

British Embassy Bangkok hosts Child Safeguarding Conference for Thai schools

Today the British Embassy Bangkok, in collaboration with UNICEF and the International Schools Association of Thailand (ISAT), hosted the Child Safeguarding in Schools (Thailand) Conference 2022. The event highlighted the importance of child safeguarding in schools in Thailand and showcased best practice that schools can effectively adopt to prevent child abuse.

According to One Stop Crisis Centre under the Thai Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, over 10,000 children in Thailand are treated in hospital every year due to abuse. A national [survey](#) conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) and UNICEF on the situation of children and women in Thailand in 2019 showed that 58 percent of children aged 1 to 14 years said they had experienced violent discipline (any physical punishment).

The British Embassy's Consular Team in Bangkok provides supports to an average of 60-70 child welfare cases every single year. Despite travel restrictions and reduced number of incoming visitors, there have been 35 child safeguarding cases in 2021.

Globally and regionally, evidence is fast-growing that children's well-being and learning are inter-connected. Violence has short and long-term negative impacts on children's health and well-being including injuries, risky behaviours, lack of trust in others, hurting oneself, health problems, among others. Facing violence can also lead to lower school attendance and dropouts, resulting in lower learning levels and completion rates.

The conference brought together experts and practitioners to share best practice as to how schools can implement robust safeguarding practices. It has opened a discussion on the role of schools and teachers in child safeguarding, with a view to support all schools in Thailand to adopt a child safeguarding policy as part of a holistic approach to school safety and student well-being. It further advocated for training for all teachers in recognising signs of abuse and how to best support children who disclose abuse.

The event featured keynote speakers from UNICEF, ECPAT, the British Embassy, Childline Thailand and child protection experts. Due to Covid-19 restrictions on gatherings, the event was broadcast online via Zoom to nearly 200 participants, concluding with a roundtable involving stakeholders from the Ministry of Education, civil society, and young people and parent representatives.

Mark Gooding, British Ambassador to Thailand, said:

Schools have a unique insight into how children are developing and interacting. Teachers can spot changes in behaviour, injuries or trauma in children, and have a vital role in spotting signs of abuse. I am therefore delighted that we have come together today to share knowledge and understanding on what more we can do to safeguard children going forward.

Suphat Champatong, Permanent Secretary, Thailand's Ministry of Education, said:

The Ministry of Education places utmost importance to the issue of child safeguarding in Thai educational system. We see this conference as a highly valuable venue to share best practices and highlight the importance of child safeguarding in schools in Thailand.

The Ministry would like to express our appreciation to the host of this event including the British Embassy, UNICEF and the International Schools Association of Thailand (ISAT) and we look forward to continuing this dynamic relationship in working together to best safeguard all children in schools in Thailand.

Kyungsun Kim, UNICEF Representative for Thailand said:

There is a growing body of evidence of how childhood well-being and learning are inter-connected. I strongly believe that the Ministry of Education's commitment to school safety as a key ministerial policy priority is a potential gamechanger to better protect children from violence in Thailand and improve the quality of their schooling experience. Making schools a safer place for all children, in Thailand and elsewhere, is a priority for UNICEF as the co-founding member of the Safe To Learn global initiative, along with the UK Government and other partners.

Background

- In March 2021, the British Embassy, in partnership with the International Schools Association of Thailand (ISAT), hosted Child Safeguarding Webinar for international schools in Thailand highlighting how the Embassy and other agencies can work together to provide support on child protection.
- The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (UK FCDO) and UNICEF are co-founding members of the Safe To Learn global initiative, dedicated to ending violence in and through schools so children are free to learn,

thrive and pursue their dreams. [Safe to Learn](#) presents an opportunity to unlock the multiple wins of ending violence in schools, improving learning outcomes, better leveraging investments in education, and raising awareness and change attitudes towards violence against children.