

# Tackling human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region



World Vision's End Trafficking in Persons Programme



## The many faces of human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

Human trafficking is a serious crime that affects men, women and children around the world. It involves putting or keeping someone in an exploitative situation, usually for profit. Exploitation can involve situations including forced or debt-bonded labour, child labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude or armed conflict.

The Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) is made up of six countries connected by the Mekong River: Cambodia, China, Laos PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. With limited opportunities for safe and legal migration in the GMS, irregular migration is widespread, creating a fertile breeding ground for the trafficking and exploitation of migrants. While the full scale of human trafficking is difficult to ascertain due to the illegal and often undetected nature of the crime, there is a huge amount of evidence that shows that there are diverse forms of trafficking in the GMS:

- Men and boys from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar have ended up on fishing boats in Thai, Malaysian and Indonesian waters.
- Both men and women have ended up in trafficked situations in unregulated factories, mines, construction sites, and agricultural plantations.
- Cambodian and Myanmar boys and girls have been forced to beg or sell flowers in urban centres in Thailand.
- Women and girls from Laos have been coerced into sexual exploitation or domestic servitude in Thailand.
- Women and girls from Myanmar and Vietnam have been trafficked into China for forced marriage.
- Babies have been abducted and sold in China for adoption.



Htet Htet Oo/World Vision

### Myanmar

**119** trafficking cases identified, including 78 bride trafficking, 25 sex trafficking, 12 labour trafficking, 1 forced begging, and 3 child trafficking

**325** traffickers identified, **215** arrested

**226** victims repatriated to Myanmar: 118 from China, 76 from Thailand, 26 from Indonesia, 3 from Suriname, 2 from Vietnam, 1 from Malaysia (source: Myanmar Anti-Trafficking Unit)



Somluck Khamsaen/World Vision

### Thailand

**538** trafficking victims provided with interim care in 9 government shelters

Victims originate from Thailand (31%), Myanmar (33%), Laos (21.6%), Cambodia (11%) and other countries (3.1%)

Most commonly trafficked into: forced labour (48%), sex work (36%) and begging (8.7%) (source: Thailand Department of Social Development and Welfare)



Phalidaracheat Kang/World Vision

### Cambodia

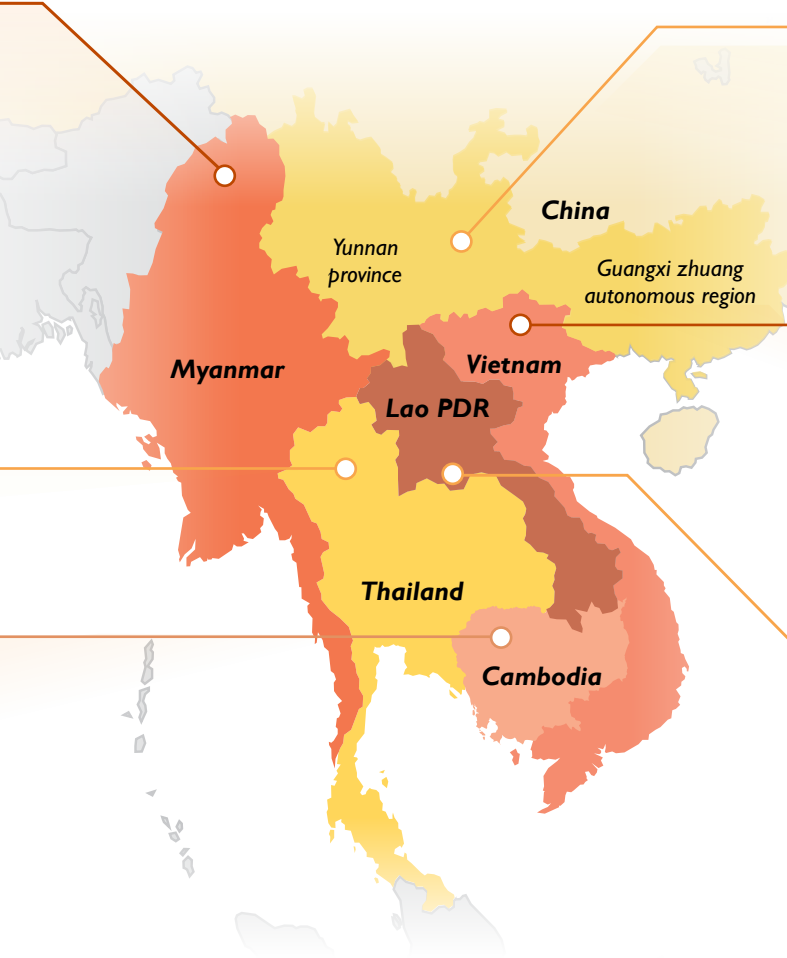
**148** suspected traffickers arrested and **442** victims rescued

(source: Annual report of the National Committee to lead STSLS)

156 Cambodian trafficking victims also repatriated from other countries (source: Cambodian government delegation report at the COMMIT Senior Officials Meeting 9)

\* None of those depicted in the photos are victims of trafficking.

# Anti-trafficking status in 2012



## China

**6,628**

trafficking cases reported and solved

**1,240**

criminal organisations identified

**17,000**

suspected traffickers put under criminal detention (source: China Government delegation report at the COMMIT Senior Officials Meeting 9)

More than 14,000 children and 9,000 women rescued



Anita Zhao/World Vision

## Vietnam

**850**

trafficking victims released through rescue and self-return

500 trafficking cases revealed and investigated

**800**

traffickers arrested (source: Report of 130 Steering Committee)

On the Vietnam–China border; 158 cases identified, 216 victims rescued and over 200 offenders arrested (source: Vietnamese government delegation report at the COMMIT Senior Officials Meeting 9)



World Vision

## Lao PDR

**75**

trafficking cases investigated

**114**

traffickers identified

**195**

victims repatriated from Thailand, of who 86% are female and 69% are children (source: Lao Government delegation report at the COMMIT Senior Officials Meeting 9)



Nita Douanesouvanh/World Vision

## World Vision's End Trafficking in Persons Programme

GMS governments, UN agencies, and many non-governmental organisations, including World Vision, are working hard to combat human trafficking. World Vision's End Trafficking in Persons (ETIP) Programme, a regional anti-trafficking programme, is being implemented from October 2011 to September 2016. Working in and across the six countries of the GMS, ETIP is the largest anti-trafficking programme of its kind, and comprises three pillar projects:

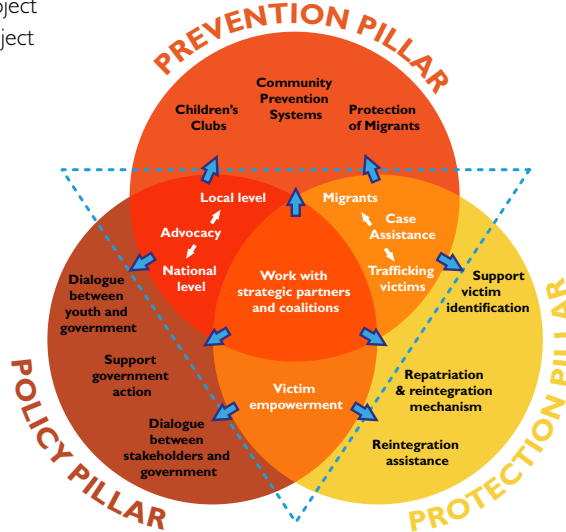
1. Prevention Pillar Project
2. Protection Pillar Project
3. Policy Pillar Project

### Prevention of the vulnerable from being trafficked

- Community Prevention Systems: Build community ownership to carry out prevention activities and set up reporting systems.
- Children's Clubs: Create safe spaces for children and youth to learn how to protect themselves from trafficking and share what they learn with their friends.
- Protection of Migrants: Assist migrants to stay safe in source, transit and destination locations.

### Protection of human trafficking survivors

- Multi-disciplinary Team Response to Victim Identification: Support capacity of law enforcement agencies and multi-disciplinary partners to carry out investigations and identify victims.
- Repatriation and Reintegration Mechanism: Support governments in repatriating trafficking survivors to their own countries quickly and safely.
- Reintegration Assistance: Assist trafficking survivors so they are able to fully recover from their experience and live healthy and productive lives.



How the three pillars work together as a programme

### Promotion of improved anti-trafficking government policies

- Dialogue between Youth and Government: Create opportunities for community members, children and youth, and trafficking survivors to talk to government officials so that the government can make decisions based on what is really happening to those directly affected.
- Dialogue between Stakeholders and Government: Work collectively with many anti-trafficking organisations to suggest new ways to combat trafficking to government leaders.

## Helping communities take an active role in trafficking prevention

ETIP is working directly with community members so they themselves can build human trafficking prevention groups at the village level. These human trafficking prevention groups help children and adults in villages find out more about the dangers of trafficking and how they can be avoided, assist the most vulnerable families, and report possible trafficking incidents to government officials so that those in danger can be protected. When educating parents, children and youth, the emphasis is not only on providing information but actually changing attitudes and behaviours so that more and more young people choose safe migration options. The most vulnerable families are identified through home visitors, and proper assistance is provided to those who most need it. To enable people to easily report suspicious incidents, ETIP is setting up community watch volunteers and reporting systems so that the police and social workers can be alerted about any human trafficking cases. ETIP is helping these human trafficking prevention groups to develop strong links with government officials, such as the anti-trafficking committees at the district and provincial levels and specialist anti-trafficking police units, so that trafficking prevention efforts can be better coordinated.



## Cambodia spotlight

The chief of a commune in Battambang, Cambodia, is head of the community trafficking prevention group. After attending ETIP's training sessions, he and the group members meet monthly to plan activities such as community forums on safe migration, identifying vulnerable children and helping them to return to school, and assisting those that face problems after migrating for work through labour recruitment agencies. As a result, more villagers are now adopting safer migration methods. "In the past, members of the community never informed me or my team if one of their relatives experienced problems in another country. But since the project started, people are increasingly doing so." He adds, "When suspicious people arrive in our community, the community watch group now always informs the police and commune council."

## Thailand spotlight

A community watch volunteer in Mae Sot District, Thailand received a tip that a boy who seemed lost was crying in a local shop. The volunteer discovered that the boy, along with his younger brother, had been abandoned there. He informed the ETIP team and then escorted the boys to a safe location. It came to light that a woman had promised the boys' parents in Myanmar to bring the boys to Thailand to earn money. In reality, she had intended to sell the boys to an employer, and then get them to run away so that she could repeat the trick over and over again. The woman was subjected to a formal investigation and the boys were referred to a shelter until they were returned to their parents.

## Helping children and youth protect themselves from trafficking

World Vision considers children and youth to be important agents of change and upholds the right of children and youth to be directly involved in action to combat human trafficking. That is why ETIP is investing in fun and engaging children's activities and setting up clubs for children to get together regularly, learn knowledge and skills to protect themselves from human trafficking and also help spread the message to their friends. This enables the most vulnerable children to develop key life skills, including critical thinking, decision making, effective communication and negotiation, self-management and life goal planning. These life skills help children stay alert and avoid potential dangers when faced with risky situations, such as when traffickers try to deceive them.



### Vietnam spotlight

"Our names are Ngo Thi Be and Nguyen Thi Hoa and we are 16-year-old high school students in Quang Nam province. We recently went to a training course about human trafficking at the World Vision Nang Hong Children's Club. We learned about what traffickers do, how they trick people, and why they do it. At the beginning of this year, some people took one of our

friends from our village. Her name is Men and the traffickers suggested that she go to Ho Chi Minh City to be a hairdresser, to earn some money to help her family. They gave her a bit of money and a telephone card and she was gone. Suddenly, one day, Men called: "I'm going to get a real job. I'll be able to earn money for my family and buy nice clothes," she said. "You can get a job here too!" she continued. Her words were positive, but her

voice was sad. I wrote down the address and passed it on to her family straightaway and they called her brothers, who live in Ho Chi Minh City. The brothers and some of their friends went to the address and found Men there with three other girls. The criminals didn't have any time to react and they were forced to let Men go and she was able to return home."



Seyha Lychheang/World Vision

## **Amplifying the voices of children and youth affected by human trafficking**

ETIP also provides opportunities for children and youth to meet and interact with other people from various locations at national level and GMS level forums. In these forums, children share fresh perspectives and lessons with newfound friends, and engage in discussions about what can be done to reduce the trafficking problem. The children also

engage in face-to-face dialogues with government officials so that senior policy makers can hear directly from those that are being affected by the trafficking problem. World Vision, in collaboration with Save the Children, the International Labor Organization, MTV EXIT and other agencies, organises the Mekong Youth Forums, in which children and youth representatives present their recommendations to senior government officials at the annual COMMIT Senior Officials Meetings and related events.

## **China spotlight**

The Mekong Youth Forum helps children and youth to get involved and speak out about how the trafficking problem affects their lives and propose creative solutions. A group of 38 young people were chosen from across different provinces of China to attend the second *National Anti-Trafficking Forum for Children and Youths*, in July 2010 in Beijing. Attendees were encouraged to express their views on how to prevent trafficking and other related topics using drama, drawing, games and group discussions. They were also given a special chance to talk to high-ranking government officials responsible for combating human trafficking. 20-year old Qili Yangzong, a Tibetan girl from Shangri-La, Yunnan, attends college in Kunming city and loves to volunteer for the street children at a local centre in her spare time. She recalled, “I was nervous when I raised questions to the officials, but their answers were really inspiring and enriched my knowledge. I think such education can be further promoted at schools.” She continued, “By participating in these activities I have learned a lot about human trafficking and the work that’s being done to combat it.”

## Protecting migrant workers from trafficking

ETIP wants those who migrate to stay safe, so this involves helping people to understand how to migrate legally if at all possible and take certain precautions before leaving, while travelling, and when they arrive at a new place. In addition to the migrants themselves, there are others who can play an important role in protecting the rights of migrants. They include labour recruitment agencies that send migrant workers, and labour protection officials, employers, and host community members who receive migrant workers. ETIP encourages labour recruitment agencies in the programme's target locations to follow a Code of Conduct and set up a complaints mechanism so that migrant workers can seek redress if they are exploited or mistreated. In places where there are high numbers of migrant workers, ETIP supports capacity building of labour protection officials and employers so they better understand the rights of migrant workers. In communities where many migrants live and work, the host community members are encouraged to change their often negative attitudes towards migrant workers and adopt behaviours that can reduce the exploitation of migrant workers, such as through reporting cases of abuse to the police.

## Supporting law enforcement efforts to investigate and identify victims of trafficking

To assist and protect victims of trafficking, the first step is to identify victims and remove them from the trafficking situation. ETIP both promotes and supports a multi-disciplinary team approach to investigation and identification of victims of trafficking. Under this approach, law enforcement agencies that are responsible for victim identification work collaborate with social welfare, health officials, legal personnel and NGO staff to ensure that the victim's needs are fully met.

ETIP also works across borders to trace and locate 'missing persons', those who have lost contact with their families and may have fallen into a trafficking situation; this is done in collaboration with specialist law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border. For many migrants who are arrested and deported for illegal stay or work, ETIP supports screening for trafficking victims among them and provides safe transport home for those who have no means to do so and are in danger of coming under the control of traffickers.





## Helping trafficking survivors return and reintegrate back into society

After victims are identified and placed in safe shelters, government officials arrange for repatriation back to their country of origin. ETIP supports the bilateral government-to-government repatriation mechanisms between the GMS countries by contributing to bilateral case management meetings and case worker visits, with the aim of ensuring that the repatriations are speedy, safe and dignified. After returning home or to another suitable location, ETIP helps trafficking victims adjust to life back in society, through tailored case management support and regular follow-up for up to two years. Resuming life after surviving the trafficking experience is often a significant challenge for trafficking survivors. Reintegration assistance provided to individual victims by organisations such as World Vision is often the tipping point between being able to make a successful recovery and re-migrating, perhaps to be re-trafficked.



### Laos spotlight

Noi, from Savannakhet, Laos, completed primary school but then dropped out of secondary school as her parents did not have enough money to support her. When Noi was 14 years old, a broker came to her village to recruit people to work in Thailand and told her that there were many jobs available in Thailand with good conditions and high salaries. Noi and a group of her friends agreed to go with the broker to Thailand. She was taken to work as a maid in a private house where she was often beaten; on one occasion, she was beaten so badly that she temporarily lost part of her hearing. Noi managed to escape and seek help from the local police. She was identified as a victim of trafficking by the police and stayed in a shelter before being reunited with her family. Upon her return, ETIP sponsored her to undertake a three-month training course in sewing and tailoring. After completing the training course, she secured a job at a traditional garments and handicrafts factory where she still works four years later. "I enjoy my life and working at the factory. I have made friends here and I am being paid a regular salary." She can now afford to support herself and also give her family some money to help keep her brother and sister in school.

## Channeling the voices of trafficking survivors

Regaining a sense of confidence in being able to dictate one's own life is crucial for trafficking survivors who have returned home and are trying to pick up the pieces of their lives. But this journey back to normality can be a lonely road, for often the survivors' loved ones cannot relate to the experiences endured by the survivors. ETIP encourages trafficking survivors to gather together so that they can share their stories, share mutual encouragement, and gain strength from recognizing their shared struggles. Additionally, as part of these gatherings, ETIP facilitates face-to-face dialogues with government officials so that the trafficking survivors can speak from first-hand experience about how human trafficking has affected them and share their thoughts and recommendations about what more government officials could do to reduce the numbers of people being trafficked and better protect those who have been victimised.

## Myanmar spotlight

ETIP has supported special gatherings in Myanmar of trafficking survivors who have returned home. During the last day of these gatherings, key anti-trafficking government officials are invited to a meeting with some of the trafficking survivors who are ready and willing to be involved. As a result, government officials have learned that many trafficking survivors don't have their national ID cards when they return and they need government support so that they can be issued with new cards as soon as possible.

A 19-year-old female survivor shared that at first she was anxious to attend because she lacked confidence and did not wish to talk about herself. However, she quickly developed close relationships with other attendees, which made her feel comfortable enough to share her story and her opinions. The young woman has now agreed to be involved in the filming of an anti-trafficking documentary, which will be used as an advocacy tool.

## Supporting government efforts to combat human trafficking

It is very important for governments to adopt and implement laws and policies to combat and respond to human trafficking. Thankfully, over the past decade, significant progress has been made in enacting new anti-trafficking legislation. With the signing of the COMMIT MOU in 2004, the six GMS governments have committed to working side-by-side to combat human trafficking. ETIP supports the ongoing efforts of governments by providing financial and technical assistance for strategic activities in the governments' National Plans of Action and by promoting the practical implementation of existing laws and policies down to the local level.

.....**2008:** Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

.....**2003:** MOU between Cambodia and Thailand on Bilateral Cooperation in Eliminating Trafficking in Children and Women and Assisting Victims of Trafficking

.....**2004:** Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) MOU signed by GMS governments

# Timeline: Government enactment of legislation to combat human trafficking in the GMS



..... **2008:** Thailand Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act

**2008:** Cambodia Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

**2008:** Agreement between Thai and Vietnam on Cooperation to Eliminate Trafficking in Persons

..... **2010:** MOU between Lao PDR and Vietnam on Cooperation in Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons and Protection of Victims of Trafficking

..... **2012:** Myanmar National Guidelines on Return/Repatriation & Reintegration of Trafficked Victims

**2005:** Myanmar Anti Trafficking in Persons Law

**2005:** MOU between Lao PDR and Thailand on Cooperation to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children

..... **2005:** Agreement between Cambodia and Vietnam on Bilateral Cooperation for Eliminating Trafficking In Women and Children and Assisting Victims of Trafficking

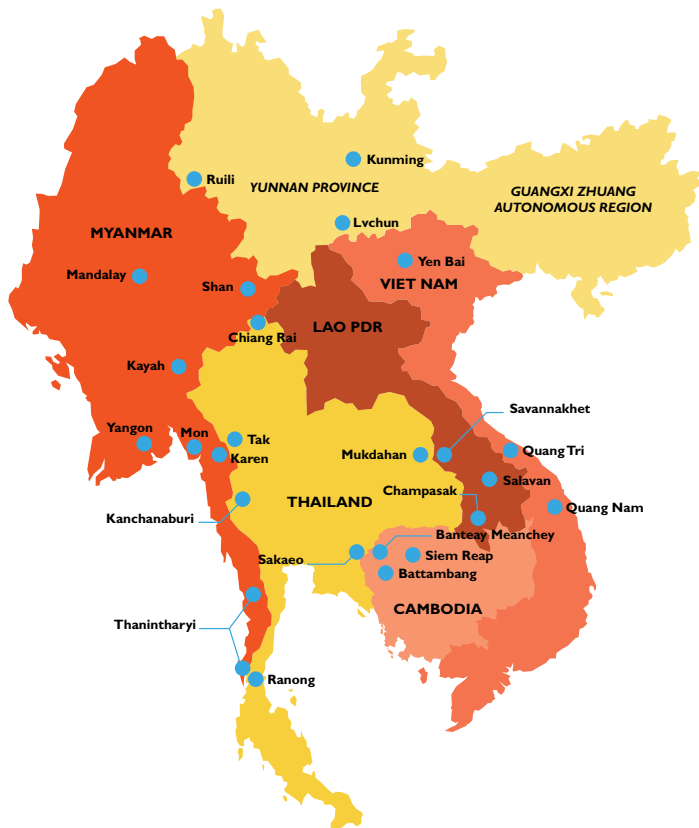
**2009:** MOU between Myanmar and Thailand on Cooperation to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children

..... **2009:** MOU between China and Myanmar on Strengthening the Cooperation on Combating Human Trafficking

..... **2011:** Vietnam Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law

..... **2013:** Bilateral Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) between Myanmar and Thailand on Management of Case and the Repatriation / Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking

## ETIP target locations in Greater Mekong Sub-region



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