Quarter 4 2016 Newsletter

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UN-ACT ON TWITTER:

- RT @BeyondSlavery: Due to strong government opposition, domestic workers' rights remain denied. Why? Asks Kate Roberts @Kalayaan https://t...
- RT @UNDESA: What do we expect from the 1st #UNDataForum? Learn more in this fact sheet: https://t.co/3q7A6hs843 #SDGs #GlobalGoals https://...
- RT @BeyondSlavery: States resort to criminal law when they either can’t or won’t tackle root causes, argues LSE’s Peter Ramsay https://t.co...
COMMIT SOM11 in Vientiane, Lao PDR

Senior Officials from all six member states (Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) gathered in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 24 November 2016 for their 11th annual meeting (SOM 11). The event welcomed over 200 attendees, including national COMMIT Task Force representatives, delegates from ASEAN, regional and national NGOs, UN agencies, Embassies and the private sector.

Key outcomes included the adoption of the common ASEAN-COMMIT indicators of human trafficking and related forms of exploitation as well as the COMMIT Guidelines on Victim Identification and Referral Mechanisms. Both are designed to help significantly improve victim identification in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and ensure that those identified receive adequate support services, in line with commitments made in the 4th COMMIT Sub-regional Plan of Action (SPAIV: 2015-2018).

More details on the event and its outcomes can be found here.
UN-ACT Training on Victim Identification and Legal Frameworks on TIP

Recognising the increased complexity of mixed migration flows in the region, UN-ACT provided training for Case Officers from UNHCR, Asylum Access Thailand, Jesuit Refugee Service and BPSOS Thailand on 16 November to increase knowledge and skills in identifying possible victims of trafficking among the vulnerable populations they serve and providing appropriate referrals. The training arose out of ongoing discussions and joint concerns over the potential vulnerabilities of the populations in the host country, but also in understanding the experiences they have fled from and the possible risks of return to their home communities. The training included international and national legal frameworks and discussions of indicators of trafficking and interviewing trafficked persons, including ethical and security concerns. The training successfully engaged 34 case officers and included panel discussions with experts in trafficking case responses from Solidarity Center and HRDF.
COMMIT Victim Identification and Referral Mechanisms

UN-ACT hosted a 2-day workshop on victim identification and referral mechanisms in Bangkok on 25-26 October 2016. Close to 40 participants from all six COMMIT countries attended representing both government agencies and CSOs. Participants worked in their country groups and the plenary to discuss and revise common draft guidelines. By the end of the workshop, countries had prepared an outcome document for review and adoption at the COMMIT Senior Officials Meeting in November (see above). Read more on the workshop and the developed guidelines [here](#).
Visit from Sweden’s TIP Ambassador

In late October, UN-ACT welcomed Mr. Per-Anders Sunesson, Sweden’s newly appointed Ambassador at Large for Combating Trafficking in Persons. Mr. Sunesson stopped in at the COMMIT workshop on victim identification and referral mechanisms to see countries in action and learn more about COMMIT’s work. He followed up with a visit to Cambodia where he connected with UN-ACT’s national office and met with local anti-trafficking actors and survivors. Ambassador Sunesson appreciated being able to speak first-hand with survivors about their experiences, as well as with civil society and government stakeholders about what is being done to combat human trafficking.
UN-ACT-Mahidol University Research Partnership

UN-ACT is currently conducting research on the intersections of asylum and labour exploitation, in collaboration with the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP) at Mahidol University and People Serving People Foundation (PSPF). A diverse group of students from Mahidol are serving as data collectors after they completed an intensive, 2-day training programme on national and international legislation related to asylum and human trafficking; ethical considerations in conducting research on highly sensitive topics; and practicing interviews based on the research tool to be used for data collection. The vulnerabilities of refugee populations to various forms of abuse and exploitation have recently received heightened recognition but remain significantly under-researched. This project will make an important contribution to the knowledge base in this regard, and help inform policy and programming responses to overcome vulnerabilities to human trafficking among refugee populations. More information on the project can be found [here](#).
Global Data Initiative on Modern Slavery

UN-ACT has been an active member of the Global Data Initiative on Modern Slavery. Convened by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in support of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), the technical working group of experts from across the world are developing a conceptual framework, research tools and measurement frameworks for various manifestations of modern slavery to help strengthen standardized prevalence estimates at the global level. Various meetings with specific thematic focuses have been held for that purpose of the past 2 years, including one most recently in Bangkok with an emphasis on the measurement of commercial sexual exploitation of women and children. UN-ACT is looking forward to working with partners in Southeast Asia and beyond on the application of the newly developed tools once these are finalized, such as for monitoring progress against targets set in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

LATEST UN-ACT BLOGS & ANALYSES

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

“How the lack of protection for persons displaced by climate change increases their vulnerability to exploitation and human trafficking” reflects on the intersections between climate change, exploitation and human trafficking. It highlights the importance of developing mechanisms to protect those who are impacted by climate
change as migration and displacement due to environmental concerns are likely to increase in coming years, leaving more and more people vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking.

In "Migrants Mean Business", Magdy Martinez-Soliman, UN Assistant Secretary General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, argues that human mobility is inevitable and unstoppable, but that, if facilitated and well-managed, it creates opportunities for everyone. He further highlights that migration policies are development policies, providing examples in the areas of economics and labour markets, human rights or social protection systems.

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'

Worker, helper, auntie, maid?: Working conditions and attitudes experienced by migrant domestic workers in Thailand and Malaysia - ILO & UNWOMEN, 2016
The ILO and UNWOMEN, in partnership with the University of Oxford's Centre on Migration, Policy, and Society (COMPAS), have carried out research into the experiences of migrant domestic workers in Thailand and Malaysia. The report provides recommendations for stakeholders with the goal of improving the workers' living and working conditions.
Amnesty International released a report investigating the palm oil industry in Indonesia and the human rights abuses and labour exploitation that lie therein. The report outlines the experiences of those who work in this industry, as well as how many international corporations are complicit in allowing these conditions to prevail.

A bench-marking report of 20 major apparel and footwear companies, including Adidas, Primark and Prada, on their commitments to combating forced labour and exploitation in their supply chains. Company's efforts are measured across seven themes such as workers' voices, monitoring and remedies.

The ILO has published a research report on female migrant workers in the Thai construction sector, providing new information on their experiences. The report focuses on the challenges these workers face as females in an industry dominated by males, and how these are further exacerbated by their status as migrants.

Business for Social Responsibility has published this migrant worker management toolkit providing guidance on how to better manage migrant worker issues, from managing risks to better protecting migrant workers’ rights.

Samsung has developed new migrant worker guidelines in collaboration with Business for Social Responsibility. The guidelines aim to eradicate any existing or potential of forced or coercive labor, slave labor or human trafficking of migrant workers at Samsung or among any of our suppliers.

The New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, adopted at the High Level Meeting on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants in New York on 19 September 2016, represents a commitment on the part of political leaders to share responsibility and protect the rights of migrants and refugees on a global scale.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Malaysia and the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia on the Recruitment and Employment of Workers is a bilateral agreement between the two countries establishing a framework for the recruitment, employment and repatriation of labour migrants.
The *Labour Migration Policy for Cambodia 2015 - 2018* sets out a framework from which to govern labour migration effectively, empower and protect the rights of women and men migrant workers, and enhance the impact of migration on development.

**IN ‘PUBLICATIONS’**

The *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association* highlights how migrant workers, women workers and domestic workers are often denied the ability to exercise their right to freedom of peaceful assembly. The report calls attention to the abuse and exploitation often suffered by these workers at the hands of employers around the world.

**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.
In Lao PDR, the Office of the Supreme People’s Prosecutor (OSPP), in partnership with the Institute for Legal Support and Technical Assistance (ILSTA) and international partners from Luxembourg and Canada, recently staged an inaugural national conference, which brought together prosecutors, members of the judiciary and police from all 17 provinces in an effort to counter the scourges of human trafficking, smuggling of migrants and organised crime. The three-day conference also involved international experts from UNODC, IOM, UN-ACT and the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO) of the Bank of the Lao PDR.

Are you in Bangkok on 20 December and interested to discuss and learn about migration and related matters? Then this may be for you!

The Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM) at Chulalongkorn University, in partnership with various partner organizations, will host an ‘International Conference to Commemorate International Migrants Day’. Participants will be able to attend panels structured around three thematic areas: human trafficking and people smuggling, displaced persons and refugees, and labour migration.

Discussions will be guided by experts from various organizations and agencies including IOMX, MSDHS, UNHCR, Chula University, Mahidol University, ILO, and UN-ACT. Participants will also be able to visit information booths from various migration networks throughout the day. This will be a great opportunity to learn more about migration and related matters in the region and connect with experts and practitioners in the field.
The threat of violence affects all girls, limiting their choices & constraining their potentials!

Thanks to the 50+ participants for coming to yesterday's Thailand Inter-Agency Working Group on Human Trafficking!

The event saw interesting presentations and discussions about UN-ACT's latest research report on forced marriages between Cambodia and China; as well as on prosecuting human trafficking and money laundering cases in Thailand by the Office of the Attorney General and the Anti-Money Laundering Office.

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.

The Myanmar Parliament (Hluttaw) has decided to ratify the ASEAN counter-trafficking convention. The Ministry of Home Affairs has confirmed that they are in the process of rewriting legislation to conform with the standards of the ASEAN convention. Read more [here](#).

The Guardian reports on British authorities failing to identify and protect Vietnamese victims of trafficking who are being deported back to Vietnam without adequate support or protection. Read more [here](#).
Thailand’s government has made a promising commitment to increase efforts against human trafficking. The deputy prime minister announced that long-term anti-trafficking measures are being considered that will address policies and law enforcement.

Importantly, the government has acknowledged that more attention must be paid to fishing. This industry is rife with abuse and exploitation of both Thai and migrant workers, leading to the EU threatening a ban on Thai seafood imports if the situation does not change. Read more [here](#).

The Thomas Reuters Foundation has a dedicated section reporting on overlooked stories related human trafficking. The stories cover news events across the world. See the section [here](#).
Worldwide, most workers are now without formal employment arrangements, according to a new UN report. Workers in the informal sector are particularly vulnerable to labour exploitation as they are without the legal protections offered by labour laws, however minimal those laws may be. Read the article here: http://www.truth-out.org/.../38152-new-un-report-shows-just-h...

NEWSLETTER SURVEY

For some time now, we have asked you a survey question in every newsletter to help us improve its frequency, format and content, and hence to make it more useful to you as our readers.

In the previous newsletter, we asked you: **How do you rate the overall quality of our newsletter?** Here are your answers (in percentage of total):
This is a relatively positive response, however one that we can further improve on. We will strive to incorporate your inputs from the previous questions - especially by expanding on the analysis section on human trafficking-related developments - going forward.

For now, this concludes our survey section, but we may re-introduce it again later to see how the newsletter has further developed in your eyes. In the meantime though, if you have other thoughts and ideas to share on the newsletter or otherwise, please don't hesitate to get in touch via unact@undp.org. We look forward to your feedback!

UPCOMING UN-ACT EVENTS

UN-ACT is pleased to partner with Mahidol University's International College and the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies on an academic conference held in Bangkok on 21-22 June 2017. The theme of the conference is ‘Irregular Migrants, Refugees or Victims of Human Trafficking? Analysis, Advocacy and Assistance between Categorizations and (Self-) Identifications’. A Call for Papers has been announced here.

Please submit proposals on conceptual studies, reports on empirical research, and reflection papers by practitioners in the areas of migration, displacement, human-trafficking and related forms of exploitation in the wider Southeast Asian region (including China) by 31 March 2017.