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WATCH

“Our Happy Family Is Gone”

Impact of the “War on Drugs” on Children in the Philippines



“Our Happy Family Is Gone”

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Summary

Thousands of people in the Philippines have been killed since President Rodrigo Duterte launched his “war on drugs” on June 30, 2016, the day he took office. Among those who died have been dozens of children under age 18 who were either specifically targeted or were inadvertently shot during anti-drug raids, what authorities have called “collateral damage.” Philippine children’s rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) put the total number of child fatalities at 101 from July 2016 through December 2018, both targeted and killed as bystanders. More deaths of children have been reported in the media in 2019 and 2020.

More broadly, official figures from the Philippine National Police and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency put the number of “drug war” casualties at 5,601 deaths as of January 31, 2020. In virtually every case, police claimed they killed a drug seller or user during a raid after the suspect resisted arrest and fought back. The national Commission on Human Rights and domestic human rights groups believe many thousands more – estimated at more than 27,000 – have been killed by the police, agents of the police, or unidentified assailants.

The overwhelming majority of these killings have not been properly investigated. According to the Philippine Department of Justice in January 2019, just 76 deaths have led to investigations. Even then, only 33 resulted in court cases and 5 were pending before the Office of the Prosecutor, while the prosecutor dismissed half – 38 cases. At time of writing, only one case – the killing of 17-year-old Kian delos Santos by three police officers in August 2017, which happened to be captured on video – has resulted in a trial and conviction.

Human Rights Watch also investigated the killings of adults in which police showed little to no regard for the safety and welfare of children, often conducting raids in the middle of the night while the entire family was at home. In many raids, children witnessed the killing of a parent, or were present while their parent was dragged away and shot.

The harmful consequences for children of Duterte’s anti-drug campaign go beyond the immediate violence of the raids. Many suffer psychological distress after witnessing the

killing of a loved one. Some children have had to leave their homes and community, either going into hiding or relocating because they and their family members feared for their lives.

At school and in their own communities, some experienced bullying because of the stigma of alleged drug use by a now deceased parent. Human Rights Watch met one 5-year-old boy who developed aggressive and violent behavior after his father's gruesome killing. A number of children have stopped going to school because they no longer had enough money for transportation, food, and school supplies.

The loss of a parent who is the main breadwinner can plunge an already impoverished family into even more extreme poverty. Many children are left with no choice but to work, and some end up homeless and living in the streets, further exposing themselves to danger, violence, and criminal activity.

The Philippine government, apart from its refusal to effectively and impartially investigate the killings and its policy of detaining children in conflict with the law, has done little to address the needs of children directly affected by the anti-drug campaign. The Department of Social Welfare and Development, the main government agency responsible for the welfare of children, does not have a specific program directly aimed at addressing the needs of children affected by the "drug war." Whatever assistance the department gives children and families is derived from existing programs, such as cash assistance for burial expenses or its conditional cash transfer program.

Families have been wary about approaching the government for help because they consider the police and other government officials to be responsible for the loss they have suffered. This leaves the children and their families left with only programs supported by civic and nongovernmental groups, particularly those from the Roman Catholic Church and a few Protestant and ecumenical groups. In some communities where violence is frequent, parish priests and lay workers have been leading the effort to help by providing psycho-social (mental health) support, economic assistance, support for children to attend school, and help in finding and supporting livelihoods for affected families. But as the killings continue, such voluntary efforts have been overwhelmed and are insufficient to address the needs of affected children.

Human Rights Watch believes governments should ensure respect for human rights in their policies and practices on the use, possession, production, and distribution of drugs. We oppose the criminalization of the personal use of drugs and the possession of drugs for personal use. To deter, prevent, and remedy the harmful use of drugs, governments should rely on non-penal regulatory and public health approaches that do not violate human rights.

Human Rights Watch calls on the Philippine government to end its abusive anti-drug campaign and investigate and prosecute those responsible for killings and other human rights violations. The UN Human Rights Council should establish an independent international investigative mechanism into extrajudicial killings and other violations committed in the context of the “war on drugs” since June 2016. The families of victims of unlawful killings by government officials and their agents should be promptly and fairly compensated for their loss. Government agencies should address the dire needs of children whose breadwinner has been killed, especially those living in impoverished communities across the Philippines where the killings typically take place, and ensure the government adopts measures to protect affected children from abuse.

Methodology

This report is based primarily on in-person interviews that Human Rights Watch carried out between March 2018 and February 2020 in Manila, Caloocan City, Quezon City, Cebu City, General Santos City, and Quezon province. In all, we interviewed 49 people – 10 children; 23 parents, relatives, or guardians of those children; and 16 individuals from nongovernmental organizations and government offices – to obtain information on 23 deaths in which the victim of a “drug war” killing left behind children. Several NGOs assisted in identifying cases and tracking down the families of victims. Human Rights Watch focused on incidents in which a child dependent was left behind and benefited from the assistance of community organizations working with children.

When possible, Human Rights Watch conducted the interviews in a private and safe setting, without the presence of others. Several interviews with children were done in the presence of a parent or guardian. In five cases in which the interview subjects agreed in advance, the interviews were conducted in front of a Human Rights Watch video crew. Interviews were conducted mainly in Tagalog but also in Visayan and English. The interviewees were not compensated but Human Rights Watch paid travel and food expenses when, for security reasons, we interviewed them some distance from their homes.

Except in cases already well publicized, the names of children, parents, and guardians in this report have been changed to protect their privacy and prevent possible retaliation.

I. Background

Since taking office on June 30, 2016, President Rodrigo Duterte has consistently delivered on his campaign promise to kill drug users and dealers.¹ In the four years since his inauguration, police have killed 5,601 persons in what authorities called “legitimate anti-drug operations” during which the suspects allegedly fought back (*nanlaban*), forcing police officers to shoot them.² This official death toll from the Philippine National Police (PNP) does not, however, include the thousands more across the country killed by unidentified gunmen, which the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) estimated to be more than 27,000.³

Research by Human Rights Watch and others has found many of these killings were perpetrated by law enforcement personnel in civilian clothes or members of so-called death squads working with the police or local government officials.⁴ In many cases, the police have planted evidence such as drugs and weapons on bodies to justify their “*nanlaban*” claims.⁵ In other cases, the police allegedly have outsourced the killings to armed vigilante groups.⁶

¹ “Speech of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte during the Rosh Hashanah,” Presidential Communications Operations Office, October 4, 2016, <https://pcoo.gov.ph/oct-03-2016-speech-of-president-rodrigo-roa-duterte-during-the-rosh-hashanah/> (accessed May 2, 2020).

² Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, “#RealNumbersPH Year 3,” March 2, 2020, <https://facebook.com/realnumbersph/photos/a.1564140077100858/1564143913767141/> (accessed May 17, 2020).

³ “CHR chief: Drug war deaths could be as high as 27,000,” *ABS-CBN News*, December 5, 2018, <https://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/12/05/18/chr-chief-drug-war-deaths-could-be-as-high-as-27000> (accessed May 2, 2020). On page 25 of its 63-page report titled, “The Duterte Administration Year-End Report: 2017 Key Accomplishments,” released in December 2017, the Presidential Communications Operations Office listed under the “Fighting Illegal Drugs” category that 3,967 “drug personalities died in anti-drug operations” between July 1, 2016 and November 27, 2017. It also listed 16,355 “homicide cases under investigation” from July 1, 2016, to September 30, 2017. These fatalities total 20,322. Human rights groups monitoring the killings base their estimates of 27,000 or higher on these figures from the president’s office, which in turn based it on figures from the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, the Philippine National Police, and the National Bureau of Investigation, and Bureau of Customs. The report is no longer available online, but a copy is on file with Human Rights Watch.

⁴ Human Rights Watch, *License to Kill: Philippine Police Killings in Duterte’s “War on Drugs,”* (New York: Human Rights Watch, March 2017), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/03/02/license-kill/philippine-police-killings-dutertes-war-drugs>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Patricia Evangelista, “Some People Need Killing,” *Rappler*, June 3, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/investigative/tondo-vigilante-gang-war-on-drugs-series-part-one> (accessed May 2, 2020).

While the daily number of killings has declined somewhat since the carnage of the first year of the campaign in 2016-2017, killings still occur on a frequent basis.⁷ In the early stages of the campaign, killings were concentrated in the cities comprising the sprawling Metro Manila area, with its vast impoverished neighborhoods where the drug raids usually occur. However, more recently, the violence has expanded to adjacent provinces such as Laguna, Cavite, and Bulacan.⁸ The killings have also worsened in other urban areas, particularly in the central Philippine province of Cebu.⁹

President Duterte has sanctioned¹⁰ and encouraged¹¹ the killings. In speech after speech, Duterte has ordered the police to kill drug suspects, and even to plant evidence during raids.¹² He has promised the police cash rewards and promotions for killing drug suspects.¹³ Officials who have followed his orders have later secured plum positions in government, among them Ronald dela Rosa, his first Philippine National Police chief whom Duterte strongly supported in his ultimately successful run for a Senate seat in May 2019.¹⁴ Duterte also promised police officers impunity for rights abuses, stating he would protect them, and ultimately pardon them, if ever they are convicted for enforcing his anti-drug

⁷ This is based on Human Rights Watch monitoring of media reports, which often quote official police reports, as well as reports by human rights and children's rights advocates.

⁸ Rambo Talabong, "New killing fields in Duterte's drug war," *Rappler*, February 24, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/224159-central-luzon-new-killing-fields-duterte-drug-war> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁹ Dale Israel, "Harsher war on drugs shows its face in Cebu," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 9, 2019, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1093707/harsher-war-on-drugs-shows-its-face-in-cebu> (accessed May 2, 2020).

¹⁰ Republic of the Philippines Presidential Communications Operations Office, "State of the Nation Address (2018) of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte," July 23, 2018, <https://pcoo.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018-State-of-the-Nation-Address-of-Duterte.pdf> (accessed May 2, 2020).

¹¹ Republic of the Philippines Presidential Communications Operations Office, "Speech of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte during the 115th Police Service Anniversary," August 17, 2016, <https://pcoo.gov.ph/aug-17-2016-speech-of-president-rodrigo-roa-duterte-during-the-115th-police-service-anniversary/> (accessed May 7, 2020). In this speech, Duterte said: "I will kill you. I will kill you. I will take the law into my own hands."

¹² Republic of the Philippines Presidential Communications Operations Office, "Speech of President Rodrigo Duterte during the 2016 Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas," December 19, 2016, <https://pcoo.gov.ph/dec-19-2016-speech-president-rodrigo-duterte-2016-presidential-awards-filipino-individuals-organizations-overseas/> (accessed May 2, 2020). In this speech, Duterte addressed law enforcers: "If they put up a good fight and they don't have a gun, give them a gun."

¹³ "Philippine Police Promotions an Affront to 'Drug War' Victims," Human Rights Watch news release, June 7, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/06/07/philippine-police-promotions-affront-drug-war-victims>.

¹⁴ Darryl John Esguerra, "Duterte assures cops: 'You're safe in the Senate' with Go, Bato," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, August 8, 2019, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1151950/duterte-assures-cops-youre-safe-in-the-senate-with-go-bato> (accessed May 2, 2020).

policies.¹⁵

There has been virtually no accountability for killings associated with the “drug war.” At time of writing, police officers implicated in the killings have been convicted in only one case.¹⁶ According to the Department of Justice, only 33 cases out of the 76 it investigated in 2018 have resulted in charges filed against police officers.¹⁷ The PNP claims it has disciplined hundreds of police officers, but this claim is misleading because most of those are administrative cases, not criminal, and many involve infractions that are not related to the anti-drug campaign.¹⁸

Police have not only failed to investigate these deaths in an independent and impartial manner, but in some instances have actively frustrated other efforts to gather information on the killings. The CHR has complained the PNP routinely refuses to provide copies of police documents so that it can investigate cases,¹⁹ prompting the CHR to seek a dialogue with the PNP.²⁰ Litigants in criminal cases filed against police officers have likewise been turned away by the PNP, forcing them to seek intervention by the Supreme Court, which ordered the police to turn over tens of thousands of documents in a 2019 ruling.²¹ The police eventually gave documents to the litigants, who called them “rubbish because most

¹⁵ Republic of the Philippines Presidential Communications Operations Office, “President Rodrigo Roa Duterte’s Speech during the reunion and fellowship of Bedans Batches ’71 and ’72 with nationwide legal coordinators,” July 17, 2016, <https://pcoo.gov.ph/july-17-2016-speech-of-president-rodrigo-roa-duterte-during-the-reunion-and-fellowship-of-bedans-batches-71-and-72-with-nationwide-legal-coordinators/> (accessed May 2, 2020). In this speech, Duterte said: “The president can grant pardon, conditional or absolute; or grant amnesty with the concurrence of Congress. I will use it. Believe me... I will not hesitate to pardon 10, 15 military and policemen every day.)

¹⁶ “3 cops found guilty of murder over Kian Delos Santos slay,” *ABS-CBN News*, November 29, 2018, <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/11/29/18/3-cops-found-guilty-of-murder-over-kian-delos-santos-slay> (accessed May 2, 2020).

¹⁷ Lian Buan, Rambo Talaong, and Jodesz Gavilan, “Duterte gov’t allows ‘drug war’ deaths to go unsolved,” *Rappler*, January 14, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/220595-duterte-government-drug-war-deaths-unsolved> (accessed May 2, 2020).

¹⁸ Alfred Dalizon, “PNP on Ateneo drug war study: Human rights protection remains our top priority,” *Journal Online*, April 27, 2019, <https://journal.com.ph/news/provincial/pnp-ateneo-drug-war-study-human-rights-protection-remains-our-top-priority> (accessed May 2, 2020).

¹⁹ Katrina Hallare, “CHR laments PNP’s alleged failure to give records on war on drugs deaths,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, July 29, 2019, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1143645/chr-laments-pnps-alleged-failure-to-give-records-on-war-on-drugs-deaths> (accessed May 2, 2020).

²⁰ Commission on Human Rights, “CHR, PNP agree on more transparent reporting of deaths related to gov’t drug campaign,” August 29, 2017, <http://chr.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/29-Aug-2017-CHR-PNP-agree-on-more-transparent-reporting-of-deaths-related-to-govt-drug-campaign.pdf> (accessed May 2, 2020).

²¹ Lian Buan, “Supreme Court rules to release drug war documents,” *Rappler*, April 3, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/227214-supreme-court-decision-release-drug-war-documents> (accessed May 2, 2020)

of it were cases not related to the ‘drug war.’”²² Journalists have likewise complained that police have ignored their requests for official police documents of drug raids, which are supposed to be public records.²³

The administration itself has resisted calls for accountability. President Duterte launched a vilification campaign from the very beginning of his presidency against those who criticized the “drug war,” including those from international agencies and foreign countries.²⁴ His government attacked then-United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein for criticizing this vilification of critics campaign.²⁵ Duterte threatened to literally slap Agnes Callamard, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, for commenting on the killings.²⁶ In March 2018, Duterte ordered the withdrawal of the country from the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court after the court’s Office of the Prosecutor announced that it would launch a preliminary examination of the complaints filed against Duterte.²⁷ In June 2019, the government launched a sustained disinformation campaign against UN Human Rights Council members countries that were considering whether to pass a resolution critical of the human rights situation in the Philippines.²⁸

²² Lian Buan, “Drug war documents submitted to Supreme Court ‘rubbish,’” *Rappler*, September 23, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/240840-centerlaw-says-drug-war-documents-submitted-supreme-court-rubbish> (accessed May 2, 2020).

²³ Human Rights Watch interviews with three journalists who are part of the so-called “Nightcrawlers,” who covered the killings on a regular basis, Quezon City, November 26, 2019.

²⁴ “Philippines: Crackdown Against Critics Intensifies,” Human Rights Watch news release, January 17, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/17/philippines-crackdown-against-critics-intensifies> (accessed May 2, 2020).

²⁵ Republic of the Philippines Department of Foreign Affairs, “Statement of Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter S. Cayetano: World Needs More Leaders Like Rodrigo R. Duterte,” March 10, 2018, <https://dfa.gov.ph/dfa-news/statements-and-advisoriesupdate/15877-statement-of-foreign-affairs-secretary-alan-peter-s-cayetano-world-needs-more-leaders-like-rodrigo-r-duterte> (accessed May 2, 2020).

²⁶ Republic of the Philippines Presidential Communications Operations Office, “Speech of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte during the General Assembly of The League of the Municipalities of The Philippines (LMP)” March 20, 2018, <https://pcoo.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/20180321-Speech-of-President-Rodrigo-Roa-Duterte-during-the-General-Assembly-of-the-League-of-the-Municipalities-Of-The-Philippines-LMP.pdf> (accessed May 2, 2020).

²⁷ Republic of the Philippines Presidential Communications Operations Office, “Palace confirms PH withdrawal from ICC over prosecutor’s violation of complementarity rule,” March 15, 2018, https://pcoo.gov.ph/news_releases/palace-confirms-ph-withdrawal-from-icc-over-prosecutors-violation-of-complementarity-rule/ (accessed May 2, 2020).

²⁸ “Philippines’ Disinformation Campaign in Geneva,” Human Rights Watch news release, July 6, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/06/philippines-disinformation-campaign-geneva> (accessed May 2, 2020).

Domestic civil society organizations and human rights defenders have likewise been targeted with threats by President Duterte, police, and other public officials.²⁹ Critics of the government have been accused of supporting communist rebels, an allegation that can prove fatal in the Philippines because of military, police, and vigilante violence.³⁰ In some cases, the government has brought inflammatory charges against activist groups, alleging illegal possession of firearms, for example, in actions apparently designed to harass, intimidate, and ultimately silence them.³¹ The government's Securities and Exchange Commission issued a memorandum in November 2018 tightening regulations on NGOs who receive funding from foreign governments or entities, an attempt to obstruct funding to organizations critical of the Duterte administration.³²

The administration has also targeted the political opposition.³³ In February 2017, police arrested on fabricated charges Senator Leila de Lima, who, at time of writing, remains in detention at the police headquarters in Quezon City.³⁴ De Lima had earlier launched a Senate investigation into the anti-drug campaign and, as a consequence, was subjected to harassment by Duterte and his allies in Congress – including many misogynistic verbal attacks³⁵ – before being detained.³⁶ Government prosecutors eventually brought non-bailable charges of collusion with drug syndicates against de Lima while she was secretary of justice.³⁷

²⁹ “Philippines: Drop Sedition Cases Against Duterte Critics,” Human Rights Watch news release, July 23, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/23/philippines-drop-sedition-cases-against-duterte-critics> (accessed May 2, 2020).

³⁰ Karapatan, “Red-tagging a prelude to the killings of activists and defenders,” July 25, 2019, <https://www.karapatan.org/Red-tagging+a+pretext+to+the+killings+of+activists+and+defenders+-Karapatan> (accessed May 2, 2020).

³¹ “Philippines: Drop Sedition Cases Against Duterte Critics,” Human Rights Watch news release, July 23, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/23/philippines-drop-sedition-cases-against-duterte-critics> (accessed May 2, 2020).

³² Russel Patina, “‘Chilling effect’: Groups slam new SEC guidelines for nonprofits,” *Rappler*, February 9, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/move-ph/223001-civil-society-groups-statements-sec-new-guidelines-non-profit-organizations> (accessed May 2, 2020).

³³ Ted Regencia, “Duterte attempting to ‘silence political opponents’: Report,” *Al Jazeera*, June 25, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/duterte-attempting-silence-political-opponents-report-190625012948369.html> (accessed May 2, 2020).

³⁴ “Philippines: Drop Charges Against Duterte Critic,” Human Rights Watch news release, February 14, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/14/philippines-drop-charges-against-duterte-critic> (accessed May 2, 2020).

³⁵ DJ Yap, “De Lima video not shown but lurid details bared in House probe,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, October 6, 2016, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/822395/de-lima-video-not-shown-but-lurid-details-bared-at-house-probe> (accessed May 2, 2020).

³⁶ Ina Reformina, “Aguirre threatens to play De Lima ‘sex videos’,” *ABS-CBN News*, September 27, 2016, <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/09/27/16/aguirre-threatens-to-play-de-lima-sex-videos> (accessed May 2, 2020).

³⁷ Senator Leila M. de Lima v. Hon. Juanita Guerrero, Republic of the Philippines Supreme Court, G.R. No. 229781 October 10, 2017, <http://elibrary.judiciary.gov.ph/thebookshelf/showdocs/1/63545> (accessed May 2, 2020).

When she was chairperson of the CHR from 2008 to 2010, de Lima was the first – and so far the only – public official who investigated Duterte for the death squad killings in Davao City, where Duterte was mayor for more than two decades.³⁸ Duterte vowed to destroy de Lima as a result of that investigation, calling her an “immoral woman.”³⁹

Other political opposition figures, such as Senator Antonio Trillanes IV, also face various retaliatory legal cases as a result of their critical stance against the administration.⁴⁰ At time of writing, Trillanes is facing incitement to sedition and kidnapping charges.⁴¹

Journalists and media outlets who have reported critically on the “war on drugs” have also faced harassment both on social media and from the government. The government’s prime target in the media has been the news website Rappler, which has frequently reported critically on the anti-drug campaign, including groundbreaking reports on the involvement of the police in the killings.⁴² Rappler’s owners, editors, and journalists face numerous legal cases, and police have arrested its editor, Maria Ressa.⁴³ Ressa has also been targeted by a withering demonization campaign on social media.⁴⁴

In July 2019, the government ramped up its campaign against critics of the violence, accusing members of the political opposition, human rights advocates, and Catholic bishops and priests of incitement to sedition, among other charges.⁴⁵ The inclusion of

³⁸ Yuji Vincent Gonzales, “De Lima on death squad probe: ‘Davao under spell of ruthless king,’” *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, March 9, 2017, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/879022/de-lima-on-2009-dds-probe-davao-under-spell-of-ruthless-king> (accessed May 2, 2020).

³⁹ Camille Elemia, “Teary-eyed De Lima on Duterte attack: ‘It’s very foul,’” *Rappler*, August 17, 2016, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/143360-de-lima-duterte-attacks-very-foul> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁴⁰ “Trillanes indicted for inciting to sedition | ABS-CBN News,” *ABS-CBN News*, February 26, 2019, <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/02/26/19/trillanes-charged-with-inciting-to-sedition> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁴¹ Aika Rey, “LIST: Cases, complaints filed vs Trillanes under Duterte administration,” *Rappler*, October 11, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/211526-cases-complaints-against-trillanes-duterte-administration> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁴² Patricia Evangelista, “The Impunity Series,” *Rappler*, July 25, 2017, <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/investigative/168712-impunity-series-drug-war-duterte-administration> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁴³ Lian Buan, “LIST: Cases vs Maria Ressa, Rappler directors, staff since 2018,” *Rappler*, February 25, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/223968-list-cases-filed-against-maria-ressa-rappler-reporters> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁴⁴ Cristina Tardáguila, “Legal battle between president Duterte and Maria Ressa’s Rappler shows the Philippines’ dark reality’ and sends some fact-checkers to therapy,” *Poynter*, August 2, 2019, <https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2019/legal-battle-between-president-duterte-and-maria-ressas-rappler-shows-the-philippines-dark-reality-and-sends-fact-checkers-to-therapy/> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁴⁵ “Philippines: Drop Sedition Cases Against Duterte Critics,” Human Rights Watch news release, July 23, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/23/philippines-drop-sedition-cases-against-duterte-critics> (accessed May 2, 2020).

religious figures among those accused signifies the government's increased hostility toward the Catholic Church, and to church leaders and priests who have become increasingly vocal in their opposition to the violence.⁴⁶ Much of the church's criticism springs from the experiences of priests in communities as they go about their ministerial work.⁴⁷

The vast majority of the killings have occurred in impoverished communities, prompting accusations that, more than anything else, the “drug war” is a war against the poor.⁴⁸ In many cases, the victim has been the breadwinner for a low-income family and their death drives the family even deeper into poverty. “These people are often the most marginalized members of our society and the ‘drug war’ violence has marginalized them even more,” said Father Danilo Pilario, dean of the School of Theology at Saint Vincent's College in Quezon City, who also runs the Project Support for Orphans and Widows (Project SOW) that provides assistance to victims of the violence.⁴⁹

Father Pilario and other community-based priests, as well as human rights defenders, children's rights advocates, parents and guardians, and children themselves have spoken of the dire consequences for children of the killings.⁵⁰ These include psychological distress caused by witnessing the violence, economic hardships that follow loss of a breadwinner, dislocation from their homes and schools, and, when they do go to school, bullying and discrimination.⁵¹

The government has developed no specific programs to address these issues. A former top official from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the main

⁴⁶ Adam Willis, “The Catholic rebels resisting the Philippines’ deadly war on drugs,” *The Guardian*, July 28, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/18/philippines-rodrigo-duterte-war-on-drugs-catholic-church> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁴⁷ Sean Williams, “How the Catholic Church is fighting the drug war in the Philippines,” *America Magazine*, January 25, 2018, <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2018/01/25/how-catholic-church-fighting-drug-war-philippines> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁴⁸ Zigor Aldama, “How Philippines war on drugs has become a war on the poor,” *South China Morning Post*, January 20, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/long-reads/article/2129538/how-philippines-war-drugs-has-become-war-poor> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁴⁹ “Collateral Damage: The Children of Duterte’s ‘War on Drugs,’” Human Rights Watch photo and video commentary, June 27, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/video-photos/interactive/2019/06/27/collateral-damage-children-dutertes-war-drugs> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

government agency mandated to care for children, told Human Rights Watch there has never been a single cabinet meeting under Duterte in which the effects of the “war on drugs” on children was discussed.⁵² The official said that while some of the department’s existing assistance for indigent families can be applicable to affected families, such as assistance with burial expenses, the government has no program specifically aimed at addressing the needs of these children.⁵³

As a result, families of “drug war” victims either receive no assistance or must seek what they can from NGOs and other civic institutions.⁵⁴ Increasingly, families have flocked to parishes whose priests have put in place interventions to provide financial assistance, vocational and livelihood support, psycho-social services such as counselling, and a safe space for them to tell their stories and share experiences with others who are sympathetic and face similar situations.⁵⁵ However, the government’s recent aggressive moves against members of the clergy, including the filing of criminal cases against some of the very same priests who help these children, threaten to take away the little help these children and their families are getting.

⁵² Human Rights Watch interview with former social welfare official [identity withheld], Manila, May 2019.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Philippine Human Rights Information Center, “The War on the Poor: Extrajudicial Killings and their Effects on Urban Poor Families and Communities,” September 19, 2018, <https://www.philrights.org/the-war-on-the-poor-extrajudicial-killings-and-their-effects-on-urban-poor-families-and-communities/> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁵⁵ Florian Neuhoof, “As drug war’s toll grows in the Philippines, so does church’s pushback,” *Christian Science Monitor*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2017/1018/As-drug-war-s-toll-grows-in-the-Philippines-so-does-church-s-pushback> (accessed May 2, 2020).

II. Killings of Children

On the evening of August 16, 2017, officers from the PNP dragged a teenage boy through the dark, filthy alleys of an impoverished community in Caloocan City, one of the cities that comprise Metro Manila. His body was found moments later, slumped in a corner next to a pigsty.⁵⁶ The victim was Kian delos Santos, 17, a Grade 11 student who had wanted to be a police officer one day. According to witnesses, the boy had pleaded to his assailants – one of whom held him by the neck—to stop hurting him because he had a school exam the next day.⁵⁷ They ignored his pleas and shot him three times while he was kneeling.⁵⁸

The police maintained that delos Santos was killed in a firefight, that he was the first to fire at the police and was shot dead in the ensuing shootout.⁵⁹ This claim – like similar police *nanlaban* claims in many other “drug war” cases that the individual killed had been fighting back – was later debunked by witness testimony.⁶⁰

While a number of children had died during earlier drug raids, delos Santos’s killing a year into Duterte’s anti-drug campaign was unique because of the discovery of CCTV footage showing the police officers dragging the boy through an alley that led to the spot where his body was found. Later, encouraged by the surfacing of the CCTV footage, witnesses – delos Santos’ neighbors – started to come out to testify.

“If not for the CCTV footage, the truth about my nephew’s death may not have been known and there never would have been a case against the policemen,” Randy delos Santos told Human Rights Watch.⁶¹ Delos Santos, 43, realized there was a government-installed CCTV camera near the site of the killing, in a neighborhood called Barangay 160 in Caloocan City.

⁵⁶ “WATCH: The dark alley to Kian delos Santos’ death,” *Rappler*, August 21, 2017, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/179412-dark-alley-kian-delos-santos-death> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁵⁷ Edu Punay, “Kian begged for his life before cops shot him,” *Philippine Star*, October 3, 2017, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/10/03/1745309/kian-begged-his-life-cops-shot-him> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁵⁸ Lian Buan, “Nakaluhod tapos nasubsob’: How Kian was shot, according to PAO,” *Rappler*, August 22, 2017, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/179552-kian-delos-santos-death-pao-autopsy-forensics> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁵⁹ Rambo Talabong, “How Kian delos Santos was killed, according to police,” *Rappler*, August 20, 2017, <https://www.rappler.com/nation/179400-how-kian-delos-santos-was-killed-according-to-police> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁶⁰ Edu Punay, “Kian begged for his life before cops shot him,” *Philippine Star*, October 3, 2017, <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2017/10/03/1745309/kian-begged-his-life-cops-shot-him> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Randy delos Santos, Manila, February 19, 2020.

He immediately asked village officials for a copy of the footage and, according to him, gave a copy to ABS-CBN, the country's largest broadcast network.⁶² He said police officers later asked village officials to delete the footage but were told that the boy's family already had it.⁶³

"What my neighbors told me about what they saw was exactly what was shown on the CCTV footage," Delos Santos said. "It was like watching a movie being replayed."⁶⁴

"Kian was the sweetest and kindest boy," his uncle said. "He was never in trouble and was never into drugs, contrary to what the police alleged." The worst offense he had committed in school, he said, was cutting classes once. He thought that the raiding police team "used an informant during the raid and pointed at the wrong person."⁶⁵

More than a year later, on November 29, 2018, a Caloocan court found three police officers – Arnel Oares, Jeremias Pereda, and Jerwin Cruz – guilty of murder and sentenced them to a maximum of 40 years in prison without eligibility for parole. It was the first ever and so far, the only, criminal conviction of police officers for misconduct in the "war on drugs."⁶⁶

A number of the children killed had been targeted during drug raids like Kian delos Santos, but most have died simply because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time: they lived in the mainly impoverished communities police have typically raided in their anti-drug operations.⁶⁷ According to statistics from the Children's Legal Rights and Development Center, nongovernmental groups that track the violence, 101 children were killed from the start of the campaign in July 2016 up through the end of 2018.⁶⁸ Several

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Howard Johnson, "Philippines drug war: Police guilty of murdering Kian Delos Santos," *BBC*, November 29, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46381697> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁶⁷ Jodesz Gavilan, "LIST: Minors, college students killed in Duterte's drug war," *Rappler*, August 21, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/179234-minors-college-students-victims-war-on-drugs-duterte>.

⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with Rowena Legaspi, executive director of the Children's Legal Rights and Development Center (CLRDC), Manila, February 20, 2020. Because of capacity issues, CLRDC could not provide an updated figure that includes deaths in 2019 and 2020. CLRDC is the only Philippine NGO that consistently tracked the deaths of children on the "drug war"; other NGOs rely on it for this information. UNICEF and other international NGOs such as Save the Children do not publish tallies of these deaths.

children have been killed from the beginning of 2019 up to 2020.⁶⁹ Government officials, including President Duterte, have dismissed the killing of these children as “collateral damage,” as if the anti-drug campaign were an actual armed conflict.⁷⁰

“Drug war” killings continue to occur frequently. On the afternoon of January 27, 2020, Ronjhay Furio, an 8-year-old in Grade 3, was out in the street in Santa Ana, a Manila district to buy *isaw*, his favorite barbecued chicken snack, according to his relatives.⁷¹ Four gunmen in civilian clothes and motorcycle helmets arrived riding two motorcycles about 200 meters from the boy’s house. One gunman fired a .45 caliber handgun at a group of village officials. The apparent target, councilor Roberto Cudal, 52, and another man were wounded; one bullet fatally struck Ronjhay in the abdomen across the street. “He was waiting for his food when the gunmen on motorcycles came,” said a relative.⁷²

Human rights advocates helping the family of Ronjhay believe that this shooting was linked to the anti-drug campaign. But even if that was not the case, Human Rights Watch’s investigation showed how such killings can devastate a family. A relative spoke about how he was very gentle and kind to his parents and other siblings. He had already displayed a sense of responsibility around the house. After helping an uncle fix their jeepney (mini-bus) that day, he had become hungry and so fatefully decided to cross the street to buy some barbecued food.⁷³

⁶⁹ This is based on regular monitoring by Human Rights Watch of media reports.

⁷⁰ “‘Shit happens’ remark shows Dela Rosa’s uncaring attitude for drug war victims —HRW,” *GMA News*, July 4, 2019, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/699949/shit-happens-remark-shows-dela-rosa-s-uncaring-attitude-for-drug-war-victims-hrw/story/> (accessed May 2, 2020); Oliver Holmes, “Duterte says children killed in Philippines drug war are ‘collateral damage,’” *The Guardian*, October 17, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/17/duterte-says-children-killed-in-philippines-drug-war-are-collateral-damage> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁷¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Ronjhay Furio’s relative, Manila, February 20, 2020; Joseph Almer Pedrjaas, “8-year-old boy dead, 2 others wounded in shooting incident in Manila,” *Manila Bulletin*, January 28, 2020, <https://news.mb.com.ph/2020/01/28/8-year-old-boy-dead-2-others-wounded-in-shooting-incident-in-manila/> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁷² Human Rights Watch interview with Ronjhay Furio’s relative, Manila, February 20, 2020.

⁷³ Ibid.

III. Psychological Distress

Children who have witnessed violence against their loved ones are among those seriously harmed by the “drug war.”⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch documented several cases in which children saw the killing of their family member or were in the house where the killing occurred. The effects on them have been profound.

Jennifer M.

Jennifer M., from Payatas, in Quezon City, was 12 years old when her father was killed by police officers in December 2016.⁷⁵ Police, some in uniform and some in civilian clothes, entered their home and ordered all the children outside. They couldn’t pry Jennifer away from her father; she later said she was hugging him tight so that “they don’t harm him.” One of the officers finally managed to wrestle her away from her father and flung her to the ground outside. Shots rang out immediately, and seconds later, Jennifer saw her father dead on the floor.⁷⁶ Jennifer said she has nightmares since the killing, her hands often shake, she is easily startled by loud sounds, and she has become withdrawn and has difficulties eating.⁷⁷

She said: “I was confused because I didn’t understand why. Why my papa? Of all the people outside, why did they pick my father? I was angry at the policemen because my father was begging for mercy, but they didn’t listen to him. That’s why I was so angry.”

When asked about the killings that had become common in her community, Jennifer replied: “I can’t explain it because with so many being killed here in Payatas, it’s like your mind gets muddled. How else to talk about it? What goes through your mind when you remember what happened? It’s like your mind is in disarray.”

⁷⁴ Aya Tantiangco, “Forgotten casualties: Groups urge concern for children orphaned by the drug war,” *GMA News*, December 11, 2018, <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/familyandrelationships/677820/forgotten-casualties-groups-urge-concern-for-children-orphaned-by-the-drug-war/story/> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁷⁵ Jennifer M. is a pseudonym. All pseudonyms in this report will use the same format (first name, followed by an initial).

⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch interview with Jennifer M., Payatas, Quezon City, February 4, 2019.

⁷⁷ “Collateral Damage: The Children of Duterte’s “War on Drugs,” Human Rights Watch photo and video commentary, June 27, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/video-photos/interactive/2019/06/27/collateral-damage-children-dutertes-war-drugs> (accessed May 2, 2020).

Children of Renato A.

The children of Renato A., a scavenger killed in December 2016, in Mandaluyong City, has also experienced enduring psychological distress. Robert A., Renato's eldest child, who was 15 at the time of the shooting, recalled the night his father was killed as he attended the wake of an aunt who had been shot three days earlier:

We were out to buy peanuts. My cousin and I saw four men riding two motorcycles without plate numbers, their faces covered, wearing jackets. I tried to chase them, I tried to get ahead of them. I did everything I could to reach my father first, but it was too late. I saw my father being shot.⁷⁸

Robert said his younger brother John A., who was 13 at the time, witnessed the shooting and was wounded in the leg. Robert said of his brother:

John was more affected by my father's death because ever since my father died, I don't see him happy anymore. If I see him smile, it's forced. He's still looking for our father because he was my father's favorite. He easily gets angry now and he lost trust in people.⁷⁹

Karla A., the youngest child who was 10 at the time, also saw the killing, cowering in fear beneath her aunt's coffin as the gunman fired at her father a few feet away. In tears, she told Human Rights Watch: "I was there when it happened, when my papa was shot. I saw everything, how my papa was shot. ... Our happy family is gone. We don't have anyone to call father now. We want to be with him, but we can't anymore."⁸⁰

Their mother, Andrea A., said Karla was "always in a daze" after the killing:

"Sometimes, before we went to sleep, we would talk about her father, the happy things they did. Sometimes we talk about those and sometimes we

⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with Robert A., Mandaluyong City, February 7, 2019.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with Karla A., Mandaluyong City, February 7, 2019.

would just cry. I would just tell them to go to sleep but the next day they were all still in a daze.”⁸¹

Kyle R.

Children who did not directly witness the deaths of their parents also suffered.⁸² Kyle R. was 5 years old when his father, Alvin R., a 39-year-old driver, turned up dead in November 2016. Unidentified assailants had wrapped his head in packaging tape and stabbed him 19 times before dumping his body on an overpass in Tondo, an impoverished district in Manila. Kyle’s mother, Zeny R., tried to shield the boy from any news about what had happened to her husband, but Kyle learned about it from his friends. One time, Zeny said, Kyle saw his father’s picture being flashed on the TV news.

Zeny said that the boy’s demeanor has changed dramatically since then. He started behaving extremely aggressively and using foul words. During a visit in February 2019, Human Rights Watch saw Kyle pick up a skateboard and hit his mother repeatedly with it as he bounced about the living room shouting, “*Putang ina mo! Putang ina mo!*” – Tagalog for “your mother is a whore” – and flashing his middle finger. One time, she said, he threatened to kill a friend and wrap him with packaging tape.⁸³

A crying Zeny told Human Rights Watch:

I don’t know what’s happening. I don’t know how this happened.... He misses his father a lot and he takes it out on me.

I fear [what will happen] when he grows up [because] he becomes so violent.... He might turn out like the other kids who have gone astray or might be jailed. That's what I fear.

⁸¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Andrea A., Mandaluyong City, February 7, 2019.

⁸² Joe Henley, “Duterte’s war on drugs creating generation of orphans,” *South China Morning Post*, November 16, 2016, <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/long-reads/article/2046511/dutertes-war-drugs-leaving-children-orphaned> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁸³ Human Rights Watch interview with Zeny R., Manila, February 8, 2019.

Children of Julian R.

The six young children of Julian R., 22, who was killed by motorcycle-riding gunmen in June 2017, in Batasan, Quezon City, also had difficulty adjusting to his death. “They watch news every day and they see news about killings,” Julian’s mother, Julieta R., said.⁸⁴ “It is not easy to forget it.”

Children of Hamed U.

The children of Hamed U., 29, a carpenter in General Santos City, on the southern island of Mindanao, were so upset by his death by the police in March 2018, that they asked their grandfather to demolish a part of their house that had been his room. The children, according to their grandfather Abdul U., always became sad each time they saw the room, so he had it torn down.⁸⁵

Psycho-social Programs Offered by NGOs and the Catholic Church

Social workers and experts consulted by Human Rights Watch believe the violence many of these children have experienced has created a mental health challenge for the Philippines.⁸⁶ However, the government has adopted no specific programs for children harmed by the “drug war” to address that challenge. None of the children or parents whom Human Rights Watch interviewed had ever seen social workers from the DSWD. The burden then falls on NGOs, like children’s rights groups, or Catholic parishes to provide psycho-social programs, such as counselling.

In Payatas, Quezon City, the parish’s Project SOW has specifically included counseling as key part of its work. Father Michael Sandaga, the priest of the Ina ng Lupang Pangako parish in Payatas who helped run the program, said 35 children ages 5 or older were enrolled in the program, which meets two Saturdays each month:

The psychological aspect of the program is being taken care by psychologists, among them the priest in charge for this program, a

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Julieta R., Quezon City, February 4, 2019.

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with Abdul U., General Santos City, May 21, 2018.

⁸⁶ Arianne Christian Tapao, “Killings in anti-drug campaign a public health issue – rights group,” *Vera Files*, September 7, 2017, <https://verafil.es.org/articles/killings-anti-drug-campaign-public-health-issue-rights-group> (accessed May 2, 2020)

graduate of psychology. So, he is the one taking care of all the modules and then also assessments. And then for the spiritual program, we have our Bible sharing and the personal reflections of the parents.⁸⁷

Father Sandaga said that, based on his observations since the program started in 2016, “it was always tragic for the children.” He recounted initial encounters with boys who had turned violent because of what happened to their parents, always quarreling and fighting with other kids.⁸⁸ The girls, he said, were very shy and are scared of strangers, including priests. Some of the children, he said, tended to isolate themselves, refusing to interact with other children. These, he said, were the “manifestation of the violence that they saw.”

⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with Father Michael Sandaga, Quezon City, February 4, 2019.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

IV. Bullying and Stigmatization

Jennifer M.

Several days after her father was killed during a police raid in December 2016, Jennifer M., whose case is detailed above (see Section III), was interviewed by a television network about what happened. The news report identified the girl, 12 at the time, and showed her face. Her account was impactful because, by then, the Duterte's "drug war" had only been in effect a few months, with killings happening on a daily basis. The TV report, however, meant trouble for Jennifer. She told Human Rights Watch:

I went to school after [it was shown] and my classmate told me I was a show-off. I was embarrassed. Then the teachers were also asking why I was interviewed. Of course, I didn't know what to tell them because I'm embarrassed to tell them what had happened. I tried to brush it aside. Then one day, one my classmates asked why was my father subjected to *tokhang*.⁸⁹ Maybe my father was using illegal drugs, he said. I said no he didn't. Then he asked me to tell him what happened. I didn't want to. He said it must be true. He was bullying me by then. He said my father was an addict. I ignored him. But the other children told my siblings that my father was an addict, that's why he was killed.⁹⁰

Jennifer told her mother, Malou M., about what happened but she did not make much of it at first. Then finally, the month after the killing, Jennifer decided to drop out of school. Malou was disappointed but recognized that her daughter was going through a rough time. She recalled:

⁸⁹ A portmanteau of the Visayan words *toktok* (knock) and *hangyo* (plead), *tokhang* is the government's main method of community outreach in the "drug war," which involves police or other local officials visiting homes of suspected drug users and advising them to stop using or selling drugs, often carrying the threat of violence. Often the advice carries a threat – that there would be consequences if they did not heed it. The police first used the word in Davao City, where Duterte was mayor for more than 20 years, as they went around the city talking to residents, pleading with them to get their children to stop using drugs. Many of those who didn't heed their plea ended up victims of the Davao Death Squad, a shadowy group of assassins allegedly operationalized by the police and city hall as enforcers of Duterte's war against drugs and crime.

⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with Jennifer M., Quezon City, February 8, 2019.

They were judging her and saying a lot of things about her father. Then she told me, “Ma, I don't want to go to school anymore.” I asked her, “Why is that?” She told me what was happening to her in school. So, I said, “All right, if you don't want to go to school now, then don't. There's still next year.” It was okay for me because I wasn't there, so I didn't know how to help her.⁹¹

Siblings of Jasper F.

One of the siblings of Jasper F., a 15-year-old boy killed in Bagong Silang, Quezon City, in December 2016, also faced harassment by classmates in school. He dropped out of school as a result.⁹² The boy, who was in fifth grade at the time of his brother's killing, suffered taunting by friends, his grandmother, Aida F., told Human Rights Watch. “It's a good thing your brother died,” one friend told him one day.⁹³

Children of Luciano F.

Maila F., 13, the daughter of Luciano F., a 43-year-old drug user in Payatas, Quezon City, suffered bullying after her father was killed in June 2017. “She was being harassed and taunted all the time in school because her father was killed, because he was a user,” her grandmother, Josefa F., said.⁹⁴ “She and her young brother were crying all the time.” Soon thereafter, Maila decided to stop going to school.

Children of Lee-Ann L.

Lee-Ann L., a mother of three children whose husband was killed in March 2017, said her two daughters had been bullied in their Quezon City school, prompting her to confront the mother of one of the bullies. Although her children managed to continue schooling in the same school, it had not been easy, she said. “They are now afraid to go to school or go home. I now have to fetch them every time,” Lee-Ann said.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Malou M., Quezon City, February 8, 2019.

⁹² Human Rights Watch interview with Aida F., Quezon City, February 4, 2019.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Josefa F., Quezon City, February 4, 2019.

⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with Lee-Ann L., Quezon City, February 4, 2019.

Severe Impacts of Bullying

Father Sandaga said he encountered many cases of bullying that forced children to drop out of school. It's part of the stigmatization that comes with being identified as a drug user or, worse, targeted by the police. "So, a child doesn't come to school anymore because he was being bullied and was being told that his father was a drug user. He was killed because he was an addict. So the child was being humiliated," he said. "In this community, when you lose someone, when a member of your family is killed in a drug raid, no one comes to your house for the wake. No one goes to the wake because there was a stigma on the family. Usually, wakes here would go on for more a week, sometimes two weeks, but not anymore because nobody comes." ⁹⁶

This bullying and stigmatization has had severe impacts on families, Father Sandaga said.⁹⁷ One family was forced to leave Payatas and go back to Bohol province, in the central Philippines, because they couldn't withstand the fear and the taunting.⁹⁸ In another case, a mother who was allegedly on a police "drug watch" list was forced to leave her children behind in the care of their grandparents.⁹⁹ "Families are also separated from each other because they needed to move out one member of the family," Father Sandaga said.

⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch interview with Father Michael Sandaga, Quezon City, February 4, 2019.

⁹⁷ Hannah Taylor, Christian Deiparine, "The scars run deep for families left in the wake of Duterte's drug war," *SBS*, January 18, 2019, <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/the-scars-run-deep-for-families-left-in-the-wake-of-duterte-s-drug-war> (accessed May 2, 2020).

⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with Father Michael Sandaga, Quezon City, February 4, 2019.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

V. Deepening Poverty

The killing of a parent or guardian typically has significant financial consequences for those left behind, especially because most victims have been from impoverished communities, and were often the family's main or sole breadwinner. Economic impacts of this loss include inability to pay for food, school supplies, and public transport to school. The new dire economic circumstances of the family have compelled some of the children to work to help make ends meet. Other children have had to leave the family to go live with relatives who could take better care of them. And some of the children have been forced by these new circumstances to stop going to school altogether.

Lee-Ann L.

One evening in March 2017, Jonathan L., 35, a bus driver who drove 24-hour shifts, was waiting in a street in Quezon City for another driver to deliver the jeepney, or minibus, that he was going to drive the next day. Two gunmen on motorcycles and wearing balaclavas sidled up to him. One of them shot him point-blank, killing him on the spot. Jonathan left behind a wife and three children – two in high school, one in elementary school. Driving the jeepney had been his main source of income.¹⁰⁰

As with many “drug war” victims, Jonathan had been the family's main breadwinner. His wife, Lee-Ann L., had stopped working to take care of the children. Jonathan's death forced Lee-Ann to move the family to live with her in-laws, which unsettled her because one of her husband's brothers was known to be a drug user. “But I had no choice but to move in with them,” Lee-Ann told Human Rights Watch.¹⁰¹

Lee-Ann's in-laws were also poor, so she went looking for work, finally finding a job in the kitchen staff at a school canteen. Even with the job, Lee-Ann had difficulty making ends meet. “While the kids remained in school, they no longer had the usual support that they received from their father. I have not been able to pay their school fees,” Lee-Ann said.

¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with Lee-Ann L., Quezon City, February 4, 2019.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Although public education is free in the Philippines, students and pupils still need to pay expenses like transportation and class projects.

Malou M.

Other families of victims had similar stories. Malou M., the wife of Benigno M. who was shot dead in Payatas, Quezon City, in December 2016, said she and her family had been driven deeper into poverty after Benigno's death:

It's hard because you don't know how you're going to start, how you're going to fend for your children, how you're going to send them to school, and how you're going to pay for their daily expenses and their meals. There are times they can't go to school because they don't have school allowance. We lost our tap water because we can't pay the water bill, and electricity and many more things.¹⁰²

Some surviving parents manage to get assistance from NGOs who help victims while others seek help from their parishes. Malou was able to find work at the Project SOW in Quezon City, where she worked as a tailor after her husband died. Even then, she said, the income was hardly adequate:

It's really not enough because it's hard to budget 250 pesos (about US\$5) a day. Sometimes, I won't even earn that much in a day if you cannot make the quota of 250 pieces daily, in which case you only get paid 150 pesos. But how about the children's school allowance? They're four, all attending school. How about the food? They often just make do with eggs. Sometimes, they don't have food when I leave them at home.¹⁰³

All of the victim's families interviewed by Human Rights Watch suffered economic difficulty as a result of the death of their loved one.

¹⁰² Human Rights Watch interview with Malou M., Quezon City, February 8, 2019.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Family of Jasper S.

Jasper S., 37, was killed in September 2017, when two masked men on a motorcycle shot him in broad daylight in Mabuhay, a suburb of General Santos City, on his way home from a volleyball game with friends. His father, Ben S., said one of the men shot him twice. “He was not into drugs, he was not in the drug watch list,” Ben said. “We do not know why he was killed.”¹⁰⁴

The death of Jasper, who worked at a computer store and was supporting his six nephews and nieces, left his family economically devastated. “[His death] is a huge loss to us emotionally, economically,” Ben said, who supports his children and grandchildren by selling snacks in front of their home.

Family of Renato A.

The family of Renato A., a scavenger murdered in December 2016 in Mandaluyong City, has faced extreme difficulties since his death. All three of his children – ages 13, 10, and 1 at the time of his killing – stopped going to school and, since their mother remarried, live in the streets of Mandaluyong, taking odd jobs, such as watching parked cars and teaching hip-hop dance in order to survive. On some days, they sleep in the homes of friends and cousins, but they mostly spend their nights at the back of a local supermarket, sleeping on mats of cardboard and hammocks tied underneath a storage building.

“We couldn’t afford it so we decided to stop going to school,” said Robert A., the eldest of Renato’s children.¹⁰⁵ Robert said their most significant expenses were the public transportation fare to and from school, which can be as little as 15 pesos (\$0.30), and lunch, typically 50 pesos (\$1) per day. To support his siblings, Robert tried to work as a garbage collector but found the job too taxing on his health. Now 19, he teaches hip-hop dance to teenagers in Mandaluyong City but is barely able to support the needs of his siblings. “We make do with my salary so that my siblings and I can eat three times a day,” he said, adding:

¹⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Ben S., General Santos City, May 21, 2018.

¹⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with Robert A., Quezon City, February 8, 2019.

I had to work harder when my father died. I became a father to my siblings because I don't want to see them suffer... so I'm doing everything I can. I force myself to work even if I don't want to. I force myself for me, for my siblings.¹⁰⁶

We sleep near Marketplace beside the stall. We lay cartons around 9 p.m. at the side of the stall. We sleep there until morning. And then when we wake up, we transfer to the parking lot. We spend the night there.¹⁰⁷

Children of Lorenzo M.

Melanie M. was 12 when her father, Lorenzo M., a 38-year-old worker at a canning factory in General Santos City, was shot dead by the police in July 2017. After Lorenzo's death, Melanie and her two other siblings were forced to stop schooling because money ran dry – they had relied solely on Lorenzo's income because their mother had no job at the time of the killing. To support her mother, who sells peanuts and washes clothes for a living, Melanie also started selling boiled peanuts in the streets of General Santos, often well into the evening.¹⁰⁸

Children of Antonio S.

The five young children of Antonio S., a 45-year-old small business owner in Bagong Silang, an impoverished community in Quezon City, have suffered from psychological distress and extreme poverty since his killing by the police in August 2017, with the children often skipping meals. Their mother, Anita S., has had difficulty finding work or income because she's preoccupied with taking care of her children and has had no one to entrust them to.¹⁰⁹

Family of Sixto M.

Sixto M., 26, from Payatas, Quezon City, used to regularly buy hypertension medicines for his father, Democrito M. Since Sixto was killed in 2017, Democrito has had trouble

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with Marilyn M., General Santos City, May 21, 2018.

¹⁰⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Anita S., Quezon City, February 4, 2019.

acquiring the medicines because he lacks the money to purchase them. Sixto's mother, Ambrosia M., now takes care of Sixto's children, whom he had supported when he was employed as a construction worker. Since Ambrosia herself does not have a regular income, she was forced to ask one of her relatives to adopt one of the children. The separation involved sending the child to live in a province outside of Manila.¹¹⁰

Family of Felixberto D.

For a wife and mother like Filomena D., it has been particularly difficult because she has six young children at home and had depended entirely on the earnings of her husband, Felixberto D., a 48-year-old seller of pillows and beddings in Labugon village, Cebu City. He was shot dead in the presence of his children by the police during a raid on June 27, 2018. Filomena said:

They came almost at midnight, when we were asleep. People in civilian clothes accompanied by police officers with long firearms. I was in the living room, the children and Felixberto were upstairs. They took him and asked about another person, Junjun, my eldest child. My husband told them Junjun was our son and that for them to take him instead of him [Junjun]. He went on his knees and pleaded but he was shot three times in the chest and three more times in the back.... How do we restart our lives now?¹¹¹

Community-Based Support Systems

These difficulties suffered by families of victims are a reality that supporters like Father Danilo Pilario have had to grapple with since the killings began. "The first need that we have been responding to is economic," he said.

It's a need that Father Pilario's Project SOW tries to meet mainly through the livelihood center it established in Payatas. The center not only supports the children of victims but also provides livelihood to mothers and relatives of victims, many of whom work as tailors at the center just across the street from the parish church in the community. The mostly

¹¹⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with Ambrosia M., Quezon City, February 4, 2019.

¹¹¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Filomena D., Cebu City, August 8, 2019.

women workers make bags and other household items such as potholders that they sell. Workers like Malou typically earn 250 pesos (about \$5) a day. The income is inadequate, but earning money is not the only mission of the center, which also provides psycho-social services to children affected by the violence. Other parishes in many parts of Metro Manila have similar projects.

VI. In-depth Personal Stories

Children of Benigno M.¹¹²

In a small, dilapidated house in Payatas, near Quezon City's mountain of garbage, Jennifer M. stared longingly at the blue couch that had been her father's favorite spot. Her father, Benigno M., was on the couch when police shot him dead during a drug sweep of the neighborhood in December 2016. The police claimed Benigno was a drug dealer and resisted arrest.

Jennifer has a different version. She said about seven men in civilian clothes barged into their small home that day, looking for Benigno. The men ordered everybody out. But Jennifer clung to her father, hugging him as he sat on the sofa, and held up his work ID for the police to see.

"He was told to lie face down, but he held his ID up behind him. All the while, one of the men had a gun to his head," Jennifer recalled. Benigno kept begging. "Sir, if I committed a crime, please have mercy, please don't kill me. If you want, you can just detain me. Because of my poor children, they are seven. What happens to them, who will take care of them?" a crying Benigno told the men, according to Jennifer's mother Belinda M.¹¹³ Jennifer said she tried to shield her father by hugging him and covering him with her small body.

One of the men – "the big one," she said – grabbed Jennifer, who was 12 at the time, and threw her to the floor just outside the door of the living room. One of her siblings caught her, breaking her fall onto the dirty concrete floor. The men ordered everyone but Benigno to leave the house; on her way out, Jennifer saw her father continue to beg for his life. Moments later, when Jennifer and all the others were in the small alley outside the house, three gunshots rang out.

Uniformed police officers arrived minutes later; the men in civilian clothes were still inside Jennifer's home. When the medics came, Jennifer strained to look inside and saw blood all

¹¹² Except where noted in separate citations, the case description that follows is based on an interview with Jennifer M., Quezon City, February 8, 2019.

¹¹³ Human Rights Watch interview with Belinda M., Quezon City, February 8, 2019.

over the floor, her father now lying face up beside the couch. “That’s when I saw the gun beside his hand,” Jennifer said. She said her father did not have a gun, that she never saw one in their home. Police say they shot him because he fought back. They claim they found a sachet of *shabu*, Filipino slang for methamphetamine or crystal meth, on Benigno’s body.

Witnessing what happened to her father was traumatic enough for Jennifer and her family. But the consequence of his death only added to their suffering. Benigno worked in a junk shop in another district of Manila and was the family breadwinner. He was only home the day he was killed because it was the birthday of another daughter.

Since Benigno’s death, there have been days the children have had nothing to eat. They rely mainly on the generosity of their grandmother, who agreed to take care of them. Jennifer’s mother was in jail for a drug-related case at the time of the killing but has since reunited with her children. After a TV station interviewed Jennifer, exposing her identity in the process, classmates began bullying her in school, ridiculing her for her father’s alleged drug use, which she denied.

Jennifer still grapples with the trauma of her father’s death. There were days when the grief was so unbearable, she didn’t know what to do, she said. She became withdrawn, not just because of the bullying but also because she just wanted to keep her head down.¹¹⁴ She finds comfort in the company of her siblings, staying mostly inside their ramshackle home, their giggles – and tears – drowned out by the noise of a malfunctioning electric fan.

Every now and then, the family takes a minute to pray at the image of the Holy Family tacked above the couch. There are days when Jennifer just sits all day on the couch that was punctured by one of the bullets that took her father from her. She hugs the couch, smelling the frayed and faded seat cover, imagining the man who had sat in it, remembering the father she once had.

“I am confused because I still don’t understand why. Why my Papa? Of all the people here, why did they pick my father?” Jennifer said. “I am so angry.”

¹¹⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Father Michael Sandaga, who supervised Jennifer’s case, Quezon City, February 4, 2019.

During these bouts of confusion and anger, Jennifer finds refuge in doodling and drawing scenes of her family, kittens, and sad girls on her notepad or on the plywood walls of her home. But she has never been able to finish her drawings. “It’s because something is missing in the drawing,” she said. “It’s incomplete.”

Child of Alvin R.¹¹⁵

“Putang ina mo! Putang ina mo! Putang ina mo!”

Kyle R. was shouting as he bounced around the cramped living room of his family’s home in Delpan, Tondo – one of the poorest, most crowded and crime-prone districts of Manila – when we visited his home in February 2018. He jabbed his middle finger in the air, shouting as he jumped around, oblivious to the perplexed reactions of the people in the room.

He picked up a skateboard and hit his mother, Zeny R., with it twice in the arm. *“Putang ina mo!”* he shouted. That is Tagalog for “Your mother is a whore.”¹¹⁶

Kyle’s behavior is deeply disturbing, in part because he is only 5 years old. While it might not be unusual for children his age to sometimes use foul language or act out among friends, his mother found something profoundly unsettling about the intensity of Kyle’s aggressiveness. “I don’t know what’s happening,” Zeny said, shaking her head and close to tears. “I don’t know how this happened.”

Zeny has not taken Kyle to a therapist because she cannot afford the expense. The nannies she has been able to hire so she could leave the house and go to work typically have not lasted long because of Kyle’s aggressiveness.

During a visit by Human Rights Watch in February 2019, the latest nanny, a 50-something man, displayed a remarkable calmness toward Kyle. Almost cheerfully, he bathed Kyle, changed his clothes, and helped him into his school uniform – even as Kyle grabbed a knife and chased him with it.

¹¹⁵ Except where noted in separate citations, the case description that follows is based on observations by Human Rights Watch and a Human Rights Watch interview with Zeny R., Manila, February 8, 2019.

The presence of strangers may have emboldened Kyle to behave more aggressively, but Zeny said this was not the first time. Sometime last year, Kyle was playing with friends when it suddenly turned ugly – he threatened to kill one of his playmates, telling him he would wrap him with packaging tape.

In November 2016, Kyle's father, Alvin R., a 39-year-old driver, disappeared. He was found dead two days later, on the Delpan overpass not far from their home. He'd been stabbed 19 times. "I'm a drug pusher. Don't emulate me," read a handwritten sign in Tagalog placed beside the body. Alvin's head was wrapped with packaging tape.

Alvin's horrific death turned Zeny's world upside down. Because he had been the breadwinner, Zeny was forced to look for a job. When she found one, she started spending less time with Kyle. And when she entered into a relationship with her current boyfriend, Kyle became even more aggressive and violent. "He's always saying that he's going to kill my partner now because maybe he's jealous because sometimes I don't have time for him anymore," Zeny said. She fears that Kyle would remain violent into adulthood. "I want him to leave this place because he might grow up like the other kids who went astray or ended up in jail."

The community Zeny and Kyle lived in Delpan is similar to the urban communities where many "drug war" victims lived, which is to say impoverished areas with high rates of violent crime. Zeny and her husband would fight constantly because Alvin, according to her, liked to "stay outside" and hang out with friends. "His life was really outside. Sometimes when his kid was asleep, he would sneak out. So, when he comes home, I'm mad. "Where did you go this time?" Confrontations like that," she said. Confrontations that Kyle would see. One time, Kyle confronted Zeny about her nagging. "You said you wished daddy would die," the child told her.

Alvin's death affected Zeny's ability to hold her family together. "I kind of punished myself when he was gone. I was drinking every day. To this day. My coworkers know that, and they ask me why since they thought I'd moved on already."

But moving on is a challenge seeing how Kyle seemed to grow more violent each day, Zeny said. “I’m going to kill you. Knife! Give me the knife!” the boy screamed at Zeny once.¹¹⁷ It’s a behavior that made it even more difficult for Zeny to take care of him. “He misses his father a lot and he takes it out on me,” she said.

Children of Renato A.¹¹⁸

The four men wearing balaclavas arrived at the funeral wake on two motorcycles. Moments later, shots rang out, sparking panic among the crowd of mourners, who fled or dove for cover. The gunmen’s apparent target, Renato A., was shot 10 times and died at the scene. His then-13-year-old son, John A., was hit in the leg; his daughter, Karla A. who was 10 at the time, cowered under a table but wasn’t physically injured in the attack. The eldest son, 15-year-old Robert A., who was right behind one of the gunmen as he fired into the crowd, also managed to escape without injury.

The wake was for Renato’s sister-in-law, Veneracion A., 39, who had been gunned down three days earlier while having dinner in front of a convenience store in an impoverished Manila neighborhood. The assailant walked up and shot her in the head in the evening of December 16, 2016. An alleged drug user whose name was on the authorities’ drug watch list, Veneracion had feared she might be a target of the government’s anti-drug campaign.¹¹⁹

Two years after the murder of their father, Renato’s children eke out an existence on the streets of Mandaluyong City in Metro Manila, abandoned by their mother, out of school, and dependent on meager wages from menial jobs and the generosity of extended family to get by.

Human Rights Watch spent time with Renato’s children and their friends and cousins one day in February 2019. They behaved like they felt at home in the streets of Mandaluyong – and, in a way, they are. Since their family’s home was demolished by the government years before, allegedly because it encroached on private property, they had been spending more

¹¹⁸ Except where noted in separate citations, the case description that follows is based on a Human Rights Watch interview with Robert A., Mandaluyong City, February 8, 2019.

¹¹⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Veneracion A., Mandaluyong City, February 8, 2019.

time in the streets. They were familiar faces to neighbors and shop owners, and even to policemen and neighborhood watchmen.

As Karla and Robert walked around Mandaluyong that day looking for their brother John, chatting up friends and acquaintances, high-fiving jeepney drivers and street vendors, it was clear they seemed comfortable living in the bustle of the city.

When Human Rights Watch spoke to Karla, she was still upset about the time she got feverish one night that month and was all by herself in a cousin's house. John and Robert were nowhere to be found; they had spent the night with their friends out in the streets. That night was the loneliest she felt since her father's death, she said.

"My brothers and I were always together," said Karla, now 12. "We were always complete. Since her father died, "a big change happened with my family," she said, now sobbing. "I just want us to be together."¹²⁰

Her father's murder shattered her family. Their mother, Andrea A., has since remarried, and practically abandoned the children, who refused to live with her because, they told Human Rights Watch, they hate their mother's new husband. Andrea told us her decision to remarry was mainly driven by her inability to support herself, and this seems to have bred resentment among her children.

Since the killing, all three children have stopped going to school. They enrolled for a few months at one point, but eventually gave up because they were homeless. Robert found menial work with the municipal government as a trash collector but left it because he found it too taxing. These days, he earns money by teaching hip-hop to teenagers in Kalentong. John has become withdrawn since his father's death and refuses to socialize even among friends. "He easily gets angry and he has lost trust in people. Especially when he learned that we know the man who had my father killed," Robert said.

But Robert is confident John can take care of himself, a view Andrea shares. "They are boys, so they are okay," she told Human Rights Watch.¹²¹ But both worry about Karla.

¹²⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with Karla A., Mandaluyong City, February 8, 2019.

¹²¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Andrea A., Quezon City, February 8, 2019.

Andrea wanted to take Karla with her to Taytay, a town north of Manila, where the girl could live with her and her new husband. But Karla refused, afraid her mother would just turn her into the housekeeper for a friend of Andrea's husband.

The three siblings spend their days in Kalentong, their nights in the houses of friends and cousins, and their afternoons in the parking lot behind Marketplace mall. There, they hang hammocks between delivery vans, taking naps, waiting for their friends who also live in the streets, and spending hours just chatting, gossiping with delivery drivers, and horsing around. Aren't they afraid the men who killed their father will come back for them? "If they wanted us dead, we would have been dead a long time ago," Robert said.

While life in Kalentong has not been easy, especially for Karla, the three have no plans to leave. Here, Robert said, "we have friends, we have each other."

Children of Kristina D. and Diana D.

Kristina D., 27, and her sister, Diana D., 26, were very close siblings, almost like best friends. They shared many things, among them that they worked at the same job at the same beer house and restaurant in General Santos City. But most importantly, they shared a responsibility for their respective children. Both were not married but had children in past relationships; Kristina had two children, aged eight and ten, while Diana has one, aged seven. All of them lived in one hut made of bamboo on the outskirts of a city in the southern Philippines, and the children were cared for by their mother, Carmen D., when the sisters were at work.

One night in August 2017, two men arrived on a motorcycle, entered the restaurant where the sisters were working, sat down, and ordered beer. Not long after they took swigs of beer, one of the men drew a gun and aimed it at Diana, who was attending to another customer a few tables away. Kristina saw what was happening, lunged at the gunman, who fired four times and hit Kristina instead: twice in the chest, once in the knee and once in the arm.¹²² The gunman kept firing even as Kristina fell to the floor, hitting Diana twice: once in the face, another in the spine. Kristina died on the spot; Diana survived but is now paralyzed from the waist down. The gunmen managed to escape on their motorcycle.

¹²² Except where noted in separate citations, the case description that follows is based on a Human Rights Watch interview with Diana D., General Santos City, May 21, 2018.

Diana did not want to go into details of why she was targeted, but she said it might have something to do with a previous side gig she did providing information to the local police about drug dealing in the city. But she was not sure whether the police or the drug syndicates were behind the attack.

When Human Rights Watch visited her on May 21, 2018, Diana was inside their hut, the cheerful Hello Kitty posters that adorned the room doing nothing to dispel the sense of helplessness inside. Dangling beneath the bed made of bamboo and coconut wood was a bag of urine from a catheter, its tube snaking up to Diana as she sat on a four-inch thick foam slab. Carmen, her 49-year-old mother, was the more emotional of the two as she narrated what had become of her grandchildren, all of whom were still in elementary school.

One of Kristina's children now lives with his grandparents on his father's side, far away from General Santos City. Carmen has been taking care of the other two on top of making sure that Diana's needs are met – bathing her, inserting her catheter, and providing daily care. Despite Carmen's best efforts, things have been extremely difficult, not least because Kristina and Diana had been the breadwinners of their extended family. As Carmen lamented: "[The children] have stopped going to school. Nobody could take proper care of them."¹²³

"We're like beggars now, asking for help from everybody," Diana said. But she despairs for her child, her nephew, and her niece the most. "I pity our children. What will become of them now?" she said. "All I can do as I sit here all day, in pain, is cry and pray."

Children of Lorenzo M.¹²⁴

A month after her father was killed, Melanie M. started going out in the streets of General Santos City, in the southern Philippines, to sell boiled peanuts. It's a decidedly unusual – and risky – task for a small 12-year-old girl but this has become Melanie's routine. She sets out at 9 o'clock in the morning and tries to return home by sundown, but often ends up

¹²³ Human Rights Watch interview with Carmen D., General Santos City, May 21, 2018.

¹²⁴ Except where noted in separate citations, the case description that follows is based a Human Rights Watch interview with Melanie M., General Santos City, May 21, 2018.

returning well into the evening. “I go around the plaza, pleading with people to buy my peanuts,” she said.

She sometimes is accompanied her mother in selling the snack but often she is on her own, navigating the wide streets and busy highways of the city, particularly near the plaza where the traffic is the busiest. It’s hard work, Melanie said, but she hoped things would get better. “I hope to stop selling peanuts during class days and just do it during the weekends,” she said. “I intend to go back to school.”

Melanie stopped going to school after her father, Lorenzo M., a 38-year-old worker at a canning factory, was shot dead by the police in July 2017. Lorenzo’s wife, Marilyn M., said the police officers who raided her in-laws’ home in an impoverished community called Silway claimed they shot him because he fought back.¹²⁵ Melanie, who was present during the raid, rejects the police claim.¹²⁶

Since Lorenzo’s death, his family has suffered. Not only Melanie, but also her younger brother, Kenneth M., 9, stopped going to the public elementary school. She was in Grade 4 while Kenneth was in Grade 1 at the time of their father’s death. The youngest child, Richard M., 4, recently fell ill with asthma. The mother’s earnings from selling peanuts and washing other peoples’ clothes were simply not enough.

Prior to dropping out, Melanie and Kenneth would go to school without lunch money and their teachers would take pity on them and feed them. But that arrangement did not last long and, soon after, both children stopped attending classes. Marilyn noted that other families in her community received the modest 4Ps, or conditional cash transfer program benefits, from the DSWD, but they did not.¹²⁷ She did not bother to ask why, except to say that she was ashamed and scared to ask for help from government.

¹²⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with Marilyn M., General Santos City, May 21, 2018.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Republic of the Philippines Department of Social Welfare and Development, “Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program,” <https://pantawid.dswd.gov.ph/> (accessed May 2, 2020).

Children of Hamed U.¹²⁸

Inside the compound owned by Abdul U., a 64-year-old tricycle driver, is a small area no larger than three square meters that looks cleaner than the rest of the property, three homes made of unfinished hollow blocks and tin roofs. “That used to be my son’s room,” Abdul said, pointing a finger at the cemented floor. His son, Hamed U., 29, died during a police raid of the compound in the outskirts of General Santos City in March 2018.

Police officers in camouflage uniforms without nameplates arrived at the house shortly before 2 a.m., when everybody was asleep, took hold of Hamed, and ordered him to go out of the room. They did not show an arrest or search warrant. “They were carrying Armalite [military assault] rifles, pointing them at my son,” Abdul said. Moments later, three shots rang out; two of the bullets hit Hamed while he was seated in the next room on a wooden bench. Abdul pointed to the bullet holes at the back of the bench as he narrated what happened.

Hamed’s children were sleeping in the same room with their father when the police invaded and yanked their father into the next room and killed him. Hamed’s wife was not there because she was working in Saudi Arabia as a domestic worker at the time. “*Ama*, please help me! They are going to kill me!” Hamed pleaded to his father, according to a cousin who witnessed the raid.

Hamed, a carpenter who police alleged was a drug dealer, left behind three children. Moner U., the eldest was 9 years old and a Grade 3 pupil at the time. His grandfather said he was traumatized by what happened to his father: “He would just sit and stare at my son’s picture all the time.”

When we spoke to him days after the shooting, Abdul said they had not yet figured out what to do with Hamed’s children. “They live in fear. We live in fear,” Abdul said. The fear was such that the family decided not to pursue a case against the police. “We can’t do anything,” he said.

¹²⁸ Except where noted in separate citations, the case description that follows is based a Human Rights Watch interview with Abdul U., General Santos City, May 21, 2018.

But Abdul did do what he could. When his grandchildren started to complain that they could not bear looking at the room in the house where Hamed and his children used to stay, he had it demolished.

VII. Government Response

The Philippine government has failed to assist the children of those killed in its abusive “war on drugs.” Beyond the illegality of the killings themselves, the government has violated the fundamental rights of the children of victims.

International human rights law, to which the Philippines is party, places obligations on governments to protect children at risk. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights calls for the “widest possible protection and assistance” to the family and dependent children.¹²⁹ Moreover, “children and young persons should be protected from economic and social exploitation.”¹³⁰ The Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out a range of rights that governments must afford children.¹³¹

While the Philippine government has asserted that families of individuals who have died in anti-drug operations can avail themselves of programs of the DSWD – such as payment for medical and burial expenses – it doesn’t have specific programs addressing the needs of such families.¹³² A former senior DSWD official told Human Rights Watch that there was no

¹²⁹ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, G.A. res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 49, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), 993 U.N.T.S. 3, entered into force January 3, 1976, article 10(1).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, article 10(3).

¹³¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted November 20, 1989, G.A. Res. 44/25, annex, 44 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 167, U.N. Doc. A/44/49, (1989), entered into force September 2, 1990, article 3. The convention states that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration (art. 3). It also states that governments must take all appropriate measures to ensure that children are protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment based on the status and activities of the children’s parents or family members (art. 2(2)). Children, as far as possible, have the right to know and be cared for by their parents (art. 7(1)). Governments must ensure that children are not separated from their parents against their will – including death arising from any cause while the person is in the custody of the State – except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with the applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child (art. 9(1) and (4)). Every child has a right to a standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development (art. 27(1)). Governments shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for a child to implement this right, and in case of need shall provide material assistance and support programs, particularly with regards to nutrition, clothing, and housing (art. 27(3)). All children also have the right to compulsory and free education (art. 28(1)). Every child has the right to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development (art. 32). Governments must also take all appropriate measures to promote – in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child – the psychological recovery and social reintegration of children who have experienced any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse (art. 39).

¹³² Republic of the Philippines Department of Social Welfare and Development, “Programs for families affected by anti-drug campaign a priority of DSWD,” September 23, 2016, https://www.dswd.gov.ph/programs-for-families-affected-by-anti-drug-campaign-%E2%80%8Ba-priority-of-dswd/?fbclid=IwAR33uoMExvPqwpdBD3lcCcViiE2WIDSBQ87_Mt8svkj8KDErcFdopAuEc3A (accessed May 2, 2020).

separate or specific program or plan for children orphaned in drug raids.¹³³ This official said that as of May 2019, the impact and effect of the “drug war” violence on children had not been raised in any Cabinet meeting.¹³⁴

Early on, the department announced that existing programs would meet the needs of these families, but no specific programs have been created, and Human Rights Watch’s research indicates that their special needs remain unaddressed.¹³⁵

Human Rights Watch sent letters (see Appendix) in January 2020 to the DSWD, as well as the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), the government agency that coordinates all efforts to protect children, and the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC), asking about the existence of specific programs for children of the “war on drugs.” We received no response from the CWC or JJWC. The DSWD responded to our inquiry on February 20, 2020, requesting more time to reply, to which Human Rights Watch replied affirmatively on March 6, 2020. However, after that, Human Rights Watch received no further response.

Other agencies that could help victims’ families with targeted programming – such as the Department of Health – have expressed support for the anti-drug campaign. When asked about psycho-social help for family members of people who have been killed, Paulyn Jean Ubial, the Health Secretary from 2016 to 2017, said: “Why is it a public health issue? [Is it] contagious? Lifestyle-related? In the first place, is that a disease?”¹³⁶

Even if there were programs, government agencies would need to address the deep wariness – if not outright fear – that many families and children of victims feel about approaching the government for help.¹³⁷ Clergy and children’s rights advocates with whom Human Rights Watch spoke to said that these families have been severely stigmatized and

¹³³ Human Rights Watch interview with a former DSWD official [identity withheld], Manila, May 29, 2019.

¹³⁴ Human Rights Watch checked the website of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, as well as the Presidential Communications Operations Office, but found no document that references any meeting where the “drug war” and its impact on children was addressed.

¹³⁵ Philippine News Agency, “DSWD to help kin of anti-drug war casualties,” *SunStar Philippines*, September 26, 2016, <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/100416>, (accessed May 2, 2020).

¹³⁶ Arianne Christian Tapao, “Killings in anti-drug campaign a public health issue – rights group,” Vera Files, September 7, 2017, <https://verafilices.org/articles/killings-anti-drug-campaign-public-health-issue-rights-group> (accessed May 2, 2020)

¹³⁷ Human Rights Watch interviews with five parents and guardians, Quezon City, February 4 and 8, 2019.

often live in fear, so that they cannot be expected to seek support from the very entity that they feel is responsible for their plight.

VIII. Recommendations

To the Government of the Philippines

- Issue a presidential proclamation officially ending the “war on drugs.”
- Investigate and prosecute alleged perpetrators, including law enforcement personnel, credibly implicated in extrajudicial killings and other abuses committed during the Duterte government’s “war on drugs.”
- Promptly and fairly compensate the families of victims of unlawful killings by government officials and their agents.
- Fully cooperate with the Commission on Human Rights’ investigation of such killings, including by providing requested information on the anti-drug campaign generally and specific cases.
- Fully cooperate with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, which was directed by the UN Human Rights Council in a July 2019 resolution to prepare a report on the human rights situation in the Philippines.
- Order the Department of Social Welfare and Development to:
 - Provide material assistance and targeted financial support programs to parents, appointed relatives, or legal guardians and any relevant agency responsible for the welfare of a child adversely affected by the anti-drug campaign to ensure children remain in school.
 - Protect adversely affected children from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development.
 - Gather information and data about the children and families affected by the anti-drug campaign, ensuring confidentiality and protection against retaliation.
 - Form and provide resources for a multi-agency initiative (government, civil society, academe, faith-based organizations, and NGOs) to develop, plan, and implement programs for assistance specifically to children of “drug war” victims.

- Ensure that the department’s conditional cash transfers (4Ps benefits) reach the families of victims, and actively monitor implementation of the program to prevent any discrimination against those families.
- Order the Department of Education to:
 - Ensure that all children, including those adversely affected by the anti-drug campaign, enjoy their right to free and compulsory primary education as guaranteed under the Philippines Constitution and international human rights law. Take immediate measures to ensure that no child is ever denied their right to education, including secondary education, due to school fees or related costs of education.
 - Enforce anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies, notably with respect to children adversely affected by the anti-drug campaign, inform students how they can confidentially report incidents of bullying, and specify measures to hold accountable students found responsible for bullying.
 - Ensure school officials and teachers are trained and equipped to handle cases of bullying among students, and ensure school administrators ensure all staff and students abide by the government’s anti-bullying policy, and recognize that all children should be protected from bullying and harassment based on their economic circumstances or on the basis of the status or activities of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.
- Order the Department of Health to:
 - Assist the Department of Social Welfare and Development in providing mental and psycho-social health services to children of families affected by the anti-drug campaign.
 - Create a partnership and coordinate with private mental health professionals and academics to ensure that adversely affected children and their families are provided adequate mental health care and support.

To the Philippine Commission on Human Rights

- Investigate the deaths of all children killed in the “war on drugs.” Publicize the results of those investigations and make specific recommendations for

accountability in all cases where there is sufficient evidence for such a determination.

- Urge relevant government agencies, such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Department of Education, to enforce existing laws and policies for the protection of children.

To the United Nations Country Team and UN Bodies

- Strongly advocate with the Philippines government to end government policies supporting the “war on drugs.” Call on the government to hold perpetrators of violence against children and their families accountable for rights abuses.
- The UN Human Rights Council should establish an independent international investigative mechanism into extrajudicial killings and other violations committed in the context of the “war on drugs” since June 2016.
- The UN Country Team in the Philippines should speak out publicly about the plight of adversely affected children and their families.
- UNICEF should make the children of “drug war” victims a priority in their programs and interventions, particularly on the issues of psychological distress and livelihoods. It should support a multi-agency initiative, to be led by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, to provide such intervention.
- Provide political, technical, and financial support for the Commission on Human Rights to investigate human rights violations in the “drug war.”

To Bilateral and Multilateral Donors

- Strongly advocate with the Philippines government to end government policies supporting the “war on drugs.” Call on the government to hold perpetrators of violence against children and their families accountable for rights abuses.
- Support the creation of a multi-agency initiative that will provide specific assistance to the children affected by the anti-drug campaign.
- Consult with Philippines government agencies and independent civil society and community groups on the design of timely and effective assistance programs to benefit children adversely affected by the anti-drug campaign.
- Provide technical and financial support for assistance programs designed to support adversely affected children.

- Publicly and privately urge the government ensure support for adversely affected children and families, such as through disbursement of conditional cash transfers.
- Provide political, technical, and financial support for the Commission on Human Rights to investigate human rights violations in the “drug war.”

Acknowledgments

This report was researched and written by Carlos H. Conde, researcher in the Asia division. It was reviewed by Michael Bochenek, senior counsel, and Bede Sheppard, deputy director, in the Children's Rights Division, and edited by Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director. James Ross, legal and policy director, and Joseph Saunders, deputy program director, provided legal and program review, respectively. Production assistance was provided by Racqueal Legerwood, Asia coordinator; Travis Carr, Publications coordinator; and Fitzroy Hepkins, administrative manager.

Human Rights Watch would like to thank these groups and individuals for their assistance in the research and preparation of this report, as well as the video that is accompanying it: Kiri Dalena, Bahay Tuluyan, Children's Legal Rights and Development Center, Project Support for Orphans and Widows, Network Against Killings in the Philippines, iDefend, Arnold Janssen Kalinga Center, and Resbak.

And to the parents, relatives, guardians, friends, and children of the victims of the "drug war," we extend our heartfelt gratitude for courageously sharing your stories with us.

Appendix I: Letter to the Department of Social Welfare and Development

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
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Chuck Lustig, *Deputy Executive Director, Operations*
Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *Deputy Executive Director, Advocacy*

Dinah Pokempner, *General Counsel*
James Ross, *Legal and Policy Director*

January 24, 2020

Hon. Rolando Joselito D. Bautista
Secretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development
DSWD Building
Constitution Hills, Batasan Complex
1126 Quezon City, Philippines



HRW.org

Re: Impact of "Drug War" on Children

Dear Secretary Bautista:

I am writing to you on behalf of Human Rights Watch, which is a global non-governmental organization that monitors violations of human rights by state and non-state actors in more than 90 countries around the world, including the Philippines.

We would appreciate your responses to our questions based on our research on the human rights cost to children of the government's "war on drugs." Among those who have perished in the "drug war" are children who were either targeted in police operations or were struck by gunfire during drug raids. The impact of the "drug war," however, goes beyond the physical violence inflicted on these children.

We interviewed 46 people – 10 children; 24 adults who are either parents, relatives, or guardians to those children; and 12 individuals from several nongovernment organizations and government offices – for this research. They told us of the trauma they suffered after witnessing the killing of a parent or other loved ones. Several were forced to go into hiding or relocated to other communities because they feared for their lives. A number of children stopped going to school because of a lack of finances caused by the loss of the family breadwinner. Several experienced bullying in school and in their community because of the stigma of alleged drug use within the family. Some children were forced to live in extreme poverty and have had no choice but to work full time at too young an age. Some ended up living in the streets, further exposing themselves to violence and other harm.

Human Rights Watch is committed to producing material that is well-informed and objective. We hope you or your staff would be able to provide written answers to the questions below, so that your views and responses are accurately reflected in our reporting. In order for us to take your

answers into account in our forthcoming report, we would appreciate a written response by February 28, 2020. If you have any questions about this request, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]

Thank you very much for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Phil Robertson
Deputy Asia Director
Human Rights Watch

Please send your reply by email or fax to:

Racquel Legerwood
Asia Coordinator
Human Rights Watch
1275 K Street NW, Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20005

QUESTIONS FOR SECRETARY BAUTISTA

- 1) Does the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) have a specific program for the children left behind by victims of the “drug war”? That is, has any program been created specifically to address the impact of “drug war” killings on child dependents of victims, many of whom live in poor communities? If so, when was this program established and which agency in the DSWD oversees the program?
- 2) If such a program exists, what operations does it carry out? For example, does it provide financial assistance, such as funeral/burial costs (beyond the assistance already provided by the DSWD for indigent persons), health expenses, and/or other types of assistance?
- 3) Has the DSWD ever been consulted by the national government and agencies tasked with pursuing the “drug war” to address the impacts of the campaign on children? If so, please provide information about these consultations, including when they happened, who was involved, what was discussed, and what concrete outcomes came from the consultations.
- 4) Have families affected by “drug war” killings been covered by the government’s conditional cash transfer program? If so, how many victims or their families have received such assistance, and what is the total sum of cash provided? Please provide an appropriate breakdown of any transfers made so the amount paid in individual cases can be determined.
- 5) Did the DSWD provide support for the psychological and mental health needs of children and families directly affected by the “drug war”? If yes, what program interventions have been done, and how many persons have benefited from such support?
- 6) Did the DSWD or its municipal or provincial counterparts make regular site visits to residences of children left behind as a result of “drug war” actions to ensure that their specific needs are being taken care of? If so, please provide additional information about the methodology behind these visits, and the results of these visits.
- 7) Has the DSWD liaised with other government agencies tasked with the welfare of children, such as the Department of Health and the Department of Education, to discuss the impact of the anti-drug campaign on children and the interventions needed to help those children? If so, when did these engagements occur, and what were the specific outcomes of this engagement? Did any specific programs to help children arise from these liaison efforts and if so, please describe those programs?
- 8) Has the DSWD actively sought to protect the children of “drug war” victims, for instance by providing shelter to children who have no dependents, or acted on their behalf in cases where these children facing bullying in school or in their community, have had to drop out of school to work, or are compelled to live in the streets?
- 9) Please provide any additional information that you think would be helpful for Human Rights Watch to fully understand how the Philippines is assisting the child dependents of victims of the “drug war.”

Thank you for your time and attention to this inquiry.

Appendix II: Letter to the Council for the Welfare of Children

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
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Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *Deputy Executive Director, Advocacy*

Dinah Pokempner, *General Counsel*
James Ross, *Legal and Policy Director*

January 30, 2020

Hon. Mary Mitzi Cajayon-Uy

Executive Director

Council for the Welfare of Children

10 Apo Street, Santa Mesa Heights, Barangay Santa Teresita,
Quezon City, Philippines

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

HRW.org

Re: Impact of “Drug War” on Children

Dear Ms. Cajayon-Uy:

I am writing to you on behalf of Human Rights Watch, a global non-governmental organization that monitors violations of human rights by state and non-state actors in more than 90 countries around the world, including the Philippines.

We would sincerely appreciate receiving the benefit of your knowledge and expertise in responses to our questions below.

Human Rights Watch has recently conducted research on the impact on children of the government’s “war on drugs.” We interviewed 46 people – 10 children; 24 adults, who are either parents, relatives, or guardians to those children; and 12 individuals from several non-government organizations and government offices – for this research.

Among those who have perished in the “drug war” are children who were either targeted in police operations or were struck by gunfire during drug raids. The impact of the “drug war,” however, goes beyond the physical violence inflicted on these children.

The children told us of the trauma they suffered after witnessing the killing of a parent or other loved ones. Several were forced to go into hiding or relocated to other communities because they feared for their lives. A number of children stopped going to school because of a lack of finances caused by the loss of the family breadwinner. Several experienced bullying in school and in their community because of the stigma of alleged drug use in their family. Some children were reduced to living in extreme poverty and had no choice but to work full time at too young an age. Some ended up living in the streets, further exposing themselves to potential violence and other harm.

Human Rights Watch is committed to producing material that is well-informed and objective. We hope you or your staff would be able to provide written answers to the questions below, so that your views and responses are accurately reflected in our reporting. In order for us to take your answers into account in our forthcoming report, we would appreciate a written response by February 28, 2020. If you have any questions about this request, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]

Thank you very much for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Phil Robertson
Deputy Asia Director
Human Rights Watch

Please send your reply by email or fax to:

Racqueal Legerwood
Asia Coordinator
Human Rights Watch
1275 K Street NW, Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20005

QUESTIONS FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CAJAYON-UY:

- 1) Does the Council for Welfare of Children (CWC) have specific policies for the children left behind by victims of the “drug war”? If so, do those policies specifically address the impact of “drug war” killings on child dependents of victims, many of whom live in poor communities? If so, when were these policies established and what was CWC’s role in formulating them?
- 2) If such policies exist, through what programs are they carried out? For example, do the policies provide for financial assistance, such as funeral/burial costs (beyond the assistance already provided by the Department of Social Welfare and Development for indigent persons), health expenses, or other sorts of assistance?
- 3) Has the CWC ever been consulted by the national government and/or agencies tasked with pursuing the “drug war” to address the impacts of the campaign on children? If so, please provide information about these consultations, including when they happened, who was involved, what was discussed, and what concrete outcomes came from the consultations.
- 4) Has the CWC conducted an audit or assessment of the DSWD’s conditional cash transfer program and how it benefited the families of victims in the drug war? If so, how many victims, or their families, have received such assistance and what is the total sum of cash provided? Please provide an appropriate breakdown of any transfers made so the amount paid in individual cases can be determined.
- 5) Did the CWC conduct any monitoring of the DSWD or its municipal or provincial counterparts to make sure they make regular site visits to residences of children left behind to ensure their specific needs are being taken care of? If so, please provide additional information about the methodology behind these visits, and the result of the visits.
- 6) Has the CWC liaised with other government agencies tasked with the welfare of children, such as the Department of Health and the Department of Education, to discuss the impact of the anti-drug campaign on children and the interventions needed to help those children? If so, when did these engagements occur and what were the specific outcomes of this coordinated engagement? Did any specific programs to help children arise from these liaison efforts and if so, please describe those programs?
- 7) To the CWC’s knowledge, has the DSWD actively sought to protect the children of “drug war” victims, for instance by providing shelter to children who have no dependents, or acted on their behalf in cases where these children facing bullying in school or their community, have had to drop out of school to work, or are compelled to live in the streets?
- 8) Please provide any additional information that you think would be helpful for Human Rights Watch to fully understand how the Philippines is assisting the child dependents of victims of the “drug war.”

Thank you for your time and attention to this inquiry.

Appendix III: Letter to the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
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Tel: 212-290-4700
Fax: 212-736-1300; 917-591-3452

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Chuck Lustig, *Deputy Executive Director, Operations*
Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *Deputy Executive Director, Advocacy*

Dinah Pokempner, *General Counsel*
James Ross, *Legal and Policy Director*

January 30, 2020

Hon. Tricia Clare A. Oco
Executive Director
Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council
56 Matintiman Street, Teacher's Village East,
Quezon City, Philippines 1101



HRW.org

Re: Impact of "Drug War" on Children

Dear Atty. Oco:

I am writing to you on behalf of Human Rights Watch, a global non-governmental organization that monitors violations of human rights by state and non-state actors in more than 90 countries around the world, including the Philippines.

We would sincerely appreciate receiving the benefit of your knowledge and expertise in response to our questions below.

Human Rights Watch has recently conducted research on the impact on children of the government's "war on drugs." We interviewed 46 people – 10 children; 24 adults who are either parents, relatives, or guardians to those children; and 12 individuals from several non-government organizations and government offices – for this research.

Among those who have perished in the "drug war" are children who were either targeted in police operations or were struck by gunfire during drug raids. The impact of the "drug war," however, goes beyond the physical violence inflicted on these children.

The children told us of the trauma they suffered after witnessing the killing of a parent or other loved ones. Several were forced to go into hiding or relocated to other communities because they feared for their lives. A number of children stopped going to school because of a lack of finances caused by the loss of the family breadwinner. Several experienced bullying in school and in their community because of the stigma of alleged drug use within the family. Some children were forced to live in extreme poverty and have had no choice but to work full time at too young an age. Some ended up living in the streets, further exposing themselves to violence and other harm.

Human Rights Watch is committed to producing material that is well-informed and objective. We hope you or your staff would be able to provide written answers to the questions below so that your views and responses are accurately reflected in our reporting. In order for us to take your answers into account in our forthcoming report, we would appreciate a written response by February 28, 2020. If you have any questions about this request, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]

Thank you very much for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Phil Robertson
Deputy Asia Director
Human Rights Watch

Please send your reply by email or fax to:

Racquel Legerwood
Asia Coordinator
Human Rights Watch
1275 K Street NW, Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20005

QUESTIONS FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OCO:

- 1) Does the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC) have specific programs or policies for the children left behind by victims of the “drug war”? Have any programs or policies been created specifically to address the impact of “drug war” killings on child dependents of victims, many of whom live in poor communities? If so, when were these programs established and what was the role of the JJWC in formulating them?
- 2) If such programs exist, please provide details about the activities and how they are carried out? For example, do programs provide financial assistance, such as funeral/burial costs (beyond the assistance already provided by the DSWD for indigent persons), health expenses, or other assistance?
- 3) Has the JJWC ever been consulted by the national government and/or agencies tasked with pursuing the “drug war” to address the impacts of the campaign on children? If so, please provide information about these consultations, including when they happened, who was involved, what was discussed, and what concrete outcomes came from the consultations.
- 4) Have families affected by “drug war” killings been covered by the government’s conditional cash transfer program? If so, how many victims or their families have received such assistance and what is the total sum of cash provided? Please provide an appropriate breakdown of any transfers made so the amount paid in individual cases can be determined.
- 5) Did the JJWC provide support for the psychological and mental health needs of children and families directly affected by the “drug war”? If yes, what program interventions have been done, and how many persons have benefited from such support?
- 6) Did the JJWC make regular site visits to residences of children left behind to ensure that their specific needs are being taken care of? If so, please provide additional information about the methodology behind these visits, and the result of the visits.
- 7) Has the JJWC liaised with other government agencies tasked with the welfare of children, such as the Department of Health and the Department of Education, to discuss the impact of the anti-drug campaign on children and the interventions needed to help those children? If so, when did these engagements occur and what were the specific outcomes of this coordinated engagement? Did any specific programs to help children arise from these liaison efforts and if so, please describe those programs?
- 8) Has the JJWC actively sought to protect the children of “drug war” victims, for instance by making sure that shelter is provided to children who have no dependents, or acted on their behalf in cases where these children facing bullying in school or their community, have had to drop out of school to work, or are compelled to live in the streets?
- 9) Please provide any additional information that you think would be helpful for Human Rights Watch to fully understand how the Philippines is assisting the child dependents of victims of the “drug war.”

Thank you for your time and attention to this inquiry.

Appendix IV: Response Letter from the Department of Social Welfare and Development



LS-OP-08
REV 00 / 17 JUNE 2019

Ms. RACQUEAL LEGERWOOD
Asia Coordinator
Human Rights Watch
1275 K Street NW, Suite 1100,
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear **Ms. Legerwood:**

This refers to the letter dated January 24, 2020, requesting the Department of Social Welfare and Development (Department) to provide answers to several questions about the "Impact of Drug War on Children", and the programs and services of the Department and its attached agencies in relation to the implementation and effects of the Philippine Anti-Illegal Drugs Strategy.

Considering that the matters covered by the proposed questions call for extensive, evidence-based and statistics-laden answers, we are therefore constrained to inform you that the Department would require more time to prepare such answers and perhaps even beyond the deadline stated in your letter. Nonetheless, if the Department is able to compose the answers to the queries earlier than the deadline, please expect us to promptly send the same via email or fax.

Hoping for your kind consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rolando Jose D. Bautista', is written over a horizontal line.

Rolando Jose D. Bautista

Secretary

Date: FEB 20 2020

Appendix V: Follow-up Letter to Department of Social Welfare and Development

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New York, NY 10118-3299
Tel: 212-290-4700
Fax: 212-736-1300; 917-591-3452

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March 6, 2020

Mr. Rolando Joselito D. Bautista
Secretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development
Manila, Republic of the Philippines

Dear Secretary Bautista,

Thank you very much for your reply dated February 20, 2020, to my colleague Racquel Legerwood. We greatly appreciate the Department's willingness to prepare information to respond to the questions we have posed about the impact of the drug war on children.

I am writing to let you know we would be happy to extend our deadline to receive a written response from the Department of Social Welfare and Development. Would it be possible to receive your replies to those questions by the close of business in Manila on Friday, March 20, 2020?

On behalf of Human Rights Watch, I look forward to hearing from you, and receiving the Department's replies to our questions.

Sincerely and respectfully yours,

Phil Robertson
Deputy Director, Asia Division
Human Rights Watch

“Our Happy Family Is Gone”

Impact of the “War on Drugs” on Children in the Philippines

Since the start of President Rodrigo Duterte’s “war on drugs” in the Philippines in 2016, the police and unidentified assailants have unlawfully killed thousands of Filipinos in anti-drug operations. Among those killed have been scores of children, some directly targeted, many mere bystanders.

But the impact of the “drug war” on children goes beyond these deaths. *“Our Happy Family Is Gone,”* based on more than three dozen interviews with children, their parents and guardians, and witnesses, documents the plight of children whose lives have been upended by the government’s brutal campaign. Many suffer long-term distress and anxiety after witnessing the killing of a parent or loved one. Several went into hiding or have relocated to other communities for fear for their lives. A number have stopped going to school for lack of money after the family breadwinner was killed. Several experienced bullying at school and in their community because of the stigma of being from a family publicly associated with drug use. Many live in extreme poverty and have had no choice but to work, even at a young age. Some have ended up living in the streets, further exposing themselves to violence.

The report reveals not just the brutality of the government’s “war on drugs,” but its failure to protect children who have been harmed. Human Rights Watch calls on the Duterte government to end its rights-abusing “war on drugs,” cease targeting children, and bring to justice those responsible for the killings. Government agencies should address the dire needs of these children and ensure that they are protected against further government abuse.



Jennifer M. drew this using pencil and crayon as part of her therapy for the psychological distress she suffered after witnessing the killing of her father by police officers inside their Quezon City home in December 2016.

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