Nong Aye Case Study

The mini case study that follows was originally published by UNICEF-Connect in 2015

**Instructions: You are the manager of the migrant learning centre referenced below – run by a small national NGO. Read the short case study and individually answer the questions that follow. Once you have written your answers, turn the paper over to read the actual response and compare your ideas to what was done in this case.**

In Tak Province, Nong Aye\* was repeatedly sexually abused by her teacher at a migrant learning centre for two years, from when she was 12 to 14. She was an active and expressive girl who enjoyed school activities. When she was young, her parents divorced and her mother moved to Bangkok. Aye and her siblings lived in a dormitory at the centre in the countryside. This made her an easy victim for the teacher, Zeya.

Another teacher at the school, Mia Khin, became aware of the abuse. “I first heard about it from neighbours,” she says. “They saw Aye go into the toilet and Zeya followed her. Then her sister told me she had seen him go into the girl’s dormitory and inside the mosquito net looking for her. I personally saw Zeya touching Aye while she was watching TV.”

Mia Khin tried to do something about the abuse. She talked to the school director, Hayma, who was a relative of Zeya. The director promised to take action but did nothing and the abuse continued. Mia Khin was the newest teacher there, and the only one who was not a relative of Zeya’s. She didn’t know what to do.

Mia Khin felt like a mother to Aye and refers to her as her own child. “I tried to prevent my child being alone with Zeya, but I didn’t know what else I could do.” she says with tears in her eyes. “I felt trapped and unable to help.”

**Questions**

1. How could you enhance the safety, dignity and rights of Nong Aye, and avoid exposing her to further harm?
2. How could you ensure Nong Aye’s access to assistance according to her need and without discrimination?
3. How would you assist Nong Aye to recover from the physical and psychological effects of her abuse?
4. How could you help Nong Aye claim her rights?

**Seeking help**

Eventually, Mia Khin attended a child protection workshop run by a local NGO, Help without Frontiers. She was taught about child rights and told how to identify and report child abuse. Afterwards, she contacted the NGO to report Aye’s case.

The NGO took Aye out of school. She went to hospital for an assessment and began seeing a psychiatrist. Aye and her siblings were moved to a new learning centre, to make it easier for her to leave the past behind and start a new life.

“At first, Aye couldn’t eat or sleep’” says Sivaporn from the NGO. “She isolated herself from her friends. She thought she was worthless and was afraid that others would find out what had happened. She had been abused for a long time and didn’t tell anyone, not even her family.”

Following Aye’s testimony, Zeya was arrested and charged with raping a minor. He confessed to the charges and was sentenced to 25 years in jail.

“I’m relieved that Zeya is in prison and not able to abuse young girls anymore,” Mia Khin says. “When I met Nong Aye afterwards, she gave me a huge hug. She looked lively and refreshed, and I was happy for her. We’d never spoken about it but she knew I was the one who had reported the abuse.”

**UNICEF’s work**

Violence against children is a critical issue in Thailand. In 2013, more than 19,000 children were treated in public hospitals because of abuse. The majority of these were girls aged 10–15 and had been sexually abused by people known to them. Abuse like this harms children’s physical and mental development and affects society at large.

UNICEF and Save the Children are supporting local NGOs in Tak and Chiang Mai provinces to deliver training for teachers and local communities, including the workshop that enabled Mia Khin to report this case. In Tak province, around 50 teachers have been trained at 10 learning centres on how to help children who have been neglected, abused or exploited.

“If I had received this training earlier, I could have helped Nong Aye sooner,” Mia Khin says.

UNICEF is also working with the Ministry of Education to develop stronger child protection policies for schools, to prevent this kind of abuse from happening in the first place. These policies outline the responsibility of teachers to protect students from violence and abuse, and the steps to take when a case is reported. All public schools in Thailand will have to implement them. We have also launched a campaign to tell the public how to recognise and report child abuse.

“Imagine how much better Nong Aye’s life would be if she had never been sexually abused,” UNICEF’s Sirirath says. “This is what we want to achieve for all children in Thailand.”

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\*All names have been changed to protect the survivor’s identity.

**Question**

**Do you think that the four Protection Principles were upheld in this response? How?**