

CEDAR Fund 'Remove Price Tags, Free Body & Soul' Donation Campaign Against Human Trafficking Ministry Report

During the COVID-19 epidemic, human trafficking is getting more severe than ever. CEDAR has been working with four partner organisations to combat human trafficking. In the last year's Anti-Human Trafficking Ministry Report, we introduced the ministry of our partner in Myanmar, Eden Myanmar. This time we would like to introduce another partner in Thailand, LIFT International.

LIFT International

LIFT International (LIFT) is an NGO established in New Zealand in 2011. LIFT aims to prevent human trafficking and to assist the prosecution of offenders in Southeast Asia through the judicial system. LIFT has four areas of service: case building, law enforcement support, court work support, and victim follow-up.

Project Detail

Project name: Combat Cybersex Trafficking through Thai Legal System Strengthening

Project period: From 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021 (14 months)

LIFT has achieved its original goal of training the Thai government's Department of Special Investigations (DSI) personnel, and more than 40% of the project's funding comes from other organisations, showing LIFT's ability to find other sources of donation. Therefore, CEDAR and LIFT have decided to suspend funding for LIFT after this project is completed. CEDAR and LIFT will work together in Thailand as a strategic partner.

Report: Mid-term report (1 July 2021 – 31 December 2021)

Beneficiaries:

- Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC)
- Department of Special Investigations (DSI) of the Thai government

Background

According to the 2021 U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP), human trafficking has been a huge issue in Thailand for a long time. The authority's crackdown has not been satisfactory and has been rated as Level 2 (there are three levels of grading, with Level 3 being the most unsatisfactory). We have supported our partner LIFT's anti-human trafficking work since 2016-17. They were involved in the arrest and prosecution of a paedophile case and gained trust from DSI afterwards. In 2018, a senior DSI official was arrested after being found guilty of collusion with



human traffickers, after which the deputy director of the ministry pledged to work with NGOs to increase transparency. LIFT has since worked more closely with DSI, willing to seek guidance from LIFT.

Project Description

LIFT's collaboration with the government had been intermittent, as LIFT's office is in Chiang Mai, far from Bangkok's main official law enforcement agencies. To facilitate collaboration, LIFT sent a Liaison Officer to a station in Bangkok.

How does Liaison Officer help combat online sex trafficking?

- 1) Cooperates with the law enforcement agencies as an NGO partner; supports intelligence and data analysis; coordinates law enforcement agencies and judicial units; provides training and technical support to DSI.
- 2) The key to all human trafficking cases is money transactions. The Liaison Officer contacts the remittance agencies, traces the suspect's financial records, and provides the police with the identity of the recipients and senders.
- 3) More and more cases of human trafficking are taking place online, and the Liaison Officer exchanges information with various internet service providers, such as conversations containing child exploitation material and relevant keywords.
- 4) Assists the police in establishing relationships with civil organisations specialising in victim assistance; provides immediate assistance to victims and helps them return to normal life after being rescued; encourages victims to assist in the investigation.
- 5) Selects specific communities, schools, and ethnicities where cybersex trafficking has been rampant. Strengthen anti-human trafficking education in those places. Orphans, children from unemployed families and children from immigrant families are particularly vulnerable.

Progress

During the first six months of the project (1 July 2021 to 31 December 2021), we made the following progress:

- 1) **Processed two OSEC cases, one of which was handed over to another law enforcement department** with support from our partner's Chiang Mai-based team. **Another case is under investigation, which involves 21 victims, three Thai suspects and one foreign suspect.** The Liaison Officer requested the Thai Immigration Service to assist DSI and LIFT. The case was investigated by actively searching for the identities of suspects and victims on social media. Investigators would then extract data from the



suspects' electronic devices, such as cell phones and computers. As the above cases are still in progress, no suspects have been prosecuted yet.

- 2) In November, the Liaison Officer and several other LIFT employees attended an **anti-trafficking conference** in Phuket, Thailand. Led by DSI, the conference is a network of anti-trafficking NGOs, DSI, and other law enforcement agencies that shared information and insights, including tips on tracking human trafficking online.
- 3) The Liaison Officer found that DSI is incapable of storing, archiving, and managing child abuse data. The Liaison Officer is therefore committed to **promoting DSI's collaboration with the International Police Organization (INTERPOL)**. Interpol has a dedicated database for child abuse. DSI can hand over their data to Interpol, which can then delete those data from the internet to prevent re-victimisation.

A Life-changing Story

Praew and her four friends were trafficked to a karaoke bar. In 2018, LIFT rescued the five girls. Two offenders were convicted to 35 years in prison after being found guilty of prostitution and child sex trafficking. Those five girls were placed under the care of child welfare protection shelters for recovery. Two of them made their decision to return home. Another three are being loved and cared for in foster homes or private shelters while continuing their education.

Praew grew up in a broken family. Her mother is a prostitute, while her father is out of contact. She had never seen life outside nightclubs and bars. LIFT's social work team received a report from the shelter Praew was receiving care. LIFT sent a social worker, Chu, to counsel Praew and help her find her life goals and plan her future. Chu has been counselling since Praew was rescued. Chu noticed that after moving into the foster home, she regained confidence and hoped to go back to school.

'I want to be an electrician because I love seeing the light shines through the darkness. If a light bulb breaks, I want to be the person who fixes it and makes it shine again. Do you think I can be a female electrician?' – Praew

'Yes, I believe in you.' -- Chu

LIFT helped her fulfil her dream of attending a vocational school. Praew demonstrated her effort with a 3.5 GPA. LIFT would provide guidance for those who want to be entrepreneurs, such as starting up a bakery shop. LIFT believes in empowering survivors with life skills rather than merely providing financial assistance.

Staff Sharing

'In recent months, DSI has received technical, human resource and documentation support from Liaison Officer and international coordination support. This collaboration is based on mutual trust with LIFT. Every time I need support, I am grateful for the Liaison Officer's assistance.'

Nopparat Panthers

Director of the Centre for Combating Online Child Sexual Exploitation

'I have been following the steps of child forensic interview that LIFT taught me: building trust with the victims, approaching them according to their age and preference; and do not repeat questions to avoid re-victimisation.'

Somchai (pseudonym)

DSI staff

Take Action

Thanks to your support, CEDAR could continue to work with agencies and governments in various countries to combat human trafficking, including Nepal, India, Thailand, and Myanmar. According to a 2016 study by the International Labour Organization, the Walk Free Foundation, and the International Organization for Migration, more than 40 million people worldwide are trafficked. Please pray and continue to support our ministry against human trafficking. Our anti-human trafficking ministry includes the followings:


- 1) RESCUE: Reach and rescue victims in red light districts and sweatshops
- 2) PROSECUTION: Arresting traffickers and ensuring convictions
- 3) REHABILITATION: Protecting, counselling, and training previous victims
- 4) PREVENTION: Raising awareness and establishing support networks

We sincerely invite you to participate in the 'Remove Price Tags, Free Body & Soul' Donation Campaign Against Human Trafficking so that people's bodies and souls can be freed, and people can live out the values and dignity bestowed by God.



Monthly donation	Beneficiaries
HK\$500	Operating community centres, offering anti-trafficking training and livelihood support to residents (based on half month's expenditure).
HK\$800	Assisting a Nepali woman or child who has been trafficked abroad to return to her country.
HK\$1,200	Offering medical support, trauma counselling, and food to three victims of human trafficking (based on a year's expenditure).
HK\$2,400	Tracing the crime of online sex trafficking, with a team of professional investigators collecting evidence and helping the Thai government to prosecute traffickers.

Donation

Online donation	Click here for an online donation
Cheque	Please make it payable to CEDAR Fund
Direct Deposit	HSBC : 004-600-385678-001 BEA : 015-185-68-00931-7SSA BOC : 012-581-2-020114-7 DBS : 016-478-001364162
Credit card: Visa / Master Card	Online donate here or fill in the donation form
PayMe	Scan the QR code to donate 
Faster Payment System	FPS ID: 3354016

Please donate according to the above methods and send the cheque, bank-in slip, or screenshot of successful payment along with your name, contact phone number and mailing address to us via mail, email, or WhatsApp.

Mailing Address: CEDAR Fund, G.P.O. Box 3212, Hong Kong

WhatsApp (for donation matters only): [5160 7549](tel:51607549)

Email: sharing@cedarfund.org