



Universal Periodic Review 53<sup>rd</sup> Session – Stakeholder’s Report

## **Thailand: Human Trafficking**

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**Submission by:**

**The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA)** was founded in 1846 and is a network of churches in over 160 nations that have each formed an evangelical alliance, and over 100 international organisations joining together to give a world-wide identity, voice, and platform to more than 650 million evangelical Christians worldwide.

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## Introduction

1. This submission was written in collaboration with the World Freedom Network and the Asia Freedom Network. The World Freedom Network serves as the anti-trafficking arm of the World Evangelical Alliance, leveraging its global reach to connect churches, civil society, and policymakers in the fight against human trafficking. Asia Freedom Network is the Asia arm of World Freedom Network. It is a network that aims to foster collaborations between churches and organisations, to collectively combat slavery in Asia.
2. This submission highlights key concerns related to human trafficking and exploitation in Thailand, with a focus on systemic vulnerabilities affecting migrant workers, children, and individuals subjected to emerging forms of exploitation such as forced criminality. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> UPR cycle, several countries made recommendations to Thailand urging increased efforts to combat human trafficking.<sup>1</sup> While Thailand has made notable legislative and institutional progress, significant gaps remain in implementation, victim identification, and survivor protection. Strengthened coordination, survivor-centred approaches, gender-sensitive responses and adaptation to evolving trafficking patterns are critical to improving outcomes.

## Human Trafficking Landscape and Vulnerabilities

3. Thailand continues to function as a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking within Southeast Asia. Exploitation occurs across multiple sectors, including forced labour, sexual exploitation, child exploitation, and increasingly, forced criminality linked to cyber-enabled operations.
4. A key driver of vulnerability is irregular migration, particularly among individuals from neighbouring countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos.<sup>2</sup> Many migrant workers remain undocumented or in precarious legal situations, limiting their access to protection and increasing dependency on informal recruitment systems. This creates conditions where exploitation can occur with limited oversight and minimal avenues for redress.
5. Children remain disproportionately affected, particularly those without legal documentation or stable access to education. These children face heightened risks of both labour and sexual exploitation. The rapid expansion of digital platforms has further increased exposure to online grooming and exploitation, while protective systems have not scaled at the same pace. Particular attention is needed to ensure that children are not subjected to immigration detention and are not separated from their families, in line with the best interests of the child.<sup>3</sup>
6. In recent years, the region has seen a significant rise in forced criminality, particularly linked to online scam operations. Individuals are often recruited under false job offers and subsequently coerced into illegal activities.<sup>4</sup> In many cases, these individuals are not identified as victims of trafficking but are instead treated as offenders, reflecting a critical gap in current response systems.<sup>5</sup>

7. Labour exploitation persists across both formal and informal sectors, particularly in fisheries,<sup>6</sup> agriculture, construction, and domestic work.<sup>7</sup> Despite regulatory improvements, enforcement remains inconsistent, especially in sectors that are difficult to monitor. Language barriers, fear of deportation, and lack of accessible reporting mechanisms further limit the ability of victims to seek help.

#### **Government Efforts and Institutional Progress**

8. The Government of Thailand has demonstrated commitment to addressing human trafficking through strengthened legislative frameworks, national action plans, and the establishment of multi-agency coordination mechanisms.<sup>8</sup>
9. Efforts include the development of specialized anti-trafficking units, increased collaboration with international organisations, and the implementation of policies aimed at improving victim identification and protection. These initiatives reflect a growing recognition of trafficking as a complex, multi-sectoral issue requiring coordinated responses.
10. Thailand has taken steps to strengthen compliance with international anti-trafficking standards and improve its performance in global assessments, indicating sustained political will to address trafficking.

#### **Key Gaps and Ongoing Challenges**

11. Despite these advancements, several systemic challenges continue to limit the effectiveness of Thailand's response.
12. A primary concern is the inconsistent identification of victims.<sup>9</sup> Labour trafficking victims are frequently treated as immigration offenders, while individuals subjected to forced criminality are often prosecuted for crimes committed under coercion. Victim identification is not consistently applied as a process across multiple touchpoints, resulting in missed opportunities for protection.
13. Access to survivor-centered support services remains uneven. Safe housing capacity is limited, and services are not always equipped to respond to complex trauma cases. This creates significant barriers to recovery and increases the risk of re-exploitation.
14. Coordination gaps between law enforcement, social services, and civil society organisations continue to affect the effectiveness of referral systems. Fragmented communication and limited data sharing contribute to inconsistent responses and reduced accountability.
15. Furthermore, emerging forms of trafficking particularly those enabled by digital technologies are not yet fully integrated into national policies and operational frameworks. This limits the ability of current systems to respond to evolving patterns of exploitation.

## Recommendations

16. In order to strengthen Thailand’s response to human trafficking and exploitation, the following actions are recommended:

1. Ensure the implementation of a process-based victim identification system across all frontline sectors, including law enforcement, healthcare, labour, and immigration, supported by mandatory trauma-informed training.<sup>10</sup>
2. Prohibit the prosecution of trafficking victims for offences committed under coercion and establish clear legal safeguards to protect victims of forced criminality.<sup>11</sup>
3. Increase funding for safe housing and specialized trauma-informed services, and establish national standards for survivor care, including long-term reintegration support.<sup>12</sup>
4. Develop national protocols that recognise forced criminality and cyber-enabled exploitation as forms of trafficking and strengthen coordination between anti-trafficking and cybercrime units.<sup>13</sup>
5. Expand labour inspections into high-risk and informal sectors, and ensure accessible, multilingual reporting mechanisms for migrant workers.<sup>14</sup>
6. Strengthen the National Referral Mechanism with clear roles, accountability, and coordination across agencies, and lead the development of a Transnational Referral Mechanism (TRM) to enhance cross-border collaboration.<sup>15</sup>
7. Invest in prevention by ensuring access to education, legal documentation, and community-based protection systems, particularly for children and other at-risk populations.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UPR of Thailand (3<sup>rd</sup> cycle – 39<sup>th</sup> Session), Recommendations 51.77 to 51.85.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Network on Migration, *Thailand Migration Report 2024*. Online: <https://thailand.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/Thailand%20Migration%20Report%202024-EN.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, “Rights of Children in the Context of Migration,” Ch. 3.

<sup>4</sup> UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud, and trafficking in persons for forced criminality in Southeast Asia: Policy Report*, September 2023. Online: [https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2023/TiP\\_for\\_FC\\_Policy\\_Report.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2023/TiP_for_FC_Policy_Report.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Network on Migration, *Thailand Migration Report 2024*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, “Working Conditions for Migrants in Thailand’s Blue Economy,” Ch. 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, “Migrant Domestic Workers: Policy, Skills, Demand and Working Conditions,” Ch. 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Royal Thai Government’s Country Report on Anti-Human Trafficking Efforts: 1 January – 31 December 2025*. Online: <https://www.thaianti-humantraffickingaction.org/Home/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Thailands-2025-TIP-Country-Report-final-version.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> *Thailand Migration Report 2024*, p. 208.

<sup>10</sup> OHCHR, *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking*, E/2002/68/Add.1, Guideline 6(2).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Guideline 4(5).

<sup>12</sup> Thailand is a signatory to the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol)*, GA resolution 55/25, adopted 15 November 2000. See especially Art. 6; OHCHR, *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking*, Guideline 6(1).

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<sup>13</sup> UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud, and trafficking in persons for forced criminality in Southeast Asia: Policy Report*, pp. 32-25.

<sup>14</sup> See General comment No. 5 (2020) on migrants' rights to liberty and freedom from arbitrary detention, CMW/C/32/R.2, para. 104.

<sup>15</sup> *Palermo Protocol*, Art. 10; UNODC, *Casinos, cyber fraud, and trafficking in persons for forced criminality in Southeast Asia: Policy Report*, pp. 32-25.

<sup>16</sup> *Palermo Protocol*, Art. 9.