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Creating gender knowledge among Thai youth

By Flaminia

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Bangkok, Thailand: About 30 students from Bangkok's main universities took part in a Gender Sensitivity Training, organized and facilitated by UNIFEM East and Southeast Asia Regional Office and a partner NGO during May 2009.

The United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) organizes a range of Gender Sensitivity Training addressed to middle and high school students, university students, teachers, male and youth groups. In the framework of the 'Zonta project on preventing trafficking in women in Thailand, by addressing the normative dimensions of demand', it raises people's awareness on gender issues, such as violence against women, trafficking and prostitution.

These trainings are aimed at building knowledge and understanding of the ideas, perceptions, values and behaviour that generate the demand for people trafficking, a deeply-rooted phenomenon in the East and Southeast Asia region, and to provide alternatives to prevailing norms and behaviour generating demand and gender-based violence.

As part of the UNIFEM 'Zonta team', and first of all as a UNV volunteer, I helped in facilitating the training and I had the chance to meet young students dedicated to gender issues and committed to ending violence against women.

This experience helped me in understanding the importance of the community-based approach to create knowledge and to raise public awareness on sensitive issues: such as the economic marginalization and gender division of labour, political subordination, violence against women, trafficking in women and prostitution.

The first steps in the process of community mobilization to prevent violence against women are to make people understand what violence against women is, its importance and to let them analyze their own behaviour. In fact, only after these steps can people start making changes in their lives.

In addition, I have learnt that an effective and successful training should be based on direct and mutual relationships with the target



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group and on knowledge, views, attitudes and values shared between trainers, facilitators and participants.

As a UNV volunteer, I am committed to the promotion of volunteerism for development between local community members and I felt that this was the right situation to integrate the promotion of volunteerism in my daily work. During the training I tried to inform young people on the importance of being engaged in volunteer activities to play an active part in the development of their own society and I encouraged them to use the UNV Online Volunteering service.

This training was a rewarding and inspiring experience for me as a volunteer and now I believe that working and volunteering at the ground level, being involved in activities with local individuals and groups, can lead to important and concrete results. In fact, the people we trained are now ambassadors who can share their knowledge with other community's members in the immediate present or in the future.

I guess the attitudes of these young students can greatly influence the behaviour of other community's members. After this experience I can say that I feel proud to serve as a UNV volunteer with UNIFEM and day by day I believe that my commitment can really lead to concrete results in my area of work.