“What About Boys?” The sexual exploitation of boys and young men in Asia

Glenn Miles
Director of Prevention, Love146, glenn@love146.org

Heather Blanch
Hard Places Community, Cambodia, hardplacesheather@gmail.com

Jasmir Thakur
Samabhavana, India, jasmirthakur@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/humtraffconf3

Part of the Inequality and Stratification Commons
“What About Boys?”
The sexual exploitation of boys and young men in Asia

Glenn Miles PhD, Asia Director of Prevention
Heather Blanch, Hard Places Community, Cambodia
Jasmir Thakur, Samabhavana, India
1 in 6

18.9% boys aged 12-15yrs said they had been sexually abused since they were 9 years. Miles (2005)
“I never thought it could happen to boys.”

- Lack of awareness and denial among communities, NGOs and authorities
- Isolation, marginalization and fear
- Diversity of abusers
- Poorly equipped practitioners
What do the boys say they need?

- Protection
  - Psychologically
  - Physically

- To be heard!
  - Trusting relationships
  - Confidentiality
  - To be believed, respected and accepted
  - People to be non-judgmental
  - Love, belonging and affection

- Future
  - Empowerment and choices
Research with former sex workers in Manila
(T. Gallagher/G. Velazco 2007, Love 146)

- Conducted with seven boys in an aftercare facility
What happens to the boys?

- Highly negative emotions towards male, female and gay gender roles
  - Men seen as abuser, pedophile, perpetrator
  - Women seen as sexual objects for men’s pleasure and gratification and as seducer.
  - Gays seen as abusers, dirty, bad.

- Experiences
  - Bad experiences of abuse with men
  - Bad experiences with mothers/street women
  - Confusion about own sexuality and gender role
What can help the boys?

- Individual listening/counselling
  - Boys need space to reflect on their role and the role of others – how it is but how it could be better to begin healing and recovery.
  - Further research is needed to understand apparent gender confusion and the particular differences of boys compared to girls.
  - Staff need training in effective listening techniques specifically of boys.
  - Explore more the use of drama/role plays in drawing out beliefs
Research with 77 masseur boys in Mumbai (Miles, Love146/Thakur, Samabhavana) 2011

- Monitoring boys as they begin vocational training as an alternative
What age do boys start work?

- 10 to 12 years: 9.09%
- 13 to 15 years: 54.55%
- 16 to 18 years: 25.97%
- 19 to 21 years: 10.39%

13 to 15 years is the most common age for boys to start work, followed by 16 to 18 years.
What is your sexual preference?

- **Men**: 32.88%
- **Women**: 50.68%
- **Men & Women**: 16.44%
Were you ever forced to have sex?

- Sometimes: 28.57%
- Never: 58.44%
- Always: 12.99%
What are the consequences to boys?

- **Physical**
  - **Violence** from police (97%), community (32%), goons/gangs (47%)
  - **Multiple partners** – none said hadn’t had in past 3 months; 27% very often – at higher risk of HIV and trauma

- **Psychological/Social**
  - 65% Being masseur very much affects personal relationships
  - 74% **Low self respect** (score 1–3 out of 10) working as masseur
Why won’t you tell your family?

- My family will lose respect & get a bad name & get ostracized (30)
- I will lose my respect/society will reject me/make fun of me/humiliate me (27)
- My friends will get angry & hate me (14)
- My family will hate me/throw me out (14)
- If the parents come to know of this they will call me back (17)
- My parents will feel hurt/die of humiliation (7)
- My sister will not be able to get married (6)
Interest in taking another job?
Research with masseur boys in Phnom Penh (Miles, Love146/Blanch, Hard Places Community)

- Base line of 45 boys from 6 masseur places
What are the consequences to boys?

Level of violence in masseur places less than those on the street
Interest in taking another job?
that would be 80USD/month

- Definitely: 37.80%
- Maybe: 40.00%
- Not interested: 22.20%
In 2 years time...?

I want to be a...

- Business owner: 32%
- hairdresser: 12%
- other employment: 7%
- study: 5%
- have a family: 2%
- return to village: 9%
- 33%
Plan to achieve goals

- Save Money: 60%
- Training/Study: 14%
- Save and train: 12%
- Don't know: 5%
- Other: 9%
Recommendations

- Acknowledgement of community’s existence!
- Legal position of boys ambiguous – Legal reform
- Boys are consistently exposed to high levels of violence – education of those responsible for them and self-protection
- Boys are major earners for family so family debt may be major factor in keeping them on the street – options
- Can’t discuss sex or sexuality with family so may not understand risks – need to educate boys
- More and more younger boys are being brought into prostitution due to higher earning potential and little understanding the ramifications of prostitution on psycho-social and sexual health – more education at community level.
- To research clients perspective
Addressing Demand;
Research with Indian clients of boys
Thakur, Samabhavana.
Miles, Love146

- Demand Factor How do men justify their use of boys?
- This will help to produce appropriate advocacy with the section of the gay community who are interested in young boys.
Where is everyone?

- Is the secular community afraid to get in because they don’t want to be seen as Anti-Gay?
- Is the church community afraid to get involved because they don’t want to be seen as Pro-Gay?
- Does this mean that this invisible group falls through the gap?
What about boys?

- Not only about boys being the victims/survivors
- .....but also....
- boys/men being the perpetrators of sexual abuse and exploitation so the need to address demand.
Addressing Demand: Men and the Sex Trade Project: Thailand and Cambodia

- Approaching tourists and expat men and getting them to consider what they are doing.
- Offering follow up for expatriates
Views on Prostitution

- **Positive** views: 11.9%
- Neutral views: 46.9%
- **Negative** views 39.2%

*one man viewed prostitution as either negative or neutral, depending on the situation*

*two men viewed prostitution as either positive or neutral, depending on the situation*
Why do men buy sex?

- **Loneliness**: 23.7%
- Lack of intimacy: 11.9%
- Need for love: 13.4%
- Desire for power: 8.2%
- Other: 33.5%

*Men could choose more than one option*
Addressing Demand;  
Research with Cambodian men in Cambodia  

Farley/ Freed of ‘Prostitution Research’ funded by Love146  

• Demand Factor How do men justify their use of women and children?  
• This will help to produce appropriate advocacy with stakeholders and awareness aimed at local men (rather than tourists)
Addressing Demand:

Working with military personnel on the Thai-Cambodian border areas to help them see their job is about protecting people as much as geographical areas.

Starting with their own problems of domestic violence in their own families