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## **Human Trafficking NGOs in Thailand: A Two-Site Case Study of the Children Served in Education Programs**

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## **Abstract**

In this qualitative case study, two Thai Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) shelters/schools working with human trafficking survivors and at-risk populations of children ages 5-18 were examined. This study takes the stance that the work of the NGOs needs to be understood through the first-hand perceptions and attitudes of NGO staff and the children they serve. Education is an intervention designed to achieve the mission of both NGOs. Education is treated as a means of preventing human trafficking and protecting human trafficking survivors from returning to exploitative situations, though the effectiveness of the intervention is unclear. This study sought an understanding of the perceptions and attitudes of the staff and children at the NGOs. Thematic findings explored cultural, social, economic and political issues impacting the children served at the NGOs. The issues of statelessness and poverty as well as secondary issues were explored through interviews with students, teachers and staff at the NGOs. NGO efforts to reduce the vulnerability of children are discussed, as well as the barriers that both children and NGOs face in vulnerability reduction efforts.

## **Introduction**

Little is known about how education is used by organizations that serve human trafficking survivors and at-risk youth, though understanding the connection between education and human trafficking prevention organizations is essential to comprehensively addressing the human trafficking problem (Jantraka 2001). Many organizations working in Southeast Asia to address human trafficking incorporate education into their intervention strategies. Education is widely considered to be a central element to preventing human trafficking and exploitation of disadvantaged populations by organizations world-wide. Knowledge and skills alone may not overcome barriers such as statelessness, poverty and a variety of social issues. Often, educational interventions targeting human trafficking focus largely on basic skills and knowledge without accounting for local, social, political and economic

barriers that impede marginalized people's access to the formal economy and further educational opportunities such as higher education.

Scholars argue that Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) working on the prevention of human trafficking and the protection of human trafficking victims need to be more closely examined for a better understanding of their work, their issues and needs, and the needs of those served by the organizations (Laczko 2005). Much of the contemporary literature on human trafficking focuses on national and international level data and policy or stories of the experiences of individual victims of human trafficking. However, little attention has been paid to the issues human trafficking victims after removal from trafficking situations, and little is known about the issues that at-risk populations face which exacerbate vulnerability and counteract the efforts of NGOs working to prevent their exploitation.

This study posits that the work of NGOs need to be understood through the perceptions and attitudes of NGO staff and the children they serve (Tedlock 2001). Much attention has been given to the details of victims' experiences while being trafficked. However, little is known about what happens to survivors of trafficking after removal from exploitation. Some survivors return to vulnerable situations only to be victimized again, although the scope of their return to exploitation is unclear (Batstone 2007). A significant gap exists in the literature on victims' and at-risk populations' perceptions and attitudes toward NGO human trafficking prevention work, and the voices of NGO staff and the children they serve are underrepresented in the field.

Understanding a continuum of vulnerability between human trafficking victims and at-risk populations is essential to effective prevention work. Vulnerability to human trafficking is impacted by a variety of factors, including global economic shifts and push-pull factors, local and regional political crises, immigration status of migrant laborers, cultural influences and social unrest. Further in-depth examination of the issues at work in NGO-run shelter-schools in Thailand is needed in order to more fully understand the human trafficking and education issues and the macro-micro relationships between governmental agencies, economic and social forces, and the grassroots actors working to address human trafficking (Valdiviezo 2013) within the local Thai context (Yin 2009). To better understand children and staff perceptions and attitudes on the important issues at work is to better understand the lens of the local context. This comparative two-site case study examined the issues faced by human trafficking survivors and at-risk populations, including hill-tribe minorities and undocumented or stateless minorities, being served by two Thai NGOs. The study also explored how staff and children perceive the NGOs' use education as a tool for the prevention of human

trafficking, and how the work of the NGOs is affected by the obstacles that these children face.

### **Background on the Human Trafficking Issue**

For the purposes of this paper, human trafficking involves force or coercion as well as transport of people for the purposes of labor and other forms of exploitation. Despite the largely accepted definition of human trafficking put forth by the Palermo Protocol in 2000, disagreement over the definition of human trafficking at the international, national and local levels created inconsistencies in law enforcement (Bales 2004), policy implementation (Emmers, Greener-Barcham, & Thomas 2006), victim identification (Lainez 2009), perpetrator prosecution (Laczko 2005) and prevention programs (Arnold & Bertone 2007). Significant disconnections occur between macro-level policy established by national governments and international actors and micro-level realities of grassroots organizations in the fight against human trafficking regardless of international efforts to clarify the definition (Bales 2004, Valdiviezo 2013). The United States government has also taken steps to curb human trafficking world-wide with the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (TVPA) in 2000 and the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report which is released annually and evaluates all national governments' anti-human trafficking efforts (United States Department of State 2013). Human trafficking continues at significant levels and Thailand remains a source, destination and transit country for trafficking victims worldwide (United States Department of State 2013).

Despite the growth in the field of human trafficking research, a lack of reliable and comprehensive data is still a major issue in the field, and there are many blind spots in the literature (Laczko 2005). Estimates of the size and scope of human trafficking worldwide are unreliable, in part due to the hidden nature of human trafficking (Bales 2004, Tyldum & Brunovskis 2005). Human trafficking as a field of research is in its early stages. Although much research on human trafficking focuses on the national and international level efforts, little is known about how grassroots actors in the field, such as NGOs, do their work and how these actors relate to macro-level policy (Laczko 2005). For example, although the Thai government has a policy allowing all school-age children, including undocumented migrants and hill tribes, access to Thai government schools, local school officials have considerable discretion regarding the number of these students allowed into the schools.

Limited and unreliable data on human trafficking also means that we have little understanding of realities and impact of grass-roots organizations working to address the issue (Laczko 2005). In Thailand, numerous NGOs operate with a

variety of purposes including education and rehabilitation of rescued victims of trafficking, and the prevention of exploitation of at-risk populations (Arnold & Bertone 2007, Asia Watch 1993, Beyrer & Stachowiak 2003, Delaney 2006).

### **Framing the Study with Globalization and Education**

Globalization is a useful lens through which to understand the effectiveness of the work of NGOs to provide non-formal education to marginalized groups, and the issues that marginalized children face in Southeast Asia. The debate on globalization has shifted in humanitarian circles to a discussion about how to engage the processes of globalization to benefit the disadvantaged (Giddens 1999). I see education, particularly a combination of non-formal and formal education, as a potential means for transforming the lives of the disadvantaged and marginalized youth that can counter the negative effects of globalization and improve the incapacities of our formal institutions (Giddens 1999). Work related to non-formal education providers in crisis situations, such as conflict displaced refugees, has shown that in “extreme circumstances” (Chelipi-Den Hamer 2011 p. 73) international and non-governmental actors commonly fill educational gaps, yet the acceptance in the society-at-large of the credentials and certifications of these educational providers is inconsistent. NGOs in Thailand certainly fill the educational gaps for marginalized children but it is unclear what the long-term impacts of these non-formal education programs are, and whether these programs can counteract the social issues encountered by the children they serve.

Arnové’s (2007) framing of globalization and education helped me understand the educational disparities experienced by at-risk children at the organizations, and the disconnection between international Education for All goals and local realities. The global issues of informal migration, neo-liberal economic policies and discrimination have powerful negative effects on marginalized ethnic minorities in Thailand, particularly due to the historical legacies of ethnic minorities in Southeast Asia migrating across regions for generations, areas now crisscrossed by national and provincial borders (McCaskill, Leepreecha, & Shaoying 2008). Marginalized groups are more vulnerable to trafficking (Pothisan, Nantajak, Rittidet, & Saenyabud 2008), and understanding neo-colonial global pressures gives insight into the issues impacting local marginalized populations in Southeast Asia (Dirlik 2006). The use of Arnové’s (2007) dialectic of the global and the local, as well as zooming in and zooming out to understand macro-micro relationships (Valdiviezo 2013) informed my findings and improved my abstraction and conceptualization of the issues of statelessness, poverty and secondary issues such as migration. Though grass-roots NGOs operate at the micro-level within a local

context, the negative effects of macro-level social issues, such as statelessness, on the children are powerful and must be understood on a broader scale.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The general goal of this study was to create a two-site case study on two NGOs in Thailand using a qualitative methods approach that develops an analysis of broad thematic issues (Creswell 2007), "...and draws cross-case conclusions" (Yin 2009 p. 20). My specific objective was to understand the issues that NGO teachers, staff, and the children they serve, face. Based on this goal and objective, I developed the following research questions: (1) How do the processes, interactions and issues at two human trafficking prevention and protection NGOs in Thailand impact the staff and the children being served, (2) What contextual factors impact children being served at the NGOs, and (3) How do these factors impact the children being served at the NGOs. This goal and objective necessitated a methodology that gained perceptions and attitudes of staff and children through interviews and observations.

### **Methodology**

The methodology emerged from the viewpoint that the work of the NGOs needed to be understood through the perspectives and attitudes of the NGO staff and children served by the NGOs (Tedlock 2001). The voices of micro-level, or grass-roots, actors in the fight against human trafficking are largely missing from the literature, and the first-hand accounts of children being served in these organizations are essential. Therefore, data collection at the two Thai NGOs combined interviews of staff and children, observational field notes, organization documents and photographs. After conducting a pilot study in 2010, the main study data collection took place in June and July of 2011 at the same two NGOs with both Institutional Review Board (IRB) and National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) approval. I interviewed 31 students and nine staff across the two NGOs. Observational field notes consisted of observations of daily operations of the NGOs, including meal times, school start and release procedures, and field trips. Organizational documents used included case files of students being interviewed which included background information on students and their families, school schedules, brochures, reports provided by the organizations and information from NGO websites.

Using constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss 1967), I simultaneously gathered and analyzed data, and the importance of themes that emerged from the data was determined through triangulation of themes across multiple instances

within interview data, data type triangulation and research site comparison. I analyzed my interview and field note data through several phases of coding consistent with Creswell (2009) and Patton (2002).

### **The Two-site Case of DEPDC and CPDC**

This study focused on two NGOs, the Development and Education Program for Daughters and Communities (DEPDC) located near Mae Sai in Northern Thailand, and the Children's Protection and Development Center (CPDC) located near Pattaya in Southeastern Thailand.

#### **DEPDC**

Originally called the Daughters Education Program, initially targeting girls but now including boys, DEPDC provides full time accommodations including meals, shelter, and clothing to human trafficking victims, orphans and at-risk children (DEPDC 2011). According to the DEPDC website, education, protection and development are the organization's "prevention tools" (2011). DEPDC has several programs and locations, although the central location of DEPDC for this study was the Patak Half-Day School in the small village of Patak on the outskirts of the city of Mae Sai. Patak is inhabited primarily by immigrants from Burma (Myanmar), particularly minority ethnic groups.

**Patak Half-Day School.** The Patak Half-Day School offers free education from kindergarten through grade six to local children considered at-risk for human trafficking, as well as human trafficking survivors living in the shelter component of DEPDC. The Patak Half-Day School provides non-formal elementary education in "Thai language, math, and social skills" (DEPDC 2006-2008a), each morning and vocational skills training each afternoon. Afternoon vocational training is offered in seven general areas: weaving, handicrafts, wood-carving, local and Thai desserts, chemistry in the kitchen, agriculture and computer skills. Students vary in age from approximately 5-18 years old. Many children live in the village of Patak; however there are children who travel from Burma, and various other hill tribe villages in the area (Oh & Van Der Stouwe 2008). Children who complete grade six at the Patak Half-Day School can also transition to local non-formal education programs, or local government schools, the cost of which is provided by DEPDC. However, DEPDC's grade six credential is not accepted at Thai government schools, and most children do not transition.

According to NGO documents (DEPDC in Detail 2004), the Patak Half-Day School served 217 children at the Mae Sai campus in 2003. 78 students lived at the facility as part of the Daughters Education Program. 139 students lived in the

community. The student population was made up of 12 ethnic groups, with the largest groups being Akha, Tai Lue and Shan. In Table 1, I provide the number of students for the years 2009, 2010 and 2011, adapted from the data provided by DEPDC's Director (personal communication February 6, 2012).

The Patak Half-Day School consistently served large number of kindergarteners and the number of students steadily decreased with each subsequent grade (see Table 1). As one staff remarked, "it depends on families, some families live in Burma and then they take the children to the aunt who live in Thailand. Later when the children grow up, the aunt wants the children to go to work" (Teacher 8, DEPDC, 7/14/2011). The number of girls was consistently higher than the number of boys in every grade and every year except first and third grade in 2009. Starting in 2009, kindergarten, first grade, second grade and third grade had 52, 37, 13, and 19 students respectively. I found by tracking this group through the next two school years revealed that the cohort became 26, 13, 8 and 10 students in first grade, second grade, third grade and fourth grade, respectively in 2010. Finally in 2011, the cohort became 21, 13, 5 and 9 students in second grade, third grade, fourth grade and fifth grade respectively. Only 50 % of the kindergarteners moved on to the first grade from 2009 to 2010. Only 35% of the first graders moved to the second grade in this time period, yet better than 50 % of the second graders and third graders moved up a grade from 2009 to 2010. Overall, enrollment at the Patak Half-Day School dwindled as students got older, and the organization consistently struggled to retain children through to the completion of their grades k-6 education program. As one staff noted, the situation is...

sad, depressing. Some students leave and work in prostitution willfully. See neighbors making money. Write and call from Bangkok or other cities to say they are doing great, but teachers know they are in prostitution. Some parents will tell their own daughters and sons, 'see other people go out and they come back and they have a big car and a nice house, why don't you go and do that', like push them and make them have really high hopes, like really high, big house, car, a lot of money. (Teacher 3 DEPDC 7/12/2011)

At the Patak Half-Day School, when students graduate grade 6 they are given a certificate of graduation, and the organization facilitates transition to further educational opportunities. This certificate is not accredited by the Ministry of Education and is not considered equivalent to grade 6 at a Thai government school, as this staff member discussed.



Children who graduate from 6<sup>th</sup> grade, we have a certificate for them, from DEPDC. But we want it to compare to government school outside. Like give certificate from the government. Give it to students, so it looks like more stronger when you go outside or continue to school outside Now we can't do it, we still work on it, we want the government to accept our certificate, but we cannot work with the government, because of some politics. (Staff 7 DEPDC 7/20/2011)

In addition to the financial and social barrier to entering the Thai government schools, the disconnection between the credential offered by DEPDC and the academic skill level needed to enter the government schools created a barrier for further educational opportunities for children at the organization, an issue that has also appeared in the literature on refugees (Chelpi-Den Hamer 2011). The lack of accreditation of the education program at DEPDC was further exacerbated by issues of statelessness and poverty and many of the stateless children served at DEPDC do not have access to the Thai government school. As one staff member noted,

We have a law that says everyone can go to school as long as you want, to university, as high as you want. But the people, they not accept it. They not follow it. The children, statelessness, from Burma, will have to pay more than Thai. Because the government will support only thai, however some of the government schools try to share some of the money to the stateless. Everywhere is not the same. It depends on the principal, the school, the opinion. (Staff 7 DEPDC 7/20/2011)

Despite the educational opportunities provided up to and beyond grade six, most students who begin school at the Patak Half-Day School do not complete the Grades K-6 education program.

## **CPDC**

CPDC “aims to provide street children with protection, education and future perspectives” (Child Protection and Development Center). CPDC is located on the outskirts of Pattaya, Thailand, a notorious sex tourism destination. The organization provides a home, education, health care, and recreational activities for children who are living on the streets, abandoned, exploited, abused, or come from extreme poverty. The children served by the organization are also considered at high risk for human trafficking, and some children are prior victims of human

trafficking. The number of children living at CPDC at one time varies from 35 to 40 children with the goal of the organization being to house and care for up to 60 children. CPDC serves children ages 6 to 18 and has over a 90% retention rate. Children at CPDC are quickly transitioned into government schools and provided with educational support with homework and tutoring. Unlike DEPDC, most of the children served at CPDC are not foreign born, stateless or ethnic hill tribe minority, an important difference between the NGOs.

CPDC offered remedial courses, vocational training, IT training (basic computer skills), English lessons, life skills lessons, and courses on drug abuse prevention and sexual abuse prevention on weekends, during school breaks and in the evenings after school (Child Protection and Development Center). Gardening and agricultural training are provided by staff, and the children learn to grow vegetables and mushrooms, and raise chickens, pigs and catfish. CPDC is organized around a “four-step process model” (Child Protection and Development Center) which includes the permanent shelter where this research took place.

### **Thematic Findings**

Analysis of the data revealed two primary issues impacting the children in the study: statelessness and poverty. In addition, several secondary issues arose that further exacerbated the barriers faced by the children in the study, and convoluted the work of the NGOs. Beyond the issues faced by the children, staff and NGOs, benefits from the work of the NGOs for the children were evident in the data. Finally, the goals of the students being served, and the goals that the staff had for the students, provided a unique lens through which to view the perceptions of the children and staff. Table 2 illustrates the themes and the number of instances the themes appeared in the data.

#### **Statelessness as a potential, not absolute, barrier**

Statelessness emerged as a central issue to both the children and the staff at the organizations. Current Thai education policy allows stateless children into government schools in Thailand, but the policies are not used to the benefit of the children equally by both organizations (Zixin 2005). Although both NGOs served stateless children, CPDC served relatively few compared to DEPDC. The ability of CPDC to navigate within the changing political circumstances and adapt its educational focus has shown to be beneficial to the children that they serve, though the smaller number of stateless children at CPDC may have made government school collaboration easier. In the case of DEPDC, statelessness is a more pronounced issue in Northern Thailand, and therefore more challenging for the

organization to collaborate with government schools because of local pressures and discrimination (Walker & Farrelly 2008).

Statelessness is one of the most powerful factors impacting the success of NGOs' efforts. The NGOs in this study navigated the political landscape differently, with implications for the success of each program. In Northern Thailand, the de-facto versus de-jure gap between policy and implementation is a barrier to hill tribe people engaging the citizenship and naturalization process. Access to government school education provided by recent policies is still not a reality for stateless people in Thailand (Brown 1994, McCaskill, Leepreecha & Shaoying 2008, Minorities at Risk Project 2004). The process of hill tribe people becoming Thai citizens remains difficult to access, expensive, and rife with corruption. DEPDC's accreditation issues and the barriers to government school access combine to create a difficult situation for the children at the Patak Half-Day School. Comparatively in the urban Southeast, CPDC more effectively navigated the legal and formal education systems and more likely made lasting impacts on the children they served.

Similarities exist between the issues that the hill tribes and other stateless groups encounter in Southeast Asia and the issues that undocumented immigrants face in the United States (Spires 2005). With aggressive immigration laws in several American states targeting undocumented immigrants, fear of deportation is a very real aspect of their lives (Johnson 2011, Varsanyi 2010), and this fear is comparable to the fear stateless children in Thailand face. As Varsanyi (2010) argued, the local context can be a decisive element in terms of anti- versus pro-immigrant policy implementation. In the case of DEPDC, local attitudes toward stateless children in Thai public schools undermine the national level policies allowing stateless children into the government schools. Negative social pressures on stateless and ethnic minorities are further exacerbated due to poverty issues, as many of these children also do not have economic resources to provide uniforms, books and miscellaneous school fees typical in Thai government schools.

### **Poverty in the Northern Thailand context**

Poverty as an important factor in human trafficking is not a particularly surprising revelation. However, the particular economic disparity between stateless or hill tribe minorities and mainstream Thai society along the northern border with Burma and Laos produces circumstances where exploitation of vulnerable at-risk youth is exacerbated. Despite the economic growth I witnessed in Mae Sai, or perhaps because of this growth, the continued influx of undocumented and stateless migrants into Northern Thailand provides human traffickers with a large vulnerable population of youth to exploit.

Stateless and impoverished children in Northern Thailand are pressured to work, which effects the low retention rate at DEPDC. The organization's lack of accreditation offers no long-term educational alternative to the children and their families. The influence of poverty on the children is difficult to combat without concrete and commonly accepted credentials to offer the children for their educational efforts, as shown also with refugees in Africa (Chelpi-Den Hamer 2011).

Even though the Patak Half-Day School teachers and staff created a loving environment and provided practical skills-training for the children, based on my findings the organization cannot fully overcome the immediate economic needs of the children and their families. I also believe that the benefits gained from attending the Patak Half-Day School are too intangible to compete with the concrete realities of poverty. In contrast, children at CPDC have an official credential to work toward at the government school. The children at CPDC also obtain the intangible benefits of love and care, like those at DEPDC, but with the added, and immediate, benefit of a government school education recognized in the wider society.

## **Secondary Issues**

Statelessness and poverty emerged as primary issues in the data, however, a host of what I term secondary issues also emerged. As Table 2 illustrates, the secondary issues are as follows: family problems, family pressure to work, border issues, language issues, funding issues, community and social pressure to work, staff retention issues, mental health, behavior and learning issues, government accreditation issues and cultural barriers. Though these issues are intertwined with statelessness and poverty, distinct elements need to be delineated. A student described CPDC as a place that... "helps children who comes from broken families" (Student 25 CPDC 7/23/2011). Another described CPDC as "...a center that helps children whose families don't have enough time to take care of them and abandon child" (Student 26 CPDC 7/23/2011). Single parent households and child abandonment were distinct family problems exacerbated by poverty.

An example of family pressure to work appeared in an interview where a student said, "people in Burma, some parents don't want them to study because they want the children to work" (Student 7 DEPDC 7/12/2011). Another student clarified this point, "Parents, they are really poor, and that's why they make the children go out to work, and they don't know where they go" (Student 14 DEPDC 7/13/2011). A staff member at CPDC gave insight to this issue, pointing out that some family members "... want to gain benefit from that child, without thinking of any problem, or any social problem or anything. Just money

sometimes...” (Teacher 9 CPDC 7/23/2011). Poverty is the primary motivator behind this issue, but family pressure on children to work is distinct in the local context.

The term border issues refers to issues of migration and freedom of movement unique to the vulnerability of children in the border regions of Thailand. Immigration policy has important implications for the children at these NGOs, pushing them to more vulnerable positions (Goodey 2004). National level immigration policy often overlooks the interconnectedness of regional neighbors in terms of historically and culturally based informal migration (Emmers, Greener-Barcham & Thomas 2006). Rafferty (2007) discussed the complex nature of human trafficking in Southeast Asia, and Thailand’s immigration policy overlooks the intertwined local factors such as the historical legacy of migration for hill tribes and the economic interdependence in border regions across national boundaries. For the children at DEPDC, migration is one of the few available options for accessing opportunity.

Mental and physical health of both staff and children emerged as a secondary theme. The lack of health care access for marginalized children increases their vulnerability to exploitation (Cosman 2005). The NGOs must also cope with mental health issues of the children they serve, as well as the teachers and staff, despite shortfalls in training and funding (see Table 2). Staff at both organizations needed training on dealing with behavior and learning issues with the children. Counseling of both children and staff was also a clear need at the NGOs, however both organizations lacked counseling expertise. Engagement and cooperation between these NGOs and governmental actors may help to address these health-related issues, which often expand beyond the scope of the NGOs’ resources and capabilities.

Language of instruction was a significant barrier to student academic success for ethnic minority children and foreign-born stateless children, especially at DEPDC. Though Thai was the language of instruction at both organizations, children being served spoke primarily regional dialects and literacy skills were minimal. DEPDC and CPDC both have difficulty with recruiting and retaining any staff, but multi-lingual staff were especially needed. Retention of staff also relates to the emotionally, mentally and physically draining nature of work at the NGOs.

## **Benefits as Evidence of Protection and Postponement of Human Trafficking**

Temporary, or short-term, benefits were important for children at DEPDC (see Table 2). These benefits indicated the immediate protection and temporary postponement of human trafficking and exploitation that the NGOs provided for children. Children benefitted from temporary removal from volatile home environments, and the families experienced a financial reprieve with the child living at the shelter or with relatives. Health and hygiene were improved, which have long-term effects. Going on educational field trips and attending camps are among the positive educational experiences for the children. Having positive relationships with adults and other children were benefits perceived by staff and children.

It was unclear whether these NGOs provided temporary protection from exploitation, postponement of exploitation or prevention of exploitation for the children. DEPDC's Patak Half-Day School acts as an intervention to the vulnerability of the students, and as a temporary safe-house to children. However, long-term prevention of human trafficking and exploitation of these children cannot be predicted based on my findings. CPDC provided access to government education and was able to more successfully navigate the complex formal education and documentation process. Whether CPDC's efforts truly prevent human trafficking and exploitation of the children under its care is still not clear.

DEPDC and CPDC represent access to education and opportunity for a better life for the children that they serve. Both organizations provide something to disenfranchised children not readily available to them elsewhere. The work of these NGOs benefits the children by acting as temporary protection from exploitation, postponing exploitation and ultimately working towards prevention of exploitation.

## **Goals as Snapshots at the Micro-level**

Goals gave snapshots into the positive perceptions and attitudes of the staff and the students at these two NGOs and illustrated the personal aspects of the micro-level work done by these two organizations. Work, educational and altruistic goals constitute perspectives that are often absent from the literature on human trafficking and its prevention (Laczko 2005).

In terms of educational goals, students at both organizations had goals of graduating high school and going on to college. It is unclear how important the work of the NGOs was to introducing the children to the idea that high school and college education were possible, and attainable. Further investigation is needed to understand the impact NGOs have on broadening the educational outlook of

marginalized populations. Staff at DEPDC saw basic literacy as a major educational goal for the children, but they were far less optimistic in terms of further education beyond Patak Half Day School's grade six. Unfortunately, based on my data regarding poor student retention at the school (see Table 1), the staff were likely more accurate in their goals for the children.

Work goals of the children illuminated aspects of the children's world views. Children at DEPDC were aware of their need to support their families financially. Family obligation was an element that ran through all of the DEPDC interviews, even the children who lived at the shelter, and those who had experienced human trafficking. At CPDC, this was not the case, as these children were either abandoned by family, orphaned by parental death or trafficked at a young age, and had been living as street children. For children at CPDC, family connection was virtually non-existent and their work goals ranged from working in the hotel and restaurant industry to owning their own businesses.

Altruistic goals were the most evident of the influence of the NGO as a positive example in the children's lives. Children at both organizations expressed long-term goals of helping people, a goal that is likely influenced by the work of these NGOs and their staff. Both organizations create a sense of community among their children, teachers and staff and established a culture of caring about others and working for the collective good. These goals highlight some important blind-spots in human trafficking research (Laczko 2005), in particular, the human element.

### **Interwoven Threads in the Data**

Three interwoven threads - Change, Fear and Vulnerability - were concepts that permeated the data. DEPDC and CPDC are continually in flux, adapting to changing local cultural influences, political circumstances and economic pressures. Although aspects of this study are akin to a series of snapshots (Laczko 2005), I attempted to take into account the major changes that occurred at each NGO including facilities, staff retention and enrollment of students. I tried to account for different perspectives within the organizations, and although perspectives change over time, this study incorporated a broad collection of perspectives on the important issues.

Fear was an important thread in the lives of children outside of the NGOs: fear of government officials because of their stateless or ethnic minority status, fear of exploitation by adults, fear of violence from family members or others in the community. The prevalence of fear as a long-term effect of human trafficking experiences is a well-documented related issue (Bales 2004, Batstone 2007, Bove, 2008).

A multitude of pressures push the children into more vulnerable positions and the NGOs are working to undo several of those key pressures, namely statelessness and poverty, through education. Meso- and macro-level assistance is needed to address pressures beyond the scope of the NGOs (Bales 2008). In keeping with the arguments of Chapkis (2003) and Derks (2000), without further assistance and support, some of these efforts may be in vain.

## **Discussion**

The Thai government is working to address many significant universal social issues, including poverty, gender discrimination, education and healthcare access disparities (World Bank 2010), as well as human trafficking (United States Department of State 2010). In addition to the work that the Thai government is doing, NGOs such as DEPDC and CPDC are also working on these issues, and increased collaboration would likely be mutually beneficial. Although improvements in Thailand have been made in many areas of the Millennium Development Goals, one area in need of improvement that is illuminated by this study is “Goal 8: to develop global partnerships for development” (World Bank 2010). Collaboration between DEPDC and the Ministry of Education could at once address international policy and practice goals for government agencies and could reduce barriers to success for the NGO. Further collaboration between NGOs providing non-formal education and formal educational institutions could also address Thailand’s education reform issues (Office of the National Education Commission Thailand 2002). As the situation at CPDC showed, cooperation between NGOs and public education in Thailand can work. The Thai Ministry of Education has taken up the provision of formal and non-formal education for all children to meet the “Education For All” goals for 2015 through its Office of Basic Education Commission and its Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission (Siltragool 2007). Policy mechanism are in place, but what remains is productive collaboration between governmental actors and NGOs. The issues related to the accreditation of DEPDC’s education program might be alleviated through collaboration with the local offices of the Ministry of Education.

Universal human trafficking and education issues need to be understood within the specific local Thai context (Arnove 2007). Many of the issues that the NGOs in my study face are common among other NGOs around the world (Tzvetkova 2002, Rose 2007) illustrating Arnove’s global to local continuum (2007). However, specific contextual influences such as proximity to an international border, cannot be ignored. NGOs that address human trafficking related issues must adapt to changes in funding models described by Riddell (1997), changes in education policy as described by Rose (2007), international policy on human trafficking



(Prevention of and Fight against Crime Programme 2008), and national and regional immigration policy (Park, et al. 2009), while coping with local community attitudes and dynamics.

Immigration and migration are universal elements prevalent in this study. Global actors such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) consider the human trafficking issue an important element in the debate on migration, exhibited in their sponsorship of human trafficking research (Laczko & Gozdziaik 2005). Immigration policy intended to strengthen national borders and reduce informal migration often conflicts with a nation's need for immigrants in the labor pool. A global paradigm shift toward national and international immigration policy alignment is occurring and the international community is currently struggling to reconcile nationalistic desires with economic realities (Renshon 2010). Informal migration of stateless and undocumented immigrants continues despite international policies and efforts to curb informal migration. Education For All goals illustrate the presence of significant undocumented populations world-wide and governments' attempts to address these realities through education (Siltragool 2008). However, these goals represent conflicting interests to that of nationalistic immigration policy. Thailand's efforts to provide education to marginalized groups are met with resource barriers, and NGOs often fill in the gaps that formal education cannot address (Trakulphadetkrai 2011).

The immigration policies of individual nation-states are also often contradictory to international development goals representing which represent important economic and social changes to the increasingly globalized world (United Nations 2007). The NGOs in my study function within these conflicting paradigms. Nationalistic immigration policies restricting informal migration are not able to stop informal migration, but create circumstances where undocumented immigrants and stateless people are further marginalized and vulnerable to exploitation. International education and development policies often ignore the need for protection from exploitation that these disadvantaged groups have. DEPDC and CPDC address this important need for these groups but need cooperation from the formal education sector.

The fundamental contribution provided by both NGOs is protection, particularly immediate protection for the children while they are served at the NGO sites. Both NGOs are also working to diminish vulnerability of marginalized children in a variety of ways which include education and care. CPDC's educational shift from education providers to education facilitators through government schools illustrates a model of NGO/government collaboration that other NGOs may find useful. The struggles of these NGOs are likely the most generalizable, particularly the difficulties micro-level actors have in reconciling international development goals (Siltragool 2007) and broad human trafficking

policy (United Nations High Commission on Refugees 2011) within the local context, within the Thai context (Fry 2002, Ministry of Education Thailand 2008), and within the educational reform context (Office of the National Education Commission Thailand 2002, Office of the Education Council Thailand 2007).

## **Conclusion**

More action is needed to engage NGOs with formal education channels, either to create paths of transition, to address local inconsistencies, or to actively and formally accredit NGO education programs. More active collaboration between NGOs with education components and the Thai government will have positive, and mutually beneficial, effects in regards to several measures of progress: TIP Report, the UNHCR evaluations, and national government assessments of local and regional anti-trafficking efforts (United States Department of State 2006) and education goals (Siltragool 2007).

The struggles of the NGOs in this study have implications for other NGOs. The changing political landscape in Thailand and the international arena can greatly impact NGOs, though the work of NGOs can benefit the Thai government's efforts and development goals if coordination, collaboration and compromise can take place. However, more understanding of the work of human trafficking prevention NGOs in Thailand, and elsewhere is needed. We also need a clearer understanding of how these organizations fit within the work already being done by governments so that efforts are complimentary, not competing. Government agencies tasked with meeting global education goals (Siltragool 2007), development goals (World Bank 2010), or addressing human trafficking issues (United States Department of State 2010), would likely benefit from establishing more cooperative relationships with NGOs operating in their countries.

Human trafficking is a complex social issue with both global dimensions and local implications. The realities of globalization and informal migration indicate the growing importance of NGOs to meet social needs that formal institutions, including education, are becoming less capable of addressing. Local, national and international policies greatly impact the work of NGOs and may benefit marginalized groups, yet policy implementation is inconsistently enforced, particularly at the local level indicating a clear macro-micro disconnection. With comprehensive collaboration between NGOs providing education and formal institutions, increased positive impacts of NGO programs are likely, but collaboration needs to be mindful of accreditation of non-formal education programs, symbiosis between formal and non-formal education providers, and effective transitioning of children to accredited education programs. Collaboration and cooperation between NGOs and national governments need to be supported

financially and encouraged by the international community with real benefits for both if education is to truly become a tool to prevent human trafficking.

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Year: 2009			
Grade	Number of boys	Number of girls	Total number of students
Kindergarten	15	39	54 ( <i>3 kindergarten classes</i> )
First	19	18	37
Second	5	8	13
Third	11	8	19
Fourth	2	9	11
Fifth	2	3	5
Sixth	1	2	3
Total	55	87	142
Year: 2010			
Kindergarten	25	47	72 ( <i>2 kindergarten classes</i> )
First	7	19	26
Second	5	8	13
Third	3	5	8
Fourth	3	7	10
Fifth	1	2	3
Sixth	1	2	3
Total	45	90	135
Year: 2011			
Kindergarten	38	38	76 ( <i>3 kindergarten classes</i> )
First	7	22	29
Second	4	17	21
Third	5	8	13
Fourth	2	3	5
Fifth	3	6	9
Sixth	1	3	4
Total	60	97	157

Table 1. The number of students in the Patak Half-Day School for 2009-2011 by grade

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-Theme</b>	Number of instances	Number of instances in
<b>Problems</b>		99 (total)	91 (total)
	Statelessness	21	6
	Poverty	6	25
	Secondary Issues	72 (total)	62 (total)
	Family problems	7	14
	Family pressure	9	11
	Border issues	4	8
	Language issues	7	8
	Funding issues	2	5
	Community/ Staff retention	2	0 (2 from translator)
	Mental and	8	8
	Government	17	4
	Cultural barriers	13	0
		3	2
<b>Benefits</b>		83 (total)	142 (total)
	Literacy	11	14
	Learn life skills	22	20
	Protection	9	10
	Opportunity and Care	13	57 (17 specifically used)
	Confidence	3	13
	Free	3	1
	Build relationships	22	29
		11	12
<b>Goals</b>		32 (total)	45 (total)
	Education goals	7	29
	Work goals	9	11
	Altruistic goals	16	5

Table 2. Number of instances of themes and sub-themes