



PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking

THAILAND TO APPLY ETHICAL STANDARDS IN COUNTER-TRAFFICKING WORK

BANGKOK, 8th October 2009 – Strict ethical standards and human rights principles are of critical importance in successful counter trafficking work. This was the premise for a workshop held today at the Amari Watergate Hotel in Bangkok, where representatives from government agencies, NGOs, international organisations, the diplomatic community in Thailand, academic institutions and the media, came together to learn about and discuss the different ethical issues that must be considered when implementing projects, conducting research or reporting on cases related to human trafficking.

“The damage that can be caused by ignoring some of these key principles is considerable. Rather than improving the lives of victims of trafficking, you can actually put them in greater danger if you don’t apply some very basic rules on ethics”, said Ms. Ratchada Jayagupta, Thailand National Project Coordinator for the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP).

There are numerous cases that illustrate how non-adherence to some simple rules on ethics jeopardize counter-trafficking efforts. These range from breaches in confidentiality rules to inadequate safety and security measures. Today’s training focused on some of the key aspects related to ethics and human rights and introduced participants to practical scenarios where such considerations are of paramount importance. This triggered some lively and engaging discussion among the training participants.

The workshop was organised by UNIAP, which is aimed at providing a strong and well-coordinated response to human trafficking among all partners and organisations engaged in counter-trafficking work in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS). UNIAP has its headquarters in Bangkok, and offices in the capitals of the six GMS countries: China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

UNIAP has published a special guide on the focus of today’s workshop. The “Guide to Ethics and Human Rights in Counter Trafficking” will serve as a tool for counter trafficking policy makers, practitioners and researchers. It details the seven key ethical principles for conducting counter trafficking research and programming, namely:

- Do no harm: Be compassionate but neutral
- Prioritize personal safety and security: identify and minimize risks
- Get informed consent, with no coercion
- Ensure anonymity and confidentiality to the greatest extent possible
- Adequately select and prepare interpreters and field teams
- Prepare referral information, and be prepared for emergency intervention; and
- Do not hesitate to help others: put your information to good use.

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UNIAP, in collaboration with the Department of Special Investigation (DSI), Ministry of Justice, has translated the “Guide to Ethics and Human Rights in Counter Trafficking” into Thai and published 8,000 copies of the Thai version to be distributed to law enforcement and concerned officials throughout the country. The Guide has also been translated into all other GMS languages and training on the ethical principles in counter-trafficking has to date been conducted in Cambodia, Vietnam and Lao PDR.

“Counter trafficking practitioners, especially law enforcement officials, must have a good understanding of the essence of human rights and the right to basic liberties of their fellow human beings, in order to be able to bring justice to everyone involved in a professional and ethical manner”, said Pol. Col. Tawee Sodsong, Director General of the Department of Special Investigation of Thailand’s Ministry of Justice. “This Guide and training are of paramount importance in achieving this understanding”, he added.

Also among the participants was Major Wanchana Sawasdee, an official in the Thai military and a well-known Thai actor who recently played the lead role in the movie “Legend of the Great King Naresuan”. As a firm supporter of the work of UNIAP, Major Wanchana supports many social activities and is a strong advocate of anti-trafficking efforts.

“I am really passionate about this issue. As a member of the Thai army, a public figure in my country, and an ordinary human being with a sense of responsibility, it is not possible for me to stand by without doing anything to help combat human trafficking in this region”, he said. “This training has helped me to understand how I can pursue this goal more effectively.”

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