

Step by Step



The UN Inter-Agency Project aims to reduce trafficking of women and children in the Mekong Sub-region through improving national and regional co-ordination, identifying and filling gaps in programme implementation and adding value to existing programmes. It includes Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam and Yunnan Province of China and is supported by the UN Foundation (Ted Turner Fund) and AusAID.

UN Inter-Agency Project on Trafficking in Women and Children in the Mekong Sub-region

ILO-IPEC Study Questions Traditional Views on Child Trafficking

Research supported recently by ILO-IPEC challenges some commonly held views on child trafficking in the Mekong region. The following is taken from the conclusions of a report by the Asian Research Centre for Migration, based on its rapid assessment in four research sites on the Thai-Lao and Thai-Myanmar borders. The full report is available from ILO-IPEC

This study shows that trafficking into the worst forms of child labour in Thailand is a complex and diverse phenomenon that varies between different places, gender and ethnic groups. It is best to think of trafficking as a continuum with cases involving force and coercion (selling children into work, debt bondage etc) at one end of the spectrum, and cases involving the voluntary migration of children at the other where unscrupulous employers take advantage of inexperienced minors for exploitative labour.

This study did find some cases of the first type, especially in situations where minors are transported and/or recruited by professional traffickers they did not know. This situation often occurs where minors come from communities with little or no experience of out-migration. However, these cases were fewer in number than those cases where community members, relatives and minors themselves had organized and facilitated the travel into Thailand and had provided the contacts to find employment. In the majority of cases, children made their own arrangements to travel to Thailand, and sought employment once in Thailand on their own initiative. These children traveled alone or in groups, or were accompanied by a relative or friend of the family. Those who organized transportation usually did so as a favour and only in the minority of

cases was a profit made from trafficking. In many origin communities the process of children leaving to work in Thailand has become so well-established, and transportation arrangements are so simple and well-known, that there is little reason for minors to use professional traffickers.

Most of the children and teenagers who were interviewed had come to Thailand from rural household for financial reasons. Nearly all respondents had said that they themselves had wanted to leave. It was common for the minor's household to make a common decision that a child would move to Thailand for work, and for the child to send home remittances. However, it was equally common for the child to leave for individual reasons, sometimes not informing parents of their intention and not staying in contact. Teenage motivations were very often related to examples set by members of their peer group. Many minors explained for example that they wanted to leave because they disliked agricultural work and wanted to 'see the world' and 'possess nice things.' Sometimes the departure was related to problems in the family. Besides the individual motivations, a crucial factor in explaining the migration patterns appears to be the availability of information about transportation arrangements and employment possibilities provided by children who had migrated previously.

Although the study revealed a great variety of trafficking arrangements, what appeared to be common to all the minors involved was an acute lack of awareness or naiveté about what they were letting themselves in for. The moment at which they began to be deceived and/or exploited varied: for some it immediately followed the travel into Thailand. For others it occurred months or years after they had entered

Thai soil and/or the labour market. Some were taken advantage of by strangers, others by people they trusted and many by employers. This study has shown that children and teenagers who come to work in Thailand, generally work in terrible conditions under highly exploitative arrangements, and that in most cases they remain in this situation. In spite of this bleak outlook, it was notable that many of the minors interviewed seemed to choose to accept their situation as a better alternative to returning home. Most were motivated by material desires and the hope of gradually achieving better working conditions and pay.

There are important differences in trafficking and child labour between different geographical areas and types of employment. Child labour appears to be much more common along the Thailand-Myanmar border than along the Thailand-Lao PDR border. One of the main reasons for this is the establishment of the special border zone on the Myanmar border, which allows minors to cross into Thailand without difficulty, but does not allow them to easily travel into the rest of Thailand. On the Lao border site, there appears to be a major concentration of foreign sex workers in Nong Khai Province on the Lao border. Although this study was restricted to border sites, interviews with respondents, who had worked elsewhere in Thailand, indicate that the worst forms of child labour also exist in places all over Thailand, notably on construction sites, in fisheries, in domestic work and general services as well as in the sex industry. Although girls are obviously more likely to end up in the sex industry, it is notable that the jobs that the interviewees complained most about were fishing and construction – both male preserves.

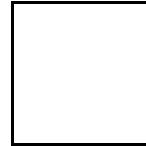
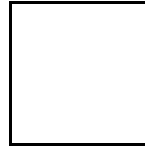
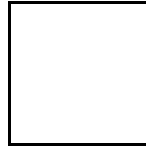
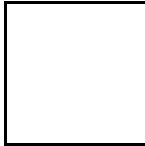
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Notice Board

Recent Publications/ Working Papers



UNAIDS

An Overview of HIV/AIDS-related Stigma and Discrimination (September 2001)

InfoDEV: Enabling Communications in Response to HIV/AIDS in South-East Asia (July 2001)

The Global Strategy Framework on HIV/AIDS (July 2001)

The Impact of Voluntary Counselling and Testing: A global Review of the Benefits and Challenges (June 2001)

Ethnic Considerations in HIV Preventive Vaccine Research UNAIDS Guidance (June 2001)

Please visit <http://www.unaids.org/whatsnew/newadds/index.html>

UNDP South East Asia HIV and Development

HIV Subverts National Security (August 2001)

The Impacts of Mapping Assessments on Population Movement and HIV Vulnerability in South East Asia (September 2001)

ESCAP - HRD, UNICEF and UN Inter-Agency Project on Trafficking in Women and Children in the Mekong Sub-region

Asia-Pacific Answers: Good Practices in Combating Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth (October 2001)

Action Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ATSEC) Newsletter, Volume 1, Issue 2, April-June 2001

Please visit <http://www.atsecbangladeshchapter.fws1.com>

Bonneau Comes Up Trumps

Many thanks to Lance Bonneau from IOM for finally resolving the Newsletter's naming difficulties. We feel 'Step by Step' is a particularly appropriate title for dealing with an issue as complex as trafficking.

Asia-Pacific Answers: Good Practices in Combating Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth

This compendium of good practices in combating commercial sexual exploitation of children in East Asia and the Pacific was the idea of a group of international agencies, based in Bangkok, in preparation, and as part of the Regional Consultation held in October 2001, prior to Congress to be held in December 2001 in Yokohama, Japan.

The case studies in this volume highlight the efforts being made in the East Asian and Pacific region in the areas of prevention, protection, recovery and integration, child participation, and co-ordination and co-operation, which were identified by the first World Congress in Stockholm in August 1996 as being part of the program of interventions necessary to stop the complex problem of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The Publication of this timely volume was coordinated by the Human Resources Development Section of ESCAP and funding for its preparation and printing was provided by the UN Inter-Agency Project on Trafficking in Women and Children in the Mekong Sub-region (UNIAP) and UNICEF.

Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

Five years ago, in Stockholm, Sweden, representatives of 122 countries met to discuss and commit themselves to act against the commercial sexual exploitation of children. The first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children was the first time that governments around the world took action to stop this serious violation of children's rights. The meeting was hosted by the Swedish government in co-operation with UNICEF, ECPAT and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Since that first Congress much has been achieved: action has been taken to remove children from exploitation and aid their recovery and reintegration into society; information campaigns have increased public awareness and targeted specific groups whose understanding is crucial in protecting children's rights and research has been commissioned to improve understanding of the exploiters and the mechanisms and obstacles to be overcome and many countries have developed their own plan of action against commercial sexual exploitation of children.

From 17-20 December 2001, the second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children will be held in Yokohama, Japan. Hosted by the Japanese government, UNICEF, ECPAT and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The second Congress will further strengthen efforts by the international community through discussions and exchange of views.

The main themes of this Congress will be "child pornography", "prevention, protection, and recovery of children from sexual exploitation", "trafficking in children", "role and involvement of the private sector", "legislation and law enforcement" and "profile of the sex exploiter".

The Trojan Horse and Other Worries

The UN Inter-Agency Project has now been running just over one year. A recent informal survey of UNIAP Working Group members indicated that significant progress had been made in terms of strengthening co-ordination and developing a more coherent response, at least within the UN system. In some areas, this has moved beyond information sharing to working together on joint or complementary initiatives. Much more needs to be done, of course, notably in strengthening work in the legal area and also finding ways to link with those working at the 'coal-face', particularly with community-based organisations and migrant groups. Coordination within Governments is also an issue, for Governments are not unitary and those who work most closely on the issues, such as Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare, are not always party to discussions in international forums such as ASEAN, ASEM and APEC.

That said, it is perhaps timely to reflect on a few key issues. Improved co-ordination is obviously important, but it is of limited value if we are not actually focusing our efforts in the right place. So here are a few things that might be problematic. Please feel free to disagree – in writing for the next newsletter .

The Trojan Horse

It now appears that some countries are using trafficking as a kind of modern day Trojan Horse to pursue their own anti-migration agendas, characterised by a focus on the migration aspects of trafficking and efforts to control these, under cover of what appear to be ostensibly humanitarian interventions.

Issues of transparency aside, the point here is that historical evidence suggests that tighter controls on the movement of people migration will probably not significantly reduce migration but simply change its nature, by encouraging a move to more organised forms of smuggling, making people more vulnerable to trafficking. There is no evidence to suggest that tighter controls on the movement of people will reduce trafficking and good reason to believe it will do the opposite.

A Problem of Participation

Many agencies seem to pride themselves on participatory projects and processes, although there appears to be considerable variance in how this plays out in practice (and few seem to be working on the issue of citizenship which is surely a foundation stone of participation). With the Yokohama Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children coming up, one of the big issues is child participation in decisions which affect their lives. I think this is a great idea.

At the same time, it stands in sharp contrast to our approach in some other areas, most notably sex workers. There are few examples of UN agencies seeking to provide the type of space for sex workers outlined by Jackie Pollock in the previous newsletter. Or of acknowledging the often blatant human rights abuses perpetuated on this group, outside of our own paradigms of trafficking and child sexual exploitation. Such abuses are commonly reinforced by often well-intentioned but empirically flawed laws and policies.

Sure this is a hugely controversial issue, but are we saying that young adolescents have the right to speak and be heard about decisions affecting their lives, while adult sex workers do not?

... And Remove All Doubt

In reading a range of reports on this issue, there are several recurring statements that to my knowledge - and I would happily be corrected - have no basis in fact. A common example is 'most people are trafficked into Thailand for the purpose of sex work'. This is almost certainly not true, but the point is we don't know. Another example is 'the majority of those trafficked are women'. This is probably true but is certainly open to conjecture and again, the real point is that we simply don't know.

And of course there are various numbers quoted on the extent of trafficking. Few of these seem to have a scientific basis (UNESCO is currently working to track down the source of the

figures most commonly quoted). Yet, that does not stop the vast majority of reports stating that trafficking is on the increase. Again, this may very well be true. But if we have no reliable numbers, can we know this for sure?

We also need to be careful about aggregation. For example, although a senior UN official told me recently that he did not see a major difference between an eleven-year-old in prostitution and a seventeen-year-old, I think most of us would. Of course one can argue that there is a global consensus in terms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child that childhood continues until eighteen (though quite how this consensus applies to our target communities, most of whom have never even had a vote, is open to debate). But programmatically, it seems to make a difference whether a child prostitute is six, eleven or seventeen, or whether a child labourer is a five-year-old begging on the busy streets of a foreign country or a sixteen-year-old in a video store. It also seems important to distinguish whether those arrested and punished for trafficking are wealthy businessmen or parents who sold their children out of abject poverty and are the ones in prison for exactly the same reason. So I think it would be useful to be a bit more careful about dis-aggregating our data.

On the GIGO principle (garbage in, garbage out), whatever programmes we develop are more likely to be appropriate if they are not based on incorrect or unproven assertions, or generalisations across diverse categories. It might be better to stick to what we know, while all the time attempting to fill the gaps in what we do not.

There is no evidence to suggest that tighter controls on the movement of people will reduce trafficking and good reason to believe it will do the opposite.

Phil Marshall
Programme Manager
UNIAP

The US Government Report - A Critique...

The US Government Report on Trafficking in Persons was released in July. We think there are some good things about it but asked Anne Gallagher and Susu Thatun to summarise some of the criticisms made of the Report and then asked the US Embassy to respond.

Despite other pressing priorities, they very graciously did and their response is on the [next page](#).

In October 2000, the US Government passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act. As well as addressing the domestic situation, the Act sets minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking which are applicable to "the government of a country of origin, transit or destination". As of 2003, the US will not provide non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance to any government that does not comply with the minimum standards and that is not making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance. Such countries will also face US opposition to their seeking and obtaining funds from multilateral financial institutions including the World Bank and the IMF. The Secretary of State is required to produce annual reports assessing governmental efforts to combat trafficking. It is these reports which are to be used as a basis for determining whether, and to what extent, sanctions are to be applied against governments failing to meet the minimum standards.

The first of these annual reports was released in July 2001 and covers 82 countries. These are divided into three tiers, with inclusion in Tier 1 denoting full compliance (12 countries); Tier 2 denoting governments making significant efforts at compliance (47 countries) and Tier 3 denoting those who do not comply and are not making significant attempts (23 countries). Interestingly, all those included in Tier 1, with the rather peculiar exception of Colombia, are destination countries. Of the Mekong countries, Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam are in Tier 2 with Myanmar in Tier 3. The US is not ranked.

A number of concerns have

been noted with regards to this report. First, the rigorous methodology described in the introduction does not seem to be reflected in the individual country analyses. There are some basic factual errors (e.g. that Thailand usually quickly deports trafficking victims) and some other highly contestable points (e.g. that Cambodians are mainly trafficked to Thailand for commercial sexual exploitation).

Second, despite the stated criteria, which has a significant human rights focus, the report is heavily biased in favor of strong law enforcement responses. Those countries which have enacted tough anti-trafficking or anti-smuggling laws and taken an aggressive attitude towards their enforcement (usually the wealthy destination countries) are rated well – irrespective of the way in which they treat victims of trafficking or the extent to which they have engaged in trafficking prevention. Very little attention is paid to the root causes of trafficking such as inequalities within and between countries and human rights violations including entrenched gender discrimination. The demand side of the equation is totally ignored – despite the reality that trafficking services a market in which there are both buyers and sellers.

Third, the report does not acknowledge the linkages between trafficking and broader migration issues and trends. Irregular migration is essentially the result of a discordance between the number of individuals who wish to migrate and the legal opportunities for them to do so. There is clear evidence to suggest that severely restrictive emigration and immigration policies are more likely to fuel organized, irregular migration than to stop it, at the same time placing irregular migrants in more and more dangerous situations. Migration policies are therefore highly relevant to any serious country analysis on trafficking and should not be omitted in future reports.

Fourth, despite acknowledging the fact that "the immensity of the problem simply overwhelms the capabilities of some countries, ... the best intention of a country may not suffice to meet the minimum standards", this does not seem to be brought into consideration in the analysis of the commitment as well as the capacity of a country to combat

the issue. A case in point is that largest regional project on trafficking in the Mekong region (ILO-IPEC) covers all the countries except Myanmar. Some of the Tier 2 countries have trafficking programmes funded almost entirely from external sources. Whatever the reasons behind the exclusion of Myanmar in the process of creating an enabling environment for tackling the problem, the lack of external resources and co-operation actively impinges on its capacity to deal with this problem. A failure to take such considerations into account could leave the US Government open to charges that its assessments are influenced by its general attitude towards a particular country. At the very least it should be acknowledged that bilateral relationships characterised by engagement and openness are likely to yield richer information than those which are not.

Finally, although the report claims widespread consultation, surprisingly few of the people to whom we have spoken - key individuals involved in anti-trafficking efforts in this part of the world - were approached by State Department officials or others involved in preparing this report. In addition to broadening its consultation base for future reports, it would be appropriate for the US to consider developing some kind of mechanism which will allow countries subject to evaluation the chance to respond. This is particularly important given the potentially severe implications of countries being categorised as "Tier 3" in two years time.

In conclusion, it would be fair to say that the Trafficking in Persons Report has the potential to become a useful tool in the fight against trafficking and related exploitation. However, the State Department will need to carefully consider whether the approach taken in this first Report is the best way forward. The first step should surely be the development and application of a comprehensive and transparent system of evaluation which allows genuine assessments and comparisons to be made. The minimum standards set out in the 2000 Act (applied partially and unevenly in the first Report) would provide a good starting point.

Anne Gallagher, OHCHR, Geneva

Susu Thatun, UNIAP NPC, Yangon

Anne Gallagher has written a detailed review of the State Department Report which will appear in the November, 2001 issue of Human Rights Quarterly.

...And Response

The U.S. Embassy appreciates the comments regarding the first annual Trafficking in Persons report for Thailand, and would like to respond to some of the concerns expressed. We feel that this represents a continuing discussion between the U.S. government and international organizations, Thai government offices, and NGOs working on trafficking issues.

The State Department hopes the passage by the U.S. Congress of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act will trigger dialogue and help countries identify specific steps they can take to combat the trafficking of persons (TIP). The legislation contains waiver provisions for the sanctions, which might apply in certain circumstances, similar to provisions in U.S. legislation regarding major narcotics producing or transit countries. The U.S. government will use the legislation to focus on engaging countries, including Thailand, toward making progress on the "three P's" of trafficking in persons: prevention, protection, and prosecution. The State Department has encouraged U.S. embassies to frame assistance in this context so that countries can make progress.

The U.S. Embassy would like to briefly address the six specific concerns raised by Bangkok organizations working on TIP issues:

Firstly, the report for Thailand (and for the other 81 countries reported on) drew from numerous government and non-government sources. The report for 2000 was, however, the first such report responding to the U.S. Congress' request, and as such had a short lead-time. For the 2001 report (due out in June, 2002) the State Department will work with U.S. embassies to refine the reports for each jurisdiction. As mentioned at the September 26th U.N. Inter-agency Working Group on Trafficking meeting in Bangkok, the U.S. Embassy strongly solicits the expertise and experience of Bangkok-based international organizations, NGOs, and Thai government offices to improve future reports.

Secondly, the State Department found a wide range of countries within each tier. A case could be made for a lower or higher ranking for many countries - Japan is a good example. Treatment of victims and prevention of trafficking are important focuses of the U.S. legislation, and were important to the State Department in compiling the report. We would encourage Human Rights Watch in Washington to share information it has collected with TIP officials in the State Department or with the embassies in the countries of concern.

Thirdly, in today's global economy, whereas the mechanisms for trade are negotiated and adjusted to facilitate the flow of goods and services, the flow of labor is less easily modified. Immigration laws are often more complex, carry enormous political interest, and are less easily changed. Finding solutions to push factors driving the emigration from source countries is also important. Analysis cannot be limited solely to linkage to destination countries' immigration laws. Concern in this regard is well worth considering, but that discussion might well go beyond the scope of the report and risk making it much longer than required or intended.

Fourthly, the U.S. legislation did permit consideration of resource constraints of countries. Less well-off countries which provided 'in-kind' assistance to NGOs, for example, by providing a building to house a center for freed victims, were given credit for that. Some countries would definitely have been lower ranked had resource constraints not been considered.

Fifthly, the placement of several close U.S. friends and allies (such as Greece, Israel, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey) in "Tier 3" effectively responds to the concern that bilateral relationships unduly influenced the report. As mentioned previously, the U.S. government welcomes information from all sources and we hope to engage all source, destination, and transit countries in dialogue for preparing future reports. More im-

portantly, such dialogue framed around the "three P's" can help countries and donors identify projects to begin to make progress on this problem.

Sixthly, the State Department and U.S. embassies consulted as widely as possible in preparing the first report. A tremendous volume of useful information was assembled but time and resource constraints probably limited the amount of consultation that could be done. Preparation of the report involved dialogue within the State Department, and with our posts, other federal agencies, NGOs, and other sources. Again, we urge those with views on how reports on particular countries can be improved to share them with U.S. embassies in those nations.

The U.S. government will assist Thailand in its fight against trafficking in persons. In addition to the U.S. government's multilateral contributions to various U.N. agency programs (including ILO-IPEC and UNICEF), a new country program is currently being finalized to provide USD 770,000 (approx. 33.9 million baht) to local NGOs and Thai government agencies. These TIP related activities will be performed during the next twelve to eighteen months. (The U.S. NGO The Asia Foundation is the implementing agency for most of this program.) This direct support is a significant expansion of the U.S. government's USD 100,000 in TIP funding during the past year.

The U.S. Embassy trusts the above discussion addresses the most pressing concerns of the various international and local organizations working on TIP issues in Thailand. Please do not hesitate to contact labor officer Timothy Scherer at (02) 205-4639 or via e-mail (t.scherer@state.gov) if there are further questions or concerns.

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Government Officials Sensitized to Anti-trafficking Legal Instruments



Government officials listening attentively to the presentation of the overview paper on Using Legal Instruments to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children.

Trafficking in women and children continues to pose a major problem to many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, in recent years increasingly being linked to international organized crime. Legal instruments are fundamental in combating trafficking, as they provide the framework for Governments to address the issue, and for NGOs to advocate for implementation, compliance and action. While many anti-trafficking interventions have predominantly focused on socio-economic aspects, some promising legal initiatives have emerged in recent years.

In an effort to raise awareness of the range of legal instruments available to governments, the Women in Development (WID) Section of ESCAP, in collaboration with IOM, convened a regional seminar on Using Legal Instruments to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children, 1-3 August 2001 in Bangkok. The Seminar further provided a forum for sharing national, bilateral and sub-regional experiences in combating trafficking with a view to incorporating lessons learned into national policy and providing impetus for the initiation of similar processes. Representatives from 17 countries in Central, South, South-East and Eastern Asia attended the Seminar, demonstrating the significant political interest in the issue. Moreover, representatives from UN agencies, specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and observers attended the Seminar.

For the Seminar the WID Section had commissioned an overview paper on Using Legal Instruments to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children. This paper initiated the 3-day-deliberations, where government officials were sensitized to variety of legal instruments, including the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), national and bilateral Memorandums of Understanding, various inter regional/regional and sub-regional arrangements, UN anti-trafficking projects from the sub-regions, the US Victims of Traf-

ficking and Violence Protection Act 2000 and extraterritorial legislation. The participants learned about these instruments through several panel sessions, where experts spoke on their topic.

The many presentations gave ground to highly productive discussions. It was among others recognized that while legal instruments were fundamental in combating trafficking, they could not stand-alone, and that trafficking also should be seen in a socio-economic context. Having stated this, international human rights instruments, such as CEDAW and CRC, were acknowledged as important tools as they established international standards and norms, as well as international monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Further, they were considered useful tools for sharing experience and best practice. Participants were given examples of how the reporting system worked, and were informed that a similar reporting and monitoring system would be established under the UNODCCP in the future after ratification of the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. This Convention and especially its Protocol on trafficking are paramount, as they provide the international community with a common definition of what constitutes trafficking, as well as setting international common agreed standards for the protection of the human rights of victims of trafficking. To further the ratification process of the Convention and its Protocols, countries were informed that they could request technical assistance from the UNODCCP.

A session that received strong attention from government officials was that of the Thai Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) on trafficking. The participants learned about the history and process of elaborating the three MOUs, one among Government organizations working with trafficking issues, one among NGOs, and one between Government organizations and NGOs, obstacles encountered in the process and results of the MOUs, as well as bilateral MOUs. The discussion touched upon various issues such as developing trust and a relationship between the Government and NGOs, the importance of training front-line

officials on the MOUs and receiving their feed-back, law enforcement, criminal procedures and making the legal system more child and victim friendly, the media, the importance of prevention in particularly of re-trafficking etc.

The presentation on the US Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act 2000 also generated a lively and heated debate. The Act contains provision mandating foreign governments to comply with minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, or to make significant efforts to meet these standards. If countries fail to meet the minimum standards they will, as of 2003, become subject to sanctions in the form of withholding of US non-humanitarian foreign aid to the country. As required under the Act, the US State Department in July 2001 published the first annual report evaluating countries' efforts to combat trafficking and categorizing them into tiers accordingly. Countries in tier 3 will be subject to sanctions. The report and the sources of information filling into the report and the categorization of countries was subject to much debate, as governments informed the Seminar of not having been contacted to contribute information for the 2001 report.

The 3-day-deliberations culminated in the adoption of a number of recommendations to Governments, both general in nature and specifically related to the different legal instruments. ESCAP was also recommended to take steps to establish a Regional Task Force on Trafficking in Women and Children, and producing a resource guide on Using Legal Instruments to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children. The Regional Seminar will be followed up by sub-regional seminars in South-East Asia, South Asia and Central Asia late 2001 and early 2002. For further information, please contact the WID Section. The Seminar report will be posted on the WID Section website: <http://www.unescap.org/wid/index.htm>.

Human Security Series: The National Drug Control Policy of Myanmar

The concept of human security evolved from the traditional concept of national security. It recognises that, in an interdependent world, the greatest threats to security come not from the military might of other states, but from issues such as disease, hunger, environmental contamination and crime, affecting the individual and communities. It is therefore the individual, and not the state, which is the focus point of human security. Human Security incorporates a range of areas including human trafficking, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health, drugs and transnational crime.

Recognising these linkages, ESCAP Human Resources Development (HRD) and the United Nations Inter-Agency Project are organising a series of human security 'brown bag' lunches. The second such lunch focused on national drug control policy in Myanmar. Even the title of the presentation itself, "The national drug control policy in Myanmar: Fiend or Feud for the neighboring countries?," promised attendees a provocative and stimulating talk by Jean-Luc Pierre Lemahieu, the United Nations Representative for Drug Control and Crime Prevention in Myanmar. Given the high attendance by colleagues from United Nations agencies, embassies, and non-governmental organizations, as well as the lively post-presentation discussion, few seemed disappointed.

Some of the most interesting aspects of Mr Lemahieu's presentation were the startling facts and figures related to Myanmar's opium production trends. Compared to Afghanistan, which produced 69% of the world's opium in 2000, Myanmar produced only 15% of global supply, a marked decrease from previous years. From the late 1970s through the early 1990s, opium production in Myanmar grew at an alarming rate, only to stabilize at an enormously high level in the 1990s. However, for the first time in approximately two decades, due in large part to the country's 1988 Peace for Development policy, there is a clear indication that opium production is quickly dwindling by as much as 40%.

Although these indications are heartening, and indicate substantial national and regional commitment to opium reduction, the surge in the number of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) seized in the past five years engenders the question of whether or not this new trend will offset the painstaking gains of drug control efforts. Mr Lemahieu gave the impression that only time will provide the answer. Despite the fact that Thailand and Myanmar are presently the main supply sources for ATS in South-East Asia, ATS abuse within Myanmar itself is not yet widespread, and appears to involve mostly high-income groups. Moreover, production is largely geared toward export

markets rather than domestic consumption.

However, Myanmar's present drug situation still gives good reason for concern. Although the number of officially registered drug abusers stands at 68,643, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) estimates that a realistic count is more in the ballpark of 300,000. In addition, the magnitude of the level of HIV/AIDS infection amongst drug abusers is staggering. According to figures from the drug treatment centre in Myitkyina, 95% of users in 1999 had HIV/AIDS. To further augment the problem, youth in Myanmar tend to prefer heroin to opium, and heroin injection has become a major risk factor for new HIV/AIDS infections in many Asian countries.

Given this variety of factual data and support, Mr Lemahieu ended his presentation by emphasizing two important conclusions: 1) opium production has sharply fallen over the last five years, and 2) Myanmar has demonstrated a concrete commitment to drug control. The questions and discussions on these encouraging trends in national drug control policy in Myanmar, as well as ATS abuse and the grim situation of HIV/AIDS proliferation, capped the event on a frank and contemplative note.

Human Security incorporates a range of areas including human trafficking, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health, drugs and transnational crime.

ESCAP-HRD



Useful Links

Amnesty International	http://amnesty.org
Women's International Center	http://www.wic.org
Women's Human Rights Resources	http://www./law-lib.utoronto.ca/diana/
Immigration News	http://www.immigrationnews.org
International Women's Rights Action Watch	http://igc.org/iwraw/
International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development	http://www.ichrdd.ca
The Hunger Site	http://www.thehungersite.com



UN Inter-Agency Project on Trafficking in Women and Children in the Mekong Sub-region

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Editor's Notes

The Newsletter is published four times a year by the UN Inter-Agency Project on Trafficking in Women and Children in the Mekong Sub-region. The views expressed in the Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or the Project.

What's coming Up?

Date and Venue	Title/Activity	Organization
16-18 October 2001 Bangkok, Thailand	East Asia and Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Second World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	UNICEF, ESCAP, ECPAT International, Government of Japan
5-10 October 2001 Melbourne, Australia	6th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific	UNAIDS
14-15 November 2001 Bangkok, Thailand	Consultation Meeting on the Thai and Migrant Domestic Workers	Migrant Action Programme (MAP)
17-20 December 2001 Yokohama, Japan	A Second World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children	ECPAT International, Save the Children Alliance, UNICEF, the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Government of Japan
17-20 December 2001 Chiang Mai, Thailand	5th International Conference on Home and Community Care for Persons Living with HIV/AIDS	UNAIDS
27-31 December 2001, Trinidad, Port of Spain	10th International Conference for People Living with HIV/AIDS	UNAIDS

ILO-IPEC Study Questions Traditional Views on Child Trafficking

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Some differences were observed between boys and girls. Girls more frequently migrated as a result of a family decision and sent home remittances. However, girls were more prominent among those who left to escape family problems, and to leave against their parents' wishes.

There are also major differences between ethnic groups. It is particularly striking that the researchers found no cases of trafficking into the worst forms of child labour from ethnic minorities in the Lao PDR. The minors interviewed who were trafficked into the worst forms of child labour from the Lao PDR were from the majority Lao Loum (lowland Lao). On the Myanmar border a rather different situation was encountered, where ethnic minorities and hill tribes make up a proportion of the children entering Thailand and subsequently into the worst forms of child labour. Very few children from the Burmese refugee camps within Thailand were found to be working in the worst forms of child labour at the border sites. Similarly, no cases were found of hill tribe children born in Thailand working in the worst forms of child labour at the border sites. These findings suggest that in discussing issues and policies related to trafficking into the worst forms of child labour, a clear distinction should be made between **transportation, recruitment** and the **worst forms of child labour**. The transportation process itself is usually not exploitative, and there are relatively few cases which fit popular notions of human smuggling

and the trade in children. A voluntary process of labour migration organised by families, trusted friends or the children themselves appears to be much more common. On the other hand, the recruitment process once children arrive in Thailand is more exploitative and many employers take advantage of children's vulnerability and lack of knowledge and experience. Thus, the real problem is not the movement of minors, but the existence of worst forms of child labour within Thailand and the extremely exploitative and harmful working conditions that foreign minors are subjected to.

These conclusions have important implications for policy making, but suggest no easy answers. Points to highlight include:

- Ø It is probably impossible to tackle the movement of minors itself, which is essentially an uncontrollable and voluntary process occurring across porous borders.
- Ø Inducing minors to stay in their communities of origin through, for example, income generating projects in the sending communities, would be a very challenging undertaking, considering the huge development disparities between Thailand and its neighbours.
- Ø In addition, tackling the economic causes of out migration cannot ad-

dress the non-economic motivations of children that were often expressed, such as escaping family problems or a desire to "see the world" outside of the village community.

- Ø It must also be recognised that the sending communities are probably not the poorest communities in the sending countries. Therefore, targeting assistance at sending communities could conflict with poverty reduction objectives.
- Ø An alternative approach to working with the sending communities could be to conduct an awareness raising campaign to help children avoid exploitation by traffickers and avoid the worst forms of child labour.

Another strategy would be to tackle the employers in Thailand, who employ foreign minors in the worst forms of child labour. There is a need for better enforcement of Thai laws and regulations in situations, which put the life and safety of minors' at risk. However, an overall emphasis on law enforcement could worsen the minor's situation as the children's illegal status is often used against them by employers. In addition, policy makers are likely to be wary of introducing measures that make working in Thailand seem more attractive.