

DEPDC

10 Years of Lessons Learned

1989-1990

*This is a summary of a report
“DEPDC: 10 Years of Lessons Learned 1989-1999”,
Supported by the Asian Children’s Fund (ACF) of Japan
and conducted by the Meakong Study Centre, DEPDC, 1999*

DEPDC: 10 Years of Lesson Learned, 1989 – 1999*

DEPDC at a glance: 1989-1998:

- DEP (Daughters Education Programme) was founded in 1989
- DEPDC (Development and Education Programme for Daughters and Communities) was founded in 1996
- DEPDC is working in 7 districts
- Since 1989-1998, 13 projects have been implemented
- DEPDC budget from 1990-1998 = 44,812,202 Bhat
- Fund supported by 25 organizations and 20 individual donors
- DEPDC has been supported by 37 foreign volunteers since 1990
- DEPDC has lost 6 daughters in 10 years (died of accident and decease)
- Total 635 DEPDC cases in 10 years
- Total Thai daughters: 409, Hill tribe: 161, Thai Yai (Shan): 57, Lao: 8
- Drop out in 10 years: 111 cases
- Graduated: 378 cases
- DEPDC children who have nationality: 469 (=73.86%), non: 129 (=26.14%)
- DEPDC has had 1,119 registered visitors in 10 years
- DEPDC has trained 4 groups of youth leaders, total 29 girls
- DEPDC 1999 (Sept)
 - total of 204 cases:

	home stay	DEPDC stay	
Mae Sai Centre:	149	107	42
Wiang Kaen:	12	1	11
Doi Luang:	15	3	12
Santonpui:	28	5	23

While Northern Thailand has long provided traffickers with a supply of young girls, in the last five years a new trend has emerged. Traffickers have expanded their networks farther afield into Thailand's neighboring countries. Agents have now established networks reaching into the remote areas of Burma, Laos, Southern China and Cambodia. The Children are mainly brought through North and Northeastern Thailand where they are then taken to other areas within the country. Although there are no exact figures available regarding the number of children being trafficked into Thailand for sexual exploitation, estimates nevertheless provide an indicative picture. From Burma, it was estimated in 1994 that as many as 20,000 to 30,000 women and girls had been trafficked primarily into brothels in Thailand, with 10,000 new recruits being added each year.

From Yunnan Province, Southern China, government estimates that in 1995 at least 2,500 girls, mainly from minority groups, have been trafficked. In 1996, the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women estimated that one million women of various nationalities have been trafficked into Thailand (cited UNDP et.al 1998)

This trend is particularly evident in Mae Sai. A 1994 informal survey by the Mae Sai hospital shows the ethnic breakdown of those working in brothels, in the local area

Women from hill tribes or other ethnic minorities in Burma	80%
Women from hill tribes or other ethnic minorities in Thailand	17%
Thai women	3%

Recruitment of children from these new areas is similar to domestic recruitment, the parents of a child are approached, a cash advance is offered, work is promised and a contract is signed. These children tend to be trafficked into low-grade brothels and into establishments with close links to the sex industry including bars, restaurants and pubs. DEPDC has found this to be the case particularly in Chiang Rai, where boys and girls who wait on tables also may be available to keep the customers company. They may be rented by the hour or the night. In guest houses, hotels, and motels, young women are available to provide room service or to act as a "friend" to the guest for the period of their holiday. On the whole, these places tend to escape prosecution as on the surface the children seem to be doing legitimate work.

Identified Risk Factors

From 10 years of experience, DEPDC has identified 8 major risk factors which combine to make a child vulnerable to entering prostitution. In order of importance, the following factors are:

- 1 The girl is about to complete primary school and is therefore considered to be of suitable age and no longer legally required to go to school.
- 2 An older sister or other relative is already involved in prostitution.
- 3 The girl has been expelled from school or is not interested in continuing education but wants to have money and nice clothes and follow her peers.
- 4 The girl's parents have separated or divorced (one or both parents have remarried).
- 5 One or both of the girl's parents are dead and she is living with relatives or friends.
- 6 One or both parents are drug addicts, alcoholics or compulsive gamblers.
- 7 The family is living in a village where there is an established tradition of girls entering the sex industry.
- 8 The family is living in extreme poverty e.g. they are landless and depend on erratic casual work for their income and/or are in debt to the bank or moneylenders.

The Program

Today, 10 years later, this program has become the Development and Education Programme for Daughters and Communities, supporting since its inception over 600 girls to remain in education or vocational training in preference to entering the sex industry or enforced child labor. Its headquarters is located in Mae Sai, the northernmost town in Thailand, with other centers spread across Chiang Rai province.

Aims

DEPDC aims to prevent children at risk being forced into the sex industry due to outside pressure and a lack of education and employment alternatives. It also aims to improve the material, social and spiritual quality of life for these children and their communities and it encourages children to be proud of their culture and customs.

DEPDC Main Projects

DEPDC conducts several activities and projects with children at risk, child rights, child sexual abuse and forced labor. DEPDC considers education and training to be the key to providing opportunities and allowing these children to reach their full potential.

DEPDC's projects include the following:

1. Daughters Education Programme. Support of girls to attend primary and secondary school in 7 districts of Chiang Rai province. They have all been identified as being at risk of entering prostitution. Many girls live at home but attend extra-curricular activities at the DEP Centers. Others live at the Centers because they are considered to be too vulnerable if they live at home or have no one suitable to take care of them.
2. Project for Prevention and Development of Child Labour. Vocational training in sewing, weaving and typing for the girls, most of whom also study non-formal school on the weekends.
3. Youth Leadership Training Programme. Support of girls who have already left secondary school to continue their higher education or through the non-formal education system. At the same time they participate in personal and leadership development activities and work experience with a view that they will be future community leaders or social workers.
4. Education and Development Programme for Patak Children. Day Care and instruction in basic literacy for children from very poor and troubled families who have no nationality or identity papers and therefore have difficulty enrolling in the formal education system.
5. Mekong Study Centre for Children Development. Disseminate information about problems which affect children in the northern part of Thailand and in Mekong Region through research, seminars, workshops, meetings, exchange programs and also through training in youth to do their own research and producing newspaper, puppet shows and other forms of media.
6. Cooperative shop. A small restaurant and supplies store at the Mae Sai Centre, providing staff and daughters with vegetarian food and other supplies. Operated by members of the Youth Leadership Training Program. The shop has become a small learning centre for cooking, selling products and managing a small scale business.
7. Follow-up, Rescue and Rehabilitation Program (Emergency shelter). Monitoring of past daughters' welfare and regular contact and support when required. Includes advocacy and intervention with employers, families, communities and police.
8. Street Education and Health Program. A project started in 1996. Takes basic mobile education and health to the children begging in the streets of Mae Sai.

Situation in Chiang Rai

In 1998, DEPDC sent surveys to over 200 schools asking for information on the main problems affecting their students. 79 schools located in the districts of Pan, Wiang Kean, Doi Luang, Mae Sai, Mae Suay, Chiang Khong and Mai Phanluang in Chiang Rai province sent back information.

DEPDC was able to collect information on 4052 children. The main problems afflicting the children surveyed were abuse, broken families, abandonment, being orphaned, poverty, death of a family member from AIDS, having reason

to drop out of school and having no nationality. Out of all of these categories the problem of not having Thai citizenship (no nationality) was seen to be one of the biggest problems affecting children in Chiang Rai province. This was seen in 54% of the children surveyed. Without Thai citizenship, access to many public services such as hospitals, education, especially higher education, and legal assistance is either denied or inaccessible due to expense. Without nationality, children have limited work opportunities and are often forced to find work in hazardous conditions with low pay and little time for rest. Non-nationality was found to be a major problem in Mai Phanluang and Mae Suay. It should also be noted that while this was a problem for many, others suffer similar disadvantages due to poverty and broken families.

Out of the children surveyed a total of 1047 children were reported to be adversely affected by their family situation, representing 26% of the sample population. This is a major problem in Mae Suay, affecting over 997 of those surveyed. Pan district reported the second highest number of children being affected by family dysfunction, though the problem was reported in varying degrees in all districts.

The third most common problem was that of poverty. Pan district reported that many of its children were extremely poor. Wiang Kean gave a similar report. Also, many of those children reported to be living in difficult financial circumstances also had lost or was in the process of losing at least one member of their family to AIDS.

Many of the schools reported that there were more and more incidences of children being orphaned in the province. A major cause of this being AIDS. Mae Sai and Chiang Kong districts reported children being orphaned as the major problem. Often the children would be left under the care of elderly grandparents who were financially and physically unstable.

Another problem of note was the incidence of students dropping out of school. Doi Luang particularly noticed this phenomena. The incidence of children dropping out of school has been heightened by the Thailand's recent economic crisis, which saw the average family income drop drastically. Many children have dropped out of school in order to supplement their families income.

Processes of Case Selection (1989 - 1998)

Once a year entire DEPDC staff gets together to select new candidates for its programs and collect current data about the situation of youth in Chiang Rai. In March the process starts, with the aim of having the children placed in time for the new school year in mid-May. Last March the process began with meetings of important people in the surrounding communities. Monks, teachers, political leaders and village leaders were brought together in the seven districts that DEPDC reaches in Chiang Rai province. These meetings focussed on the situation of children in these districts, called attention to many prevalent problems and discussed the DEPDC philosophy and experience. After explaining the project and its activities, the participants were asked to collect data about children in particular need. This data was then forwarded to DEPDC.

Each nomination was considered, and in most cases further research into the child's situation was conducted. This research was done by DEPDC staff and the older girls participating in the leadership training program. In March 1997 there were almost 4000 cases nominated. Research included finding out about the village and family of each case and interviewing the village leaders, parents and the children themselves. A group meeting of DEPDC staff was then held over a four day period where all collected information was discussed and a decision made on each case presented. The majority of cases were referred to alternative programs or given scholarships to continue their education. At the time, the DEPDC resources did not allow for many more children to be included into the on site program. The vocational training project was able to take 75 new girls. Many identified by community leaders as at-risk children were given scholarships or training projects.

This is just one method used by DEPDC to assess and assist at-risk children. To illustrate some of the different approaches taken in the past, the research team compiled the following three examples from documents and interviews.

1. Direct Selection 1989 - 1998, Mai Lourng Kon Center

Process

- Collect basic information for the Primary District Education Department in the local Tambon area. Also collect data from local schools.
- Visit the villages and meet with the local leaders and school teachers. Discuss the background of the children experiencing difficulties.
- Meet and talk with the children themselves to build personal relationships.
- Visit the families of the children and discuss their situation.
- Screen the case according to DEPDC's criteria.

2. Participatory Selection 1991 - 1995, Mae Sai Schools, Temple, Patak site

Process

- Organize a meeting with local teachers and DEPDC staff to collect basic information.
- During the meeting, teachers present cases of at-risk children.
- DEPDC staff visit each of the cases. At a later stage, those who are selected will be recruited by the teacher. This is necessary, as the teacher already has contact with the child and family.
- Cases are further researched and then presented in a DEPDC staff meeting.
- Within this meeting DEPDC staff select those children most at-risk to be supported by the program.

3. Meeting of Five Districts 1996, Patak Site

Process

- Meeting in district area with local officials, teachers and other NGO workers.
- Select cases from questionnaires that were distributed prior to the meeting.
- DEPDC staff visit the cases to gain more detailed information.
- Cases are screened at a DEPDC staff meeting.

Each of the above selection techniques were evaluated for effectiveness as well as weakness. Each method had specific good and bad points. In the first example, a highlight was that DEPDC established friendships with teachers and village leaders, enabling future relationships with people who have regular exposure to individual children. At the same time, this method had the weakness of not reaching into areas of the communities where children are the most at-risk. Children with less resources might not have contact with the people present at the DEPDC selection meetings. In the second example, teachers became more involved in the process, creating strong connections and credibility between DEPDC and the children's communities, however time and money expended in the process were excessive. Also, some families did not agree that the DEPDC should come to interview them in their villages. The third technique had the positive result of enolving and educating many people, and collecting comprehensive data from 4052 cases. On the negative side, out of 200 questionnaires sent, only 79 were returned. The DEPDC spent less time in direct contact with the at-risk children, and had to trust the judgement of teachers and local officials who submitted the information.

Total Number of Children Supported By DEPDC 1990-1998

Year	Formal Education			Vocational Education			TOtal		Grand Total
	Thai	Hilltribe	Total	Thai	Hilltribe	Total	Thai	Hilltribe	
1990	19	0	19	0	0	0	19	0	19
1991	15	17	32	0	0	0	15	17	32
1992	23	8	31	0	0	0	23	8	31
1993	24	19	43	0	0	0	24	19	43
1994	72	16	88	53	5	58	125	21	146
1995	68	27	95	45	23	68	113	50	163
1996	8	1	9	32	18	50	40	19	59
1997	4	2	6	16	18	34	20	20	40
1998	29	11	40	7	9	16	36	20	56
	262	101	363	153	73	226	415	174	589

Occupations of Former DEPDC Daughters (328 samples)

Work in the private sector(i.e. restaurants, shops, hotels, factories)

38%

Continue Education 28%

House Work(i.e. return home to assist their family) 16%

Unemployment(at the time of survey) 10%

Sewing 2%

Sex Services 2%

Other 4%

Public Roles of Graduates from the DEPDC Leadership Training programs

Year	# of graduates	Project	Present positions	Location	Organization
1996	4	YLT = 2	ILO/IPEC = 2		Co-op Coordinator = 1
		Volunteer Teacher = 2	DEPDC Staff = 1	Mae Sai = 4	DEPDC = 4
1997	5	YLT = 4	ILO/IPEC = 1		Educ. Instructor =
		1DEPDC Staff = 1	Day Care Teacher = 3	Mae Sai = 2	Ban Mueng Yai = 1
		1Hong Hair = 1	DEPDC = 2	Defenei = 1	Interior Dept. = 1
1998	3	YLT = 3	Day Care Teacher = 1	Volunteer Teacher =	
		1Hill Tribe Center Staff Member = 1	Hill Tribe Village = 1	Laolie Meafalaung =	
		1Payamengsai = 1	Labor Dept = 2	Educ. Dept. = 1	

*YLT refers to the Youth Leadership Training program coordinated by DEPDC and supported by UNICEF.

*ILO/IPEC refers to the vocational training program coordinated by DEPDC and supported by International Labour Office and International Prevention of the Exploitation of Children.

DEPDC Time Line

1989

Research project about the sex trade in Thailand conducted by Sompop Jantraka and Michiho Inagaki, a Japanese journalist. From this research Sompop realized he could prevent vulnerable girls being forced into the sex industry by funding their education.

Established an educational fund project supported by the Japanese-based Asian Children's Fund.

1990

First group of 19 girls participated in the program.

1991

Expanded to involve the hill tribe communities near Mae Sai to support vulnerable Akah girls and their communities.

DEP became a member of the *Taskforce to End Child Sexploitation in Thailand*.

Moved from rented housing to the Buddhist temple *Phomwiharn*.

Started vocational training project with 9 girls.

Opened the program to accept foreign volunteers from abroad.

1992

Moved to the current larger site in Mae Sai on borrowed money.

As support to run vocational training and alternatives to the formal education system became available, the project widened to incorporate projects other than the Daughter's Education Program.

Because of this expansion of the program's focus, the name was changed to *Development and Education Program for Daughters and Communities*.

1993

Established an AIDS project funded by the *Northern AIDS prevention and Care* (NAPAC) via the Australian embassy.

1994

The UNICEF funded *Leadership Training* program was initiated. This program funded 80 young women over six years to participate in educational and developmental activities, encouraging them to become positive role models and community leaders.

Sompop Jantraka was granted membership to become an ASHOKA fellow.

The new vocational training building was built with funds from the Japanese embassy. The official opening was attended by both Thai and Japanese officials.

Official opening of the Mae Sai center. Attended by community and government representatives and the Thai media. Buildings to house current projects and many children had been completed. Two other DEP sites in Chiang Rai were opened in Huai Krai and Huai So. These sites house and support some of the girls receiving DEP scholarships and some vocational training projects.

A day care school for local village children was established to teach basic literacy and numbers to about 40 children unable to attend government schools. This project is run by volunteers and older girls involved in the *Leadership Training Program*.

1995

With the growth of the program, publicity of the plight of children in the sex industry and the higher profile of DEPDC, the Thai government acknowledged and approved the work of Sompop Jantraka and his staff, giving the DEPDC a higher community profile. DEPDC moves from being a small unrecognized NGO to a role model organization with public support.

Joins a network of NGO's and became a member of the NGO committee which included: NGOAIDS, *Northern Network of Children's and Women's Development Groups* (NNCWD), and the IYF YouthNet.

Three more DEPDC sites are opened around Chiang Rai province. These are located at Wiang Kaen, Phan and Mae Suai. DANDIA funded DEPDC at these sites as well as a public awareness campaign through community participation about the problem of child prostitution.

The *International Labour Organization* (ILO) funded *Media and Information Action Centre* was established, providing information about child labor, child sex work and AIDS to many Chiang Rai children, schools and communities.

A small restaurant/shop was built on the Mae Sai site with a donation from the Soroptimists. This is both a learning venture and provides a useful service to girls, staff and visitors. It aims to promote the concepts of self sufficiency and sustainability.

1996

The *Street Education and Health Project* to aid street children and child beggars on the streets of Mae Sai is established. This project provides them with family support, basic literacy, numbers and health education and was funded by HELP (a Japanese NGO).

The *Follow-Up, Rescue and Rehabilitation Project* is established. Past DEP girls' welfare is monitored and assistance offered when necessary. This includes advocacy and intervention services.

Research conducted throughout Chiang Rai province on the problems faced by children. Joined local government to write the "Provincial Master Plan of Action on Children's Issues" supported by the ILO (IPEC).

Email service starts and information placed on a web page.

1996–97

Research on the children in the Mekong basin continues, supported by the ILO (IPEC). And a research and study center, aimed at collecting information about the situation of children in neighboring countries is now established.

International seminar on *The Protection of the Rights of Children in the Upper Mekong Basin*. Attended by representatives from Burma, Southern China, and Laos, academics, international donor agencies and experts in the field. Organized by the MSC at the DEPDC headquarters in Mae Sai.

1998

Opening of the boy's dormitory in Parmaud village, Mae Sai. The arrival of the first 18 boys into the center marked their official incorporation into the DEPDC program.

Opening of the library at DEPDC headquarters, Mae Sai.

1999

MSC begins research for the *Lessons Learned* project which traces the lives of former Daughters. It was completed in 1999 to honor DEPDC's 10th year anniversary.

The *Safe Shelter Project* was started. The first of five houses for emergency cases are built with funding from the Canadian embassy.

Land cleared at DEPDC's headquarters for a vegetable and fruit garden. The *Sustainable Agriculture Skills Training Project* begins with funding from the Canada Fund.

2000

DEPDC founds *The Provincial Child Rights Protection Center* in Chaing Rai.

ILO/IPEC continues support of Phase V for DEPDC.

Canada house is built. Canada house was opened by the Canadian ambassador.

CoOperaid and ILO/IPEC support Children project at-risk at the border throughout DEPDC.

Mae Sai Child Rights Centre founded by DEPDC and started

Project of Mekong YouthNet and Half Way House are prepared.

2001

International ASHOKA conference on international protection for children and collaboration between ASHOKA member fellows in a half dozen countries is held in Chaing Rai, hosted by the DEPDC.

A hotline phone project is started to give children a rescue service they can call for help.

24 hour rescue services are started.

Fight Against Trafficking of Women and Children in Mekong Region is introduced.

DEPDC continues to work with ILO/IPEC and the Finnish Embassy.

US government begins support of the DEPDC.

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