

Missionaries Minister Delivering Grace to Girls in Bondage

At first it's cool to have foreign friends, enjoy nice meals together in fancy restaurants and go with them to beach resorts for a relaxing day out. There is also the delight of receiving and buying lovely things and learning to connect with new friends through the Internet—until one day you find yourself trapped. It is like an addiction; you don't really like it but it's too difficult to break free.

It was like that for Patty.* She looked innocent and sweet, but at the age of 17 she was already sleeping with a 57-year-old foreigner. She had thought the guy was taking her seriously. He had offered to marry her when she reached legal age. But then she found out he was meeting other girls as well. When he finally left, Patty started chatting with more foreigners until what seemed to be just fun meeting them became a habit of mating with some of them.

Patty went to OM Cebu weekend community outreaches and sometimes joined the youth Bible studies in the training center. She also occasionally showed up at OM's feeding program for street children.

She told us that she wanted to be set free—from the inside out. Since then, Patty has undergone a series of medical tests and been declared clean from possible STDs. We have welcomed this girl and would like to join her in her journey, yet we know that it will be a very long one. Materialism is deeply entrenched in Patty's system, even though she has discovered that not all that glitters is gold.

Please pray for Patty's journey to complete freedom. She has just turned 18 and she represents thousands of young girls and

boys who have become trapped in a degrading lifestyle. The increasing numbers of foreigners, easy access to the Internet, mushrooming hotels, restaurants, beach resorts and glittering super malls lure so many disillusioned teenagers. Underage sex tourism is a major industry in the Philippines, and child prostitution affects some of the youth we meet in our outreaches.

Carrie* had just come from the dumpsite in Cagayan de Oro City when I first met her. Like others, she had been picking through landfill garbage in the hope of finding something worth selling. She told me that she had to earn money to pay off her mother's debt. Later, I also learnt that at the age of 12 Carrie had been married to an elderly man as part of a tribal custom.

After several months she ran away and joined her mother who lived by the dumpsite, which led to a glue-sniffing addiction and promiscuous lifestyle. The teenager could not read and write, but she could sing beautifully, which made her popular in karaoke corners.

Carrie went through several programs in various rehabilitation centers. Improvements were made in some areas. She can now, at least, read and write; she learned to pray and was even baptized when she was with us. Yet she still chose to run away from our center and go back to the dumpsite to live with another scavenger. She is now 16 years old and staying on a different island.

From time to time, Carrie still calls and updates me on how she has been doing. I long to have her with us, but I know we do not have the capacity.

Please pray for the many girls like Carrie who have been channeled by circumstances into a lifestyle they did not choose. Pray also that God will expand our limited capacity so that we can reach out to many more children like her.

May the love of the Father, the forgiveness of the Son and the abiding guidance and comfort of the Holy Spirit be upon all those young people who long for release and restoration in Christ!

*Name changed

*In 2001, **Sally Ababa** established OM Philippines-Cebu Ministries, a growing and dynamic ministry that touches lives and communities in 14 different areas through a wide range of programs and services. She also heads up the Mercy Ministry Stream of OM East Asia Pacific.*