

English Summary

Study on The situation of child prostitution: Nan Province

By Nan Education office in cooperation with Thai Phayap Development Association

The objectives of the study on “the situation of child prostitution in Nan Province” are

1. To study the severity of child prostitution situation in Nan.
2. To identify social and economic factors (also from relevant and concerned people) placing children at risk of prostitution in Nan
3. To identify problems, obstacles in combating child prostitution in Nan.

Methodology

This study combines quantitative and qualitative data and information. Gathered from target areas of 57 villages of 15 districts (amphua) in Nan. Quantitative data are statistics from AIDS and STDs department, regional educational office, vocational education department and primary education departments in every amphua in Nan. The qualitative data are literature review and participatory informal interview using interview guide to gather information on child prostitution situation from 3 informative groups as followed – 1st group: a community leader and a village leader per village. 2nd group: a teacher, a school administrator, a police officer, a public health volunteer, and a relevant organization or person per village. 3rd group: 16 child sex workers from different districts in Nan.

Summary findings

General

The study team concluded that child prostitution situation in Nan is not serious but still at risk. Prostitution started in Nan in 1963 and went to its peak during 1973-1992. A lot of brothels were opened during that period. Prostitution declined after that. There were only 11 brothels nowadays. Number of prostitutes decreased in general (from 55 prostitutes in 2000 to 43 prostitutes in 2001). However, part-time and hidden prostitution included child prostitution can also be found.

There was no police report on child trafficking, child abuse, and rape of children under 15 or prostitution of children under 18. In 2001, 90% of children finishing grade 9 continued their study and more than 95% of children finishing grade 12 continued their study. There were 3,000 scholarships named “Sema Pattana Chewit” available for children finished grade 6 who wished to continue their study during 1996- 2000. These scholarships were counted as a pull factor for child prostitution.

Labor migration among young females (which might lead to prostitution) aged between 15-19 is only 1/ 67 or 1.49% of total number of the whole group in Nan and it is considered very low.

How and where they sell now

Figures from AIDS and STD control section, Nan Public Health office show a list of different night entertaining establishments with sex services found in Nan (starting from the biggest numbers) – restaurants with gardens, brothels, hotels, bungalows, guest houses, traditional massage parlors, karaokes, discotheques and pubs. It is not certain that child prostitutes were included in the figures.

Results from case studies show that child prostitutes can be contacted through different means: through agents who are friends or adults; being directly contacted by regular customers; by looking for customers by themselves; and by working as waitresses that can go out with customers after work hours.

Case studies

16 case studies were collected through interviews. Most of them are girls under 18 staying at dormitories, guesthouses or bungalows in the Nan municipal area. 11 of them entered prostitution for more than 3 months and 5 have done it for more than 3 years. Some of them are still studying while some are planning to continue their education. Some have full-time jobs while others only work on prostitution. They all are freelance.

Customers

The study did not mention customers of child prostitutes. However it was found that nowadays, they are afraid of sexually transmitted diseases in ordinary night entertaining establishments so they look for new, fresh, cleaner and safer prostitutes. Children have become their targets which customers feel that the younger is the better.

Who are at risk?

From the case studies, child prostitutes, from lowland and hilltribe, have some similar characteristics: drug addicts, having broken families, schools dropouts, living with boyfriends at the dormitories.

Push and pull factors

Most child prostitutes found in this study are

- 1) addicted to amphetamines and they need to earn money to buy drugs.
- 2) victims of consumerism: like to buy expensive and brand name products, love to go out to expensive night entertaining establishments.
- 3) lack of love, acceptance from boyfriends and feel that they are in charge of the family well-being.
- 4) from very poor and broken families. Some families support or even push them to enter prostitution for family survival and children themselves want to be grateful to parents.

Social and law mechanism is weak. These girls know that prostitution is illegal and socially unacceptable. However, some people accept, understand and use services from them so these child prostitutes can make easy money and live luxurious.

How do they enter the process?

Having a chance to contact with ex-prostitutes who succeeded in job and earned a lot of money attracts the girls to enter prostitution as they put them as role model. Most of the child prostitutes found in this study had sexual relationship with boyfriends or were raped. (In Thai culture, virginity of females is highly valued and girls/women who have sex before marriage are considered bad and looked down upon.) It makes them feel that they have nothing else to lose and they can also earn money from that activity.

The draft report was presented to the public. After presentation, round table discussion was conducted. Comments and suggestions are as follow:

1. Community leaders/village leaders suggested that
 - higher education for girls in their own communities should be promoted;
 - awareness on this issue among all relevant parties, for example, parents, relatives and children themselves should be raised;
 - extra income generation activities should be promoted;
 - extra-curricular activities outside classroom atmosphere for children should be supported.
2. Relatives, neighbors of children who are at risk suggested that
 - poverty should be dealt with
 - higher education for children should be promoted
 - vocational training for children should be promoted
 - awareness on importance of education among parents should be raised
 - both governmental and non-governmental agencies should cooperate in dealing with this problem
 - villagers have to preserve good traditional/culture for the younger generation
3. School administrators, teachers and instructors stated that
 - poverty, irregular income, family problem, divorce, lack of love and warmth, following bad role models, rousing advertisement and media, and being addicted to brand name products and luxuries are push factors for child prostitution.
4. Village and Tambon Public health workers suggested that
 - village level empowerment is the most important means
 - push factors are poverty, inappropriate values and believes, families lacking of understanding, warmth and care.
 - lacking of necessary information for the minority groups (hitltribes) that regularly migrate might be a factor that drives children to make wrong decision.
5. Staff of Ministry of Interior in Nan, Tambon administrator provided information as followed.
 - All relevant departments take it seriously in working on this issue.
 - Education and vocational training for children is promoted.
 - Jobs are made available in local areas
 - Information and training are provided to parents and guardians in promoting moral.
 - New theory of the king is brought into practice so new values can be created.
 - Law enforcement is strengthened in terms of punishments for law violators.