

**AGIR POUR LES FEMMES EN SITUATION PRECAIRE
ACTING FOR WOMEN IN DISTRESSING CIRCUMSTANCES**



Psychosocial health and vulnerable populations in South East Asia

***Recovery Enhancement for sex
trafficked youths in Lao PDR:
Insights from Morita therapy***

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AFESIP : AGIR POUR LES FEMMES EN SITUATION PRECAIRE

French NGO founded in 1996 by Somaly Mam and Pierre Legros in Cambodia

AFESIP MISSION STATEMENT

- To combat human trafficking in Children and Women for sexual exploitation
- To care for and rehabilitate those rescued victims from sexual exploitation or slavery

AFESIP social enterprise logo



Lao PDR: Human Trafficking Routes



4 years of AFESIP in Lao PDR :

- **Rescue in places of exploitation (137)** thanks to mobile outreach teams and cooperation with police authorities in some cases.
- **Investigation work** toward the arrest of traffickers.
- **Health awareness** in place of exploitation and referral to health centres.
- **Coordination** with other stakeholders at national and regional level
- **Capacity building and partnership** with main official partners : Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Anti Trafficking police Unit, Ministry of Justice toward legal reinforcement.
- **Protection and Rehabilitation** of victims in shelters (256)
- **Access to care and to justice**
- **Reintegration in the society** with financial independence (safe employment or micro business with a reintegration kit),
- **Social enterprise to create fair job for beneficiaries**
- **Study grants (17)** thanks to the Somaly Mam foundation program voices for victims.

Psychosocial health

Psychosocial health is a holistic approach focussing on the human multifaced experience of health that involves both psychological, spirit-based and social contextual aspects of one's life, and relating the conditions at individual, family, and social levels to mental and emotional health.

Phenomenological analysis of the psychological incidence of trafficking for sexual exploitation

Undermining of self esteem and de-personalisation process.

- Victims identity is reduced to work-force or sexual object, inducing a de-personalisation process supported by the exploiters in order to shape a kind of robot for work or prostitution.
- Individual sense of worthiness, adequacy, and self-respect is affected.
- Exploitation is linked with a lost of the control on their own life.
- Victims suffer from moral and personal degradation (shame, mistrust) and helplessness.
- Betrayal is affecting deeply the person psychological dynamic, her self-confidence and the image of herself.

Psychological incidence of trafficking for sexual exploitation

- Relation with body is affected some victims neglect their body, dissociate from it or perceive it as spoiled.
- Dissociation and creation of new life stories becomes part of the coping process. It permits psychological survival of unbearable situations, and not to become mad/crazy.
- Substance abuse (induced dissociation) is another main issue met by victims of trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation.
- The use of drugs and alcohol helps to push away real emotions and unpleasant feelings or ideas and to detach from reality.
- Addiction reinforces the power of exploiters in terms of control and increases debt towards them.
- Being an “addict” increases the low feeling of self-esteem.

Exploitation resulting from trafficking can be multi-traumatic.

- Violence by traffickers and pimps is aimed at controlling victims, to make them worthless, powerless, to ensure their compliance and keep them trapped. It includes, threats to beat, kill, kick, starve, burn, drown and verbally abuse.
- Psychological distress results from dangerous and degrading circumstances surrounding the condition of exploitation, which are physically and emotionally painful.

Effects of violence, abuse & multiple traumas

- Victims express feelings of sadness, anger, anxiety, of not being understood.
- They experience grief and depression, fear and distrust, sleep difficulties or nightmares.
- They show poor impulse control and passive-aggressive tendencies
- They develop a sense of hopelessness, resignation and despair that are increased in condition of captivity.
- The acknowledged risks of AIDS increase their fear and anxiety.

Trauma

- The PTSD diagnostic should be used carefully. It has its own limitations: distress and suffering after the trauma are normal responses to abnormal situation.
- Need to pay attention to the local idiom of distress before to jump into international nosography.
- There is a danger to call or stigmatise people as mentally ill.
- There are risk factors that account for individual's vulnerability to develop this disorder:
 - Social support, attitudes of parents.
 - Prior exposition to trauma.
 - Individual personality, family history.
 - Other life events at the time of trauma.

Medical issues

- High prevalence of STI/STD with all the victims rescued from bars and gynecological problems
- Unwanted pregnancies and multiple non medical abortion
- Parasitosis
- Self mutilation
- Injuries and burn due to torture from clients or pimps
- Feeling of being weak
- Pain in body attributed to end of drug taking or aphrodisiacs.
- Psycho somatic disorders: head, stomach and gastro intestinal aches

Psycho-Social incidence with family & reintegration in the community

- Severed or broken family ties: the perception role and expectations of family toward their children's departure need to be carefully assessed understanding what is to be a good daughter for the family and for the person herself.
- At young age deprivation of family support due to separation might induce a disruption of emotional and psychological development.
- Stigmatization and ostracism by family and community, family ties might be weakened due to the shame felt by family and victims.
- Many victims will tend not to tell their story in order not to face social prejudice resulting in feeling of being non understood and isolated.
- Victims of trafficking feelings of unworthiness, dirtiness and being spoiled are common and push to leave again
- Difficulty in re-integrating into society when they become adults

The recovery process: working with a victim centred approach

The Challenge:

To help victims to find the resources within themselves, to live a meaningful, productive and constructive life and not be ruled by one's emotional state.

- In the shelter, in the family or within a community and can take days, months, years according to each person.
- Consider persons as active survivors being able to work on their environment not passive victims.
- Persons express the facts, their feelings the sense of the events in a way that relates to their current or new attitudes and beliefs, then they are empowered and ready to decide on appropriate action for their future.
- Vocational training with professional certificate and economic support to start a new life with 3 years follow up are key elements of the success of the reintegration.

Therapeutic activities on shelter

- Rest, relaxation, meditation
- Sport (aerobic, karate, badminton, football, ping pong, swim)°
- Dance and music
- Play role with small wooden dolls, teddy bears
- Art mediation with drawing, painting, and clay work

Occupational therapy activities :

- Gardening, and animal care : dogs, cats, rabbits, fishes and frog,

In Morita's therapy, the realisation of self-nature occurs when one is engaged with Nature, as in plant and animal care, and by noticing and responding to the changing sky during the course of the day.(Peg LeVine)

- Handicraft: weaving, cards, silk flower, embroidery, sewing
- Cooking and mutual hair dressing, beauty care (with trainer)
- Group discussions
- Personal note book writing and discussion with counsellor
- Counselling : Psychological, Medical and Legal, Individual and Group



Phases of the recovery

(All dates average)

- Orientation (3-4 weeks)
- Family visit if safe enough (in villages 3-7 days)
- *Vocational training (in shelter 3 months)
- *Apprenticeship *(with boarding out of shelter for the ones over 18 years old)* (3 months) (*+general education)
- Job placement in town or micro business in communities and follow up (3 years)

Limitations in classical western therapeutic approaches and insights from Morita Therapy in Lao context

- In Western psychotherapy there are many labels to diagnose and describe a person's psychological functioning

Morita did not categorise anxiety or depression as mental disorders per se, and from this orientation, he designed his therapy so that the patient moves from an unnatural state to a natural state,

- Western therapies often reflect worldviews that categorise actions, feelings, thoughts and symptoms into the desirable or undesirable (rational or irrational).

Morita found, paradoxically, that the more one tries to get rid of symptoms by speaking about them, the more symptoms stay in one's field of vision. An over focus on symptom reduction can actually decrease the wellbeing of one's mind-body-spirit (LeVine).

- Strong emphasis on human-centred relationships and values akin to Christian views that reinforce dichotomous worldviews, such as forgiveness or retribution, victim or perpetrator, alongside splits on good (God, heaven) and bad or evil (devil, hell) - with faith attached to one 'all good' supreme being conceived in human form.

Morita's theory as formed from Zen does not qualify or quantify feelings, thoughts, and behaviours into an either-or-experience

- Not taking into account spiritual life

This is in contrast perceptions of animating and transforming forces and perceptions, and non-retributinal justice in Buddhist regions throughout SEA.

- Aim to control & cancel emotions

Morita believed that there was no need to try to change or 'fix' thoughts and feelings. Instead, we should accept reality as it is (arugamama). If we feel angry or depressed, fearful or lonely, we accept these feelings - as gifts from reality - and focus our attention on living well, by taking the steps necessary to realise this.

- Strive to reduce symptoms

Morita therapy aims at building character to enable one to take action responsively in life regardless of symptoms, natural fears, and wishes.

- Linear conceptions of consciousness and time

Consciousness extends in all directions and is peripheral rather than layered. In this regard, Morita's therapy as designed advances a peripheral field of awareness wherein time and place spreads out in all directions.

- Based on catharsis

Morita Therapy directs one's attention receptively to what reality brings in each moment. Simple acceptance of what is, allows for active responding to what needs doing. Does not call for traumatic experiences to be remembered.

- Not related to context specially environment and nature

Morita therapy is less reliant on verbal exchange and medication to include diary, art, and outdoor activities with observations of nature, while noting how the safe familial environment participated in responsive therapeutic outcomes, advocating a broader formulation inclusive of social and environmental factors.

Comprehensive Healing

It is important for health practitioners:

- ✓ To assess spirit based influences and connections
- ✓ To facilitate collaboration between medical and spirit resources
- ✓ To incorporate illness categories that are meaningful to local people
- ✓ To equalise powers between healers
- ✓ To treat with attention to the physical and metaphysical realms simultaneously.
- Keeping traditions and maintaining good relation with the spiritual world might reinforce self esteem and identity.
- Lao traditional soul calling ceremony :*Bassi* (or *su khuan*) help to chase bad influences and call for good souls to come and support the person. This collective ceremony welcome new residents and supports reintegration in villages.
- Purification rituals with holly water (*lot nam*) have magical power to clean and to reinforce one's energies, resulting in better mental dynamic and less physical pains.
- The legal intervention is a whole part of the healing process. **Justice is healing**

Lao Bassi or sou khouan (souls calling) ceremony

- Calling the souls



- Fixing or attaching the souls to be body



Conclusion

- Trafficked victims or survivors faced combination of history of poverty, social isolation, lack of social support, pain, and traumatic abuses, they are more likely to report high levels of stress often linked with high levels of depression. They suffer long-term physical and psychological damages that need to be recognised and addressed professionally
- Sexual Exploitation compromises the right of a child to enjoy their youth and their ability to lead a productive, rewarding and meaningful life.
- Through a person centred approach, AFESIP intends to consider the choices and the intentions expressed by the person within the experienced set of limitations that she is facing in the family or community, in order for her to restore her dignity in the context of her life and environment.
- In agriculture based society, Morita principles provides a viable therapeutic treatment for trafficked victims that helps them to return to the ordinary.



Play role

drawing



Clay mediation Dolls



Activities in shelter



Cooking, tayloring, cards



Weaving



Thank you for your kind attention

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