

BEST PRACTICE IN REDUCTION OF VULNERABILITY OF GIRLS TO HIV/AIDS

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HIV/AIDS in Thailand

The first case of AIDS in Thailand was detected in September 1984. Early cases were found among male homosexuals; thereafter the disease spread rapidly among injecting drug users (IDUs) in 1987 and 1988, and then to commercial sex workers and their clients. It has now extended beyond the 'high risk group' to the general population. The sentinel sero-prevalence survey reveals that HIV has increased among all groups since 1989. Moreover, the HIV prevalence rate for direct CSWs rose rapidly from 3.50 percent in 1989 to 28.89 percent in 1996. For indirect commercial sex workers, the rate of increase went from 1.6 percent to 11.1 percent during the same period (AIDS Division, Ministry of Public Health, 1997). Among AIDS patients, heterosexual transmission is now the predominant mode of disease transmittal. As of June 1996, the rate of infection among AIDS patients who apparently acquired HIV through heterosexual relations reached 66.06 percent for males and 13.83 percent for females (Table 1).

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Table 1. AIDS Cases by Year and Mode of Transmission

Mode of Transmission	1948-89	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	Total	Percent
Hetero-Male	32	70	351	1135	4312	8893	12607	13372	40772	66.06
Hetero-Female	3	10	36	135	645	1501	2730	3479	8539	13.83
Homo-/Bi-sexual	22	6	9	9	54	129	274	310	813	1032
IDU	9	22	41	136	500	871	1250	946	3775	6.12
Vertical	4	15	72	136	458	765	885	994	3329	5.39
Blood	2	1	4	10	8	9	10	1	45	0.07
Unknown	1	2	16	89	642	1097	1499	1104	4450	7.21
Total	73	126	529	1650	6619	13265	19255	20206	61723	100

Source: Division of Epidemiology, Ministry of Public Health, 1997

Although the rate of new infection has begun to slow, a projection made by the Thai Working Group on HIV/AIDS estimates that by the year 2000 there will be 1,379,189 HIV-positive persons (NESDB Working Group on HIV/AIDS Projection, 1994). A high rate of HIV infection among CSWs indicates that not only women who become involved in commercial sex work are at high risk of infection, but also their clients and those with whom they come into sexual contact. The problem is particularly serious in the northern part of Thailand where the rate of HIV infection among commercial sex workers is alarmingly high. For example, a survey of HIV infection among CSWs in Phayao and Chiangrai provinces, reported by the Thai Women of Tomorrow project in 1996, indicated that 53.9 percent and 60.1 percent of commercial sex workers in these two provinces respectively were HIV-positive.

Commercial Sex Workers in Thailand

Commercial sex workers (CSWs) are the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS in Thailand. The rate of infection among direct CSWs was 28.89 percent in 1996. As a comparison, among other groups such as male military conscripts and pregnant women, the rates were 2.2 percent and 1.8 percent respectively (AIDS Division, 1997). The risk of young girls contracting HIV/AIDS is higher than adults, and especially for those girls entering the commercial sex industry (Rushing, 1994).

Estimates of the number of children involved in prostitution vary, from 13,000 to as high as 800,000 (Ard-am and Sethaput, 1994). The lowest estimate comes from the Vulnerable Diseases Section of the Ministry of Public Health and is derived from a biannual door-to-door head count of CSWs at brothels and places of entertainment. The highest figure is from the Center for the Protection of Children's Rights which uses an estimation technique. They estimate the number of sex-related service establishments and then multiply this figure by the average number of women working in these establishments. Child CSWs are estimated to be 40 percent of the total number of CSWs (2 million), giving a figure of 800,000 child CSWs. Since there were four million females aged 11 to 17 years recorded in the 1990 census, one out of every four females in this age group might be a CSW. This figure, though, is not accepted by most government organizations (Ard-am and Sethaput, 1994).

Guest (1994) also used an estimation technique to identify potential risk of becoming a CSW. The factors considered were area of current residence, migration, co-residence, and school attendance. Those children who live in rural areas, are non-migrants, living with family members and attending school are identified as the no risk group. Those children who are defined as the high risk group are migrant children who live in an urban area apart from their families and are not attending school. The middle category, called the low risk group, are those who have some, but not all, of these four high risk factors. From his estimation, Guest reported that 1.7 percent, 68.0 percent,

and 30.3 percent of the female population age 11 to 17 belong to the high risk, low risk and no risk groups respectively. Guest estimated that a range of 30,000 to 100,000 female child CSWs would be reasonable. Among the low risk group, not attending school is the major factor since 65.7 percent of this group are not in school. The figures presented here may be only an estimation of number of child CSWs but it is enough to determine that child prostitution does exist and occurs at a high enough magnitude to make it a significant a social problem; one that also places such children at high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

Reasons for Girls Entering Prostitution

Why girls enter the commercial sex industry is an issue that has received much attention, with innumerable research studies having been undertaken to identify causes and solutions to this problem. Summarily speaking, the causes have been divided into those at macro-societal and micro-family levels. At the macro-level, Thailand's rapid economic development is cited as one major cause (Guest, 1994; Kaime-Atterhog et al., 1994). When Thailand adopted an industrialized export-led economy, one of its consequences was that agriculture-formerly the strong backbone of the Thai economy-was devalued. Farmers grew increasingly in debt and many were forced to move from their lands to search for work in urban areas, usually in Bangkok or provincial urban centers. Those who remained in the rural area tried alternative family survival strategies, including sending their children to cities to earn the family income.

Thailand's national policy which emphasized economic growth also led to a rise in materialism. Parental desires for a better, more materialistic standard of living-often fueled by mass media advertisements-led some parents to encourage their children into the commercial sex industry as one viable means of attaining their materialistic goals. Children who did not follow their parents' demands were regarded as ungrateful, since respect for one's parents and providing for their care are paramount socio-cultural norms in Thai society which have held even under Thailand's rapid social and economic

changes (Kaime-Atterhot et al., 1994). In some rural villages, particularly in Northern Thailand where prostitution has become an acceptable occupation, families who do not sell their daughters were seen as foolish by fellow community members.

Relatedly, the main reason for girls entering the commercial sex industry is to satisfy their parents' urgent need for money, not simply for material goods but in some cases for survival as well. Remittances from unskilled wage earnings are much lower than those from commercial sex work. Thus, many parents decide to sell their daughters and earn quick money to provide for their immediate needs. Though some girls may not want to be CSWs, they are not uncommonly forced or deceived into the profession. This group of children usually have little to no education and do not live with their parents. Those who are also at special risk are children who live with a step-father or step-mother (Ard-am and Sethaput, 1994). This group requires greater attention and the strategies adopted aim to reduce forced or deceived prostitution.

Strategies for Preventing Child Prostitution

Under the government of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai (1992-1995) child prostitution was a high priority with several strategies being implemented including prevention, suppression, assistance, rehabilitation and legal measures to eliminate entry into the commercial sex industry by children under 18. Preventive measures were viewed as best practice in that they could change the children's lives from being at risk of exploitation or contracting a fatal disease. Some of the key strategies are as follows.

1. All children should received nine years of quality basic education. Those impoverished children with no opportunity for further education will be given access to education and vocational training.
2. The quality of education must be improved to enable a child to think and uphold moral principles, and be able to choose a way of life with human

dignity. The educational curriculum and vocational training must be relevant to the local environment and conditions, as well as the demands of the labor market.

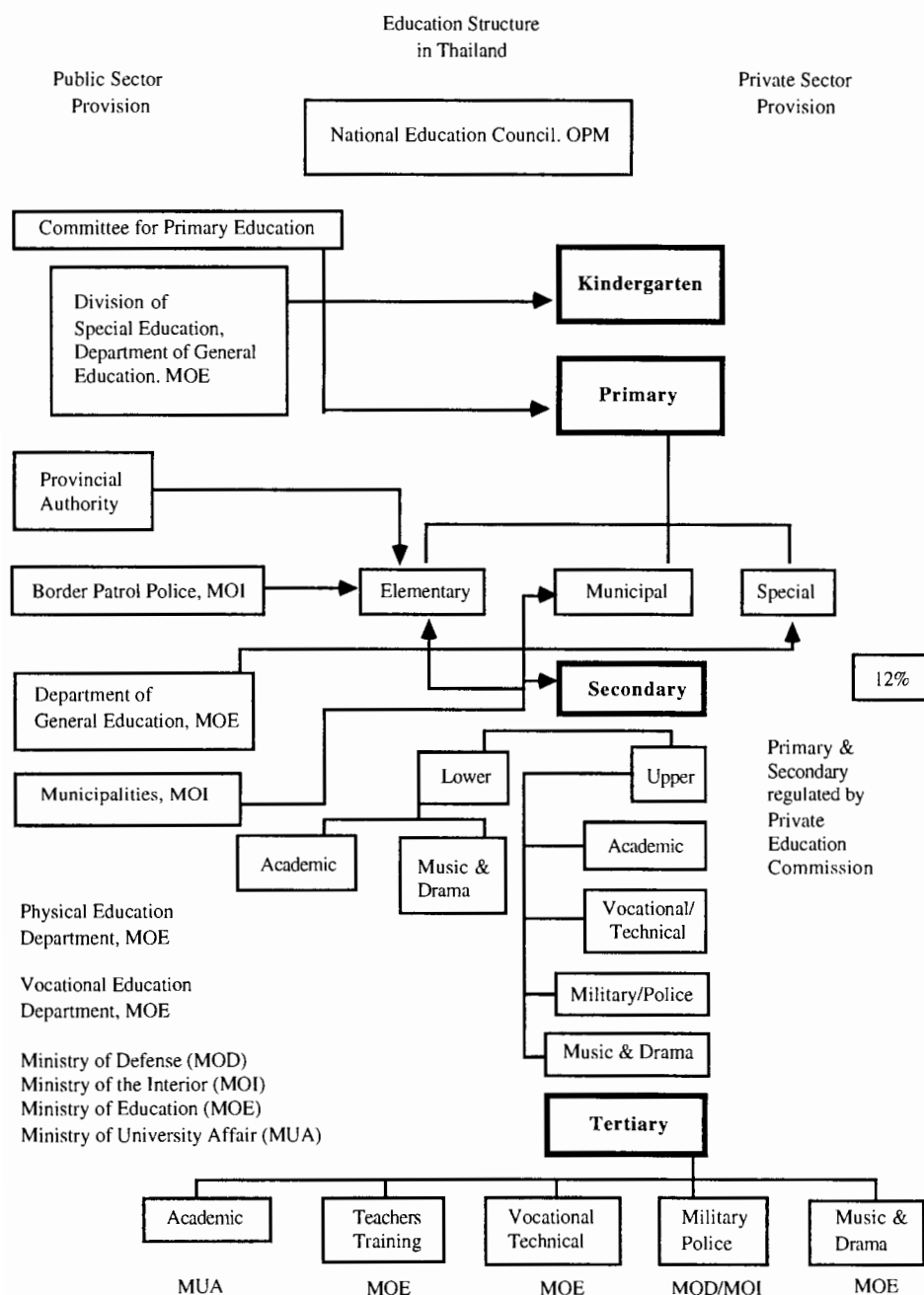
3. Girls and boys must have the same opportunities to access to formal and non-formal education.
4. Counseling and guidance services for solving family and youth problems and job selecting must be provided in every school and to out-of-school children.
5. Recreational and social services should be provided so children and youth can spend their leisure time appropriately.
6. Campaigns to raise awareness about child prostitute should be conducted to set correct attitudes among parents, guardians, teachers and also general public.
7. Encourage coordination with neighboring countries in such campaigns and encourage publications about prevention and feasible solutions to problems relating to the commercial sex industry.
8. Set up an inspection surveillance system to prevent forced and deceived child prostitution.

In response to the national policy, several projects have been implemented of which education and vocational training are among the best strategies to prevent young girls from entering into the commercial sex industry.

Thailand's Educational System

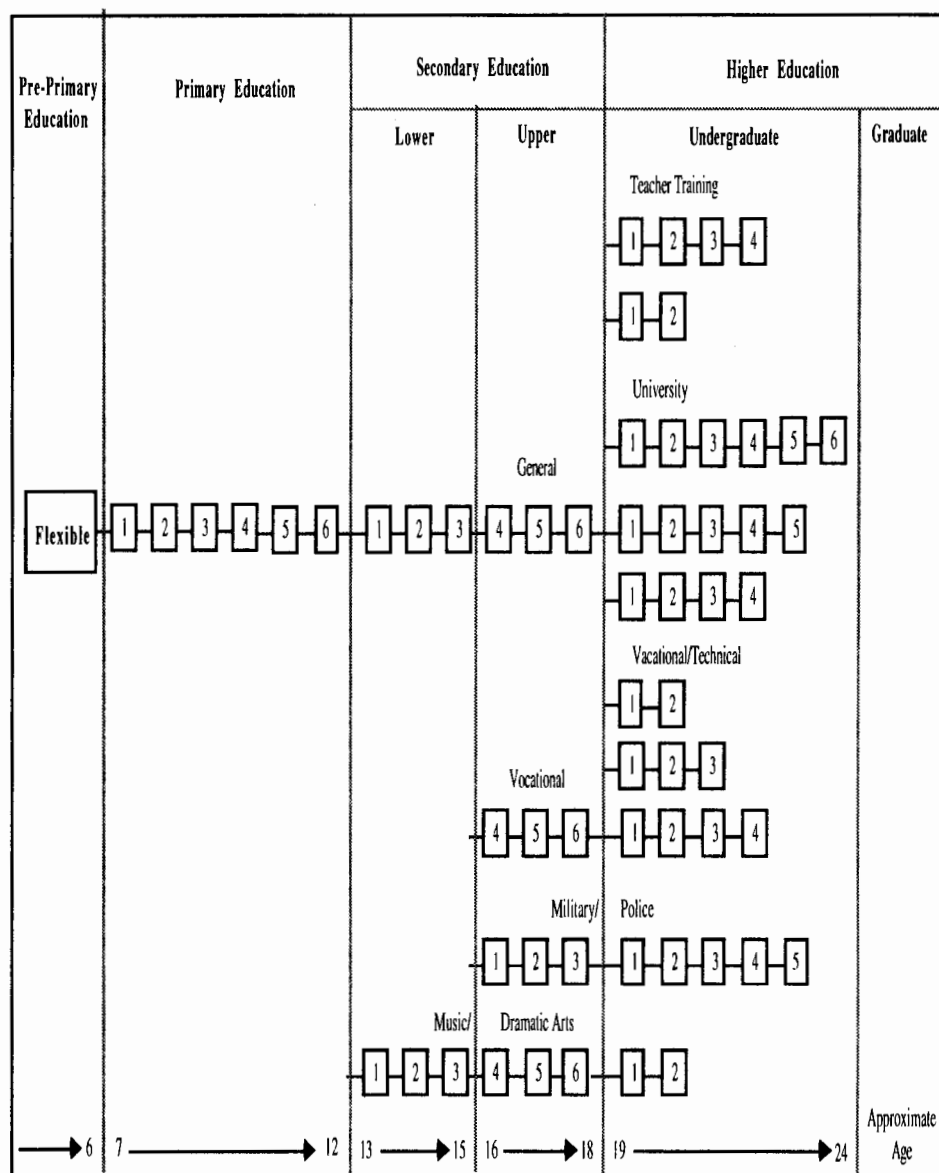
The structure of education in Thailand is presented in Figure 1 as well as the reformed education system in Figure 2. Four government agencies are responsible for the formal education system: the Office of Prime Minister, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Interior, and Ministry of University Affairs. Pre-University education is provided mainly by the public sector. At present, the formal school system in Thailand is divided into four levels: kindergarten, primary, secondary and tertiary. Compulsory education is set at six years which is equal to grade 6, though strong efforts are underway to expand compulsory education to nine and then twelve years. By grade 6, most children have reached 12 years of age.

Figure 1



Source : TDRI, The 1991 Year-End Conference, Educational Options for the Future of Thailand. Volume I

Figure 2. The Structure of the Reformed Education System (1977)



Source: Watson, Keith. 1980. *Education Development in Thailand*.

In 1990, secondary school enrollment was only 30 percent and unevenly distributed across the total population (TDRI, 1991). Table 2 shows that children from farming families have the least chance to rise in the education ladder, with only 14.5 percent of farming children receiving a secondary school education compared to 95.8 percent for professional and business families, and 24.2 percent for laborer families. Poverty is viewed as the main reason for why children of farming families are unable to continue their education.

The environment surrounding this situation is changing, however. Parents acknowledge that a grade six certificate is no longer sufficient for employment in the labor market and the difference in wages between workers with and without secondary education is obvious. In addition, children who finish primary school are usually too young (age about 12) to legally enter the labor market (age of legal entry is 13 years). Thus education beyond primary school is clearly seen as important for their children's future, but the main obstacle to advancement, however, is cost. The 1992 Children and Youth Survey conducted by National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that 52.7 percent of children age 12-14 were not attending school because they had no financial support; 20.2 percent said they had to work to earn a living and only 9.8 percent reported no interest in further study. The average direct cost including fee, books and materials, uniforms, transportation, etc. is about 1,425 baht per year for lower secondary school.

Table 2. Gross Enrollment Ratios for Children from Households of Different Occupations: Secondary and Tertiary Level (1985)

Occupations	Secondary	Tertiary	Population Distribution
Professional and Business	95.8	57.7	12.8
Laborers	24.2	7.1	21.3
Farmers	14.5	1.7	65.9

Source: TDRI, The 1991 Year-End Conference, Educational Options for the Future of Thailand, Volume 1:7.

Responding to this low secondary enrollment rate, the Ministry of Education began two projects: (1) Extension of Basic Education to the Lower Secondary Level initiated by the Department of General Education, and (2) a Pilot Project for the Extension of Educational Opportunities initiated by the Office of the National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC). After implementing of these projects, the secondary school enrollment rate increased markedly from 30 percent in 1990 to 85 percent in 1994, according to data from the National Education Commission. However children from poor agricultural families, the most vulnerable group, remained at a disadvantage, because these two government projects only covered costs related to tuition fees, free uniforms and text books. Travel and meal expenses as well are costly, but required, uniforms for other activities such as physical education and boy/girl scouts were not provided. Moreover, a study by the Office of the National Education Commission noted that personal costs for education are about 2.5 times higher than direct educational costs. This is compounded by the indirect or opportunistic cost of losing income from the children when they are in school rather than working on the farm or in other jobs.

Best Practice Case

In order to help such disadvantaged children, many projects have been undertaken, one of which is known as the Sema Pattana Cheewit (Sema Life Development). This project was initiated to help highly disadvantaged girls enroll in secondary school by providing them with scholarships of 3,000 baht per year. This amount of money was felt to be sufficient to cover all educational costs and other personal costs during the school year.

Data on Sema Pattana Cheewit project were derived from both secondary and primary sources including in-depth interviews with project personnel and beneficiaries. Three provinces (Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Phayao) were selected for collecting primary data on girls and teachers who participated in the project. Education officials at provincial and district levels, were also interviewed.

Sema Pattana Cheewit (Sema Life Development) Project

After Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai took his office in 1992, a policy effort was launched to eradicate child prostitution and assist those at risk of entering the commercial sex industry. The Sema Pattana Cheewit Project is one of the strategies that responds to this child prostitute eradication policy.

In 1993, the Ministry of Education (MOE) conducted a survey of Thai CSWs in Thailand and abroad to uncover information about their home town, age, education, reasons for becoming a CSW, the channels used to find work abroad, and so forth. This information along with data on villages with high HIV/AIDS rates, as well as the number of students who finished grade 6 but decided not to continue their education were used as a base line for planning the intervention project. Using this information, eight provinces in the North were identified as the target area (namely, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Phayao, Chiang Mai, Prae, Mae Hong Song, Lampoon, and Nan) since they

were the highest risk areas for girls entering the commercial sex trade. These provinces also had high HIV/AIDS rates, and a high percentage of girls (43%) who finished grade 6 but did not to continue their education. After these target provinces were selected, the MOE organized a seminar to determine the causes of the problem by focusing on the factors that encouraged girls to become CSWs. From the seminar, five main factors were identified and later used as a guideline to select girls for participation in the project.

1. *Poverty.* Agricultural areas that are not suitable for cultivation lead their associated families into a cycle of debt.
2. *Materialistic attitudes.* There was competition among households to own a nice house and possess expensive material goods to show their well-being over other households. Households who had their daughter(s) working in the commercial sex industry and sent back income to buy goods and build new houses were accepted and recognized as successful families.
3. *Lack of education.* Survey data revealed that the majority of CSWs had very little education. Over 95% of CSWs had only 6 years of education or lower, while others had no education at all due to poor family economic circumstances. Even though the government provided free education, the families still had to pay for food, books, travel costs and other education related expenses not covered by the government.
4. *Agent persuasion.* Agencies who seek out young good looking girls have several techniques to persuade girls and their parents that commercial sex work is profitable. They may use either direct or indirect techniques depending on the attitude of the particular family. For those families who are not willing to send their daughter(s) to work in the sex industry, agents may initially promise to find the girls good paying jobs in restaurants or factories, but later they force the girls into prostitution.

5. Family difficulties. Girls who live with a single parent, with other relatives or step-parents, in families with economic or drug addiction problems are at high risk of becoming prostitute.

On May 3, 1994, the Cabinet approved the implementation of the Sema Pattana Cheewit Project and provided 4,000 scholarships to day-students at 2,400 Baht/year and 500 scholarships for boarding students for 9,000 Baht/year.

Objectives and Targets

The Sema Pattana Cheewit project aims to provide an education for girls in difficult circumstance so they can develop in terms of maturity, knowledge, and experiences to be able to protect themselves from being deceived and have a means of finding a socially acceptable job. The project's targets are as follows:

1. Prevent girls at high risk from becoming CSWs; at least 500 girls are provided scholarships for boarding school.
2. Provide 4,000 scholarships for day-students to further their education in schools located in their communities.
3. Prepare scholarships for students who finish grades 9 and 12 so they can attend vocational training.
4. Establish 94 Sema Pattana Cheewit Centers in 94 districts in eight Northern provinces. These centers will provide information and conduct campaigns to prevent girls from becoming CSWs.
5. Establish a collaborating working system with other concerned organizations.

Duration and Target Area

The Sema Pattana Cheewit project has three distinct phases. Phase I was implemented from 1994-1996 in the eight targeted Northern provinces. Phase II (1997-1999) will expand the project to other Northern provinces as well as Bangkok, while Phase III (2000-2002) will cover high risk areas in the Northeast and South of Thailand.

Implementation Steps

Three types of students participate in the Sema Pattana Cheewit project, namely, those in boarding school, those in day-school and those receiving vocational training.

Boarding School

Primary school teachers select students for the project according to the following criteria:

1. girls who are currently in grade 6, residents of the eight target provinces in the North, and are or will not receive other scholarships, and
2. their families have one or more of these characteristics:
 - father or mother is deceased, disabled or sentenced in prison and unable to take care of their children,
 - broken family, children have to live with either a step-father or step-mother or other relatives,
 - family members or relatives are or have formerly engaged in the commercial sex industry, or their community of residence has a number of persons entered in the sex industry,
 - father or mother is a drug addict,
 - family is in a situation which places the child at high risk of becoming a CSW.

Day-student

The selection criteria for day-students are the same as for boarding school students except the family is in a situation where students can safely live with them, and the family will allow their children to go to school if they receive a scholarship. The selection process consists of three steps. First, primary school teachers select candidates according to the guideline provided by the MOE. Thereafter, each school will send the list of students to the district education office for screening. The district office will form a committee to select the number of girls according to a quota provided by the provincial education office. The final district office list will then be sent to the provincial education office for finalization.

After the final list of students from each province is completed, it is sent to the MOE for approval. The MOE will take approximately 45 days for approval and scholarships will be distributed to each province.

After receiving a scholarship, each student opens a savings account under her name and sends the account number to the district office. The provincial education office then transfers the scholarship funds to the girls' accounts. In order for a student to withdraw the money, at least two out of three persons: home room teacher, principal, and student must sign the withdrawal form.

For boarding school scholarships, the money is transferred to the bank account of that particular school. The money covers the cost of three meals, tuition fee, books, school uniforms and other education related expenses.

Implementation Schedule

1. **Early February:** The Ministry of Education announces the implementation schedule and the number of scholarships to be provided to each province. Each

province determines the appropriate number of scholarships to be allocated to each district according to the situation of each district.

2. **Mid-February:** The provincial education office informs each district about the schedule and the number of scholarships provided.
3. **Mid-February:** The district education office instructs each school to select girls to participate in the project under the conditions and characteristics specified by the Ministry of Education.
4. **End of February:** A school-by-school committee selects girls who are eligible to receive a scholarship and sends the prioritized list, including those placed on a waiting list, to the district education office.
5. **Early March:** The district level committee considers the list of students from every school and prioritizes girls who are most in need. If the number of girls selected by the schools are more than the number of scholarships offered, girls who are not in urgent need will be put on the waiting list. The final list of girls is then sent to the provincial education office.
6. **Mid-March:** A provincial level committee reviews and revises (if necessary) the list and announces the names of the girls who are to receive scholarships. The final list is then sent to the Ministry of Education for recording.
7. **Mid-April:** Before school starts in mid-May, the district education office must identify the schools to which the girls will enter in order to inform them about the process of receiving the girls' scholarships.
8. **Three weeks in April:** Girls who receive scholarships for boarding school will attend an orientation and training workshop to prepare for the life in boarding school.

9. **Mid-May:** Girls open their bank accounts and send the account numbers to the district education office.
- 10 **End of May:** The district education office checks all of the account numbers and names of girls and sends them to the provincial education office. After the provincial office receives the funds from Ministry of Education, the money will be transferred to the account of each girl. The time lag between the account number being sent and the money being transferred is more than one month.

If students drop out or change schools, the school in which the student was originally enrolled must inform the district and provincial education offices. Girls on the waiting list will then be selected as replacements. School transfers can only be done for day-students.

Vocational Training

For girls who do not want to study in the regular school system but desire to train in specific areas, they will be placed in suitable vocational training programs. At present, three areas of training are offered.

(1) Agriculture training

Starting in 1995, an Operational Center for Agriculture accepted 106 students (boys and girls) who had finished grade 6 for vocational agricultural training as part of a rural development project. Students are also enrolled in an out-of school program, thus they will graduate with a grade 9 certificate while receiving agriculture training over a period of 18-24 months.

In 1996, the Ministry of Education assisted approximately 40,000 needy ninth grade students to continue their education to a higher level (Certificate of Vocational Education). The Ministry of Education subsidized tuition fees, and provided free housing. Another 5,000 Baht per student per year was provided for raising cattle

and growing vegetables for the duration of their study. Students could sell the training products for profit in order to give them experience in making a living after graduation.

(2) *Nurses training*

Mahidol University provides 40 seats each year for girls who have finished grade 9 in the North to train as Assistant Nurses for one year. After training, these students work in Siriraj Hospital and Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University, Bangkok, for at least 2 years. Then they are encouraged to go back to work in rural areas.

The Ministry of Public Health also offered 50 seats for students who finished grade 12 in 1995 and 80 students in 1996 to train in Nursing Colleges under the Ministry of Public Health. After training, they will work in health centers or hospitals under this Ministry.

(3) *Working while studying*

At the beginning of 1996, UNICEF in collaboration with the Dusit Thani Hotel (one of the leading hotel chains in Thailand) joined hands with Sema Pattana Cheewit Project to organize a training program for 60 students who graduated from grade 9 at hotels in Phetchaburi and Chiang Rai provinces. There are plans to expand the project to other hotels in the Dusit Thani Kempensky group in Thailand and Europe. During their two years of training, students study general subjects via non-formal education through Thailand's distance education system. Students receive a salary 2,000 Baht per month. Graduates of this project are then recruited as staff for hotels within the Dusit Thani group at a salary of 5,000-6,000 Baht per month. It is planned to expand this project to other companies.

Budget

Public Sector

The Thai government provides a budget to cover scholarships for girls studying grade 7 to 9 in school. The budget spent from 1994-1997 for both day-students and boarding-students entailed:

Academic year 1994	21,050,000	Baht
Academic year 1995	21,390,000	Baht
Academic year 1996	40,200,000	Baht
Academic year 1997	41,100,000	Baht

Private Sector

Several private businesses donate money to be used as a revolving fund for students attending nursing school and for personal expenditures for boarding school students. The total amount donated is 8 million Baht.

Project Evaluation

Relevance

From interviews with 86 girls who are currently being supported by the project, they report that their scholarships are very important for their study. Most of the girls interviewed from three provinces (Chiang Mai Chiang Rai and Phayao) have a positive attitude towards education and report that they will continue their education regardless of whether they receive a scholarship or not. The money needed for their education could come from family support, from loans or they may decide to work and be self-supporting. In any case, receiving a project scholarship helps to lessen the family's financial burden for education thus reducing the amount of debt that the

families might have encountered. From interviews with teachers who have selected girls for this project, they noted that some girls had already been 'sold' to an agent. The teachers then had to convince the girls' parents or guardians to change their minds prior to offering the girls their scholarships. This project can save the lives of many girls and provide them an opportunity for a decent future.

Efficiency

Screening Process

Selecting the right girls is the most important step in order to make sure that scholarships will reach the most needy children. In order for every school to use the same criteria, the project set standard selection criteria for each school teacher to follow. From interviews with teachers in 9 schools in 3 provinces, 90 percent of the girls selected conformed to the criteria set by Ministry of Education. Data collected from 86 girls in these three provinces revealed that the majority were selected because of poverty (62.8%) or that their parents did not live together (18.6%), followed by girls who did not live with either parent (13.9%). Other reported reasons, such as the girls having good grades or their parents know teachers in school, occurred among only 4.7% of the girls (Table 3).

Table 3. Reasons for selecting girls to receive scholarships in three provinces

Province	Reason for Selection					
	Poverty	Parents not living together	Did not live with either parent	Parents know teacher	Other	Total
Chiangmai	20 (64.5%)	5 (16.1%)	5 (16.1%)	-	1 (3.2%)	31 (100%)
Chiangrai	18 (52.9%)	8 (23.5%)	5 (14.7%)	1 (2.9%)	2 (5.9%)	34 (100%)
Phayao	16 (76.2%)	3 (14.3%)	2 (9.5%)	-	-	21 (100%)
Total	54 (62.8%)	16 (18.6%)	12 (13.9%)	1 (1.2%)	3 (3.5%)	86 (100%)

Approval Process

The Provincial Education Office holds final approval for those girls eligible to receive scholarships. Every province has established a provincial committee to make decisions based on the criteria and quota allocated to the province. However, the provincial level makes very small changes to the list that is submitted by the district education office. Thus, the district level plays a crucial decision making role. Since it has all of the detailed information about each of the girls selected from each school, district education authorities can more suitably prioritize girls by selecting the most needy girls first, regardless of the quota for each school. This decentralization of decision making power to the district level is more appropriate than it would be if it were centralized at the provincial level. At the district level, officials have greater information and greater access to each school than the provincial level. If necessary, district officials can visit the girls' families to observe actual conditions. Decisions can thus be made based on real data rather than simply reported information.

Scholarship Disbursement Process

At the project's beginning, provincial authorities transferred scholarships to the district education office which then paid each student by check made payable to the girl's name. Students then opened a bank account and deposited the money. This process, however, was slow and it took several months for the girls to receive the money. In some districts, girls received the first semester scholarship at the beginning of the second semester which meant that students had to use their own money to pay for the educational expenses required by the school.

The Ministry of Education realized this problem and changed the disbursement process by asking new students to open a bank account and inform the district office. When the provincial office receives the money from central office they transfer it to each student account. This modification streamlined the process.

Overall, the students feel that the current disbursement system is satisfactory. About one-fourth of the girls said they had problems in receiving their scholarship, while about three-fourths said they were satisfied with the money allocation. Chiang Mai province had the highest percent of girls having problems at 36.7% whereas Chiang Rai exhibited the lowest at 14.7%. From 22 students who reported having problems, 54.6 % said that the money provided is inadequate for one year of schooling, while another 45.4% said that the money allocated to them was delayed. However, no student reported problems in withdrawing the money or any other problem (Table 4).

Table 4. Difficulties in receiving scholarships

Province	Difficulty in obtaining money		If yes, what is the reason?			
	Yes	No	Not enough	Delay	Withdrawal	Other
Chiangmai	11 (35.7%)	19 (63.3%)	6 (54.6%)	5 (45.5%)	-	-
Chiangrai	5 (14.7%)	29 (85.3%)	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	-	-
Phayao	6 (28.6%)	15 (71.4%)	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	-	-
Total	22 (25.9%)	63 (74.1%)	12 (54.6%)	10 (45.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Monitoring and Evaluation Process

The project's monitoring and evaluation process is implemented at every level. The Ministry of Education conducts a national survey on a yearly basis by sending questionnaires to every project province asking about drop out rates, implementation problems, and follow up information on those girls who have finished grade 9. Moreover, the monitoring team visits each province to help solve problems at the provincial level. Information collected from the implementation level is used to adjust and revise the project to minimize problems.

At the provincial level, officials responsible for this project visit district offices for follow up and monitoring. Likewise, district officials visit schools under their responsibility to collect information and provide guidelines for implementation and problem solving if needed. Moreover, a reporting system set by the Ministry of Education helps the education office to keep track of required information.

Impact

Within three years of implementation (1994-1996), 1,395 girls received scholarships for boarding school and 11,500 girls obtained scholarships for day-school. Data are collected by the Ministry of Education about what students who completed grade 9 do after they finish their education (the first group of girls getting scholarship in 1994). However, only data pertaining to boarding school girls are available. This information reveals that from 395 girls who finished grade 9, 320 girls or 81% continued their education, 2 students took short-course training, 47 girls began working, and 4 or 1.01% dropped out from school (Table 5).

Table 5. Data on Sema Pattana Cheewit students after finishing grade 9, 1996.

Item	Number of Students	Percent
Total number of students completing grade 9	395	100
Study in academic program	149	37.7
Study in vocational program	83	21.0
Study in out-of-school program	6	1.5
Study in the public-private cooperation program	82	20.76
Work and study in out-of-school program	11	2.78
Drop out before finish grade 9	4	1.01
Short course training program	2	0.5
Working	36	9.1
Got married	5	1.3
Unidentified	8	2.0
Lost contact	9	2.3

Source: Special Education Division, Ministry of Education

The high percentage of girls pursuing an education after finishing grade 9 reflects the successfulness of this project. As stated earlier, girls recruited to be in boarding schools are those who have problems in the family and their risk of being sold to an agent is very high. Boarding schools, which are located in provinces different from the girls' home towns, take the girls away from home and their more difficult family circumstances. From focus group discussions with girls who are currently holding scholarships in boarding schools, the girls want to study when they have a chance. The orientation program to prepare girls before entering boarding school helps them to adjust to life in school. Moreover, three years in school is long enough to provide knowledge and show the dangers of getting HIV from becoming a CSW, as well as providing a means to make a living.

Sustainability

This project used the government budget to support its implementation. Since project initiation in 1994, every government has made a commitment to allocate a budget for this project. The private sector and UNICEF participate in this project by donating money and financial support for the training of students who want to work and study at the same time. Moreover, the Ministry of Education together with the State Lottery Office used lottery proceeds to set up an occupational training fund for those girls who finish grade 9. They set the target at 600 million baht and use the interest from this fund to support short course vocational training for 10,000 students per year. This project is therefore potentially self-sustaining through the use of national support mechanisms from both government and the private sector.

Lesson Learned

After four years of implementation, the project adjusted its process to be more efficient. The lessons learned from the implementation can be summarized as follows.

Selection and Scholarship Disbursement

Selecting the girls to participate in the project is the most important part in order to identify those in most need. Teachers who have worked in their schools for a long enough time know the girls' family backgrounds and select the most needy or the girls who have problems in the family. Yet for those teachers who are new to communities, or who may have little contact with them (such as teachers who commute to work and do not live in the communities), a mechanism should be developed whereby they can objectively assess the educational needs and desires of students. This could, for example, take the form of collecting family background profiles containing such information as family size, structure, income, migration history of family members, etc. for each child. This information, along with the students academic records, could be used to identify those children who could best benefit from scholarships, either in terms of in-school or vocational training, and in line with the project's objectives.

Selection time should be set before the school year ends so that there is enough time for teachers to screen and nominate girls. If the time allowed for selection is too short, the school may make an announcement and anyone who is interested can apply. As a result, the objective of helping high risk girls may not be achieved.

The disbursement process of transferring money to each girl's bank account is the most appropriate method. It cuts out unnecessary steps and shortens the time lag between money approval and money transfer. However, the financial system at the provincial level must be flexible enough to facilitate and speed up the disbursement process.

Responsiveness

Based on school interviews, the quality of data from the MOE's monitoring questionnaire may be problematic, since several schools did not understand it and provided incorrect information. For example, concerning the number of girls who drop out, many schools reported no drop out because they had immediately replaced girls who had dropped out with those on the waiting list. Their understanding of drop out referred to an unfilled position rather than a girl who had left school. As a result, a very low number of drop outs appears in the official statistics, which in turn leads to insufficient attention and seriousness towards the drop out issue, its causes and the ramifications for the girls who leave school.

Data collected from 9 schools in the three provinces found that 11 girls had dropped out from a total of 346 students or 3.18 percent. Even though the percentage of drop outs is very small (and questionable), this group of girls needs greater attention. Based on information from the girls' friends, provided during a focus group discussion on the reasons for drop out, the girls who left school did so voluntarily since they wanted to go to work. Their work of choice was in the entertainment business such as massage parlors, restaurants, etc., which places them at risk of becoming commercial sex workers. Little has been done to follow this group of girls and help them to find other career alternatives in line with the Sema Pattana Cheewit project's aims.

Relatedly, the curriculum offered in school should provide greater alternatives. Girls from poorer families may be at a disadvantage in terms of their educational ability, and they may not follow the strict academic process. Students report that their friends who drop out do so because they were bored of studying and unable to follow the class. If the school offers alternative programs-such as vocational training in school and especially opportunities to acquire important life skills-these could help motivate girls to stay in school. Since the schools have no strategy to cope with girls who want to quit school, it depends on each individual teacher to solve the problem. Some

teachers may take it seriously and try to convince a girl to stay, but others may ignore the problem and put the girl on the waiting list to replace her. It is thus important to have clear strategy to deal with this problem including a guideline for teachers to follow.

The district education office should serve as an information center about the girls' current situation both during their study and after they finish their education. Follow up information about what the girls do after they finish their education is important since it serves as an indicator of project success or the need for improved future planning and implementation.

Information about the Education Loan Project or other scholarships that are available should be distributed to Sema-Pattana Cheewit girls before they finish grade 9. Thus, they can make their education plans in advance.

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