

# **Trafficking In Women And Children**

Delivered by: *Justice* Nimfa Cuesta Vilches at the  
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Just like the dark ages, women and children are once again treated as properties and chattels-- and the "goods" must be kept moving. Women and children are victims of unspeakable abuse, gender discrimination, violence, torture and the worst form of labor called "trafficking." Incidentally, many of them have died as a result of this compelled "career", and no one is being made accountable. To mask a problem that is systemic in nature, victim-blaming, stereotyping and pure prejudice is typically resorted to- "you are sold as a sex slave in another country because you have a culture of migration, "or, "you come from a poor land where fathers sell their daughters."

What is trafficking? Trafficking is procuring women and children (but it is more their exploitation than movement) to join activities ranging from what seem to be harmless ones- such as employment, training, cultural exchange, sports, marriage (with the trafficker posing as the bridegroom), or child adoption, and targeting even those who are in the course of migration or seeking asylum (trafficked during processing of their application), to more severe cases of white slavery, begging or debt bondage, and abduction, within or across national borders, almost always leading to sexual exploitation. It is for this reason why trafficking is often linked to prostitution.

A staggering number of children, and women for that matter, are trafficked as well for forced and domestic labor, as drug couriers, to participate in armed conflict, to work for criminal gangs, and for sale of their bodily organs. UNICEF reports that traffickers smuggled 35,000 orphans out of Aceh Province in Indonesia taking advantage of the confusion brought about by the tsunami and on the pretext of having them cared for by others through adoption. On the other hand, countless of children from neighboring countries fall into the hands of traffickers who transport them to the United Arab Emirates where they end up working as camel guides.

Trafficking generally entails the use of threat, force, fraud, and abuse of power in taking advantage of a person's vulnerability. Consent of the victim is of no moment because women and children are tricked into agreeing to what the traffickers want, and once lured, their travel documents are taken away; they are placed in rooms that are locked in from the outside; forced to use drugs; raped 10 times or are imposed a daily quota of 10 to a record high of 80 customers on holidays; are not given money; and the victims go hungry each day.

In Colombia and Ethiopia, the abduction of women and children for trafficking is common, while women and girls from orphanages, abused in their childhood and coming from dysfunctional families are high-risk ones in Romania. In Bulgaria, most victims of trafficking are between the ages of 15-21 and are still schoolgirls or girls with only primary education. United Kingdom police confirm that the girls are getting progressively younger, mostly 13 years old in Korea.

United Nations data tell us about the magnitude of trafficking. There are over 4M trafficked persons right now, 1M of them are children. Upon the other hand, the International Labor Organization (ILO) has a ballpark figure of 12.3M persons enslaved in combined forced labor and sexual servitude with a total of 2.45M victims annually. On a yearly basis, the US State Department calculates those affected by the illicit human vending at 800,000, 70% of the overall number are women and 50% are children. The International Organization for Migration claims to have helped 6,000 victims of trafficking from 2000-2004 in Eastern Europe. In Asia, there are 2M prostituted women even as UNICEF-Manila estimates the number of Filipino children who are into prostitution to be 600,000. Boys are also trafficked from the United Kingdom to Amsterdam, the Netherlands, to work in sex clubs, so are boys from India who are trafficked into the Middle East. No wonder, trafficking is a \$US 32B yearly criminal enterprise and is second only to the illegal drug trade.

There are 3 ways that a country may be involved in trafficking: 1) as source or country of origin like the Philippines with women and children trafficked to Japan as entertainers or hostesses (this is expected to end after the new immigration law of Japan took effect on 15 March 2005) and to Europe and Korea as mail order brides with the parents paid \$400, the recruiter \$200 and \$3000 penalty if the girl escapes; 2) as transit country such as Russia through which people are trafficked from Central Asia and China to Europe, and 3) as destination country such as the United Kingdom of women and children from Eastern Europe, or Italy for persons originating from Albania and Nigeria.

Other patterns of trafficking are arranging sex tours and escort services; on-line pornography originally with young-looking women but became authentic child pornography in the late 1960s; cyber sex; setting up chat-rooms with cameras where young girls are made to use sex gadgets (in the Philippines, the fee may simply be mobile phone load); circulating pornographic materials in cellular phones; and child sexual abuse videos sold by the children themselves. Pedophilia that involves sexual activity (usually videotaped) with a prepubescent child is inextricably associated with child pornography that makes trafficking a complex problem.

The adoption of children which is seen as a response to child shortage in Western countries and Europe is also a popular front for trafficking specifically when adopters fail to go through the legal institutions. In Cambodia and Guatemala, for instance, there is a great number of babies trafficked to the USA and Canada for adoption. When sold, a child costs \$5000-25,000, or at times, a baby is merely exchanged with alcohol or drugs by the parents. To this day, around 50,000 children are in foreign adoption, and a good number of them finish up in the hands of pedophiles. In many countries, however, the adoption is revoked outright when it affects a trafficked child.

Perhaps the biggest factor that works on trafficking is creating a demand for it. This means that people promote and facilitate trafficking for sexual exploitation on the notion, that prostitution is the world's "oldest profession". For them, sex is a commodity, hence, if sex can be bought, sex can be sold. And, for as long as borders of countries remain porous, women and children can be marketed globally and on a regular basis. Let me emphasize at this point-- that to legalize or regulate prostitution of trafficked women and children in order to maintain healthy "sex workers" will not help-- as this may only reinforce or normalize the demand.

In the Philippines, persons who smooth the progress of human trafficking are penalized with 15 years imprisonment and a fine of \$10,000. The acts vary from pandering to leasing spaces for brothels; publishing pornographic materials; giving fictitious pre-departure documents or assisting entry and exit with forged papers; to retaining or destroying passports and travel documents to prevent victims from leaving or seeking assistance.

When trafficking is done under serious conditions, it becomes a qualified wrongdoing. This occurs when the injured party is a child (because we should never let child abuse travel); when it is committed by a syndicate (by more than 3 traffickers) or is carried out on large-scale (with more than 3 victims). Victims may readily expose their traffickers so “networks” operate in larger populations to meet the volume of clients, evade detection, and ensure impunity.

Trafficking is likewise qualified when the perpetrator: has parental authority over the victim; is a government, military or police officer as contemplated in the anti-trafficking laws of the Philippines and Honduras (it is not uncommon for trafficking to come about in countries with the presence of international militia); or when, as a result of being trafficked, the victim dies, becomes insane, suffers mutilation, or acquires HIV-AIDS. Please keep in mind that pay is higher for sex without a condom.

HIV-AIDS itself is best tackled against the backdrop of trafficking in persons. A recent study shows that there are more than 45M people suffering from HIV-AIDS, 20M come from Asia, and 50% of them are prostituted women. Once sick with the disease, and together with those who by now are heavily addicted to drugs, trafficked women and children are released to the streets to fend for themselves- usually by committing other crimes, and left in our midst.

A word of caution, though, qualified trafficking with the penalty of death or life imprisonment may deter extradition and consequently prosecution of traffickers in the country where the offense was committed.

Buying sex in the Philippines is an offense. The penalty is 6 months community service and fine of \$1000 for first-time offenders, and 1 year prison term and fine of \$2000 for ensuing violations. In Denmark, using the sexual services of a woman under 18 is also a crime. Just recently, France put to trial some 66 parents and people who abused 45 children and babies by “playing doctor,” prostituting them, or swapping the children with food or alcohol.

A range of international instruments protect women and children from trafficking and among them are: the 1926 UN Convention to Suppress Slave Trade and Slavery; UN Declaration of Human Rights; UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; UN Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers; UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). At the very least, such accords serve as framework for domestic laws.

Conversely, laws of countries against human smuggling and the flesh trade must have comprehensive coverage and with protective perspective. Such legislations protect women and children from abuse, exploitation and compulsory labor; sexual harassment; or rape and provide for victim assistance. These laws also curb dodgy child adoptions; violence against women and children; human trafficking; save from harm migrant and overseas workers (and not consider trafficking as simple labor or migration problem); and carefully screen travel documents sought

for women and children at risk of being trafficked outside of the country and those obtained for prospective foreign clients of locally trafficked persons.

Trafficking in women and children is usually done in combination with other offenses such as sale and use of narcotics; money laundering; smuggling of firearms; gambling or operation of casinos; and corruption of government officials. As a deterrent, the Philippines propose to consider child prostitution as predicate crime under the anti-money laundering law triggering immediate investigation to stop the flow of money. Along with this, governments may prohibit search engines or portals operating within their control from posting child pornographic materials and shows in the internet.

How do we rescue victims of trafficking? States by necessity adopt a “country-team approach” whereby representatives of government abroad work side by side. The rescue panel is equipped with system responses-- victims do not want to be pulled out from what they call as “work”; they do not have work in their own country; and victims will be scorned as they return to their country. Police statements are made on the individuals, entities and paraphernalia involved in furtherance of investigation and prosecution. Remember that courts require evidence that would link the suspects directly to the act of trafficking. For a fact, criminal gangs will take on the prostitution business in a roundabout way by supporting pimps instead of being with the victims. Temporary shelter and extended stay for the victims of at least 3 months as that allowed in the Netherlands may be requested from the destination country. In domestic trafficking, helpdesks or hotlines for victims can make it easy for them to report the activity and ask for prompt assistance.

Existing schemes in dealing with trafficking problems are oftentimes ineffective. For instance, when law enforcers launch offensives or carry out raids of suspected trafficking hideouts, they fail to observe proper legal procedures. Even when armed with a valid search warrant, the manner of seizing the criminal elements and collection of trafficking effects become flawed undermining their admissibility as evidence to prove the crime in court. Identifying a victim of trafficking is another glitch. Many erroneously consider a trafficked person as illegal migrant, undocumented worker, a party to a criminal transaction or a plain criminal. If this is so, how about infants and young children exchanged by their own parents for food, alcohol or drugs?

Migrant workers trafficked under the Philippine anti-trafficking laws are considered as overseas workers in “distress.” The government may terminate work in the interest of the country and assist the victim with money claims against the employer. The victim is repatriated to the country of origin- a policy also observed by the government of Mali, whether or not the travel abroad was documented. Residency extension in the destination country may be applied for mainly if the victim is a witness in court and in the event that repatriation exposes the victim to risk. In all instances, trafficking is an extraditable offense.

Victims and “returnees” are provided with social services among which are treatment, temporary shelter similar to that practiced in Belgium; counseling; and access to asylum procedures akin to that in France for victims to feel secure and be free from reprisal. In their own country, victims receive care that is community-based because that is by far the best direct service extended to them; food provision; educational and livelihood assistance; occupational skills training for alternative income; periodic evaluation of service plans; and monitoring of their cases until recovery and unification with the family and community.

Building the capacities of service providers helps bring to the foreground trafficking schemes. In 2001 for example, the Border Police of South Africa made trafficking in women and children integral part of its strategic plan. Those in the front-line services need to be well trained and possess the capacity to carry out effective crisis intervention, healing, and prevention of further trauma to the victims.

In combating trafficking, justice systems take in, although unorthodox, rules of procedure strengthening the position of the victim in the entire legal process. And, the principle of restorative justice that takes into consideration the feelings of the victim is adopted, where appropriate, to reinstate every human right lost or violated.

The investigation and prosecution of trafficking offenses have to be simple and easy comparable to the process prescribed by the anti-trafficking law of Thailand. There is no bias alongside women and children trafficked, because most of the time they are regarded as illegal migrants rather than victims. When the age of the victim is not known, the presumption is in favor of minority. An all-female panel handles the case giving victims rights to privacy and closed-door investigations.

The language used is understandable to the victim and there is no shaming or name-calling such as “whore”, “child prostitute”, “hospitality girl”, etc. A single and multi-agency interview of victims is ideal to avoid their feeling re-victimized through repeated questioning. Media sensationalism is avoided, and victims of trafficking have preferential right to witness protection programs.

And then let us give victims the justice they deserve. A special court with the required expertise deals with trafficking cases where delay in the litigation is eliminated. Temporary restraining orders are availed of to straight away disable pornographic websites and foil the organizing of future sex tours. The duty-holders in the courtroom are gender sensitive and aware of children’s rights. A victim, particularly a child, is deemed a competent witness and is accorded alternative ways to testify such as by live-link television and videotaped statement. If a trafficking case involves many victims, the one to take the witness stand is carefully chosen to ensure successful prosecution. Free legal representation by a lawyer or a trained advocate is made available to a victim. And, the court actors adhere to the essence of the criminal justice system that the survival of the case does not solely depend on the victim’s testimony.

With a good implementation of trafficking law, we should be seeing already increasing convictions for traffickers. But just like other criminals, traffickers, mostly as organized crime structures, every so often slip through the legal system with the help of slick lawyers who find obscure loopholes in the law. One way to stymie this is to have procedural safeguards such as upholding the finding of facts by a trial court when a perpetrator appeals the guilty verdict. And, any foreigner trafficked in a country has the same benefits as that of a national.

The penalty for trafficking worldwide is by and large imprisonment for a period of 1-20 years as can be seen in the laws of Australia, Sweden, Brazil, Cambodia, and Nepal. In the Philippines, the fines can go up to \$50,000. Penalties and fines, yet, are to be proportionate to the huge profits that traffickers bring in. For corporations, the officers are punished and license to operate is cancelled. If the trafficker is a foreign national and the prison term is served, the perpetrator is deported. In the event the offender is able to evade arrest by leaving the country, a petition for

extradition, if practicable, can be made. Consistently, properties and proceeds of trafficking operations are confiscated for proper government disposal.

When the trafficking case is terminated, attention is swayed back to the victim for aftercare services that will assure recovery, return to normal life with the family, and finally to the community. The victim participates in the legal process all throughout and is given the right to report or file a case, claim for damages, and be part of support and advocacy groups.

A trust fund is established out of the fines, proceeds and properties forfeited from traffickers for programs to put off trafficking; look after victims; for data gathering; technical support; and to elevate the awareness of the public about all aspects of trafficking. A clearinghouse or database is crucial for situation analysis; country assessment; to document best practices; and for gathering valuable information concerning trafficking causes and trends.

Trafficking in women and children is done underground, it is a transnational organized crime that is on striking scale but it is not unlawful in all countries. Indisputably, stopping it cannot be done alone. It needs an inter-agency and multi-level approach. Additionally, the duty-holders are many: law enforcement, justice department, social welfare, courts, labor, immigration and foreign affairs, education, task forces, non-government organizations and actors, and community-based organizations.

What else must be done?

1. Keep your eyes open. Traffickers form loose alliances with weak governments, losing banks, unscrupulous job recruiters or travel agencies, and corruption-susceptible law enforcers. Prostituted women who are never in government taxpayers' list are considerably utilized as expendable dummies to hide illegally obtained money. Traffickers may appear "nice" and say that they only want to help out people in need like building a house for the victim and sending other family members to school. Accordingly, if one country is able to bring into the store of another country women and children, the traffickers are more than happy to take a cut out of the revenues. From human smuggling, trafficking syndicates afterward dominate the sex markets.

2. Let us transform bilateral and regional agreements to counter trafficking into multilateral and unified pacts so that anti-trafficking agreements have longer arms and are valuable devices to dismantle transnational organized trafficking conglomerates. The Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings of 2005 fulfills this initiative with a monitoring mechanism that is characterized by independence, expertise and cooperation among members. Disparity in laws only assures sanctuaries for traffickers. Along with this, victims may be accorded legal relief outside of countries involved and before a neutral tribunal that can decide cases on the merits. In such a court, the trafficker is not favorably judged nor the victim misjudged according to nationality-led biases.

It is about time for the international community to rework their understanding of "jurisdiction", "work and labor", and even "advertising." Every criminal justice system must be geared up to appreciate novel forms of evidence such as in the way child pornography particularly that in the internet, recent crackdown of which having been recently made in 6 European countries, will have to be proven during trial. With the proliferation of cyber-sex, international legal experts, in

their attempt to hold everyone in the trafficking trade liable regardless of the nature of complicity, may revise the context of the crime of adultery.

3. We need to attend to the effects of poverty, lack of work opportunity, the availability of women and children and the ever-expanding market for them. Today, there are almost 1B children living in poverty making them easy preys for trafficking. The so-called “children of tsunami and hurricane” are equally open to all types of exploitation. In the Philippines, there are at present 17.4M girl-children and this is a great cause for worry to us. UNICEF-Manila figures show that the Philippines by now ranks 4th as a supplier of children for commercial sexual exploitation.

Let us look into people’s desire to benefit from globalization. The illegal human trade has become an inter-play of supply and demand. Families and friends at the moment entrust girls to traffickers unaware of the dangers that sexual exploitation brings. Available readings confirm that for girls and women, prostitution is a way out of pervasive poverty.

Moreover, there are countries that mainstream sex-oriented activities into their national economies as significant source of their GDP (UNICEF-Manila records trafficking as the 4th source of GDP for the Philippines). Of course, we cannot solve harsh poverty by making women, children and sex as our main export, for that solution is far worse than the problem. Let us not put out of our mind that sooner than we expect, self-prostitution will overwhelm us—the frightening moment when the victim becomes the trafficker—and when a crime is committed but there is no perpetrator. Imagine a world as grim as that.

4. Interests of victims such as women’s and children’s rights, equality, and empowerment that are long-term should be placed above the superficial interests of states such as the sovereignty, politics and profit. Nations work towards mutual action against and collective responsibility for trafficking.

5. Lastly, we have to act now. Pass laws to end trafficking and revise outdated ones that do not respond to our concerns. Where other men will not oblige themselves, let the law do so. Then, implement and apply these laws to full extent. It is in this area, I believe, where most of us encounter difficulties. Consequently, we have to build up the capacities of the law enforcement, the prosecution and the courts. In the Philippines where trafficking is very prevalent, as of January 2005, only 25 cases were filed in court and 31 are still being investigated.

When needed, seek the help of other countries. The US President, for instance, is empowered to impose non-trade and non-humanitarian sanctions on countries that do not comply with minimum standards to eradicate trafficking. The European Parliament, by the same token, passed a resolution commending Cambodia’s undertaking in the form of an inter-ministerial committee consisting of representatives from international missions or local and international NGOs as observers and allowing said persons to further investigate trafficking cases and personally interview victims.

When we finish our work, we realize as well that we are tired of putting plaster on gaping wounds and thus start to work on prevention measures starting with our families and our own communities. Let us have the courage to look at this problem for some of us do not even have a name for trafficking. Every effort at this point counts-- for it will be a noble step towards building a future structure that is good for our women and best for our children... Then and only

then we can move on from “human wrongs” to “human rights”--- a mission that is possible for all of us, NOW!

**The Author**

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Assistant Court Administrator (ACA) Nimfa Cuesta Vilches is a graduate of the Ateneo de Manila University and the Ateneo Law School. After passing the Bar in 1983, she immediately worked as Attorney II in the Offices of Justices Hermogenes Concepcion, Jr. and Jose Y. Feria and was later promoted to the post of Attorney III in the Office of Justice Teodoro Padilla, Supreme Court of the Philippines, Manila, until July 1989 when she was appointed to the bench. ACA Vilches was a judge for 17 years and was assigned to various courts in the country.

ACA Vilches earned grants for major studies abroad, among which are: “Evidence” conducted by the National Judicial Institute Of Canada (NJI), at Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, on 23-27 August 2004 sponsored by NJI and the Supreme Court of the Philippines; “Children’s Rights” at Oxford University, England, supported by the British Council; “Violence Against Women: Tackling Trafficking” at Hertfordshire, United Kingdom, sponsored by the British Council and the Supreme Court of the Philippines; “Evidence and Role of the Judge” at the University of Nevada in Reno, USA, sponsored by UNICEF; DNA and Forensic Matters at the Home Office, United Kingdom, arranged by the British Embassy, Manila; Philippines; “The Legal and Technical Aspects of DNA” extended by the Applied Biosystem in Foster City, California, USA; “Crimes Against Children” conducted by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Justice; and “Juvenile Justice”, conducted by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) in Houston, Texas, USA, granted by the Consuelo (Alger) Foundation.

She is a Professorial Lecturer and Member of the Faculty and the Legal Research and Method Department, Philippine Judicial Academy (PhilJA), Supreme Court, where she does lectures to judges and other court employees and carries out research work; Member, Subcommittee on Rules for Family Courts, Committee on Revision of Rules, Supreme Court to recommend innovations in procedure and in the system; Member of the Supreme Court Ad Hoc Committee on Justice on Wheels; Member of the Faculty, Ateneo Law School and recipient of the Chief Justice Ramon Avancena Professorial Chair in Civil Law for the years 2003-2004; 2004-2005; 2005-2006; and 2006-2007; Chairperson, Subcommittee On Justice For Children, Council For the Welfare of Children (CWC), Office of the President of the Philippines, the biggest organization of government and non-government institutions, where in her free time, she coordinates inter-agency efforts for the betterment of Filipino children and families; Lecturer for the University of the Philippines Law Center-Institute of Judicial Administration (UP-IJA) and UNDP to train Nepal judges and justices on women and children’s concerns and a lecturer on various topics for its mandatory continuing legal education (MCLE) program provided to the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP); and Lecturer for the Public Attorneys Office (PAO) of the Department of Justice thereby updating the knowledge of lawyers on new laws, rules, and societal issues that affect the legal system. ACA Vilches also helps train other family court duty-holders for UNICEF-Manila in partnership with the judiciary and various relevant government agencies. Currently, she is the Resource Person for the joint Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), Supreme Court, in the nationwide orientation-seminars on RA 9344 or the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006.

In May 2002, ACA Vilches was chosen as a Member of the Philippine Delegation to the UN General Assembly Special Session for Children in New York, USA; was a Delegate-Rapporteur to the 1st Australasian Judicial Forum in Manila in January 2003, and was a Delegate-Rapporteur, Asia-Europe Experts Meeting in Manila in March 2003. With a vision of transforming the work of a trial court judge beyond the role of an adversarial trier of fact, in August-September 2004, ACA Vilches participated as a member of the Canadian-Philippine judicial team designated by the Supreme Court of the Philippines and the National Judicial Institute of Canada in the activity to develop a module on family law case mediation, a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) that can be performed by the judge himself or herself to have parties arrive at an amicable settlement and provide in the end healing to the parties in intra-familial controversies. On 12-23 June 2005, ACA Vilches, on authority of the Supreme Court, participated in the study tour of the court system, government structure and social services for children in Sweden on invitation of the Swedish Ombudsman for Children.



As a recognized international speaker, ACA Vilches delivered on plenary session the topic “Trafficking in Women and Children” and chaired Session 24 on “Child Trafficking” at the 4th World Congress on Family Law and Children’s Rights at Cape Town, South Africa, on 20-23 March 2005.

ACA Vilches has written the articles ‘Trafficking In Women and Children’; ‘Are You Ready To Be A CASA/GAL Volunteer?’; ‘DNA And The Courts’; ‘Making Juvenile Justice Work’; and ‘Mediation: Reaching Its Potential In Family Law Cases’ which have been widely published locally and internationally. In 2004, she authored a reader-friendly book entitled “B.P. 22: FAQs” published by Rex Bookstore to help the general public know more about the commonly committed violation of that law. And in 1999, ACA Vilches started a program in the Philippines called “CASA/GAL” composed of trained community volunteers who advocate and promote the best interests of children and families in court and thus ensuring their access to justice. Among the earliest volunteers for children in the court of Judge Vilches are Ms. Maribel Ongpin and Mrs. Virginia Davide. In 2004, CASA/GAL was voted by UNICEF as one of the ten innovative initiatives for East Asia and the Pacific.

In February 2004, ACA Vilches was nominated by the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) for the post of Associate Justice, Court of Appeals; was a finalist in the Gender Justice Awards of August 2004; and a co-author of the upcoming Gender Justice Book. She was adjudged Outstanding Judge, Judicial Excellence Awards of 2006 of the Society for Judicial Excellence, Supreme Court of the Philippines.

At the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), Supreme Court, ACA Vilches is Chair of the Grievance Committee; Performance Evaluation Review Committee; Office of the Administrative Services; Finance and Management Office; and the proposed Chair of Committee on Uniforms for Lower Courts and Special Events Committee (to attend to demise and hospitalization of judges; visits to OCA of foreign dignitaries; and observance of OCA and Supreme Court anniversaries). She is a Member of the OCA Selection and Promotion Board.

On 16 March 2007, ACA Vilches, upon invitation of the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada, will deliver the topic “Making Juvenile Justice Work” at the International Conference On The Rights Of The Child on 28-30 March 2007, and will attend the seminar on “Fundamental Issues in Caseflow Management” at Orlando, Florida, USA, sponsored by the USAID.

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ACA Vilches is married to Salvador C. Vilches, an accredited mediator of the Philippine Mediation Center (PMC), Philippine Judicial Academy (PhilJA) and a consultant to a maritime school. She has two children – Steve (21 years old) and Nicole (19 years old).