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UN-ACT ON TWITTER:

- RT @BeyondSlavery: Read/listen to our full interview with Cathy Feingold here! #GlobalSupplyChains #decentwork @AFLCIOGlobal https://t.co/o...
- RT @ejfoundation: NEW BLOG: uncovering widespread slavery in Taiwan's fisheries https://t.co/pS1b8yq14G #illegalfishing #modernslavery #sla...
- RT @ag_fidh: #Thailand: Protect women human rights defenders, UN says https://t.co/Eilx277L8b @PravitR reports for @KhaosodEnglish
The 'International Seminar on Mixed Migration in Southeast and East Asia' wrapped up

The 'International Seminar on Mixed Migration in Southeast and East Asia' co-organized by UN-ACT and Mahidol University took place on 21 and 22 June, and what a success it was!

The venue was packed at maximum capacity on both days as some 30 presenters discussed their papers on various dimensions of mixed migration in the region, divided across 7 thematic sessions. A few thousand people also joined from afar via an excellent live-stream. Authors had diverse backgrounds including academia, government, civil society or international organizations, and many flew in for the event from almost all parts of the world.

Many of the papers have been made available on our website. Further, all sessions including presentations and discussions can be watched on demand on our Facebook page under 'videos' at any time. Some 37,000 viewers have already made use of this opportunity.

The papers presented and discussed will also be considered for publication in the Anti-Trafficking Review (ATR) in a 2018 issue on the conference's theme, with UN-ACT and Mahidol University staff serving as guest editors.
UN-ACT’s mid-term evaluation has been finalized by Mike Dottridge as independent evaluator.

The objective of the exercise was to a) assess the project based on its goal and output areas, its management and organizational set-up within the UN; b) evaluate the role of the UN and the position of UN-ACT within the UN-system to counter trafficking in persons, and the internal UN coordination regarding trafficking in persons; c) assess the position of UN-ACT and the COMMIT Process in relation to other regional initiatives to counter trafficking in persons in Asia; and d) review the funding situation of UN-ACT and analyze the strategy used to attract new sources of funding.

According to the evaluator, "the special value of UN-ACT lies in the process benefits it delivers - by developing and maintaining relationships of trust with a range of actors and practitioners in the counter-trafficking sector in six countries (belonging to COMMIT) and beyond. Sometimes these relationships enabled UN-ACT to deliver its own results as planned, while at other times it has facilitated action by others and enabled them to achieve results, while UN-ACT itself kept a low profile. Numerous people interviewed during the evaluation remarked that they (and the wider cause of counter-trafficking) would suffer significantly if UN-ACT did not exist (...)."

You can read the full evaluation including a summary of key findings and recommendations [here](#).
UN-ACT supports monitoring the implementation of minimum standards on residential care for trafficked persons in Cambodia

UN-ACT provided both technical and financial support to the Cambodian Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) in their efforts to monitor the implementation of minimum standards on residential care for trafficked persons.

A first monitoring mission went to three provinces, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, and Siemreap, applying a newly developed M&E tool for that purpose. The team visited eight shelters, with results suggesting that most minimum standards were met, although some improvements needed to be made.

MoSVY will send out letters to the visited shelters informing them about the results and how to further improve the conditions to fully meet the standards set. Aside, a reflection meeting was held to discuss the mission and how to improve approach and conduct.
UN-ACT partnered with the Freedom Collaborative for another webinar, this time on (trans-)national referral mechanisms.

Paul Buckley, UN-ACT Regional Technical Specialist, and Sebastian Boll, UN-ACT Regional Research Specialist, were joined by Tatiana Kotlyarenko, Anti-Human Trafficking Advisor at the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. They introduced models, challenges and approaches related to referral mechanisms, especially from Southeast Asia and China.

The full webinar and others can be watched on demand via the Freedom Collaborative's YouTube channel.
COMMIT Capacity Development Well Underway

Strengthening both the technical and functional capacities of relevant COMMIT stakeholders is key to the Process' long-term sustainability and hence a primary objective of UN-ACT as the COMMIT Secretariat.

Following a comprehensive capacity assessment in all 6 COMMIT countries conducted by UN-ACT, our staff are now actively supporting governmental counterparts in developing and implementing national capacity development plans.

In Lao PDR, the UN-ACT country team worked with the Anti-Trafficking Department (ATD) in developing a first draft of a national matrix, which is now with the department's director for consideration and approval.

Similar developments have taken place in Thailand, where a national capacity development plan has been drafted by the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS), with support from UN-ACT Thailand.

In Myanmar, our team co-organized a meeting of the new M&E group in the Myanmar National Task Force for the implementation of the country's National Plan of Action (NPA), whilst also conducting an M&E training for 7 government departments on reporting against the NPA as well as the COMMIT Sub-regional Plan of Action.

Standard Operating Procedures on Referrals and Reintegration Support
Developed in Viet Nam
In Viet Nam, work is underway to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for relevant stakeholders in providing referral and reintegration services to trafficked persons.

A first outline of the proposed SOPs has been developed by a national consultant, and shared with UN-ACT and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) for comments.

Our staff have provided inputs drawing on the 'After Trafficking' research, the reintegation guidebook developed based on the research's findings, and the COMMIT guidelines on victim Identification and referral mechanisms.
Facilitated by UN-ACT, Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen met Ms. Napa Setthakorn, Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS); gave a presentation at UN-ACT’s Regional Network Meeting on the role of the special rapporteur system in anti-trafficking work; and visited the Labour Rights Promotion Network (LPN) to learn more about the experiences of trafficked fishermen and the available services to support their reintegration.

More information on Ms. Dettmeijer-Vermeulen and her work can be found here.

[In the picture above (from left to right): Ms. Kaori Kawarabayashi, UN-ACT’s Regional Project Manager; Ms. Napa Setthakorn, Deputy Permanent Secretary, MSDHS; and Corrine Dettmeijer-Vermeulen, Dutch National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence against Children]

Call for Papers: Anti-Trafficking Review

The Anti-Trafficking Review (ATR), a peer-reviewed academic journal housed under the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), issued its latest Call for Papers.

Titled ‘Irregular Migrants, Refugees or Trafficked Persons?’, the publication follows the theme of the recent ‘International Seminar on Mixed Migration in Southeast and East Asia’ and will be guest-edited by staff from UN-ACT and Mahidol University. All papers presented at the event will be automatically considered as submissions for the ATR.

The deadline for contributions is 7 January 2018. More information is here.
UN-ACT routinely publishes analyses and opinion pieces on latest trends and developments in anti-trafficking. Here are links and summaries of our most recent blogs

"Act to Protect and Assist Trafficked Persons" draws upon the theme of this year's World Day against Trafficking in Persons on 30 July as set by UNODC, and takes a look at some of the latest developments in counter-trafficking at the global level, with a particular emphasis on the 'protection' framework for those affected by human trafficking. It then introduces recent initiatives in the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT), aimed at strengthening the 'protection' response in the Greater Mekong Sub-region countries.

NEW RESOURCES ON THE UN-ACT WEBSITE

UN-ACT maintains a comprehensive resource center related to human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region and Southeast Asia on its website, covering research, tools & guidelines, laws & agreements, and other publications. Below is a list of latest additions to the resource center including brief summaries and links for downloads

IN 'RESEARCH'

Access Unknown: Access to Justice from the Perspectives of Cambodian Migrant Workers in Thailand - GAATW, 2017
Research examining why there continues to be a significant disconnect between the
currently available options in the Thai legal system for migrants and Cambodian workers' unwillingness or inability to practically access them, and explore the access to justice scenario from their experiences at both origin and destination.

**IN 'TOOLS & GUIDELINES'


Code of Conduct attempting to set minimum standards for investigative NGOs operating in Southeast Asia. It seeks to set and uphold professional standards for the protection of victims of trafficking, NGO personnel, the integrity of the criminal justice process and the reputation of all parties in the sector.


Handbook providing tools, advice and recommendations to various stakeholders in the field of migration and development, with a focus on the role and contributions of 'small-scale actors'.

*Supporting the Reintegration of Trafficked Persons: A Guidebook for the Greater Mekong Sub-Region* - Nexus Institute, UN-ACT and World Vision, 2017

Guidebook providing a practical tool for service providers in the Greater Mekong Sub-region who support the reintegration of trafficking survivors. It was developed based on the research findings from 'After Trafficking: Experiences and Challenges in the (Re)integration of Trafficked Persons in the Greater Mekong Sub-region'.

**IN 'LAWS & AGREEMENTS'


Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on Cooperation to Combat Trafficking in Person as signed on 12 July 2017 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR.

**IN 'PUBLICATIONS'

*Report of the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* - Giammarinaro, 2017

Report of the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children to the Human Rights Council focusing on the efforts of multi-stakeholder initiatives and industry coalitions to address, through voluntary standards, trafficking in supply chains.
Report by the Thai government outlining its measures in 2016 to counter human trafficking across the areas of 'Policy', 'Prevention', 'Protection', 'Prosecution' and 'Partnerships'

Legal Analysis of Human Trafficking in Thailand - Liberty Asia, 2017
Legal gap analysis seeking to provide a comprehensive look at local laws as part of a constructive conversation on the way forward in anti-human trafficking.

UN-ACT FACEBOOK HIGHLIGHTS

UN-ACT maintains an active Facebook presence with frequent updates on key news stories, the latest from UN-ACT as well as our partners. Below are some of the highlights from Facebook over the last few months
16 June is Domestic Workers Day and the 6th anniversary of the ILO Domestic Workers' Convention, 2011.

What are good ways of preventing abuse and exploitation in the domestic work sector? Find out some possible solutions in this study by the International Labour Organization and UN Women on bans and restrictions to women’s migration into domestic work. Many trafficked persons in the Greater Mekong Sub-region end up abused and exploited in domestic households.

UN-ACT is working towards ending such forms of violence. More here.

"Businesses must be more effective in their action to prevent and combat human trafficking."

In a recent press release by the OHCHR, Special Rapporteur Maria Grazia Giammarinaro highlights the importance of mobilizing industry-based initiatives to ban human trafficking and forced labour from company supply chains. Ms.
Giammarinaro argues for simple yet effective strategies including guaranteeing a voice for workers, raising awareness amongst relevant stakeholders and implementing state frameworks. These efforts will not only set ethical expectations for businesses but they will also contribute to the broader goal of protecting workers from labour exploitation around the world.

She presented her full report on 9 June to the Human Rights Council. More here.

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*Posted on 2 June 2017*

As part of our 'International Conference on Mixed Migration in Southeast and East Asia', we will host a photography exhibition by Visarut Sankham. 'Behind Tin Walls' will be open for a week prior to and throughout the conference, and documents the stories of migrant workers who live in temporary, tin-walled structures as they build Bangkok’s skyline. More here.

**NEWS ON TIP IN THE MEKONG COUNTRIES & BEYOND**

UN-ACT closely monitors news and developments on human trafficking, especially related to the Greater Mekong Sub-region and Southeast Asia. Below are some of the key stories that have been published in newspapers around the world over the last few months
“Being on a fishing boat is like having your life hang by a thread,” says Samart. “Nobody should experience this.”

A number of years ago, journalists and non-government organizations exposed highly abusive and exploitative working conditions on Thai fishing vessels. Some of the individuals affected at the time have since set up the Thai and Migrant Fishers Union Group, with assistance from the Labour Rights Promotion Network. They provide counselling and other rehabilitation support to trafficked persons, and help them obtain compensation for the income loss and hardship endured.

More here.
"Respecting migrants’ rights is good for the economy. Unless policy makers understand this, harsh laws based on control and punishment are only good for the business of corruption."

In this powerful opinion piece in the Bangkok Post, Sanitsuda Ekachai argues that the real problem Thailand faces in the management of migrant workers is the current oppressive labour laws and flawed labour migration systems that inadvertently fuel extortion and corruption.

More here.
“There has been a virtually lawless environment in China’s three northeast provinces adjacent to the DPRK [North Korea] with respect to widespread sex trafficking of North Korean women”, said Tim Peters, a prominent advocate of Helping Hands Korea.

Many North Korean refugee women have been sold as brides and forced into cyber pornography after crossing the border into China. There are strong indications of a nexus between refugees and trafficked persons in the case of North Korean women in China.

More here.
'We are ensuring that Australian registered child sex offenders are not able to take part in the growing child sex tourism trade'

This week the Australian government has proposed a new legislation that revokes the passports of registered child sex offenders. Under this regulation, an estimated 20,000 people on the country’s sex offender registry will be barred from travelling overseas. The initiative has surfaced in response to trends showing that child sex tourists from Australia are among the most active offenders in the sex trade, particularly in neighboring Southeast Asian countries.

Child sex tourism is a global phenomenon and widespread in countries like Thailand, Cambodia or the Philippines. This law, which has been described as a first of its kind world-wide, is considered to mark a vital step towards the protection of children at risk.

More here.
“One of the biggest problems is that there is such a dichotomy in the discourse. It’s all about forced versus voluntary migration, legal or illegal migrants. But human trafficking isn’t black or white- it’s everything in between”.

This article investigates challenges faced by individuals who have been trafficked across international borders into countries foreign to them. Vulnerabilities, desperation and fears of being deported mean that many victims of trafficking are reluctant to step forward to report their abuse. Strict migration policies also push victims to remain silent.

Hlín Sæþórsdóttir, a PhD student from the State University of New York talks to the Guardian about the importance of social workers understanding the complex dynamics between trafficking and migration to help them identify individuals affected or at risk. Sæþórsdóttir paints a nuanced picture of the world of trafficking and questions popular myths and misconceptions dispersed in the media.

More here.
“My in-laws were always bullying me. Although I am a university graduate, I was always called illiterate and a jungle man. Once I shouted back at them and they beat me. After that I was resigned to my fate and work.” Shahid Sandhu reflects on his experience of servitude and abuse at the hands of his in-laws in Hong Kong.

Sandhu is just one of dozens of known cases where vulnerable men from India and Pakistan have been entrapped as slave grooms after being promised the opportunity of an arranged marriage. Slavery and human trafficking occurring within familial and married environments is commonly underreported due to the attached social shame and stigma. The majority of men in this situation therefore remain isolated and hidden.

This article argues for a change of social perception so that men trapped in hellish circumstances like Shahid feel able to speak out and seek help from authorities. More here.
“As I've lived in this country for a long time, I now feel that I have a bond with Thailand and I always hope that one day I can live comfortably in this country, but now I am not sure about this dream.” said Ei Dhan Dar, a 28-year-old migrant from Myanmar.

According to this article, obtaining a work permit in Thailand for unskilled migrant workers is becoming harder than before. The article states that new measures designed to combat human trafficking have ended up complicating the situation for groups of migrants seeking new economic opportunities. More here.

"They don't have any support ... so they have some kind of set-up where they're leaving the children assuming it's safe and they're going to try to earn some living,"
says Gangadharan. "Those kind of separations heighten the risk."

A number of Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh are feared to be human trafficking victims. According to non-governmental organisation Action Against Hunger, refugees are at risk of exploitation because they lack community structures.

More here.

UPCOMING UN-ACT EVENTS

UN-ACT’s next quarterly Regional Network Meeting will take place in Bangkok on Wednesday, 13 September 2017. The thematic focus is on patterns of mixed migration as a follow-up to the seminar on the theme at Mahidol University in June. If you would like to attend the session, please contact mary.grimwade@undp.org.