



# AtidMUN 2022



**SOCHUM**

SOCIAL, CULTURAL &  
HUMANITARIAN COMMITTEE

**Topic A: Access to Health and Education in Prisons**

**Topic B: Human Trafficking in Thailand**



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## ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

The Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM) is a forum for the UN Member States to discuss social, humanitarian, and cultural issues, especially those related to human rights. The advancement of women's rights, the protection of children, issues related to indigenous affairs, the treatment of refugees and economic migrants, the promotion of fundamental freedoms through the elimination of racism and racial discrimination, and the right to self-determination are just a few issues on its agenda. The Committee also addresses important social development questions, such as issues related to youth, persons with disabilities, criminal justice, and control over the international drug epidemic.





## TOPIC A: ACCESS TO HEALTH AND EDUCATION IN PRISONS

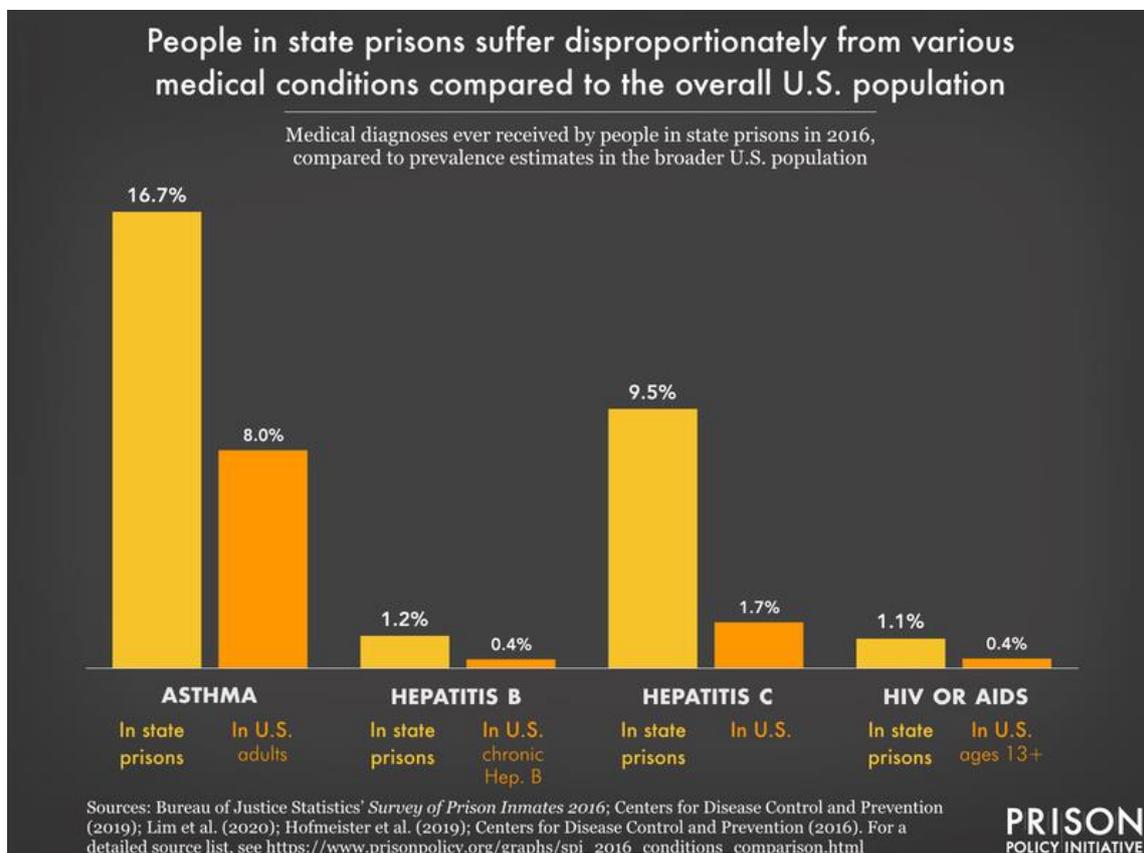
### INTRODUCTION

Today, approximately 11 million people are inmates worldwide, a number that is constantly growing. With prisons frequently overcrowded, prisons around the world are unable to provide services such as education and health to the level required by international standards. And yet, education and health are fundamental human rights – we, the international community, must take active steps to ensure they are not deprived of anyone, prisoner or not.

### ACCESS TO HEALTH AND EDUCATION IN PRISONS

#### THE IMPACT OF HEALTH AND EDUCATION ON PRISONERS

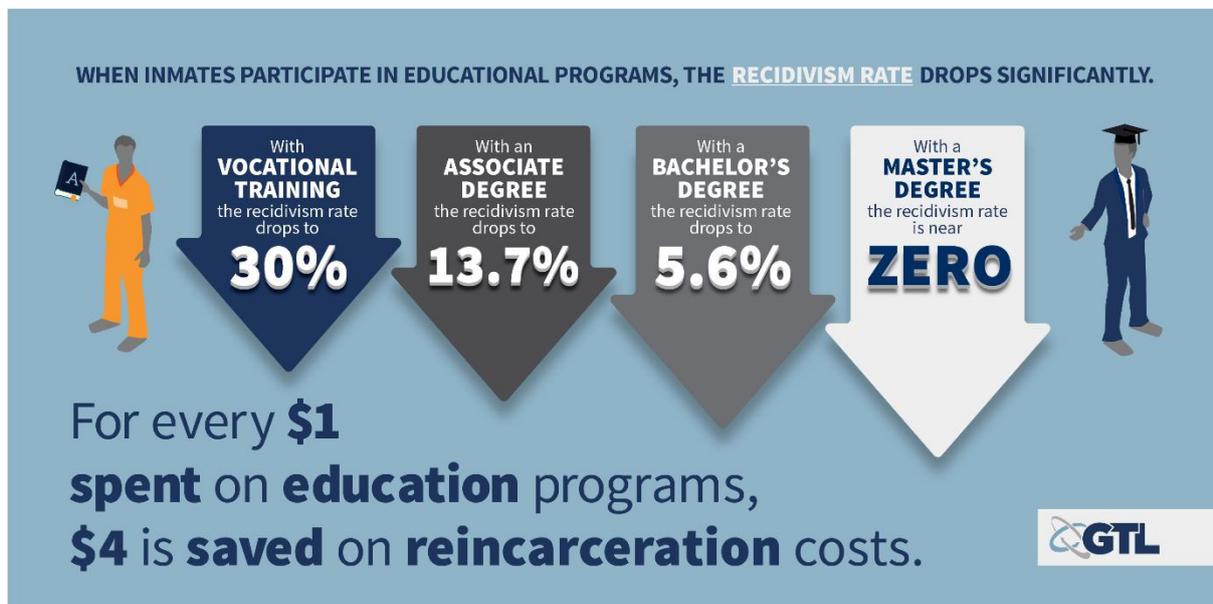
In the status quo, prisons have some of the worst healthcare in the modern world. In the US alone: Prisoners are twice as likely to have Asthma than the general population; three times more likely to have Hepatitis B, five times more likely to have Hepatitis C, and three times more likely to have HIV (Wang, 2022).





Worldwide, the issue is the same. Prison overcrowding remains a severe issue in the modern world, with 102 countries reporting prison occupancy levels have reached over 110%. Overcrowding in prisons leads to more sexually-transmitted diseases, passive smoking, and tuberculosis.

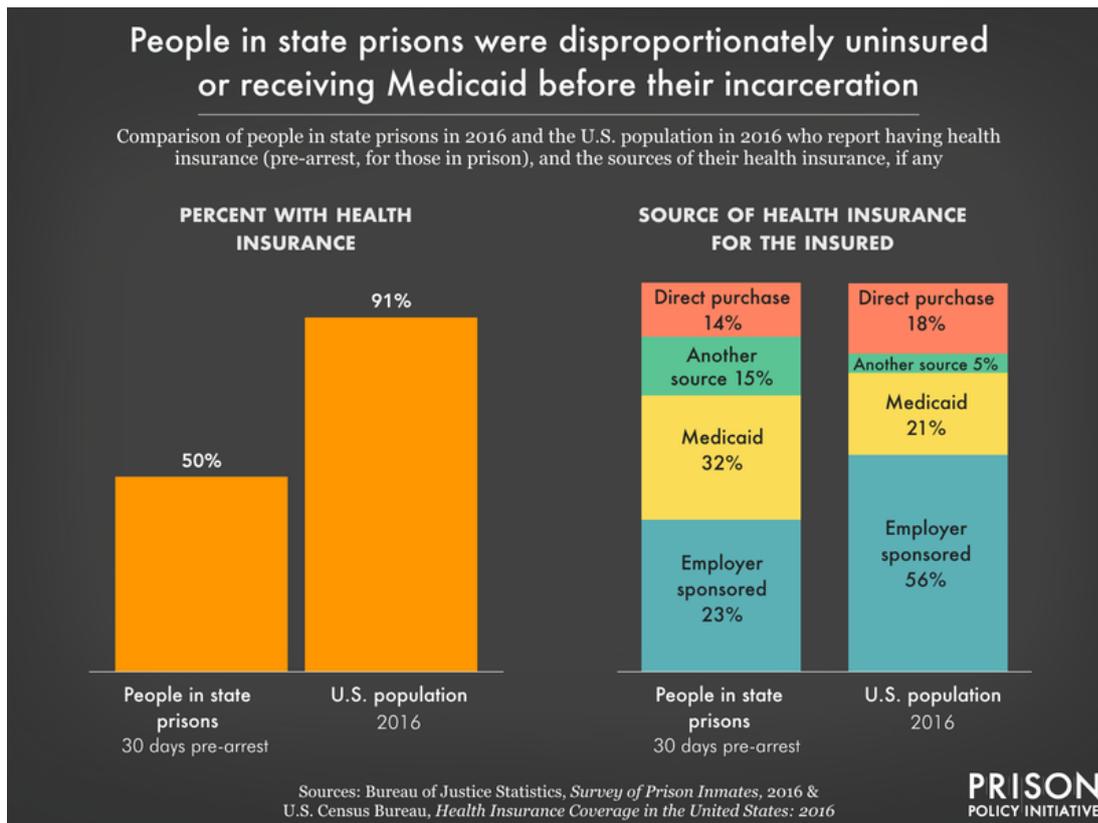
Education is also highly crucial. Currently, 47%, almost half, of prisoners re-offend within just a year from release. According to the Ministry of Justice, high rates of recidivism can be tackled through the use of prison education. 47% of prisoners have no formal qualifications upon imprisonment, 42% were expelled from school, and 13% never had a job (Akpabio-Klementowski, 2020). Educating prisoners makes a significant difference. For example, in North America, there was a 13% reduction in reoffending among those who participated in education during their imprisonment. Likewise, a large-scale study conducted in England and Wales reported a 7.5% decrease (UK Government, 2018).



This has significant benefits, not only to the prisoners themselves but to the broader population as well: In 2012, taxpayers paid \$39 billion to incarcerate inmates – that's 4 times what taxpayers paid two decades ago. This is because prisoners often find themselves in a cycle of imprisonment, re-arrest, and return to prison (GTL, 2017).

### HEALTH AND EDUCATION PROVISIONS IN PRISONS

Healthcare fails to treat the sick prisoners – even though Hepatitis C is highly treatable, 4 out of 5 inmates still have it. Half of the population in prisons in the US lacked medical insurance upon entering prison, which meant that they would not get appropriate medical care. Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) inmates have gone without a single health-related visit since their imprisonment. Mental health is also severely undertreated: Even though half of the inmates have reported having mental health problems, only 1 in 4 have received professional help (Wang, 2022).



One of the main goals of any imprisonment facility is rehabilitation. The most influential factor regarding the rehabilitation of prisoners is their access to education services. With the image of the outside world, a new skill set to get a job, and a sense of stability in the classroom, prisoners can lay the groundwork for a brand-new life outside of prison. (Cochrane, 2021)

Although it is well-established that education is a critical factor in driving down recidivism rates, prison education is often lacking because of several challenges:

First, there is the issue of connection. Prison education is often referred to as a "delicate balancing act", between enough cooperation from the justice system and genuine efforts to offer meaningful learning experiences. In some prisons, teachers may be forbidden from contacting the students after class times for ongoing support, encouragement, and active feedback. They may also be banned from using the prisoners' names and only allowed to call them "offenders" (Deborah Appleman, 2021). Another aspect of the issue is the motivation of the prisoners themselves: Many don't know the national language, which discourages them from trying to learn (Hawley, Murphy, & Souto-Otero, 2013); others are likely to have previous failures in education, which may serve as deterrence from trying again; and prisoners are often frequently transferred between prisons, which disrupts the learning experience and their motivation as a whole.



Another challenge is the variety of prisoners. Inmates can be, and often are, from different educational, economic, and social backgrounds. There are often classes of inmates of vastly different ages, ranging from their early 20's to their late 50's (Tam, Heng, & Rose, 2007). Many don't know the national language, and there may not always be a translator in the classroom with them – making them unable to learn.

Furthermore, there is the issue of security: Prisons consider security issues more critical than educational goals; as a result, some vocational trades are restricted because of concerns about prisoners creating weapons (Dick, Rich, & Waters, 2016). Headcounts and other security measures often create disruptions during the learning experience (Hopkins & Farley, 2015), and if prisons are on lockdowns, which can last for several weeks, inmates may not be able to attend classes (Francis, 2007). Additionally, distance education is offered online, which presents a significant barrier as most countries forbid the use of the internet by inmates (Antonio & Farley, 2015). Finally, prisoners often don't have the time or the space to commit to their education: Prisons may only allocate limited time to have access to educational services. Therefore, students are forced to keep up with their assignments during their very little free time, on their cell floor, and around other people who may not be taking the same courses. Because of the time, space, and focus restrictions, many give up on their education as it is a significant source of stress for them (Francis, 2007).

### ***CASE STUDY – NORWAY'S PRISON SYSTEM***

While many justice systems around the world focus on distancing criminals from society and punishing them for their misdeeds, the Norwegian justice system takes a different approach: Punishment is not at the forefront of prisons, but rather, the background. Restorative justice and rehabilitation take the front seats (Wikipedia, 2022). Norway strongly believes that it is only the freedom of inmates that should be taken away, such that life in prison would be very similar to life on the outside. The Directorate of Norwegian Correctional Service states on its website: “The punishment is the restriction of liberty; no other rights have been removed by the sentencing court. Therefore, the sentenced offender has the same rights as all others who live in Norway. No one shall serve their sentence under stricter circumstances than necessary for the security in the community.” (Kriminalomsorgen, n.d.)

Prisons in Norway are often referred to as "luxury prisons", due to their high-quality cells and top-notch conditions (Nosowitz, 2010). Norwegian prisoners can expect to find cells decorated with



wooden furniture, desks, complete sets of bed sheets, flat-screen TVs, and even a private bathroom – similar to a college dorm room. Additionally, inmates have a lot to do outside of their cells: they can take up yoga classes and ceramics workshops, they can work jobs such as metalworking and woodworking, and can start working towards their bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees while incarcerated. (Rasin, 2020)

By creating an environment that is very similar to the outside world, ex-prisoners have an easier time reintegrating themselves back into society. And it shows: Norway has one of the lowest recidivism rates globally. In 2016, only 20% of prisoners re-offended within 5 years. Combined with low crime rates, and only 75 per 100,000 people incarcerated in 2014, Norway is considered to be one of the safest countries in the entire world. (The Borgen Project, 2020)

Following these statistics, a significant question has been raised: "Is it a product of Norway's justice system, or rather its culture?" While there is no definitive answer, it is essential to know that Norway went through its period of prison reform, too. In 1902, capital punishment was banned, and in 1981, life sentences were banned too. And yet, the system still saw high rates of recidivism (around 60%). In the 1990s, Norway's government decided to shift its prisons' focus on guarding and security towards rehabilitation instead. After a top-to-bottom prison reform, which included bringing in educational programs, workshops, new cell space designs, and a transformation of the role of prison guards into mentors and coaches as well, recidivism rates dropped to around 20%, and have stayed relatively the same ever since. (Rasin, 2020)

### ***FAMILIARIZING QUESTIONS***

1. How many prisoners does my country hold?
2. Do my country's prisons receive sufficient funding?
3. What kind of access to education and healthcare do the prisoners in my country have?

### ***CLASH-ORIENTED QUESTIONS***

4. Do my country's prisons offer rehabilitation and education services?
5. How do my country's prisons' arrange medical facilities? Can prisoners rely on prison healthcare in my country?



6. How can it be improved?

7.

What can SOCHUM do to establish the guidelines on providing appropriate access to health care and education?

### ***FURTHER READING***

[About Recidivism](#)   [Health in Prisons](#)   [Education in Prisons](#)

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## TOPIC B: HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THAILAND

### *BACKGROUND TO THE TOPIC*

Human trafficking is an issue that almost every nation faces, whether the country is a source, destination, or transit point for trafficking. Yet, the world continues to ignore this issue largely. Former Executive Director of UNODC, Antonio Mario Costa, spoke, “Many governments are still in denial. There is even neglect when it comes to reporting on, or prosecuting cases of human trafficking.” Approximately 2.4 million people have been trafficked into forced labor globally, with 600,000 to 800,000 trafficked across borders every year.

But what is human trafficking? The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime defines human trafficking as, “The recruitment, transport, transfer, harboring, or receipt of a person by improper means (such as force, abduction, fraud, deception, or coercion) for an improper purpose (the purpose of exploitation, including forced labor, forced marriage, forced domestic servitude or sexual exploitation).

Much of the history of human trafficking in Thailand begins with the heavy foreign military presence and rapid population growth from the 1960s onward. During the Korean and Vietnam wars, as American troops filled Thailand’s streets and bars, many women took up sex work in the face of the rising poverty levels. This led to many hotspot destinations that became known as the centers of the sex industry.

The rise in sex work quickly leads to the trafficking of women and especially girls, from rural villages. While it was likely happening since the 60s, according to research by a Thai Law forum, it was only in the 1980s that trafficking became industrialized. This rise is directly linked to the industrialization of the country, which has left many rural regions without the proper infrastructure and education required to combat trafficking.

In addition to the problems, Thailand had to face from within, throughout the years, the country has become a country of migrants. In fact, Thailand’s population consists of about 4.9 million migrants, and they are some of the most trafficked groups of people.

Migrant workers in Thailand often come from countries such as Cambodia and Myanmar and are in a bad financial state, making them vulnerable to exploitation. Furthermore, putting the migrant



workers at an even higher risk, Thailand is surrounded by poorly secured borders, making it easy for countries to forcibly move their victims into the country.

The influx of human trafficking throughout these periods has led to a cultural acceptance of prostitution and other forms of trafficking throughout much of the country. This is compounded by general apathy from the government toward enforcing laws against traffickers. While the 1996 Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act prohibits both prostitution and child trafficking, fines are inconsistent, and many law enforcement agencies are ill-equipped to deal with the magnitude of trafficking at hand.



**CASE STUDY**  
**District Level Anti-Trafficking in Person Committees in Border Provinces on the USAID Thailand CTIP Project**

Chiang Rai PCOM, Mae Sai Immigration and World Vision explore the role of the Operations CTIP Committee. Operations CTIP committee capacity building training in Mae Sai, Chiang Rai.



### *CURRENT SITUATION*

Today, human trafficking is still prevalent in Thailand, especially in the fishing, agricultural, and construction industries. Thailand is at high risk due to multiple factors such as its geographical location, economic development, demographic composition, and cultural background, all factors have only been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which only increased human trafficking and high lightened the importance of the problem.

### GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Although not a landlocked country, Thailand is surrounded by multiple countries, such as Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Malaysia. Many poor migrant workers cross the border from these countries, and as stated before, along with women and children, migrant workers are some of the most vulnerable people to human trafficking.



In 2019, Thailand and the UN Office for Drugs and Crime discussed the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The concerns were, “That the same investments are creating faster moving illicit trade and opportunity for cross-border criminal networks and organizations to do business, particularly in vulnerable countries and parts of the region.” Because ASEAN’s trading is increasing, it allows criminals, including 31 human traffickers, to slip through the cracks of authorities. At the Synchronizing Trade and Security Plans in Support of the ASEAN 2025 conference, it was acknowledged that a regional border management system must be put in place. The UN has acknowledged that this is not going to solve the problem entirely and wants to employ more strategies, such as looking at the market demand for illicit commodities. In the past couple of years, the UN has acknowledged that migrants in Thailand have not seen policy changes that will allow them to function as full members of Thai society. There is still a great need for migration policy change in Thailand to promote migrant workers’ rights.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Thailand and the ASEAN community are now one of the world’s largest trading blocs, but with this increase in trade comes more opportunities for human traffickers to cross borders unnoticed.

Economic inequality is prevalent throughout the country, especially in the rural areas of the capital, Bangkok. For those experiencing economic inequality, the sex industry is a lucrative opportunity and an escape from poverty. The fishing industry is a significant part of Thailand’s economy, with seafood exports valued at \$6 billion. Unfortunately, at times fishing boats are used as means of trafficking because traffickers know that fishing boats are hard for authorities to monitor and enforce trafficking laws making boats an ideal destination for victims.

Due to COVID-19, Thailand’s economy, like other countries, has taken some significant losses, with Thailand’s GDP dropping 6.1% in 2020. On the one hand, those who continue to work in sectors such as the garment industry, agriculture and farming, manufacturing, and domestic work, where trafficking is frequently detected, may also face more exploitation because of the need to lower production costs due to economic difficulties, as well as due to less control by the authorities. But, on the other hand, because of COVID-19, more people are out of jobs, which leads to an even greater risk of vulnerable jobless people falling into the deception of human traffickers.

Exports of goods such as automotive parts, electronics, and agricultural products have been shown to support Thailand’s economy through these troubling times. On the flip side, due to COVID-19, there were more restrictions placed on businesses, meaning migrant workers returned home to



await the opening of companies again. Therefore, transnational human traffickers had less opportunity to commit crimes. A report to the U.S. report ranking countries on their anti-trafficking efforts reported only 131 cases were filed in Thailand in 2020. However, once businesses reopen, there needs to be a plan in place to protect the returning migrant workers.

### DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION / CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

Thailand has a significant amount of migrant workers from surrounding countries like Cambodia and Lao, speaking multiple different languages. Language barriers can lead to a greater risk of being trafficked which is why minorities and migrants are at more significant risk for human trafficking. It is easier to take advantage of people like this due to debt bondage and traffickers quickly being able to withhold work documents.

Thailand is mainly composed of people of Chinese descent, but a minority includes highland indigenous groups such as Khama, Lisu, and Hmong. These indigenous groups have always struggled economically due to discrimination. In a 2020 TIP Report from the U.S., it was reported that these highland groups are at greater risk for human trafficking. This is an unsurprising report as these groups are vulnerable not only due to limited economic opportunities but because of their different culture, their rights to their livelihoods are constantly at risk with a significant influx of ethnic Thais. With their rights at stake, human traffickers take advantage of this.

Taking COVID-19 into consideration, the people who might fall victim to human trafficking are usually from low-income areas – areas that migrants generally settle in. These people are more exposed to contracting the virus, less equipped to prevent it, and have less access to healthcare to ensure their recovery. Essential and practical operations to support them have become a challenge, due to countries adjusting their priorities during the pandemic. Dramatic increases in unemployment and reductions in income, especially for low-wage and informal sector workers, mean that significant numbers of people who were already vulnerable find themselves in even more precarious circumstances.

Another minority group that has been affected by COVID-19 that's important to keep in mind is the children. Children are at heightened risk of exploitation, especially since school closures have not only precluded many from access to education but also from the primary source of shelter and nourishment. In some countries, because of the pandemic, more children are forced onto the streets in search of food and income, heightening their risk of infection and exploitation.



Since their schools are closed, many children are increasingly online for learning and socializing. This may make them more vulnerable to online sexual predators. Child rights groups, law enforcement officials, and international organizations report greater demand for online sexual abuse material and risks of online grooming.

With countries like the United States and organizations such as the European Union putting pressure on Thailand through actions such as downgrading them to a Tier 3 in their annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, Thailand has made efforts to stop human trafficking. For example, in 2019, the Royal Thai Government ratified the ILO Convention on Work in Fishing, requiring standards for recruitment and placement for work on a fishing boat. Additionally, the Thai Ministry of Social Development and Human Security created hotlines for citizens to report human trafficking. These are improvements, but human trafficking is still a significant concern in Thailand, and there needs to be more action taken to aid victims.

### *PAST UN ACTIONS*

The UN Office of Drugs (UNODC) and Crime and Thailand, specifically the Thai Institute of Justice (TIJ), have worked together, as previously discussed, in helping the anti-trafficking movement. To give some more examples, in 2016, the UNODC and TIJ began the Joint Project to Counter Human Trafficking. The main focus of this initiative was the borders surrounding Thailand and the human trafficking victims that flowed through these borders. The goal was to create a more concrete criminal justice response to human traffickers. First, the project did research on Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia's law enforcement and judicial systems. From there, the problems identified in the study were addressed in sequences.

Additionally, UN groups like the ILO and UNODC have been supporting women migrants in Thailand who want to take action against trafficking. For example, these UN groups worked with a migrant from Myanmar who lives in Thailand to empower women to be independent and support themselves financially. This was done through the Safe and Fair Programme to stop violence against women and create peer network groups in the ASEAN region to form a support system for women migrant workers.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries had more significant issues than human trafficking, resulting in a decrease in attention to the topic as well as an increase in the number of cases regarding human trafficking and hindering the existing process.



The General Assembly met to reaffirm their commitment to the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. In this meeting, they also adopted a resolution, putting on paper their acknowledgment of how COVID-19 has increased the number of human trafficking cases. Furthermore, representatives from affected countries, expressed what could be done by the international community to solve this issue. This meeting will hopefully be the beginning of the fundamental change to aid victims and prevent more cases from occurring in all countries, including Thailand.

### *QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER*

- 1. For the minority groups in Thailand, such as the highland groups, how can discrimination against minorities be put to an end? How do you think discrimination plays a role in human trafficking?
- 2. What measures in the fishing industry can be taken by authorities to prevent labor trafficking?
- 3. After human trafficking victims have been rescued, what should be done to help them physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially? Why is providing aid not only the morally right thing to do but beneficial in preventing the cycle of being trafficked again?
- 4. How can you encourage other countries surrounding Thailand to work together in more strictly monitoring their borders and strengthening their criminal justice systems?
- 5. What power does the UN have to take action within Thailand's borders, and how will Thailand respond to such actions?
- 6. What measures is Thailand taking to document human trafficking cases? Do you believe there is anything to be improved upon?
- 7. What are incentives to provide businesses that profit off of labor trafficking in Thailand to address workers' rights issues in their supply networks?

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