



UN-ACT

United Nations Action for Cooperation
against Trafficking in Persons

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2014



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAPTIP	Australia-Asia Program to Combat Trafficking in Persons
ACTIP	ASEAN Convention to Combat Trafficking in Persons
ARTIP	Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons Project
ATIPD	Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division
ATTF	Anti-Trafficking Task Forces
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBTIP	Central Body for the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons
CED	Community Education Development
COMMIT	Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking
COMMIT TF	Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking Task Force
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
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
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMM	Inter-Ministerial Meeting
IMOAT	Inter-Ministerial Office against Human Trafficking
IO	International Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LE	Law Enforcement
LPN	Labour Rights Promotion Network
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSDHS	Ministry of Social Development and Human Security
NCCT	National Committee for Counter Trafficking
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOCHT	National Operation Centre on Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking
NPA	National Plan of Action
NRC	National Registration Cards
PEDA	Population Education Development Association
RBM	Results-Based Management
RCF	Regional Cooperation Framework
RCG	Research Communications Group
RPA	Regional Plan of Action
RSO	Regional Support Office
SOM	Senior Officials Meeting
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SPA	Sub-regional Plan of Action
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN-ACT	United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIAP	United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
VoT	Victim of Trafficking

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project, United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons (UN-ACT), was launched in April 2014 to further progress anti-trafficking efforts in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and beyond, through effective coordination and technical support to anti-trafficking partners.

UN-ACT is well positioned to address some of the key challenges in anti-trafficking as identified in its design phase: the fragmentation of the anti-trafficking response; the limited evidence base in anti-trafficking; and the limited space for civil society to contribute to this effort in the region. In its unique position working with a range of counter-trafficking agencies and organisations, including in governments, international organisations, and civil society, UN-ACT is able to capitalise on its networks and relationships to develop and support joint initiatives to combat trafficking in persons at all levels.

UN-ACT provides technical and financial support to the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) to develop capacities and coordination in combating trafficking in the region through a rights-based and multi-disciplinary approach. The process for developing the capacities of the COMMIT governments is underway to ensure that by the end of the project the COMMIT Process is sustainable through integration into the governments' own systems. In 2014, this has seen most progress in China, where the government has assumed both funding and administrative responsibilities for several COMMIT activities.

Technical support to the COMMIT Process at a regional level focused on consultations on the 4th Sub-regional Plan of Action (SPA IV), which was developed to an advanced stage, alongside the finalization of SPA III implementation. SPA IV has been developed through an inclusive process demonstrating the progress in COMMIT, engaging civil society in new ways. It seeks to implement a systematic approach to anti-trafficking with a results framework at its core. This process has ensured the governments' commitment to the goals of the plan and built the political will to hold themselves to account for its implementation.

UN-ACT has established a regional network with the collaboration of over 20 organisations engaged in anti-trafficking initiatives in the region to facilitate improved cooperation and knowledge sharing. Quarterly meetings bring the organisations together to share experiences, plans, and analyse trafficking trends.

The network is organised to share good practices and lessons learned in key areas of anti-trafficking efforts, to raise the standards in the sector and for possible joint programming. The project has also been in discussions with the ASEAN Secretariat as well as the Government of Malaysia on areas of technical support and coordination that the project can provide beyond the GMS.

As the limited evidence base in anti-trafficking continues to hinder the sector, UN-ACT has developed a research strategy to prioritise targeting of data collection. Two research reports were finalised in 2014 documenting trends in vulnerability to trafficking between Laos and Cambodia as source countries, and Thailand as a destination. Further research was initiated on the trafficking of women from Cambodia to China for marriage, and recruitment of migrant workers in Laos. UN-ACT's website serves as a repository of information and tools in anti-trafficking, with corresponding social media channels for interactive dissemination of trafficking-related information.

A small grants fund was established to support the work of civil society in the fight against human trafficking, strategically targeting support to the development of referral mechanisms alongside direct support to victims. The terms of reference was widely disseminated and proposals have been received from across the sub-region, with implementation expected to start in 2015.

UN-ACT has been developed to succeed the UN Inter Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP), which ran from 2000 to 2014, building on the good practices and developing from the lessons learned of its implementation.



Figure 1. Human Trafficking and Forced Labour in Numbers

INTRODUCTION

The UN Action for Cooperation against Trafficking (UN-ACT) project was created to succeed the UN Inter-Agency Project against Trafficking (UNIAP), which ran from 2000 to 2014. When developing the project document for UN-ACT, UNDP consulted with over 200 stakeholders in the six countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS). The following key findings resulted from these consultations:

The anti-trafficking sector often operates in a fragmented fashion, without consensus in regards to desired outcomes. This fragmentation often leads to confusion, conflicting efforts and an ineffective overall response to the crime of human trafficking. Future efforts to fight trafficking must therefore focus on developing a holistic approach that pulls together all key stakeholders and ensures that activities are undertaken in a concerted manner.

Based on these findings, a project was developed with the following outcome:

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

To work towards this outcome, the project identified four interlinked outputs, presented in the UN-ACT project document as follows:

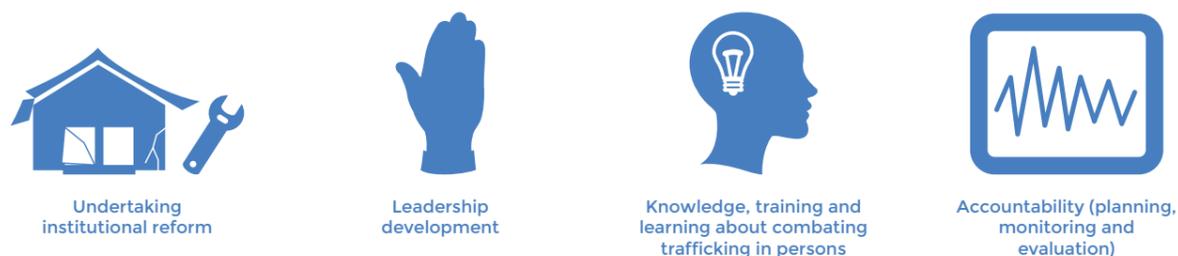
OUTPUT 1:
The COMMIT Process is strengthened to become sustainable and self-reliant

UNIAP functioned as the Secretariat for the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) since its inception and the new project will continue to provide support to this process. However, UN-ACT will put additional focus on institution building for the purpose of ensuring the sustainability and self-reliance of the COMMIT Process. Parallel to these institution-building activities, support will be provided to the implementation of national anti-trafficking work plans in line with identified (sub-) regional priorities.

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

The project will engage with a broader geographical area in the next phase in order to strengthen anti-trafficking work in COMMIT countries, in recognition of the human trafficking flows and linkages that exist between COMMIT countries and many other countries in the broader region. Greater engagement is also envisaged with regional institutional bodies such as ASEAN to bolster cooperation with other countries and promote cross-learning and stronger linkages.

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



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

Because



Assumptions



Figure 2. UN-ACT's Theory of Change



UN-ACT staff conduct situation assessment vulnerability to TIP as a result of the mass deportations at the Thai-Cambodian border

OUTPUT 3:

Policy makers, academia, non-governmental actors and the public have increased access to evidence-based research and knowledge on human trafficking
Capacity building activities will be implemented with research institutions from both within and outside the region, to enable key actors including governments to take the lead in effectively monitoring the trafficking situation in their countries; and to develop and use harmonised research tools with common indicators to monitor the effectiveness of anti-trafficking work and ensure high quality.

OUTPUT 4:

Civil society and other non-governmental actors are able to contribute more effectively to anti-trafficking efforts
In addition to the support for government-led processes, UN-ACT will seek to engage with non-governmental actors such as civil society, academic institutions, media and the private sector. These activities will be aligned with (sub-)regional priorities with a focus on transfer of knowledge and skills through a combination of funding and mentoring. A special civil society small grants fund will be established to build the capacity of civil society. The small grants facility will also serve as a means for UN-ACT to gather information and real evidence to feed into the project's policy advocacy and strategies.

UN-ACT was launched on 1 April 2014. This annual report provides an update on progress during the

period from 1 April to 31 December 2014. Progress is reported against the UN-ACT 2014 work plan, which was submitted to the Embassies of Sweden and Norway at the beginning of 2014.

Achieving the long-term goals of UN-ACT requires changes in mindsets of key stakeholders, and continued strategic engagement and cooperation. However, in the first eight months of implementation some notable trends have been observed, as this report documents.

UN-ACT and the UN Resident Coordinator system

UN-ACT seeks to ensure a more cooperative and mutually supportive approach to anti-trafficking, including in the UN system.

A key avenue for such efforts is through the UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) who are represented on UN-ACT's Project Management Board. UN-ACT keeps the RCs informed of the project's efforts, so that they can better fulfil their coordination mandate in the area of human trafficking.

UN-ACT organized a meeting amongst the RCs in the GMS in 2014, where they discussed priority areas for joint efforts in migration and human trafficking.

UN-ACT's role as a bridge between the different actors both nationally and regionally was acknowledged, with the coordination support provided to the RCs of Thailand and Cambodia during the exodus of Cambodian migrant workers from Thailand in early 2014 highlighted as a concrete example.

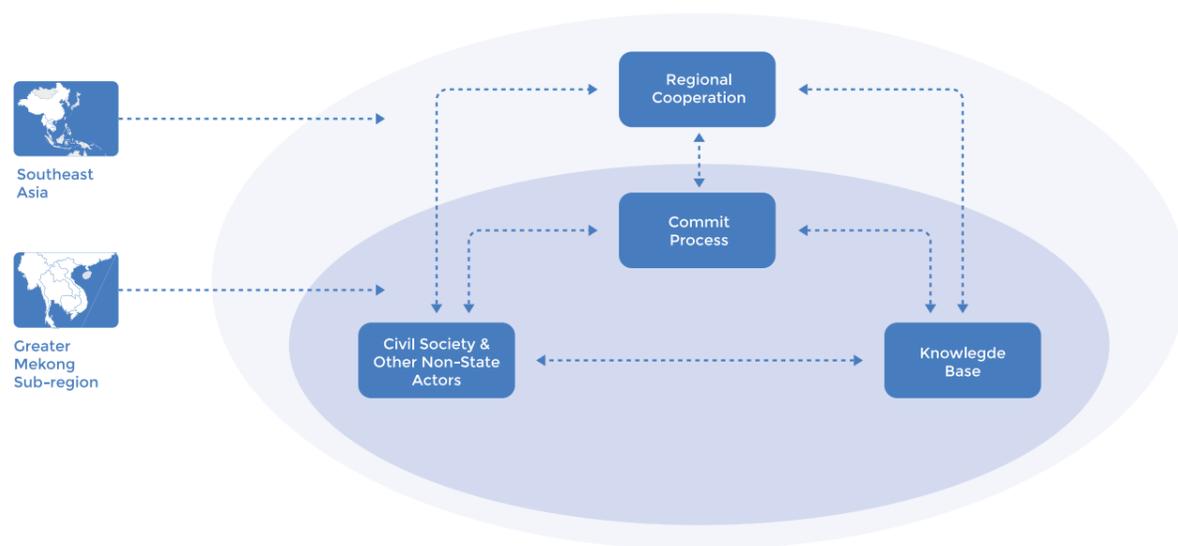


Figure 3. UN-ACT Strategic Framework

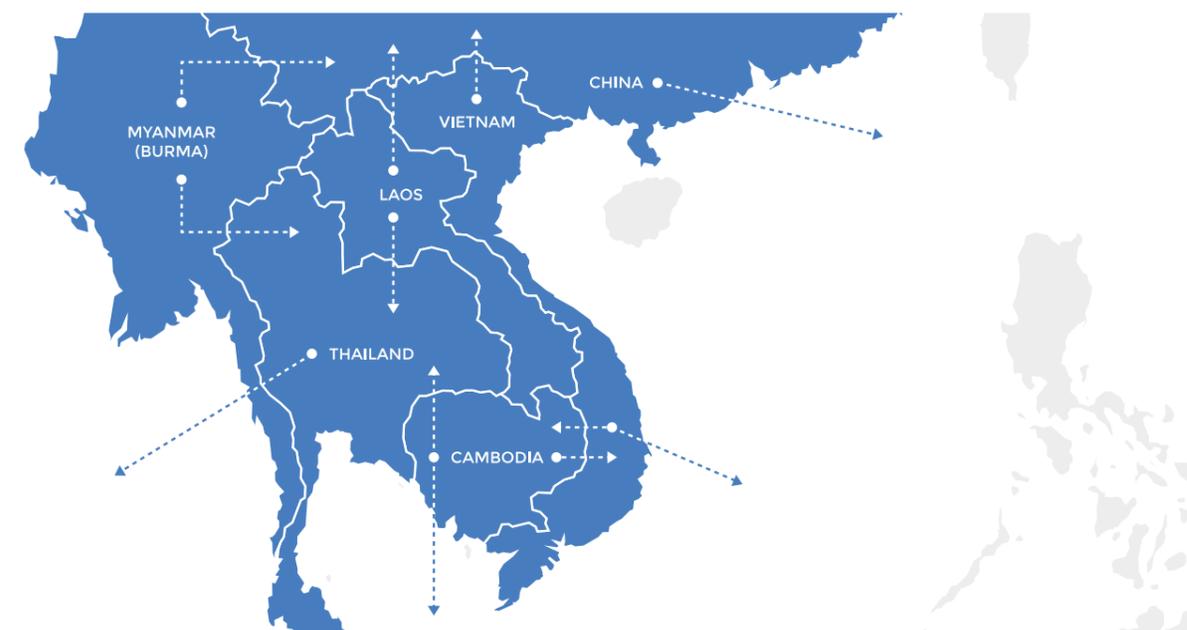


Figure 4. Patterns of human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE GREATER MEKONG SUB-REGION

Human trafficking in the GMS has a long history and its diverse patterns are recognised as particularly acute internationally. There are trends domestically, within the sub-region, and from the sub-region to destination countries beyond. Myanmar, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Viet Nam are primarily source countries for patterns of trafficking, with different patterns manifesting in each country. China and Thailand represent the two primary countries of destination in the sub-region, while also being source countries more broadly. In terms of trafficking beyond the GMS, Malaysia is a common destination country for trafficked persons from a number of the countries in the region. While old trafficking patterns appear to remain unabated, new ones occur.

Among the new trends in the region have been increasing reports of women trafficked to China from Cambodia for forced marriage, surpassing the established trends from Myanmar and Viet Nam for the same purpose. Media coverage of the foreign “brides” in China indicates patterns of exploitation and abuse

within a broader flow of marriage migration, which need to be better understood to then implement effective responses. With e-commerce booming in the country, transnational marriage intermediaries have started to publish on the internet and social media advertisements to introduce Vietnamese, Cambodian and other foreign brides to low-income single men in rural areas who cannot afford the cost of marrying a Chinese woman.

Despite an increasing recognition of the phenomenon and implementation of responses, there are many challenges to progress in combating trafficking in persons. This is not least in terms of political will, which inhibits the ability to implement more effective responses more broadly. Criminal justice responses remain weak and victim protection often does not respond sufficiently to the needs of victims. Further, reactive interventions are sometimes implemented to combat specific trafficking patterns without considering the potential consequences, with the subsequent effects being counter-productive and in violation of human rights.

MYANMAR:

- To China for marriage and sexual exploitation
- To Thailand into fishing, seafood processing, agriculture, factories, domestic work, and for sexual exploitation

THAILAND:

- To countries outside the GMS for both forced labour and sexual exploitation

CAMBODIA:

- To Thailand into agriculture, factories, construction, domestic servitude, fishing and begging
- To Viet Nam into begging and agriculture
- To China for marriage and sexual exploitation
- To countries outside the GMS for forced labour

CHINA:

- To countries outside the GMS for both forced labour and sexual exploitation

VIET NAM:

- To China for child abduction, into factories, for marriage and sexual exploitation
- To Cambodia for sexual exploitation
- To countries outside the GMS for both forced labour and sexual exploitation

LAO PDR:

- To Thailand for sexual exploitation, into domestic servitude, construction and agriculture
- To China for marriage and sexual exploitation

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



Heads of COMMIT Task Forces & UN-ACT staff celebrating the 10th anniversary of COMMIT at the regional COMMIT Task Force meeting

In 2014, several significant steps were taken towards achieving the overall outcome of UN-ACT. These include: a participatory process to develop the new Sub-regional Plan of Action for COMMIT; the creation of a regional network that pulls together the main actors in the counter-trafficking community at the regional level; exploratory steps towards cooperation with ASEAN together with the COMMIT Process; cross-border research on trafficking trends; and the launch of a small grants fund for civil society to provide direct support to victims of trafficking. All of these initiatives are described in more detail below.

Achievement of progress markers at the outcome level in 2014: The first indicator points to “Number of victims referred and supported through National and Transnational Referral Mechanisms”. SPA IV to be adopted in early 2015 includes a commitment to the establishment of National Referral Mechanisms, which will be connected regionally through elements of a Transnational Referral Mechanism. Crucial steps have hence been taken to ensure that victims will be referred and supported through such mechanisms in the years to come. The second progress marker - “6 changes in trafficking policies after advocacy from civil society” - was fully achieved.

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

It is now ten years since COMMIT was created through the signing of a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by the governments of Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. The aim of creating this process was to establish an inter-governmental and inter-ministerial approach to tackling the broad and complex issue of human trafficking. The COMMIT Process provides a platform where representatives of the six concerned governments come together on a regular basis through the COMMIT Task Forces at the national level, and during meetings at the sub-regional level.

Since the launch of COMMIT, UNIAP first and now UN-ACT have functioned as its Secretariat. Working towards establishing a well-functioning, self-reliant COMMIT Process is a key objective for UN-ACT. In 2014, UN-ACT took the first steps towards handing over its Secretariat functions to the COMMIT governments, which will require building relevant capacities amongst the concerned governmental agencies.

“It is Sweden’s position that we look for results in our development cooperation and looking back, with reference to the evaluation made in 2013 of UNIAP and COMMIT, it is clear that there has been very little economic commitment by the governments to the COMMIT Process - there is no future for Swedish funding to the COMMIT Process if the governments do not show economic commitment, as well as a commitment to the monitoring and evaluation of the project showing

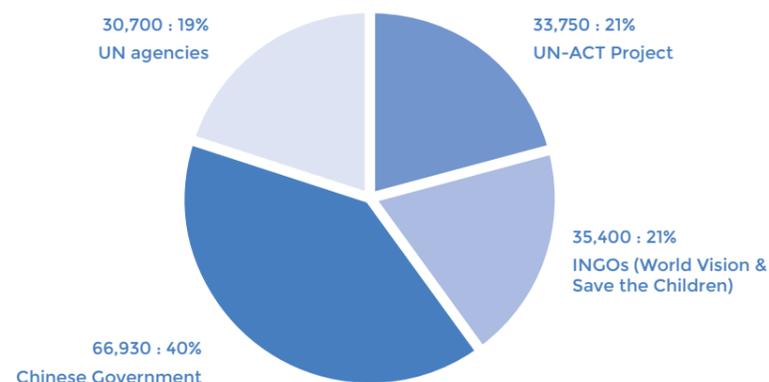


Figure 5. China financial contributions toward COMMIT activities

results. There are clear expectations from Sweden on countries like Thailand, China and Viet Nam to take a stronger economic responsibility for the COMMIT Process. Unless progress on this is shown during 2015 and 2016 it will be difficult to argue for continued Swedish support.”

- Camilla Ottosson,
First Secretary, Embassy of Sweden,
17 February 2015

“Having agreed that the project duration would ideally cover a period of 5 years, both the Embassies of Sweden and Norway in Thailand signed agreements with UNDP to cover a period of 3 years as a first step. Continued Norwegian support for UN-ACT will, inter alia, depend on a positive review of the level of contribution from the COMMIT countries, in particular the middle income ones, to strengthen the sustainability and future self-reliance of the Process.”

- Erik Svedahl,
Minster Counsellor/Deputy Ambassador, Embassy of Norway,
25 February 2015

Greatest progress towards this result could be seen in China where the government established a practice at both the ministerial and operational level, in order to facilitate the co-funding of project activities together with UN-ACT and other international organisations. The government also took over most of the logistical

arrangements of COMMIT-related training workshops, and the Ministry of Public Security together with the local police authority bore the travel and accommodation expenses for all training participants. The provincial Police Bureaus in China also started to take over the costs related to language interpretation, field missions and allowances which had previously been covered by UN-ACT and World Vision.

The other COMMIT governments also reported some progress during the year:

- Cambodia organised the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)/Inter-Ministerial Meeting (IMM) in 2015 with support from UN-ACT and other partners, and raised funds for the COMMIT Sub-regional Plan of Action and its administration;
- Lao PDR provided administrative and technical support to the COMMIT Process at country level;
- Myanmar provided an annual progress report on its COMMIT SPA implementation including budget utilization at the annual SOM meeting;
- Thailand established a Secretariat under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) to serve the Thai COMMIT TF, provided some funding for the implementation of SPA III and its administration, and submitted its annual progress report at the SOM and regional COMMIT TF meetings;



Consultation on the draft SPA IV with civil society in Myanmar

• Viet Nam took the lead in organising workshops and other meetings related to the COMMIT Process, and generally drafted their own press releases/reports/technical papers before sharing them with UN-ACT for comments.

ACTIVITY RESULT 1.1: COMMIT accountability and transparency enhanced

The development of the 4th Sub-regional Plan of Action for COMMIT demonstrated progress in many aspects. The SPA IV draft was created through a participatory process that set new standards for inclusivity and participation in COMMIT, with a wide range of key anti-trafficking stakeholders including UN agencies, other international organisations and civil society groups engaged both regionally and nationally. This is in contrast to previous plans drafted primarily between UNIAP and the governments. In China, the national consultation process on the draft SPA IV resulted in the inaugural presence of a CSO to COMMIT discussions, the “Baby Back Home” Association, a civil volunteer organisation tracking missing children. UN-ACT has contributed to this positive development through functioning as a bridge between civil society and government. Through inviting civil society to meetings, training and roundtable discussions with the governments UN-ACT has contributed to confidence-building between the parties, and this needs to be further developed.

SPA IV has further demonstrated progress towards results-based management in COMMIT with a results framework that includes measurable indicators to monitor progress, negotiated between the COMMIT governments through intensive discussions. This will significantly enhance the accountability of COMMIT and strengthen its potential as a peer review mechanism, thereby setting additional incentives for delivering on commitments made. This positive trend can, in part, be attributed to the ongoing advocacy work and capacity building efforts of the UN-ACT project.

Several governments improved their National Plans of Action (NPA) against Human Trafficking with the financial and technical support of UN-ACT in 2014, in particular in relation to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) measures. In China, UN-ACT staff coordinated and participated in the discussion and drafting process of the NPA against Human Trafficking (2013-2020) and the M&E framework subsequently endorsed by the government. UN-ACT in Myanmar focused advocacy on gaps in the current NPA such as transport for returnees, the need to develop a national database system and the need for an M&E team to review the NPA. These have all been included in the NPA for 2015. In Viet Nam, UN-ACT supported the development of an M&E framework for the NPA through a workshop, contributing financial and facilitation support as well as the roll-out of the framework through related trainings. In Lao PDR, the government endorsed its first NPA against Human Trafficking and made financial commitments to fund



CASE STUDY: Repatriation of Cambodian trafficking victim from China

Living in a poor area of rural Cambodia, 19 year-old Kolap dreamed of a better life. A broker approached her and convinced Kolap that going to China would give her the opportunity to make a better life for herself and her family. He showed her pictures of someone he claimed was his sister and told Kolap that his sister's life was much better since she went to China.

"My family is poor, so I decided to go," said Kolap. The moment she arrived in China, Kolap was handed over to another broker. She was then sold from one man to another in farming communities of Jiangxi province. "They treated me like a commodity" she said. Kolap was sold to another Chinese man to be his wife. That man then sold her to a brothel, despite knowing that she was pregnant. "I was forced to have sex with men every day." She was raped, confined and beaten. "I was forced to have an abortion.

"I didn't agree. They beat me up and tortured me," she said "I was chained because the pimp was afraid that I might run away."

Finally, Kolap escaped. She did not file a complaint, but through coordination between the national authorities engaged in the COMMIT process in Cambodia and China, and with the support from the respective UN-ACT offices, Kolap was safely returned to Cambodia. She is now receiving care and protection from an NGO in Cambodia. She has also been receiving vocational training in which she learns tailoring skills.

"I would like to thank all who helped rescue me from China, a life that resembled a living hell," said Kolap.

More information regarding this case can be found at the following link:

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/two-years%E2%80%99-prison-china-sex-slave-sale>

the plan following advocacy efforts from UN-ACT and its partners.

2014 saw three regional COMMIT Task Force meetings convened - in January, May and October. Sustainability of the COMMIT Process was highlighted throughout the 2014 meetings, as was the need for a framework to capture indicators of sustainability. As SPA III ended in 2014, the development of SPA IV was the primary focus of the regional COMMIT meetings, which will be adopted at the SOM/IMM in April 2015. With respect to the COMMIT Secretariat function, the uninterrupted transition from UNIAP to UN-ACT resulted in continued support to the COMMIT process.

The progress marker "2 countries report back on agreed M&E framework" was not achieved, given that the M&E framework will be discussed and agreed upon in 2015 after the adoption of SPA IV.

ACTIVITY RESULT 1.2: Sufficient technical and functional capacities developed by governments

Several bilateral activities among COMMIT countries took place in 2014 reflecting increased capacities, with financial and technical support from UN-ACT, including:

- Cambodia and Thailand renewed their MoU on Bilateral Cooperation for the Elimination of Trafficking in

Persons and Protecting Victims of Trafficking, with the objective to improve cooperation, strengthen efforts in combating human trafficking, and provide needed support and services to protect victims of human trafficking;

- The MoU between Lao PDR and Thailand was revised in order to create more direct collaboration between the responsible departments in charge of human trafficking and improve the repatriation and reintegration process for victims;

- China and Lao PDR signed the Cooperation in Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons Agreement, which aims to strengthen law enforcement cooperation between the two countries;

- China and Myanmar held an annual bilateral meeting on cooperation to combat trafficking in persons to improve their bilateral efforts;

- At the Myanmar-Thailand bilateral case management meeting and regular case workers visit, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on return and repatriation were developed and agreed upon between the two countries. The success of the SOPs will be measured through a reduction of pending cases and more timely repatriations;

- A criminal justice and law enforcement meeting was held between Myanmar and Thailand. Several follow-up



UN-ACT training of border guards in Viet Nam

action points were agreed during the meeting and the implementation of these will be reported back on at the next meeting;

- A Thai police attaché was placed in Yangon to function as a focal point for human trafficking, and Terms of Reference for the exchange of information in criminal justice and law enforcement cooperation were agreed upon.

The progress marker "2 COMMIT Secretariat functions fully and 10 partly transferred" was fully achieved (2 fully and 11 partly).

ACTIVITY RESULT 1.3: Effective implementation of SPA IV

UN-ACT supports the COMMIT process by providing technical assistance and facilitating inter-governmental coordination as well as other bilateral and multilateral interactions to meet regional commitments. Focus is particularly on developing government capacities for sustainable anti-trafficking work that will continue beyond UN-ACT. A first step in this direction was taken in Viet Nam, where the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) and UN-ACT started to map out existing facilities and available services supporting trafficked persons in all provinces in the country in order to identify gaps and needs.

The identification of victims of trafficking is a crucial entry point for both providing adequate support to victims and ensuring successful prosecutions. Several activities in 2014 focused on supporting more effective victim identification. In Cambodia, Guidelines on Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation and Referral for Support Services were developed with support from UN-ACT and other partners, to be finalised and published in 2015.

In Thailand, the National Operation Centre on Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking (NOCHT) at MSDHS initiated, designed and co-funded data collection on policies and procedures through interviews with government officials in frontline roles, which revealed a number of challenges in the victim identification process. Among the identified challenges were: different understandings and applications of the definition of human trafficking under the law; lack of consistency in the application of different terms in trafficking (such as exploitation); large numbers of victims having to be screened for victim status in a short period of time when raids of trafficking environments are conducted; and the lack of trained interpreters. Further data collection in two target provinces will take place in early 2015 before the study is finalised.

Training of border guards on the identification of trafficking victims took place in Viet Nam where UN-ACT staff delivered sessions on the human trafficking situation in the region and ethical principles in working



CASE STUDY: Increase in identified victims of marriage trafficking after training of frontline responders in China

An increase in identified cases of trafficking for forced marriages was observed in China after 40 frontline law enforcement officers from 13 different hot spot areas received training on victim identification with financial and training support from UN-ACT and other partners. A key issue raised during the training was the fact that even if a woman has initially consented to marriage, her experience may still be qualified as human trafficking if she ends up in an exploitative situation.

One month after the training, a major case of Cambodian women trafficked for forced marriages to northeast China was uncovered by the local police who had been part of the training with 150 women identified as potential victims. The training furthermore encouraged authorities in three other

provinces to contact UN-ACT for interpretation assistance to conduct proactive screening of Cambodian, Myanmar and Vietnamese women married to Chinese men in their areas, to ensure that they were not victims of trafficking. The local authorities in one of the provinces provided the financial support to cover the cost of translation services.

Other positive results from the training include that police officers became more aware of the importance of (re) integration assistance for victims, and UN-ACT obtained permission by the police to share information with trafficking survivors about (re)integration service providers at home.

with victims of trafficking. Similar training took place in China and had immediate impact on the number of victims identified, as further described in the case study above.

Ensuring a high quality of services provided to victims is a key objective of the COMMIT governments. In Cambodia, the "Minimum Standards on Residential Care for Victims of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation" were developed and approved, with 5,000 copies of the printed standards disseminated. In Lao PDR, the Women's Union (LWU) held consultations to discuss draft victim protection guidelines, with the aim to finalise the guidelines in 2015. Prior to the meeting, UN-ACT organised a stakeholder consultation to advocate for the development of draft victim protection guidelines and also gained agreement from LWU to invite stakeholders to attend the meeting.

In the area of prevention, activities included a Training of Trainers (ToT) on pre-departure orientation for migrant workers in order to increase the knowledge and understanding of safe labour migration organised in cooperation with the Cambodian Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training and ILO.

The progress marker "20% of COMMIT work plan activities funded or fundraised by governments" was partly achieved (3 countries provided funding: Thailand 33%, China 37% and Viet Nam 45%).

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

The consultations undertaken to develop the UN-ACT project document highlighted the need for wider regional engagement, both with other countries affected by trafficking flows from the GMS and with other regional bodies such as ASEAN.

UN-ACT initiated discussions with Malaysia, a key destination country for human trafficking from the GMS, about joint anti-trafficking efforts in policy and capacity development, particularly given the country's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2015. Consultations also took place between UN-ACT and the ASEAN Secretariat about possible COMMIT-ASEAN activities, with a joint workshop on the development of common victim identification indicators being planned for 2015.

ACTIVITY RESULT 2.1: Joint anti-trafficking efforts of COMMIT countries with key destination countries elsewhere increased

As Malaysia is a key destination country for several countries in the GMS region, COMMIT governments have made several efforts over the years to engage with the Malaysian authorities responsible for anti-trafficking. In



The UN-ACT regional network developing the zero draft of the COMMIT Sub-regional Plan of Action IV

response to a request to facilitate interaction between the Government of Malaysia and COMMIT, UN-ACT took the opportunity of Malaysia's 2015 ASEAN chairmanship to increase engagement. Discussions were facilitated by the UN Resident Coordinator in Malaysia for UN-ACT to offer support to the Malaysian government, particularly in light of the potential agreement of an ASEAN Convention on Trafficking in Persons and Regional Plan of Action in 2015. UN-ACT was also able to provide inputs during a consultation workshop held between Cambodia and Malaysia on the formulation of an MoU between the two countries on Cooperation in Combating Trafficking in Persons, negotiations for which have been ongoing since 2008.

Another focus for UN-ACT was on the trafficking flows to Indonesia, in particular relating to trafficking in the fishing industry. In one significant case, 49 potential victims of trafficking from Thailand (30) and Myanmar (19) in Indonesia were supported to return to their home countries through the civil society organisation Labour Rights Promotion Network Foundation (LPN), with financial and technical support from UN-ACT Thailand. After their repatriation, UN-ACT supported a panel discussion where the victims presented their stories and delivered recommendations directly to both government officials and civil society.

UN-ACT also provided coordination support for rescue operations of Cambodian victims in Saudi Arabia, with the Thai Embassy in Riyadh chiefly involved as well.



CASE STUDY: Repatriation of Myanmar and Thai trafficked fishermen from Indonesia

"I'd rather be imprisoned for three years than stay a year on board. This is hell, not the heaven that they lured me in with."

"What can I do? I owe them now, so I must stay here, but I would rather escape."

These are direct quotes from some of the 46 trafficking victims rescued from Ambon, an isolated Indonesian island.

Increasing numbers of enquiries from family members and workers, along with findings from research projects, led a Thai-based organization, Labour Rights Promotion Network (LPN), to conduct a field visit to Ambon in August 2014. There, they found workers from Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia who were victims of trafficking.

When LPN returned to Thailand, an urgent working group was set up, and government, UN agencies and CSOs cooperated to develop a strategy for interventions. With support from UN-ACT Thailand, LPN conducted a second field visit to Ambon, and 27 Thai seafarers were returned home and reunited with their family members.

Information on 19 Myanmar nationals was referred to the Myanmar embassies in Indonesia and Thailand as well as authorities in Myanmar, with coordination support from UN-ACT Thailand and Myanmar. These efforts led to their successful return to Myanmar.

National and international media attention prompted Thai government agencies to conduct a visit to Indonesia, where the Department of Special Investigation collected evidence that led to the arrest of two Thai suspects.



Discussions with relatives of victims of trafficking to learn about (re)integration needs

The progress marker “5 project activities/interactions with other countries” was fully achieved (10).

ACTIVITY RESULT 2.2: Institutionalized engagement between COMMIT and ASEAN

Discussions have been initiated with ASEAN for stronger cooperation with COMMIT both at the regional and national level.

At a regional COMMIT Task Force meeting held in January, the decision was taken that national COMMIT Task Forces would regularly invite their ASEAN national representatives to future Task Force meetings in order to update each other on developments in both fora. In Cambodia, these discussions have already led to ASEAN representatives participating in COMMIT Task Force meetings.

UN-ACT, together with other partners, also had initial discussions with the ASEAN Secretariat about joint efforts in developing common victim identification indicators to help countries deal with cross-border human trafficking cases. A joint workshop to initiate such efforts is expected to take place in 2015.

The progress marker “1 joint initiative between ASEAN and COMMIT representatives” was not achieved.

ACTIVITY RESULT 2.3: Coordination and cooperation among relevant regional actors for anti-trafficking increased

A coordinated approach to regional anti-trafficking work does not only require governments to work together but also a wider range of actors. In recognition of this, UN-ACT established a regional network in 2014, which includes:

- UN agencies: IOM, UNODC, UN Women, UNICEF, ILO
- NGOs: Save the Children, Walk Free, Alliance Against Trafficking, Terre Des Hommes, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, Caritas, Nexus Institute, Chab Dai, Freedom Collaborative, World Vision, International Justice Mission, and GAATW
- Regional mechanisms: ESCAP, Bali Process

The regional network meets every three months to discuss project implementation updates, ideas for joint interventions, new trends in human trafficking, etc. The meetings also define themes of mutual concern for more in-depth deliberations. One example in this respect was M&E systems related to the sector, for which various partners, including ILO, AAPTIP and World Vision presented their respective frameworks, with subsequent discussions focusing on experiences, challenges and solutions with M&E efforts.

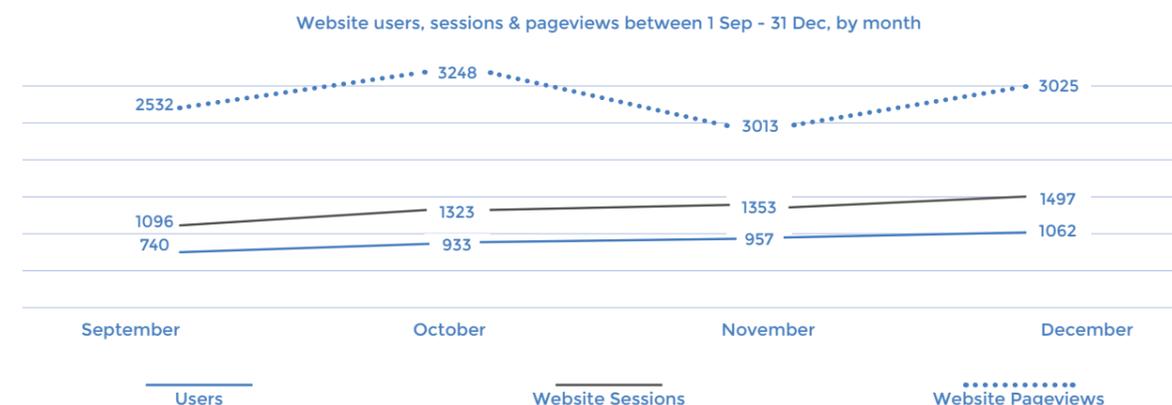


Figure 6. UN-ACT China website statistics

One of the most significant results from the network in 2014 was the joint development of a ‘zero draft’ of the new Sub-Regional Plan of Action at the request of the COMMIT governments.

The progress marker “5 joint activities in regional network” was partly achieved (3).

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

Upon its launch, UN-ACT developed new branding and communication tools for the project, including a multi-purpose website as well as dedicated Facebook and Twitter accounts.

The website provides a comprehensive directory of key anti-trafficking resources, with a specific focus on the GMS. There are additional, dynamic and interactive features including forums, blogs and an update section to encourage regular visits and engagement from the audience.

In order to maximise the impact of UN-ACT’s research outputs, the project has developed strategies to disseminate key findings through both traditional and social media, and in meetings facilitated by UN-ACT

including COMMIT Task Forces or Inter-Agency Working Groups.

UN-ACT was regularly consulted and interviewed regarding different aspects on human trafficking by different global media outlets, such as Deutsche Welle, The New York Times, Al-Jazeera and Agence France Presse.

ACTIVITY RESULT 3.1: Evidence-base for anti-trafficking interventions enhanced and accessible

Two research projects were finalised during the reporting period, with publication expected in early 2015. Drawing on an innovative sentinel surveillance methodology, these projects analyse the labour migration experiences of deported Cambodians and Laotians in Thailand respectively.

The Cambodia report involves three datasets with more than 1,200 interviews conducted in three different years (2009, 2010 and 2012) and hence allows for a trend analysis over time. Although the study points to significant improvements in the deportees’ labour migration experiences, it also highlights continuous, high levels of deception, coercion and exploitation amongst those working in the fishing industry.

The Lao PDR report draws on some 120 interviews

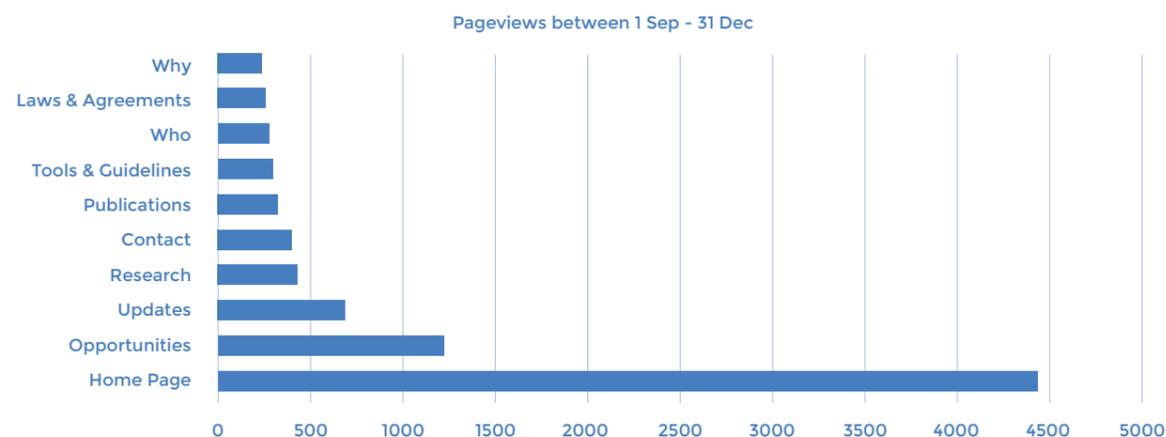


Figure 7. Pages most visited on the UN-ACT website

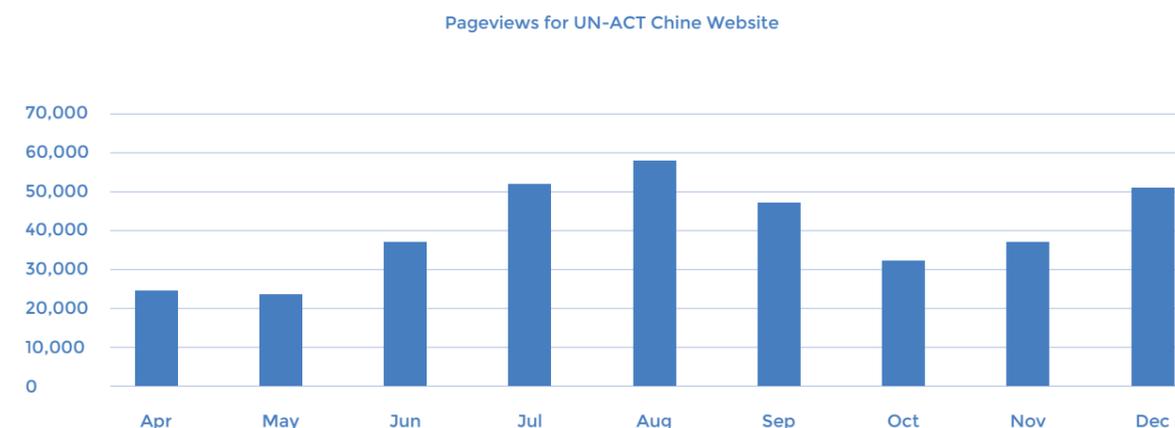


Figure 8. UN-ACT China website statistics

conducted in 2013, with about 4% classified as possibly trafficked, i.e. being deceived or coerced, and exploited. Whilst reported levels of exploitation were rather low, a much higher share of respondents (16%) felt deceived during their labour migration experience in Thailand. The report suggests that the involvement of irregular brokers in the migration process on the Lao side requires further scrutiny as a possible predictor of negative migration outcomes.

In addition, through UN-ACT-supported Khmer translation assistance for victim identification procedures in China, it was discovered that incidences of Cambodian women in forced marriage situations appear to be increasing, and in more significant numbers than women of other expected nationalities. In response, UN-ACT launched new research on patterns of cross-border trafficking for forced marriage between Cambodia and China in 2014. A draft report on the study is expected for 2015.

UN-ACT increased its outreach to academic institutions in the region as part of its research strategy and capacity building. Amongst the results from that is a 3-month student project at the Singapore Management University related to legal support to migrant workers in selected countries in Southeast Asia. UN-ACT also cooperated with the Institute of Developing Economies in Japan by granting it access to research datasets for further quantitative analysis and publishing.

As stated above, UN-ACT's website is one of its major tools to disseminate information relating to human trafficking. It has been tracked and analysed since its launch in August 2014, with statistics pointing to an increasing usage on a month-to-month basis and a split between new and returning visitors of 65% to 35%. This suggests a broadening reach with a high level of more regular engagement.

China has a separate, inter-linked national UN-ACT website due to its large population and limitations in English proficiency. Tracking of website traffic, however, proved to be difficult, although solutions continue to be sought.

The regional UN-ACT website is also interlinked with the UN-ACT Facebook page, which introduces new content available on the website to a broad readership. The Facebook audience has significantly increased over the reporting period, from 1,514 followers on 1 April 2014 to 15,378 by the end of the year. 5 out of 6 GMS countries feature in the top 10 origin countries of followers (the only exception being China where Facebook is blocked), and together they make up more than 13,000 of the total.

In addition, Twitter is used to engage a smaller and more informed audience having consisted of 85 people by the end of the year, almost all of whom work directly or indirectly in anti-trafficking. Finally, UN-ACT



UN-ACT website and Facebook page

prepares a monthly newsletter that, by December 2014, was disseminated to 1,746 subscribers, and features trafficking-related updates from each of the 6 GMS countries, key news articles on human trafficking in Southeast Asia, as well as a changing, more in-depth monthly focus on a key issue related to trafficking in persons.

All the platforms and tools mentioned above are interconnected with each other, thereby maximising the reach and engagement on the information contained.

The progress marker "1 research project on TIP completed in-house or in partnership with others, and disseminated" was fully achieved (2 reports completed, although still awaiting publication); "9 initiatives in follow-up to research findings/recommendations" was partly achieved (7 initiatives); and "1,500 website sessions for regular and 3,500 for new visitors" (activity result 3.2) can be considered fully achieved, given that tracking of website traffic only began in September 2014, with 1,844 sessions for regular and 3,425 for new visitors recorded in four months alone.

Cambodia	China	Lao PDR	Myanmar	Thailand	Viet Nam
2 meetings were held in 2014 with various UN agencies, 7 CSOs and government representatives.	3 meetings were held in 2014 with 3 UN agencies and 2 CSOs. 1 meeting to respond to increased requests for help from alleged VoTs.	5 meetings were held in 2014 including donor representatives, 13 CSOs and 9 UN agencies.	6 meetings were held in 2014 with 8 regular members including CSOs and UN agencies.	1 meeting was held in 2014 with 50-70 participants. 12 government departments are represented, along with numerous CSOs and UN agencies.	4 network meetings were organised in 2014 with attendance of CSOs and UN agencies.

Inter-Agency Working Groups (IAWGs) on Human Trafficking and similar meetings facilitated by UN-ACT in 2014

Narrative reporting related to activity result 3.2. is embedded in other parts of the report.

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

Civil society plays a crucial role in anti-trafficking work, providing vital assistance to victims of trafficking, engaging in prevention activities with communities, and holding state actors to account. UN-ACT adopts a three-pronged approach to support civil society and other non-governmental actors to contribute more effectively to anti-trafficking work: technical capacity building; financial support; and cultivating an enabling environment for civil society operations. While the latter is particularly difficult, it can be facilitated by encouraging governments to invite and consult with civil society in their anti-trafficking planning and interventions.

Progress in this area is most clearly demonstrated by the inclusive approach to developing COMMIT SPA IV, as described under Output 1. The facilitation by UN-ACT has significantly increased civil society's scope to engage with policy-makers, both as part of the SPA IV design process as well as its implementation. Moreover, the draft SPA IV looks to specifically include language on the involvement of all sectors including civil society in

the execution of SPA IV, and COMMIT governments have agreed to include a session on cooperation with civil society during the Senior Officials Meeting in April 2015. In preparation for this and beyond, a number of key civil society organisations are in the process of establishing a civil society platform to engage with policy-makers.

In addition, youth engagement in COMMIT was further consolidated in 2014, when the six governments accepted a name change from 'Mekong Youth Forum' to 'COMMIT Youth Forum' (CYF), and agreed in principle to the COMMIT Youth Action Plan. A key component of the Youth Action Plan involves routine engagement of youth, both nationally and regionally, in COMMIT gatherings as well as in SPA IV implementation, especially in the prevention pillar. The first country to have adopted the Youth Action Plan in late 2014 was Cambodia, including an agreement to accept two youth representatives as members in the national COMMIT Task Force.

UN-ACT leads an inter-agency working group (IAWG) on trafficking in all COMMIT countries (although the names and composition of these working groups vary), which generally include UN agencies, non-governmental organisations and other key stakeholders. These working groups are instrumental in keeping the sector informed, driving progress and increasing collaboration by supporting common advocacy initiatives. The table above gives an overview of the existing working groups.

In Thailand UN-ACT was able to mobilise the Human



UN-ACT staff providing technical advice to civil society organizations interested in applying for the CSO grants

Trafficking Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) network in order to advocate against a proposal that prisoners be used as labourers on fishing boats. They submitted an open letter to the Prime Minister, engaged media at national and international levels and organised a dialogue with concerned government agencies through a panel discussion and forum. The proposal was cancelled following much heated debate.

In Lao PDR, joint advocacy efforts and effective collaboration among the IAWG members eventually convinced the government to develop a standardised NPA for the first time, as well as to support it financially. UN-ACT Lao PDR also works with other networks to advocate for change, such as the Gender Working Group and the Child Protection Working Group.

ACTIVITY RESULT 4.1: Increased engagement between governments and civil society

UN-ACT launched a civil society grants scheme in 2014 to provide sustainable support in direct services to victims of trafficking through networks with partners, linking into the broader strategy with government referral mechanisms. A call for proposals received a total of 35 applications from all six GMS countries. During the application period, the Project's Country Offices pro-actively reached out to eligible organisations, particularly smaller NGOs, to encourage their solicitations, and provided relevant

information and advice for their grant applications. Four organisations in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam were selected as grantees in a selection process based on UNDP standards and procedures. UN-ACT will be able to provide financial and other support as part of the grant agreements as of early 2015.

In addition, UN-ACT was able to use its regional network to connect one of the organisations, which had not been successful in its application to UN-ACT due to the limited funding available, with another potential donor, having led to advanced talks on cooperation between the two sides by the end of 2014.

UN-ACT also supported community-based initiatives such as the Community Watch Groups (CWGs) in Myanmar which were established to empower communities to protect themselves against trafficking. However, a review workshop organised in 2014 and two related field visits revealed that the large number of CWGs (in the thousands) has made it difficult to monitor their work. There is hence a need to improve communication channels between the community and national level on anti-trafficking cooperation in Myanmar as well as strengthen the capacities of the Anti-Trafficking Task Forces (ATTF) officers.

A workshop on debt bondage and human trafficking was organised in Thailand, serving as a platform where civil society organisations were able to present their findings on trends and challenges. UN-ACT Thailand together



A police officer is making an intervention during the Thai workshop on debt bondage

with ILO provided technical support at the event related to international laws and standards. Following the workshop, several civil society representatives expressed that they felt more comfortable in their communication with government officials on human trafficking, debt bondage and related issues.

The progress marker “30 CSO representatives participate in COMMIT meetings” was fully achieved (80); and “70 victims are supported by NGOs with UN-ACT funding” (activity result 4.2) was fully achieved as well (70).

Narrative reporting against activity result 4.2. is embedded in other parts of the report.

ACTIVITY RESULT 4.3: Private sector engagement in anti-trafficking interventions strengthened

With a growing understanding of the role that the private sector can and needs to play in combating human trafficking, UN-ACT has sought to engage relevant industries in anti-trafficking efforts across the Greater Mekong Sub-region. The level of engagement and awareness among private sector actors on this issue varies between countries and industries, and a strategic approach is needed to target where there is most value in UN-ACT’s efforts. As destination countries, the private sector in China and Thailand have the most potential to effect change in the patterns of exploitation in different industries.

In Thailand, the fisheries industry has been well documented as a destination of trafficked persons and UN-ACT has sought to support a range of initiatives in this area, collaborating with government, civil society and the private sector. UN-ACT has supported the

ILO-led Good Labour Practices initiative with the Thai government, while supporting civil society advocacy engagement with employer representatives. On a practical implementation level, UN-ACT also provided coordination as well as technical support to the Mekong Club (a private sector initiative based in Hong Kong) to develop a smart phone application to support the identification of trafficking victims. The application is currently being revised based on feedback from various ministries and civil society in order for it to become more effective.

In China, engagement with the private sector involved consultation with industry associations, or guilds, to raise awareness of TIP and gather information on efforts to combat the problem, as well as avenues for engagement that UN-ACT may pursue. While most industry associations did not initially perceive trafficking to be an issue that they may face, the sensitization to cases that have been identified in supply chains were useful in changing perceptions.

Activities have been conducted in other countries, collaborating with recruitment agencies for example, advocating for and supporting improvements in the standards of practices by private agencies. Further, in Myanmar, an awareness-raising workshop was organised by UN-ACT and the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division (ATIPD) and Hotel & Tourism in the Shan State, Myanmar, in order to strengthen private sector engagement and reduce vulnerability to sexual exploitation in the hospitality industry.

The progress marker “4 collaborations with private sector partners” was fully achieved (9).

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

GENDER

Trafficking is a highly gendered phenomenon with men, women, boys and girls, facing similarities and differences in their experiences as victims of trafficking. For this reason, it is important to utilise a gender-informed approach in order to improve intervention, prevention and service provision strategies. Gender is an integrated part of the UN-ACT Project and gender considerations are being mainstreamed throughout activities to ensure that the specific concerns and experiences of men, women, boys and girls are adequately addressed.

Until recently, the response to trafficking in persons has primarily focused on the situation of women and children, in particular those trafficked for sexual exploitation, both in domestic and international law. UN-ACT’s holistic approach has led the project to shed more light on the phenomenon of other trafficking patterns, especially trafficking for labour exploitation and of male victims.

Some particular gender issues that have come to light during the first year of implementation of UN-ACT are:

- The link between social expectations of young women and marriage migration/trafficking for forced marriages. In many societies in the GMS, young women are expected to provide for their elderly parents, which creates pressure on these women to seek any kind of income source even if this means putting themselves into very vulnerable and risky situations. UN-ACT has therefore advocated that behaviour change interventions should not only focus on these young women but also on the communities and families around them.

- Anti-trafficking responses from governments that discriminate against young women. Cambodia introduced a requirement for single women to deposit \$10,000 into a Chinese bank account before they are allowed to visit China as tourists, a move meant to curb the trafficking of Cambodian woman to marry Chinese men. However, there has been no official confirmation that the measure requested has been implemented.

Furthermore, Thailand banned Lao youth below the age of 18 from entering Thailand on their own. The tougher immigration stance by Thailand came after frequent reports in the Thai media of Lao girls, some under 18, found in the sex industry. UN-ACT is engaging in advocacy to raise awareness of the discriminatory aspects of these kind of responses and the potential that they may put people in even more vulnerable positions.

- Despite increasing evidence of the high number of men and boys that are trafficked in the Southeast Asian region, there is still an almost complete lack of support services for male victims. UN-ACT is advocating for the rights of male victims of trafficking through research, awareness raising activities as well as the provision of funding to NGOs who provide services to this underserved group.

UN-ACT works through preventive measures to address gender inequalities that create vulnerabilities to trafficking or by supporting the development of policies aimed at empowering women victims of trafficking. The project will also continue to advocate that underserved victims such as adult males are supported in appropriate ways. By conducting research and providing evidence-based advocacy, UN-ACT has helped contribute to a broadening of the discourse and put the needs and importance of these groups on the agenda of counter-trafficking actors.

HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

One of the key features and most damaging aspects of human trafficking is that it robs individuals of their freedom of will and action. Project activities should therefore be based on a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) that ensures that victims are empowered to regain control over their lives, while the capacity of duty bearers is strengthened so that they are better able to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of trafficking victims. An HRBA that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights is critical.

Human trafficking is an ever-changing phenomenon that requires constant learning, in particular by listening to the voices and concerns of those affected. As UN-ACT has shown, survivors are a key source of information to further develop effective interventions. With their experiences and insights, they can inform more effective anti-trafficking responses, and provide an important reality check on the functioning of the procedures and services in place. The project will continue to support and work towards opportunities for those affected by trafficking to inform policy-making processes, as for example has been the case with “survivor workshops” in Myanmar.



CASE STUDY: Repatriation of Myanmar trafficking victim from China

“When I was home, I was very depressed and ashamed. People treated me like a prostitute. I stayed at home and did nothing for two months.”

Phyo*, age 23, is from Myanmar. When she was 17 years old, she was deceived by a broker and sold to a Chinese man to be his wife in China. As she refused to have a baby with him, she was abused by her husband and mother-in-law. Aside, Phyo never received any money promised by her broker. After 8 months, she managed to escape and returned home, but the problems didn't stop there.

Phyo shared her story at a ‘Survivors’ Workshop’, an initiative started in Myanmar in 2009 by the Central Body for the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons (CBTIP) in cooperation with World Vision Myanmar and UNIAP, now UN-ACT. Since then, the gatherings have been held annually.

Key to the workshop is to build the capacity of trafficking survivors, so that they can protect themselves from re-trafficking and successfully (re)integrate into society. At the same time, it provides a platform for survivors from different parts of Myanmar to share their experiences with each other.

Through the program, Phyo realised that she was not the only person to have had such negative experiences. She developed new friendships, felt empowered and became

involved in community anti-trafficking awareness projects. She also started a small business as a dressmaker with her older sister and took on a leadership role in a survivors’ self-help group in her township.

“I don't want anyone to fall into this living hell as I did. I never thought I'd become a victim of trafficking. I try to share my story with the youth and young women. I will be satisfied if they can learn to prevent human trafficking from my story. It would also be great if we can educate our children about trafficking at schools,” Phyo said.

The program also supports survivors in developing recommendations to improve protection & (re)integration services, which they discuss in dialogues with policy-makers and developmental agencies. Thanks to these exchanges, a number of concrete improvements to procedures and key services have occurred, including speedier cross-border repatriation; reduced compulsory shelter stays upon return; extended temporary accommodation in the border areas; re-issuing of National Registration Cards (NRC) for trafficking survivors; faster and more widely available passport application systems; processes for temporary passports; and the formation of government-led community watch groups as a trafficking prevention tool.

*Pseudonym used.

CONSTRAINTS IN IMPLEMENTATION: Improving UN-ACT project performance through learning and reflections

While UN-ACT succeeded another regional project, the launch still resulted in disruptions to ongoing activities. The recruitment process was time-consuming and several offices only had one or two out of three staff in place during the first few months of implementation.

Upon its launch, UN-ACT introduced a results-based management (RBM) approach requiring a different way of thinking and working, which was challenging for some UN-ACT staff to adopt in practice at first. Several internal capacity-building activities on RBM and HRBA were therefore conducted throughout the year. It has proven to be crucial to build the capacity related to M&E for all staff as everyone has a role to play in this respect.

UN-ACT enjoys close partnerships with governments in the implementation of activities. However, on occasion these partnerships can pose challenges for timely project implementation, as government staff may rotate, some officials lack capacities in certain areas or governmental priorities change unexpectedly. In order to limit the risk of cancelled or delayed activities, UN-ACT will develop risk-assessments and risk-responsive strategies as part of the work plan in the future.

Effective coordination between and within various stakeholder groups such as governments and CSOs is both crucial and challenging. To address the latter, UN-ACT will continue to help develop networks and communication channels between key stakeholders working against human trafficking in the region by providing platforms of engagement and supporting their institutionalization.

UN-ACT's role as Secretariat to the COMMIT Process meant that project staff in 2014 were often occupied with time-consuming, administrative or logistical tasks. This put constraints on their ability to implement and monitor more substantive interventions. UN-ACT, in partnership with donors, will therefore continue to engage the six governments in a gradual handover

of COMMIT Secretariat functions, in accordance with the Project Document. This will be vital for enhanced government ownership of COMMIT and the sustainability of the Process.

THE WAY FORWARD

2015 is an exciting year for UN-ACT, with the COMMIT SOM/IMM being held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in April. The 4th Sub-regional Plan of Action, to be adopted at the SOM/IMM, will provide fresh impetus for systematic anti-trafficking cooperation between agencies and across borders over the coming years. The contribution of civil society to the COMMIT Process is also being more formally recognised, with a civil society platform initiated alongside the COMMIT SOM/IMM demonstrating this.

In the wider region, it is expected that ASEAN will endorse an ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons and related Plan of Action in November 2015. This Convention will constitute a significant step forward in regional anti-trafficking cooperation and UN-ACT has been in communication with both ASEAN and Malaysia (as the ASEAN Chair in 2015) to support development of anti-trafficking efforts more broadly in Southeast Asia. Having proposed a range of activities to support the Malaysian government's anti-trafficking efforts, continued advocacy will be pursued to gain concrete collaboration through 2015. This is particularly important given that Malaysia is a key destination for victims of trafficking from the GMS countries. A priority of COMMIT in 2015 is the improvement of victim identification procedures, and developing common indicators between the COMMIT countries. UN-ACT is also pursuing cooperation with ASEAN in this area, in partnership with other organizations and programs.

UN-ACT's research strategy has been developed and will receive inputs from development partners in consultations on research priorities at the regional network on human trafficking in early 2015. Research projects, often in partnership with other organizations, will be developed on the basis of the strategy and the identified priorities, and technical support is being provided to research conducted by partners.

Research reports on vulnerability and prevalence of trafficking among deportee populations will be finalised and disseminated in 2015 and ongoing data collection on trafficking for forced marriages from Cambodia to China will also be completed. The latter, which has already generated great interest amongst partners, will be used not only to shed light on trafficking flows but also on root causes. The report will contribute to a bilateral agreement between Cambodia and China on how to address the problem, and help inform programmatic activities of partners in both countries.

Small grants will be provided to four NGOs in 2015 on the basis of the Call for Proposals and selection process conducted in 2014. The grants will be contributing to the delivery of critical services in the protection, rehabilitation and (re)integration of trafficked, vulnerable and abused persons. Capacity building for those selected organisations will also serve to support their integration into referral mechanisms in collaboration with government and other partners at local and national levels.

A capacity development strategy will be developed with a baseline assessment of the COMMIT Process, looking at technical and functional capacities. This data collection will provide a baseline for SPA IV and determine where capacity development interventions should focus. The initiative will also ultimately provide the basis for the sustainability of the COMMIT Process, mapping out where the Secretariat functions may integrate into the governments' own systems.

UN-ACT is looking forward to working with its partners on these and many other activities in 2015 and beyond.

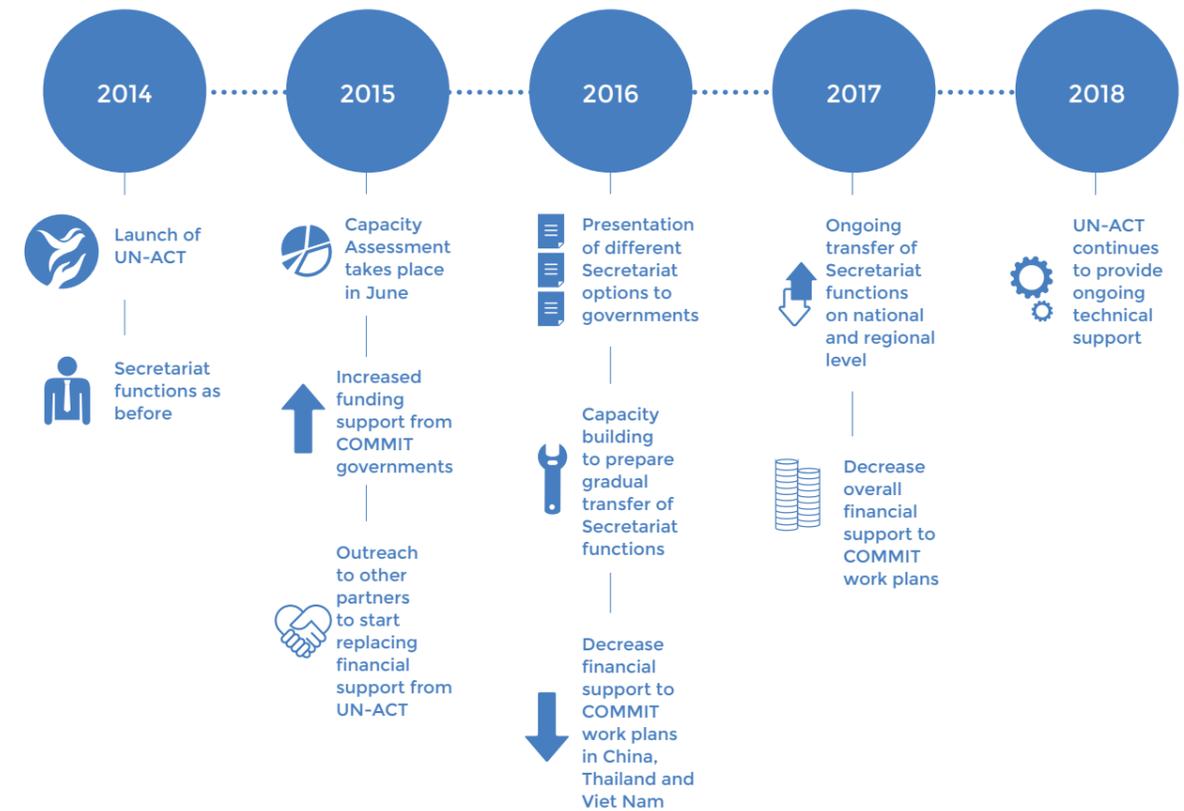


Figure 9. Sustainability plan for the COMMIT Secretariat

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
Baseline: 0
2014 progress marker: N/A
2018 target: 5000

Indicator 2: Number of changes in counter-trafficking policies after advocacy from civil society
Baseline: 0
2014 progress marker: 6
2018 target: 14

Activity Result	Indicator	Baseline	Cambodia	China	Lao PDR	Myanmar	Thailand	Viet Nam	Regional	2014 progress marker (only 8 months of implementation)	2014 progress marker achieved
1.1. COMMIT accountability and transparency enhanced	# of countries reporting back on agreed M&E framework	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	SPA IV developed, expected to be adopted in April 2015, after which M&E efforts will be developed	2	Not achieved
1.2. Sufficient technical and functional capacities developed by governments	# of Secretariat functions transferred to the governments	0	1 fully, 2 partly	4 partly	1 partly	1 fully, 2 partly	1 partly	1 partly	Terms of Reference finalised for capacity development	2 fully, 10 partly	Fully achieved
1.3. Effective implementation of SPA IV	% of COMMIT work plan activities funded by government and other partners	0	N/A	37%	0%	0%	33%	45%	N/A	20% per country funded and/or fundraised by governments	Partly achieved

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

2.1. Joint anti-trafficking efforts of COMMIT countries with key destination countries elsewhere increased	# of project activities/interactions with other countries	0	1 (discussions on the development of MoU with Malaysia)	0	0	0	1 (ASEAN workshop)	2 (survey conducted in Singapore; discussions with Malaysia on bilateral agreement)	6 (Bali Process training in South Korea; consultations with Belgium, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Japan)	5	Fully achieved
2.2. Institutionalised engagement between COMMIT and ASEAN	# of joint initiatives between ASEAN and COMMIT representatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Discussions have been initiated with ASEAN on joint initiatives including an ASEAN-COMMIT workshop on victim identification in 2015	1	Not achieved
2.3. Coordination and cooperation among relevant regional actors for anti-trafficking increased	# of joint activities in regional network	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	3 (Zero draft of SPA IV, M&E workshop, development of civil society platform for SPA IV)	5	Partly achieved

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

3.1. Evidence-base for anti-trafficking intervention enhanced and accessible	# of research projects on TIP completed in-house or in partnership with others, and disseminated	0	1 (Cambodia-Thailand deportation research completed, awaiting publication)	-	1 (Lao PDR-Thailand deportation research completed, awaiting publication)	-	-	-	-	1	Fully achieved
3.2. Strategic dissemination and advocacy on research findings to influence policy and programming strengthened	# of initiatives in follow-up to research findings/recommendations	0	0 (awaiting publication of deportation research)	0	0 (awaiting publication of deportation research)	1 (follow-up on 'After Trafficking' for possible related research)	6 (4 trainings, 1 study and 1 development of M&E framework)	0	9	Partly 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 in-house or in partnership with others, and disseminated	0	1 (Cambodia-Thailand deportation research completed, awaiting publication)	-	1 (Lao PDR-Thailand deportation research completed, awaiting publication)	-	-	-	-	1	Fully achieved
3.2. Strategic dissemination and advocacy on research findings to influence policy and programming strengthened	# of initiatives in follow-up to research findings/recommendations	0	0 (awaiting publication of deportation research)	0	0 (awaiting publication of deportation research)	1 (follow-up on 'After Trafficking' for possible related research)	6 (4 trainings, 1 study and 1 development of M&E framework)	0	9	Partly achieved	

ANNEX 3 UN-ACT RISK ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

• LACK OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

RISK EVALUATION:

It is likely that the risk will occur.

The generous funding commitments from the Governments of Norway and Sweden have supported the establishment and implementation of the project. The project has been working to secure further funding from other donors to meet the programming needs as outlined in the project document. However, the initial year of the project has resulted in unsuccessful efforts to bridge this funding gap and therefore a shortfall in planned activities.

ASSESSING CONSEQUENCE:

Major consequence on the ability to achieve the intended results.

The ability to achieve the project's broader objectives will be limited if further financial resources are not secured, however the commitments under the agreements with the current donors, will not be affected by such a shortfall in funding.

MITIGATION:

The project will seek to identify new donors and raise awareness and understanding of the project's value, in order to attract further resources.

• 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 sensitivities around the issue, particularly with regards to labour exploitation and the economy. The six countries of the Greater Mekong Sub-region have shown commitment to combating human trafficking through the COMMIT Process, and increasing political will through the development of the new Sub-regional Plan of Action and their collaborative and national activities to combat human trafficking. However, translating that

commitment into tangible progress remains to be seen, particularly around critical issues of services to victims of trafficking, victim identification, and taking action against official complicity in human trafficking.

Beyond this, the difficulty to gather data and report on human trafficking in some countries hampers the ability to target the problem. There are also indirect risks from restrictive laws and policies being developed in a number of countries related to the work of civil society organisations that may be focusing on anti-trafficking efforts.

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 Sub-regional Plans of Action. 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 be key to reinforcing 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 emphasised on all levels. Further engagement of stakeholders and channels to influence the governments will be important, including private sector and civil society.

• 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 recognised and sets the foundation for overcoming sensitivities. Further, the COMMIT Process provides the member countries with a forum and plan 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 strategising initiatives, and pushing some boundaries may be necessary.

MITIGATION:

The project will take a collaborative approach to work with a range of stakeholders and prioritising 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.

• 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.

• 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 minimised. Also, given the range of partnerships that the project has developed, any lack of engagement from a given partner will be balanced by engagement with others.

MITIGATION:

Careful 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 Task Force 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.

MITIGATION:

Continued communications and trust-building with government partners, bilaterally and multilaterally, will help to minimise the risk.

• 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 partners, government and non-government, may unintentionally cause ethical and security concerns in their work directly with victims of trafficking, in developing policies or in their work with 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. However, such consequences are unlikely to have a significant consequence on the project as a whole.

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.

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in more than 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.



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