



ANNUAL REPORT

2023



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A Letter From Our Founder



Dear Friends:

Many thanks for your partnership and collaboration in 2023. As I reflect on the past year, I am grateful for the substantial progress we have made as an Eleison community, involving a partnership between our staff team, our Survivor Leadership Council (SLC), and all of our advisors, community members, and collaborators.

Recent research conducted by the University of Nottingham Rights Lab found that in 2022, approximately 1 out of every 100 children in the Philippines were trafficked to produce sexual exploitation materials. Given the alarming rates of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), in 2023 we decided to expand our mental health and crisis response services to children and youth survivors of trafficking and abuse to meet rising needs. As we approach 2024, I look forward to continuing to broaden our mental health and crisis intervention services to reach more youth survivors of OSEC, CSEC, and other forms of abuse.

Another significant accomplishment in 2023 was the completion of our evaluation of the Healing and Resilience after Trauma (HaRT)

program, a group mental health intervention we implement with human trafficking survivors. Preliminary results are highly promising, showing the intervention to be effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. We look forward to releasing the full research findings in 2024, demonstrating our commitment to continuing to raise standards of care in the sector.

In 2023, we also expanded our capacity building programs for anti-trafficking providers globally, reaching organizations in 7 countries. In 2024, we're excited to continue to broaden the reach of our global capacity building programs for service providers in the anti-trafficking sector in the United States and globally.

The only way to fight human trafficking and exploitation is to do it together, as a global community. Thank you for partnering with us – I am deeply grateful for your engagement with our work.

With sincere thanks,

DR. LAURA CORDISCO TSAI

What We Do

Survivor leadership, research evidence, and community partnership are at the heart of everything we do.



SURVIVOR SERVICES

We help survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence recover from trauma, support their resilience and security, and reduce the risk of re-exploitation. We use evidence-based and trauma-informed approaches to meet survivors' real needs.



RESEARCH

We work diligently to provide the highest quality programs in the sector. We integrate research into everything we do so that we continually strengthen our programs, building an evidence base for effective practice.



CAPACITY BUILDING

We train and mentor other service providers in survivor-centered, evidence-based, and culturally relevant interventions. We share knowledge from our research and practice to strengthen the quality of care in the broader movement.



SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP

We collaborate with survivors to advocate for survivors' priorities, goals, and recommendations to be centered at the heart of all efforts to combat human trafficking and gender-based violence. We co-lead programming and research in partnership with survivors.

About Us Who We Are



We value research and evidence

We are methodical in figuring out what works. Scientific research on human trafficking is scarce, limiting the effectiveness of anti-trafficking programs. We integrate rigorous research into everything we do, partnering with research scholars, survivors, and communities to make programs more effective. We share what we learn to help everyone in the sector.

We are survivor-centered

The rights, perspectives, and priorities of survivors are at the heart of everything we do. We value survivor leadership, with survivors as key members of our team. We use participatory processes in which survivors continually give input on our programs, which we tangibly put into practice. We center survivor voices and wholeheartedly commit to ethical storytelling.

We're not afraid to do things differently

We value innovative and cutting-edge approaches. We don't need to follow what everyone else is doing. Through our outside-the-box approach, we aim to help the anti-trafficking movement progress and implement more effective and survivor-centered approaches.

We are trauma-informed

We recognize the pervasive impacts of trauma and use trauma-informed approaches in all our work. To support survivors in their recovery, we prioritize safety, choice, collaboration, empowerment, trustworthiness, relationships, and responsiveness to culture, gender, and historical trauma.

We have deep roots in the community

We don't conduct research or train service providers from a distance. We make long-term commitments to the communities in which we are working. We do the work ourselves too. We bring our own experiences providing survivor services to train staff in a supportive manner that is grounded in shared experiences and mutual understanding.

We are a bridge between systems

Through integrating our research with our practice, we bring together stakeholders that often work separately. We bridge the gap between academia, survivors, and communities toward a common goal of more effective programs and services.

Our Impact

At a glance

96

SURVIVORS SERVED

We provided free community-based mental health, crisis intervention, and economic empowerment services to 96 survivors of human trafficking, online child sexual exploitation, and gender-based violence.

631

COMMUNITY MEMBERS SERVED

We provided training and mental health support to 631 community members, partners, and service providers through our community mental health and capacity building programs.



YOUTH SERVICES EXPANSION

We extended our programming to include youth survivors of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), signaling a crucial shift in the fight against child exploitation.



NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

We have been appointed as one of the members of the national advisory council for the Philippine Survivor Network (PSN), the local chapter of the Global Survivor Network (GSN), alongside six other organizations in the Philippines.

Our Impact

We integrate monitoring and evaluation in everything we do – bringing together research and practice.

291

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

We conducted 291 group and individual sessions with clients for our Barug, Bansay, Community Mental Health, Crisis Intervention, and Survivor Leadership Council programs.

93%

SUICIDE RISK REDUCTION

Among our clients who completed our Crisis Intervention program and were experiencing suicidal ideation and behavior, 93% showed a reduced risk for suicide over time.



GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

We collaborated with anti-trafficking organizations worldwide, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Philippines, Rwanda, Kenya, and Uganda, where we conducted a training of trainers (ToT) program.



RESEARCH PRODUCTION

We have developed 4 research studies and conducted 1,071 surveys, 8 in-depth interviews, 525 feedback forms, and 5 focus group discussions with 669 program participants.



Opening New Eleison Office



After broadening our operations in the Philippines in 2021 and experiencing significant growth in 2022, we recognized the need to expand our facilities to accommodate more survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence. In February 2023, we reached a significant milestone with the inauguration of our new office space. With this additional space, we can:

- Extend our programs and services to reach more survivors and strengthen our community presence,
- Serve a larger number of survivors and community partners in our crisis intervention, community mental health, economic empowerment, and partner capacity-building programs, and
- Allow for dedicated counseling and research rooms, essential in our 2023 plans to launch new research studies aimed at improving the quality of care for survivors.

“The extension of a new office for Eleison has been a great blessing, and I am very thankful for it. This opening of a new office for Eleison is an opportunity for growth that will allow us as an organization to welcome more client survivors and provide more quality programs and services.”

– Ryco Sheen C. Mirafuentes, Outreach and Training Coordinator



Capacity Building Suicide Prevention Training



Suicide Prevention Training equips service providers with knowledge and concrete skills to conduct effective crisis intervention and suicide prevention, including identifying, assessing, managing, and preventing crises.

Human trafficking survivors are at heightened risk for mental health disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation and behavior. However, many frontline workers have never received training in suicide prevention or intervention. Nonetheless, simple, evidence-based mental health interventions that have been proven effective across contexts exist. We launched a capacity building program for service providers to give frontline workers access to these critical tools.

Our suicide prevention capacity building program trains service providers to recognize suicide warning signs, communicate effectively with at-risk individuals, and understand the complex factors that contribute to suicidal ideation and behavior. In 2023, we expanded our capacity building programs at Eleison to reach service providers in seven different countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, Canada, and the Philippines. We collaborated with Chab Dai's Global Learning Community (GLC) to run a **series of suicide prevention trainings** for its members. The training series raised awareness about suicide, dispelled its misconceptions, and introduced suicide prevention, intervention, and research to anti-trafficking organizations worldwide.

Additionally, we partnered with Healing and Resilience after Trauma (HaRT) and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) Uganda to conduct a **Training of Trainers (ToT) program in Uganda**. The training program provided staff with foundational education about suicide, including how to ask individuals about their suicidal thoughts and behaviors, how to assess their suicidal risk, how to conduct an evidence-based suicide prevention intervention, how to identify strategies to reduce the risk of suicide, and how to access emergency services, among others. After the initial training, the ToT participant trained service providers from anti-trafficking organizations in Uganda on how to conduct suicide prevention and intervention.

Training of Trainers (ToT) Program in Uganda



I have been empowered with knowledge and skills to better understand suicide and use evidence-based tools and approaches in suicide prevention. This training helped change my mindset about suicide. I realized that as a social worker, comfortably talking about suicide is a protective factor for reducing suicide and can enhance the ability of people with suicidal ideation to reach out for help. I now feel more confident that the social workers I will train have effective tools to help their clients."

— Agnes Grace Nabachwa,
Training of Trainers (ToT) Participant

Capacity Building Motivational Interviewing Training



Motivational Interviewing (MI) is an evidence-based, person-centered, and trauma-informed counseling approach that strengthens a person's motivation to change.

Our Motivational Interviewing (MI) training equips service providers with the necessary skills and techniques to communicate effectively with survivors using a trauma-informed approach. MI is a survivor-centered approach to behavioral change, designed to strengthen a person's motivation and commitment to a specific goal by eliciting and exploring their reasons for change in a supportive and collaborative environment.

In 2023, we collaborated with the **University of Southern Philippines Foundation's College of Social Work** to deliver MI training to **social work students** and **faculty members**. This initiative marked the beginning of the university's commitment to training all their social work students and faculty in MI with help from Eleison. We also partnered with **North Star Initiative**, a nonprofit based in Pennsylvania, USA, to provide MI training to their **entire team**.

MI encourages **individuals** to **actively engage in the change process** by exploring their own goals and motivations.

MI fosters a supportive environment where **individuals feel heard and respected** through its empathetic and non-confrontational style.

MI helps **individuals recognize their capabilities and strengths** to make **positive changes** through open-ended questions and reflective listening.

Motivational Interviewing Training



// We realize that without the concepts of MI, we cannot truly implement trauma-informed practice. MI centers the client's needs from the beginning of the conversation and protects us from directing them with steps based on our viewpoint. Understanding ambivalence helps us to sit with them as they discern their goals for change. The practical tools we received, such as the readiness ruler and decisional balance sheet, allow us to navigate conversations with them in the driver's seat choosing what is best for them.

We had immediate opportunities to apply the training with the clients we serve, and many times since the training we have responded to situations with, 'What does the client think? Have we listened to what she needs?' MI is now a required part of onboarding for new staff. We will practice the PACE (i.e. the spirit of MI) and OARS (i.e. skills of MI) in staff meetings and implement them in our case management."

Melinda Clark,
MI Training Participant



Survivor Services Healing and Resilience after Trauma



Healing and Resilience after Trauma (HaRT) is a 12-week group mental health program that combines mindfulness, mind-body practices, and supportive group discussion to address three core themes: **safety in the body**, **radical self-love**, and **healthy relationships**.

Survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence often experience physical and psychological trauma, elevating their risk of developing mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, self-harm, suicidal ideation and behavior, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Despite the anti-trafficking sector recognizing the need to address survivors' mental health concerns, most mental and psychological support services remain prohibitively expensive and inaccessible.

HaRT addresses the existing gaps in mental health support for survivors by offering an accessible and free community-based alternative. In HaRT, survivors are empowered to proactively improve their mental health and overall well-being by learning about self-care, stress management, emotional regulation, and ways to build their resilience. An integral aspect of HaRT lies in the sense of community it cultivates, wherein survivors establish meaningful connections with others in a safe and nurturing environment.

In 2023, we conducted a total of 36 weekly sessions and launched the first cohort consisting of youth survivors of online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC) and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).

"I noticed physical changes in my body. I did the stretching and poses at home. When I came home after the HaRT sessions, I could sleep better. I'm no longer emotional. For example, if I felt like crying, I would no longer dwell on it so much. I listen to the negative things people say about me, but I no longer dwell on them. I no longer have time for that. I feel happy because I feel I have value. In the HaRT discussions, I heard, 'You're important.' When I shared during the HaRT sessions, I can say that I was accepted." - HaRT Participant

Healing and Resilience after Trauma (HaRT)



Why it matters

- HaRT is an intervention designed to be administered by non-mental health professionals, making it ideal for low-resource contexts where trauma recovery programs are greatly needed but often unavailable for survivors. By offering a low-tech approach, the HaRT program reaches survivors who have been left without the essential support required for their healing journey.
- HaRT emerges as a viable solution to meet an existing gap in mental health care for low-resource contexts. With its cost-effectiveness and accessibility, the HaRT program is a game-changer in effectively nurturing the psychological and social well-being of survivors.

Survivor Services Community Mental Health Education



Community Mental Health Education (CMHE) sessions are interactive learning seminars designed to raise awareness and create a safe space to discuss mental health.

Survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence face mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, self-harm, and post-traumatic stress (PTSD). However, mental health stigma and lack of access to care prevent survivors from receiving needed support.

Our Community Mental Health Education (CMHE) sessions for survivors, their families, and community partners reduce stigma, encourage open communication about mental health, and create a safe space for self-expression. These interactive sessions increase awareness and provide practical strategies for promoting mental health and emotional wellness. CMHE topics include **Health and Wellness**, discussing different health aspects and personalized holistic care methods, and **Managing Emotions**, providing practical tools for identifying, understanding, and managing emotions. In 2023, 94% of participating cohorts demonstrated enhanced knowledge of mental health after joining Eleison's CMHE sessions.



555 People Reached

— **116 youth** received CMHE sessions

— **439 adults**, including survivors, service providers, staff, partners, and community members, received CMHE sessions



Survivor Services Clinical Case Management



Clinical Case Management (CCM) provides free specialized counseling, case management services, and psychological support tailored to address each client's mental health needs.

Survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence often struggle to access affordable mental health care due to the scarcity of specialists in low-resource areas, creating significant barriers to recovery and stability. Our Clinical Case Management (CCM) program is designed to help survivors obtain free counseling, case management, and psychological support that caters to their needs. We collaborate with survivors to identify priority mental health needs, develop a treatment plan to address their concerns, conduct psychoeducation, and connect them with the necessary resources to facilitate their recovery.

During our CCM sessions, individualized psychosocial support is provided to clients to help them understand their mental health, learn how to navigate mental health treatment, develop coping skills, and strengthen their support networks. We provide financial assistance for counseling and psychiatric care, connect survivors to other community mental health services, and support them in accessing medication, as needed. Additionally, we collaborate with other providers to advocate for survivors and help reduce barriers to accessing mental health care.

In 2023, we provided and funded a total of 68 CCM sessions with survivors consisting of clinical case management, counseling, psychotherapy, and psychiatric services.

"I learned that it's important not to get stuck in one place and to avoid letting your emotions take over. The staff reminded me that many people need and love me, which was a revelation because I always felt alone. Initially, it felt overwhelming to accept that there were people who genuinely cared for me. However, I now realize that my situation is not permanent and that I could live my life to the fullest. I know that life doesn't end in one place and that there are people who care for me." – CCM Participant



Survivor Services Crisis Intervention



Crisis Intervention (CI) addresses the immediate and short-term needs of survivors in crisis through counseling, psychosocial support, and connecting them with emergency services to help them stabilize, stay safe, build coping skills, and strengthen their support systems.

Survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence experience many forms of crisis throughout their recovery, including suicidal thoughts and attempts, interpersonal and community violence, and acute mental health crises. Our crisis intervention services are tailored to address each survivor's needs, prioritizing their immediate safety and well-being. We use evidence-based practices that have been proven effective in reducing acute risk.

Within these sessions, survivors are assisted in strengthening their internal and social supports and developing safety plans tailored to their unique needs. By addressing these immediate needs, we ensure survivors have access to essential resources and connect them with relevant support networks, including healthcare professionals, legal services, and social welfare agencies. Following immediate intervention, we offer extended support to survivors through ongoing monitoring for future indicators of distress, assisting them with referral needs, and being available to revisit crisis cases until the situation de-escalates and stabilizes.

In 2023, we facilitated 79 crisis intervention sessions and 74 referrals to other services for survivors who experienced suicidal thoughts, behaviors, and attempts, as well as physical violence.

“What I like most about the sessions is it feels as though I am conversing with myself. The staff listens with great attention and provides helpful guidance. It’s reassuring to know that they understand and sympathize with my situation. When they say, ‘I feel you,’ it’s like looking at myself in a mirror. Although they haven’t experienced my struggles firsthand, they can perceive my pain, burdens, and worries. It’s like being alone in a room, speaking to my reflection in the mirror, but in reality, I am conversing with the staff.” - CI Participant



Survivor Services Bansay Program



Bansay – adj. (Cebuano) to practice
Bansay is a brief financial literacy training course for survivors which serves as a stepping stone to our savings program, Barug.

Financial security is often one of the highest priorities for survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence. However, survivors face significant barriers to establishing a financial safety net. By equipping survivors with financial knowledge and skills, they can build a foundation of financial security for themselves and their families.

Bansay, our brief financial literacy training program, continues to make an impact in empowering survivors with culturally sensitive financial management tools. Bansay covers savings, budgeting, debt management, financial goals, financial negotiation with family and peers, and emotional wellness and self-care.

In 2023, we launched an extension of Bansay catering to the needs of youth survivors, particularly those who have experienced online sexual exploitation (OSEC) and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). In total, we facilitated sessions with 42 survivors, including both youth and adults.



“The program provided us, as clients, with valuable insights on managing, budgeting, and saving money. However, applying these ideas in our lives is ultimately up to us. Eleison truly cares about our well-being. If we don’t keep what we’ve learned in our minds and hearts, and if we don’t follow what the organization told us, it’s useless unless we understand that what we’ve learned is important and would help us. Budgeting and saving are challenging because everything is expensive, but if we work hard to reach our goals, it’s not that difficult. I’m very grateful to Eleison for offering this program. This shows that you care for your clients. Everything you taught us through Bansay is a great help to us. Thank you very much.”

Bansay Participant

Survivor Services

Barug

Savings

Program



Barug – v. (Cebuano) to strongly stand up

Barug is a two-year matched savings and economic empowerment program for survivors and their family members to strengthen their safety net.

Survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence often face significant financial difficulties with limited resources and economic opportunities. Despite other organizations offering economic interventions, only a few integrate asset-building or financial counseling. Barug, a two-year matched savings program, is designed to help survivors and their families achieve their financial goals and improve their financial and psychological well-being through three components:



Matched savings program: Participants' savings are matched at a 1:1 ratio, and can be used to cover expenses related to education, healthcare, family and personal emergencies, home repairs, and employment.



Financial literacy training (FLT) course: The FLT training program is a three-month skills-building course that covers savings, budgeting, debt management, financial communication, and emotional wellness.



Individual and peer support sessions: Survivors engage in individual and group sessions to work toward their financial goals, practice the skills they learned in the FLT, and establish a supportive peer community.

Through Barug, survivors develop financial discipline and behaviors that empower them to shape their futures and take significant steps toward lasting change. In 2023, we conducted a total of 51 Barug sessions.

“Barug has helped me learn the necessary skills for managing my finances. Throughout the program, I became more aware of my savings, budgeting, and negotiating with others. I can see the difference between who I was before and who I am now in terms of financial management. For me, good financial management is now a form of self-care. I thank Eleison for this wonderful program.” – Barug Participant



Survivor Services Survivor Leadership Council



The **Survivor Leadership Council (SLC)** is an advisory board comprised of human trafficking and gender-based violence survivors who partner with Eleison staff to ensure our approaches are survivor-centered.

In 2023, the SLC **welcomed new members**, fostering greater inclusivity and representation within the council. Throughout the year, the SLC actively engaged in various activities and events:

Referral System Expansion

The SLC members conducted strategic outreach to potential clients within their networks and local communities, ensuring that individuals in need have access to Eleison's services.

Mental Health Workshops

The SLC members supported Eleison's ongoing mental health programming by participating in sessions, proposing relevant mental health topics, and providing valuable feedback on session content and delivery.

Program Development

The SLC members actively engaged in focus group discussions to ensure Eleison's programming is survivor-centered and to enhance the accessibility of program resources for clients. Additionally, they shared testimonials during program orientations for the Bansay, Barug, and HaRT programs.

World Day Against Trafficking

The SLC members joined advocacy activities where they learned about the ongoing efforts of communities, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations to raise awareness about human trafficking.

Photovoice Research

Through intensive deliberations and planning, SLC members prepared to co-lead a new photovoice research study exploring the meaning of survivor leadership. Based on the results of this study, the SLC will collaborate with other members of the Eleison team to develop a survivor-defined framework for survivor leadership. This framework can serve as a guide for the global anti-trafficking sector, deepening the collective understanding of what survivor leadership means in diverse contexts and fostering a more comprehensive and survivor-centered approach to combating trafficking.

Survivor Leadership Council



“ As an SLC member, I have been able to develop my decision-making skills, boost my confidence, and learn how to share my thoughts and ideas effectively. The SLC provided us with opportunities to develop our leadership skills, voice out our opinions, and gain insight from one another through an exchange of ideas. We are encouraged to think things through before presenting them to others, which helps us better understand each other’s perspectives. The SLC helped me grow and I feel like I’m part of something special.”

— R. A.,
SLC Member

Research Healing and Resilience after Trauma



Despite the anti-trafficking sector recognizing the need to address survivors' mental health, most mental and psychological support services are inaccessible and expensive. In partnership with the University of Alabama, we received a research grant from Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) to fund a pilot evaluation of the Healing and Resilience after Trauma (HaRT). The study addresses the gap in evidence-based reintegration support programs for survivors by delivering and evaluating a trauma-informed, survivor-centered mind-body intervention in a community-based setting.

We collected quantitative and qualitative data from survivors who completed the HaRT program over 14 months to document their experiences and the impacts of the program. Using a convergent mixed-method design, we assessed the program's impact through interviews at three points: baseline, end-of-program, and two months following completion of the intervention. Surveys explored the participants' symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as their general physical and emotional well-being, resilience, and overall perceptions of the HaRT program. Additionally, we conducted in-depth interviews regarding perceived acceptability, feasibility, and self-identified changes in mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

In June 2023, we completed the study's data collection with no attrition, gaining valuable insights into the program's impact. Our initial findings show promising trends related to survivors' mental health and well-being, with research participants reporting feelings of physical relaxation, social acceptance, and emotional support, as well as statistically significant reductions in symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD over time.

"My perspective changed through HaRT. It changed the way I carry myself and interact with other people. Now, I prioritize self-care and meditation, and would ground myself. I believe in being gentle with myself first because it would manifest in my body and my relationship with others. I barely experience anxiety anymore because, instead of being consumed by it, I would breathe and shift my mindset. Each day, I dedicate at least 30 minutes to practicing yoga and meditation, so I can take a break from thinking about my problems." – HaRT Participant

Our Team



“ Working within a women-led organization has allowed me to witness the strength that comes from diverse perspectives and collaborative decision-making. It is truly inspiring to work with a group of intelligent, driven women who prioritize empathy, compassion, and a commitment to addressing the pressing needs of underserved communities such as survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence. Working in a women-led organization has not only enhanced my professional skills as a developmental worker, but it has also inspired me to be a stronger advocate for gender equality and women’s rights in all aspects of my life.”

Beau Marie P. Tinio,
Clinical Program Associate

Staff Spotlight

Mary Jhudielle A. Gicale–Villasin, RSW
Social Worker



As a Social Worker, Ms. Gicale–Villasin (RSW) supports the organization by providing crisis intervention services, organizing Eleison’s monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, and supporting the Barug and Bansay programs. She also creates content and other communications materials for Eleison’s advocacy and outreach. When asked about her experiences at Eleison, she responded:

Why did you decide to work at Eleison?

Upon learning about the Eleison, I was impressed by its dedicated mission to positively impact the lives of survivors of human trafficking and gender–based violence through a comprehensive and holistic approach. I decided to work at Eleison because it’s incredibly rewarding to see how I can directly contribute to the empowerment and healing of survivors in an environment where my values align with my work.

What is your favorite part of working at Eleison?

Working at Eleison is refreshing because I get to work alongside passionate and knowledgeable individuals who share similar goals and values as I do. I love how we are encouraged to use our strengths and maintain a growth mindset that keeps our work engaging, stimulating, and rewarding. Being able to expose myself to new ideas, concepts, and perspectives fuels my desire to excel personally and professionally.

What inspires you or keeps you going in your work?

Being a social worker at Eleison is a profoundly gratifying and fulfilling experience. Although the job can be challenging, the unique nature of the work and the positive impact it has on survivors serve as a constant source of inspiration. As a social worker, it’s heartening to witness the inspiring journeys of survivors and their remarkable resilience and strength. It is fulfilling to assist them in overcoming obstacles, leading them toward healing, self–empowerment, and a brighter future.

Survivor Leader Spotlight

F.T.
Survivor Leadership Council (SLC)
Member



F.T. is a graduate of multiple Eleison programs, including Pamilya ug Panalapi, Bansay, Clinical Case Management (CCM), and Healing and Resilience after Trauma (HaRT). As an SLC member, he consistently contributes to the enhancement of Eleison’s programs by sharing innovative ideas and facilitating engaging activities for new clients. When asked about his experiences as an SLC member, he responded:

How and why did you become an SLC member at Eleison?

After completing HaRT, I received an invitation from an Eleison staff to join the SLC. At the time, I didn't make an immediate decision. Instead, I reflected on my experience in HaRT and what it meant to me. I decided to join the SLC because I wanted to have more meaningful experiences in life. I wanted to expand my knowledge, broaden my horizons, and dedicate time to activities beyond my daily work and home life. I realized that joining the SLC could help me continue my personal growth and contribute to my community.

What motivated you to take on this role?

I wanted to share what I've learned and experienced with people who have gone through similar situations like mine. For example, I had the privilege of sharing a testimony during a HaRT orientation. It was rewarding to see how my story inspired and motivated people to join HaRT. It struck me how much of a positive impact I could have through my words and experiences. After that, I knew I wanted to keep inspiring people and giving them hope and encouragement, just like Eleison did for me.

What does it mean to you to support human trafficking survivors in your community?

As an SLC member, supporting survivors means raising awareness about this issue within my community. I hope to educate my community on preventing human trafficking and encouraging them to support survivors. I really enjoy participating in events such as World Day Against Trafficking because I get to learn more about how I can effectively contribute to the cause. By staying informed, I can provide survivors with the support they need in their journey to recovery.

Advisory Board



TERRIANN NICHOLSON, M.D., M.A.

Dr. Nicholson is a psychiatrist at Columbia University / New York Presbyterian and the New York State Psychiatric Institute. She holds experience as a trainer and technical advisor on the adaptation and implementation of Suicide Safety Planning Intervention (SPI) in cross-cultural contexts, including with trafficking survivors in the Philippines. She holds an MA in International Affairs from Johns Hopkins and an MD from Howard University College of Medicine.



CATHERINE CARLSON, Ph.D., M.S.W

Dr. Carlson is an Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Alabama. Her research focuses on the intersection of violence and mental health and the implementation of evidence-based interventions in low-resource settings. Her social work practice experience pertains to GBV, psychosocial programming, and child protection. She holds a BA in Sociology from Emory University, MSW from the University of Georgia, and PhD in Social Work from Columbia University.



TINA JIWATRAM-NEGRÓN, Ph.D., M.S.S.W.

Dr. Jiwatram-Negrón is an Assistant Professor of Social Work at Arizona State University (ASU) and core faculty of the ASU Office of Gender-Based Violence. Her research centers on GBV, mental health disparities, and intervention development. Her practice experience pertains to community mental health and domestic violence services. She holds an MSW from the University of Pennsylvania and a PhD in Social Work from Columbia University.



RAN HU, Ph.D., M.S.W.

Dr. Hu is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of British Columbia's Center for Gender and Sexual Health Equity. She specializes in gender-based violence, particularly interpersonal and structural violence against sex workers, trafficking, and intimate partner violence, delving into structural foundations and root causes of violence. She holds a BSW from Nanjing University, MSW from the University of Michigan, and a Ph.D. in Social Work from the University of Toronto.



GENESIS DEJAN, M.A., RPsy.

Mr. Dejan is a clinical psychologist and a faculty member at Cebu Normal University's Department of Psychology. He also serves as a consultant for Legal Alternatives for Women (LAW) Inc. and the Philippine Mental Health Association (PMHA). He specializes in promoting mental health advocacy in the community. He holds a BA in Psychology from Cebu Normal University and an MA in Clinical Psychology from the University of San Carlos.

Advisory Board



VANESSA LI, Ph.D., M.A., RYT-200

Dr. Li is a Clinical Psychologist and Director of Clinical Services at The Pond. She utilizes evidence-based theories including dialectical behavioral (DBT), cognitive behavioral (CBT), psychodynamic, and mindfulness-based modalities, among others. Outside of her clinical practice, her research and advocacy centers on dispelling mental health stigma. She holds a BA in Environmental Studies and MA in Sociology from Brown University, an MA in Psychology from Columbia University, and a PhD in Clinical Psychology from Adelphi University.



MALABIKA DAS, Ph.D., M.S.S.W., RYT-200

Dr. Das is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at National Taiwan University and a facilitator of clinical social work, psychosocial, integrative wellness, yoga, and trauma-informed care training. Her social work practice experience pertains to community mental health, crisis intervention, and domestic violence. She holds a BA in Urban Planning from the University of Illinois, an MSW from Columbia University, a certificate in global mental health from Harvard University, and a PhD in Social Work from the University of Hong Kong.

Key Partners





 eleisonfoundation.org

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