this point on board while preparing to interview formerly-trafficked people, I added a question which invited respondents to consider human-made disasters, as well as those which stem from natural hazards. As will be apparent in the following chapter, a number of respondents did, indeed, cite human-made disasters as a catalyst. In most cases, this was a story of their home being destroyed or severely damaged by fire. It is clear that the impact of human-made disasters –

such as losing homes, livelihoods, increased poverty, and disruption to family life – can be the same as through disasters which stem from natural hazards. In other words, whether a home in a slum area is burnt to the ground by an arsonist acting on behalf of a developer, or it is destroyed by a typhoon, the impact on an individual, and their increased susceptibility to trafficking, can be the same.

**Trafficking of Filipinos abroad**

While this study has focused exclusively on domestic trafficking within the Philippines, before concluding this chapter on the 'wider disaster zone', it would be remiss not to touch upon the extraordinary phenomenon of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) – thus casting the net even further with reference to international trafficking. International trafficking of Filipinos was cited by many respondents and clearly forms a significant part of the puzzle. A short section is therefore included here, analysing information garnered from interviewees and put to test against current literature on the topic.

To set the scene, in 2020, there were an estimated 2.2 million Overseas Filipino Workers (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020a). Those who take the risk of working overseas and send remittances back home are lauded as heroes – *bagong bayani* in the Filipino language Tagalog (Tigno, 2012:26). This discourse includes the notion that people who migrate, particularly women, make the transition from victim to survivor (ibid:26). Remittances accounted for 10 per cent of the country's GDP totalling US$14.4 billion in 2007 (Tigno 2013:96) which does not include an estimated 30 per cent that may not pass through the formal banking system (Tigno, 2012:25).

This doubtless adds to the cultural pressure, or 'cultural coercion', scenario referred to above which can lead individuals to take trafficking risks. Indeed, during interviews for this study, cases of overseas trafficking – in this case due to conflict rather than disaster – came to the fore. For example, the Visayan Forum told me they intercepted 105 people from January to June 2018 who were due to be trafficked abroad. This included 80 minors bound for the Middle East at Manila Ninoy Aquino International Airport. They were displaced and their families wanted them out of the conflict area, in the south of the country, in search of a safer environment. 30

recruitment agencies based in the Philippines were involved, with counterparts in the Middle East. Three have since been suspended (Field interview, July 2018).

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to establish a link between human trafficking overseas and Typhoon Haiyan. Data obtained for this study from the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) shows reports, in the year after Haiyan, of a number of 'distressed Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)' originating from Tacloban City. Such reports suggest the individual overseas has run into troubling circumstances and requires assistance from the Philippine Embassy. Some refer to unpaid salaries. However, it is impossible to determine if any of these cases relate to trafficking and, indeed, whether the individual migrated as a result of the circumstances surrounding Typhoon Haiyan.

**Conclusion**

This chapter set out to test the theory that the risk of human trafficking increases significantly in the wider disaster zone – as opposed to the inner disaster zone, referenced in the previous chapter. It concludes, through interviews with officials, NGOs and academics involved in the typhoon's aftermath, that this theory does hold true, and that individuals faced a higher risk of trafficking when they travelled to cities in search of work, rather than staying put in Tacloban City. From the select number of cases cited, the risk also appears to increase in outlying areas, such as Cebu Island, which experienced severe damage to homes but very few deaths (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, 2013:4).

Just one valid post-Haiyan trafficking case in the wider disaster zone has ever been publicly reported, to the best of my knowledge – the case of a Canadian national allegedly trafficking children on Cebu Island. However, interviews with officials and NGOs for this study have yielded details of 25 trafficked individuals involving seven different cases which, save one, never made it into the public domain. Two involved groups of children being evacuated from the devastated city of Tacloban, in search of work in Manila, who ended up in forced labour. Two further incidents involved domestic workers who were deceived and effectively imprisoned in cases of modern-day slavery. A fifth reported case involved a woman from Tacloban who travelled to

the city of Cebu in search of work, and was deceived and coerced into prostitution. All of these five cases featured the risks associated with leaving the central disaster zone due to economic desperation.

The final two cases involved trafficking in rural outlying areas, which received less attention from NGOs and the authorities, rather than movement to another area. The first, which appears to be the only case publicly recorded, as stated above, involved Canadian national Levis Talbot who stands accused of child abuse, involving coercion of children and their parents due to poverty and vulnerable following the typhoon. This is the only case which leans towards the frequently-cited narrative (IOM, 2014a; UNICEF, 2014; Eimer, 2013) that traffickers take advantage of vulnerabilities in the immediately-affected post-disaster environment. Talbot was arrested and the story was widely reported, but there is no further record of charges, a court case, a conviction, or acquittal.

The final post-Haiyan trafficking case cited by interviewees for this field study also involved children in an outlying area affected by the typhoon, Samar Island to the north of Tacloban, who were recruited to work in a bakery. While child labour, of course, is already illegal, they also experienced significant abuse and withheld wages which met the definition of human trafficking.

As with the previous chapter, it must be acknowledged that, bearing in mind the historic scale of Typhoon Haiyan, very few trafficking cases were recorded overall, even in the wider disaster zone spanning a much larger area. Furthermore, none appear to have resulted in prosecution. However, cases which come to the fore will always be the 'tip of the iceberg' (Samarasinghe, 2008:122), and the limitation of one researcher probing a clandestine subject, with myriad sensitivities, in a large geographic area with officials who are often reluctant to talk about the topic, should be borne in mind when considering the prevalence of human trafficking. Nonetheless, these cases add weight to the assertion that post-disaster trafficking risks do, indeed, increase significantly in the wider disaster zone. This is primarily because migration is involved, either through evacuation flights from the devastated city of Tacloban which dropped off evacuees at Villamor military airbase in Manila, or through regular migration in search of work. Either way, individuals in many of these cases found

themselves in a large conurbation they did not know, with no contacts, often no documentation, and no way of securing bona-fide legal employment. As in the previous chapter, many of the cases involved children.

Furthermore, interviewees' valuable narratives surrounding these cases – and insights generally into post-disaster trafficking risks, away from the specifics of Typhoon Haiyan – add colour and significant subtlety to the wider trafficking literature. Emerging themes include poverty, cultural coercion, and using disaster as a reason to escape family troubles. As cited above, these scenarios play into theories in existing literature – albeit with extra subtleties, such as the assertion that economic desperation can be mixed with 'distorted values' to create a severe trafficking risk for children and young adults. The chapter has also introduced the 'slow burn' trafficking effect where the shock of a disaster can trigger a series of events which unfold and ultimately result in trafficking, often years later. This can even be traced back to disrupted education in childhood. This theme will be explored in much more detail in the following chapter through the in-depth research with formerly-trafficked people in Cebu.

# Chapter 6

## The 'slow burn' disaster-trafficking effect

The preceding fieldwork chapters have critically examined and tested the disaster-trafficking link presented in literature through semi-structured interviews with government, authorities, NGOs and academics directly involved in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. This was divided into two distinct geographical areas, the inner and outer disaster zones, noting that trafficking risks were reduced for individuals affected by the disaster who 'stayed put' in the most affected area, and increased for those migrating in search of work with few resources or contacts, particularly into the major cities. This chapter now turns to those who have experienced trafficking themselves, presenting information obtained through detailed interviews with 33 people from trafficking shelters in and around Cebu City.

Recognising the rare opportunity to hear directly from people who have experienced trafficking, coupled with the modest number of interviewees, limiting the research questions solely to the circumstances surrounding Typhoon Haiyan would have been unnecessarily restrictive, ruling out much valuable content and proving counter-productive. This empirical research therefore 'casts the net wider' to feature all disasters that respondents have experienced. These also include a sub-set of human-origin hazards which respondents articulated as a moment of 'disaster' in their lives such as fire, demolition of homes, and displacement of squatter areas due to development. Indeed, it has been argued that "the line between human-caused and natural disasters is blurring" (Rosa, 2006). The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)'s definition of disaster also encompasses disasters of a human, rather than natural hazard, origin:

> A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts (UNDRR, no date).

This includes fire and demolition which were frequently cited by respondents. The shelter manager explained that many commercial developers want to build on slum

areas, but are unable to displace the population currently living there. They therefore resort to paying for an arson attack to be carried out which displaces families. It appears that many respondents experienced trafficking after being displaced in this situation.

The Philippines "has become an important case study for understanding community resilience and vulnerabilities, as well as the intersection between poverty and hazards" (Daly, 2016:10). Yet, once again, it is worth reiterating the dearth of empirical evidence on the disaster-trafficking link in current literature, as highlighted by Goździak (2014:58) and Mahmoud and Trebesch (2010:6), along with a lack of empirical research on the wider subject of trafficking generally (Okech, 2017: 109). Contributing towards filling this void of knowledge, this chapter now examines how respondents' lived experiences compare and may be applied to, or expand upon, existing theories.

As the dissertation moves on to explore individual and personal testimony, I have tried to avoid labelling those I interviewed as 'victims' or 'survivors'. As stated in the Methodology chapter, despite stories which would seem harrowing to most researchers, none of the respondents presented as 'victims'. Similarly, the term 'trafficking survivor' implies the respondent could have been subjected to a 'life or death situation' which, again, was rarely the case. Each interviewee had a unique story to tell, in a unique way, none of which seemed to fit current descriptors offered in the literature. I have therefore attempted to avoid any labelling, opting instead to describe the situation they faced objectively, in the words of the interviewee. All names are pseudonyms chosen by the respondents themselves.

**Introducing the field interviews**

The interviews were conducted with 33 respondents at three trafficking shelters on Cebu Island in the Central Visayas. This area (see map, Figure 3) is to the west of Leyte Island, the region that was most affected by Typhoon Haiyan, and an area where many of those affected migrated to. The research features a set of questions to ascertain how disaster, ranging from the impact of low-level repetitive environmental hazards to major rapid-onset events such as typhoons or earthquakes,

may have been a direct or indirect catalyst in each respondent's trafficking experience.

The interview questions capture the sequence of events leading up to each individual's trafficking experience with a timeline, based on movement from place to place, with an explanation as to why that move occurred. The respondent was then invited, through a series of open questions, to consider whether environmental events, such as flooding, landslides, monsoons, earthquakes or typhoons, were factors in each move. Other key variables were recorded such as the type of housing, whether it was located in a slum area, available facilities such as clean water and electricity, and family situation such as who they were living with, and any abuse or major events in their life at that time. These build a picture of each individual's resilience to withstand the shock of disasters, and enable common themes to be examined. Each respondent was also asked whether they felt they were forced to move to each new location or did so freely, and whether they were experiencing exploitation or abuse at the time – all of which are key features of trafficking. For those respondents who cited environmental impacts or disaster as a factor in their trafficking experience, a narrative section provided an opportunity to expand on this. Questions were also asked about the nature of each individual's trafficking experience, to determine whether it met the threshold of trafficking as per the Palermo Protocol definition with the key features of recruitment through coercion, deception or abuse of power; and exploitation. The full questions are included in the Appendix, and copies of the completed hand-written interviews are stored securely. Pseudonyms, chosen by the respondents themselves, are used on the interview paperwork and throughout this thesis. All pseudonyms are denoted with an asterisk.

All participants were 18 years old or over and, after analysing their responses, were all confirmed as having experienced trafficking. None of the responses therefore needed to be discounted, due to not experiencing trafficking as defined by the Palermo Protocol, or for any other reason. As there was a total of 33 residents across all three trafficking shelters, this was a manageable number to interview with the available time and resources. There was therefore no need to limit the number or to introduce a sample selection process.

The interviews were conducted in June 2019 with a local lead researcher, who was an experienced social worker and academic, and two research assistants. Managers from the trafficking shelters were also present throughout, though did not join the researchers to sit in on all the interviews. The interviews lasted around 90 minutes each, though a number continued beyond that. This was followed by a group 'validation and debrief session' in which respondents reflected on the interview experience itself and provided further commentary in a group setting. I was invited, and took the opportunity, to be present throughout. Full details of the rigorous ethics procedure followed for this fieldwork study are in Chapter 3 (Methodology).

Each respondent was asked to provide 48 items of quantitative data including ages, locations, type of housing, and category of weather event, plus another 18 items of data for each geographical location. There were also ten narrative questions. To compare the results in a meaningful way, the data were entered into a spreadsheet, allowing useful comparisons and patterns to be identified, informing the analysis below.

Overall, the fact that 42 per cent of individuals in just one shelter cited natural hazard-related shocks as a direct or indirect factor in their trafficking journey is significant. While facilitators took care not to ask leading questions, caution is of course needed to ensure that these aspects of their stories are not over-emphasised. It is worth reiterating, as stated in Chapter 3, that 43 per cent of urban Filipinos live in slums (World Bank, 2018) which are often in ramshackle buildings unable to withstand even modest weather-related shocks. Indeed, following Typhoon Haiyan, many residents simply picked up the debris from their destroyed housing and rebuilt them on the same site (Doyle, 2016). Respondents in my field research were therefore asked about the materials their homes were built with, and whether they had basic amenities such as running water, toilets or electricity. Many had clearly lived in slums with very few or even no basic facilities during periods of their lives, increasing their vulnerability. Many also lived in wooden or bamboo housing, often along a coastline, which is extremely susceptible to weather-related damage.

**Using content gathered from the interviews**

As the research is centred around the risk of human trafficking following disasters, this was the focus of the questions asked – and therefore the responses were centred around this topic too. There was also a good deal of socio-economic information captured, which is presented later in this chapter. Additionally, a number of 'exacerbating factors' for human trafficking emerged such as drug use, and the rise of online forums. In terms of presenting respondents' testimony relating to these points, I have used material from 30 of the 33 respondents throughout this chapter, with multiple sections of testimony from several interviewees. Testimony from three respondents was not used. For two of these individuals, although they had experienced trafficking according to the definition of the Palermo Protocol, there was no connection cited between disaster and the trafficking experience; nor was there any testimony which helped to expand upon the exacerbating factors. The third respondent whose content was not used said her family home had caught fire. However, again, this was not connected to her experience of human trafficking, nor was there other content which helped to shed light on the process. It is also worth observing that, throughout the interview process, some respondents were much more forthcoming than others, resulting in longer passages of useful content to help explain the disaster-trafficking phenomenon and other trafficking risk factors.

**Recognising the researcher's perspective – 'emic' and 'etic'**

Throughout this research, it is important to make a clear distinction between the emic, or insider's perspective, and the etic – my interpretation as a researcher. This is particularly pronounced because I spent a relatively short period of time in the country on field research, with a number of 'short, sharp' field trips last between one and two weeks. I did spend a month in the country following Typhoon Haiyan while working for a UK-based NGO as a media spokesperson back in 2013, though the experience – based in Cebu and staying in a tent in Tacloban City, in the aftermath of the strongest typhoon to have ever made landfall, with bodies still being pulled from the debris – could hardly have provided an insight into normal circumstances of Filipino society. It should also be noted that I spent the majority of my time with middle-class Filipino aid workers who were clearly empowered, well-educated and

well-travelled, as well as international staff – again, hardly giving a glimpse into the country's culture in times of normality. Indeed, applying a 'Western perspective' to the issues of disaster and human trafficking, has already been explored in this dissertation, with warnings that Western fears about trafficking and child abduction are 'projected and magnified' (Montgomery 2011:406). This sentiment is echoed by a journal paper with a title clearly relevant to my research, 'New perspectives on vulnerability using emic and etic approaches', which states:

> Risk consists of assumptions from etic or external evaluation of relative danger while lived experience informs an emic or personal interpretation. Assumptions related to the etic view include normative social values, objective harm and endangerment, and social sanction for intervention. An emic view of vulnerability is based on experiential perception of challenge to personal integrity and the universal and mutual nature of the phenomenon (Spiers, 1999:715).

While this particular paper focuses on the subject of nursing, there are clear lessons here for research on vulnerability of human trafficking. The paper goes on to emphasise the need to properly understand lived experience by the subject facing vulnerability, and how this may differ significantly from the outsider's (etic) perspective:

> The two dimensions presented here as etic risk and emic vulnerability represent polar points. In reality there are less differentiated ranges between these points… Vulnerability is not defined by identification of risk factors. Nor is it defined by adding the normative assets of the individual to the equation. Appreciation of the unique lived experience of vulnerability as experienced by the person is essential to complete the equation (ibid, 720).

A takeaway point from this reflection is to acknowledge that, while the 33 interviewees I heard from relayed their first-hand trafficking experiences, it is *my* interpretation of risk factors which is presented in this paper. In other words, respondents were not specifically asked about, nor did they offer, their own interpretation of risk factors. A simple question could have been included in the research, along the lines of: *Why do you believe you were trafficked/ what do you believe are the factors that led up to your trafficking experience?* This question could be one of the first questions asked, before the 'leading' questions which explore known or suspected risk factors. Ahead of this question, it may also be necessary to

clarify what is meant by 'trafficking', as the various elements will undoubtedly have been experienced in different ways and at different moments by interviewees – and may not necessarily be recognised as 'trafficking'. On reflection, while also gathering the other information about known risk factors, this would have been an extremely valuable – and arguably essential – question to ask, and will certainly be done so in any future research. It would therefore be necessary to spend much more time inquiring about interviewees' perception of risk – rather than gleaning the facts, and interpreting these as risk factors from an outsider researcher's point of view.

**Introducing the research findings – the five themes**

Interviewees' answers introduce many subtleties and indirect disaster-trafficking links which are not currently cited in literature, as well as expanding upon existing theory. Of the respondents interviewed, 42 per cent (14) cited a disaster stemming from a natural hazard as having a link to their trafficking experience. Half of these (21 per cent of overall respondents, totalling 7) experienced a direct link – in other words, a natural hazard such as a typhoon forced them to seek employment due to the ensuing financial hardship, which resulted in human trafficking. 21 per cent (7) referred to an indirect link, such as slow-onset disasters like annual flooding adversely affecting the family finances which, over time, prompted a search for employment which resulted in trafficking. 18 per cent (6) described a human-made disaster such as fire or demolition leading to an experience which constituted trafficking. Finally, 39 per cent (13) of respondents did not cite any natural hazards or human-made disasters as a catalyst for their trafficking experiences. The answers of those who did not cite disaster, nonetheless, still cast new light on the circumstances surrounding trafficking and how it can unfold due to financial desperation, abuse in the home, and vulnerability – all of which can increase in the wake of disaster (Aronowitz, 2009a:23; Shelley, 2010:53).

The discussion in Chapter 2, surrounding whether an 'active decision' to enter sex work constitutes trafficking, should arguably be borne in mind throughout the following narrative and testimonies. The discussion concluded that sex work does, indeed, meet the threshold of human trafficking because it always results in abuse, and trafficking is deemed to have occurred in circumstances where there was no

viable alternative but to take this course of action. In just one illustration of this situation, the respondent Jam* states that she was "forced" – albeit through circumstances, rather than an identifiable individual such as a trafficker – to pursue sex work due to financial desperation. Other respondents describe a very similar situation, even if they do not choose to use the word 'forced'.

Other interviewees' stories offer a less obvious disaster-trafficking link, with a broad narrative of weather-related shocks during childhood which increased poverty over several years, and respondents stating that they felt forced to take up sex work because of abuse in the household. Further inquiries would be needed to establish whether the abuse was linked to disaster-induced poverty – a link which is cited anecdotally by local experts and academics in the previous two chapters. However, this disaster-abuse link may be extremely difficult if not impossible to prove.

Five distinct themes emerged from the respondents' answers, many of which play into the disaster-trafficking narrative, and all of which add depth and insight to the existing volume of literature. These themes are explored below, with regular testimony to illustrate the points being made, and respondents' answers tested against current literature. While, in reality, some of the respondents' stories contain features which spread over several of these five themes, I have to tried wherever possible to match each case study with one major theme for tidiness' sake, and to avoid widespread repetition of testimony.

**Link 1: Economic desperation due to disaster**

The current literature refers frequently to economic desperation as a trafficking risk factor (Mahdavi, 2011:216; Aronowitz, 2009a:23) which, theoretically at least, becomes more acute following a disaster (Goździak, 2014:59). These widely-cited claims are echoed throughout the my empirical research, building on the collective narrative from government officials and NGOs in the previous chapter. Respondents who had experienced trafficking spoke of damaged or destroyed housing and livelihoods being wiped out, leading to economic desperation. A strong cultural desire to support one's parents or children financially was also noted by most respondents, who said they would 'do what it took' to secure funds for the family. This desire to

support family members whatever the cost is highly significant, with some respondents stating they would risk their own health and even their own lives to do so, that it is explored in more detail as a distinct and additional risk factor later in this chapter.

Facing financial hardship after a disaster, many respondents were clearly ready to take jobs that were 'too good to be true'. While it is clear that many knew they risked being exploited, and decided to proceed with the job offer nonetheless, this meets the definition of trafficking with its key features of recruitment, deception and exploitation.

The following testimony from my interviews will focus first on trafficking due to natural hazard-induced disasters, followed by human-made disasters. It is worth reiterating that all respondents' names are pseudonyms, denoted in the first instance by an asterisk; and all were chosen by the participants themselves.

Engel*, 19, was trafficked at the age of 15, after what she describes as a happy childhood. She did not report any abuse during her early years, in contrast to most other respondents. Her family lived in a basic house made of wood, with an iron roof. Engel explains:

> Because of the typhoon, our roof was leaking and our clothes were affected. Flooding causes us to be awake to watch the water coming into our house. I decided to engage on-call [sex work] so that I can repair the second floor of our house. I was forced to serve as on-call because of money problems. It is very important to help my family because they are the reason for my existence. I want to own a business so that I can repay the sacrifices of my parents.

Jam*, 23, was trafficked at the age of 21. She spent most of her childhood, including when her community was struck by a typhoon, in an unfinished house with no facilities such as running water, toilet or electricity. Following her trafficking experience, she moved to a slum area in Cebu with only basic facilities. She was subjected to sexual abuse from a family friend, and subsequently emotional abuse from her employer. Jam states:

> My parents took care of me very well, providing food and other needs. I was not physically abused. Then our house was affected by typhoon and earthquake so we needed to repair it. Drought made our farm barren. Flooding caused by overflowing from the river damaged our things in the house. Because of these events, I need to have money to buy food, new things, and so on. I was forced to work as a freelance sex worker in Cebu.

Both of the above cases present clear empirical evidence about the link between economic desperation, caused by disaster, and a subsequent experience of trafficking. The following answers from respondents add to this narrative. While they are undoubtedly similar in their theme, the respondents' words are included here in full – acknowledging, once again, the concerns noted in literature about a complete absence of empirical research on the disaster-trafficking link.

Mardie*, 19, the youngest of eight siblings, was trafficked at the age of 15. She lived in a basic house made of wood, with an iron roof. This house was eventually demolished due to typhoon damage, and they built another basic property next to it on the same site. As further background, Mardie had been subjected to physical abuse by her brother during her childhood. As discussed previously, this can serve as further motivation for individuals to leave home in search of work which subsequently morphs into human trafficking. Mardie says:

> When I was younger, we stayed in one place the whole time. During a typhoon, our house was damaged. During demolition we had to rebuild our house, so we needed more money to do this. That's why I engaged in on-call [sex work], to have money for our needs. It is very important for me to provide for my family because I want them to be happy. I would engage in on-call even if it is against my will.

Maya*, 31, faced two disasters and was trafficked at the age of 13. She says:

> Because of the flooding from Typhoon Ruping [in 1990] our farm got lost and we didn't have enough income to sustain our daily needs. Later, our farm plants were eaten by pests. We lost everything, and never really got it back. Because of these calamities, I was forced to help through earning money. I was recruited by my friend and influenced. I had to help my family – my father was bed-ridden. My friend took advantage of me and recruited me, and also got me hooked in drugs.

Typhoon Ruping, known internationally as Typhoon Mike, occurred in 1990 when Maya was just three years old. However, she reports that the financial knock-on effect continued throughout her childhood. This was coupled with physical abuse by

her father. As the family continued to struggle, she entered sex work resulting in trafficking at the age of 13. A further 12 years later, at the age of 25 and living in northern Cebu, she also experienced Typhoon Haiyan. She describes the situation she faced as follows:

> I was living with my mom, three brothers, and one sister, on a lot owned by my grandparents. All of our livestock was washed away. Our dog was also washed away. Everything was gone. We were evacuated to Bogo Central School and helped by Australian volunteers, with UN support. At this time, I was getting support but also involved in prostitution. Yolanda made me hopeless – and ashamed to seek help. I didn't want to ask for help or beg. I had become the breadwinner, and felt huge pressure.

Similarly, Yellow Madness*, 27, was trafficked at the age of 15. She is the youngest of five siblings, and experienced abuse from her brother and his friend during her childhood. As with other respondents who were trafficked due to disaster from natural hazards, she lived in a house built of 'light materials', susceptible to storm damage, with few facilities. She explains:

> Because of the typhoon our house got leaning. I've got low confidence and not wanting to visit my friend. Because of the poor condition of my house, and inadequate income, I was forced to work in a bar as a dancer. I was deceived by my friend – she told me that we will apply to work as waitresses. But when we arrived there, she said it was already closed. And so she blackmailed me to dance just one night, so that we can have money for going home.

Jhuna*, 19, was trafficked at the age of 16. Unlike many respondents, she reports a happy childhood, being brought up by her parents, with no abuse in the household.

> The roof of our house blew off in a typhoon. I went 'on-call' [engaged in sex work] to help my parents get enough money to repair it and avoid demolition. I wanted to help my parents to buy basic needs and housing materials – that's why I engaged in 'on-call'.

Keshni*, 23, was trafficked at the age of 18. She offered fewer details in her responses than other respondents, though spoke clearly about the impact of natural hazard-induced disasters on her life:

> Because of flooding and a typhoon, we contracted skin diseases. Because of a fire, we needed to repair our house. I was forced to work in a bar as an entertainer to help my parents repair our house and to buy medicine.

In all of the above cases, the link between disaster and human trafficking is plain to see, with the impact of a disaster stemming from natural hazards enhancing poverty which, in turn, prompts an individual to seek work. Due to financial desperation, this often involves turning to unscrupulous employers – with subsequent deception, coercion, abuse or exploitation which meet the definition of human trafficking.

Continuing with the theme, three further cases of testimony relating to economic desperation, which resulted in trafficking, will now be presented. These resulted in trafficking due to disaster which stemmed from human-made hazards – two of which involve fire, and one case of demolition. Adelaine*, 28, said:

> Due to a fire we lost our house. That's why we transferred to Cebu City and we find money. Because of my ambition to help my parents to raise our daily needs, that's why I engaged in sex work.

Riya*, 52, was trafficked at the age of 16, after being deceived by her neighbour. She explains:

> Because of demolition, I lost my house and went to Colon Street [to engage in sex work] to raise money for my daughter. I was forced to do it because I had no other way to earn income.

Meanwhile, Rosepete*, 26, says she succumbed to trafficking because she took an employment risk to pay for milk for her children. She describes the situation after her family home caught fire and was demolished:

> I wanted to help my mom in any way I could. That put me in a situation where my friend sold me to a man. Half our house was also burned due to fire and we really had nothing else to do. I helped my mum scavenging food for us to eat something, recooking food we found in bins.

Staying with economic desperation as the first theme in respondents' answers, it is worth beginning to observe what I will term the 'slow burn' effect. Respondents often referred to a long gap between the hazard and the trafficking experience, with a detrimental situation building up over several years. For example, Tanya*, 20, speaks of events in earlier life leading up to her trafficking experience. Her mother died when she was nine, and she had to rescue her two siblings soon afterwards when the house was flooded "knee deep in water". They had to move again at this point,

prompting a chain of events which culminated in trafficking at the age of 12. Speaking of the background to these troubles, Tanya says:

> Due to so much flooding and a typhoon, I experienced trauma in saving my two little siblings. Due to the loss of my mother, I was abused by my neighbour during my ninth birthday.

These ten testimonies above all point to a clear link between disasters and human trafficking. However, this is rarely in the immediate aftermath of the event – as is often portrayed in the current literature and media reports. Respondents frequently stated that disasters from natural hazards such as typhoons and flooding, or human-origin disasters such as fire and demolition, occurred during formative years. This sparked a chain of events which resulted in poverty, ultimately leading later to human trafficking during a desperate search for employment due to financial hardship. With regard to this 'slow burn effect', there are in fact only two references I can find in current literature which relate to this point. The first of these is a Masters thesis, based on interviews with six professionals involved in the aftermath of the Nepal Earthquake of 2014, which speaks of a "long-term perspective" suggesting that the impacts of a disaster "may be felt not only in the immediate aftermath of a shock, but still months and years later (Brülisauer, 2015:2). The second is also from the Philippines in the aforementioned NGO report by Alburo-Cañete et al., who interviewed 88 respondents in a remote coastal area about the risks of trafficking following disaster. As stated in Chapter 2 (Literature Review), their findings point to a direct link between disaster and an inability to cope economically – which, in turn, can lead to an increase in human trafficking. In other words, there is an acknowledged passage of time, and a chain of events, in between the moment of disaster, and the moment human trafficking is established (2014:14). This subtlety emerges as a prominent factor in my findings.

**Link 2: Escaping abuse**

The 'escaping abuse' scenario is part of a two-step trafficking driver, insofar as disaster leads to an abusive situation which, in a further step, leads to seeking risky employment to escape this situation which then results in trafficking. In other words, the trafficking is one step removed from the disaster but a clear link is present

nonetheless. Using the words of trafficking expert interviewees in the previous chapter, this can be described as the "anything is better than this" scenario – that is to say, the individual affected feels that fleeing an abusive situation by taking an employment risk, which they suspect may result in exploitation, would be better than continuing to endure the abuse.

Based on information obtained from the interviews I conducted, the chain of events is often as follows: An individual loses their home due to disaster and is displaced, having no choice but to move in with neighbours or relatives who commit abuse while the affected person is at their lowest point. A number of respondents also said that they moved back in with known abusers due to disaster damaging their home, having previously escaped this situation. They stated that they did so because they were unable to continue sustaining themselves financially and had nowhere else to live. This, in itself, does not yet meet the definition of trafficking because of the absence of 'recruitment'. However, what typically happens next, according to respondents, is that the individual seeks to escape the abusive situation and takes employment risks, accepting job offers which may be 'too good to be true' with potentially unscrupulous employers. At this point, the trafficking occurs through deception, coercion, exploitation and abuse.

For example, respondent Rowena*, 26, was living with her grandmother who ran a business. A fire destroyed this property which forced her to move back in with her abusive father. His abuse became so bad that she was forced to find a way to move out at any cost. She took a risk with an apparent employer. The employer deceived and exploited her, thus meeting the definition of human trafficking. The link between the initial disaster, and the end result of trafficking, is therefore apparent in this example, albeit with a significant passage of time of ten years, between the ages of two and 12, and numerous 'stepping stone' events, leading up to the act of trafficking itself.

Family breakdowns, including divorce, alcohol abuse or death of a parent, are already cited in the literature as a trafficking risk factor (UN Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2000). Shelley notes:

> Family homelessness, familial breakdowns, parental illness, divorce, death of a parent, and abandonment by the father often follow rural to urban migration. Alcohol abuse often becomes more common within families, including violence and sexual exploitation of women and children who often run away. Familial exploitation often becomes a steppingstone to abuse by traffickers (2010:53).

While Shelley's point about women and children 'running away' from an abusive situation does not apply specifically to disasters, it is clear from respondents' answers – coupled with explanations from trafficking experts in the previous two chapters – that disaster can lead to an increase in abuse. According to interviewees for this study, this abuse can occur because parents or caregivers can become frustrated by the situation they have been left in after disaster, such as loss of livelihood, self-worth, and income, which results in them 'taking it out' on members of their own family.

The following seven pieces of testimony tell individuals' story of escaping abuse which originally occurred as a result of disaster. First, Jonalyn*, 25, experienced frequent flooding up to the age of nine, and the family was evacuated from their home twice. While this disaster was not necessarily a catalyst for the circumstances which unfolded, it can be interpreted as a clear, contributory factor. She was sexually abused from the age of ten and states clearly that she took an employment risk to escape this abusive situation, which subsequently resulted in human trafficking at the age of 15. Jonalyn says:

> I was told by someone that I will be a tour guide here in Cebu City. I was deceived by someone in Manila because, when I arrived here in 2007, I was surprised to know that I will be working as a dancer.

Mabel*, 45, says that following disaster and losing the family income she was "lured to have material things and shelter where she can stay", and went into sex work. Abuse is a significant part of her story, as she states she was raped by a teacher during her childhood and was too afraid to tell anyone when he threatened her life if she did so. This was compounded by the impact of disaster on the family home during her childhood. She also contracted tuberculosis, leading to health issues which compounded these problems. Mabel says:

> When I was still with my grandmother, we lost everything due to disaster - our house, clothes and money. We slept at the friend of my grandmother. My auntie helped my grandma and me to rebuild the house. I was still very young at that moment in my life.

Yuri*, 34, experienced weather-induced displacement forcing her, through the circumstances she faced, to move back in with a known abuser. Her family was then forced to evacuate when their house, made of bamboo and wood, became unliveable after damage from a typhoon. Yuri, who was trafficked at the age of 15 and now has six children, states:

> I ran away from home because I was sexually abused by my brother, and my mother didn't believe me. I moved from one place to another because of sexual abuse and I needed to earn money. But I did not have enough education, so I entered into laundry and housemaid work then, eventually, sex work in bars and streets.

All of the above cases, while presenting slightly different narratives, point to a consistent link between disaster and abuse which, subsequently, results in individuals seeking to escape the situation and succumbing to human trafficking, with the sequence of events unfolding in this order: **Disaster – abuse – escaping abuse – trafficking.**

During the interviews, there were four additional responses which pointed to the link between abuse and trafficking – though the abuse itself did not stem from a disaster-related situation. I have included brief summaries of these below, nonetheless, because – noting once again the need for more empirical evidence in the trafficking literature – the findings are arguably valuable as they help to inform the "second part of the chain" – that is, the link between abuse and subsequent human trafficking. In the case of respondent Mary-Ann*, 30, she left her partner and had no income for her family. She was offered work as an escort, but ended up being taken to three different regions and forced into sex work. Speaking of the decision to take risks which resulted in trafficking, she says:

> Just the need of my child at that moment led to trafficking. I had no choice because I needed money to buy food and milk for my son. My partner left us for two months and [we had] nothing. That is why I need to find work, for us to eat.

Recalling her earlier childhood, Mary-Ann says she was abandoned by her parents as a baby and left by a bamboo tree. Someone took her to her grandparents, who raised her. Similarly, Annabel*, 19, speaks of abuse at a young age. While this is not disaster-related, this abuse became the catalyst for running away from home and "going with friends" to engage in sex work.

> My mother left when I was young. She gave me to my grandparents to take care of me, even though they were very old. Given my mother knows also that I was abused by my grandfather, she allowed me to stay with them – even when I was still living with my parents, my life was miserable. That's why I decided that I will go to my friends and learn how to sell my body until I decided to go to the centre to ask for help from the nuns.

Continuing with the theme, another respondent, Cristal*, 25, says:

> When I started working as a babysitter, my employer had me do all the housework. I agreed to come with my neighbour to work in Cebu City so I could get away from home, so my grandfather and other relatives, like uncle and cousins, won't be able to sexually abuse me anymore.

It was at this point, at the age of 15, that Cristal was deceived and trafficked. Meanwhile, Michelle*, 25, experienced abuse throughout her childhood, and was trafficked at the age of 20. She grew up in a slum area, living in a house built of light materials such as scrap wood with very basic amenities including 'tapped' electricity, diverted from other households. She felt pressure to provide for her family after being forced to move because of a fire. In addition, she states that physical abuse from her father meant "she spent most of her time with friends" and went into sex work "due to peer pressure":

> I got physical abuse from my father - that is why I spent most of my time with friends. And with peer pressure, I was lured to do sex work.

As important context, it is clear that most interviewees (88 per cent of the total) had experienced abuse as a child. Of those, the majority included sexual abuse, with half of the cases reported as incest. In one case, a respondent who was brought up in an orphanage was sexually abused by a co-resident during her childhood. A number also reported physical abuse, such as Sheena*, 37, whose mother beat her and "locked her in a chicken cage". Just over a third of respondents (12) gave the specific age they began experiencing abuse. The youngest was just four years old, and the

average age the abuse started was 7.6 years. During the interview process, it was emphasised that respondents did not need to answer the question about abuse, due to the risk of re-traumatising. It is possible, therefore, that there were further instances of abuse which were not mentioned by respondents.

The first three cases above therefore point to a clear link between disaster, subsequent abuse, and taking employment risks to escape the situation, with an additional four cases adding colour specifically to the link between abuse and trafficking. Once again, it should be emphasised that the passage of time between the disaster and the actual trafficking event can be long, pointing to a continual 'slow burn' effect following the initial impact of disaster. In a handful of cases, disaster was not the primary cause of this abuse to start. Nonetheless, I have retained these cases as they follow a similar pattern to the disaster-related cases and add depth to the existing assertions in the literature (Shelley, 2010:53); UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2000).

**Link 3: Eroded parenting standards**

The third scenario often cited by respondents was disaster leading to a change in parental attitudes or standards. In other words, parents or caregivers struggled to cope with the ensuing economic hardship, displacement or deaths in the family caused by disaster, leading to a sense of despair. Some respondents explained that their parents appeared to have 'lost hope' due to the impact of a disaster and seemed unable to care for them in the same way. This is similar to the scenario of parental abuse but is more related to neglect and inability to hold together a firm family unit – often due to the effects of disaster on the family. This led to the common scenario, already described, where an employment risk was taken to escape an abusive or neglectful situation which ultimately resulted in trafficking.

Yurika*, 19, says a fire which devastated the family home "added to her parents' problems", meaning they were subsequently unable to look after her appropriately. She was trafficked at the age of 12, and her father was in jail during some points in her childhood. Yurika says:

> The fire caused my parents' demeanour to change – they lost hope. I felt rejected and betrayed. Because of my young age they forced me to a man, but I ran away from home, and a mother of my friend brought me somewhere and locked me in a house. She sold me to many men.

Yurika had faced abuse since the age of seven when she lived in a house on Leyte Island made of bamboo and wood which "became unliveable". They were forced to evacuate to an area where there was no privacy and no facilities, which is when the abuse started. She adds:

> I moved from one place to another because of sexual abuse and I needed to earn money. But I did not have enough education so I entered into laundry and housemaid work. Then, eventually, sex work in bars and streets. I experienced sexual abuse by my brother and my cousin during childhood. I felt angry and scared growing up.

Amaya*, 19, says her mother was unable to care for her when the family home was demolished and she was taken into care at an institution. She says:

> Because our house was demolished, my mother referred me, at six years old, to a facility where I grew up. Being away from my family made me experience so much sadness and sexual exploitation, even in the centre.

In a similar situation to other respondents, Amaya then took employment risks to escape this situation and was trafficked at the age of 15. Amaya, the youngest of 13 siblings, experienced continued physical and sexual abuse while in the shelter, where she was supposed to be protected.

Once again, these responses point to a situation where individuals needed to fend for themselves or to escape an undesirable situation, often during their childhood. In these two cases, disaster was cited as a catalyst for the situation unfolding, thus pointing to a clear link between disaster and human trafficking – albeit, as with all of these scenarios, with a 'slow burn' effect often developing over several years. It is difficult to identify a matching theory in literature which this scenario builds upon, though clearly neglect is, in itself, a form of abuse. Thus, this disaster-induced trafficking driver can arguably add colour to the assertions about abuse as a trafficking catalyst by Shelley (2010:53).

**Link 4: Migration and displacement**

At this point, it is worth dwelling on the distinction between 'displacement' and 'migration'. Migration implies some agency of the individual undertaking this move – while displacement suggests this movement may be forced. However, in reality, the two definitions are blurred. The International Organisation for Migration defines displacement as follows:

> The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters (IOM, Key Migration Terms, *no date*).

Many respondents cited in this chapter fall into this category. Internal migration, according to the IOM, is a term that encompasses both movement through choice, and forced:

> The movement of people within a State involving the establishment of a new temporary or permanent residence. *Note:* Internal migration movements can be temporary or permanent and include those who have been displaced from their habitual place of residence such as internally displaced persons, as well as persons who decide to move to a new place, such as in the case of rural–urban migration. The term also covers both nationals and non-nationals moving within a State, provided that they move away from their place of habitual residence (IOM, World Migration Report: 2015).

In reality, however, many respondents cited in this chapter were forced to move through circumstances such as poverty, facing no choice but to search for work in cities; or severe damage to their homes through fire or natural hazards. This can be compared to the notion referenced earlier of an individual 'choosing' to enter sex work – and whether this notion of choice, as articulated by the individual in that situation, 'downgrades' the situation, thus falling short of the threshold needed to constitute human trafficking with its element of coercion. As previously discussed, while some respondents may articulate entering sex work or migration as a choice, it is clear that the circumstances they faced at the time meant they had no viable alternative. In other words, if one's home is destroyed or severely damaged, the individual faces no other course of action but to leave the community in search of much-needed income and shelter. This, as stated throughout the study, clearly

carries many risks such as deception, coercion and abuse, which can lead to human trafficking. Finally, on the point of definitions, can 'migration' refer to domestic movement? The answer in this case is yes – particularly in the Philippines, which is made up of 7,000 islands and requires boat or plane travel between them (UNHCR, 2010). Additionally, Chuang states that human trafficking can be seen as 'migration gone horribly wrong in our globalised economy' (2006:138), while Mahmoud and Trebesch say trafficking is inextricably linked with migration when a continuum of possible abuses may take place (2010:175).

Four respondents referred to disaster-induced migration and displacement as a catalyst for the chain of events which ultimately resulting in them being trafficked. Jen*, 18, spoke of the ongoing demolition of her family homes, moving from place to place. This started at 12 years old, when property developers started a fire to destroy property and move families out of a slum. She states that she was forced to start sex work soon after this to meet the family's financial needs. Jen says:

> Growing up, we never really had our own house. We were always informal settlers – that's why we moved a lot, because of demolition. I needed to help the family financially so I did sex work. Also, I am upset with my father having a mistress.

Jonalyn*, 25, experienced a "life on the move", citing disaster as a contributing factor in her trafficking journey. At the age of 15, she states she was living with "pimps and strange people, a guard, and a driver." She says:

> When I experienced this kind of disaster, it pushed me to move to different places and houses; it also pushed me to do some bad things. This is also the reason why I go with strange people and pimps.

Mia*, 25, was moved from place to place after her parents separated at the age of seven. She was placed into an orphanage and, at the age of 19, began staying with lots of different friends. She said: "My friends introduced me to drugs, and eventually sex work, which made me vulnerable. In turn, I got pregnant by different guys."

Lara*, 22, also faced demolition of the family home and subsequent displacement. A lack of education also appears to have played a role in her story, limiting her job prospects and increasing the risk of trafficking:

> I am pushed to take up this work [sex work] because my needs were not met. I was not sent to school. My grandparents, who brought me up, could not provide my school requirements and projects. I think, if we have a permanent place or home, we could have a better life. My grandparents were not able to provide education to me. I was lured by a friend to take drugs, and since my grandparents cannot provide my needs, I was pushed to look for income and a means to earn money. This is so that I can eat and buy some clothes for myself.

Mich*, 19, was evacuated to a local gym after Typhoon Haiyan and also refers to continual displacement leading to vulnerability and, ultimately, her trafficking experience at the age of 12. Mich was also abused by her father from the age of eight. These responses add weight to existing numerous theoretical claims in the literature, and NGO reports, that displacement is a risk factor for human trafficking, with the UNHCR stating:

> Unaccompanied internally displaced children, child heads-of-households, single (especially female) heads-of-households, young girls, and former victims/survivors of trafficking are particularly vulnerable to the risks of trafficking during and after displacement (UNHCR, 2010:218).

Answers from the respondents in my interviews do, indeed, confirm that displacement emerges as a clear risk factor for human trafficking, contributing both directly and indirectly. However, as with the other themes that emerged, this is not always an immediate risk and can be part of the 'slow burn' effect. For example, as stated above, displacement during childhood can affect educational attainment and increase poverty, which means the person in question – due to a lack of qualifications, as explored in the following theme 'Disrupted Education' below – may seek more menial work 'behind closed doors' such as a nanny or live-in house helper, which carries a high risk of trafficking. Poverty itself, as stated previously, can also push individuals to take risks with employment, securing jobs which they may know are 'too good to be true' out of desperation, which subsequently result in deception, exploitation and abuse.

**Link 5: Disrupted education**

Aronowitz notes that the "low income, poor education, and lack of employment" are risk factors for trafficking (2009a:23). As stated in the previous link about displacement and trafficking, education is frequently interrupted after disasters. This was certainly the case following Typhoon Haiyan with more than 2,500 public schools damaged or destroyed, 12,400 classrooms needing repair, and thousands of students losing their paper-based school records (TheirWorld, 2015) which are often difficult to replace, as explained by interviewees in Chapters 4 and 5. However, the situations presented by respondents relate to the longer-term impact of leaving school to support family members. In many cases, this is driven by disaster. As stated by interviewees in Chapter 5, a lack of formal qualifications means that individuals can be forced to seek out work which is 'off the books' or menial, behind closed doors, and thus carrying a higher risk of trafficking.

Respondent Nikki*, 40, traces back the problems in her life, and ultimately her trafficking experience, to a lack of education at a young age. Part of this was due to challenges with natural hazards. In fact, she was lured into a trafficking situation with the promise of better education. After being trafficked, at the age of 15, Nikki was forced to carry sacks of rice when not engaged in sex work. She says:

> I couldn't complete [my] education due to flooding of rivers. I needed to cross two rivers, and couldn't get to school. I really wanted to do this. I was deceived by a trafficker, promised to have a better life in Cebu City and finish my study.

Joy*, 32, faced a volcanic eruption as a child, displacing her family at the age of four and, because of the financial impact, forcing her to take up work at the age of 13 – thus impacting her education. She began moving from place to place when she was four years old, and lived with her grandparents in Manila. She states she was abused when changing her location from one place to another, and was raped in Tacloban. Joy cites these circumstances as contributory factors in the run-up to her trafficking experience at the age of 20. Compounding these troubles, her education certificate from Tacloban University was washed away during a typhoon, which had an impact on her subsequent job search. It has been stated by experts interviewed for the

previous two chapters that getting replacement certificates can be difficult, as all records are paper-based. Joy got married but became widowed.

Jan*, 34, left school at 15 to live on her own and work, to bring in money for the family following a disaster resulting from a natural hazard. She says: "We needed money to build another house because our house was damaged by a typhoon and there was no more food to eat or water." This work then dried up, meaning she was forced to resort to sex work which resulted in trafficking. Jan was trafficked at the age of 27.

Once again, in all of these examples, it is clear that the impact of disaster has a long-term impact on education – which, in turn, affects individuals' ability to secure formal employment. This heightens the risk of human trafficking, as job-seekers turn to informal employment, often behind closed doors, or sex work to raise vital income for the family. Alburo-Cañete et al. singled out low educational attainment as one of the risk factors for trafficking in their study in a remote part of the central Philippines (2014:194), with the IOM also noting that migrants "without an education or advanced skills" have "minimal bargaining power to assert their rights and can become easy targets for exploitation" (2016:4). Testimony from my interviews, above, adds weight to this assertion. It should be recognised, once again, that this is an indirect, 'slow-burn' process, with a lack of education increasing trafficking risks many years later in life – and that these vulnerabilities can particularly come to the fore following a disaster, as demonstrated by respondents.

**Exacerbating factors**

Having explored these five distinct themes surrounding the link between disaster and human trafficking, this section will now explore exacerbating factors that were noted throughout the interview, ranging from drug use by almost every respondent, to a strong cultural desire to support one's family.

**Drug use:** There was no specific interview question on drug use, though many referred to being hooked on drugs as part of their trafficking experience. Shelter managers stated that almost all of their residents had experienced drug use, and this

point was emphasised by experts including social workers, NGO workers and academics interviewed in the preceding two chapters. A number of respondents stated that they were introduced and 'hooked on' drugs at the point they were deceived or coerced to enter sex work. In many cases, this happened at a young age. For example, respondent Rowena stated that she "moved at the age of 13 to recover from drug addiction". Cristal, who was trafficked at the age of 15 by the partner of a family member, recalls, as an eight-year-old, witnessing a "riot and shooting because of drugs". Indeed, the fallout from drug abuse emerges as a common theme throughout many respondents' childhoods, including the erosion of parents' ability to care for their children.

**Family values**: Despite enduring hardship and sometimes neglect as children, all respondents whose parents were alive spoke of a strong desire to continue supporting them. In some cases, as stated above, this had already resulted in them taking employment risks, such as entering sex work, to provide the necessary finances. This was explained by shelter managers as a strong cultural need in the Philippines to support one's parents. This was certainly borne out through interviewees' narrative answers, with Jan*, 34, stating: "Even if it costs me my life, I will provide for my parents and family.". Yellow Madness, 23, says:

> It is very important to provide the financial needs of my family because, without them, I do not feel complete. I will risk even my health, so that they will have the good life.

Reinforcing these deep family values, Mich*, 19, explained:

> I want them [my parents] to experience the happy life, and I also want to rescue them from poverty. It's my way to give back to my family for raising me.

These insights, demonstrating the cultural importance of providing for family members whatever the cost, were reiterated by most other respondents, with all saying they would take employment risks to achieve this. Just under two-thirds (21) of respondents had children themselves, with the average number being 2.6. It was clear, from many respondents' answers, that supporting their children – even if these children had since been put in the care of others – was central to their lives. This

issue has been discussed, with background on the topic and contribution from expert interviewees, towards the end of Chapter 5.

**Digital technology:** The rise of online forums and use of WhatsApp groups means exploitation can occur more easily with potential recruits quickly 'lured' and matched with unscrupulous employers, pimps, or directly with abusers, thus meeting the definition of human trafficking. Much of this is undetectable to the authorities, occurring on closed WhatsApp groups or similar platforms, and transcends borders. Cases have nonetheless been detected and occurred in this region after Typhoon Haiyan, as described by interviews with local law-enforcers in Chapter 5. This works by abusers gaining the contact details of a 'fixer' who, in turn, has access to women via WhatsApp groups, many of whom may have been persuaded to join the group and coerced or deceived into taking up this work. The trafficking shelters do not automatically report these incidents to the police, if their clients have experienced trafficking in this way. Their role, they emphasise, is solely to provide post-trafficking support to victims, and only to help individuals if they do wish to report such incidents.

**"Re-offending with impunity":** The literature cites reasons why human trafficking continues, with perpetrators "re-offending with impunity". Samarasinghe notes that trafficking is, by its very nature, a clandestine crime and most cases go unreported (2008:122). Indeed, many interviewees did not report the crime to the authorities – though my field research responses do not explain clearly why this did not happen. The literature also refers to corruption as a reason trafficking continues unabated (Guth, 2010:157). Indeed, Bales claims that corruption rates are one of the strongest predictors for trafficking (2007:88). One respondent, 37-year-old Sheena*, was arrested and imprisoned by police during a raid on a bar. As referenced in the previous chapter, such raids can be carried out by police when bar owners refuse to pay bribes.

**Who are the traffickers?**

A frequent question that inevitably emerges throughout this study is: Who are the perpetrators? Who, specifically, committed the act of trafficking in each of these cases? The answer is rarely simple. Referring back to the Literature Review, it was stated by Shelley that traffickers tend to be from the same community as the victim to win their trust, and often of the same ethnicity (2010:95). This assertion was confirmed by trafficking shelter managers, saying "it's normally a friend, or someone who has been a victim of trafficking" who initially recruits the trafficked person. Marietta Latonio, an academic and retired social worker in Cebu City, also states: "We have cases in secondary schools. They have classmates who have plenty of money. The classmates say – if you want money, come with me."

Respondents to my survey spoke frequently of friends or acquaintances luring them into trafficking situations, with echoes of Shelley's observation: "The violation of trust, which occurs in every trafficking case...[is] as devastating to the individual as the physical or psychological abuse". The phenomenon of people who have experienced trafficking themselves, who go on to become traffickers, is also noted in the literature. Women who do this are known to get recruitment bonuses (ibid, 2010:97) though some former trafficking victims carry out recruitment due to threats from their employers (Jones et al, 2007:112). Indeed, it was apparent from the information collected during the survey that at least one respondent had, technically, acted as a trafficker herself. Typically, from the testimony offered in the survey, victims are encouraged to travel for bona-fide work such as a tour guide – but end up in a bar, which results in prostitution. This is 'organised trafficking' in the sense that these businesses offer the trafficker – who, as previously stated, could be a former trafficking victim themselves – a bonus for carrying out the recruitment. There are known international trafficking networks, which are referred to in the Literature Review chapter.

**Conclusion**

The empirical research for this dissertation confirms current theoretical claims that disaster does, indeed, lead to an increased risk of human trafficking. However, the way in which these circumstances unfold is a far cry from many of the assumptions and theories in current literature, and claims by government and NGOs echoed in the media. Until now, most of the literature implies that those affected by disaster are at risk of trafficking in the immediate aftermath of the event, or these theories or claims do not go into any further detail at all. Rather, the findings from these interviews paint a more nuanced picture of a 'slow burn effect'. In other words, a disaster – even at a young age – can spark a series of events which result in a change to one's life, starting a downward spiral. These are categorised above into five themes: disaster-induced poverty, escaping abuse, eroded parenting standards, displacement and disrupted education. Disaster-induced poverty is the most widely-cited of these; however, in reality, all of these factors tend to overlap in respondents' accounts. While all of these scenarios are referenced in current literature, there is little or no narrative surrounding how these unfold in lived experience – nor to the significant passage of time between a disaster and human trafficking. It is therefore hoped that this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the links between disasters and human trafficking.

# Chapter 7

## Conclusion

This PhD study set out to examine the theory that disaster leads to an increased risk of human trafficking, with the research question: *Why and how is human trafficking affected by the occurrence of disasters?* This was based on the working assumption that the risk of human trafficking is, indeed, elevated in the wake of calamity. This claim is frequently made by NGOs, echoed widely and frequently in media reports, and theorised in the literature. But it is noted by scholars that the link has never been proven in literature with empirical evidence (Gurung et al, 2018:303; Goździak, 2014:58; Bowersox, 2018:5).

After investigating the disaster-trafficking phenomenon following Typhoon Haiyan, which struck the central Philippines in November 2013, my field research clearly endorses the assertion that there is a robust link between disaster and trafficking. However, in reality this plays out very differently from the oft-held assumption that traffickers recruit victims in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, in the worst-affected area.

The first key finding of my fieldwork is that individuals who remained in the central disaster zone, benefiting from heightened attention from local authorities and a gargantuan international aid effort, may have faced fewer trafficking risks than those who left the area in search of work, or those already living in outlying rural areas which received significantly less aid and attention by the authorities. In other words, traffickers *do not* swarm into the central disaster zone recruiting vulnerable children and disaster-stricken individuals. The second finding is that, while the link between disaster and trafficking can be robust, there is often a significant passage of time between the initial disaster and the trafficking experience occurring. This is also a process involving several steps along the way where, for instance, disaster increases poverty which, in turn, causes frustration and abuse in the household, prompting an individual to escape the situation in a desperate search for employment – which ultimately results in deception and exploitation, thus meeting the definition of human trafficking. This sequence of events can, of course, be traced back to the initial impact of disaster. I have termed this the 'slow burn effect', as disaster can spark a

chain of events with an impact which mounts up over several years or, in its most pronounced example, even has an effect in childhood which leads to trafficking later in life.

**Fewer trafficking risks in the central disaster zone**

The first finding from this PhD dissertation seems counter-intuitive: that remaining in the worst-affected area of a disaster, which I have termed the 'central disaster zone', is safer from a trafficking perspective than leaving it. This new theory began to emerge following research in Tacloban City, the epicentre of historic Typhoon Haiyan which struck the central Philippines on 8th November 2013. Haiyan (local name: Yolanda) was the most powerful storm to have made landfall anywhere in the world, resulting in a huge storm surge smashing into Tacloban killing 6,300 people with a further 1,032 missing (NDRRMC, 2013:4), forcing four million from their homes, and impacting up to 16 million people in total (IDMC, 2014:2).

A researcher's expectation, after reading the widespread and grand claims of post-Haiyan trafficking, might reasonably be that numerous cases were recorded, and interviews with local officials on the front line of Haiyan's aftermath would be packed with stories of combating human traffickers who had swarmed into the city to take advantage of a vulnerable population, a decimated economy, and weakened rule of law. However, this could not be further from the truth.

Interviews I conducted three-and-a-half years after Haiyan, with officials and professionals who would have come into contact with such cases, yielded just four known instances of trafficking in the central disaster zone of Tacloban City. One case, the only to have ever been publicly reported, turned out to be a misunderstanding. The remaining three investigations, which emerged during my fieldwork interviews but never made it into the public domain, did not mature into court cases or prosecutions.

My research moved on to necessarily examine why so few trafficking incidents were detected in the aftermath of this historic storm, even taking into account the notorious under-reporting of such crimes (Samarasinghe 2008:122; IOM, 2015; Nykaza,

2009:319). Two scenarios came to the fore from interviews with government officials, law enforcement, NGOs and academics in the city. The first is that individuals who experienced increased poverty, displacement and even lacked basic essentials did not always need to accept dubious job offers which carried trafficking risks, because their basic needs were met by the huge aid effort. In other words, a Typhoon-affected resident faced with a damaged home and loss of their livelihood could stay put and rely temporarily on humanitarian aid, bolstered soon afterwards by cash transfer programmes, than leave to a nearby city in a desperate search for work. However, it is pointed out that the humanitarian response to Haiyan was clearly not a panacea for all the challenges experienced by survivors and must be balanced with claims that not all aid reached survivors, many continued to struggle with basic amenities, and that some of those entrusted with supporting the most vulnerable committed abuse themselves.

A second factor at play in the central disaster zone, which emerged as a prominent theme throughout many of my field interviews, was officials' hyper-vigilance against human trafficking. All of those I interviewed stated firmly that they were on their guard against traffickers and some told me directly that they had taken action against suspected perpetrators. It is observed that this local belief in traffickers preying on disaster-stricken communities is in sharp contrast to observations in current literature, which suggests these fears are portrayed largely in western media and not often shared by experts and front-line staff responding to disasters in the Global South.

**Elevated trafficking risks in the outer disaster zone**

With this apparent 'dead end' on searching for post-typhoon trafficking cases, and responding to observations and advice from experts in Tacloban City, the research was expanded geographically to include the wider disaster zone where many of Haiyan's survivors evacuated or migrated to, including the Philippine capital and mega-city of Manila; the country's second-largest city Cebu; and rural areas which were severely damaged by the typhoon, but where the death toll was significantly lower. These rural areas also received much less international aid and attention. Here, in the outer disaster zone, interviews with professionals involved in Haiyan's aftermath yielded many more cases of human trafficking, with reports of 25 incidents

involving seven trafficking cases. It is also noted that, due to the available time and finances for this study, I was only able to 'scratch the surface' of trafficking in this much wider area. This suggests that many more Haiyan-related trafficking cases may have come to the fore, if further investigations were carried out with authorities and experts in other districts. This is recognising, as previously stated, that records are often paper-based and not shared between districts – thus, there is no overall regional authority which can summarise known trafficking cases. The significant number of incidents that I was told about involved either people who travelled to these outer areas from the central disaster zone of Tacloban City, or who already lived in rural areas which were affected and were trafficked from there. This lends weight to the existing assertion in literature that post-disaster trafficking from rural areas may be more pronounced because relief may take longer to reach communities (Gurung et al, 2018: 305).

While avoiding the reiteration of full detail surrounding the trafficking cases I uncovered in the wider disaster zone, it is worth dwelling on the nature of these incidents and their significance to the literature. Three of these five trafficking incidents involved individuals who left the devastated city of Tacloban, the central disaster zone, to seek work in nearby cities and were deceived in the process. In two incidents, this resulted in forced labour; the third resulted in prostitution. All of these cases feature the route of leaving the central disaster zone in a state of economic desperation, and becoming exploited in the process. Reflecting this key finding, the distinction between the relative safety of remaining in the central disaster zone, and the risky path of leaving to seek work in the outer disaster zone, is portrayed in the dissertation's title: 'A phenomenon displaced'. That is to say, the risk of trafficking is displaced from the central disaster zone to the wider zone, where there is less aid and attention from the authorities, and where individuals arrive in cities with few resources of contacts to seek bona-fide work.

The remaining incidents involved human trafficking in outlying rural areas where, while there were significantly fewer typhoon-related deaths, there was significant damage to property and livelihoods, and less monitoring and assistance than in the central disaster zone.

**The 'slow burn' effect**

Following the above observations on *where* post-disaster trafficking risks are most likely to increase, the second key finding of this research turns to *when* these risks are elevated, challenging the assumption that traffickers exploit vulnerable individuals in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. Broadening the research net even further, through interviews with 33 trafficking survivors in the central Philippines, it emerged that disaster can create a 'shock' to an individual's life which sparks a chain of events which do ultimately result in trafficking, though often not until many years later. This includes ongoing low-level disasters such as annual flooding, as well as the more obvious rapid-onset catastrophes such as major earthquakes, tsunamis, or typhoons. To the best of my knowledge, there is just one existing reference to this notion, in a published dissertation which notes theoretically – in the context of disaster-trafficking – that the impacts of a calamity "may be felt not only in the immediate aftermath of a shock, but still months and years later" (Brülisauer, 2015:2). This also builds on observations in a wide-ranging NGO report from the Philippines which notes that the disaster-trafficking link, while evident, is not direct (Alburo-Cañete et al., 2014:193). The researchers point out that disaster can – for instance – lead to economic desperation which, in turn, leads to human trafficking. This also builds upon Chambers' 'ratchet effect' theory where each disaster makes a population more vulnerable than the last (1983:112), which could also be applied here in relation to vulnerability to human trafficking.

I list five distinct themes which emerged during the field interviews on disaster-trafficking, which help to explain the various processes that take place. These are disaster-induced poverty, escaping abuse, eroded parenting standards, displacement and disrupted education. The most prominent of these, experienced by most respondents, was disaster-induced poverty, followed closely by abuse within families which, as already noted by the UN Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "often becomes a steppingstone to abuse by traffickers" (2000).

Once again, without delving too heavily into the detail of these disaster-related trafficking cases which have already been presented in Chapter 6, the headline findings were that a significant 42 per cent of respondents in my interviews referred

to natural hazards as a contributing factor to their trafficking experience through, for example, increased poverty or abuse in the household. Stories typically included a typhoon or storm which damaged a house and destroyed livelihoods, leading to a state of economic desperation in which the affected person searches for work and is ultimately deceived and exploited, thus meeting the definition of human trafficking.

A further 21 per cent of respondents cited an indirect link between a natural hazard and their trafficking experience – that is to say, it was part of a combination of factors which created challenges in life which ultimately led to human trafficking.

The notion of agency and choice can be singled out as a topic for discussion, when considering respondents' answers and, indeed, the wider trafficking literature. A number of respondents expressed entering sex work, due to financial desperation, as an active choice – or, at least, did not state that they were 'forced' into this situation. A question therefore arises as to whether coercion was involved, which is an essential element for human trafficking to have occurred. In other words, was the situation faced by some respondents exploitation and abuse, rather than trafficking – because the element of coercion of deception was arguably absent? Can their accounts therefore be included as those which contribute to the disaster-trafficking link, if there is doubt surrounding whether their experience meets the threshold of trafficking as defined by the Palermo Protocol? There is, thankfully, clarity on this issue from the UNODC which cites the Protocol's "abuse of a position of vulnerability", suggesting it is to be understood as "any situation in which the person involved has no real and acceptable alternative but to submit to the abuse involved" (2013:3). In the case of respondents to my trafficking interviews, the abuse was prostitution, and the economic desperation faced by individuals impacted by disaster clearly meant, after examination of their narrative answers, that they faced no viable alternative but to take this course of action. As clarified further by the same UNODC document, "it is the victim's vulnerability that is used to explain away and nullify the apparent consent" (ibid:5).

**Disaster-trafficking infrastructure**

From the findings of my field work, it is possible to present a 'disaster-trafficking infrastructure' offering further insight into the factors, occurrence, actors, and mechanisms involved in the process. This builds on the theoretical framework presented in the Literature Review (Chapter 2) as a starting point on how disaster-trafficking unfolds, and some of the actors involved in that process. It should be pointed out that the disaster-trafficking infrastructure I will now set out serves merely as a 'glimpse' into the clandestine world of human trafficking based on information gleaned from the 30 people I interviewed who experienced human trafficking, and expert interviewees in the central and outer disaster zones following Typhoon Haiyan. In terms of *who* is involved in trafficking, there are numerous actors featuring in respondents' stories. Some increase vulnerability in the first place, with others then exploiting that vulnerability by recruitment through deception or coercion. It is usually the case that a further set of individuals then carry out the exploitation. Together, the combined action of these individuals creates a situation of human trafficking with its key elements of recruitment through deception or coercion, and exploitation or abuse, often in slave-like conditions.

Further research would be required to understand the presence of other actors, their precise roles, identities, and motivations in the trafficking process. One example of this is unscrupulous business owners in the capital Manila who are known to exploit vulnerable individuals for cheap off-the-books labour. Often, these characters are presented as anonymous figures by my respondents, and their actions were described only in the broadest terms during my research – though I certainly tested robustly that their exploitative actions did amount to human trafficking with its key elements of recruitment, deception or coercion, and abuse.

Addressing this chronologically, identifying processes and then the actors involved, appears to be the best way to examine this infrastructure. First, the research in Chapter 6 hones in on the factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking in the first place. Circumstances such as poverty, unemployment, family break-up, and abuse were identified. There is clearly a wide range of potential actors involved in all of these processes, from employers to family members and friends, and even

teachers when considering a lack of education as a factor. For instance, in the broadest terms, could the individual's school have done more to keep them in education for longer – albeit with limited resources? These situations could be described as 'push factors', which spur individuals to leave their homes in search of work in the cities where they are recruited into exploitative employment conditions, having been deceived – thus meeting the threshold of human trafficking.

Once the element of vulnerability has been established, for trafficking to have taken place there needs to be an act of recruitment. This act is, essentially, an offer of work which later turns out to be exploitative, where wages are withheld, or movement is restricted in 'slave-like conditions'. The actors involved in recruitment vary widely – though, as identified throughout the dissertation, he or she is never a mysterious 'shadowy figure' who enters an area affected by disaster offering jobs or taking children away, as is sometimes portrayed or assumed. In fact, as discussed in Chapter 6, it became clear while interviewing one individual as a trafficking 'victim' at the trafficking shelter was in fact also a recruiter. As previously discussed, this situation is not uncommon as the lines between perpetrator and victim are, in reality, never clear cut, and often those who 'recruit' do so under duress or from a position of vulnerability.

When considering the 'actors' involved in disaster-trafficking, it is also worth dwelling on the role of government and NGOs. Their actions – or potential absence of actions, or ineffective actions – could ultimately have an effect on whether an individual is trafficked or not following a disaster. This centres largely around awareness campaigns. As discussed in Chapter 2, these are frequently conducted by the Philippines government in areas known to be vulnerable following disasters, and by NGOs. Their impact is, I would argue, impossible to measure because incidents of trafficking cannot be measured due its clandestine nature – thus, a reduction in trafficking cases could never be proved and, even if it was, it would be difficult to attribute to this wholly to a specific awareness campaign. Awareness of trafficking risks among community members can, however, be measured to indicate a campaign's *potential* effectiveness. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that an individual whose economic vulnerability had increased following a disaster may think twice about accepting a job offer in a nearby city which appeared 'too good to be

true' if they had recently been exposed to an awareness campaign warning them of the dangers. Interviewees in my research did not mention such advocacy, but those involved in conceiving and delivering these campaigns can be identified as potential actors in the trafficking process.

Next, a further set of actors with a major role in human trafficking are the exploitative employers themselves. There is a huge range of individuals, though none were ever identified specifically during my research. A glimpse into the identity of these characters includes bar owners who were involved in trafficking for sex work; and bakeries who employed children, forced them to work long hours, and subsequently withheld their wages. It is also necessary to identify actors involved more peripherally in the 'exacerbating factors' surrounding trafficking. Chapter 6 has referred to the culture of providing for one's parents in the Philippines. While it feels uncomfortable to apportion blame to any of these individuals, as this is a cultural issue, it is possible that those expect to be provided for have had a role in inadvertently exerting pressure on individuals to seek work 'whatever the cost' and to provide for their families. These is also the wider culture of 'Bagong Bayani' – modern-day heroes, lauded by the government, who work overseas amid great sacrifice to send much-needed remittances home. This arguably contributes to employment pressure and therefore, in some circumstances, enhanced trafficking risks.

In terms of other exacerbating factors, the research has explored corruption – pointing to individuals who are prepared to accept bribes, for example, to allow bars to continue to operate despite known trafficking activities. This scenario was referenced by a respondent I interviewed in Chapter 6. Finally, drug misuse was cited as a factor by nearly all respondents when describing the process of human trafficking they had experienced. Therefore, those who deal and offer drugs can be identified as actors in the human trafficking process.

With so many factors and mechanisms involved, I have created a visual representation of this 'disaster-trafficking infrastructure' in Figures 7 and 8 on the following pages. First, there is a visual representation of the *processes* known to be involved, and how these build vulnerabilities and ultimately morph in human trafficking. Direct perpetrators of human trafficking are in the centre, with peripheral

perpetrators who exacerbate or create the right environment for human trafficking further out. When creating this chart, is also seemed appropriate to distinguish between those whose actions are malicious and intentionally increase human trafficking; and those whose actions are 'careless', or whose actions may inadvertently do so. For instance, a drug dealer or abusive employer can hardly be compared to a well-intentioned government department involved in evacuations from a disaster zone which leads to individuals seeking work in a city and succumbing to human trafficking – even if both sets of actions have arguably contributed. I have therefore used different colours on the chart with red indicating actors whose actions are most egregious; and yellow indicating a lesser role. I have also attempted (rather generally) to portray the general significant of their by the size of the circle; and positioned those with a more central role in the process nearer the middle of the chart.

**Figure 7.**



Figure 7. Disaster-trafficking infrastructure – processes

Disaster-trafficking infrastructure – processes

- Climate/ weather-related trafficking drivers
- Other drivers cited by interviewees
- Compounding factors

**External factors**

Climate/ Environmental
- DISASTER (Eg typhoon, earthquake, tsunami)
- LOW-LEVEL/ REPEATED HAZARDS (Flooding. monsoon rains, drought)

Other contributing factors
- 'Inherited' poverty
- Lack of education
- Abuse in the family/ household
- Crime
- Arson attacks on slums by developers, or forced demolition

**Result**
- POVERTY
- DISPLACEMENT Including forced migration/ relocation
- Continual relocation and/or rebuilding of homes
- Worsening health/ sanitation affecting education and job prospects

**Response/ coping strategies**
- Seeking employment – risk-taking
- Relocation ('voluntary'/ forced through circumstances)
- Breakup of family units – leaving home

- Family pressure to provide
- Drug use
- Lack of knowledge about the risks
- Corruption/ lack of law enforcement

- Heightened vulnerability to human trafficking → Human trafficking

**Figure 8.**



**Disaster-trafficking infrastructure – actors**

**Drug dealers**
*Drugs features in nearly every case throughout my research.*

**'Friends'**
*Sometimes offering support and advice. Sometimes recruiting into trafficking situation.*

**Abusers within families**
*This prompts would-be trafficking victim to flee the household, often migrating to cities in search of work.*

**Arsonists**
*Deliberately clearing residents from slums*

**Corrupt government officials**
*'Oil the wheel of trafficking.' Perpetrators act with impunity.*

**Former trafficking victims**
*Like friends – sometimes offering support and counter-trafficking advice, but sometimes Recruiting and technically committing trafficking themselves. .*

**Fake nuns**
*Known cases during my fieldwork of deception by dressing as nuns and trying to recruit*

**Overseas recruitment agencies**
*Unscrupulous agencies directly commit trafficking. Others assist the individual to work overseas, who then becomes vulnerable and succumbs to trafficking.*

**Individuals who are trafficked**

**Exploitative/ abusive employers**
*Examples – bakery owner in Chapter 5*

**Customers of businesses which commit trafficking**'
*Such as customers of bars, the bakery which withheld children's wages, etc*

**NGO/ gov staff**
*Entrusted with protection who commit abuse themselves, creating – among many other devastating consequences – further vulnerability*

**Parents/ carers**
*Who are unable or unwilling to care for their children appropriately, prompting them to leave household early in search of work*

**Various government policy-makers/ officials**
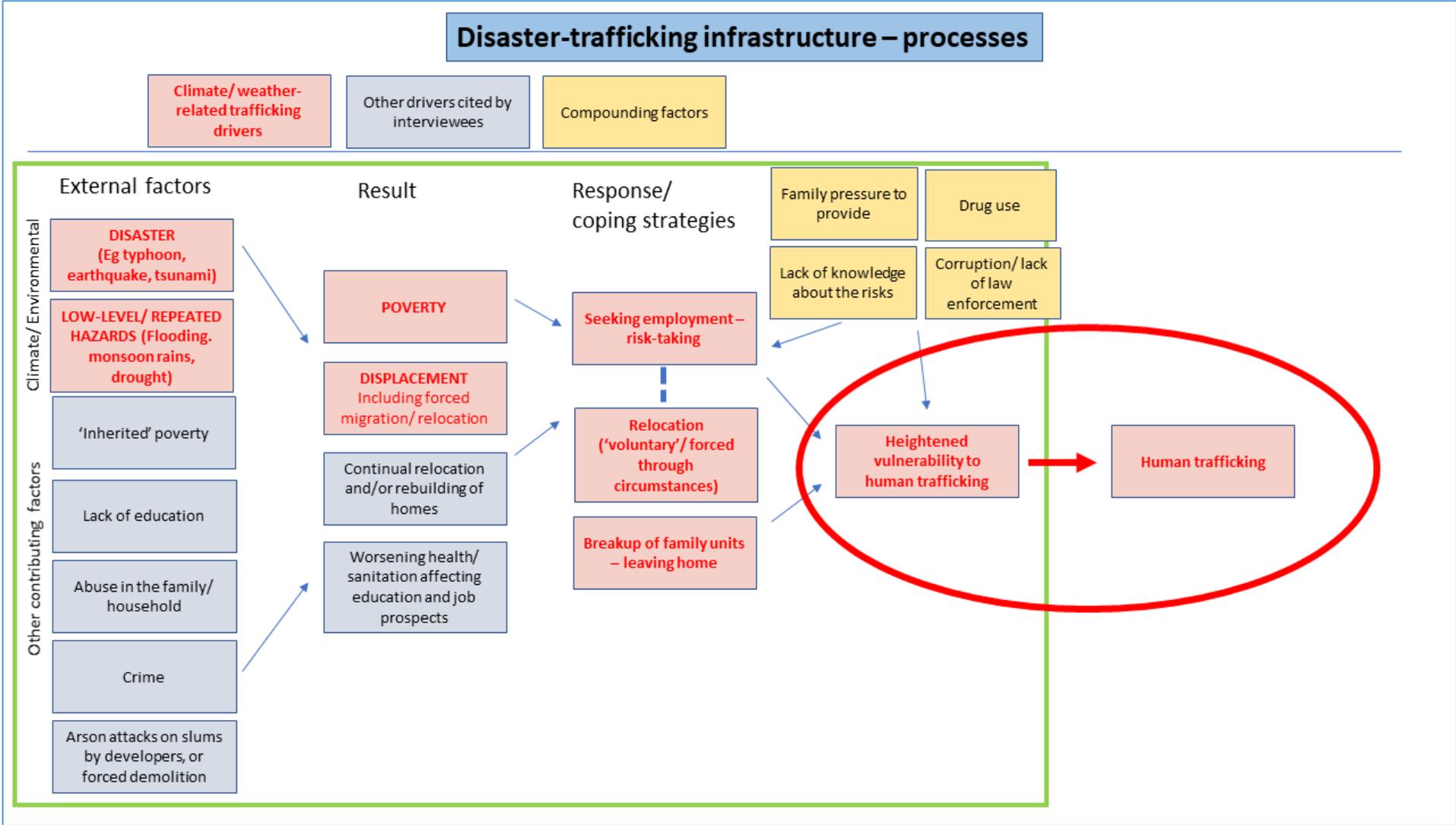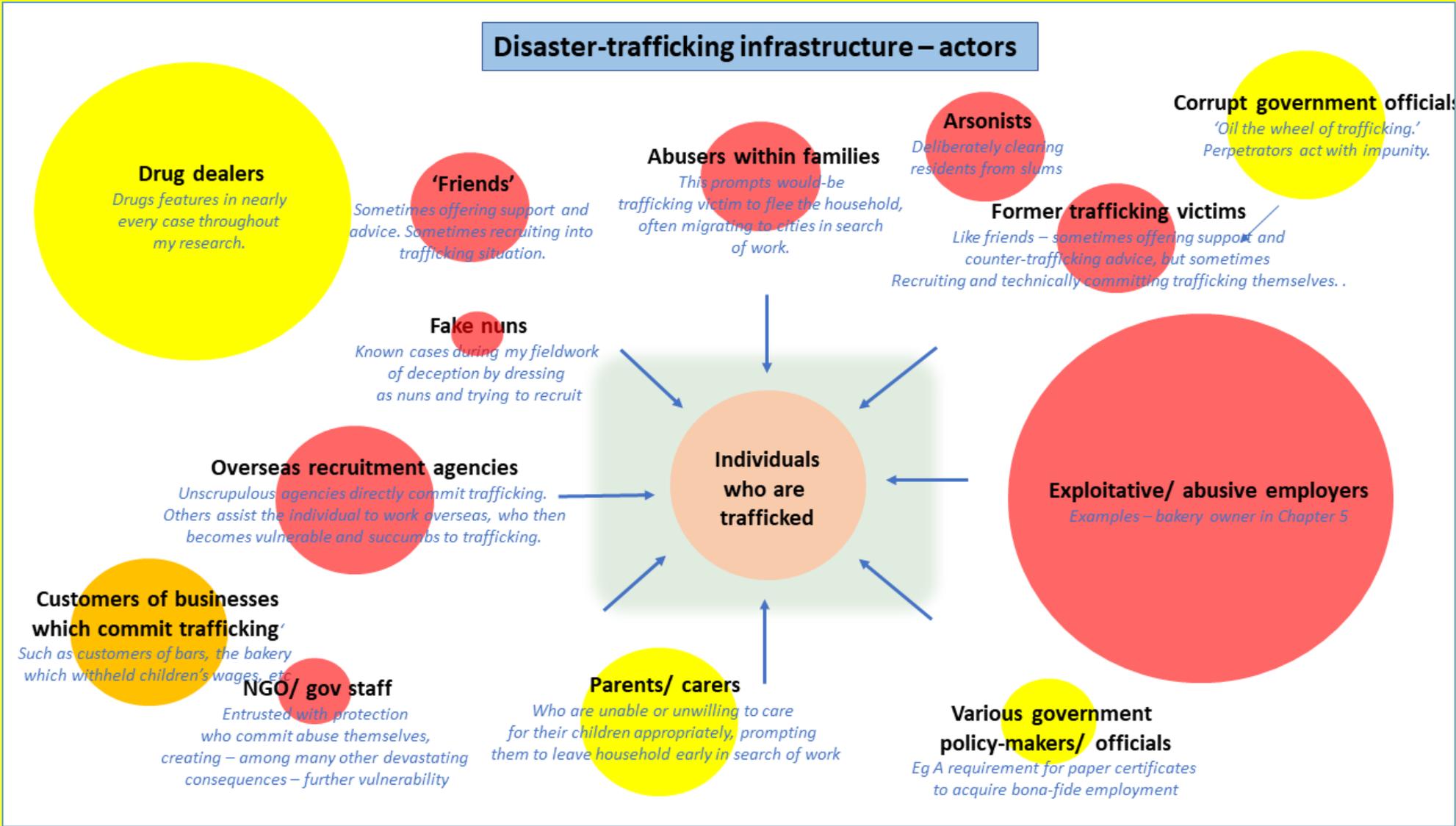*Eg A requirement for paper certificates to acquire bona-fide employment*

**Inter-sectional analysis of the disaster-trafficking nexus**

When attempting to gain a deeper understanding of the factors that increase vulnerability to human trafficking, an inter-sectional analysis is a helpful and arguably necessary approach. During the interviews with trafficking survivors, I captured certain types of socio-economic information such as age, educational attainment, type and condition of housing – including whether it was urban, rural, coastal and whether it was located in a slum; along with parents' employment, respondents' marital status, and number of children. This data was obtained from each interviewee to try to understand whether these factors had a bearing on trafficking risks. When I was planning the research, examples of theoretical questions which emerged, and which I believed may need to be tested, included: *Are those who live in coastal areas more vulnerable to human trafficking than those inland? Does a respondent's number of siblings, and their ranking among those sibling – whether they are the oldest or youngest – have a bearing on whether they were trafficked?* Within the confines of this research and the cohort of 33 trafficking survivors, it is clear that common themes and patterns among respondents' answers can be seen. These findings, while not directly related to the disaster-trafficking phenomenon, do arguably add significant depth to the study. At the same time, it should be noted that there is no comparative cohort or 'control group' – in other words, it is not possible to compare the findings with a group of people who were *not* trafficked, thus attempting to assert with confidence that the factors cited below have contributed to human trafficking.

**Parents' employment**: Nearly all the respondents' parents were, or had been, employed. Jobs were almost always manual labour, with fathers typically working as labourers, farmers, fishermen, or in catering. The fathers of two respondents were in jail – one for murder. Two thirds of respondents' mothers also worked, with jobs including vendors, maids, and laundry women. In 12 out of the 33 cases, they were full-time housewives. In two cases, the mother was previously in sex work too with one of those respondents stating: "She used to dance at bars, but now she just uses drugs a lot". A third respondent stated that her mother's employment was "drug dealer".

**Parents' status:** My research questions included whether parents were still alive and, if they were, whether they were together or had separated. Among respondents, it is significant that a third (11) said that their father had died, with 12 per cent (4) stating that their mother had passed away. Two respondents said both parents were deceased. Of those with both parents surviving, around a quarter (9) stated that their parents had separated, with 18 per cent (6) stating that their parents remained together. One respondent did not know what had happened to either of her parents as she was separated from them at a young age.

**Siblings:** Respondents were asked to indicate how many sisters and brothers they have, and how they rank in terms of age. This was to test a theory about whether the eldest sibling bears more responsibility for raising funds for the family, and is more likely to succumb to human trafficking as a result of these employment pressures. However, a mixed picture emerged from the interview responses – with a notable number of those in the trafficking shelter identifying as either the eldest, or the youngest, sibling. Of the 33 respondents, just over a quarter (9) said they were the youngest sibling. Six respondents (18 per cent) were the oldest sibling. Families were large, with two respondents having 12 siblings each. The average number of children per family among the respondents is calculated at 7.4.

**Childhood:** Respondents were asked who raised them as children, in an effort to identify any themes on upbringing which may have contributed to trafficking, noting Shelley's observation that broken family units are a trafficking risk factor (2010:53). Just over half of the respondents (19) were brought up by their parents, with others stating grandparents (24 per cent). Two respondents were raised by their aunts, one by an older sister, and a further two grew up in orphanages. 70 per cent of respondents had been trafficked as children, rather than as adults, with the average age being 16. Thirty out of the 33 respondents were able to give a specific age they were trafficked, with the youngest being just 10 years old, and the oldest 27 years old.

**Education attainment:** Lack of education is seen as a risk factor for human trafficking. Again, before delving into respondents' answers, it should be noted that

despite widespread poverty, literacy rates in the Philippines are incredibly high at nearly 99 per cent (Philstar quoting UN, 2019) and education is highly valued in society. Analysing available data from my interview sheets, the average age respondents left school was 19. Several had returned to finish their education, the oldest graduating school at the age of 32. The youngest had finished school at just 11 years old, though this was a notable exception. It was clear that the vast majority had seen their secondary school education through to its conclusion. In the case of this study, therefore, it is clear that a lack of education does not appear to play into the trafficking risk factors.

**Discussion:** While the cohort of interviewees were clearly well-educated, as just stated, it is notable that their parents had menial jobs in the majority of cases. Two thirds of respondents stated that both parents worked, with mothers being housewives in the remaining third of cases. One respondent's parent was a sex worker, and another was a drug dealer – though the majority appeared to hold mainstream, legal jobs and were described as hard-working. It is notable, as stated in the preceding summary, that more than half of respondents had lost one or both parents, with the majority stating that their father was deceased. Life expectancy in the Philippines is 70.4 years, three years behind the global average of 73.3 years (World Health Organisation, 2019) – so it stands out that so many respondents, who were of a relatively young age, had lost parents before their time. The death of parents early in life is likely to have led to significant financial pressure on these families, which is a known risk factor for trafficking. I did not inquire as to the cause of death, nor was this information offered proactively during the course of the interviews. In terms of sibling data, it is notable that the average number of siblings among respondents was more than seven. The birth rate has recently plummeted in the Philippines, with an average of just 1.9 children per woman in 2022 (Philippines Statistics Authority, 2022). However, bearing in mind the average age of respondents is 26.5 years, with the oldest being 52, it would make more sense to compare this with the birth rate in 1997 (reflecting the average year respondents were born) which was 3.7 (ibid, 2022). Respondents to the survey, however, still had twice as many siblings as the national average at that time. One effect this may have had on families is to increase economic pressures, leading to an enhanced sense of

desperation when seeking work – and a possibility that dubious jobs were more likely to be accepted, thus leading to human trafficking.

## Recap on ethics and methodology

The ethical rigours required to prepare and conduct research with trafficking survivors are so significant and central to this study, that a note on this process is required in the conclusion. First, it is recognised that securing the interviews in the first place was not easy and understandably required a good deal of patience, not to mention trust on the part of trafficking shelter managers. All of the trafficking shelters I approached were enthusiastic about the direction of the research, stating that they knew, anecdotally, that many of the survivors in their care had experienced significant weather-related shocks which weakened their financial position or resulted in household abuse, thus paving the way for human trafficking to occur. However, the Good Shepherd Welcome House, a trafficking shelter with three sites in the central Visayas supporting survivors at various stages of their rehabilitation, was the only shelter able to provide access on the dates I was able to conduct a field trip. This resulted in a strong sample of 33 people who had experienced human trafficking, and who voluntarily agreed to take part and gave informed consent for their information to be used – understanding, of course, that they could freely withdraw at any point in the process. The interviewees were aged 18 to 52, and all had experienced human trafficking as per the Palermo Protocol – a definition that was widely understood by trafficking shelter managers and those involved in planning and executing the research.

The trafficking interviews were conducted at the three sites over a period of ten days in June 2019, following a rigorous two-stage ethics review at SOAS in 2016 and follow-up discussions. It was recognised that all interviewees were vulnerable due to the fact they had been trafficked and thus deceived, coerced and exploited; and that the interview necessarily included questions on highly-sensitive topics which required careful handling. The security and safety of participants was also a prime consideration, recognising that researchers "may put trafficking victims who co-operate with them at risk" (Di Nicola, 2012:56). This risk may be exaggerated in the Philippines where English is widely read and spoken, and thus published material

available online on such a specific topic could easily be found. However, after consulting at length with trafficking shelter managers who knew each trafficking survivor's circumstances in detail, I was assured that no aspect of this research would put participants at risk. Strict anonymity is maintained throughout, with pseudonyms denoted with an asterisk throughout the dissertation. Participants chose these pseudonyms themselves during a 'warm up' session for the interviews.

local facilitators conducted the interview including an experienced social worker and academic, who I had met while tracking down trafficking experts in my first round of interviews in the 'central disaster zone' two years earlier. She was highly interested in disaster-trafficking, though had not previously carried out any research on this topic specifically; and she knew the trafficking shelter managers well, having worked with them before, which paved the way for this empirical research to take place. Numerous preparatory meetings were held with the shelter managers beforehand to agree the questions, making sure that they were appropriate and would not create upset or cause trafficking survivors to relive trauma they had experienced. It was also ensured that the aforementioned trained social worker who was acting as the lead local researcher, and trained staff from the trafficking shelter, would be on hand to provide support if any respondents required it after the interviews. Group 'debrief sessions' were also conducted after all the interviews, to 'check in' on participants to ask about the process, and to ensure that they were content and had not experienced any significant emotional challenges which required follow-up in the supportive environment of the trafficking shelter.

The field research asked a series of questions with ten narrative answers, and collected 48 items of data during the questionnaire including ages, locations, family situation and types of housing, to piece together the chain of events that led up to their trafficking experience, leading to the results and analysis presented in Chapter 6.

**Chosen case study of the Philippines**

To recap, the Philippines was chosen to examine the disaster-trafficking link because it is one the countries most vulnerable to disaster in the world (UN Office for Disaster

Risk Reduction, 2015) and is also claimed to be a trafficking hotspot (Commission on Filipinos Overseas, 2019; US State Department, 2014; Reuters, 2018) and the archipelago is recognised as "an important case study for understanding community resilience and vulnerabilities, as well as the intersection between poverty and hazards" (Daly, 2016:10). In terms of practicalities for the researchers, English is widely spoken, negating the need for translators, and field trips to the country are relatively inexpensive.

**Areas for further research and limitations**

This PhD study is geographically and culturally specific. For example, the pressure many Filipinos feel to provide financially for their parents was repeatedly and consistently cited as a catalyst for taking employment risks which ultimately led to trafficking – a feature which may not be present in other contexts. There is, therefore, an opportunity to test the disaster-trafficking framework in other geographical areas, which experience significant disasters and known trafficking risks, and compare the findings with those in the Philippines. The sample size of 33 trafficking survivors could also be expanded upon, with more respondents adding extra breadth and depth to the research. In relation to this point, there has already been an offer of conducting further fieldwork at the Good Shepherd Welcome House's Davao counselling centre in the southern Philippines, if time and budget allowed.

It should be acknowledged, once again, that trafficking literature has tended to focus disproportionately on women rather than men, and disproportionally on sex trafficking (Goździak and Graveline 2015:16), recognising that "contemporary victims of trafficking are more likely to be victims of labour trafficking, forced to serve as child soldiers, or trapped in domestic servitude" (Shelley 2010:297). Chapter 6 of this dissertation – the interviews with formerly-trafficked women who experienced prostitution – does little to redress that balance in literature. While this would prove time-consuming, further research could make a concerted effort to track down trafficking survivors who were exploited in other situations, and include male survivors to present a more balanced picture.

Finally, as referenced in Chapter 2, there are claims that individuals are trafficked *into* disaster zones for the reconstruction effort (Bales, 2021:38). This did not emerge as a theme during my research, but may merit further investigation particularly as an official I interviewed from Tacloban City's Housing & Community Development Office stated that the population of Tacloban City had increased due, in part, to "construction jobs on offer in the 'Yolanda corridor' from Samar to Leyte" with numerous opportunities for building work such as carpentry over a three-year period following Haiyan (Field interview, June 2017).

**Contribution to knowledge**

The interest in this topic was sparked by disaster-trafficking claims routinely made in the aftermath of disasters (examples: Childs, 2016; Branigan, 2013; Eimer, 2013; UNICEF, 2005; US Department of State, 2005; Aglionby, 2005; Atzet, 2010:510; CNN, 2010; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016; Gyawali, Keeling and Kallestrup, 2016:1) which I observed while based in the central disaster zone following Haiyan as an NGO worker, and which have become 'an integral part of the disaster narrative' (Montgomery, 2011:395). The phenomenon is also touched upon in literature, recognising theoretically that trafficking drivers such as poverty, abuse and displacement can all increase in the wake of calamity (Goździak, 2014:58). However, while there is a wealth of literature on trafficking generally, there is – to the best of scholars' knowledge – no empirical research on the disaster-trafficking link itself. This is called out as a concern and an area for further study.

Beginning with the case of Typhoon Haiyan, this PhD study has tested and proven the disaster-trafficking assertion through interviews with experts involved in the aftermath of this historic storm. The information from these interviews did, however, point to a very limited number of cases in the central disaster zone – and many more cases in the outer zone. This prompted an analysis which recognised that those in the worst-affected area received much more aid, support and protection than those in more far-flung areas, and thus do not necessarily have to leave to the cities in search of work; and that local officials were almost universally on their guard against trafficking incidents, and took immediate action in cases where they suspected something was awry. It is thus argued that 'staying put' in the central zone was safer

from a trafficking perspective than leaving it. The second key finding was the aforementioned 'slow burn' disaster effect. That is to say, a disaster can spark a chain of events such as poverty, abuse and disrupted education spanning several years, or even decades, which ultimately result in trafficking. The link between the moments of disaster and trafficking are strong – but the passage of time between the two, and numerous 'stepping stone' events, must be recognised.

With the above findings, it is therefore hoped that this PhD dissertation has begun to fill this void of evidence with a distinct contribution to knowledge on the disaster-trafficking link. This line of research also has global implications, especially with climate-change induced disasters on the rise (Finn, 2016:83), the wide range of destinations for Overseas Filipino Workers, who particularly face trafficking in the Middle East, and globalisation leading to more human trafficking across international boundaries.

# Appendix

1. Example of the trafficking interview sheets
2. Complete list of field interviews
3. Case study from World Vision

# APPENDIX 1



SOAS
University of London

## CONSENT FORM

Disaster and displacement is a known factor in human trafficking, but the link has yet not been properly examined. This survey, led by Chris Weeks from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, UK, is to learn more about how disaster played a role in individuals' trafficking experience.

In particular, the study seeks to examine to what extent disaster may have exacerbated poverty, or pushed people into a situation where they needed to take risks seeking employment which may have subsequently resulted in trafficking.

- I confirm that I have either read the participant information sheet, or the participant information sheet has been read to me;

- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and have received satisfactory answers to questions, and any additional details requested;

- I understand that my interview will be recorded with an audio device unless I request that a recording is not made;

- I understand that I may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time by advising the researchers of this decision;

- I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the SOAS Research Ethics Committee;

- I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored; and what will happen to the data at the end of the project;

- I agree to participate in this study;

- I understand how to raise a concern and make a complaint if I am unhappy with the way this interview or the research is conducted.

Name: ...................................................

Signature: ...................................................

Date: 6/3/19 ...................................................

Researcher's signature: ...................................................

**CONFIDENTIAL SURVEY:** University of London, January 2019

**SOAS**
University of London

## Informed consent

I understand that this research will be used completely anonymously by the University of London, as part of a project to examine the link between disaster and human trafficking, and I give my permission for this to be done so. I do not need to answer questions, and can stop the interview at any time without reason

Signed: *[signature]*                    Date 06-4-19

## Personal details

▶ Name (first name only, or alias) ___Inday___

▶ Siblings No. of brothers __1__ No of sisters __5__

▶ What number sibling are you (1 being the oldest)? __6__

### Childhood

▶ Who brought you up? Parent(s) or other (please specify) ___Mother___

▶ Would you describe childhood as happy? [Rating 1-10, 1 = most happy.] __9__

▶ Please explain briefly in a few words why you have chosen this number.
My parents fought a lot. most of the time I was left alone at the house with no adult. Soon then separated.

### Education

▶ At what age did you finish school? __20 years old__

▶ What is your highest qualification? __4th year high school__

### Parents

▶ Are both your parents still alive? Mother (Y/N) __Y__ Father (Y/N) __Y__

▶ What work do/ did your parents do? (Current) mother • pharmacy assistant

▶ Are/ were your parents together, or did they separate? __separated__

▶ If so, how old were you when this happened? __4 years old__

▶ What work do/ did your parents do? (before; welder)
Mother pharmacy assistant  Father in prison now

▶ Is there anything you would like to add? ...........

## Children

▶ How many children do you have? __0__

▶ Please list ages, and whether boys or girls ___N/A___

▶ Who do your children currently live with? ___N/A___

## Partners

▶ Do you have a live-in partner currently? (Y/N) __N__ If so:

→ How old were you when you started living with your current partner? __N/A__

→ How old was your partner when you started living together? __N/A__

→ How long are you living together? __N/A__

▶ Did you have a live-in partner previously? __Yes__ / 2nd live-in partner If so:

→ How old were you? __9__

→ How old was your partner when you started living-in? __20__

→ How long were you living together? __3__

*Repeat for additional partners. Please continue on extra sheet if required.*

## Arriving at this destination

When did you arrive in this city (Cebu)? (Month/ year) __I was born in Cebu City__

When did you arrive in the shelter? (Month/ year) __2010 can't remember month__

What was your most recent employment? __I worked informaly as a nanny__

What is the main reason you moved here? __I was born and raised in Cebu City.__

Was it a voluntary decision to take up this work – or do you feel as you were forced, or deceived? If so, please explain.
I needed money so I work as a nanny for my neighbor. I also worked sometimes as sales lady at an eatery and have worked at 10 yo.

*Please continue on extra sheet if required.*

in Labangon, the house was made of light materials

in the house urban, but not coastal

and own electricity no abuse experienced

2 escaped

| Weather experienced at this location: Examples: •Flooding •Landslides •Monsoon wind/ rains •Typhoon • Earthquake •Drought | Did you experience any other 'disaster' here which caused you to move? Examples: •Fire •Displacement due to development •Other (please specify) | Did you choose to move to this place, or did you feel that you were forced to do so? Please explain. | Did you have enough money to meet your basic needs (water, food, education)? | Were there medical needs in the household? If so, please explain. | Was there abuse in the household? (Y/N) Please explain if you feel able. You do not have to answer. | Anything else you want to tell us about your time living here (optional). |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| tropical | NONE | this is my family bye when I was born | Just enough | NONE | NONE | I remember happy thoughts |
| tropical | NONE | we were renting a house after my parents separated we lived w/ my stepfather | Just enough | NONE my stepfather sexually abused me | my mother would frequently beat me up before 2 weeks b/c of my father | I was always crying because my parents seperated. |
| tropical | during heavy rains or high tide, we would go to the gym for evacuation | my father took me in when he learned 2 was abused we lived in his friends house | just enough | none | None from my father | I feel save because I live my fathers house. |
| tropical | NONE | my mother took me from my fathers care w/ no explanation | Just enough | none | sexually abused by the same stepfather. I was not allowed to go out the house | I feel hopeless, scared and depress. |
| tropical | NONE | 2 ran away from home to escape the abuses and went with my train pastor | Just enough | NONE | NONE | I feel save but sometime 7 feel scared if my mother find me. |
| tropical | during heavy rains or high tide, we would go to the gym for evacuation | 2 missed my father so 2 lived back w/ him | just enough | none | none | someone sold me to a customer who took me in his car and housing me somewhere 2 don't know. 2 stayed there for a few months until 2 escaped |

Please continue on extra sheet if required

★ 8-9 yrs old    lived in w/ a female partner in Labaragan, the house was made of light materials    there were only the 2 of us in the house urban, but not coastal    w/ toilet and running water and own electricity    no abuse experienced

## Narrative: Impact of weather/ disaster

► We would like to know more about the effect of the weather or disasters in your timeline, such as typhoons, flooding, fire etc. For example: did any of these events damage your family's home or business? Did any of these events ultimately cause you to leave in search of work? If so, please explain. (Interviewer: please inquire about each disaster/weather event the participants has cited in the timeline to establish its impact. Encourage participants to think widely about the issue. For example, if the weather damaged a home, did this mean money had to be spent fixing the home that would have been spent on something else like healthcare or school transport?)
Continue on separate sheet as necessary

Moving house is the on of reason why I'm push my self to envolve the Sex work because I need money to support my self and my father & sister.

## Priorities and values

► What are your top three priorities in life? Please list in order. (Examples may include providing for family/ children's education) 1.) College   2.) work
3.) to help my family financialy

► How important is providing financially for your family, especially your parents? This is important for me because I want them to experience the happy life and also I want to res Cue them from poverty.

► Has this/ would this affect your decision to take employment risks? If so, please explain. If I get work, I want to give them a house and support my brother education.

► What risks would you be prepared to take to support your family financially in the future? Please explain  by

► Who has provided the main income in your family in the past two years? (Please specify what 'family' means – eg parents) my mother

► Final question: What is the achievement in life you're most proud of, and why? I passed the elementary and high school ALS. Then I also proud to my self when I was save from my dengeros exprience before.

**Field interviews conducted** (*asterisk indicates full recording and transcript available):

1. **Dr Ela Atienza**, Department of Political Science, University of Philippines
2. **Dr Jean Encinas-Franco**, Assistant Professor, University of Philippines
3. **Marissa Monge**, Head of Women and Children's Protection, Tacloban City Police.
4. **Jerry Yaokasin**, Vice-Mayor of Tacloban City
5. ***Carmela Bastes**, Social Welfare Officer 3, and Head of the Woman and Children Shelter of Tacloban City.
6. **Remedios L. Petilla**, Mayor of Palo, Leyte.
7. ***Eva Jocson**, Co-Ordinator for the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking in eastern Visayas: Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)
8. ***Meriam R. Balmocena**, Head of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), Region VIII.
9. **Alberto Penaflor**, Welfare Case Officer, Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA)
10. ***Ruperto Golong**, City Prosecutor of Tacloban, and Chair of the Region VIII Taskforce on Anti-Trafficking and Regional Prosecutor (for Region VIII covering Leyte Island including Tacloban City, and Samar Island)
11. **Rhoda Ercilla**, Plan International trafficking specialist during Haiyan (now consultant)
12. **Marietta B. Gaspay**, Former Save the Children Logistics Officer during Yolanda
13. **Emelita S. Montalban**, Captain of Barangay 88 (near airport, devastated by Haiyan)
14. **Remedios G. Buna**, Head of City Social Welfare and Development office (CSWD), Tacloban City
15. **Ted Jopson**, Head of Tacloban City Housing and Community Development Office
16. **Dr Ladylyn Lim**, Politics Lecturer at University of Philippines' Tacloban campus.
17. **Jane G. Balondo**, Statistics Specialist – Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA) for Region VIII
18. **Kaira Canete**, former University of Philippines lecturer and now PhD student at University of New South Wales, Australia. Focusing on protection issues following Typhoon Haiyan.
19. **Dr Rhodora Masilang-Bucoy,** Chairperson of the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW). Formerly Associate Professor of Political Science and Development, and Gender Studies at the University of the Philippines (UP), Cebu.
20. **Dr Zona Hildegarde S. Amper,** Department of Anthropology, Social and History at San Carlos University, Cebu.
21. **Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA)**, Region VII, Cebu City.
22. **Antonio Yap,** Planning Officer, Region VII Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). (The regional director, Evelyn B. Macapobre, was out of town all week.)
23. **Emily Lagrimas,** social worker at DSWD and working for Plan International supporting people affected by Haiyan at the time of the typhoon.
24. **Rhee Telen,** Research and Documentation Division, Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management, Cebu.
25. **Naomi Truya**, lawyer from Children's Legal Bureau, Cebu.
26. ***Linda Tamkeen**, Director of Tamkeen Fields for Aid, Amman, Jordan.
27. **Arianne**, case worker (first interview) and Sister Fuentez, Centre Head (second interview), Good Shepherd Welcome House.
28. ***Tess Fernandez**, Head, Lihok Pilipina

29. **\*Latonio Marietta**, academic and former DSWD worker
30. **\*Haley Atienza**, Head, Philddra
31. **\*Cecilia Flores-Oebanda**. Founding President and Executive Director, Visayan Forum
32. **\*Prosecutor Fernando Gubalane**, Chair of Inter-Agency Council Against Human Traffic and Public Prosecutor
33. **\*Marcus Antonious Bao**, Social Welfare Officer II, CSWD Lapu-Lapu
34. **\*Pureza Tabuac**, Social Welfare Officer III and ATIP Focal Person, CSWD Mandaue.

# APPENDIX 2

A case study from World Vision Philippines of a woman who became a victim of human trafficking following migration motivated by Typhoon Haiyan.

### 35. A job opportunity gone bad:
"I didn't think I would make it out alive"

By Rhonda Hirst, Communications Manager, World Vision Haiyan Response Team

 *, 49, has eight children. She lived a basic, yet comfortable life in a remote community in the rolling hills of Ormoc, Leyte. Her husband made coconut wine and sold two large barrels a week for 5,000 pesos. "We were happy before Yolanda," she explains.

Like many others, Joy's home was flattened by Typhoon Yolanda and their family's income source disappeared when all of the nearby coconut trees snapped in half due to the super typhoon's strong gusts of wind.

"I had to find work to feed my family. We had no house, and no food," she says. She found a job as a domestic helper close to home for 2,000 pesos per month. She worked alongside two other women who were hired to do the same work.

"After one month, my boss' sister asked me and the other women to work in Iloilo for 3,000 pesos for just one month of work. My husband was against it, but it was only a month and we really needed the money, so he allowed me to go.

What awaited them once they arrived in Panay Island was an employer that forced them to work as domestic helpers, kept them confined, and took away their means of communicating with friends or family.

*"We were trapped there for seven months with no pay. We were beaten badly, and she threatened to kill us if we tried to escape. We were so, so afraid,"* she shared.

"I didn't think I would make it out alive. I thank God every day that I am still breathing." she tells, wiping away her tears.

Joy's story is a classic example of a seemingly good job opportunity that turned into a nightmare. Lured by the promise of additional money, Joy fell into a trap typical to trafficking stories, where victims are forced to work far from home, drawn into the situation due to desperate need. Traffickers prey on boys and girls, women and men. Sometimes they have local contacts that facilitate the recruitment. These contacts seem trustworthy, and can even be known friends, neighbours or family to the people whom they are recruiting.

Through Sustainable Livelihood Recovery for Typhoon-Affected People program, World Vision and U.S. Embassy Manila's United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have been educating communities in Ormoc, Western Leyte to recognize the signs of human trafficking and heighten their awareness about potential recruiters.

Likewise, village leaders learned how to detect, respond and report cases of human trafficking, which resulted in the successful rescue of Joy and the two other women from her village.

"If people are aware of the common themes and the risks, they are better equipped to make informed decisions," says Angelina Theodora, World Vision Typhoon Haiyan Response Manager.

"Sadly, recruiters prey on the vulnerable. The education campaign is part of our work, but World

Vision is working to ensure that the poorest of the poor have means of making an income. This way, people are less likely to take risks that they otherwise wouldn't."

A key aspect of the campaign is encouraging people to come forward with concerns. By raising their voice, community members can save lives, like in the case of Joy. After Joy's story emerged, the local referral pathways was activated, and linkages made to local enforcement and social welfare authorities to ensure that she and the other two women could access psychosocial support and legal assistance should they decide to pursue a case.

World Vision and USAID are calling on the public for information about anyone that may be involved in human trafficking. Similarly, they urge people to report possible cases, where someone may have been caught up in a trafficking scheme. Confidentiality is assured when you call the hotline on 0998 642 7453.

Source: World Vision Haiyan Response, 2014

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