



# The Mekong Children's Recommendations on Human Trafficking

## **Introduction**

Children are the future of every country, and the ones who can ensure a country's sustainable development. However, trafficking of children severely violates their rights.

In the Greater Mekong Subregion, there is a serious problem of human trafficking, which can be seen both within countries and across borders. Moreover, the phenomenon of trafficking is on the rise. Many children have no certainty in their daily lives, or are even at great risk of being trafficked. Victims of trafficking suffer tortures. For instance, they are likely to be exploited, forced to do hard work, enter the sex industry etc. These factors will have very bad impact on the development of the children's physical and psychological health, as well as on their intelligence and emotions.

In our view, there are several main causes of child trafficking, such as: poverty; lack of employment opportunities; low level of education; children's limited awareness of self-protection; sometimes, parents cannot protect their children very well; in addition, there is not enough

cooperation among countries. There are many other reasons that add to the problem.

We strongly hope every child can be properly protected and be kept away from trafficking. We hope all the children can enjoy their naïve smiles, and there is a happy and colourful world for them to live in.

### **Why we are sending this message**

We have come here to let all the governments of the countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion hear our voices and know our real needs in relation to trafficking in children.

We ask for full support from the governments of the countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion on implementation of various activities to combat trafficking.

## **Our Recommendations**

### *Social and economic development*

- Governments should have policies and measures to promote social and economic development, such as controlling prices and inflation, credit for the poor, etc.
- Further implement hunger alleviation and poverty reduction programmes to improve the living standards of the people, especially for victims of trafficking and families at high risk.
- Governments should mobilize all human and financial resources to combat human trafficking.
- Governments and local authorities should have policies and measures to give appropriate support for children to find suitable jobs to start their careers.

### *Laws and policies*

- We want laws to protect children's rights.
- Establish institutions that can provide legal assistance to protect the rights of children.
- Punish traffickers and illegal agents severely.
- There should be international cooperation to combat illegal agents involved in cross-border labour migration.
- Give more power to officials, but also control them.
- Crack down on corruption and bribery.
- Forbid drug and alcohol abuse by officials at border checkpoints.
- Do not seize returnees' wages and property at checkpoints when they come back of their own choice.
- Close down karaoke bars linked to sex services.
- Supplement national laws, and make them more effective.

### *Child Labour*

Take action against the involvement of children in hard work and labour exploitation:

- Punish severely people who use child labour.
- Allow children to do part-time work that is clearly defined in terms of time, forms and working conditions.
- Governments should be more concerned about children in poverty.

### *Child Rights and the Family*

- We want adults to understand children.
- Adults should give children opportunities to participate in useful activities that do not have bad effects on children, especially participation in combating trafficking.
- Governments should take children's rights more seriously
- Governments should grant nationality to all children born in their country.
- Families should pay close attention to taking care of their children.
- Governments should take care and control media that have a bad influence on children.
- Governments should support any organizations who provide welfare in children's best interests.

### *Advocacy and Awareness Raising*

- Strengthen advocacy on trafficking issues, especially trafficking in children and women
- Governments must provide opportunities for, and facilitate, peer education on relevant child rights issues, including trafficking.
- An international Anti-trafficking Day should be designated.
- Set up parents' committees in communities to talk about possible problems children can face when they migrate.
- Raise awareness among all community members - including teachers, children, adults and parents - on women and children trafficking issues: the root causes, tricks used by traffickers, legislation, children's rights, etc.

- Materials and media about trafficking issues, produced by children themselves, should be available at all levels where children and relevant adults can easily access them. These media could include: leaflets, posters, CDs and VCDs, audio tapes, TV, radio and internet.
- Awareness raising about trafficking should be incorporated into primary and secondary school curricula.
- Governments should facilitate sharing good experiences and enable study exchange.

### *Education*

- Governments should provide opportunities for free, quality education to all children - in particular children at high risk of trafficking and victims of trafficking.
- Provide scholarships to poor children without discrimination, even if they do not have nationality in the country where they are residing.
- All people, in particular children and women at high risk and victims of trafficking, should have access to marketable vocational training and specific skills training.
- Provide non-formal education literacy programmes in communities for children and women at high risk or victims of trafficking.

### *Victim Support*

- Victims of trafficking must have equal rights with other people, with no discrimination.
- Society must be prepared to accept and give opportunities to victims of trafficking.
- Rescue centres and taskforces must be established to find the victims and rescue them quickly.

- Governments must prepare better the return process while considering victims' feelings, safety and need for mental support.
- Victims should be taken care of and be given good advice. Ensure that they have access to health care.
- Victims must be provided with both education and vocational training programmes, and they must have access to health services free of charge.
- Victims should be able to take part in information dissemination about trafficking.

**We want to see results.** We want governments to take serious action against trafficking. We will follow up and examine the activities of governments.

We want governments to publish their promises and reports in the mass media: internet, radio, newspapers, television.

We may need to meet you again to learn the progress you have made in your actions - after one year at national level and after two years at regional level.

We thank you and hope you will give special consideration to our requests. We would also like to thank the governments and international organizations that have supported us to be part of anti-human trafficking activities.

We hope that our proposals will really happen, and that our guests in this room will cooperate seriously.