

**HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR
EMPOWERMENT OF FEMALE SEX WORKERS:
A CASE STUDY OF ONE NON-FORMAL EDUCATION
PROGRAM FOR FEMALE SEX WORKERS IN THAILAND**

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ABSTRACT

Female sex workers' rights are severely violated in Thailand. They are discriminated against and stigmatized as a social evil by every social institution within the mainstream patriarchal society. The EMPOWER Foundation works to promote sex workers' rights and has been conducting non-formal education (NFE) for female sex workers for more than two decades, with accreditation by the Office of Non-formal Education Commission (ONFEC), within Thailand's Ministry of Education (MOE).

This thesis aims to examine the process and content of the NFE program of EMPOWER. It seeks to assess whether Human Rights (HR) issues are integrated into the curriculum, to analyze the impact of the NFE program on female sex workers as well as to identify the factors which influence the empowerment of female sex workers through the NFE program. The study argues that without integrating HR issues into the NFE curriculum, it is impossible to empower female sex workers. The study was conducted at EMPOWER in Chiang Mai Province. Eleven female sex workers and five key informants were interviewed through in-depth interviews by using qualitative, feminist ethnography and a case study approach.

The findings of the study confirm that a NFE program that integrates HR issues into the curriculum is able to empower female sex workers in certain dimensions such as gaining greater self-confidence, self-respect, a sense of their own value, and self determination. Moreover, the NFE program is able to deconstruct discourses in order to counter mainstream social discourses. Therefore, HR education is seen as an important tool for empowering marginalized groups, particularly female sex workers.

**KEY WORDS: HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION / NON-FORMAL EDUCATION /
EMPOWERMENT FEMALE SEX WORKER / DISCOURSE ON SEX
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