



NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child Focal Point on Sexual Exploitation of Children

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REPORTS TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

THAILAND

Problems and lacunae

- Prostitution is illegal in Thailand but still, according to NGO sources, 2,5 million women and children prostitute themselves ; of them, 800 000 are under the age of 18 and 30 000 are under 15. Other estimates suggest that between 36 000 and 67 000 children aged between 11 and 18 may be working in the commercial sex industry.
- Prostitution is not confined to the major cities or big tourist spots ; there are brothels at truck stops, markets and small villages all across Thailand.
- Children from Burma are taken to Thailand for prostitution. Local human rights-groups estimate that it concerns as many as 10 000 new Burmese women and female children each year. When they go back to Burma and found to be HIV-positive, they are treated very badly by Burmese authorities (reports from people working on the field say that infected people are sometimes killed). Children working in Thai brothels come from tribes in the north of the country or from neighboring Vietnam, Cambodia and China ; in some villages in northern Thailand, there are almost no young girls from age 11 and up left. Some have been sold by their parents, or lured by promises of jobs. Widespread corruption adds to the complexity of the problem ; village headmen, police officers and government officials are often involved in recruitment, transportation and in supplying the necessary documents.
- The village of Mai sai on the border to Burma lies in the heart of the famous Golden Triangle, an area where drug trade has been one of the main income sources for a long time. When parents abuse drugs, they can no longer take care of their children, who may be forced to leave for a larger city to find work. Children are sometimes even sold to finance the parents addiction.
- After a big police crackdown, many brothels have been closed. The problem still exists but has changed shape and child prostitution is now more hidden, disguised for example in massage parlors.
- Thailand's HIV/Aids pandemic continues despite the efforts of Governments communities and NGOs. In 1993, a study by the Thai Red Cross found that between 660 000 and 825 000 Thais were infected ; by the year 2000 this figure is likely to reach 1,38 million. More young people involved in high risk behaviour both in the sex industry and through drug use will contract the virus.

not true says
Burma Peace
found at:

Matters of concern to the NGO community

- With regard to the cross-border trafficking in children, Thailand could reinforce its bilateral and multilateral cooperation with neighboring countries (agreements, border checkpoints).
- With regard to parents selling their children or lured by job promises, corruption among officials, village leaders and police officers, awareness-raising campaigns on sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children could be launched. Special training on children's rights could be proposed to the police. Further, corrupted persons could be sued to show that the crime of sexual exploitation of children does not remain unpunished.
- Thailand is one of the few countries to have developed a National Plan of Action to implement the Stockholm Congress Agenda. What concrete actions have resulted from it up to date?
- Thailand has enacted a new legislation, the Prostitution Prevention and Suppression Act of 1996 which decreases penalties on prostitutes, penalizes clients of underage prostitutes, increases jail term for brothel owners, managers and procurers and penalizes parents and guardians of underage prostitutes (including revocation of their custody rights). This Act is welcome ; yet, a matter of concern is the decrease in penalties on prostitutes : children prostitutes are victims and any penalty imposed on them, be it as light as possible, leads to a further victimization of the child.

Sources :
Youth in Church and Society
Save the Children Alliance
ECPAT International