

# Airline Ambassadors

## AAI's Child Trafficking Initiative

It all began in Cambodia. Three of us were walking down the dirt road of a small village near Siem Riep, when we saw her. A tiny girl standing on a dirt floor under a house on stilts - she had no CLOTHES, no HAIR, and no NAME.

This was a "Karaoke Baby", the result of a mother trapped into prostitution that took place behind the Karaoke Bars that lined the village streets. She was clearly malnourished and had been trying to draw clothes on her body with a red marking pen she had found. Deb Quigley, Airline Ambassador mission leader for the trip, handed her a balloon. We asked others in the neighborhood about the little girl. They assured us she had NO NAME and foraged as she could for food...the villagers called her NO HAIR, as someone had shaved her head to keep lice away. Her mother sometimes came back and wanted to give the child away to anyone who would take her....so far no one had, and little No Name just stood there in the dirt, under the house, waiting with the insects for crumbs to fall through the floor above and waiting for her fate.

We could have walked away, but when we looked back and she waved her hand slightly ...our hearts melted. We took that innocent little girl into our arms and brought her to the New Hope Clinic for evaluation. Although she was malnourished, and full of lice, she was not beyond hope. Our local AAI member Kerry Huntley agreed to care for the child, (as she is for 6 others) with a house mother and provisions for food, clothing and education. Airline Ambassadors sponsored her and Kelly gave her a name - Somnang which means "New Hope".



What would have happened if we had walked away? Somnang, like thousands of others like her, would have either died or been abducted into a life of slavery and prostitution.

Cambodia estimates that Child Traffickers capture 1.2 Million children a year like Somnang, who are bought and sold like merchandise and flown on airplanes across borders to lives of modern day slavery. Among the Airline Ambassadors who have been very active in identifying Child Traffickers, Debra Sigmund and Sandra Fiorini have developed educational materials that we will be dispersing on flights and introducing as curricula for In-flight Training schools through all AAI airline partners.

As a member of our recent mission to the Dominican Republic, Debra Sigmund provided a brief about Child Trafficking. We also brought cash and gifts of clothing, shoes and food to Ninos de Cristo orphanage and reflected at how these children were being protected from the dangers of life on the streets. Freshly aware of the danger, our AAI team noticed suspicious behavior on two of our departing flights. Upon informing the flight attendants (Delta and jetBlue) our Airline Ambassador team members relayed the 800 # that Debra had provided to call and alert ground authorities with Immigration- Customs- Enforcement (ICE). In both cases the traffickers were apprehended! Another AAI team had relayed this vital information to Child Trafficking authorities. Flight attendants are asking for more information and we will soon provide this curriculum at our bi-annual LAMM Training sessions. Airline Ambassadors will expand our campaign via our program for Child Welfare and establish an Airline Partnership Against Trafficking in Persons at the corporate level, which will include an industry wide education campaign for all employees. Stay tuned for more information on our "Blue Lightning Campaign". Call 866-ANGEL-86 if you would like to help.