

# MYTHBUSTERS

The top 3  
child sex trafficking myths  
[EXPOSED]

Destiny  Rescue™  
RESCUING CHILDREN





## Top 3 Myths [EXPOSED]

To help set the record straight, Destiny Rescue has drawn on its 20+ years of experience to describe the reality of child sex trafficking in Southeast Asia.



Understanding the issue of child sex trafficking is the first step to ending it.

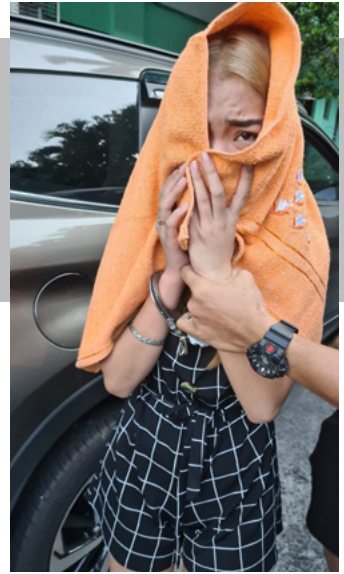
**Whether on news platforms, social media, or around the BBQ, child sex trafficking is becoming an increasingly hot topic.**

But in the age of the internet – where people are constantly neck-deep in information – the line between truth and fiction can blur.

It is crucial to understand the realities to protect and educate others and end the trade effectively.

**Here we address three common myths about child sex trafficking:**

1. A sex trafficker looks evil, behaves suspiciously, and slinks around in the shadows of society. (Page 4)
2. A typical workplace for the prostituted is a luxury penthouse with red satin sheets draping the bed. (Page 6)
3. The girls enjoy what they do. (Page 10)



## HOW DOES A SEX TRAFFICKER LOOK?

**Myth #1** A sex trafficker looks evil, behaves suspiciously, and slinks around in the shadows of society.

If you wonder who the predators are who trade in innocent children or what a sex trafficker looks like, read this candid response from our International Rescue Director, Mike (*name changed for anonymity*).

### Unmasking the True Traffickers

Dismantling the idea of traffickers being an underground gang of men selling children, Mike says many traffickers are women.

Female traffickers, Mike says, are cunning hunters who wield their femininity to build trust with parents and gain access to their children. The women scout impoverished villages and pretend to be career recruiters offering girls jobs in a nearby city.

**"As a parent, you are going to trust a woman over a man to take your daughter away,"** Mike says.

In Cambodia and Thailand, nearly 70% of traffickers were women.

— United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Mike goes on to say **“A handful of poverty-stricken parents can also become traffickers out of desperation. These poor parents in Southeast Asia will ‘sacrifice’ one of their children to work; to help feed the family or pay a debt”.**

## Pushed Down the Slide

Unlike blockbuster movies where children are kidnapped and thrown into the sex industry, most Southeast Asian children are tricked or led by necessity.

These kids, Mike says, often have only two options for work – farming or prostitution – because they lack education, work experience and even citizenship.

**“Ninety-nine per cent of the girls never want to be in this situation,”** Mike says.

Many girls get tricked. Some traffickers lure girls by pretending to fall in love with them on social media and convincing them to leave their home country. Mike explains, “Guys just troll the internet for vulnerable kids.”

Other traffickers blatantly promote a ‘mysterious’ high-paying job on social media. They leave out critical details about the job description, but for a trained eye, you can read between the lines. Naive girls, on the other hand, could miss the signs.

Taking advantage of a vulnerable girl is a profitable business model for traffickers. They see it as an easy way to make a dollar in one of the most lucrative illegal trades in the world.



**Sex trafficking  
generates \$99 billion per year!**

— International Labour Organisation (2014)



# WHERE DOES TRAFFICKING TAKE PLACE? WHY DON'T THE GIRLS GET UP AND LEAVE?

**Myth #2** A typical workplace for the prostituted is a luxury penthouse with red satin sheets draping the bed.

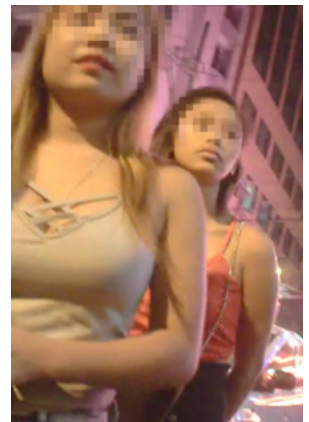
Have you ever wondered what circumstances and environments victims are from and why they don't escape their captors?

## Modest Locations

Luxury penthouses with red silk bed linen are not typical workplaces for prostitutes – at least not in Southeast Asia. Instead, Mike says most child sex trafficking victims work in karaoke bars, massage parlours, brothels or on the street.

**“As a client, you pick a girl and location, and the pimp will send them to you.”** Additionally, Mike says, these girls are being sold online to pleasure customers by a live stream video where customers pay them to perform sexual acts. That's very much the way of the future.

Most traffickers are also not flying, boating or driving their victim long distances to sell her in one of these locations. Instead, most victims stay in or near their home country.



Street pimps, often women known as “mama-sans”, typically hold a tablet showcasing pictures and personal details of their sex workers, similar to a dinner menu at a restaurant.



## Chains of Shame & Fear

Child sex trafficking victims cannot simply leave the industry.

A “shame-honour culture” is a term to describe a culture where people do not represent themselves but rather their group identities, such as their family or community. If a person violates their group identity’s expectations, they can humiliate everyone in the group. Child sex victims can be too afraid to return home because they could “shame” their family or community — occasionally facing harsh consequences.

**“[In severe cases] a girl ... returns to the village and is violently beaten, or even set on fire because she brought shame onto the family,”** Mike says.

Many girls cannot leave their work without facing harsh blackmail such as death threats. Or, disturbingly, some traffickers will take a paparazzi-like photo of a girl’s innocent sister to show her they can find and kill her sister too.

“They instil this fear into a girl who has no option but to work.” Also, these girls stay in the trade because they can at least find glimpses of fulfilment by affording materialistic items. Mike says they buy cars, phones and clothes, which creates a more lavish lifestyle than being raised in a poor village. “These are things they have never dreamt of having.”



“

When they touched my body,  
it made me feel sad and dirty.

I was told to smile, and they  
forced me to pretend it was okay.

I couldn't do anything about it.  
I just had to accept it.

– Survivor (Thailand)







“

Contrary to a girl's friendly façade in a brothel, they do not want to be there and are good at masking their emotions.

— Mike (our International Rescue Director)

## HOW DO MINORS FEEL WHILE ENGAGED IN THIS 'WORK'?

### Myth #3 The girls enjoy what they do.

#### Pulling Back The Curtain

Some girls have 'sales targets' where they must sleep with a certain number of men each month, or their pimp will beat them or deduct money from their wages. "They have to get into roleplaying to make these men want to have sex with them."

"While working undercover, we get to see and hear how the girls feel. When a customer goes off to the bathroom, you will see her whole demeanour change; then he will come back, and she will, at the flick of a switch, turn it all back on."

And to put it bluntly, these girls are not protected by their pimps when they are with a customer. Instead, Mamasans turn a blind eye to their girl's sexual interactions with customers, leaving the child at the mercy of a customer behind closed doors. "Whatever he is into, she has to participate. Guys are fulfilling fantasies from porn."

Scan the QR Code to watch four videos of survivors sharing what they have been through — in their own words.



## Hope-Filled Futures

Considering all factors that play a role in child sex trafficking, Mike says, “There is no rule to how people are trafficked. There’s no black and white answer to everything. But they typically have one thing in common. Wherever you have desperation and poverty, you have exploitation.”

**“But despite this – and the mountain of other burdens listed earlier – child sex trafficking victims are surprisingly resilient.”**

Rescued girls often make giant steps to recovery alongside our reintegration teams.

Most of them walk out of our program into hope-filled futures such as returning home, gaining new skills and higher education, landing a safe job or starting their own business.

**We are honestly so excited for the momentum that is building in this fight against child sex trafficking. So many people and sectors around the world are responding with their compassionate voices and support. From Governments to business people to grandparents to students, EVERYBODY’S contribution is significant.**

We love being part of such an important cause — rescuing and protecting the vulnerable. It is an honour to know our supporters and why they are determined to make a difference.

Many of the people who join us are: **Passionate. Committed. Kind.** And believe in living their life for more than themselves.

**You are one of those people.**

*Thank you!*

## Connect with us

Follow Destiny Rescue on social media.

See how your contribution is making a tangible impact.

We regularly celebrate rescue outcomes and inspirational stories of freedom and rehabilitation.



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