

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Human trafficking is a global challenge and as the United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated in September, 2005 countries need to join together and form “an abolitionist movement of the 21st century to advance freedom for the world’s most vulnerable citizens”.(U.S Department of State, 2005)

The problem of human trafficking is very complex, there is no easy solution but it requires urgent international, regional and national intervention strategies. At international level, there have been ongoing efforts to combat human trafficking, but as identified above the number of human trafficking victim’s increases, exploitation continues and the reported cases seem to get more horrific.

As stated previously Thailand has been described as “a hub of trafficking” and is used as a transit area and is itself both a source and destination country for trafficking. In the past the government failed to prevent and investigate cases of trafficked persons such as that of Urairat’s case and many others go unreported. The loss suffered by Urairat’s family and the violation of her basic human rights stems from a failure of government policy to treat such cases as a serious human rights abuse.

The victim is denied access to the law, receives little or no support and even if a case is prosecuted, is left to sort out a future alone without resources and in fact the chance of being re-victimized are great. In some areas, the issue is perceived as a consequence of poverty experienced by a few underprivileged people and economic and social development strategies alone can provide the solution, yet as we have seen this insidious slavery cannot be defeated by such strategies alone.

While recently advances have been made by the Thai government in acknowledging the extent of the problem in the region, legislating against human trafficking and accepting a human rights policy approach as appropriate, there is still much to be done to put the good intentions into effect and to achieve results that impact on the growing numbers of people being trafficked in the region. The Thai

government needs to accept responsibility for the public's discriminatory perceptions of migrants, hill tribes and other vulnerable groups, which are the groups most exploited in the past and these perceptions need to be urgently corrected if new policy changes are to have public support which is crucial to their success.

While the economy benefits both directly and indirectly from the exploitation of these groups the government does little to publicly acknowledge the benefits but it is still quick to reinforce perceptions that such people are dangerous, a threat or unwanted. The government has the power to deal with their illegal status but does not address that issue or still categorizes the groups as criminals not victims when it suits its agenda. It is not surprising that the community or police have little sympathy or understanding of trafficking issues especially if the justice system reflects the government ethos. It is hard to expect Thai police or Immigration Officers to act differently and they are the first line of defence against human trafficking. If a victim has no confidence they can access the justice system the majority of human trafficking cases will continue to go unreported.

Thailand needs to urgently engage its citizens in the battle against human trafficking and empower indigenous groups such as stateless people, refugees, sex workers and other vulnerable groups such as migrant labor by recognising their basic human rights in law and government policy. By discriminating against them by using policy and laws, Thailand places them in a vulnerable position for the traffickers to exploit to their full advantage.

Therefore, the inference could be drawn based on the facts and information gathered in this study that Thailand has failed to identify and target the groups that are in real need of protection and failed to empower them against the human traffickers. This has left the most vulnerable groups exposed to various forms of exploitation and human rights abuses.

Secretary of State Rice reminded the international community of the need for an international coalition to create the abolitionist movement of the 21st century likewise the Thailand government needs to be proactive to create an internal and regional coalition supported by legislative, regulatory and community programs based on a human rights model and provide the resources to achieve the objective of abolishing human trafficking, nothing less will win the battle.

The fact that human trafficking is increasing and continues to increase suggests past approaches have not worked which implies only holistic human rights based approach can bring all the resources together under one umbrella to develop the sustained and united action needed by all players to eradicate human trafficking internationally and nationally.