



# Effects of Forced Labor and Trafficking in Persons on Female Relatives of Male Fishers

## FINAL REPORT

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**RAPID ASIA**  
Guiding Sustainable Change

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*On the cover: A woman with her fisher husband and children.*

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# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BFAR</b>	Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
<b>CAF</b>	Census of Agriculture and Fisheries
<b>CSWDO</b>	City Social Welfare and Development Office
<b>CAPI</b>	Computer-Aided Personal Interviewing
<b>CBO</b>	Community-Based Organization
<b>CFV</b>	Commercial Fishing Vessel
<b>DO</b>	Department Order
<b>DOLE</b>	Department of Labor and Employment
<b>ESOMAR</b>	European Society for Opinion and Market Research
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FL/TIP</b>	Forced Labor/Trafficking in Persons
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>GenSan</b>	General Santos City
<b>Ha</b>	Hectare
<b>ILO</b>	International Labor Organization
<b>IDI</b>	In-Depth Interview
<b>IUU</b>	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OND Hesed</b>	Oblates of Notre Dame Hesed Foundation, Inc.
<b>PSA</b>	Pre-Situational Analysis
<b>RA</b>	Republic Act
<b>SAFE Seas</b>	Safeguarding Against and Addressing Fishers' Exploitation at Sea
<b>SHG</b>	Self-Help Group
<b>US TIP</b>	United States Trafficking in Persons
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

The study, “Effects of Forced Labor and Trafficking in Persons on Female Relatives of Male Fishers,” is part of Plan International USA’s *Safeguarding Against and Addressing Fishers’ Exploitation at Sea* (SAFE Seas) project. The objectives of this study can be summarized as follows: (i) to assess women’s awareness and knowledge of forced labor and trafficking in persons (FL/TIP) on fishing vessels; (ii) to explore women’s experiences and coping strategies to deal with the impact of FL/TIP; (iii) to assess gender norms and gender relationships in the fishing community; and (iv) to identify potential future roles for women and how women’s agency can contribute to prevention and protection against FL/TIP.

This study took place in Sarangani Province and General Santos City (GenSan) of the Soccsksargen region, where the SAFE Seas project is being implemented and where the SAFE Seas Pre-Situational Analysis was carried out. Three municipalities, including Kiamba, Glan and GenSan, were selected where fishers and their families are known to reside.

This study employed a mixed-methods approach comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods with the following four target groups: (i) key stakeholders in two provinces, including local government units, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community members and boat owners; (ii) wives or female relatives of male fishers in Sarangani Province and GenSan, prioritizing wives of fishers as they are likely to have more first-hand knowledge; (iii) fishers working on fishing vessels who have experience or

are aware of FL/TIP; and (iv) wives whose male partners have been victims of FL/TIP on fishing vessels and lived in Sarangani Province or GenSan. The survey team interviewed a total of 210 women, the vast majority being wives of fishers in 12 barangays in Kiamba, Glan and GenSan. The qualitative interviews were conducted with 10 key informant interviews (seven women and three men), six focus group discussions (FGDs of four female groups and two male groups) and 10 in-depth interviews with wives whose husbands were victims of FL/TIP. All data collection was conducted during February-March 2020.

In the Philippine fishing sector, the terms FL and TIP are often used interchangeably. Based on definitions in international law, there is an overlap between FL and TIP, in the sense that trafficking can result in exploitative working conditions that may amount to FL. However, they are conceptually distinct, and each has its own definition.<sup>2</sup> According to The Republic Act (RA) 10364 — also known as the Expanded Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act or RA 10364 — the act of FL is considered a form of TIP, so there is no separate category. The RA 10364 section d) Forced Labor — refers to the extraction of work or services from any person by means of enticement, violence, intimidation or threat; use of force or coercion, including deprivation of freedom, abuse of authority or moral ascendancy; debt-bondage; or deception, including any work or service extracted from any person under the menace of penalty. Further, the criminal penalties outlined in RA 10364 make no distinction between FL and TIP. Therefore, the term FL carries the same meaning as

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1 South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and GenSan.

2 The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines forced labor as “all work or service that is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily” (ILO C.29, Art. 1). The UN Protocol, 2000, article 3(a): “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring 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 a position of vulnerability or 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...” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/protocoltraffickinginpersons.aspx>.

TIP. Based on this definition, this report will refer to both concepts as FL/TIP.

### Women's awareness and perception of FL/TIP

Overall, 30% of the women surveyed had never heard the term FL/TIP, while 50% said they had heard of it but did not know much about it, leaving 21% who said they were familiar with the topic. This finding highlights the evident gap that exists; that is, even if



*Interview with a fisher's wife*

the husband or son has experienced abuse, this does not automatically translate into women being aware of FL/TIP. While awareness alone would not necessarily protect women from the impact of FL/TIP, it would help in mitigating or seeking remedy for this abuse. The awareness of abusive practices tends to be normalized across the community and generations, with the families having virtually no alternatives for income and thus predisposed to accepting such practices. There is, however, a distinct lack of awareness that abusive practices are illegal and that they have rights to protect them from such conditions.

The most common sources of awareness were TV documentaries and other programs (59%), followed by news and media reports (55%) and family and friends (33%). Community radio is also a source of information (29%). This result shows the significant role that mass media and word-of-mouth communication have in spreading information about FL/TIP.

Fishers and their wives and family members who have experienced the negative impact of FL/TIP cannot solve the problem independently. Most study participants confirmed they would rather keep quiet and accept their situation to avoid trouble, recognizing the significant power imbalance between themselves and the vessel owners and operators. Moreover, most fishers and their wives are neither aware of their rights nor do they understand what decent working conditions should be and what entitlements they should receive. Most significantly, there is a lack of enforcement of relevant regulations for fishing; for example, not one participant had knowledge of any fisher having an employment agreement or contract, despite it being legally mandatory for employers to provide one.

Across all FGDs with both women and men, there was a general acceptance of poor working conditions because most fishers have similar experiences of exploitation and maltreatment, leading them to think it is "normal" practice. Virtually all fishers interviewed had been introduced to fishing by their fathers or other male relatives, who themselves experienced poor working conditions. Fishing on vessels appeared to be the result of either being unable or unwilling to continue secondary education or higher education; lacking such qualifications in GenSan and Sarangani leaves few options for men to make a living. Faced with the lack of alternative livelihoods, a general acceptance that fishing is tough and the acknowledgment that payment or working conditions are unfair, these abuses are tolerated to maintain an income for the men's households.

### Impacts on women and their families and coping strategies

Women whose husbands experienced FL/TIP had also experienced negative impacts on the family. Stress and having to work extra hours to make ends meet were the most commonly mentioned consequences on women, followed by debt burden. In some cases, their children had to stop going to school so they could also work and support the family. There was also a negative impact on their marriage if the husband was detained or had experienced psychological trauma. Most of those interviewed also had a debt burden from the need to take out cash advances from

the vessel owner. The repression of their FL/TIP experience creates an underlying atmosphere of anxiety and stress in the family and has harmful psychological effects on the wife and children.

This result appears to be consistent with the type of abuses experienced by fishers. Manipulation of salary and debt are common tactics that unscrupulous employers use and could likely lead to stress, financial pressure and debt burden for families. In contrast, in the absence of FL/TIP, most families (71%) did not experience any such issues.

Borrowing money in times of need is a common coping strategy for fisher households. In this study, while some fishers took a loan or salary advance from their employer, there was no clear evidence of debt bondage. However, fishers' wage calculations, often based on "share of the catch," are frequently at rates below the minimum wage, forcing women of the household to borrow money to buy food and other necessities. Money would either be borrowed as a cash advance from the vessel owner or from a money lender with high interest rates. The latter was more common, as cash advances were conditional on the fisher having made a catch on their current trip. This scenario often leads to what can be referred to as "debt enslavement," meaning continuous dependency on debt. It should be noted that women who had husbands or sons who experienced FL/TIP also were more likely to be in a situation of debt enslavement (i.e., 26% compared to 14% in the absence of FL/TIP). In other words, when there is a case of debt enslavement, instances of FL/TIP almost doubles.

### Gender norms and barriers and women's agency

The study confirmed that gender norms and social values determine the role of women and men both within and outside the household. Beliefs around gender roles are reflected in the division of work in the home. In the vast majority of fishing households, it is the women who do most of the daily household chores, including preparing food, buying groceries, cleaning, washing and looking after children. Taking all activities into account, four out of five women (81%) did most or all of these tasks.

Field data found that much of the work women do, although productive, is often unpaid or underpaid. Even though most of the women also carried out fishing support activities, it was clear that such work is not formally recognized in the eyes of both men and women. The division of labor has implications when considering the impact of FL/TIP and how to engage women in mitigation activities.

Women interviewed expressed a desire for greater economic agency through fair loans, skill development, or assistance in setting up a small business. The women wanted to rely less on their husband's income not only for greater economic resilience, but also to grant their husbands greater freedom in their choice of work and not accepting exploitative and abusive work to secure basic subsistence.

Interviews with stakeholders revealed that women who are involved in local community organizations organized by NGOs or religious organizations have more access to vital resources and information, such as training and seminars or income-generating programs. In addition, most women believed men were more decisive than they are, especially about work-related issues, including FL/TIP. Finance is an area where women tend to have decision-making power, both with household finances (51%) and borrowing money (45%). The decision-making process is very similar when comparing households with or without FL/TIP experience.



*Fisher's wife performing household chores*



## Key recommendations

### Raise awareness:

- Carry out widespread awareness-raising activities on FL/TIP and in consideration of its wider gendered impact.
- Adopt television and radio as communication channels.
- Educate women on their labor rights, legal services and advocacy strategies.

### Enable access to affordable loans and social protection programs:

- Provide access to affordable microloans or credit schemes.
- Promote the use of women-led savings groups.
- Establish and/or expand social protection programs in ways that will eliminate the reliance on loans for basic needs.

### Promote livelihood and skills development for greater agency and empowerment of fisher households:

- Increase engagement and participation in existing community-based programs.
- Offer relevant and targeted livelihood support for women.
- Encourage school participation to assist children and young people to continue their education.
- Improve counseling support and remedial services for FL/TIP victims and families.

### Build capacity and coordination:

- Use this study as an advocacy tool with relevant stakeholders to stimulate dialogue and ensure coordinated efforts to improve the livelihood of fisher households.
- Use community-based organizations to work alongside the Department of Labor and Employment in providing safe, secure and trustworthy reporting mechanisms for cases of labor violations and FL/TIP.<sup>3</sup>
- Strengthen the reporting and support mechanism for Filipino fishers arrested, detained and exploited by Indonesian authorities.
- Support local governments to actively promote gender-sensitive policies that tackle gender stereotypes and occupational segregation.
- Conduct a follow-up study to monitor progress toward reducing fisher exploitation and abuse and improving the wellbeing of fisher families.

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<sup>3</sup> The existing mechanism in GenSan is Plan International's partner OND Hesed.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. The Philippine fishing industry

The Philippines is an archipelago with 7,100 islands endowed with vast aquatic resources. Its sea area is about seven times larger than its land area of 300,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The marine resources of coral reefs, mangroves and fish stocks take up 220 million hectare (ha) within the Exclusive Economic Zone. Of these, 26.6 million ha are coastal, and 193.4 million ha are oceanic waters. The continental shelf area is about 18.46 million

ha, and the length of the coastline is 17,460 km. The Philippines is a significant fish producer, ranking 11th among the 80 fish-producing countries of the world. In 2017, the Philippines ranked ninth among the top fish-producing countries globally, producing 4.125 million metric tons of fish, crustaceans, mollusks and aquatic plants (including seaweed). In 2018, the total volume of fisheries production in the Philippines from January to December 2018 reached 4,356,875 metric tons, which were valued at 265.35 billion pesos compared to the 241.94 billion pesos in 2014, an average yearly increment of 1.8 billion pesos.<sup>4</sup> The fishing industry is a crucial sector in the Filipino economy, accounting for approximately 1.2% at current prices of the Gross Domestic Product in 2018.<sup>5</sup>

Based on the 2012 Census of Agriculture and Fisheries (CAF), the fishing sector employed more than 1.9 million workers who engaged in fishing activities nationwide. The gender divide in this sector is stark, with men representing 92% of the total workforce and women just 8%.<sup>6</sup> The job roles within the fishing sector are starkly divided by gender, with men exclusively holding positions on vessels and women predominantly working in processing and preparations onshore. Literature also shows that wives of low-income fishers assume the responsibility of taking out and managing loans to ensure their household's subsistence while their husbands are out at sea for prolonged periods. Those offering the loans are usually the boat owners, leaving many households indebted to the husband's employer.<sup>7</sup>



File photo by Kristine Villanueva

4 Philippine Statistics Authority. 2019. Fishers situation report, 2018 January to December. <https://www.bfar.da.gov.ph/2019/FSR2018Jan-DecRevisedV5.0.pdf>.

5 Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR). 2019. Philippine Fisheries Profile, 2018. <https://www.bfar.da.gov.ph/files/img/photos/FisheriesProfile2018forWeb.pdf>.

6 For example, the percentage to the total number of aquaculture operator's 91.4 percent are male and 8.6 are female. More specifically, in Soccsksargen region (Sarangani and GenSan) the total number of aquaculture operators are 6,994, of which 6,498 are male and only 496 are female. Thus, the percentage to the total number of aquaculture operator 92.9 percent are male and 7.1 are female. <https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/2012%20CAF%20Aquaculture%20and%20Municipal%20Fishing.pdf>.

7 WINFISH. 2018. "Gender Analysis of the Fisheries Sector General Santos City, Philippines." *The National Network on Women in Fisheries in the Philippines, Inc.*; 33. The USAID Oceans and Fisheries Partnership (USAID Oceans).

The economic dependency on fishing in the Philippines is magnified in GenSan and Sarangani Bay, the major production sites for tuna in the Philippines, which itself is the biggest export item in the Philippine fishing industry.<sup>8</sup> Despite its value to the national and local economy, fishers and their families do not receive equal or just benefit from the economic value of this industry. The high level of informality of the sector, combined with the lack of alternative forms of employment for those lacking qualifications or hard skills, creates a situation of uncertainty and vulnerability for both fishers and their families. This vulnerability has only been exacerbated by the depleting levels of tuna available in the surrounding waters, forcing vessels to venture farther and farther out to maintain a profit and, in the process, exposing crew to harsher conditions, long working hours, lack of medical equipment and participating in illegal fishing.<sup>9</sup> Gender segregation leaves fishers' wives at home to balance the financial burdens and uncertainties brought about by these exploitative practices, as well as their caregiver responsibilities, thus negatively impacting their well-being and agency.

## 1.2. FL/TIP in the fishing industry

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) Work in Fishing Convention (No. 188), all fishers are entitled to written terms and conditions of employment (i.e., a work agreement), decent accommodation and food, medical care, regulated working time, repatriation, social protection and health and safety onboard. It also provides minimum standards relating to recruitment and placement as well as the mandatory requirement of a certificate of medical fitness to work onboard a fishing vessel. Fishing vessels are defined as "any ship or boat, of any nature whatsoever,

irrespective of the form of ownership, used or intended to be used for commercial fishing."<sup>10</sup> Convention 188 applies to all fishers working on fishing vessels of any size, with more rigid standards for vessels over 24 meters in length or operating on longer voyages of three days or more. According to the Convention, anyone involved in fishing activities is considered a "fisher."<sup>11</sup>

In the Philippine fishing sector, the term forced labor (FL) and trafficking in persons (TIP) are often used interchangeably. For example, media accounts of unfree labor in the fishing industry almost always invoke the language of slavery and trafficking, drawing on the ILO definition of trafficking, which links it to FL.<sup>12</sup> Another report stated that Filipino fishers working on



File photo by Kristine Villanueva

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>9</sup> Verite. 2016, *Research on indicators of forced labor in the supply chain of tuna in the Philippines*: 33.

<sup>10</sup> ILO. 2007. Work in Fishing Convention (No.188), art. 1, (g).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 1, (e).

<sup>12</sup> The Guardian. 2018. "They are taking out a generation of tuna: Overfishing causes crisis in Philippines." Sources from various media reports on FL/TIP in the Philippines (August 23 2018). <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/aug/23/they-are-taking-out-a-generation-of-tuna-overfishing-causes-crisis-inphilippines>.

both handline and purse seine tuna fishing typically work under some form of debt bondage through the receipt of cash loans or advances, or products at inflated prices.<sup>13</sup> Debt bondage is one of the most common indicators of FL as is TIP for labor exploitation, and debt itself is identified as a major driver of vulnerability to FL/TIP and exploitative working situations.<sup>14</sup>

Based on definitions in international law, there is an overlap between FL and TIP, in the sense that trafficking can result in exploitative working conditions that may amount to FL. While they are, legally speaking, conceptually distinct and each has its own definition,<sup>15</sup> recently there has been increasing debate over whether all FL comprises trafficking and whether movement should be a necessary element for trafficking.<sup>16</sup> The United States Trafficking in Persons (US TIP) and the Conference of Parties Working Group on Trafficking in Persons have both shifted toward de-emphasizing the element of movement and focusing instead on the forms of exploitation themselves, making FL and TIP, for the purpose of labor exploitation, virtually indistinguishable.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the ILO in its 2014 Protocol to the Forced Labor Convention 1930 states that its definition of FL shall encompass trafficking for the

purpose of forced or compulsory labor.<sup>18</sup>

Within the Philippines, according to The Republic Act (RA) 10364 — also known as the Expanded Anti-Trafficking Act or RA 10364 — the act of FL is considered a form of TIP, so there is no separate category.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the term FL carries the same meaning as TIP. Based on this definition, this report will refer to both concepts as FL/TIP.

Freedom from FL/TIP is one of the most basic human rights and a cornerstone for ensuring decent work for all. FL cannot only be understood in terms of low wages or poor working conditions; there is also a requirement of involuntariness. This can be either through deception or coercion, such as deceptive recruitment, abuse of vulnerability, debt bondage, excessive overtime or restriction of movement. The ILO's Special Action Program to Combat Forced Labor has defined 11 indicators<sup>20</sup> representing the most common signs of FL.<sup>21</sup> These indicators were taken into account for this study to identify potential instances of FL/TIP.<sup>22</sup> These indicators are in line with the definition of FL in the RA 10364.<sup>23</sup>

13 Seafish. 2020. *Ethical Issues in Seafood* (January 2020). Philippines Country Profile. [https://seafish.org/media/Publications/SeafishEthical-Profile\\_Philippines\\_Jan2020.pdf](https://seafish.org/media/Publications/SeafishEthical-Profile_Philippines_Jan2020.pdf).

14 United Nations General Assembly. 2016. Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, A/HRC/33/46 (July 4, 2016). [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/33/46](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/33/46).

15 International Labor Organization. 2000. The ILO defines forced labor as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily” (ILO C.29, Art. 1). The UN Protocol, 2000, article 3(a): “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring 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 a position of vulnerability or 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...” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/protocoltraffickinginpersons.aspx>.

16 Chuang, J. 2014. Exploitation creep and the unmaking of anti-trafficking law. *Articles in Law Reviews & Other Academic Journals*: 563.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

18 ILO. 2016. ILO Standards on Forced Labor. The New Protocol and Recommendation at a Glance.

19 RA 10364. “(d) Forced Labor – refers to the extraction of work or services from any person by means of enticement, violence, intimidation or threat, use of, force or coercion, including deprivation of freedom, abuse of authority or moral ascendancy, debt-bondage or deception including any work or service extracted from any person under the menace of penalty. <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRON-IC/103636/125993/F1442701866/PHL103636.pdf>.

20 [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms\\_203832.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_203832.pdf).

21 “a) abuse of vulnerability; b) deception; c) restriction of movement; d) isolation; e) physical and sexual violence; f) intimidation and threats; g) retention of identity documents; h) withholding of wages; i) debt bondage; j) abusive working and living conditions; and j) excessive overtime.”

22 See questionnaire, question A4 included as Appendix 1.

23 *Ibid.* The RA 10364.



Working on a fishing vessel typically involves long working hours and strenuous activity in a challenging marine environment. Fishing vessels may be out at sea for long periods and beyond the reach of national labor inspectors. Some fishing vessels operate illegally, such as changing the vessel's flag and fishing in restricted waters. Such practices are often tied to other transnational crimes, such as human, weapons or drug trafficking and illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing.<sup>24</sup> Coercive practices have also been documented in other parts of the sector, including onshore seafood processing.<sup>25</sup> According to an ILO Report in 2013, the fishing industries in developing countries harbor some of the worst forms of human rights abuse, despite their importance to coastal communities and their

contribution to economic prosperity. The same ILO report also indicated how fishing industries are particularly vulnerable to FL/TIP. The use of unskilled workers with inadequate training, the isolation of these workers for months at sea, regulatory gaps and the lack of law enforcement are identified as the main factors of FL/TIP in the fishing industries.<sup>26</sup> Employment in the Philippine fishing sector has traditionally offered poor working conditions, very low transparency and high informality. One report described how 63 Filipino fishers were trapped at sea while on a long-haul fishing vessel; the vessel only docked once a year unless repairs were needed. The men had been deceived about the conditions and nature of the work. They were subjected to threats and intimidation, substandard living and working conditions, surveillance, arbitrary punishment, withholding of identifying documents, inadequate provision of medical treatment and the non-payment of salary.<sup>27</sup>

In response, the Filipino government expressed a strong commitment to combating FL/TIP through strict policies and law enforcement. For example, the government ratified 38 ILO Conventions and amended the law to adopt the Forced Labor Convention, 1930 (No. 29). Specifically, the government enacted the RA 9208, also known as the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003. It established the necessary institutional mechanisms to protect and support trafficked persons and provided penalties for its violations. In 2012, the RA 9208 was amended through the RA 10364. For the working conditions of fishers, the government stipulated the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Department Order (DO) No. 156-16 (DO-156-16).<sup>28</sup> This regulation, passed in July 2016, provides detailed labor standards, largely in line with the ILO C188 Work in Fishing Convention (on the requirements of employment on commercial fishing vessels (CFV), the rights of fishers, the duties of employers and the mechanisms of labor administration and inspection). It



*File photo by Kristine Villanueva*

24 UNODC. 2011. Transnational Organized Crime in the fishing Industry, focus on: Trafficking in Persons, Smuggling of Migrants and Illicit Drugs Trafficking. Vienna. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Issue\\_Paper\\_-\\_TOC\\_in\\_the\\_Fishing\\_Industry.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Issue_Paper_-_TOC_in_the_Fishing_Industry.pdf).

25 ILO, 2018, Baseline research findings on fishers and seafood workers in Thailand, Ship to Shore Rights, pp. 27-28, 35. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_619727.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_619727.pdf).

26 ILO. Caught at sea: Forced labor and trafficking in fisheries; also see: <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01525149/document>.

27 <https://nexushumantrafficking.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/surtees-2013-trapped-at-sea.pdf>.

28 <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/103635/125992/F-1348308564/PHL103635.pdf>.

applies to vessel owners, fishers and captains or masters onboard Philippine-registered vessels engaged in commercial fishing operations in the Philippines and international waters.<sup>29</sup> Due to these efforts, the Philippines was removed from the European Union (EU) Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) watch list in 2015.<sup>30</sup> In 2016, the Philippines later improved its trafficking profile to Tier 1 — meets the minimum standard for eliminating TIP — and the Philippines currently remains at this level.<sup>31</sup>

However, according to recent reports, there is still evidence of FL/TIP in the Philippine fishing sector. The Philippines country narrative in the US TIP report 2020 stated that men are commonly victims of FL through debt bondage in the agricultural, fishing and maritime sectors, while women and children are usually subjected to other forms of FL/TIP.<sup>32</sup> A report on the indicators of FL in the tuna supply chain in the Philippines highlighted that many fishers, including handline and purse seine fishery, experience exploitative practices such as lack of employment contracts, no access to complaint mechanisms, threat of exclusion from future employment and being forced to engage in illegal activities or hazardous work.<sup>33</sup> Another report pointed to excessive work hours, up to 20 hours a day, for seven days a week while remaining isolated at sea for months with minimal sustenance.<sup>34</sup> According to one media report, vessel owners in GenSan have been known to mislead fishers with exaggerated salaries and working conditions. The traditionally informal methods of recruitment and lack of contracts in

areas like GenSan often create a situation where workers are exploited with little opportunity for redress.<sup>35</sup> The Pre-Situational Analysis (PSA) has corroborated these findings of informality, specifically the use of social networks to quickly find a vessel crew when there is a vacancy.<sup>36</sup>

While there are efforts to help victims of FL/TIP on fishing vessels, the impact on fisher families remains relatively unexplored. Fishers are often the primary breadwinners for their families, meaning any suffering from FL/TIP is likely to impact their families economically as well as psychologically. For example, in the case of unpaid or delayed earnings, there is likely to be financial tension in the household and an inability to meet basic needs, which in turn contributes to the poverty of the fishers and affects women and other family members. However, this form of impact has received less attention, and no recent report or study could be found, which leaves a research gap on the gendered impact of FL/TIP in fisher households.

### 1.3. Gender dynamics in the Philippine fishing sector today

The roles of men and women in the fishing sector are segregated based on the perception that women are caregivers and men breadwinners, with women mainly responsible for the domestic and private sphere

29 The Philippines. 2016. Rules and Regulations Governing the Working and Living Conditions of Fishers on Board Fishing Vessels Engaged on Commercial Fishing Operation. Department of Labor and Employment, Order No. 156-16.

30 Seafood Source. EU Threatens Thai sanctions over IUU fishing, clears Korea, Philippines (April 21, 2015). <https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/environment-sustainability/eu-threatens-thai-sanctions-over-iuu-fishing-clears-korea-philippines>.

31 <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5b3e0aa4a.html>.

32 United States Department of State. 2020. Trafficking in Persons Report, 20th edition (June 2020): 406–409. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-TIP-Report-Complete-062420-FINAL.pdf>.

33 Verite. 2016. "Research on indicators of the forced labor in the supply chain of tuna in the Philippines." [https://www.verite.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Research-on-Indicators-of-Forced-Labor-in-the-Philippines-Tuna-Sector\\_9.16.pdf](https://www.verite.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Research-on-Indicators-of-Forced-Labor-in-the-Philippines-Tuna-Sector_9.16.pdf).

34 NTS Bulletin. 2016. Labor Exploitation in the Fishing Industry (May).

35 <https://opinion.inquirer.net/118519/look-into-modern-day-slavery-in-gensan>.

36 *Ibid.* 2019. SAFE Seas Pre-situational analysis: 59.

while men are in charge of the public sphere.<sup>37</sup> In the Philippines, women generally work onshore during the post-harvest season, preparing fishing tools, processing and preserving (salting or drying) and selling seafood products.<sup>38</sup> A 2018 United States Agency for International Development (USAID) study in the Philippines found that men are mostly involved in capture fishing, while women are engaged in fish processing and fish marketing.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, a World Wildlife Fund report showed that women have three key roles in the fishing sector; namely, maintaining equipment such as repairing nets, fish processing and selling fish. Still, the participation of women before and after fish capture activities has been given little attention in terms of their economic contribution and social value.

Regulatory acts continue to maintain the status quo by not recognizing the rights and needs of women who work onshore. Contrary to the UN Work in Fishing Convention, onshore workers in the Philippines, mostly women, are not recognized as fishers.<sup>40</sup> This lack of recognition leads to women's invisibility as contributors to this sector, and their work is often undervalued.<sup>41</sup> Because of this, when male fishers become victims of FL/TIP, the indirect impact this has on women and their families is most often not recognized and may explain why the impact of FL/TIP on women has received less attention in past studies.

Women's roles, positions, experiences and agency onshore are still underexplored. Given the traditional role of women to look after the household, women are not only well suited to find coping solutions to family economic degradation, but they also have a vested interest in doing so. Their presence onshore also allows them to organize and advocate against exploitative practices on fishing vessels. It is necessary, therefore, for women to become more visible and take part in the mitigation of FL/TIP on fishing vessels and its indirect impacts

onshore. Hence, this study explores the gendered nature of power relations within the fishing community in the context of exploitative practices on fishing vessels.

## 1.4. The SAFE Seas project and the current study

The *Safeguarding Against and Addressing Fishers' Exploitation* (SAFE Seas) project of Plan International is an initiative that seeks to combat FL/TIP on fishing vessels in the Philippines and Indonesia. The focus is on fishing vessels with less than 30 gross tons capacity, where labor exploitation is unlikely to be detected or reported. This program is funded by the United States Department of Labor/Bureau of International



*Fisher's wife selling food outside her home*

37 For example: shell and shrimp fry gathering, gleaning, spearfishing in rivers, reef fishing using scoop nets, traps and fish baskets. [http://pubs.iclarm.net/Pubs/Wif/wifglobal/wifg\\_asia.pdf](http://pubs.iclarm.net/Pubs/Wif/wifglobal/wifg_asia.pdf).

38 Siason, I. M. 2018. Women in Fisheries in the Philippines. <http://pubs.iclarm.net/Pubs/Wif/wifasia/N4-06-Siason.pdf>.

39 USAID. 2018. Oceans and Fisheries Partnership (USADI Oceans) studies.

40 According to the DOLE 156-16, the official definition of the term 'fisher' refers to any person engaged in any capacity for carrying out an occupation onboard a commercial fishing vessel (CFV), but excludes shore-based persons carrying out work in a fishing vessel. Hence, the fishers contemplated by DO-156-16 are those who are onboard a Philippine-registered CFV operating within the Philippines or international waters.

41 <http://pubs.iclarm.net/Pubs/Wif/wifasia/N4-06-Siason.pdf>.



Labor Affairs and implemented by Plan International (henceforth Plan), the United States National Office, in cooperation with the Plan Country offices in Indonesia and the Philippines. The timeframe of this project is December 2017 to November 2021.

While FL and TIP commonly affect the livelihood of fishers and their families, past studies on FL/TIP have mostly concentrated on individual men as victims. Less is known about the reverberating impact on spouses and female relatives in the fisher household. This study aims to identify women's awareness of FL/TIP and gender inequality in the fishing sector. The study explores women's experiences, coping strategies and agency with regard to FL/TIP on fishing vessels. It seeks to demonstrate how exploitative practices on vessels have a substantial impact on the wellbeing and economic security of fisher households, with women left to mitigate these impacts on top of their day-to-day responsibilities. An attempt is made to identify roles women can play to help mitigate or reduce the incidence of FL/TIP, potentially through collective organizing to advocate for their husbands or empowering their households and communities economically to shift the balance of power in favor of fishers, thus providing them with greater leverage to protect their rights and ensure their protection from FL/TIP.

According to the SAFE Seas PSA, there is a general lack of awareness of fishers' rights among fishing communities, including women in Puerto Princesa City, the Municipality of Taytay, GenSan, the Municipality of Glan and the Municipality of Kiamba. There is limited availability of information on programs, policies and support organizations for fishers and also among women, young and unemployed men, barangay officials and other members of these communities regarding FL/TIP. Moreover, the lack of designated agencies working in these areas only contributes to low public awareness about FL/TIP. Also, efforts to combat labor exploitation, including FL/TIP, tend not to take into account the vulnerability<sup>42</sup> (i.e., poverty, household debt, gender norms) of fisher families as a whole.

The field research took place in Sarangani Province and GenSan of the Soccsksargen<sup>43</sup> region, where the SAFE Seas project is being implemented and where the PSA had previously collected data. Three municipalities, including Kiamba, Glan and GenSan, were selected where fishers and their families are known to reside.

The objectives of this study are: (1) to understand the socio-economic and gendered impact of FL/TIP as experienced by spouses and female relatives in fisher households; and (2) to inform project interventions, community-level actions, stakeholder engagement and policy responses on how to best combat FL/TIP in fishing communities in the Philippines.

42 Plan International. 2019. Forced Labor and Trafficking in Persons among Fish Workers in Indonesia and the Philippines Pre-Situational Analysis (PSA): The SAFE Seas Project (July).

43 South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and GenSan.



## 2. RESEARCH APPROACH

### 2.1. Scope and objectives of the research

The main objectives of the study can be summarized as follows:

- To assess women's awareness and knowledge about FL/TIP on fishing vessels.
- To explore women's experiences and coping strategies.
- To understand how FL/TIP on fishing vessels affects women and their families' wellbeing.
- To assess how gender norms and gender relations may influence women's responses to FL/TIP and their ability to increase anti-FL/TIP awareness in their communities.
- To identify potential future roles for women and how women's agency can contribute to prevention and protection against FL/TIP on fishing vessels.
- To identify potential barriers to women's agency.
- To contribute to enhancing knowledge of FL/TIP on fishing vessels.

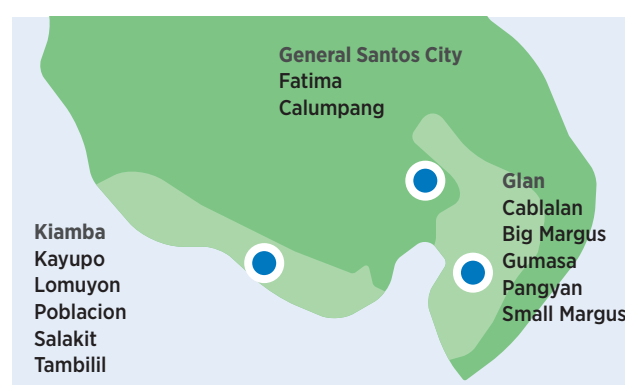
The overall research results will inform the implementation of the SAFE Seas project activities and determine how and to what extent women could be engaged to combat FL/TIP on fishing vessels in Indonesia and the Philippines. The research findings

will also inform policymakers and relevant stakeholders on how to alleviate livelihood challenges and exploitation faced by the most vulnerable members of the fishing community of the Sarangani-GenSan area.

### 2.2. Study locations and populations

A “gender-sensitive approach” was adopted by employing female interviewers to gather data from the field. **Figure 1** shows the study locations. The survey data was collected through the use of computer-aided personal interviewing (CAPI), and the interviewers used computer tablets to record the women's answers. CAPI was useful for bringing all survey components, such as questionnaire design, managing, supervising, interviewing, data entry and validation, into one loop where the data collection process was also monitored. The quantitative survey was conducted over two weeks in February 2020.

**Figure 1. Locations of the Study<sup>44</sup>**



44 Philippine Statistic Authority, Census agriculture and fisheries. 2012. “Aquaculture and municipal fishing Philippines.” [https://psa.gov.ph/content/special-report-highlights-2012-census-agriculture-2012-ca#:~:text=The%202012%20Census%20of%20Agriculture%20and%20Fisheries%20\(CAF\)%20is%20a,fishery%20sectors%20in%20the%20Philippines.&text=The%20reference%20period%20of%20the,2012%20to%20December%2031%2C%202012.](https://psa.gov.ph/content/special-report-highlights-2012-census-agriculture-2012-ca#:~:text=The%202012%20Census%20of%20Agriculture%20and%20Fisheries%20(CAF)%20is%20a,fishery%20sectors%20in%20the%20Philippines.&text=The%20reference%20period%20of%20the,2012%20to%20December%2031%2C%202012.)

## 3. FINDINGS

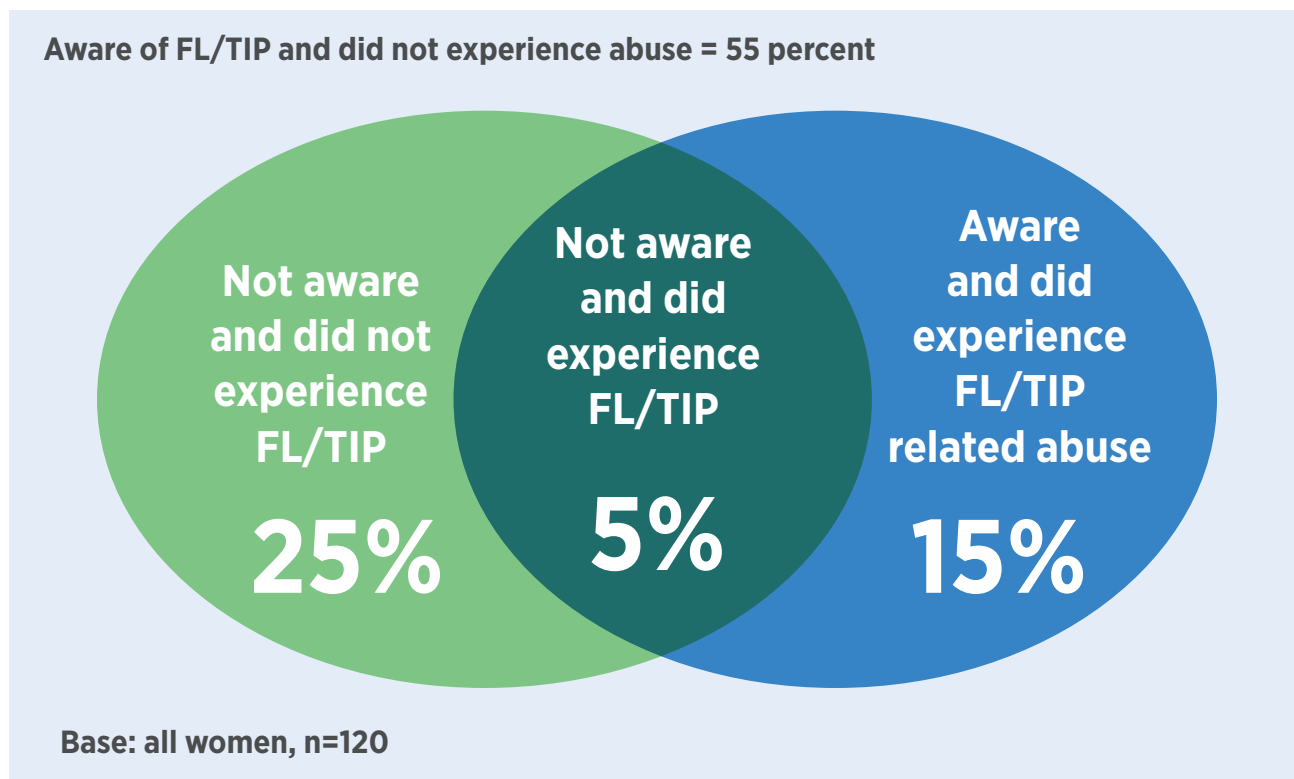
### 3.1. Survey respondent profiles

As a first step, an analysis was carried out to understand the interrelationship between women's awareness of FL/TIP and their husbands' or sons' experience of FL/TIP-related abuses. This analysis determined whether awareness can serve as a deterrent to FL/TIP. In other words, those not aware of the issue are more likely to experience abuse.

**Figure 2** below provides an understanding of the interaction between awareness and experience of FL/TIP. As shown in this figure, 25% of women were not aware of FL/TIP, and their family members never experienced FL/TIP; 15% were aware and had a husband or son who had experienced FL/TIP. The overlap between the two circles is only 5%, representing those who are not aware and had a husband or son who experienced FL/TIP. This result shows

that raising awareness per se may not provide a safeguard against FL/TIP in and of itself. That is, not being aware of FL/TIP is not strongly correlated with abuse experience. As confirmed by the in-depth interviews (IDIs) with fisher wives, most women were indeed aware of the abuse. Still, they did not have the means to do anything to prevent or stop it because they were not aware of to whom they should report it or were afraid their husbands or sons could lose their job if they reported it. It should be pointed out that when comparing results between women who were aware and not aware of FL/TIP, no significant differences were found. Based on these findings, results throughout this report have been broken down by women whose husband or son experienced FL/TIP and those who did not.

**Figure 2. Women Respondents' Awareness vs Experience with FL/TIP**



**Table 1** entails the socio-demographic profile of women broken down by region and FL/TIP experience. It shows about half of the women live in GenSan (51%) and the rest in Glan (24%) or Kiamba (24%). Most of them are between 35 and 49 years old, and the vast majority (97%) are married. Around one in four women have not completed six years of primary education, and two thirds can be considered poor, belonging to the bottom two socioeconomic groups.<sup>45</sup> Overall, the two regions' demographic profile is similar, but those

living in GenSan were, on average, slightly older, more educated and a bit more financially secure. The majority of the women are Cebuano (77%) and Catholic (77%). Ethnicity was found to be more diverse in Glan and Kiamba, with around one third being from an ethnic group other than Cebuano. It is interesting to note that the demographic profile did not differ significantly between those whose husbands had experienced FL/TIP and those who had not.

**Table 1. Profile of Women Respondents in Fisher Households by Region and FL/TIP Experience**

<b>Demographics</b> Base: all respondents	<b>Total n=120 (%)</b>	<b>Gensan n=107 (%)</b>	<b>Glan/Kiamba n=103 (%)</b>	<b>FL/TIP Experience n=42 (%)</b>	<b>No FL/TIP Experience n=168 (%)</b>
<b>Location</b>					
General Santos City	51	100	-	45	52
Kiamba	25	-	52	21	26
Glan	24	-	48	33	21
<b>Age</b>					
18-34	31	24	38	24	33
35-49	49	51	46	48	49
50 or older	21	24	17	29	19
<b>Education</b>					
Less than 6 years	7	5	10	5	8
Completed 6 years	19	18	20	29	17
Completed 9 years	37	35	39	41	36
Completed 12 years or higher	37	43	31	26	40
<b>Marital status and children</b>					
Married	97	95	98	100	96
Have children	93	94	95	95	92
Avg. number of children	3	3	2	3	2
<b>Socioeconomic status</b>					
SES A	6	8	3	7	5
SES B	6	8	4	2	7
SES C	25	29	20	19	26
SES D	49	45	52	55	47
SES E	15	10	20	17	15

<sup>45</sup> Socioeconomic status was measured via estimation by asking what the household could afford to buy. Not always being able to buy food or new clothes would categorize them as SES D or E.

The fishers' profile was also determined by first looking at the relationship between the woman and the fisher. In most cases (88%), the fisher was the woman's husband; in nearly all other cases, it was her son (11%). This outcome indicates the women interviewed would most likely have had firsthand experience with the impact of FL/TIP. Wives reported that most of the fishers do not have proper contracts or formal job agreements with the boat owners, and the recruitment process appears to be mostly informal, with 65% securing the job through relatives or friends. Most of the remaining third (33%) were hired directly by their employer. On average, fishers would be out for 74 days at sea and, according to the FGD participants, have long working hours (between 14 and 20 hours per day), with only three to six hours of rest per day.

It is interesting to note that 25% of all fishers started working when under 18 years of age, indicating child labor may be or may have been common practice. However, most of the fishers in this study (49%) started when they were between 18 and 24 years old. The PSA also found that boys under 18 working on ships

is commonly accepted in the community.<sup>46</sup> Again, fishers' profiles did differ somewhat between those who had experienced FL/TIP and those who had not. Husbands or sons who had experienced FL/TIP had, on average, spent longer periods out at sea (83 vs 71 days) and were more likely to have been recruited directly by their employers (43% vs 30%).

The women participants' profile in terms of media consumption is essential for knowing how future programs can reach them. The vast majority of women have access to television (89%), and exposure is a bit higher in GenSan (94%). Smartphone penetration is 44% overall and 56% in GenSan, likely due to better coverage and more women being able to afford a phone. In line with 59% of phone ownership, 43% of women have access to social media. Facebook and YouTube are the most popular platforms by a large margin, and access is almost exclusively through a mobile device. The media profile did not differ significantly between households who had experienced FL/TIP and those who had not. See **Table 2** for details.

**Table 2. Women Respondents' Media Usage by Region and FL/TIP Experience**

Media profile Base: all respondents	Total n=210 (%)	Gensan n=107 (%)	Glan/Kiamba n=103 (%)	FL/TIP Experience n=42 (%)	No FL/TIP Experience n=168 (%)
<b>Mass media</b>					
Television	89	94	83	86	89
Radio	34	44	24	41	33
Internet	43	55	31	48	42
Newspaper	1	1	1	-	1
None	4	1	8	2	5
<b>Social media</b>					
Facebook	43	55	31	48	42
YouTube	31	41	19	36	29
Twitter	1	1	1	-	1
Instagram	2	4	1	5	2
Other	2	3	1	-	2
None	57	45	69	52	58
<b>Mobile phone</b>					
Regular mobile phone	15	15	15	17	14
Smart phone	44	56	31	45	44
<b>How access to internet</b>	<b>n=94</b>	<b>n=61</b>	<b>n=33</b>	<b>n=20</b>	<b>n=74</b>
Mobile phone	99	100	97	100	99
PC, Laptop or tablet	6	8	3	20	8

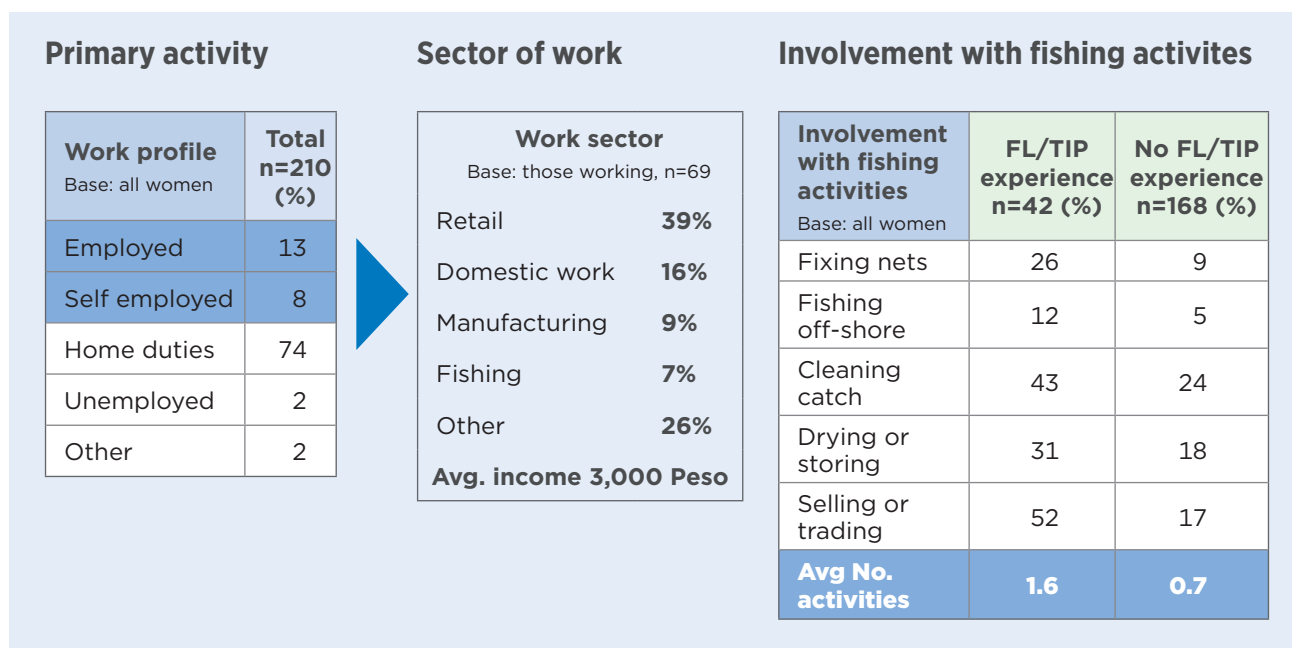
46 SAFE Seas Pre-Situational Analysis. 2019. p. 54.



As highlighted in **Figure 3**, to assess women's roles and contributions to the household economy, women were asked about their current activity and involvement with fishing activities. A majority of women (74%) were engaged with home duties as their main activities, while 21% were employed or self-employed.

Just over half of employed women were in most cases doing retail or domestic work for someone else, while only five women were working in the fishing sector and had an average income of 3,000 pesos per month (USD 60).

**Figure 3. Women Respondents' Working Profile**



Many women also had involvement in fishing activities, repairing nets, cleaning the catch, drying or storing and selling fish. They would do this work on top of their primary activity to help their husband or to earn extra income for the household. Results are shown in Figure 3 above, split by women who experienced FL/TIP and those who did not. In most cases they were selling or trading (52% and 17%) or cleaning the catch (43% and 24%). It is interesting to note that women whose husbands had experienced FL/TIP had, on average, significantly more involvement with fishing activities, approximately 1.7 activities compared to 0.7 for those who have not experienced FL/TIP.

From the focus group discussions (FGDs), it was confirmed that women typically do not have formal roles in the fishing sector but will help out when needed. So, they seldom have the opportunity to take advantage of formal job opportunities. Women's involvement in fishing activities, over and beyond their primary activity, is typically not remunerated. The informal work

they engage in will often increase their workloads since they are also expected to fulfill household duties, and their work and contributions are often overlooked and not formally recognized.

## 3.2. Women's awareness of FL/TIP through a gender lens

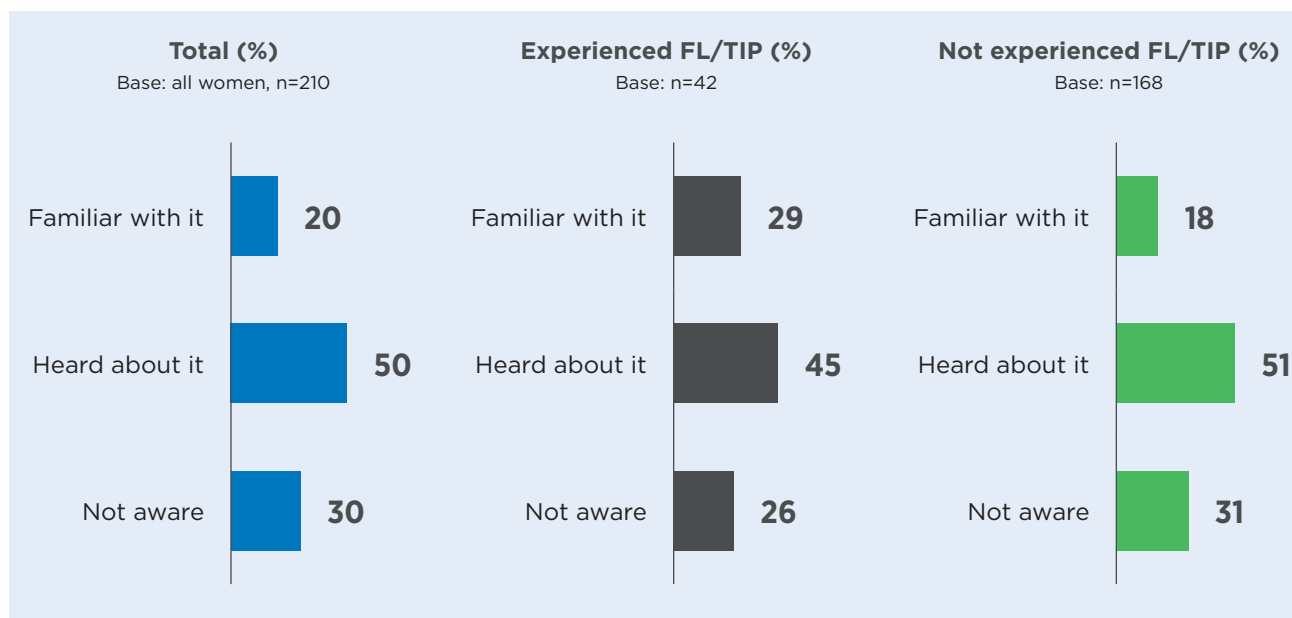
### 3.2.1. Women's awareness of FL/TIP

The survey with women measured awareness of FL/TIP as a concept without any explanation. Awareness was measured across three levels: unaware, had heard about FL/TIP but did not know much about it and familiar with the topic. Overall, 30% of the women surveyed had never heard about FL/TIP, while 50% said they had heard about it but did not know much

about it, leaving 20% who said they were familiar with the topic (see **Figure 4**). Those whose husbands had experienced FL/TIP were, on average, slightly more aware (29%); however, 26% in this group claimed they had never heard about the issue. This finding

highlights the existing evident gap that even if the husband or son has experienced abuse, this does not automatically translate into women being aware of FL/TIP. Hence, awareness does not necessarily protect women from the impact of FL/TIP.

**Figure 4. Women Respondents' Awareness of FL/TIP**



Responses from the FGDs with the fishers and their wives confirmed that abuses in the fishing sector are considered standard and common practice. Examples mentioned included unclear salary deductions, long working hours with limited rest time (three to four hours), late salary payments, no employment benefits, no protection when sick or detained, performing dangerous work and being subject to harassment and verbal abuse. This abuse was reflected in their own words:

**“Only three to four hours’ sleep is normal. Even if they are exhausted, they don’t have a choice because the boat operator will wake them up.”** (FGD with women in GenSan)

**“No job benefits and not enough medical supplies onboard the vessel. No proper salary control, and deductions are made for food and equipment.”** (FGD with fishers in GenSan)

**“If the catch is small, the operator will tell the owner that the fishers were lazy and make them embarrassed in front of many people when they arrive in the port.”**  
(FGD with fishers in Glan)

Women who had heard or were familiar with FL/TIP were asked about the source of awareness. As shown in **Table 3** below, the most common sources of awareness were TV documentaries and other programs (59%), followed by news and media reports (55%) and family and friends (33%). Community radio is also a relevant source (29%). Other sources were mentioned much less frequently. This result shows the significant role that mass media and word-of-mouth communication have in spreading information about FL/TIP. However, how information about FL/TIP has been conveyed and the extent to which it has been accurate is not known.

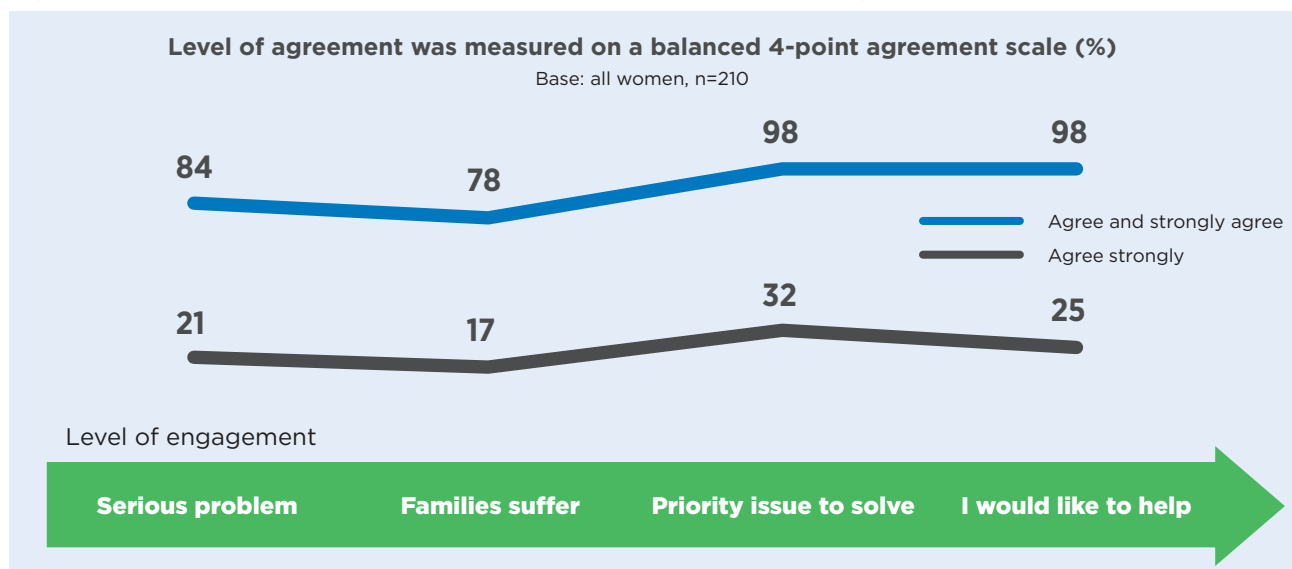
**Table 3. Women Respondents' Source of Information about FL/TIP**

<b>Source of awareness</b> Base: those aware of FL/TIP	<b>Total n=147 (%)</b>	<b>FL/TIP experience n=31 (%)</b>	<b>No FL/TIP experience n=116 (%)</b>
News and media reports	55	81	48
TV documentary or other program	59	55	60
Community radio	29	23	30
Through friends or family	33	29	34
Through local government authorities	5	3	6
Commercial Radio	3	7	2
Internet	7	10	6
Police	3	3	3
Maguindanao TIP-VAWC Actionline	1	3	-
DOLE (Department of Labour and Employment)	2	7	1
POEA (Philippine Overseas Employment Admin)	1	3	1
OWWA (Overseas Workers Welfare Admin)	2	7	1
Kaagapay OFW or other NGO	1	3	-
Public service announcements	1	3	-
Community event, festival, street show, etc.	1	3	-
Other	1	-	1

### 3.2.2. Women respondents' perceptions about FL/TIP

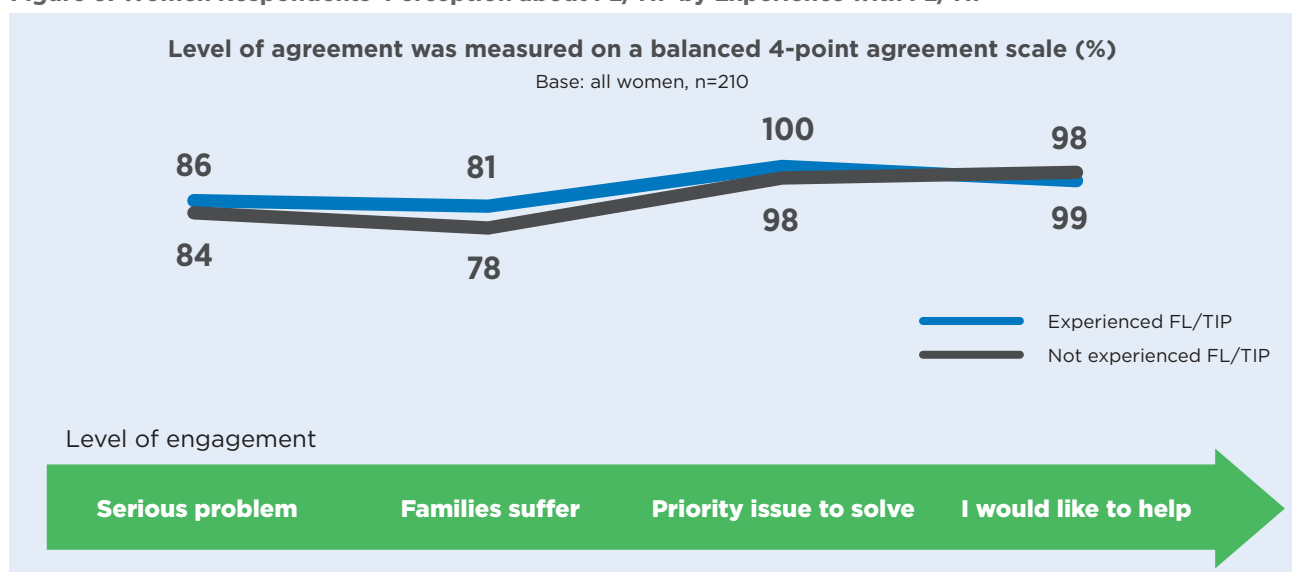
In addition to awareness, women's perceptions of FL/TIP were also measured. Women who had stated they were unaware of the issue were given a brief explanation of what constitutes FL/TIP. They were then asked to agree or disagree with a series of attitude statements. The first statement asked whether FL/TIP was seen as a "serious problem," followed by whether fisher families "suffered" from it. Next, women were asked whether they thought this was an issue that deserved prioritization to come up with solutions and whether the women themselves would like to help

in this process. Formulating the statements this way was deliberate in capturing the level of engagement women have with the issue. The overall result is presented in **Figure 5** below. It shows that the total agreement (i.e., agree and strongly agree) was relatively high, with 78% up to 98% of women agreeing with the four statements and around one in four women strongly agreeing. It is noteworthy that engagement was more persuasive when moving from recognizing the problem to wanting to do something about it. This engagement indicates some women may have come to accept the problem; but if empowered to take action, there is a positive indication they may do that.

**Figure 5. Women Respondents' Perception about FL/TIP and Level of Engagement**

Seeing FL/TIP as a problem was recognized equally by women who had experienced FL/TIP and those who had not, as shown in **Figure 6**. A similar pattern emerged with relatively more women showing

a willingness to do something about the issue. Not surprisingly, 100% of the women in households who had experienced FL/TIP agreed that it should be prioritized as an issue to solve.

**Figure 6. Women Respondents' Perception about FL/TIP by Experience with FL/TIP**

The women's desire to be involved and provide help was supported by most participants in the women's FGDs and some of the women interviewed. Nevertheless, there is a clear notion that such efforts should be collective and not carried out by a single individual.

**“We hope things can change, and I wish there were a support group that can help to process complaints and that will not require us to pay.”** (FGD with women in GenSan)



**“ I wish women will [have] an opportunity to come together to help each other when their husbands are in trouble.” (IDI with a woman in Kiamba**

Another government representative interviewed was more cautious and pointed to the lack of awareness fishers have about their rights and that many perceive abuses to be normal and an accepted part of the job. While it is true that lack of awareness about labor rights heightens vulnerability to being exploited, the solution is a two-way street with the government playing an important role, especially when it comes to enforcing current laws and doing inspections. The PSA found that government officials themselves acknowledged implementation gaps of relevant regulations.<sup>47</sup>

**“ It’s hard to teach them about their rights and improve their working condition. It’s because of their belief and culture. They keep saying, ‘We’re used to this and that.’ Therefore, we cannot get anything done, no matter how hard we try’.” (Key Informance Interview [KII] with government official)**

### 3.2.3. Reasons for not reporting FL/TIP

Meanwhile, both the FGDs with fishers and their wives shed some more light on why FL/TIP is usually not reported. Women and their households are also affected by the impact of FL/TIP occurring on fishing vessels against male fishers but cannot solve the problem independently. Even if women proactively want to help their husbands by reporting an FL/TIP case, their husbands tell them to keep quiet due to the perceived or actual risk of losing their jobs. One participant explicitly pointed at the power imbalance in the fisher’s relationship with their employer.

**“ We cannot complain, and husbands discouraged us because they don’t want to have any trouble. We feel we don’t have a voice because we are poor and will lose if we fight against the rich employers.”**  
(FGD with women Kiamba)

Most of the participants confirmed they would rather keep quiet to avoid trouble and thus accept the situation to provide for their families. Moreover, most fishers and their wives are neither aware of their rights, nor do they understand what decent working conditions should be and what entitlements they should receive. **Case Study 1** below captures this dilemma.

#### Case Study 1. Abuse on Fishing Vessels Often Not Reported

My husband is a fisher but has no permanent employer. He sails whenever there is available work. If no job, he stays home. My husband has had terrible experiences while working on the boat. He was often abused verbally, insulted and has to work overtime even when he is sick and tired because of lack of rest. One day, my husband was not feeling well and felt mentally unfit to be out at sea. He had to be treated in [a] hospital. We did not have any support from the employer apart from a cash advance. He became traumatized and refused to speak. He could not freely express his thoughts.

I have three children, and the second child is 15 years old and has had a disability since he was a baby. Life is very challenging, looking for money to buy food and medicine for my child. When my husband is out at sea, we cope by taking out cash advances and loans from friends. Once a group of teachers helped, but it was not for long. I am not working because I have to take care of my disabled child. The eldest daughter is married and has one child, and her husband sends her money regularly to help us [with] day-to-day expenses.

We never reported the maltreatment of my husband. We kept quiet to avoid trouble because there might not be a chance to work again if we complain. Despite everything, I need to be strong for my family, and ‘God will take care of us.’ Also, I am not aware of any group or government agency that can help. Once I came across an offer for financial assistance — 5000 pesos extended to people with

47 SAFE Seas Pre-Situational Analysis. 2019. p. 54.

a disability. But we were not selected. I think it was unfair because only those who have better connections get help.

I want to earn my own income, so we are not dependent on my husband's income. I wish to have a small store so I can still be at home while caring for my child. For my husband, I want him to have his own boat. As fishing is the only work he knows, having his boat would help. I hope that there will be a way to report when violence and maltreatment happen out at sea.

Across all FGDs with both women and men, there was a general acceptance of poor working conditions because most fishers have similar experiences, leading them to think it is "normal" practice. Verbal and physical abuse are all considered part of the job and something participants said they knew they would face. This correlates with findings from the PSA, where some workers stated they were well aware of the risks and poor conditions but considered fishing preferable to land-based jobs.<sup>48</sup> Not being able to afford, or being unwilling to continue higher education or even secondary education, leaves young men with few viable alternatives, so they follow their fathers' employment pathway — experienced the same working conditions. As such, fishing, along with its poor conditions, is a life they have become accustomed to since a young age. FGD participants mentioned that most fishers start working when they are 15-21 years old. While they were not happy about the situation, they were not surprised when abuses happened because their peers were treated the same. One fisher stated:

**“Our wives know the hardships of working out at sea. We are (both husband and wife) aware of the risks of being a fisherman since our fathers were also fishermen. It's the environment we grew up in. It is hard labor, and we are aware that maltreatment happens, but we consider it normal.”** (FGD with fishers in GenSan and Glan)

According to the FGD participants and the women interviewed, how salaries are calculated, based on the share of catches, tends to be unclear and not transparent, causing many fishers to be underpaid. Despite a designated system for salary payments to be made on the 15th and 30th of each month, in reality, salary payments are often delayed. The FGD participants

reflected on this situation and put it this way:

**“Payments are often delayed between three to 10 days, and we feel cheated when catches are weighed in. The total payment is very small and lower than market price.”**  
(FGD with wives, Kiamba)

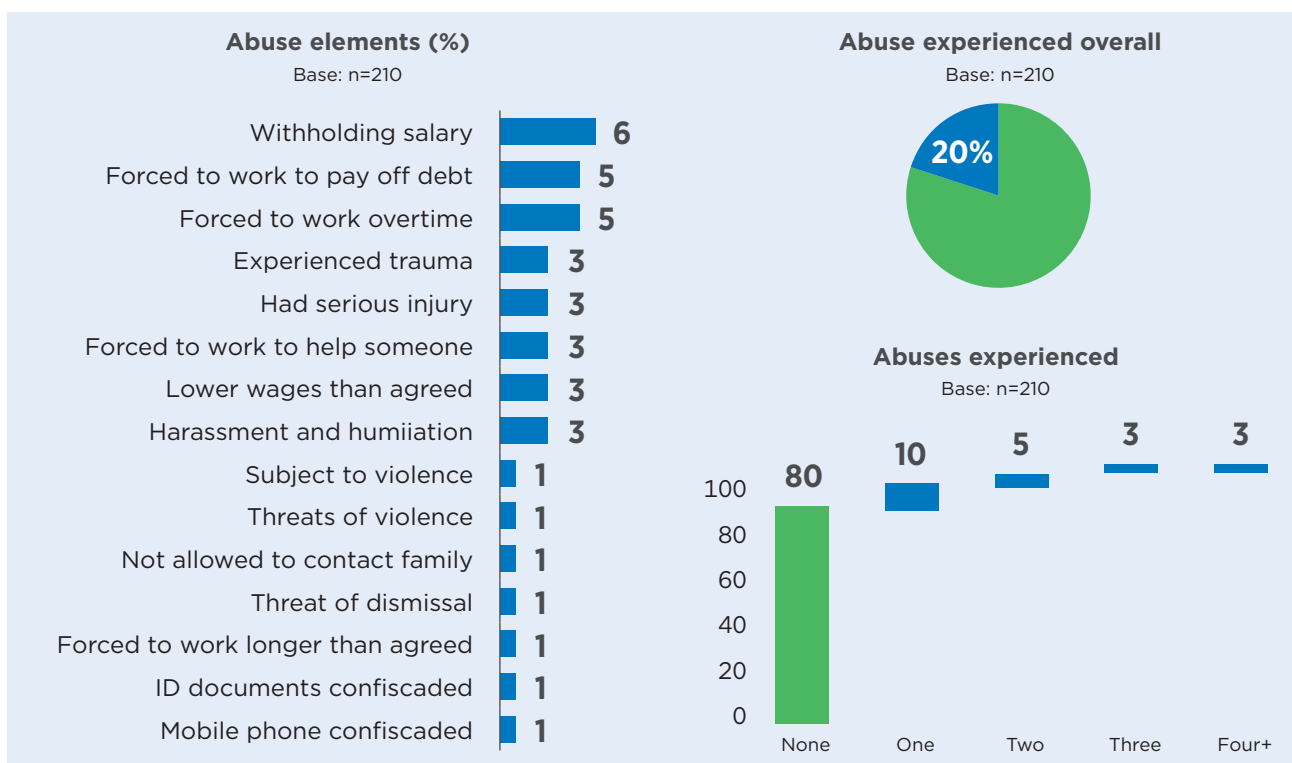
### 3.3. Impact of FL/TIP and coping strategy

#### 3.3.1. Experience of FL/TIP and impact on the family

Many different elements can be regarded as contributing to an abusive work environment, including physical and non-physical aspects. The primary forms of exploitative working conditions that were mentioned by fishers' wives in the survey include withholding of salary, forced to work to pay off debt, forced to work overtime, experiencing trauma, having a serious injury, receiving a lower wage than agreed and harassment and humiliation (**Figure 7**). Overall, 20% of women had a husband or son who experienced at least one of these abuses, and half of them had experienced two or more.

It should be pointed out that these abuses may not, per se, represent a confirmed case of FL/TIP; rather, they represent indicators that may or may not amount to the full legal definition of either FL or trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation. The ILO's operational indicators of FL are designed to identify elements of coercion and involuntariness. While these elements are certainly present in the abusive practices described, whether or not they legally constitute a case of FL/TIP is beyond the scope of this study.

48 Ibid. p. 56.

**Figure 7. Types of Abuses Experienced by Fishers**

According to responses gained during FGDs, elements of FL/TIP were experienced by some fishers, all of which represented some form of coercion.

**“We have our salary withheld. Since there was no written contract and only verbal agreement, we feel cheated because of no fair pricing and sharing.”** (FGD with fishers in Kiamba)

Other forms of coercion included threats of dismissal and were mentioned in the FGDs by both the fishers and in the women's IDIs. This example is reflected in the following statements made:

**“The employer threatened fishers, saying they will not be selected for the next fishing trip if they refused to do what they were told to do. Therefore, we cannot say no to work extra hours when arriving in the port. On another occasion, I had to follow the order when I was being transferred to a smaller boat while out at sea, which is less safe.”** (FGD with men in Glan)

**“If no catch, my husband comes home empty-handed and is forced to get more salary advances from the boat owner, making our debt grow. This makes it difficult to find another employer because he is tied to his debt. He was forced to work for the same boat owner over and over, even though he was not satisfied with the compensation he got and having to pay off his cash advances.”** (Interview with a woman from GenSan)

The main types of coercion mentioned included withholding salaries, being forced to work longer to pay back debt and performing dangerous work without proper equipment or protection. These types of coercion have been substantiated in **Case Study 2** below.

## Case Study 2. Withholding of Salary and Impact on Women

My husband's fixed salary is 12,000 pesos per month and released bi-monthly. After some deductions, he gets about 5,000 pesos plus some incentive from the catch. I am not clear about the deductions. The incentives used to be released every 23rd or 24th of the month and was enough to pay for our living costs. Incentives range from 8 to 14 thousand pesos, depending on the catch in the previous month. But since July last year, we have not received any incentives. My husband has not returned yet, and he stays at sea for about 22 months. I usually collect my husband's salary on the 15th and 30th of every month. But I haven't heard any explanation from the employers as to why they have stopped the incentives. It seems impossible if there was no catch since last June.

When I went to the employer's office, she was mad at me and drove me out instead of showing empathy! Myself and a few other wives of fishers were gathered outside to complain and had plans to expose it to Raffy Tulfo's show. But the owner just kept avoiding us. She did not talk to us or even explain why we have no more incentives and Christmas bonuses. Before, we had a fixed salary plus incentive, and we could also get cash advances from our incentives.

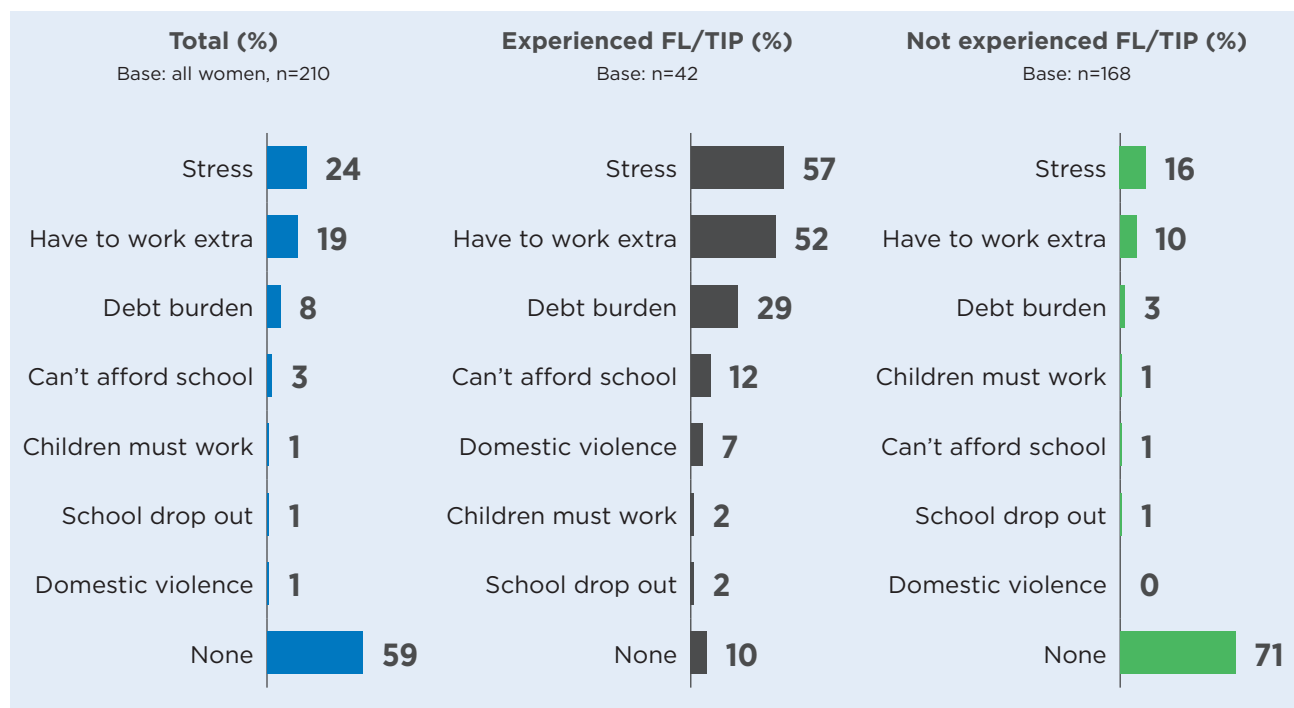
I complained to the manager and had a verbal argument with her. She said we should learn how to wait. But it's been eight months. She warned me not to post on Facebook, but I did. I just said, 'Fishermen are so pitiful. They work so hard and get so little. They work for months and do not receive any incentive!' I'm not friends with her on FB, but others saw my post and might have shown it to her. The manager got angry with my post and called me to her office. She told me not to post on Facebook because fishing companies might not deal with us anymore. I had to borrow money from loan sharks, which makes life harder because we pay high interest. I have a small computer rental shop with three computers and can earn 1,500 pesos per month. But now there are many competitors.

Even though we can still buy rice, but life is difficult. My son once asked me, 'Why can we not eat at Jollibee anymore?' When my family comes to me asking for help, it hurts not to help them. I can just give them a few cups of rice, and I cry when they leave. I have been thinking of finding a job without my husband's permission. I hope I can earn more money to cope. I saw a neighbor weaving strips of old clothes, making them into rugs or doormats, and I asked her to teach me. I am excited about doing this, and I'm going to buy materials for the weaver. At least, then I'll have something to do and can earn money from selling rugs.

Based on past studies carried out by Rapid Asia, negative impacts from labor abuse and human trafficking can take many forms. Typically, there is financial pressure, which leads to other issues such as children dropping out of school to help out at home, debt burden or domestic violence.<sup>49</sup> To examine the impact of FL/TIP, interviewers asked women what their families had experienced since their husbands or male relatives started to work in the fishing sector. Overall, 59% of women claimed their husbands had not experienced any form of negative impact. However, when comparing women who reported FL/TIP in the survey and those who did not, a stark difference emerged. As

shown in **Figure 8** below, no less than 90% of women whose husbands experienced FL/TIP also experienced negative impacts on the family. Stress and having to work extra to make ends meet were the most commonly mentioned consequences on women, followed by debt burden. This result appears to be consistent with the type of abuses experienced by fishers. Manipulation of salary and debt are common tactics that unscrupulous employers use and could likely lead to stress, financial pressure and debt burden for families. In contrast, in the absence of FL/TIP, most families (71%) did not experience any such issues.

49 ILO. 2020. Endline Research Findings on Fishers and Seafood Workers in Thailand. [https://shiptoshorerights.org/wp-content/uploads/End-line-Research-Findings-on-Fishers-and-Seafood-Workers-in-Thailand\\_EN.pdf](https://shiptoshorerights.org/wp-content/uploads/End-line-Research-Findings-on-Fishers-and-Seafood-Workers-in-Thailand_EN.pdf).

**Figure 8. Fishing Work and Its Impact on the Family**

The negative impact that FL/TIP can have on the fisher family was confirmed by some of the participants in the women's FGDs. One woman provided an example of the impact on children:

**“As wives, we feel the burden, especially since we are left to take care of our children and without a source of income. We had to resort to looking for ways to find money, mainly to feed the kids and their education. Lack of money leads kids not able to pursue higher education and female kids to marry early.”**  
(FGD with fishers' wives from Glan)

The repression of their FL/TIP experience creates an underlying atmosphere of anxiety and stress in the family and has a psychological effect on the wife and children. Some of the women interviewed during the IDIs explained that when their husband experienced FL/TIP, they often had traumatic symptoms and stress disorders, which included nightmares, adverse changes in mood and avoidance. One woman expressed the impact that FL/TIP had on her relationship with her husband:

**“While the relationship with [my] husband is generally okay, something's a bit changed with him. He tends to hold back a little and [be] more private. There are times he would want to be by himself, refused to speak. He doesn't freely express his thoughts.”**  
(Interview with a woman from Glan)

The negative impact of FL/TIP on families, particularly on wives, was assessed through the IDIs with women; all 10 women interviewed claimed to have experienced stress and were emotionally drained. They also had to work extra to make ends meet, and, in some cases, their children had to stop going to school so they could also work and support the family. In addition, there was a negative impact on their marriage if the husband was detained or experienced psychological trauma. Most of those interviewed also had a debt burden from needing to take out cash advances from the vessel owner. Case Study 3 below illustrates a typical example of the family situation when the husband has experienced FL/TIP.



### Case Study 3. How a Work Injury Can Devastate a Family

My name is Nini (pseudonym). I am 49 years old and have two children. My son is 22 years old and is working in a small town in the southwest of Mindanao. My daughter is 20 years old and is a second-year college student here in General Santos.

My husband is working as a fisherman and earns 5,000 pesos per month, plus extra money from the catch after each trip. On average, his earnings are 8,000 to 10,000 pesos, which is barely enough for our living. Yet our lives are better here in General Santos, compared to when we were farmers in Pagadian, in the southwest of Mindanao. Though we still experience poverty here, we have food to eat. In Pagadian, we couldn't afford to eat three meals per day.

One day, my husband had an accident while working at sea; his eyes were injured, and he wasn't able to see. He was sent home by a service boat that comes to fetch the catch. When he arrived at General Santos, he did not receive any medical help from the employer. A cash advance was released so he could go to a hospital, but it was only 2,000 pesos! The money was not enough to pay for an Ophthalmologist's consultation fee, plus medicines and tests. I had to borrow money from a loan shark with a high interest rate (about 20%) to help with his medications. Also, because of his eye infection, he was not able to work for a while, and the consequences of his eye injury devastated us financially. I stayed strong and got a job in a local coconut factory. I wanted to complain about the boat owner, but I do not know who to contact. But if there is any, I would not be afraid to report. I am my husband's voice.

I dream of a better life. I want to sell something, open a store, even just a small one, so I can stop working at the factory and can be here when my husband returns home from sea. If my husband can get a pay raise, then our life would be much better. Now, my husband is working again, and I continue to work in the coconut factory.

Another woman described the situation when her husband was imprisoned in Indonesia for several months and never returned to the Philippines after being released because he had married an Indonesian woman.

**“That devastated me, and I felt betrayed, angry and lonely. But life has to go on. My eldest son stopped going to school and started working and helped my brother to sell fish in the port. He was 16 years old and supported us to get by.”** (Interview with a woman from GenSan)

One woman interviewed described a situation when her husband was killed in a fatal accident during bad weather that caused two ships to collide and sink, causing 50 fishers to die while several others were seriously injured.

**“Our life plummeted and used up all our savings and survived with the help of my mother. It's tough and stressful, with six kids to feed. I started working as a store helper, but no one would take care of my small children. I lost weight. Many told me I lost my beautiful aura. Sometimes I was like staring at a blank wall. Emotionally, I was as dead.”** (Interview with one woman from GenSan)

The average fishing household had five household members, of which two were able to generate an income. The median monthly household income was 7,000 pesos (USD140). That translates into a daily wage of 233 pesos (USD 4.60), which is less than half the minimum wage in the Philippines. This lack of earnings could explain why some women feel compelled to take a paid job even though 81% of them (see Section 3.4) also take care of all housework and are involved with fishing activities. As described by one woman, a 28-year-old with four children, the youngest being a one-year-old and the eldest 11 years old, she married a fisher when she was 17 years old. She said:

**“I take care of all household chores: cleaning, cooking and doing laundry as well as looking after my kids. At night I work as a vendor selling fish BBQ in the street.”** (FGD with women in Glan)

Meanwhile, the stakeholders' interview confirmed that this type of impact of FL/TIP on women is common. For example, when the husband leaves for work at sea, he may already have accrued a significant debt. When he returns to port, he may not be paid straight away, which adds to the family's burden. To cope, the wife is forced to take any opportunity to work she can get.

Some opt for sex work or finding another man who can support their family while the husband is away.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.3.2. Source of vulnerability: Poverty

The desk review results pointed to the importance of understanding the vulnerability factors that can pull fishers into a situation of FL/TIP. Among the nine primary work sectors in the Philippines, fisher households have the highest poverty rate, with 34% living below the official poverty line.<sup>51</sup> Usually, poor households below this line do not have financial safety nets and tend to borrow money to solve short-term needs and accept any job, even under

exploitative conditions. Therefore, fishers have, on average, low wages and quickly become indebted from borrowing money. Funds borrowed can be in cash or in-kind (e.g., rice) and paid back through future salary deductions. By the time the debt is paid, if the fisher does not have any money left, they become compelled to borrow again. This debt can lead to heavy dependency on employers who might take advantage of the worker's vulnerability. These circumstances lock the fisher and his household in a cycle of debt bondage, compounded by the fact that their employer is the one lending the money, leaving them no choice but to accept low wages and abusive working conditions as highlighted in **Case Study 4** below about a typical debt trap.

### Case Study 4. Debt Bondage

My husband is a fisherman. Fishing is a job that we cannot rely on. Fishermen will get a 22 percent share of their catch while the boat owner gets 78 percent, and the owner covers all expenses except for their hooks and lines. My husband will go fishing for a month or so. If they have no catch, they don't earn anything. To add to our hardship, the fishermen sometimes get paid two weeks after docking. So, how come [can] we can survive another two weeks? So, I give in to loan shark and pay interests knowing that this can eat up a big chunk of our earning.

I have four school-aged children. The eldest is 12, and the youngest is 4. I used to work at a tuna canning factory and left the children with my neighbor or on their own. But in a few days, my kids became sick. So, I had to quit my job and be with my children during the day as I did not have anyone at home to look after them. In the evening I sell BBQ. With such a limited income, my household economy is not sustainable.

My husband will return home empty-handed if there is no catch. And then he is forced to take out more cash advances from the boat owner, making our debt bigger. He cannot look for another employer as he is tied to his debt. So, he is forced to work for the same boat owner even though he is not satisfied with the salary he can earn. I do not know how we can get out of poverty from under this debt trap.

An additional factor contributing to the vulnerability of fishers is the irregularity of payment and lack of transparency around how the salary is calculated. This factor is confirmed by all FGDs with women and men and through interviews with women. Also, paying workers in the form of "share of the catch," forces fishers to work longer hours. Some of the women confirmed this by saying:

**"We don't have a regular income because we are dependent on cash advances. There are times when we don't get paid until two weeks or one month after coming back to port."**  
(FGD with women in GenSan)

<sup>50</sup> Interview with one of the local NGOs.

<sup>51</sup> National Statistical Coordination Board. Based on the 2015 Poverty Incidence for Basic Sectors.

One of the indicators of FL/TIP is the abuse of vulnerability and is in fact considered an integral part of trafficking.<sup>52</sup> People who have few livelihood options are especially vulnerable to abuse and may be coerced or trafficked into an exploitative situation; for example, when an employer takes advantage of a worker's vulnerable position by imposing excessive working hours or withholding wages. There is solid evidence and consensus that poverty is an underlying factor behind FL/TIP and particularly an abuse of such economic vulnerability.<sup>53</sup> From this study, it is clear that poverty is a major contributing factor to the vulnerability of fisher households. In such situations, employers can potentially take advantage of the fishers exploiting their vulnerability.<sup>54</sup> As mentioned earlier, fishers may also be reluctant to report exploitative practices because they are afraid of losing their jobs or being blacklisted.

Insights from the qualitative interviews pointed to fishers' income not always being enough to buy food, which was also supported by survey results that identified 15% of women said they could not always afford to buy food. Salary payments for fishers are regulated by DO-156-16 (2016) and the DOLE. The Order stipulates fishers should be paid at least once a month and that employers should provide fishers with a payment record and document any cash advances. Moreover, employers should pay at least the applicable daily minimum wage that applies to the non-agricultural sector.<sup>55</sup> The survey with women found the average household income is 7,000 pesos per month, which is less than the legal minimum wage, before salary deductions. Even though the DO-156-16 establishes a

set number of working hours, it is difficult to enforce in the fishing sector due to fishers being out at sea for several days. The current study found fishers, on average, worked six and a half days per week and spent 70 days out at sea on an average fishing trip.

### 3.3.3. Debt bondage

Borrowing money in times of need is a common coping strategy for fisher households. The impact of borrowing on households can be severe, leading to indebtedness and further impoverishment. The burden of debt has implications for fisher households' financial situation and can make them vulnerable to exploitation. It can affect a whole family when the fisher pledges to receive an advance payment from his employer. They often fall into a debt trap, and the typical situation is depicted in **Case Study 4**.

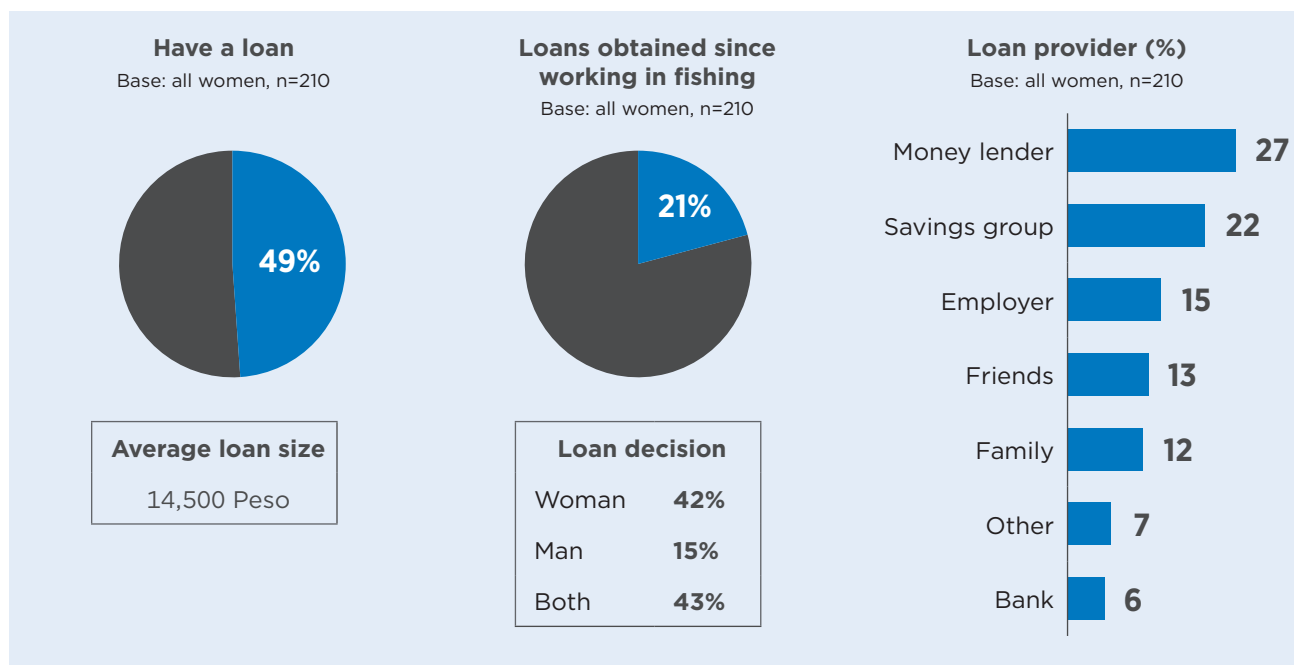
Nearly half of all the fisher households had debt (49%), as shown in **Figure 9**. The average loan size was 14,500 pesos, representing two months of household income on average. One in five households (21%) had taken out a loan after the husband or son started working in the fishing sector. Women appear to be the leading decision-makers regarding loans, around 86% of the time. Most of the loans (27%) were taken out with informal money lenders, most likely with a high-interest rate, followed by local savings groups (22%), employers (15%), friends (13%) and family (12%). Overall, only 6% was borrowed from a bank and shows that the vast majority of loans are informal.

52 UNODC. 2012. Abuse of a position of vulnerability and other "means" within the definition of trafficking. *Issue Paper*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Vienna: 2. [https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2012/UNODC\\_2012\\_Issue\\_Paper\\_-\\_Abuse\\_of\\_a\\_Position\\_of\\_Vulnerability.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2012/UNODC_2012_Issue_Paper_-_Abuse_of_a_Position_of_Vulnerability.pdf).

53 Lebaron, G., et al. 2018. p. 20.

54 [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms\\_203832.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_203832.pdf).

55 [http://bwc.dole.gov.ph/images/Issuances/DepartmentOrder/DO\\_156\\_16\\_WorkingandLivingConditionsOfFishersonboardFishingvesselsEngaged\\_Commercial-FishingOperation.pdf](http://bwc.dole.gov.ph/images/Issuances/DepartmentOrder/DO_156_16_WorkingandLivingConditionsOfFishersonboardFishingvesselsEngaged_Commercial-FishingOperation.pdf).

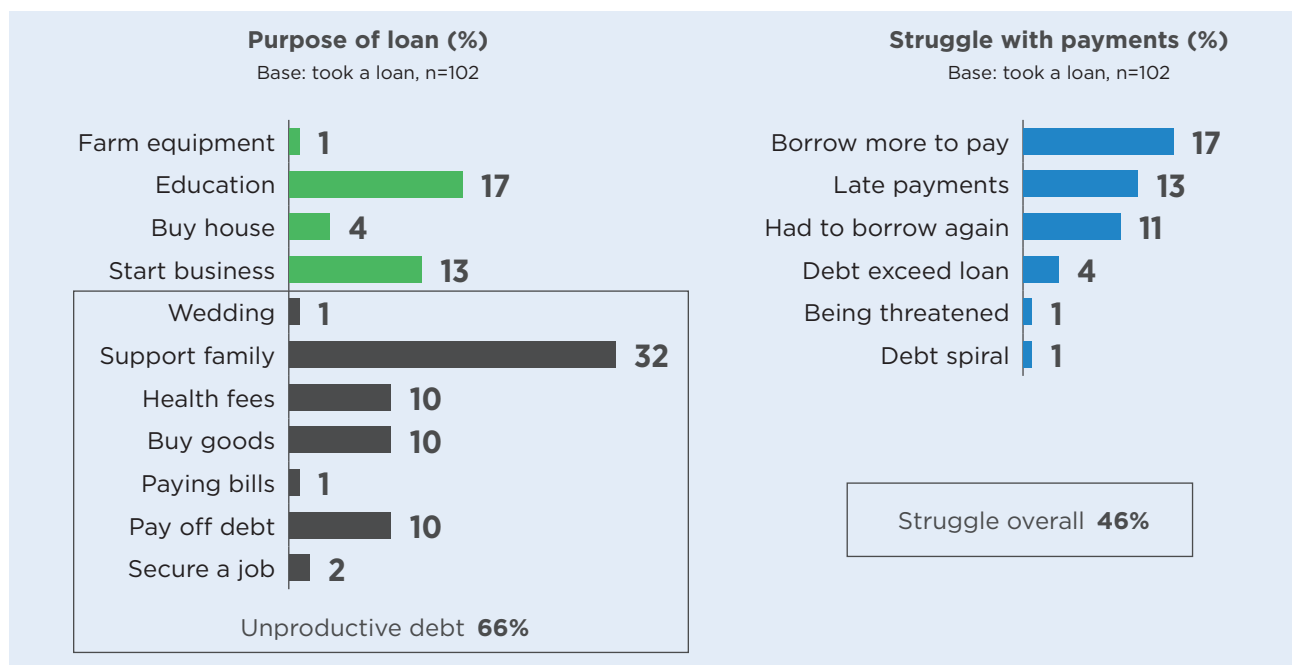
**Figure 9. Borrowing Behavior**

Not all forms of debt are necessarily harmful. Many fisher households managed their debt repayments when loans were of a manageable size and taken out for productive purposes. Productive debt, used to invest in income-generating assets or education, can potentially create positive returns in the long term. Once the loan is paid, their household will be in a more secure position. Another consideration was whether or not the family can cope with debt repayments. **Figure 10** looks at these two aspects. Women were asked to state the purpose of the loan, and the different elements were classified into productive and unproductive debt. Loans taken out to buy farm equipment, pay for education, buy or build a house or start a business were all considered productive forms of debt.

On the other hand, buying consumer goods, paying back old debt and health expenditures were classified as unproductive debt. In other words, the money was not reinvested in something with clear evidence of a return. Overall, approximately two thirds (66%)

of fishing households who had taken out a loan were deemed to have unproductive debt. Money to support other family members was the most common form of unproductive debt. Two percent use the loans to secure a job or pay recruitment fees, typically to cover the cost for travel and work documents, which are customarily paid upfront. Unproductive debt can increase women's vulnerability if they struggle to repay the loan. Having to pay down unproductive debts means having fewer resources to meet the household's basic needs, such as foods, health and supporting family members.

Women were then asked whether they had experienced any problems with repaying their loans. Overall, 46% of households with debt did struggle with debt repayments. Also shown in Figure 10, the most common challenge was the need to borrow more money to pay the previous debt (17%), followed by late repayments (13%) and the need to borrow money again as soon as the loan was paid off (11%).

**Figure 10. Unproductive Debt and Repayment Difficulties**

### 3.3.4. Debt enslavement

The concept of debt bondage refers to situations in which an employer uses debt to retain a worker against his will.<sup>56</sup> The inability to repay the loan can lead to debt bondage, resulting in the worker's enslavement.<sup>57</sup> In most cases of debt bondage, the initial debt grows at a rate that cannot be met, and the worker is unable to leave the employer as the debt mounts and cannot be paid with the wages received. In this study, while some fishers took a loan or salary advance from their employer, there was no clear evidence of debt bondage. Past studies have shown that fishers are not necessarily bound to their employer even if they have debt with them.<sup>58</sup> However, fishers' wage calculations, often based on "share of the catch," are frequently at rates below the minimum

wage, forcing women of the household to borrow money to buy food and other necessities.

This scenario often leads to what can be referred to as "debt enslavement," meaning continuous dependency on debt. Debt enslavement and debt bondage differ in that debt bondage describes a situation where a person's labor is itself demanded as repayment for a loan or advance, but the value of their labor does not contribute to the repayment due to undetermined terms of service or valuation of their labor.<sup>59</sup> Debt enslavement is a useful concept because it is a marker of working poverty rather than direct coercion by an employer, and the resulting exploitation faced by the worker and his family is the same as if debt bondage were being practiced. The typical process behind debt enslavement is outlined in **Case Study 5** below.

56 ILO. Indicators of Forced Labor. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms\\_203832.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_203832.pdf).

57 Daru, P., C. Churchill, and E. Beemsterboer. 2005. The prevention of debt bondage with microfinance-led services. *Eur J Development Research* 17:132-154.

58 SAFE Seas Pre-situational analysis. 2019. p. 55.

59 UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, A/HRC/33/46 (July 4, 2016), p. 4.



### Case Study 5. Debt Enslavement Follows a Predictable Pattern

Before sailing, they are given cash advances of at least 1,500 pesos. We then buy what he needs, materials for hook and line, and food items like coffee, biscuits, etc. So how much is left? Barely enough to buy rice for a month. He may or may not catch anything. On rare occasions, he can take home a slightly bigger amount, but the debt is still there. Cash advances are deducted from his earnings. So, if he earns very little, it will be carried over to the next trip. We never get out of debt. That's also why he cannot go to other vessels because he is tied to his debts.

Moreover, my husband has never been paid immediately, even though the catch is sold for cash at the fishing port. They go into bidding for the highest price, and the office will take time to compute our earnings. Sometimes they pay after two weeks. So, what happens while waiting? We go into debt further because I have to buy food on credit. Furthermore, I have to borrow money for school and to pay our bills. It's an ongoing situation.

However, this study shows that debt, even if not imposed by an employer, can create a situation where a family is overburdened and forced to accept work they may not have chosen to do otherwise. Several studies support this scenario;<sup>60</sup> in addition, this situation is consistent with the concept of the “working poor,” those who are forced to accept dangerous and exploitative work to survive and afford the most basic necessities. Moreover, the entrenched pattern of sons of fishers taking up fishing work on vessels to contribute to the household economy suggests that fisher families are trapped in intergenerational cycles

of poverty. Debt enslavement, the inability to cope with unproductive debt from loans intended for subsistence, coupled with delayed and low wages, creates the perfect conditions for fishers to be forced to accept exploitative work.

As shown in the text box below (**Figure 11**), two conditions are necessary for debt enslavement. First, the debt itself must be regarded as unproductive; second, the holder of the debt is struggling with repayments. A case for potential debt enslavement is valid only when both conditions are met.

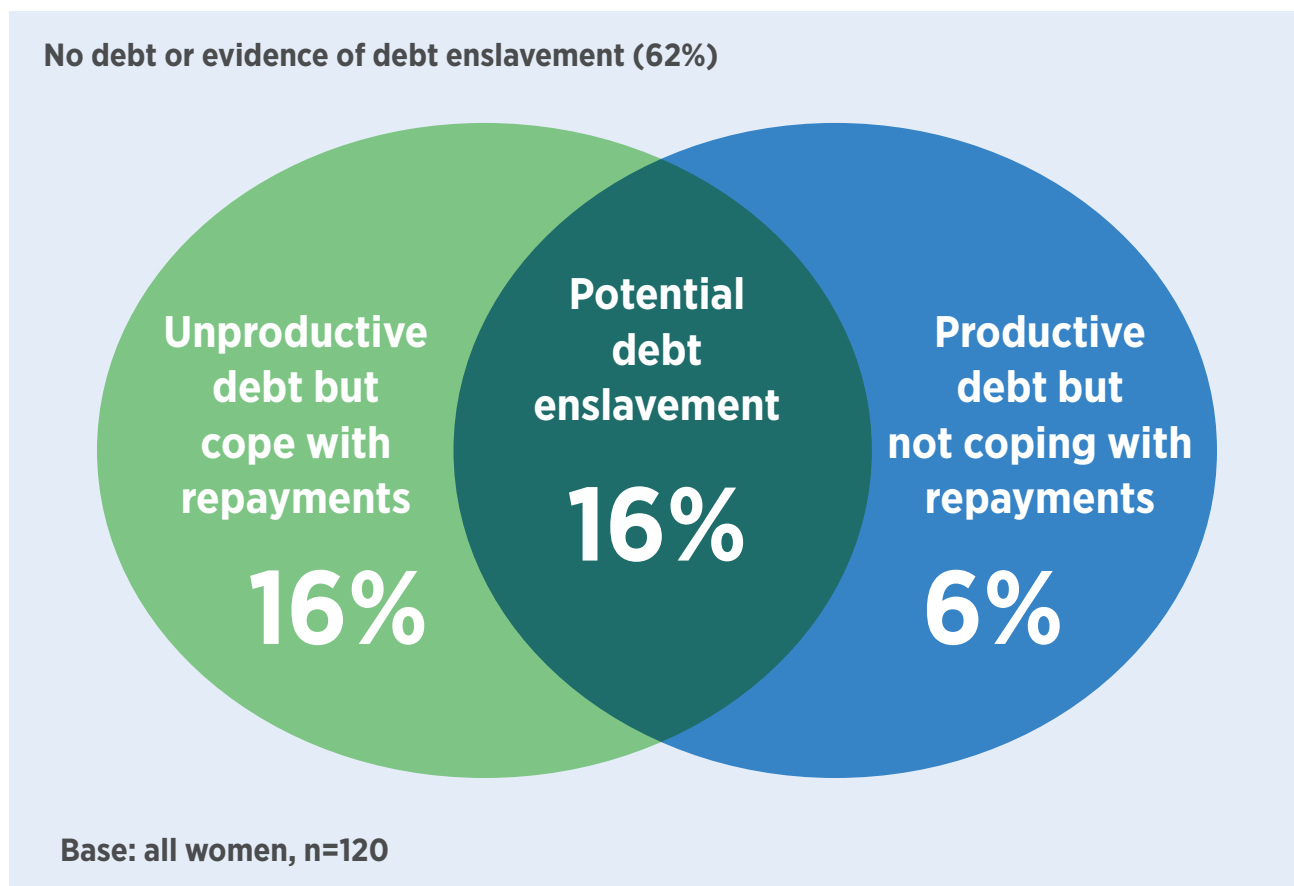
### Figure 11. Concept of Debt Enslavement

It should be noted that women who had husbands or sons who experienced FL/TIP were also more likely to be in a situation of debt enslavement at 26 percent compared to 14 percent in the absence of FL/TIP. In other words, when there is a case of debt enslavement, instances of FL/TIP almost doubles.

Debt enslavement can graphically be depicted as shown in **Figure 12**, where the green circle represents unproductive debt and the blue circle not coping with repayments. The intersection of the two circles represents debt enslavement. Overall, 32% of fishing

households have unproductive debt, and 22% stated they could not cope with debt repayments. The overlap of 16% represents households who experienced both. Hence, the prevalence of debt enslavement is estimated at 16%.

60 LeBaron, G., N. Howard, C. Thibos, and Kyritsis. 2018. Confronting root causes: forced labor in global supply chains. *OpenDemocracy and Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute*: 27 and UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, A/HRC/33/46 (4 July 2016) and ILO. 2020: 18. [https://shiptoshorerights.org/wp-content/uploads/Endline-Research-Findings-on-Fishers-and-Seafood-Workers-in-Thailand\\_EN.pdf](https://shiptoshorerights.org/wp-content/uploads/Endline-Research-Findings-on-Fishers-and-Seafood-Workers-in-Thailand_EN.pdf).

**Figure 12. Estimated Prevalence of Debt Enslavement**

### 3.4. Gender norms, agency and the potential role of women

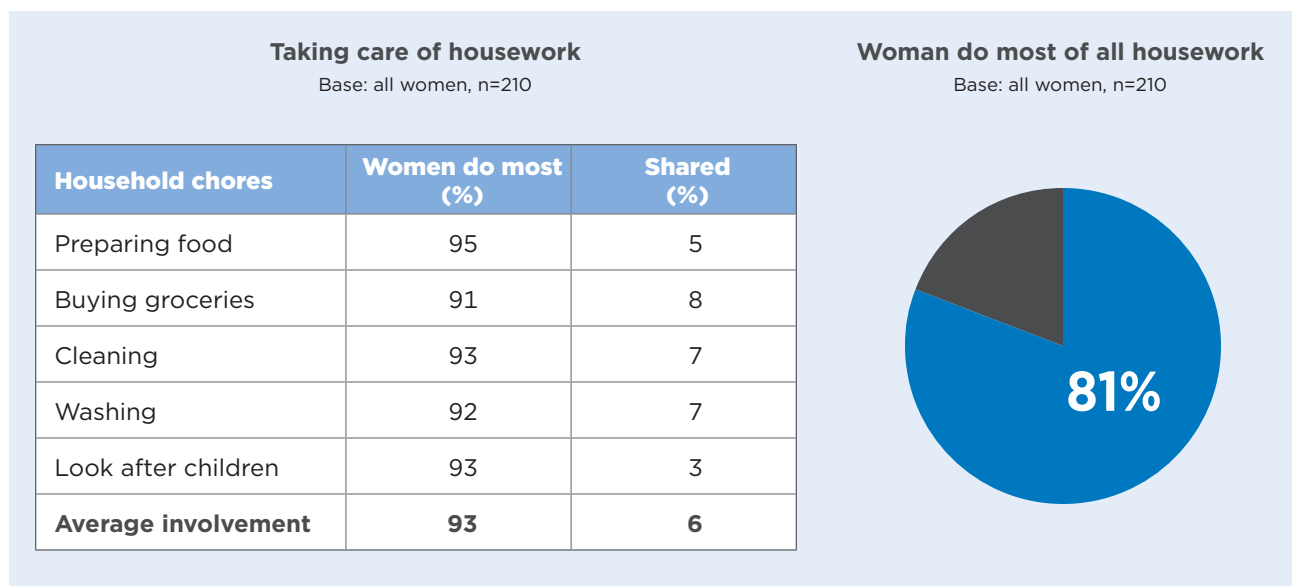
#### 3.4.1. Gender norms and barriers in the fishing community

Historically, the notions of gender norms emerged from feminist scholars working to counter gender inequality. In recent times, gender norms are defined as social norms that relate specifically to gender differences, stipulating behavior that is considered acceptable behavior for women and men in society. Gender norms are embedded in formal and informal institutions, nested in people's minds and have become

reinforced through social interaction. These norms play a role in shaping women's and men's (often unequal) access to resources and liberties, thus affecting their voice, power and sense of self.<sup>61</sup>

The study revealed gender norms and social values determine the role of women and men both within and outside the household. Beliefs around gender roles are reflected in the division of work in the home, as shown in **Figure 13**. In the vast majority of fishing households, it is the women who do most of the daily household chores, including preparing food, buying groceries, cleaning, washing and looking after children. Taking all activities into account, four out of five women (81%) did most or all these tasks. In a fisher family with two or more dependents, this workload could equate to a full-time job.

<sup>61</sup> ODI. 2015; Cislighi, B., and L. Heise. 2020.

**Figure 13. Division of Work in the Household**

Using a gendered lens, the FGDs examined community perceptions and opinions about gender norms and gender relations. Both the women's and men's FGDs affirmed that division of labor is based on gender roles. They emphasized that a man's role is to be the primary income earner and decision-maker in matters related to work. Meanwhile, women were not only almost exclusively responsible for reproductive work, but were also involved in fishing activities (see Figure 7. Women's Working Profile) as well as being in charge of household finances. When describing the role of women, they used terms such as wife, mother, child-bearer or homemaker, thus conceptualizing women's primary obligation as attending to the needs of the family.

**“Women are mainly housewives and take care of the household budget. They can also work but not do heavy labor.”** (FGD with fishers in Glan)

**“Men are the main income provider for the family, and women take care of the household. Women can also work but not the labor-intensive, especially fishing.”** (FGD with women in Glan)

Field data found much of the work that women do, although productive, is often unpaid or underpaid.

Gender norms play a crucial role when women accept unpaid labor, while men seek a paying job and will risk their lives at sea with no legal contract or guarantee of compensation. The FGD participants believed that fishing work is a “man's job” as it requires physical strength. The women viewed themselves as supporters of their working husbands and expressed a strong sense of obligation in pursuing their housework duties. Even though most of the women also carried out fishing support activities, it was clear that such work was not formally recognized in the eyes of both men and women. The division of labor has implications when considering the impact of FL/TIP and how to engage women in mitigation activities.

**“My husband prefers that I stay home to take care of family, and women are discouraged from work.”** (FGD with women in Kiamba)

Nevertheless, women are also responsible for managing household finances and participating in community activities when husbands are away. In contrast, fishers were perceived to work hard and only support their wives when they are home.

**“Men do the heavy type of work like fishing and construction work. Men can help in taking care of the house and kids when they come back from fishing.”** (FGD with women in Glan)



*Fishing is a man's job*

The interviews with stakeholders revealed a similar perspective on gender roles and reflecting the manifestation of social norms in the fishing community. Programs involving women tend to reproduce gendered norms, reinforcing traditionally gendered spaces, roles and obligations. For example, livelihood programs focused on skills development for women would be limited to stereotypical jobs, such as hair-dressing, massage, seafood processing, dressmaking and knitting. Meanwhile, awareness programs on violence against women, health care, childcare and family planning only target women, whereas programs on fishers' rights only target men.

**“On the livelihood program, we have training skills for women such as pedicure-manicure and dressmaking. We also have capacity building for women and training about women's rights and family planning.”**

(KII with a stakeholder in Sarangani Province)

When fishers are out at sea, women become heads of the household and need to shoulder all responsibilities related to household chores, childcare, finances and community responsibilities. Some women struggled to find time to attend funerals, church services

and community meetings.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, it may be difficult for them to spare additional time and energy to organize or participate in activities related to FL/TIP mitigation, such as advocacy or seeking redress against exploitation.

Another barrier faced by women is a lack of awareness of available services, including formal complaint procedures of which there are very few available in GenSan.<sup>63</sup> Not all women are equally aware of the services provided by the local government and community-based organizations (CBOs). Some of the stakeholders interviewed mentioned there are services targeted to FL/TIP victims.<sup>64</sup> However, participants in the FGDs said they had no idea about these services. Although there are services to address the problems of FL/TIP on fishing vessels, the current efforts do not appear to reach the women they intend to serve, as stated in the FGDs with both men and women.

**“We are not aware of any solutions from the local government to address the issues of FL/TIP. There is no support groups and no assistance for us.”** (FGD with men and women)

As discussed in the previous section, poverty makes fishers vulnerable and can lead to experiences of FL/TIP. Should they face such a situation, women also suffer as they bear the brunt of increased poverty and are forced to immerse themselves in both domestic activities and low paid or even unpaid work. These women will try to find the most appropriate way to reconcile both tasks, which conflict because of time constraints. This added pressure affects women's overall wellbeing and socioeconomic status.

**“My husband used to be a tricycle driver but with very low earnings. He then took the risk to become a fisher. I have three kids and need to earn extra income working as a laundrywoman earning 150 pesos per day.”** (FGD with women in Kiamba)

62 SAFE Seas Pre-Situational Analysis. 2019. p. 60.

63 *Ibid.*

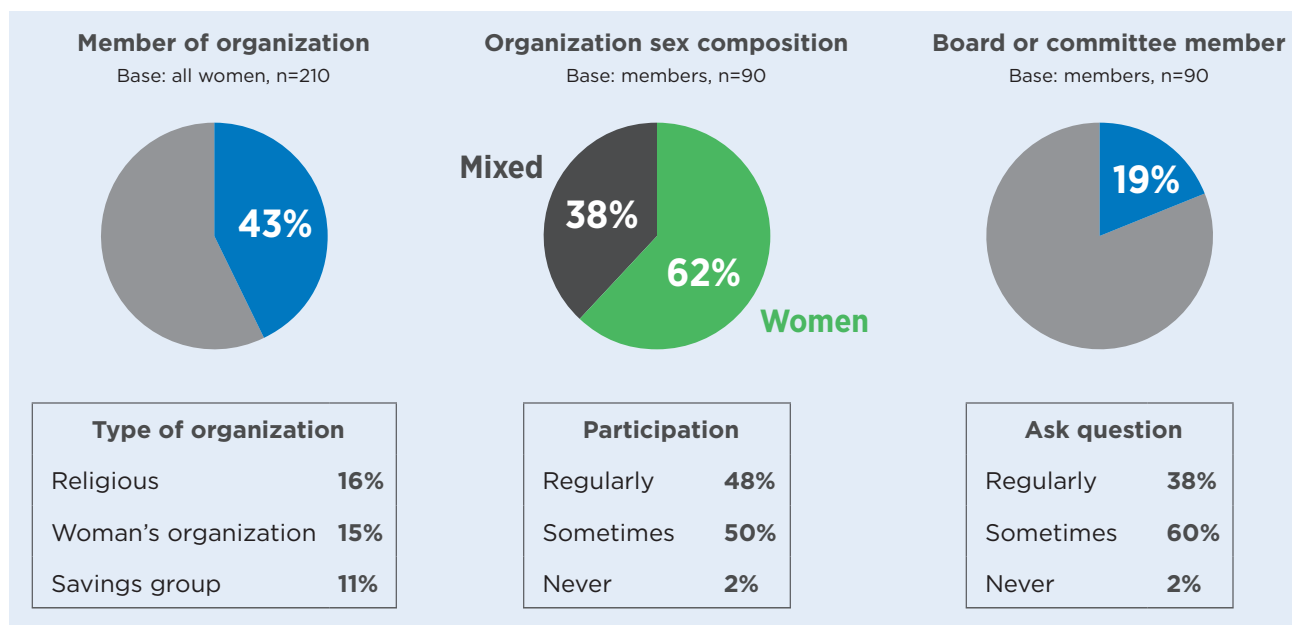
64 Services included awareness-raising on advancing women's rights, skill development training, income generation from entrepreneurship development, and legal support services.

### 3.4.2. Women's agency and potential roles

Agency is often associated with empowerment and women's "ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them."<sup>65</sup> The concept of agency is broadly referring to direct control and having sufficient power. Agency is essential to amplify women's voices, to expand their economic choices and learning opportunities and to broaden their views and aspirations. To recognize and expand women's agency, their ability to make decisions and the capacity to take advantage of opportunities are vital.<sup>66</sup> This study explores to what extent women's agency exists in fisher households and how the concept of agency can help women to create a path toward gender equality and reduce or mitigate exploitative practices on fishing vessels and their knock-on effects.

Women's agency in this study was explored in connection with FL/TIP through women's participation in household decision-making and women's involvement in community decision-making. This study looks at the ability to act at the community level and has been focused on access to services or reporting mechanisms, membership in a local CBO, attending meetings and actively participating in the local CBO. The findings show women's involvement in community decision-making and leadership to be somewhat limited (Figure 14). Less than half of all women interviewed are members of a local community organization (43%). Among them, 62% are members of an organization that only caters to women, and half of them (48%) participated regularly. Furthermore, one in five women members (19%) hold a board or committee member position, and most are active participants and ask questions.

**Figure 14. Women's Involvement with Local Organizations**



Interviews with stakeholders revealed women who are involved in local community organizations, NGO-organized activities or religious organizations have more access to vital resources and information, such

as training and seminars or income-generating programs. An example of this was a women's Self-Help Group (SHG) facilitated by Oblates of Notre Dame Hesed Foundation, Inc. (OND Hesed) in GenSan.

<sup>65</sup> Kabeer. 1999. Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment." *Development and Change* 30, no. 3: 435-464.

<sup>66</sup> WB2012, FAO. 2018.



**“They came here about three years ago to report repatriates, but we got to talk about this self-help group system. We got interested, and so we started it first with a group of 15 women, who started with 20 pesos a week, but when their money reached 5K, they saw the advantage, so they agreed to increase their contributions to 100 per week. The system is good. Now they have almost a million in savings and want to convert this SHG into an enterprise. Other areas have adopted this system too.”**  
(KII with Self-Help member in GenSan)

According to the interview with the facilitator of SHGs, there are currently six SHGs in GenSan that she facilitates. The main activities the group conducts are regular meetings every Sunday to discuss issues pertaining to the women, including how to cope with the impact of FL/TIP through income generation and livelihood and savings programs. NGOs such as OND Hesed and representatives from government agencies, including DOLE, Department of Foreign Affairs, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO), visit regularly to implement the programs.

Each group has a minimum of 15 members who will raise the profile of the program to the rest of their community.

**“With this system, the women can talk to another 15 women to create another group, and this can help strengthen our advocacy; then these women can cope with their everyday lives.”** (KII with a facilitator of SHG in GenSan)

**“The activities of the SHG, with support from local government and NGOs, however, were limited [to certain] areas due to limited resources. Ideally, the SHG is introduced in all the barangays.”** (KII with Self-Help member in GenSan)

**Case Study 6** below is an illustrative example of how a wife took the initiative to find help for her family, not just in the immediate sense, but also in the long term. The case study demonstrates that women can be effective advocates for raising awareness of FL/TIP and pressure the government for more action against labor violations, as well as better enforcement of existing regulations.

### Case Study 6. A Little Bit of Financial Support Can Go a Long Way

When my husband was detained because of his vessel crossing the Indonesian territory, I feared not ever seeing my husband again. How could I raise all five children without my husband? Stores will not let me buy on credit because they know my husband was detained overseas, and I have no source of income. I had barely enough for me and my kids. I had to go around the neighborhood and beg for rice or corn. I would always have fish and vegetables at home because I learned how to make dried fish. I used it to feed my children. Making myself busy can keep my mind away from my worries.

I went to my husband's employer to get an update, but there was nobody to ask. I reported my husband's detention to the Municipal Hall and asked for help. The Mayor and other officials comforted me and gave rice and some cash. The City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) helped me get raw materials for bead making, but the income was limited. I went back again, and they taught me how to make “bagoong” (shrimp paste). I fry tiny shrimps mixed with salt and ferment them [once] a week. With some cash assistance, I started drying fish to sell in the market. When my husband was released, we attended a livelihood seminar organized by the CSWDO. Our local government supports wives whose husbands were detained.

Life now is much more peaceful and “normal.” Normal means we have a routine: we can eat on time, we do not have any problems, and we are going to church every weekend. My children have grown up, and the eldest is already helping financially, working as a factory worker in GenSan. She comes home on her off days and brings food. One very big difference is that we received “Bale” twice a month. These are cash advances from the employer when my husband was out at sea. So that was a regular source of income. However, almost every cent I have received is used up right away to pay bills, so I went back to the store to ask for a loan.

I was happy to see my husband again. We became closer after that happened. His capture made me miss him so much. So, I was just relieved he was alive. When he arrived, he was very thin and dirty, but he was still my husband. The kids also are happy to have their father around. I felt this was his second chance in life. For a few months after he was rescued, he would wake up in the middle of the night, sweating and looking scared.

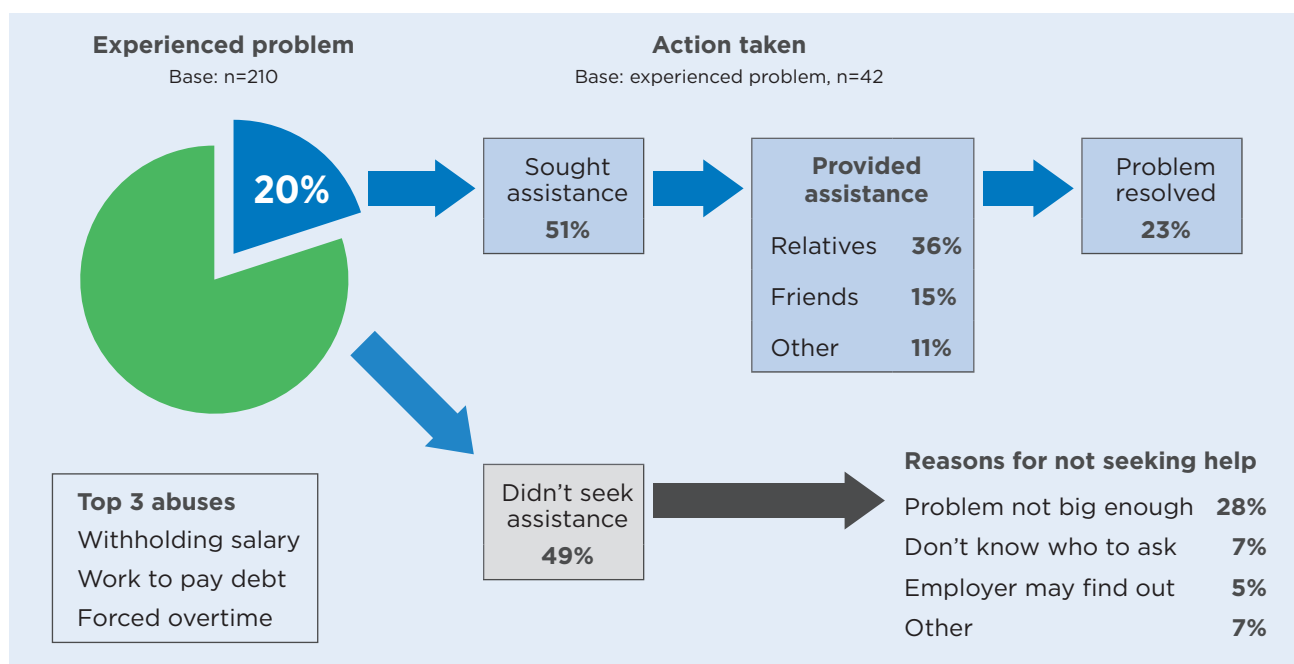
It's always a dream for me to see all our children finish their education. Finishing Grade 12 would be a good achievement. I am thankful to our local government for being there when I needed support. I hope to have a bigger house and our own pump boat. I do not want to say I will stop my sons from being fishermen, since that will be their decision, but I will remind them of their father's experience.

Women's agency was also explored in connection with FL/TIP through women's action on labor abuse cases. When a potential labor abuse case was identified, women were asked what action they had taken to resolve the situation. The results can be found in **Figure 15** below and show that nearly half of all women did not seek any assistance (49%). The main reason was they did not think the problem was big enough (28%). In other words, abuses have become normalized in the minds of some women. The other half who did seek assistance turned to relatives or friends in most cases. Overall, 23% of the time, the problem would be resolved. As a result, three victims out of four did not

find a remedy to their problem. While these women took action, they had limited power to succeed in this case based on a lack of knowledge and information regarding available services and the fact that there are very few services available, as found in the SAFE Seas PSA report<sup>67</sup> and mentioned by most of the FGD participants, as quoted:

**"We are not aware of any solutions from local government to address the issues (of FL/TIP). We don't have any support or assistance."**  
(FGD with women in GenSan)

**Figure 15. Resolution to Serious Labor Abuses**



67 SAFE Seas Pre-Situational Analysis. 2019. p. 62.

Government officials and NGO representatives provided a possible explanation for the lack of reporting. They recognized the risk fishers and their wives might face if they complain about FL/TIP on fishing vessels. Although all of them agreed FL/TIP is still a significant problem, it was also mentioned that the government is limited in what they can do unless someone files a formal report. The following narrative from one government official makes this very evident.

**“There are some instances of FL/TIP but have not received any formal complaints about it. Maybe they are just stories that cannot be proven. The main complaint here is unfair catches sharing.”** (KII with government official)

When fishers were mistreated, they were often reluctant to report, being afraid that their employer might find out, and they could lose their job. Some fishers confirmed they did not report even though they had experienced FL/TIP.

**“There are few formal complaints about FL/TIP on fishing vessels as fishermen are afraid to lose their jobs.”** (KII with government official)

**“Men are traumatized, but there is no choice but to contend with our situation as we don't have other work options.”** (FGD with women in Kiamba)

From the FGDs a deep sense of powerlessness was revealed among both the fishers and their wives. When asked about seeking solutions to exploitative practices, most of the women participants said their husband discourages them from saying anything, rooted in a belief that complaining will not change anything as exploitative practices are too entrenched, and they lack any power to advocate for themselves.

**“We don't have a voice because we are poor; we will lose the fight. We don't have money to go against rich employers.”** (FGD with women in Kiamba)

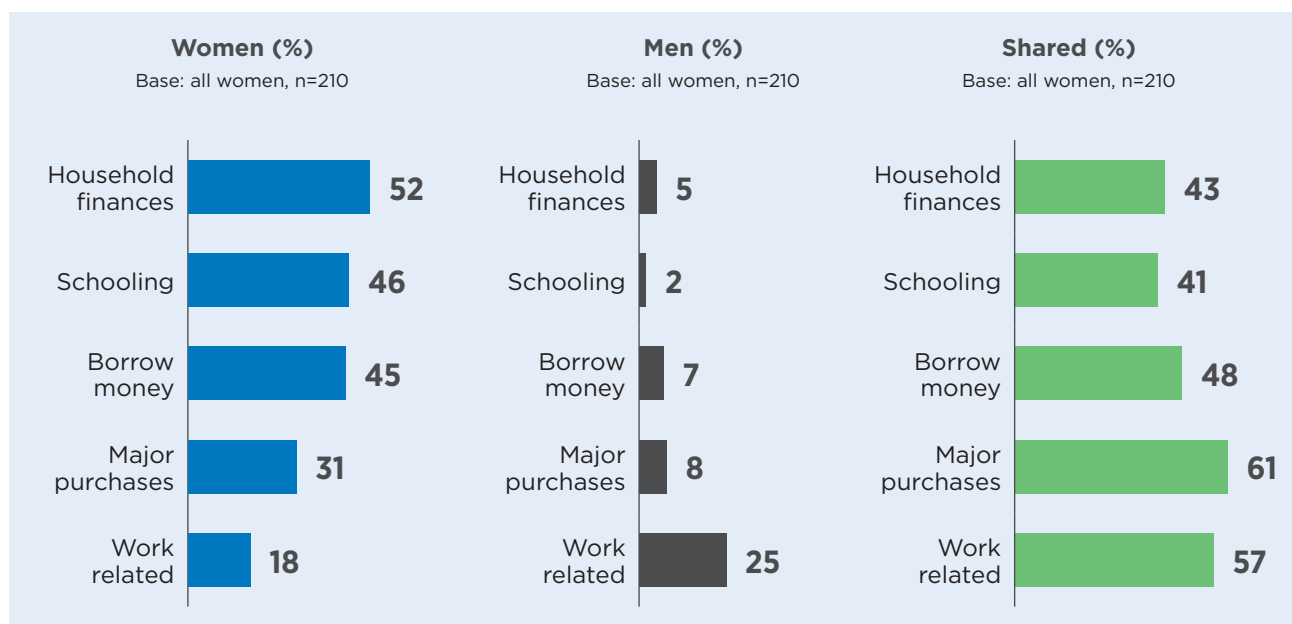
**“Everyone is subjected to similar conditions. Complaining won't do any good and won't change the system.”** (FGD with men in Glan)

Despite this lack of optimism and a resignation to cope with exploitative practices, cycles of debt and FL/TIP on vessels, almost all FGD participants, both men and women, still expressed hope for basic social protection, fair pricing of catch, employment agreements, a safe place to file complaints and on-time payments for the men. While the women hoped for livelihood skills development and access to fair loans and support for their children to continue their education and not resort to fishing.

Women's agency was explored further in this study, looking at their ability to make decisions at the individual and household levels. Decision-making roles within the household cover different domains, such as household finances, children's education, borrowing money, major purchases and work-related matters. Most women believed men are more decisive than they are, especially about work-related issues, including FL/TIP. This perception reinforces the already male-dominated decision-making structure in households. However, regardless of these norms, it was observed that when families needed to take out a loan, it was typically the women who would negotiate the loans with potential lenders. When the household income was inadequate and the husband could not obtain a cash advance from his employer, the wife would take responsibility and seek out loan financing. One example of such an initiative came from one of the FGD participants.

**“We will find ways to look for money to support the kids and to get through the day. We always check if it is possible to get a cash advance. If not, we can borrow from relatives and friends and will accept the high interest and try to look for means to pay back the debt.”** (FGD with women)

As confirmed by the survey, Figure 16 shows the extent to which women are the primary decision-makers across several decision domains in the household. Finance is an area where women tend to have decision-making power, both when it comes to household finances (51%) and when borrowing money (45%). Schooling is another area where women participate and make decisions (46%). Men, on the other hand, have more decision power when it comes to work-related matters. However, decisions are shared in many instances, reflecting cooperation and compromise.

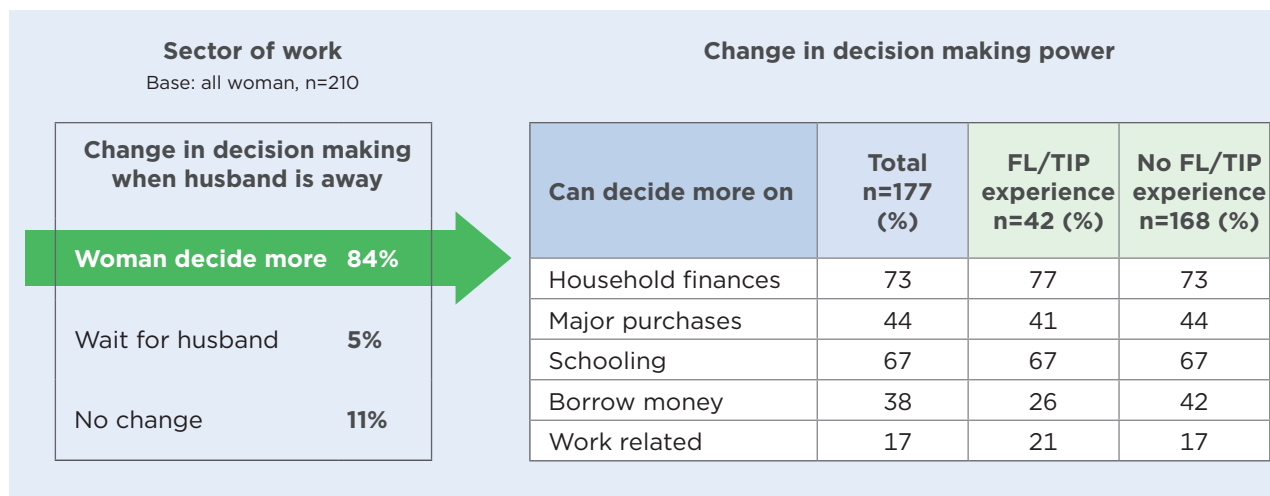
**Figure 16. Women's Decision-Making in the Household**

Women are often regarded as a vulnerable group either because of having a low status in society or being subordinate to men, as described by a few stakeholders:

**“As I’ve said, the women here are so dependent on us, men. They must be taught how to stand on their own, and I know they are able to do it because they are strong women. They just need guidance (from men)...”** (KII with a community leader in Glan)

However, far from being passive partners in fisher households, the study findings suggest women are

central to their family’s wellbeing, especially when experiencing financial difficulties. As shown in **Figure 17** below, when the husband is out at sea, most women (84%) had more decision-making power. In such situations, women had more freedom to decide about household finances and children’s schooling. Whether they had experienced FL/TIP did not appear to make much difference, except when it comes to the decision to borrow money, as previously shown in Figure 16 (26% vs 42%). An explanation could be that loans may be tied to the male fisher; hence, the woman would have less influence in such cases.

**Figure 17. Decision-Making When the Husband is Away**

The above results show women do have agency in certain situations and can exercise some level of decision-making power, even though there is no formal status associated with such capabilities. Regardless of formal status, women take it upon themselves to

make decisions when circumstances require them. **Case Study 7** depicts how women perceive themselves as being dependent on men and the need for women to organize into groups to exercise agency during times of struggle.

### Case Study 7. "I Have a Dream to Get Out of Poverty"

I am 36 years old, married and have four kids (18, 16, 12 and 7). They are all in public school. I'm a housewife, but [I] do laundry and cleaning for my neighbors to earn money. My husband is a fisherman and used to come home every three to four months. They fish near the border of Indonesia, and in 2015 they were caught by the Indonesian police. They were taken to Indonesia and were beaten and forced to work in an ice factory. They were paid very little, around 50 pesos a day, and were fed with rice and leaves. When I heard about their imprisonment, I kept on praying. I was so scared. Sometimes I just cry, thinking if he would ever come home. Sometimes I would wake up and hear his voice. I thought he was dead.

I kept going to their office to check if there was news. I left my baby with my sister because I could not take care of him anymore. He was only a year old. My sister told me I sometimes just stare, and cannot hear them even if they shout in my ear. They once told me we all had to go to the DOLE office, but the staff couldn't receive us. If we report, they say, it must be as a group. I did not know where else to go. They say that if I report to the government, they might not come home at all. It was so scary! But when they were rescued, I was relieved. I realized how important my husband is to me. On the other hand, this made me an irresponsible mother.

My husband used to make good money, but after that experience, he is traumatized. We decided not to go back to that employer. Now our life is almost the same as before. Still poor, but I can see my husband every day. He goes to sea around 9 pm, then comes home around 5 am. I would meet him at the shore and take our share of the catch. When it's abundant, we can sell some of it. Sometimes we have enough money for a few days, sometimes not. But our family is closer now.

I'm a member of CSWDO\*, and we get an allowance for the kids' school. Now the challenge is to earn the same as he did before. Sometimes he would want to go back to that employer, but after I remind him of what he experienced, he'd stop talking about it. The thing that has improved is the closeness he has with the kids. Now he helps me raise them.

The wives of other fishermen did not care as much as I did. Some of them engaged in prostitution; some had a boyfriend to take care of them. It was their way of coping. I hope women will come together to help each other when their husbands are in trouble. I have a dream to get out of poverty and to build our own house and to send all my children to college. I do not want my sons to become fishermen.

\*City Social Welfare and Development Office



## 4. CONCLUSIONS

In contrast to previous studies on FL/TIP that have focused on the effect on individual fishers, the SAFE Seas project of Plan International seeks to understand the impact on spouses and female relatives in the fisher household. This study took place in three municipalities in the southern Philippines, including Kiamba, Glan and GenSan, and in the Sarangani Province of the Soccsksargen region.

The objectives were to identify women's awareness of FL/TIP and gender dynamics in fishing communities and households affected by exploitative practices on fishing vessels. Within these objectives, the aim was to explore women's experiences, coping strategies and their agency with regard to mitigating FL/TIP on fishing vessels. To respond to these objectives, part of the focus was placed on four main aspects: women's awareness and perception of FL/TIP, impact and coping strategies, gender norms and barriers and women's agency,

### 4.1. Women's awareness and perception of FL/TIP

Our findings show that the awareness of the concept of FL/TIP occurring on fishing vessels is low among women. Moreover, even if they are aware of this practice and know their male relatives have been impacted, they mostly perceive this situation as a normal practice not related to FL/TIP. Though they might not know the term and might not be aware that FL/TIP is illegal, they may still consider it as abuse, even if men think they have to put up with exploitative practices as part of the job. Still, the experience of abuse does not automatically translate into being aware of FL/TIP. Furthermore, among women who are aware that their husbands have experienced FL/TIP, most do not know who to report it to and are afraid that their husbands could lose their jobs. The fear of fishers or fishers' wives' fear of their husbands losing their jobs may not necessarily be instilled by their employer. The economic pressure and necessity for sustaining income mean very few are willing to risk losing the main source of their families' livelihood.

Limited awareness of FL/TIP among women, especially among those who are more vulnerable, is linked to a lack of education and knowledge about labor rights and legal support services. It is also the result of a disconnection between the information provided by the media and their own experiences. Moreover, even if some women can recognize some types of abuses (lower wages, withholding of salary, etc.), there is a general lack of understanding of fishing laws and regulations (i.e., DO-156-16) and how to seek assistance or redress from the authorities.

The perception of FL/TIP among women interviewed for this study was not directly associated with the financial problems they experienced. While they may not know the term, they definitely recognize the negative effects of these practices, such as debt enslavement, on their families. However, many women could articulate situations of debt enslavement and other FL/TIP-related issues, as well as the negative impact this had on their family. They believe this issue should be prioritized and have the desire to be part of this process and to contribute to potential solutions.

### 4.2. Impact on women and their families and coping strategies

The impact of FL/TIP on women creates an underlying atmosphere of anxiety and stress. To support the family, women have to work extra to make ends meet. In some cases, their children had to drop out of school to work or help out at home.

Debt enslavement typically happens when fishers have their salary withheld and have taken an advance to cover costs while out at sea. Upon return, the family struggles financially, and the women, often in charge of household finances, have to borrow money to cope with day-to-day household expenses. The money was typically borrowed from informal lenders, which can result in a high-interest rate. For some fisher families, this situation creates a vicious cycle of financial

struggle and makes them vulnerable to exploitation and FL/TIP. Debt enslavement also impacts negatively on women who feel compelled to overburden themselves or have to neglect their children to take on low paid work. Importantly, debt enslavement is not something that necessarily arises out of a malicious intent to control workers; rather, it is a result of the combination of low and irregular pay and lack of alternative sources of income.

### 4.3. Gender norms and barriers and women's agency

In the study areas, cultural gender norms constitute the root cause of gender inequality within the fishers' households and communities. In the fishing sector, women whose husbands or sons experienced FL/TIP

had more involvement with fishing activities. Women typically do not have formal roles in the fishing sector, and their work tends to be unpaid or underpaid. The work they do will often increase their workload since they are still obligated to fulfill their household duties. For this reason, their work contribution is often overlooked and not formally recognized.

Women are central to their family's wellbeing and are the primary decision-makers in most decision domains within the household. Finance is an area where women hold significant decision-making power, both in managing household finances and negotiating loans. However, considering women's participation and representation in local community organizations, women may have considerable influence at the community level. Through collective action, they may also have potential roles in advocating and applying pressure to the local government for more action against labor violations.



*File photo from Kristine Villanueva*

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

**In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made.**

### **Raise awareness:**

- **Carry out widespread awareness-raising activities on FL/TIP and in consideration of its wider gendered impact.** An awareness campaign and activities relating to FL/TIP should be conducted more broadly in the target areas. The awareness campaign should be directed toward multiple target groups, including fishers, employers, women, local government, representatives of other CBOs, media, vessel owner associations and local civil society organizations. Communities and stakeholders need to be sensitized to duties, obligations and rights concerning working and living conditions onboard vessels. Above all, awareness raising also must be complemented by safe and accessible grievance channels and assurance that government services are accessible to all fisher households.
- **Adopt television and radio as communication channels.** People in the target areas tend to be informed more through TV and radio, rather than direct government sources. Hence, to build on these channels, television could be used as the primary format with radio as complementary support to maximize the reach for building awareness of FL/TIP. The messages should use simple vocabulary and straightforward language. Further, messages should use a style suitable to local cultural vernacular and context.
- **Educate women on labor rights, legal services and advocacy strategies.** Evidence emerged that women (particularly vulnerable women) are often lacking education and knowledge about labor rights and legal services. There is a general lack of understanding of regulation around withholding salaries and minimum wage entitlements under prevailing fishing laws (i.e., DO-156-16) and how to seek assistance. In line with this, the government and civil society organizations should be encouraged to develop more comprehensive education programs for women that can empower them with both the knowledge and skills to mobilize and advocate for the protection and wellbeing of their husbands and families.

### **Enable access to affordable loans and social protection programs:**

- **Provide access to affordable microloans or credit schemes.** The study found that fishing households lack access to immediate cash or provisions for affordable loans or credit. SHGs or fisher co-operatives could be set up and/or expanded into developing financial literacy with a particular focus on how to manage loans and productive debt. Such groups could be established with the help of civil society organizations that work within the community. Loans should be provided directly to women in the households.

- **Promote the use of women-led savings groups.** Women-led savings groups could potentially be scaled up as part of existing SHGs to offer more affordable loans and support families in need. SHGs can provide fair and equitable access to microloans to not only cover subsistence needs, but also provide a pathway for women to start their own small business, as many women expressed a desire to do in the study. This intervention would reduce the risk of debt enslavement to local “loan sharks,” families having to sell off household assets or children having to drop out of school to work or help out at home.
- **Establish and/or expand social protection programs in ways that will eliminate the reliance on loans for basic needs.** Local government agencies and NGOs need to ensure effective rollout and implementation of social protection programs to cover the basics for vulnerable fishing community members and lessen the reliance on cash advances and illicit loan providers. Such social protection measures should include benefits for children and families, mothers with newborns, unemployment benefit, disability and injury protection, access to healthcare and assistance for children to attend compulsory education. Social protection measures must be extended to those employed in the informal sector.

### Promote livelihood and skills development for greater agency and empowerment of fisher households:

- **Increase engagement and participation in existing community-based programs.** There is potential for increased involvement of women, children and vulnerable groups in existing community-based programs. Such programs may involve social protection, livelihoods, self-support or health. These could be enhanced through better coordination of services at the barangay level and assisting women in establishing formal linkages to these types of programs. Efforts to increase engagement and participation would strengthen “women’s agency,” while also reaching more women.
- **Offer relevant and targeted livelihood support for women.** Fisher families need to secure their day-to-day livelihoods and to see them improved for the future. Offer livelihood support with a focus on skills development and diversification for women. Women have great potential and desire to contribute to their economies and sectoral domains; however, many women’s skills are not fully used or developed.
- **Encourage school participation.** Education is essential to assist children and young people in their development. Extra effort is needed from the local and national authorities to ensure high enrollment of girls and to minimize dropout rates. Additional allocations should be made for education scholarships and vocational training, providing a pathway to skills development for girls and women’s skill development over time. Similarly, boys must be encouraged to remain in secondary education and be provided access to vocational skill development to provide greater options for work beyond fishing.
- **Improve counseling support and remedial services for FL/TIP victims and families.** Counseling support is limited for FL/TIP victims in local fishing communities, often conducted by local individuals and the minister at church. There is potential to improve this support by training volunteers and skilled counselors to better meet the needs on the ground. For instance, psychological and economic support for wives of fishers arrested in Indonesian waters is particularly crucial.



### Build capacity and coordination:

- **Use this study as an advocacy tool with relevant stakeholders to stimulate dialogue and ensure coordinated efforts to improve the livelihood of fisher households.** Emphasize specific topics for upcoming dialogues, such as debt enslavement, women's potential roles and women's agency. Partnerships, roundtable discussions or workshops could be organized among fisher associations, DOLE, Department of Social Welfare and Development, the ILO and other relevant stakeholders to develop strategies and interventions to implement recommendations.
- **Use CBOs to work alongside DOLE in providing safe, secure and trustworthy reporting mechanisms for cases of labor violations and FL/TIP.** Fisher centers should be established to provide safe and accessible spaces for both fishers and their families to report instances of labor abuse or indicators of FL/TIP without fear of redress or exclusion from future employment. DOLE must also strive to enforce regulations in fishing communities and provide accessible legal services for redress, particularly implementing the employment agreement.
- **Strengthen the reporting and support mechanism for Filipino fishers arrested, detained and exploited by Indonesian authorities.** A dedicated reporting channel for fishers who have been arrested by Indonesian authorities with clear procedures and guarantee of anonymity is needed. Clear and transparent mechanisms are needed between Indonesia and the Philippines to resolve these cases and, most importantly, ensure the fishing vessel crew are not arrested but instead allowed to return to the Philippines immediately. The wives and relatives of fishers must be made aware of where to report cases of their husband or relative being arrested beyond Philippine waters.
- **Support local governments to actively promote gender-sensitive policies that tackle gender stereotypes and occupational segregation.** There appears to be strong occupational segregation based on gender, which is likely to be the result of stereotypical perceptions of what women can and cannot do. Gender-sensitive policies need to be adopted to remove barriers and allow women access to alternative job opportunities.
- **Conduct a follow-up study to monitor progress.** This study has established several baseline results regarding the FL/TIP situation and its impact on fisher households. Several recommendations for improvement have also been made. A follow-up study should be carried out to determine progress and the extent of activities that have contributed to reducing the negative impact of FL/TIP on women and their families.



## 6. COVID-19 POST-SCRIPT

Because the field data for this research was collected in February 2020 in GenSan and the Sarangani province in Mindanao, Philippines, it does not take into account the impacts of COVID-19 on the fishing community and fishers. The very first COVID-19 situation report for the Philippines was issued by the World Health Organization on March 9, 2020, at which point three cases had been confirmed during the January-February period and seven additional cases reported between March 6 and 8, 2020.<sup>68</sup>

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), across the world, reduced physical movement and shutting down of local businesses have resulted in reduced demand for fish, thereby impacting the ability of fishers to catch and sell fish to make a living.<sup>69</sup> This would have had a devastating impact on those whose sole income is from fishing, especially for families trapped in debt due to the payment practices of fishing vessel owners. Women whose husbands or sons work on fishing vessels would have been severely impacted not only by the loss of income, but also due to increased incidences of domestic violence, as reported globally during the pandemic. According to UN Women, Filipina women and girls have experienced greater vulnerability to gender-based violence than the global average, with one in five women between the ages of 15 and 49 having experienced violence at least once in their lifetime.<sup>70</sup>

In the Philippines, mitigation measures for food security were taken by the Department of Agriculture and the BFAR in the form of a Food Lane Conduct Pass to allow products to pass through quarantine checkpoints and by using a rolling store to sell fresh fish products to communities. It also was reported



*Fisher's wife receiving COVID prevention information and personal protection equipment for her family*

that some local governments were buying the catch of small-scale fishers to distribute as part of the food packs to families and communities.

According to a report in May 2020, the BFAR had calculated that the Philippines would not experience a reduction in its supply of fish for domestic consumption, estimating that the country would maintain a supply of 3.35 million metric tons of fish.<sup>71</sup> In addition,

68 WHO. 2020. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Situation Report 1 Philippines (9 March 2020). [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/wpro---documents/countries/philippines/emergencies/covid-19/who-phl-sitrep-1-covid-19-9mar2020.pdf?sfvrsn=2553985a\\_2&download=true](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/wpro---documents/countries/philippines/emergencies/covid-19/who-phl-sitrep-1-covid-19-9mar2020.pdf?sfvrsn=2553985a_2&download=true).

69 FAO. 2020. The effect of COVID-19 on fisheries and aquaculture in Asia (21 May 2020). <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9545en/CA9545EN.pdf>.

70 UN Women. 2020. Gender Snapshot: COVID-19 in the Philippines, In Focus (April 2020). <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2020/04/phl-covid%20gender%20snapshot%20april%202020.pdf?la=en&vs=3508>.

71 Manila Bulletin. 2020. Sufficient fish supply assured amid COVID-19 (2 May 2020). <https://www.sffaii.com/2020/09/bfar-assures-sufficient-fish-supply.html>.

the prices of staple fish products at major ports, including GenSan, had remained stable. However, a national federation of small-scale fishers reported having not received any cash subsidy from the Department of Agriculture.

For exporting fish products however, the situation had become critical, as GenSan, in particular, relies heavily on the export of its main resource, tuna, which in turn relies on the smooth and quick transportation via air to ensure freshness. Japan is the biggest importer of Philippine tuna. During the pandemic, prices of tuna dropped to P100 (2 USD) per kilo, as compared to P200-300 (4-6 USD) per kilo, and the number of exporters halved, greatly impacting the 120,000 people who rely on the tuna industry in GenSan.<sup>72</sup>

Demonstrating the economic impact that the port has in GenSan, when the complex was forced to close for three days because of being identified as a source of local transmission of COVID-19, it was reported to have cost the local fishing industry up to 400 million pesos (8.2 million USD) in revenue.<sup>73</sup> Recently, however, due to the resumption of international shipments

and orders for tuna from the United States, the price of tuna is returning to pre-COVID levels, which is determined largely by international demand.

The fishing vessel crew, as well as their families, would have borne the brunt of these economic impacts, especially those lacking contracts and formal recognition. They would have had to cope without basic social protection. Many of the women surveyed and interviewed in this study work in the informal sector themselves, living on daily income generation to supplement either their husband's or son's income from fishing. With these sources of income cut off, women in these communities, along with their families, would have been pushed deeper into poverty.

As such, the most precarious communities who rely on the functioning of local economic activity for survival have faced greatly exacerbated vulnerabilities during this pandemic. This has only further demonstrated the need for universal social protection, unconditional government assistance during crises and formal labor protections, including contracts, for fishers.

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72 Sarmiento, Bong S. 2020. Back to export mode for GenSan fresh tuna stocks. Minda News (30 September 2020). <https://www.mindanews.com/business/2020/09/back-to-export-mode-for-gensans-fresh-tuna-stocks/>.

73 Manila Bulletin. 2020. P400 million in revenues to be lost when GenSan fish port closes for 4 days, August 31, 2020. <https://mb.com.ph/2020/08/31/p400-million-in-revenues-to-be-lost-when-gensan-fish-port-closes-for-4-days/>.

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# APPENDIX I:

## SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

January 2020

Version: FINAL

Barangay				
Town/Municipality				
Province				
Date of Interview		Begin Time		End Time
Name of Interviewer				

### INTRODUCTION and INFORMED CONSENT

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. I'd like to introduce myself — I am (NAME) from RAPID ASIA on behalf of Plan International Philippines. We are currently undertaking a study about working conditions in the fishing sector and the impact on women in Sarangani Province and General Santos City (GenSan). We invite you to participate. Your contribution is very valuable. There will be no right or wrong answers; just give us your honest opinion. I am interested to hear your views and your thoughts and not those of other people.

The information we collect is confidential and will be compiled in a report. We will not state your name, address or any other personal information by which you could be identified. The report also will not include any information or responses by which you can be identified.

Participation in this interview is voluntary, and you can withdraw any time. However, your participation will be very insightful to understand the future needs and aspirations of women like yourself.

Do you have further questions about this survey? (MAKE CLARIFICATION AS NEEDED)

CONFIRM UNDERSTANDING (Yes, I understand and hereby give my consent to be interviewed for the study.) Click Yes.

Look for Filipino women in Sarangani Province and GenSan who have husbands/male relatives working on fishing vessels.

## SCREENING

## S1 RECORD REGION

General Santos 1	1	<b>CHECK QUOTA</b>
Kiamba	2	
Glan	3	

## SHOW CARD 1

S2 Which of the following age groups do you fall into? **(Single)**

Below 18 years	1	<b>SELECT A PERSON 18 YEARS OR OLDER</b>    <b>CONTINUE</b>
18-24	2	
25-64	3	
35-49	4	
50 or older	5	

S3a Do you have a husband or a male relative working on a fishing vessel? **(Multiple)**

Yes, husband	1	<b>CONTINUE</b>
Yes, male relative	2	
No	3	<b>STOP</b>

S3b How long have your husband or male relative been working on a fishing vessel? **(Single)**

More than 6 months	1	<b>CONTINUE</b>
Less than 6 months	2	<b>STOP</b>

## SHOW CARD 2

S3c How old was your husband or male relative when he started working on a fishing vessel? **(Single)**

Below 18 years	1
18-24	2
25-34	3
35-49	4
50 or older	5
I don't know	6

## SHOW CARD 3

S4 What is his relationship to you? **(Single)**

Husband	1
Father	2
Brother	3
Uncle	4
Son	5
<b>Other (SPECIFY)</b>	6

S5 What is his work position? **(Single)**

General boat crew/staff member	1	<b>CONTINUE</b>
Chief/Supervisor	2	
Higher position/Boat captain	3	<b>STOP</b>

S6 How did he find this job? **(Single)**

Directly from employer	1
Broker	2
Through relatives or friends	3
Government agency	4
Don't know	5

S7 How long is he normally out at sea?

<b>Days:</b>	<b>Weeks:</b>	<b>Months:</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
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S8 How well can you understand or read Cebuano? **(Single)**

None or very little	1	<b>MUST READ OUT ANSWERS</b>
Some	2	
Good	3	
Fluent	4	

### AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF FL/TI

- A1 Before today, have you ever heard about something called **Forced Labor** or **Human Trafficking? (Single)**

No	<b>1</b>	<b>GO TO A3</b>
Heard about it but don't know much about it	<b>2</b>	<b>CONTINUE</b>
Yes, I'm familiar with this subject	<b>3</b>	

### SHOW CARD 4

- A2 From where have you heard about force labor or human trafficking? **(Multiple)**

News and media reports	<b>1</b>	DOLE (Department of Labor and Employment)	<b>11</b>
TV documentary or other program	<b>2</b>	POEA (Philippine Overseas Employment Admin)	<b>12</b>
Community radio	<b>3</b>	OWWA (Overseas Workers Welfare Admin)	<b>13</b>
Through friends or family	<b>4</b>	Kaagapay OFW or other NGO	<b>14</b>
Through local government authorities	<b>5</b>	Job fairs (e.g., on Labor Day)	<b>15</b>
Religious leaders	<b>6</b>	Public service announcements	<b>16</b>
Commercial radio	<b>7</b>	Community event, festival, street show, etc.	<b>17</b>
Internet	<b>8</b>	Posters, leaflets, or brochures	<b>18</b>
Police	<b>9</b>	Recruitment agency or broker	<b>19</b>
Maguindanao TIP-VAWC Actionline	<b>10</b>	Other	<b>20</b>

### SHOW CARD 5

- A3 Forced labor or human trafficking means someone was deceived, forced or coerced to do a job or provide services in which they were exploited or are unable to leave. Based on this, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. **(Single per row)**

#	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
<b>1</b>	This is a serious problem in this community.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	Families of victims suffer serious negative consequences.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

**SHOW CARD 6**

- A4 This question is for you alone, and I can't see the answers. Which of the following have your husband/**male** relatives experienced in the past two years while working on a fishing vessel? Just select the numbers here on the tablet. You can choose more than one. **(Multiple)**

Harassment, humiliation or strong verbal abuse	<b>1</b>
Employer confiscated their mobile phone	<b>2</b>
Employer confiscated their ID documents	<b>3</b>
Forced to work overtime	<b>4</b>
Paid lower wages than agreed or lack of transparency	<b>5</b>
Not being paid for two months or longer	<b>6</b>
Forced to work longer than agreed for the same employer	<b>7</b>
Threat of being dismissed from work	<b>8</b>
Not allowed to communicate freely with family	<b>9</b>
Forced to work to help another family member or relatives	<b>10</b>
Forced to work to pay off debt to employer	<b>11</b>
Facing threat of violence	<b>12</b>
Facing violence	<b>13</b>
Had a serious injury that required medical attention	<b>14</b>
Experienced some form of trauma, but I don't know what happened	<b>15</b>
None	<b>16</b>

**SHOW CARD 7**

- A5 Which of the following did your family experience in the past two years since your husband or male relatives started working on a fishing vessel? **(Multiple)**

Stress	<b>1</b>
Increased domestic or family violence, such as threatening, insulting and humiliating someone in the family	<b>2</b>
Greater burden to repay debt	<b>3</b>
Children in the family drop out from school	<b>4</b>
Children cannot afford to go to school	<b>5</b>
Having to do an extra or a part-time job to earn more money	<b>6</b>
Children had to work	<b>7</b>
Other <b>(SPECIFY)</b>	<b>8</b>
None	<b>9</b>

**IF NONE IN A4 and A5, GO TO G1**

- A6 Did you seek assistance from anyone about this problem?

Yes	<b>1</b>	<b>CONTINUE</b>
No	<b>2</b>	<b>GO TO A9</b>

**SHOW CARD 8**

- A7 From whom did you seek help? **(Multiple)**

Family or relative	<b>1</b>
--------------------	----------



Friends	<b>2</b>
Community leader	<b>3</b>
Police	<b>4</b>
NGO	<b>5</b>
Other <b>(SPECIFY)</b>	<b>6</b>

A8 Were they able to help you to resolve your problem? **(Single)**

Yes		<b>1</b>	<b>GO TO G1</b>
Somewhat		<b>2</b>	
No		<b>3</b>	

## SHOW CARD 9

A9 Why didn't you ask for help? **(Multiple)**

Don't know who to ask	<b>1</b>
The employer may find out	<b>2</b>
Don't want to give out personal information	<b>3</b>
It would be embarrassing	<b>4</b>
The problem is not big enough to be reported	<b>5</b>
Other <b>(SPECIFY)</b>	<b>6</b>

## GENDER NORM

## SHOW CARD 10

G1 What is your main activity at the present time? **(Single)**

Employed full time or part time	1	<b>CONTINUE</b>
Self-employed, seasonal or piecemeal work	2	
Unemployed, looking for work	3	
Home duties, including raising children	4	<b>GO TO G3</b>
Studying	5	
Other	6	

## SHOW CARD 11

G2 Which of the following best describes the industry in which you work? **(Single)**

Fishing	1
Agriculture or forestry	2
Domestic work	3
Manufacturing	4
Construction	5
Retail and wholesale	6
Entertainment	7
Personal services	8
Healthcare	9
Government	10
Other	11

## SHOW CARD 12

G3 To what extent are you involved in the following activities related to fishing? **(Single)**

#	Statement	Do all or most of it	Do some of it	Not involved
1	Preparing or fixing nets or other equipment	1	2	3
2	Fishing off-shore	1	2	3
3	Cleaning or peeling the catch	1	2	3
4	Drying/storing	1	2	3

G4 What is your monthly income on average? **IF NO INCOME, WRITE '0'**

	Peso
--	------

## SHOW CARD 13

G5 To what extent are you involved in the following activities at home? **(Single)**

#	Statement	Do all or most of it	Shared with others	Not involved
1	Preparing food	1	2	3

2	Buying groceries/going to the market	1	2	3
3	Cleaning the house	1	2	3
4	Washing clothes	1	2	3
5	Taking care of children	1	2	3
6	Taking care of sick relatives or elderly	1	2	3

## DECISION-MAKING

### SHOW CARD 14

- C1 In your household who would be the main decision-maker for the following?  
(Select one per row)

#	Statement	Myself	Husband or other male	Other female	Shared between males and females
1	Household finances	1	2	3	4
2	Major household purchases	1	2	3	4
3	Schooling for children	1	2	3	4
4	Borrow money	1	2	3	4
5	Work-related matters	1	2	3	4

- C2 While your husband/male relative is off fishing, how does decision-making change in your household?

Women are able to make more decisions	1	<b>CONTINUE</b>
Women still have to wait for husband/relative to come home	2	<b>GO TO F1</b>
No change	3	

### SHOW CARD 15

- C3 While your husband/male relative is off fishing, in which of the following do you or other female family members have more decision-making? **(Multiple)**

Household finances	1
Major household purchases	2
Schooling for children	3
Borrow money	4

Work-related matters	<b>5</b>
None	<b>6</b>

## FINANCE

### SHOW CARD 16

F1 How often does your husband/male relative get his salary? **(Single)**

Daily	<b>1</b>
Weekly	<b>2</b>
Every 2 weeks	<b>3</b>
Monthly	<b>4</b>
Lump sum after a longer period (2 months or longer)	<b>5</b>
Have not been paid yet since started working	<b>6</b>
Don't know	<b>7</b>
Other <b>(SPECIFY)</b>	<b>8</b>

F2a Do you or anyone else in this household currently have any loans or debt?

Yes	<b>1</b>	<b>CONTINUE</b>
No	<b>2</b>	<b>GO TO F8</b>

F2b How much money did you borrow?

	Peso
--	------

F3 Was the loan obtained before or after your husband/male relative started working on the fishing vessel?

Before	<b>1</b>
After	<b>2</b>
Don't know	<b>3</b>

F4 Who made the decision to take out the loan?

Yourself	<b>1</b>
Husband	<b>2</b>

Both yourself and husband	<b>3</b>
Other person	<b>4</b>

**SHOW CARD 17**F5 Who provided the loan? **(Multiple)**

Bank	<b>1</b>
Community Savings Group	<b>2</b>
Money lender	<b>3</b>
Family or relatives	<b>4</b>
Friends	<b>5</b>
Employer	<b>6</b>
Other <b>(SPECIFY)</b>	<b>7</b>

**SHOW CARD 18**F6 What was the purpose of the loan? **(Multiple)**

Secure a job	<b>1</b>
Pay off other debt	<b>2</b>
Pay living expenses or bills	<b>3</b>
Buy consumer product, TV, motorcycle, phone, etc.	<b>4</b>
Pay health fees or medicine	<b>5</b>
Support family members	<b>6</b>
Pay for a wedding	<b>7</b>
Start a business	<b>8</b>
Buy land	<b>9</b>
Build or buy a house	<b>10</b>
Children's education	<b>11</b>
Buy farming equipment	<b>12</b>
Other <b>(SPECIFY)</b>	<b>13</b>

**SHOW CARD 19**F7 Which of the following have you experienced when paying back the loan? **(Single)**

Difficult to keep up with repayments	<b>1</b>
Had to borrow money to meet payments	<b>2</b>
The debt greatly exceeds the worth of the initial loan	<b>3</b>
Had to renew debt soon after it was paid off	<b>4</b>
Debt has continuously increased, impossible to repay	<b>5</b>
Lost collateral	<b>6</b>
Been threatened when payments were late	<b>7</b>
Have struggled in other ways <b>(SPECIFY)</b>	<b>8</b>
None, we don't have any problem repaying the loan	<b>9</b>



F8 How many people live in this household? \_\_\_\_\_

F9 How many cannot produce an income, either because they are too young, too old, go to school, have poor health, are disabled, looking after children or any other reason?

<b>WRITE IN TOTAL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS</b>	_____ people
<b>WRITE IN TOTAL NON-INCOME PRODUCING HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS</b>	_____ people

F10 Considering the combined income for all remaining household members, what is your best estimate of the combined income per month?

	Pesos
--	-------

## WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

## SHOW CARD 20

Q1 Are you a member of any organizations? **(Multiple)**

Community Savings Group	1	<b>CONTINUE</b>
Religious organization	2	
Local women's organization	3	
Parent association	4	
Fisheries organization	5	
Local community organization set by local government (barangay level)	6	
Other (Specify)	7	<b>GO TO M1</b>
None	8	

Q2 Are members mostly men, women or about the same? **(Single)**

Mostly men	1
Mostly women	2
About the same	3

Q3 How often do you participate in the organization activities? **(Single)**

Never	1	<b>GO TO Q5</b>
Sometimes	2	<b>CONTINUE</b>
Regularly	3	

Q4 In meetings do you ask questions and participate in discussions? **(Single)**

Never	1
Sometimes	2
Often	3

Q5 Do you currently hold a position as a board or committee member?

Yes	1
No	2

## MEDIA AND INFORMATION

### SHOW CARD 21

M1 Which of the following media do you regularly use? **(Multiple)**

Television	1	<b>GO TO D1</b>
Radio	2	
Newspaper	3	
Regular mobile phone	4	
Smartphone/Android	5	<b>CONTINUE</b>
Internet	6	
None	7	<b>GO TO D1</b>

M2 How do you normally access the internet? **(Multiple)**

PC or laptop	1
--------------	---

### SHOW CARD 22

M3 What social media do you regularly use, if any? **(Multiple)**

Facebook	1
Twitter	2
WhatsApp	3
Instagram	4
YouTube	5
Line	6
Skype	7
Other	8
None	9

### SHOW CARD 23

M4 What activities do you regularly do on social media? **(Multiple)**

Browsing	1
Reading material (blogs, news, magazines)	2
Viewing pictures and videos	3
Chatting, connecting and networking	4
Downloading content	5
Liking, sharing and commenting on stuff	6
Competition and games	7
Others	8
None	9

## DEMOGRAPHICS

## SHOW CARD 24

D1 What is the highest level of education you have completed? **(Single)**

Never attended school	<b>1</b>
Completed less than 6 years of basic education	<b>2</b>
Completed 6 years of basic/elementary education	<b>3</b>
Completed 9 years of basic education	<b>4</b>
Completed 12 years of education	<b>5</b>
Diploma, university, or higher education	<b>6</b>
Vocational training	<b>7</b>

## SHOW CARD 25

D2 Which of the following best describes your marital status? **(Single)**

Single	<b>1</b>
Married but no children	<b>2</b>
Married with children	<b>3</b>
Divorced/ <b>Separated</b>	<b>4</b>

D3 How many children do you have? **IF NONE, WRITE 0.**

Boy(s)	
Girl(s)	

## SHOW CARD 26

D4 What is your ethnicity? **(Single)**

Cebuano	<b>1</b>
Waray	<b>2</b>
Hiligaynon/Ilonggo	<b>3</b>
Karay-a	<b>4</b>
Aklanon	<b>5</b>
Masbatenyo	<b>6</b>
Romblomanon	<b>7</b>
Tagalog	<b>8</b>
Ilocano	<b>9</b>
Bikol	<b>10</b>
Other <b>(Specify)</b>	<b>11</b>

## SHOW CARD 27

D5 Which of the following best describes the financial situation of your household? **(Single)**

Money is sometimes not enough to buy food	<b>1</b>
---	----------

Money is enough for food, but sometimes not enough to buy new clothes	<b>2</b>
Money is enough to buy food and new clothes, but not enough to buy a new television or new tools or machinery to work with	<b>3</b>
Money is enough to buy home appliances, but we can't buy a new car	<b>4</b>
Money is enough for everything but not to buy a house or apartment	<b>5</b>
We could afford to buy a house or apartment if we needed	<b>6</b>

**SHOW CARD 28**D6 What is your faith/religion? **(Single)**

Catholic	<b>1</b>
Islam	<b>2</b>
Christian	<b>3</b>
Hindu	<b>4</b>
Buddhism	<b>5</b>
Other	<b>6</b>
None	<b>7</b>

**CONTACT INFORMATION**X1 In case I have missed anything and need to contact you, may I have your name and your phone number that I can reach you on? **DO A MISSED CALL TO CHECK**

Name	
Phone	

X2 **THIS RESPONDENT IS A GOOD PROSPECT FOR THE FGDs/KIIs S3=1/2, A4=1-15)**  
 We will have a focus group discussion with some women from this community. Participation is voluntary, and you will be compensated for your time. Would you like to join?

Yes	<b>COLLECT DETAILS</b>
No	<b>FINISH</b>

**Thank You for Your Time and Cooperation**



# APPENDIX II: MODERATOR GUIDES

MODERATOR GUIDE - IDIs				
Respondent Name:				
Location:				
Mobile:				
Date of Interview:	___ / ___ / 2020	Start Time		End Time
Interviewer:				
<b>ESOMAR DECLARATION</b>				
I declare that the respondent, whose name and address appear above, was unknown to me until the interview. I confirm that, before returning this questionnaire, I have checked that it meets and was carried out in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct, and instructions were supplied to me for this study. I understand that the information given to me during the interview must be kept confidential.				
<b>Signed by Interviewer:</b>				

## FOR MODERATOR:

- A. **Be clear about the goals of the interview: to get a story about women's experiences with FL/TIP and the consequences to her and the family.** Let them talk; perhaps you will get details you never knew before, perspectives you never heard before. **Study Goals:** To learn about the experiences of women who have a husband being trafficked or forced to work against his will. Findings will be used to design and adapt project interventions being implemented by Plan International in your community.
- B. **Prepare your interviewee.** Tell them exactly what you are doing. This will help create context for them and put them at ease for the interview. You should share with them why you have chosen to speak with them. Speak from your heart and be sincere. Be clear you are not here to judge, but to learn. Convey that you respect and are interested in their experience and that you value what they might share and their life's perspective.
- C. **Prepare your logistics.** Location: Choose a quiet place where there are minimal distractions and, if you are recording the interview, select a place that offers better sound quality. **Equipment:** Charge your phone or recording device beforehand. Silence your phone during the interview. Bring a paper and pen so you can note follow-up questions without interrupting their flow. Placement of recording device: Place the recording device somewhere it can easily pick up sound and the mic is unobstructed. Then, forget about it.
- D. **Prepare your questions.** Frame questions to be open-ended. Begin questions with "Why," "How," "Can you describe...," "Tell me about...." You are looking for more than a yes or no answer. Less is more. The less specific you are in your questions, the more room you allow the interviewee to expand on their answer.

## INFORMED CONSENT (in a separate form)

**Main Topics:** Include a description of self and experiences before, during and after her husband was being trafficked.

- A. First, would you be willing to share more about yourself and your background? What does your typical day look like? Are you currently employed? If yes, can you please tell us your job? (*Before*)
- B. How did your life change while your husband was at sea / being trafficked / forced to work against his will? (*During*)
- C. What are the impacts felt by you and your family after his return? Did you report your husband's FL/TIP experiences to anyone? If not, why not? (*After*)
- D. Have you experienced a similar situation to the experiences of your husband (*being trafficked/forced against your will*)?

**Main Topics:** How is your life different now from how it was before? This should include forms of coping and key areas of impact, such as identity, emotions, economic and relationships. Ask about their experiences with services or support received (if any).

- A. How is your life different now from how it was before? What has been challenging? What has improved?
- B. How did the trafficking experience affect your relationship with your husband? Please ask about both positive and negative experiences.
- C. What helped you to get through your husband being trafficked? What support and who provided the support (e.g., community, organization, local government)? Can you tell me about your experiences with resources and services? Were you able to access them? If not, what prevented you from accessing them?

**Main Topics:** The final section asks about their goals and dreams, as well as recommendations they have for service providers.

- A. What do you hope for in the future? What is next for you and your family?
- B. In your opinion, what support services are working well in the community? What could be improved?
- C. Do you have any recommendations for the service providers in your community?

That is the end of my questions. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Thank You for Your Participation**

## INFORMED CONSENT – IDI with Women

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I work with RAPID ASIA on behalf of Plan International Philippines. Currently, we are undertaking a study about working conditions in the fishing sector and impacts on women. We have selected you because you have experienced or are aware that your husband or partner is a victim of forced labor or human trafficking. We want to hear your story and learn how you have been affected and can cope.

Any information we collect is confidential. No name or personal details will be shared with any third parties and will be deleted upon completion of the project. We will use a tape recorder so I can concentrate on what you are saying. Please be assured that your participation is voluntary; you can withdraw at any time. The interview will take up to 30 minutes. Do you have any questions? (CLARIFY AS NEEDED). If you agree to participate, please sign below.

## CONFIRM UNDERSTANDING

1. I confirm that the information sheet concerning this study has been read to me, and I understand what is required of me to take part in this study.
2. I have been given the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions, and a reply was given to me for all my questions to my satisfaction.
3. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time.
4. I understand that any information given by me and others will be compiled and used for preparing a report by the research team.
5. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.
6. I agree to take part in the above study.

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Plan International Philippines Office directly through the information provided below.

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 4th Floor, Bloomingdale Building  
 205 Salcedo, Legazpi Village  
 Makati 1229, Philippines

### SIGN

---

**Name of Participant**

---

**Date**

---

**Signature**

MODERATOR GUIDE - KII with Stakeholder				
Respondent Name:				
Organization/Location:				
Mobile:				
Date of Interview:	___ / ___ / 2020	Start Time		End Time
Interviewer:				
<b>ESOMAR DECLARATION</b> I declare that the respondent, whose name and address appear above, was unknown to me until the interview. I confirm that, before returning this questionnaire, I have checked that it meets and was carried out in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct, and instructions were supplied to me for this study. I understand that the information given to me during the interview must be kept confidential.				
Signed by Interviewer:				

## FOR MODERATOR:

- A. **Be clear about the goals of the interview:** a) to identify and discuss the women's awareness of, perception of and coping strategies to deal with the impact of FL/TIP on fishing vessels experienced by their male spouses/relative and felt by the wife or female relatives; and b) to assess the level of knowledge stakeholders have regarding FL/TIP on fishing vessels and their involvement with FL/TIP and/or women's empowerment.
- B. **Prepare your logistics.** *Location:* Choose a quiet place where there are minimal distractions and, if you are recording the interview, select a place that offers better sound quality. *Equipment:* Charge your phone or recording device beforehand. Silence your phone during the interview. Bring a paper and pen so you can note follow-up questions without interrupting their flow. *Placement of recording device:* Place the recording device somewhere it can easily pick up sound and the mic is unobstructed. Then, forget about it.
- C. **Prepare your questions.** Frame questions to be open-ended. Begin questions with "Why," "How," "Can you describe..." and "Tell me about..." You are looking for more than a yes or no answer. Less is more. The less specific you are in your questions, the more room you allow the interviewee to expand on their answer.

## INFORMED CONSENT (consent form in a separate form)

### Background (Ask Everyone):

First, I would like to understand a bit about the work you do and the organization you work for. How long have you been working with the current organization? Please tell me a bit about your role in the organization.

## 1. NGO/Advocacy Group/Community Member

**Main Topics:** a) To identify their involvement with FL/TIP and/or women's empowerment; b) To find out what their priority is; c) To address their concern(s) and what their efforts have been to build awareness of FL/TIP; and d) To assess the alliances that collaborate to support or oppose the policy.

1. Would you please tell me what your/your organization's involvement is with FL/TIP and women's empowerment?
2. What are your/your organization's main concerns regarding FL/TIP and women's empowerment?
3. What strategies and actions have you/your organization taken to support women whose male relatives are subject to FL/TIP?
4. What are the efforts taken by your organization to build awareness of FL/TIP and women's empowerment?
5. With whom and how do you build alliances and collaborate to support or oppose the program and/or the policy (if any) regarding the FL/TIP and women's empowerment?

**Main Topic:** Women's role and agency in FL/TIP prevention and mitigation:

1. How can women prevent and mitigate the effects of FL/TIP on the family?
2. How can women play a role in terms of improving knowledge on and learning how to report FL/TIP?
3. How could economic empowerment of women help in decreasing indicators of FL/TIP? Would social and gender norms present barriers to such empowerment?
4. What social media networks, if any, do women possess onshore that could be harnessed to mitigate or decrease indicators of forced labor on fishing vessels?

## 2. Government Official

**Main Topics:** To assess the level of knowledge stakeholders have regarding FL/TIP. This is important to identify stakeholders who oppose/support/neutral women's agency/women's role due to misunderstanding or lack of information.

1. Would you please tell me what your/your organization's involvement is with FL/TIP and women's empowerment?
2. What are your/your organization's main concerns regarding FL/TIP and women's empowerment?
3. What strategies and/or actions have you/your organization taken to support women whose male relatives are subject to FL/TIP?
4. What are the efforts taken by your organization to build awareness of FL/TIP and women's empowerment?
5. With whom and how do you build alliances and collaborate to support or oppose the program and/or the policy (if any) regarding the FL/TIP and women's empowerment?



**Main Topic:** Women's role and agency in FL/TIP prevention and mitigation.

1. How can women prevent and mitigate the effects of FL/TIP on the family?
2. How can women play a role in terms of improving knowledge on and learning how to report FL/TIP?
3. How could economic empowerment of women help in decreasing indicators of FL/TIP?  
Would social and gender norms present barriers to such empowerment?
4. What social media networks, if any, do women possess onshore that could be harnessed to mitigate or decrease indicators of forced labor on fishing vessels?

### 3. Media or Journalist

**Main Topic:** To assess knowledge, perception and how media present/cover women related to FL/TIP in fishing vessels.

1. How do you report stories you come across related to the issues (any specific reportage, column, etc.)?
2. What are the guidelines for how to cover FL/TIP (if any), such as training on awareness of FL/TIP?
3. What is your concern and what efforts (by your institution) have you made to build awareness about FL/TIP in fishing vessels?
4. What kind of collaborations do you have with institutions or actors related to FL/TIP on fishing vessels?

**Main Topic:** To assess the role of media in relation to FL/TIP on fishing vessels.

1. What kind of initiative, if any, has been taken to build awareness on FL/TIP and women's empowerment?
2. Would you tell me about the social media that can support, in terms of mitigating, the issues of FL/TIP?

**Main Topic:** Women's role and agency in FL/TIP prevention and mitigation.

1. How can women prevent and mitigate the effects of FL/TIP on the family?
2. How can women play a role in terms of improving knowledge on and learning how to report FL/TIP?
3. How could economic empowerment of women help in decreasing indicators of FL/TIP?  
Would social and gender norms present barriers to such empowerment?
4. What social media networks, if any, do women possess onshore that could be harnessed to mitigate or decrease indicators of forced labor on fishing vessels?

#### 4. Fisheries Association, Vessel Owner

**Main Topic:** To assess knowledge, perceptions and experiences with FL/TIP on fishing vessels and its impact on women, family and the consequences.

1. Would you please tell me what your/your organization's involvement is with FL/TIP and women's empowerment?
2. What are your/your organization's main concerns regarding FL/TIP and women's empowerment?
3. What strategies and/or actions have you/your organization taken to support women whose male relatives are subject to FL/TIP?
4. What are the efforts taken by your organization to build awareness of FL/TIP and women's empowerment?
5. With whom and how do you build alliances and collaborate to support or oppose the program and/or the policy (if any) regarding the FL/TIP and women's empowerment?

**Main Topic:** Women's role and agency in FL/TIP prevention and mitigation.

1. How can women prevent and mitigate the effects of FL/TIP on the family?
2. How can women play a role in terms of improving knowledge on and learning how to report FL/TIP?
3. How could economic empowerment of women help in decreasing indicators of FL/TIP? Would social and gender norms present barriers to such empowerment?
4. What social media networks, if any, do women possess onshore that could be harnessed to mitigate or decrease indicators of forced labor on fishing vessels?

That is the end of my questions. Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Thank You for Your Time and Cooperation**

## INFORMED CONSENT – KIIs (Key Stakeholders)

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I work with RAPID ASIA on behalf of Plan International Philippines. You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Plan International. Currently, we are undertaking a study about working conditions in the fishing sector and impacts on women. We have selected you because of your knowledge and involvement on the issues of FL/TIP on fishing vessels. The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of the gendered impact and capacity to mitigate the effect of forced labor and human trafficking in the Philippines by wives, partners and female relatives of male fishers on fishing vessels. Your responses will be included in our assessment and will inform the development of our program.

Although you may not receive any benefits from participating in this study, the information that you provide may help inform the SAFE Seas project team from Plan International to develop our program. Any information we collect is confidential. No name or personal details will be shared with any third parties and will be deleted upon completion of the project. We will use a tape recorder so I can concentrate on what you are saying. Please be assured that your participation is voluntary; you can withdraw at any time. The interview will take up to 30 minutes. Do you have any questions? (MAKE CLARIFICATION AS NEEDED). If you agree to participate, please sign below.

## CONFIRM UNDERSTANDING

1. I confirm that the information sheet concerning this study has been read to me, and I understand what is required of me to take part in this study.
2. I have been given the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions, and a reply was given to me for all my questions to my satisfaction.
3. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time.
4. I understand that any information given by me and others will be compiled and used for preparing a report by the research team.
5. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.
6. I agree to take part in the above study.

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Plan International Philippines Office directly through the information provided below.

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 4th Floor, Bloomingdale Building  
 205 Salcedo, Legazpi Village  
 Makati 1229, Philippines

### SIGN

---

Name of Participant

---

Date

---

Signature

MODERATOR GUIDE - FGD					
No. of Participants		Date:		Name of Moderator:	
Start Time:		End Time:		Location:	
Signed by Moderator/Facilitator:					

## CRITERIA FOR RECRUITMENT:

- Women who are older than 18 years old.
- Have a husband or male relatives working on a fishing vessel (S3=1).
- Have experienced or are aware that their husband or male relative is/has been a victim of human trafficking in the past 12 months (A6=1-15).
- Each group consists of 5-8 women participants.

## FOR MODERATOR:

1. Stimulate the discussion, focus it on the topics listed in a guide and ensure all participants participate actively. The **note taker** will take notes so the moderator can focus on the discussion.
2. Make sure you can do the discussion in a comfortable setting. It should be quiet and have space for participants to sit comfortably.
3. Make sure participants sit in a way that you can see all their faces so you can view their body language and facial expressions.
4. Prepare name tags/signs. Ask the participants if they are comfortable wearing name tags; if not, use name signs.
5. The purpose of the study is to explore how attitudes and gender norms affect women's perception and ability to identify current coping strategies, as well as their future roles to prevent, counter or mitigate the effects of FL/TIP.

### 1. Informed Consent (5-10 min)

- a. **INTRODUCE YOURSELF**
- b. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for coming today. I am working on behalf of Plan International Philippines. I will be facilitating today's discussion.
- c. **READ THE INFORMED CONSENT** (Each participant will be given a consent form.)
- d. Do you have any questions? (**CLARIFY AS NEEDED**). If you agree to participate, please sign the consent form and hand it to us.
- e. **SIGN THE CONSENT FORM**
- f. **START TAPE/VIDEO RECORDER**
- g. **TOOLS:** Picture/poster, flip chart paper and marker, tape recorder, or video recorder

## 2. Warm-up (10 min)

- Let's start by introducing ourselves. **LET EVERYONE SPEAK IN TURN.**
- Tell me about your work and family. **LET EVERYONE SPEAK IN TURN. WRITE DOWN ON THE CARD THEIR WORK OR ACTIVITIES AND PUT IT ON THE FLIP CHART. WE WILL LOOK AT IT AGAIN WHEN WE DISCUSS THE NEXT TOPIC.**

## RESEARCH QUESTION:

In what ways do gender norms affect women's empowerment or agency that would in turn restrict or support their efforts to counter or mitigate FL/TIP?

## SUB-QUESTIONS:

- What things are considered the "men's role" in the family and "men's work" in this community?
- What things are considered the "women's role" in the family and "women's work" in this community?

### Activity: GENDER RELATIONS

**Tools:** List of words and occupation (from flip chart on previous introduction), flip chart, markers, show cards

#### Instructions:

- **SHOW CARD:** Various words/occupations
- **ASK PARTICIPANTS:** Which one of these activities/words are normally done by women or men, or both? Participant can describe why. The note taker writes the answer on the flip chart.
- **SHOW CARD:** Decision-making in household (e.g., finance, education, work related)
- **ASK PARTICIPANTS:** Discuss how they manage these things; who makes the decision? Who negotiates the interest rate on loan amounts, who should attend school, whether to accept a job, etc.? How does the men's absence from the household affect the decision-making in the household?

## 4. AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF FL/TIP

## 5. THE SOCIOECONOMIC EFFECTS OF EXPERIENCES ONSHORE WHEN FL/TIP IS OCCURRING OFFSHORE (25 min)



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- a. What do women/men know about FL/TIP on fishing vessels in the community?
- b. What are the causes, who is most affected and in what ways? What are the consequences?
- c. What are the characteristics of those affected by FL/TIP in this community?

### **Activity:** INDICATOR OF FL/TIP ON VESSELS

**Tools:** Show cards of various indicators of FL/TIP, flip charts, markers

#### **Instructions:**

- **SHOW CARD:** Various indicators of FL/TIP listed
- **ASK PARTICIPANTS:** Please choose the card you want to explain or share the story about. Facilitator writes down the answer on the flip chart. LET EVERYONE SPEAK IN TURN.

#### **Follow-up Questions on Flip Chart:**

- Were you aware of these risks before your husband began working on fishing vessels? How and by whom was the decision made to accept such risks? Prompt on how well the men were prepared/trained before working onboard vessels? What was their expectation before they started work compared to what was the reality?
- What was the family situation as a result of this? Education for children? Domestic violence? Burden of work? Finance situation?

#### **Follow-up Question if Anyone Mentioned Anything about a Loan/Debt:**

- How is your debt payment managed?

## 6. WOMEN'S AGENCY IN FL/TIP PREVENTION AND MITIGATION (25 min)

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- d. What solutions have been tried so far to overcome the problem?
- e. Do women in your community apply different coping strategies than men to prevent or mitigate an existing issue with FL/TIP?
- f. What can be the role of women's social networks and connections in mitigating against exploitation practices on fishing vessels?

### **Activity:** WHAT IF and REPORTING (follow up with the list of indicators of FL/TIP from the flip chart)

**Tools:** Show cards of various indicators of FL/TIP, flip charts, markers

#### **Instructions:**

- **SHOW CARD:** Various indicators of FL/TIP listed
- **ASK PARTICIPANTS:** Which indicators will be easier to address? More difficult to address? Why? (Facilitator: Stick the card on the flip chart.)

**Flip Chart:**

- What can the people/community/government do to prevent it? (actions from different actors, e.g., providing better job opportunities, regulation of fishing operators, better education, opportunities to migrate to better jobs, community savings groups)
- What can men do to prevent FL/TIP? What can women do to prevent FL/TIP? Can women play a role in educating and reporting on FL/TIP? What can be done to encourage women to access a reporting mechanism? What existing mechanisms do men and women think are working well in the community and what is still lacking?

**Show Card: Social Media**

**Ask Participant:** Anyone want to tell about the use of your social media?

**Reporting (if anyone mentions reporting, ask follow-up questions):**

- How did you report? What was the response? Is there any other reporting channel available? Have you known anyone who tried pursuing legal action? Were they successful and what were the problems they encountered in the process?

**Reporting (if no one mentions reporting, ask follow-up questions):**

- Why did you not report it? How did you deal with the effects?

## INFORMED CONSENT – FGDs

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I work with RAPID ASIA on behalf of Plan International Philippines. You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Plan International. We have selected you because your husband, partner or male relative is working on a fishing vessel and a victim of FL/TIP. We want to know your experiences, opinion and perspective on how you have been affected in this community and your coping strategies for dealing with the impact of FL/TIP on you and the family.

Your input will help us to identify the gendered impact and help inform the SAFE Seas project team from Plan International to develop our program. **The discussion will be about 90 minutes long.** The information we collect is confidential. No name or personal details will be shared with any third parties, and it will only be used for internal processing purposes. It will be deleted upon completion of the project. We will use a tape recorder (and video recording). We also will take a picture if necessary. If you are uncomfortable with that, please let me know. Please be assured that anything you say is confidential and your participation is voluntary; you can withdraw at any time. If you agree to participate, please sign below and hand it to us.

## CONFIRM UNDERSTANDING

1. I confirm that the information sheet concerning this study has been read to me, and I understand what is required of me to take part in this study.
2. I have been given the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions, and a reply was given for all my questions to my satisfaction.
3. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time.
4. I understand that any information given by me and others will be compiled and used for preparing a report by the research team.
5. I understand and give permission to the research team to take my photograph and make a tape or video recording during the discussion.

6. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Plan International Philippines Office directly through the information provided below.

**Contact information:**

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**SIGN**

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**Name of Participant**

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**Date**

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**Signature**

