



# Rehabilitation of Victims of Child Trafficking: A Multidisciplinary Approach

## Objectives of the report

1. To provide an overall understanding of the multidisciplinary approach for the provision of services to child victims of abuse and trafficking based on experiences from the Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights (CPCR) Foundations; and
2. To elaborate guidelines and processes for developing a multidisciplinary team, with an emphasis on key factors for effectiveness and the fulfilment of victims' needs.

## Definitions

The term “multidisciplinary team” refers to a group of individuals who have been trained to use tools, knowledge and skills to solve certain problems of the client based on common goals and objectives using a systematic and consultative process. There is a continuous information sharing process and responsibilities from the assessment of the situation to the completion of the case.

The key concepts of a multidisciplinary approach are that (1) it has to be child-centred, (2) it provides professional services, and (3) it requires multi-professional assessments before any services can be provided. Key professions of a multidisciplinary team include physicians, psychiatrists and psychologists, social workers and legal professions such as police officers, prosecutors, judges and lawyers. In several cases, educators are brought into the picture.

## Beginning

CPCR encountered three practical difficulties during the early phase of its operation:

- (1) Rescuing children without a long-term recovery strategy resulted in repetition of the vicious cycle of abuse;
- (2) Single emphasis on prosecuting child abusers did not help to protect the children in the long run; and
- (3) Weak recovery services did not help children to cope with their behavioural problems and psychosocial needs.

The Foundation therefore shifted its strategy to embrace a holistic approach in child protection by focusing on the best interests of the child. The family situations are addressed more proactively so that it is empowered to provide a protective environment for children to live in, rather than be separated from their family.

## Pre-conditions to a multidisciplinary approach

- National laws in favour of a multidisciplinary approach and the focal point of the multidisciplinary team being a government agency with direct mandate.
- Victim protection system integrated in crime suppression, offender prosecution and work of health care professionals and social workers.
- An expert institute or a council for professionals in place to help improve knowledge, facilitate experience sharing and acknowledge professional codes of conduct.
- A skilled team leader to facilitate an efficient case conference and understanding of the team members on their roles and that of others.

## Process of developing a multidisciplinary team for child protection

- Review legislation to identify loopholes in child protection and trafficking and the reasons why it cannot effectively and holistically address the need of abused children.
- Campaign for the revision of laws in collaboration with those concerned.
- Design a framework for child protection mechanisms by following the five steps as stated in Articles 19 and 39 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which include: (1) Fact-finding or investigative process, (2) Immediate, short-term protection and prevention process, (3) Rehabilitation process, (4) Reintegration process, and (5) Prevention through reduction of risk factors in the family and the community.
- Build capacity for relevant professionals both within and

outside CPCR, apply the multidisciplinary approach within the organisation, set up multidisciplinary teams at national and sub-national levels, pilot test the multidisciplinary team operation in nine provinces and design a multidisciplinary team guide and handbook for replication.

### Success of a Multidisciplinary Team Approach in Thailand

- The child protection system, through a multidisciplinary team, has become a model for scale-up in all provinces in accordance with the Child Protection Act of 2003.
- The guideline for practitioners in handling cases of trafficking in women and children has been developed in accordance with the MOU between concerned non-government agencies against trafficking in women and children of 2003.
- Tools for the work of the multidisciplinary team on child protection have been designed and/or are being tested, i.e. (1) Minimum standards in child care and supervision, (2) Indicators for identifying risk factors, (3) Signs and symptoms of abuse and/or neglect, (4) Criteria for identifying risk factors in case the children and/or minors have some tendencies to commit offences, and (5) Minimum standards for professionals such as social workers and psychologists.

### Challenges

- Individual commitment to the issue and the approach is low, resulting in low cooperation, slow response and poor information collection and sharing.
- Support from the management level is not always guaranteed and it is sometimes unclear in the organisational structure on how to work as part of a multidisciplinary team.
- There is a constraint in human resources, and being part of a multidisciplinary team can be a burden for a partner organisation.
- Public attitudes on family problems are an obstacle to the multidisciplinary team's mandate in interfering with domestic violence.

### Conclusions

- The multidisciplinary team approach is an answer to bridge the gaps in provision of services to victims of child abuse and trafficking such as physical treatment and rehabilitation, psychosocial care and legal support.
- A multidisciplinary team can provide a holistic and one-stop service to child victims of violence, including trafficked children.
- A multidisciplinary approach has become the norm for dealing with child rights violation cases and the practical aspects can continue to be refined.