

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a red lace top, is looking at a whiteboard. The whiteboard has a hand-drawn car with a charging cable. There are several sticky notes on the board with text like "WHAT ARE YOU TAKING WITH YOU?", "WHERE DO YOU WANT TO GO?", and "ARE YOU GOING?". The woman is pointing at one of the sticky notes.



PROJECT SUMMARY

The Re-integration and Risks of Re-trafficking for Survivors in the Philippines project saw [Dr Ella Parry-Davies](#) (Department of English) collaborate with [The Voice of Domestic Workers](#). Together, they worked on a project focused on examining the outcomes for migrant domestic workers returning to the Philippines after experiences of trafficking.

The project, inspired by participatory and co-creative research approaches, placed those from outside the academy in investigative roles. Co-researchers, themselves Filipina domestic workers who had been trafficked to the UK, devised research questions and conducted online interviews with survivors in the Philippines. In a subsequent workshop, Ella and the co-researchers collectively analysed the interview transcripts. Additionally, they reflected on how conducting the research had affected them personally.

The project also saw the creation of a policy brief focused on the findings of the workshop. The policy brief was disseminated via a press launch and in the media. The brief's findings will contribute to the 'country of origin information' for the Philippines used by UK policy-makers and legal actors, informing ongoing cases for individual survivors of trafficking.

HOW DID THE PROJECT COME ABOUT?

Recent reports by academics and NGOs have done much to contribute to our understanding of the experiences of trafficked Filipinx domestic workers. There remains, however, limited research on their outcomes after returning to the Philippines.

In order to fill this gap in our understanding, Ella developed a research project aimed at investigating outcomes for returnees in collaboration with The Voice of Domestic Workers, a member-led charity that advocates for migrant domestic workers in the UK. This involved the participation of members of The Voice of Domestic Workers as co-researchers. Due to their first-hand experience of trafficking, this team of co-researchers was well-placed to offer unique perspectives that would support their interviews with survivors and enrich the analysis of returnees' experiences. The project also contributed to the range of activities coordinated by the Voice of Domestic Workers that assist survivors in rebuilding their lives through experiences of leadership and agency.

The project was envisaged not just as a scholarly exercise but also as a contribution to wider public discourse. It was hoped that the report would raise public awareness of trafficking, inform policy and directions in the anti-trafficking sector, and provide evidence in legal contexts.

Outcomes for survivors of trafficking who return to the Philippines as their country of origin

Ella Parry-Davies, Joyce Jiang, Marigold Balquen, Mimi Jalmasco, Karen, Saharah Mamatas, Wendelyn Nova, Yolly Santos (2023)

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of original research on the outcomes for domestic worker survivors of human trafficking who return to the Philippines as their country of origin. It draws on 22 online interviews conducted in June-July 2022 with returnee survivors in the Philippines.

The report finds that domestic worker survivors of trafficking face prohibitive barriers to accessing support for sustainable reintegration in the Philippines, and are at severe risk of re-trafficking. Certain

survivors are particularly exposed to the risk of re-trafficking due to stigmatisation and discrimination relating to characteristics such as gender, age, and a perception of domestic work as unskilled.

The report concludes that the Philippines cannot currently be considered a country of origin where effective, appropriate and accessible support is in place for survivors of trafficking, or where a "safe and dignified return" with "sustainable reintegration" is a likelihood.¹

The front page of the policy brief created by Ella, Joyce Jiang, and the team of co-researchers.

WHAT HAPPENED?

In the summer of 2022, co-researchers attended a training session facilitated by Ella and Dr Andrea Nicholson (Rights Lab, University of Nottingham) that focused on research methods and led to the co-production of research questions. They also co-authored an ethics framework for their investigation. They then proceeded to conduct 23 interviews with trafficked domestic workers who had returned to the Philippines, which were subsequently transcribed and translated from Tagalog/Filipino into English. Dramatherapy sessions led by Dr Alyson Coleman (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama) supported the co-researchers at key points throughout the project.

Ella and the co-researchers participated in a full-day impact evaluation and data co-analysis workshop in April 2023. Here, they engaged in a sustained analysis of their data and spent time iteratively evaluating the project's impacts on co-researchers themselves. Drawing upon their findings, the team then proceeded to draft a comprehensive [policy brief](#) co-authored with Dr Joyce Jiang (University of Leeds) focused on highlighting the challenging circumstances faced by survivors of trafficking returning to the Philippines. The brief offered the important contention that 'the Philippines cannot currently be considered a country of origin where effective, appropriate and accessible support is in place for domestic worker survivors of trafficking'.

In June 2023, the brief was launched at a policy launch held at King's College London, with speakers from the team of co-researchers, the Anti-Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit, and Garden Court Chambers. Attendees signed up from a range of organisations, including Kalayaan, the National Bureau of Investigative Journalism, and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. The report was also promoted in [an article](#) written by two co-researchers, Wendelyn Nova and Saharah Mamatas, published in English and Tagalog/Filipino in *OpenDemocracy*, and [disseminated](#) by the charity *SoundDelivery*.



“I will take with me all of the skills, knowledge, confidence and bravery that I’ve learned from my experience and apply and fight for the right thing in the future”

— A co-researcher reflecting on her experiences of participating in the project

WHAT WAS THE PROJECT’S IMPACT?

The initiative delivered a range of significant impacts. The policy brief holds the potential to alter the ‘country of origin’ information that is relied on by policy-makers deliberating on anti-trafficking on a national basis, as well as legal actors in individual trafficking and immigration cases. It will also be of particular interest to the office of the UK Anti-Slavery Commissioner, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, and MPs including Jess Phillips, a longstanding ally of the Voice of Domestic Workers. The press release and other media accompanying the launch of the report have also raised public awareness of the issue of the trafficking of migrant workers from the Philippines to the United Kingdom. In addition to the media publications in *OpenDemocracy* and *SoundDelivery*, Ella also shared a short video on the social media platform X, attracting over 6 000 views.

The project also provided a number of benefits for the co-researchers. The project fostered the development of analytical skills and provided research and ethics training, facilitating the acquisition of new competencies. A number of co-researchers are keen to build upon their experiences developing the project. One, for example, has deployed newly acquired interview skills when inducting new members of Voice of Domestic Workers. Another co-researcher remarked upon her desire to further explore mental health, particularly what she terms survivors’ ‘multiple trauma’, a line of enquiry that emerged from the project.

The project also helped co-researchers mediate their personal experiences of having been trafficked to the UK. They were able to leave the project, for example, with increased awareness of and hopefulness about their capacity to contribute to systemic change, particularly when it comes to the issue of human trafficking. Additionally, they developed enhanced confidence as well as stronger identification as experts and investigators. As one co-researcher remarked, “I will take with me all of the skills, knowledge, confidence and bravery that I’ve learned from my experience and apply and fight for the right thing in the future.”

In recognition of its rigorous and imaginative approach, and the diverse array of outcomes impacts it secured, the project was [shortlisted](#) for a King’s Engaged Research Network award in January 2024.

ELLA'S TOP 3 TIPS FOR IMPACT

1. A great approach is seeking to secure modest, targeted changes. In my experience, aiming for the specific and achievable can help bring a particular clarity and focus to impact work.
2. Impact projects are particularly powerful when they respond to existing needs and preferences in the sectors in which you are working. Take time to scope out the demands that communities are making, develop a specific sense of where your research can be useful, and form mutually enriching partnerships.
3. Research can be especially rigorous and impactful when approaches are generated in conversation with, or led by, experts-by-experience. This brings diverse viewpoints and lived experiences into the research process, enriching scholarly output and other impact project outcomes.

FURTHER READING

Wendelyn Nova, Saharah Mamatas and Mimi Jalmasco (trans.), 'Trafficked Filipino Workers Refused Support in UK and Philippines', *Open Democracy*, 20 September 2023.

Maruja M. B. Asis, 'Supporting Victims-Survivors After Trafficking: Recovery, Return and Reintegration Programs in the Philippines', in *Human Trafficking: Issues Beyond Criminalisation* (2015), 222-24.

Ella Parry-Davies, 'Modern Heroes, Modern Slaves? Listening to migrant domestic workers' everyday temporalities', *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 15 (2020), 63-81.

Ella Parry-Davies, 'Essential and Invisible: Filipino Irregular Migrants in the UK's ongoing COVID-19 Crisis' (London: Kanlungan, 2021).

Corinne Redfern, "I want to go home": Filipina domestic workers face exploitative conditions", *The Guardian*, 27 January 2021.



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Or visit: www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/research/impact