



Submission No 59

**Inquiry into Slavery, Slavery-like conditions and People
Trafficking**

Organisation: Hagar Australia – supplementary submission

CASE 1 | HAGAR CAMBODIA | DOMESTIC SERVITUDE

Phalla

Phalla (not her real name) is 12 years old. She was only 9 when her poverty-stricken grandmother was offered money by a wealthy couple to employ Phalla as a domestic worker in the home. She was promised education and a future of opportunity. Instead, Phalla was treated like a slave, beaten and tortured every day, and denied food or nutrition. She never went to school or played with other children. Phalla was made to sleep outside like a dog. One day, a neighbor heard her cries and called the police to rescue her.

Since then, Phalla has bravely testified in court against her perpetrators. As a consequence, both were granted deserving prison sentences. Phalla was very happy to see a successful prosecution and this helped aid the healing process. Hagar found a foster family for her and she started attending school.

As the appeal date drew closer, the relatives of Phalla's perpetrators came to visit her home. They intimidated the foster family and soon after they came to Phalla's school and physically assaulted and threatened her. She was immediately moved to a safe house and was unable to attend school until after the appeal process was over.

She was terrified that the 'relatives' would hurt her again and yet she bravely stood in court yet again during the appeal proceedings. It was a very difficult day for Phalla. She was asked how she could make such accusations about her 'adoptive' parents when they treated like their very own child and provided for her. Phalla felt very discouraged and angry that they would doubt her story. Her confidence and belief in herself waivered.

Both sentences were reduced for Phalla's perpetrators. Although Phalla had the right to appeal this decision, the risk of revenge and retaliation were too high. Her safety was paramount and the highest priority.

Today, Phalla still feels desperately afraid that the 'relatives' will come and hurt her again. Her rights have been violated in so many ways. Like every child, she has the right to safety, family, education. She has the right to develop healthily and be protected from hazardous, dangerous work. Above all, Phalla has the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. Phalla is already so vulnerable and was made even more vulnerable through the criminal justice process. Justice for Phalla needs to be about far more than a successful prosecution. Family belonging, trauma recovery, and access to education all need to form part of Phalla's future of recovery and her justice story.

CASE 2 | HAGAR CAMBODIA | LABOUR TRAFFICKING

Ratha

My name is Ratha. I am now 19 years old. I am a single mother of a nine month old boy. I came from Pursat province and have five siblings. We were all only able to finish grade two because our mother could not support our education. My father divorced my mother and married another woman.

We all farmed a landowner's land and we lived in our grandparents' house. We did not have enough food to eat and we were in debt because of loans we took from our neighbor for our daily expenses. We didn't have a strong person who could support the family.

I was trafficked to Malaysia for two years. Someone I knew told me about working in Malaysia for a good wage and I agreed with her.

When I arrived at the agency, I was locked inside for five days and not allowed to leave. After that I was sent to Malaysia.

I worked there for two years and wasn't paid. I worked hard – like a machine. With very little breaks, I had such a bitter experience. I really missed my family but I did not have hope to see them again.

I was like a butterfly with no wings. My wings were cut and I did not have freedom to fly from evil.

Some workers in Malaysia experienced extreme violence and some suffered and died. I could hear screams for help, but I could not help them because I could not help myself either. Sometimes I had nightmares of the pictures that I saw. I wanted to have a job abroad because I believed that I would be well paid and I could support my family. But it was the opposite. I had a desperate and bitter experience.

An idea came to my mind that if I was still working in that cage of a workplace, that I would die one day. So I decided to run away – at least I would not die in the cage. I wanted to die with my freedom, even if that was in the street. When I ran away, I met a man who became my husband. I told him what had happened to me and he hid me and took me to live with him.

Later on I became pregnant, and my husband took me to Cambodia's embassy to process my passport so that I could go home safely. I received Chab Dai's contact and I called them for help when I arrived in Cambodia. It took me several months to wait until I was referred to Hagar.

Now my husband is in Cambodia, but we are living separately because his family does not like me because I am poor.

It was late 2012 that I came to Hagar. When I first arrived, it felt good to have a better place to live with my son. I also received a lot of good advice, skills and other knowledge that make me strong and have peace inside.

Because I was born in a poor family and I did not have good education, I was like a piece of fabric tossed around, blowing in the wind without a destination. I had no vision for my future. I chose to learn to sew and I want to run my own sewing shop to support my son and myself. Now I am so happy that I will have a skill that belongs to me.

I have found hope, value and happiness. I had never experienced counseling before but have found that it is very important to me. I can speak about the things that distress me, and release my bad dreams.

In the future, I want to live in good conditions and I don't want anyone to look down on me. I will bring a good future for my son also.

I can feel that now I am like a beautiful flower bloom in the morning.

CASE 3 | HAGAR CAMBODIA | LABOUR TRAFFICKING

Mao Mao

Five hundred dollars. For my parents, that is all I am worth.

My family has always been poor- with barely enough food to eat and no land to call our own. We had to work on other's farm to survive.

I never went to school. After working everyday at the farm my parents would make me work as a house cleaner for another family. Then they would take all of my earnings. Exhausted, I'd use what strength I have left to prepare food for the family.

Being poor would have been fine if we had love. Working all day and not even knowing what 'school' meant would have been bearable if we had love in our family.

But for my parents, money was more important. After working at the farm they would drink wine to forget our misfortunes in life. Then they would beat us without reason. They never really cared about us.

Sometimes I look out our window and get jealous watching other families. They show love to their children. They were also poor, but unlike us, they were rich with love.

Five hundred dollars. My parents sold me as a slave for this amount.

And the family who bought me treated me like a slave. The husband tried to rape me many times. One time, I was electrocuted while trying to escape.

I was desperate. Finally I had a chance to escape with a man who wanted to marry me. We ran away and went to his parents' house but they rejected me because I was poor.

I couldn't blame them. My own parents even exchanged me for money. I was a slave whose worth was a petty amount.

One day, my leg was badly broken in an accident. I stayed at a hospital in Phnom Penh. But the man who said he loved me never came back to visit me. He abandoned me.

At this point I lost all hope. I wanted to kill myself.

But the good people at the hospital took pity on me and brought me to Hagar's shelter for women.

Things did not change for a while. I was burying myself in pity of my life. Sold by my parents and rejected by the person I thought who loved me. And now I am crippled, I decided I was worthless. I lost the will to live.

But Hagar staffs are persistent. They counsel and helped me see beyond my sickness. Their words help me have hope. I learn new skills from Career Pathways and experience love and care that I never experienced before.

I am beginning to see my real value.

I still feel pain when I remember the people who hurt me. But now, I see many people who love and support me. I believe I have value and worth. Because of what I received from Hagar, I know I will be successful in the future.

Now I can say, "I am priceless. I am more valuable than money."

CASE 4 | AFGHANISTAN | SEX TRAFFICKING

Bacha Bazzi 'Dancing Boys'

I am 13 years old. My family life was difficult. I had a stepmother who beat me many times. When I was around 11 years old, I was walking in the provincial capitol and a person on a motorbike came up next to me and told me to come with him and I will take you to a good place.

First he brought me to his house and then he brought me to a police check post. There many police men there. They taught me to dance and every night they took me to different houses and parties for dancing.

There were many other boys like me. Sometimes they would gather us for dancing and have a competition to see who among us would be the best dancer. There was one boy, from another district, who was always the winner. One time I was even taken all the way to another province to dance in a wedding.

At night they would make me dance and then they would rape me, again and again. I tried to escape one time in a car, but one of the police men chased after me on his motorbike and caught me, beat me, fired his gun into the air over my head and warned me. After that they would not let me be alone.

One day, at a check post, a policeman asked who we were and the man said I was his nephew, but then the policeman asked me as well and I told him everything. The policeman arrested the man with me and sent him to prison. They sent me to the JRC, a juvenile detention centre, because they said they didn't want to take me home until I am an adult.

For two years I was in the juvenile detention centre. I never saw my father, even though he knew I was at the detention centre. Then someone transferred me to a shelter for boys. Now I am hoping for a place to stay where I can study, go to the madrassa, eat food, get help from a doctor and learn a job.

Since they made me dance, I have received bad effects on my life. I don't want to go back home until I am an adult.

This Bacha Bazzi story was recorded by one of Hagar Afghanistan's partner agencies while conducting research on the human rights issues affecting boys in Afghanistan. The research is supported by Hagar and funded by the US Justice Department.