

## The Crusade Against Sex Trafficking

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*This article is the first part of a two-part series. The next installment will explore alternative approaches to addressing the problem of trafficking for the purposes of forced prostitution. --The Editors*

Gary Haugen is cradling the padlocks in his thick hands. A former high school football player--bristly crew cut, broad shoulders squeezed into a dress shirt--Haugen has more the mien of a military man than a lawyer, although his image is in keeping with the muscular work of the organization he founded and heads. The president of the International Justice Mission, an evangelical Christian organization devoted to combating human rights abuses in the developing world, Haugen is musing over the mementos of IJM's work in India and Cambodia. The padlocks look ordinary enough: heavy brass, a squat square one, a round one with a key. But they had once hung on the doors of brothels, until local law enforcement busted the establishments in raids initiated by IJM. "Have you been to Tuol Sleng?" Haugen asks, looking down at the padlocks. He is speaking of the central Khmer Rouge detention center in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, now a museum filled with photographs of the thousands who perished at the prison. "There it is--you see a factory where people got up every day and then went to work, and their job was to torture people as painfully and horribly as possible to extract a confession from them and then kill them.



AVENGING ANGELS

"A lock on a brothel, for me, represents this element of violence and force," says Haugen. "The lock is on the outside of the door, not inside."

For Haugen, the locks are reminders of his calling: to break the chain of human rights abuses, one person at a time. He argues that the main problem facing the disenfranchised is not one of hunger, homelessness, lack of education or disease. Rather, the root cause of much of the suffering in the developing world is the failure of the criminal justice system to protect the poor from violence--the brutality that robs them of food, home, liberty and dignity.

In an effort to counter those failures, IJM marshals more than 300 Christian lawyers, law enforcement specialists and social workers who collaborate with local counterparts and police to provide services to victims of slave labor, sexual abuse, police brutality, illegal detention and land seizure. In the case of its best-known and most controversial work--brothel raids--IJM provides evidence of trafficking to police in countries including India, Cambodia, the Philippines and, in the past, Thailand; and it collaborates on "interventions" to remove victims from the establishments and arrest and prosecute their abusers. Although the raids have undoubtedly saved a number of trafficking victims from exploitation, human rights advocates have criticized the interventions for disrupting HIV-outreach efforts, heightening the potential for police brutality and subjecting adult sex workers and trafficking victims to possible deportation or long involuntary stays in shelters.

In light of the organization's tactics, Haugen's mention of Tuol Sleng is an uneasy one that points out the potential perils of IJM's approach--an example of state power used to prey on, rather than protect, its populace. Haugen acknowledges that law enforcement agents have often been the perpetrators of abuse, and he has testified against this police corruption in Congress. Nonetheless, he has based his decision to work with local police on the premise that power can be harnessed to bring about justice--especially when tethered to divine aims. As Haugen writes in his book *Good News About Injustice*, "God is the ultimate power and authority in the universe, so justice occurs when power and authority is exercised in conformity with His standards."

This philosophy found deep resonance with the Bush administration. Eager to complement his war on terror with a parallel "soft-power strategy," according to his speechwriter Michael Gerson, President Bush signed on to the "war on trafficking" with a vengeance. Although countertrafficking funds found their way to groups that worked more broadly on immigrants' rights and services, much of the money went to organizations like IJM, whose interventionist attitude was congruent with Bush's foreign-policy stance, and to groups that believed that prostitution was inherently exploitative and deserving of abolishment.

Part of the appeal of the law-and-order solutions proposed by groups like IJM is that they are highly visible and forceful responses to the horrifying abuses faced by trafficking victims and sex workers--injury, extortion, rape, even murder. (*New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof tried a similarly dramatic tack when he went so far as to purchase the freedom of two trafficked girls, with decidedly mixed results.) The narrative that frames such vigorous interventions as the noblest response to the scourge of sex trafficking is an understandable one, but it skirts the economic and social problems that make recovery so difficult for the "rescued." It also rips their lives out of context, so that an approach that might be suitable, if still controversial, in a country with reliable law enforcement and criminal justice systems is applied in a country where those systems are more likely to be part of the problem than the solution. The Obama administration seems to be aware of these issues, but rolling

back the momentum on raid work in order to scrutinize its efficacy is a tough challenge--especially when there is always another young victim to rescue.

In 1997 Haugen launched IJM to answer the biblical mandate to seek justice. As he writes, "Over time, having seen the suffering of the innocent.... More and more I find myself asking not, *Where is God?* But, *Where are God's people?*" Dedicated to a "casework" model, IJM staff work to remove victims from exploitation. IJM then prosecutes the abusers under local law and assists victims with "restoration" by winning them financial compensation or providing "aftercare" services through partner organizations.

IJM's casework approach focuses on individual rescue. As Haugen has written, "The good shepherd would leave the ninety-nine to go find the one lost sheep because the one mattered." Sharon Cohn Wu, IJM's senior vice president of justice operations, concurs. "While there are millions of girls and women victimized every day, our work will always be about the one," she said in a public address. "The one girl deceived. The one girl kidnapped. The one girl raped. The one girl infected with AIDS. The one girl needing a rescuer. To succumb to the enormity of the problem is to fail the one. And more is required of us."

Thousands of Christians have answered Cohn Wu's call, joining IJM campus chapters, attending Haugen's talks at the Saddleback and Willow Creek leadership conferences, and swelling the organization's budget to \$22 million in 2008. IJM has become a major force in humanitarian work and an even larger one in burgeoning evangelical activism.

IJM's rise was fueled by the millions in federal grants it received under the Bush administration, which also expanded the federal law on trafficking. Before the Bush era, the law created a State Department office to rank--and potentially sanction--countries on the basis of their countertrafficking efforts in its annual "Trafficking in Persons" report. When the law was reauthorized under Bush, however, it included a clause to suspend funding to organizations that "promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution." Those applying for funds for HIV education or outreach were subject to the same clause.

President Bush then released anti-trafficking funds to feminist anti-prostitution groups and to faith-based organizations like IJM. The funding decision outraged HIV-education NGOs and sex workers' unions, a number of which were cut out of HIV-outreach and countertrafficking funding or refused it in protest. Human rights advocates, meanwhile, raised concerns that IJM's criminal justice approach would cause "collateral damage"--putting women and girls on a collision course with police brutality, detention and deportation, and disrupting HIV services while failing to address the economic inequities that would replace one rescued girl with another victim.

Those concerns fell on deaf ears. IJM began receiving federal funding in 2002, and by the end of 2010 the organization will have received more than \$4 million from the government, including a \$500,000 grant to open an office--established just last January--to work against trafficking for forced prostitution in Samar, the Philippines.

IJM's ardent sense of mission--its moral clarity about justice work, dedication to the individual and passionate desire to find relief for victims--brought a revitalized engagement to believers and those concerned about trafficking. But those qualities often led to a quagmire in IJM's early years.

Although the organization has refined its techniques, its operations have ambiguous, and sometimes troubling, results on the ground.

As for IJM's symbolic quest to provide individual rescue, finding "the one" for whom the group toiled and whom IJM had "saved" would prove nearly impossible. She is a cipher, a repository of innocence and redemptive hope that seemed to call more loudly to the IJM staff than the voices of trafficking victims and sex workers who decried the raids and their experiences of police brutality. "The one" was a symbol that IJM staff would always be driven to break free, even if she would wind up running away from her rescuers in the end. The shepherd claimed to have benevolent aims but did not always know the way to safety.

Ping Pong is frowning, her formidable charm dampened by memory. The sex worker is mulling over IJM's work in Thailand. As a health and legal-services advocate with the sex-worker organization Empower, she's seen the aftereffects firsthand.

"Oh, yes, there were problems," she says at last. "The deportation--and back to Burma! They were desperate to leave in the first place. The long detention. The girls running away. And the way they treated other NGOs, just expecting them to clean up the mess afterward. Even the other anti-trafficking groups couldn't get along with them."

We are meeting in Empower's Chiang Mai offices, perched over the Can-Do Bar, an "experitainment" venue cooperatively owned by sex workers and managed in compliance with Thai labor laws. The bar is a cavernous space--front patio, full bar, pool table, fairy lights and two poles for dancing.

IJM set up its Chiang Mai office in 2000, intent on tackling the northern city's trafficking and child-prostitution problems. Located near the Burmese border, Chiang Mai serves as the gateway to uncertain refuge for Burmese and ethnic Shan migrants seeking escape from a despotic regime, or fleeing the rape and plunder of a Burmese military determined to eradicate a Shan insurgency through the cruelest means possible. Thailand has thrived on the underground labor of these migrants, who often work the construction sites, wash the laundry and sell sex--largely without benefit of documentation or legal protections.

The group's early raids soon resulted in IJM being branded vigilante "cowboys" and "cops for Christ" by other humanitarian workers. The organization even busted the same brothel twice, in 2000 and 2003, each time calling local NGOs in a panic afterward to ask for translation help--no one had realized the frightened women and girls were Burmese and Shan.

In accordance with Thai laws, older, voluntary prostitutes caught in IJM raids were deported to the border, while younger ones, automatically defined as trafficking victims on the basis of their age, were moved to government rehabilitation centers, where they were often required to stay for months or years, waiting to testify in court and be repatriated directly to their families. As Thai law did not grant trafficking victims temporary legal documents at the time of IJM operations in country, the girls were not allowed to leave the shelter grounds. (The new law, passed last year, allows for the possibility of temporary residence for foreign trafficking victims, but it remains to be seen if this provision will be implemented.)

Rather than face a potentially long period of detention, some rescues took matters into their own

hands, knotting sheets together to escape shelters--one was hospitalized with back injuries when she fell during an escape attempt.

Ping Pong sighs, recalling the reaction of the women and girls rescued in an IJM raid in 2003. "They were so startled, and said, 'We don't need rescue. How can this be a rescue when we feel like we've been arrested?' All their possessions were taken away, they were photographed by the media and some of them couldn't leave for quite a long time. The women who get rounded up usually wind up back here and doing sex work again--but this time with more debt from having to make the journey or be re trafficked again.... We wrote a report critiquing the raid, but then IJM accused us of supporting brothel owners--so we never talked to IJM again." In a 2003 position paper, IJM had argued that Empower turned a "blind eye" to child prostitution by failing to report brothel owners they knew were practicing it "in order to further their work among adult commercial sex workers."

According to Empower staff member Liz Hilton, in the late '90s, before IJM began its work in Thailand and when police raids were at a high, brothel owners would occasionally drop off women and girls at the Empower office after learning of an impending raid. Empower staff would then assist the women in deciding what their next steps would be. Should the brothel remain open, they could return there to work. Others sought work elsewhere, returned home or entered shelter programs voluntarily. Hilton says, "After they were deposited on our doorstep, well, we eat first--it's Thailand!--and we see what everyone needs and wants." Hilton recalled two cases where girls under 18 were dropped off by brothel owners, and both were referred to shelters and services. According to Hilton, Empower made it clear to the brothel owners that "there was no guarantee that they'd be willing to go back" and that Empower had as its dictate "whatever the women want." Even so, "to be honest, sometimes the best interests of the women and what they want fits more closely with brothel owners than with the rescue organizations or police," says Hilton, meaning that sometimes the women wanted to continue working rather than face deportation or receive alternate vocational training. Still, the evacuation prompted by the threat of the raid did mean that some who wanted to leave got the chance to do so.

A number of trafficking victims from the 2003 raid initially refused to provide their real names and addresses in order to protect themselves and their families, according to Ping Pong. They were willing to stay in the shelter rather than face a return to impoverished villages and the shattering shame at the discovery of the nature of their work or the possibility of detention in Burma for their illegal exit from the country. Burmese officials are not above extorting the women's families, and Ping Pong recounted anecdotes of entire households being forced to move because village gossip broke out after Burmese officials came to locate the women's relatives in the repatriation process. The victims eventually relented and were repatriated--my efforts to find and speak directly with women and children recovered in IJM-initiated raids in Thailand were unsuccessful.

"IJM talks about saving an individual," says Joe Amon, director of the health and human rights division at Human Rights Watch. Amon met with the group in 2007 to discuss its tactics. "And what's incredible is that it's not clear if that individual has been saved. IJM is not clear on how aftercare leads to protection for these kids. I asked them about deportation of these girls. And they had no tracking for that, for any minors that had been repatriated. That to me is incredibly troubling."

Ben Svasti is the executive director of Trafcord, a Thai organization that provides liaison among

social workers, police and lawyers on trafficking cases. Trafcord used to work closely with IJM--the group's undercover investigators would hand over evidence of trafficking to Trafcord, which would launch an inquiry and decide the best course of action.

"Half of those IJM cases didn't hold water," says Svasti. Part of the problem was that IJM had difficulty differentiating between voluntary sex workers and trafficked women and girls, a difficult task even for Trafcord. "IJM would go in and ask, 'Do you like working here?'" says Svasti. "The girl says no, and then they'd assume she wanted to be rescued. But you very rarely get a woman who says, 'I like this kind of work.'"

Svasti links this problem with US policies that conflate trafficking and prostitution. "I remember talking to US officials who were confused that there could be voluntary prostitution," he says. "They thought, 'Why would we need to differentiate? It's all forced and largely the same as trafficking. If we come across it, we should shut it down.' If you think that sex work is one of the worst things that can happen to a person, then I guess you can say you are rescuing people to take them out of it."

Christa Crawford served as IJM's country director in Thailand in 2001 and '02, after which she worked for the United Nations and wrote a book on using international law to fight trafficking. As she explains it, American perceptions of trafficking led to policies centered on eradicating large-scale brothel prostitution, rescuing "an innocent pre-pubescent girl victim who has been kidnapped or tricked" and targeting traffickers who are part of international criminal rings. "That does exist. But the on-the-ground reality often consists of the big murky middle," says Crawford, referring to the family members, neighbors or formerly trafficked women who often pull others into prostitution.

"There were degrees of volition involved," Crawford continues. "Under international law the minors can't consent to prostitution, but it was important to understand what they were thinking. As for the women, they were making a rational decision under horrible conditions--to be raped for free in Burma or paid to do commercial sex work is one situation. For me, they are making a rational decision, but that's a decision no one should have to make. We should be talking about the labor laws, migration laws and the situation in Burma--just as much as working with the courts and police."

A high-ranking police officer at the provincial level agrees with Crawford's assessments. "The 'victims' we found intended to come and work in prostitution. That's the majority of the people we found, I would say 80 or 90 percent, back then when we were working with IJM, and now, too," he says, speaking on condition of anonymity. "I feel bad for the women--and they get so angry about what we're doing."

IJM harnessed US influence to pressure local NGOs and police to fall in line. In one IJM-initiated case, Trafcord's "slowness" in taking action on raiding a brothel earned it a rebuke from the State Department, according to Svasti, which raised diplomatic hackles in Thailand and in effect severed the relationship between IJM and Thai countertrafficking efforts.

Stymied by Thailand's inflexible laws on detention and deportation and shut out by Thai organizations, IJM gradually tapered off its countertrafficking work there; now it focuses on helping ethnic minorities file for legal citizenship. It shifted its countertrafficking efforts to the next

battlefront--a neighboring country with an appetite for child prostitution, Cambodia.

Head north out of Phnom Penh on National Road 1 for eleven kilometers and turn left, and you'll find what was once Cambodia's most notorious haven for child prostitution. These days, visitors who come to Svay Pak during the day will find an open-air billiards area, a few drugstores and one or two gold shops that form part of an informal banking system for the poor and undocumented, who display the gold as a form of aspirational fashion or tuck it away for safekeeping. A few young men and women are cutting and stacking rags, and farther down, past a dusty marketplace full of the smell of overripe fruit and empty of customers, is a recycling outpost where a woman with a scarf wound around her head is at work crushing water bottles. Svay Pak is a town of scraps and remnants--including a diminished child-sex trade that lingers on, despite the efforts of IJM and the Cambodian police.

It's a melancholy ending to what was supposed to be a happily-ever-after story--after all, Svay Pak helped IJM make its name. The predominantly Vietnamese village was the staging ground for IJM's most celebrated raid, in March 2003, which became the subject of a *Dateline NBC* special and Haugen's book *Terrify No More*.

"They would bring the youngest of girls and sit them on your laps in the streets," said Patrick Stayton, who became IJM's field office director in 2007, after the first IJM raid. "There were girls that were anywhere from 5 to 8. After that [IJM raid] they no longer had to have every orifice of their body violated ten times a day.... That ended for at least a few that day."

I first met Stayton in February 2008. The tall lawyer had a deep, rolling voice--a natural fit for singing in a chorus, which he says serves as "one of my outlets"--and an intense gaze that radiated moral seriousness and genuine, if guarded, warmth.

He folded himself into a wicker chair, and we turned to his work, faith and the classic conflict that IJM had encountered: how to balance the needs of trafficked women and girls with the potential for disruption in the lives of adult sex workers and the distribution of HIV services.

"I believe that God is all-powerful. He could do this, but I think it pleases him to let his creations be his hands and feet here," he said. "I have an opportunity to bring heaven on earth in places that are already hell on earth. I believe in a God who created us with the ability to feel this kind of pain, and to understand and recognize and see it, a heart to want to do something about it. I think the evil that happens here breaks his heart.

"Am I happy about the potential disruption? No. But I'm looking at the girl there, the 15-year-old girl who is nothing more than an organ for rent," he says. "That's what we find unacceptable. And I think that IJM has weighed that cost--I have personally weighed that cost. I wouldn't be working with IJM if I didn't feel that cost was one I could take."

IJM was prepared to stake it all on its first major intervention in Cambodia. On March 29, 2003, it staged an ambitious and massively publicized raid. Haugen had agreed to embed a crew from *Dateline*, hoping that the TV segment would create enough public outrage to force Cambodian authorities to shut down the village, should the raid fail.

Posing as prospective clients, IJM investigators had amassed videotaped evidence that around forty

girls, some as young as 8 or 9, were being offered for sexual services. After the raid, IJM was able to count thirty-seven girls among the rescued; the ensuing court case resulted in six convictions. I was unable to meet the girls rescued in the raid or any from subsequent interventions; shelter managers said they wanted to protect the girls from too much media exposure. But in August 2008 *Dateline* ran a follow-up story with the girls, who appeared healthy and happy, and had dreams of becoming doctors and dance teachers.

The Svay Pak raids seemed to close on that triumphant note--but the story after the redemptive ending is far darker, according to Peter Sainsbury, a consultant who worked with Cambodian human rights group LICADHO to review the IJM raid. A number of bystanders had been caught up in the intervention, including a noodle seller suffering from high blood pressure. Although Sainsbury notified IJM staff of her condition, little was done to earn her release or provide her with medical care, and she died in custody. Her body was returned to her family with teeth missing--prison guards had used pliers to wrench out any with gold fillings.

As for the children, a number of them were addicted to ketamine and injectable drugs, according to Sainsbury, and cut deals with police in the safe house in order to procure them. At least twelve of the victims ran away, some of them later reappearing at Svay Pak to continue prostitution, according to local sources. A police raid a year later netted a number of the rescues from the high-profile March 2003 IJM raid. Within days of the later raid, all the girls had fled the shelter.

A USAID-funded "census" of sex workers in Cambodia uncovered the fact that the number of underage children offered for prostitution actually increased after the raid, from forty-six before to twelve directly after to fifty-five by May 7 of that year.

"We were a little surprised at the increase after the raid," said researcher Thomas Steinfatt by phone. "But a lot of the girls have a debt contract. If [a girl] winds up in a shelter after a raid, she wants to get out because her family will be pressured to pay back the debt. They won't be able to do that, so the 15-year-old [sister] may get sent. Then the 13-year-old may get sent as well. That's one way the larger number could be accounted for. I argue that the contracts should be null and void, but the girls and women are not going to see it that way."

Those who remained or returned to Svay Pak faced an additional challenge: according to Sainsbury, pimps believed that local HIV-education and social work NGOs had aided IJM and the police, and after the raids cut off the groups' access to the women and barred them from providing care.

In an effort to put a definitive end to child prostitution in Svay Pak, IJM raided the village multiple times after its initial intervention, and the Cambodian police also conducted 100-day saturation/surveillance operations. In his report on the impact of these initiatives, however, French economist Frederic Thomas discovered that the raids had merely dispersed the problem. The women and girls of Svay Pak who hadn't returned to Vietnam had been relocated to Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, the town just outside the famous Angkor Wat ruins.

By 2007 business in Svay Pak had recovered and reappeared more covertly. Pimps would search clients for cameras, according to Interior Ministry and IJM sources, or use intermediaries like hotel staff and motorcycle-taxi drivers to help deliver children from the village directly to clients' hotel rooms.

Shortly after its first Svay Pak raid, IJM launched a police-training initiative in Cambodia that brought its own controversy. USAID awarded a nearly \$1 million grant to the organization to train police in countertrafficking techniques--a decision that fueled criticism from human rights advocates concerned about corruption. Cambodian police are notorious for their involvement in trafficking, through extorting protection money from brothel owners, or through assault and rape of sex workers and trafficking victims.

According to a 2006 USAID-funded study that drew on interviews with 1,000 sex workers and sixty police officers, approximately a third of the freelance sex workers surveyed had been raped by a policeman in the past year; a third had been gang-raped by police. As for sex workers who worked in brothels but also accepted clients outside, 57 percent had been raped by a lone policeman; nearly half had been gang-raped by law enforcement. Fifty percent of freelancers and nearly 75 percent of the brothel group had been beaten by police in the past year.

The police themselves testified to their behavior:

Frankly speaking, I did not like sex workers in the past. I have recently abused many hardheaded women who were working in the parks at nighttime. I beat them when they refused sex with me.... I can't remember the number of beatings. Because I thought that sex workers needed extreme sex from men [laughs]. People in my area called sex workers *pradap* (meaning "equipment that people can use for doing something," a public vagina for men). Sometimes I asked for some money from them to buy beer or wine.... Sometimes I f\*\*\*ed them on the stone bench. I never paid them for sex.... There were many policemen who used to work in this park and they did the same.... Now I realized that women become sex workers because they have no job and no money to do business. I know that sex workers have suffered a lot from men, especially men who have guns and power like policemen. I am so sorry for what I have done to those sex workers. Maybe at that time I was too young to know everything in this society. About five years ago, I arrested one woman who was walking on the street late at night. I threatened her to give me some money. I needed money for buying beer and cigarettes. That woman told me that she had no money. I beat and forced her to find money for me. She took off her earring and sold it for money to buy wine for me. I raped her on the ground near Wat Phnom. I used a condom and I raped her three times. I beat her when she was crying for my mercy. [Respondent silent for a while.] I will never do it again. I did many wrong things in my life. I want POLICY [the project that performed the study] to train police about women's rights.... I want to be a good man and take care of my family.

Such stories, according to a US government official who works on anti-trafficking, speaking on condition of anonymity, raise serious questions about "whether or not working with police as allies on this issue was a good [policy] in Cambodia."

Indeed, the "war on trafficking" blew up in Cambodia last year. In the wake of US pressure on trafficking and the advent of a new countertrafficking law, the Cambodian government launched a campaign of indiscriminate sweeps of streets and brothels. Security forces harassed HIV-outreach workers, disrupting condom-distribution efforts, and caged sex workers and street people in detention centers--actions that drew criticism from UN agencies and other civil society groups.

Cambodian government officials responded with indignation. "It is not true police are using this law to arrest and extort money from the suspects," said Gen. Bith Kim Hong, head of the anti-trafficking

police. "We never arrest prostitutes, but rather we save them from brothels."

According to LICADHO, the sweeps resulted in the murder of three detainees, who were beaten to death by prison guards, and the suicides of at least five others.

IJM did not help conduct the sweeps and condemned them publicly--Stayton even attempted to contact the local sex workers' collective to offer his help in investigating the allegations of abuse. He was rebuffed by silence, however--a representative of the collective argued that the sweeps were an unsurprising consequence of US pressure on trafficking, in which IJM has played a strong part, and of a policy that favors engagement with law enforcement while failing to heed the voices of those they ostensibly protect.

Some in the human rights community remain open to dialogue with IJM and to the possibility of positive collaboration with the police. Joe Amon of Human Rights Watch offered a slew of possible modifications to IJM's work, including establishing formal mechanisms like citizens' commissions and independent investigations to pursue complaints about police abuses. As for the sex workers, IJM could engage in "real dialogue with sex workers' groups, which have their own ways of gathering information and informing police they trust. They could also provide legal representation for adult sex workers, particularly those abused by police, or they could support local legal NGOs to do so." In the absence of those safeguards, Amon felt that IJM's strategies have yielded mixed results at best.

It's unclear how IJM may be addressing the potential complications of working with such volatile partners. The organization did not respond to repeated requests to speak on concrete strategies in the field to avoid or counter police corruption and brutality. IJM staff did, however, mention the protocol they had issued to local police, which advises them on ways to shield sex workers from the media and to reassure them they are not being arrested, and which explains techniques for conducting raids so they do not implicate social service NGOs operating in the area. My request to see the manual, however, resulted in no response. Asked about the provision of legal representation for adult sex workers, Haugen responded by noting that most of the women were undocumented and therefore less likely to press charges against law enforcement.

For Marielle Lindstrom, weighing the balance of IJM's work in Cambodia is a difficult task. Formerly chief of the Asia Foundation's anti-trafficking project, Lindstrom was in charge of disbursing the major USAID grant on the issue and served as main coordinator on Cambodia's anti-trafficking strategies, convening a task force of government officials, ministries and more than 200 NGOs. She acknowledges that IJM is "doing a good thing rescuing the children" and could have a strong positive effect should its training be incorporated into the national police academy, but she is torn about the overall impact of the organization's work.

"In the end," she says, "it's the way of thinking that troubles me. Do you want to make a difference in one person's life, or change the system? Many people are here because they've been called to do something, they have a calmness and a conviction. They know this is right. For me, I'm only human. I doubt myself all the time. I need to consider different approaches. I'd much rather say that God tells me to do this. It would be easier." Lindstrom sighs again. "Because what about your responsibility to a fellow human being, to what *they* want? Do we ever ask them? Some see proof of their faith in that one person they rescue. That's my concern--there's no self-doubt. It didn't cross

anyone's mind to work with sex workers on the law, for example. And we talk about the minimum standards of assistance, but victims are not consulted in the creation of those standards."

Before I left Cambodia, I met with the secretariat of the sex workers' collective. Three of them had been trafficked--although I didn't ask for details, they provided them, their stories of deception by friends and family.

At the end of our conversation, I asked if they had any questions. They had only one. "Sister," Preung Pany said, "we tell our stories to so many journalists, so many people like you, but then nothing changes. Still we are raped by the police, still there are young ones in the brothels. There are so many people working on this--the rescuers, the HIV people, people like you--and so much money going into this problem. But why doesn't anything change?"

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### **About Noy Thrupkaew**

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