

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Exploring the Perceptions of Youth Street Migration in Pattaya,
Chiang Mai, and Bangkok

by

Mary M. Faulk

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The problem of children living and working on the streets reflects economic, familial and societal conditions worldwide. In countries around the world, children migrate to the streets to find work, escape from negative family environments, and seek ways to survive from other harsh circumstances. In Thailand, youth migrate to the major urban areas of Pattaya, Chiang Mai, and Bangkok for these reasons. In addition, families migrate to these areas for economic reasons, and often times their children are vulnerable to working on the streets. From a human rights perspective, youth living and working on the streets are denied their rights to a safe and happy childhood. This qualitative study explores the perceptions of the reasons for youth street migration from the staff members working directly with these populations, using a human rights framework. A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from seven professionals working in social service agencies in Pattaya, Chiang Mai, and Bangkok. These three urban cities were identified as having considerable populations of street children. Interview contents were subject to content analysis using specific coding to identify the emerging themes, with attention to consistent themes found between the three cities.

Findings of this study are generally consistent with the literature, indicating that the primary reasons for youth street migration are due to negative family dynamics and economic factors. The collected data shows that youth living on the streets have left abusive or neglectful family environments, while other youth live with their families yet work on the streets out of economic necessity. The direct services provided by the staff vary between the three cities, but it is clear that trust and relationships are essential to any effective approach. The researcher also recommends that attention must be paid to economic opportunities and community development, and support from the government towards the organizations working with these youth.