



FactSheet



Child Trafficking in Southeast Asia

The study covers the following countries:

- Philippines
- Indonesia
- Mekong Region
 - China (Yunnan province), Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Vietnam

Initial Scenario in the Regions

- All the countries in the Mekong region are countries of origin as well destinations of international trafficking in children and young persons, and many of them are also countries of transit.
- Differing economic situation in the neighbouring countries
- Thailand has the strongest economy in the region.
- Vietnam and Yunnan have a very diversified economic structure with international and regional trade relations.
- Cambodia, Burma and Laos are poor, under-developed countries.
- Increased trafficking in children and youngsters accompanies the economic development of the region.
- Organised trafficking in children and young persons continues to profit from the illegal trade routes and structures that were set up during the Indo-China war and used even today.
- Regional migratory movements also encourage trafficking in children and young persons.
- There is high social acceptance of child labour and child trafficking since the children have to and are also expected to contribute to the family income (a necessity for survival).
- The societies of the South East Asia are primarily male-dominated. This in turn results in different expectations from girls and boys or men and women respectively. Thus for example, men visiting brothels is generally accepted, whereas sexual norms that are significantly more restrictive apply to the women.
- Thailand is one of the centres of the international sex industry. At the same time it is also one of the destinations of organised trafficking in children and young persons from the entire region.
- Difficulties encountered in the fight against child trafficking are also the result of the national legislation and the absence of a uniform definition of child trafficking.

Routes

- Child trafficking in Southeast Asia exists in the form of domestic trade within the borders of a country as well as cross-border trade between the countries.
- All the countries are affected by this cross-border trade, either as the country of origin, the destination or as the country of transit.
- Country of Origin: Burma
Destinations: Thailand, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh
- Country of Origin: Indonesia
Destinations: Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Australia, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (Qatar, Bahrain, Oman), Kuwait, Germany, Netherlands, Austria



- Country of Origin: Cambodia
Destinations: Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan, Europe, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Vietnam, South Africa
- Country of Origin: Laos
Destinations: Malaysia, Thailand, China
- Country of Origin: Philippines
Destinations: Japan, Costa Rica, USA, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Europe, the Middle East, Northern Mariana Islands
- Country of Origin: Thailand
Destinations: Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia, USA, South Africa, New Zealand
- Country of Origin: Vietnam
Destinations: China, Taiwan, Cambodia, Thailand, Europe, Hong Kong

Objectives and Purpose of Child trafficking

- Commercial sexual exploitation and prostitution
- Begging and street trading
- Forced recruitment in the state army or other armed groups and organisations
- Forced labour / child labour
Handicrafts and industry, fishery, agriculture, cattle breeding, building and construction trade, textile processing
- Domestic labour
- Adoption
- Forced marriage
- Drug trafficking and drug smuggling

Dominant Forms of Exploitation of Trafficked Children

(as well as other examples)

- Philippines
Commercial sexual exploitation as well as forced recruitment, begging, forced labour
- Indonesia
Commercial sexual exploitation, domestic labour as well as forced marriage, begging, child labour
- Myanmar (Burma)
Commercial sexual exploitation as well as jewellery manufacture, fishery, construction work
- Cambodia
Prostitution as well as begging, domestic labour
- Laos
Commercial sexual exploitation as well as forced or child labour
- Thailand
Drug trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, begging as well as jewellery manufacture, fishery, construction work
- Vietnam
Adoption as well as forced marriage, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic labour

Favourable Factors

- Poverty and globalisation
Social changes and the various economic developments that are accompanied by it escalate the already existing economic differences between the rich and the poor cities, regions or countries. The economic changes take place within a short period, whereas the negative effects of crisis situations can be felt by the people or the individual regions more



rapidly. Migration (especially of children and young persons), an increasing pressure on children and the young to contribute to the family income or economic obligations and the temptation to sell the children to middlemen and agents are examples of negative developments. Child trafficking is an effect produced by the 'free' market, the demand for uneducated and cheap labour and increasing international trade.

The development of more new regions or places into centres of international tourism with its negative effects (commercial sexual exploitation, begging)

- Material incentives and the model qualities of a metropolis
- Cultural values and traditions
In the Southeast Asian societies, modern child trafficking can in part be traced back to centuries-old traditions, behaviour or forces: among other things, the expectation that children must contribute to the family income; economic obligations that force children to leave their parental home at a very early age and begin work; socially accepted prostitution of girls and young women.
- Breakdown of family and social structures
- Migration to economically stronger cities, regions or neighbouring countries
Unaccompanied minors in search of work are potential victims of middlemen or child traffickers.
- Lack of education and no information on child trafficking
With no information about the dangers of child trafficking, parents, relatives as well as children and young people are more susceptible to promises of a future with good earnings or prospective education made by middlemen, agents or traffickers.
- Sexual discrimination
The risk of girls rather than boys becoming victims of child trafficking is greater. Among other things this can be attributed to a patriarchal social structure, better educational opportunities for boys or the social acceptance of prostitution.
- After-effects of the wars in Vietnam and Cambodia as well the subsequent local as well as regional military conflicts.
Poverty and devastation, disintegrated family structures, existing ties with smuggling and trafficking, need for helpers and soldiers in state armies, armed groups or liberation armies and prostitution are some of the consequences or accompanying phenomena.
- Corruption and the involvement of official bodies or influential people
Protection by the state or the social elite does not permit effective prosecution and control of child trafficking.

Potential for Profits

- Next to drugs and arms smuggling, trafficking in human beings is the third-largest source of profit for organised crime groups.

International, Regional and National Agreements and Laws

- In 1979 all the six countries of the Mekong region signed and subsequently ratified the 'Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women' (CEDAW).
- In 1989 the six countries signed and ratified the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' (CRC).
- Till October 2001, none of the Mekong countries had signed the 'Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Trans-National Organized Crime' (Trafficking Protocol).
- In 1996 the Mekong countries joined the 'Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children'.
- In 1995 the six Mekong countries joined the 'Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women'.
- Membership or observant status of the individual countries in the '1992 Program of Action for the Prevention of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others'



- The national legislation on child trafficking in each of the countries is also very different. In Laos for example, child trafficking is not an offence, but in Vietnam, trafficking and trade in children and women is punishable.

Regional and National Shortcomings in the fight against Child Trafficking

- Lack of social and legal definitions and categories that differentiate illegal migration from child trafficking. As a result trafficked children are treated as illegal migrants and are faced with the threat of imprisonment and deportation.
- Lack of legal right for victims to claim aid from the government in the destination country.
- Lack of adequate relief and integration programs for the returning victims.
- Lack of cross-border aid programs.
- Poor treatment of the returning victims by the authorities.
- On one hand there are no facilities for psychological treatment, on the other there is a risk of the victims being sent to camps and prisons.
- It is necessary to train the authorities and its employees to develop a basic and humane way of dealing with the victims, taking into consideration the sex of the victim.

Involved Persons, Groups or Organisations

- Parents, family members and friends
- Professional middlemen and traffickers in human beings
- International, regional or local organised criminal groups
- White slave owners
- Employment agents
- Government authorities or employees
- Employees of the judiciary, the border authorities or the police
- Brothel owners, pimps and prostitutes
- Owners of handicraft workshops and industry ('employers')
- Drivers, accompanying persons and guides
- Village heads
- Teachers, doctors or bank employees
- Employees of orphanages or public health services
- Professional adoption agents
- Temple monks

Demands

- The policies of each of the countries in Southeast Asia should develop a comprehensive strategy against child trafficking based on the UN protocols.
- There has to be a consensus on a common definition of child trafficking that is valid in all Southeast Asian countries.
- It is necessary to define child trafficking in the national legislation and to identify it as a criminal offence in each of the countries.
- Introduction, ratification and implementation of international treaties and agreements for protection against child trafficking.
- Greater consideration of the rights and interests of children while educating and training members of the police and judiciary.
- Consistent prosecution of child trafficking as a crime by the national judiciaries.
- Bilateral treaties and cross-border co-operation between the authorities and the national and international NGOs
- Development of long-term action plans that take into account the complex relation between child trafficking and other social problems such as discrimination against the indigenous populations, drugs, armed conflicts, HIV/AIDS or domestic violence.



- The high dynamics of the phenomenon of 'child trafficking' calls for continuous observation, studies and records of known cases in order to use the knowledge so acquired to formulate counter-measures.
- A long-term political strategy is to establish child relief organisations that would take care of children and young persons in very different ways. Preventive awareness about child trafficking, offers to take care of and support illegal migrants or political lobbying are only three possible examples of their work.

Source: Child trafficking in Southeast Asia. Rosalie Matilac and Regina Florendo, February 2002
Financially supported by terre des hommes Germany.



Contact & further information

terre des hommes Deutschland e.V.
Hilfe für Kinder in Not
Bundesgeschäftsstelle
Internationale Kampagne gegen
Kinderhandel
Ruppenkampstr. 11a
Postfach 4126
D-49031 Osnabrück

Phone: 0541/7101-182
Telefax: 0541/707233
Internet: www.tdh.de
e-mail: kinderhandel-kampagne@tdh.de