



Tool 9.5 Citizenship and statelessness

Overview

This tool discusses the issue of citizenship as a means of preventing cross-border trafficking.

People without citizenship have limited or no access to justice, health care, travel, education, employment and political representation. A recent study published by the Vital Voices Global Partnership, entitled *Stateless and Vulnerable to Human Trafficking in Thailand*, discusses the particular vulnerability to trafficking of ethnic minority groups who have no citizenship. The obstacles posed to such persons by their lack of citizenship makes their employment opportunities limited, thereby rendering them vulnerable to exploitation. Furthermore, people who have no citizenship who are ultimately trafficked will receive limited protection and assistance and may be denied re-entry to their State of origin.

The report analyses the legal dimensions of obtaining citizenship and the challenges faced by tribal peoples. It asserts that improving access to citizenship would be a significant contribution towards reducing vulnerability to human trafficking and recommends that the following measures be implemented:

- Birth registration of all children
- Improving the transparency of the application process for citizenship
- Eliminating fees associated with application for citizenship
- Training of local officials on relevant laws
- Elimination of restrictions on travel and access to education, health care and employment for non-citizens during the application process



Stateless and Vulnerable to Human Trafficking in Thailand is available at:

www.humantrafficking.org/publications/584

Promising practice

Highland citizenship and birth registration project

Dedicated efforts are being undertaken in Thailand to reduce the trafficking vulnerability of ethnic minorities. The Government is working with the Culture Unit of UNESCO to address the issue of lack of citizenship of highland girls and women in Thailand, affirmed as a major risk factor for their vulnerability to being trafficked or otherwise exploited. Without legal status, ethnic minorities are considered “illegal aliens” and can be subject to arrest, deportation, extortion and other forms of abuse. Not only does this breach their right to birth registration and nationality, but it also denies them their human rights to

vote, own land and travel beyond their home districts or provinces (thereby restricting their employment opportunities), obtain certificates after completing schooling and access State welfare services, including health care and medical treatment.

In response to these findings, UNESCO is supporting non-governmental organizations and cooperating with UNIAP and agencies of the Government of Thailand in assisting hill tribespeople to register for citizenship.



More information about the Highland Citizenship and Birth Registration Project is available at:

www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=1822