

## DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY-LEVEL MECHANISMS FOR PREVENTING AND SOLVING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND WOMEN IN THE NORTHERN BORDER AREAS OF THAILAND

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### ABSTRACT

Violation of children and women's rights is a serious problem in the northern border areas of Thailand. This participatory action research (PAR) was therefore conducted with 3 objectives which were to study the situation of violence against children and women, to study the community-level mechanisms for preventing and solving violence against children and women, and to develop the community-level mechanisms for preventing and solving violence against children and women. The study area was Sathan Sub-district, Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province, Thailand. Data collection was conducted through observations, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, group interviews, training and community forums. The results showed that violence against children and women in this community included physical, psychological, sexual and cyber violence. The existing community-level mechanisms for preventing and solving problems consisted of 1) community operational mechanisms, 2) government operational mechanisms, and 3) NGOs operational mechanisms. However, there was still a lack of integration and collaboration. The mechanisms developed were based on a participatory process involving all sectors in the community. Two statutes for elimination of violence against children and women were established as the guidelines for preventing and solving violence against children and women in the community.

**Keywords:** children, women, violence against children and women, community-level mechanisms, border areas

### INTRODUCTION

Violence against children and women is a problem all countries of the world are facing. Save the Children, one of the United Nations agencies, reports that 75% of children worldwide face a range of forms of violence such as physical and emotional abuse, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation, including intentional and unintentional abandonment. Growing up with violence can lead to lifelong physical, emotional, and mental health problems (Save the Children, n.d.). UNWomen statistics also reports that approximately 736 million women, or more than 35% of women worldwide, have experienced physical or sexual violence committed by their partner or someone other than their partner at least once in a lifetime (UNWomen, 2022). Thailand's data from the One Stop Crisis Center (OSCC), the Ministry of Public Health, shows that during 2007-2013, there were 117,506 children and women who were subjected to violence and admitted to OSCC in hospitals. This represents an average of 23,501 or violence against children and women

was committed every 20 seconds. In 2011, 22,565 children and women were admitted to OSCC, of which 11,491 were children and 11,075 were women aged 18 years and over. Most of the perpetrators were close people and the incident took place in the family. In the past, this problem was perceived as a personal and family matter. According to the Queen Sirikit National Institute of Child Health, which is responsible for the treatment and protection of children who have been subjected to violence and admitted to One Stop Crisis Center (OSCC), there were 1,307 cases in the fiscal year 2004-2020, with an increase in violence against children, both domestic and non-family violence, such as schools, communities (Queen's National Institute of Child Health, 2022). There were both domestic and non-family violence such as schools, communities (Queen Sirikit National Institute of Child Health, 2022).

There are many forms of acts of violence with more complexity. Examples of violence against children and women in society include rape, beatings, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, abandonment, verbal abuse and human trafficking including child labor, child sex workers, use of children as tools of drug trafficking. Violence, whether verbal violence, physical violence and sexual violence, can be found even in social institutions that are closely related to children such as families, communities, schools, educational institutions, agencies or organizations, or in public places. Statistics from the Child Abuse and Child Violence Information Center by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (online) are as follows.

**Table 1** Statistics of children subjected to violence and abuse during 2013-2020.

<b>Statistics of children subjected to violence and abuse receiving welfare and protection at Home for Children, Department of Child and Youth during 2013-2020</b>						
<b>Year</b>	<b>2013-2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Children subjected to abuse</b>						
Physical	180	45	49	53	50	51
Psychological	38	3	3	11	11	1
Sexual	463	159	169	152	150	151
<b>Total</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>Children subjected to domestic violence</b>						
Physical	456	158	175	103	106	91
Psychological	59	9	9	10	9	9
Sexual	342	102	109	73	71	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>159</b>

**Source:** Updated from the Department of Children and Youth (Information as of May 2020)

The above table shows the data obtained from the statistics of children subjected to abuse and domestic violence during 2013-2020 by the Department of Children and Youth. It was found that a total of 1,739 children were subjected to abuse during 2013-2020, most of which were sexual violence (1,244 cases), followed by physical violence (428) and psychological violence (67 cases), respectively. It was also found that a total of 1,950 children were subjected to domestic violence during 2013-2020, most of which were physical violence (1,089 cases), followed by sexual

violence (756 cases) and psychological violence (105 cases), respectively. Although the statistics of child subjected to abuse and domestic violence have decreased, but this is only a fraction of the actual data. This is because violation of children and women's rights is related to domestic violence. In the event of domestic violence, it is often not brought to justice (Wichulada Matanboon, 2009). This problem is caused by the factors related to both children and women, their families, external environment, culture and society around them, and the development of economic and tourist areas also affect the acts of violence against children and women.

Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province is located in Northern Thailand. This district is adjacent the Thailand-Lao border, separated by Mekong River. During the data collection, there was a large government project to build a road through the 4<sup>th</sup> Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge connecting trade routes to China. Chiang Khong District has been therefore affected by both direct and indirect effects with rapid social and economic changes. The data from relevant agencies in the area and data from researches conducted in the area showed that Sathan Sub-district is the area with the highest statistics of violations of children and women's rights in Chiang Khong District. At the same time, in this area, there are existing mechanisms for preventing and solving violence against children and women. Therefore, the research question is how to develop the community-level mechanisms for preventing and solving violence against children and women.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To study the situation of violence against children and women
2. To study the community-level mechanisms for preventing and solving violence against children and women
3. To develop the community-level mechanisms for effective and sustainable prevention and resolution of violence against children and women

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study was a participatory action research (PAR). The study area was Sathan Sub-district, Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province, Thailand which was selected by using the purposive sampling method. The target groups were 1) community leaders, 2) children and youth, 3) women, 4) community organization leaders, 5) government officials, and 6) NGO officers.

The research procedure consisted of 3 phases. The first phase involved data preparation, research instrument development and coordination. The second period involved field data collection. The third phase involved the development of community-level mechanisms for preventing and solving violence against children and women. The research procedure is as follows.

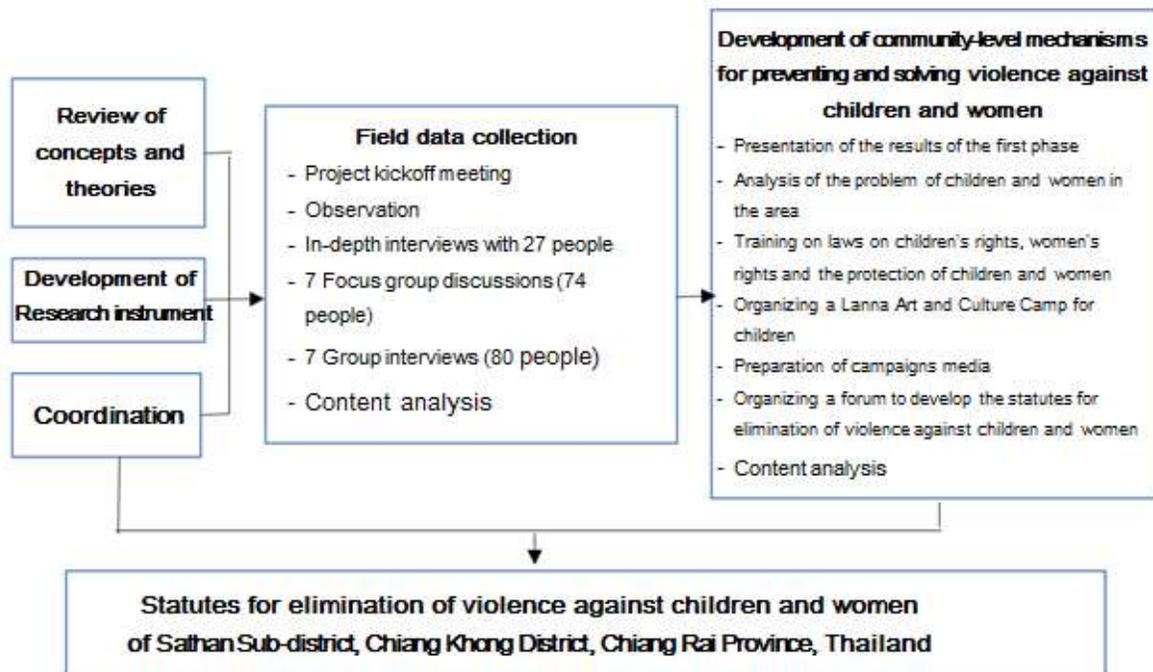


Diagram 1: Research procedure

## RESULTS

### 1. The Situation of Violence against Children and Women

#### 1.1 Violence against Children

##### 1.1.1 Physical Violence against Children

- 1) Quarrels between boys and girls. There were quarrels and fights both inside and outside the school. In boys, this was caused by personal dissatisfaction and competition for girls. In girls, it was because of having a crush on the same guy.
- 2) Domestic violence against children committed by parent, such as hitting. Only neighbors or close people know about these incidents. Two clear examples include a boy who was violently abused by his father since his childhood and he is now 25. Being abused by his father made him grow up to become paranoid and afraid of even small ants. This case is also classified as psychological violence as it deep-seated in the child's mind and causes the child to feel fearful.

1.1.2 Psychological violence against children is not easily visible. Most people in the community do not consider it a serious problem and it can lead to child misbehaviour. Compared to physical violence, psychological violence is more painful for children. Psychological violence is as follows.

- 1) Parents or guardians scold, yell and intimidate the children in various ways. This makes the child feel scared and unhappy in life. This problem is more common in communities, especially in families where the child lives with a grandfather or grandmother, who sometimes scolds the child with harsh words, especially with the sentences "Didn't your parents ever teach you not to do that?"

or “You deserve to be abandoned by your parents”. These sentences have a serious psychological effect on children and contribute to the child’s violent behaviour. For example, a case of Mr. Phan who was punished by his father by burying half his body in the sand and left him to be biting by red ants at the age of 7. Mr. Phan had violent behaviour when he grew up.

2) Children are neglected and unloved. Data from teachers in some schools showed that more than half of the students in the school did not live with their parents. This is because their parents were working in other provinces, the children had to live with their grandfathers, grandmothers, or uncles and aunts. Most of these children were unloved, causing teachers to cancel school activities that teachers thought would affect the mental health of this group of children, namely Mother’s Day activities because these children did not have parents to participate in the activities. The behaviours of children in this group are 1) aggressive and showing various behaviours such as being offended, easily irritable, often shouted loudly, crying and arguing with teachers. Children often exhibited these behaviours with younger teachers, but with older teachers the children were silent; 2) Lack of concentration and understanding; and 3) Could not read and write.

For example, a 12-year-old girl attended grade 6 at a school in the community. Her parents separated. The girl lived with her mother, who had remarried. The girl felt neglected and unloved. The girl expressed her feelings that “I don't want my mom to take my stepfather home.” One day, the girl used her cell phone to take pictures of her breasts and genitals and posted them on Facebook. The leader of the local women’s group solved this problem by inviting the girl to participate in group activities with other children and youth in the community for training traditional dance. “Being a traditional dance performer” of the village made children behave better and enjoy being in the community.

### 1.1.3. Sexual Violence

- 1) A total of 11 cases of sexual abuse of girls leading to adolescent pregnancy were reported in the news and recognized by the community. These cases were found in girls aged 13-18, and sexual abusers are children or men aged 15-20 years. Most of all of these adolescent pregnant women were school-age pregnancies and most of them were in junior high school. The actual number of adolescent pregnancies may be greater, but it is not recognized to the community. This is because the parents or guardians often ended the problem by having the children marry and live as husband and wife with the sexual abusers while the children were not ready in many respects in terms of age, career and responsibilities. Most of them tended to break up eventually. But the biggest negative impact on a child is from school dropouts, which deprives the child of the educational opportunities he or she deserves.
- 2) Child sexual abuse committed by adults. The most shocking case in the community was sexual abuse against a 12-year-old girl by her biological father. This was a very sad case in the community because the abuser is the child’s biological father.
- 3) Six cases of child rape were found in children aged 2-12 years. Most of the child molesters were between the ages of 47-60 and were elderly and were close or familiar with children.

Most child sexual violence was voluntary sexual abuse committed by children, followed by child sexual abuse committed by adults who were close to or familiar with the children.

1.1.4 Substance abuse and violence. Substance violence was another form of violence found in the community and was considered both physical and psychological violence against children. In most cases, children were addicted to substances such as cigarettes, alcohol and methamphetamine. Some of the children were arrested and treated at a nearby addiction rehabilitation center. Two children were addicted to methamphetamine two years ago when they were about 15-20 years old and they are undergoing addiction rehabilitation. About 5 years ago, there was a 15-year-old 9th grader who was addicted to methamphetamine because he was unattended as his mother and grandmother died. He had to undergo rehabilitation care for 4 nights and 5 days until fully recovered.

1.1.5 Violence against children on cyberspace or the Internet. Game addiction among children was a relatively serious problem in the community. In the past, there were Internet cafes in the community which acting as a gathering point for children on weekdays and holidays. Nowadays, these Internet cafes have changed their business model. Without a storefront, children who like to play games know where these Internet cafes are. However, the problem may be less visible as another group of children have switched to mobile phone games or internet games at home.

From the above situation of violence against children, it can be seen that most of the sexual violence was sexual abuse against children committed by children and adults who were in close contact with children. Most of these problems were resolved through mediation and settlement without any litigation.

## **Causes of Violence against Children**

### **1. Factors Related to Children**

1.1 Adolescent pregnancy is often driven by the children's curiosity and imitation of the behaviour of peers and media.

1.2 Changes in children's attitudes. For example, the idea that "whoever doesn't have a boyfriend is considered old-fashioned", "cannot keep up with friends". This is different from the children in the old days who thought that if they had a boyfriend, they had to hide it from others and those who have boyfriends are often described by their friends as being "precocious" (meaning having a boyfriend too early). This modern children's attitude is an incorrect value and is now spreading to younger age.

### **2. Factors Related to Family**

2.1 Parents do not have time for their children. With modern day lifestyle, people in the community often leave the house to work early and come back home in the evening, so parents have less time for their children, resulting in a lack of communication and understanding between each other. Children find a way out by hanging out with friends and being easily influenced. Children therefore try to find solutions by hanging out with friends and are often easily influenced.

2.2 Parents do not live with their children but leave them with grandparents. This leaves children feel unloved and unattended by their family. This also creates an age gap because sometimes parents don't understand their children. Children therefore rely on their peers or same-age groups and the number of these children is increasing in the community.

2.3 Use of alcohol or drugs by parents or grandparents makes children vulnerable to violence. For example, a 12-year-old girl who lives with her biological father who is an alcoholic and sexually abused his own child.

2.4 Being alone with the father or stepfather increases the risk of abuse or violence.

3. Factors related to society and environment in which the child lives such as relationship with friends with violent behaviour or having a violent family. In the study area, there are several distilleries, which made it popular and easily accessible to the community, contributing to violence against children.

## **1.2 Violence against Women**

Most of violence against women is domestic violence and is often not disclosed to people outside the family. In addition, the attitude of the people in the community that "it's a family matter and doesn't want to get involved" is the part that makes no one want to help when there is a problem in the family. The violence against women found is as follows.

### **1. Physical Violence against Women**

1.1 There were many cases of physical abuse against wives committed by husbands. These physical abuse incidents were not publicly disclosed or discussed, but were known to people in the community. The case when people in the community were aware of the problem and it was a tragic case. As mentioned above, most people in the community hold the view that violence between husbands and wives is a personal matter and therefore does not want to interfere although such violence occurs with Thai people. There were 6 cases of this type of violence in this community.

1.2 Husband abuse. Husband abuse committed by their wives are very rare case, with only one case reported. In this family, there were quarrels between husband and wife, but the wife was the one who committed violence against her husband. This is because every time there is a festival or event in the community, both husband and wife love to drink alcohol. When drunk, the wife is always the one who hurt her husband and the husband does not fight back.

### **2. Psychological Violence against Women**

A common form of psychological violence against women is "love affair" or have other women and some have brought other women to live in the same house. Husband's affairs are becoming more common in the community and it is a concern among the community in terms of family relationships and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. The findings of this study showed that the presence of the large-scale construction projects in the area has affected this form of violence against women. Some fled after their lovers to live outside the community but had to come back to live in the community at the end.

## Causes of Violence against Women

1. Use of alcohol or substances by people who commit violence against women. For example, a husband who use alcohol or substances is the cause of quarrels and beating his wife. Most of domestic violence occur during festivals such as New Year's Eve, Songkran Festival, and housewarming due to excessive use of alcohol and substances.
2. Substance use such as methamphetamine among working men. Drug addiction is a serious problem in the community, especially use of methamphetamine among workers aged 35-45 years. In the community, about 12 people have been arrested and treated at probation office and Thoeng Detention Center, Chiang Rai Province.
3. Economic problems and household debt. Some families are heavily in debt, causing stress and family quarrels. For example, a person has hundreds of thousands of debts but can't pay his debts, so he drinks alcohol to relieve his stress. When drunk, he always has a quarrel with and beat his wife. Sometimes he even pretends to be an insane person playing drums and singing late at night and causing frequent annoyances to the neighbours.
4. Jealousy between Spouse. A husband often went to karaoke center and brothel near the community, when the husband returned from karaoke center or went to a brothel, he had a serious argument with his wife.
5. Use of alcohol in women. In this study, it was found that the values of women in the community began to change. Some women think that drinking alcohol is normal and not a shameful act. Some groups regularly sit in front of their homes drinking alcohol almost every day after work. Some families have separate drinking circles for mothers and fathers. When children see their parents drink alcohol every day, they see it as normal act and imitate their parents. Being a bad role model for their children is another form of violence against children and women.

The situation of violence against children and women in the community continually existed since the past. In the event of violence against children and women, it is often perceived only by family members and those working in child and women support. As most people in the community hold the view that **“it is a personal matter”**, **“it is a family matter”**, and **“does not want to get involved”**. Some stigmatize and blame the children and women, stating that the problem was a result of **“misbehaviour of children and women”**.

## 5.2 Community-Level Mechanisms for Preventing and Solving Violence against Children and Women

There are 3 types of the mechanisms for preventing and solving violence against children and women which are 1) community operational mechanisms, 2) government operational mechanisms and 3) NGOs operational mechanisms as follows.

### 1. Community Operational Mechanisms

1.1 The use of sports as a tool to build relationships and prevent violence in all ages, including students, teachers, village health volunteers (VHV), community leaders, and housewives is as follows.

1.1.1 The village health volunteer (VHV) sports competition is held once a year with the support from the Sathan Sub-district Municipality Office at Huai So Sub-district Municipality Office, Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province.

1.1.2 The sports competition to build relationships between all 5 schools and communities in Sathan Sub-district, is held once a year, with the support from Sathan Sub-district Municipality Office. Each school will take turns hosting the competition.

1.1.3 Sports competition for housewives Sathan Sub-district is held once a year on the International Women's Day at Sathan community school with the support from the Sathan Sub-district Municipality Office.

1.2 Operational mechanisms of 25 Ta Supparod groups. Each village had established their own group dividing into sections or groups. Each section is responsible for 25-30 households for drug surveillance and patrols around the village day and night. Most of these groups are civil defense volunteers (CDV) or village security officers (VSU). During the festival, government officials and undercover police will also patrol around the community area.

1.3 Operational mechanisms of religious organizations that play a role in preventing violence problems. For example, Ban Fan Temple is used as Buddhist Sunday School. There are activities for dharma practice, meditation, continuation of arts and culture. There is also a promotion of English language learning to prepare for entering the ASEAN community for villagers and interested parties with English lessons on every Sunday.

1.4 The use of rules, regulations or community rules to control the behaviour of people in each village. The rules of the 16 villages are somewhat different, especially in relation to violence. For example, Ban Thung Ngew's rules require a fine of 2,000 baht for both parties in the event of a fight, and the fine will be included in the village's common purse to be used in the development or activities of village. Those who fire a gun will be fined 500 baht per each bullet shot and the fine will be included in the village's common purse to be used in the development or activities of village. In the event that a community leader commits an offense such as the village headman, the village headman's assistant, and the municipal council member, the fine is higher than others because the community leader is considered the role model for the community. These rules vary from village to village based on mutual agreement between village members.

1.5. Announcement via public address system and the village monthly meeting in the morning before the villagers go to work and in the evening after the villagers return home. For example, when the headman goes to the monthly meeting at the district office, he learns about the violence or the policies related to the village development.

## **2. Government Operational Mechanisms**

2.1 Sathan Sub-district Municipality Office, Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province has strategies and guidelines for development during the three years in Strategy 2: Development of Religions, Culture, Quality of Life, Human Resources, Education Management, Sports, and Integrated Public Health. For example, prevention and solution health problems, especially

maternal and child health and risk behaviours of youth, prevention and reduction of drugs, infectious diseases among migrant workers. For the reduction of violence against children and women, the Sathan Sub-district Municipality Office has provided the budget for youth and community sports competitions and organized the Strong Family Project every year and established a Human Rights Protection and Prevention Center for Human Trafficking, Violence Against Children, Women and Domestic Violence at the sub-district level". This center has the abbot of the temple as a consultant, responsible for surveying and preparing information about children and women, disseminating campaign information and expanding networks, providing advice on solving human trafficking problems, violence against children, women, and domestic violence, including providing budget to support the operation of the working group and to develop an integrated action plan for preventing and solving human trafficking, violence against children and women and domestic violence.

2.2 Chiang Rai Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office has collected data about HIV-infected, the elderly, the handicapped, and children without support in the village 1-2 times a year. The Chairman of the Village Health Volunteer or the Village Health Volunteer is responsible for surveying and submitting reports to the Chiang Rai Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office in order to provide further assistance to the target groups.

2.3 Chiang Rai Provincial Social Development and Human Security Office, together with the Thoeng Provincial Court and the Department of Probation organized training sessions on roles, duties, rights of children and women and laws related to children and children and women's behaviour such as child aggression. The community leaders in Chiang Khong district were invited to attend the training sessions in order to disseminate their knowledge. This one-day training is held once a year.

2.5 Somdej Phra Yupparat Chiang Khong Hospital organized a training to educate about sex with the demonstrations on how to use condoms correctly. In addition, there are also training on tuberculosis, public relations for foreigners to join the project and training on AIDS in schools every year.

2.6 Psychiatry Group, Somdej Phra Yuparat Chiang Khong Hospital, Muang District, Chiang Rai Province has established One Stop Crisis Center (OSCC). This center is responsible for helping children and women experiencing domestic violence to receive both physical and mental health care within 24 hours. It is a multidisciplinary collaboration between physicians, psychologists, social workers, teachers and local multidisciplinary teams. There is also a referral system to relevant agencies at the provincial and national level to provide further assistance for children and women as appropriate.

### **3. Ngos Operational Mechanisms**

3.1 Look Ying Center is located at Ban Nam Ma Tai, Sathan Sub-district. The center has a role in helping children and women affected by violence and encouraging children to have access to education by creating programs to provide support to children without parents, children in poverty

and children living with their grandparents. This is done by providing scholarships to children in schools every year, providing accommodation, emergency shelters, and organizing life skills development camps for children, such as occupational training and communicable disease campaigns. The work of the center is based on coordination with local networks with foreign budget support.

3.2 Center for Girls Foundation, Chiang Khong branch has its head office in Phan District and after that a branch has been set up in Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province. This center provides activities and assistance once a year for approximately 3 consecutive years. It provides scholarships for children with divorced parents and children living with grandparents and has a lunch program for students in poverty. There is also a cycling program with volunteers and students in the community to distribute brochures on violence against children and women, a project to support children at risk such as children whose parents are infected with HIV or children with separated parents by providing financial support of 500-1000 baht per person. There are campaigns to educate people in the community about trafficking, a field trip to pesticide-free vegetable garden, and organizing trainings on the rights of children and women, children and women protection laws for housewives and village health volunteers.

3.3 Rak Sathan Group, Sathan Sub-district, Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province has worked with children, women and HIV-infected group. The group provides educational training for grades 3-6 students and also works on other issues in the community.

3.4 The World Vision Foundation started working in the community 20 years ago. The foundation has provided assistance with school supplies and scholarships of 1,200 baht per semester for students in poverty or orphans, foreign children under 15 years of age. These scholarships are ongoing scholarships that will provide funding until students complete a degree. In addition, the foundation also provides training on sex and condom use among migrant workers and a free condom program by installing a condom vault in the community

3.5 Foundation of Child Understanding (FOCUS) is an organization that is committed to driving effective protection of children and vulnerable people in society. It works on campaigning and anti-human trafficking with a network of organizations and communities in Chiang Khong District.

#### **4. Operational Mechanisms of Multi-Disciplinary Teams in Chiang Khong District**

Multidisciplinary team work plays an important role in child and women protection by providing assistance and protection in the event of children and women abuse in areas such as violence, human trafficking, sexual abuse, etc. The multidisciplinary teams will hold a meeting to provide assistance to children or women affected by violence who seek medical care or file a complaint against those who committed abuse as rape, beating or assault. If problem arises, a meeting of a working group appointed by the Chiang Khong District Chief, consisting of 1) psychologists, 2) physicians, 3) police officers, 4) social development and human security officers in Chiang Rai Province, 5) Chiang Rai Shelter for Children and Families staff, 6) teachers, and 7) prosecutor. The One Stop Crisis Center (OSCC) of Somdej Phra Yupparat Chiang Khong Hospital serves as

the coordinating body for the meeting to consider the assistance and protection and referral of children and women who have been abused to provincial authorities.

### **5.3 Developed Community-Level Mechanisms for Preventing and Solving Violence against Children and Women**

Since there are mechanisms in place for preventing and solving violence against children and women, this research aims to strengthen the operations in the area as the existing mechanisms lack continuity of activities and integration of local operations. The operational mechanisms were further developed based on the existing mechanisms, starting with the reflection of information collected in the area in the first phase, providing knowledge of laws related to children and women, organizing a process for joint discussion and analysis of issues between community leaders and stakeholders. This is in order to find approaches for preventing and solving problems and to encourage people in the community to place greater importance to these problems. Trainings were also provided to educate about the Child Protection Act, B.E. 2546 (2003), Children's Rights Law and Family Violence Victim Protection Act, B.E. 2550 (2007) and women's rights in order to provide community leaders with knowledge about relevant laws.

#### **Preparation of Statutes for Elimination of Violence against Children and Women in Sathan Sub-District Municipality, Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province**

The target groups participating in the drafting of the of Statutes for Elimination of Violence Against Children and Women include community leaders in the Sathan Sub-district Municipality Office, both female and male, deputy mayor, village headmen, sub-district headman, housewife group chairmen, presidents of village health, village health volunteers (VHV), municipal council members, president of the municipal council, the elderly, children and youth from all 16 villages

The new mechanisms jointly developed by all sectors using participatory processes are “**Statute for Elimination of Violence Against Children**” and “**Statute for Elimination of Violence Against Women**”. They are integrated mechanisms for preventing and solving violence against children and women, requiring all sectors to have knowledge of the relevant laws and the rights of children and women as a tool to provide assistance to children and women. This is because in the past, the community leaders have reflected on problems encountered in their work that they sometimes wanting to help children and women, but fear that they do not have the power to help or are afraid of legal restrictions and do not know the extent of power they have for helping children and women subjected to violence. Therefore, in developing the new mechanisms, emphasis is placed on providing leaders and people in the community with knowledge of relevant laws and the rights of children and women. At the same time, all aspects of the operations are integrated. The community has jointly established rules and regulations called “**Statues**” as important tools for preventing and solving violence against children and women.

During the study period, the community helped a girl who was sexually abused by his biological father. In this case, it was necessary to immediately separate the girl from the family. Assistance was provided is the integration and collaboration of many parties in the community, including

NGOs staff, police officers, mayor, and local government officials. It is a significant success in providing assistance to girl suffered from violence. The assistance process is as follows.

1. Local NGO official was notified of problems by a teacher as the teacher noticed the girl exhibiting depressive and altered behaviour.
2. NGO official asked for more information from people around the girl suffered from abuse.
3. Officials coordinated with mayor, researchers and multi-disciplinary team at the local level to discuss and find an approach to help this girl.
4. The girl was separated from her family by the mayor who is a government employee under the Child Protection Act, B.E. 2546 (2003) by working with the multi-disciplinary team at both the sub-district and district levels to provide urgent assistance.
5. The case was reported to the local police officer.
6. The girl was sent to Private Shelter for Children and Families in Chiang Rai city.

In conclusion, community-level mechanisms were developed in this project for greater coordination of related parties, better forum for discussion and ongoing elimination of violence against children and women in order to raise awareness among people in the community. In addition, Statues for Elimination of Violence Against Children and Women were also established as tool facilitating the operations. The teams are more knowledgeable and understands the relevant laws and are more confident in helping children. According to the monitoring of operations in the area, it was found that there were ongoing operations performed for preventing and solving violence against children and women. The Statues for Elimination of Violence Against Children and Women in the Area have been used continuously to this day, but some content and conditions have been modified to reflect local circumstances at different times.

## DISCUSSION

There were many forms of violence against children in the area, including physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, drug violence and Internet violence. A total of 16 children were found suffered from violence, most of which were sexual abuse (11 cases) which resulted in early pregnancy, followed by rape (5 cases). It was found that most of the children who were subjected to violence were middle school students aged 2-18 years. The causes of these cases were 1) children's curiosity; 2) the family status that made the children feel unloved. This is consistent with the study by Prapaphan Chucharoen and Panrat Nimtalung (2007) who found that the most common form of domestic violence among Thai children is neglect, abandonment, and lack of parental care, which lead to various forms of violence; 3) the society and environment in which the child lives, such as friends, family and community; and 4) the child's and family's alcohol consumption. For sexual abuse that led to adolescent pregnancy the parents or guardians often ended the problem by having the girl marry and live as husband and wife with the sexual abuser while the girl was not ready in many respects. Most of them tended to break up eventually and left

their children to their grandparents while going to work outside the community. This is an area of interest to study as it leads to ongoing domestic and child violence.

The most common violence against women in the area was domestic violence. Interestingly, the large-scale construction project in the community led to a large number of migrant workers in the area. Some married women in the community fell in love with the men who came into the community and these women eventually fled after their lovers to live outside the community and led to family problems. There was also domestic violence where wives physically assault their husbands, which are very rare case, with only one case reported. It was caused by use of alcohol by the wife and the husband. The domestic violence can affect children and family members. This is in line with the study by Rathawit Ariyaphatphon and Phapassorn Worapatthirakul (2020), who studied the problem of domestic violence in Thailand and found that domestic violence can be found in every household in Thailand. It often comes with physical abuse, sexual harassment, mental abuse from scolding, neglect from caregivers. There are forms of violence which are 1) physical violence such as men attacking women; 2) sexual violence such as physical harassment and sexual harassment; 3) psychological violence such as scolding and abuse of power; and 4) financial condition such as household poverty and lack of conventional upbringing. This is consistent with a study by Siripriya Sirisunthorn and Thanattha Rojanatrakul (2021). However, despite ongoing violence against children and women in the community, this problem is not publicly discussed as most people in the community hold the view that “it is a personal matter” and “it is a family matter” and therefore does not want to interfere. While the children and women who have been subjected to violence still think it’s embarrassing and don’t want anyone to know their suffer.

Violence against children and women is a long and persistent problem in Thai society, and most of them are related and linked to domestic violence. Although Thai society has become more alert and aware of violence against children and women and has taken measures to end violence in many areas, but this problem is still found continuously. What is worrisome is that this research found that such problems were often not discussed and shared in the community to find solutions. This is consistent with a study by Wichulada Matunboon (2017) who studied and suggested that violence against children and women were often kept in the “family” and “community”. In the event of domestic violence, it is often not brought to justice. Most of these problems are resolved through mediation and settlement without any litigation. This is partly because the perpetrator is a family member or a close person or an acquaintance, which is an obstacle in solving the problem properly. It was also found that people in the community or even the community leaders lacked knowledge of child protection laws, children’s rights, women’s rights, and domestic violence victim protection laws. Therefore, it is necessary to educate and create a positive attitude towards children and women’s rights and child protection (Wichulada Matanboon, 2009). This is consistent with a study by Patrick Fowler and Jordan Braciszewski (2009) who compiled a series of articles on community strategies for preventing violence against children and adolescents. One of the key articles is a study by Sharon Walker and Donald Smith who have developed a community-level

child abuse prevention initiative with a model for educating school personnel on domestic violence prevention and a project for reducing the number of children suffered from abuse and neglect. These model and project are also very helpful in addressing the problems of victims of violence in the community.

Most of the community-level mechanisms for preventing and solving violence against children and women in the area were mainly based on prevention and operations of communities, temples, local government organizations, the government and non-governmental organizations. However, there is still a lack of integration and collaboration and the intermediaries for coordination. With the use of this research project as a tool for coordination and collaboration, the Statutes for Elimination of Violence Against Children and Women were established as the guideline for preventing and solving violence against children and women. In addition, the community leaders have reflected on problems encountered in their work that they sometimes wanting to help children and women who have been subjected to violence, but fear that they do not have the power to help or are afraid of legal restrictions and do not know the extent of power they have for helping the victims. The knowledge of relevant laws gained from training can be applied in the preparation of Statutes for Elimination of Violence Against Children and Women. This is consistent with a study by Susan Samuels et al. who studied the community participation and the resolution of violence against youth, suggesting that community participatory approaches must be adapted to the context. This is because the participation of communities in area with different geographic, historical and racial and ethnic background had different effects on the environment and context and presents challenges in implementing the violence prevention initiatives. This is in line with strategies proposed for solving violence problems by Rathawit Ariyapatphon and Phapassorn Worapatthirakul (2020) consisting of 5 strategies which are 1) Creating a network for women development, 2) self-development, 3) earning for family development, 4) community and social development promotion, and 5) law enforcement and development. The continuous coordination of operations in the area with the local authorities will lead to sustainable prevention and solution of problems. Patrick Fowler and Jordan Braciszewski (2009) suggested that at the government level, the Ministry of Health must promote cooperation to create change as communal violence causes suffering, loss of productivity and funding to meet the needs of youth in the future. The role of the government is therefore necessary for the cooperation with the community in order to promote and find solutions to these problems. In addition, a study of gender-based violence (GBV) by Maria Raguz (2021) provided a public health approach to change current social practices on violence against children and women. Psychology is another relevant factor, especially gender psychology and gender, political psychology, social psychology, family and community psychology, educational psychology, development and health as well as organizational psychology. This will increase attitudes and awareness about violence against children and women, especially on gender issues.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendations for the Community

Communities should have a forum to discuss the situation of violence against women on an ongoing basis and provide a monthly meeting agenda for every village in order to encourage people in the community to realize the importance and raise awareness of the problem as well as surveillance. Community people should be instilled in the value that the violence against children and women “is a public problem, not an personal matter”.

### Recommendations for Local Administrative Organizations (Laos)

Sathan Sub-district Municipality Office, Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province is the government agency that works closely with the community and knows the problems in the area. Therefore, there should be an action plan for preventing and solving of violence against children and women and proper budget should be established to support ongoing activities to ensure continued exchange of information in the area. In addition, “Statutes for Elimination of Violence Against Children and Women in Sathan Sub-district Municipality, Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province” should be review and considered periodically and further developed into a “Municipal Law for Preventing and Solving Violence Against Children and Women”

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The model of the operations for preventing and solving violence against children and women in urban and rural communities should be further studied and developed in order to lead to sustainable prevention and resolution of problems in the area that can be applied in other areas.

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