



# PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking

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## OFFICIALS FROM MEKONG COUNTRIES VISIT THAILAND'S SHELTERS FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Nonthaburi, 15 October 2009** – Providing appropriate shelter, protection and support for victims of human trafficking is a critical responsibility in counter-trafficking work. As part of a week-long regional counter-trafficking training organised by the UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP), 48 senior level representatives from the six countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) – China, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam – and from Malaysia visited two shelters for victims of human trafficking in Thailand.

The Kredtrakarn Protection and Occupational Development Centre for women and girls, and the Pak Kred Reception Home for Boys, are located in Nonthaburi Province on the outskirts of Bangkok. These government-run facilities provide shelter to young people from different countries who have fallen victim to human trafficking or other forms of severe abuse or neglect in Thailand.

Baan Kredtrakarn currently provides care for a total of 231 young women and girls, including 91 who are under 15 years old and the remainder from 15 to 28 years old. Pak Kred Reception Home currently cares for 139 boys ranging from 6 to 18 years old. The victims in both shelters come from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. There are also three young boys from Liberia in the Pak Kred shelter.

“As a state-run shelter, Baan Kredtrakarn provides services free of charge,” said Baan Kredtrakarn Director Ms. Ladda Benchatachah. “The women and girls stay here until all the proper procedures are met and arrangements can be made for them to return home. During this time they receive various support including accommodation, medical care, counseling, psycho-social support, education and vocational training, recreation services and social activities and early childcare training. We also run a programme that helps to prepare victims and their families for reintegration, and special outreach projects through which we try to ensure follow-up with the families after the victims have gone back home.”

“The boys in our shelter are from various backgrounds, but all are in need of special protections and care,” said Ms. Rungtiwa Suddan, Director of Pak Kred Reception Home. “One of the challenges we face is being able to provide services in the many different languages spoken by the victims. We try to overcome this problem by working with NGOs and international organisations that can assist us with translators who speak the languages we need to communicate with the boys.”

During the visits to the shelters, government and law enforcement officials, non-governmental organisations and victim support agencies from the different GMS countries saw firsthand the kinds of victim protection and support services that are provided to victims. They were also able to review, compare and discuss the types of services and facilities for victims available in their own respective countries.

**UNIAP Regional Management Office | [www.no-trafficking.org](http://www.no-trafficking.org)**

United Nations Building 7th floor | Block B Rajdamnern Nok Ave. | Bangkok 10200

Tel: +66-2-288-2213 | Fax: +66-2-280-0268

“Victims of trafficking are often highly traumatized people with no-one to ask for help. Kredtrakarn shelter is a good temporary home for them before they can return to their country of origin. They are protected here and provided with immediate support such as medical care, psycho-social counseling, and vocational training”, said Ms. Tran Thi Thanh Thu, from the Vietnam Women’s Union.

“I am glad that I had the opportunity to see such a facility that cares for victims from different countries, including my own, Vietnam” she added. “As a Vietnamese visiting a centre that is caring for Vietnamese victims of trafficking abroad, I wanted to be able to speak to these girls in Vietnamese, hear their story and see if I could help, but it was important to respect their privacy.”

According to the UN, there are an estimated 2.5 million trafficked persons worldwide, with a concentration in the Asia and Pacific region, and traffickers are making illicit profits estimated at \$31 billion US dollars. Human trafficking is a highly complex problem in this region due to a variety of factors. Chief among these has been poor coordination between countries and a lack of knowledge by governments about how other countries tackle the problem.

This week’s visits to the shelters for victims of human trafficking were part of the victim protection training provided by UNIAP’s 10<sup>th</sup> Regional Counter-Trafficking Training Programme held in Ayutthaya from 12-16 October 2009. This training is helping to strengthen the collective efforts by the six countries in the Mekong region to combat the transnational crime of human trafficking.

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For further information, please contact:

**In English:**

Ms. Dominique Larsimont, UNIAP  
[dominique.larsimont@undp.org](mailto:dominique.larsimont@undp.org)  
+66 878 23 8810 (Thailand)

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