

‘It’s a very big torture’: the children growing up in hiding in Dubai

A **sweltering**, windowless room in an old district of Dubai, no more than 5 metres **by** 3 metres in size, is the only home to a six-year-old boy from **the Philippines**.

sweltering 闷热的

by 乘

the Philippines 菲律宾

His name is Jerry and he shares a tiny bed with his mother, Neng. Growing up without a birth certificate means he has no access to education and has never visited a doctor. Officially, this little boy does not exist.

Having sex outside of marriage is a crime under the country’s **Islamic** laws, with convictions resulting in prison terms of up to one year. In some cases, even reporting a rape has been regarded by the authorities as **illicit** sex, and has led to victims being jailed.

Islamic 伊斯兰的

illicit 非法的

“The moment that you get pregnant, and you cannot tell anyone and you don’t know what to do, it’s a very big torture,” says Neng.

It is almost impossible to know how many children are in the same position as Jerry across the country. Each month, about 40 mothers with children born **out of wedlock** seek assistance from the Philippines **Consulate** in Dubai, according to a spokesperson for the consulate. This figure is likely to be a fraction of the number of mothers who are living in hiding in the country with their children.

out of wedlock 婚外的

Consulate 领事馆

Yet there are signs of hope for these families. In the cases the Dubai Foundation for Women and Children has worked on, the courts have been flexible and the mother has not served a jail term. This approach could be **rolled out** for wider implementation.

roll out 铺开