



Thai Children Call For Prompt Action On Human Trafficking

“We should be listened to – we have a right to protection, education, and statehood” – Thai Children’s Agenda for Action

Thai Children Urge Their Government to Adopt Child-Centred, Rights-Based Policy to Prevent Child Trafficking and Child Labour

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For Immediate Release:

Chiang Mai – Children from three provinces in Thailand worst affected by human trafficking today adopted a **Children’s Agenda for Action** to better protect them from human traffickers and exploitative child labour. The Agenda for Action was presented to Government representatives at the close of the three-day event here.

The children, who spent two days preparing a series of messages to present to the Government, came from Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Phayao – areas of the country where trafficking is an ever-present risk. Some of the children were also previous victims, trafficked into begging gangs, prostitution, and domestic servitude.

One participant, too traumatized to attend, told her story to delegates by telephone. At 11 years of age, “Ashu” traveled with her mother to Bangkok but became separated. Three days later, alone, without citizenship, and in a large and strange place, Ashu was forced by adults into prostitution. With the help of others, she eventually managed to escape and return home.

The Agenda for Action is designed to help local, national, and sub-regional authorities deal with child trafficking and child labour by taking into consideration, and acting upon, the views of those most vulnerable to human traffickers – children.

Some of the points for action developed by the children include: Their desire to be heard and their voices and views respected, the need of children for special protection from traffickers, more prosecution of traffickers, and the right of all children – regardless of nationality – to an education.

The children are also urging the Government to adopt extra preventative measures to provide better protection to children who’ve migrated to Thailand from other countries, as well as those from minority communities in Thailand who are denied citizenship.

The **Thai Children's Forum** was initiated by the **International Labour Organization – ILO** – and **Save the Children UK**. It was co-organized by the **ILO-IPEC Mekong Sub-regional Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women** and the **Mirror Art Group**.

The Thai Children's Forum was designed to empower children as full partners in the fight against human trafficking in Thailand – a source, transit and receiving country for victims of trafficking and traffickers alike.

The Agenda for Action was conceived and drafted entirely by the 50 young delegates attending the Forum. All of the participants were below the age of 18.

Under Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have a right to participation and consultation in matters that affect their physical and moral well-being. Article 12 states that children should: “be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.”

The ILO's Recommendation 190 on implementing ILO Convention 182 to eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour also calls for child participation. Thailand has ratified both the CRC and ILO Convention 182. Earlier this year, Thailand also ratified ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment.

The young delegates have chosen five of their peers to carry their messages to a sub-regional gathering of children in Bangkok. **The Mekong Children's Forum** will take place from the 11th to 17th October. The young Thai representatives will join children from four other Mekong countries.

At the Mekong Children's Forum, a sub-regional **Agenda for Action** will be developed and submitted to sub-regional Governments for consideration within the context of the recently launched Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking (COMMIT). The COMMIT process involves inter-ministerial representation from all the countries of the GMS, including Thailand. The Governments are expected to develop and endorse a Sub-Regional Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking.

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