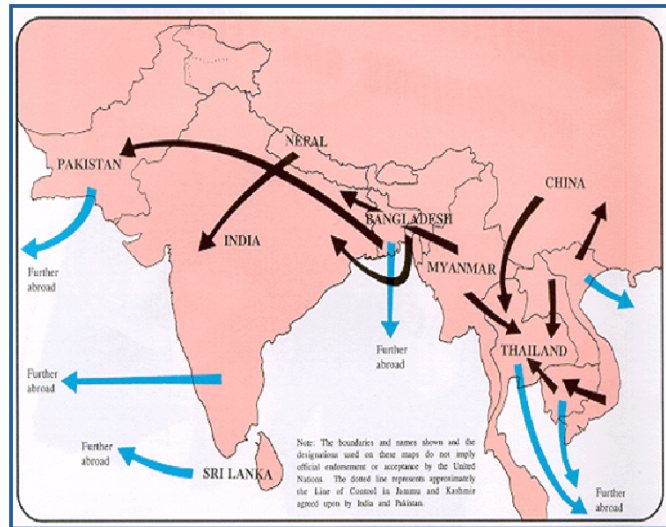


Child Sex Trafficking

Over the past two decades, trafficking in human beings has reached epidemic proportions. No country is immune. It is estimated that one third of the world's human trafficking takes place in Asia. 30% of the victims are children.

One of the largest forms of trafficking is sex trafficking where the majority of victims are young females between the ages of 12-18. Between 50-90% of the children rescued from brothels in parts of South East Asia are infected with HIV.

The UN estimates that trafficking in persons generates US\$7-10 billion annually for traffickers. **Trafficking is the second most lucrative crime in the world, after the drug trade.**



Accurate statistics about child sex trafficking are impossible to obtain as nature of any illicit trade prohibits this.

In 2003, the UN estimated that **1.2 million children are trafficked annually around the world** and their most recent global estimate dates from 1995 and concluded that **one million children mainly girls but also a significant number of boys enter the commercial sex trade every year**. It is therefore likely that in the last decade, this figure has substantially increased.

Trafficking is not limited to adults or to international borders. Toddlers, children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to trafficking. They are trafficked across local, regional and international borders; these children can just as easily find themselves alone in a strange city, as they can alone in a new country.

There are many reasons for the dramatic increase in the trafficking of women and children such as globalisation, domestic servitude, cheap labour, marriage, adoption, prostitution, child pornography including the more recent practice of "live" internet child abuse, and child sex tourism. Weak law enforcement and lack of community awareness as well as the lure of easy money have helped to make this industry boom.

Although many people are removed forcibly from their families for the purpose of trafficking, many others go willingly, choosing to believe their traffickers' promise of a better life. This deceit is all too common. A Cambodian study found that 85 percent of victims were trafficked by someone close to them someone from within the family, a friend, neighbour or boyfriend.

A 2004 study in Lao PDR "Broken Promises, Shattered Dreams: A Profile of Child Trafficking" found that:

- The majority of trafficking victims (60%) are young females between the ages of 12-18

- A disproportionate number come from an ethnic minority background
- 43% of trafficking victims have never been to school or only partially completed primary school
- Most of the girls came from the rural areas

The story of child trafficking is bleak, but there is hope. Child Wise works tirelessly to put a stop to the sexual abuse and exploitation of children that fuels the demand for child trafficking. Our programs aim to prevent abuse and exploitation, to protect children from victimisation and to provide recovery support and services to those children who have already suffered at the hands of their oppressors.

Child Wise believes that child protection should be at the forefront of all the work that we do. Children are entitled to all the rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights however they also need special protection and care. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child has been ratified by every country in the world except two.

To tackle child trafficking, coordinated regional action to enforce the rights of children and prosecute the criminals involved is needed to prevent this horrible trade.

Some of the underlying factors which make people vulnerable to trafficking include:

- Poverty
- Lack of access to education
- Lack of access to employment

Child Wise has been working across Southeast Asia since 1999 to increase the knowledge and community practices to protect children.