



World Vision 

Children, communities, governments

World Vision's
Regional Advocacy
Anti-Child Trafficking
Project



This resource highlights the work of World Vision's Regional Advocacy Anti Child Trafficking Project (RACTP) project.

The main goal of the Regional Advocacy Anti Child Trafficking Project is to influence the establishment of positive and enabling policy environment to effectively combat trafficking in persons, especially children, to reduce and ultimately eliminate the problem in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

The project is funded by World Vision Australia.

Regional Advocacy Anti Child Trafficking Project is currently implemented in Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. Motivated by our Christian faith, World Vision works with the world's most vulnerable people. World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

Human trafficking is a contemporary form of slavery.

Around the world, an estimated 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked across borders each year - around 80 percent of transnational victims are women and girls and up to 50 percent of them are children. Although women and girls have been noted to be the majority of those that have been trafficked, however, trafficking of men and boys has begun to surface in recent years.¹

Children are especially vulnerable to trafficking because of a perceived lack of value in their own communities, as well as their inability to challenge exploitative conditions and rights abuses.

They are exploited in many ways: forced into hazardous labour on plantations, in factories or households, sold to brothels, working as beggars or drug couriers, or forced to become child soldiers.

Perpetrators of trafficking may work in sophisticated networks across borders and even continents, or simply move people from villages to the city to meet the demand for cheap, exploitative labour. Between them, they make this cruel and illegal industry the third largest source of crime profits globally.

1. Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, 2005 U.S. Department of State Publication, Office of the Under-Secretary for Global Affairs

“It’s a big lesson for young people who want to work in foreign countries. You can’t even trust your own blood.”

Teenager, Myanmar, whose aunt lied to her about sending her Thai wages home to her parents

“I would go begging for one month at a time, and then I would be allowed to go home again for a few days before my aunty would rent me out to another woman again. She forced me to go and beat me if I refused.”

Cambodian girl, trafficked into begging in Vietnam at the age of four

Asia's trafficking challenges

In Asia, trafficking of girls and women into the sex industry is probably the most common, and certainly the most discussed, form of trafficking. As well, there are many other industries known for using “slave” labour., including agriculture and fishing, domestic labour, “sweatshop” factories and organised crime syndicates.

The trademark for all these industries is the invisibility of their victims - young girls kept under lock and key in brothels, ragged children beaten by “owners” for a bad days’ begging, young fishermen told at sea their wage will be withheld to pay their migration debt.

They rarely report their treatment, tell their stories or press charges against their traffickers and employers. This makes the real picture of trafficking in Asia very difficult to see.

Asian victims are reported to be trafficked into all other continents as well as between Asian countries; destinations include Thailand, Japan, India, Malaysia, Taiwan and Pakistan.

Victims of trafficking are almost always from poor communities where employment opportunities are lacking, forced by their domestic situations to accept exploitative treatment. Often they

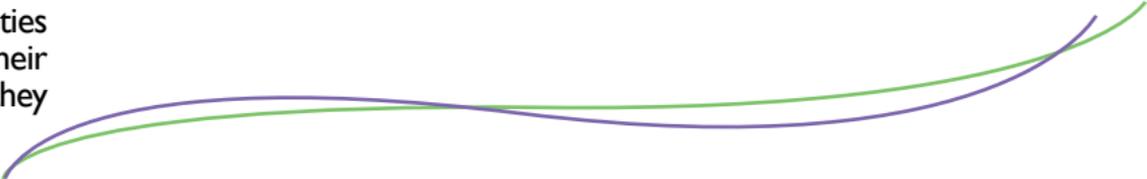
are also from marginalised groups – illegal immigrants or ethnic minorities, with low levels of education and lack of government protection or representation.

Governments are the key to change

The key to reducing trafficking in Asia and the Pacific is in the hands of national governments. Many are not doing enough to combat trafficking, in particular implementation of agreed policies and laws. While many countries have introduced legislation to address trafficking into prostitution, broader patterns of trafficking receive little recognition or action.

As well, victims of trafficking lack legal rights or protection; cross-border migration in search of work is often done illegally, and the fear of being caught and punished by authorities places migrants at extreme risk of exploitation and abuse.

To meet their promises, governments need to implement serious laws that treat trafficking as the crime and traffickers as the criminals, plus adapt a holistic approach to ending it in every industry.



Why advocacy?

One of the major challenges in addressing human trafficking is that the problem is largely unrecognised. Many efforts are concentrated on trafficking into prostitution, losing sight of the larger patterns of trafficking for labour and exploitation across industries. Although human trafficking is illegal, with international measures in place to make anti-trafficking laws enforceable, governments and communities continue to tolerate and shelter trafficking and traffickers.

World Vision believes that recognizing the broader issues of trafficking is the essential first step towards solving them. Alongside program interventions which provide livelihood security to reduce the need for migration, assist with safe migration processes, protect migrant rights or care and support for victims of trafficking, World Vision's advocacy efforts raise awareness and empower communities to challenge trafficking from within.

World Vision is ideally placed as both a grassroots community organisation and a national advocate. We provide resources to local groups to help them deliver anti-trafficking campaigns, as well as joining high profile agencies in advising governments on trafficking policy.

How does advocacy make a difference?

- *By listening to voices and experiences of victims of trafficking, especially children, to understand and combat the factors that lead to vulnerability.*
- *By calling on governments to ensure rights-based, child-friendly and gender-sensitive policies on prevention, protection (including repatriation and reintegration), and prosecution*
- *Through partnerships, between NGOs as well as local community groups and authorities, for greater access to the communities most vulnerable to trafficking and therefore greater opportunities for lasting changes in attitude.*

Supply and demand



- *Without demand for an exploitable labour force, trafficking would no longer be profitable.*
- *Without a ready supply of people unaware of risks of trafficking or subject to the pressures of poverty, trafficking would no longer be possible.*
- *Trafficking interventions need to work from both sides – with governments and legal authorities on reducing demand, with communities and local leaders on reducing supply.*

Why is trafficking so prevalent in the GMS?

The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) is a region within the mainland South East Asia comprising six countries; Yunnan Province of China, where the Mekong river begins, as well as Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. The onset of regional integration within the overall context of globalization greatly enhanced the flow of travel in a region where the history of migration has always been high.

While the flow of goods and finances were encouraged, restrictions were placed to curtail the flow of people, in particular that of unskilled labour; at a time when the demand for such labour was on the rise. This impacted the market force, pushing both the demand and the supply to meet it.

The result was a lucrative market for “peoples’ movers,” “facilitators” or “carriers”. Many of these “facilitators” were individuals who knew the territory and had contacts across the borders.

Rarely are the traffickers large scale organized crime syndicates as may be the case in other parts of the world. Instead, GMS trafficking works for the most part through loosely knitted networks of criminal entrepreneurs or individuals seizing opportunities created by these regional imbalances of globalization.

Advocacy in action: World Vision's response

World Vision National Offices in the Greater Mekong Sub-region have taken a critical step towards a regional approach to combat human trafficking, with two combined groups, the Trafficking Working Group and the Project Advisory Committee.

The Project Advisory Committee operates at the policy and strategic level, while the Trafficking Working Group pools knowledge and experience to systematically approach programming standards and issues.

Cambodia is known to have high rates of trafficking. Cambodian children are trafficked to the major cities of Thailand and Vietnam for begging or the sex industry. Trafficking of children from Vietnam, both girls and boys, meets an international and local market for commercial sexual exploitation in Cambodia.

Communities most at risk are those in remote, underdeveloped areas with few livelihood options and poor educational standards. For those dependent on the land, a bad crop or the death of livestock can plunge a family into ruin. The impact of HIV and AIDS can also be seen through orphans and child-headed households.

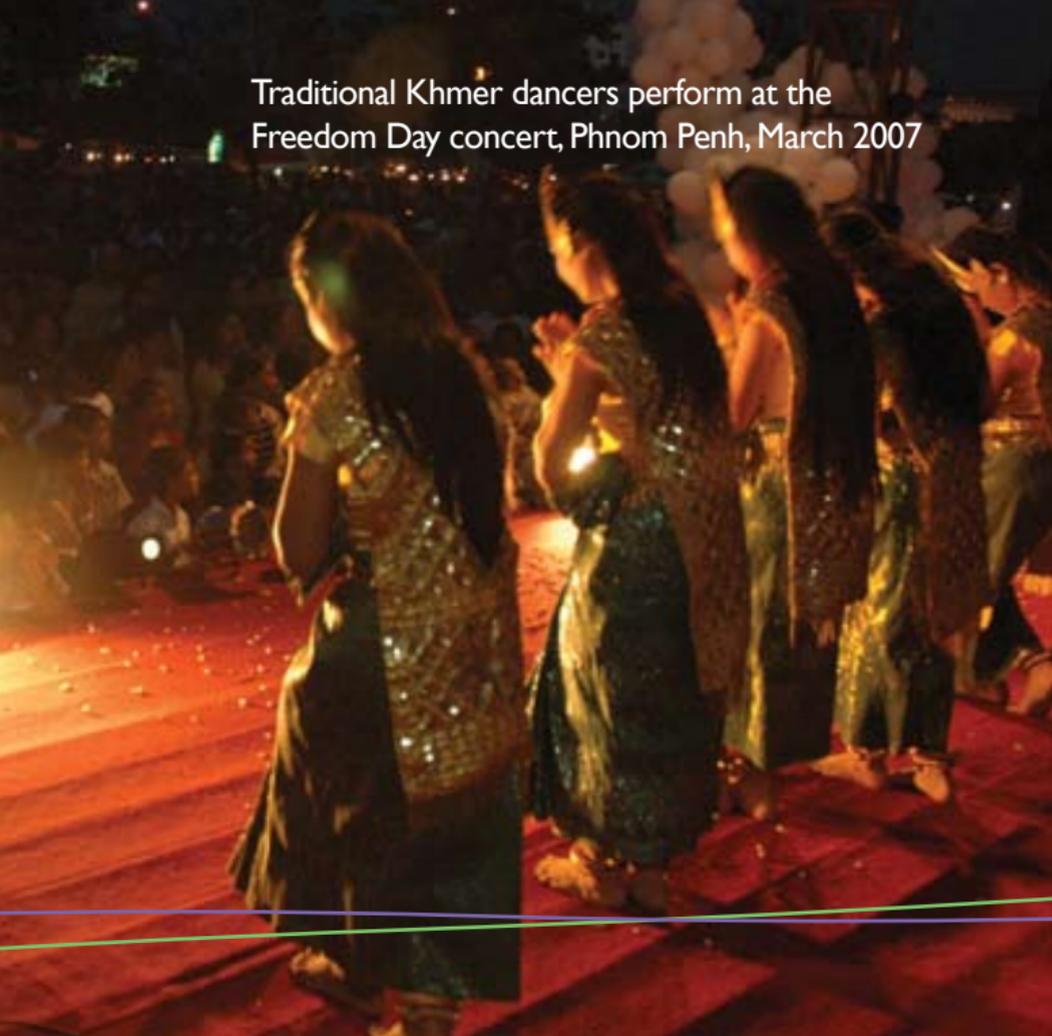
For over ten years World Vision Cambodia has focused on children's issues, especially children in circumstances that may place them at risk of sexual abuse and trafficking. World Vision's Children at High Risk Prevention Project works through Children's Clubs to improve child protection and income generation in rural communities.

World Vision also runs a trauma recovery centre for girls who have experienced sexual abuse or trafficking into the sex industry. As well as giving the girls psycho-social support and vocational training, World Vision works with their communities and families to ensure their experiences will not leave them stigmatised when they return home.

To address demand, World Vision raises awareness using billboards, signs and magazines around Phnom Penh warning in English, Japanese, Chinese and Khmer of the consequences of child sex tourism.

Training between the US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement and the Cambodian Ministry of Interior's Department of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection is also reinforcing ways that NGOs can contribute to successful investigations and prosecutions.

Traditional Khmer dancers perform at the
Freedom Day concert, Phnom Penh, March 2007



Freedom Day 2007

In March 2007, a coalition of local and international NGOs including World Vision banded together in Cambodia as part of a worldwide effort to raise awareness on modern-day slavery, dubbed “Freedom Day” by the coalition “Stop the Traffik!”

A free concert in the park attracted around two thousand young people, wearing white wristbands with the message printed in Khmer language “Freedom from Human Trafficking”.

The program, hosted by one of Cambodia’s premier television celebrities, included dance, songs and a moving drama performance about child protection. As the sun went down, candles were lit and films on trafficking were shown.

“This is the first time I’ve heard about human trafficking,” said one audience member. “The movie that reflected the victims’ suffering really touched my heart. If I find someone trafficked, I will contact the national hotline on the leaflet.”

In Cambodia, World Vision works with UNICEF and IOM to implement the Law Enforcement Against Sexual Exploitation & Trafficking of Children (LEASETC) project, providing support and capacity building for the Ministry of Interior's Department of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection. This includes:

- (1) a hotline for reporting cases of trafficking and sexual exploitation,
- (2) training police,
- (3) establishing a standard accepted medical examination form for victims of sexual exploitation and
- (4) a database system for child sex offenders.

Throughout Myanmar, people face extreme poverty, particularly in under-developed rural border regions. In neighbouring countries, economic opportunities, the demand for unskilled, cheap labour, and perceived better conditions, create "pull factors" that make migration an attractive option for men, women and children.

Myanmar is mainly a country of source and transit, although recent incidences indicate it may also be a place of destination for trafficking from China.

Children are trafficked to Thailand for prostitution, labour exploitation and begging. Children are also used to traffic goods and drugs across borders.

World Vision's anti-trafficking initiatives in Myanmar focus on three main areas: prevention, protection (repatriation and reintegration) of trafficking survivors and policy advocacy.

To prevent, World Vision focuses on awareness building and livelihood/life skills training for community members, including the "Look before you leap" prevention campaign and ongoing awareness raising activities in the communities.

To repatriate, World Vision provides services to survivors of trafficking with the collaboration of Myanmar government, UNIAP and Save the Children Myanmar. Cross-border repatriation has been made possible by government networking.

To reintegrate, World Vision provides psycho-social counseling, life-goal planning and support with education, vocational skills and livelihood opportunities.

Raising awareness of the risks is a key anti-trafficking strategy for villages near the Thai border in Myanmar.



Thailand, because it is a relatively rich country, is by far the biggest receiver of illegal and legal labour migration from its neighbours in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS), Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. Victims of trafficking into Thai brothels tell desperate stories of exploitation linked to family poverty. Children from Myanmar and Cambodia are forced into begging on the streets of Bangkok, extremely vulnerable to sexual exploitation from locals and tourists.

World Vision Foundation of Thailand is working with partners to establish multi-disciplinary committees at provincial levels. As well, World Vision's Assistance Support and Protection for Migrants and Trafficked women and Children (ASAP) project works on reducing the vulnerabilities of newly arrived immigrants in Thailand to traffickers.

Community watch groups, legal assistance, skills development and awareness building all contribute to a more secure existence for these groups. The project also works on rights issues including increasing rights protection by local and national government and calling for an end to exploitative labour practices.

New law protects victims, not perpetrators

On June 5, the Thai government passed the much-awaited Anti-Human Trafficking in Persons Act, bringing them in line with policies of Cambodia and Myanmar whose anti-human trafficking laws have already been successfully ratified. The launch of the new legislation not only highlights a strong commitment from the Thai government that it is determined to put an end to human trafficking but also express its intention to increase involvement of civil society to protect human rights.

World Vision Foundation of Thailand (WVFT) has been working with the Thai government and its partner organisations in human trafficking issues including policy for over 10 years. The new laws will provide better protection for people who have been trafficked, both internally and across borders, with harsher penalties for perpetrators and a broader definition of trafficking, including boys and men who previously have not been protected by law.

To launch recognition of the new law, Thailand's Department of Social Development and Welfare, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security created a one-month roadshow to promote anti-trafficking messages through Bangkok and Pattaya. The reaction of just one boy in the crowd, 19-year-old Kamsorn from Laos, indicated the success that awareness-raising can bring. "I get it!" he said. "The traffickers think we know nothing, so they try to fool us to do whatever they want. But now I understand trafficking."



For hundreds of children like these, who cross the border illegally from Cambodia to Thailand each day, new laws will mean greater protection from traffickers.



Schoolgirls hold signs and chant “Don’t believe recruiters” at a World Vision awareness raising event in Laos.

Lao PDR’s human trafficking occurs in a context of mass migration due to widespread poverty, limited education, economic hardships and growing consumerism. In areas of high migration such as Savannakhet, up to 7% of the total population may be cross-border migrants, especially to Thailand.

Out of all these migrants, a small percentage will disappear, possibly victims of trafficking resulting in slavery or death. A much larger percentage will experience undesired situations of exploitation such as hazardous working conditions or refused promised wages.

Through the Regional Advocacy anti-Child Trafficking Project, World Vision Laos is working with key stakeholders to advocate for strong policies to protect children from all forms of trafficking.

World Vision is also implementing Voices of Victims (VOV) project, currently in Savannakhet province, to reduce the number of youth from Laos trafficked to Thailand. VOV has established a pilot Migrant Advice Centre in a major transit area, as well as providing trafficking prevention education through peer educators in source communities and schools. Source villages have established child and youth protection committees (CYPC), with watchdog volunteers and an effective referral network.

The People's Republic of China (P. R.C.) is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor.

The majority of trafficking in China occurs within the country's borders, but there is also considerable international trafficking of P.R.C. citizens to Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and North America, which often occurs within a larger flow of human smuggling.

World Vision China has the largest NGO programmatic presence in China with some 39 ADPs in 18 provinces/autonomous regions and more than 72,180 sponsored children. By caring for and keeping track of migrant families, WV China is able to reduce their risk of being trafficked.

Recently launched, World Vision's Regional Advocacy anti-Child Trafficking Project is in the process of building networks and partnerships with other key actors in order to support development of better policies on trafficking.

Vietnam is a source and destination country for men, women and children trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced labor. Vietnamese women and girls are trafficked to Taiwan and Korea where they are lured by fraudulent offers for employment and marriage to local Taiwanese and Korean men. As a destination country, Vietnam receives trafficked Cambodian children who are often forced to work as beggars in urban areas like Ho Chi Minh.

In Vietnam, World Vision's key focuses are prevention, protection (including return and reintegration) and policy advocacy at national level.

World Vision Vietnam also actively supports the Reintegration Network of INGOs, local NGOs, UN agencies and Government concerned agencies in Vietnam. Partnering with the government of Vietnam, World Vision is actively supporting capacity building of National Task Force members at provincial levels.



Partnering for change: The Mekong Youth Forum

Child and youth participation is key to combating child trafficking. The “Voices of Children” initiative aimed to increase their involvement through partnership with World Vision, ILO and Save the Children regionally, plus many other international and local agencies at country level.

The main objectives were:

- To provide a venue for children and young people in the Mekong sub-region to collectively articulate their perspectives on the issue of trafficking*
- To review policies and programs discussed at the first series of National and Mekong Children’s Forum in 2004*
- To demonstrate the value of children’s participatory approaches in the search for sustainable solutions to trafficking*

As part of this initiative, the September 2007 Mekong Youth Forum on Human Trafficking (MYF) brought vulnerable young people from across the Greater Mekong Sub-region to Bangkok for a week-long intensive consultation on trafficking solutions for children. The children shared their perspectives to draft a series of recommendations on ways to improve anti-trafficking measures within countries and across borders.

The recommendations were then presented to senior government officials of the six GMS countries at a special session arranged by the UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (UNIAP).

Recommendations included:

- Increased protection of migrant children
- Better access to quality education
- Recognition of the right to a birth certificate for all children born in a GMS country
- Improved methods to support young victims and prevent them from further abuse and exploitation when they return home
- More outreach and advocacy networks to help raise awareness about the dangers of trafficking especially in schools and communities.

The peer-nominated delegates had already participated in similar national forums on trafficking in their own countries; many had begun dialogue with government officials and agencies as a result.

During the MYF, participants selected a youth representative to take their views even further, to the December's Senior Officials Meeting (SOM5) in Beijing. It was the first time a youth delegate was allowed to participate in the high level policy making process. The governments accepted the recommendations of MYF and, in a joint declaration signed by the Ministers of 6 GMS countries, pledged to have sustained and meaningful engagement with young people.

"I understand that some of the children's ideas are not new, but we have power in saying such thing and sharing our ideas. When the government listens to the children they will see children are very brave, and it is very powerful when they express their point of view."

Vietnamese youth delegate

"Before coming here I didn't know there were other countries working on this issue. But others are working to stop trafficking and now we have partners in the region sharing our ideas."

Thai youth delegate

"In fact I didn't know much about human trafficking... but after the forum in our district and then in our city, little by little I was touched by the real stories of those who suffered through human trafficking. If we can do something, raise our voice, I think our voice matters and our words can come to be."

Chinese youth delegate

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