

Girl's education and community development for awareness-raising and prevention of girl trafficking in Lao PDR



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



Fast Facts

Country: Lao PDR

Duration: September 2003 to December 2005

Implementing UN Agencies: UNICEF

Other Implementing Partners: Ministries of Education, Health, Labour and Social Welfare; Lao Women's Union

Budget: \$506,699.36

Key Words: Human trafficking; access to education

BACKGROUND

As Lao PDR underwent social and economic transformation, human trafficking and sexual exploitation of vulnerable children and youth became increasingly common in the country. The heightened risk of trafficking was exacerbated by insufficient access to basic education, in particular for girls living in remote rural areas. According to UNICEF, only 76 per cent of girls aged 6 to 10 enrolled in formal education and the proportion of uneducated girls was even higher in ethnic minority communities where sometimes less than half of school-aged girls attended primary schools. Organised trafficking networks were common in these communities and to protect at-risk

girls from exploitation it was crucial to keep these girls in school. However, few schools offered adequate education programmes and many teachers lacked the appropriate training to provide quality education. In addition to the poor education, the absence of community development in conjunction with general economic insecurity also contributed to women's and children's vulnerability to trafficking. Moreover, as parents were often unaware of how organised trafficking networks operated and the danger they posed for their children, it was necessary to raise awareness and mobilise communities in order to protect themselves from traffickers.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The project aimed to reduce trafficking of girls in rural areas bordering Thailand by combining education and community development programmes with anti-trafficking awareness raising and preventative measures. To this end, the project aimed to (i) ensure

that girls received quality primary education; (ii) empowered communities to protect children through increased awareness about the dangers of human trafficking; and (iii) implemented community-based surveillance mechanisms to detect traffickers.

BENEFICIARIES

Overall, the project benefited vulnerable girls and families in source communities in the provinces of Khammouane, Savannakhet and Saravan. The direct beneficiaries were girls who obtained access to basic education and teachers who upgraded their teaching skills as well as their awareness about human

trafficking through capacity-building trainings and workshops. Lastly, the communities benefited from the establishment of child protection networks that monitored at-risk children and responded to the needs of the victims.