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Responding to Child Sex Trafficking: Transnational Advocacy Networks in the Greater Mekong Subregion

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The rapidly expanding market in enslaved children bought and sold for sex is one of the most inhumane transnational crimes that appears to have been facilitated by globalization and its many effects, such as a growing disparity in wealth between north and south. Child sex trafficking has become one of the most highly publicized social issues of this time, and, because of its global nature, transnational advocacy networks are well placed and central to leading campaigns against it. Transnational advocacy network anti-trafficking efforts have led to significant progress in the Mekong Subregion by bringing the child trafficking issue onto the global social policy agenda, resulting in new child protection legislation and improved interagency collaboration in the region.

KEYWORDS *child sex trafficking, transnational advocacy networks, globalization*

INTRODUCTION

In the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), the geographic region spanning the Southeast Asian countries of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, China, and Vietnam, transnational advocacy networks (TANs) have been forming since the 1990s to combat child trafficking for sexual exploitation. Child sex trafficking occurs in all Southeast Asian countries. In a region where the demand for young brides, adoptive infants, sex with children, images of child pornography, and cheap labor is strong, children may be trafficked at source or during migration, either en

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route or after reaching their destination. Origin, transit, and destination countries for child trafficking exist throughout the Southeast Asia region, with some countries characterized as origin, transit, or destination countries and others encompassing all three. Internal trafficking, from rural to urban centers and from small towns to big cities, is also a considerable dynamic, although far less researched than cross-border trafficking. Complex push and pull factors, including poverty, gender inequality, unemployment, and forced migration, complicate the child sex trafficking issue. The regional picture that emerges from the available literature is one in which children experience serious physical, psychological, emotional, and social consequences as a result of being trafficked (Dottridge 2004; Rafferty 2007; UNICEF 2009). Children also often encounter revictimization by the justice system as well as stigma within their communities when reintegrated and are at risk of falling back into exploitive situations (UNICEF 2009).

Interagency collaboration against child sex trafficking is essential for the effective control and prevention of child sexual exploitation. State inaction, and at times collusion, in child trafficking has significantly exacerbated the problem in recent decades. Because of their transnational nature, and the diverse membership of government, nongovernmental, and United Nations (UN) agencies operating within TANs, these groups are well placed to lead campaigns against child sex trafficking. TANs have successfully lobbied for new legislation on the child trafficking problem; developed systems for protecting children; improved interagency cooperation on child trafficking and associated issues; and, as demonstrated in the examples of the UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT), UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP), global anti-trafficking campaigns such as the Child Wise and Body Shop campaign, and new extraterritorial legislation on child trafficking, facilitated the development of a global social movement against child sex trafficking.

This article examines two important themes: first, the complexities of child sex trafficking in the Mekong Subregion; and second, the proliferation and activities of transnational anti-child sex trafficking advocacy networks in Thailand and Cambodia that act as buffers against child exploitation and trafficking. The article has two main sections. First, it provides a historical overview of child sex trafficking in the Mekong Subregion, looking specifically at Thailand and Cambodia, as well as an examination of the complex trafficking push and pull factors that exacerbate child trafficking, with a focus on poverty. Second, the article examines the centrality of TANs in delivering victim services, performing advocacy, and transforming the child sex trafficking problem.

METHODS

Data collection for this research was conducted in Thailand and Cambodia over a 6-month period in 2010. A total of 22 interviews were conducted with

child trafficking experts employed in nongovernmental agencies (NGOs), UN agencies, TANs, and academia in Bangkok (Thailand), Pattaya (Thailand), Chiang Mai (Thailand), and Phnom Penh (Cambodia). The purpose of the semistructured interviews was to build a complete picture of the child trafficking problem in Thailand and Cambodia and a picture of TANs and their diverse structures, the anti-trafficking advocacy strategies used, and campaign highlights and successes. Additional methodologies included process tracing and participant observation (performed while I was employed as a researcher at an international NGO in Bangkok and attending regional anti-trafficking forums, seminars, and meetings). Given the difficulties of quantifying a complex and transnational social problem, using a qualitative research methodology allowed the exploration of normative and theoretical questions within the social science framework. The strategies used illuminated complexities in the child sex trafficking issue and also complexity in advocacy networking processes against child trafficking in Thailand and Cambodia.

Although this article discusses the subject of child sex trafficking as a social issue spanning the continents, Thailand and Cambodia served as the primary country case studies for data collection and the analysis of TAN activities. Through the study of these two countries and the TANs against child sex trafficking operating within them, interesting networking phenomena became evident, including the development of cohesive networks against trafficking; the collective sharing of resources, knowledge, and expertise among network partners; and the shaping of social policy on the child trafficking issue as a result of the advocacy efforts of these networks. As the following sections of the article explain, Thailand and Cambodia form the nexus of child sex trafficking activity in the Mekong Subregion and are clearly the most documented countries for both child sex trafficking and child sex tourism.

CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING DEFINITIONS, ESTIMATES, AND DYNAMICS

Definitions

There is a broad consensus that child sex trafficking is an issue that urgently needs to be tackled. Most child sex trafficking research reports start from the premise that child trafficking is a sinister, serious, or major problem. Early 20th-century conventions defined *trafficking* as internal or cross-border movement for the purposes of prostitution and defined all sex work as trafficking, whether the women and girls were in the profession voluntarily or not (Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women [GAATW] 2007). Pointing out that until recently there was no internationally agreed-upon definition of trafficking, a handbook from GAATW gives some modern definitions of trafficking from the UN and from the Human Rights Standards for the Treatment

of Trafficked Persons. Common elements in these definitions include movement from community of origin; fraud, force, deception, or coercion; and exploitation in slavery, near-slavery, or servitude with or without pay (GAATW 2007). The modern definitions do not require that sexual exploitation be involved for it to be called trafficking, and GAATW emphasizes that movement for sexual exploitation is only one type of trafficking, though it has arguably been the most prioritized form for concern.

Today the most widely accepted definition of human trafficking comes from the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which supplements the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, better known as the Palermo Protocol (November 2000). The Palermo Protocol has proved a highly useful tool in establishing a widely used definition of trafficking that all organizations—governments, UN agencies, and NGOs—can use. According to the Protocol,

- (a) “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.
- (b) The consent of the victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in the subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in the subparagraph (a) have been used;
- (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in the subparagraph (a) of this article;
- (d) “Child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age. (UN 2000:2)

As the Protocol implies, sex trafficking refers to a specific subset of the wider phenomenon of human trafficking. It can be understood as the component of human trafficking that deals with the use of persons—almost exclusively young women and children—in prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation. As Subsection (b) of the Protocol clarifies, whether a victim “consents” or not is “irrelevant.” In essence, the Protocol holds that consent cannot truly be given when acts such as fraud and deception are used. Exploitation rather than consent is the central feature of the Palermo Protocol’s definition. The emphasis on traffickers is also evident in the fact

that the Palermo Protocol is a supplement to the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. It is these organized criminal networks of traffickers that have played an instrumental role in the globalization of sex trafficking; however, the trafficking of children in the GMS operates as more of a cottage industry than a large-scale criminal enterprise, as occurs in Eastern Europe.

Wylie and McRedmond (2010) argued that the adoption of the Palermo Protocol and its tripartite definition of trafficking as involving deceptive/coercive recruitment, movement, and the exploitation of a person has driven the debate on trafficking forward and has been a crucial factor in states' recognition of human trafficking as a serious problem. NGOs, governments, and UN organizations have widely lauded the Palermo definition of trafficking as a step toward ensuring structure and cohesion in approaches to the prevention of trafficking and the prosecution of traffickers (UN Office on Drugs and Crime 2008). Advocacy organizations and TANs have, however, also pointed out that the definition reduces trafficking to a law and justice issue rather than a problem associated within the larger global issue of uneven wealth and resource distribution due to globalization (Canadian Council for Refugees 2009). Because trafficking is a transnational crime, having a definition that is accepted across boundaries is essential for developing and implementing anti-trafficking laws as well as combating the problem.

National governments have also developed their own human trafficking definitions and policies in recent decades, and one of the first countries to achieve this was the United States. In federal U.S. statutes, there are no formal definitions of human trafficking or trafficking in persons. Instead, the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) defines "severe forms of trafficking in persons." Specifically, Section 103(8) of the TVPA defines this term as follows:

- (a) Sex trafficking in which a commercial act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or
- (b) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. (U.S. Department of State 2000:1470)

It is this definition, rather than the Palermo Protocol definition, that is applied in the context of U.S. anti-Trafficking in Persons policies and programs (Siskin and Wyler 2012), which measure national governments' efforts to eradicate trafficking. The TVPA's definition of severe forms of trafficking in persons is similar to the Palermo Protocol's definition of trafficking in persons, as both identify force, fraud, and coercion as prohibited means or methods for obtaining the services of another person and neither require the

movement of persons across national borders as a necessary precondition for identifying instances of human trafficking (Siskin and Wyler 2012). The creation of the TVPA and the Palermo Protocol, both in 2000, has provided clear legal definitions of trafficking and related concepts such as that of the minor, and provided significant legal frameworks for, in the case of the TVPA, grading the efforts of countries such as Cambodia and Thailand in preventing child trafficking and protecting victims. Furthermore, both the Palermo Protocol and the TVPA have successfully promoted the notion that a child, any minor younger than 18 years of age, cannot be deemed to make the decision to enter the sex trade voluntarily and that a child should be protected from hazardous work—and sexual exploitation and prostitution certainly fall into the category of hazardous work. A legally defined child can only be a victim and be trafficked.

Estimates

UNIAP (2008) has stated that there are no universally accepted estimates of child trafficking throughout the world. Difficulties in identifying victims and differences in applying trafficking definitions to local realities make obtaining such estimates virtually impossible. However, some commonly quoted figures provide some sense of the magnitude of the problem. UNICEF (2009) has suggested that about 10 million children, mainly girls, are subjected to various forms of sexual exploitation worldwide. A further 1 million children are estimated to enter the commercial sex trade each year (UNICEF 2009). UNICEF further estimates that a third of all sex workers in Southeast Asia are between the ages of 12 and 17. Kristof (1996) similarly noted that more than a million girls and boys, ages 17 and younger, are engaged in forced prostitution in Asia. A recent study by the International Labour Organisation (2008) estimated that 43 percent of all victims of forced labor worldwide are trafficked for sexual exploitation. According to Child Wise (2007), an Australian NGO working on the human trafficking issue both domestically and internationally, more than 250,000 sex tourists visit Asia each year, with 25 percent coming from the United States, 16 percent from Germany, and 13 percent from both Australia and the United Kingdom. This includes those seeking sex with children, a practice better known as child sex tourism, and those specifically targeting prepubescent children, that is, pedophiles (Peters 2007). However, in most countries the major demand that creates a market for the commercial sexual exploitation of children is still domestic. Local perceptions of childhood, which often differ from the international legal norm, contribute to this phenomenon.

Over the past three decades international NGOs, together with UN agencies, governments, and other bodies, have become increasingly aware of the widespread phenomenon of child trafficking—both across borders and within nation-states themselves. Much attention has been given to the

Asia-Pacific region, and especially the GMS, which has become a hub for trafficking in children, particularly for the purposes of sexual servitude. The Asian countries surrounding the Mekong River (the six countries of the GMS—Cambodia, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam) have among the highest incidence of internal and transnational migration in the world. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children in this region leave their homes to cross borders each year in search of new economic opportunities and a better life (World Vision 2008). The countries of Cambodia and Thailand are therefore within a region where the ease of cross-border movement coupled with the relative economic prosperity and political stability of some countries has attracted large numbers of would-be economic migrants. Despite the ease of cross-border mobility, political sanctions against would-be migrants in destination countries have created a need for networks of people-movers to facilitate cross-border movement. That these facilitators often serve as links to low-paid, exploitive, and slave-type jobs, including sex work, in the destination countries is hardly surprising. Further impacting the migration of adults and children in the region is the fact that the lucrative tourism industry in the GMS has not only created jobs within legitimate sectors but also stimulated a demand for women and children—both male and female—in the entertainment sector, which generally translates as the sex sector (Dottridge 2004). Many of the children in this sector are poor and have low education levels (Peters 2007). The sex sector can offer these poor migrating children higher paid jobs than they would find elsewhere (Peters 2007).

In the GMS children are trafficked either within their own countries or over the border into neighboring countries, for example from Laos to Thailand, or Cambodia to Thailand, or Thailand to China, or Myanmar to Laos, and so on. Some children are moved across international borders and some are trafficked across the world into developed regions such as Europe, the United States, and Australia (Marshall 2001). Whereas adults might choose sex work as an occupational choice, children can only be considered victims of coercion and trafficking (Lim 1998). Children, in contrast to adults, “are clearly much more vulnerable and helpless against the established structures and vested interests in the sex sector, and are much more likely to be victims of debt bondage, trafficking, physical violence or torture” (International Labour Organisation 1998:212). In a similar vein, Marshall (2001) has argued that children's choice is questionable, as it is often motivated by poverty or other extenuating circumstances. Because of extreme poverty families in the Southeast Asia region have been known to be manipulated into giving up their children to recruiters to make ends meet when faced with bleak economic opportunities (Leung 2003). Some children are turned over to recruiters by their families as part of an ancient practice known as debt bondage, in which children, usually girls, are sent to work for creditors until they pay off a family's debt (Blackburn, Taylor, and Davis 2010). In many cases of

trafficking in the GMS, the children have themselves initiated the migration process, motivated by real and/or perceived differences in lifestyles, employment opportunities, and pay levels between Thailand and surrounding countries (Huijsmans 2008).

The global and public policy response to human trafficking has been profound. As Wong (2004:2) suggested, "From a poorly funded NGO women's issue in the early 1980s, human trafficking has entered the global agenda of high politics, eliciting in recent years significant legislative and other action from the US Congress, the EU and the UN." Although *End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes* (2006:20) has reported that, to date, "there is no clear strategy to deal with the demand for sex with children," it is the political activism and campaigning of transnational anti-trafficking advocacy networks that has influenced the promotion of child trafficking as an important issue for public and international policy concerns.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEWS OF CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING IN CAMBODIA AND THAILAND

Cambodia

Cambodia is noted as being one of the poorest countries in the world (Blackburn et al. 2010). Of the Southeast Asian countries touched by child trafficking, Cambodia is one of the most affected, especially with regard to health issues such as HIV/AIDS. Human trafficking in Cambodia has been heavily influenced by the country's history of civil conflict, the growth of the sex sector as a result of UN intervention and presence in the country, and Cambodia's lagging economic development. As a result of decades of conflict in the country, Cambodian society and infrastructure was virtually destroyed and has been slow to recover following the peace settlement of 1991 (Owen 2005). Sweeping purges and political repression were common in Cambodia for decades, resulting in several generations of Cambodians being affected by death, unemployment, and acute poverty (Owen 2005). The aftermath of the Khmer Rouge regime is still felt both psychologically and economically and plays a direct role in labor and sexual exploitation arising from ill-prepared migration (Shelley 2010). The upheavals caused by the conflict and lack of opportunities in rural areas have fuelled a return to the cities and urban areas, all but emptied during the Khmer Rouge period (Shelley 2010). With well more than half the population younger than age 20, Cambodia faces a growing problem of providing decent work for its young population, with growing unemployment further increasing the drive toward cross-border migration for employment and perpetuating the cycle of vulnerability to human trafficking (Shelley 2010).

As a result of the destruction throughout the country and the new UN liberal, post-Cold War goal of democratization following the Khmer Rouge rule and civil conflict, a UN transnational team entered the country in the 1990s with the goal of rapidly transforming Cambodia into a democracy (Paris 2004). It was at this time, with the entrance of UN forces into the country, that human trafficking first appeared in Cambodia (Aoi, De Coning, and Thakur 2007). The effects of the substantial period of violent conflict in the country left the general population in an especially vulnerable position. During the period prior to UN intervention, general Cambodian institutional life ceased to exist, and many of the services normally provided by a government disappeared. There were few schools, religious organizations, or legitimate economic opportunities that could provide the education and stability necessary for normal lifestyles. This lack of structure and education left many Cambodians without the knowledge or understanding necessary to be aware of the dangers posed by traffickers. The rapid infusion of foreigners with large sums of money that followed the entrance of both UN military forces and civilian officials led to an increased demand in the sex sector across the country (Aoi et al. 2007). It is estimated that the size of the sex sector surrounding UN installations during this period tripled (Aoi et al. 2007). This expansion was largely aided by the absence of other forms of legal employment for women and children. As a result of the complete disruption of society that occurred during the decades of conflict there was massive poverty in the country and many girls found themselves without viable employment and little education, which made them particularly susceptible to the lure of traffickers. The supply and demand of the growing sex sector and a vulnerable population led traffickers to take advantage of those who needed employment to provide for their families.

Although there is little doubt that the sex industry in Cambodia expanded during the period of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, some scholars suggest that it should also be noted that both married and single Cambodian men frequently visited brothels both before and after the Khmer Rouge period (Takamatsu 2004). Even following the departure of UN forces from Cambodia, the sex sector has continued to thrive as the Cambodian government continues to promote traditional tourism as a source of much-needed economic growth. Among the tourism centers of Southeast Asia, Cambodia is well known as a haven for child sex tourists (Peters 2007). Significant numbers of Asian and Western men travel to Cambodia for sexual encounters with children (Samarasinghe 2003). Illustrative of this is that 51 percent of Cambodian girls in one study had lost their virginity to a tourist or foreign client, indicating the important role that sex tourism plays in the growth of trafficking (Samarasinghe 2008). Investigators have discovered girls as young as 5 years of age working in the sex trade in Cambodia (Blackburn et al. 2010). Brown (2007) has discussed in depth the existence and popularity of what she labels the “virginity trade” in Cambodia. She has

argued that the trade “clearly shapes the patterns of trafficking within Cambodia, and given the extensive cultural links between virginity loss ... and the sex industry, it is arguably the largest factor contributing to entry into commercial sex” (Brown 2007:57). Cambodian families are often facilitators of child sex trafficking: “Between 30 per cent and 40 per cent of parents sell their children for sex” (Kneebone and Debeljak 2010:140). Although Cambodia was previously considered a source country, its sex trafficking industry is now so large that children from outside the country are trafficked into Cambodia to work in the sex trade (UNIAP 2009).

Many of the issues regarding Cambodia’s economic development remain unresolved, and recent economic downturns in the late 1990s and mid-2000s stalled or reversed many of the gains that had been achieved in recent years. With much of the country’s population younger than 20 years of age and few prospects for economic growth, the Cambodian government is struggling to provide adequate employment for its young population, leaving many young Cambodians susceptible to the grasp of traffickers (Kaida 2006). Such obstacles have affected the government’s ability to create coherent national anti-trafficking policies. However, with the assistance of domestic and international NGOs, advocacy networks, and UN agencies such as UNIAP, some progress is being made in terms of developing more comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation (Cambodia Today 1999). Historically speaking, the first piece of anti-trafficking legislation adopted in Cambodia was the Law on Suppression of Kidnapping, Trafficking, and Exploitation of Human Persons, which was enacted in 1996 (Yasunobu 2004). This law focused solely on the victimization of women and children forced into the sex industry. The law led to increased prosecution against those found guilty of trafficking women and children for sex but failed to set up protection and rehabilitation facilities for the victims of trafficking (Yasunobu 2004). As a result, victims were poorly treated and Cambodian officials relied heavily on the facilities of domestic or international NGOs to undertake the task of rehabilitation rather than instituting government-run organizations. This legislation remained in effect until the enactment of the 2008 Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Commercial Exploitation. Prior to its adoption, the Cambodian government had been under a great deal of pressure from both the United States and international anti-trafficking NGOs to take on a larger role in the combating of human trafficking within the country (Unmacht 2003). Many critics stated that Cambodian officials were relying on outside organizations to handle the issue of trafficking rather than taking action themselves (Yasunobu 2004). The new legislation has been useful in that it has clearly defined what trafficking is and it has acknowledged the many forms of human trafficking present in Cambodia. The law has also expanded and increased the powers of police officers investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases (U.S. Department of State 2008). Traffickers prosecuted under this new legislation are subject to far more severe punishments

than previously. Although statistics regarding the prosecution of traffickers in Cambodia are often considered unreliable, data released in the 2008 U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report show an increase in the overall level of trafficking prosecution within the country (U.S. Department of State 2008).

The enactment of this recent legislation was coupled with the establishment of a national anti-trafficking task force. The goal of this national taskforce is to improve interagency efforts for combating trafficking. Trafficking prevention efforts in Cambodia have increased with the passage of the comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation and the proliferation of other new policies. There has also been an increased effort in the country to promote the level of women's and children's rights. The Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth have initiated efforts to raise the level of awareness regarding trafficking and provide rehabilitation and protection programs to the victims of trafficking. These groups have organized vocational training programs for children to aid in trafficking prevention. The government has also undertaken efforts to reduce the sex tourism industry in the country. The Ministry of Tourism has begun producing and distributing pamphlets and information flyers to foreign tourists arriving in the country, warning them of the punishments that await those who sexually abuse Cambodian children. The Ministry of Tourism has teamed up with several NGOs, including World Vision International, to conduct workshops and training sessions educating staff in the hospitality industry on how to recognize and take action against instances of child sex tourism, and it has also developed a program designed to protect children from being drawn into the sex tourism sector.

A major obstacle to effective anti-trafficking initiatives in Cambodia continues to be that of government corruption. In Cambodia the government continues to prosecute its own police for trafficking-related corruption charges. For example, in 2006 the former deputy director of the Police Anti-Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department was convicted for complicity in trafficking and sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment, and two officials under his supervision were also convicted and sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment. Former U.S. President George W. Bush stated in 2005 that the Cambodian government had "failed to address the trafficking complicity of senior law enforcement officials" (Bush 2005:n.p.).

Thailand

The causes and extent of child sex trafficking in Thailand are much better understood than in Cambodia because of Thailand's long history of both human trafficking and advocacy organizations' anti-human trafficking intervention in the country. Trafficking and slavery are not new phenomena in Thailand, and slavery, especially bonded slavery, has strong historical roots (Rende Taylor 2005). In Lanna Thai history, the king owned all farmland, and if the people were unable to pay their taxes or owed any other debt, they

could choose to place themselves, their wives, their children, or their junior kin in debt bondage (Rende Taylor 2005). Debt bondage slaves could be bought out of slavery but often were not, and once entered into debt bondage, the slave could be resold (Rende Taylor 2005). Daughters were often resold, as the male *corvée* labor system demanded a constant supply of female slaves for domestic and sexual services (Rende Taylor 2005). There is evidence that as early as the 14th century the Siam government licensed and taxed prostitution, and there has been recorded government control and intervention in the sex sector since that period (Lim 1998). Although these practices were abolished by King Rama V in 1905, social hierarchy, sexual slavery, and the leveraging of children to pay family debts persist in modern Thailand (Rende Taylor 2005).

The sex industry in Thailand received a substantial boost during the Vietnam War when nearly 40,000 American service members entered the country on rest and recreation periods (Hitchcock 2008). The increased number of American servicemen in the country occurred at the same time globalization was creating new trends in global travel and communication. Globalization brought an even greater number of foreigners into Thailand looking for sex. Migrating children from poor neighboring countries such as Laos, Cambodia, and Burma, looking to escape poverty and civil conflict in their own countries, were lured into sexual servitude to meet the needs of the growing Thai sex tourism industry (Hitchcock 2008). Even these regional sources could not meet the needs of the burgeoning tourism sector, and young girls were trafficked from as far away as Eastern Europe (U.S. Department of State 2008). During this period of rapid expansion little action was taken by the Thai government to curtail it (Hitchcock 2008). Indeed the Thai government openly promoted the growth of sex tourism until the late 1980s (Hitchcock 2008).

The reasons for child sex trafficking in Thailand differ somewhat from those in its neighboring countries because of the unique status of females in Thai society. Thai family structure is described as matrilineal and matrilocal (Mensendiek 1997). The family is structured around female members, and although the authority rests with the senior male, it is transmitted through the female line (Mensendiek 1997). The traditional role of women in upholding the household has meant that women have needed to seek ways to respond to the changing rural economy. The failure of the traditional subsistence farming economy has driven many women and girls to migrate to Bangkok or neighboring countries in search of means to support the family. A study by Phongpaichit (1982) found that migrant Thai women and young girls send their earnings back home as remittances, and some females return to their families after a period of time. Phongpaichit concluded that "it is not helplessness but the sense of responsibilities they feel" (1982:68) that drives Thai girls into prostitution and that the sex trade provides a means of survival for many of the rural poor.

The seminal author on slavery, Kevin Bales, has argued that in Thailand the case of women and children who are forced into prostitution reflects the differences between old and new forms of slavery. Thailand's rapid population growth has meant that there is a surplus of potential slaves while the country's rapidly changing economy has led to increased poverty and desperation (Bales 2000). In Thailand there is often no ethnic difference between the slaveholder and the victim—young Thais are enslaved by Thai brothel owners, and the primary distinction is between rural slaves and urban slaveholders (Bales 2000).

Given Thailand's long history of intervention in the sex industry, it is not surprising that the country's anti-trafficking legislation and policies are more advanced than those of its neighbors. Thailand first acknowledged the presence of human trafficking in 1928 with the Trafficking in Women and Girls Act. This legislation aimed to reduce the number of women and girls forced into prostitution in the hope of decreasing the occurrence of sexually transmitted diseases (Wongboonsin 2007). This legislation was replaced in 1997 with the Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Women and Children Act. This law greatly expanded the prosecution and severity of penalties associated with human trafficking. Like the previous law, this act was aimed at reducing sexually transmitted diseases rather than responding to trafficking as a human rights violation. The law significantly increases the penalties associated with the crime of human trafficking and addresses government corruption, with those within the government found to be involved in trafficking schemes susceptible to receiving double or even triple the punishment accorded to a Thai citizen (Wongboonsin 2007). Under the new policy, prosecution of traffickers in Thailand has increased. According to the 2008 U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report, during that year the Thai government reported more than 140 cases of sex trafficking that were investigated and prosecuted, up from 88 the previous year (U.S. Department of State 2008).

TAN child trafficking prevention efforts have increased in response to new legislation and policies. The Thai government has, in collaboration with UN agencies and NGOs, undertaken awareness campaigns across the country that have focused on promoting safe migration practices and integrating the importance of human rights into general school education. Sex tourist education has also received increased attention for trafficking prevention purposes. Upon arrival in Thailand, foreign tourists have received information regarding the high-traffic sex sector in the country and the penalties that are associated with the criminal act of abusing a child in Thailand (U.S. Department of State 2008). The new trafficking legislation has also improved the resources provided for rehabilitating and protecting trafficking victims. New programs, which largely focus on preventing the re-trafficking of children, offer various services to increase the victim's level of education and vocational skills. All female trafficking victims, Thai or foreign, are now

offered shelter and rehabilitation services upon their rescue (U.S. Department of State 2008). There are currently nine trafficking victim shelters located regionally and run by the government to assist victims of trafficking (U.S. Department of State 2008). It is estimated that the overall number of shelters run by the state and also NGOs in the country is approximately 97 (Fein 2007). The government has also established overseas protection and rehabilitation measures to ensure that Thai citizens identified as trafficking victims abroad are returned home and safely reintegrated into society.

There is some disagreement on Thailand's efforts to combat child sex trafficking. For example, Shelley (2010) argued that the sex industry in Thailand is still viewed as a form of development capital. She pointed to the issue of government corruption and collusion in human trafficking and suggested that trafficking remains a major source of revenue for the police, who share the proceeds of this large-scale activity with politicians and political parties (Shelley 2010). The sex industry in Thailand is not, she argued, the consequence of well-organized crime groups as in many other countries but rather the result of networks of criminals working with government officials who assume a key role in the trafficking of Thai citizens and migrants (Shelley 2010). Other critics, such as Obokata (2006), argue that despite a recent flurry of legislation against human trafficking, the government of Thailand still tolerates the sex industry because of the large amount of profit it generates. Blackburn et al. (2010) stated that the sex industry contributes more than \$22 billion to Thailand's gross domestic product. This statistic underscores why the sex industry in Thailand is so entrenched in Thai culture (Blackburn et al. 2010). Despite promises to stamp out government corruption, the practice continues unabated. In Mae Sai in northern Thailand, for example, brothels pay a certain amount of bribe money to the police each month for each girl (Obokata 2006). In 2003, 50 police officers of the Bangkok Metropolitan Police were removed from active duty because of allegations that they had taken bribes from human traffickers (Obokata 2006).

FINDINGS: TANS RESPONDING TO THE CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING PROBLEM

The Proliferation of TANS as Buffers Against Child Sex Trafficking in the GMS

In Southeast Asia, especially since the 1997 financial crisis, there has been a growing tendency for NGOs, social movements, and activist networks to organize and work transnationally (Caouette 2007). In the fight against child trafficking in the GMS and internationally there are three major categories of contributors: national governments, the UN (and its various agencies), and NGOs from both the north and the south. Many network partners,

particularly NGOs, are on the ground, carrying out day-to-day operations such as protecting victims, performing rescues, and repatriating victims to their home countries. The UN serves as the important forum where international consensus on human trafficking is built and where the bulk of coordination takes place (Dyrud, Malik, and Sunnanon 2007). National governments, of course, remain important contributors because they have the power to legislate and have access to enforcement mechanisms, intelligence, and resources to fight trafficking (Dyrud et al. 2007). These organizations—NGOs and government and UN agencies—have historically had little experience of coordination, largely because of financial constraints and economic, labor, and political concerns and differences.

The demands of donors and the history of anti-trafficking funding from the United States are key reasons for the development of, initially, anti-trafficking organizations in the GMS and, subsequently, anti-trafficking networks. The creation of UNIAP, a key interagency anti-trafficking network in the GMS, and that of a handful of other anti-trafficking organizations was largely the result of a significant (\$1 billion USD) donation from the Turner Foundation, a private American trust. As an interview participant explained, the substantial Turner Foundation grant aimed to “get the various UN agencies to work together on human trafficking issues and for the UN to work with NGOs and the private sector where possible and appropriate.” Subsequently UNIAP was established in the early 2000s and mandated to consist of and coordinate UN agencies, NGOs, and Southeast Asian governments.

Human trafficking also received attention in the 1990s and 2000s because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Health experts during this time visited brothels and talked to sex workers about public health and how and why sex workers started working in the brothels and realized that many of the prostitutes had not consented to their employment. Anti-trafficking and anti-forced labor campaigns in the region were subsequently launched to combat forced prostitution, and more organizations became interested in issues having to do with HIV/AIDS and human trafficking. From there, with the Ted Turner funding, campaigning against human trafficking simply snowballed.

In the 1990s, at the same time the Turner Foundation was providing large amounts of funding for anti-trafficking activities, the U.S. government was creating new legislation on human trafficking. The United States passed its first human trafficking bill in 2000, which led to the U.S. Trafficking in Persons law and the U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report Card for countries all over the world except itself. The U.S. government was also actively encouraging the development of anti-trafficking legislation in all countries and provided funds for the development of this legislation (U.S. Department of State 2001). The U.S. government also actively encouraged anti-trafficking advocacy, particularly the development of awareness programs to prevent trafficking from occurring.

However, an early problem in anti-human trafficking advocacy was that U.S. money for anti-trafficking campaigning was conditional. In the early years of this funding under the George W. Bush administration, the majority of funding from the U.S. government was reserved for NGOs that, as an interview participant explained, specifically “did not support women working as prostitutes.” Therefore, the bulk of U.S. anti-trafficking funds in these early years were given to nonsecular NGOs and faith-based advocacy networks. Under current U.S. President Barack Obama these restrictions have eased, and current U.S. Agency for International Development funding is given to both secular and nonsecular anti-trafficking NGOs and TANs.

The Centrality of TANs in Combating Child Sex Trafficking in the GMS

Since Keck and Sikkink’s (1999) seminal work on TANs as structures with the potential to transform the “terms and nature of the debate” (Gilson 2011:290), a wave of scholarship has followed that has attempted to identify the relevance of such groups, focusing in particular on themes of globalization and legitimacy (Gilson 2011). Recent studies on the benefits of collaboration among advocacy organizations have concluded that TANs can have significant influence in key debates and discussion, increase their political standing, and improve access and leverage as well as political influence (Dutting and Sogge 2010). The modern aid industry encourages collaboration and coproduction and has created a range of relationships, not just between states, the UN and NGOs, and NGOs and civil society, but also among NGOs themselves, including alliances, coalitions, and networks. International NGOs and UN agencies seeking social transformation collaborate on a number of levels to influence global governance. They create and activate global networks, participate in multilateral arenas, facilitate interstate cooperation, and act within states to influence policy and enhance public participation (Alger 1997). Even in areas often considered to be the sole domain of states, such as international security, advocacy networks can play a role in shaping the agenda and contributing to policy change (Price 1998).

In the GMS transnational advocacy networking against child trafficking has enabled organizations with different mandates and expertise to share skills and capacity for a broader and improved response to child trafficking, including prevention, protection, and prosecution activities and rehabilitation of victims. In addition, by networking against this problem, TANs have been able to have a stronger voice in lobbying for new child trafficking policy and legislation and improved opportunities for working collaboratively on improving child protection systems in the GMS. Most important, transnational advocacy networking has contributed to a redistribution of knowledge, power, influence, and material resources from the rich north to the core southern actors working on the ground in local NGOs in the GMS.

Advocacy networking against child trafficking in the GMS has helped to ensure a number of important benefits for victims. Foremost among these has been the benefit that victims are able to access a wide range of services. TANs have facilitated the streamlining of victim services, and once victims are identified, networks have been effective in referring victims to partner agencies for a range of protection and rehabilitation services. In addition, advocacy networks are helping vulnerable children acquire knowledge and tool sets to mitigate their risks of exploitation.

TANs in the GMS are facilitating effective collaboration among law enforcement agencies across jurisdictions so that bureaucratic obstacles are minimized and perpetrators of child trafficking do not escape justice. Improved prevention-oriented coordination has facilitated the involvement of all sectors of society so that anti-trafficking networks can move toward the ultimate goal of preventing the exploitation of children. In providing such victim services, and through the direct sharing of global political economy knowledge, TANs are bringing an equal level of counteractivity to a social problem that is clearly enhanced, even promoted, by the economic connect-edness of the globalization of criminal networks that sell children's sexual labor as a commodity.

A further major benefit of collaboration through TANs is that anti-trafficking campaigns can reach all corners of the globe rather than just a small geographic corner. Campaigns have been adapted and developed to target citizens not just in the GMS but also in a large number of developed countries to teach such developed nation citizens about slavery, trafficking, and ethical consumerism and make the West aware of the strict penalties imposed on those who travel to poorer countries to sexually abuse children. This expansive outreach beyond the borders of the GMS, and the incorporation of cultural difference and engagement, reflects the essentially cosmopolitan nature of advocacy networks and provides an important model for addressing global social problems.

Individual anti-trafficking organizations, particularly grassroots organizations, have little voice with states and the GMS community in campaigning for child trafficking prevention and victim protection. However, when organizations unite in advocacy networks they are able to share resources, knowledge, and skills and thus have a stronger campaign reach and impact in the GMS community and a stronger political voice with states. With a united voice advocacy network members are providing an effective buffer against child trafficking. As one expert commented, "There is real value in coming together; the voices together are a lot more difficult to quiet than on their own."

Scholars of human trafficking agree that "little can be achieved without dialogue and cooperation between regional and international bodies, governments and NGOs" (Cameron and Newman 2008:13). With the exception of a few, the world's many thousands of NGO groups, when acting in isolation,

have no power in the international system (Magis 2009). In addition to their insignificant size and voice, the groups can be narrowly focused on specific policy areas and highly ideological, both of which limit their comprehension of larger and related issues and diminish the capacity for the negotiations so critical in political environments (Magis 2009). Through collaboration, the groups acquire the ability to influence international decision making above and beyond their weak formal status and can use the power of the collaborative to avoid co-optation (Magis 2009).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In a similar vein to the women's rights and other social justice movements, TANs in the GMS are promoting the cosmopolitan notion of global justice and supporting the creation of global fora to fight child trafficking. Examples include the Global Forum on Human Trafficking; the Asian Taskforce; UNIAP; and also international legislation such as that provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Palermo Protocol, and extraterritorial legislation to intercept and punish perpetrators. Another important recent example is UN.GIFT, which was launched in March 2007 by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in cooperation with the International Labour Organisation, the International Organisation for Migration, UNICEF, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe with the aim of eradicating human trafficking

by reducing both the vulnerability of potential victims and the demand for exploitation in all its forms; ensuring adequate protection and support to those who do fall victim; and supporting the efficient prosecution of the criminals involved, while respecting the fundamental human rights of all persons. (UN.GIFT 2012)

Through conventional and unconventional advocacy activities such as rock concerts and social media campaigns, anti-trafficking networks have been successful in broadening their appeal by reaching out to members of the public who may not be able to join protest marches but are willing to engage in and support "innovative activities with a critical edge" (Kurasawa 2004). Furthermore, TANs' development of forums and their involvement in the development of new legislation have pushed the child trafficking issue onto the global social policy agenda and promoted the goal of universal child rights. TANs have also provided participants with opportunities to exchange and acquire first-hand information about the difficult political, cultural, and socioeconomic circumstances faced by ordinary citizens on all continents in order to gain more global perspective (Kurasawa 2004).

Anti-trafficking advocacy network success has been significant, but there is much more that needs to be done. Child trafficking is likely to increase

under conditions of poverty, unemployment, and social and economic transition, especially in regions where there are limited opportunities for legal migration. TANs continue to expend much energy keeping children's rights on key UN and government agendas. Recent successes highlight the critical importance of sustained network practice that engages with global political, legal, and economic arenas in the struggle to keep a global focus on children's rights issues at a macro level. There is little doubt that this kind of transnational advocacy will increase in the future as the rapidly globalizing world continues to exacerbate the divide between the haves and the have-nots.

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