

Combating Human Trafficking

Case Study Four

Victims: Estella, 35-years old and Angelica, 22-years, both Filipino

Type of Trafficking: domestic and sexual exploitation



Estella's Story:

I was born in the northern Philippines and I have a diploma in nursing. I left three of my five children in my village three years ago to work in Malaysia as a domestic worker. My two older children also work as domestic servants for some families in our province but their schooling is paid for by their employers so they receive less than \$20 per month. I miss them but am happy that they go to school.

I am very good friends with the younger girl that I am travelling with, Angelica who is 22, because we both now work for the same Saudi prince. We have been on the road, travelling the world for some time now. As I am not allowed to contact my family she has become very close to me. Being quite a bit older than her, I have so far been lucky not to have been sexually abused by the prince but I know that this has not been the case for Angelica. She has told me her story many times – how she began working as a domestic servant in the Philippines and how after a few years was recruited by an agency which sent her to Malaysia to work for Saudi princes. The agent turned out to be a trafficker. When she arrived in Kuala Lumpur her passport and mobile phone were taken from her. She talks about having lost all her sense of her own identity and the links with her beloved family at home. Even worse – she was sold 11 times to different Saudi Arabian employers who took her all over the world with them.

This is what happened to us in London before we were finally saved. The Prince booked an entire floor of a luxury hotel for his family and us 'maids' (as he liked to call us) as he always did. Once we had unpacked the entire luggage of the family I asked for some hours off because I had seen a church near the hotel. I hadn't prayed for so long and was desperate to feel the lovely atmosphere of a church again –away from all my troubles. The Prince was offended with my request and beat me whilst he shouted "After Allah, here I am your God!". I knew he had hurt Angelica before but to now also beat me! This was really enough; I didn't care anymore about anything I just knew I had to get away from him and his bullying family.

The staff at the hotel seemed so nice. They had even made a point of talking to us as if we were guests and not servants. We seemed like real people to them! I took Angelica with me on the day that the family were due to shop in Knightsbridge and went to see the person who seemed to be in charge of room cleaning – 'the housekeeper' - I had worked out that this woman was probably the person in charge of the nice girls who cleaned the bedroom suites. We told her, "We have been forced to work for the Prince and his family! We have been beaten and abused! We can't return home because he has our passports and is controlling our families and children. Please help us!"