



SUB-REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EAST ASIA (SRO-BANGKOK)
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

**ILO Calls For Better Protection of Foreign Domestic Workers in Thailand After
'Shocking' Attack**

Abusive Employers Need to Know They Will Face Consequences

4 May 2005

For immediate release:

Bangkok – ILO News – The International Labour Office in Bangkok today urged authorities in Thailand to take urgent steps to better protect all foreign migrants – both documented and undocumented – from abusive employers, especially Thai employers of foreign domestic workers.

The ILO Sub-regional Office for East Asia also requested that all available measures be taken to ensure that the person or persons responsible for the recent serious physical assault of a young domestic worker be brought to justice, and that the full extent of the law be brought to bear in this case.

The 17 year old Burmese-Karen girl was working in the home of her Thai employer at the time of the attack. She received severe injuries, including a fractured skull and a shattered ribcage. The girl remained in hospital for two months and needed several operations including one to insert a metal plate in her skull. Her employer, a 32 year old Thai woman, has been charged in connection with the assault. She has denied all charges and has been released on bail.

The case was first brought to light by the Coalition to Fight Against Child Exploitation (FACE) after a Bangkok hospital asked to discharge the girl into its care. The unconscious girl had been taken to Siriraj Hospital by a local taxi driver.

“This shocking episode is sadly just the most recent in a series of violent attacks on foreign domestic workers in Thailand and underlines their vulnerability and need for protection,” said Ms. Christine Evans-Klock, Director of the ILO Sub-regional office for East Asia in Bangkok.

The teenage victim told a news conference in Bangkok that her family had paid 12,000 Baht (\$300 USD) to an employment broker who found her the job. She alleged she had been confined to a residence, suffered systematic physical abuse and had not received any of her agreed 4,000 Baht monthly salary (\$100 USD).

Thailand has recently taken steps to register migrant workers and is in the process of implementing a number of Memoranda of Understanding with neighbouring countries to improve the situation for both foreign migrant workers wishing to work in Thailand and Thai employers wishing to hire them.

Thailand has also ratified ILO Conventions on Forced Labour (No. 29) and Worst Forms of Child Labour (No.182). Both conventions call upon ratifying member states to take action to protect individuals, especially children (under the age of 18), from abuse. A 17 year old girl confined to a house, refused her wages, and seriously assaulted would constitute worst forms of child labour.

(cont'd)

Employment in the home of another must be seen as a workplace where employment standards and basic human rights are fully respected.

“Registered or unregistered, migrant workers need to know they have rights and employers need to know there will be serious consequences if those rights are abused,” Ms. Evans-Klock said. “Employing an undocumented or unregistered foreign worker is not a license to abuse that person.”

The fact the staff at Bangkok’s Siriraj Hospital, a taxi driver, and the group FACE all came to this foreign girl’s assistance is proof that the people of Thailand are willing to look after their neighbours – foreign or otherwise. Enforcement of national law protecting migrant workers is the necessary official embodiment of this hospitality and concern.

FACE, the taxi driver, and the staff at Siriraj Hospital should be commended for coming to this girl’s assistance.

END STATEMENT.

For further information, please contact:

Allan Dow
Communications Officer
ILO Mekong Sub-regional Project
To Combat Trafficking in Children and Women
United Nations Building
Rajadamnern Nok Avenue
Bangkok 10200 Thailand
Tel: +66 2 288 2057 or Mobile +66 9 891 5003
Email: dow@ilo.org