



UN-ACT

United Nations Action for Cooperation
against Trafficking in Persons

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2015



NORWEGIAN EMBASSY



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*



SWEDEN

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAPTIP	Australia–Asia Program to Combat Trafficking in Persons
AAT	Alliance Anti Traffic
ACTIP	ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children
AICHR	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
Bali Process	Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime
BCC	Behavioral Change Communication
CCPCR	Cambodian Center for the Protection of Child Rights
COMMIT	Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSP	Civil Society Platform
CYF	COMMIT Youth Forum
GAATW	Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-region
HTWG	Human Trafficking Working Group
IAWG	Inter-Agency Working Group on Counter Trafficking in Persons
ICAT	Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMM	Inter-Ministerial Meeting
IOM	International Organization for Migration
Lao PDR	Lao People’s Democratic Republic
LPN	Labour Rights Promotion Network
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	National Plans of Action
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
PoA	Plan of Action
RMO	Regional Management Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SeaCAT	Southeast Asia Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons
SOM	Senior Officials Meeting
SOMTC	Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPA	Sub-regional Plan of Action
TF	Taskforce
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
ToT	Training of Trainers
TWG	Technical Working Group
UN	United Nations
UN-ACT	United Nations Action for Cooperation Against Trafficking in Persons
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIAP	United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VFI	Village Focus International
VIJUSAP	Viet Nam Justice Support Association for the Poor
WV	World Vision

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons (UN-ACT) is a regional project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), launched in 2014, to counter human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and beyond. UN-ACT is the only United Nations project in the sub-region dealing comprehensively with human trafficking. It is positioned at the strategic intersection of governance, policy, research, coordination and direct interventions.

UN-ACT provides technical, coordination and financial support to the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking (COMMIT), an inter-governmental body that brings together the six countries in the GMS in a joint effort to counter human trafficking. Ongoing efforts aim at building national capacities for a more sustainable process, with COMMIT-related functions being fully integrated into the countries' own systems and procedures. In 2015, China, Thailand and Viet Nam increased their financial commitments and managed to implement efforts to fight human trafficking more effectively.

UN-ACT's regional level support to COMMIT in 2015 focused on the finalization of the fourth Sub-regional Plan of Action (SPA IV); the organization of the 10th Senior Officials Meeting/4th Inter Ministerial Meeting (SOM10/IMM4) held in Cambodia including to adopt SPA IV; the development of a COMMIT capacity assessment and development strategy, which provides a baseline for SPA IV implementation; and the establishment of the COMMIT Youth Forum and the Civil Society Platform to COMMIT.

The purpose of UN-ACT is to create an environment where key stakeholders in the region are working in a more cooperative and mutually supportive manner. The UN-ACT-led regional network, for example, convenes more than 20 agencies and organizations with counter-trafficking programming on a quarterly basis, and has become a key platform for regional anti-trafficking coordination and collaboration efforts. Over the reporting period, the regional network meetings have helped partners share experiences and expertise in advocacy, research, and monitoring and evaluation, as well as identify synergies and joint programming opportunities.

UN-ACT also contributed to COMMIT's increased level of collaboration with other countries and regional actors. COMMIT and ASEAN have strengthened their cooperation in 2015 by developing a set of joint indicators of human trafficking and related forms of exploitation at a regional workshop in Malaysia. Representatives

from ASEAN and Malaysia also contributed to SOM10/IMM4, and Malaysia signed a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on Combating Transnational Crime with Viet Nam, which includes sections on trafficking in persons. UN-ACT also increased engagement with Indonesia by providing technical support to several conferences related to human trafficking, people smuggling and irregular migration, and by supporting the repatriation of trafficked persons from Indonesian islands.

Furthermore, UN-ACT continued to increase access to evidence-based data on human trafficking by conducting and supporting research initiatives, in accordance with the UN-ACT Research Strategy. Examples of reports undertaken in 2015 include: regular labour migration channels from Lao PDR to Thailand; forced marriage cases between Cambodia and China; datasheets on human trafficking in the GMS; mapping of referral mechanisms in China as well as of existing facilities and services provided to trafficking survivors in Viet Nam.

A small-grants fund was rolled out in 2015, providing support to four civil society organizations (CSOs) in four different countries. In addition to providing financial resources for direct victim support, the project developed the CSOs' capacity in results-based management and monitoring and evaluation. UN-ACT also supported capacity building initiatives in anti-human trafficking for youth, media actors and the private sector.

UN-ACT increased its collaboration with the private sector in 2015 by: co-organizing a regional conference on the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in combating human trafficking with Microsoft and other partners; facilitating dialogue between pro bono law firms and anti-trafficking NGOs towards increased collaboration through PILNet's Asia Pro Bono Forum; providing technical support to a workshop on the prevention of forced labour in the fishing industry held in Thailand; and facilitating a Training of Trainers (ToT) on pre-departure orientation for migrant workers with recruitment agencies in Cambodia.

INTRODUCTION



Trafficking in persons is an estimated **US\$150 BILLION** industry



One of the world's largest **CRIMINAL INDUSTRIES**



20.9 MILLION persons globally are in forced labour, according to ILO estimates



Over **50%** of those in forced labour are in the Asia-Pacific region

Figure 1. Human Trafficking and Forced Labour in Numbers

The United Nations Action for Cooperation Against Trafficking in Persons (UN-ACT), a regional project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), represents the evolution of counter-trafficking efforts in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), consisting of Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, that began 15 years ago through the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP).

As UNIAP neared the end of its programming in 2012, over 200 stakeholders from governments, civil society, United Nations (UN) agencies and international organizations from across the sub-region reviewed the achievements and experiences in the anti-trafficking sector to determine ongoing needs. Key findings from

the consultations showed that despite considerable progress, including greater recognition of the severity and scope of human trafficking, the anti-trafficking response remains fragmented and uncoordinated, which undermines the impact. There are also continuous challenges due to deficiencies in the conceptual and legal frameworks on human trafficking in the region as well as in the sector's capacity to develop adequate responses and monitor their results.

The review led to the development and implementation of UN-ACT, with the goal of building capacities among key stakeholders, coordinating interventions in the sub-region and beyond, and leading analysis and research in the sector.



UN-ACT Regional and Country Office Staff

If anti-trafficking stakeholders in the region are capacitated with knowledge and skills in:



Undertaking institutional reform



Leadership development



Knowledge, training and learning about combating trafficking in persons



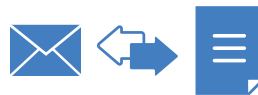
Accountability (planning, monitoring and evaluation)

Then they will be able to effectively coordinate and cooperate to combat trafficking in persons in the region

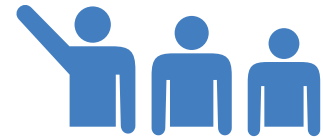
Because



Anti-trafficking institutions will be strengthened



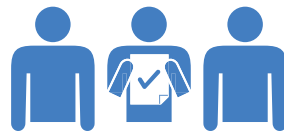
Availability and exchange of information between key institutions in anti-trafficking will increase



Leadership will be enhanced by identifying agents of change at different levels



Knowledge will be enhanced through training and learning that focuses on increasing research capacity in the region



Internal accountability will be ensured through the strategic use of a peer review system (via COMMIT)



External accountability will be ensured by strengthening the role and voice (and opportunity to deploy said voice) of civil society

Assumptions



Political will (+values & attitudes) exists amongst COMMIT members towards ending human trafficking



Anti-trafficking stakeholders operate in an environment in which they are able to use their capacity in an effective manner



Sufficient resources available

Figure 2. UN-ACT's Theory of Change

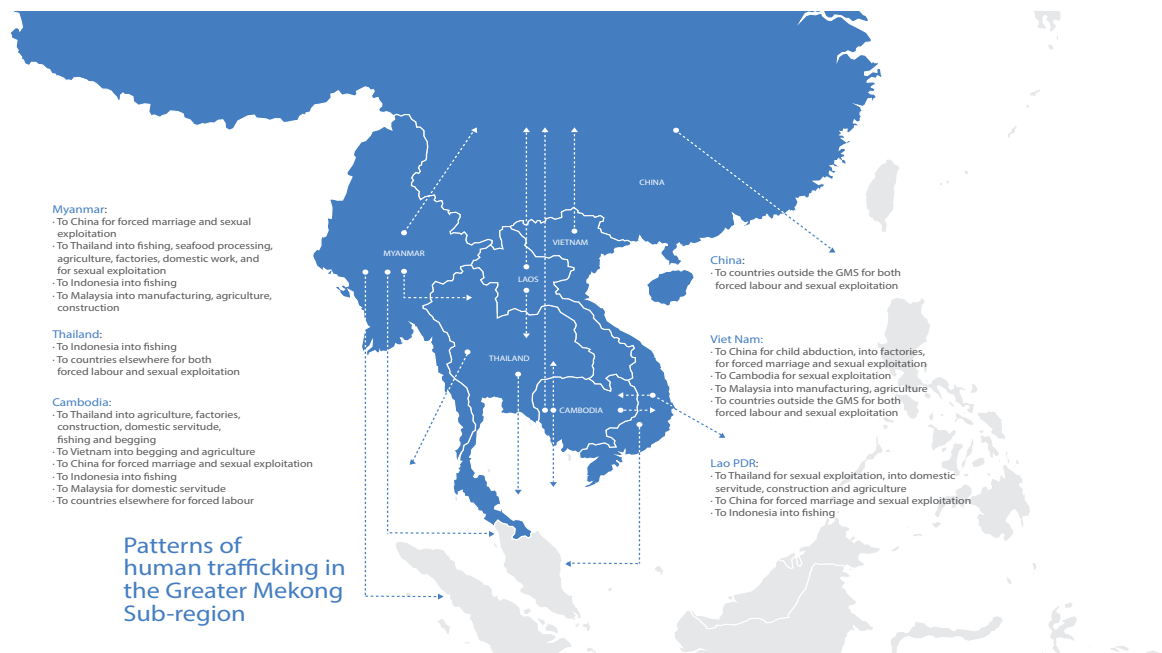


Figure 3. Patterns of human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUB-REGION

Human trafficking is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that is affected by socio-economic disparities, gender inequalities, weak governance systems, and limited labour rights and migration opportunities. People are often trafficked within regions, each with its distinct forms and dynamics. Some of the most extensive and diverse human trafficking patterns take place in and between the six countries of the GMS, with new practices of exploitation regularly emerging.

Human trafficking in the Southeast Asian fishing and seafood processing industry received significant attention in 2015. The Associated Press highlighted the significant numbers of trafficked fishermen from Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia stranded on remote Indonesian islands, and traced their labour to international fisheries' supply chains. While hundreds of survivors have been repatriated, many others are believed to remain trapped on vessels or other hard-to-reach islands. Exploitation and human trafficking in the sector has many causes including environmental degradation. Overfishing of Thai waters has dramatically

reduced local fish stocks, forcing vessels to go out further and stay longer at sea, which leads to increased costs and pressure on working conditions on boats with little to no regulatory oversight.

Forced marriage in China has equally received increasing recognition and attention in recent years. The phenomenon started with women and girls brokered and trafficked from neighboring Myanmar and Viet Nam. However, as reported by UN-ACT in 2014, Cambodia has now emerged as a significant market for brokers deceiving and coercing women into marriage in China. Forced marriage is affected by the skewed gender ratio in Chinese society due to decades of one-child policy and gender selection, as well as factors such as limited economic opportunities and relative poverty affecting women in origin countries. Restrictive migration regimes including for marriage further exacerbate the problem, pushing would-be migrants to enlist the services of irregular brokers without oversight. UN-ACT has in 2015 conducted research on forced marriage, as reported under activity result 3.1.

In 2015, the large scale movement of Rohingya asylum seekers and migrants from western Myanmar and



LPN mission to Indonesia in support of abused migrant workers and victims of human trafficking (Picture courtesy: LPN)

Bangladesh reached critical levels as boats of migrants were stranded at sea and prevented from reaching port. The crisis was triggered by the discovery of mass graves in southern Thailand and the resulting clampdown on the smuggling of migrants, which brought international attention to the plight of this persecuted population. The mixed migration flows, primarily based on abusive smuggling and refugees, also included reported incidences of forced labour and sexual exploitation, and the extortion and exploitation involved challenged the distinction between the trafficking and smuggling of persons. Ultimately, the persistent nature of key root causes for this movement suggests that the phenomenon may continue to be observed in coming years, if effective responses remain absent.



Indonesians send off Thai migrant workers upon their escape from forced labour (Picture courtesy: LPN)

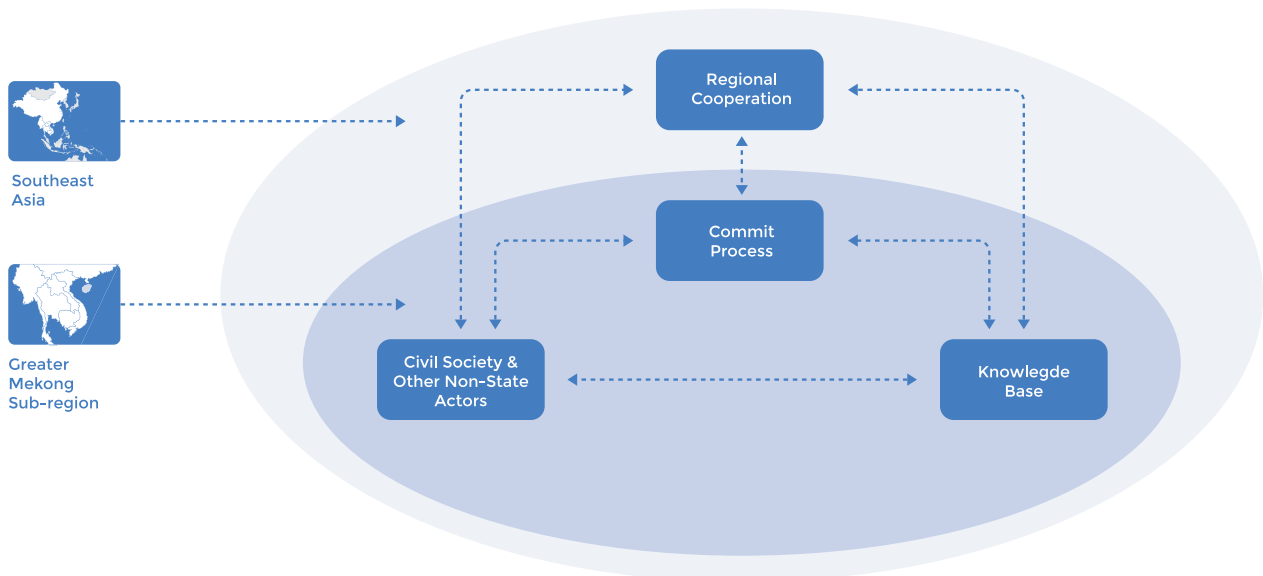


Figure 4. UN-ACT Strategic Framework

OVERVIEW OF THE FOUR OUTPUTS OF UN-ACT

Output 1: The COMMIT Process is strengthened to become sustainable and self-reliant

The Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking (COMMIT) is an inter-governmental process established in 2004 to counter the complex, diverse and cross-border patterns of human trafficking in the GMS. It operates on the basis of multi-year, Sub-regional Plans of Action (SPAs), ensuring coherence in direction and collaboration across borders. The sub-regional plans break down into annual, country-specific work plans that bridge the national and regional dimensions. COMMIT Taskforces (TFs) at the national level oversee activities, monitor progress and make joint decisions, bringing together all anti-trafficking actors.

Through the COMMIT secretariat role, which UN-ACT assumed from UNIAP, the project supports the development of a comprehensive and inclusive anti-human trafficking approach, empowering underrepresented institutions and providing non-government stakeholders with opportunities to inform policy responses. The project also assists governments in applying a systems-based model integrating COMMIT into their respective national procedures and mechanisms, and in gradually building their capacities to take more responsibility for COMMIT secretariat functions. UN-ACT further supports COMMIT to adopt

results-oriented approaches in the development and implementation of the SPAs and annual work plans.

Output 2: COMMIT countries increase their cooperation with other countries and regional actors to counter human trafficking

Human trafficking flows from the GMS also reach beyond the sub-region, to countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. UN-ACT therefore also supports COMMIT governments in establishing cooperation with non-COMMIT countries, bilaterally as well as through COMMIT and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This helps bolster cross-country learning and supports more effective, standardized efforts to prevent and address human trafficking across the region.

As secretariat to COMMIT, UN-ACT also facilitates the process' engagement and cooperation with other stakeholders such as UN entities, international organizations, civil society groups including youth, academics and the private sector. For example, the project organizes regular meetings for a regional network, which provides a forum for exchange, coordination and thematically focused discussions among stakeholders working to counter human trafficking across the region. The network also helps to define and coordinate development partners' collective support to COMMIT.



COMMIT representatives celebrate the process' 10th anniversary

Output 3: Policymakers, academics, non-government actors and the public have increased access to evidence-based research and knowledge on human trafficking

The limited research on vulnerabilities to human trafficking as well as trends and patterns continues to be a significant weakness in the sector. In response, UN-ACT has a dedicated component on research, data analysis and access to knowledge, which aims at helping to expand and make accessible the evidence base for more informed counter-trafficking interventions.

The project conducts research in-house as well as in partnership with other agencies based on its research strategy, which outlines the conceptual framework and priority areas in this respect. UN-ACT also provides technical advice to research institutes, UN agencies, international organizations and civil society actors conducting research on human trafficking, and facilitates partnerships between universities for research collaboration and capacity development.

The project manages a comprehensive resource centre on its website covering relevant research, laws and agreements, tools and guidelines and publications, with linked Facebook and Twitter accounts to reach audiences interested in anti-human trafficking. It uses its agenda-setting function as COMMIT secretariat to introduce relevant research into policy and programming considerations and initiates discussions on research

priorities, findings and follow-up interventions through the regional and national network meetings.

Output 4: Civil society and other non-government actors are able to contribute more effectively to anti-trafficking efforts

UN-ACT provides opportunities for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to inform decision-making in COMMIT and participate in the implementation and monitoring of SPA IV through the Civil Society Platform (CSP) to COMMIT. UN-ACT also supports the COMMIT Youth Forum (CYF), a formal body for youth engagement in COMMIT's human trafficking prevention efforts.

Further, the project provides financial and technical support through a small-grants fund to four civil society organizations (CSOs), and technical support to civil society working on human trafficking in the sub-region more broadly. The support centres on providing training in reporting and monitoring, project management, project proposal formulation and fundraising, thereby helping civil society become more sustainable.

Finally, private sector actors are also becoming increasingly important in UN-ACT's anti-human trafficking efforts given that exploitation often occurs in the supply chains of corporations and because companies have relevant technological or other expertise to contribute.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Outcome: Key anti-trafficking stakeholders in the region are working in a more cooperative and mutually supportive manner to effectively combat trafficking in persons

The achievements in 2015 demonstrate that UN-ACT is progressing towards the long-term goal of more collaborative and effective anti-human trafficking efforts.

Through the support of UN-ACT, the COMMIT Process has continued to strengthen by functioning more effectively and by becoming more transparent, accountable and inclusive. During the 10th Senior Officials Meeting (SOM10)/ 4th Inter Ministerial Meeting (IMM4) held in Cambodia, civil society representatives participated side-by-side government representatives, presenting their challenges, lessons learnt and recommendations for strengthened collaboration going forward. Several government delegates emphasized the importance of involving civil society in the efforts to counter human trafficking during the meeting, and proposed a more institutionalized approach to their engagement. All GMS governments have since then invited CSO representatives to participate in national and regional COMMIT meetings.

Collaboration between ASEAN and COMMIT progressed significantly in 2015 through the joint development of common indicators of human trafficking and related forms of exploitation. The indicators developed at a workshop co-sponsored by UN-ACT will enable front-line responders to identify potential victims of human trafficking, prior to more specialized screening to accurately determine their status. The driver of this key initiative is the broad recognition of the low levels of identification of trafficked persons and the need to increase the number of those identified, to provide assistance, and allow for more effective collaboration between countries in the areas of protection and criminal justice. The indicators are expected to be endorsed by the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) and the COMMIT SOM in 2016 before localization and operationalization in national contexts.

During 2015, a total of 2,911 victims were referred and supported through national and transnational referral mechanisms in the GMS. The figure represents a 16% increase compared to 2014 when 2,509 victims were supported and referred, which may be indicative of improved victim identification and referral mechanisms both within and between GMS countries. For example,

2015 Results At A Glance

2911* Victims Referred and Supported Through National and Transnational Mechanisms

*number represents a 16% increase compared to 2014

Cambodia: 688	Thailand: 720
China: 144	Lao PDR: 27
Myanmar: 987	Viet Nam: 345

6 Improvements to Anti-Trafficking Polices in the GMS

Cambodia: Developed M&E tools for the implementation of the Policy and Minimum Standards for Protection of the Rights of Victims of Human Trafficking

China: Passed the ninth amendment of the Criminal Law strengthening clauses related to human trafficking; Changed policies on the adoption of trafficked children whose biological parents cannot be found

Lao PDR: Approved country's first Anti-Human Trafficking Law

Thailand: Finalizing the third amendment of the Anti-Trafficking in Person Act that includes debt bondage as a factor in human trafficking

Viet Nam: Revised the Penal Code to include trafficking of males as a crime

the Cambodian Government reported that 85 Cambodian women were repatriated from China and assisted in Cambodia in 2015 (38% more than in 2014), which they explained was due to improved collaboration between the two governments and relevant NGOs.

2015 also saw further improvements in the legal frameworks and policies against human trafficking in the GMS, in part based on significant advocacy efforts from UN-ACT and partners: Viet Nam revised its Penal Code to broaden the scope of human trafficking offences and to grant men the right to be recognized as trafficking victims; Cambodia developed a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) tool for the implementation of its Policy and Minimum Standards for the Protection of the Rights of Victims of Human Trafficking; and the People's Congress in China officially approved the ninth amendment to the Criminal Law, which stipulates that



CASE STUDY 1: Rescued after Six Years as a Slave on a Boat

Six years after being enslaved on a trawler catching fish and seafood, U Min Min* was rescued along with hundreds of other fishermen from Indonesian islands in 2015.

"I finally get to go home," said the 66-year-old, smiling. He left Myanmar on the promise of getting a good job in neighboring Thailand, but like many others, he was instead duped into getting on a fishing boat that took him thousands of miles from home.

U Min Min suffered from an accident while working on that boat which severely injured his hands. Despite the extent of his injuries, no doctor or any medication was provided to help him. The injuries prevented him from being able to work, which led to beatings and punishments, such as the withholding of food and salary.

U Min Min and the other men onboard were also forced to work 20 to 22-hour days with no time off for little or zero pay. "We were staying out at sea for months before going back to port. If we didn't work hard enough, or made mistakes, they would beat us. I even saw some people getting shot or thrown overboard because they were sick or did something wrong".



U Min Min shows his scars resulting from the hardship endured on fishing trawlers (Picture courtesy: LPN)

Most of the victims are men and boys from impoverished rural areas in Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. They are usually approached by someone they know, or a friend of a friend, and promised work with a generous wage in construction or on farms. As many are desperate to earn money to provide for their families, they agree to go, on the understanding that they will repay the costs when they are later working. They are then transported across the border to Thailand covertly at night.

By the time they realize they will not be taken to the job they had been promised, but to a fishing port where they will be sold to captains and taken far out to sea, it is already impossible for them to seek help or escape. The fishing vessels normally operate far from the reach of inspection authorities. Due to rampant overfishing, fish stocks have significantly reduced, forcing the fishing vessels to go further out to sea. Some stay out for years, using supply ships to transport fish back to the mainland, or to get food and other provisions delivered.

With no written contracts and brokers paid for bringing the workers to the captain, the men have no information on what or when they should be paid. If they protest, they may be beaten or threatened to be reported as illegal migrants, or worse. Even after spending years working as slaves, they might not even receive enough salary to cover the journey back home.

U Min Min was lucky in escaping the boat in Indonesia, although he was stranded there until assistance arrived from civil society and journalists investigated the phenomenon of people in similar situations. He and many of the others received help from the Myanmar government, UN-ACT, other UN agencies and civil society organizations to return back home.

*Pseudonyms are used to protect identities of individuals affected.

criminal charges be brought against anyone involved in the buying or selling of women or children irrespective of the purpose. The amendment in China is considered to be a major step forward in addressing the demand side of human trafficking and the result of years of advocacy from victims' families and CSOs. The country also changed the policy and procedures regarding the adoption of trafficked children whose biological parents cannot be found. Further, the National Assembly in Lao PDR approved the country's first specific law on human trafficking, and Thailand was finalizing a third amendment to its Anti-Trafficking in Person Act B.E. 2559 (2016) at the end of the reporting period. A key feature of the amendment will be the inclusion of a definition of debt bondage as a factor in human trafficking, a critical issue for migrant workers in the country.

Output 1: The COMMIT Process is strengthened to become sustainable and self-reliant

Activity Result 1.1: COMMIT accountability and transparency enhanced

SOM/IMM was successfully organized in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in April 2015, with support from UN-ACT. The meeting brought together some 500 anti-human trafficking stakeholders from the CMS and elsewhere, including COMMIT governments, representatives from ASEAN and Malaysia, civil society, UN agencies and international organizations, as well as the private sector and media actors.



Myanmar official plays trafficking prevention game developed by COMMIT Youth Forum participants during SOM/IMM

The key outcomes of the meeting were:

- Formal adoption of SPA IV;
- Direct engagement between COMMIT governments and CSOs, youth, media and private sector representatives;
- Sharing of experiences, good practices and lessons learned, challenges and recommendations in regional counter trafficking efforts;
- Signing the Third COMMIT Joint Declaration to reaffirm dedication and commitment in combating trafficking in persons.

SOM/IMM also celebrated the tenth anniversary of COMMIT, commemorated through the publication of Reflections from the GMS with ministers and senior officials from COMMIT commenting on its evolution and achievements, along with a video documenting SOM/IMM and COMMIT's progress from the perspectives of the various key stakeholders. Through the interviews, it is clear that stakeholders find the process to have become more transparent, collaborative and efficient throughout the years.

SPA IV (2015-2018) was developed through a process that set new standards of inclusion and participation in

COMMIT by involving a wide range of anti-trafficking stakeholders. Further, SPA IV demonstrates progress towards Results-Based Management (RBM) in COMMIT, including a results framework with measurable indicators that will help monitor progress, developed by the COMMIT governments with UN-ACT support. The six governments have also committed themselves to report against a standardized reporting format on an annual basis, with a corresponding M&E framework. Each country agreed to select two national M&E focal points, to be trained by UN-ACT on RBM tailored to SPA IV monitoring and reporting purposes. These developments are expected to significantly enhance the accountability and transparency of COMMIT, strengthen its potential as a peer review mechanism, and ensure focus towards results.

Several countries strengthened the transparency and sustainability of their national work plans against human trafficking in 2015 by involving civil society and other stakeholders in the development and review process, and by adding M&E mechanisms. For example, Myanmar's work plan was developed by the government in partnership with members of the Human Trafficking Working Group (HTWG), a national network that gathers various stakeholders working on combating human trafficking such as CSOs, national and international NGOs, and academia. Through support from UN-ACT, the 2016 work plan was aligned with SPA IV in order to further harmonize and streamline the government's anti-human trafficking efforts. In Viet Nam, the 2016 work plan was developed by the Ministry of Public Security but benefited from a participatory planning process involving relevant counter-trafficking stakeholders that helped create a sense of collective ownership and responsibility for the COMMIT Process. Cambodia finalized its national guidelines on victim identification in 2015, with technical support provided by UN-ACT Cambodia and other partners. The guidelines will be launched in early 2016 and implemented by government and organizations through activities such as Training of Trainers (ToT), and training for frontline officers (social workers, police officers, embassy focal persons etc.). A selection of the ASEAN-COMMIT indicators have been included, and efforts will be made to integrate as many indicators as possible going forward.

Activity Result 1.2: Sufficient technical and functional capacities developed by governments

In order to ensure a sustainable and self-reliant COMMIT Process, a capacity assessment for COMMIT was conducted in 2015 resulting in a capacity development strategy. The report indicates that the process has been successful in the establishment of new laws, policies

and agreements; in raising awareness about human trafficking in the GMS; and that there has been progress made in the areas of investigations and prosecutions, though the capacities still need to be strengthened and solidified. The assessment also highlights that cross-border cooperation, including case management mechanisms, have become more effective, resulting in improved repatriation processes in some bilateral arrangements. However, the report notes a range of capacity limitations and challenges that vary from agency to agency and country to country. These include gaps in legal and policy frameworks; shortcomings in inter-agency cooperation mechanisms; and institutional capacity deficits, including in M&E.

The findings were used to draft a capacity development strategy for the COMMIT Process, which will inform future programming and capacity building efforts, and help COMMIT TFs develop national-level capacity development plans through the support of UN-ACT.

While there continues to be a need to strengthen the technical and functional capacities within COMMIT, all six governments increased their ownership over the process during the reporting period by assuming greater responsibility for the secretariat functions, such as: providing administrative, financial and organizational support to the organization of COMMIT-related meetings; documenting outcomes of relevant events; and preparing and delivering annual progress reports on COMMIT SPA IV implementation to development partners.

A selection of important results in 2015:

- The Cambodian government took on full responsibility for organizing and implementing a SOM/IMM meeting, allowing UN-ACT to focus mainly on providing technical and coordination support, the first time a government has done so. The Cambodian authorities, with assistance from UN-ACT Cambodia and other partners, also developed a Behavioral Change Communication (BCC) strategy, providing guidance at the national level for human trafficking prevention interventions;
- The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division in Myanmar, in coordination with UN-ACT, strengthened the capacity of community-based watch groups and township-level anti-trafficking bodies in three key hotspot areas to improve the quality of preventive and protective responses at the local level, and to strengthen relations and referrals between local and national actors;
- Thailand shifted its approach to a proactive, intelligence-led enforcement model including greater coordination with domestic and international partners. As a result, in 2015, the number of cases investigated, suspects arrested and victims identified have all increased from 2014 by 13%, 33% and 35.7% respectively. Specialized units were set up within the Criminal Court and the Office of Attorney General to expedite and further enhance the efficacy of the country's criminal justice system, rendering Thailand the first country in Southeast Asia to have specialized anti-trafficking agencies in every step of the criminal justice process. Criminal and disciplinary actions were also taken against 29 officials who were complicit in trafficking in persons;
- Viet Nam reported that the increased number of trained border officials in high-risk areas resulted in improved victim identification and case investigation efforts. In 2015, Vietnamese police investigated 407 human trafficking cases, leading to the arrest of 655 traffickers and the rescue of 345 victims.

Activity Result 1.3: Effective implementation of SPA IV

The COMMIT capacity assessment and development strategy identified the lack of financial resources as a key challenge to the process' long-term sustainability. However, several of the GMS governments increased their financial contributions to their own COMMIT work plans in 2015. An estimated 91% of the COMMIT work plan budget in China came from government funding covering activities such as cross-border anti-trafficking campaigns; meetings to negotiate bilateral MoUs, and a co-funded UN-ACT workshop on legal frameworks on transnational forced marriage and victim protection. The Chinese Ministry of Public Security has also announced that China will provide financial resources directly to UN-ACT in non-earmarked resources, subject to budgetary approval in 2016.

Thailand and Viet Nam covered an estimated 47% and 30% of their respective COMMIT work plan expenditures, and whilst there is no detailed data from Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar, there are indications that all three increased their financial commitments to their COMMIT work plan in 2015 despite limited national budgets. For example, the Lao Government partially funded its SOM/IMM delegates and fully financed the national COMMIT TF meetings held during the year. Further, the Cambodian Government allocated \$50,000 for the organization of the SOM/IMM meeting, in addition to raising additional funds from development partners.

Activity Spotlight: Cambodia and China partnering to protect vulnerable migrant women

In November 2015, the Chinese Government hosted a Cambodian Government delegation in Jiangxi Province, the largest destination province for Cambodian marriage migrants in China. Supported by UN-ACT, the meeting aimed to discuss ways to protect vulnerable Cambodian women from being exploited by traffickers and to develop a draft agreement between the two countries.

In the lead up to the meeting, UN-ACT consulted service providers and INGOs in both countries which had been involved in assisting and rescuing Cambodian women from forced marriages. Based on these consultations, a list of recommendations was developed and shared with the Cambodian Government. UN-ACT also provided technical support during the negotiations to ensure that the bilateral agreement on combating human trafficking was aligned with international standards. As a result, the draft agreement includes measures regarding: tailored preventive measures, effective prosecution cooperation and stronger protection and integration support for vulnerable migrant women.

The two governments will meet again in May 2016 to finalize the agreement and develop a plan of action for implementation.



Government representatives from Cambodia and China conclude negotiations on a draft agreement for bilateral anti-human trafficking efforts

The six COMMIT governments also improved their planning and implementation capacities in 2015, with support from UN-ACT and partners. Estimates suggest that China achieved 100%, Myanmar 88%, Thailand 87.5% and Viet Nam 82% of their respective national work plans. Cambodia and Lao PDR also implemented a significant number of planned activities, but the governments have not disclosed data on their implementation rates.

Bilateral cooperation between COMMIT countries was enhanced further in 2015, such as between Thailand and its neighboring countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar) where human trafficking flows are some of the most prevalent in the sub-region. This includes the introduction of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the repatriation of trafficking survivors as well as greater coordination in law enforcement responses for case investigations through the placement of a police attaché in the Embassy of Thailand in Myanmar. Thailand held discussions with Lao PDR and Viet Nam respectively to review progress in their implementation of bilateral MoUs against human trafficking, and to plan for collaboration going forward.

UN-ACT China initiated the development of a smartphone-based screening app for human trafficking in GMS languages. The app is expected to help frontline

responders overcome language barriers in encounters with potential trafficked persons, thereby ensuring more effective victim identification and assistance. The project was developed at the request of local Civil Affairs department officials and frontline police officers, and was informed by a joint Chinese-Cambodian field visit as well as interviews with Cambodian victims of forced marriage in China.

In Viet Nam, UN-ACT strengthened national-level training capacities on trafficking prevention approaches, case investigations processes, and victim protection principles through ToT of border guard officials in high-risk provinces. By the end of the reporting period, such efforts were being followed up through the development and implementation of an inter-agency BCC manual on anti-human trafficking, led by the social-political organization Central Women Union with support from UN-ACT and World Vision (WV). Further, the new Viet Nam - Lao PDR Plan of Action (PoA) under the bilateral MoU against human trafficking includes an M&E mechanism, which will help measure progress in implementation.



CASE STUDY 2: Traffickers Exploit the Lack of Safe Migration Options and Knowledge

“They were promised work at a garment factory in Malaysia getting \$500 per month, but my daughter called and told me that she was in fact sold as a sex slave.”

Akara's voice is wrought with anguish as she speaks about her daughter, Arruny, who was sold into the sex trade in Malaysia at 23 years of age, together with a 15-year old girl.

When a local man offered Arruny the chance to work in a textiles factory in neighbouring Malaysia last year, it was difficult for her to decline the offer. The promised salary of US\$500 per month would help repay debts incurred when her brother was sick and care for her mother and two younger siblings.

The girls are two of the many unfortunate Cambodians deceived into sexual exploitation. Lack of adequate information and channels for safe migration remain grave challenges to potential migrant workers in Cambodia.

False promises of better living and working conditions with greater earnings remain a common trick deployed by brokers to lure victims into the human trafficking trap. According to official figures released by the Cambodian Ministry of Interior, 230 people were recorded and supported as victims of trafficking in 2014. However, the unofficial figure is expected to be much higher.

“Pre-departure orientation to migrant workers is a must when it comes to seeking solutions to this challenge,” says H.E. San Arun, Secretary of State, Ministry of Women's

Affairs, who is also Chair of Cambodia's Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking (COMMIT) Taskforce. According to San Arun, “the orientation can equip migrant workers with basic knowledge and information on safe labour migration practices as well as the culture of the receiving countries. This can reduce chances of them falling prey to human trafficking. Anti-human trafficking NGOs as well as relevant state institutions have increased their attention towards pre-departure orientation.”

UN-ACT supports the anti-human trafficking efforts of the Cambodian government through the COMMIT Process. Cooperation with countries like Malaysia is imperative in trafficking prevention, assistance to survivors and in the criminal justice response to human trafficking, which COMMIT seeks to build.

Akara was happier when UN-ACT spoke to her again: “My daughter and the other girl were rescued and they came back to Cambodia earlier this year. They are now receiving support and vocational training. Hopefully, this will help them find work and they can make their own money, so they would never end up in a similar situation again”.

Yet the two girls will never be able to forget their terrible experiences in Malaysia and greater efforts are needed to ensure others are not subjected to the same ordeal.

Pseudonyms are used to protect identities of individuals affected

Output 2: COMMIT countries increase their cooperation with other countries and regional actors to effectively counter human trafficking

Activity Result 2.1: Joint anti-trafficking efforts of COMMIT countries with key destination countries elsewhere increased

Indonesia and Malaysia are two major destination countries for human trafficking from the GMS countries. COMMIT and UN-ACT have therefore made it a priority to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation against human trafficking with the two countries. While previous efforts in this respect yielded few concrete results due to limited governmental buy-in, 2015 saw significant advancements:

Malaysia signed a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on transnational crime including human trafficking with Viet Nam, and actively participated in the COMMIT SOM/IMM. The country also presided over the 2015 ASEAN Summit adopting the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP), which is expected to further strengthen counter-trafficking efforts in Southeast Asia.

UN-ACT supported the assistance and repatriation efforts for trafficking survivors from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand stranded on Indonesian islands. A delegation from the Myanmar Government, with support from UN-ACT and the HTWG in Myanmar, went to Indonesia to identify and assist victims from Myanmar, resulting in the repatriation of 535 victims and vulnerable migrants. The project also provided technical support to the Indonesian authorities in their efforts to seek regional responses to irregular migration and human trafficking patterns in Southeast Asia. These included the Jakarta Declaration Roundtable Meeting on Addressing the Root Causes of Irregular Movement of Persons as well as the first ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR)-SOMTC Joint Workshop on a Human Rights-based Approach to Combat Trafficking in Persons, organized by the Indonesian AICHR representative. In the latter, UN-ACT facilitated a session on policies and practices against trafficking in persons in ASEAN.

Activity Results 2.2: Institutionalized engagement between COMMIT and ASEAN

2015 saw the first formal cooperation between COMMIT and ASEAN. The two bodies jointly developed common indicators of human trafficking and related forms of

exploitation. UN-ACT, together with Australia-Asia Programme to Combat Trafficking in Persons (AAPTIP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), facilitated the development and agreement of a practical tool to be used by front-line responders in the preliminary identification of trafficked persons, in a workshop co-hosted by the Malaysian Government in Kuala Lumpur. The indicators are intended to increase the number of victim identifications, and to allow for more effective cross-border cooperation on cases in both protection and criminal justice responses. The outcome document is expected to be adopted by ASEAN SOMTC and COMMIT SOM in 2016.

As ASEAN strengthens its counter-human trafficking efforts, COMMIT is ideally positioned to lead the way with policy and programming initiatives, which can be scaled up in a broader regional context. Given its experience and expertise in both ASEAN and COMMIT, UN-ACT provides crucial technical advice on knowledge transfer between the two bodies. Representatives from the ASEAN Secretariat participated in both SOM/IMM and regional COMMIT TF meetings in 2015, with more concrete interventions between the two regional bodies expected going forward.

As the only non-ASEAN member in COMMIT, China maintains formal dialogue relations with ASEAN including through an inter-ministerial meeting mechanism on law enforcement and security cooperation that encompasses collaboration on human trafficking. China also actively participated in the COMMIT-ASEAN workshop mentioned above and has indicated its willingness to pursue strengthened cooperation with ASEAN through the COMMIT framework and beyond.

Activity Result 2.3: Coordination and cooperation among relevant regional actors for anti-trafficking increased

An inclusive, coordinated and regional approach requires the engagement of various stakeholders. For this reason, UN-ACT has convened a quarterly network meeting for some 30 regional counter-trafficking actors including:

- UN and affiliated agencies (ILO, IOM, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UN Women)
- NGOs (AAPTIP, Chab Dai, Fortify Rights, Save the Children, Walk Free, Alliance Anti Traffic (AAT), Terre Des Hommes, Caritas, A21, Nvader, ECPAT,

the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), WV, Plan International, Caritas);

- Researchers and research institutes (Nexus Institute);
- Regional mechanisms (the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime).

The gatherings have proven to be an important platform for information exchange and discussions on themes of mutual concern (research, advocacy and victim identification in 2015); identifying synergies and opportunities for joint action; and defining common messages for advocacy purposes. Caritas, AAT and A21 conducted a joint field visit to Khon Kaen province in Thailand to get an update about human trafficking and exploitation issues in the area and discuss potential collaboration.

UN-ACT also provided extensive technical support to initiatives by partners during the reporting period. Examples included Polaris' efforts to build capacities in human trafficking hotlines in the region; the Bali Process' work towards a regional approach to the prevention of labour trafficking; and Terre des Hommes Netherland's development of a new, integrated regional anti-trafficking programme.

The project also contributed a chapter on human trafficking in Thailand to the annual Asia-Pacific Migration Report, prepared by the Technical Working Group (TWG) on International Migration including Human Trafficking co-chaired by UNESCAP and IOM.

UN-ACT participated in and provided technical inputs to a number of events in 2015, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on the Bay of Bengal Crisis; the International Conference of Asian Political Parties on Human Trafficking; the process to develop both CSP and CYF; the Bali Process Training on Enhancing a Victim-Centered Approach to the Identification, Assistance, and Protection of Trafficking Victims in the Asia-Pacific Region; and the ILO Global Data Initiative on Modern Slavery. UN-ACT also presented at the European Parliament's Sub-committee on Human Rights on latest human trafficking trends and developments in the Asia-Pacific region. UN-ACT's contribution to the hearing will feed into a report on the fight against human trafficking in the EU's external relations, to be published in 2016.

UN-ACT staff also serve as the Asia-Pacific focal point for UNDP's global work on migration and displacement, adding a human development and resilience approach

to the humanitarian framework of other agencies. This involves addressing some of the negative root causes of migration and displacement, including limited livelihood and employment opportunities, protracted conflicts, governance challenges, and environmental degradation or disasters. Further, the project also supported the development of UNDP's Guidance Note on Migration and Displacement, published in late 2015.

UN-ACT was co-initiator of the newly formed Southeast Asia Coordination group Against Trafficking in Persons (SeaCAT) with other UN partners. The group feeds into the UN's high-level Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT), and seeks to identify synergies in approaches and interventions among members, drawing on and benefitting from each other's mandates and expertise, and identifying and scaling up best practices.

All these platforms allowed UN-ACT to provide technical support on human trafficking and migration-related initiatives nationally, regionally and globally.

UN-ACT also supported the Norwegian Embassy, together with the Labour Rights Promotion Network (LPN), to host a human trafficking donor coordination meeting in Thailand's Samut Sakhon province, which included a discussion with survivors of human trafficking. Representatives from Canada, Japan, the European Union, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and the United States participated. The visit ensured that donors involved in anti-trafficking work at a regional level were able to coordinate their work and engage directly with those at the heart of their efforts to better understand the impact of their interventions.



Interviews are conducted in Lao PDR as part of a UN-ACT research project seeking to understand patterns of migration and human trafficking to neighbouring countries

Output 3: Policy makers, academia, non-state actors and the public have increased access to evidence-based research and knowledge on human trafficking

Activity Result 3.1: Evidence-base for anti-trafficking interventions enhanced and accessible

Research examining the experiences of Lao migrant workers who used recruitment agencies to obtain jobs in Thailand was conducted in 2015, with a final report expected to be published in mid-2016. The project is designed to inform the further development of regular labour migration mechanisms between the two countries, preventing abuse and exploitation as well as assisting those in need.

Further, in response to increasing numbers of identified forced marriage cases between Cambodia and China, UN-ACT, in partnership with government and non-government stakeholders in both countries, initiated a research project to identify vulnerability factors for forced marriage as well as opportunities for protection interventions. The report, scheduled for publication in the first half of 2016, will help to inform the bilateral MoU process on human trafficking between the two countries.

UN-ACT collected secondary data on the "4Ps" - policy, prevention, protection and prosecution - of human trafficking for a series of data sheets on the six GMS countries. A previous publication of this kind was published by UNIAP and was well received in the anti-human trafficking sector. The new briefs, to be published in 2016, will build upon the previous editions by improving the comparability of information both over time and between countries.

In recognition of the importance of National Referral Mechanisms (NRMs) with standardized operational procedures to deal with human trafficking cases, UN-ACT China, together with WV, initiated a mapping exercise on existent NRM components in China against the background of international models and best practices. This analysis, which was ongoing by the end of the reporting period, will result in a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening the national referral mechanism for human trafficking in China.

In Viet Nam, a survey on existing facilities and services for trafficking survivors was conducted by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, in collaboration with UN-ACT and WV. The study is designed to identify gaps in available services that need to be addressed by Vietnamese authorities and NGOs with support from development partners.



CASE STUDY 3: Judicial Support for Victims of Human Trafficking

Deceived by her boyfriend, Mai* was trafficked from Viet Nam's Ha Giang Province to become the wife of a Chinese man in April 2012. Her boyfriend, Nam, had told her to leave school and go to China in search of work.

"I loved and trusted him. It was a difficult decision to make, but my parents could not afford the school fees anyway," said Mai.

Wanting to help her family with money, Mai went with Nam to meet with a woman called Huyen, who promised to give her a job. They travelled together by bus for many hours, and as Mai recounted, "I woke up the next morning alone and I had no idea where I was." She soon learnt that she was in the custody of a man who then sold her as a wife to a man in Jiangxi Province.

"I was scared that if I disobeyed my husband, he would beat me or sell me to a brothel, so I tried to always work hard and be a good wife. Two months after our son was born, I was sent away to work in a factory to make money for my husband's family. My husband was not a bad man, but all I wanted was to return home together with my child".

Mai was never given access to money, so she was unable to buy a ticket and escape. However, in August 2015, she managed to get hold of some money, rented a car and drove three days to the border, where she contacted the authorities. They interviewed her and informed her about the center of Legal Consultation and Judicial Protection in

Ha Giang Province. As Mai did not have any identification and her name had been deleted in the household registration book, the Viet Nam Judicial Support Association for the Poor (VIJUSAP) provided legal assistance, helping Mai with a written request for legal aid, and completed the administrative procedures for her to re-register in Viet Nam. Nam was subsequently arrested, although it is not possible to do so with Huyen, who is currently pregnant.

Mai has since remarried and does not want to continue pursuing a legal case for the fear of stigma from her husband's family if her past is revealed, as well as the potential of reprisals. Still, Mai is now actively raising awareness in the commune by talking about the risks of trafficking and unsafe migration with her neighbours, in order to prevent others from being trafficked in the same way.

Given increasing reports of such cases in China, UN-ACT has conducted research between 2014 and 2015 to identify patterns of recruitment, brokering, transportation and exploitation of Cambodians trafficked into China for forced marriage, and to inform policy interventions on the issue. The report, slated for publication in 2016, builds on previous research conducted by UN-ACT's predecessor on human trafficking between Viet Nam and China, including for forced marriages.

***Pseudonyms are used to protect identities of individuals affected.**

In 2015, UN-ACT finalized and disseminated two research reports analyzing the migration experiences of Lao workers deported from Thailand in 2013, and those of Cambodian workers deported from Thailand in 2009, 2010 and 2012. Both identify vulnerability factors to exploitation and propose a series of interventions to government and non-government stakeholders for mitigation purposes.

UN-ACT also provided technical support to the following research reports in 2015:

- Reintegration of Cambodian Trafficked Men, by Hagar International;
- Inaccurate numbers, inadequate policies: enhancing data to evaluate the prevalence of human trafficking in ASEAN, by Jessie Brunner;
- Vulnerabilities of street children to sexual exploitation in Thailand, by Love146;
- The Dynamics of Migration: Re-Displacement of Migrant Workers in Lower Northern Thailand; Will Myanmar Migrant Workers in Samut Sakorn Return Home?; and Human Trafficking in the Hospitality Industry, all conducted by Naresuan University in Thailand;
- Coming Clean: The prevalence of forced labour and

human trafficking for the purpose of forced labour amongst migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, by the Hong Kong Justice Center;

- Lessons learned from human trafficking cases in the agricultural sector, conducted by LPN, Social Responsibility Law Office (SR Law) and provincial authorities in Thailand;
- Desk review on human trafficking cases related to irregular migration in Thailand, by the Human Rights and Development Foundation.

In addition, UN-ACT continued to increase its outreach to academic institutions in the region as part of its capacity building efforts. A university-to-university programme, involving institutions in Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand is being developed in partnership with Mahidol University in Thailand. Discussions are also ongoing for UN-ACT support to curriculum development on migration and human trafficking at Thai universities, with guest lectures given at various institutes as a starting point for such dialogues.

Activity Result 3.2: Strategic dissemination and advocacy on research findings to influence policy and programming strengthened

Several strategic dissemination and advocacy initiatives based on research findings and recommendations were

conducted in 2015. In China, UN-ACT, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Security, organized a workshop to present and discuss preliminary findings of the Cambodia-China forced marriage study. These helped inform plans by Chinese authorities to revise procedures for the registration of marriages involving foreigners.

In Thailand, three awareness raising and advocacy activities on debt bondage were conducted. This has been a point of contention between advocates who see this as instrumental in human trafficking, and officials who have argued that it is not in human trafficking-related legislation.

In a major breakthrough, Chinese authorities, in response to targeted advocacy interventions by UN-ACT Cambodia and China, opened a government-run shelter in Beijing to foreign trafficking survivors and migrants in need of protection. Upon referral by UN-ACT, trafficked persons may now access direct support services ranging from food, accommodation to transportation and documentation assistance.

UN-ACT's website is designed to serve as a comprehensive tool for the dissemination of information related to human trafficking. Analysis of website traffic since August 2014 suggests an increasing usage on a month-to-month basis, and an overall split between returning and new visitors of 30% to 70% pointing to a broadening reach with a high level of more regular engagement. During the reporting period, the website saw 14,246 visitors making 41,918 page views. Visitors came from a total of 162 countries, with Thailand (2nd), Cambodia (5th), China (9th) and Myanmar (10th) among the top ten users by country. The UN-ACT China

website continued to provide updates on news, policies and laws as well as domestic and international research reports in Chinese, reaching a wide audience.

The UN-ACT website is linked to the project's Facebook page, which introduces new content available on the website, relevant updates from the broader anti-trafficking sector and key news stories for a broad readership. The Facebook audience increased over the reporting period, from 15,387 to 16,387 followers – with some posts reaching as many as 21,400 people. Five out of six GMS countries featured in the top ten origin countries of followers (the exception being China where Facebook is blocked). UN-ACT also uses Twitter to engage a smaller and more informed audience. The number of followers increased from 85 people to 213 during the reporting period. Further, the project prepares a regular newsletter that, by December 2015, was disseminated to 1662 subscribers. The newsletter features trafficking-related updates from UN-ACT and the GMS more broadly, important news articles on human trafficking in the sub-region, as well as an analytical review on a major issue of relevance to the sector.

In addition to these platforms and tools, which are interconnected and work to maximize the information's reach and impact, UN-ACT also had key achievements and success stories featured in UNDP's Governance and Peace Building News Updates, and on the UN Secretariat Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Social Policy and Development's website, both targeting a global audience.



Figure 5. UN-ACT website and Facebook page

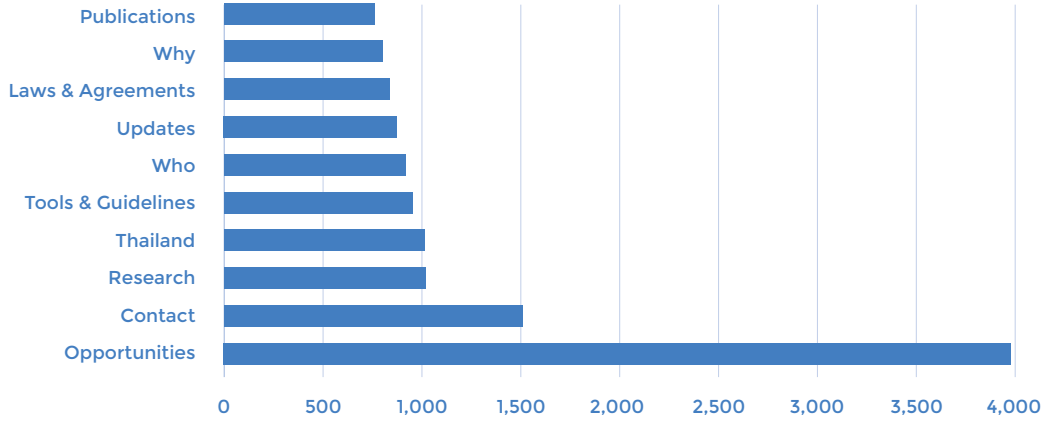


Figure 6. Pages most visited on the UN-ACT website in 2015 (excluding home page)

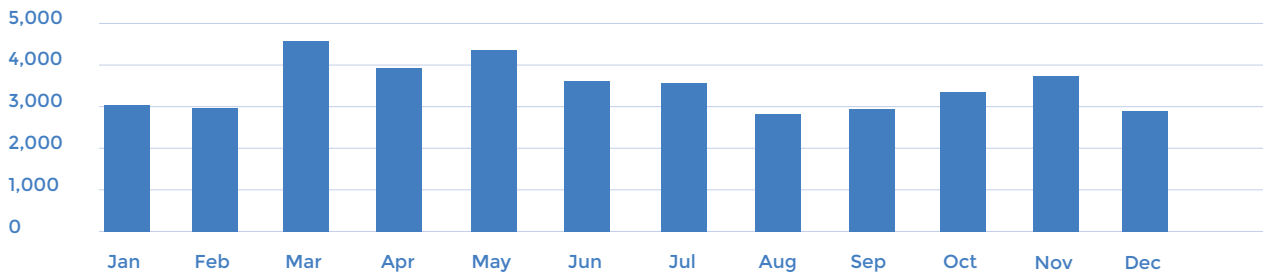


Figure 7. UN-ACT website pageviews

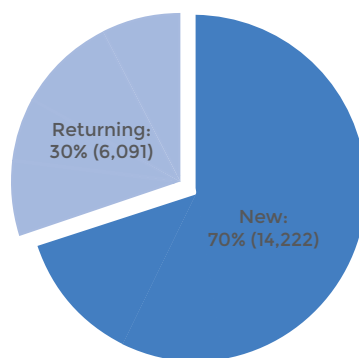


Figure 8. New vs. returning visitors on UN-ACT website

Output 4: Civil society and other non-governmental actors are able to contribute more effectively to anti-trafficking efforts

Activity Result 4.1: Increased engagement between government and civil society

As reported above, civil society actors had a dedicated session for engagement with the COMMIT governments at the COMMIT SOM/IMM in 2015. In preparation, relevant CSOs and NGOs from across the sub-region, with support from UN-ACT, established the Civil Society Platform (CSP) to COMMIT, and convened the CSP nationally and regionally to develop common positions and messages on issues at the COMMIT SOM/IMM. The CSP representatives presented examples of successful interventions between civil society and governments to counter human trafficking in the GMS, and outlined their vision for and commitment to increased cooperation in the implementation and monitoring of SPA IV. A number of governments called for more institutionalized civil society involvement in the COMMIT Process in response, and all GMS countries subsequently began to engage CSOs more regularly in both national and regional COMMIT TF meetings.

In total, there were 149 CSOs participating in national and regional COMMIT TF meetings in 2015, compared to 80 in 2014. While there were concerns in 2015 over shrinking space for civil society in many of the GMS countries, the anti-trafficking sector is comparably well-positioned in this respect, partly because of UN-ACT's coordination and convening role.

Cambodia, China, Lao PDR and Myanmar also reported an overall increase in the number of cases referred between government agencies and CSOs, up to 871 in 2015 compared to 551 cases in the previous year.

COMMIT governments strengthened their engagement with youth groups through the CYF. The body was previously known as the Mekong Youth Forum, with the transition to the CYF reflecting the increasing integration of youth participation in national and regional anti-trafficking efforts in the COMMIT framework. At a dedicated session at the COMMIT SOM/IMM, youth representatives presented creative examples of human trafficking prevention interventions, along with key recommendations to COMMIT SOM/IMM delegates for strengthened youth engagement. Youth representatives and CYF organizers also participated in national and regional COMMIT TF meetings; in fact youth are now formally COMMIT TF members in some of the COMMIT countries.

In Thailand, UN-ACT supported two youth projects to promote a better understanding of safe migration and human trafficking at universities involving a total of 450 students. This led to a partnership with Microsoft, UNICEF and WV to launch a series of youth trainings on building and using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills in trafficking prevention interventions, to be implemented in 2016.

Each of the six COMMIT countries organizes quarterly HTWG/Inter-Agency Working Group on Counter Trafficking in Persons (IAWG) meetings. The forums provide opportunities for the country relevant stakeholders (government agencies, civil society organizations, international organizations and private sector entities) to share information; discuss challenges, lessons learned and best practices; and identify synergies and joint interventions. The gatherings resulted in concrete activities in 2015, including a joint advocacy paper for government engagement in anti-human trafficking in Lao PDR, and consolidated inputs into the development of the new National Plan of Action (NPA) in Viet Nam.

Activity Result 4.2: Civil society has increased and sustained capacity to support Victims of Trafficking

In order to strengthen the capacity of civil society in the GMS region and to develop referral networks for the provision of direct support to trafficked persons, UN-ACT awarded four CSOs in four COMMIT countries with technical and financial support as part of its small-grants programme.



UN-ACT conducts training for civil society stakeholders in Viet Nam, focusing on results-based project management



CASE STUDY 4: Preventing Re-Trafficking through Skills Development

San Na*, a 15-year-old girl from the Cambodian province of Svay Rieng near the Vietnamese border, is third in a family of six children. Since the age of one, she was transported to and from Viet Nam by her aunt, a known smuggler, to be exploited for begging.

When she reached grade three, her mother became ill and she had to quit school to help pay for her mother's health treatment and pay off the family's high debt. Her mother made her go back to Viet Nam with her aunt to beg and sell lottery tickets. In return, her aunt promised to give her mother one million Dong per month (approximately \$45).

"My father had left and my mother was really sick, so my family relied on me to help them," she said. "I was willing to do so as I wanted my mother to get better."

Reality, however, turned out to be completely different for San Na. Her aunt kept all the money she made and she was not given enough to eat or drink, nor did she have a safe place to sleep or proper clothing to wear. On days when she did not make enough money, she would be abused verbally and physically by her aunt. Several months passed before she was finally able to talk to her mother, who told her that the aunt had not sent any money.

"I felt helpless, desperate and I couldn't believe it was my own aunt who had done this to us."

San Na's plight is not an isolated case in Cambodia. Her case highlights how children and young people are often forced to work for the survival of their families. While it is difficult to get accurate estimates of the number of trafficking cases in Cambodia, official figures released by the Ministry of Interior state that 230 victims of trafficking were recorded and supported in 2014.

San Na was at one point detained for seven months for the illegal selling of lottery tickets during the 13 years when she was forced to do so. In prison, she was beaten by prison guards and deprived of food and contact with others. When she was finally released, she was again arrested but this

time, she was sent to a shelter. Vietnamese shelter staff sent San Na back to Cambodia, where she was placed in the shelter run by Cambodian Center for the Protection of Children's Rights (CCPCR).

CCPCR is a Cambodian NGO offering direct services such as shelter and vocational training to victims of trafficking of up to 25 years of age, and supported by UN-ACT. During her time with CCPCR, San Na decided to train as a hairdresser and is currently working at a salon close to the shelter.

"I do not dare to even think that I could have become what I am today. I am a new person now."

Even as San Na recovers from her traumatic experiences in Viet Nam, children and youth are becoming new victims of trafficking every day. UN-ACT continues to conduct awareness-raising campaigns and train trainers who can help educate the communities about the risks of human trafficking and how to migrate through safe channels.

* A pseudonym is used to protect the identity of the individual.



San Na starting life anew at her job

The four CSOs cover the following services:

- Cambodia: Promoting better life options for victims of trafficking and exploitation through social care and vocational training, to reduce the likelihood of further exploitation and abuse | Cambodian Center for the Protection of Child Rights (CCPCR);
- Lao PDR: Protective services for vulnerable and trafficked children in southern Lao PDR, provided by key government agencies, communities and civil society actors | Village Focus International (VFI);
- Thailand: Promotion and protection of equal rights, and improving the quality of life for migrant workers | The Labour Rights Promotion Network Foundation (LPN);
- Viet Nam: Legal assistance to trafficking survivors, directly and through community legal aid clubs |

Viet Nam Justice Support Association for the Poor (VIJUSAP).

Through this initiative, UN-ACT has supported the CSOs to improve their management, reporting and monitoring skills, and supported large numbers of trafficking survivors during the reporting period. LPN played a particularly influential role in 2014 and 2015, bringing attention to hundreds of cases of trafficked persons from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Thailand on Indonesian islands, in collaboration with governments, civil society, media and the UN. This assistance was continuing through the end of the reporting period, and a total of 754 trafficking survivors were assisted by NGOs with UN-ACT funding in 2015.

UN-ACT China, in collaboration with development partners, organized three inter-linked training and networking workshops focusing on capacity building and empowerment for CSOs who played a pivotal



UN-ACT collaborates with Microsoft and other partners on skills development for youth to prevent human trafficking in Thailand

role in providing emergency assistance to presumed foreign trafficking victims (in particular vulnerable women, such as breast feeding mothers with small children and pregnant women). The training workshops covered case management, NRM/referral procedures, risk management and cross-border cooperation in 2015. Frontline service providers in China expressed a need to improve collaboration with their Cambodian counterparts, which resulted in Cambodian CSO representatives joining the Cambodian government delegation going to China for bilateral MoU discussions.

UN-ACT China also facilitated engagement between Chinese government counterparts and civil society representatives (especially domestically registered NGOs), which helped increase trust and boost relations between them thereby paving the way for more systematic cooperation going forward. Given the limited space for civil society involvement in political decision-making in China, deliberate efforts were made in Cambodia to engage non-governmental stakeholders in discussions on the bilateral MoU on human trafficking between the two countries. Such initiatives ensured that the experiences and expertise of civil society actors were reflected in the MoU.

Activity Result 4.3: Increased engagement by private sector

UN-ACT increased its engagement with the private sector through several important initiatives during the reporting period.

The project co-organized a regional conference on the role of ICT in countering human trafficking involving governments, UN agencies, civil society and the private sector, together with Microsoft and other partners. The event resulted in several follow-up initiatives including a proposed public-private partnership to develop national human trafficking case databases in Thailand, and a series of trainings aimed at empowering vulnerable youth by developing their computer science and ICT skills through the Microsoft YouthSpark initiative.

In addition, UN-ACT Thailand co-organized a workshop on how to prevent forced labour in the fishing industry, and collaborated with PILnet's Pro Bono Forum providing legal support to Thai NGOs working to counter human trafficking. In Cambodia, representatives from Microsoft and the Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies built networks and relations with government and civil society representatives at SOM/IMM. UN-ACT also co-organized a ToT for 27 recruitment agencies in Cambodia on pre-departure orientation for migrant workers going to Thailand and Malaysia.

Finally, UN-ACT China initiated the development of a human trafficking screening app in GMS languages for smartphones, in response to a government request and in partnership with software developers. As mentioned above, the app, to be launched in 2016, will help frontline responders overcome language barriers in engaging with possible trafficked persons from abroad, thereby ensuring more effective victim identification and assistance.

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

GENDER

Gender is an integral part of the UN-ACT project and gender considerations were continuously mainstreamed throughout activities in 2015. All UN-ACT research and analysis is disaggregated by gender, and UN-ACT is sensitive to gender-specific concerns during data collection. Gender balance is a key consideration in the organization and implementation of events and activities, and for all UN-ACT technical support provided. Further, the project works with partners such as UN Women to strengthen the gender dimension of interventions.

Below are some country-specific gender initiatives from 2015:

- UN-ACT Cambodia supported the planning and drafting process of a plan for gender mainstreaming in Cambodia's education system;
- UN-ACT Lao PDR participated in the country's Gender Working Group which contains UN agencies, NGOs, Embassy representatives and international consultants, by providing technical and coordination support related to trafficking in persons to research initiatives and similar activities;
- UN-ACT Thailand advocated the Law Reform Commission of Thailand for strengthened consideration of gender in the revision of the Anti-Trafficking Act B.E. 2558;
- UN-ACT Myanmar advocated for the concerns and rights of women and children from conflict-affected (Kachin and Shan State), disaster-prone and border regions of Mon, Kayin, and Thaninthayii as these groups are considered especially vulnerable to exploitation, human trafficking, violence and abuse;
- UN-ACT China continued to focus on preventing and addressing the conditions of forced marriages for women.

HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

Human trafficking is a severe form of human rights abuses whereby people are deprived of control over their lives. A human rights-based approach requires that interventions are designed with the objective to have people's inherent rights strengthened and protected, including through empowerment to claim such rights. UN-ACT activities seek to ensure that victims are empowered to regain control over their lives, while strengthening the capacities of duty bearers so that they are better able to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of vulnerable populations and trafficked persons. UN-ACT understands that trafficking survivors have vital information and experiences, which the project seeks to draw upon to develop more effective anti-human trafficking responses. This may be through research, support to survivor workshops engaging policy-makers, or its support to the CYF ensuring that the voices of vulnerable populations and those affected by human trafficking inform interventions. The rights of survivors were also addressed and integrated into trainings of border guards in Viet Nam; the CSO projects implemented through UN-ACT's small-grants scheme; the photo exhibition, "No one should work this way" by Karen Emmons and Steve McCurry at the COMMIT SOM/IMM meeting; and during the development of SPA IV, which places the rights of victims at its core.



Powerful images from "No one should work this way" are exhibited at the COMMIT SOM/IMM in Cambodia

CONSTRAINTS IN IMPLEMENTATION: Improving UN-ACT Project Performance Through Learning and Reflections

A fundamental challenge faced by the project in 2015 was the decrease in available funds due to exchange rate losses in donor currencies. This had a negative impact on both country and regional level implementation across all four output areas, as well as with regard to the planning of future initiatives.

Another key challenge was that despite efforts made to increase collaboration with Malaysia and Indonesia, outcomes were not as far-reaching as anticipated. UN-ACT had plans to place a liaison officer in Malaysia for more regular and substantive forms of cooperation. However, whilst initial discussions were encouraging, the Malaysian Government's response ultimately fell short of an actual commitment or endorsement. Part of the reason may have been its very busy schedule as Chair of ASEAN in 2015.

UN-ACT's implementation rate in 2015 was 92%, indicating that efforts to ensure strategic planning and continuous monitoring of project implementation by country offices and the Regional Management Office (RMO) was effective. However, the project's close engagement with governments was occasionally a challenge for timely project implementation due to rotating government staff, different budget cycles, and a lack of capacity in the governments or sudden changes in national priorities. Going forward, it will be important to involve government partners in planning processes at an early stage, thereby ensuring ownership and commitment, and mitigating potential obstacles to implementation from the start.

UN-ACT's role as the secretariat to COMMIT at times also meant that project staff were occupied with time-consuming, administrative or logistical tasks, which constrained their ability to implement and monitor more substantive interventions.

Finally, the COMMIT Taskforces lack adequate M&E mechanisms and skills, with negative implications for the effectiveness of anti-human trafficking efforts. The Taskforces need to improve information-sharing between and within member agencies as well as with other partners. By improving their reporting mechanisms

and increasing the accountability and transparency of their interventions, the COMMIT Taskforces will be able to learn from mistakes, scale up best practices and better showcase their achievements.

It will also be important for anti-trafficking work to be increasingly mainstreamed in the work of relevant ministries, thereby ensuring budget allocation and allowing for longer-term planning as well as an overall higher prioritization of the issue. Given the structural nature of human trafficking, current, often ad-hoc efforts are ill-equipped for this task.

THE WAY FORWARD

UN-ACT's financial constraints are expected to continue in 2016, due to the continued depreciation of donor currencies against the U.S. Dollar, while the refugee crisis in Europe may result in donors diverting international development resources to address this problem. The project will need to prioritize resource mobilization as a result, whilst forging additional partnerships for activity implementation to move its programmatic agenda forward.

The coordination and technical support to COMMIT, civil society, academia and the private sector will continue to be at the core of UN-ACT's effort. In addition, COMMIT TFs are set to draft national-level capacity development plans on the basis of the COMMIT capacity assessment and development strategy, with development and implementation support from UN-ACT and other development partners. This will help relevant government agencies enhance their capacities to take over additional COMMIT secretariat functions and move the process closer to a functional trans-national referral mechanism.

The latter requires common standards and procedures at the sub-regional level, including for victim identification. 2016 will see efforts to have the indicators of victim identification (that were jointly developed in late 2015 by ASEAN and COMMIT) endorsed, localized and operationalized in GMS countries. Whilst endorsement is expected to take place at the COMMIT SOM in Lao PDR, preparatory steps for their alignment and incorporation into national-level victim identification procedures may proceed in the meantime.

UN-ACT will also work with COMMIT TFs to identify opportunities for resource allocation from government budgets to support COMMIT. Whilst 2015 saw promising developments in this respect, financial commitments will have to increase further to ensure COMMIT's long-term sustainability. The project will also continue to strengthen results-based management and M&E capacities in the COMMIT TFs through dedicated training programmes, ensuring that COMMIT remains focused on its objectives, learns from challenges and scales up proven and best practices.

In addition, UN-ACT will be working with the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process to develop regional guidelines for the development of results-based NPAs including adequate monitoring frameworks, and

supporting the production of a catalogue of up-to-date and high-quality training courses and materials available in the region.

The project will be finalizing and publishing a series of research and data analysis projects including the China-Cambodia forced marriage study; the Lao PDR-Thailand labour migration survey; and the GMS human trafficking datasheets. Further, the University-to-University conference on migration and human trafficking co-organized with Mahidol University, institutions elsewhere in the GMS and possibly beyond is scheduled for early 2017 and will require significant preparatory efforts in 2016. UN-ACT will continue its work on the Global Data Initiative on Modern Slavery with research actors across the globe, developing a research tool and measurement framework for prevalence studies on human trafficking, in support of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) monitoring.

Additional research projects are being planned, but they will depend on the availability of financial resources.

Lastly, UN-ACT will continue to support and build the capacity of civil society organizations through its small-grants scheme, as well as to increase opportunities for civil society to inform policy-making through more institutionalized engagement with COMMIT TFs. The project is also likely to increase its partnership with the private sector, including with Microsoft through its YouthSpark Initiative and law firms for pro bono legal support to trafficking survivors through PILnet.

UN-ACT is looking forward to working with its partners on these and many other activities in 2016.

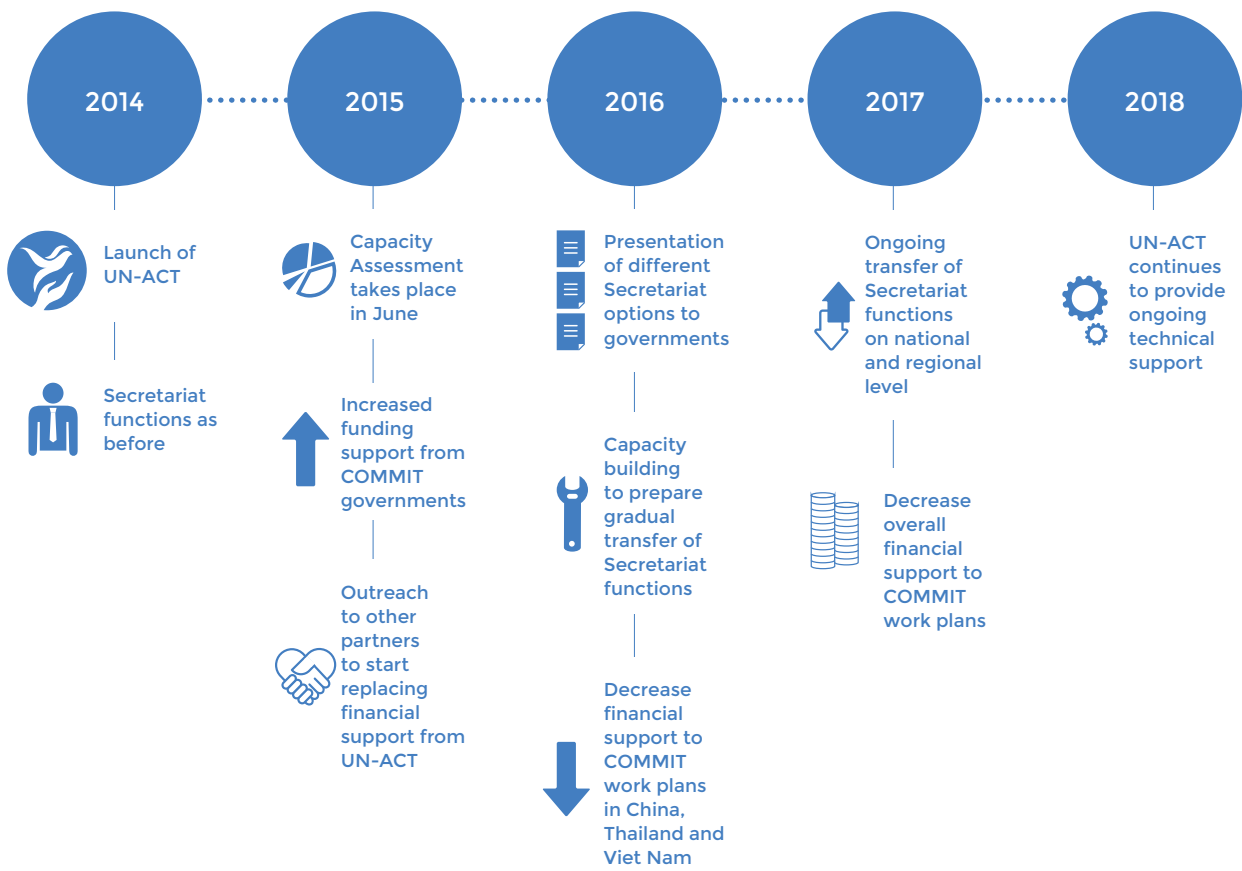


Figure 9. Sustainability plan for the COMMIT Secretariat

ANNEX 1 INDICATOR TABLE

Outcome: Key anti-trafficking stakeholders in the region are working in a more cooperative and mutually supportive manner to effectively combat trafficking in persons											
Indicator 1: Number of victims referred and supported through national and transnational referral mechanisms		Indicator 2: Number of changes in trafficking policies after advocacy from civil society									
Baseline: 0	2015 Progress Marker: 2000	Baseline: 0	2015 Progress Marker: 7								
2015 Result: 2911		2015 Result: 6									
2018 Target: 5000		2018 Target: 14									
Activity result	Indicators	Baseline	Cambodia	China	Lao PDR	Myanmar	Thailand	Viet Nam	Regional	2015 Progress Marker	Result
Output 1: The COMMIT Process is strengthened to become sustainable and self-reliant											
1.1 COMMIT accountability and transparency enhanced	# of countries reporting back on agreed M&E framework	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	3	0 ¹
1.2 Sufficient technical and functional capacities developed by government	# secretariat functions transferred to the governments	0	5 partly (b,c,d,e,g) ²	3 partly (a,b, f)	4 partly (b,d,e,h)	2 fully (a, d), 2 partly (e, g)	5 partly (a,b,c,d,e,g)	2 fully (b,d), 3 partly (f,i,e)	N/A	4 fully, 15 partly	Fully: 4 Partly: 22
1.3 Effective implementation of SPA IV	% of COMMIT work plan activities funded by government and other partners	0%	N/A	91% (estimate)	N/A	N/A	47% (estimate)	30% (estimate)	N/A	50%	Increasing financial contribution, but not all recorded.
	% of COMMIT work plan activities implemented	0%	N/A	100% (estimate)	N/A	88% (37/42 for 2015)	87.5% (est.)	81.8% (est.)	N/A	70%	Govts have not provided full information.

Output 2: COMMIT countries increase their cooperation with other countries and regional actors to effectively counter human trafficking												
2.1 Joint anti-trafficking efforts of COMMIT countries with key destination countries increased	# project activities/ interaction with non-COMMIT countries	0	2	0	1	2	1	1	1	2	10	9 ³
2.2 Institutionalized engagement between COMMIT and ASEAN	# of joint collaborations between ASEAN and COMMIT representatives	0	0 ⁴	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 ⁵	2	1 ⁶
2.3 Coordination and cooperation among relevant regional actors for anti-trafficking increased	# of joint activities between regional network	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	7	14 Achieved
Output 3: Policy makers, academia, non-state actors and the public have increased access to evidence-based research and knowledge on human trafficking												
3.1 Evidence-base for anti-trafficking intervention enhanced and accessible	# of research projects on TIP completed	0	0	1 ⁷	0 ⁸	0	0	0	0	3	2	3 Achieved
3.2 Strategic dissemination and advocacy on research findings to influence policy and programming strengthened	# initiatives in follow up to research findings/ recommendations	0	0	2 ⁹	0	0	2	2	1	1	12	7 Not achieved
	# of sessions of returning and new visitors on the website	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2500 regular, 4500 new	Returning: 6091 New: 14,222 Achieved.

Output 4: Civil society and other non-governmental actors are able to contribute more effectively to anti-trafficking efforts												
4.1 Increased engagement between government and civil society	# CSOs participating in COMMIT meetings	0	89	11	11	16	9	11	2	50	149	Achieved
	# of referrals from government to CSOs/ CSOs to government	0	688	59	103	21	N/A	N/A	N/A	700	871	Achieved
4.2 Civil society has increased and sustained capacity to support VoT	# victims supported by NCOs with UN-ACT funding	0	46	15	87	0	584	22	0	100	754	Achieved
4.3 Increased engagement by private sector	# of collaborations with private sector partners	0	1 ¹⁰	1 ¹¹	0	1 ¹²	1	1 ¹³	1 ¹⁴	6	6	Achieved

INDICATOR TABLE NOTES

1 SPA IV adopted during SOM/IMM in Cambodia in April 2015, where a decision for countries to report on an annual basis was made. M&E capacity-building trainings will be provided to M&E focal points in each country in 2016.

2 The letters refer to specific COMMIT secretariat functions as follows:

a. To provide support to the COMMIT Process to ensure that the process continues to be guided by international norms and standards;

b. To provide administrative, technical and substantive support to the COMMIT Process at the country and regional levels including assistance in the convening of technical roundtable discussions;

c. To organize annual Senior Officials Meeting and the Inter-Ministerial Meeting and urgent meetings requested by the Governments;

d. To document outcomes of meetings convened and decisions reached;

e. To prepare press releases and press advisories as required, disseminate information on COMMIT undertakings, and represent the information source for public inquiry on the COMMIT Process;

f. To raise funds to ensure timely implementation of the COMMIT Sub-regional Plan of Action and for its administration according to standards set by the UN;

g. To provide an annual progress report on the COMMIT SPA implementation status at the annual SOM meetings.

3 There are ongoing discussions between Malaysia and two COMMIT countries, Cambodia and Viet Nam, regarding the development of MoUs specific to human trafficking. Victims have been repatriated from Indonesia to Lao PDR, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar. Myanmar organized a mission to Indonesia to arrange the return process for 535 trafficked persons and abused migrants.

4 ASEAN representatives attended national COMMIT meetings in Cambodia as well as the SOM/IMM.

5 An ASEAN- COMMIT victim identification workshop.

6 In addition to the victim identification workshop, ASEAN representatives participated in the COMMIT SOM/IMM.

7 This refers to the China-specific study as part of the joint

Cambodia-China research project on forced marriages between the two countries. The latter is expected to be finalized in 2016. Further, UN-ACT partnered with Chinese government agencies and World Vision on a unpublished mapping study of existing structures and available services in human trafficking cases, in efforts to strengthen the National Referral Mechanism in the country.

8 An ongoing study examining Lao workers' experiences with regular labour migration schemes between Lao PDR and Thailand is expected to be finalized in mid-2016.

9 A presentation of the preliminary findings of the China-specific study of the joint research project on forced marriages between Cambodia and China to government agencies resulted in discussions about revisions to relevant legal frameworks. The findings also informed the development of a Cambodia-China MoU on human trafficking including forced marriages.

10 Pre-departure ToT of 27 private recruitment agencies.

11 A private information technology company hosts the UN-ACT China website on a pro bono basis.

12 Collaboration with two Myanmar airlines.

13 Microsoft provided financial support to trafficked persons.

14 Microsoft provided support to a regional conference on human trafficking.

ANNEX 2 OVERVIEW OF EXPENDITURES IN 2015

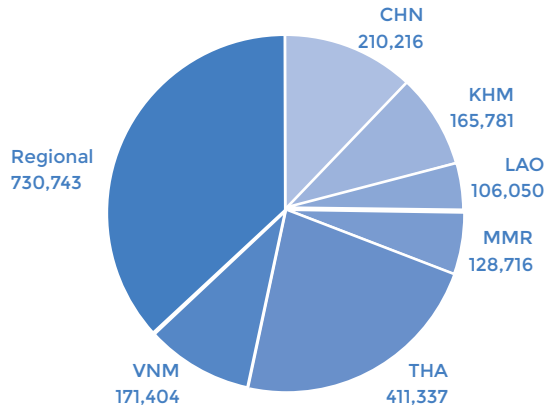


Figure 10. Division of expenditure by office

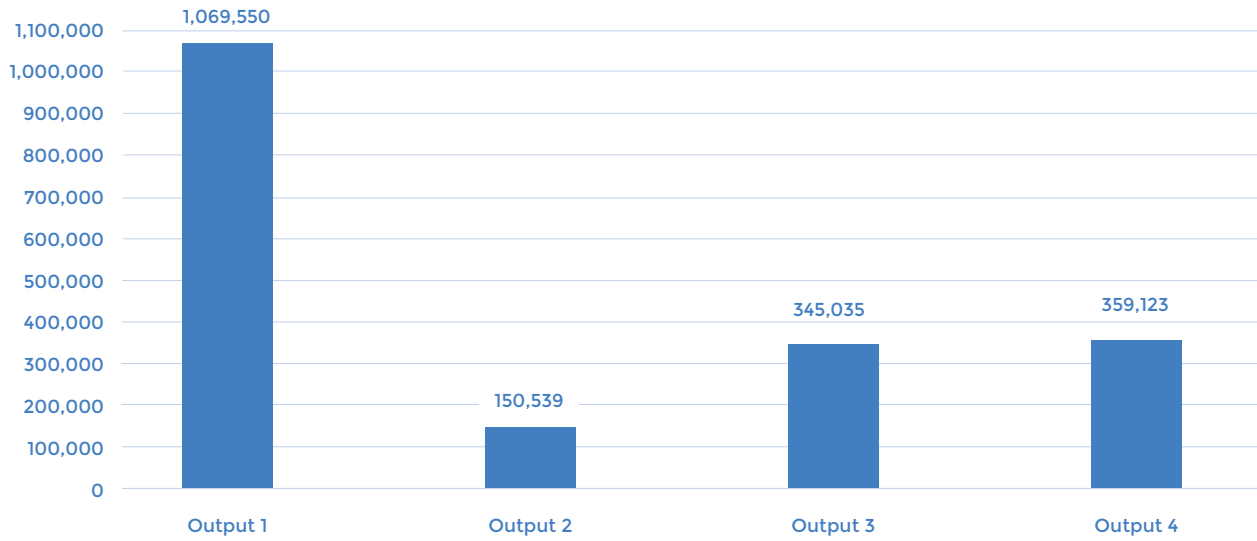


Figure 11. Expenditures by Output (with Operations)

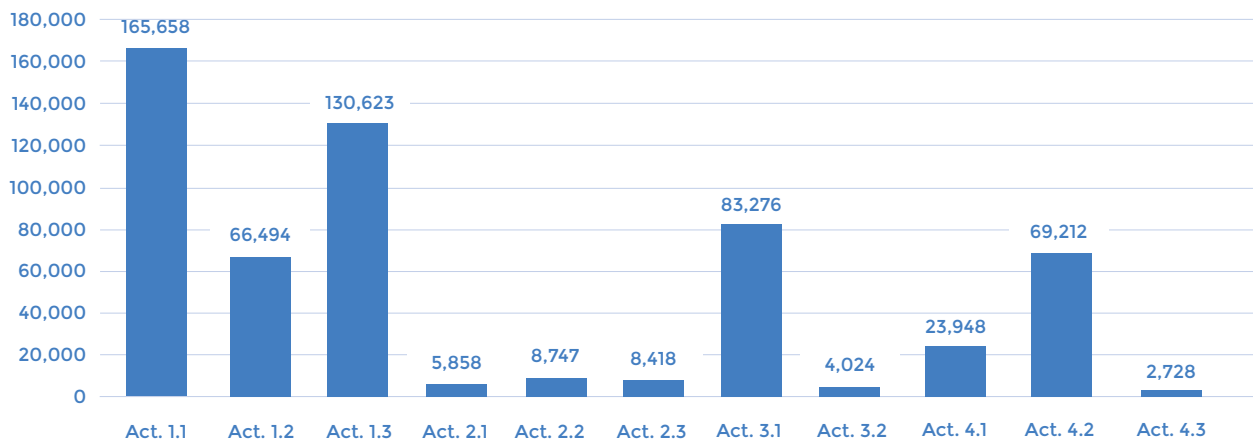


Figure 12. Expenditure per Activity Result (without Operations)

ANNEX 3

UN-ACT RISK ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

LACK OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

RISK EVALUATION:

It is very likely that this risk will occur.

Norway and Sweden have committed approximately 60% of the required funds for the first three years of the UN-ACT project. The donors have requested an independent evaluation to be conducted in mid-2016, in order to decide whether or not they will continue funding the last two years. At the beginning of 2015 there was a significant exchange rate change which led to a financial loss. Sweden covered most of the loss related to their funds, unfortunately Norway was not able to do the same. There is a large risk that the project will experience a similar exchange rate loss in 2016.

ASSESSING CONSEQUENCE:

The project risks not being able to achieve the objectives set and being closed down by the end of 2016, if no further funding can be secured.

MITIGATION:

The project developed a fundraising strategy to help guide the project's ongoing efforts to liaise with potential traditional and new donors. A UN-ACT brochure is currently being developed, which will be utilized for fundraising and awareness raising of what the project does and what it aims at achieving.

LACK OF POLITICAL WILL

RISK EVALUATION:

It is possible that the risk will occur.

Building political will to combat human trafficking is a challenge due to the sensitivities that surrounds the issue, particularly with regard to labour exploitation, corruption and economic benefits. The six countries of the Greater Mekong Sub-region have shown commitment to combating human trafficking through the COMMIT Process: by developing Sub-regional Plans of Action and undertaking collaborative and national efforts. However, tangible progress remains to be seen, particularly around critical issues such as services to victims of trafficking, victim identification, and taking

action against official complicity in human trafficking cases.

Beyond this, the issue of data collection and reporting on human trafficking hampers the ability to effectively and sustainably target the problem. There are also indirect risks from restrictive laws and policies being developed in a number of countries related to limiting the space for civil society organizations to work, among them organizations involved in anti-human trafficking efforts.

Previously, there was little pressure on the governments to show progress made against indicators and commitments. However, they are now requested to demonstrate how they are combating human trafficking, through action and resources, and to report on this progress. UN-ACT will engage with different stakeholders to advocate for and leverage on this.

ASSESSING CONSEQUENCE:

Major consequence on the ability to achieve the intended results.

A lack of political will may limit the sustainability of the COMMIT Process after the end date of the UN-ACT project, and implementation of measures agreed to under the COMMIT SPA IV. Limited implementation could result in inadequate prevention, protection and prosecution efforts, with serious consequences for those vulnerable to or affected by human trafficking.

MITIGATION:

Building trust and developing stronger relationships with the relevant government counterparts will continue to be key in order to reinforce the political will. Continuous engagement and focusing discussions on the factors driving the need for better anti-trafficking efforts, not only moral and rights-based, but also political, economic and social, will be emphasized on all levels. Further engagement of stakeholders and channels to influence the governments will be important, including private sector and civil society.

NON-COMMIT COUNTRIES AND REGIONAL BODIES ARE NOT WILLING TO ENGAGE

RISK EVALUATION:

It is possible that the risk will occur.

As the project seeks to engage further relevant countries and ASEAN in its objectives, success in these areas will be dependent on receptiveness from these partners. Five of the six COMMIT countries are within the ASEAN grouping and there is relevance and leverage within those countries. There has been informal engagement with ASEAN bodies, and indications that co-supporting initiatives in the future is possible. Efforts to engage Malaysia have received a positive informal response, however the prospects for engaging in more formal cooperation are still dependent on a decision to do so by the Malaysian Government. Beyond engagement with governments, other institutions such as civil society, academia and the private sector are channels that the project may seek to engage in other countries.

ASSESSING CONSEQUENCE:

Limited consequence on the ability to achieve the intended results.

The project will still be able to deliver in three of the four key areas of work without the engagement of countries and regional bodies beyond the GMS, however the output related to increasing cooperation with other countries would be limited. Given the increasing focus on trafficking between GMS countries and those outside the region, it is considered particularly important to engage countries such as Malaysia, and efforts will continue.

MITIGATION:

The risk will be reduced by working through different channels and with a range of potential partners in ASEAN and the target countries

POLITICAL SENSITIVITY

RISK EVALUATION:

It is possible that the risk will occur.

Working with governments, civil society and other stakeholders to combat human trafficking is likely to continue to be politically sensitive, due to the various economic, political, social and reputational impacts of the problem. However, the project design has taken account of such concerns and focuses on collaboration

and capacity development in the sector. The need to work across borders and across sectors is now well recognized and sets the foundation for overcoming sensitivities. Further, the COMMIT Process provides its member countries with a forum and guidance to address human trafficking across sectors and borders in a safe environment.

ASSESSING CONSEQUENCE:

Limited consequence on the ability to achieve the intended results.

The consequences may vary from initiative to initiative and will be contained within those initiatives should political sensitivities become heightened. Working closely with the governments and other stakeholders provides channels for feedback at different stages and therefore limits consequences of politically sensitive actions. There is also a need to weigh different interests and relationships in strategizing initiatives, and pushing some boundaries may be necessary.

MITIGATION:

The project will take a collaborative approach to work with a range of stakeholders and prioritize its capacity building goals. Assessing the sensitivity of initiatives based on the experience and expertise of UN-ACT staff will help to guide interventions and reduce the potential risk.

LACK OF COMMITMENT BY PARTNERS TO PROJECT INITIATIVES

RISK EVALUATION

It is possible that the risk will occur.

The project relies on partnerships for the success of project initiatives, and these are dependent on common goals and available resources. Where the project has limited resources for initiatives, the incentives for partners to join and remain committed to interventions may be reduced.

ASSESSING CONSEQUENCE:

Limited consequence on the ability to achieve the intended results.

Due to the collaborative nature of the project and the synergies in different initiatives with different partners, this risk is likely to be minimized. Also, given the range of partnership that the project has developed, any lack of engagement from a partner will be balanced by engagement with others.

MITIGATION:

Careful and strategic selection of partnerships and the range of partners involved in different activities should mitigate this risk.

DIFFERENCES IN PERSPECTIVES WITHIN AND BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS

RISK EVALUATION:

It is possible that the risk will occur.

The COMMIT governments work together in their anti-trafficking efforts, yet have different perspectives towards the COMMIT Process and levels of interest in the different areas of anti-trafficking cooperation. These factors can result in obstacles to progress in project implementation.

ASSESSING CONSEQUENCE:

Limited consequence on the ability to achieve the intended results

The long-term existence of the COMMIT Process and the multilateral nature of the regional Taskforce is based on the common interests of the COMMIT governments, and consensus is built out of discussions that focus on those common interests. Differences in perspectives are therefore likely to be overcome by the overarching desire for regional cooperation on this issue and the progress already made under the COMMIT Process.

ETHICAL AND SECURITY CONCERNS

RISK EVALUATION:

It is unlikely that the risk will occur.

The project takes a rights-based approach to interventions and therefore seeks to implement initiatives with such considerations well planned for. The primary risk is that government and non-government partners may unintentionally cause ethical and security concerns in their work with victims of trafficking, in developing policies, or in their work with the media.

ASSESSING CONSEQUENCE:

Limited consequence on the ability to achieve the intended results.

Any infringements on ethical and security concerns may have significant consequences to the lives of trafficked

and vulnerable persons as well as those directly communicating with them, and should therefore be carefully mitigated against.

MITIGATION:

Mitigating measures will include security, ethical and risk assessments conducted on initiatives with implementing partners, and corresponding capacity building to reduce risks as an ongoing strategy.

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