

**FOBISIA Model United Nations 2014 | Jerudong International School**  
**Forum: Human Rights**

**Issue:** Combating human trafficking throughout Southeast Asia

**Student Officer:** Saurabh Tripathi

**Position:** President of the General Assembly

---

## **Introduction**

During the past decade, trafficking has become an issue of growing concern in South-East Asia. It has been conservatively estimated that at least 200,000 to 225,000 women and children from South-East Asia are trafficked annually; a figure that represents nearly one-third of the global trafficking trade. Of the estimated 45,000 to 50,000 women and children estimated to be trafficked into the US each year, 30,000 are believed to come from South-East Asia. However, most trafficking occurs within South-East Asia, and only a minority of women from the region are trafficked to other parts of the world.

Trafficking is not a new problem for South-East Asia, and many initiatives have been developed to combat the problem by NGOs, inter governmental organisations, government ministries, national and international bodies, human rights organisations and lobby networks.

## **Definition of Key Terms:**

### ***Human trafficking***

The act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving persons through use of force, coercion or deception for the purpose of exploiting them.

### ***Human rights***

The rights inherent to all human beings without discrimination; no matter what language, gender, race or any other status; these rights include rights to life, education and social security, equality before the law, freedom of expression and many more.

### ***Southeast Asia***

A geographical division of Asia that includes Indochina as well as include Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Singapore, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam (Also the members

of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN])

***Prostitution:***

Is the act or practice of providing sexual services to another person in return for payment. The person who receives payment for sexual services is called a prostitute and the person who receives such services is known by a multitude of terms, including "john". Prostitution is one of the branches of the sex industry. The legal status of prostitution varies from country to country, from being a punishable crime to a regulated profession. Estimates place the annual revenue generated from the global prostitution industry to be over \$100 billion. Prostitution is sometimes referred to as "the world's oldest profession"

**Major Parties Involved and Their Views:**

**UNICEF**

The UNICEF policy regarding trafficking is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The strategy for addressing child trafficking focuses on raising awareness about the problem, providing economic support to families, improving access to and quality of education, and advocating for the rights of the child. UNICEF has no regional project on child trafficking, but has supported and implemented studies on the issue in several countries and has been involved in building national and local capacity in the region. UNICEF also participates in the Regional Working Group on Child Labour. Furthermore, UNICEF is a partner in a number of projects in the Asia and Pacific Region, such as the Mekong Regional Law Centre project described above, the ESCAP project, the ILO-IPEC project, the UNDP project and the IOM Return and Reintegration project.

**UNHCHR**

The Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights has encouraged the National Human Rights Commissions of the Asia-Pacific region to take up the issue of trafficking. Discussions with the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF) resulted in a working paper and the recommendation to all member-institutions to appoint someone as the focal point on the issue of trafficking. The focus of UNHCHR is on legal and policy development, thereby trying to be a catalyst and a support for the work of others. In December 1999, the High Commissioner appointed a Special Representative on trafficking. The Special Representative is based in Cambodia and has a key role in supporting national and regional anti-trafficking initiatives.

**CATW-Asia Pacific**

The Coalition Against Trafficking of Women is an international feminist network of organizations and groups promoting the human rights of women and children by combating sexual exploitation in all its forms, particularly in prostitution. The Asia Pacific branch was launched in 1993 and is located in Manila. CATW-AP organizes education and training activities, develops human rights programmes, publishes research and other reports, provides services to, among others, member organizations, the media, and researchers through a documentation system on trafficking cases, and is active in networking, policy

advocacy and campaigns related to prostitution, sexual exploitation and trafficking.

## **GAATW**

The Global Alliance Against Trafficking of Women is an umbrella organization of women's community-based groups around the world, and aims to prevent the abuse and violence meted out to women and girls, both forced and voluntary migrants. GAATW International, founded in 1994 and based in Bangkok, aims to ensure that the human rights of trafficked persons are respected and protected by authorities and agencies, thereby promoting the involvement of women on the grassroots level in all work against trafficking in order to empower women. GAATW activities include advocacy, human rights, capacity training, research projects, documentation and publications, campaigns and policy reform activities.

## **Save the Children Fund**

The Save the Children Funds from different countries has been involved in a variety of activities related to trafficking. SCF-UK has a Trafficking Programme as part of the Regional Cross-Border Project, which started in 1999 with Participatory Action Research among migrant children and youth in the cross-border areas of Thailand, Myanmar and South China.

## **Australia**

Australia has become a more attractive target for smuggling and trafficking operations. Australia is a massive continent with a very long coastline, which makes it relatively easy to enter illegally. Australia also has the image of being a rich and stable country with a high standard of living and a relaxed life style (Graycar, 1999). There is a clear demand for cheap migrant labour, which is partly regularized through a migration programme

## **History**

There is a lot of argument as to when human trafficking began due to the fact that it had not been defined until recently. However, the first major sign of it or something similar was in the 16<sup>th</sup> century during the Atlantic Slave Trade. This was a global event and it was recognized and acknowledged by all, but not necessarily as an act of violation of human rights, but as a means to increase the labour force. This made the Slave trade widely tolerable but the issue was still the same. Since then, the issue has only grown, not only in size, but also with even more abuse involved considering that at first, it was only for labour, but over time, it has increased to sexual abuse as well. The first law to be made against trafficking was in 1807 by the British that made the aforementioned trade illegitimate. Over the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, many conferences have been held and International Convention for the Suppression of White Slave Trade was formed, with only 13 countries signing it at first, but over time, the number more than tripled. Although, in the present day, many laws have been passed against this internationally recognized crime, it still remains at large. The most affected region is by

far the South-East Asian one. Hence, this issue can easily be focused to this region.

The different approaches to trafficking are not based solely on ideological and moral arguments or acquired expertise. Much is also dependent on the particular situation in a country, with regard to the social-cultural, economic, political and historical context. This is also true for trafficking in the South-East Asian context. Trafficking within and from the region has, since the beginning of the 1980s and especially in the 1990s, become a topic of concern to most countries in South-East Asia. The problem affects the various countries in the region differently, depending on a variety of factors, thereby dividing countries into sending, transit or receiving countries. These categories are, however, not clear-cut or stable, as trafficking routes, purposes and methods have changed over time. It is estimated that nearly one-third of the global trafficking trade, or about 200-225,000 women and children, are trafficked annually from South-East Asia (Richard, 1999). However, most of this trafficking occurs within the South-East Asian region. About 60 per cent of the trafficking which occurs is to major regional cities in South-East Asia and about 40 per cent to the rest of the world (Richard, 1999). Of the 45-50 thousand women and children estimated to be trafficked to the United States, approximately 60 per cent (30,000) are estimated to originate from Southeast Asia, making this region the most important source region in the world for victims of trafficking to the United States. Human trafficking from mainland Southeast Asia in the modern period started in the 1960s in connection with the presence of United States troops in Indochina. The foreign male clients of the sex trade at that time were American soldiers using Thailand as a rest and relaxation area, with some also seeking temporary partners or “rental wives.” After the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Indochina in 1975, some women remained in the sex trade in Thailand, serving male tourists who came on “sex tours.” Others began working abroad, especially in Germany, Scandinavia, Hong Kong, and Japan. Keeping with the sex trafficking approach, within the geographical context of Southeast Asia, Thailand has undergone unprecedented scrutiny of its sex industry and hence the trafficking of women into it.

Thailand has been recognised as a receiving, sending and transiting destination from and, into other Asian countries such as Burma, Philippines, Korea, and Japan in addition to Europe, the Pacific region, and North America. Moreover, the trafficking issue cannot be divorced from the practice of migration –domestically as well as trans-nationally. Illegal migration, which also includes trafficking, is historically not new to the Southeast Asian region.

Agents facilitated the migration and employment of women through “international human trafficking networks.” A key problem has been the inability of women migrants to anticipate and control the conditions of their labour. “Some women entered the trade willingly. Others were deceived into believing they would have jobs and/or opportunities abroad unrelated to the sex trade” Further, although some women knew that they would become sex workers, they were not aware of the working conditions they would encounter.

The actual number of prostituted women enslaved, trafficked or kept in prison in Southeast Asia was no more than 20% of the total number of women engaged in prostitution. Smugglers are increasingly trading in women in Southeast Asia because of the shadowy nature of the sex sector. Victims of human trafficking are vulnerable to numerous forms of human rights abuses and exploitation. As trafficking affects hundreds of thousands each year

in Southeast Asia, it constitutes a major human security issue in the region. Human trafficking as a transnational crime has been identified as one of the major security issues within Southeast Asia which requires such a coordinated, regional approach.

### Timeline of Events

**1562-** The first Africans are captured by the British and sold into slavery, beginning the notorious and successful triangular slave trade. The slavery of Africans in the New World led to “white slavery”, which was the sexual slavery and kidnapping of white women during the 20th century.

**1902** – In order to “prevent the procurement of women and girls for immoral purposes” the International Agreement for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic is drafted.

**1910** – The United States passes the Mann Act which “forbids transporting a person across state or international lines for prostitution or other immoral purposes.”

**1995** – The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is created by U.S. congress. In doing this, the U.S. government takes action by helping “provide victims with the protection and services they need to pursue safe and healthy lives, while simultaneously enabling communities to hold offenders accountable for their violence.”

**October 28, 2000** – The U.S. government directly addresses the issue of human trafficking and sex slavery in passing the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. This act was established “to combat trafficking in persons, especially into the sex trade, slavery, and involuntary servitude, to reauthorize certain Federal programs to prevent violence against women, and for other purposes.”

**2001** – The U.S. Department of State takes a stand against human trafficking issues not only domestically now but internationally as well by establishing the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. It’s mission statement claims to “provide the tools to combat trafficking in persons” and “assist in the coordination of anti-trafficking efforts both worldwide and domestically.

**2003** - The United Kingdom enacts the Sexual Offenses Act of 2003 which addresses many sexual assault issues including sections on Exploitation of Prostitution and Trafficking.

**2003** – The OSCE’s Office of the Special Representative for Combating the Traffic of Human Beings endorses an action plan to implement anti-trafficking strategies. These will address investigations, prosecutions and law enforcement for human traffickers on a national level, as well as prevent trafficking activities and offer assistance to trafficked victims.

### Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The crime of human trafficking has not always received the attention it should. In 2000, an United Nations protocol called The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in

Persons, especially Women and Children was passed, as part of a convention against Transnational Organized Crime. This was the greatest step towards a united front devoted to stopping the trafficking of humans. It also provided the boon of defining exactly what human trafficking was. It mainly entails the safety of those involved in trafficking, and providing homes, shelter, and rights to those made victims of it. It even seeks to provide medical attention and psychological help, if need be. It also seeks to punish those committing human trafficking, as well as others such as parents or guardians who may have sold children. While the act itself sets an excellent foundation for the care of trafficked persons after the event, there is little in the way of preventing it all together. As of October 2009, it has been signed and ratified by 117 countries.

The protocol also introduces a policy called The Anti-Trafficking Policy Index. The index can be used to compare and measure the amount of policy requirements met by each nation. The requirements are those stated in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.

### **Possible Solutions**

There are many different methods of finding a solution to the problem. One way of accomplishing this (immigration problems) would be to end the welfare state. Many people will indeed have a problem with me suggesting this, but the idea that an immigrant can come in here and just mooch off of everyone is as disgusting to me as it is to anyone else.

Another focus should also be on ending the war on drugs because this would almost immediately end the problems associated with drug use. The major problem with drugs is not that people get high, it's that they become addicted to the substance and, due to their high price and stigmatized nature, often have to resort to illegal activity to pay for it.

The main problem with prostitution, the oldest profession in history, was that it results in horrible conditions for the woman. If it were legalized, the women could be protected through their pimps or mistresses, or whatever the CEO of a company of "ill-repute" would be called. If it were legal, then the prostitutes could go seek legal aid when dealing with abusive clients, business partners, or managers.

## **Bibliography**

<http://www.unesco.org/most/migration/ctsea.pdf>

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html>

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/index.html#Fulltext>.

[http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_war\\_peace/human\\_trafficking.php](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_war_peace/human_trafficking.php)

[http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929\\_58005.html](http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58005.html)

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33533&Cr=trafficking&Cr1=#.UtC8hvQW0vI>

[http://www.hks.harvard.edu/cchrp/isht/study\\_group/2010/pdf/Human%20Trafficking%20in%20East%20Asia.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/cchrp/isht/study_group/2010/pdf/Human%20Trafficking%20in%20East%20Asia.pdf)

<http://www.osce.org/odihr/19223>

[http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_war\\_peace/human\\_trafficking.php](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_war_peace/human_trafficking.php)

<http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=southeast%20asia>