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**The changing situation of child prostitution in Northern  
Thailand: A study of *Changwat* Chiang Rai**

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**By**

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## Summary findings

**There has been a major reduction in the number of children at risk of entering into child prostitution over the last two decades.** The reasons for this are:

- Fertility decline, which has reduced the numbers of children in each age group, making it easy for parents to educate their children.
- Major increase in school enrolments throughout the region.
- The psychological impact of AIDS with parents no longer willing to allow their daughters to enter child prostitution due to fear that they will die from this disease.
- The 1996 Prostitution Prevention Suppression ACT, which moved the emphasis of guilt for child prostitution onto parents, customers, agents and the sex-establishment owners.

**Despite the decline in the number of children at risk of becoming victims of child prostitution there are still significant groups that are at risk.** Of greatest concern are those children who are living in poverty. Although improvements have occurred in the last two decades with an improving standard of living for the majority of Thais there are still pockets of poverty. Resulting from financial difficulties, but often combined with other factors the following groups are at risk.

- Children from Myanmar who are either directly entering into the sex industry or are seeking other forms of employment, but due to a lack of opportunities are forced into prostitution.
- Hill-tribe children who are not continuing with their education beyond primary school.
- Children from dysfunctional families. This group consists of Myanmar, hill-tribe and lowland-Thai children. These children include street children, children whose parents have separated or divorced, children who have parents with drug or gambling problems, and finally children who have lost a parent or both parents through death, such as from AIDS.
- Children who are *jaitaek*. This is the Thai term for children whose behaviour is seen by others as unsuitable, such as drug taking and being involved in sexual relationships.

## Introduction

I am very lucky that I was born when I was, if I had been born earlier I would have certainly been sent into this work [child prostitution] (Essay, 15-year-old girl, Chang Noi School).

The number of Northern Thai children<sup>1</sup> at risk of becoming victims of child prostitution<sup>2</sup> has declined substantially over the last 20 years. Thai children are fewer both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the total population, and are better educated than two decades earlier. Girls, who would have sought employment, including in the sex industry, are now far more likely to be studying. Past fertility reductions, increased educational opportunities, the impact of HIV/AIDS and changes to legislation have all helped to reduce the number children being exploited in prostitution.

Even though there are fewer children at risk of becoming victims of prostitution the problem still exists. Both boys and girls can be found selling their bodies within the region. On the Thai-Myanmar border the children in prostitution tend to be all from Myanmar. Yet, within Chiang Rai the under-aged workers in the a-go-go bars will be Thais, although predominately from the various minority groups of the region. There would be students who would be supplementing their incomes by entertaining customers, and finally there would be girls leaving the region to work in the sex industry in other parts of the country.

It must be stressed that the views expressed in this report are controversial. At a presentation to a group of NGO officials working with children in *Changwat* Chiang Rai<sup>3</sup> the findings were attacked. At the beginning of the meeting only one person out of 25 people thought that the number of children entering prostitution was declining. The difference between the views of the 24 people and what is expressed in this report are marked. Nevertheless, the views of the NGO workers at that meeting differ to most other people that I encountered during this study.

Further, a recent study by Berger and Glind (1999:3-4) on child prostitution in Thailand indicates that the number of children undertaking this work is increasing. This conclusion is based on 1998-1999 data and it is possible that there has been a recent increase resulting from the economic crisis. My study also indicates that since

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<sup>1</sup> Children, boys and girls are defined as those aged less than 18, as in the Convention on the Rights of Children (United Nations 1991) and the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Child prostitution is the sexual exploitation of a person aged less than 18 for remuneration in cash or in kind.

<sup>3</sup> Chiang Rai is both a province and a city. When referring to the province I use the Thai word *Changwat* so as to distinguish between the two. This is also the case with Chiang Mai and Khon Kaen, two other provinces mentioned in this report.

the start of the economic crisis in 1997 there has been a growing number of children in *Changwat* Chiang Rai who are at risk of becoming prostitutes. Other recent studies indicating decreasing numbers of children entering child prostitution from Northern Thailand include Sacks (1997:425) and Pokapanichwong (1999:9-10). The second paper is an anthropological study of a Northern Thai community and her findings are similar to what I have encountered.

This report demonstrates how there have been reductions in the number of children at risk of child prostitution in Northern Thailand by focusing on developments in *Changwat* Chiang Rai, the most northern province of the country. First, I describe the study's methodology, before detailing the factors that have reduced the number of children at risk. Next, I give the reasons why there are still some children being pushed into this work, who these children are and how they are recruited. In the next section of the paper 'Estimating the unknowable' I do not attempt to determine the prevalence of the problem but I demonstrate that the numbers are declining using a method developed in another study. The final two sections of the paper include a list of organisations working to tackle child prostitution in Northern Thailand and a series of recommendations for ECPAT to consider.

## **Methodology**

This study combines secondary and qualitative data. The secondary data namely the literature<sup>4</sup>, population figures and educational enrolments show the changes to the lives of Thai and Northern-Thai children over the past two decades. The qualitative data; interviews, focus group discussions, essays written by school children, listing exercises, and role-plays illustrate the specific changes in the lives of children in five different sites in *Changwat* Chiang Rai.

The educational enrolment figures determined the settings of the research. Enrolment numbers from 1983 to the present were gained for each *Ampher* (an *Ampher* is the administrative division below province) in *Changwat* Chiang Rai. The data indicate an increase in the proportion of children studying over time; however, it also revealed differences between the various *Ampher*. Based on these differences I concentrate on three *Ampher*: *Ampher* Muang, the city district, which had the highest progression rate in the province; *Ampher* Mae Sai, the most northern district in the country on the Thai-Myanmar border, and which has a middle ranking progression rate; and *Ampher* Mae Fa Luang, a mountainous area dominated by the ethnic minority Akha and which had one of the lowest progression rates in the province.

Two schools in *Ampher* Muang were chosen, one within the city centre, which

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<sup>4</sup> In this study there is no literature review, however throughout the paper the literature is used to back the findings of the study.

in this paper will be called Chiang Rai School, and a second school around 15 kilometres from the city, which in this paper is called Chang Noi School. In *Ampher Mae Sai* two schools were also chosen, one next to the border with Myanmar, which I call Mae Sai School after the main town of the *Ampher*, and a second around 15 kilometres from there, which I call Chiang Khom School. In *Ampher Mae Fa Luang* one school was chosen, a school that was catering for a number of Akha villages and as such is called the Akha School. All the students from whom I collected data from were Year 9 students<sup>5</sup>, except in the Akha School where the students were in Year 6, the oldest students in that school.

At each school a photograph (Cuc and Flamm 1996:110) of three Vietnamese child-sex workers in Cambodia were shown to the students. The students were immediately able to state the girls' profession. The students then wrote an essay about the situation in their own community. They were asked to write about why children were entering this work, who was responsible and to explain the process that leads children into prostitution.

The essays written by students reflect the children's 'reality' of child prostitution. This 'reality' is not the 'truth' as many of the children's views are influenced by 'myths', misconceptions and outdated understandings of the situation, but this is similar to many adults that I met. Despite being influenced by these 'myths' the children were aware of fellow schoolmates and children from their own communities who had entered into the sex trade, the reasons why this had happened and how it took place.

At the completion of the essays the children were asked to list the reasons why children enter prostitution and then vote for the most important factors. After that eight to 10 girls undertook a role-play on the problem of child prostitution in their community. The preparation and performance took around one hour. This was immediately followed by a focus group discussion.

Further data were collected from interviewees with key informants. Those interviewed include current and past sex workers, an ex-brothel owner, government and police officers, NGO workers, schoolteachers, villagers and academics.

## **Factors decreasing child prostitution**

### **Population decline**

Thailand in the 1970s experienced a demographic 'revolution' (Knodel, Chamrathirong and Debavalya 1987), within a generation the average number of

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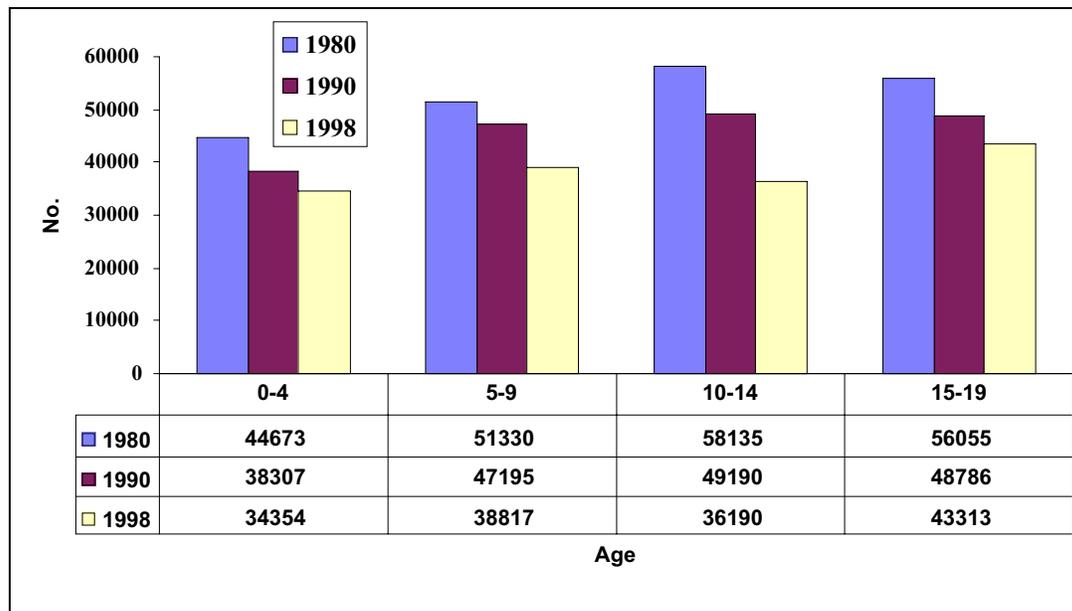
<sup>5</sup> In Thailand the school system is divided into six years of primary school, which in this paper are called Year 1 to Year 6, then junior high school, which are referred as Year 7 to Year 9 and then senior high school, which is called Year 10 to year 12.

children in each family dropped from 6 to less than 2 (Hirschman et al. 1994:82). This revolution brought major benefits to the lives of children in Thailand, as it has become easier for governments and individual families to ensure that children study, decreasing the probability that they will be victims of child prostitution.

The decline in fertility, the reduction in the proportion of children, and now the declining absolute numbers of children in Thailand continue to provide benefits for individuals and the society as a whole. First, it has allowed greater social and economic investment in individual children (Hirschman et al. 1994:87). No longer does the State have to recruit and train the large number of teachers, build new schools or produce extra textbooks as was the case while the number of children was increasing.

In *Changwat* Chiang Rai the number of girls aged 10-19 (the data could not be broken into the 10-18 age group), those at risk of being child prostitutes, has declined by 34,687 from 114,190 in 1980 to 79,503 in 1998 (Graph 1). This decline will continue for at least the next ten years, as the number of girls, in the age group 0-9, has declined further. The decline is likely to continue beyond this ten-year period as fertility reductions are predicted to continue. Medium forecasts indicate that the proportion of children aged 14 or under is likely to decline from under 28 percent in 1995 to under 20 percent by 2020 (Human Resources Planning Division National Economic and Social Development Board 1995).

Graph 1 Changing numbers of girls in *Changwat* Chiang Rai: 1980-1998



Source: National Statistical Office (1984; 1994; 1999)

## Education

the probability that she will stay out of sex work. Available information indicates that Grade 6 graduates are more likely to enter the sex industry than Grade 9 graduates. Education is viewed as one of the best strategies to deal with the prostitution problem and hence the vulnerability of girls (Kanchanachitra 1999:31).

The best data indicating the number of children at risk of being victims of child prostitution are education enrolment figures. Education is a surrogate measure for both child labour (Weiner 1991:156) and child prostitution. While physically located in school children are unable to work. School attendance limits the hours of work and defines the character and the conditions of employment that children can undertake. While studying children are not leaving their hometowns for sex employment in Bangkok or Hat Yai (on the Thai-Malaysian border). Also, they are far less likely to be working in sex establishments in *Changwat* Chiang Rai compared to girls of their age who are not studying.

It must be noted that being a student does not stop children being involved in prostitution, but it limits it. Based on discussions with many people in *Changwat* Chiang Rai and from newspaper articles (Daily News 2000a; Daily News 2000b; Daily News 2000c; Thai Rat 2000; Verachai 2000) female students are increasing involved in prostitution. However, the nature of this work is different from that carried out by other sex workers.

From the mid 1980s until 1997 there was a dramatic increase in the progression rate<sup>6</sup> from primary school to the first year of high school for children in *Changwat* Chiang Rai and Thailand as a whole (Graph 2). Up to 1987 less than 40 percent of Thai children who finished primary school went on to high school. By the end of that decade still less than half of all students were continuing with their studies. However, in the five years between 1990 and 1994 the national progression rate increased from 57.2 to 90.8, an average increase of 8.5 percent per year. In 1994 there was an increase of 11 percent at the national level and an increase of 12.2 percent for *Changwat* Chiang Rai. Within two years after the national figure had reached 90 percent it jumped to 97 percent.

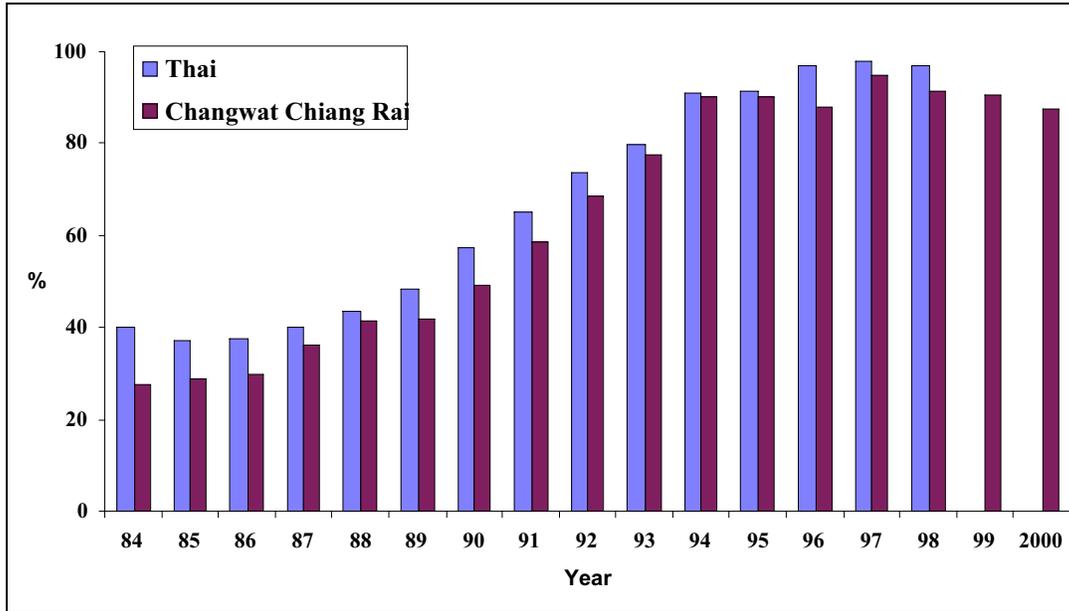
In *Changwat* Chiang Rai the progression rate in 1984 was only 27.6 percent but by 1997 it had reached 94.7. Since then with the impact of the economic crisis the progression rate has declined to 87.6 percent in 2000. This decline represents a substantial increase in the numbers of children at risk of becoming victims of prostitution. Despite this recent decline the present level is a marked increase from 1984 and even the 1990 figure of 49.3 percent.

NGO worker: Before when girls finished Year 6 and had no work to do they might go off to be sex-workers. They would go to Bangkok or to another province, but now the children are trying to study further. There is no longer an attitude that the girls should be sex-workers (Mae Sai, 12-7-00).

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<sup>6</sup> The progression rate is calculated by comparing the number of students in Year 6 with the number of students in Year 7 the following year.

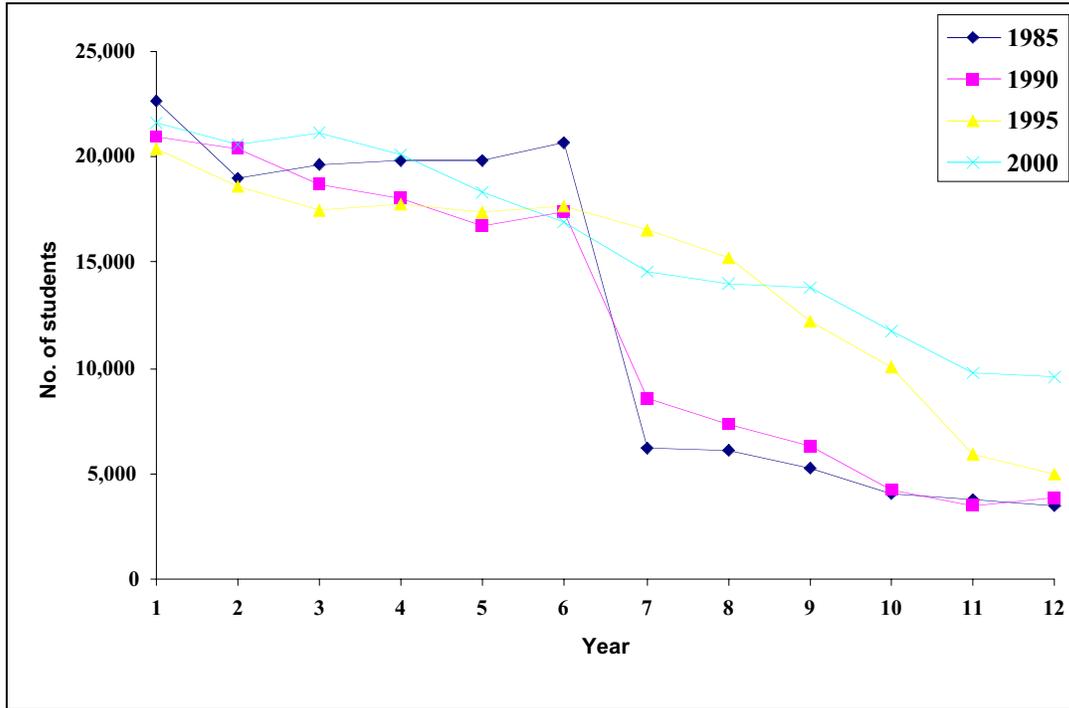
Graph 2 School progression rates for Thailand and *Changwat Chiang Rai*: 1984-2000



Source: (Chiang Rai Provincial Education Office Various years; Ministry of Education Various years 487).

These increasing enrolment rates indicate a shift in universal schooling from those aged 12 to those aged 15 (Graph 3). In 1985 and 1990 the standard number of years of schooling was only six years. When children finished this level they left school and started full-time employment, which placed them at great risk of entering into child prostitution. The only well paying jobs for children with limited education were illegal one, such as prostitution. However, by 1995 far fewer children were at risk as the standard numbers of years of schooling had shifted to Year 9. It was at the age of 15 that children were making the decision to continue with their studies or to enter the workforce.

Graph 3 Changing educational enrolments in *Changwat* Chiang Rai: 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2000



Source: Chiang Rai Provincial Education Office (Various years).

### *Gender differences*

A gender analysis of the data is important, as if it was mainly boys who were continuing with their education it would still leave girls at risk of being victims of child prostitution. The data reveal that in fact the girls have outperformed the boys. In 2000 in *Changwat* Chiang Rai more boys were studying in primary school, but this is to be expected with the greater number of boys in those years<sup>7</sup>. However, from Year 9 onwards there were more girls studying than boys were. These data include those children studying in the high schools and also the technical colleges.

The girls in *Changwat* Chiang Rai are not unique in Thailand; in a study on *Changwat* Khon Kaen I found that this was the case and that in Thailand there were more boys than girls in the workforce (Baker 1998). The greater number of girls in the education system supports the argument of Knodel (1997: 65-68) and Knodel and Jones (1996a:2; 1996b:684) that in Thailand poverty is a more important barrier to education than gender.

<sup>7</sup> See also the data on educational enrolments in *Changwat* Chiang Rai for 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2000.

## HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is unlike the above mentioned factors as it is likely to be both decreasing the overall number of children becoming victims of prostitution but at the same time forcing sub-groups of children into this work.

### *HIV/AIDS and decreasing numbers of victims of child prostitution*

Social Welfare Officer: It [child prostitution] has changed because of AIDS. Now, there are lots of girls staying in the villages, more than before. In the past girls who finished Year 4 or Year 6 were being sold [*Tok khiew*<sup>8</sup>] into prostitution in Bangkok, Hat Yai and Suhaigolok. But now most children are studying longer and longer. This is because parents have seen their daughters, who went off to sell sex, come back with AIDS and they have started to die. Now villagers are not accepting that their children leave to become prostitutes. Instead they are pushing their children to study. ... AIDS has helped greatly. ... Now, you will see in the villages all these beautiful girls, before you would see only old people. You could say it is the good fortune of the villages that AIDS has come, you can see this so clearly. In the villages people are dying every day, every week. ... Villagers are aware of AIDS and are tending not to send their daughters into this profession (Chiang Rai 26-6-2000).

This quote indicates the dramatic impact that HIV/AIDS has had on reducing the risk of children entering child prostitution, or at least in the minds of those that I interviewed. Interviewee after interviewee mentioned the impact of the disease in reducing the number of children entering into prostitution from their own communities. AIDS was clearly seen, by children, parents, teachers, NGO workers, police and government officials, the ex-brothel owner, and academics, as the main reason for the large reduction in the number of children entering prostitution.

At Chiang Khom School the first school where data were collected, the girls' role-play illustrating the problem of child prostitution in their community focused on AIDS with two performers catching the disease after being child prostitutes. One of the girls in real life had a mother who was HIV+. The disease has had a major impact in the lives of children in this and every community I visited. The theme AIDS was repeated by each student performance. All the girls performing in the role-play had relatives or knew of people who had the disease. The importance of AIDS is also reflected in the students' essays with 63 percent of students mentioning the disease. The fear of AIDS and thus a reduction in the number of children becoming victims of prostitution was a constant theme by both students and adults in the different communities.

The fear of AIDS in reducing the number of child victims of prostitution in the research sites of Northern Thailand contradicts other studies. The literature on AIDS

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<sup>8</sup> *Tok khiew* or "green harvest" connotes an elaborate system of village-based loans, with farmers pledging their daughters' labour in the commercial sex industry in exchange for the

and victims of child prostitution indicates that there is a strong link between the two. It is claimed that the disease is entrapping greater numbers of young girls in prostitution as men believe that such girls are safer or that they can even cure themselves by having sex with young virgins (see for example Asis 2000:7; Bangkok Post 1996; Bequele and Myers 1995:22; Berger and Glind 1999:4; Black 1995:7; Celentano et al. 1995:16; Chandravithum 1995:8; Kaime-Atterhog, Ard-Am and Sethaput 1994:52; Kanchanachitra 1999:1; Lim 1999:176; The Nation 1994:11).

I do not wish to claim that AIDS is reducing the number of child victims of prostitution, however, in the minds of people in Northern Thailand this is exactly what has happened. A 1997 report in the Bangkok Post (Assavanonda 1997) expressed these views by stating that “Thousands of northern girls have been saved from prostitution due to the fear of AIDS...” In other countries AIDS may well be forcing greater numbers of children into commercial sexual exploitation. Yet in Northern Thailand the return of HIV+ women, who were sex workers, has become a powerful message for parents not to send their daughters into this profession.

### ***AIDS is forcing some children into prostitution***

In the absence of action, the HIV/AIDS epidemic will almost certainly expand the demand for child labor, increase the exploitation of children in child labor markets, and worsen their working conditions. This is, unfortunately, the nature of HIV; it feeds synergistically off many of the weaknesses in the societal fabric and in turn amplifies them (Brown and Sittitrai 1995:145).

Although AIDS has had a dramatic impact on reducing the numbers of children entering child prostitution, the disease is posing a threat to those already most vulnerable in society. AIDS, although helping reduce the number of children in prostitution, may be forcing some children into this work. Children, whose parents are dying of AIDS or already have done so, may be forced to sell their bodies because of their precarious situation.

In April 2000 *Changwat* Chiang Rai had 2,982 children (in this case children are defined as those 19 and under) directly or indirectly affected by HIV/AIDS (Department of Public Health - Chiang Rai 2000). That is one or both parents have the disease or have already died. Some of the children would also be HIV+.

Not all of these children are at risk of entering into prostitution as most of them will be taken in by other members of their family, most likely grandparents (Brown and Sittitrai 1995:90). However, a proportion of these affected children would be forced into the labour market to support themselves or other siblings. As a parent becomes too sick to work the family is likely to slip into poverty. Children may be unable to continue with their schooling; instead they must work to help the family survive.

Mu<sup>9</sup>: She [his mother] cried, she couldn't accept it when I told her I had become a

prostitute. I told my mother that she had to accept it. The situation forced me to do this. I also cried, we both cried a lot. She couldn't accept it. My mother is not well [She is HIV+ and is unable to take care of herself]. ... I have to earn money to help my mother; she is my family (A 14-year-old boy prostitute, Chiang Mai 8-7-2000).

## **Legislation**

Police Officer: AIDS, it would be the main reason [for the decline in numbers of child prostitutes], then there is the new prostitution act, which has also had a big impact, as parents are scared. We can also arrest those men who are visiting child sex workers (Chiang Rai 28-6-2000).

The 1996 Prostitution Prevention Suppression ACT, which moved the emphasis of guilt for child prostitution onto parents, customers, agents and sex-establishment owners (National Committee for the Eradication of Commercial Sex 1996) has had a role in reducing the numbers of victims of child prostitution. However, as the police officer stated it is probably a secondary factor compared to AIDS. In a number of interviews this new law was mentioned, but in each case the interviewees spontaneously mentioned that AIDS has had a bigger impact in reducing the number of children in prostitution. Further, students in their essays and in the focus group discussions did not mention the new prostitution act. Even when asked directly about this law they were not sure of the details.

Although many people knew little of the new prostitution act and those who did saw it playing a minor role in changing things its importance can not be denied. As a police officer stated:

The new prostitution law allows us to arrest parents who are selling their daughters as well as the owners of sex establishments with under aged children. Now, children entering into the sex industry are doing so in a hidden way, such as at karaoke bars or other night entertainment establishments (Chiang Rai 28-6-2000).

The legislation has played a role in changing the nature of prostitution in Thailand. It has helped reduce the existence of 'brothels', once a major feature of the Thai-sex industry. Since the early 1990s other entertainment establishments, such as massage parlours, restaurants, karaoke, a-go-go, and beer bars, where sexual services can be bought have become more popular. The decline of brothels is important in the fight against child prostitution as the majority of child prostitutes have been located there or in low class bars away from the public view (Kaime-Atterhog, Ard-Am and Sethaput 1994:55; Lim 1999:182).

The new legislation and police crackdowns on brothels have played an important role in reshaping<sup>10</sup> the sex industry in Thailand. In November 1992 the then Thai Prime Minister, Chuan Leekpai, declared 'war' against child prostitution (The Nation 1994:17). It is claimed that from then the concern for child prostitution

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<sup>10</sup> The reshaping of the Thai sex industry does not mean a reduction in the number of sex workers, but a shift in where the sex workers operate, such as in karaoke bars rather than in brothels (see Berger and Glind 1990:2)

increased (Brown and Sittitrai 1995:31-32; Kaime-Atterhog, Ard-Am and Sethaput 1994:38). This is reflected in the reports of the Bangkok Post. In each year since 1992 reports on legislation and police crackdowns have been some of the most common stories on child prostitution in Thailand (Table 1).

Table 1 Subject matter of Bangkok Post articles on child prostitution in the Bangkok Post library service

Year	Thai girls	Foreigner girls	Boys	Legislation	Crack down	Students	Sold	Materialism	Other
1984	18			2	2				1
1985	2								
1992	3		2	3	14		1		4
1993	3	2		5	6				4
1994	16	3	1	5	5	2			15
1995	1	1			3				2
1996	2	6	1	16	3			1	11
1997	2	9		1	6	1			15
1998	1	4	2	1	5	1	1		14
1999				1		7			7
2000	1	4			3				1

Notes: The Bangkok Post library service had no articles on child prostitution between the years 1986 and 1991.

The 18 articles on Thai girls in 1984 refer to the death of sex workers, including girls from Northern Thailand who were killed in a fire in a Phuket brothel.

The 16 articles on Thai girls in 1994 are predominately about a 16-year-old hill-tribe girl from *Changwat* Chiang Rai who was a victim of child prostitution in Hat Yai and who committed suicide.

The 14 articles in 1992 on crackdowns coincide with the Chuan Leekpai government's 'war' on child prostitution.

The 16 articles on legislation in 1996 coincide with the new Prostitution Law.

## Factors placing child at risk of prostitution

### Poverty

Arjan: Seven to 10 years ago it was common for girls finishing Year 6 to go into this work. Most of their families were poor. They didn't have enough to eat. They prepared their daughters to be sent off so that they could earn money (Chiang Khom School 3-7-2000).

Poverty is the main reason why children enter into prostitution. This does not mean that the children are so poor that they have nothing to eat, or that the poorest of the poor undertake this work. Nevertheless, the lack of wealth is the factor that pushes most children into this work.

According to the student essays poverty was the main reason why children entered into prostitution, with over 85 percent of students mentioning this problem (Table 2). In the listing exercise poverty was ranked the most important factor in two schools and second most important in two other schools (Table 3).

Table 2 Main reasons given by students in their essays for why children enter child prostitution

Reasons why children enter prostitution	Number	Percent
Poverty	131	85.1
Want to be rich	101	65.6
Lack of education	80	51.9
Family problems	54	35.1
<i>Jaitaek</i> (Children who have bad behaviour)	50	32.5
Materialism	39	25.3
<i>Yaba</i>	20	17.4
<i>Todtan bunkhun</i> (Obligation)	8	5.2

Note: The total number of essays is 154.

In the student essays the next two most important factors were that the children wanted to be rich and because of a lack of education. These two factors are related to poverty, as an Akha man stated “With poverty there is only one way to earn money, which isn't tiring” (Akha village 26-7-2000). The lack of an education is a reflection of poverty; students leave school at the end of Year 6 or Year 9 because their families can not afford their children’s education. The rapid increase in school enrolments in *Changwat* Chiang Rai since 1983 is a result of families becoming economically more secure. They have fewer children on average and are finding it easier to educate them and ensuring that they are not in the prostitution.

The importance of poverty is demonstrated by who the sex workers of *Changwat* Chiang Rai are. There are few lowland Thais working in this field even though numerically they are the dominate group of the region. As a group their economic position is far better than the hill-tribe communities and the migrants from Myanmar. An Akha woman who had been a sex worker saw this:

The lowland Thais are rich, they do not have to do this work, but most of us in the mountains have to go and do this type of work because we are poor (ex-sex worker, Akha village 26-7-2000).

At the national level, as indicated by the Bangkok Post articles, foreign girls are being found in prostitution. Since 1996 there have been more stories about foreign girls, namely from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar than about Thai girls (Table 1).

Table 3 Reasons for why children become victims of prostitution

	Chiang Rai	Chang Noi	Chiang Khom	Mae Sai	Akha
--	------------	-----------	-------------	---------	------

Poverty	1	4	2	2	1
Lack of education	5		1	1	5
<i>Jaitaek</i>	2	1			
Parents force them			3		4
Gullible				3	
Mother or relatives have been prostitute				4	
Drugs	4	5	4	5	2*
Family problems	3	3	5		
Materialism		2			
Tricked					3

Note:

	Mentioned by the students at that school but not in their top five factors
	Not mentioned

\* The problem was not children and *yaba* as in other schools but parents who were drug users.

## Materialism

While the villagers are constantly exposed to modern and luxurious consumer goods through advertisements in the mass-media, their income from selling agricultural produce is meagre. Along with the importation of foreign technology and material comfort comes a frenzied desire for more (Kaime-Atterhog, Ard-Am and Sethaput 1994:47).

It is not always absolute poverty that forces children into prostitution. Materialism, the need for a better standard of living or the desire to have the latest and the best or simply to have has been a driving force pushing children into prostitution. Expectations far exceed the reality of village life and even that for many children in the provincial cities. If they want a pager, a mobile telephone or whatever, selling their bodies is a quick way of gaining money.

Within the Thai language press materialism is seen as an important factor in explaining why children are entering prostitution and particular so for students (Daily News 2000a; Verachai 2000). Verachai (2000) even claims that poverty is no longer the reason why children enter prostitution, but instead it is materialism. However, in the Bangkok Post materialism is hardly mentioned at all (Table 1).

According to the students materialism was a substantial factor for why children enter prostitution, although behind that of poverty. Within the essays 25 percent of the students mentioned materialism (Table 2). In the listing exercise the students in Chang Noi School regarded this as the second most important factor, while the other students either did not mention it at all, or it was not in their top 5 factors (Table 3).

Despite the focus on materialism by the Thai press and many people I interviewed it seems to me that poverty renders sex work the only means for upward

mobility for many girls and women. Materialism is often in the perception of the beholder. People that I interviewed, who claimed that girls entering prostitution were doing so in order to gain material things, more often than not already had the material objects that they perceived the girls were striving for. They were not in poverty and did not need to sell their bodies in order to maintain their standard of living.

### ***Yaba* and child prostitution**

It is my opinion that today there is not that many child prostitutes in Thailand. Before there were many, but now the new generation of Thai children are not selling their bodies. However, now there is another problem, which has replaced child prostitution, namely drugs (Essay, 14-year-old girl, Chiang Rai).

*Yaba*, amphetamine tablets, is a major issue in Northern Thailand. For many community members this has become the most important social issue in the area, far passing the problem of child prostitution. Teachers stated that they would confiscate the drug from students within the school grounds, however, they would not dare to do so off the school premises, as they feared reprisals from local drug dealers. At one school I was shown the foil and home made straw confiscated from a Year 6 girl (12 or 13 years old) who was caught taking *yaba*. All the teachers had numerous stories of their students using the drug.

There is a connection between *yaba* and children selling their bodies, as one student clearly stated: "If a girl is hooked and doesn't have money she will sell herself" (Chang Noi School 4-7-2000). A Thai newspaper report (Verachai 2000) on child prostitution argued that children on drugs are one of three groups of child prostitutes and that they would be willing to sell their bodies 24 hours a day, whenever they needed money for the drug. Some people that I interviewed felt *yaba* is now the main cause of child prostitution. For example, asking a social welfare officer in Chiang Rai if there was a connection between the drug and child prostitution, I was told:

Definitely! And the problem is spreading, 90 percent of students in the *Changwat* are users. In the villagers it is easy to buy and sell the drug, it is cheap. If females become hooked they have to find money to buy it. How can they find the money except by sleeping with men? They need the money to buy *yaba*. Now students are taking drugs. It is scary. It is a crisis (Chiang Rai 26-6-00).

Despite these concerns about *yaba* children in the study sites did not see it as a major reason for children becoming victims of prostitution. In their essays only 20 students (17.4 percent) mentioned children on drugs as being related to child prostitution (Table 2). In the listing exercise they thought it was a fourth or fifth level reason for why children entered into prostitution (Table 3). Only the Akha children saw drugs being important in forcing girls into prostitution. However, the students were not referring to children taking *yaba* but to their own parents' drug problems.

The connection between the drug and child prostitution needs further

investigation. How many children are using the drug, how many are hooked, how many children are hooked and do not have money and finally how many children are actually selling their bodies in order to gain the drug? The answers to these questions are unknown.

*Todtan bunkhun*, the payment of gratitude that children have to repay to their parents for being born, was hardly mentioned by the students. Only eight students mentioned this in their essays and in their listing exercise it did not even appear. Previous studies on girls entering into child prostitution from Northern Thailand have emphasised the importance of social values such as *todtan bunkhun* for why girls have entered into prostitution (see for example Berger and Glind 1999:5; Kaime-Atterhog, Ard-Am and Sethaput 1994:48; Sacks 1997:424).

I suspect that the importance of *todtan bunkhun* in forcing girls into prostitution is over stressed. Girls enter into prostitution because of poverty and not because of the social values of the region. Over the last two decades there has been a marked decrease in the numbers of girls entering into prostitution, yet the *value todtan bunkhun* still exists. Once in prostitution girls are likely to rationalise their position by stating that they are doing this work because of *todtan bunkhun*, namely their desire to help their family, but they are there because of the family's economic problems.

## Who is at high risk of child prostitution in *Changwat* Chiang Rai?

### Hill-tribe children<sup>11</sup>

Although the number of children in *Changwat* Chiang Rai at risk of being victims of child prostitution has decreased there are substantial numbers of children still at risk. The earlier section on education indicated that the progression rate in *Changwat* Chiang Rai increased from a low of 27.6 in 1984 to 94.7 percent in 1997 before falling to 87.6 percent in 2000 due to the economic crisis. Although there has been a substantial increase, over 12 percent of all students are not continuing with their schooling after primary school. These children are at great risk of being victims of child prostitution.

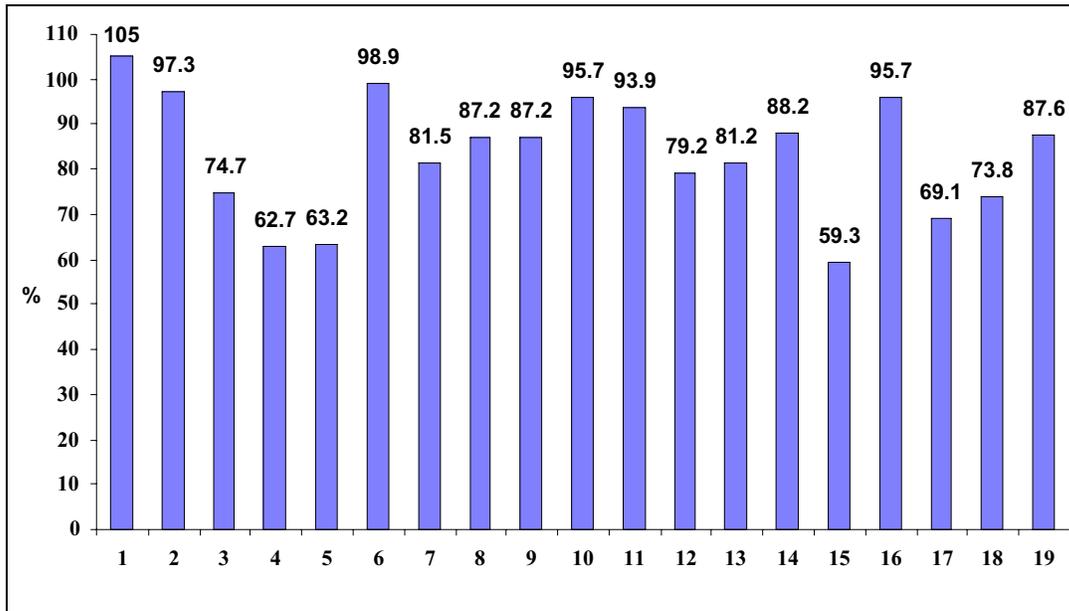
An analysis of the school enrolments for each *Ampher* in *Changwat* Chiang Rai reveal that most of the 12 percent of the children not continuing with their education are located in a small number of *Ampher* and that these particular *Ampher* have large numbers of hill-tribe people (Graph 4). In *Ampher* Muang (the city *Ampher*) over 100 percent of children continued their education from Year 6 to Year 7. This is possible as children from neighbouring *Ampher* either commute daily or migrate to the city, as the education facilities within the city are superior to those found elsewhere. At the same time in three *Ampher*, Mae Fa Luang, Mae Suai and Wiang Kaen only around 60 percent of children reached high school. The proportions of hill-tribe communities in these three *Ampher* are 88, 52 and 58 percent of the population.

A proportion of the 40 percent not progressing in these *Ampher* would be studying elsewhere, which would increase the number of children who were actually studying. Nevertheless, a progression rate of around 60 percent is very low, similar to that of the province as a whole 11 years earlier. Such a low progression rate is of great concern, with only primary school education some girls will have little to do except to enter into prostitution.

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<sup>11</sup> Hill-tribe people in this report refer to the ethnic minorities as identified by the Thai government and include Akha, Hmong, Htin, Karien, Khmu, Lahu, Lawa, Lisu, and Mien (Vogel 1996:24)

Graph 4 Proportion of students continuing with their education from years 6 to 7 for all *Ampher*, *Changwat* Chiang Rai 2000



Note: The first number below indicates the name of the *Ampher* in the above graph, while the number in the bracket indicates the proportion of people in that *Ampher* who are from one of the hill-tribe communities.

1 Muang (16.9), 2 Mae Lao (6.5), 3 Chiang Saen (18.4), 4 Mae Fa Luang (88.2), 5 Mae Suai (52), 6 Mae Chan (20.5), 7 Wiang Chai (1.7), 8 Phya Meng Rai (11.2), 9 Wiang Papao (23.9), 10 Padaet (0), 11 Thoeng (12.4), 12 Mae Sai (10.4), 13 Chiang Khong (15.4), 14 Khuntan (3.9), 15 Wiang Kaen (57.6), 16 Phan (1.8), 17 Doi Luang (25.5), 18 Chiang Rung (2.6), 19 **Changwat Chiang Rai** (23.1)

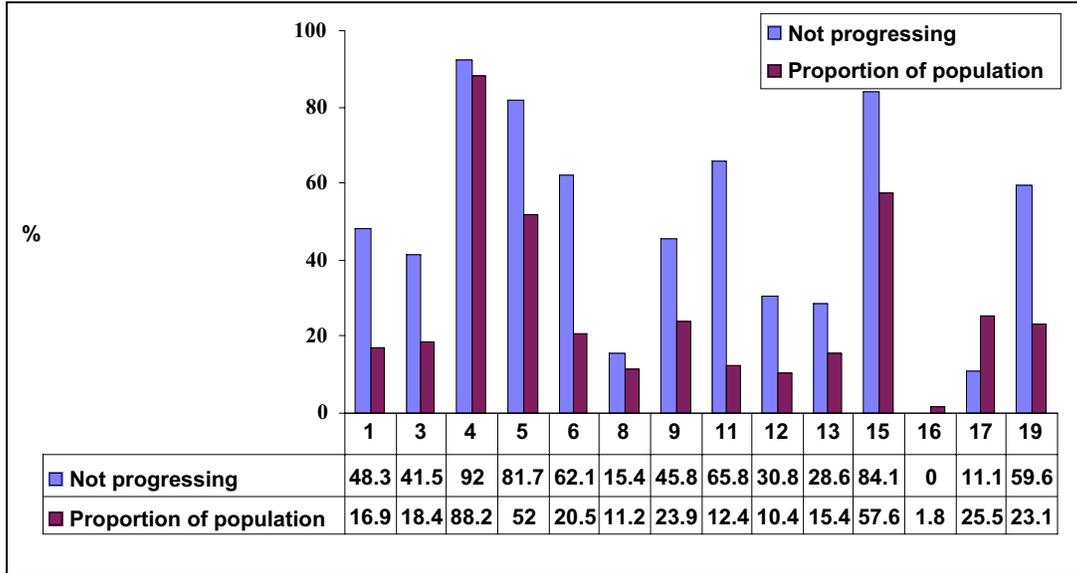
Source: (Chiang Rai Provincial Education Office 1998; Chiang Rai Provincial Education Office Various years; National Statistical Office 1998).

Not only are hill-tribe children more likely to leave school at the end of primary school in these three *Ampher*, but they are also far more likely to do so than lowland-Thai children in the other *Ampher*. Graph 5 is based on the names of all children in each *Ampher* who in March 2000 (at the end of the Thai school year) indicated that they would not progress to high school at the start of the school year in May 2000.

Using the names of the students the children were divided into those who are from hill-tribe communities and those who are lowland Thais. The graph does not include those *Ampher* where less than 10 students indicated that they would not study. The graph shows that the proportion of hill-tribe children stating that they would not study is greater than the proportion of their population in all but one *Ampher*. For example, in *Ampher* Muang 48 percent of children stating that they would not study were hill-tribe children, but the proportion of hill-tribe people in that district was only 17 percent. For *Changwat* Chiang Rai as a whole 60 percent of the students who indicated that they would not study were hill-tribe children but they

make up only 32 percent of the province's population.

Graph 5 Proportion of hill-tribe students compared to all other students who indicated they would not enter Year 7 compared with the hill-tribe population for the various *Ampher* in *Changwat Chiang Rai*: 2000



Note: 1 Muang, 3 Chiang Saen, 4 Mae Fa Luang, 5 Mae Suai, 6 Mae Chan, 8 Phya Meng Rai, 9 Wiang Papao, 11 Thoeng, 12 Mae Sai, 13 Chiang Khong, 15 Wiang Kaen, 16 Phan, 17 Doi Luang, **19 *Changwat Chiang Rai***

Source: (Chiang Rai Provincial Education Office 2000).

The reasons why hill-tribe children are far less likely to progress with their education are greater levels of poverty, poor roads, drugs, many of the children do not have Thai citizenship and a lack of decent schools. While collecting data I stayed in an Akha community in *Ampher* Mae Fa Luang, which was far poorer than any other community that I visited. The road to the village was unusable except for four-wheel drive vehicles once it started to rain and the general condition of the houses was poor, although the villagers claimed that the village had developed over the years, such as with the arrival of electricity.

The impact of drugs was a major issue in the community; here the children were not the problem as in other sites, but it was the parents. Of the eight girls who were involved in the role-play four of them had a father or both parents who were taking heroin. I also interviewed a married couple, who were heroin users and who were HIV+ as a result of sharing a needle. They had four children and a further one was on the way. These children were at high risk of becoming victims of child prostitution. Once their parents died they would have a very uncertain future as they had the added burden of not having ID cards.

The lack of an ID card affected every aspect of the lives of the hill-tribe

communities. Without an ID card the hill-tribe communities are not able to buy land, they can not open a bank account and they are not even allowed to travel out of the province without approval. The lack of an ID card is a major issue. It creates poverty, limits education and increases the risk of children becoming victims of child prostitution.

Dam: If you have no ID card you have no rights, you can not even think about struggling or negotiating your way out of trouble (Akha village 26-7-2000).

Without this card their children are not entitled to a school certificate even if they study. This is a major reason why girls are being forced into prostitution.

Dam: However, if you don't have an ID card you have no rights to study in higher education. What I am saying is that if you do not have an ID card you will only get a piece of paper saying that you have finished Year 6 or Year 9 but no certificate (Akha village 26-7-2000).

A final problem for this community and other villages in *Ampher* Mae Fa Luang was that the schools in the area were limited and of poor quality. In the whole *Ampher* there is only one school catering for students in Years 10, 11 and 12. While the school that I visited lacked many of the facilities that the other schools had. This school was located next to the village that I stayed in but also served other villages. The children from these other villages had to walk up to a couple of hours to reach the school. Children wishing to continue their schooling after primary school had a two-hour walk just to reach the nearest high school. With no prospect of gaining a certificate and the need to walk long distances each day it is unsurprising that the progression rate in this *Ampher* was so low.

### **Children from Myanmar**

In Mae Sai there are many occupations. There are both many people and many occupations for them. But the occupation that most people know in Mae Sai is prostitution, because it is well known in Mae Sai. This occupation has girls from Myanmar, Laos and from other places. The girls in this profession come into it on their own free will because their own countries are not that developed and thus they come here. The girls have not studied thus this is their main profession to gain money. Some of them have come into Thailand legally, while others have entered illegally by boat, across the Mae Sai River that forms the border. Some girls will be sent by their parents to sell their bodies, their parents do not have money and thus they have to send their children to Thailand. Another reason is that the parents or others lie to the girls telling them that they will get a good job, and they believe them and thus come to Thailand. Prostitution is a profession that my family finds disgusting, because they bring one disease, HIV or AIDS, some of the women have this disease and give it to people in my town (Essay, 14-year-old girl Mae Sai).

As the school student articulates Mae Sai has an active sexual market, which includes a number of under-aged girls who are from Myanmar. Changes to the fundamental political and economic conditions in Myanmar must occur before the flow of girls and women into the sex industry in Thailand stops. With conflict in Myanmar and greater levels of poverty in the country, Thailand will continue to

The students' essays indicate that girls from Myanmar are a major component of child prostitution in the region. The students were not asked to name the geographic areas where children entering into prostitution came from. Nevertheless, the most commonly referred group were children from Myanmar, with a number of students specifying the Shan who are the dominant ethnic group crossing the border at Mae Sai (Images Asia 1997:17). All but one reference to Myanmar and Shan children came from the students studying in Mae Sai. This reflects the reality of the sex industry in Mae Sai with nearly all the sex workers coming from Myanmar.

For some women and girls from Myanmar, living illegally in Thailand is better than remaining in their own country (Images Asia 1997:17:2). Even conditions in a sex establishment at the border can be seen better than that back home. An NGO worker stated:

When the girls [from Myanmar] come to work here [Mae Sai], they see all the beautiful things, with everything so comfortable. They don't have to farm under the hot sun, instead they can watch TV, go up stairs with customers, put on makeup, wear beautiful clothes and as a result they don't want to return home (Mae Sai, 12-7-00).

All the sex workers in Mae Sai that I talked to had decided to undertake this work. They were not sold, trafficked or tricked into prostitution. They knew exactly what they would have to do and decided that they would opt for this type of work. (This finding is similar to that expressed in a forthcoming ILO report - discussions with the author).

Noi: She [the Madam] told me that I could do this work if I wanted to or I could do any other work that I wanted. However, if I did this work I would quickly earn more money (Shan sex worker, Mae Sai 13-7-2000).

Noi, due to economic problems at home, decided to do this work. Her parents were farmers and were struggling economically. Further, she had a younger brother who was in hospital and the family needed extra money to cover the medical expenses. Resulting from these troubles Noi's 14-year-old sister also decided to undertake this work and was at the same sex establishment as Noi. With the economic problems at home Noi made a decision to come to Thailand.

I went to her [the Madam was from the same village as Noi] house, which is in Chiang Tung [Shan State, Myanmar]. I told her that I wanted to work, I had no money, and I wanted to help my parents. She told me "please don't worry I will help you, you don't have to cry. I will go back to Thailand now but I will send someone to pick you up". And she did send someone to pick me up. I went with two friends, when we reached Mae Sai she met us. We stayed at her house for nearly half a month before starting work on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2000 (Shan sex worker, Mae Sai 13-7-2000).

Although girls coming from Myanmar are a high-risk group, working with them will be highly problematic. Given the political conflicts in that country it is unlikely that ECPAT or its various partners will be able to work directly with these children in their home communities. Nevertheless, Myanmar is a major source of children entering into prostitution in Northern Thailand.

### *Assumption*

#### ***Children in prostitution on the Myanmar side of the border***

Based on reports from NGO workers, sex workers in Mae Sai, and men in Myanmar there is a sex industry on the Myanmar side of the border. It is unclear how large this industry is as I was unable to see it for myself, although reports indicated that it was growing. I was told it was about 5 kilometres from the border crossing and that it was obvious at nighttime. It was impossible for me to see it as I had to be on the Thai side of the border before 6.30 p.m. Despite not seeing the sex establishments I am assuming that there would be more girls in prostitution on the Thai side of the border than on the Myanmar side. This assumption is based on the belief that girls can gain more money than women can and that the price for this service would be higher on the Thai side. I was told by the madams, the sex workers and NGO workers that the younger the girl the higher price that she can gain. It is far more likely that the majority of Thai, Chinese, Western and Japanese customers will be on the Thai side of the border when the border closes. Further, there seemed few restrictions on women on the Myanmar side of the border gaining a day pass and then disappearing into the sex industry.

#### **Street children and broken families**

Lek: Most street children who do not have work that is bringing in money will be at a bar selling sex. They will take customers so as to get money to survive (ex-street boy, Chiang Mai 9-7-2000).

Street children are at risk of being victims of child prostitution. The numbers of children who are in this situation are not large, particularly in *Changwat* Chiang Rai. Nevertheless there are pockets of such children and with few other means of earning money they are likely to be sexually exploited by adults.

Although there may not be large numbers of street children in *Changwat* Chiang Rai, there is a substantial number in Chiang Mai. This city is much larger than Chiang Rai and has numerous tourist attractions. The Thai and foreign tourists in turn attract the street children, as they are able to earn a livelihood by begging, selling flowers or selling their bodies to them.

Lek: Selling their bodies is better [then selling flowers] as they get more money. It is also easy; you don't have to do much. You just sleep, masturbate the man and you get money (ex-street boy, Chiang Mai 9-7-2000).

Once on the street the children and they are mainly boys, often have no other option but to offer themselves:

Jet: Staying at home was boring. I left home to have friends. One friend persuaded me to sell my body. He asked me if I wanted to have money and I said I did. I was 13 then (17-year-old boy prostitute, Chiang Mai 8-7-2000).

Selling sex for street boys can be highly profitable. According to Lek, the ex-street

boy:

New children would get 1,500 baht a night if they masturbate and have anal sex with the customer. Staying all night with him they would get about 2,000 or more. Other nights they would only get 300 to 500 baht, it all depends (Chiang Mai 9-7-2000).

Lek, himself had been a child prostitute while he was living on the streets in Chiang Mai. For him gaining money was not difficult:

It was easy to get money. It was enjoyable. You could earn money quickly, but the money would disappear quickly. The money was hot. I would buy everything for my friends. We would go and drink alcohol and I would also buy clothes. I would get 1,500 baht and would use it all in one or two days (Chiang Mai 9-7-2000).

All the street boys that I talked to were lowland Thais, except for one boy who was from Laos. However, these boys and the NGO workers helping them all indicated that the majority of street children were from Mae Sai, which meant from Myanmar, with the next largest group being from hill-tribe communities throughout Northern Thailand.

Each of the lowland-Thai boys had a traumatic story, which had forced them on to the streets from where they were selling themselves. Within the school essays over a third of students felt family problems was a reason why children enter child prostitution (Table 2). One boy aged 14 who spoke freely about why he was prostituting himself indicated that he did not have a father and that his mother was not well. He had to raise money for his and his mother's accommodation as well as trying to take care of his mother. Each of the street children that I talked to had a similar story with one of no parent.

Although *Changwat* Chiang Rai does not have a substantial number of street children there is a noticeable population of street children in *Ampher* Mae Sai. This is where street children from Myanmar first arrive in Thailand. They were making a living by begging, selling things, and maybe by selling their bodies. I saw no evidence of this at the border; however, this location seems to be a stop over point for street boys from Myanmar before they enter the Bangkok, Pattaya and Chiang Mai sex markets.

### ***Jaitaek* and students**

Student: She was *jaitaek*, she wanted a house and she wanted to be rich. She went [into prostitution] because she had already had sex and her parents forced her to go. An agent came and contacted her. The other girl was also *jaitaek*, she went out at night often, and her parents weren't interested in her. They left her alone just like people leave crippled dogs at the temple. Then a person came along and asked if she wanted to go and work. She was undecided but her parents wanted her to, as if she was going to have sex again she should be paid for it (Chiang Khom School 30-6-2000).

Based on interviews and general discussions there is great concern about children who are described as *jaitaek* and/or students as they are perceived to be selling their bodies. Within the Thai press there has been a series of articles about students who

are working part time as prostitutes (Daily News 2000a; Daily News 2000b; Daily News 2000c; Thai Rat 2000; Verachai 2000).

Those living in or close to Chiang Rai expressed the greatest concern about *jaitaek* children. In the listing exercise, for the students at Chang Noi School, studying only 15 kilometres from Chiang Rai, the main reason why children were entering prostitution was because they were *jaitaek*, while for the students in Chiang Rai School the behaviour of *jaitaek* children were the second most important factor. In the other schools the students either did not mention this group at all or it was not in their top five factors (Table 3). Within the school essays 50 students, which was a third of all students, mentioned *jaitaek* as a group that was likely to enter into prostitution (Table 2).

Teenagers living close or in the city and with easy access to the discotheques were more likely to be seen as *jaitaek*. The discotheques are where many teenagers 'hang out' and where monetary transactions are taking place in exchange of sexual services, however, not all female teenagers going to the discotheques are selling their bodies. Most teenagers going to these places are doing so because it is fun; it is the place for teenagers to be seen. Further, those selling sex at these places are not necessary teenagers. A-go-go dancers told me that sometimes when they did not have customers at the end of the night they would go to a discotheque to pickup one.

Although the city students were more concerned about those who were *jaitaek* they were the group who had the least direct experience about child prostitution, as according to their essays. There was a divide between those students who were writing about direct experiences and those who were not. In Chiang Rai School 34 of 39 students (87 percent), either indicated that they knew nothing about child prostitution, or their essays were about the past or about elsewhere. This compares with 38 percent in the Akha and Chang Noi Schools, 15 percent in Mae Sai School and only 6 percent in Chiang Khom School.

It would seem to me that many teenagers are being branded guilty of being *jaitaek* and thus of selling their bodies simply because they are doing the done thing of going out with friends. This does not deny that there would be female teenagers at the discotheques who would be willing to have sex for free or for a fee.

## **Main patterns of entry into child prostitution**

There are numerous ways in which children from Northern Thailand have entered into prostitution ranging from being 'sold' to 'volunteering' themselves. It is unclear how important each method of entry is, as there are conflicting views from different sources.

Agents were the most often mentioned way of recruitment in the school essays (Table 4), with over 60 percent of students mentioning them. One teacher gave a description of how agents in the past would seek girls:

Arjan: In 1983-84 when I first started teaching I was 19 years old, an agent came to me and asked who are these girls' parents. ... She had a vehicle, as there were many girls in the village who went with her. When the school year finished in April the agent returned to the village, as we were making merit. I was the teacher helping at the main table and the agent was working out who was who. She knew who had finished school (Chiang Khom School 3-8-2000).

Table 4 The main ways children enter child prostitution, as according to the school essays

Means of entering child prostitution	Number	Percent
Agent	92	59.7
Tricked	76	49.4
Child volunteers	73	47.4
Parents force them	65	42.2
Parents sell their children	53	34.4
<i>Jaitaek</i>	50	32.5
Persuaded by relative or friend who is a sex worker	39	25.3
<i>Tok khiew</i>	1	0.6

Note: The total number of essays is 154.

An ex-sex worker also talking of the past claimed that:

The agents would give between 5,000 to 20,000 baht to the parents. It depended on their level of debt. Those parents who were in greater debt were given more but they wouldn't know how difficult their daughter's lives would be (Chang Noi Village 5-7-2000).

It would seem that presently agents are still operating. One girl in a focus group discussion claimed that an agent had contacted her in the last school holiday, while other girls claimed that they had personally been contacted in the last couple of years.

It would seem that the character of an 'agent' maybe changing. According to many of the students and adults the agent today is likely to be an ex or current-sex worker and someone known to the girl. A quarter of the student essays mentioned relatives or friends who are sex workers trying to persuade children to enter into this work. The sex worker's debt is reduced if she can recruit a friend (Celentano et al. 1995:21) providing an economic incentive to try to recruit others into this work. The sex workers are likely to be a large proportion of today's agents.

Student: Usually the agents will be relatives as they will be more believable. The agents will be women who were sex workers and they will ring the madams (Chang Noi School 4-7-2000).

Student: Those who have done this work would return home and will tell people about their work, trying to persuade others to go. They will get money for this, the money that the agents would have got (Chiang Khom School 30-6-2000).

These women or girls would return to their villages with stories of how they are making lots of money and how the work itself is not difficult:

Arjan: The girls [returning home] would show off their wealth and tell others about their easy life. They sleep with customers and after a moment they have money

They don't have to work hard. They have money to build a house, to buy a car, to eat at restaurants and to travel. The younger girls are jealous and they want to go also (Chiang Khom School 3-7-2000).

In the essays the second most commonly method of entry into prostitution was being tricked. This method, if still being used, is likely to be restricted to only certain groups. According to many people that I interviewed lowland Thais could not be tricked due to their increased levels of education and their experience with other members of their communities who in the past were tricked.

Those interviewed felt hill-tribe children and those from Myanmar could be tricked into prostitution. The Akha students themselves indicated that they were at risk of being tricked. In the listing exercise these Akha students thought this was the third most important way girls ended in prostitution, although the other students either did not mention this at all or it was not in their top five factors. According to the Akha children a *Jae* (a Chinese word for older sister that has entered the Thai language) would enter the village to trick the girls into prostitution by offering them good jobs.

Although children could be tricked into prostitution none of the sex workers that I talked to were tricked. One sex worker from Myanmar after being asked if girls from there were be tricked stated:

Noi: No. They wouldn't be tricked; almost all of us have decided ourselves to come here. This is because back there they would have thought about their problems; at home there is no way of earning money. Each day they are never in the shade, they suffer from the sun, they are always working on the farm (Shan sex worker, Mae Sai 13-7-2000).

The third most commonly mentioned means of recruitment in the essays was by the children volunteering themselves. This may seem depressing that children would volunteer to do this work and it can be argued that they would not be aware of the consequences. However, many children living in poverty know that there is one occupation that can earn them a lot of money. Becoming a sex worker for some children is a rational decision. They know that there are many risks involved, but if they are successful the benefits could be huge as shown by women returning with foreign husbands and money to build new houses. It must be stressed that all the sex workers that I talked to indicated that they had volunteered to do this work.

Student: Yes, they volunteered to go. They finished Year 9 and didn't want to study. They were lazy to work; they didn't want to go to the rice fields. Their parents asked if they wanted to go and work with their auntie. They agreed to go. They knew from the start that they were going to be sex workers and they went (Chang Noi School 4-7-2000).

The next two methods of entry into prostitution were parents forcing children and parents selling their children. Sixty-five students (42.2 percent) indicated that children are forced into prostitution by their parents. It is frightening that any parent could force their children into prostitution, however, when this does happen it is too easy to blame the parents. Reality is likely to be far more complex than parents simply forcing their children into this work. Rather than the parents, it is the evil of poverty

that is to be blamed. If this is still taking place today it is the Thai government that should be blamed, as there is a lack of social security and policies alleviating poverty.

Over a third of students in their essays mentioned parents selling their children as a way children enter into prostitution. This is an alarming rate however; I saw no evidence that this was happening. None of the sex workers that I talked to indicated that they or any of their fellow workers had been sold. For example asking an a-go-go dancer about girls being sold by parents, she stated:

No, that doesn't exist. The women come by themselves to apply for the work that is how it is.

Asking her further if there would be cases of girls being sold in other establishments, she stated: "No, there isn't. I have never heard of this" (Chiang Rai 2-8-2000). The views of this worker is backed by a Thai Member of Parliament, who is the president of a NGO working for female teenagers in Northern Thailand, and who stated that she thought the selling of daughters probably does not exist anymore (Thai Rat 2000).

*Tok khiew*, a down payment system where agents give loans to villagers with the farmers pledging their daughters in exchange has received great attention (see for example Celentano et al. 1995:19; Tasker 1994:28). Nevertheless, this system no longer exists. In none of the sites that I visited did anyone mention this system of recruiting girls into prostitution. In the Akha School none of the students had even heard of this system. Only one student wrote about *tok khiew* and that student was writing about the past. The ex-brothel owner even suggested that the *tok khiew* system never existed. He said that it never happened, as there was no economic sense in paying money to families so that in the future the daughter would enter into prostitution. Why pay money for a girl so as to receive benefits from her in the future, when there was a ready supply of girls entering prostitution due to poverty. He said that there was no *tok khiew*, but a period that parents would not discourage their daughters from doing this work because of poverty.

## **Estimating the unknowable: numbers of child prostitutes in**

### **Northern Thailand**

Child prostitution is illegal and has been the target of highly publicized attempts by the government to eliminate its occurrence. Hence, the sexual activities of children are highly concealed and counting the numbers working in commercial sex is an impossible task (Kaime-Atterhog, Ard-Am and Sethaput 1994:40).

It is impossible to determine the exact number of child victims of prostitution. Despite that many 'estimations' have been made, which in turn have been criticised for being too high or too low.

Given the problems in ascertaining the number of children in prostitution this paper does not attempt to determine the number of such children in Northern

Thailand or in *Changwat* Chiang Rai. It, however, briefly uses the technique developed by Guest (1994) in his estimation on the number of child prostitutes in Thailand to indicate that the numbers in the region are declining.

Guest using 1990 population census figures calculated those girls aged between 11 and 17 who were at 'no risk', at 'low risk' and at 'high risk' of being child prostitutes. Doing this he used the following variables: whether the girls were living apart from their family, attending school, living in an urban area and had migrated in the last five years. His results indicated that between 0.7 to 2.5 percent of girls or between 30,000 and 100,000 girls were in the 'high risk' group. These girls were at 'high risk' but that does not mean that they were child prostitutes. He concludes that a figure of around 36,000 girls in prostitution was likely to have been the case in 1990.

Using the range of 0.7 to 2.5 with the age group 10-19 for *Changwat* Chiang Rai in 1980, 1990 and 1998 the numbers would have been 799 to 2855 in 1980, 686 to 2449 in 1990 and 557 to 1988 in 1998. **This is not an estimation of the number of child prostitutes in this province**, however, a simply demonstration that as the population of girls decreases, as is occurring in Northern Thailand, and given that all other factors stay constant, the number of girls at high risk declines.

However, not all factors have stayed the same. There has been a marked increase in the number of girls in the education system and this has decreased those at risk substantially. In 1990 the progression rate for Thai children going on to Year 7 was 57 percent for Thailand and 49 percent for *Changwat* Chiang Rai. In 1998 the figures were 97 and 91 percent. What this means is that if Guest's technique is used on the 2000 census data once they are available it would reveal a marked decline in the number of victims of child prostitution.

## **Recommendations**

Below are a series of recommendations for ECPAT to consider.

### ***Recommendation 1***

Considering the rapid and dramatic reduction in the number of children at risk of becoming victims of child prostitution ECPAT should focus on other countries in the region with greater problems.

I personally do not agree with this option as I feel that there is still a problem of children becoming victims of child prostitution and I feel ECPAT has a major role to combat this problem.

### ***Recommendation 2***

A greater emphasis should be placed on data collection. ECPAT is not a research organisation and thus is not expected to be constantly carrying out research on the problem of child prostitution. Nevertheless, ECPAT can be involved in data collection as well as monitoring the changes in the lives of children in the areas that ECPAT operates. If ECPAT's efforts are to be effective they must be better targeted to those children most at risk.

The most important data that should be collected are the educational enrolment figures in the region. These data will indicate the areas with low progression rates from primary to high school and thus the girls most at risk of becoming victims of child prostitution.

Close co-operation with the education authorities would result in a wealth of knowledge for ECPAT, which would strengthen the organisation's ability to target the children most at risk. Names and addresses of all children indicating that they will not continue their education after Year 6 and Year 9 are collected each year. These are the children at risk. Further, individual schools would be able to inform ECPAT when children dropout during the school year. These children are also at risk.

### ***Recommendation 3***

ECPAT should attempt to work directly with people who are HIV+ and in particular those who were sex workers. In the minds of many people in the region AIDS is the factor that has reduced the number of victims of child prostitution. ECPAT should use this belief to its full. Taking HIV+ ex-sex workers to schools would reinforce the connection in the minds of children and their parents of prostitution and death.

One of the main way that girls in the region are being recruited into prostitution is through friends or relatives who are sex workers. When visiting their own

community they will persuade others to do this work. The girls are hearing stories of how large amounts of money without the need to work hard can be gained. Ex-sex workers who are HIV+ would provide a more realistic view of the dangers of such work.

#### ***Recommendation 4***

ECPAT should also attempt to educate men visiting sex workers of the greater dangers of catching HIV/AIDS from young girls. From this study it would seem that the supply of girls for sex work has been reduced by the impact of AIDS. The demand to visit sex workers and particular young sex workers could be reduced if there is greater awareness among customers that young girls are at greater risk than older sex workers.

#### ***Recommendation 5***

A shift of focus towards children from Myanmar and possibly Laos (research needs to determine if Laotian children are entering Northern Thailand in other provinces as children from Myanmar are in *Changwat Chiang Rai*), as these children are at risk of becoming victims of child prostitution.

This recommendation is fraught with difficulties. Due to political conflicts it is unlikely that ECPAT will be able to operate within Myanmar in the near future. Yet, this is the region which is providing a large proportion of the under aged sex workers in *Changwat Chiang Rai*. Further, in Mae Sai where all the under aged sex workers are from Myanmar there is the NGO EMPOWER that is already successfully working with these girls.

#### ***Recommendation 6***

There should be a shift in ECPAT's work in Northern Thailand towards hill-tribe children. In the past ECPAT has worked with one NGO with a focus on these children. However, it is my belief that other NGOs, particularly groups that are made up on one or another ethnic group, should be invited to be partners with ECPAT.

This study has indicated that hill-tribe children are at risk because of greater levels of poverty, lack of proper educational facilities and the lack of Thai citizenship. These factors are structural problems in Thai society and are unlikely to be changed by ECPAT or its partners. However, ECPAT through its data collection could highlight these problems and show how it is forcing hill-tribe children into prostitution.

#### ***Recommendation 7***

There should be greater emphasis on street children within the ECPAT program. This issue is relevant in *Changwat Chiang Mai*, the largest province and the key tourist

site of the region. Other possible sites where ECPAT partners could be working with street children are the border towns, such as in Mae Sai. The street children in Chiang Mai indicated that many of their numbers were coming from Mae Sai, which meant from Myanmar.

### ***Recommendation 8***

A major gap in the lives of children in Northern Thailand is the lack of organised sport. There is very little to do for teenagers except going to the discotheques, pubs and bars of the regions, the very places that are seen at making them at risk. ECPAT could improve the lives of the children of the region by establishing sporting events.

There is a need for alternatives in the lives of Northern Thai children. Organised sport, such as football, volleyball and basketball could make an important contribution to the lives of children in the region. It would also allow ECPAT to work closely with governmental agencies such as those in the school system and police authorities. It could also be combined with attempts to combat *yaba*, an issue that is seen to be now a more important problem than child prostitution.

## List of Thai words used in this paper and their English meanings

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Thai	English
<i>Ampher</i>	District, administrative division below province
<i>Arjan</i>	Teacher
<i>Changwat</i>	Province
<i>Jae</i>	A Chinese word for older sister that has entered the Thai language
<i>Jaitaek</i>	A child who has lost the way, not interested in education or being responsible. Prefers to do activities considered by adults as unsuitable. A literate translation would be ‘a child with a broken heart’, but a closer translation would be ‘a child with a broken mind’.
<i>Todtan bunkhun</i>	Payment of breast milk to the mother, the debt of gratitude that children have to their mother and father.
<i>Tok khiew</i>	System used by agents to gain girls for the prostitution market. Down payments were made to parents with the agreement that once the girl reached a certain age she would be given to the agent.
<i>Yaba</i>	Amphetamine tablets

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**List of organisations working on child prostitution in Northern  
Thailand**

## Chiang Rai Province

### Association for Community and Ecology Development (ACED)

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**Contact person:** Mr. Tewin Akarasilakul

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**Established:** 1987

#### Objectives:

1. To promote and support village and community organisations in order to strengthen them to become self-supporting and self-reliant.
2. To provide, through ACED's Baan Saeng Tawan schools, one year of non-formal education, with financial support, to disadvantaged children in rural areas leaving compulsory primary education. The curricula of the schools are designed to be relevant to people living in reserve forest areas: ecology, environmental conservation, sustainable development and subsistence living.
3. To provide scholarships to children whose rights have been violated or risk being violated. To campaign for social and state protection for women and children's rights, particularly assistance to children and women from the countries of the Mekong region whose rights have been violated.
4. To co-ordinate and collaborate with national and international

government and non-governmental agencies and development organisations.

5. To provide an educational and training centre on community development and the ecology of the Mekong Basin for the people and communities of Northern Thailand and neighbouring countries.

**Projects and Activities:**

1. Scholarships to disadvantaged girls finishing primary education, in Chiang Rai province's Muang and Wiang Chai districts and Chiang Rung sub-district, and Phayao province's Dok Kham Tai district.
2. Project to support the networking and development of community-forest land, among communities with conservation forests and in national park areas, in Chiang Rai and Phayao provinces.
3. Project for the development of disadvantaged women, working with rural women's groups in Chiang Rai and Phayao.
4. Natural Agriculture Promotion and Development Project, in 24 villages in Chiang Rai province and 36 villages in Phayao province.

**Activities Specifically Related to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:**

1. Protection of risk group at source
2. Assistance to child victims
3. Stimulation of policy-making
4. Campaigning for public awareness

**Target Groups:**

- Priority:* Children and women  
*General:* Community leaders and farmers

**Development and Education Program for  
Daughters and Communities Centre (DEPEC)**

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**Background:**

DEPDC was founded in 1989 as a community-based initiative aimed at preventing young girls from being forced into prostitution. Originally supporting 19 girls, today DEPDC assists over 400 children by providing an alternative to prostitution and labour by providing them with education, job training, help with finding work and life development courses. DEPDC works throughout Northern Thailand from 5 centres, with its headquarters in Mae Sai.

**Project Background:**

The Emergency Shelter for Cases of Child Abuse, Abandonment, and Orphaned Children project is an initiative conceived by DEPDC in response to the growing numbers of children being abandoned, orphaned, and abused in Northern Thailand, and as a consequence, who are in need of emergency shelter and care. DEPDC research has found that children from such backgrounds are placed at a higher risk of being forced into prostitution and labour. A number of factors have contributed to this trend, including the breakdown of family units often leading to divorce or separation, growing poverty fuelled by the economic crisis, the addiction of one or more parents to drugs, consumerism, and the spread of AIDS in Northern Thailand. Left alone, these children often turn to prostitution, illegal work, begging, or stealing in a bid for survival.

Based on this, DEPDC believes there is a need to provide a secure, stable, and safe place for children in danger of exploitation. From the basis of secure environment, the struggle by the children to overcome exploitation and abuse, to become confident, strong, and productive adults in society, will be supported and further aided.

**Aims of Project:**

- ◆ To build appropriate accommodation for children in need of emergency shelter and care.
- ◆ To improve the privacy and security of the children's accommodation.
- ◆ To improve the physical environment of the children, which will have an impact on their health as well as feelings of belonging and safety.

**Beneficiaries:**

- ◆ Those children who are at risk of entering prostitution and child labour.
- ◆ Those children who are orphans, abandoned, or facing physical and emotional abuse at home.
- ◆ Those children who are in contact with drug addicts or are taking drugs themselves, and are in danger of contracting HIV/ AIDS.

# EMPOWER

Mae Sai Centre

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**Contact person:** Ms. Bupore Yaebiang  
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**Established:** 1999.

## **A Sex Worker's Rights Organisation:**

Every person, every woman, has the right to equal rights. Every woman has the right to choose her job and work safely, without exploitation, with a living wage, and without harassment.

### *A Support Centre for Sex Workers*

Empower is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) which supports sex workers who work in bars, brothels, massage parlours, karaoke restaurants, and other entertainment venues.

## **Other Activities and Community Outreach:**

We distribute information about health, HIV/AIDS, safer sex, women's rights, human rights and laws relating to women and sex worker through brochures, a newsletter, and cassette tapes to sex workers at their work places. We aim to increase understanding of issues facing sex worker and to promote co-operation and support.

## **A Centre:**

Empower is a place where sex workers meet for friendship and to share their daily experiences and ideas about working, dealing with health issues, safer sex, HIV/AIDS, survival, and new opportunities. Empower is a space where women come to exchange thoughts and opinions about women's rights, justice, human rights, laws, economics and gender. Sharing ideas with one another, women gain new understanding of issues relevant to their lives and the world around them.

**A Non-Formal Education School:**

Empower is a community school where sex workers can study the primary and high school Non-Formal Education programs for further academic and vocational study. Empower is accredited by the Thai Ministry of Education and students who complete primary or high school receive certificates from the NFE School Department and Ministry of Education.

**Activities:**

- ◆ Thai Language Classes.
- ◆ Counselling about health and HIV/AIDS

## Hill Area Development Foundation (HADF)

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### **Background:**

Approximately 1 million Hill-tribe people live in small villages scattered throughout North and Western Thailand. Most have migrated from China, Burma and Laos over the past 200 years, a process that continues even today due to the political situation in Burma. Recently, hill-tribe people have been forced to abandon traditional agricultural practices of shifting cultivation of rice and maize, due to increased pressure on land from population growth, government land use policies, tourism and cash crop/forestry interests. Now required to cultivate the same plots of land on a continuous basis, the hill-tribes face problems of sustainability.

Deforestation of the hills, increased contact with the outside world owing to a loss of cultural values, and lack of both citizenship and legal land rights are also problems that affect hill-tribe people of Northern Thailand.

### **The Foundation:**

The Hill Area Development Foundation (HADF) was founded in 1986 as a support mechanism to assist hill-tribes in dealing with problems ranging from environmental management to social development. Today, HADF works in 27 Akha, Lahu, Lisu and Mien villages in the watershed area of the Mae Chan and Mae Salaong rivers on the Thai-Burma border. Funding support is provided through such agencies as Bread for the World, Terres de Hommes, the Population and Community Development Association, ACCU, UNDCP, PLAN International and ECPAT-Taksavarkki.

### **Objectives:**

- people.
2. To co-operate with government agencies and other organisations for increased self-reliance of the Hill-tribe communities.
  3. To promote respect for the value of Hill-tribe cultures and to conserve and develop these cultures and traditions as appropriate.
  4. To promote the concept of people and nature living in harmony and to support environmental conservation activities.
  5. To support committed individuals in their work with Hill-tribe people.

### **Prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation:**

With the goal of ending juvenile sexual exploitation, HADF is proud to be a partner in the global network known as End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT-TAKSVARKKI). In this project, HADF targets young people in the watershed areas, working to prevent the entrance of these children into the sex industry through educational programmes.

### **Specific objectives:**

- ◆ To study and analyse the situation and factors led to child prostitution of hill-tribes minorities.
- ◆ Raise awareness among hill-tribes children and youths about child prostitution problems and enable them to develop skills and learning process to prevent themselves.
- ◆ To improve the quality of life of youth and children in the area.

### **Activities:**

- ◆ Conduct survey in 4 villages to explore characteristics of children and their households and to find out what motivated young people to seek employment outside the communities.
- ◆ Collect socio-cultural information from people in the communities, particularly from community leaders and respected senior people to understand why young women enter sex work.
- ◆ Organise protection camps for children who are about to leave the community for work so they can prevent themselves from being taken advantage of.
- ◆ Disseminate information to students on 14 topics and develop teaching curriculum with teachers in the areas to promote life-skills education for hill-tribe children.

- ◆ Establish a mobile education team to disseminate information to people in the communities about issues related to child prostitution.
- ◆ Organise family-camp days to bring children and their parents together.
- ◆ Organise workshops for women to promote their knowledge about child's right.
- ◆ Provide occupational training activities to promote income of children.
- ◆ Establish mobile meeting teams who promote skills and networks of local NGOs working with children.
- ◆ Take part in setting up of a local multi-professional network to help dealing with children who are sexually exploited.

**Prevent Dark Dangers Project  
Huay Krai School, Chiang Rai**

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**Background:**

The project was a school-based working group composed of 15 out of 52 teachers of Huay Krai School in Mae Sai district, Chiang Rai province. The whole project was based on Huay Krai School, which is an opportunities-expanding school located in the semi-urban area of Mae Sai district, Chiang Rai province with about 1,200 students. 30% of students were ethnic minorities including Chinese, Akha, Lahu, and Shan. About 5% of the students were hill-tribes with no nationality. Many students come from poor families. Huay Krai School serves several communities known to have many women who have entered sex work. About 10% of female students who completed Year 9 entered occupations likely to be associated with sex work such as waitresses, masseurs, Karaoke hostesses, and restaurant singers.

**Specific objectives:**

- ◆ Build immunity for students to encourage appropriate cultural norms and attitudes for their life.
- ◆ Promote love and understanding within the family.
- ◆ Promote self-awareness of students to be able to select appropriate occupations for them in the future.

**Activities:**

*For general students:*

- ◆ Promote staff development so they would be able to help strengthening students in making decisions through life skills education

- ◆ Establish cultural club to promote local cultures and grass root level knowledge to advocate pride and dignity of students.
- ◆ Establish traditional music and drama plays club to encourage students to spend free time together.
- ◆ Establish school radio program managed by the students themselves to disseminate information.
- ◆ Provide counselling and advice about potential occupations students.
- ◆ Provide occupational training.

*For students at risk:*

- ◆ Establish youth volunteer activities to encourage student leaders to run their campaigns about the rights of children and women.
- ◆ Organise family-camping day to promote mutual understanding between students and their parents.
- ◆ Collect detailed information from students and their parents.
- ◆ Recruit teacher volunteers who were able to spend more time with the students to learn about their problems.

## New Life Centre

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### Background

Hill-tribe people in Thailand live a precarious existence. Because of their increasing number and tightening restrictions on the use of land, they are not able to maintain their traditionally self-reliant, agrarian lifestyle. As the economic situation continues to deteriorate in the hills, more and more people are forced to go into the cities to work. Many hill-tribe girls and women are ending up in the country's many brothels, massage parlours, and nightclubs. Agents also actively recruit hill-tribe girls, often buying them from their families or the village headmen. The money is attractive to those who have few other economic options.

Out of their concern for these women, American Baptist missionaries Paul and Elaine Lewis who had worked for more than 40 years among the Lahu and Akha peoples, sought a way to offer educational opportunities to those who had little or no previous formal education, and therefore, few legitimate occupations open to them. With the financial support of the Thai Tribal Crafts store, the New Life Centre was created. The first residence was opened on May 5, 1987, in Chiang Mai and provided shelter to 18 women. More than 100 girls and young women at a time are now sheltered in the houses of the Centre, ranging in ages from 11 to 30 years old.

### Objectives

- ◆ To provide shelter to young tribal women so that they can attend night school.
- ◆ To provide vocational training.
- ◆ To provide training in home arts such as sewing and handicrafts, nutrition, marketing and cooking, hygiene and health care.
- ◆ To provide an opportunity for young women who have been

and worth.

- ◆ To actively protest Thailand's sex trade and all other forms of the exploitation of women in Thai society.
- ◆ To present the Christian message to residents through Bible teaching, encouraging church attendance, and by the Christian living on the part of the staff. There is no discrimination, however, against women who choose to follow religions other than Christianity.

#### Residents

There are basically three categories of residents living at the Centre:

### **1. Crisis Cases**

These young women have come from brothels or other abusive situations, and may be at the Centre on an "emergency care" or temporary basis. Medical care and counselling are offered to them, and they are helped to make decisions about their future. Sometimes they choose to return to their villages and families, and the staff of the Centre works with them to determine whether or not that is a safe and viable option. Other times, they are accepted formally into the program of the Centre, entering into the vocational training and adult education classes.

### **2. At-Risk Cases**

Many young tribal girls and women are at risk of being tricked or sold into prostitution. Risk factors include: opium addicted parents, no parents, and living in areas where tribal leaders are heavily engaged in the business of selling girls. More than 60% of the young women at the New Life Centre fall into this category.

### **3. Leadership Development**

Young women who have demonstrated leadership potential in their villages and churches are encouraged to further their education at the Centre, so that their leadership skills can be enhanced. Returning to their villages, they can influence individuals and families in significant ways.

## Chiang Mai Province

### EMPOWER

#### Chiang Mai Centre

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**Contact person:** Ms. Wilailak Panyarung

**Position:** Co-ordinator

**Address:** 72/2 Raming Nives Village  
Tippanet Hi-ya District  
Chiang Mai 50100

**Tel/Fax:** (66-53) 282 504

**Email:** [empower@cm.ksc.co.th](mailto:empower@cm.ksc.co.th)

**Established:** 1990

#### **A Sex Worker's Rights Organisation:**

Every person, every woman, has the right to equal rights. Every woman has the right to choose her job and work safely, without exploitation, with a living wage, and without harassment.

#### *A Support Centre for Sex Workers*

Empower is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) which support sex workers who work in bars, brothels, massage parlours, karaoke bars, restaurants, and other entertainment venues.

#### **Other Activities and Community Outreach:**

We distribute information about health, HIV/ AIDS, safer sex, women's rights, human rights and laws relating to women and sex workers through brochures, a newsletter, and cassette tapes to sex workers at their work places. We aim to increase understanding of issues facing sex worker and to promote co-operation and support.

#### **A Centre:**

share their daily experiences and ideas about working, dealing with health issues, safer sex, HIV/AIDS, survival, and new opportunities. Empower is a space where women come to exchange thoughts and opinions about women's rights, justice, human rights, laws, economics and gender. Sharing ideas with one another, women gain new understanding of issues relevant to their lives and the world around them.

### **A Non-Formal Education School:**

Empower is a community school where sex workers can study the primary and high school Non-Formal Education programs for further academic and vocational study. Empower is accredited by the Thai Ministry of Education and students who complete primary or high school receive certificates from the NFE School Department and Ministry of Education.

### **Activities:**

- ◆ Thai Language Classes
- ◆ English Language Classes
- ◆ Typing Classes
- ◆ Computer Classes
- ◆ Non-Formal Education
- ◆ Counselling about health and HIV/AIDS
- ◆ Community Outreach
- ◆ Sewing and Batik Classes

## COMMUNITY THEATRE PROJECT

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*Contact person:* Mr. Amarin Plengrusme

**Position:** Co-ordinator

**Address:** 30/1 Rajapuek Road, Chang-puak  
Muang, Chiang Mai 50300

**Tel/Fax:** (66-53) 404 582

**Email:** [gabfai@cm.ksc.co.th](mailto:gabfai@cm.ksc.co.th)

### **Background:**

Community Theatre Project is a non-government organisation established in Chiang Mai province in 1996 to work on media development for strengthening individual and Community capabilities. Community Theatre is one part of the media which stimulates learning process and sharing of experience. It provides not only an entertainment but also behavioural and attitudinal adjustment of people.

### **Objective:**

1. To strengthen the capabilities of target groups through Community Theatre process.
2. To promote communities in developing own Community Theatre for self-communication.
3. To produce the media for delivering useful information to the public.
4. To support individuals, organisations or agencies in developing the community theatre.

### **Project Activities:**

#### **◆ Workshop on Community Theatre Process**

This workshop aims to utilise Community Theatre and Community participation as a tool for building teamwork, group process, leadership, and exchanging experience. This self-learning process also applies the indigenous knowledge and local arts in its two major activities:

1. Creative Theatre for young people
2. Creative Theatre for the public

◆ **Mobile Community Theatre**

1. Mobile Theatre for young people
2. Mobile Theatre for the Community
3. Street Theatre

## New Life Centre

Chiang Mai

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**Contact person:** Ms. Judy Montreevat  
**Position:** Assistant Director

**Address:** P.O.Box 29  
Chiang Mai 50000

**Tel:** (66-53) 244 569  
**Fax:** (66-53) 244 569  
**Email:** [newlife@pobox.com](mailto:newlife@pobox.com)

### Background

Hill-tribe people in Thailand live a precarious existence. Because of their increasing number and tightening restrictions on the use of land, they are not able to maintain their traditionally self-reliant, agrarian lifestyle. As the economic situation continues to deteriorate in the hills, more and more people are forced to go into the cities to work. Many hill-tribe girls and women are ending up in the country's many brothels, massage parlours, and nightclubs. Agents also actively recruit hill-tribe girls, often buying them from their families or the village headmen. The money is attractive to those who have few other economic options.

Out of their concern for these women, American Baptist missionaries Paul and Elaine Lewis who had worked for more than 40 years among the Lahu and Akha peoples, sought a way to offer educational opportunities to those who had little or no previous formal education, and therefore, few legitimate occupations open to them. With the financial support of the Thai Tribal Crafts store, the New Life Centre was created. The first residence was opened on May 5, 1987, in Chiang Mai and provided shelter to 18 women. More than 100 girls and young women at a time are now sheltered in the houses of the Centre, ranging in ages from 11 to 30 years old.

### Objectives

- ◆ To provide shelter to young tribal women so that they can attend night school.
- ◆ To provide vocational training.

handicrafts, nutrition, marketing and cooking, hygiene and health care.

- ◆ To provide an opportunity for young women who have been exploited in any way to realise their potential as people of dignity and worth.
- ◆ To actively protest Thailand's sex trade and all other forms of the exploitation of women in Thai society.
- ◆ To present the Christian message to residents through Bible teaching, encouraging church attendance, and by the Christian living on the part of the staff. There is no discrimination, however, against women who choose to follow religions other than Christianity.

#### Residents

There are basically three categories of residents living at the Centre:

### **1. Crisis Cases**

These young women have come from brothels or other abusive situations, and may be at the Centre on an "emergency care" or temporary basis. Medical care and counselling are offered to them, and they are helped to make decisions about their future. Sometimes they choose to return to their villages and families, and the staff of the Centre works with them to determine whether or not that is a safe and viable option. Other times, they are accepted formally into the program of the Centre, entering into the vocational training and adult education classes.

### **2. At-Risk Cases**

Many young tribal girls and women are at risk of being tricked or sold into prostitution. Risk factors include opium addicted parents, no parents, and living in areas where tribal leaders are heavily engaged in the business of selling girls. More than 60% of the young women at the New Life Centre fall into this category.

### **3. Leadership Development**

Young women who have demonstrated leadership potential in their villages and churches are encouraged to further their education at the Centre, so that their leadership skills can be enhanced. Returning to their villages, they can influence individuals and families in significant ways.

## Programme for Women and Youth in Chiang Mai

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**Contact person:** Ms. Thongdee Phothiyong

**Position:** Co-ordinator

**Address:** 28 Moo 4, Tambon Don Kaew  
Saraphi District, Chiang Mai 50140

**Tel/Fax:** (66-53) 428 306

### **Background:**

The Programme for Women and Youth in Chiang Mai was founded in 1986. The programme's work stresses community participation and self-reliance.

### **Objectives:**

1. To prevent migration to urban areas and encourage people to work in their own villages.
2. To support the grouping of home-based producers.
3. To support mobilisation of local funds such as saving groups or occupational groups.
4. To support women and their participation in development.
5. To campaign on problems related to HIV/AIDS and prostitution.

### **Projects and Activities:**

1. The Housewives' Saving Group for Production Project, in seven villages in Tambon Don Kaew, Saraphi district, Chiang Mai
2. The Intensive Farming Group Project, for farmers of Moo 3 and Moo 4, Ban San Ton Kok, Don Kaew, Tambon Don Kaew
3. Project on Developing Quality of Life for Schoolchildren, aimed at children in Year 7-9, in Tambons San Sai, Don Kaew, Comphoo, Ta Wang Tan and Pa Bong, Chiang Mai provinces

### **Activities Specifically Related to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:**

1. Protection of risk group at source
2. Assistance to child victims
3. Campaigning for public awareness

4. Formation of groups to collect funds for development of locally based employment

**Target Groups:**

*Priority:* Women and young people

*General:* Occupational and non-formal labour groups

**Girl Guides Association of Thailand Northern Training Centre**  
**(Chiang Mai branch)**

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*Contact person:* Ms. Sirirat Thevisan

**Position:** Chief, Northern Region Training Centre

**Address:** 189/3 Chang Khlan Road  
Muang, Chiang Mai 50100

**Tel:** (66-53) 275 995

**Fax:** (66-53) 274 125

**Established:** 1958

**Type of work:**

1. Community development
2. Social work
3. Activities
4. Provision of scholarships for girl students
5. Training

**Projects and Activities:**

1. Project to train rural girls out of school to be entrepreneurs, in the North and Northeast.
2. Development of Ecology for Health, aimed at the families of young children in the Young Children's Development Centre.
3. Scholarships to rural girls, including those finishing primary school, in Wiang Pa Pao and Mae Chan districts in Chiang Rai and Me Rim and Hod districts in Chiang Mai.

**Activities Specifically Related to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:**

1. Protection of risk groups at source (education and provision of scholarships)
2. Stimulation of policy-making

**Target Groups:**

*Priority:* Females aged 7-25

*General:* Families, communities

## Northern Women's Development Foundation

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*Contact person:* Ms. Phanomwan Youdee

**Position:** Secretary-general

**Address:** 103 YMCA Building Sao Hin, Dor Klang Road  
Tambon Nong Hoi, Muang  
Chiang Mai 50000

**Tel:** (66-53) 221 819

**Fax:** (66-53) 221 819

### **Background:**

The Northern Women's Development Foundation was founded in July 1989, developed from YMCA Chiang Mai's Women's Development Institute, whose work for more than 17 years had been to bring development to women in the upper northern provinces. The foundation was established because many disadvantaged women were not receiving the necessary support to realise their full potentials. Many organisations dealing with development of northern women were faced with continuing problems.

The Northern Women's Development Foundation seeks to recruit co-operation from all sides for the benefit of women, especially those in disadvantaged groups. It also hopes to stimulate public awareness of women's problems and support women taking greater responsibility for and playing a greater role in the solution of social problems. The foundation's activities emphasise training rural women to become leaders, enabling them to co-ordinate with other organisations for problem-solving at village level and vocational training for family income generation and to join in exchange of experience.

### **Objectives:**

1. To provide counselling and assistance to women on legal, family, emotional, mental health and personal matters.
2. To help women to understand life and maintain their culture and traditions and love of their homeland.
3. To act as a centre for co-ordination and assistance from a more privileged group of women to a less privileged one.

4. To help women to become aware of their duties and responsibilities to society.
5. To co-operate and collaborate with other NGOs for the benefit of society.

**Activities Specifically Related to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:**

1. Protection of risk group at source
2. Stimulation of policy-making
3. Campaigning for public awareness

**Target Groups:**

- Priority:* Female youths in and out of school and women's occupational groups
- General:* Interested persons

## The Volunteers Group for Children Development

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**Contact person:** Mr. Anuchon Hualsong

**Position:** Co-ordinator

**Address:** 127/8 Moo 2, Chang Phuek  
Muang, Chiang Mai 50300

**Tel/Fax:** (66-53) 213 192

**Established:** 1992

**Target group:** Street children and youth  
*Priority* Children aged 12 to 18 years old  
Youth aged 18 to 25

**Objectives:**

1. To help and develop the life of street children and youth in Chiang Mai City.
2. To reduce risky behaviour of street children and youth in Chiang Mai City
3. To organise co-operation between government and NGOs working to help street children and youth.

## Thai Woman of Tomorrow

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**Contact person:** Dr. Chakrapand Wongburanavart  
**Position:** Project Director

**Address:** Faculty of Social Sciences  
Chiang Mai University  
Ampher Muang, Chiang Mai 50002

**Tel:** (66-53) 943 585  
**Fax:** (66-53) 892 789

**Email:** twtcmu@chmai.loxinfo.co.th

### **Background:**

The project entitled “Thai Woman of Tomorrow” has been undertaken by the Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University since 1992 by the Board of Administration and Working Committee in collaboration with the provinces of Chiang Rai and Phayao. Later in 1996 the project was extended to Chiang Mai and Lampang.

In the beginning the project received supports from WELD and later from Thailand USAID and several private organisations, especially for the implementation of the aforesaid project. The project concentrates on distributing the support to young women in target provinces who are liable to be seduced. It is aimed at minimising child prostitution and HIV/AIDS infection, which, to date has been increasing dramatically.

The following is a detailed description of project activities:

1. ***The Project for Attitude Readjustment:*** The project has produced changing media to readjust the attitude of young women and their guardians in target area in order for parents to encourage their children to continue studies up until Year 7 – Year 9.
2. ***The Project for Extension of Education Opportunity:*** In the beginning the project provided scholarship funds to 1,000 girl students who finished Year 6 in Chiang Rai and Phayao to pursue their studies in Year 7 – Year 9. Each of them was awarded 3,000 baht a year. In the 1<sup>st</sup>

year project, associate funds of 1.5 million baht were allocated for 500 scholarships by the USAID through the US Kenan Institute. But in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years, the project awarded students 1,500 baht each. The aforesaid funds were procured from funding campaign carried out among private sector and other establishments who generously responded. More than 3,000 scholarships have been awarded to those young girls in the project areas.

3. ***The Project for Occupational Training:*** The project had provided a variety of occupational training courses to those who finished Year 6 – Year 9 in accordance with their capabilities and skills. The training courses covering 4 curriculum are as follows:
  1. Gem Cutting
  2. Dress Making
  3. Public Health Assistant
  4. Basic Computer

A good operation has been received from government agencies as well as private sector. For example, Gem Cutting was provided by Gemopolis Company affiliated with Gems Association of Thailand; Dress Making by the company in Sahaphathana Group; Public Health Assistant by the School of Health and Youth Education; and Basic Computer by the Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University. So far, the trainees who have undergone the above-mentioned courses and got employed are recorded as 478.

The number of girls supported by the “Thai Woman of Tomorrow” from 1992-1999 in terms of scholarship funds and occupational training totals 3,755.

And in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year the project had received financial supports from Small Scale Grant Assistance (SSGA) from the Government of Japan in terms of mass media tools and vehicle for propagating media and readjusting young women and their guardians in the target area.

In the meantime, the project has also received assistance from the Government of Japan to help construct a project permanent office through the Grass Root Project and form the International Labour Organisation (IPEC/ILO) for running its business and for producing videos, posters and pamphlets. These are to be used in a campaign for readjusting the attitude of young women and their guardians. It is aimed to minimise child prostitution and HIV/AIDS infection. In addition, the project has established an information centre to provide data and technical service to government agencies as well as private organisations which have a wish to carry out a research on child prostitution and child labour in northern provinces. At present, some of these studies have been carried out, such as research on basic education for the Ministry of Education, a study of child labour in textile and garment factories in Chiang Mai a joint effort in organising countermeasures against child labour in Chiang Mai, etc. It is hoped that this establishment will become an information and extension centre for co-ordinating and making up

a network responsible for finding out an appropriate means to get rid of child prostitution and child labour.

## Lamphun Province

# Lamphun Women and Youth Development Project

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*Contact person:* Ms. Sinaul Pengkhamta

**Position:** President

**Address:** 84 Moo 7, Tambon Mae Rang  
Pa Sang District, Lamphun 51120

**Tel/Fax:** (66-53) 520 211

**Fax:**

### **Background:**

Lamphun Women and Youth Development Project was founded in 1987 as a local NGO working at the community level to help solve local problems. The project's key objective is to assess and address the problems of three priority target groups: women, children and youth in Lamphun. In doing so, it seeks to raise awareness among rural people of the importance of sustainable development and participation in problem solving in order to achieve self-reliance.

### **Objectives:**

1. To educate women and young people in Lamphun on economic, social, political and administrative matters.
2. To support the formation of women and youths into groups through which they can address their own problems.
3. To support the development of people's organisations' capacities in the areas of problem solving, creativity and self-reliance.
4. To co-ordinate with people's organisations for exchange of ideas, knowledge and experience.
5. To co-ordinate with local and international NGOs for budgetary and other support for people's organisations.

### **Projects and Activities:**

1. Income-generating activities for women in Pa Sang district
2. Quality of life development for children and young people
3. Scholarships for children and young people
4. Raising awareness of local women on issues relating to domestic violence

**Activities Specifically Related to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:**

1. Protection of risk groups at source.
2. Stimulation of policy-making.
3. Campaigning for public awareness.
4. Co-ordination of fund raising to provide scholarships for children in risk groups.

**Target Groups:**

*Priority:* Children, young people and women

**New Path Project:**

This project is a community-based working group led by a female village leader who had worked in the past 11 years for women and youth development at the village level in Pasang District, Lamphun province. Their experiences prior to joining ECPAT/Tskvarkki Project were giving scholarships to students, raising awareness and providing education to school students on issues related to AIDS, child prostitution, environment and women and child's problem. The project area is not generally known to have a high number of women entering prostitution, but the project working group believed that an increasing number of young women in the area have turned themselves into indirect types of sex workers to earn their living.

**Specific objectives:**

- ◆ To mobilise local volunteers and villagers to get involved and to take part in dealing with sexual exploitation and child prostitution in the area and to prevent and solve problems of their own communities.
- ◆ To encourage the right attitudes of children about their future occupations which abide to acceptable local values.
- ◆ To motivate and strengthen the set up of a local-youth network to prevent them from being taken advantage of and to prevent them from entering prostitution.

**Activities:**

- ◆ Collaborate with related individuals and organisations in the area to raise awareness about the situation of child prostitution in Lamphun province.
- ◆ Provide money to selected schools in the area to enable them to establish their own educational campaign to prevent and to solve problems of child prostitution.
- ◆ Act as supplementary teachers in 7 schools to raise the student's awareness about child prostitution, child's right, sexual exploitation, and life skill education.
- ◆ Introduce activities suitable for students including occupational training, educational centre for children, traditional music and play.
- ◆ Organise parents' meetings to raise awareness about the situation of child prostitution and ask them for co-operation to prevent the problems.
- ◆ Organise children's meeting to enable them to exchange knowledge about child prostitution and to exchange their lessons learned.
- ◆ Follow up the project's activities by providing regular visits to children and to the project's volunteers.

## Phayao Province

### Thai Youth Prevent AIDS (TYPA)

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*Contact person:* Ms. Suphin Chaichameren

**Position:** Secretary-general

**Address:** Ban Si Muang Chum School  
Tambon Lo, Chun District  
Phayao 56150

**Established:** 1994

**Background:**

A small organisation operating within a single school.

**Objectives:**

1. To prevent primary school leavers from entering the sex trade.
2. To encourage primary school leavers to study further, by finding scholarships to support them.
3. To teach children what are honest and honourable occupations, which create no problems in society.
4. To foster in students love for their country.

**Projects and Activities:**

1. AIDS prevention campaign aimed at students and villagers, in Si Muang Chum Village.
2. Project to train students in hairdressing as a profession, aimed at students in primary levels 4-6, in Ban Si Muang Chum School.
3. Anti-AIDS slogan and essay writing contest, for primary levels 5-6 students, in Ban Si Muang Chim School.

**Activities Specifically Related to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:**

1. Protection of risk group at source
2. Campaigning for public awareness

**Target Group:**

*Priority:* Primary level 4-6 students, Ban Si Muang Chum School

## YMCA Phayao

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*Contact person: Ms. Sengwan Maneewan*

**Position:** Manager

**Address:** 218 Village 5, Tambon Pin  
Dok Kham Tai, Phayao 56120

**Tel:** (66-54) 457 189, 457 191

**Fax:** (66-54) 457 190

**Title of Project:**

Project for the Development of the Quality of life of Children and Their Families in the North to Protect Children from the Commercial Sex Trade.

**Project's Objectives:**

1. To stop girls and women from being deceived or forced to sell sexual services, and to reduce the number of child prostitutes and sexual violence.
2. To build living skills and attitudes for girls and their families in order to develop a sustainable quality of life.
3. Support community groups to solve basic problems and the problem of sexual exploitation.
4. Support housewives groups, and young women's group by training in handicraft products, and sewing in order to earn additional income to stop the flow of women into the sex trade.
5. Make networks with groups and NGOs who oppose women and children entering the sex trade.

**Mae Hong Son Province**

**Centre for the Development of Hill-tribe Children,  
Youth and Women**

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*Contact person:* Mr. Santiphong Moonfong

**Position:** Co-ordinator

**Address:** 7 Moo 2, Tambon Sob Moei  
Sob Moei District, Mae Hong Son

**Tel/Fax:** (66-53) 618 267

**Established:** 1994

**Objectives:**

1. To strengthen child and youth groups, both in terms of their awareness and understanding of the problems of disadvantaged children and in terms of their capacity to participate in solving these problems, leading to development of individuals, families and communities.
2. To provide quality formal and non-formal education to hill-tribe children, children with family problems and those otherwise disadvantaged.
3. To stem the flow of rural children to urban centres in search of work, and prevent exploitation of children.
4. To develop in children the necessary occupational skills to earn a living in their home towns and respect for the environment.

**Project and Activities:**

1. Project to expand children's, young people and women's roles in development, in Mae Sariang and Sob Moei districts of Mae Hong Son province.
2. Study of the ecological systems of the Yuan and Ngao river valleys in order to provide protection for them, working with children, young people, women and village groups, in Mae Hong Son and Tak provinces.

**Activities Specifically Related to Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children:**

1. Protection of risk groups at source
2. Stimulation of policy-making
3. Assistance to child victims
4. Campaigning for public awareness
5. Promotion of child and youth groups for leadership

**Target Groups:**

*Priority:* Children, youth and women in 22 target villages

*General:* Children, youth and women in Mae Hong Son and Tak provinces

### **Sources of information:**

The above list of organisations has been based on the following sources:

- ◆ **Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute.** 1998. *Directory of government agencies and NGOs: Working against sexual exploitation of children in Thailand.* Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute.
- ◆ **Korkeatkachorn, Wipaphan, and Suntaree Kiatiprajak** (Eds.). 1997. *Directory of Non-Governmental Organizations 1997.* Bangkok: Thai Development Support Committee.
- ◆ Pamphlets, and
- ◆ Personal contacts established over the last 10 weeks. Whether possible, the information on the organisations have been checked and updated as many of the organisations are constantly changing their contact persons and their addresses.