

## Children and young adults speak out against human trafficking

Children and youth from various ethnic groups and nationalities came together to find solutions to prevent the exploitation and trafficking of all children, at Thailand's COMMIT Youth Forum. The 40 children and youth, from nine provinces in Thailand, shared their stories and made recommendations on how the country could prevent the trafficking and exploitation of children.

The youth emphasized the role of social media and community networks to raise awareness about the issue, including the establishment and strengthening of community-based surveillance networks. The children placed utmost importance on the right to education for the migrant and stateless children.

Describing the recommendations developed by the children, Birgitte Krogh-Poulsen said, "Recommendations from the youth representatives are comprehensive. They are like the government's action plan – which cover root causes, strategies and activities – but are more creative. The next challenge would be how these recommendations would be taken by the government and adults working on this issue."

*"There were a case of some Burmese children under 15 years who were forced to work in a fishing boat. They had to work 18 hours a day and barely had time to rest. They were also forced by the employer to tell a lie about their age,"*

*Part of a story shared by one of the young participants.*

The recommendations sprung from a series of discussions and story-telling on trafficking and exploitation – stories of children being trafficked across the border, girls lured and forced into prostitution, and children kidnapped and forced to become beggars, some by their own parents. The storytellers – children and youth, are among the most vulnerable to trafficking. Quite often they have innovative and powerful perspectives on what can be done in ending trafficking.

Through the young people's engagement, the forum aimed to influence policy and attitudinal changes. The Forum will enable children and youth to consult with peers and with influential adults. Eight child and youth 'moderators' were selected to be part of Thailand's COMMIT Taskforce and represent children's voice at the COMMIT meeting to be held in April 2015, at Phnom Penh, in Cambodia.

The Forum helped identify the priority issues for young people in Thailand, which would ultimately lead to a Mekong Children's Forum on Human Trafficking.

In concluding the Forum, the children shared their recommendations with representatives from the Government, including the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Anti-Trafficking Bureau, the Immigration Bureau of the Royal Thai Police, the National Security Council as well as ILO-IPEC and the National Council for Child and Youth Development.

### **About the COMMIT Youth Forum and ILO-IPEC**

Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) is a government process, which aims to develop coordinated and comprehensive policies and programme interventions to end human trafficking across six countries (Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam).

The Thailand COMMIT Youth Forum took place in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, from 25 to 28 October 2014. It was organized by Save the Children, together with Thailand's National Council for Child and Youth Development (NCYD), World Vision, UNACT, and International Labour Organization (ILO). The primary activity of the forum is to discuss priority issues for young people in Thailand that would ultimately lead to a Mekong Children's Forum on Human Trafficking.

The ILO - IPEC Project on Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Shrimp and Seafood Processing Areas of Thailand is implemented in close collaboration with Thai Royal Government, private sector and workers organizations. The project has three objectives: 1) to address policy and implementation frameworks; 2) to improve work conditions within enterprises in shrimp industry supply chain; and 3) to provide education, social protection and livelihood services to children.

ILO-IPEC sees tremendous potential in promoting active engagement with children and youth in advocating for solutions to the problems affecting their lives. For this, ILO-IPEC worked in collaboration with Save the Children, World Vision, National Council for Child and Youth Development (NCYD), and UNACT to raise awareness and advocate on anti-trafficking initiatives in the Thailand Commit Youth Forum.

## Voices of the children

### ***Sheeta, World Vision Thailand Foundation youth activist, Ranong Province***

I am impressed by this forum. It is the first national forum that I attended. It is fun, I learned a lot and I have made many new friends.

At first I was worried and too shy to share my opinion because I did not understand much about human trafficking problem. But because of the facilitation and encouragement from facilitators, I have gained more courage and confidence.





***Nuch, Dek D Club from Kanchanaburi Province***

It is great that a child without surname or an ID was involved in this national forum. Before I was not interested in child rights issues and human trafficking because I thought those were not relevant to my life. But after I attended this forum, I know that the issue is related to me and my peers. I will take this message to my friends and community.

The ILO-IPEC project in Thailand (2010-2015) aims to address child labour and forced labour in shrimp and seafood processing areas. It helps to create an industry that is free of child labour and forced labour and offers decent working conditions and opportunities to Thai and migrant workers. Special attention is given to the situation of Thai and migrant children at risk of entering or/and involved in hazardous child labour.

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