



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO Bangkok
Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education

Regional Unit for Social and Human Sciences in Asia and the Pacific
Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific

PRESS RELEASE

April 2006

**Launch of UNESCO project on Birth Registration and
Citizenship for Thailand's Hill Tribes,
8pm, 27 April, at FCCT**

UNESCO, funded by the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office Sustainable Development Programme Fund, is working with the Department of Social Development and Welfare (Ministry of Social Development and Human Security), and NGOs, to promote birth registration amongst highland communities in Thailand. The Department, aided by UNESCO, is conducting the most extensive study ever undertaken in Thailand of the relationship between birth registration, legal status and access to social services. The study includes approximately 11,000 (out of 18,000) highland households in Chiangmai, Chiangrai, and Mae Hongson.

Why does legal status matter?

No birth certificate often means no citizenship and no ID card. This creates vulnerability, insecurity, and invites exploitation. Under international law, every child is entitled to a birth certificate, because without a birth certificate a child often has no recognized legal status. Girls and women are particularly at risk.

Trafficking in Thailand: Lack of Legal Status Endangers Hill Tribe Women

Research by UNESCO has shown that the single greatest risk factor for a hill tribe girl in Thailand to be trafficked or otherwise exploited is lack of citizenship. Without legal status ethnic minority people are often considered "illegal aliens" in their own country. They are subject to arrest, deportation, extortion and other forms of abuse, and denied their basic human rights: the right to vote; the right to own land and the right to medical care. In keeping with UNESCO's special mandate for ethnic minorities under the Universal Declaration for Cultural Diversity, UNESCO's Culture Unit runs several projects to assist the region's minorities.

Trafficking is a very real, complex and heinous crime affecting both the region and the international community at large. In Thailand, for many victims, trafficking begins with the lack of birth registration and/or citizenship. Consequently, UNESCO, in cooperation with the British Embassy, has initiated the Highland Birth and Citizenship Registration Promotion Project.

This project will be formally launched by the British Ambassador to Thailand at the FCCT on 27 April at 8pm. After a short video presentation a panel including Khun Sirirat Ayuathana, Deputy Director General, Department of Social Development and Welfare and Dr. David A. Feingold, International Coordinator of Trafficking Programmes, UNESCO will discuss this project and the issues of birth registration and citizenship in Thailand.

//////////

Contact Persons:

Dr. David A. Feingold
Email: d.feingold@unesco Bangkok.org
Tel: 02-391-0577 ext. 504

Ms. Maliwan Khruemanee
Email: k.maliwan@unesco Bangkok.org
Tel: 02-391-0577 ext. 510