10 Year COMMIT Anniversary!

29 October 2014 marked the official 10 year anniversary of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking, better known as the COMMIT Process. The intergovernmental agreement was established through the signing of a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the ministerial level between the governments of Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam in October, 2004.

A report on 10 years of COMMIT is currently in development, and is expected to be released at the Inter-Ministerial Meeting (IMM) in Cambodia next year. The SPA IV (4th Sub-regional Plan of Action) is also scheduled to be endorsed at the IMM, guiding COMMIT’s work for the next 4 years. UN-ACT would like to thank the various stakeholders engaged in the Process for 10 years of work, and is looking forward to strengthening cooperation further in the future!

To view the COMMIT MoU (2004) Click Here

For other documents and publications on human trafficking, look no further than the UN-ACT Website
Trafficking Trends and Developments

CAMBODIA

- On 31 October 2014, a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Bilateral Cooperation for Eliminating Trafficking in Persons and Protecting Victims of Trafficking was signed between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand, replacing the previous MoU signed in 2003. The document was signed during an official visit to Cambodia by the Thai Prime Minister, Mr. Prayut Chan-O-Cha, and his delegation.

- A consultation workshop entitled ‘Labor Migration Policy and Action Plan for Cambodia’ was conducted on 16 October 2014 by the ILO Triangle Project, and gathered input from various stakeholders including UN-ACT. An additional consultation workshop on Migration Policy was also conducted on 17 October 2014 by the International Labour Organization to discuss draft guidelines on the use of guarantee deposits from recruitment agencies.

CHINA

- Cambodian language interpreters continued to provide services to local police in northeast China as part of an ongoing investigation involving approximately 150 Cambodian women recently wed to Chinese men. Police have identified three criminal gangs and arrested several gang members on charges of smuggling. The smuggling charges were attributed due to the fact that most of the women had known they were to marry Chinese men and live "happily" with their husbands. The number of Victims of Trafficking (VoT's) is approximately 20-30 out of the 140, with these women claiming they had been lured to China for work opportunities, but were instead forced to marry Chinese men or, alternatively, pay their broker six thousand USD for transportation fees.

- Ten Chinese government officers from three key departments (All China Women’s Federation, Ministry of Civil Affairs and Ministry of Public Security) met in Hong Kong to learn and observe how SAR government officials and NGO practitioners worked together to address child protection issues as well as the operation of referral mechanisms. UN-ACT and World Vision China jointly facilitated the trip to initiate the development of a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in China.

LAO PDR

- An ASEAN workshop was held on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, with participants from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Participants shared national trafficking challenges, overviews of human trafficking in the ASEAN region were presented, and participants discussed enhancing cross border and international cooperation.

- Discussions were held surrounding the International Day Against Human Trafficking and International Migration Day, with a decision made to merge the two events and celebrate them together with a new slogan: “Promote Safe Migration to Fight Against Human Trafficking”.

THAILAND

• The Department of Employment (DoE), Ministry of Labour has set up a team to monitor human trafficking in the form of online advertisements. Officials have been appointed to monitor online media for illegal recruiters. Under Thai law, those found guilty of unlawful recruitment are subject to a fine of 60,000 – 200,000 baht, a jail term of 3-10 years, or both sentences.

• The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) imposed new protocols to regulate beggars in Bangkok in part to help resolve the problem of human trafficking and child labour particularly from neighbouring states.

• On 1 October 2014, six alleged trafficking victims returned to Thailand from Ambon Island, Indonesia. A multi-disciplinary team including police and authorities from the MSDHS conducted a victim identification process and determined one returnee to be a victim of human trafficking. In addition, the Consular Affairs Department revealed to the media that 35 Thai nationals have been rescued from fishermen. Four are under the care of Indonesian Immigration authorities on Ambon Island and will be asked to return to Thailand voluntarily. There will be no expenses involved should they decide to travel by ship, however, it will cost them each 30,000 baht for a flight back to Thailand.
VIET NAM

- The Vietnamese Minister of Public Security attended a meeting in China to discuss strengthening anti-crime cooperation between the two countries. The meeting emphasized that cooperation between the two ministries of public security has produced encouraging achievements, significantly contributing to ensuring security and social safety in each nation, as well as promoting bilateral relations. The event focused on reviewing anti-crime cooperation, and set out plans for further cooperation in the future.

- Vietnam and Cambodia have agreed to enhance collaboration in the fight against criminality, particularly in border areas. The two states informed one another of their respective crime prevention policies and shared experiences in suppressing various forms of illegal activity, with an emphasis on drug and human trafficking. A quarterly exchange between two sides was suggested to further share prevention measures and other crime-related issues.

- A new human trafficking section in the Penal Code was drafted in order to comply with protocol on crimes outlined in international conventions. Current Vietnamese regulations are vague and struggle to describe criminal activity with sufficient detail and clarity, thus further complicating differentiation between crimes. The new regulations have been improved with more detailed definitions about human trafficking, and also classify various forms of criminality, such as transporting persons across borders to exploit their labour, for sexual services, and for organ removal.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING PARTNERS

The Anti-Trafficking Review is an open access, academic publication with a readership in 78 countries, published by the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW). The Anti-Trafficking Review calls for papers for a Special Issue entitled 'Forced Labour and Human Trafficking.'

For more detailed information, please click here: Call for Papers

Deadline for submission: 30 November 2014

Word count for Full Article submissions: 4,000 - 6,000 words, including footnotes, author bio and abstract

We advise those interested in submitting to follow the Review's style guide and submission procedures, available at www.antitraffickingreview.org. Please email the editorial team at atr@gaatw.org with any queries.
Human traffickers prey on poor Bangladeshi

“the 81 Bangladeshis had not come along of their own volition. They were deceived. They thought they were going to Malaysia to find employment - instead they ended up stuck working on fishing boats in gruelling conditions for little or no pay. This is the standard human trafficking story in this area.” (Al Jazeera)

6 arrested, including 2 foreigners, for selling 147 Vietnamese women to S. Korea, China

“Police in southern Vietnam have arrested six members of a gang including two foreigners for allegedly trafficking 147 poor women to China and South Korea, and rescued 17 would-be victims.” (Thanh Nien News)

Twenty Fishermen, Two Brides Rescued Abroad

“Twenty Cambodian fishermen forced to work on a trawler in Indonesia have been rescued, while a pair of Cambodian brides extricated from abusive relationships in China have been repatriated.” (Cambodia Daily)

‘Poverty and caste’ fueling child labor in South Asia

“When the Nobel Committee awarded the Peace Prize to children’s rights activists it also highlighted child labor, a move which will hopefully lead to robust efforts to eliminate the practice, says analyst Siddharth Kara.” (Deutsche Welle)

Traffickers use abductions, prison ships to feed Asian slave trade

“In the past, evidence showed most people boarded smuggling boats voluntarily. Now people are being abducted or tricked and then taken to larger ships anchored in international waters just outside Bangladesh’s maritime boundary.” (Thanh Nien News)

Official Human Trafficking Figures Released

“Figures issued by Myanmar’s anti-human trafficking task force for the first nine months of this year indicate the cross-border slave trade remains a problem for Myanmar.” (Burma News International)

Feeding the Asian Slave Trade

“Testimonies from Bangladeshi and Rohingya trafficking survivors provide evidence of a shift in tactics in one of Asia's busiest human trafficking routes.” (Reuters)

Figures show human trafficking to China, Thailand critical

“Fifty-nine people fell victim to human traffickers in trade to China, 13 to Thailand and two to Malaysia, and a further 11 people in Myanmar from January to September 2014, Police Captain Min Naing of the Anti-Human Trafficking Corps told Mizzima.” (Mizzima)

Anti-human trafficking Bill tabled

“A proposed law to prevent human trafficking in Singapore was introduced in Parliament yesterday, one of 10 Bills that was put before the House.” (Asia One)

Somaly Mam Foundation Closes Down

“Months after announcing the resignation of its founder and promising to start afresh to continue its “vital work” protecting vulnerable girls in Cambodia, the U.S.-based Somaly Mam Foundation (SMF) announced Saturday that it has ceased operations, telling supporters to turn to other organizations to help the fight against sex trafficking and slavery.” (Cambodia Daily)
More Bangladeshis Found in Thailand on Human Trafficking Route

“Thai police found scores of sick and exhausted boat people hiding on a remote island on Monday, and all but one of the 79 suspected human-trafficking victims were from Bangladesh, according to local officials.” (The Irrawaddy)

Terrified victims of Thai trafficking face uncertain future

“For at least five years, the Andaman coast of Thailand has been the scene of some horrific abuses, mainly against ethnic Rohingyas, a Muslim minority group fleeing persecution in Myanmar.” (BBC News)

Proposed Human Trafficking Bill is more focused way to address the problem: Experts

“The proposed law comes with heavy penalties and will clearly define what constitutes human trafficking, empower various agencies with necessary enforcement powers, and enhance victim support and protection.” (Channel News Asia)

Cambodia wakes up to organ trafficking, another human woe for the impoverished nation

“Chhay, 18, sold his kidney for $3,000 in an illicit deal that saw him whisked from a rickety one-room house on the outskirts of the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh to a gleaming hospital in the medical tourism hub of neighboring Thailand.” (Japan Times)

More than 100,000 ‘have now fled Myanmar’

“A growing sense of despair has caused a mass exodus of Rohingya Muslims from western Myanmar, with at least 8,000 members of the minority fleeing by boats in the last two weeks, according to residents and a leading expert.” (Al Jazeera)

Protecting victims’ rights the key to human trafficking Bill’s success: Activists

“The number of human trafficking victims in Singapore reporting their cases could rise initially if the proposed Prevention of Human Trafficking Bill is passed without amendment. However, activists from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on Tuesday (Oct 21) said this scenario will be short-lived if their cases are not dealt with comprehensively.” (Channel News Asia)

New Documentary Highlights Plights of Burmese Migrant Children

“‘All You Need is Love,’ a documentary from second-time Scottish director Stuart Cameron, offers a look into the lives of Burmese migrant children at the Good Morning School in the Thai border town of Mae Sot.” (The Irrawaddy)

6 Thai crewmen come home

“The first batch of six Thais believed to be human trafficking victims on trawlers in Indonesian waters returned to Thailand yesterday.” (Bangkok Post)

The Price of Sex

“...Mimi Chakarova decided to investigate the devastating effects to Eastern European women who have been forced into the underground sex trade. She has devoted the past 10 years of her life to making her heartbreaking documentary The Price of Sex.” (Huffington Post)

Rape Video Shows Trafficking Brutality

“Graphic video of a gang rape may be the first real evidence of the brutal treatment of captives in the secret camps run by human traffickers in the jungles and plantations of southern Thailand.” (Phuketwan)
Backpage.com accused of helping pimps in child sex trade

“Backpage.com, an online classified advertising service, was sued by two women who claim the website operator helps pimps and traffickers in the sexual exploitation of minors.” (Thanh Nien News)

Gov’t holds workshop on human trafficking

“A panel of speakers gathered for the International Workshop on Strategies for Combating Human Trafficking in Taipei yesterday, as part of the National Immigration Agency’s (NIA) efforts to raise awareness of human trafficking and to safeguard human rights.” (China Post)

2 Thais arrested for human trafficking

“Police Tuesday arrested two men on human trafficking charges related to the discovery of several groups of suspected trafficking victims in Phang Nga province.” (Bangkok Post)

Sex trafficking, slavery and forced marriage on the rise in Australia, say police

“Federal police are investigating a record number of human trafficking cases in Australia involving sex slavery, forced marriages and child brides.” (Sydney Morning Herald)

13 trafficked Lao females rescued

“Police rescued 13 Lao women and girls who had been forced into sex slavery, officials confirmed Monday.” (Bangkok Post)

Students to run against human trafficking

“The fight against human trafficking will get a boost when students from several high schools in Malaysia will take part in a 24-hour-race in November to raise funds for the cause.” (The Star)

Rwanda: First Lady Calls for Concerted Effort Against Human Trafficking

“There is need for concerted effort to curb human trafficking, gender-based violence and drug abuse, the First Lady, Jeannette Kagame, said yesterday.” (All Africa)

No evidence of human trafficking found in Trat’s fishing industry

“The Department of Employment’s Trat Office has claimed there is no human trafficking activity in the fishing industry. It said migrant workers only spent a few days at sea before returning ashore.” (Pattaya Mail)

Enslaved Abroad, Oppressed at Home: Modern Slavery in Bangladesh

“In the last two months, more than 170 men, mostly Bangladeshis, have been rescued from human traffickers in the jungles of Thailand.” (New York Times)

Human trafficking problem expected to improve

“Social Development and Human Security Minister Pol Gen Adul Sangsingkeo said Thursday he is confident that the human trafficking problem in Thailand could improve and Washington would in future lift the country’s negative rating.” (Pattaya Mail)

Disclaimer:
Please note that the views and opinions expressed in the above news articles do not express the views and opinions of UN-ACT or any of its affiliated agencies or partners.
MONTHLY FOCUS

Human Rights and Human Trafficking:
Fact Sheet No. 36


“Human trafficking is generally understood to refer to the process through which individuals are placed or maintained in an exploitative situation for economic gain. Trafficking can occur within a country or may involve movement across borders. Women, men and children are trafficked for a range of purposes, including forced and exploitative labour in factories, farms and private households, sexual exploitation, and forced marriage. Trafficking affects all regions and most countries of the world.

While it is difficult to secure reliable information about patterns and numbers, our understanding about why trafficking happens has improved. Inequalities within and between countries, increasingly restrictive immigration policies and growing demand for cheap, disempowered labour are just some of the underlying causes that have been identified. The many factors that increase individual vulnerability to trafficking include poverty, violence and discrimination.

The exploitation of individuals for profit has a long history and international efforts to address it can be traced back at least a century, well before the birth of the modern human rights system. However, it is only over the past decade that trafficking has become a major concern. During that same period, a comprehensive legal framework has developed around the issue. These changes confirm that a fundamental shift has taken place in how the international community thinks about human exploitation. It also confirms a change in expectations of what Governments and others should be doing to deal with trafficking and to prevent it. Hence, the victim-centred approach is also gathering increased support from the international community. Human rights form a central plank of the new understanding and there is now widespread acceptance of the need for a human rights-based approach to trafficking.”

A full copy of the publication can be found online at:

Human Rights and Human Trafficking