

Ministry sheds light on international sex trafficking

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By Whitney Farr

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BANGKOK, Thailand—Lina stood drenched and bleeding in the middle of the street after a woman selling fruit threw a bucket of water on her and proceeded to beat her with a plastic ice cooler.

“She’s not a human being!” the street vendor screamed. “She sells her body!”

Lina felt the pain of the blows and the blood gushing from her hands. She heard the laughter of male onlookers. But she also heard the comforting voice of a Christian woman.

“Lina, I know. I understand about the Uzbek women coming to Bangkok,” said [NightLight](#) Director and Founder Annie Dieselberg. “We want to help you.”

Dieselberg has made it her life’s calling to care for women like Lina—victims of Bangkok’s booming international sex trade.

Recently, Asha Sanchu of NightLight Bangkok challenged 450 Baptist

delegates from more than 50 countries gathered at the Baptist World Alliance annual meeting to do everything in their power to end sexual slavery.

NightLight Bangkok is a ministry in urban Bangkok that reaches out to women and children working in and around local bars. Located in a neighborhood with a growing sex trade, Nightlight's vision is to share "the Light of the world" in both word and deed to women and children who live in darkness.

The ministry provides economic and educational opportunities, life-skills training, public awareness and involvement and relational evangelism.

Sex trafficking is not happening only in Thailand. According to a CIA report cited by the *New York Times*, as many as 50,000 women and children are brought to the United States under false pretenses each year and forced to work as prostitutes, abused laborers or servants.

Trafficking in human beings is now the third-largest moneymaking venture in the world, after illegal weapons and drugs. In fact, the United Nations estimates that the trade nets organized crime more than \$12 billion a year.

Voluntarily or involuntarily, these women are victims, representatives of the NightLight ministry insist.

Prostitutes experience repeated sexual assaults, domination, battering and terror, according to a recent study done by NightLight.

The ministry takes its name from Isaiah 9:2—"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."

The radiance of NightLight is penetrating dark corners of Bangkok, and the ministry reports overwhelming numbers of professions of faith in Christ,

representatives of the ministry told the Baptist World Alliance meeting.

Forty people attended the first worship service NightLight sponsored. They included not only women and staff, but also husbands, children and relatives. Seventy-two women had been employed at NightLight making handcrafted jewelry as of June, and new ones are applying for work nearly every day, Dielselbeg said.

NightLight has become well-known in the bars of Bangkok, and women involved in prostitution from all around have come to seek better employment—so much so that NightLight is outgrowing its facility and continually needs more staff members and volunteers.

“One of the new applicants last week was literally trembling and on the verge of tears as she applied (for a job at NightLight making jewelry). She finally broke down crying as she shared how she ended up in the bars and just couldn't handle the thought of going back. Inside I wanted to cry. ‘How can we say no? How could we possibly send her back to the lion's den?’ We couldn't say no and now she is happily learning to make jewelry, and her face is peaceful,” Dieselberg said.

Purchasing NightLight Design jewelry helps provide employment for former sex workers and will help to maintain the company's registered status as a legally operating company in Thailand.

Jewelry is showcased and may be purchased on the website, www.nightlightbangkok.com . People interested in volunteering with NightLight should contact nightlightbkk@yahoo.com.

“They deserve a good normal life and I feel it is our responsibility, the church's responsibility to help them. Just because somewhere in their journey of life they made a wrong choice, we can't keep on degrading them,” Sanchu said.

“Moreover, until they are given a choice, how can we expect them to make the right choice?”

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