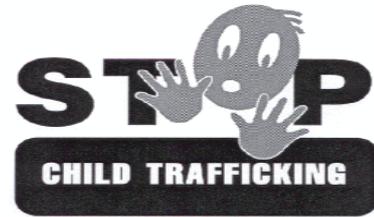


Combating Child Trafficking in Southeast Asia

Presentation by Amihan Abueva
Coordinator for Southeast Asia
AsiaACTS Asia Against Child Trafficking
(affiliate of ICaCT) for the Second World Congress
against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children



Child Trafficking in Southeast Asia

Manifestations of Child Trafficking in Southeast Asia

- In the Philippines, a 13 year old girl was kidnapped and sold as virgin for USD30. She was raped by 8 to 15 men every night even when she had menstruation or had fever.
- When Mr Altamirano, an Australian came home from work, he found out that his daughter Aline, then 15, a minor, had gone to East Timor to be with the man, who is more than twice her age. The Department of Foreign Affairs refused to tell him where his daughter was, saying the teenager did not want to be found and the Privacy Act prevented it from passing on any information.
- She went to Tanjung Balai Karimun because a friend of her mother offered her to work in a restaurant for Rp200,000 (AU\$40) a day. Her mother, hoping she could help the family, agreed. Her mother's friend sold her. She learned later that this woman earns Rp 850,000 od AU\$170 for every girl sold.
- Veng was swimming in the river when a Vietnamese man came into the water and pulled him out. He put something on his face and made him sick, and put him into a taxi and brought him back to Bangkok. He taught Veng how to beg, where to put his cup, how to ask for money.
- A 13 year old Lowland Laotian boy who was involved in drug smuggling claims that a stranger approached him and asked him to carry a package across the border for 1000 baht. He had entered Thailand at the age of 11 as a monk. Then he became a day laborer and worked as a thief and has been arrested by police several times already.



- A 14 year old girl was sold for US\$1,000. Her vagina has been stitched up more than 5 times so that clients would think she was a virgin. Her owners forced her to take clients well before her wounds healed, so that men would believe that the bleeding was from her torn hymen.

These are just of the some of the manifestations of child trafficking in Southeast Asia where children are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation including prostitution and pornography, exploitation through work (including slave labour and bonded labour); and exploitation through illegal activities (including begging and drug trade) among others.

The people involved and the victims

Child traffickers may be operating on a small-scale basis or they may also be highly organized and sophisticated. They present themselves in a community as benevolent individuals. They may even be relatives or friends known to the child or a complete stranger.

Table 1. People involved in trafficking, Southeast Asia

Country	Persons involved
Laos	community migration workers, Laosian strangers, transporters(drivers & trusted friends of the family),employers involved, middleman at border, labor broker transport facilitators
Cambodia	Vietnamese org, trafficking ring, Cambodia trafficking ring, begging syndicate with Vietnamese or Cambodian boss, brothel owners finance traffickers, bribe the police
Burma	migration network within Burma, recruiters approach families, youth migration/peer groups enter Thailand, Burma/mini bus driver recruit minors to cross borders
Vietnam	Parents, syndicates, adoption rings, government official, director's of orphan
Philippines	friends and relatives as recruiters, agent, townmates, peers,parents/guardians,strangers, white slavery syndicates,foreign gangs, groups,agencies, aging prostitutes,unscrupulous recruitment agents, sexual exploiters and prostitute users, pedophiles
Indonesia	Parents, elders siblings, younger siblings, family members, neighbors, close friends, job brokers, local and overseas organized syndicates, state officials at provincial and national levels, local and overseas worker recruitment services, entertainment businesses, maid agents, housemaids in the cities

Routes of trafficking

Cambodia:

Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan, Europe, Singapore, HK, Japan, Vietnam, South Africa

Laos:

Malaysia, Thailand, China

Burma:

Thailand, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh

Indonesia:

Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Australia, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Arab Emirate, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait, Tokyo, Singapore and Hongkong, East Malaysia, Singapore, Singapore, Malaysia Peninsula, Germany, Netherlands, Vienna

Vietnam:

China, Taiwan, Cambodia, Thailand, Europe, Hong Kong, Macau

Thailand:

Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia, US, South Africa, New Zealand

Philippines:

Northern Marianas, Saipan, Middle East, Japan, Costa Rica, US, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Europe

Factors that favor child trafficking

Philippines

PUSH factors:

- Policies such as labor export policy, tourism program
- Areas where there is poverty, unemployment, underemployment, landlessness and armed conflict are natural targets for unscrupulous recruitment agencies
- greed and lack of respect of the traffickers for basic human rights
- when a family can no longer cope with responsibilities due to financial problems they resort to other means in order to meet their basic needs and other requirements in life
- economic
 - poverty
 - lack of educational opportunities
 - opportunity of financial upliftment /rewards
- social
 - social obligation to help and support the family financially
 - desire for financial independence
 - gender socialization

- desire to keep up with successful neighbors and peers
 - cultural
- consumerism/materialism
- desire to be urbanized
- work within the city will make skin fairer
- discrimination against ethnic minorities
 - personal
- wanting to leave family because of disintegration and/or experienced of abuse, neglect and abandonment

PULL Factors

- economic
 - demand in the urbanized cities for domestic workers and for children in prostitution
 - demand for children in prostitution created by tourists/pedophiles
 - demand created by information technology/internet for bride sale/prostitution
 - demand for child laborers because they are cheaper and non-problematic in terms of asserting rights as workers
- social/cultural
 - demand for sexual services created by presence of military servicemen and fulfilled by women (including girl children) as providers of this service
 - demand for virgins as “safe” sexual providers
 - existence of informal network (relatives in the cities acting as referrals of “jobs)

While the factors that lead towards child trafficking are common to almost all countries, each country has its specific factors or developments that make children more vulnerable to child trafficking.

Laos:

- new roads/infrastructure linking previously isolated communities to urban centers
- desire to escape poverty because there is no development
- money culture
- lack of job opportunity, due to lack of education
- peer pressure (because others have left)
- personal difficulties (broken families)
- family conflict
- images of prosperity seen on Thai television

Cambodia:

- poverty due to war and privatization of state services
- lack of education about trafficking
- sex tourism after 1993
- weakening of community spirit and breakdown of families due to WAR
- family violence
- police protection of perpetrators of abuse and exploitation
- gender discrimination

Vietnam:

- market economy
- sex tourism
- corruption
- money culture
- cultural factors(children virgin bring success, longevity)
- dysfunctional and broken families

Thailand:

- high demand of unskilled worker for industrialization
- domestic labor declining

Burma:

- peer pressure
- lack of education/poor education
- ethnic minorities spend 1.3 yrs. in school
- children want to earn for their families(household decision)
- natural disaster

Indonesia:

- children getting married at young age or divorced
- strong encouragement from parents or surroundings to work
- poverty and being out of school; made to believe that tourist would pay more
- serve military and police officers, working middle class
- conspicuous consumption and lavish life styles
- crisis in the country
- forced by circumstances.
- very low wages
- young women live in "relative anonymity and freedom"
- wishes for better life expressed in lullabies
- open sexual behavior
- role modeling
- social rewards
- demand for very young children to work as domestic helpers specifically to babysit or take care of old people
- relatives failed to fulfill promise to send them to school
- children trafficked for drug trade to answer their own needs for drugs

Synopsis of the factors:

Materialism: Modernization schemes in Southeast Asia caused rapid and uneven economic growth that widened the gap between rich and poor, between urban and rural areas, and among various regions. The effect of mass media compounds the problem by cultivating consumerist culture and the desire go to the city. People in rural areas tend to abandon self-sustaining lifestyle for easy money and convenient life.

Poverty: Poor people who are either desperate or just wanting to seek better life fall prey to promises of a trafficker.

Breakdown of families: Dysfunctional or broken families, problem with stepparents, family violence and related problems influence children to leave homes.

Out-migration networks: Migration networks have become one of the most important aspects in explaining the out-migration of teenagers. There are some villages where out-migration has become so institutionalised that it has become a trend among young people, thereby exposing them to the probability of being trafficked.

Lack of education and information: Ignorant of trafficking, rural folks fall prey to syndicates and recruiters promising big money for their children to work in the cities.

Culture: Cultural values like filial piety produce the attitude that children should work outside the family to help parents and other siblings. There is also the attitude that the child must pay gratitude to parents. These values favour the rise of trafficking. It is not uncommon for parents and guardians to be witting or unwitting accomplices of the trafficker.

Gender insensitivity and inequality: Girls and women are more vulnerable to trafficking. Most countries in Southeast Asia share the male-dominated culture that results in unequal treatment in favour of boys. Boys are given better schooling, educational and work opportunities. Also, macho culture accepts that men can go and hire prostitutes for sex.

Aftermath of war: Due to long periods of war, there is a weakening of community spirit and breakdown of families that favour the activities of traffickers.

Official corruption and collaboration: Trafficking rings operate with impunity because corrupt and immoral government officials protect them.

Globalisation has added an international dimension to free market economy by interconnecting all or most markets with the prevalence of the World Trade Organization and the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade. But given the disparity among nations, globalisation has only succeeded in widening the gap between rich and poor countries, and in concentrating more power in the hands of a few. Information technology enabled global financial markets to unleash control over local economies. With one push on the button, multinational investment houses are able to move funds from one country to another, just like what happened during the Asian economic crisis of 1997. Such global

mechanisms have been destabilizing communities and increasing socio-economic crises down to the village level.

Trafficking in children is an extension of the free market philosophy, the laws of supply and demand and the movement of labour. Globalisation has promoted consumerism and materialism with the lifting of import restrictions, and the influx of money and cheap foreign goods. Families desiring to experience the amenities of modern living become open to working abroad. But lack of education and training make rural people become vulnerable to trafficking syndicates, exploitative agents and employment rackets. Parents are tricked into virtually selling their children to employment brokers and agents who promise to take care of their children.

Development policies like massive infrastructure changes and the development of tourism as multi-million dollar business have given rise to social evils like criminality and illegal trading of arms, drugs, biological species and humans. The long-entrenched network of trade in drugs is related to the network of trafficking in persons.

What has been done against it? What are the gaps?

There are many remarkable initiatives that are already going-on in the region. The large agencies such as the UNICEF, ILO-IPEC, IOM, UNESCAP have both country level and sub-regional efforts to combat child trafficking, mainly focusing on prevention and training of government personnel involved in child protection services to become more sensitive to the problems faced by children, the formation of inter-agency committees and task forces, and legislative reform. Several NGOs have initiated programs on prevention and have a few have focused on rescue, recovery and repatriation of children who have been trafficked. There are also programs to counter or to foil the recruitment of children by labor recruiters.

In terms of research, there has been much more research focusing on the situation in the Mekong River area, and much less on situation of Indonesia, Philippines, East Timor, Malaysia and Singapore. Much of the data has not segregated information about children from that of women affected by trafficking and migration.

So far, not much attention has focused on the situation of child domestic servants.

There has been less attention focused on the situation of children who are trafficked for the drug trade and other criminal activities, child soldiers and for commercialized adoptions. Very little is still known about trafficking for human organ transplants.

More effective and new approaches for detection, intelligence and rescue of trafficked children has to be developed through collaborative efforts between NGOS and government agencies since the old modus operandi used by traffickers is constantly being modified by traffickers.

There is a need to develop coordinated services for children to facilitate the integration of services needed by children and to avoid the multiple case intake procedures that each rescued trafficked child usually undergoes. The enactment of appropriate laws against child trafficking and the adoption of policies consistent and supportive of these laws must be implemented.

What does the campaign do?

Asia ACTs

Asia Against Child Trafficking (Asia ACTs) is the regional campaign to fight child trafficking in Southeast Asia. AsiaACTs is part of the International Campaign against Child Trafficking (ICaCT) led by Terre des Hommes, Germany and the International Federation of Terre des Hommes.

Asia ACTs joins the outrage of people's movements, children, private sector and governments in SEA against the existence of child trafficking as one of the most blatant violations of children's rights in the region.

They urge respective authorities to immediately implement human rights standards for trafficked children by

- enacting national legislation and ratifying international instruments,
- creating regional mechanisms for the protection and rehabilitation of children,
- initiating and implementing bilateral and international cooperation in tracing, repatriating and rehabilitating victims of trafficking,

--implementing preventive measures like poverty alleviation, community awareness campaigns, carrying out national and international police measures to prosecute offenders.

Asia ACTs works by complementing the efforts of other child rights organizations and agencies. It seeks to forge alliances with groups dedicated to protect children. It seeks to help unite organizations on a common and widely-accepted definition of child trafficking in order to ensure that it will eventually be possible to harmonize the legislation on this issue within the region. This will help pave the way for more coordinated efforts at the bilateral and multi-lateral level to ensure adequate protection for children trafficked across national boundaries.

Asia ACTs also believes that the participation of children and young people in their own protection and development is important for the success of the campaign against child trafficking.

10,000 Villages Education Campaign

Our goal is to develop advanced communities all over Southeast Asia that vigilantly protects its children. We need to organize and develop 10,000 advanced villages to be models that set the standard for community cooperation in the various areas of work:

- Prevention -- improving socio-economic conditions through livelihood programs, cultural and values education, training. The campaign starts with education at the community level involving community leaders, organizations, parents and children.
- Monitoring and investigation of cases,
- Rescue and recovery of victims;
- Social reintegration of victims.

The campaign starts with education at the community level involving community organizations, leaders, parents and children. From the village level, awareness and implementation of child protection programs will be coordinated with town-level mechanisms for integrated services and with initiatives of civil society. Local initiatives

will then be interwoven at the provincial, national and international levels. Thus, the gains of the 10,000 leading villages will multiply and spread all over Southeast Asia.

Asia ACTs has a Regional Action Committee to coordinate the campaign to fight child trafficking in the region. The members of the Regional Action Committee are the Focal Points for the anti-child trafficking campaign in each country, and the Coordinator for Southeast Asia.

Members:

Philippines: ECPAT Philippines

Thailand: Center for the Protection of Children's Rights
Hill Area and Community Development Foundation

Indonesia: SAMIN

Cambodia: Cambodia Women's Crisis Center

Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Child Welfare Foundation

Lao PDR: Village Focus International

Burma: Images Asia