

Study on Repatriation and Social Reintegration Assistance: Lao Victims of Trafficking Returned from Thailand



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Photo on cover: A young woman demonstrates her vocational training in weaving at an NGO shelter for trafficking victims and vulnerable girls in southern Laos. Photo credit: Village Focus International.

Please note that the opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors, and not of the JICA Thailand office, the CM4TIP project, or Village Focus International. Publication of this research does not constitute endorsement of the opinions expressed in it.

Executive summary

Social reintegration is a key strategy of both the Lao and Thai governments in combating trafficking in persons and protecting victims of trafficking (VOTs). Processes, requirements, and services for repatriation and reintegration are enshrined in the legal framework in both countries, as well as contributed to by government agencies, development partners, and service providers. In general, social reintegration aims to provide support and services for victims of trafficking in order to assist their recovery from traumatic experiences, to uphold their rights, and to prevent the risk of being re-trafficked.

Still, challenges remain in the successful implementation of repatriation and reintegration services on both sides of the border. This study was proposed by the CM4TIP project, a joint anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) project by Thailand's Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), to identify these challenges and make recommendations that will ultimately improve the repatriation and reintegration of VOTs from Thailand back to Laos. Research for this study was conducted from October 2018 to January 2019, which included a desk review; interviews with government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations; and analysis of all VOT cases returned to Laos from Thailand from 2015-2017. Interviews with government were conducted both at the national level, as well as at the provincial and district levels in Vientiane capital, Vientiane province, Savannakhet, Saravan, and Champasak provinces. Twenty VOTs from across those provinces were also interviewed.

While Laos and Thailand enjoy a strong bilateral relationship, facilitated by a shared history and common ethno-linguistic roots, these factors do not translate to easy and consistent communication between the countries with regard to repatriation of trafficking victims. Communication about trafficking cases is often confined to official channels, meaning that joint decision-making on cases does not happen frequently or quickly. Negative results can thus arise for VOTs who may be forced to wait for up to several years in Thai shelters before being able to be reintegrated back to Laos, although this is an area the Thai government is working to improve. Information sharing between the two governments with regard to reintegration and repatriation also requires improvements, with both governments reporting that they receive incomplete data from each other that limits each side's work and makes legal proceedings and family tracing processes more difficult than they need be.

In addition to long wait times in shelters, Lao VOTs often face other challenges before being repatriated, including experiencing lack of trust in some Thai law enforcement (because of police corruption or VOTs' fear of being punished), and facing social isolation at shelters due to lack of contact with their families and communities during their stay. Families also experience emotional, and sometimes financial, stress as a result of not being able to communicate with their children at Thai shelters.

Reintegration of VOTs in Laos is implemented by a variety of government agencies and non-governmental organizations. Following the passage of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law (Anti-TIP Law) in 2015, the government entity most directly responsible for reintegration became the Lao Women's Union, with additional involvement of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare in employment-related services. Although it has been more than two years since this law was passed, there remains a lack of clarity among both government and civil society partners about the specific responsibilities of the LWU,

MLSW, and other government entities. This lack of clarity results in lack of governmental capacity and less than ideal government collaboration and initiative regarding reintegration services for VOTs -- both horizontally across government agencies and vertically from national to village levels. It also means that NGO service providers are often the main organizations providing continued services to VOTs after their return to Laos. While government budget does exist for Anti-TIP work through the Secretariat of the National Anti-TIP Committee, most government agencies interviewed reported significant budget constraints in implementing reintegration work, and a reliance on NGO funds. Government's limited capacity also limits the amount of follow-up on cases that government can conduct, meaning that ongoing case monitoring frequently falls on NGO service providers, who may invite government to participate. While follow-up on cases is a key strategy to ensuring VOTs are not revictimized, the limited capacity of government authorities and limited presence of NGO service providers in Laos means there are large numbers of VOTs who are underserved and may be at risk of being re-trafficked.

While vocational training is offered for VOTs in a number of areas by both NGO and government partners, more flexible models to provide vocational training should be piloted to reduce the long-term vulnerability of victims, and to increase their long-term income generating capacity. Many VOTs are not interested in training programs or staying at shelters because doing so requires them to sacrifice earning income in their work. For this reason, families are also often hesitant to have their children leave home to stay in a shelter for trafficking victims. Additionally, vocational training programs do not always teach skills that are applicable in VOTs' communities, and few plans are made with victims about how to run a business or practice their vocation once they leave the shelter. VOTs may also not have access to markets through which they can earn income through their skills. The result is that, although victims may have received training, many return back to their old work (such as agriculture) upon returning home, and may therefore feel a desire to re-migrate, thus opening themselves up to further possible exploitation.

Services and facilities for male victims of trafficking, both official and unofficial VOTs, remain nearly nonexistent. All long-term support for trafficking victims is for female victims, and there are currently minimal options for males to participate in vocational trainings specifically for VOTs, and no options to stay at a shelter beyond two weeks. While the LWU does have separate short-term shelters for females and males, and reported working with the Ministry of Public Security in supporting male victims, it remains to be seen how the switch in responsibility to LWU affects male victims, as the LWU's mandate is most centrally to protect the rights of women and children, and LWU at central level reported they have limited capacity to work with male victims. Transgender victims are even less served by existing resources, as government and NGO protection services are tailored to either males or females, with no set protocols for how to serve VOTs who do not identify with either sex.

A lack of sensitivity toward VOTs was exemplified on the part of some government and media representatives in both Thailand and Laos through this study. Some stakeholders in both countries reported incidents with media, where news organizations have published pictures of VOTs' faces, with personal information about their stories. Precautions should be made to ensure media coverage in both Thailand and Laos respects VOTs' privacy. In Laos, several government officials interviewed reported that they encourage families and village officials not to let VOTs and young people migrate to Thailand. Not only does this approach restrict VOTs' mobility, it also does not make VOTs less likely to migrate –

as evidenced by the fact that most VOTs interviewed in this study reported still wanting to return to Thailand or an urban area for work.

In addition to speaking with multiple stakeholders about the challenges faced by VOTs, governments, and service providers in repatriation and reintegration work, the research team analyzed 229 VOT cases shared by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare that were returned to Laos from the study period 2015 to 2017. 78.1 percent of the returned total victims were minors, and the majority of both male and female returnees were under 18 years old. Female cases comprise 90.4 percent of total victims. 50.2 percent of total VOTs were Khmu ethnicity, although Khmu people make up only eleven percent of the entire population of Laos. While most information about these cases is related to demographics, some metrics are relevant to repatriation and reintegration. 152 VOTs engaged in sex work in Thailand (all female), representing 66.4 percent of total VOTs and 73.4 percent of female VOTs. 73.4 percent of female cases participated in vocational training in shelters in Thailand, while only 13.6 percent of males (three individuals out of 20 cases) did. The average length of time between when VOTs were sent to a Thai shelter and arrived home varied significantly by year: 294 days in 2015, 417 days in 2016, and 265 days in 2017.

As a result of these challenges identified by multiple stakeholders, the research team suggests the following recommendations, grouped thematically, that are meant to be implementable and practical for actors in both Thailand and Laos. Additional details about implementation are provided in the Recommendations section.

Communication and data collection

- Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for repatriation of cases between Thailand and Laos, as part of the SOP on Anti-TIP work more broadly, which is currently being developed. This process should include development partners early on.
- Continue consistent Case Management Meetings, with the involvement of development partners, civil society and international organizations in both countries, that discuss details of cases and are tailored to making decisions about cases. Prepare responsible Lao agencies for hosting these meetings.
- Increase channels for more informal and consistent case discussion (such as through phone calls) between Laos and Thailand, particularly at local levels, to supplement official communication and expedite the Thai legal process.
- Involve international organizations and NGO service providers in nationality verification and family tracing processes to expedite the Thai legal process and support government data collection.
- Implement a standardized database, shared between Lao and Thai officials and all engaged Lao ministries, to track the process of repatriation and reintegration of VOTs. Share relevant data with non-government partners, particularly NGO service providers, engaged in Anti-TIP work as necessary.

VOT protection at Thai shelters

- Notify VOTs' families of their protection at Thai shelters in a timely manner. Establish more accessible channels for Lao victims' families to communicate with or visit VOTs while in shelters in Thailand, such as receiving approval through local, rather than central, government.

- Increase VOTs' ability to interact with Lao social workers during their stay at Thai shelters. This could include placing a Lao social worker at the Lao embassy in Thailand; facilitating distance counseling between Lao social workers in Laos and VOTs in Thailand; or coordinating visits to Thai shelters for Lao social workers.

Clarification of Lao government roles and processes

- Develop Reintegration Guidelines for Laos, which are adopted by all levels of government, with the involvement of development partners at early stages. These guidelines should guide local authorities in achieving sustainable reintegration, and should build off the Victim Protection Guidelines and National Referral Mechanism, which are currently under development.
- Create specific Terms of Reference (TOR) for all Lao government ministries listed as responsible for Anti-TIP work in the 2015 Anti-TIP Law and Prime Minister's decree 245/PM (issued July 2018). Involve non-government partners in both Laos and Thailand in this development process.

Economic empowerment of VOTs

- Engage diverse ministries and departments, not only those with a mandate in TIP, in creating training programs and non-formal education opportunities that VOTs can access to enhance their livelihoods. These opportunities should include services for male VOTs.
- Expand income generating programs for VOTs -- including male VOTs -- beyond vocational training to economic empowerment more holistically, including creating business plans with VOTs upon their return to their communities and following up on these plans in ongoing monitoring. There is also a need to increase capacity of both government and NGO service providers in providing job placement and training in business skills to VOTs.
- Establish flexible and mobile models of vocational training that do not require stay at a shelter and can allow VOTs -- including male VOTs -- to continue earning income while developing their skills.

Increasing government capacity for Anti-TIP work

- Clarify avenues for government agencies to access National Anti-TIP Committee funding for reintegration work, and make use of this budget transparent through annual reporting.
- Create standards for district agencies, and train them, in following up on VOTs who are reintegrated. There should be particular emphasis on individuals who do not receive services from service providers and other vulnerable groups, such as sex workers, VOTs who never entered school or those who drop out at an early age.
- Adopt a victim-centric approach by assessing victims' and their families' needs, and creating social reintegration plans based on these needs, through collaboration between multiple government agencies, development partners, and service providers.

บทสรุปสำหรับผู้บริหาร

การกลับคืนสู่สังคม คือกลยุทธ์สำคัญของรัฐบาลไทยและลาวในการต่อต้านการค้ามนุษย์และคุ้มครองผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ โดยทั้งกระบวนการ ข้อกำหนด และบริการสำหรับการส่งกลับประเทศและการกลับคืนสู่สังคมนั้นอยู่ในกรอบกฎหมายของทั้งสองประเทศ นอกจากนี้ ยังได้รับความสนับสนุนจากหน่วยงานรัฐบาล หุ้นส่วนการพัฒนา และผู้ให้บริการต่าง ๆ โดยทั่วไปแล้ว การกลับคืนสู่สังคมมุ่งที่จะให้ความสนับสนุนและการบริการแก่ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์เพื่อที่จะช่วยให้พวกเขาฟื้นตัวจากประสบการณ์ที่สร้างความบอบช้ำทางใจ เพื่อยืนหยัดในสิทธิของตน และเพื่อป้องกันความเสี่ยงต่อการถูกค้ามนุษย์อีกครั้ง

ถึงกระนั้นก็ยังคงมีอุปสรรคยังในการดำเนินการให้บริการการส่งกลับประเทศและการกลับคืนสู่สังคมให้ประสบผลสำเร็จในบริเวณชายแดนทั้งสองฝั่ง โครงการ CM4TIP ซึ่งเป็นโครงการความร่วมมือด้านการต่อต้านการค้ามนุษย์ระหว่างกระทรวงการพัฒนาสังคมและความมั่นคงของมนุษย์ ประเทศไทย และองค์การความร่วมมือระหว่างประเทศของญี่ปุ่น (JICA) จึงได้เสนอให้ดำเนินการศึกษาค้างนี้ เพื่อบ่งชี้ถึงอุปสรรคเหล่านั้นและให้ข้อเสนอแนะในการปรับปรุงการส่งกลับประเทศและการกลับคืนสู่สังคมของผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์จากประเทศไทยกลับสู่ลาวในที่สุด การวิจัยสำหรับการศึกษานี้ดำเนินการตั้งแต่ตุลาคม 2561 ถึงมกราคม 2562 ซึ่งรวมถึงการทบทวน เอกสารและรายงานที่เกี่ยวข้อง การสัมภาษณ์หน่วยงานราชการ องค์กรพัฒนาเอกชน และองค์กรระหว่างประเทศ และการวิเคราะห์ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ทุกรายที่เดินทางกลับมาถึงลาวจากประเทศไทยในช่วงปี 2558-2560 การสัมภาษณ์กับหน่วยงานของรัฐได้ดำเนินการทั้งในระดับชาติ ระดับแขวง และระดับเมือง ในนครหลวงเวียงจันทน์ แขวงเวียงจันทน์ แขวงสะหวันนะเขต แขวงสาละวันและแขวงจำปาสัก โดยมีการสัมภาษณ์ผู้เสียหายชาวลาวจากแขวงต่าง ๆ ที่กล่าวไปจำนวน 20 ราย

ในขณะที่ลาวและไทยมีความสัมพันธ์ทวิภาคีที่เข้มแข็ง ซึ่งเสริมด้วยการมีประวัติศาสตร์ รากเหง้าของภาษาและชาติพันธุ์ร่วมกัน แต่ปัจจัยเหล่านี้ไม่ได้หมายถึงการจะทำให้เกิดความง่าย ความสอดคล้องในการสื่อสารกันระหว่างประเทศเกี่ยวกับการส่งตัวผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ การสื่อสารเกี่ยวกับคดีค้ามนุษย์นั้นมักจำกัดอยู่เพียงในช่องทางที่เป็นทางการเท่านั้น ซึ่งหมายความว่า การตัดสินใจร่วมกันเกี่ยวกับคดีเหล่านี้ ไม่ได้เกิดขึ้นบ่อยหรือรวดเร็วนัก ผลลัพธ์เชิงลบอาจเกิดขึ้นกับผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ที่อาจถูกบังคับให้หรือเป็นเวลานานปีในสถานพักพิงของไทยก่อนที่จะสามารถกลับคืนสู่ลาวได้ แม้ว่าประเด็นนี้จะเป็นประเด็นที่รัฐบาลไทยกำลังดำเนินการปรับปรุง การแบ่งปันข้อมูลระหว่างรัฐบาลทั้งสองเกี่ยวกับการส่งกลับประเทศและการกลับคืนสู่สังคมนั้นยังต้องการการปรับปรุงด้วย โดยรัฐบาลทั้งสองประเทศรายงานว่าแต่ละฝ่ายได้รับข้อมูลที่ไม่สมบูรณ์จากกันและกันซึ่ง จำกัด การทำงานของแต่ละฝ่ายและทำให้กระบวนการทางกฎหมายและกระบวนการสืบหาครอบครัวยากยิ่งกว่าที่ควรจะเป็น

นอกเหนือจากระยะเวลายาวนานที่ต้องรอในสถานพักพิงแล้ว ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ชาวลาวยังมักจะเผชิญกับอุปสรรคอื่น ๆ ก่อนที่จะถูกส่งกลับประเทศ รวมถึงการเผชิญหน้ากับเจ้าหน้าที่ผู้บังคับใช้กฎหมายที่ฉ้อโกง ซึ่งอาจส่งผลให้ขาดความเชื่อถือต่อเจ้าหน้าที่ของรัฐอื่น ๆ รวมทั้งต้องเผชิญกับการถูกแยกออกจากสังคมในสถานพักพิง เนื่องจากไม่ได้ติดต่อกับครอบครัวและชุมชนในระหว่างที่อาศัยอยู่ นอกจากนี้ ครอบครัวยังต้องเผชิญกับความตึงเครียดทางอารมณ์และบางครั้งรวมถึงทางการเงิน อันเป็นผลมาจากการที่ไม่สามารถติดต่อกับลูก ๆ ซึ่งอาศัยอยู่ในสถานพักพิงในประเทศไทย

การกลับคืนสู่สังคมของผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ในประเทศลาวนั้นดำเนินการโดยหน่วยงานรัฐบาลและองค์กรพัฒนาเอกชนต่าง ๆ ทั้งนี้ ตามข้อกำหนดในกฎหมายว่าด้วยการต่อต้านการค้ามนุษย์ (Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law) พ.ศ. 2558 หน่วยงานรัฐบาลที่เป็นผู้รับผิดชอบโดยตรงเป็นส่วนใหญ่ในการการกลับคืนสู่สังคม คือสหภาพแม่หญิงลาวโดยการมีส่วนร่วมเพิ่มเติมจากกระทรวงแรงงานและสวัสดิการสังคมในการบริการที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการจ้างงาน ถึงแม้ว่ากฎหมายฉบับนี้จะได้ออกมาเป็นเวลากว่าสองปีแล้ว แต่ยังคงขาดความชัดเจนในกลุ่มผู้ร่วมงานทั้งจากรัฐบาลและภาคประชาสังคม เกี่ยวกับความรับผิดชอบโดยเฉพาะของสหภาพแม่หญิงลาว กระทรวงแรงงานและสวัสดิการสังคม และหน่วยงานรัฐบาลอื่น ๆ การขาดความชัดเจนเช่นนี้ ทำให้รัฐบาลขาดศักยภาพและมีความคิดริเริ่มที่น้อยลงเกี่ยวกับความร่วมมือและการนำผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์กลับคืนสู่สังคม ทั้งในแนวนอนระหว่างหน่วยงานต่าง ๆ ของรัฐบาล และในแนวตั้งจากระดับชาติสู่ระดับหมู่บ้าน ซึ่งหมายความว่า ผู้ให้บริการที่เป็นองค์กรพัฒนาเอกชน (NGO) มักจะเป็นเพียงองค์กรหลักที่ให้บริการอย่างต่อเนื่องแก่ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์หลังจากที่ได้เดินทางกลับประเทศลาวแล้ว แม้ว่าจะมีงบประมาณของรัฐบาลสำหรับการต่อต้าน

การคุ้มครองโดยผ่านเลขาธิการคณะกรรมการต่อต้านการค้ามนุษย์ (ATIP) ระดับชาติ แต่หน่วยงานรัฐบาลส่วนใหญ่ที่ได้รับการสัมภาษณ์ได้รายงานถึงข้อจำกัดอย่างมากด้านงบประมาณ ในการดำเนินการส่งผู้เสียหายกลับคืนสู่สังคมและการที่ต้องพึ่งพาเงินทุนขององค์กรพัฒนาเอกชน นอกจากนี้ ศักยภาพอันจำกัดของรัฐบาลยังจำกัดจำนวนของการติดตามกรณีต่าง ๆ ที่รัฐบาลสามารถดำเนินการได้ ซึ่งหมายความว่า การติดตามกรณีที่เกิดขึ้นนั้นมักจะติดอยู่กับผู้ให้บริการจากองค์กรพัฒนาเอกชน (NGO) ซึ่งอาจเชิญให้รัฐบาลเข้าร่วม ในขณะที่การติดตามกรณีเหล่านั้นคือกลยุทธ์สำคัญที่จะช่วยสร้างความมั่นใจว่าผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์นั้นจะไม่ถูกทำให้กลายเป็นผู้เสียหายอีกครั้ง ขีดความสามารถที่จำกัดของหน่วยงานรัฐบาลรวมทั้งการมีผู้ให้บริการจากองค์กรพัฒนาเอกชนที่จำกัดในประเทศลาว หมายความว่ายังมีผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์จำนวนมากที่ไม่ได้รับบริการและอาจเสี่ยงต่อการถูกค้ามนุษย์อีกครั้ง

แม้จะมีการฝึกอบรมวิชาชีพสำหรับผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ในหลาย ๆ พื้นที่ทั้งโดยองค์กรพัฒนาเอกชนและภาครัฐ แต่ควมมีโครงการนำร่องในการใช้รูปแบบการฝึกอบรมวิชาชีพที่มีความยืดหยุ่นมากขึ้น เพื่อลดความไม่มั่นคงและเพิ่มขีดความสามารถในการสร้างรายได้ของผู้เสียหายในระยะยาว ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์หลายคนไม่สนใจในโปรแกรมการฝึกอบรมหรือการพักอยู่ที่สถานพักพิง เพราะการทำเช่นนั้นทำให้พวกเขาต้องเสียสละรายได้ในการทำงาน ด้วยเหตุนี้ครอบครัวจึงมักเล็งที่จะให้ลูกออกจากบ้านเพื่ออยู่ในสถานพักพิงสำหรับผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ นอกจากนี้โปรแกรมการฝึกอบรมอาชีพไม่ได้สอนทักษะอาชีพที่ใช้ในชุมชนของผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์เสมอไป และไม่ค่อยจะมีการวางแผนร่วมกับผู้เสียหายถึงวิถีดำเนินธุรกิจหรือประกอบอาชีพหลังจากที่ออกจากสถานพักพิงไปแล้ว นอกจากนี้ ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์อาจไม่สามารถเข้าถึงตลาดซึ่งตนสามารถหารายได้ด้วยทักษะที่มีอยู่ได้ ผลก็คือ ถึงแม้ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์จะได้รับการฝึกอบรมมาแล้ว แต่หลายคนต้องกลับไปทำงานเดิมหลังจากกลับสู่ภูมิลำเนา (เช่น เกษตรกรรม) และอาจรู้สึกอยากย้ายถิ่นอีกครั้ง ซึ่งเป็นการเปิดโอกาสให้ถูกแสวงหาผลประโยชน์ต่อไปอีก

บริการและสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกสำหรับผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์เพศชายทั้งที่เป็นทางการและไม่เป็นทางการนั้นแทบจะไม่มีเลย การให้การสนับสนุนระยะยาวแก่ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ทั้งหมดนั้นมีไว้สำหรับผู้เสียหายหญิง โดยปัจจุบันมีทางเลือกน้อยมากสำหรับเพศชายที่จะเข้าร่วมการฝึกอบรมวิชาชีพโดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งสำหรับผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ และไม่สามารถเลือกที่จะพักอาศัยในสถานพักพิงได้เกินสองสัปดาห์ ถึงแม้ว่าสหภาพแม่หญิงลาวจะมีที่พักพิงระยะสั้นแยกกันสำหรับหญิงและชาย และได้รายงานว่าได้ทำงานร่วมกับกระทรวงป้องกันความสงบในการให้ความสนับสนุนผู้เสียหายชาย แต่ก็ยังคงต้องดูต่อไปว่าการเปลี่ยนแปลงความรับผิดชอบไปสู่สหภาพแม่หญิงลาวนี้จะส่งผลกระทบต่อผู้เสียหายชายอย่างไร เนื่องจากหน้าที่หลักของสหภาพแม่หญิงลาวนั้นจะมุ่งที่การปกป้องสิทธิของผู้หญิงและเด็ก และสหภาพแม่หญิงลาวในระดับส่วนกลางยังรายงานว่ามีศักยภาพอันจำกัดในการที่จะทำงานร่วมกับผู้เสียหายชาย ยิ่งไปกว่านั้น ผู้เสียหายที่เป็นคนข้ามเพศยังได้รับการจากทรัพยากรที่มีอยู่น้อยกว่ากลุ่มอื่น เนื่องจากบริการให้ความคุ้มครองของรัฐบาลและองค์กรพัฒนาเอกชนนั้นได้รับการออกแบบขึ้นมาให้แก่ชายหรือหญิงเท่านั้น โดยไม่มีการกำหนดระเบียบปฏิบัติในการให้บริการแก่ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ซึ่งระบุไม่ได้ว่าเป็นเพศชายหรือหญิง

รายงานฉบับนี้ ได้ยกตัวอย่างของการขาดละเอียดอ่อนต่อผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ในส่วนของตัวแทนจากรัฐบาลและตัวแทนสื่อทั้งในประเทศไทยและลาว หน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้องบางแห่งในทั้งสองประเทศรายงานเหตุการณ์ที่เกิดขึ้นในการที่สื่อได้เผยแพร่ภาพใบหน้าของผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์พร้อมข้อมูลส่วนบุคคล ดังนั้น จึงควรระมัดระวังเพื่อให้เห็นใจได้ว่าการนำเสนอของสื่อทั้งในประเทศไทยและลาวเคารพความเป็นส่วนตัวของผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ นอกจากนี้ ในประเทศลาวเจ้าหน้าที่ของรัฐหลายคนที่ได้รับการสัมภาษณ์ ได้รายงานว่าเขาพยายามไม่ให้ครอบครัวและเจ้าหน้าที่ระดับหมู่บ้านปล่อยผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์และคนหนุ่มสาวย้ายถิ่นมาสู่ประเทศไทย วิธีนี้ไม่เพียงแต่จำกัดการเคลื่อนไหวของผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์เท่านั้น แต่ยังไม่ได้ทำให้ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์มีความต้องการน้อยลงในการโยกย้ายถิ่นฐาน ตามข้อเท็จจริงที่ว่าผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ส่วนใหญ่ที่ให้สัมภาษณ์ในการศึกษานี้รายงานว่าจะยังคงต้องการกลับไปประเทศไทยหรือย้ายเข้ามาในเขตเมืองเพื่อทำงาน

นอกจากการพูดคุยกับหน่วยงานผู้เกี่ยวข้องหลายฝ่ายเกี่ยวกับอุปสรรคที่ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ รัฐบาล และผู้ให้บริการต้องเผชิญเกี่ยวกับการส่งกลับประเทศและการกลับคืนสู่สังคมแล้ว คณะผู้วิจัยยังได้วิเคราะห์กรณีของผู้เสียหาย 229 ราย ที่ถูกส่งกลับสู่ประเทศลาวจากการศึกษาในช่วงปี พ.ศ. 2558-2560 ซึ่งเป็นข้อมูลจากกระทรวงแรงงานและสวัสดิการสังคม โดยพบว่า ร้อยละ 78.1 ของผู้เสียหายที่ถูกส่งกลับยังไม่บรรลุนิติภาวะ และผู้ที่ถูกส่งกลับทั้งชายและหญิงส่วนใหญ่อายุต่ำกว่า 18

ปี ในบรรดาผู้เสียหายทั้งหมด มีผู้หญิงร้อยละ 90.4 โดยร้อยละ 50.2 ของผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ทั้งหมดคือผู้มีชาติพันธุ์
ขมุ แม้ว่าชาวขมุจะมีเพียงร้อยละ 11 ของประชากรลาวทั้งหมด ข้อมูลส่วนใหญ่ของกรณีเหล่านี้จะเกี่ยวกับข้อมูลทาง
ประชากร แต่มีตัวชี้วัดบางอย่างที่สัมพันธ์กับการส่งกลับประเทศและการกลับคืนสู่สังคม มีผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ 152
ราย มีส่วนเกี่ยวข้องกับการค้าประเวณีในประเทศไทย (ทั้งหมดเป็นหญิง) คิดเป็นร้อยละ 66.4 ของผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์
ทั้งหมดและเป็นร้อยละ 73.4 ของผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์เพศหญิง โดยมีผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์เพศหญิงร้อยละ 73.4
ได้เข้าร่วมการฝึกอบรมวิชาชีพในสถานพักพิงในประเทศไทย ในขณะที่มีผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์เพศชายเพียงร้อยละ 13.6
(3 ราย จาก 20 ราย) ได้เข้าร่วมการฝึกอบรมวิชาชีพในสถานพักพิงในประเทศไทย ระยะเวลาโดยเฉลี่ยระหว่างที่ผู้เสียหายจาก
การค้ามนุษย์ถูกส่งไปยังที่สถานพักพิงในประเทศไทยจนกลับถึงบ้านมีความแตกต่างกันมีนัยสำคัญในแต่ละปีคือ ปี 2558
จำนวน 294 วัน, ปี 2559 จำนวน 417 วัน และ ปี 2560 จำนวน 265 วัน

จากอุปสรรคต่าง ๆ ที่ถูกระบุโดยผู้เกี่ยวข้องหลายฝ่าย คณะผู้วิจัยจึงได้ให้ข้อเสนอแนะต่อไปซึ่งแบ่งกลุ่มตามหัวข้อ ซึ่งมุ่งที่จะ
ให้ผู้ปฏิบัติงานทั้งในประเทศไทยและลาวได้นำไปปฏิบัติได้จริง โดยรายละเอียดเพิ่มเติมเกี่ยวกับการปฏิบัติจะระบุอยู่ในส่วน
ของข้อเสนอแนะ

การสื่อสารและการเก็บข้อมูล

- สร้างมาตรฐานขั้นตอนการปฏิบัติงาน (Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)) เพื่อการส่งผู้เสียหายกลับประเทศ
ระหว่างไทยและลาว โดยให้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของมาตรฐานขั้นตอนการปฏิบัติงานในการต่อต้านการค้ามนุษย์โดยทั่วไปซึ่งกำลัง
พัฒนาอยู่ในขณะนี้ กระบวนการนี้ควรจะรวมถึงหุ้นส่วนการพัฒนาไว้ในตั้งแต่ระยะแรก
- จัดการประชุมกลุ่มใหญ่เพื่อการจัดการผู้เสียหายรายกรณี (CMM) อย่างต่อเนื่องและสม่ำเสมอ โดยให้หุ้นส่วนในการพัฒนา
ภาคประชาสังคมและองค์กรระหว่างประเทศในทั้งสองประเทศเข้ามีส่วนร่วม เพื่อปรึกษาถึงรายละเอียดของกรณีต่าง ๆ และ
ปรับเพื่อการตัดสินใจเกี่ยวกับกรณีเหล่านั้น รวมถึงเตรียมหน่วยงานที่รับผิดชอบของประเทศลาว สำหรับการเป็นเจ้าภาพการ
ประชุมดังกล่าว
- เพิ่มช่องทางสำหรับการสนทนากฎหมายที่ไม่เป็นทางการและสม่ำเสมอมากขึ้น (เช่นการโทรศัพท์) ระหว่างลาวและไทย
โดยเฉพาะในระดับท้องถิ่นเพื่อเสริมการสื่อสารที่เป็นทางการและช่วยให้การดำเนินการตามกระบวนการทางกฎหมายของไทย
ทำได้เร็วขึ้น
- ทำให้องค์กรระหว่างประเทศและผู้ให้บริการจากองค์กรพัฒนาเอกชน (NGO) เข้ามามีส่วนร่วมในกระบวนการการยืนยัน
ข้อมูลสัญชาติและกระบวนการติดตามครอบครัว เพื่อช่วยให้การดำเนินการตามกระบวนการทางกฎหมายของไทยทำได้เร็วขึ้น
และส่งเสริมการรวบรวมข้อมูลของรัฐบาล
- จัดทำระบบเก็บข้อมูลที่เป็นมาตรฐาน โดยแบ่งปันระหว่างเจ้าหน้าที่ของไทยและลาว รวมทั้งทุกกระทรวงที่เกี่ยวข้องของ
ลาว เพื่อติดตามกระบวนการส่งผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์กลับประเทศและการกลับคืนสู่สังคม แบ่งปันข้อมูลเหล่านี้กับ
หุ้นส่วนจากภาคเอกชน โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งผู้ให้บริการจากองค์กรพัฒนาเอกชนที่มีส่วนร่วมในงานต่อต้านการค้ามนุษย์ตาม
ความจำเป็น

การคุ้มครองผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ที่สถานพักพิงในประเทศไทย

- แจ้งให้ครอบครัวของผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ทราบโดยเร็วเมื่อผู้เสียหายได้รับการคุ้มครองที่สถานพักพิงในประเทศไทย
สร้างช่องทางที่สามารถเข้าถึงได้ง่ายเพิ่มขึ้นเพื่อให้ครอบครัวของผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ชาวลาวยังมาเยี่ยมหรือสื่อสารกับ
ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ขณะอยู่ที่สถานพักพิงในประเทศไทย เช่น ให้มีการอนุมัติผ่านทางรัฐบาลท้องถิ่น แทนที่จะผ่าน
รัฐบาลกลาง

➤ เพิ่มโอกาสให้ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์สามารถติดต่อกับนักสังคมสงเคราะห์ชาวลาอในระหว่างที่พำนักอยู่ที่สถานพักพิงในประเทศไทย ซึ่งอาจรวมถึงการจัดให้มีนักสังคมสงเคราะห์ชาวลาอที่สถานทูตลาวประจำประเทศไทย หรืออำนวยความสะดวกให้คำปรึกษาทางไกลระหว่างนักสังคมสงเคราะห์ลาอในประเทศลาวและผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ที่อยู่ในประเทศไทย หรือประสานงานให้นักสังคมสงเคราะห์ชาวลาอมาเยี่ยมเยียนสถานพักพิงในประเทศไทย

การสร้างความชัดเจนของบทบาทและกระบวนการของรัฐบาลลาว

➤ พัฒนาแนวปฏิบัติในการกลับคืนสู่สังคมสำหรับชาวลาอ ซึ่งหน่วยงานรัฐบาลทุกระดับจะนำไปใช้ โดยให้หุ้นส่วนการพัฒนาเข้ามามีส่วนร่วมตั้งแต่ระยะแรก แนวปฏิบัติเหล่านี้ควรทำให้หน่วยงานท้องถิ่นไปสู่การบรรลุเป้าหมายในการกลับคืนสู่สังคมอย่างยั่งยืน และควรกำหนดแนวปฏิบัติในการคุ้มครองผู้เสียหายและกลไกการส่งต่อระดับชาติ ซึ่งขณะนี้อยู่ในระหว่างการพัฒนา

➤ จัดทำขอบเขตอำนาจหน้าที่เฉพาะ (Terms of Reference) สำหรับทุกกระทรวงของรัฐบาลลาวที่รับผิดชอบงานด้านการต่อต้านการค้ามนุษย์ตามที่ระบุในกฎหมายว่าด้วยการต่อต้านการค้ามนุษย์ พ.ศ. 2558 และคำสั่งนายกรัฐมนตรีที่ 245/PM (ออกเมื่อเดือนกรกฎาคม พ.ศ. 2561) และให้ผู้ร่วมงานภาคเอกชนทั้งจากลาวและไทยเข้าร่วมในกระบวนการพัฒนานี้

การเสริมพลังทางเศรษฐกิจของผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์

➤ ให้กระทรวงและฝ่ายต่าง ๆ เข้ามีส่วนร่วม โดยไม่จำกัดเฉพาะตามที่บัญญัติไว้ในกฎหมายว่าด้วยการต่อต้านการค้ามนุษย์ เพื่อสร้างโครงการฝึกอบรมและโอกาสในการศึกษานอกโรงเรียน ซึ่งผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์สามารถเข้าถึงเพื่อเสริมสร้างชีวิตความเป็นอยู่ของตน โอกาสเหล่านี้ควรรวมถึงบริการสำหรับผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์เพศชายด้วย

➤ ขยายโครงการสร้างรายได้นอกเหนือไปจากการฝึกอาชีพ สำหรับผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ รวมทั้งผู้เสียหายเพศชาย ไปจนถึงการเสริมพลังทางเศรษฐกิจอย่างเป็นองค์รวมมากขึ้น เช่น การสร้างแผนธุรกิจกับผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์เมื่อกลับสู่ชุมชน และติดตามแผนเหล่านั้นอย่างต่อเนื่อง นอกจากนี้ ยังจำเป็นต้องเพิ่มศักยภาพให้กับผู้ให้บริการทั้งของภาครัฐและองค์กรพัฒนาเอกชน ในการจัดหางานและการฝึกทักษะทางธุรกิจให้แก่ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์

➤ สร้างรูปแบบการฝึกอาชีพที่ยืดหยุ่นและเคลื่อนที่ได้โดยไม่จำเป็นต้องอยู่ในสถานพักพิง และช่วยให้ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ รวมทั้งผู้เสียหายเพศชาย สามารถหารายได้ต่อไปได้ในขณะที่ได้รับการพัฒนาทักษะ

การเพิ่มขีดความสามารถของรัฐบาลในการปฏิบัติงานต่อต้านการค้ามนุษย์

➤ ชี้แจงช่องทางสำหรับหน่วยงานภาครัฐในการเข้าถึงเงินทุนของคณะกรรมการต่อต้านการค้ามนุษย์แห่งชาติสำหรับการดำเนินงานการกลับคืนสู่สังคมและการใช้งบประมาณนี้อย่างโปร่งใสโดยการรายงานในรายงานประจำปี

➤ สร้างมาตรฐานสำหรับหน่วยงานในระดับเมืองและฝึกอบรมในการติดตามผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ที่ถูกส่งกลับคืนสู่สังคม โดยเน้นบุคคลที่ไม่ได้รับบริการจากผู้ให้บริการ และกลุ่มเสี่ยงอื่น ๆ เช่น ผู้ค้าบริการทางเพศ ผู้เสียหายจากการค้ามนุษย์ที่ไม่เคยเข้ารับการศึกษาในโรงเรียน หรือผู้ที่ออกจากโรงเรียนตั้งแต่อายุน้อย

➤ ใช้วิธีการที่เน้นผู้เสียหายเป็นศูนย์กลาง โดยการประเมินความต้องการของผู้เสียหายและครอบครัว และสร้างแผนการกลับคืนสู่สังคมตามความต้องการเหล่านั้นผ่านการทำงานร่วมกันระหว่างหน่วยงานรัฐบาลต่าง ๆ พันธมิตรเพื่อการพัฒนาและผู้ให้บริการต่าง ๆ



ບົດລາຍງານສະບັບຫຍໍ້

(ສະບັບຮ່າງ)

ການສຶກສາກ່ຽວກັບວຽກງານການສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ຄືນສູ່ສັງຄົມຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈາກການຄ້າມະນຸດທີ່ເປັນຄົນລາວ ທີ່ຖືກສົ່ງກັບຈາກປະເທດໄທ ໄລຍະປີ 2015-2017.

ລັດຖະບານຂອງ ສປປ ລາວ ແລະ ລາຊາອານະຈັກໄທໄດ້ເອົາວຽກງານກັບຄືນສູ່ສັງຄົມຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈາກການຄ້າມະນຸດເປັນວຽກບຸລິມະສິດ ເຊິ່ງເປັນວຽກງານໜຶ່ງທີ່ນອນຢູ່ໃນແຜນງານການຕ້ານການຄ້າມະນຸດ ແລະ ການປົກປ້ອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ຄວາມພະຍາຍາມເຫຼົ່ານີ້ແມ່ນໄດ້ສະແດງອອກຢູ່ໃນນິຕິກຳ ແລະ ນະໂຍບາຍຕ່າງໆຂອງທັງສອງປະເທດ ແລະ ໄດ້ຈັດຕັ້ງປະຕິບັດໂດຍໜ່ວຍງານຕ່າງໆຂອງລັດ, ຄູ່ຮ່ວມງານ ແລະ ຜູ້ໃຫ້ບໍລິການຕ່າງໆ. ໂດຍລວມແລ້ວວຽກງານການກັບຄືນສູ່ສັງຄົມແມ່ນແນໃສ່ເພື່ອສະໜັບສະໜູນ ແລະ ໃຫ້ການບໍລິການຕ່າງໆໃຫ້ແກ່ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈາກການຄ້າມະນຸດ ເພື່ອຊ່ວຍເຂົາເຈົ້າປົວແປງຈິດໃຈຈາກປະສົບການທີ່ເຈັບປວດ ແລະ ເປັນການຍົກສູງສິດທິຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າ ແລະ ເພື່ອປ້ອງກັນບໍ່ໃຫ້ເຂົາເຈົ້າກັບໄປຕົກເປັນເຍື່ອຂອງການຄ້າມະນຸດຄືນອີກ.

ຄຽງຄູ່ກັນກັບຄວາມຍາຍາມຂອງລັດຖະບານໃນການຊ່ວຍເຫລືອຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ແຕ່ກໍຍັງມີສິ່ງທ້າທາຍຫລາຍໃນການຈັດຕັ້ງປະຕິບັດວຽກງານສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ຄືນສູ່ສັງຄົມຂອງທັງສອງປະເທດ. ການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ແມ່ນຖືກສະເໜີໃຫ້ຈັດຕັ້ງປະຕິບັດໂດຍກະຊວງພັດທະນາສັງຄົມ ແລະ ຄວາມໝັ້ນຄົງຂອງມະນຸດຮ່ວມກັບ JICA ພາຍໃຕ້ ໂຄງການ CM4TIP ເຊິ່ງມີຈຸດປະສົງເພື່ອກຳນົດການຈັດຕັ້ງປະຕິບັດທີ່ດີ ແລະ ສິ່ງທ້າທາຍຕ່າງໆເພື່ອເຮັດການປັບປຸງການສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ການກັບຄືນສູ່ສັງຄົມ ຂອງຜູ້ທີ່ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈາກການຄ້າມະນຸດທີ່ກັບຈາກປະເທດໄທ. ການສຶກສາຄັ້ງນີ້ແມ່ນໄດ້ຈັດຕັ້ງປະຕິບັດໃນຊ່ວງເດືອນ ຕຸລາ 2018 ຫາ ເດືອນ ມັງກອນ 2019, ການສຶກສາຄົ້ນຄ້ວານີ້ແມ່ນໄດ້ດຳເນີນໂດນການທົບທວນເອກະສານ, ສຳພາດໜ່ວຍງານພາກລັດຖະບານ, ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງທີ່ບໍ່ຂຶ້ນກັບລັດຖະບານ, ແລະ ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງສາກົນອື່ນໆ, ໃນຂະນະດຽວກັນກໍໄດ້ເຮັດການວິເຄາະຂໍ້ມູນຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທັງໝົດທີ່ກັບມາຈາກປະເທດໄທໃນລະຫວ່າງປີ 2015 – 2017. ການສຳພາດລັດຖະບານແມ່ນໄດ້ເຮັດການສຳພາດທັງຂັ້ນສູນກາງ, ຂັ້ນແຂວງ, ຂັ້ນເມືອງເຊິ່ງລວມມີ ນະຄອນຫລວງວຽງຈັນ, ແຂວງວຽງຈັນ, ສະຫວັນນະເຂດ, ແຂວງສາລະວັນ ແລະ ແຂວງຈຳປາສັກ. ນອກຈາກນັ້ນກໍໄດ້ສຳພາດຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈຳນວນ 20 ກໍລະນີ ຈາກບັນດາແຂວງທີ່ກ່າວມາຂ້າງເທິງນັ້ນ.

ສປປ ລາວ ແລະ ລາຊາອານະຈັກໄທ ມີການຮ່ວມມືສອງຝ່າຍທີ່ຕະຫຼອດມາເນື່ອງຈາກສອງປະເທດມີວັດທະນະທຳ ແລະ ພາສາປາກເວົ້າທີ່ຄ້າຍຄືກັນ ເຊິ່ງອັນນີ້ຊ່ວຍໃຫ້ການສື່ສານຕິດຕໍ່ພົວພັນວຽກງານການສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ການກັບຄືນສຸສັງຄົມຂອງ ທັງສອງປະເທດມີຄວາມສະດວກ ໂດຍບໍ່ຈຳເປັນຕ້ອງໃຊ້ພາສາແປ. ເຖິງຢ່າງໃດກໍຕາມການຕິດຕໍ່ພົວພັນ ແລະ ປະສານງານກ່ຽວກັບ ກໍລະນີການຄ້າມະນຸດ ສ່ວນໃຫຍ່ເຮັດໄດ້ໂດຍຜ່ານຊ່ອງທາງທີ່ເປັນທາງການເທົ່ານັ້ນ ເຊິ່ງອັນນີ້ມັນໄດ້ເຮັດໃຫ້ການຕັດສິນໃຈ ແລະ ການປະສານສົມທົບຕ່າງໆຍັງບໍ່ທັນວ່ອງໄວເທົ່າທີ່ຄວນ ເຊິ່ງອັນນີ້ແມ່ນໄດ້ສົ່ງຜົນກະທົບໃນທາງລົບຕໍ່ກັບຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຈາກການຄ້າ ມະນຸດ ເຊິ່ງເຂົາເຈົ້າຈຳເປັນຕ້ອງໄດ້ຝັກເຊົາຢູ່ສູນໃຫ້ການການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອຕ່າງໆຢູ່ໃນປະເທດໄທ ເປັນເວລາດົນກ່ອນທີ່ຈະຖືກສົ່ງກັບ ມາປະເທດລາວ. ເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າ ລັດຖະບານໄທ ພວມພະຍາຍາມປັບປຸງບັນຫານີ້ໃຫ້ດີຂຶ້ນກໍຕາມ. ການແລກປ່ຽນຂໍ້ມູນທີ່ຈຳເປັນ ກ່ຽວກັບວຽກສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ຄືນສຸສັງຄົມຂອງສອງປະເທດແມ່ນຕ້ອງໄດ້ຮັບການປັບປຸງໃຫ້ດີຂຶ້ນຕື່ມອີກ ເຊິ່ງການສຶກສາຄັ້ງນີ້ໄດ້ຮັບ ຂໍ້ສະເໜີຈາກທັງສອງປະເທດວ່າ ຂໍ້ມູນທີ່ທັງສອງຝ່າຍໄດ້ຮັບນັ້ນແມ່ນຍັງບໍ່ທັນລະອຽດ ແລະ ຄົບຖ້ວນ ເຊິ່ງມັນເປັນຂໍ້ຈຳກັດໃນ ການດຳເນີນງານຂອງທັງສອງປະເທດ ແລະ ເຮັດໃຫ້ວຽກງານການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອທາງດ້ານກົດໝາຍ ແລະ ການພິສູດກ່ຽວກັບທີ່ຢູ່ ແລະ ຄອບຄົວຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍມີຄວາມຍຸ້ງຍາກຂຶ້ນ.

ຜົນກະທົບຂອງການທີ່ຕ້ອງໄດ້ຝັກຢູ່ໃນສູນໃຫ້ການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອເປັນເວລາດົນນັ້ນ ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນຄົນລາວແມ່ນໄດ້ ປະເຊີນກັບສິ່ງທ້າທາຍຫຼາຍຢ່າງ ກ່ອນທີ່ຈະຖືກສົ່ງກັບຄືນປະເທດຂອງຕົນ ຜົນກະທົບດັ່ງກ່າວນັ້ນແມ່ນລວມທັງການທີ່ເຮັດໃຫ້ ເຂົາເຈົ້າມີຄວາມໂສກເສົ້າ, ແລະ ອາດຈະຖືກ ສະແຫວງຫາຜົນປະໂຫຍດຈາກເຈົ້າໜ້າທີ່ປະຜິດຜິດຕໍ່ລະບຽບ ແລະ ກົດໝາຍຂອງ ໄທ ເຊິ່ງເຮັດໃຫ້ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍບໍ່ໄວ້ວາງໃຈຕໍ່ເຈົ້າໜ້າທີ່ ນອກຈາກນັ້ນ ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຍັງຖືກໂດດດ່ຽວຈາກສັງຄົມໃນເວລາຝັກຢູ່ ໃນສູນ ເຊິ່ງເຂົາເຈົ້າບໍ່ສາມາດຕິດຕໍ່ກັບຄອບຄົວ ແລະ ຊຸມຊົນ. ນອກຈາກນັ້ນ ຄອບຄົວຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຍັງໄດ້ຮັບຜົນກະທົບ ທາງດ້ານຈິດໃຈ ແລະ ບາງຄັ້ງກໍຂາຍຊັບສິນ ແລະ ໃຊ້ຈ່າຍເງິນເພື່ອຊອກຫາລູກຫຼານຂອງຕົນ, ແລະ ຍັງມີຄວາມກົດດັນເຊິ່ງເປັນ ຜົນມາຈາກການທີ່ບໍ່ໄດ້ຕິດຕໍ່ກັບລູກຫຼານຂອງຕົນທີ່ຝັກຢູ່ໃນສູນຂອງປະເທດໄທ.

ວຽກງານກັບຄືນສຸສັງຄົມຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຢູ່ໃນ ສປປລາວ ແມ່ນໄດ້ຮັບການຈັດຕັ້ງປະຕິບັດໂດຍຫຼາຍໆໜ່ວຍງານ ຂອງລັດຖະບານ ແລະ ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງທີ່ບໍ່ສັງກັດລັດຖະບານ. ພາຍຫຼັງທີ່ໄດ້ຮັບຮອງເອົາ ກົດໝາຍວ່າດ້ວຍການຕ້ານ ແລະ ສະກັດ ກັ້ນການຄ້າມະນຸດ ໃນປີ 2015, ໃນທ້າຍປີ 2017 ໜ່ວຍງານຂອງລັດທີ່ເຮັດວຽກກ່ຽວກັບການກັບຄືນສຸສັງຄົມແມ່ນໄດ້ຖືກ ມອບໃຫ້ເປັນໜ້າທີ່ຂອງ ສະຫະພັນແມ່ຍິງລາວໂດຍກົງ ໂດຍການເຂົ້າຮ່ວມຂອງ ກະຊວງແຮງງານ ແລະ ສະຫວັດດີການສັງຄົມ ໃນ ການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອເພື່ອຊອກຫາວຽກເຮັດງານທຳທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງ. ເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າ ກົດໝາຍ ດັ່ງກ່າວແມ່ນໄດ້ມີຜົນບັງຄັບໃຊ້ສອງສາມ ປີຜ່ານມາແລ້ວກໍຕາມ, ເຖິງຢ່າງໃດກໍຕາມ ໜ່ວຍງານຂອງລັດ ແລະ ຄູ່ຮ່ວມງານ ຍັງບໍ່ທັນມີຄວາມກະຈ່າງແຈ້ງກ່ຽວກັບຄວາມ ຮັບຜິດຊອບສະເພາະລະຫວ່າງ ສະຫະພັນແມ່ຍິງລາວ ແລະ ກະຊວງແຮງງານ ແລະ ສະຫວັດດີການສັງຄົມ ລວມທັງໜ່ວຍງານອື່ນໆ ຂອງພາກລັດ ເຊິ່ງອັນນີ້ມັນໄດ້ເຮັດໃຫ້ການປະສານສົມທົບ ແລະ ການລິເລີ່ມພາຍໃນພາກລັດ ກ່ຽວກັບ ວຽກງານກັບຄືນສຸສັງຄົມ ຍັງເຮັດບໍ່ທັນໄດ້ດີເທົ່າທີ່ຄວນ ເນື່ອງຈາກຄວາມອາດສາມາດທີ່ຈຳກັດ ເຊິ່ງໃນນີ້ແມ່ນລວມທັງໜ່ວຍງານພາກລັດຈາກຂັ້ນສູນກາງ ຮອດຂັ້ນບ້ານ ບໍ່ວ່າຈະເປັນສາຍຕັ້ງ ແລະ ສາຍຂວາງ. ການຕິດຕາມ, ສະໜັບສະໜູນ ແລະ ຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ຫຼັງຈາກ ເຂົາເຈົ້າໄດ້ກັບຄືນພູມລຳເນົາແລ້ວສ່ວນໃຫຍ່ແມ່ນປະຕິບັດໂດຍຜ່ານໂຄງການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອ ແລະ ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງທີ່ບໍ່ສັງກັດລັດຖະ ບານ. ງົບປະມານຂອງລັດຖະບານ ສຳລັບວຽກງານການຕ້ານການຄ້າມະນຸດ ແມ່ນໂດຍຜ່ານກອງເລຂາຂອງຄະນະກຳມະແຫ່ງຊາດ ເພື່ອຕ້ານການຄ້າມະນຸດ. ໜ່ວຍງານພາກລັດ ທີ່ຖືກສຳພາດໃນການສຶກສານີ້ ໄດ້ລາຍງານວ່າໜ່ວຍງານຂອງຕົນແມ່ນມີງົບປະມານ ທີ່ຈຳກັດຫຼາຍສຳລັບການຈັດຕັ້ງປະຕິບັດວຽກງານການກັບຄືນສຸສັງຄົມ ແລະ ສ່ວນໃຫຍ່ແມ່ນອີງໃສ່ງົບປະມານຂອງໂຄງການຊ່ວຍ ເຫຼືອຂອງ ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງທີ່ບໍ່ສັງກັດລັດຖະບານ. ຄວາມອາດສາມາດທີ່ຈຳກັດຂອງລັດຖະບານ ຍັງເປັນການມີຈຳກັດຕໍ່ວຽກງານ ການຕິດຕາມກໍລະນີທີ່ສາມາດເຮັດໄດ້ໂດຍພາກລັດ ເຊິ່ງອັນນີ້ແມ່ນໝາຍຄວາມວ່າ ວຽກງານການຕິດຕາມຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍຫຼັງຈາກກັບ

ບົດລາຍງານ ການສຶກສາກ່ຽວກັບວຽກງານການສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ຄືນສຸສັງຄົມຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈາກການຄ້າມະນຸດທີ່ເປັນຄົນລາວ ທີ່ຖືກສົ່ງກັບຈາກປະເທດໄທ ໄລຍະປີ 2015-2017.

ຄົນສຸຂຸມຊົນເຂົາເຈົ້າແລ້ວນັ້ນ ແມ່ນຕົກເປັນຂອງຜູ້ໃຫ້ບໍລິການທີ່ເປັນອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງທີ່ບໍ່ສັງກັດລັດ ເຊິ່ງໃນພາກປະຕິບັດຕົວຈິງ ບັນດາອົງການຊ່ວຍເຫລືອກໍແມ່ນໄດ້ໃຫ້ພາກລັດເຂົ້າຮ່ວມນຳ, ວຽກງານການຕິດຕາມຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍ ແມ່ນວຽກງານທີ່ສຳຄັນ ເພື່ອ ເປັນການຮັບປະກັນວ່າຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈະບໍ່ກັບໄປຖືກຄຳມະນຸດຄົນອີກ, ຄວາມອາດສາມາດທີ່ຈຳກັດຂອງພາກລັດ ແລະ ການ ບໍລິການທີ່ຈຳກັດຂອງພາກສ່ວນອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງທີ່ບໍ່ສັງກັດລັດຖະບານຢູ່ໃນ ສປປ ລາວ ແມ່ນຍັງບໍ່ທັນພຽງພໍຕໍ່ຄວາມຕ້ອງການ ຕົວຈິງ ເຊິ່ງໃນນັ້ນລວມທັງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈຳນວນຫຼາຍແມ່ນຍັງບໍ່ທັນໄດ້ຮັບການບໍລິການ ແລະ ຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອທີ່ຈຳເປັນເຊິ່ງເຂົາເຈົ້າ ອາດມີຄວາມສ່ຽງຈະຕົກເປັນຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍໄດ້ອີກ.

ໃນຂະນະດຽວກັນການເຝິກອົບຮົມວິຊາຊີບແມ່ນໄດ້ສະໜອງໃຫ້ແກ່ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຢູ່ໃນຫຼາຍພື້ນທີ່ ໂດຍທັງພາກລັດ ແລະ ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງທີ່ບໍ່ສັງກັດລັດ. ການເຝິກອົບຮົມວິຊາຊີບນັ້ນກໍຄວນຈະມີຫລາກຫລາຍຮູບແບບທີ່ຍືດຢຸນໄດ້ ແຕ່ກໍຍັງຕ້ອງໄດ້ມີ ການທົດລອງ ເພື່ອສະໜອງການເຝິກອົບຮົມວິຊາຊີບທີ່ຫຼາກຫຼາຍ ແລະ ແທດເໝາະກັບຄວາມຕ້ອງການຕົວຈິງສຳລັບຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍ ເພື່ອເປັນການຫຼຸດຜ່ອນຄວາມສ່ຽງໃນໄລຍະຍາວຂອງຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍ ແລະ ຍົກລະດັບຄວາມອາດສາມາດຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າໃນການສ້າງລາຍ ຮັບໃນໄລຍະຍາວໃຫ້ມີຄວາມຍືນຍົງ. ຍັງມີຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍຈຳນວນຫຼາຍທີ່ບໍ່ສົນໃຈຮັບເອົາການເຝິກອົບຮົມ ຫຼື ພັກເຊົາຢູ່ໃນສູນຍ້ອນ ວ່າ ເຂົາເຈົ້າບໍ່ສາມາດສ້າງລາຍຮັບໄດ້ໃນເວລາຢູ່ສູນ ພັກເຊົາ. ດ້ວຍເຫດຜົນດັ່ງກ່າວ ຜູ້ປົກຄອງ ແລະ ຄອບຄົວຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າຈຳນວນ ໜຶ່ງແມ່ນບໍ່ເຫັນດີໃຫ້ລູກຫຼານຂອງຕົນອອກຈາກບ້ານໄປພັກຢູ່ໃນສູນຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ. ນອກຈາກນັ້ນການເຝິກອົບຮົມວິຊາຊີບ ແມ່ນມັກຈະເຝິກທັກສະ ຕ່າງໆທີ່ຍັງບໍ່ທັນແທດເໝາະກັບຄວາມຕ້ອງການຕົວຈິງຂອງຊຸມຊົນຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າ, ການວາງແຜນທຸລະກິດ ແລະ ຄວາມຮູ້ກ່ຽວກັບການປະກອບອາຊີບແມ່ນຍັງເຮັດບໍ່ທັນໄດ້ດີ ແລະ ຍັງມີຈຳກັດ ລວມທັງການທົດລອງ ແລະ ຝຶກປະຕິບັດຕົວ ຈິງກ່ຽວກັບທັກສະຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າເມື່ອອອກຈາກສູນເຝິກອົບຮົມແລ້ວ. ນອກຈາກນັ້ນການເຂົ້າເຖິງຕະຫຼາດແມ່ນຍັງຈຳກັດສຳລັບຜູ້ ຖືກເຄາະ ແລະ ຄອບຄົວຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າໃນການຂາຍຜະລິດຕະພັນ ເຊິ່ງເຮັດໃຫ້ເຂົາເຈົ້າປະສົບກັບບັນຫາໃນການສ້າງລາຍຮັບຈາກທັກ ສະຂອງຕົນ. ເມື່ອເປັນດັ່ງນັ້ນ ເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈະໄດ້ຮັບການເຝິກອົບຮົມກໍຕາມ ຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍຫຼາຍໆຄົນແມ່ນໄດ້ຫັນໄປ ເຮັດອາຊີບເດີມຂອງຕົນ ເຊັ່ນ: ກະສິກຳ ເມື່ອເຂົາເຈົ້າກັບຄືນສຸຂຸມຊົນຂອງຕົນ ແລະ ຫຼາຍຄົນມີທ່າອ່ຽງວ່າຈະເຄື່ອນຍ້າຍໄປເຮັດ ວຽກຢູ່ຕ່າງຖິ່ນອີກ ເຊິ່ງອາດເຮັດໃຫ້ເຂົາເຈົ້າຖືກສະແຫວງຫາຜົນປະໂຫຍດໄດ້ອີກ.

ການບໍລິການສຳລັບຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນຜູ້ຊາຍທັງຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນທາງການ ແລະ ບໍ່ເປັນທາງການ ເກືອບວ່າຈະບໍ່ມີ ເລີຍ. ການສະໜັບສະໜູນໃນໄລຍະຍາວສຳລັບຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍແມ່ນສຳລັບຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນແມ່ຍິງ ໂດຍສະເພາະແມ່ນໃນປະຈຸ ບັນມີທາງເລືອກໜ້ອຍຫຼາຍສຳລັບຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນຜູ້ຊາຍ ໃນການເຂົ້າຮ່ວມເຝິກວິຊາຊີບສະເພາະສຳລັບຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ, ປະຈຸບັນ ແມ່ນບໍ່ມີບໍລິການພັກຊົ່ວຄາວສຳລັບຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນຜູ້ຊາຍ. ສະຫະພັນແມ່ຍິງລາວ ມີສູນພັກໄລຍະສັ້ນສຳລັບ ຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍແມ່ຍິງ ແລະ ຜູ້ຊາຍໃນສູນດຽວກັນ ແລະ ໄດ້ເຮັດວຽກຮ່ວມກັບ ກະຊວງປ້ອງກັນຄວາມສະຫງົບ ໃນການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຜູ້ຊາຍ ຍັງບໍ່ທັນຈະແຈ້ງວ່າ ເມື່ອມີການປ່ຽນຄວາມຮັບຜິດຊອບໃຫ້ແກ່ສະຫະພັນແມ່ຍິງລາວ ແລ້ວຈະມີຜົນກະທົບແນວໃດຕໍ່ຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ ເປັນຜູ້ຊາຍແນວໃດ ຍ້ອນວ່າ ພາລະບົດບາດຂອງສະຫະພັນແມ່ຍິງລາວແມ່ນເພື່ອປົກປ້ອງສິດຜົນປະໂຫຍດຂອງແມ່ຍິງ ແລະ ເດັກນ້ອຍ ເຊິ່ງສະຫະພັນແມ່ຍິງລາວໃນຂັ້ນສູນກາງກໍໄດ້ເລັ່ງເຫັນເຖິງຂໍ້ຈຳກັດດ້ານຄວາມອາດສາມາດໃນການເຮັດວຽກກັບຜູ້ເຄາະ ຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນຜູ້ຊາຍເຊັ່ນກັນ. ຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນເພດທິສາມແມ່ນຍັງໄດ້ຮັບການບໍລິການທີ່ຈຳກັດຈາກຊັບພະຍາກອນທີ່ມີຢູ່, ເຊິ່ງຜູ້ ໃຫ້ບໍລິການທັງພາກລັດ ແລະ ອົງການທີ່ບໍ່ຂຶ້ນກັບລັດແມ່ນໄດ້ແນໃສ່ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນແມ່ຍິງ ແລະ ຜູ້ຊາຍເປັນຫຼັກ ເຊິ່ງຍັງບໍ່ ທັນມີແນວທາງສະເພາະໃນການເຮັດວຽກກັບຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນເພດທິສາມ.

ບົດລາຍງານ ການສຶກສາກ່ຽວກັບວຽກງານການສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ຄົນສຸສັງຄົມຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈາກການຄ້າມະນຸດທີ່ເປັນຄົນລາວ ທີ່ຖືກສົ່ງກັບຈາກປະເທດໄທ ໄລຍະປີ 2015-2017.

ການຂາດຄວາມອາດສາມາດ ແລະ ປະສິບການ ໂດຍສະເພາະແມ່ນຄວາມຮູ້ສະເພາະດ້ານໃນການເຮັດວຽກນຳຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຍັງຈຳກັດ ໂດຍສະເພາະແມ່ນພະນັກງານພາກລັດ ແລະ ສື່ຕ່າງໆ, ຍົກຕົວຢ່າງ, ໄດ້ມີການລາຍງານວ່າ ສີ່ຂອງໄທ ແລະ ລາວ ໄດ້ອອກຂ່າວກ່ຽວກັບຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ໂດຍນຳສະເໜີຮູບພາບ ແລະ ເລື່ອງລາວຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍອອກສື່ສາທາລະນະ, ດັ່ງນັ້ນ ຄວາມຮັບຮູ້ ແລະ ການມີຈັນຍາບັນຂອງສື່ໃນການນຳສະເໜີຂ່າວກ່ຽວກັບເລື່ອງນີ້ຈະ ຕ້ອງໃຫ້ຮັບປະກັນວ່າຂໍ້ມູນຄວາມລັບ ແລະ ຮູບພາບຂອງຜູ້ທີ່ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈະເປັນຄວາມລັບ ແລະ ຕ້ອງໄດ້ຮັບອະນຸຍາດຈາກຜູ້ຮັບຜິດຊອບ. ໃນຂະນະດຽວກັນ, ພະນັກງານລັດໃນສປປ ລາວ ຫຼາຍໆທ່ານຜູ້ທີ່ໄດ້ຖືກສຳພາດຍັງໄດ້ແລກປ່ຽນວ່າ ພວກເຂົາເຈົ້າໄດ້ແນະນຳ ແລະ ຊຸກຍູ້ໃຫ້ຄອບຄົວ ແລະ ອຳນາດການປົກຄອງຂັ້ນບ້ານຊ່ວຍຕິດຕາມ ແລະ ພະຍາຍາມບໍ່ໃຫ້ໄວໜຸ່ມເຄື່ອນຍ້າຍໄປເຮັດວຽກຢູ່ໄທ. ເຊິ່ງອັນນີ້ຖືວ່າເປັນການຈຳກັດສິດຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ, ວິທີການນີ້ບໍ່ໄດ້ຊ່ວຍໃຫ້ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຫລຸດ ຜ່ອນການເຄື່ອນຍ້າຍ ເຊິ່ງຂໍ້ມູນຫລັກຖານທີ່ໄດ້ຈາກການສຳພາດຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ໄດ້ຊື່ໃຫ້ເຫັນວ່າພວກເຂົາເຈົ້າຕ້ອງການທີ່ຈະໄປເຮັດວຽກຢູ່ປະເທດໄທ ຫລື ໃນເຂດຕົວເມືອງ.

ໃນການສຳພາດພາກສ່ວນທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງຕ່າງໆ ເຖິງສິ່ງທ້າທາຍຕ່າງໆທີ່ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍປະເຊີນຕໍ່ກັບການສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ການກັບຄືນສູ່ສັງຄົມຂອງພາກລັດ ແລະ ຜູ້ໃຫ້ບໍລິການ ທີມງານຄົ້ນຄ້ວາໄດ້ວິເຄາະຂໍ້ມູນຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈຳນວນ 229 ຄົນ ເຊິ່ງເປັນຂໍ້ມູນທີ່ ກະຊວງແຮງງານ ແລະ ສະຫວັດດີການສັງຄົມ ໄດ້ສະໜອງໃຫ້ ເຊິ່ງເປັນຈຳນວນຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ກັບມາລາວ ໃນປີ 2015 - 2017. ເຊິ່ງໃນນັ້ນ 78.1 ເປີເຊັນ ຂອງຜູ້ທີ່ຖືກສົ່ງກັບມາເປັນຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນເດັກ ເຊິ່ງສ່ວນໃຫຍ່ເປັນເດັກຍິງ ແລະ ຊາຍທີ່ມີອາຍຸຕໍ່າກວ່າ 18 ປີ. ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນແມ່ຍິງແມ່ນກວມເອົາ 90.4 ເປີເຊັນ ຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທັງໝົດ. 50.2 ເປີເຊັນ ຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທັງໝົດແມ່ນເຜົ່າຂະມຸ, ເຖິງແມ່ນວ່າປະຊາກອນເຜົ່າຂະມຸຈະມີພຽງ 11 ເປີເຊັນ ຂອງປະຊາກອນທັງໝົດຂອງລາວກໍຕາມ. ຂໍ້ມູນສ່ວນໃຫຍ່ແມ່ນກ່ຽວກັບປະຊາກອນ ເຖິງແນວໃດກໍຕາມ ບາງຕົວຊີ້ວັດ ແມ່ນກ່ຽວຂ້ອງກັບການສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ກັບຄືນສູ່ສັງຄົມ. ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈຳນວນ 152 ຄົນ ເຊິ່ງກວມເອົາປະມານ 66.4 ເປີເຊັນ ຂອງຈຳນວນຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທັງໝົດ ແມ່ນຖືກຊັກຊວນໃຫ້ຄ້າທາງເພດໃນປະເທດໄທ (ເປັນຍິງທັງໝົດ). 73.4 ເປີເຊັນ ຂອງຈຳນວນຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍເພດຍິງທັງໝົດ ແມ່ນໄດ້ຮັບການຝຶກອົບຮົມວິຊາຊີບທີ່ສູນຊ່ວຍເຫລືອຂອງຂອງລັດຖະບານປະເທດໄທ, 13.6 ເປີເຊັນ ຂອງຜູ້ຊາຍ (3 ຄົນໃນຈຳນວນທັງໝົດ 20 ຄົນ) ແມ່ນໄດ້ຮັບການຝຶກອົບຮົມທີ່ສູນຂອງປະເທດໄທ. ໄລຍະເວລາສະເລ່ຍທີ່ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຖືກສົ່ງໄປຢູ່ສູນພັກຝັງຢູ່ປະເທດໄທ ແລະ ກັບມາລາວແມ່ນ 294 ມື້ ໃນປີ 2015, 417 ມື້ ໃນປີ 2016, 265 ມື້ ໃນປີ 2017.

ໂດຍອີງໃສ່ສິ່ງທ້າທາຍຕ່າງໆທີ່ໄດ້ລະບຸໂດຍພາກສ່ວນກ່ຽວຂ້ອງຕ່າງໆຢູ່ໃນການສຶກສານີ້, ທີມງານເຮັດການສຶກສາໄດ້ສະເໜີຂໍ້ແນະນຳຕ່າງໆລຸ່ມນີ້ ໂດຍຈັດແບ່ງເປັນຫົວຂໍ້ ແລະ ຂົງເຂດ ເພື່ອສະເໜີຕໍ່ຜູ້ທີ່ປະຕິບັດວຽກງານຕົວຈິງຢູ່ໃນ ສປປ ລາວ ແລະ ປະເທດໄທ ເພື່ອຝຶກຈາລະນາ ແລະ ຈັດຕັ້ງປະຕິບັດໃນອະນາຄົດ. ຂໍ້ມູນເພີ່ມເຕີມສຳລັບການຈັດຕັ້ງປະຕິບັດແມ່ນມີຢູ່ໃນພາກຂໍ້ສະເໜີຂອງບົດລາຍງານນີ້.

ການຕິດຕໍ່ສື່ສານ ແລະ ການເກັບກຳຂໍ້ມູນ

- ພັດທະນາມາດຕະຖານການດຳເນີນງານສຳລັບການສົ່ງກັບຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍລະຫວ່າງ ລາວ ແລະ ໄທ ເຊິ່ງເປັນສ່ວນໜຶ່ງຂອງມາດຕະຖານການດຳເນີນງານຕ້ານການຄ້າມະນຸດໂດຍລວມ ເຊິ່ງປະຈຸບັນແມ່ນພວມໄດ້ຮັບການພັດທະນາ. ໃນການພັດທະນາ ແລະ ປົກສາຫາລື ຄວນເປີດໂອກາດໃຫ້ຄູ່ຮ່ວມງານທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງໄດ້ເຂົ້າຮ່ວມຕັ້ງແຕ່ຕອນລິເລີ່ມວຽກງານ.

ບົດລາຍງານ ການສຶກສາກ່ຽວກັບວຽກງານການສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ຄືນສູ່ສັງຄົມຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈາກການຄ້າມະນຸດທີ່ເປັນຄົນລາວ ທີ່ຖືກສົ່ງກັບຈາກປະເທດໄທ ໄລຍະປີ 2015-2017.

- ສືບຕໍ່ຈັດກອງປະຊຸມການປຶກສາຫາລືກ່ຽວກັບການຄຸ້ມຄອງກໍລະນີ (Case Management Meetings) ຢ່າງເປັນປົກກະຕິ, ໂດຍການມີສ່ວນຮ່ວມຂອງຄູ່ຮ່ວມງານ, ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງທາງສັງຄົມ ແລະ ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງສາກົນຕ່າງໆຂອງທັງສອງປະເທດ ເຊິ່ງເປັນການປຶກສາຫາລືກ່ຽວກັບລາຍລະອຽດຂອງກໍລະນີ ແລະ ຮ່ວມກັນຕັດສິນບັນຫາກ່ຽວກັບກໍລະນີ. ກະກຽມໜ່ວຍງານຕ່າງໆ ແລະ ປຶກສາຫາລືໃນເປັນເຈົ້າພາບຈັດຕັ້ງກອງປະຊຸມດັ່ງກ່າວ.
- ເພີ່ມຊ່ອງທາງການຕິດຕໍ່ສື່ສານທີ່ບໍ່ເປັນທາງການ ແລະ ຮັບປະກັນເຮັດໃຫ້ຂໍ້ມູນຂອງກໍລະນີເປັນອັນດຽວກັນ (ຕົວຢ່າງ: ຜ່ານການຕິດຕໍ່ສື່ສານຜ່ານທາງໂທລະສັບ) ລະຫວ່າງ ລາວ ແລະ ໄທ ໂດຍສະເພາະແມ່ນຢູ່ໃນຂັ້ນທ້ອງຖິ່ນ ເພື່ອເປັນການປະກອບໃຫ້ແກ່ການສື່ສານທີ່ເປັນທາງການອີກທາງໜຶ່ງ ແລະ ເຮັດໃຫ້ຂະບວນການຍຸຕິທຳຢູ່ປະເທດໄທດຳເນີນໄປໄດ້ໄວຂຶ້ນ ແລະ ຕາມກຳໜົດເວລາ.
- ໃຫ້ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງສາກົນ ແລະ ອົງການທີ່ບໍ່ຂຶ້ນກັບລັດຖະບານໄດ້ເຂົ້າຮ່ວມໃນການພິສູດສັນຊາດ ແລະ ໃນການຊອກຫາທີ່ຢູ່ ແລະ ຄອບຄົວຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ເພື່ອເພື່ອເຮັດໃຫ້ຂະບວນການຍຸຕິທຳຢູ່ປະເທດໄທດຳເນີນໄປໄດ້ໄວຂຶ້ນ ແລະ ຊ່ວຍໃນການເກັບກຳຂໍ້ມູນຂອງລັດຖະບານ.
- ນຳໃຊ້ຖານຂໍ້ມູນທີ່ມາດຕະຖານ ແລກປ່ຽນຂໍ້ມູນລະຫວ່າງພະນັກງານຂອງລາວ ແລະ ໄທ ແລະ ບັນດາໜ່ວຍງານຂອງພາກລັດຕ່າງໆຂອງລາວທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງ ເພື່ອເປັນການຕິດຕາມຂັ້ນຕອນການສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ຄືນສູ່ສັງຄົມຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ. ແລກປ່ຽນຂໍ້ມູນທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງກັບອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງທີ່ບໍ່ຂຶ້ນກັບລັດ ໂດຍສະເພາະແມ່ນຜູ້ໃຫ້ບໍລິການທີ່ບໍ່ຂຶ້ນກັບລັດທີ່ເຮັດວຽກກ່ຽວກັບການຕ້ານການຄ້າມະນຸດ ຕາມຄວາມຈຳເປັນ.

ການປົກປ້ອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຢູ່ໃນສູນຝັກຝັງຢູ່ປະເທດໄທ

- ແຈ້ງໃຫ້ຄອບຄົວຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຊາບ ກ່ຽວກັບການຝັກຝັງໃນສູນທີ່ປະເທດໄທ ໃຫ້ທັນຕາມກຳໜົດເວລາ. ສ້າງຊ່ອງທາງທີ່ສາມາດໃຫ້ຄອບຄົວຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ໄດ້ເຂົ້າຢ້ຽມຍາມ ຫລື ສື່ສານກັບຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍໃນຂະນະທີ່ເຂົາເຈົ້າຝັກຝັງໃນສູນທີ່ປະເທດໄທ, ເຊັ່ນວ່າໄດ້ຮັບການອະນຸຍາດຈາກໜ່ວຍງານພາກລັດໃນຂັ້ນທ້ອງຖິ່ນແທນທີ່ຈະເປັນຂັ້ນສູນກາງ.
- ເພີ່ມຊ່ອງທາງໃຫ້ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍໄດ້ມີໂອກາດພົບກັບນັກສັງຄົມສົງເຄາະທີ່ເປັນຄົນລາວໃນໄລຍະທີ່ເຂົາເຈົ້າອາໄສຢູ່ໃນສູນຂອງປະເທດໄທ. ໃນນີ້ອາດຈະລວມເຖິງການມີນັກສັງຄົມສົງເຄາະປະຈຳຢູ່ໃນສະຖານທູດລາວທີ່ປະເທດໄທ, ອຳນວຍຄວາມສະດວກໃນການໃຫ້ຄຳປຶກສາໄລຍະໄກ ລະຫວ່າງ ນັກສັງຄົມສົງເຄາະທີ່ຢູ່ລາວ ແລະ ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ຢູ່ໃນປະເທດໄທ, ຫລື ເຮັດການປະສານງານໃຫ້ນັກສັງຄົມສົງເຄາະທີ່ຢູ່ລາວໃຫ້ໄປຢ້ຽມຍາມ ທີ່ສູນຂອງປະເທດໄທ.

ອະທິບາຍກ່ຽວກັບພາລະບົດບາດຂອງໜ່ວຍງານພາກລັດ ແລະ ຂັ້ນຕອນຕ່າງໆ ຂອງລັດຖະບານລາວ

- ພັດທະນາຄູ່ມືກ່ຽວກັບວຽກງານກັບຄືນສູ່ສັງຄົມສຳລັບປະເທດລາວ ໂດຍການມີສ່ວນຮ່ວມຂອງຄູ່ຮ່ວມງານຕັ້ງແຕ່ຕົ້ນ ຄູ່ມືຄວນເປັນແນວທາງສຳລັບພະນັກງານຂັ້ນທ້ອງຖິ່ນ ເພື່ອເຮັດວຽກກ່ຽວກັບການກັບຄືນສູ່ສັງຄົມໃຫ້ມີຄວາມຍືນຍົງ ແລະ ຄວນສືບຕໍ່ພັດທະນາຄູ່ມື ໃນການປົກປ້ອງຜູ້ເຄາະຮ້າຍ ແລະ ກິນໄກການສົ່ງຕໍ່ລະດັບຊາດໃຫ້ສຳເລັດ ເຊິ່ງໃນປະຈຸບັນພວມຢູ່ໃນຂັ້ນຕອນການພັດທະນາ.
- ສ້າງພາລະບົດບາດສະເພາະຂອງໜ່ວຍງານພາກລັດທັງໝົດທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງທີ່ມີຄວາມຮັບຜິດຊອບໃນວຽກງານຕ້ານການຄ້າມະນຸດ ຕາມທີ່ໄດ້ລະບຸໄວ້ຢູ່ໃນກົດໝາຍວ່າດ້ວຍການຕ້ານ ແລະ ສະກັດກັ້ນການຄ້າມະນຸດ ປີ 2015 ແລະ ດຳລັດຂອງນາຍົກລັດຖະມົນຕີ ເລກທີ 245/ນຍ (ເດືອນ ກໍລະກົດ 2018) ວ່າດ້ວຍການຈັດຕັ້ງ ແລະ ການເຄື່ອນໄຫວຂອງຄະນະກຳມະການຕ້ານການຄ້າມະນຸດ. ເປີດໂອກາດໃຫ້ອົງການຈັດຕັ້ງທີ່ບໍ່ແມ່ນລັດຖະບານຂອງທັງລາວ ແລະ ໄທ ໄດ້ເຂົ້າຮ່ວມ ແລະ ປະກອບສ່ວນໃນຂັ້ນຕອນການພັດທະນາດັ່ງກ່າວ.

ບົດລາຍງານ ການສຶກສາກ່ຽວກັບວຽກງານການສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ຄືນສູ່ສັງຄົມຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈາກການຄ້າມະນຸດທີ່ເປັນຄົນລາວ ທີ່ຖືກສົ່ງກັບຈາກປະເທດໄທ ໄລຍະປີ 2015-2017.

ການສ້າງຄວາມເຂັ້ມແຂງທາງດ້ານເສດຖະກິດໃຫ້ແກ່ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ

- ໃຫ້ມີການເຂົ້າຮ່ວມຂອງບັນດາກະຊວງ ແລະ ພະແນກການທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງ ໃນການພັດທະນາແຜນງານການເຝິກອົບຮົມ ລວມທັງໂອກາດໃນການເຂົ້າເຖິງການສຶກສານອກລະບົບຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ເພື່ອເປັນການຍົກລະດັບຊີວິດການເປັນຢູ່ຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າໃນໄລຍະຍາວ ເຊິ່ງລວມທັງບໍລິການຕ່າງໆສໍາລັບຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນຜູ້ຊາຍຕື່ມອີກ. ປະເມີນຄວາມຕ້ອງການສະເພາະຂອງບຸກຄົນ ແລະ ສ້າງແຜນກັບຄືນສຸສັງຄົມ ໂດຍອີງໃສ່ຄວາມຕ້ອງການຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ແລະ ຄອບຄົວຂອງເຂົາເຈົ້າ ເຊິ່ງຕ້ອງໄດ້ມີການປະສານສົມທົບທີ່ດີ ລະຫວ່າງພາກລັດ, ຄູ່ຮ່ວມງານ ແລະ ຜູ້ໃຫ້ບໍລິການ.
- ຂະຫຍາຍແຜນງານການສ້າງລາຍຮັບສໍາລັບຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ລວມທັງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍທີ່ເປັນຜູ້ຊາຍ ໂດຍຜ່ານການເຝິກອົບຮົມວິຊາຊີບຕ່າງໆ ເພື່ອເປັນການສ້າງຄວາມອາດສາມາດທາງດ້ານເສດຖະກິດໃຫ້ກວມລວມຍິ່ງຂຶ້ນ ເຊິ່ງລວມທັງການສ້າງແຜນໃນປະກອບການຮ່ວມກັບຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ໃນເວລາເຂົາເຈົ້າກັບຄືນສຸສັງຄົມ ແລະ ມີການຕິດຕາມແຜນດັ່ງກ່າວຢ່າງໃກ້ສືດ ແລະ ຕໍ່ເນື່ອງ. ຈະເຮັດໄດ້ຄືແນວນັ້ນ ຈໍາເປັນຕ້ອງໄດ້ຍົກລະດັບຄວາມອາດສາມາດໃຫ້ແກ່ພະນັກງານທັງພາກລັດ ແລະ ຜູ້ໃຫ້ບໍລິການທີ່ເປັນອົງການບໍ່ຂຶ້ນກັບລັດ ໃນການສະໜອງວຽກເຮັດງານທຳ ແລະ ການເຝິກອົບຮົມທັກສະກ່ຽວກັບການປະກອບການໃຫ້ແກ່ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ.
- ສ້າງ ແລະ ພັດທະນາການເຝິກອົບຮົມເຄື່ອນທີ່ ແລະ ຕອບສະໜອງກັບຄວາມຕ້ອງການຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ເຊິ່ງບໍ່ຈໍາເປັນຕ້ອງໄດ້ພັກຢູ່ໃນສູນໃນເວລາເຝິກອົບຮົມ ເຊິ່ງອັນນີ້ຈະສາມາດຊ່ວຍໃຫ້ຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ລວມທັງຜູ້ຊາຍສາມາດສ້າງລາຍຮັບພ້ອມທັງໄດ້ພັດທະນາທັກສະໄປໃນເວລາດຽວກັນ. ວຽກງານດັ່ງກ່າວແມ່ນຄວນໄດ້ຮັບການປຶກສາຫາລື ແລະ ປະສານສົມທົບກັນກັບໜ່ວຍງານທີ່ຈັດຕັ້ງປະຕິບັດແຜນງານການສຶກສານອກລະບົບ ເຊິ່ງເປັນເຈົ້າການໂດຍ ກະຊວງສຶກສາທິການ ແລະ ກິລາ ພາຍໄດ້ທຶນການສະໜັບສະໜູນຂອງ ທະນາຄານພັດທະນາອາຊີ, ລັດຖະບານ ເຍັຍລະມັນ, ລຸກຊໍາບວກ ແລະ ສະວິດເຊີແລນ.

ການຍົກລະດັບຄວາມອາດສາມາດຂອງລັດຖະບານ ໃນວຽກງານຕ້ານການຄ້າມະນຸດ

- ເຮັດວຽກຮ່ວມກັບ ຄະນະກຳມະການຕ້ານການຄ້າມະນຸດຂັ້ນເມືອງ ທີ່ລະບຸໄວ້ໃນ ດຳລັດ ນາຍົກລັດຖະມົນຕີ ເລກທີ 245/ນຍ, ເຊິ່ງເປັນໂອກາດທີ່ດີໃນການຍົກລະດັບຄວາມອາດສາມາດ ແລະ ເປັນເຈົ້າການຂອງພະນັກງານຂັ້ນເມືອງເປັນຕົ້ນແມ່ນສະຫະພັນແມ່ຍິງລາວ, ຫ້ອງການແຮງງານ ແລະ ສະຫວັດດີການສັງຄົມ, ບ້ອງກັນຄວາມສະຫງົບ ແລະ ໜ່ວຍງານທີ່ກ່ຽວຂ້ອງທີ່ເຮັດວຽກກ່ຽວກັບການກັບຄືນສຸສັງຄົມ.
- ໂຄສະນາ ແລະ ເປີດໂອກາດ ສໍາລັບໜ່ວຍງານພາກລັດຕ່າງໆ ທີ່ສາມາດສະເໜີຂໍທຶນຈາກລັດຖະບານກໍຄື ຄະນະກຳມະການຕ້ານການຄ້າມະນຸດລະດັບຊາດ ສໍາລັບວຽກງານກັບຄືນສຸສັງຄົມ ແລະ ນໍາໃຊ້ງົບປະມານດັ່ງກ່າວແບບໂປ່ງໄສ ໂດຍຜ່ານການລາຍງານປະຈຳແຕ່ລະປີ.
- ຮັບຮອງເອົາແນວທາງປະຕິບັດການເອົາຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍເປັນໃຈກາງໂດຍການປະເມີນຄວາມຕ້ອງການຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍ ແລະ ຄອບຄົວຂອງພວກເຂົາ, ແລະສ້າງແຜນການກັບຄືນສຸສັງຄົມໂດຍອີງຕາມຄວາມຕ້ອງການເລົ່ານັ້ນ ໂດຍການຮ່ວມມືລະຫວ່າງ ໜ່ວຍງານພາກລັດ, ອົງການຄູ່ຮ່ວມງານພັດທະນາ ແລະ ໜ່ວຍງານທີ່ໃຫ້ການບໍລິການ

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ບົດລາຍງານ ການສຶກສາກ່ຽວກັບວຽກງານການສົ່ງກັບ ແລະ ຄືນສຸສັງຄົມຂອງຜູ້ຖືກເຄາະຮ້າຍຈາກການຄ້າມະນຸດທີ່ເປັນຄົນລາວ ທີ່ຖືກສົ່ງກັບຈາກປະເທດໄທ ໄລຍະປີ 2015-2017.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

Anti-TIP	Anti-Trafficking in Persons
ATD	Anti-Trafficking Division (Ministry of Public Security, all levels)
CM4TIP	Project on capacity development on assisting victims of trafficking in the greater Mekong regional countries
CMM	Case Management Meeting
CPS	Champasak Province
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DLSW	Department of Labor and Social Welfare (provincial level)
IDI	In-Depth Interview
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
KII	Key Informant Interview
KM	Khammouane Province
LSWO	Labor and Social Welfare Office (district level)
LWU	Lao Women’s Union
MLSW	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (national level)
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOPS	Ministry of Public Security (sometimes also referred to broadly as “police”)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SRV	Saravan Province
SVN	Savannakhet Province
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
VFI	Village Focus International
VOT	Victim of Trafficking
VTC	Vientiane Capital
VTP	Vientiane Province

Definition of terms and concepts

Trafficking in persons: In this study, “trafficking in persons” refers to the generally accepted definition established in international legal documents, including the United Nations’ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (also known as the UN TIP Protocol or the Palermo Protocol). The Protocol defines trafficking in human beings in article 3a as: “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”¹

Protection: The International Organization for Migration defines protection as “all the concrete measures that enable individuals at risk to enjoy the rights and assistance foreseen them by international conventions... Protection of victims can include (but is not limited to) shelter, medical and psychological assistance, establishing visa options, voluntary return and reintegration, safety, and national and transnational cooperation.”²

Repatriation: The process of returning a victim from the destination country where they have been trafficked, back to their country of origin. Consists of transit assistance, accommodation, legal support or legal processing, assistance with immigration, and transport back to victims’ home countries.

Reintegration: The process of recovery, and economic and social inclusion following a trafficking experience. It includes settlement in a safe and secure environment, access to a reasonable standard of living, and mental and physical well-being, opportunities for personal, social and economic development, as well as access to social and emotional support.³

Victim of Trafficking (VOT): As defined in Laos’ Anti-Trafficking in Persons law, “A victim shall mean any natural person who has directly been suffered in his or her physical or mental health, dignity, freedoms or his/her property resulting from all forms of trafficking in persons.”

Official VOT: Any victim, trafficked to any country, who is recognized and certified by the police of the destination country as a trafficking victim. This victim is commonly referred to a government shelter for initial assistance in the destination country and then repatriated to Lao PDR through the official channel, after which point which they can receive additional services from the Lao government.

¹ United Nations. 2000. *United Nations’ Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, supplementing the United Nations Convention against transnational organized crime*. New York.

² IOM. 2007. *The IOM handbook for direct assistance for victims of trafficking*. Switzerland. Available at http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iom_handbook_assistance.pdf

³ UNIAP and NEXUS Institute. 2013. *After trafficking: Experiences and challenges in the (re)integration of trafficked person in the Greater Mekong subregion*. Bangkok. Available at <http://un-act.org/publication/view/trafficking-experiences-challenges-reintegration-trafficked-persons-greater-mekong-sub-region/>

Pushback case: Migrants traveling to the destination country without proper documentation. Pushback cases may be identified by authorities in the destination country, or may return to Laos on their own without assistance from the destination country. Within pushback cases, some are considered to be unofficial VOTs.

Unofficial VOT: Undocumented migrants identified as trafficking victims by Lao police at the border or elsewhere, upon being “pushed back” into Laos by other countries. They are not recognized as victims or considered eligible for protection or services in the destination country, though they may receive services from either government or NGOs in their country of origin.

Service provider: Any entity (government agency, international NGO, non-profit association, etc.) that directly provides services and assistance to victims of trafficking, including counseling, medical attention, vocational training, family reintegration services, etc. In this report, NGO service providers are specified as such, while the term “service provider” more broadly encompasses government, as well.

Shelter: A place that provides accommodation, support and assistance -- either short or long term -- to VOTs, among other potential beneficiary groups.

Introduction

Scope of study

This study was commissioned by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, JICA, in Bangkok in an effort to better understand the gaps and successes of the repatriation and reintegration processes from Thailand to Laos and support both governments in providing better services to Lao victims of trafficking (VOTs). While broad international and regional research has been conducted, and standards have been made, there is a lack of research and strategy specific to the Lao and Thai contexts.

This study was mandated to specifically focus on repatriation and reintegration; while the study team did collect information about other areas of Anti-TIP work, the findings explained in this report will focus in on the process of a VOT returning home from Thailand, and the support they receive during and after.

The study team focuses on trends in repatriation and reintegration over the past few years, as well as up to present day. Specific attention is paid to the time period 2015 - 2017, as these years brought several changes in Anti-TIP work in Thailand and Laos, including the signing of a revised Memorandum of Understanding between the countries, a recently adopted Anti-TIP law, and an Anti-TIP Strategy and Plan of Action (2017-2020) in Laos. The impact of these changes will be specifically discussed, although some changes may be too recent to be able to draw conclusions.

Legal framework governing Anti-TIP work in Laos

Anti-trafficking in persons work in Lao PDR (Laos) is currently governed through the Law on anti-trafficking in persons (Anti-TIP law), passed in December 2015. Reintegration is provided as a right of victims, along with receiving other assistance, including staying at a shelter, medical support, legal assistance, vocational training, education, economic support, etc. (Article 39). The law promotes international cooperation in trafficking work, and states that the Lao government will create “favorable conditions” for cooperation in the protection and assistance of Lao victims trafficked abroad being repatriated to Laos, although no further specificity is provided (Article 52). While the law does set out a few agencies that are responsible for various aspects of repatriation and reintegration, in general most provisions are rather open to interpretation and only list “relevant organizations”, “relevant agencies” or “local authorities” as the responsible entities for implementing assistance. As will be explained in the key challenges section, under “Clarification of Lao government roles”, some ministries have overlapping responsibilities or vague mandates, which impedes successful collaboration.

The Anti-TIP law designates a department from the Ministry of Public Security (MOPS) as the Secretariat of the National Anti-TIP Committee (from here forward referred to as the Secretariat). This Secretariat, and MOPS more broadly, is the central “administrating organization” responsible for managing and overseeing all work related to trafficking, according to the law. The Anti-TIP law breaks down the rights and duties of MOPS at the national, provincial, and district levels (Part VII, Chapter 1); however, this is the only ministry whose responsibilities are described in such detail in the law. Through the Anti-TIP law, MOPS has the right and duty to “coordinate, support, and monitor ministries, agencies, other sectors and local authorities” working on TIP (Article 75). In practice, this means other government entities and NGOs need to receive approval from the Secretariat (MOPS) in certain aspects of their work. For

instance, if Thai authorities need to confirm a VOT's nationality with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in Laos, they first need to submit an official request letter to the Secretariat, which will then issue approval for the Thai government to work directly with MOFA. If NGO service providers would like to request information about cases from the Lao Women's Union, they would need to submit a request letter to the Secretariat, which would then either authorize or not authorize the LWU to provide the requested information. The result is that, while the Secretariat is not directly responsible for all areas of Anti-TIP work in Laos, they often act as a "one door service" (in the words of one government agency) for all Anti-TIP work to be funneled through.

The Secretariat is also responsible for distribution of an annual budget set aside to allocate to government implementers of Anti-TIP work. At the time of this report, however, no non-government stakeholders interviewed knew of these funds being successfully used by local government agencies. Funding for repatriation and reintegration services to VOTs at the community level is therefore often provided by international donors, as will be discussed further later in this report.

Prime Minister's Decree No. 245 (July 2018), on the role and implementation of Anti-TIP committees, requires establishment of Anti-TIP committees in all provinces (which is also required in the Anti-TIP law) and districts across the country. This decree is meant to establish official ownership of the district level to implement Anti-TIP work and ensure implementation of national strategies and laws at local levels. Under this decree, reintegration work is part of the responsibility of Anti-TIP Committees at all levels (national, provincial and district), including to protect and provide necessary services to VOTs in order to prevent their re-victimization. Thirteen government organizations have been assigned to be part of Anti-TIP Committees at all levels; however, no specific roles and responsibilities are assigned to agencies under this decree, apart from being "Committee Members." In addition, this decree assigns the Anti-TIP Committee at the central level to provide guidance to and develop detailed roles for committees in provinces and districts. The decree also directs each ministry, including local line agencies, to assign a focal point to serve on the committees. The timeline for implementation of this decree is unclear; multiple district-level agencies interviewed for this study reported not having been informed of the new committees, although a few provincial-level representatives were familiar.

In 2003, Laos ratified the "United Nations Convention against transnational organized crime", and the "Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children", which supplements the Convention.⁴ The obligation for states to make assistance and protection available to VOTs is specified in Article 6 of the Protocol. The Protocol also defines obligations with regard to the return (or repatriation) of VOTs (Article 8) and suitable measures that enable VOTs to remain in the destination country, where it is appropriate for them to do so (Article 7). Laos is also party to the 2015 "ASEAN Convention against trafficking in persons, especially women and children", which aims to promote regional cooperation in the prevention of TIP and protection of VOTs.⁵

⁴ United Nations. 2000. *Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against transnational organized crime*. New York. Available at [https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/Special/2000 Protocol to Prevent 2C Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/Special/2000%20Protocol%20to%20Prevent%20Suppress%20and%20Punish%20Trafficking%20in%20Persons.pdf)

⁵ Convention available at: <https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ACTIP.pdf>

In its 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report, the US Department of State downgraded Laos from a “Tier 2 Watch List” country to a “Tier 3” country, citing the fact that Laos had been on the Tier 2 watch list for four consecutive years and that the government of Laos “does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.”⁶ The recommendations of the report are numerous for Laos, including increasing support for male victims; increasing budget for Anti-TIP work, and increasing transparency of budget expenditures; collecting information on case details and sharing them with non-government partners; and expanding services and vocational trainings for victims. The report classifies current government victim protection efforts as “insufficient” and notes that most services to victims come from NGOs and international organizations “with minimal government involvement.” Despite services offered in vocational training programs, shelters, etc., the report identifies that long-term supports are needed to reduce victims’ vulnerability to being re-trafficked. As a result of Laos’ under-performance in the 2018 reporting standards, the US Embassy in Vientiane has hired a full-time staff member to monitor Anti-TIP work among government and international actors in Laos and assist where possible with strengthening efforts.

Laos’ “National plan of action on prevention and countering human trafficking (2016-2020)”⁷ sets forth a list of goals and activities to be conducted by all stakeholders in Laos for the prevention of trafficking and the protection of victims. Some key activities include: establishing a reporting system from local to national levels; promoting a study visit between Lao and Thai officials to observe the prevention of human trafficking in both countries; developing a national database on human trafficking, which should be shared within the country and across borders; providing opportunities for VOTs to access free formal and informal education; partnering with private sector to create employment opportunities for VOTs; and providing opportunities for VOTs to access loans. Continuing cooperation with INGOs and NGOs is also listed as a key project under the plan. While some of the actions outlined in this plan are significantly underway, the progress of many actions is unknown.

The Lao government, led by the Lao Women’s Union, is currently developing two set of standards that are anticipated to strengthen the roles and responsibilities of all actors working in repatriation and reintegration in Laos. These efforts are the Victim Protection Guidelines and National Referral Mechanism (NRM). In a December 2018 interview, LWU reported that the Victim Protection Guidelines will encompass the NRM and outline which agencies are responsible for victim protection, assistance and reintegration. Consultations have been held on the development of both these documents, which included stakeholders both in Laos and Thailand, but the Lao Women’s Union is currently leading this process with a government working group. It reported that after the first or second draft, the process will be opened up to development partners and NGOs. LWU’s goal is to finish the Guidelines in 2019.

Collaboration between Laos and Thailand

Repatriation and reintegration of trafficking victims from Thailand to Laos is governed through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Laos and Thailand, recently updated in July 2017, which seeks to suppress trafficking in person through prevention, repatriation, and reintegration. This

⁶ US Department of State. 2018. *2018 Trafficking in persons report country narrative: Laos*. Washington, D.C. Available at <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2018/282689.htm>

⁷ Note that the version of this Plan analyzed for this study was the unofficial English translation, not the official Lao version.

MOU replaces the previous version agreed upon in 2005. The MOU outlines responsibilities of both governments to prevent TIP through providing social services, such as vocational training and educational programs; and to protect victims through legal assistance and justice systems. Importantly, the MOU lists collaboration with other organizations as a duty of both countries, affirming that government agencies “shall cooperate with other organisations in order to provide legal assistance, health care, and take other necessary measures to protect victims of trafficking in persons and their families in an appropriate manner.” Exchanging information between government agencies, particularly with regard to investigations and prosecutions of offenders, is also required in Articles 10 and 12. Article 12, however, stipulates that the exchange of information should be done “through official communication” and that, “in case of urgency, the Parties may informally exchange such information.” The previous 2005 MOU does not include any detail about whether information exchange and communication should be done through official channels, or not.

Regarding repatriation, the MOU requires officials to “use diplomatic channels” to inform each other in advance of repatriation of a victim to create proper arrangements (Article 16, paragraph 3), which was not specified in the 2005 MOU. Methods that qualify as “diplomatic channels”, however, are not included. The reintegration process is described as necessitating close monitoring, including prevention of revictimization, and information sharing between the countries on the status of victims. Vocational training for victims, as well as training for service providers and government staff, are also outlined as measures to take to ensure the well-being and safety of victims. Compared to the 2005 MOU, the 2017 MOU is quite strengthened with regard to its provisions on repatriation -- it describes the objectives of reintegration, including victims being provided with educational opportunities, receiving psychological support, and not being subject to stigma (Article 14, paragraph 2). Information exchange between Laos and Thailand about victims’ reintegration is also specified in Article 17, paragraph 3 of the new MOU, while the old MOU did not mention this topic.

Description of court proceedings, and of victims’ participation in them, is changed between the new and old MOU. While the 2005 MOU mentions little about victims in legal proceedings, the 2017 MOU outlines actions to both increase victims’ participation in court proceedings, but also protect victims’ rights. Article 13, paragraph 2 of the 2017 MOU states victims’ participation in court should be enhanced to “improve the prosecution efficiency”, while Article 15 goes on to say the two countries shall encourage VOTs “to fully participate in any criminal proceedings for the best interests of those victims of trafficking in persons.” This statement is slightly confusing when taken into account with Article 13, paragraph 3, which calls for timely proceedings and consideration of rights of victims, and Article 14, paragraph 2, which says that victims “shall not be subjected to further victimisation or trauma in legal proceedings.” It seems that the MOU sends mixed messages about whether participating in court proceedings, or not, is in the best interest of VOTs. Specific experiences that interviewed VOTs had with court procedures will be discussed later, in the “Experiences of VOTs” section.

The new MOU assigns the Secretariat of the National Committee on Anti-Trafficking in Persons (the Ministry of Public Security) as the focal point in Laos, whereas the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare was the previous focal point under the 2005 MOU. This is perhaps the most significant change between the two documents, according to both government and non-government interviewees.

To implement the partnership between Laos and Thailand, the 2017 MOU establishes a joint working group which is tasked for developing joint Plans of Action on TIP and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Anti-TIP work. This joint working group should also be responsible to promote cooperation between governments, civil society, development partners, and the private sector in combating trafficking in persons. The last Case Management Meeting between Laos and Thailand in August 2018 determined that the Lao government would lead drafting of the SOP, while the Thai government would lead the Plan of Action development. The status of these drafting procedures are unknown, though.

Repatriation and reintegration flow from Thailand to Laos

Official VOTs

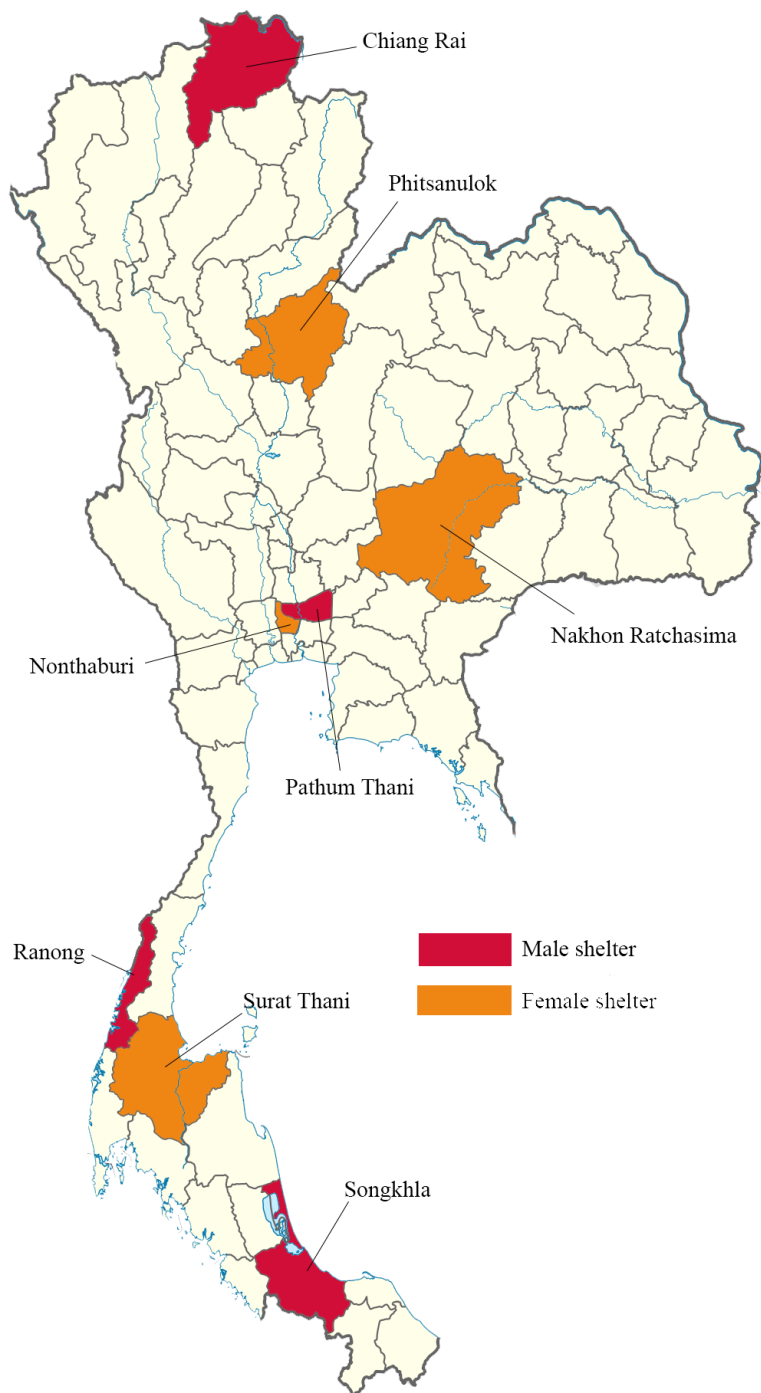
Upon being rescued from or escaping their trafficking situation, Lao VOTs will be commonly be sent to a Thai police station for interviewing, or, in some cases, be sent to an immigration detention center. If the individual is identified by Thai authorities as a victim of trafficking, fact finding begins to identify the victim's nationality, family, and other information. These VOTs are designated as "official VOTs." The Thai government will first notify the Lao government that an official Lao victim has been identified, with the Lao government responsible for providing case information back to Thailand to assist with further processing.

❖ Protection at shelters and the legal process

While information collection between Thailand and Laos is ongoing, VOTs will be sent to one of eight shelters for trafficking victims across Thailand. Four of these shelters are for males, while four are for females. Female victims will either be sent to Songkwae in Phitsanulok province (north), Kretakarn in Nonthaburi (central), Nareesawat in Nakhon Ratchasima (east) or Sri Surat in Surat Thani (south), depending on the location in which they are rescued. Male victims are sent to either Chiang Rai shelter (north), Pathum Thani (central), Ranong or Songkhla (south).

Figure 1: Map of government-managed shelters in Thailand

Map source: Wikimedia Commons. Map has been modified from its original version.



The Thai government recently opened up the option for NGOs to register their shelters with the government to be able to receive VOTs there, instead of VOTs being sent to one of the government facilities. Thailand's 2017 Country Report on Anti-Human Trafficking Response mentions that two NGOs are interested in registering their shelters with the government. As of December 2018, a Thai stakeholder reported that one NGO, NightLight, had finished this process and started receiving VOTs.

The length of stay at the Thai shelters is largely varying. While Thai officials and shelter staff aim to have VOTs stay as short as possible, in reality, the process can be influenced by a number of factors. VOTs are required to stay in shelters until their participation in legal proceedings is completed (e.g. their testimony), should the VOT opt to pursue legal measures. Even if the VOT does not decide to file for compensation, the VOT may need to wait for several weeks until other VOTs are sent back to Laos, since it is rare for individual cases to be repatriated alone. With

regard to legal proceedings, progress may be slowed by the Lao government not providing necessary information in a timely manner, such as information on victim's nationality or family, and by VOTs not sharing accurate information with Thai authorities, which then complicates case information collection on the Lao side. The end result is that some cases stay at shelters in Thailand for multiple years.

The Thai government is aware that the length of stay in their shelters is a significant concern for VOTs, and has taken efforts to ameliorate this issue. Thailand’s 2017 report on Anti-TIP response reported improvements in the court process that allowed for victims to return to Laos more quickly⁸:

Figure 2: Average length of judicial processes in Thailand				
Source: Thailand Country Report on Anti-Human Trafficking Response, 2017				
	2014	2015	2016	2017
Police complete a case	118 days	118 days	72 days	69 days
Public prosecutors complete a case (deciding whether to indict)	--	--	38 days	29 days

According to Thailand’s country report, in 2017, 63 percent of cases in Courts of Justice were completed within six months, with 29 percent completed between six months to one year. Eight percent of cases took one to two years, with 0.19 percent taking more than two years. The Thai government credits this quicker adjudication with the establishment of a Human Trafficking Case Division in the Criminal Court. The Lao government has also noticed improvements in this area, with the LWU at the central level reporting that, in 2017, the longest period a VOT stayed in a Thai shelter was about eight months.

While it is not compulsory for VOTs to seek compensation through courts, and there is the option that VOTs can first be repatriated to Laos and later return to Thailand to enter the justice system, very few cases choose these options. Service providers and officials in both Thailand and Laos reported that it is very difficult for VOTs to go back to Thailand for legal processing after having returned to Laos – there is no budget available to support VOTs doing so, and while some NGOs and international organizations might provide legal services to Lao victims, these services are for the Lao justice system, not the Thai system. The Thai and Lao governments also both discourage this model, as it creates difficulties in streamlined information gathering and smooth reintegration. As a result, the majority of Lao VOTs enter the Thai legal system and therefore spend time at Thai shelters while waiting for their participation in the court process to be complete.

During the legal process, VOTs are required to testify in court. Despite Thai laws allowing video conferencing testimony and witness statements⁹, Thai shelter staff reported that Thai officials prefer to not employ these methods for VOT cases, since video conferencing reduces the impact of VOTs testimony, and because Wi-Fi connections in both Laos and Thailand are not reliable. Interviewees therefore reported that, in practice, little virtual conferencing occurs. It is possible that these technologies

⁸ Note that this quicker adjudication process is not reflected in the experience of VOTs in this research, since the VOTs interviewed were not processed through the Thai court system in 2017.

⁹ Liberty Asia. 2017. *Legal analysis of human trafficking in Thailand*. Hong Kong. Available at <http://unact.org/publication/view/legal-analysis-human-trafficking-thailand/>

allowing for VOTs' virtual participation in court may have grown in popularity quite recently, meaning that the information shared by interviewees in this research could be out-of-date.

❖ *Repatriation to Laos*

After VOT's participation in the court process is complete, VOTs can be repatriated back to Laos. Any compensation may either be issued immediately, before return to Laos, or sometimes after victims have been reintegrated to their villages. As mentioned previously, repatriation to the Lao border normally occurs in groups. Thai officials are required to register the arrival of VOTs to Laos with Lao officials and provide information on the cases to assist the Lao government in returning the victims to their communities.

Official returnees are sent to Vientiane Capital over the Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge that connects Nong Khai of Thailand and the Lao capital. Unofficial VOTs, and push-back migrants more broadly, may arrive back in Laos at any location, whether an official border or not. Most push-back cases, however, are deported at Vang Tao-Chong Mek border between Ubon Ratchathani of Thailand and Champasak province of Laos.

Once returned to Laos, official VOTs are sent to stay temporarily at the Lao Women Union's shelter in Vientiane for roughly two weeks. Before the LWU took on responsibility for reintegration services following the revised MOU in 2017, VOTs were sent to MLSW's transit center. At the LWU shelter, LWU conducts family tracing, family assessments, and health checks, as well as introduces VOTs to vocational training options. VOTs also are interviewed by police at this time, and if the Anti-TIP Department at MOPS concludes legal procedures are necessary, victims may stay at the shelter for up to one month while these are ongoing.

Victims must first return to their communities before potentially receiving further support or vocational training from service providers, such as NGOs or the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. The length of time that they might remain at home before opting to receive services varies: it could be several weeks, up to several months. Victims also have the option to refuse to receive further services. In the event that victims cannot return home (due to unsafe family situations or other reasons), government and NGO service providers will usually work together to find accommodations or a job placement for the victim.

Most government representatives interviewed shared that follow-up on cases is conventionally the responsibility of district governments, who coordinate with families and communities at the request of provincial or central government, along with any service providers that might work directly with cases. While the length of follow-ups are determined on a case-by-case basis, government agencies at multiple levels reported follow-up occurs for three to six months, and two other government interviewees added that after six months, follow-up should be the responsibility of village committees. In practice, this might not be the case, as will be discussed further in this report.

Unofficial VOTs

Unofficial VOTs differ from official VOTs in that they are not recognized as victims until their return to Laos. For a variety of reasons, Thai police may not identify unofficial VOTs as victims – for instance, because victims may not share enough information about their case for police to realize they have been

trafficked, because victims may lie in an effort to protect themselves, because law enforcement handling the case may be corrupt or compromised, or because the law enforcement may not have enough knowledge to properly identify and handle the case. If the individual is not identified as a trafficking victim by Thai police, they will be “pushed back” to Laos, where the Lao police may either identify the individual as a VOT, or not.

❖ *Return to Laos*

Unofficial VOTs’ return to Laos differs significantly from official VOTs’ repatriation. Because unofficial VOTs are not identified by the Thai government as VOTs, they are not sent through the judicial process, nor required to stay at a Thai shelter before repatriation. As a result, unofficial VOTs do not receive the option to pursue court proceedings against their trafficker or to seek compensation, meaning that access to justice for unofficial VOTs is significantly reduced. Since they do not stay at Thai shelters, unofficial VOTs are ineligible for receiving vocational training in Thailand, and also do not receive other protective services that are offered at Thai shelters, including counseling, etc.

Instead, unofficial VOTs are conventionally processed as undocumented migrants, which can include interviews with immigration officials and staying at an immigration detention center. In some cases, no case processing occurs at all, and victims are deported straight to Laos by immigration authorities, either through traditional or official borders. Before unofficial VOTs are sent to Laos, they fall into the broad category of being “push-back migrants”, since their status as a victim is not recognized.

Once these push-back migrants cross back into Laos, they may be identified by border authorities or police as unofficial trafficking victims. This identification usually occurs through interviews with the victims at the border, or through cases being referred to law enforcement and NGO service providers in other areas. In cases where Thai police did not have sufficient information to classify an individual as a VOT, Lao officials can glean enough details to realize a case is, in fact, a victim. Lao VOTs may feel more comfortable to share information once they are back in Laos, and may face easier communication with Lao officials as a result of shared language.

❖ *Reintegration services*

Once an unofficial VOT is identified in Laos, their access to reintegration services is the same as official VOTs’. Depending on the location of identification, the VOTs will be referred to the Lao Women’s Union or an NGO service provider operating in that area. In the case that the victim is referred to the LWU, the victim would be sent to the temporary LWU shelter in Vientiane capital before returning home. Unofficial VOTs may opt to stay at an NGO shelter at any time during their reintegration, the same as official VOTs, and may also participate in vocational training programs. If they choose to, unofficial VOTs may go through the legal process in Laos, although there are very few possibilities for VOTs to retroactively go through the Thai court system after they have returned to Laos. As a result, unofficial VOTs are often unable to take legal action against their trafficker in Thailand, although they may achieve some sense of justice if others who were complicit in their being trafficked are found guilty through Lao courts.

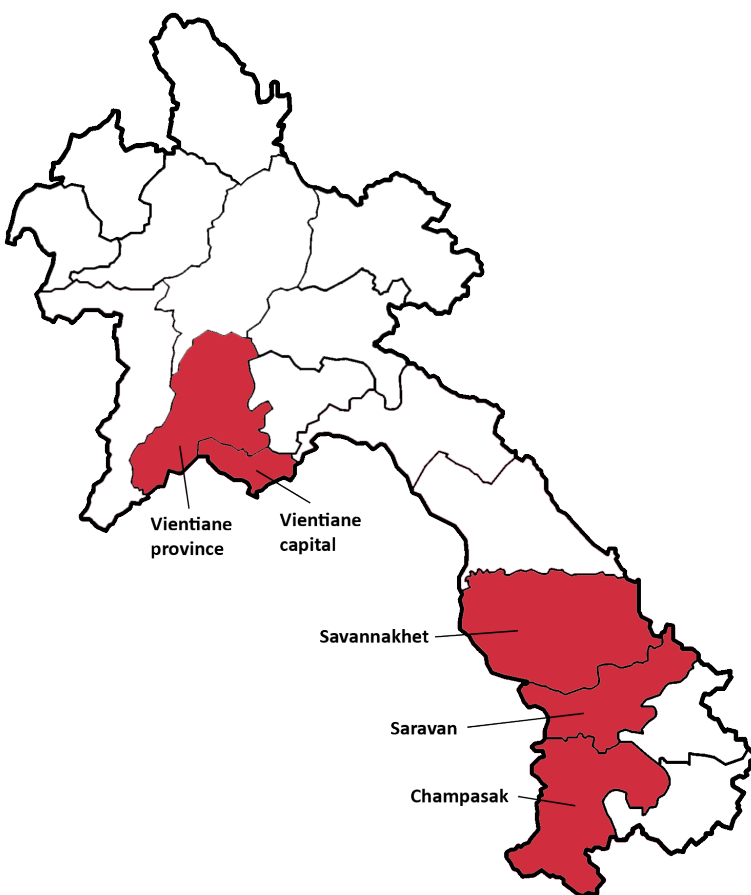
Following unofficial VOTs’ reintegration, they can receive case follow-up from either government or NGO service providers, just as official cases do.

Methodology

Research for this study took place from October 2018 to January 2019. A predominantly qualitative methodology was applied, including a desk review; interviews with stakeholders working in trafficking and labor migration issues both at central and local levels; and interviews with 20 trafficked individuals. Quantitative analysis was used to understand trends from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare's data on 229 official returnees from the research period 2015-2017. Stakeholder interviews (key informant interviews -- KIIs) were held in Vientiane Capital and in other provinces where service providers and government line agencies operate. The team conducted interviews with two NGO service providers, in addition to eight INGOs. Interviews with national government were conducted with the Lao Women's Union, Department of Social Welfare (Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare), and the Anti-TIP department at the Ministry of Public Security. Provincial and district level government interviews were conducted in Champasak, Savannakhet, Saravan, Vientiane province and Vientiane Capital. See Annexes 2 and 3 for a full list of INGO, service provider, and government interviews.

Figure 3: Map of study areas in five provinces

Map source: *Wikimedia Commons*. Map has been modified from its original version.



Interviews with VOTs were also conducted in five provinces -- Champasak, Saravan, Savannakhet, Vientiane province, and Vientiane capital. The trafficking cases were identified through collaboration with NGO service providers in these areas: Village Focus International in Vientiane province, Vientiane Capital, Saravan and Champasak; and Sengsavang shelter in Savannakhet. VOT cases were selected based on a few criteria, including the VOT's age; their sex; the shelter in which they stayed in Thailand; and the sector of work in which they were engaged in Thailand. Most importantly, the cases had to be willing to talk with the research team and consent to having their information used. In total, the team interviewed 20 VOTs. Demographic information about these cases is available in the "Experience of victims of trafficking" section, and

expanded on in Annex 4. Short case stories for selected interviews can be found in Annex 1.

The research team was aware of potential negative impacts on the victims of trafficking that might arise through this study, and therefore adopted the “World Health Organization ethical and safety recommendations for interviewing trafficked women”¹⁰, which outline practices to do no harm in interviews, obtain informed consent, and avoid re-traumatizing interviewees. The research team implemented these guidelines by working with service providers to select interviewees who were more likely to speak with the team; by explaining that victims could withhold their consent for their information to be used; and by having interviewees sign a consent form following the interview if they agreed to share their information. Additionally, the researchers worked with NGO service providers to collect case details (such as when the VOT was trafficked to Thailand, to where, in what industry, etc.) so that the interviewees did not have to retell their stories or re-live potentially traumatizing situations. Instead, the interviews focused on what happened to get the cases from Thailand back to Laos, including the assistance cases received on both sides of the border.

Limitations

A central limitation of this study was availability of government data on the 229 official trafficking returnees from the study time frame 2015 - 2017. While the study team received government data about these cases, this data includes mostly demographic information, and information on their repatriation or reintegration process is largely missing. While this study originally intended to assess the current status of returned VOTs through analyzing this data, this was not possible given the government data is predominantly demographic. Additionally, access to trafficking victims whom the research team could interview proved more difficult than originally anticipated. Working with interviewees’ schedules, which required work on family farms, around the house, etc., prevented some from participating, while remoteness of their villages required significant time for travel and made the interviewing process slow.

The time constraints of the research team in how many days were able to be spent in the field conducting interviews also affected interviewing the maximum number of cases that was originally hoped. As a result of these limitations, in-person interviews were only conducted with 13 individuals. An additional seven interviews were conducted over the phone, although in not as detailed a manner as the in-person interviews. Related to this limitation was a difficulty contacting male cases. The service providers who had access to male victims had fallen out of contact with these individuals, and phone numbers were mostly out-of-date. As a result, only two male victims were interviewed by phone. This study therefore has only limited evidence in regard to the experience of male victims, although the team did gain additional insights about male VOTs from discussion with service providers, INGOs, and government.

Lastly, in selecting its interviewees, the study team had to interview victims in locations where NGO service providers work, thus limiting the sampling area to only a few provinces, mostly in the south of the country. The fact that all interviewees were served by NGO service providers also means that the study team was not able to interview VOTs who were not contacted by NGOs, since these VOTs are extremely difficult to reach. The analysis of VOTs’ reintegration experiences is thus limited only to those who received some additional guidance or support (such as an offer to receive vocational training or stay at a shelter) following their return to Laos. Additional research would be needed to understand the experience of VOTs who are truly unreachable and unserved after their return home.

¹⁰ Available at: http://www.who.int/mip/2003/other_documents/en/Ethical_Safety-GWH.pdf

Analysis of VOT data from 2015 - 2017

The research team received data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare about official trafficking victims from the study period 2015-2017. This data includes a number of metrics about the VOTs, listed below:

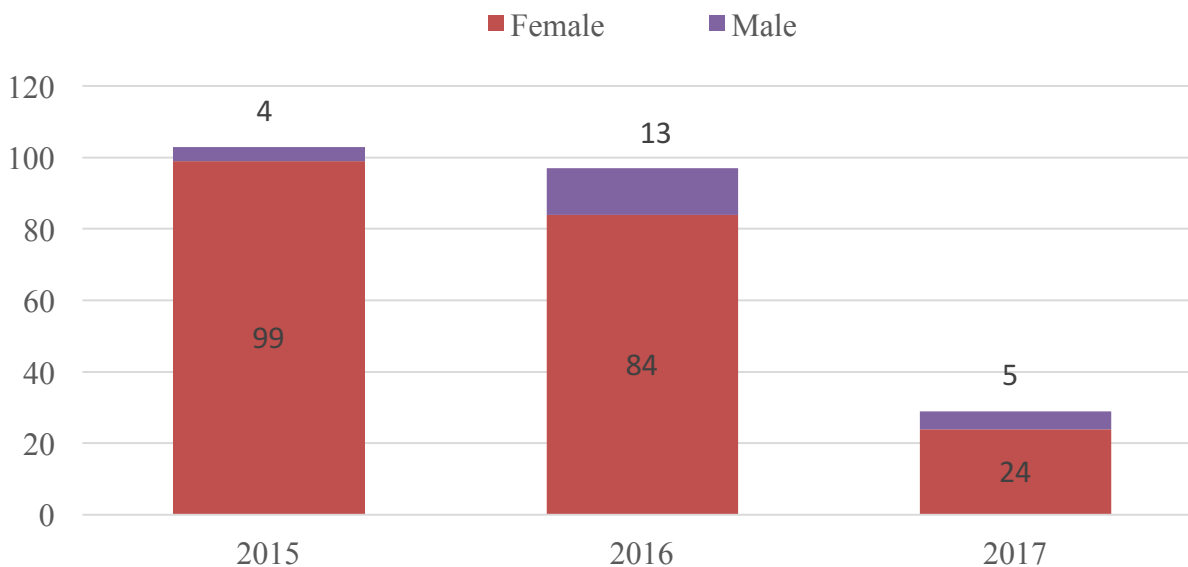
- VOT's code number
- Name
- Age
- Sex
- Ethnic group
- Village
- District
- Province
- Telephone number
- Number of members in family
- Marital status (only included in 2015 and 2016 data)
- Number of children
- Family status (only included in 2017 data)
- Economic conditions
- Education level
- Health status
- Whether the case wants to return home or not (only included in 2017 data)
- Type of exploitation in Thailand
- Date entered shelter in Thailand
- Times entering shelter
- Type of vocational training received in Thailand
- Group return number
- Date returned home
- Entity responsible for case (government or NGO)

This section will include a number of figures and charts to represent the data about VOTs from 2015 to 2017. For raw numbers and percentages used to create these figures, please refer to Annex 5.

In total the data counts 233 victims, four of whom are young children under the age of one year who were born during the trafficking period and did not work. These children have been excluded from the following analysis so as not to skew the data, bringing the total number of VOTs analyzed to 229 individuals. A child of four years old, who was trafficked with his parents and siblings, is included in the total, since the data indicates he participated in labor in Thailand, along with the rest of his family.

The data shows decreasing official returnees across the study period, starting with 103 in 2015 (99 female, four male); dropping slightly to 97 in 2016 (84 female, 13 male); and decreasing significantly to 29 cases in 2017 (24 female, five male). The reason for this decrease over time is unclear, although government officials interviewed in Laos reported they believe a decrease in cases recently indicates positive victim identification efforts in Thailand, as well as successful education in Laos on safe migration.

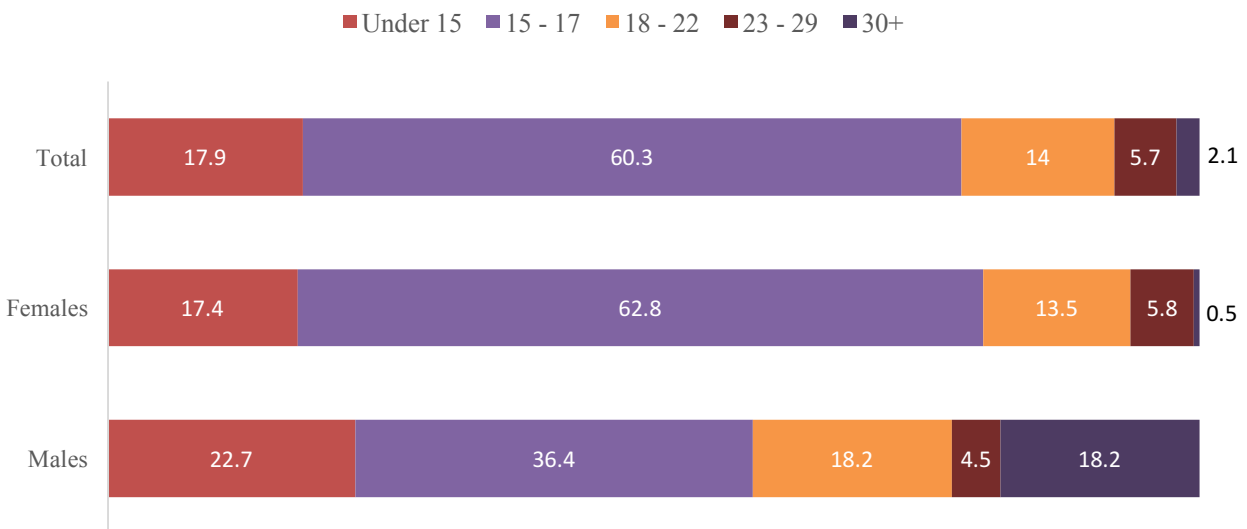
Figure 4: VOTs returned from Thailand to Laos, 2015 - 2017



Concerningly, 78.1 percent of VOTs during this period were minors (179 minors out of 229 total cases). 22 males VOTs were reported from this period, compared to 207 females. Females therefore comprise 90.4 percent of total victims. The average VOT age is 17 years old. While a majority of all cases were minors, age disparities intensified in female VOTs. 80.2 percent of female cases are minors, with the youngest VOT aged ten years old. The oldest female victim is 39 years old. The majority of male cases are also minors, although at a lesser percentage than females. 13 of 22 male victims were minors, or 59 percent. The youngest male victim is four years old, while the oldest is 45 (two individuals of this age).

Dividing the VOTs by age group illuminates that a majority of total VOTs are between the age 15-17 (60.3 percent of all VOTs). 62.8 percent of female VOTs are between 15-17, while 36.4 percent of male VOTs are. 97.9 percent of total VOTs are under the age of 30, compared to 99.5 percent of female VOTs, and 81.8 percent of male cases.

Figure 5: Age division for VOTs, 2015 - 2017



Ethnicity

Lao and Khmu are the predominant ethnic group classifications of victims. 115 VOTs are Khmu -- representing 50.2 percent of total victims -- while 106 are Lao ethnicity. One individual is Katang, one Yao, two Hmong, one Suay, one Pou Tai, and two Laven. The Lao ethnic group, which comprises 53.4 percent of the total country's population¹¹, accounts for 46.3 percent of total trafficking victims from 2015-2017. While the Khmu ethnic group is the third largest group in Laos (after Lao and Hmong), it comprises only eleven percent of the population, meaning Khmu people are highly overrepresented in this data.¹² While Khmu women have been reported to be increasingly vulnerable to trafficking, particularly in sex work¹³, the research team did not expect to be the percentage of Khmu VOTs to be so high, nor for the presence of other ethnic groups to be so low in comparison. Disaggregating the data by sex reveals that a high percentage of male VOTs are Khmu: 15 of the 22 trafficked males are Khmu (68.2 percent), while 100 of the 207 females are Khmu (48.3 percent).

Slight age differences exist when comparing between ethnic minority VOTs and Lao ethnicity VOTs. For females, the average age of ethnic VOTs is 16.23 years, while it is 17.3 years for Lao females. In males, age differences are slightly more pronounced: 19.87 years average for ethnic males, and 21.57 years for

¹¹ Lao Statistics Bureau. 2015. Results of population and housing census, 2015. Vientiane. Available at: http://lao.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/PHC-ENG-FNAL-WEB_0.pdf

¹² Lao Statistics Bureau. 2015. *Results of population and housing census, 2015*. Vientiane. Available at http://lao.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/PHC-ENG-FNAL-WEB_0.pdf

¹³ Suzie Albone. 2011. *Gender and power analysis for remote ethnic groups*. Vientiane. Care International in Lao PDR.

Lao males. Out of minor female cases, 54 percent are from ethnic groups¹⁴, compared to 52.2 percent of all females overall, suggesting that minor female cases are slightly more likely to be from ethnic groups than female cases of any age.

It should be noted that the ethnicity of VOTs is listed unclearly in the data. Laos is the most ethnically diverse country in Southeast Asia, with 50 officially recognized ethnic groups. Ethnic classifications are often broadly referred to based on three geographies: Lao Loum (inhabit the lowlands and consist mainly of Lao-Tai ethnicity), Lao Teung (inhabit the uplands and consist mainly of Mon-Khmer ethnic groups), and Lao Soung (inhabit the highlands and consist mainly of Hmong-Mien ethnic groups).¹⁵ The MLSW data includes a mixture of these geographic categories as well as specific groups. Since Lao Loum can describe individuals from a number of ethnic groups, the data lacks clarity. For the purpose of this analysis, it has been assumed that “Lao Loum” in the data refers generally to the Lao ethnic group.

Province of origin

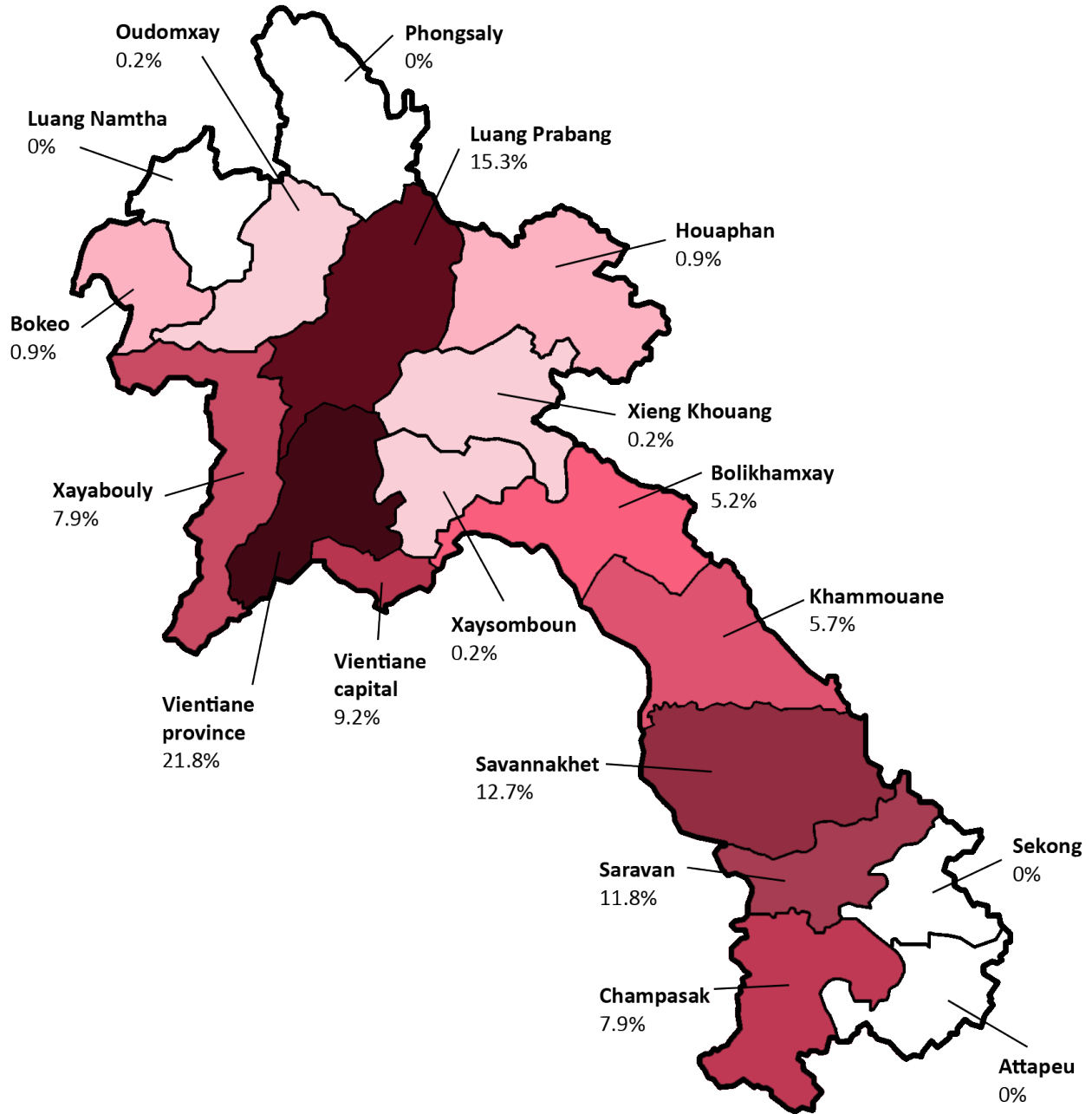
The plurality of VOTs, or 21.8 percent, came from Vientiane province. Luang Prabang (15.3 percent), Savannakhet (12.7 percent), and Saravan (11.8 percent) follow. No victims were reported from Attapeu, Luang Namtha, Phongsaly, or Sekong provinces. Of the 14 provinces trafficking victims came from, including Vientiane capital, nine share a border with Thailand. See Figure 5 for a visualization of VOTs’ provinces of origin during the 2015-2017 time period. The percentages indicate the percentage of total VOTs coming from that province, with darker shading indicating a higher percentage of VOTs.

¹⁴ Here, “ethnic groups” refers to individuals who are from an ethnicity that is not Lao, which is the largest ethnicity in Laos, comprising 53.4 percent of the population as of the 2015 census. Examples of people from ethnic groups include the Khmu, Hmong, or Laven.

¹⁵ Minority rights group international. 2018. *World directory of minorities and indigenous peoples: Laos*. London. Available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20180730033256/http://minorityrights.org/country/laos/>

Figure 6: VOTs by province of origin, 2015 – 2017

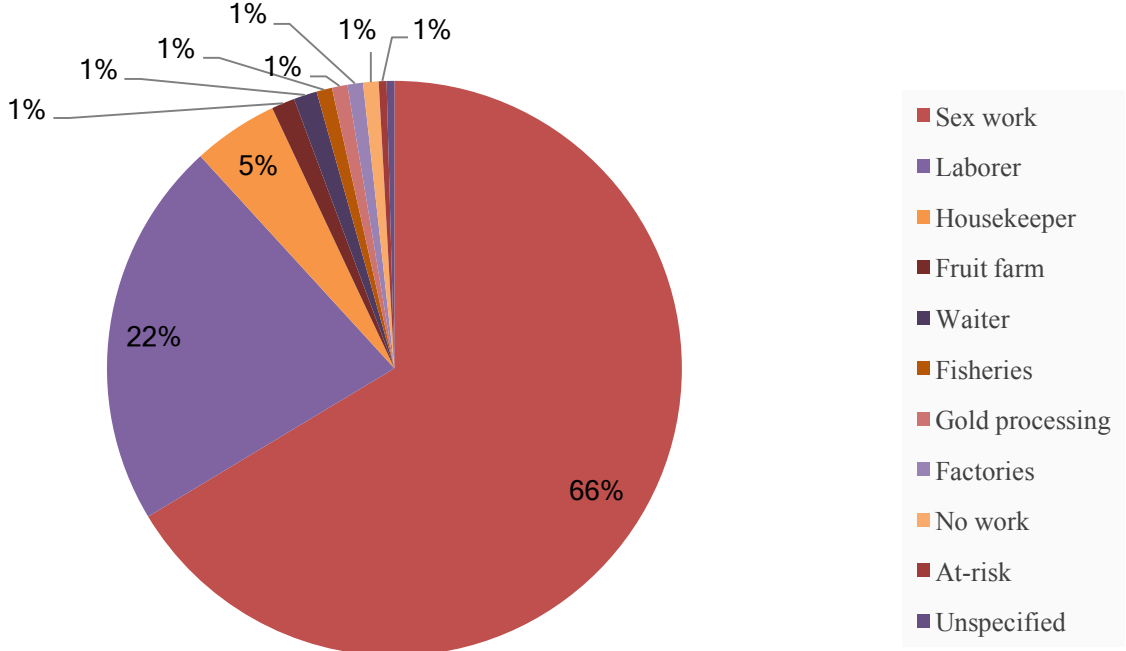
Map source: Wikimedia Commons. Map has been modified from its original version.



Work in Thailand

In Thailand, 152 cases were engaged in sex work (66.4 percent). 50 cases were laborers, with no further description. An additional 23 were laborers with further description: eleven as housekeepers; three on a fruit farm; three as waiters; two in fisheries; two in gold processing, and two in factories. One case was listed as an at-risk group. Two cases were listed as not having worked, while one case had nothing written about the type of work the victim might have engaged in.

Figure 7: Type of work in Thailand, 2015 - 2017

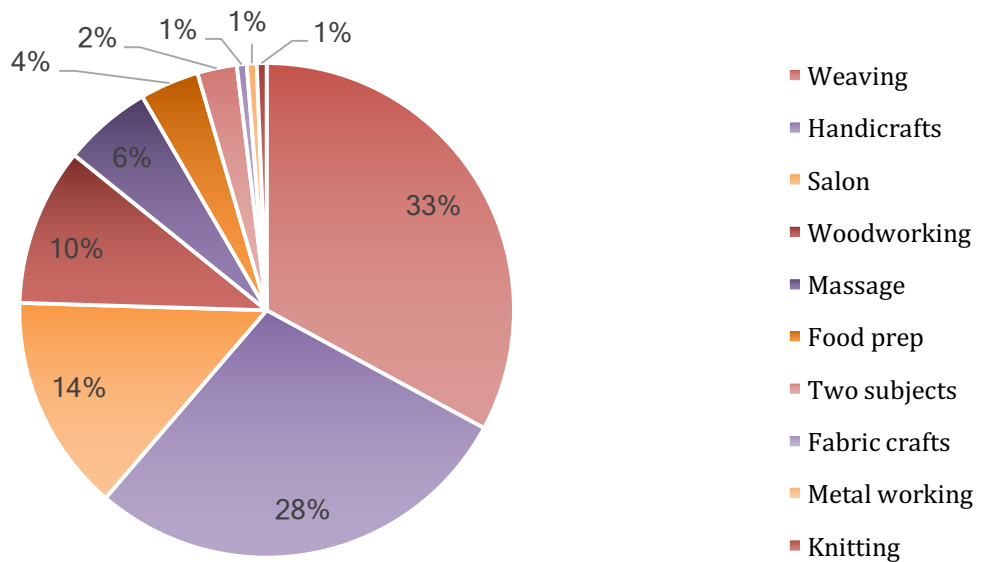


All sex workers trafficked were female, totaling 73.4 percent of female VOTs. General labor followed as the next most common form of exploitation for females (15.9 percent), with work as a housekeeper accounting for 5.3 percent. 77.3 percent of male cases (17 of 22) were laborers, with two cases (9.09 percent) engaged in fisheries and an additional two cases (9.09 percent) working in gold factories.

Training in Thailand

155 out of 229 victims, or 67.7 percent, participated in vocational training while at Thai shelters, although the data does not specify for how long. Female VOTs received training at a much higher rate than males did: 73.4 percent compared to 13.6 percent (three people of 22), respectively. The most popular training course among females is weaving. The only training men participated in is handicraft making (two individuals) and metalworking (one individual). The below figure showcases the trainings pursued by VOTs, excluding individuals who did not receive training.

Figure 8: Type of vocational training in Thailand, 2015 - 2017

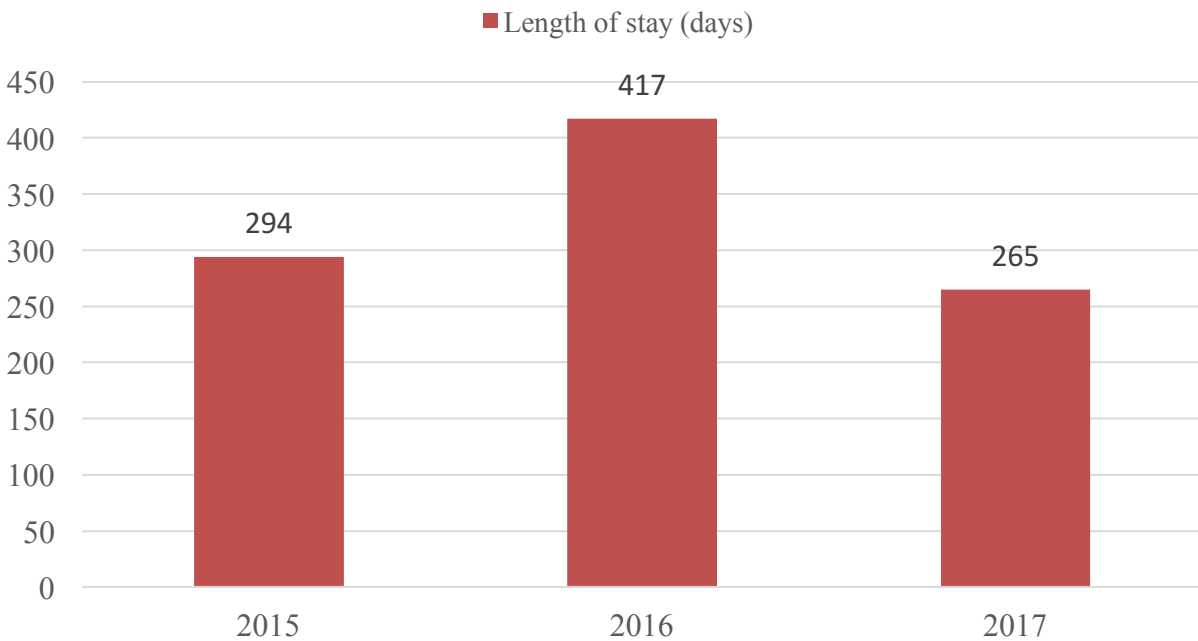


Length of stay

The length of stay was determined by analyzing two dates included in the government data: the date a VOT arrived at a Thai shelter, and the day they were sent home. Note that this data is not clear on whether “being sent home” means being repatriated back to Laos, or being reintegrated back to their villages. Some VOTs’ data does not include the date they arrived at a Thai shelter. These VOTs have been left out of the length of stay analysis. A few other cases list only the month and year the VOT returned home -- for the sake of including them in the analysis, it was assumed that these VOTs arrived back on the first day of the month. The length of stay was calculated by subtracting the date the VOT arrived at the Thai shelter from the date they were sent home. The date they were sent home was not included in the length of stay.

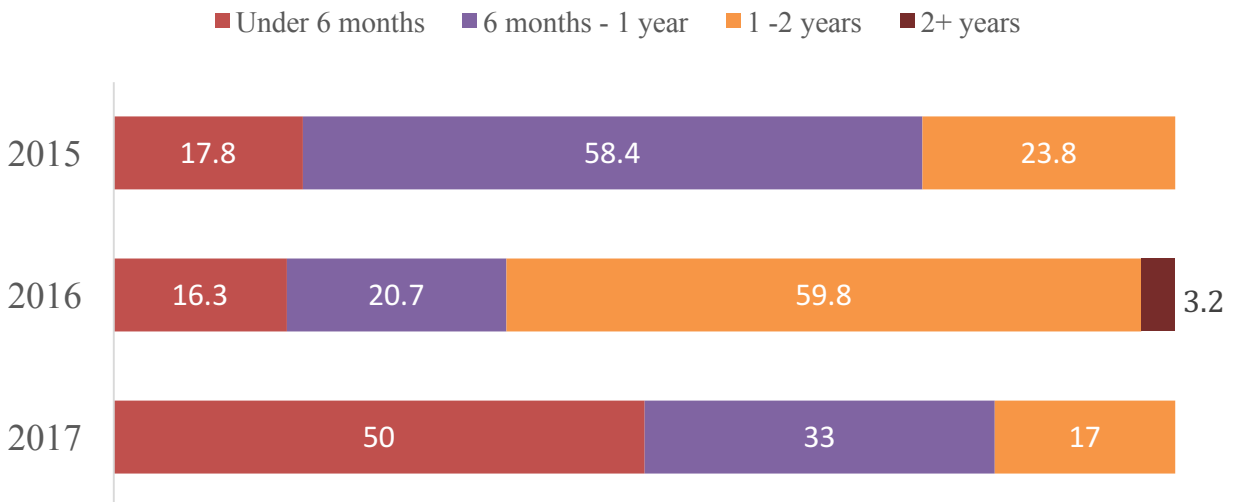
In 2015, the average length of stay was 294 days, or roughly 9.7 months. The VOT who stayed the shortest amount of time stayed for 69 days, while the longest stay was 494 days. In 2016, the VOT who stayed the shortest amount of time stayed for 34 days, with the longest stay reaching 895 days (two cases). The average length of stay in 2016 was 417 days, or 13.7 months. 2017 has the shortest average length of stay, at 265 days, or 8.7 months. The VOT who stayed for the shortest time stayed 136 days, while the longest stay was 546 days. Seventeen cases in 2017 did not include a date they arrived at the shelter, meaning that this average was reached using only twelve cases and therefore may not be representative of the sample as a whole.

Figure 9: Length of stay, on average, 2015 - 2017



From these averages, it seems that 2016 might be considered an “anomaly year” in which the extreme outliers of 895 days threw off the overall average. In fact, it appears that in 2016, all cases took, on average, longer to be sent home. The below figure displays the breakdown in the length of time it took for VOTs across all years to return home. While the majority of cases were sent home in under one year in 2015 (76.2 percent of cases) and in 2017 (83 percent), in 2016, a comfortable majority of cases were sent home between one to two years, or longer (62 percent of cases).

Figure 10: Length of stay, by year, 2015 - 2017



Other data

VOTs' average years of education was 4.79, just short of finishing primary school. 19 VOTs (8.3 percent) did not study at all. 87 VOTs completed primary school and went on to study in secondary school, representing 37.6 percent of total VOTs. Only one victim out of 229 individuals completed secondary school. Female VOTs completed an average of 4.95 years of education, while males completed an average of 3.27 years. This fact is surprising, given that females in Laos, on average, complete less education than males.¹⁶

All but two victims were listed as either healthy or average (the 2015-2016 data uses the term "average", while the 2017 data uses the term "healthy"). The remaining two victims reported back pain.

Only 53 of the 229 cases, or 23.1 percent, have a telephone number listed for follow up. It is possible, however, that NGO service providers have contact information for the cases that was not shared back to the MLSW and therefore is not included in this spreadsheet. The responsible agency for each case is also listed, either as the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, World Vision, Sengsavang, or Village Focus International.

The categories of data collected do not change much across the study period. The 2015 and 2016 spreadsheets include marital status, while the 2017 spreadsheet does not. The data available in 2015-2016 indicates 186 VOTs are single, ten are married, four are divorced, and one has no available information. The 2017 data includes one additional metric that is not listed in the 2015 and 2016 data -- whether the victim wants to return home or not. All VOTs are marked as wanting to return home.

While this data includes useful statistics, it is mostly demographic information about the victims, rather than information about their repatriation or reintegration process. For instance, there is no information in the data the research team received about what area of Thailand the victim was trafficked to; through what border; whether they traveled with a passport or border pass; what shelter they stayed at in Thailand; through what border they returned to Laos; how long they stayed at a temporary shelter in Laos; etc. For this reason, although the research team is able to draw conclusions in general terms about the victims' experience, most of these conclusions are not specific to reintegration and repatriation. This data shortcoming also means the research team is not able to assess the VOTs' current situations, as no information on case follow-ups are included in the data.

¹⁶ According to the Lao census of 2015, 15 percent of the population aged 25-59 reported no schooling at all, while 25 percent completed five years of secondary school. Sixteen percent started, but did not complete, secondary school, and 12 percent attended at least one year of higher education. Twenty-one percent of adult females reported no educational attainment as of the 2015 census, compared to 10 percent of males.

Experience of victims of trafficking

Demographics of VOTs interviewed

The research team interviewed 20 VOTs (18 female and two male), four of whom were unofficial VOTs (all female). As explained in the “Methodology” section, the VOTs were selected by NGO service providers based on the type of trafficking case they were (unofficial or official) and the industry in which they worked in Thailand. The team was limited to the cases that NGO service providers still had contact with, which limited the candidate pool significantly. Most importantly, the cases had to be willing to speak about their reintegration and repatriation experience and consent to having the information they shared used by the research team.

The following chart summarizes the demographic information of the VOTs interviewed, including some basic case information. Additional details about cases are available in the case studies in Annex 1. A code system is used to track the interviewees. They are each given an ID that corresponds with the order in which they were interviewed (by province), followed by a provincial abbreviation. CPS means Champasak; SRV for Saravan; SVK for Savannakhet; VTP for Vientiane Province; and VTC for Vientiane Capital. One IDI is labeled as IDI 2 - SVK/KM, as this individual was interviewed in Savannakhet at the Sengsavang shelter where she currently works, but is from Khammouane province. Under this system, IDI No. 3 - SRV, for example, indicates the third IDI (in-depth interview) conducted in Saravan province.

All respondents reported that they were between 13-22 years old when they migrated to Thailand. However, during interviews, most of them were not able to indicate their age or date of birth exactly. Some individuals’ information is therefore estimation based on VOTs’ best guesses, or information provided by NGO service providers. In addition to the information provided below, Annex 4 contains a more comprehensive profile of VOTs, including their length of stay in Thai shelters, how they escaped or were rescued, and additional details.

Any information marked in brackets in quotes “[]” is an addition on behalf of the research team to clarify or add to what was shared by the IDI cases.

Figure 11: IDI participant overview

IDI No	Sex	Ethnicity	Minor or adult case	TIP Type	Shelter in Thailand	Victim status	Current age	Current job	Type of interview
1 - CPS	F	Lao Lum	Minor	N/A - victim was rescued before crossing into Thailand	N/A	Unofficial	15	Sewing and farmer	In person
2 - CPS	F	Lao Lum	Minor	Sexual exploitation	Nareesawat	Official	18	Fisher	Phone

3 - CPS	M	Lao Lum	Adult	Labor exploitation - Fishery worker	Sent directly from Indonesia to Laos	Official	30	Farmer	Phone
1 - SRV	F	Lao Theung (Suay)	Minor	Labor exploitation - Domestic work	Kretakarn	Official	20+	Sewing and farmer	In person
2 - SRV	F	Lao Theung (Katang)	Adult	Labor exploitation - Mobile vendor	Kretakarn	Official	26	Sewing and Farmer	In person
3 - SRV	F	Lao Theung	Minor	Labor exploitation - Fruit farm	Kretakarn	Official	20	Sewing	In person
4 - SRV	F	Lao Theung	Minor	Labor exploitation - Fruit farm	Kretakarn	Official	19	Farmer	In person
5 - SRV	F	Lao Theung	Minor	Labor exploitation - Fruit farm	Kretakarn	Official	20+	Farmer	In person
6 - SRV	F	Lao Theung	Minor	Labor exploitation - Mobile vendor	Kretakarn	Official	22	Farmer	In person
7 - SRV	F	Lao Theung (Suay)	Adult	Labor exploitation - Mobile vendor	N/A	Unofficial	25	Hairdresser and farmer	Phone
8 - SRV	F	Lao Theung (Suay)	Minor	Labor exploitation - Mobile vendor and domestic work	Kretakarn	Official	19	Farmer	Phone
9 - SRV	F	Lao Theung (Suay)	Minor	Labor exploitation - Vendor	Kretakarn	Official	22	Farmer	Phone
10 - SRV	M	Lao Theung	Adult	Labor exploitation - Fishery	Sent directly from Indonesia to	Official	29	Farmer	Phone

				worker	Laos				
11 - SRV	F	Lao Theung	Minor	Labor exploitation - fruit farm	N/A	Unofficial	22	Sewing and farmer	Phone
1 - SVK	F	Lao Lum	Minor	Labor exploitation - Mobile vendor	Nareesawat	Official	18	Factory worker and sewing	In person
2 - SVN/ KM	F	Lao Lum	Minor	Labor exploitation - Domestic work	Kretakarn	Official	18	Works at Sengsavang as assistant	In person
3 - SVK	F	Lao Lum	Minor	Labor exploitation - Domestic work	Kretakarn	Official	22	Farmer	In person
4 - SVK	F	Lao Lum	Minor	Sexual exploitation	Nareesawat	Official	22	Sewing	In person
1 - VTC	F	Lao Lum	Minor	Sexual exploitation	N/A	Unofficial	20	Sewing and farmer	In person
1 - VTP	F	Lao Theung (Khmu)	Minor	Sexual exploitation	Nareesawat	Official	18	Farmer and vendor	In person

Before trafficking

All VOTs (both female and male) interviewed in this study dropped out of school before completing primary and secondary school. Five of those (female) never went to school at all. Poverty and lack of income were the main reasons for leaving school at an early age, as their parents were not able to provide educational materials and fees, including transportation costs, etc. Some VOTs were not able to continue their education after they completed primary school (grade 5) because the secondary school was too far from their village. For those who dropped out at secondary school, they thought that higher education did not match their current needs, even though they acknowledged the importance of education. After dropping out of school, many worked as child laborers in agriculture work. For example, one individual worked at a coffee plantation and supported their parents' agricultural work before deciding to go to Thailand.

"I decided to drop out of school during the first year of secondary school [grade 6] because many of my friends also dropped out. I would like to go back to school again but it's too late and I feel shy to join the class with other younger students." - IDI No. 1 - CPS

“I decided to go to Thailand because I had no income, and I saw that a lot of people in our community who went to Thailand had a new house...” - IDI No. 2 - SRV

“I went to Thailand at that time because I wanted money to do something, like open a sewing shop or retail shop in my village.” - IDI No. 3 - SRV

Nearly all respondents lived in rural areas (two to three hours travel by car from the urban center of each province) with poor infrastructure and a lack of economic activities, investments, and development projects. Most areas had no direct market access and unpaved roads.

Gender roles and cultural norms also influenced many female VOTs to leave school and migrate to seek an income for their family. Many respondents are from households with many family members and siblings, particular those from ethnic groups. Most of the female respondents are elder sisters in poor families. In Lao culture, older sisters and brothers are considered as second parents, and they are expected to have a greater role and responsibility to support family well-being. Most of the income VOTs earned in Thailand was therefore used to support VOTs’ families and their siblings’ education. This role still continues even after VOTs reintegrated with their families. Seventeen female VOTs interviewed in this study received vocational training from NGO service providers. Two male VOTs rejected training offered by NGO service providers. Only one female rejected an offer for training, but she asked for her sister to take a sewing course instead.

“The compensation money I got from Thailand I gave to my parents to buy a farm truck and construct a house for my parents.” IDI No. 2 - SRV

“I gave compensation money from Thailand to my parents to buy food and a motorbike, and to pay debt fees for my sister for her new motorbike... I have two siblings but no one takes care of the house or does household and farm work. I am an elder sister, so I have to be in charge of many things. I want to take vocational training in town but I have no time, so I asked my sister to attend the vocational training instead.” - IDI No. 3 - SRV

During trafficking

Most VOTs indicated that their trafficking experience was the first time they went to work in Thailand. Only two respondents had gone to Thailand for the second time for work. Before they migrated, they were contacted by and offered work by brokers. These brokers could have been friends, relatives, or people they knew in their communities; friends who went to work in Thailand; or their own parents. There were multiple factors that influenced them to decide to work in Thailand. Most of the VOTs made their own decision to go to Thailand. Their ultimate objective in migrating was to seek better income and job security in order to support their families. It is interesting to note that the main reason VOTs migrated, particularly for minor VOTs, was to improve their family well-being rather than for their individual benefit.

“I dropped out in 7th grade. Our family didn’t have any income so my mother said I should go to work in Thailand... I was about 13-14 years old when I went to Thailand. All of my siblings also

dropped out. My sister went to work in Thailand first, and she sent money back home often. My mother told me that I could get more money if I went to work in Thailand.” - IDI No. 4 - SVK

The route through which VOTs entered Thailand depended on the area the VOT was from. Seven VOTs traveled to Thailand via international border checkpoints by using a passport (three individuals) or a temporary border pass (four individuals). Ten VOTs traveled by boat through traditional river borders without any document, which was particularly true for minor VOTs and those who never entered school. One VOT traveled by boat while using a temporary border pass. Only two VOTs traveled via land border without any documents.

“I used a passport to go to Thailand but the age in the passport was incorrect. My real age was younger than in the passport. My sister helped me arrange the passport in Laos, and my employer paid for that.” - IDI No. 4 - SVK

Most VOTs interviewed in this study volunteered to migrate to Thailand with knowing the nature of their work and workplace. While they might have been informed broadly about the type of work, for example “domestic work”, due to their very young age and limited experience in paid labor, many of them did not know what to expect. Some VOTs volunteered to work in Thailand, but they were deceived by brokers about their work and ended up being forced to work as sex workers.

“My dream is to have a secure job. That’s why I migrated. I discussed with my friends a lot about jobs, but we didn’t discuss the risks or the environment in Thailand. Mostly we talked about work location and income.” - IDI. No. 1 - CPS

“The broker told me and I understand that I will go to Thailand to work as domestic work, however I don’t have any skills and knowledge about domestic work at that time.” - IDI No. 3 - SVK

Some VOTs could read and speak Thai when they worked in Thailand; however, this was not the case for VOTs who were from rural ethnic groups; those who dropped out of school at an early age; and those who never entered school. Five VOTs interviewed in this study were not able to read and write both Thai and Lao languages. Some of them also shared that it was difficult to communicate with their employer if the employer did not speak Lao or Isan language (spoken in northeast Thailand). In these cases, they got help from friends who were able to speak Thai to communicate.

Awareness campaigns on TIP in Laos are often conducted in an ad hoc manner. Most interventions, both at policy and programmatic levels, are mainly backed by external donors, rather than through government agencies. Knowledge about safe migration is low; although communities may be aware of risks associated with migration, most VOTs interviewed for this study reported they do not know how to go about migrating safely or where to seek assistance in doing so. All VOTs reported that there are currently no information distribution or community campaigns about TIP and safe migration in their villages. Most VOTs did state, however, that they received safe migration information during their stay in shelters in Thailand and Laos that expanded their knowledge modestly.

“We have never heard about safe migration messages before, and up until now. There is no information distribution about TIP and safe migration in our village. We only hear information about health issues.” - IDI No. 3 - SRV

“I didn’t know about exploitation, abuse or TIP information before until I got this information at the shelter in Thailand.” - IDI No. 3 - SRV

Respondents in this study indicated that they were trafficked to Nong Khai, Udon Thani, Chaiyaphum, Bangkok, Samut Sakhon, Prachuap Khiri Khan, and Narathiwat. A few of them were not able to indicate the province to which they were trafficked. This information is provided in Annex 4.

Nearly all respondents had never heard about services to those who struggled during their time in Thailand to return back to Laos (or after their return, to find a job and income). Only two female respondents said they considered Thai police to be a service -- the others felt that police might not help them because they were undocumented migrants, or because police had connections to their traffickers and they did not trust them. While VOTs were aware that they were abused and exploited during their work in Thailand, they were not familiar with the concept of trafficking and therefore did not recognize that they were victims. Instead, they felt they might be punished by Thai authorities due to their status as undocumented workers. Due to this status, poor awareness of their rights, lack of knowledge about available services, lack of a supporting network, low self-esteem, and fear, they did not report their situations.

“We heard that if we reported to the people and police nearby our workplace, we would get no help from them because those police and people belonged to the farm owner [the trafficker]. We also heard that if someone ran away to get help from the police, they would be sent back to the farm again. We saw staff in the farm seriously beat one person who ran away.” - IDI No. 2 - SRV

“When I worked in Thailand as a mobile vendor selling vegetables, I ran away and reported to the police close to my employer’s store, but the police did not listen to me. The police sent me back to my employer. My employer, she knows many big people in that community, including the head of the police at that station and nearby. The employer also told us that if we want to escape or run away we will be caught again and sent back to her and it’s true... During the rescue our employer had a chance to call her son, who also abused and exploited Lao children in other workplaces, and we heard that her son knew about our rescue and so he released the Lao children who worked with him to go back home [out of fear of being arrested]. We don’t know whether our employer went to jail or not, but we knew that she was investigated by police.” - IDI No. 1 - SVK

Different VOTs had different experiences of getting out of their trafficking situations. Fourteen of them were rescued by police, particular minor VOTs who worked in entertainment venues. (One of those who was rescued was actually identified as a VOT at the border of Laos and Thailand, before crossing into Thailand). Of those who were rescued, only one individual was unhappy to have been rescued. Some of them were rescued after a friend ran away and reported their employer to police. Some of them were rescued by Thai police after they were able to call back home and report the situation to their parents and family members. Six VOTs escaped and sought help from the people nearby and the police.

“I run away from the employer’s house and reported to the police nearby, but they didn’t pay attention. They told me to wait until I met with another police officer in the police station, and he helped me to report my case.” - IDI No. 4 - SRV

However, some minor VOTs, particularly those who volunteered to work in entertainment venues and as sex workers, got confused or scared when they were rescued by police. Despite their willingness to work in the sex industry, their age classifies them as trafficking victims and requires they be removed from their situations. Although they may have been relieved to be rescued, they were also afraid of getting arrested and being punished by Thai authorities for engaging in illegal labor. Conversely, VOTs who worked as domestic workers, mobile vendors, or in fishery and agriculture all said that they were happy and relieved to be rescued from abusive and exploitative situations.

“I didn’t know what the reason was and why they rescued me until it was explained by the shelter in Thailand that I could go back home after completing the judicial procedure... Actually I didn’t want to sue or get compensation from my employer. I wanted to go back to do the same work.” - IDI No. 1 – VTP (sexual exploitation)

“We saw the police came to the employer’s house, and we were scared because the employer told us that if we were arrested by the police, the police will cut our fingers. But those police told us that they came to help us and we felt relief.” - IDI No. 3 - SVK (domestic worker case)

Assistance provided in Thailand

During and after rescue

After being rescued, most of the minor VOTs were interviewed at the police station or immigration office before being sent to child protection centers. The VOTs stayed for a range of one to seven days before entering a shelter. There were three shelters mentioned by VOTs interviewed in this study: Kretakarn in Nonthaburi (Bangkok) and Nareesawat in Nakohn Ratchasima (Isan).

“I was kept in the child protection center for one week. There were police who came to interview me and I didn’t think about much about it, but I was happy that I could go back home. Some questions they asked I didn’t understand clearly.” - IDI No. 2 - SRV

Two minor female VOTs (one who worked as a domestic worker and one who worked as a vendor in Thailand) mentioned that after they were rescued and interviewed by police, they were sent to an immigration detention center for a few weeks.

“The police sent us to a jail [an immigration detention center] and we stayed there for three weeks. The police asked about our age and we told them. We cried hard in the jail. There were police who came to take photos and make ID cards for us. In the jail there were a lot people, including those who had health problems, like conjunctivitis. We didn’t ask anything to the immigration police. While we were in jail, there was one female police officer who took us to have lunch, did activities with us, and studied outside the jail. Inside the jail there were many people, including Vietnamese,

European and Thai people. There were around 100 people in one big room. Some women also had babies. We slept on the floor while in the jail. I didn't like the food offered in the jail because it was the same menu every day. Sometimes they offered only rice with soy sauce or only soup.” - IDI No. 3 - SVK

“I saw an elder undocumented migrant staying in the immigration detention center. She was very ill and later, she died in the jail.” - IDI No. 9 - SRV

“I was 16 years old when working in Thailand... After I was rescued from the brothel I was sent to the police station and stayed in jail for three nights. The police also arrested the brothel manager and they put the manager and me in the same jail. In the jail, the manager threatened me and said that I had to be careful and that I would not have a chance to go back Laos. I was very scared at that time.” - IDI No. 1 - VTP

The stories above reflect a potential limited capacity and coordination among Thai authorities to protect the right of VOTs, particularly minor VOTs. It is possible that these cases were processed incorrectly because of limited knowledge of how to handle the cases, which is verified through evidence in the US Department of State's 2015, 2016, and 2017 TIP reports. However, it is also possible that they were processed incorrectly due to more concerning factors, including corruption or complicity in trafficking. The Department of State's 2018 TIP report cites anecdotal evidence that Thai authorities improperly detain and deport some trafficking victims, rather than referring them to services, for this reason.¹⁷ Stakeholders in Laos have also suggested that Thai law enforcement may be reticent to identify VOTs, since it could reflect poorly on Thai officials' efforts to combat TIP.

Life in the shelters

After initial processing, all VOTs are sent to stay in Thai shelters until their contribution to criminal procedures (testimony) is complete. This process may take several months to several years. The respondents in this study said that they stayed in the shelter in Thailand from as little as four months up to two years. VOTs felt that the social workers in the Thai shelters explained their rights and the activities in the shelters well. The shelters provided intensive training on sewing, cooking, and vegetable planting. Health care services, counseling, other recreational activities and exercise were also part of the programming. According to VOTs interviewed and the Department of Social Welfare, no training completion certificate is provided to VOTs after their stay at the shelter in Thailand. All VOTs interviewed in this study expressed that training in Thailand matched their needs, as they had the option to choose which course was the best fit for them. They felt they were able to increase their skills through activities and get new information about self-protection, safe migration, etc.

“The environment in the shelter was good. The staff are friendly.” - IDI No. 2 - SRV

“At the shelter in Thailand I learned cooking, vegetable planting, and Thai language. I liked studying geography, Thai history and Lao language there. I know that these activities will help me in

¹⁷ US Department of State. 2018. *2018 Trafficking in persons report country narrative: Thailand*. Washington, D.C. Available at <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2018/282764.htm>

the future and help me know how protect myself in Thailand. I also like the sewing course because I could make income when I went back to Laos.” - IDI No. 2 - SRV

All VOTs stated that they did not realize at first that they had to stay in the Thai shelters for a long time, and many did not clearly understand why they had to stay at the shelter in the first place. Despite being explained about legal proceedings by staff at the shelter, all VOTs interviewed, particularly those who never entered school, had very limited knowledge about judicial procedures and legal assistance, potentially due to communication difficulties or the fact that court logistics are difficult to understand in general. Their decision making therefore relied on Thai authorities and shelter staff, since all of them did not have deep enough knowledge about their rights and options to decide to not pursue legal proceedings. This limited knowledge is a preventing factor that can lead VOTs to not take advantage of services available to them, or not fully exercise their rights.

Ten VOTs interviewed in this study revealed, in fact, that while they did not want to take legal action or file a claim for compensation, they did so. They may have agreed to go to court due to a misperception that it was mandatory, or due to the advice of authority figures the VOTs interacted with. The greatest need for most VOTs interviewed at the time they were in Thai shelters was to go back home and see their parents or family members. While some cases preferred not to take their case to court, seven VOTs interviewed did report that they volunteered to start legal proceedings, as they wanted their employer to get punished by law and to claim their compensation. They did not, however, realize how long the judicial procedures would take.

“The staff told us that in our case, there needs to be a judicial procedure and we need to go to the court in order to punish the employer and get compensation. I also wanted to take legal action because I wanted the employer to get punished, because she did a lot to me.” - IDI No. 1 - SVK

“The staff also asked me if I wanted to take legal action. I told them that I don’t want to go to the court because it will take a long time and I would not be able to go home early. Other VOTs in the shelter told me that if I wanted to go home early I should not take legal action. I didn’t go to the court and I didn’t want to sue the employer. We discussed among our friends and agreed that we didn’t want to sue and go to court. But I had to continue to stay at the shelter for a while. I can’t remember how long, but I felt disappointed that I had to continue to stay in the shelter. I didn’t realize that I had to stay in the shelter for a long period. I didn’t know anything at that time.” - IDI No. 3 - SVK

“I didn’t expect that I had to stay in the shelter for a year. I thought about two or three days... Most Lao VOTs at the shelter didn’t want to claim or sue the employer, but the staff at the shelter said that we must follow the legal process, and I felt upset and wanted to go home only.” - IDI No. 3 - SRV

“I stayed in Kretakarn for many months but I could not remember how long. During the stay there, I didn’t realize the date, month and year. I only knew the day when there was holiday, such as Father’s Day and Children’s Day.” - IDI No. 3 - SVK

“At the beginning in the shelter in Thailand, I could not eat and sleep well and I only wanted to go back home. I was afraid that the authorities would not be able to contact my family and village, and I

wanted to talk to them... When I stayed at the shelter in Thailand, there were police that came to interview me four or five times. Sometimes it was not the same person, but they asked the same questions. But I was fine with that. Some questions I didn't understand, but I could ask them back.” - IDI No. 2 - SRV

“I felt bored when police asked the same questions as I didn't want to repeat my story again.” - IDI No. 6 - SRV

Although many VOTs said that they enjoyed the trainings and activities provided in the shelters, many of them also said that, because they had to stay in the shelter with other VOTs from Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia, they experienced some challenges and sometimes were discriminated against by other VOTs from different countries.

“Sometimes Thai children in the shelter said that Lao people don't know anything. I felt annoyed, but there were no serious cases.” - IDI No. 2 - SRV

“Thai children teased us saying that Lao people eat sticky rice and have flat noses.” - IDI No. 3 - SRV

“There were Lao VOTs and also Burmese and Thai in the same shelter in Thailand. Sometimes they stole things from each other and sometimes the Thai children fought among each other.” - IDI No. 4 - SRV

“I didn't like that there were some Thai children using drugs [a type of glue that is sniffed] in the shelter. I didn't like it because there are no strict regulations to check things that people can bring inside the shelter. I reported this to the staff's shelter.” - IDI No. 1 - SVK

Many VOTs mentioned that there were too many restrictions and rules during their stay in the shelter in Thailand. These regulations made them feel a lack of freedom and movement, and sometimes impacted their mental health.

“We were only able to go out of the shelter when there was outdoor activity, in which we had to be accompanied by shelter staff. Sometimes I missed home and I could not eat well. We talked to each other [VOTs] as a way to relieve the pain.” - IDI No. 2 - SRV

“We have to get in a line before going to bed and to get food. I don't like when shelter's staff offered food because I could not select the menu I like. For me, I eat a little bit, but they gave me a lot. If I could not finish my food, the shelter staff got angry with me and said that I have to finish it all.” - IDI No. 6 - SRV

Trafficking cases that are taken to courts are often complicated and take a long time for processing, particularly in cases where VOTs engaged in sex work, since these cases are hesitant to share information that can help in prosecution. Many obstacles exist in providing legal assistance for VOTs, including VOT's lack of legal knowledge and lack of communication skills to be able to provide sufficient evidence

related to their exploitative and abusive experiences. Most VOTs said that they had to stay in the shelter for many months before going to the court; however, VOTs reported that shelter staff explained things well to them and supported them before appearing to court, which made them feel more confident.

“Before going to the court I was informed about the process. Some processes I didn’t understand, but I was happy because I knew that I could go home after this process. I stayed in the shelter almost eight months before going to court.” - IDI No. 2 - SRV

However, most of the respondents reported that even after the end of the judicial procedure and after the court had made its judgement, VOTs had to continue to stay at the Thai shelter for a long time before going back to Laos.

“I felt very disappointed because after the court made the judgment, I had to continue to stay in the shelter for another six months. The shelter staff told me that I had to wait for compensation, and normally the Thai government will send back many VOTs at one time, not one-by-one cases.” - IDI No. 1 - SRV

Many VOTs did not know about or understand the court’s judgment after they went to court. Many of them were sent back to Laos after going to the court without knowing the results or progress of their legal assistance. Several VOTs reported they did not ultimately receive compensation, and most of them do not currently know whether their traffickers received punishment or not.

“For the judicial procedure we could not do much. When the court made a judgment we had to accept it... Now my parents and I haven’t heard anything about if my employer received punishment or not.” - IDI No. 2 - SRV

Although VOTs reported their greatest need was to return to their families after they escaped or were rescued, VOTs have very few options for family communication during their stay in Thai shelters. Restrictions exist on foreign VOTs’ ability to contact their family, and in most Thai shelters, the process for families to speak with their children can be cumbersome and requires approval of the Lao government. Because most parents of VOTs are poor, living in rural areas, and have very little knowledge of services available, obtaining approval from the Lao government to speak to their children is far from their capacity and means. Parents thus often turn to alternate routes to reach their children, rather than going through the required official channels.

“When I stayed in the shelter, my parents didn’t get news from me. My parents started to try to find me, and they asked everyone who came back from Thailand in my village whether they got news from me. My parents also asked help from a shaman or through superstitious practices in order to find me. They didn’t know where to report my case or know any services.” - IDI No.1 - SRV

“When I stayed in the shelter in Thailand, my father asked help from the senior monk in our village, and the monk gave him the police’s contact number, who provided him Pavina Foundation’s [an NGO in Thailand] contact number.” - IDI No. 1 - SVK

Many VOTs interviewed in this study also mentioned that their parents had to spend a significant amount of money to find them. Some parents borrowed money to find their children and ended up in debt. If the families had been notified of their child's stay at a shelter or allowed to communicate with their child, these costs likely could have been avoided.

“After I was rescued, my parents called to my employer, and they were told that I was arrested by the police... My parents spent a lot of money just for making a call to find me.” - IDI No. 3 - SVK

“When I was in Thailand, my parents didn't know that I was in the shelter so they searched for me. They sold land and animals in order to get the money to find me [about five million LAK, or 584 USD]... There was a Thai female who contacted my parents and told them that I was arrested, and that if my parents wanted to know where I was, they had to pay her about 60,000 or 70,000 Thai baht [1,830 - 2,140 USD]. My parent searched for me for three months and then were broke. They rented a van because the driver in Laos told them that he could help them to find me, but they couldn't find me.” - IDI No. 2 - SRV

“My parents went to the shelter in Thailand, but we were not allowed to talk and meet. I really didn't know why. I didn't ask the staff in the shelter. We didn't know anything, and we just followed the instructions and participated in daily activities in the shelter... I felt upset and like it was unfair that they didn't allow me to talk to my parents. Meanwhile Thai children in the same shelter are able to talk and meet with their parents.” - IDI No. 1 - SVK

Assistance provided in Laos

At the temporary shelter in Vientiane Capital

After official VOTs were repatriated back to Laos and arrived in Vientiane Capital, VOTs were sent to a temporary shelter (at the time they were repatriated, this was the MLSW shelter), where they stayed for one week in order to be re-interviewed and receive health checks. VOT were also introduced to available services in Laos, such as vocational trainings, offered by NGOs and government agencies.

All VOTs stated that, at this time, they felt very happy that they could go back to their hometowns and family. Some of them were able to contact their parent for the first time after being rescued or after migrating to Thailand. Sightseeing in Vientiane Capital was also a part of the shelter stay, and many VOTs shared that they enjoyed this, as it was the first time for them to see their country's capital. Still, a few VOTs did not understand why their return home was further delayed by having to stay at another shelter.

During their week in Vientiane Capital, victims were re-interviewed by Lao authorities. While many VOTs reported that they were asked similar or the same questions that they were asked several times in Thailand, the vast majority of IDIs did not feel this affected them. Most said that they did not think anything of being asked similar questions as in Thailand because they were happy knowing that they would see their parents very soon. Many interviewees stated that they felt more comfortable and were able to give more information to Lao authorities, compared to when they were in Thailand, because in Laos they could speak the same language and there was no interpreter during the interview. Information

collection in Vientiane, while repetitive, may also therefore be necessary to gain a clearer picture of the victim's experience.

"I stayed in the shelter in Vientiane Capital for seven days and did nothing, I understood that I had to stay there for taking a rest from tiring travel. It was not clear why had to stay there." - IDI No. 1 - SRV

"I was sent back to Laos along with other VOTs (about 15 of us). I returned to Laos without any money. The staff in the shelter in Vientiane provided me about 50,000 LAK [5.84 USD] to buy something in Vientiane." - IDI No. 3 - SVK

Not all cases felt ambivalent about repetitive interviews, though. One case said that she felt not comfortable to tell her story again on the Lao side.

"I felt bored when I got back to Laos. They asked the same questions again, but I had to tell them. I got headaches when I talked about my painful experiences, which make me think a lot." - IDI No. 6 - SRV

After information was collected and arrangements were made to send the VOTs home, the victims were sent back to their communities directly. Some VOTs were contacted by NGO service providers a few weeks to one year after they returned from Thailand. There were four vocational training centers mentioned by VOTs during interviews: VFI's shelters in Pakse and Vientiane Capital, VFI's Green Earth Center in Lao Ngam district (Saravan province), and Sengsavang's shelter in Savannakhet province. VOTs decided their vocational training programs based on their own interests, the influence of their parents, and advice from shelter staff.

"I decided to take the sewing course because I liked it, and because of no one did this work in my village. And my parents also liked this topic. My friend who also was a VOT back from Thailand wanted to join the course, but she didn't join because her grandmother didn't allow it, since my friend just back to Laos and her grandma wanted to be reunited." - IDI No. 1 - SVK

"When I stayed in the shelter in Vientiane, the staff introduced us to vocational training centers. After I was back in my village for one month, I got contacted by the shelter [Sengsavang] and I attended the sewing course because my mother wanted me to study this subject. In fact, I liked the beauty salon course." - IDI No. 4 - SVK

VOTs stayed at shelters or training centers for varying lengths, depending on which training course they enrolled in. Salon courses usually take a few months, while sewing takes roughly eight months to over a year. Most respondents stated that the services and accommodations at the NGO shelters were comfortable, friendly and matched their needs and skills. Apart from vocational training, VOTs also learned other life skills, including family planning and information related to safe migration. For those who never entered school or dropped out at an early age, Sengsavang supported and encouraged them to continue their education through a non-formal education program. While this seems like a positive service at face value, it might not be realistic given VOTs' needs.

“During my stay at Sengsavang shelter I continued my education at primary level with other younger students, but they said that I was too old compared to them... I dropped out again in grade seven, because when I went back home, my parents asked me to help them to do farm work. Sengsavang staff contacted me and convinced me to continue studying a few times, but I refused because I worked in the rice farm and my parent had a lack of labor.” - IDI No. 3 - SVK

While some VOTs expressed interest in taking legal action against individuals in Laos who facilitated their trafficking (brokers, relatives, etc.), they had no idea where to start that process, or who to turn to for assistance. In fact, service providers, development partners, and government all face minimal budget, human resources, and expertise regarding legal assistance in Laos. Most VOTs received very limited support on legal assistance when they stayed in an NGO shelter in Laos, and most VOTs interviewed still did not clearly understand the results of their legal proceedings in Thailand.

Lack of awareness on legal rights and services, poverty, and lack of education can all make accessing legal services inaccessible to VOTs. Cultural beliefs of Lao people may also make them justify their exploitation or view it matter-of-factly.

“I wanted to sue my employer and wanted to get compensation, but I don’t know where to get the services or how to. If I knew the services I would report... When I worked in Thailand, I knew that I was exploited and abused, but as an employee, I had to tolerate that situation... I think it’s because of my bad karma.” - IDI No. 7 - SRV (unofficial VOT)

“I didn’t know who to consult or where to get legal services during the time that I stayed in the shelter in Laos, or up until now. If I knew, I would report and claim for compensation. That’s quite a lot of money that my employer didn’t pay me.” - IDI No. 7 - SRV

While VOTs generally reported positively on their experience at NGO service providers’ shelters in Laos, a few respondents suggested that in order to better improve the shelter environment, regulations and restrictions should be revised. Since VOTs used to stay for a long period in the shelters in Thailand with a number of restrictions, they often expect to have more freedom and movement in centers in Laos.

“There are a lot of restrictions in the shelter, such as not being allowed to go outside alone and having to go to bed on time, or not being allowed to call back home more than one time a month. I felt pressure and wanted to go back home... I didn’t make a complaint while I was at the shelter or after I completed the training, because I didn’t know how to.” - IDI No. 7 - SRV

After reintegrating into the community

Most interviewees saw trainings and information provided both from Thailand and Laos as useful and relevant to their needs back in their communities. They applied the knowledge and skills gained -- such as hygiene practices and cooking skills -- in their daily life, and these new skills benefited both VOTs themselves and their family members. Many respondents said that they felt more empowered, as they improved their communication skills during their stay in shelters both in Thailand and Laos.

“I used my knowledge and skills to teach my mother to do sewing and make handicrafts. I told my mother that I learned these skills in Thailand and Laos, and she wanted to learn from me. There are a lot of orders from the villagers now, and my mother can get additional income from this work.”

IDI No. 4 - SVK

“I used the skills I learned in the shelter in Laos for making a vegetable garden and raising animals. Now we don't use chemicals for our vegetable garden and we can eat safe food.”- IDI No. 1 - SVK

The additional income VOTs earned are mainly from sewing skills. According to service providers, many female VOTs are encouraged to take sewing courses, as they will be able to make income in their communities after completing the training course. The average income they earned from sewing was between 100,000 to 1,000,000 kip (12 to 120 USD) per month. Two female respondents stated that they could earn up to 3,000,000 kip (350 USD) per month from their beauty salon services in their communities. Apart from sewing, most respondents spend most of their time in agriculture work, such as vegetable gardening, rice farming, animal husbandry and fish hunting. None of the respondents mentioned that they had a long term job; however, some of them are currently working in development projects nearby their communities, such as in dam construction in Champasak or in factories with little skills required and low pay.

Most respondents confirmed that they have good relationships with their family members and friends, as they are now reunited, and this is their dream. Some of them shared that their family's well-being and income are now better when compared to the time prior to their migration to Thailand. This improvement is because their parents (mostly their fathers) have gotten a job nearby their community, and because their siblings are growing up and are able to support themselves and their families.

“My family well-being is getting better compared to the past because we have additional income and we can earn more and have enough money to support our family. I got married two years ago. My husband is working in house construction, and his income is also sufficient for our living. My mother also helps me to take care of my child when I do sewing work. My relationship with family members and people in the village is better because I have skills, and many of my friends want to learn from me. They want to be my student. I feel proud of myself.” - IDI No. 3 - SVK

“My parent's income is now better, and we are united. My parents produce charcoal and plant vegetables, which can give them income. But my family still has high spending compared to our income. It's difficult when someone in the family gets sick because we have to pay for health care services.” - IDI No. 2 - SVK

Due to lack of awareness on TIP issues, parents and community members misunderstood the distinction between shelters and jails. During the time VOTs stayed in shelters, parents and communities understood that VOTs had been arrested and were being detained, rather than being “protected”. This misunderstanding created negative perceptions and attitudes toward VOTs, who were sometimes questioned and judged for supposedly doing something wrong or having bad behavior.

“The relationship with my friends in the village is not so good compared to the past. Many people asked about my experience, and they thought I was arrested and stayed in jail... I felt annoyed.” - IDI No. 2 - SVK

“Some of my relatives and people in the village blamed me for getting arrested in Thailand because I didn't listen to my parents and adults and that was a sin... My friends [both male and female] in the village also criticized the way I dressed up, which looked like a sex workers or like I was a mistress in Thailand... I didn't respond to them or say anything.” - IDI No. 3 - SRV

While these cases did report different treatment from community members after coming back from Thailand, no cases reported that this treatment significantly negatively impacted their reintegration. Interviewees demonstrated a decent sense of resilience in describing this challenge, saying they tried not to let it bother them.

Future plans

Most respondents said that they have plans to establish and expand their businesses in their village or even in town. However, most of them have very low knowledge on business management and how to prepare budget plans. Most of them never calculate their expenditures and profits from sewing, beauty salon and from selling agricultural products. The main challenge in starting up and expanding their businesses is a lack of capital and funds. Very few respondents and their parents know where to access to microfinance funds or any services related to business, including finding jobs. Creating business plans or successfully marketing businesses is a very distant goal for VOTs who cannot read and write.

“I have an idea to expand my sewing. My family supported and agreed with my plan but I don't know where to get information on doing business.” - IDI No. 3 - SVK

“I know that there is a microcredit fund run by Lao Women's Union at the village, but we didn't contact them knowing that we have little education [can't read and write] and it might be difficult.” - IDI No. 3 - SRV

According to the VOTs, they have very limited knowledge on legal services available at the local level. There are a few legal cases that are being followed up on and supported by NGO service providers; however, these cases very much rely on the service provider's support and guidance to VOTs. Family members and village leaders also have little awareness on legal entitlements and rights of VOTs. Those who were sent back to Laos before the end of judicial procedures in Thailand mentioned that they have never heard updates on the progress of the case, either from service providers in Thailand or in Laos. Nearly all respondents and their parents did not know where to go to get updates about the cases.

“After I went to the court, I received 3,000 baht [currently 95 USD] from the Thai government when I got back to Laos. The shelter staff in Thailand told me that they would follow up on legal assistance, but until now I have received no information about the punishment for my employer. I felt happy that I was sent back to Laos, but I felt not safe because my employer in Thailand knows my address in Laos.” - IDI No. 1 - SVK

Legal action for VOTs while back in Laos may be further clarified in the coming years, as a Decree on Legal Aid is currently being drafted that will open up opportunities for trafficking victims to receive free legal aid from the Lao Bar Association. The impact of this Decree remains to be seen, although service providers should be sure to work with the Lao Bar Association in providing legal services to any VOTs who are interested to pursue cases against brokers or others in Laos.

When asked whether VOTs want to go to work in urban areas or Thailand, most of them, particular those who are single, responded that if they have a chance, they still want to seek better opportunities to get income and a secure job. However, most of them stated that they do not know of any services or support for getting information about future migration. Many of them do not know specifics, such as how they can obtain proper documents or migrate through official channels. Those who responded that they do not want to go to work in urban areas or Thailand had varying reasons for saying so: some of them have to take care of parents, and some had already gotten married and have to take care of their young children and household tasks. Some of them also stated that they do not want to go back to Thailand as they are afraid of having the same experience as when they were trafficked. Many VOTs reported that they still want to work in low-skill sectors, such as being a domestic worker or vendor, if they re-migrate to urban areas or Thailand.

“If I have a chance, I still want to go to work in Vientiane Capital. If I could not go back to school, I want to work in a garment factory or do more vocational training to get a job. The current job that I am working is not secure; sometimes the payment is delayed... Young people in my village still drop out of school and continue to go to work in Thailand, but they migrate with proper documents. The broker prepares everything for the documents and the employer in Thailand pays for it. People want to go to Thailand because they can get more income... They know that they can get more income, but also know that they might face more risk.” - IDI No. 1 - SVK

“If I have a chance I still want to go to work in city or Thailand because I want to get income. If the income was not very different from Thailand, I would choose to work in Laos. If I were to go to Thailand and have a problem, I still don’t know where I can get help or services. I want to do domestic work again.” - IDI No. 4 - SVK

“If my family’s economic situation does not get better and I have no job or income, I still want to go to Thailand. But I will go through a formal channel.” - IDI No. 2 - SVK

Until VOTs have opportunities to earn income in their own communities that is equivalent to what they might earn in cities or in Thailand, they will continue to seek opportunities to achieve a better livelihood for themselves and their families, some of which may put them back in the trafficking cycle.

Experiences of unofficial VOTs

As previously explained, the repatriation processes for official, as opposed to unofficial, VOTs, differ significantly. While official VOTs may face a long stay at Thai shelters or other challenges associated with the legal process, unofficial VOTs can encounter their own challenges. These may include being treated as an undocumented migrant rather than as a victim, and, as a result, being sent to an immigration detention center and deported. Unofficial VOTs may therefore have a heightened sense of having done

something wrong, or heightened trauma from potentially distressing experiences with the immigration system. They may also experience a greater sense of fear and lack of trust in authorities as a result of being treated as a criminal, rather than a victim. On the other hand, the process of returning back to Laos may be easier for some unofficial VOTs, as they do not have to wait for an extended period of time at shelters or go through the court system before going home, as most official VOTs do.

While this study initially aimed to explore the pros and cons of being identified as an official versus unofficial VOT, and to make conclusions about differences in their repatriation and reintegration, such a comprehensive analysis was not possible. Only four unofficial VOTs were interviewed for this research, compared to 16 official VOTs, meaning that drawing conclusions from the few unofficial victims' experiences would not have been entirely responsible. Instead, the research team has relied on service providers' anecdotes to supplement the narratives shared directly from victim interviews in order to provide a broader look at unofficial VOTs' experiences.

Of the four unofficial VOTs interviewed for this research (all female), one never made it across the border to Thailand – she was identified and rescued by police in Laos during her transit to Thailand. One of the unofficial VOTs was rescued by Thai police, but the police reportedly did not have enough information to classify her as an official victim. The two remaining unofficial VOTs escaped.

Interestingly, one unofficial VOT interviewed for this study reported that she knowingly withheld information from Thai police during an interview, since she did not want to stay at a Thai shelter, and instead wanted to go straight home. It is likely that few VOTs have the level of knowledge that this individual had, and most VOTs likely do not make the conscious choice to *not* be identified as an official VOT. Still, this case suggests that, if VOTs had advanced notice of what being an official VOT requires (delayed return home and, likely, a court process), some might in fact opt out of being identified. The advantages of going straight home may in fact outweigh the advantages of being officially processed for some individuals.

In addition to not being identified because of lack of sufficient information, or from victims' deliberate decision to withhold information, victims may also not be identified due to improper processing on behalf of Thai law enforcement. In one case shared by an NGO service provider in Laos, a VOT's family contacted the NGO and the District Labor and Social Welfare Office worrying about their daughter in Thailand. The Lao NGO coordinated with partners in Thailand to facilitate the VOT's rescue, but the Thai police sent her straight back to Vientiane Capital through a traditional border, rather than processing her and sending her through the Thai legal system. The case had been sexually exploited and was pregnant at the time of her rescue. As a result of this improper handling, the case was only identified as a trafficking victim upon her return to Laos by the Anti-Trafficking Division of the Ministry of Public Security, with support from the NGO service provider. Through collaboration between the Lao and Thai NGOs, this victim decided to pursue compensation in Thai court, but the process never came to fruition. This VOT therefore did not receive any assistance from the Thai government, and her case is still being processed in Lao court. Anecdotal evidence from other service providers in Laos suggests this narrative is not an isolated case, and that other individuals may also be improperly deported directly to Laos – either intentionally or not – without the option for protection or justice in Thailand.

Following repatriation, it seemed from this research that the reintegration process for unofficial VOTs was not so distinct from official VOTs' process. Once unofficial victims were identified as actual victims by Lao authorities, they went through the same steps as official VOTs: they stayed at a government shelter for a brief period, were sent back to their villages, were informed about vocational training programs, often participated in those programs, and received follow-up from service providers. The research team could not discern any significant differences in the overall experience of unofficial victims that would suggest that their reintegration was either more or less successful than official VOTs. A larger sample size is likely needed to be able to draw more conclusions in this area.

Key issues in repatriation and reintegration

Communication between governments

As previously mentioned, the Lao-Thai MOU requires that communication about trafficking cases be conducted “through official communication”, which significantly limits the opportunities for consistent and accessible consultation on cases being repatriated from Thailand back to Laos. Official communication requires submitting an official request letter to the relevant Ministry in Laos, which will then be fed down to the local entity responsible before that entity is able to act on the request detailed in the letter. Such a process can take multiple weeks to be completed, and means that urgent case issues are not solved as efficiently as they could be if more informal communication were the norm. Some non-government stakeholders interviewed in Laos suggested that perhaps the governments could supplement formal written communication with informal follow-ups via phone call, so that official channels are still pursued as required, but so that urgent case details can also be agreed upon so victims do not suffer or wait longer than they need to at Thai shelters.

International organizations and NGO service providers reported positively on some aspects of collaboration and communication between Thailand and Laos. For instance, while Case Management Meetings (CMMs) to discuss cases between the two countries had not been held for multiple years (since 2015), the most recent CMM was hosted in the third quarter of 2018, a positive trend in joint case management. The Thai government hosted this most recent meeting, which was co-chaired by a representative from the Lao Women’s Union, on behalf of the Secretariat. The next CMM is intended to be hosted by Laos, and development partners and NGOs in Laos are hopeful these meetings will continue to be held on a regular basis in the future. CMMs provide a critical opportunity for case discussions, but some stakeholders reported that they would like to see future CMMs focused more on decision-making on how to repatriate victims in a timely manner, rather than broader discussions about case trends. Further, the existence of CMMs does not mean that these meetings should be the only form of updates between the countries, and these meetings need to be supplemented with ongoing communication and case decision making.

Thailand and Laos seem to have different approaches to decision making and intra-governmental communication. According to one provincial Anti-Trafficking Division, they perceive Thailand to have more capacity and resources at all levels of government, when compared to Laos. They observed that Thailand coordinates TIP work through its provinces, whereas in Laos all instructions on TIP work must flow from the central level, and then get fed down to provinces, districts, and villages. One potential way to de-centralize TIP work in Laos, and thus promote easier communication between the countries, would be to empower provinces and districts to have local-level MOUs and meetings with corresponding jurisdictions in Thailand. An MOU already exists between Ubon Ratchathani province in Thailand and Champasak province in Laos, as well as two border districts in these provinces. Another MOU has also been proposed between Moukdaharn province in Thailand and Savannakhet province, although it has not been approved. In both these cases, Lao and Thai officials have communicated on case details through technical meetings, likely akin to local-level CMMs. In Savannakhet, however, interviewees reported no decisions came from that meeting, as central-level approval was needed.

Information disparities and exchange

International agencies and government organization at both national and provincial level consulted during key informant interviews (KIIs) reported that communication from Thailand needs to be improved in alerting Lao officials of incoming cases so that proper time can be allowed for preparation (predominantly with push-back migrants, but to a lesser extent with official VOTs, as well). An interviewee from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare described that letters and communication from the Thai government to inform about when they will send VOTs to Laos are sent on too much of a short-term or urgent notice, giving the Lao side little time for preparing or coordinating among government agencies. As of May 2018, though, in a meeting with Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia, a representative from LWU reported that advanced notice from the Thai to Lao side about returning cases had recently improved, so the perception held by MLSW and international agencies may be slightly outdated. In some cases, including official cases, government authorities also reported that the information they were given on incoming cases was sparingly little, sometimes only a name and village. The police in one province noted that case information they receive from Thai police lacks detail, which makes prosecution of cases a challenge in Laos.

Lao stakeholders reported that information sharing from Laos back to Thailand can also be improved, particularly with regard to promptly sharing nationality and family information with Thai officials for legal proceedings. Due to requirements for formal communication, information gathering and exchange are often coordinated through multiple government agencies at multiple levels, contributing to a slow process. As previously mentioned, the requirement for central level coordination and instruction in Laos can also lengthen this information collection and exchange process. Additionally, Lao government officials often do not collaborate with NGOs or international organizations in obtaining nationality or family information and sending it to Thailand, although these organizations reported being interested in assisting with this process.

Standard information systems that are jointly contributed to by Thai and Lao officials do not exist, meaning that data collection is often replicated, including multiple interviews of victims. International standards state that repetitive information collection can increase victims' emotional trauma by requiring reliving of unpleasant memories. Limited comprehensive data sharing between governments, however, means that victims are often interviewed repeatedly. This issue is not only with lack of information exchange from Thailand, but also a lack of information sharing between ministries and levels of government in Laos. While Lao government agencies reported having some data systems (such as Excel spreadsheets), they also reported these are often not shared with other ministries, due to confidentiality concerns or other reasons. Multiple provincial and district interviewees reported not receiving sufficient VOT case data from another ministry, or a higher level of government, thus resulting in a need to re-interview. One district LSWO even reported implementing a project (through government and donor money) in which interviews with VOTs and other vulnerable groups were conducted at villages -- they knowingly had to re-interview VOTs for this project, as they were not shared on VOT profiles by the provincial or central levels. The purpose of this project is unclear.

VOTs interviewed for this study affirmed that they were interviewed several times by different authorities in both Thailand and Laos, many times with the same questions. One male VOT mentioned that he was interviewed by authorities and NGO service providers about ten times in Thailand and after returning to

Laos. While repetitive interviewing is discouraged in anti-trafficking standards, many victims interviewed did not report feeling bothered by having to retell their stories to multiple officials. Ultimately, most felt that these processes were just a necessary part of their return back to their communities, and that they were more focused on returning home than they were on critiquing the processes they were put through. One individual, however, did report experiencing headaches when she was asked to repeat her story. Minimization of repetitive data collection, facilitated by strengthened information sharing, should therefore still be pursued.

One key area that all Lao stakeholders reported desiring more information about was the result of court proceedings in Thailand. Many VOTs interviewed did not know the final results of their court cases, namely whether or not their trafficker was ever punished. Government and NGO service providers interviewed reported that they, too, lack updates on Thai legal proceedings, which ultimately harms their ability to serve VOTs. One NGO service provider shared that, in one case, a VOT lost trust in the NGO's services, because the VOT thought the NGO had information about their trafficker that the NGO was not sharing. Efforts should be made to consistently update Lao stakeholders on the results of Thai court cases, and for Lao stakeholders to share this information with VOTs.

Fear and lack of trust toward authorities

VOTs in exploitative situations in Thailand learn quickly to be skeptical of, or, in the worst cases, fear police. Some who try to escape realize that police are connected to their trafficker after they arrive at a police station, and police return them back to the place from which they just escaped. In other cases, word spreads among VOTs working in a given location that police will not help VOTs, or traffickers themselves dissuade VOTs from seeking help. In one case interviewed for this research, a VOT recounted that her trafficker told her that police would cut off her fingers if the police found that she was an illegal migrant.

This fear of being discovered as an illegal migrant is a central limiting factor in VOTs realizing their full rights or seeking services from government and NGO service providers. Since VOTs do not realize that they are victims, and rather see themselves as criminals, they do not expect to be assisted by police. This hesitation to trust those in authority can stay with victims throughout their entire repatriation and reintegration process, potentially making them deny assistance for which they are eligible even after returning home to Laos.

When VOTs are rescued or escape their trafficking situations, they undergo interviews with Thai police. If at first they do not trust police officers, the process of being interviewed can sometimes show VOTs that police are willing to help. Still, though, a fear of law enforcement incentivizes many VOTs to lie about their stories, as they worry that they might be punished when police hear that they migrated through unofficial channels or worked in an illegal industry (such as sex work). In some cases, NGO and service provider stakeholders reported that VOTs lying about their identities has delayed court proceedings significantly, and ultimately delays return home. One VOT interviewed in this study reported she lied to a Thai NGO in interviews, out of fear of not being able to return home, suggesting that VOTs' fear is not limited to just government.

These mentalities can also carry on into Laos, potentially affecting successful information gathering by Lao officials and victims' social reintegration. Lao officials interviewed for this study in multiple agencies and at multiple levels of government explained that the fear VOTs have toward Thai police affects successful data collection once VOTs return to Laos, as information VOTs share with Lao officials is not consistent with information provided by Thai authorities, which creates a challenge for the Lao government and results in repetitive interviewing. While repetitive interviewing should be avoided, as previously explained, several Lao government officials regarded it as a necessity to get truthful information from VOTs, who might have lied to Thai officials.

This fear and lack of trust can result in some VOTs not being identified in Thailand. As previously explained, VOTs withholding information from Thai police due to fear may lead police to assume the VOT is not actually a victim, but just a general push-back case. When the push-back victims arrive in Laos and feel more trust in service providers and local authorities to share information, these organizations may find that, in fact, some are victims of trafficking. These individuals then become unofficial VOTs.

Social isolation at Thai shelters

A key concern raised both by VOTs and service providers in Laos and Thailand is limitations on VOTs' contact with family while staying at a shelter in Thailand. In general, foreign trafficking victims who stay at Thai shelters face many more restrictions on their ability to contact their families during their stay, when compared to Thai victims. One official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in Laos explained that, for families to visit their children at a shelter, they must submit a request letter to MOFA, based in Vientiane Capital, or to the Lao consulate in Thailand. Requested visitors then must be interviewed to confirm their identities before receiving an approval letter and being able to coordinate with Thai authorities. If these channels are not followed, visits are not allowed. In one case interviewed for this research, a victim's family succeeded in getting to the shelter at which their daughter was staying in Thailand, but they were denied entry or contact with their daughter upon their arrival because they did not follow the proper procedures before arriving. Knowledge about these procedures is low, though, because no entity actively informs VOTs' families about how to communicate with their children in shelters. Lack of education and literacy also present barriers to completing required steps, particularly for families from rural areas and ethnic families. Parents and relatives are therefore forced to resort to alternative methods, and sometimes pay large sums of money, to try to find their children.

At present, only Thai VOTs who stay at shelters in Thailand are allowed to receive visitors, and they often do receive guests who bring snacks, gifts, etc., which has negative impacts on the foreign shelter residents who witness this difference in treatment. VOTs interviewed for this study did not understand why Thai children could communicate with their families, while they could not, perhaps because the rules were never explained to them or because they did not understand the details of the policy. Lack of contact with families intensifies homesickness in VOTs, some of whom have not been able to speak with their families since they were rescued, or, in some cases, since they left Laos. All VOTs interviewed for this study reported that they wished they could have spoken with or visited with their families while staying in Thai shelters. On the family's side, lack of contact with their children creates confusion and fear, and intensifies perceptions that the VOT did something wrong and is now in jail for their bad actions.

One Lao government official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs described that restrictions on family contact for foreign VOTs exist for a reason. The restrictions arose after a few disruptive visits by Lao victims' parents to their children in shelters, although the timeline of these incidents are unclear. These visits reportedly disrupted the judicial process and affected the progress of the VOT at the shelter, sometimes creating emotional distress. In some cases, parents were reportedly violent or shouted at their children. The Thai and Lao governments also want to limit risk of brokers, traffickers, and others posing as VOTs' parents and attempting to intervene in court proceedings. The official and cumbersome approval process is a way to limit such risks. Further evaluation of this requirement should be pursued by both governments, though, to better understand the quantity of cases that benefit from no contact with their families, compared to the number of cases that feel harmed by it.

Some limited possibilities for family contact do exist at some shelters in Thailand. At Pathum Thani shelter, which predominantly serves adult males in forced labor, VOTs are allowed to call their families twice a week (Mondays and Fridays) from 9-11 a.m., under the supervision of shelter staff. Families may also visit VOTs, by coordinating with the case manager either by letter or phone. At Surat Thani shelter, VOTs may contact their families once per month, provided good behavior, but may not discuss the legal process. It is not clear why some shelters have different policies than others, but experiences at shelters that allow more consistent and accessible family contact could present positive case studies in how to effectively manage contact with VOTs' families. Unfortunately, the research team was not able to interview VOTs who stayed at shelters that allowed family contact to see how their ability to contact their families affected their repatriation and reintegration. All VOTs interviewed for this study did not speak with their families during their stay at Thai shelters.

Limited services for male and transgender victims

Male victims comprise just under ten percent of VOTs from the study period. While their numbers are significantly less than female victims, male victims are still a vulnerable group, particularly given the difficulties in identifying male cases, and limited services available to male VOTs (both official and unofficial) in Laos.

The longer-term effect on male VOTs of the Lao Women's Union new role in reintegration remains to be seen. The LWU has particular experience working with women, and also children. As the majority of male victims are minors, the LWU could be well-equipped to handle the struggles these minor males face. Adult male VOTs are still served by LWU, although they are not a specific target group of the organization more broadly. Special attention needs to be made to ensure that the unique challenges that males face (such as drug addiction or trauma) are addressed, and that male VOTs do not fall through cracks in support networks.

The Lao Women's Union at the national level reported that their approach to working with male victims includes housing male victims in a separate shelter, and designating male staff to mentor male VOTs. Activities for male VOTs differ from activities for females, including drawing, vegetable growing, and sports. In the event that there more male VOTs enter the LWU shelter, the LWU said it will refer to police to supplement their staff, as they have limited staff who can work with males. One provincial LWU affirmed its sufficient capacity to work with male VOTs, and also cited collaboration with the police as a mechanism for serving males.

While reintegrative services, such as vocational training or job placement, have been offered to male victims in the past by NGO service providers, no current male-tailored programs led by NGOs exist. World Vision has provided services to male victims (and female victims) in Savannakhet province through job placement at local factories and private sector organizations. Male victims were then able to stay on-site at dormitories provided by companies. Funding for this program ended in 2016. From late 2015 to late 2016, Village Focus International served unofficial male VOTs by identifying them at the border in Champasak, and referring them to a shelter and training program at VFI's Green Earth Center in Saravan province. At this center, victims received physical and mental health care, life skills training, and vocational training.

One embodiment of the challenges for male cases lies in the fact that very few male cases could be reached for interviews for this study. The vast majority of case phone numbers were out-of-date, or service providers had lost touch with male victims they had previously worked with. Being unable to contact these individuals is not necessarily a sign that they have been re-trafficked; however, it is a sign that these individuals receive no current support or follow-up from service providers operating in Laos. The two male VOTs who were interviewed for this research neglected receiving services from NGOs upon their return to Laos, and instead opted to generate income right away. Pressure for male VOTs to earn money, particularly for older male VOTs, is therefore a limiting factor in their decision to not receive services.

Services for transgender victims are even more limited than for male victims, since victim protection and services are commonly determined by victims' sex. Shelters in Thailand are intended for males or females, with little room for transgender or gender non-conforming VOTs. At the time of writing this report, the Thai and Lao governments have no known protocol for serving transgender VOTs. One Thai NGO shared a case in which a transgender Lao VOT, who was assigned male at birth before transitioning to being a woman, was originally taken to a female-serving shelter in Thailand, where the staff said they would not serve her. As a result, she was sent to a male-serving shelter, despite the fact that she did not identify as male. She was reportedly made to cut her hair while at the shelter to appear more male. This VOT then denied services upon returning to Laos, despite one NGO service provider volunteering to serve her at their shelter. This is the only case of a transgender VOT of which NGOs and international organizations interviewed were aware. The protocol undertaken for this case is concerning, and points to a lack of understanding among those in the Anti-TIP sector about how to uphold the rights of transgender VOTs. As awareness about transgender issues increases in Thailand and Laos, government and NGOs in both countries need to be prepared to think beyond just male and female VOTs and create processes that will protect trans VOTs in ways that are comfortable for them.

Lack of sensitivity toward VOTs

Throughout the research process, the study team heard of a few perspectives and practices on behalf of both Thai and Lao governments that present causes for concern in strengthening Anti-TIP work. It should be noted that these perspectives cannot be generalized to the entirety of the governments, nor to the entirety of certain ministries and agencies.

In Thailand, multiple non-governmental stakeholders reported witnessing Thai officials take pictures of a VOT's rescue to post on their personal Facebooks, as a way to promote their work. There have also been incidents with Thai media running stories about VOTs in newspapers or other media platforms, which include personal details about VOTs as well as their pictures. These practices violate the privacy of VOTs and can create trauma as well as embarrassment. The issue of media coverage of VOTs has historically not been a concern in Laos, although care should be taken to make sure it does not become one. Media coverage of trafficking should focus on the perpetrators, rather than the victims.

In Laos, other practices can limit VOTs' privacy and confidentiality. One VOT interviewed in this study shared that a government official disclosed to her parents when she returned to her village that she had been a prostitute in Thailand, which embarrassed her in front of her family. While this was the only case of such behavior mentioned by VOTs interviewed in this study, anecdotal evidence shared by NGOs suggests this may not be an isolated incident with VOTs engaged in sex work. Such approaches can strain VOTs' relationships with their family and community and ultimately harm their successful reintegration.

In two provinces, government agencies were aware that they do not protect the privacy of VOTs', but they do not have capacity to remedy this issue. An Anti-Trafficking Division in one province and a Department of Labor and Social Welfare in another province both reported needing to conduct interviews with VOTs in a large, open room with multiple staff present. VOTs thus needed to share personal details in front of not only their interviewer, but other potential listeners who were also in the room. While these agencies recognized that this was insensitive toward VOTs, they reported they are not able to resolve the issue because they have no other space in which to interview VOTs.

Some Lao government representatives also speak about victims' migration in ways that limit their rights and increase their vulnerability. A provincial-level Lao Women's Union representative and district-level Labor and Social Welfare Office interviewed for this study shared that they advise village authorities, and VOTs themselves, not to let VOTs return to Thailand again. Similarly, one VOT interviewed for this study reported that district and village-level government officials who returned her to her home warned her parents that she should not be able to travel back to Thailand again. These suggestions can create a sense of guilt in VOTs that it was their own fault they were trafficked, because they chose to migrate. Instead of advising Lao youth and VOTs to not migrate, the Anti-TIP sector should seek to prepare them with resources to be able to do so safely. Government and NGO service providers should focus on providing VOTs with economic opportunities that eliminate their need to migrate for income, or focus on trafficking education that would allow these victims to identify future risky and exploitative situations. Reintegration to home should not be framed as a way to prevent victims from leaving their homes, but rather as a way to equip them with the skills, confidence, and knowledge necessary to ensure that they do not fall victim again.

Clarification of Lao government roles

Lao government roles in repatriation and reintegration have changed significantly over the research period 2015 - 2017. Under the previous Lao-Thai MOU that took effect in 2005, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare was the main focal point for reintegration services. The Anti-TIP law's passage in 2015 muddled the responsibilities of MLSW somewhat, but since the MOU was still in effect, MLSW carried on its responsibilities as it previously had. It was not until the adoption of the revised MOU in

July 2017 that MLSW's role became uncertain. While the revised MOU appointed the Secretariat (Ministry of Public Security) as the Lao government focal point for Anti-TIP implementation, all stakeholders describe that this revision established the Lao Women's Union as a central player in reintegration support for VOTs. In fact, neither LWU nor MLSW is mentioned in the MOU. LWU started to receive cases in mid-2017, while MLSW stopped doing so.

Since the Anti-TIP law was passed in 2015, many stakeholders have reported a lack of clarity in government roles related to Anti-TIP in general, and more specifically, to repatriation and reintegration. The law is universally described by those interviewed as having switched the agency centrally responsible for social reintegration from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare to the Lao Women's Union. However, the law itself is not so clear in the division of responsibility between these two entities. The MLSW is described as responsible for "long-term vocational trainings, development of the labour skills, and provision of employment opportunity", as well as "provision of social welfare to the victims such as safe shelters, rehabilitation, care, counseling, [and] reintegration into family and society within its responsibilities."¹⁸ The Lao Women's Union, in contrast, is responsible for "temporary safe shelters, physical rehabilitation, basic care services, short-term vocational trainings, [and] reintegration services within its responsibilities."¹⁹ In addition, the LWU has the responsibility to oversee legal proceedings, advise victims in legal matters, and also act on behalf of victims in legal proceedings.

Beyond what is written in the law, no further distinction of roles has been developed to more clearly define the appropriate division of work between the MLSW and LWU. No non-government stakeholders interviewed for this study were clear on how the responsibility for reintegration is different between the two entities, nor what qualifies "short-term" and "temporary" services from "long-term" services. Even the Department of Social Welfare (MLSW) nationally admitted that the mandates of LWU and MLSW regarding Anti-TIP work and reintegration are not clearly defined, and requested guidelines for coordination between government agencies and development partners. Government and NGOs did report that the development of a National Referral Mechanism and Victim Protection Guidelines, which are currently being developed by the LWU, are expected to shed some light on the distinction of roles through descriptions of relevant government agencies' responsibilities.

While lack of clarity in government roles and responsibilities seems to be a rather high-level issue, international organizations interviewed emphasized that this reality has serious and negative consequences for VOTs, and these consequences were reflected in the research team's experience with local level government. Multiple provincial and district-level agencies interviewed reported that activities that were within their mandate were actually the responsibility of other agencies, or other levels of government. Different levels of government also had different perspectives on which responsibilities belonged to which agency, and what processes should be followed to serve victims. While both national and provincial agencies reported informing lower levels to implement Anti-TIP work, some lower level government interviewees said they had never received official communication from higher offices, and therefore did not engage much in Anti-TIP work. In one case, a provincial LWU reported reintegration and follow-up should be the district's responsibility for roughly three to six months, but a district Labor

¹⁸ National Assembly of Lao PDR. 2015. *The law on anti-trafficking in persons*. Vientiane.

¹⁹ Ibid.

and Social Welfare Office (LSWO) reported they do not have budget for reintegration, and so the village committee is responsible. The research team did not assess if the village committee actually undertakes this role, though. In another concerning case, a provincial-level Anti-TIP Division mentioned a VOT that went missing and was reported by the victim's parents in 2017. While the ATD reported the case to the central level, they have not yet heard any follow-up on the case status and are unclear if this case is their responsibility or the Department of Labor and Social Welfare's.

As a result of this lack of clarity, and a corresponding lack of inter-agency collaboration, services provided to VOTs are inconsistent. Most government authorities interviewed at local levels expressed some degree of uncertainty about who should be administering services to VOTs, and potentially assume that other levels of government or agencies are doing so, when in fact, they may not be.

Limitations of vocational training

Negative experiences in Thai shelters can influence VOTs to opt to not stay in shelters in Laos, which means some individuals do not receive vocational training and remain vulnerable. And because staying at a shelter for multiple months often means sacrificing a source of family income, service providers reported that VOTs' parents might prohibit them from staying at a shelter to participate in training, instead preferring that they earn money at home. Some cases have even been reported of families coming to remove their children from shelters because they wanted them to return back to farms or family businesses, or of VOTs running away for the same reasons.

Vocational training programs are generally tailored to what VOTs want to participate in. Government and NGO service providers offer trainings in a variety of areas, including sewing, weaving, food processing, mushroom and vegetable growing, etc., and VOTs conventionally select which of these subjects they will study. Still, several VOTs interviewed in this case reported that their parents' desires played a role in what training they chose, and they sometimes opted for the training that their parents thought was best for them, rather than the training in which they were most interested. Some VOTs also reported that they heard from shelter staff at multiple service providers that sewing trainees get good income and that this training is most applicable in communities. These VOTs were influenced to choose sewing as a result of this implicit suggestion.

There is a fine line between making training programs applicable in communities, while also ensuring they can generate income and capturing the interest and engagement of VOTs. In reality, the work that is most applicable in communities VOTs come from is agricultural work. This is also the area of work most VOTs interviewed in this study are currently engaged in. VOTs are often not interested in training in agricultural production, though, because this is the same work they have done at home for most of their lives. VFI's Pakse shelter reported that, although girls staying at their shelter participate in vegetable gardening and animal husbandry as part of their shelter program, very few residents choose to be officially trained in these areas due to a lack of interest. An interviewee from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare at the national level explained that many Lao people see agriculture work as "poor work" and therefore would rather migrate to an urban area for work, even if the income is not so different than what they could earn at home through agriculture.

On the other hand, training programs that might be of most interest to VOTs may not have applicability in their communities. The Labor and Social Welfare Office in one province highlighted this disconnect as a challenge -- while VOTs might be most interested in a certain vocation, they might not be able to generate income from it in their village. For instance, NGO service providers reported that many VOTs expressed interest in studying salon, but VOTs' ability to generate income long-term from salon trainings is often limited in the context of their villages. Training programs therefore need to have a balance between skills that will be useful and lucrative in villages, while also prioritizing the interests of VOTs.

It is important to recognize that receiving vocational training does not equate to victims' long-term livelihood security. VOTs may be unable to generate income from their training skills due to lack of customer demand in their communities; lack of start-up funding for a business; or lack of business management skills that would help them gain customers. While service providers do often provide grants to VOTs who complete their training programs and help them develop simple business plans, follow-up capacity of service providers is too limited to check in on implementation of these business plans and support VOTs in their ongoing income generation. Illiteracy and lack of education or skills may be other factors that limit VOTs' ability to start a successful business with the funds they are given. Additionally, and somewhat obviously, grants are not replenishing -- although funds are provided as a kickstarter, VOTs have a limited ability to raise future funds that can be invested in capital for their businesses. One VOT interviewed for this study shared that, although she was provided with a sewing machine to use in her community by VFI, her sewing machine had since broken, and she did not have the parts or knowledge to repair it. Her ability to generate sustained income from her training was thus limited to the first capital grant provided to her.

Several provincial authorities interviewed expressed that VOTs need to be better connected to markets to ensure their reintegration is successful. Some VOTs interviewed reported that, despite working in agriculture in their villages, a lack of market access prevents them from making much income from agriculture. And while VOTs may be equipped with additional skills through vocational trainings, these skills are not useful unless they have avenues through which to apply them. Direct job placement was also brought up as an area that needs to be expanded for VOTs, and VOTs themselves reported they did not know how to find jobs, or whom to go to for support in this. One project in Saravan province partnered the DLSW with the Department of Agriculture and Forestry to support VOTs in animal husbandry, including connecting them to agricultural markets. While this model of cross-ministry collaboration and emphasis on market connections was strong, government officials reported the project did not achieve as successful results as originally hoped. Further experimentation is needed to identify successful approaches to giving VOTs market access.

One positive model that was unique among other offerings in Laos was World Vision (WV)'s private sector collaborations, which allowed for income generation and training at the same time. WV worked with factories and companies in Savannakhet to allow VOTs to participate in training programs and work at their premises, while staying in dormitories on the company's property. VOTs were therefore able to generate income while learning new skills, and they were not required to stay at an NGO shelter while doing so, potentially giving them more independence than a shelter might offer. This model could be a strong option for male victims (for whom shelters are not currently available) or for victims that are not interested in staying at a shelter. It is also more appealing to family members who are hesitant to have

their children participate in vocational training because it takes time away from their ability to participate in income-generating activities. Expanding private sector partnerships to serve VOTs was one recommendation presented by local government for this study, and should be explored further.

Limited Lao government budget and capacity

Every provincial and district agency interviewed for this study reported having sparingly little budget for Anti-TIP work, resulting in an inability to conduct reintegrative and follow-up services. Some NGOs interviewed also recognized budget restrictions for provincial and district-level authorities that limit how much local governments are able to participate in their designated activities. Even at the national level, the Lao Women's Union reported limited budget for legal assistance, victim protection, and reintegration work.

As a result of this lack of funding, local government agencies interviewed reported that they receive most of their budget and support for reintegration from international organizations and NGO service providers, and even then, this external funding is often not sufficient. Interviewees reported little funds available for travel to villages, which is critical in sending VOTs home and in ongoing follow-up. Concerningly, international organizations reported the number of foreign donors providing funds for repatriation and reintegration of Lao VOTs has dramatically decreased over time, thus limiting the number of NGOs working in Anti-TIP work in Laos, and also limiting these organizations' ability to support government Anti-TIP work.

Even though government budget for Anti-TIP work does exist through the Secretariat of the National Anti-TIP Committee, the distribution of these funds is unclear. This funding is meant to be used for all trafficking cases nationwide, and is only allocated to government agencies. No local authorities interviewed knew if they received funds from the National Committee, or where their budget came from (just that some funds came from "central level"). Similarly, no non-government agencies knew about the distribution of the committee's funds. More information is needed to understand where these funds are coming from; how they are made available; and how decisions are made on where to spend the funding.

The only available report on government's application of budget for Anti-TIP activities came from the US Department of State's 2018 TIP report, which indicated that the Secretariat and other local authorities used 160 million LAK (19,340 USD) in 2017 to provide 40 cows to 15 male and 17 female victims who returned to their communities. The report does not specify whether this money was from the Secretariat's own governmental funds, or from donor funds. No other reports on National Anti-TIP Committee budget use exist.

Ongoing follow-up on cases

Linked closely to the issue of lack of budget is the resulting reality that government agencies have limited capacity to follow-up on reintegrated VOTs. One provincial level MOPS representative expressed that their office wants to be able to follow-up on cases, but is restricted by a lack of funds and therefore does not know where past VOTs are now, or what their current situation is. An LWU district office shared that they do have a very limited transportation budget for follow-up, but in practice, follow-ups are more often coordinated through village Child Protection Units, not the district government.

As a result, follow-up on reintegrated cases is reportedly most frequently conducted by NGO service providers, who check in on cases to whom they provided services. NGO service providers often invite local government agencies to accompany, and several government interviewees reported that these invitations are the central avenue through which they conduct follow-ups. Since NGO service providers only currently operate in select provinces, cases who are not supported by NGO service providers usually have no one checking in on them, and are thus highly vulnerable to being re-trafficked.

A few government agencies interviewed in this study did explain that they integrate check-ins on VOTs into other government development activities at local levels. For example, if a district-level agency will be conducting outreach on poverty reduction in villages, they might try to integrate Anti-TIP information in the outreach, as well as check up on any VOTs in the target villages. This combination of development activities with follow-up activities can be successful in overcoming budgetary challenges.

Even outside budgetary restrictions, significant challenges exist that prevent successful case follow-up, both for government and NGOs. First, trafficking victims come from a range of villages, most of them living in remote areas that take significant time to visit. One provincial level LWU cited remoteness of VOTs and high transportation costs as limiting factors in government follow-up on cases, and these challenges are shared by NGOs. The Department of Social Welfare (MLSW) at the national level mentioned that remoteness, particularly during the rainy season, makes follow up on cases quite difficult. While service providers are sometimes able to follow up via telephone, rural telephone connectivity is often poor and thus eliminates this option for many cases. As cases move, get married, or change their phone numbers, it is easy for them to become unreachable. Accessing VOTs to interview during this study was one of the main challenges in completing the research, due to a confluence of all these reasons.

While case follow-up is a vital component of reintegration, several NGOs reported that follow-up from government and service providers can make VOTs stick out in their communities in ways that might harm their reintegration. For instance, in some cases, government officials or other organizations would drive up to the victim's house in a large, labelled car, thus drawing attention to the victim and making others wonder what happened for the government to visit them. It is therefore important to recognize that, while monitoring of cases is a necessary step in their ongoing protection, this monitoring cannot be burdensome to victims or further ostracize them from their communities.

Factors for successful repatriation and social reintegration

While many areas for improvement were identified through this research, stakeholders also discussed approaches that make for successful repatriation and reintegration. Not all of these approaches were practiced in reality, but rather pointed to as potential positive models through interviews with stakeholder groups. Examples of these factors in practice are provided, where applicable.

- ❖ **Streamlining the court process in Thailand to shorten the length of stay at Thai shelters.**

While unofficial VOTs' length of stay in Thai shelters was a concern raised by multiple stakeholder groups in this study, the Thai government is making active efforts to shorten the length of stay through improving court processes. The Thai government created the Human Trafficking Case Division in the Criminal Court in 2017, which has already proven to expedite legal proceedings. Continued efforts to maximize efficiency of the court system, while also ensuring the wellbeing of VOTs who participate in court processes, should be continued in the future.

- ❖ **Creating opportunities for technical staff engaged in Anti-TIP work in both Thailand and Laos to discuss cases.**

Non-government stakeholders reported that Case Conference Meetings, which were held consistently before Case Management Meetings between the two countries, were a positive model that allowed for in-depth discussion of cases repatriating from Thailand to Laos. The meetings were held the day before CMMs to plan for larger discussions with higher-level officials, and helped contribute to the effectiveness of CMMs. While the most recent CMM in August 2018 did not include a CCM, future meeting should reinstate this practice to maximize the CMM's success.

- ❖ **Partnering across the border between local Thai and Lao government agencies in Anti-TIP work.**

While not all provinces in Laos and Thailand engage with each other in Anti-TIP work, there are several positive examples that can act as good models for provincial-level, and even district-level, collaboration. A sort of MOU exists between Ubon Ratchathani in Thailand and Champasak in Laos (while the technical document is titled "Meeting Minutes for Anti-TIP Collaboration", it reportedly acts as a substitute MOU), as well as between two districts on the border between Laos and Thailand in both provinces. These local-level agreements create opportunities for direct coordination and collaboration with technical staff in both countries, as well as present the opportunity for expediting and normalizing consistent communication. While similar arrangements have been pursued between Mukdahan and Savannakhet provinces, and Bokeo and Chiang Rai provinces, agreements have not been finalized in these areas.

- ❖ **Involving international organizations and NGO service providers in services to VOTs.**

Local government officials interviewed for this study reported that they mainly get involved in anti-trafficking work, and reintegration more specifically, through collaboration with NGO service providers in their jurisdictions. Several reported positively that the involvement of NGOs has increased government budget, capacity and expertise for Anti-TIP efforts in their provinces and districts. While stakeholders should take care to ensure that government does not become too

dependent on NGOs, collaboration between government and non-government organizations can be a positive approach to serving victims of trafficking.

❖ **Providing options for earning income, while gaining new skills.**

A private sector partnership pursued through World Vision allowed VOTs in Savannakhet province to work at local factories, where they were also trained. Such simultaneous work and training arrangements allow for more VOTs to participate in vocational training, since they do not have to sacrifice earning money to participate. This model also gives VOTs a stable job that can ideally continue when their training is finished. At a few shelters in Laos, too, VOTs can earn money through selling handicrafts and other products they produce at fairs or to private customers. Building out these models at shelters through partnerships with private sector could enhance VOTs' earning capacity while they are training.

❖ **Incorporating VOTs' families in vocational training.**

Vocational training is meant to limit VOTs' vulnerability to being re-trafficked, as well as allow VOTs to earn income for themselves and their families. In a few cases shared by VOTs and service providers, VOTs have participated in vocational training along with another person in their family, such as a sister. One program offered through VFI allowed for VOTs' families to receive agricultural processing training at a facility in Saravan province. Such approaches may make families more willing to allow their children to participate in vocational training, since multiple members of the family will do it together, and could more successfully raise VOTs' families' incomes, as multiple people would gain new skills.

❖ **Supporting VOTs with capital to start a small business.**

While ensuring VOTs' long-term economic empowerment is a challenge, distributing grants and supplies to VOTs who receive vocational training is a step in the right direction. Multiple VOTs reported these grants, provided by government and NGO service providers, helped them practice their vocations and increase their income beyond what it was before they were trafficked. This practice should therefore be retained, in conjunction with other approaches that might enhance VOTs' economic self-sufficiency after they complete vocational training.

❖ **Leveraging VOTs' skills through empowering VOTs to train others.**

One VOT interviewed in this study reported that she was spreading her knowledge of sewing, learned through vocational training, to others in her village, including her mother. She gained a sense of fulfillment through this, as well as felt respected in her community. Encouraging VOTs to share their knowledge, particularly with their families, could be a successful approach that would root VOTs in their communities and raise families' incomes.

❖ **Providing VOTs with options to not return home.**

It is important to remember that "reintegration" is not synonymous with "returning home." Some VOTs may not be able to return home, while others may not want to. Since many VOTs see limited options for earning income in their communities, placing them in stable situations outside their homes (such as in nearby urban areas) could be a solution that would allow them to support their families economically without having to migrate to Thailand. This approach should only be

taken where VOTs are deemed capable of living independently away from their families, for instance, in the case of adult VOTs. One positive example of this model is a VOT from Khammouane province who was given a job at Sengsavang shelter and now lives in Savannakhet. While it is not always possible for NGOs to provide VOTs with employment, this could also be an option where possible.

❖ **Maximizing engaging activities at shelters in Laos and Thailand.**

While VOTs reported positively on receiving vocational training in Thailand and Laos, they also reported shelters can feel restrictive due to strict rules. The aspects of shelters VOTs spoke most positively about were the friends they made there, as well as the fun activities that were held, such as sports, games, and outings beyond the shelter. Providing ample time for leisure and giving VOTs unique experiences can help them feel more at home at shelters and contribute to a positive experience. One exchange program exists at a shelter in Vientiane Capital between shelter residents and students at a local international school, who conduct joint activities together multiple times per year. Girls at this shelter have expressed that they greatly enjoy the activities, as well as being able to build relationships with those outside their shelter.

❖ **Engaging a diverse range of ministries in supporting VOTs.**

The Lao Anti-TIP law lists a broad range of ministries and agencies with a mandate in Anti-TIP work. Both Thai and Lao governments demonstrate understanding that TIP is a cross-cutting issue, and that collaboration between sectors is necessary to prevent TIP, and to support victims. In Laos, some economic opportunities for VOTs have explored partnerships between ministries with expertise in TIP, and ministries with technical expertise in other areas. One program, for instance, partnered the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to promote livestock raising and general agricultural support for VOTs. While this program reportedly had its weaknesses, the framework of engaging multiple ministries in support of VOTs is a positive one, and shows promise for the future.

Conclusions

The following key conclusions have been identified through this research. The conclusions are grouped thematically, following the same categories that will be used in the “Recommendations” section following.

Communication and data collection

- ❖ **There is no Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for repatriation between Thailand and Laos.** While it was decided in the last Case Management Meeting in Bangkok in August 2018 that the Lao government would lead the process to develop an SOP for Anti-TIP work between Laos and Thailand, the progress of this development is unknown. As such, no document or guidelines currently govern repatriation or enforce accountability. Procedures undertaken by the governments in repatriation and reintegration are thus conducted without any adherence to larger standards that will ensure the success of the processes. While the MOU outlines the countries’ collaboration, it does not provide specific procedures that can be implementable at local levels.
- ❖ **Record keeping and sharing data, especially in regard to legal proceedings, remains inconsistent and slow.** Data exchange between Laos and Thailand is essential for successful repatriation and reintegration, particularly when it comes to court cases. Delays from the Lao government in providing information on victims’ nationality, family, and other required details results in Lao VOTs needing to stay at Thai shelters longer. Some cases last multiple years as a result of ineffective information exchange that prevents prosecution of traffickers. The required official procedures for requesting information from the Lao government contribute to difficulties in data sharing to Thailand. Conversely, Lao government and Lao NGOs are often uninformed about the results of legal proceedings in Thailand, and therefore cannot effectively serve VOTs upon their return home, in terms of claiming compensation or achieving justice.

VOT protection at Thai shelters

- ❖ **Linguistic similarities between Lao and Thai languages do not mean that Lao VOTs understand what they are told by Thai officials before and during repatriation.** Most government, NGO, and international organization representatives interviewed during this study indicated that trafficking coordination between Laos and Thailand, and communication between VOTs and Thai officials, is relatively easy, given the similarity of the two languages. While this is true in many cases, all parties should take care not to assume understanding on behalf of Lao victims simply because they have a greater ability to understand Thai than victims from other countries. In fact, many VOTs reported that they had difficulty understanding police and other Thai officials’ questioning during their time right after the rescue and at shelters, likely due to both language barriers and difficult-to-understand concepts. Communication issues are even more pronounced for Lao victims from ethnic groups (who comprise the majority of VOTs trafficked to Thailand), victims from very rural areas who speak in dialects, and those who are not trafficked to the Isan region of Thailand, where the language is more similar to Lao.
- ❖ **VOTs’ and their families bear negative emotional consequences from believing VOTs have been arrested, rather than rescued, and from lack of contact during stays at Thai shelters.**

Despite legitimate reasons for a no-contact policy to exist in most Thai shelters, and good intentions on behalf of officials who seek to ensure the success of Thai legal proceedings, this policy has demonstrably negatively affected both VOTs and their families. Families interviewed during this study reported distress at not knowing the status of their child, and not being able to contact their child reinforced a perception that their child was being detained in jail for wrongdoing. Several families spent significant amounts of money to locate their children or try to visit them in shelters in Thailand. VOTs reported wishing to contact their families as one of their central desires during their time in shelters in Thailand. The fact that foreign and Thai victims are mixed together in shelters contributed to a sense of unfairness in Lao VOTs, as they witnessed Thai victims receiving food and gifts from their relatives, which aggravated their own sense of isolation from their families.

- ❖ **Even shelters can feel restricting and jail-like, despite staff's best intentions.** Shelters in Thailand need to take certain precautions for ensuring the safety of their residents, but these precautions sometimes led to VOTs feeling trapped, rather than protected. Limited mobility and ability to go outside; having to line up to receive meals; designated bed times; and isolation from families all contributed to some VOTs' perceptions that their freedoms were limited during their stay in Thai shelters. Restrictions on VOTs' actions at shelters in Laos was also brought up as a downside of staying there in some IDI interviews. These types of experiences in Thailand can spur a VOT to reject further services in Laos.
- ❖ **Many VOTs do not trust Thai police and, as a result, other authority figures they must interact with before being repatriated. This fear of authorities contributes to inaccurate and slow information collection, which delays victims' return to Laos, as well as makes VOTs more likely to reject services.** VOTs often learn not to trust Thai police as a result of their own attempted escapes, stories from other VOTs, or threats from their trafficker. While police are feared figures during the time VOTs are exploited, VOTs are later required to interact directly with police in sharing intimate details about their trafficking experience, which limits many individuals' willingness to share truthful information. This behavior is especially true for sex workers, who worry they will receive consequences for engaging in illegal work and thus often lie about their case details. While some of this fear arises from VOTs' own false perceptions about how VOTs are processed (they do not realize they are victims, not criminals), fear can also be rooted in the reality that informal networks between traffickers and police exist that lead to dangers to VOTs. This fear can stay with VOTs throughout their repatriation and reintegration, making VOTs skeptical of authority figures in general and therefore deny services from government or NGOs in Laos.
- ❖ **The length of time VOTs stay at shelters in Thailand directly impacts their emotional well-being and their willingness to receive future services both in Thailand and in Laos.** As mentioned previously, case collaboration in legal proceedings between Laos and Thailand needs to be improved, including the timely provision of nationality and family information to Thai authorities by Lao officials. Because some court cases may last for multiple years in Thailand, VOTs often become exhausted by the notion of staying in a shelter by the time their stay is complete. Multiple international organizations and service providers reported that VOTs who stay considerable lengths in Thailand are much more likely to refuse additional services from service providers in Laos, out of an assumption that the experience will replicate the one they already experienced in Thailand. When

cases refuse services, they are more susceptible to re-victimization. The Thai government is aware of this issue and has taken positive steps to address it, resulting in the steady shortening in the length of time it takes for VOTs to be sent home.

Clarification of Lao government roles and responsibilities

- ❖ **Lack of clarity in the Anti-TIP law about governmental responsibilities in reintegration, combined with limited service provider presence, result in inconsistent implementation of reintegrative services and case follow-up across the country.** The 2015 Anti-TIP law is unclear in different ministries' responsibilities related to Anti-TIP work and includes overlapping duties for reintegration. Adoption of the TIP law, combined with the new MOU, muddled ministries' roles in reintegration, especially since these two legal instruments were adopted at different times. As a result, ministries have less initiative and ownership over reintegration than they might if roles were clearly defined. Many provincial and district government officers interviewed indicated that they are not clear on their reintegration mandates as defined by Lao law, and a few have received no official assignments from higher levels to provide reintegrative services to VOTs. Generally, provincial and district government agencies only get involved in reintegration work if NGO service providers engage them. The result is that VOTs and local governments are reliant on NGO service providers, which are only located in a few areas across the country.

Economic empowerment of VOTs

- ❖ **Vocational training expands VOTs' skills, but does not necessarily guarantee their future economic stability.** VOTs interviewed for this study indicated that they were happy to have received vocational training, as it prepared them with skills in areas that could supplement their income. A few IDI cases interviewed currently receive income as a direct result of their skills development through trainings; however, many VOTs had simply gone back to their old work in agriculture -- the same work they did before they were trafficked. While VOTs expressed wanting to expand their business capacity, very few IDI cases knew where to access microfinance schemes or other services, including job placement, to do so. Service providers to provide small grants to many VOTs, although these grants do not guarantee the successful establishment of a business, especially since most VOTs are underprepared to own a business, and because ongoing follow-up of VOTs' business plans and profit is minimal. Market access provides another preventing factor, since rurality limits VOTs' ability to practice their skills, and many VOTs interviewed reported not having enough customers to earn income from their training.
- ❖ **VOTs continue to want to return to Thailand, or go to urban areas, for work, until income generating possibilities in Laos match those available across the border.** Most VOTs interviewed in this study perceived work available in Thailand and in urban areas of Laos as more lucrative than those in their communities. While the majority of IDIs indicated they would like to migrate to another area for work opportunities, they admitted they did not know how to do so safely. Being married, having children, and needing to take care of family were all factors that made VOTs less likely to want to re-migrate. It is important to note that, despite government's perspectives that VOTs should not return to Thailand, VOTs have a right to mobility, although they need to be equipped with resources for safe migration.

- ❖ **While support for male VOTs has been offered in the past, services for male victims' reintegration -- from both NGOs and government service providers-- are very limited. Standards and services for transgender victims need to be defined and established.** Male victims participate in vocational training at a much lower rate than female victims do. There are no long-term shelters for male victims in the country. Both these facts are partially attributable to the fact that foreign donor funding for services to male victims is seldom offered, limiting service providers' ability to serve male victims. Further, the new responsibility of the LWU as the key agency overseeing reintegration casts into question how services for males will fit into their mandate, which is centered on women and children. The reality that services for VOTs are determined by gender or sex presents a concern for transgender VOTs, as governments and NGOs have no standards for serving transgender VOTs, and generally lack awareness about transgender rights.

Increasing Lao government capacity for Anti-TIP work

- ❖ **Local government agencies responsible for reintegration remain uninformed about their duties and under-resourced in budget and TIP knowledge.** Despite national laws that define provincial and district governments (particularly LWU line agencies) as responsible for reintegration, many provincial and district officials interviewed did not get involved in reintegration work because they had not received orders from a higher level, or had no budget to implement reintegration activities. Multiple agencies also reported a lack of training in TIP and limited knowledge on how to successfully serve VOTs.
- ❖ **Follow-up on reintegrated cases is not standardized, and little government budget supports ongoing follow-ups, meaning many victims are vulnerable to being revictimized.** Contact information for the majority of cases contacted during this study was out-of-date. NGO service providers are the only entities that have standards for following up, and they are only responsible for following up on cases that opt to receive their services. Victims who refuse assistance from service providers therefore have no one following up and are vulnerable to being re-trafficked. Government generally only follows up on cases with the invitation from NGOs, calling into question how follow-up happens in areas with no NGOs present.

Recommendations

Recommendations for this study are meant to be practical and implementable and focus on some of the key issues limiting the successful reintegration of Lao victims of trafficking back to Laos. While other shortcomings were identified through this research, the following recommendations reflect the areas the study team believes to be most urgent. The recommendations start at the highest level with cross-border collaboration, and work down to services provided directly to VOTs. Each recommendation is accompanied with the corresponding conclusion, notes on implementation, and a suggested responsible entity in either Thailand, Laos, or both.

Figure 12: Recommendations to improve repatriation and reintegration of Lao VOTs		
Recommendation	Notes on implementation	Responsible body
<i>Communication and data collection</i>		
Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for repatriation of cases between Thailand and Laos, as part of the SOP on Anti-TIP work more broadly, which is currently being developed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The SOP can be adapted from UNACT, NEXUS Institute, and World Vision’s “Supporting the reintegration of trafficked persons: A guidebook for the Greater Mekong Sub-Region”, and other regional or international standards. - This process should include development partners early on. - Specific provisions should be provided, such as how far in advance Thai officials should notify Lao officials of a VOT being identified; how long family identification should take; etc. 	Thai and Lao governments
Continue consistent Case Management Meetings, with the involvement of development partners, civil society and international organizations in both countries, that discuss details of cases and are tailored to making decisions about cases. Prepare responsible Lao agencies for hosting these meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These meetings should be preceded by Case Conference Meetings (CCMs), which were previously held the day before CMMs for technical staff to prepare for the larger meetings. - Opportunities should be explored to heighten district and provincial government officers’ participation in CMMs, such as through having local government authorities attend national-level CMMs if cases are relevant to their jurisdictions, or by establishing provincial and district CMMs between jurisdictions in Laos and Thailand. 	Thai and Lao governments

<p>Increase channels for more informal and consistent case discussion (such as through phone calls) between Laos and Thailand, particularly at local levels, to supplement official communication and expedite the Thai legal process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guidelines for ongoing communication and coordination should be developed, for example to establish maximum response periods and approved channels for case discussions. This can be included in the SOP development process. 	<p>Thai and Lao governments</p>
<p>Involve international organizations and NGO service providers in nationality verification and family tracing processes to expedite the Thai legal process and support government data collection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This would include providing relevant case information to NGOs, as necessary. 	<p>Lao government</p>
<p>Implement a standardized database, shared between Lao and Thai officials and all engaged Lao ministries, to track the process of repatriation and reintegration of VOTs. Share this data with non-government partners, particularly NGO service providers, engaged in Anti-TIP work as necessary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - While some information is understandably confidential, as much information as possible should be shared between government agencies and levels to minimize re-interviewing VOTs. - This database does not need to be high-tech, but should be consistently updated and exchanged so both governments are aware of VOTs' status. - Exchanging court case information across the border should be a priority, so VOTs have closure on their judicial process. 	<p>Thai and Lao governments</p>
<p><i>VOT protection at Thai shelters</i></p>		
<p>Notify VOTs' families of their protection at Thai shelters in a timely manner. Establish more accessible channels for Lao victims' families to communicate with or visit VOTs while in shelters in Thailand, such as receiving approval through local, rather than central, government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This will help VOTs' families avoid unnecessary spending to locate their children, as well as the emotional stress families and VOTs experience. - Legal rights awareness should be given to VOTs' family at the same time, with involvement of NGO service providers. 	<p>Thai government (with collaboration of Lao government)</p>

<p>Increase VOTs' ability to interact with Lao social workers during their stay at Thai shelters. This could include placing a Lao social worker at the Lao embassy in Thailand; facilitating distance counseling between Lao social workers in Laos and VOTs in Thailand; or coordinating visits to Thai shelters for Lao social workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being able to interact with Lao social workers could help VOTs feel a sense of security and trust through the repatriation process, as well as make them less homesick. - A Lao social worker placed at the Lao embassy in Thailand could facilitate information gathering with the Lao government, support VOTs through legal proceedings, coordinate with Thai shelters, and communicate consistently with families. - The Lao Women's Union reported that the Lao government has proposed integrating Lao social workers at Thai shelters to better support ethnic VOTs, although this suggestion has not been implemented. - This approach should include capacity building for the labor attaché at the embassy to better understand trafficking issues. 	<p>Lao government, in collaboration with Thai shelter staff</p>
<p><i>Clarification of Lao government roles and processes</i></p>		
<p>Develop Reintegration Guidelines for Laos, which are adopted by all levels of government, with the involvement of development partners at early stages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These guidelines should guide local authorities in achieving sustainable reintegration, and should build off the National Referral Mechanism and Victim Protection Guidelines, which are currently under development. - They should also build off the SOP developed by Laos and Thailand. 	<p>Lao government</p>
<p>Create specific Terms of Reference (TOR) for all Lao government ministries listed as responsible for Anti-TIP work in the 2015 Anti-TIP Law and Prime Minister's decree 245/PM (issued July 2018). Involve non-government partners in both Laos and Thailand in this development process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aim to reach as much specificity as possible in the roles and responsibilities outlined in the TOR. - Disseminate this TOR at all levels of government, so local officials are aware of their mandates. 	<p>Lao government</p>

<i>Economic empowerment of VOTs</i>		
<p>Engage diverse ministries and departments, not only those with a mandate in TIP, in creating training programs and non-formal education opportunities that VOTs can access to enhance their livelihoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement of multiple agencies allows for strengthened support of VOTs by leveraging a variety of sectors with diverse experiences. - One positive example of cross-sector collaboration was the partnership between the Department of Labor and Social Welfare and Department of Agriculture and Forestry in Saravan to support VOTs' through animal husbandry and agriculture. 	<p>Lao government</p>
<p>Expand income generating programs for VOTs -- including male VOTs -- beyond vocational training to economic empowerment more holistically, including creating business plans with VOTs upon their return to their communities and following up on these plans in ongoing monitoring. There is also a need to increase capacity of both government and NGO service providers in providing job placement and training in business skills to VOTs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expand options for VOTs to access microcredit funds, job placement, and markets. Promoting existing services to VOTs. - Explore the creation of a peer network model for income generating activities, so VOTs can learn with and from others. (This was suggested by one LSWO in this study.) - Place particular focus on VOTs who never enter school and those who drop out of school early. 	<p>Lao government</p>
<p>Establish flexible and mobile models of vocational training that do not require stay at a shelter and can allow VOTs -- including male VOTs -- to continue earning income while developing their skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This model should be discussed, and collaborated upon, with the national non-formal education program led by the Ministry of Education and Sports. - Trainings do not have to go village-to-village, but can explore alternate ways of providing non-formal education or training to those in rural areas. - Existing vocational training and non-formal education opportunities should intentionally include VOTs as a target group. 	<p>Lao government</p>
<p><i>Increasing Lao government capacity for Anti-TIP work</i></p>		

<p>Clarify avenues for provincial and district government agencies to access government funding for reintegration work, and make use of this budget transparent through annual reporting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - While National Anti-TIP Committee funding may be dispersed frequently, local government agencies and all non-government stakeholders were unsure of how these funds were distributed. - Local government lacks budget, and clarifying the dispersal process for Anti-TIP Committee funds could help local government better understand how to access additional budget, as well as where their existing budget comes from. 	<p>Lao government</p>
<p>Create standards for district agencies, and train them, in following up on VOTs who are reintegrated. There should be particular emphasis on individuals who do not receive services from service providers and other vulnerable groups, such as sex workers, VOTs who never entered school or those who drop out at an early age.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These standards could be established through the Victim Protection Guidelines and developed in conjunction with the Reintegration Guidelines mentioned in recommendations above. - Training should address some problematic perspectives held by local government officials that limit VOTs' rights and privacy. - Use the new establishment of district-level Anti-TIP Committees, under PM's decree No. 245/PM, as an opportunity to increase capacity and ownership of district officials in LWU, MLSW, MOPS and other relevant agencies in reintegrative services. 	<p>Lao government</p>
<p>Adopt a victim-centric approach by assessing victims' and their families' needs, and creating social reintegration plans based on these needs, through collaboration between multiple government agencies, development partners, and service providers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coupled with this recommendation is the understanding that, when service providers take a victim-centric approach, they empathize with victims, do not place blame, and uphold victims' privacy. This recommendation would therefore help address the lack of sensitivity issues previously discussed. 	<p>Lao government</p>

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Annex 1: Case studies

Note that all case names have been changed to respect the privacy of VOTs. Some basic case information is provided with each story. Most of these cases are written from direct interviews with VOTs, although some were compiled from stories shared by NGO service providers and international organizations. Cases that were not written from VOT interviews are noted as such.

Case story No. 1

Ms. Dokmai dropped out of school in grade 9. She believed that even if she graduated from secondary school, she would not be able to continue higher education anyway. Her mother told her that she could earn money if she went to Thailand. Her sister also worked in Thailand and sent money back home quite often. Dokmai followed her mother's suggestion and travelled to Thailand without any documents. Dokmai worked as a domestic worker for eight years in one province in Thailand. The employers sent money to her mother sometimes, and also kept some of her salary with them. Dokmai's mother knew that she got exploited and abused. Her mother told her to go back home to Laos, but Dokmai refused because she wanted to save more money. However, as she was increasingly abused and exploited by her employer, Dokmai decided to run away, and she was lucky that she got help from the Thai police. The police took her to the police station for an interview. After they identified her as a VOT, she was sent to a shelter in Nonthaburi. She didn't realize right away that she had to stay in the shelter for many months. The shelter staff in Thailand were friendly, but they didn't tell her how long she had to stay in the shelter. She only knew that she could go back home after completing her legal assistance.

After three months in the shelter she was told that she would not need to go to the court because her case was not so serious. She was fine with that because she didn't want to sue her employer or claim compensation, and had plans to return to Thailand to work with her sister, who was also there. She really still does not understand why she had to stay in the shelter. Her parents also didn't know that she was in the shelter. Dokmai was sent back to Laos and the Thai government provided her with 3,000 baht, but she didn't get any money that her employers kept with them during the eight years she worked for them. During the interviews in Thailand, Dokmai didn't tell the police about these wages because she didn't want to go to court. She thought that it was already all alright and that she was free from her workplace and employer at that time.

Profile of case story No. 1	
Province: Saravan	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Labor exploitation - domestic worker
Current age: 23	Current job: Sewing and farmer
Age at identification: 21	Marital status: Married

Case story No. 2

Ms. Chan was rescued from forced labor from a farm in one province in Thailand. After being identified as a VOT, she was sent to a shelter in Thailand where she stayed for more than two years. Chan was not at first aware that she had to stay in the shelter for such a long time to get legal assistance -- she thought that it might take a few weeks. While in the shelter, she was only able to leave the shelter when there was an outdoor activity with other VOTs, and she had to be accompanied by the shelter's staff. Sometimes she missed home and could not eat well. She talked to other Lao VOTs as a way to relieve her pain.

In the shelter in Thailand, there were many VOTs from different countries living together, including from Myanmar, Cambodia and Thailand. Sometimes Chan experienced challenges and felt she was discriminated against. She reported that Thai children teased that, "Lao people eat sticky rice and have flat noses." She felt it was not fair for her that she could not call back home and talk with her parents, while Thai VOTs could. Chan also felt that there were too many restrictions and regulations in the Thai shelter, for example, that VOTs have to get in a line before going to bed, to get food, etc. She felt as if she was in jail, even though she said the shelter staff were friendly.

Profile of case story No. 2	
Province: Saravan	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP Type: Labor exploitation in fruit farm
Current age: 20	Current job: Sewing and farmer
Age at identification: 17	Marital status: Single

Case story No. 3

Ms. Keo was a minor VOT sent back to Laos from Thailand. She received assistance from Sengsavang shelter in Laos, where she attended and completed sewing training. Before migrating to Thailand, Keo dropped out of school at grade 5 because her parents could not support her education costs. If she were to continue secondary education to grade 6, she would have to travel to another village, but her parents didn't have the money to buy a bicycle for her to travel to school. Thanks to a non-formal education program run by the Ministry of Education and Sports, after she was repatriated to Laos, Keo was able to continue her education. She completed secondary school and received a certificate. After secondary school she also continued to study other subjects with support from Sengsavang (through an Asia Foundation project). After completing her studies, Keo went back to her hometown in Xayabouly province. She is now applying to be a kindergarten teacher in her own community.

Profile of case story No. 3 (This case was shared by Sengsavang, not from a direct interview)	
Province: Xayaboury	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Unknown
Current age: Unknown	Current job: Applying to be a teacher in her own village
Age at identification: Unknown	Marital status: Single

Case story No. 4

Ms. Am is from a poor family in Savannakhet province. She was trafficked and forced to work as a mobile vendor in one province in Thailand for nine months without pay. She eventually ran away from the workplace with other Lao friends and got help from Thai authorities. She was sent to a shelter after being identified as a minor VOT. In the shelter in Thailand, Am received training on organic vegetable growing.

After one month back in her village after she returned to Laos, VFI contacted her and her parents to provide information about training and other services. Am decided to take a sewing course because she liked this subject. It was her dream to receive vocational training, and no one else did sewing work in her village. Her parents supported her in receiving training. Am's friend, who was also a VOT returned from Thailand at the same time as Am, wanted to join the training course, but the friend's grandmother wouldn't allow it.

Now Am can earn about 100 USD per month from sewing, and she is happy that she can make income and support her family. Her father also can work now, as there is an investment project in her village. Her family's well-being is getting better when compared to the past. She also applied her vegetable planting skills learned in the Thai and Lao shelters at home, and now her family doesn't use chemicals in their vegetable garden and are happy that they can eat safe food.

Profile of case story No. 4	
Province: Savannakhet	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Labor exploitation - mobile vendor
Current age: 18	Current job: Wood factory, sewing and farmer

Age at identification: 16	Marital status: Single
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Case story No. 5

Ms. Naly was 16 years old when she was trafficked to Thailand and worked as a domestic worker without pay. After her Lao friend who worked in the same place ran away and reported their situation to Thai police, Naly was rescued and sent to a shelter in Thailand for eight months. In the Thai shelter, Naly learned handicraft skills and how to make scarves. One year after she was back in her village in Laos, Naly attended vocational training at Sengsavang’s Savannakhet shelter. Her friends who are also VOTs returned back from Thailand did not join the training course, because they migrated back to Thailand. One got married and had a child.

During her time at the Sengsavang shelter, Naly attended a sewing course. She decided to select this course because the skills could help her get income. Now she earns about 100+ USD per month. Naly also used her knowledge and skills to teach her mother to make crafts. She told her mother that she learned these skills in Thailand, and her mother wanted to learn from her. There are lots of orders from their community now, and her mother can get additional income from this work.

Her family is getting better compared to the past because they have additional income to support themselves. Naly got married one year ago and has one child. Her husband is working in house construction and his income is also sufficient. Her mother also helps her to take care of her child. Her relationship with her family members and the people in the village is also better because she has skills she learned during vocational training. Many of her friends want to learn from her: “They want to be my student; I feel proud of myself,” Naly said. Her relatives also want to attend vocational training.

Profile of case story No. 5	
Province: Savannakhet	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Labor exploitation - domestic worker
Current age: 22	Current job: Sewing and farmer
Age at identification: 16	Marital status: Married

Case story No. 6

Ms. Amphone is now 20 years old. She received intensive training in sewing, mushroom farming, and other life skills. After going back to her village, Amphone can generate some income from sewing, but it’s still not sufficient compared to her expenditures. She also applies other skills that she learned in her daily life, such as cooking and hygiene. After going back to her village for one year, she got married.

Now she has two children. Her parents-in-law help her to take care of her young kids (two and three years old) when she works.

Amphone wanted her children to go to kindergarten, but there is not a kindergarten available in her village. Most of the children in her village can only go to school when they turn five or six, as they can enter primary school. Amphone can only do sewing work when her parents are at home or available to watch her children, which is not very often, as they have to go to their farm. She thinks that if there were child care services in her village, she could work and earn more.

Amphone talked to her husband about going to work in an urban area or going back to Thailand, but her husband does not want to migrate since he has to take care of his elder parents. Her husband does think, though, that working in a city or in Thailand could be an option if they need more income to support their young kids, particularly when they reach school age in the future.

Profile of case story No. 6	
Province: Saravan	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: labor exploitation - domestic worker
Current age: 20	Current job: Farmer
Age at identification: 17	Marital status: Married

Case story No. 7

Ms. Dee was 15 years old when she migrated to Thailand. She's from a poor family and has five siblings. Dee is the oldest sister. She dropped out of school at grade seven because her parents could not afford her education. Dee decided to go to Thailand because, as the elder sister, she has to support her parents.

Dee worked as a sex worker and was rescued by Thai authorities. After going back to her village, Dee was introduced to services at Sengsavang in Savannakhet. Dee decided to take vocational training in sewing, since she thought that this skill would help her future. She also realized that, if she stayed in her village, she would have nothing to do and might go back to Thailand. Her parents agreed with her, as the Sengsavang shelter provided full funding for training. Dee stayed in the shelter for also most two years. Now she is working in the shelter as an assistant.

Dee is currently happy to be working at Sengsavang, but her dream is to open small shop and do sewing work. However, she still worries that if she goes back home, she does not have a secure job or funds to start a business. Dee also worries that her family still does have not enough income compared to their expenditures, since her siblings are still young and her parents have to pay high costs for their education. They also find it difficult when someone get sick and they have to pay for health care. Dee said that if

there is a chance, and if her family situation does not get better and she still has no job or income, she would still want to go to Thailand.

Profile of case story No. 7	
Province: Khammouane	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Labor exploitation - domestic worker
Current age: 18	Current job: Working in Sengsavang shelter as an assistant
Age at identification: 16	Marital status: Single

Case story No. 8

Ms. Phet is a 16-year-old girl from Vientiane capital, who was sold by her step mother to a Thai man in 2016 for 50,000 baht (currently 1,590 USD). Phet was forced to work as sex a worker for two years without pay.

Phet’s step mother subsequently blackmailed the Thai male for more money, threatening to report him to the police for rape of a minor, if he didn’t pay her more money. The Thai man paid two more sums – 20,000 baht and 30,000 baht. In 2017, Phet’s mother asked for 200,000 baht (currently 6,370 USD), which he refused to pay, so she reported him to the Thai police. At this point, the victim, Phet, was interviewed by a multidisciplinary team in Nong Khai of Thailand. The Thai man, scared of being found with the minor female, sent her back to Laos illegally by boat. He was subsequently arrested by the Thai police and charged with rape of a minor. He is currently on trial in Nong Khai, and his case is expected to last for several more months.

The Thai police sought the assistance of the Lao police in locating Phet and her step mother. The Lao police located Phet’s step mother, in her home village, where she runs a small store, but there was no sign of Phet, until a few months later when she returned to live with her mother. The village-level Lao police have informed the Lao Anti-TIP Division at the Ministry of Public Security that Phet is voluntarily working at a “beer & BBQ” restaurant/bar in Vientiane, but so far no more information is available.

Lao police do not think they have enough evidence yet to arrest Phet’s step mother -- and do not want to interview her yet for fear she will flee from her village if she realizes she is under investigation. The Lao police reported that when they have enough information, they will arrest Phet’s step mother. From the information of Nong Khai Immigration officials, the Nong Khai Governor sent a letter reporting Phet’s case to the Lao side, calling for her presence at a court trial to claim her compensation. However, up until now, there is no report from Lao police on the progress.

Profile of case story No. 8 (This case was shared by an international NGO interviewed for this study)	
Province: Vientiane Capital	Minor VOT - unofficial
Sex: Female	TIP type: Sexual exploitation
Current age: 17	Current job: Restaurant/bar
Age at identification: 16	Marital status: Single

Case story No. 9

Ms. Nang lives in Champasak. Her parents got divorced many years ago. When Nang turned 15 years old, she dropped out of school at grade seven and migrated to Thailand with her mother. Her mother used to work in Thailand and introduced her to sex work. After she was rescued by Thai authorities, she was not identified as a VOT. Nang had mental health problems as a result of being forced to be a sex worker. She was sent back to Laos as an undocumented migrant without necessary support, including health support, while her mother remained in Thailand working. She stayed with her grandmother for a while upon her return home to Laos.

After a civil society service provider in Laos received word about this case from the Department of Social Welfare in Champasak, Nang got health treatments for many months and recovered from her mental health issues. With support from the Lao government and collaboration with VFI, Nang continued secondary education provided by SOS Pakse -- an NGO working to protect and care for children who have lost parental care. After many months, Nang's grandmother reported to VFI that Nang's mother came to Laos and convinced Nang to go back to Thailand. NGOs and government worked together to find out where Nang was, but they have not heard about her since that time.

Profile of case story No. 9 (This case was shared by VFI staff interviewed for this study)	
Province: Champasak	Minor VOT - unofficial
Sex: Female	TIP type: Sexual exploitation
Current age: Unknown	Current job: Unknown
Age at identification: Unknown	Marital status: Single

Case story No. 10

Ms. Sone lives in Pak Ngeum district, Vientiane capital. She dropped out of school in grade seven because her parents could not support her education. After her mother passed away and her father got remarried, she stayed with her grandfather. Sone decided to go to work in Thailand when she was at 16 years old. Her close relative introduced Sone to some work in the southern part of Thailand, but Sone didn't know exactly where. Sone didn't ask her relative (the sister of Sone's grandmother) for more details because she trusted her; she had known Sone since Sone was born. In Thailand, Sone was forced to work in a brothel, although her relative had told her that she would be working in a restaurant. Her father contacted VFI, and through collaboration with Thai authorities and NGOs, Sone was rescued along with ten other Lao girls.

After an interview by Thai authorities, Sone was sent to Bangkok, and then directly to Laos. During the police interview in Sungai Kolok, Sone was told by the police that she had to report that her age was 20 years old and that she had volunteered to work as a sex worker. Her real age at that time was 17: "they convinced me to tell a lie," she said. Thai police told Sone that they need her to cooperate in lying, since they had helped and rescued her. When Sone gave information to a Thai foundation, she gave the information the police told her to give, because she was afraid that she would be not able to go back home if she didn't. In Vientiane, Sone received sewing training from an NGO service provider. This NGO is now supporting her to sue her Lao broker through the legal process in Laos. Sone now lives with her young child in her village (she became pregnant when she worked in Thailand).

Profile of case story No. 10	
Province: Vientiane Capital	Minor VOT - unofficial
Sex: Female	TIP type: Sexual exploitation
Current age: 20	Current job: Farmer and sewing
Age at identification: 17	Marital status: Single

Case story No. 11

Ms. Phone, 22 years old when she migrated to Thailand without her parents' knowledge, was rescued by Thai authorities from her work as a mobile vendor. She was sent to a child protection center for one night before being sent to a shelter, where stayed for roughly one year. During her stay in the shelter in Thailand, Phone was not allowed to contact or talk with her parents. Sometime she missed home and felt so upset.

Her parents were very worried after they lost contact with her, so they started to try to find her. They went to many provinces in Laos to ask people. There was a Thai woman who contacted Phone's parents and told them that Phone was arrested. If they wanted to know where Phone was, they would have to pay her

about 60,000 - 70,000 baht (1,825 - 2,130 USD). Luckily, her parents did not pay that woman. Her parents sold their land and animals to have money to travel to find Phone, in total about 5,000,000 kip (currently 582 USD). Many months passed, and Phone's parents were told by an NGO service provider in Laos that Phone was in a shelter in Thailand. Phone's parents went to the Thai shelter to see Phone; however, the staff at the shelter said to meet with Phone, they have to get an approval letter from the government of Laos. As the result, Phone and her parents did not meet at her shelter in Thailand. Both Phone and her parents felt upset and sad at this.

Profile of case story No. 11	
Province: Saravan	Adult VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Labor exploitation - mobile vendor
Current age: 26	Current job: Sewing and farmer
Age at identification: 24	Marital status: Unknown

Case story No. 12

Ms. Mee, 16 years old, was trafficked and forced to work as a mobile vendor in one province in Thailand. Due to collaboration between NGO service providers in Laos and Thailand, she was rescued by Thai authorities and was sent to a shelter, where she stayed for more than two years. After receiving legal assistance and going to court, Mee was sent back to Laos through the official channel. Mee received 3,000 baht from the Thai government (currently 95 USD). The shelter staff in Thailand told her that they will follow up with the results of her case when it was decided.

Mee is now back in her village in Savannakhet after receiving vocational training in Laos, but she has not gotten any information about the progress of her legal procedures. She felt very happy that she is now reunited with her family, but she does not feel so safe because she worries that her trafficker in Thailand knows her address in Laos. At the time she was in the shelter in Thailand, her trafficker came to her house in Laos with other Thai people to convince Mee's parents to withdraw their case and not claim any compensation from her. The trafficker paid a few thousand baht to her parents, but they did not sign any papers that the trafficker tried to convince them to sign, since they had learned about their legal rights from an NGO service provider in Laos. The NGO had contacted Mee's parents regularly during the time Mee was staying at the shelter in Thailand to provide necessary legal information.

Profile of case story No. 12	
Province: Savannakhet	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Labor exploitation - mobile vendor

Current age: 18	Current job: Farmer and working in a factory
Age at identification: 16	Marital status: Single

Case story No. 13

Ms. Champa was trafficked in Thailand when she was 16 years old. She worked as a domestic worker in Thailand for three years. After she was rescued and went to the Thai court, she got some compensation and was sent back to her family in Laos. Her family supported her to take a vocational training course in Champasak province run by VFI. After completing vocational training, she went back to her village. Champa realized when she returned that her relationships with some of her friends were not so good compared to in the past, before she left for Thailand. Many people asked about her experience and thought she was arrested and stayed in jail, rather than that she was rescued and stayed in a shelter. Champa felt annoyed about that, but she didn't say anything.

Some of her relatives and people in her village blamed her for getting arrested in Thailand, because she hadn't listened to her parent and adults. Sometimes her friends (both male and female) criticized the way Champa dressed, which they thought looked like a sex worker or a mistress. When this happened, she just stayed quiet. After some time passed, she said no one asked questions or judged her again.

Profile of case story No. 13	
Province: Saravan	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Labor exploitation - mobile vendor
Current age: 23	Current job: Farmer
Age at identification: 20	Marital status: Married

Case story No. 14

Ms. Khamnoy lived in a rural village in Saravan province. She never entered school because she is from a poor family with many family members and siblings. She decided to go to Thailand, where she worked in a vegetable farm in one province for three years without pay. After being rescued, she was sent to a Thai shelter, where she stayed for one year. At the shelter, she received health care, vocational training and other services which she said she found very useful for her. After going back to her community for few months, Khamnoy received support from a service provider in Laos. She stayed in a training center for one year for sewing course. She can now make some income from sewing to support her family. Khamnoy has plans to expand her sewing work and also wants to apply her skills to grow organic vegetables to sell in her village. Her family agrees with her plan.

Khamnoy does face some challenges, though, because there is not a market in her village, so she worries that if she produces vegetables, she does not have a way to distribute her products. Khamnoy also cannot read and write, even though she received intensive education when she stayed in the center in Laos. She says she now has forgotten what she learned. Khamnoy doesn't know of any information related to starting or managing businesses, or services to support business owners. Even though she knows that there is a microcredit fund run by the Lao Women's Union in her village, she is afraid that if she joined the fund, she would not be able to manage it, as she has limited math skills and knowledge on how to handle her funds.

Profile of case story No. 14	
Province: Saravan	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Labor exploitation - fruit farm
Current age: 20+	Current job: Farmer and sewing
Age at identification: 17	Marital status: Single

Case story No. 15

Ms. Ta, from a rural village in Vientiane province, was trafficked to the southern part of Thailand and forced to work as a sex worker. After one of her Lao friends at the brothel ran away and reported to the police, Ta was rescued along with ten other Lao girls. Ta was interviewed at the police station, but she said that when the police interviewed her, she did not understand some questions. After being identified as a VOT, Ta was sent to a Thai shelter. During her two years in the shelter, Ta was interviewed by Thai authorities about five times. Sometimes the investigator was not the same person. She found it a bit annoying, as she had to tell her story multiple times.

After Ta was sent back to Laos, she had to stay in a temporary shelter in Laos for one week. Lao authorities came to interview Ta again with exactly the same questions that she was asked in Thailand. Ta said she felt bored that she had to repeat her story again and again. She was also scared to provide information about her work, as she knew that sex work is illegal both in Thailand and Laos and was afraid of getting arrested or punished. She was sent back home, and there were Lao authorities from the district and village level during the hand-over. Ta's parents did not know that she worked as a sex worker, and she was very shy and shameful when the Lao authorities told her parents that she worked as a sex worker in Thailand. The authorities also informed Ta's parents that they should not allow her to go to work in Thailand again.

Profile of case story No. 15	
Province: Vientiane province	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Sexual exploitation

Current age: 18	Current job: Vendor - opened a small grocery store
Age at identification: 16	Marital status: Single

Case story No. 16

Ms. La was identified as a minor VOT in Thailand and rescued after working as a domestic worker in one province in Thailand for almost seven years without pay. After she returned to Laos for a few months, NGO service providers contacted her and her parents to introduce vocational training programs and other services in Laos. La wanted to take a beauty salon course, since it was her dream to learn salon skills. However, her parents suggested that she should take the sewing course because they thought she could make income from this work in her community in the future. La felt a bit confused and unsure about this, because she does not like sewing, but apart from sewing and beauty salon, there were not any courses that felt relevant to her background and skills. She was not sure if, after she completed the course, she would be able to make income or not. She also wanted to continue her education, since she had dropped out of school at grade seven; however, she did not know of any projects or information available that would help her continue her education. She also thinks that she is too old to join a class with younger students.

Profile of case story No. 16	
Province: Savannakhet	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Labor exploitation - domestic worker
Current age: 22	Current job: Sewing
Age at identification: 18	Marital status: Single

Case story No. 17

Ms. Nong went back to her village in a rural area of Saravan province after completing a sewing course provided by a shelter in Champasak. Nong was returned from Thailand in 2015. After returning to her village, Nong could earn about 80-100 USD per month from her sewing services. She is very happy that she is now able to generate income and support her parents. Apart from rice and vegetable farming, sewing is Nong's main income source.

At the time she was interviewed, though, Nong could not make income from sewing because one of the parts of her sewing machine was broken. She hasn't been able to earn income from sewing for the past few months, meaning she has made less money overall, since income from agriculture is minimal and does not cover her food and other living costs. Although she called shelter staff in Champasak to see if they could help, the staff told her that she should try to look for spare parts in the city of Saravan. Nong is

not able to travel to the city, though. Instead, she has plans to get the spare part in the next six months, when her sister, who works in Vientiane, will bring the supplies back to her village for her.

Nong said that, if she cannot find a new part for her machine, she may look for a new job in town or maybe go back to Thailand. She doesn't know about safe migration or how to go work in Thailand through official channels. Nong previously worked as a sex worker in Thailand and thinks that she can only go work in Thailand through non-formal channels, as the laws in Thailand and Laos prohibit working as a sex worker.

Profile of case story No. 17	
Province: Saravan	Minor VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Labor exploitation - fruit farm
Current age: 23	Current job: Sewing and farmer
Age at identification: 20	Marital status: Single

Case story No. 18

Mr. Phonevan dropped out school in grade 5 due to poverty. After his parents got divorced, he decided to go to work in Thailand with other young males from his community. He travelled to Thailand without any documents and was not informed by the broker what work he was going to do at that time. After he arrived in Thailand, he changed his type of work and workplace many times, at his employer's will. In the end, he was forced to work as a fishery worker on a boat for almost four years. After he was rescued in Indonesia, he stayed in a shelter in Indonesia before being sent to Laos directly in 2015. At the end of legal procedures, he received about 600,000 baht (18,380 USD) in compensation from the trafficker in Thailand, but he does not know whether the trafficker was sentenced or not.

After he went back to his community, although he was offered vocational training by an NGO service provider in Laos, he rejected to attend the course. He preferred to stay in his community and continue generating income.

With support from the Lao government and NGO service providers, after the end of the judicial procedure in Thailand, compensation was decided upon and sent to Phonevan through his friend's sister's bank account in Thailand, as he didn't have his own bank account at that time. Phonevan ultimately found out that his friend's sister in Thailand had transferred only half of his compensation to Phonevan's relative's account in Laos. He doesn't know why this happened. Phonevan tried to contact his friend's sister in Thailand, but the phone number they used to communicate in the past is invalid. Phonevan doesn't know where to get support and follow-up on this issue.

Profile of case story No. 18	
Province: Saravan	Adult VOT - official
Sex: Male	TIP type: Labor exploitation - fishery worker
Current age: 29	Current job: Farmer
Age at identification: 25	Marital status: Married

Case story No. 19

Since she lived in a poor family with eight siblings, Ms. Tou didn't have a chance to enter school, so she cannot read and write. As an elder sister in her family, she was not patient with the insufficient food and poor well-being her family experience. Tou contacted a Lao woman who was working in Thailand and had come to visit Tou's village. At that time, Tou decided to go to work in Thailand. She was 16 years old. When she arrived in Thailand, Tou and the Lao women who were trafficked together were sent to different places. Tou has not heard anything about those women until now, whether they are still alive or not. Tou worked as a vendor in Bangkok for one year without pay. She decided to get help from the police nearby and was sent to an immigration center for one month, before being sent to Kretakarn shelter and staying there for one year before returning to Laos.

After the judicial process, Tou received compensation and returned to her hometown in Laos. She attended a nine month vocational training program (sewing) offered by an NGO service provider. However, she found it quite difficult to make income from sewing work, since nearly every house in her village has its own sewing machine. Apart from sewing work that she earns (about three dollars per month), Tou also plants cassava, which earns her about 70 dollars per month. Still, this income is not sufficient to support her family, as she still must take care of many young siblings and her older parents, who are not able to do active work as before.

Tou is quite worried about her family's economic situation, which is still not getting better. She has talked with her two brothers, who are monks in Vientiane Capital, whether she could find a job that would earn her some money to set up a small retail shop in her village. Tou still doesn't know where to get help to find a job, as she cannot read and write. Working in a city is Tou's future plan, but at the moment she still needs to take care of her young siblings and elderly parents.

Profile of case story No. 19	
Province: Saravan	Adult VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Labor exploitation - vendor
Current age: 22	Current job: Farmer and sewing

Age at identification: 19	Marital status: Single
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Case story No. 20

Ms. Tookta is an ethnic girl from a rural area of Saravan. Due to poverty she decided to migrate to work in Thailand as a domestic worker without any documents. She was 15 years old at that time. While working in Thailand, her Thai employer sent money back to Tookta's parent in Laos sometimes, but her employer also kept Took's wages with them, and told Tookta that she would get all her money after she was back in Laos. Tookta asked her employer to let her to go back home to visit her parents many times, but her employer said that she could only go back home if they can find a new domestic worker or someone to replace her. She was working in Thailand for almost three years. Tookta called her father and told him the situation, and her father asked help from an NGO service provider in Laos.

With coordination between Lao and Thai authorities, Tookta was rescued from her workplace. She was interviewed by Thai authorities in a police station and in her shelter in Thailand more than three times. Although there was a Lao translator during the interviews in Thailand, Tookta still felt there was a language barrier. In these interviews, Tookta didn't share all information. She didn't report that her employer kept her wages with them, since she thought that if she told all information to Thai authorities she would not able to go back to Laos early. However, Tookta gave more information to authorities when she was sent back to Laos. She felt more comfortable to talk in her own language and communicate with Lao people.

Profile of case story No. 20	
Province: Saravan	Adult VOT - official
Sex: Female	TIP type: Labor exploitation - domestic worker
Current age: 20	Current job: Farmer and sewing
Age at identification: 18	Marital status: Single

Annex 2: List of Key Informant Interviews from NGOs and service providers

Organization	Main area of focus
Australia-Asia Program to Combat Trafficking in Persons (AAPTIP)	Strengthening justice systems and law enforcement in service to VOTs.
International Labor Organization (ILO)	Migrant protection, with minimal work directly with VOTs.
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Supports Lao government to receive migrants, including operating a transit center in Vientiane for returning migrants and providing some reintegrative services.
Sengsavang	Service provider operating a shelter for VOTs in Savannakhet province.
United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons (UNACT)	Policy development and government support for repatriation and reintegration of VOTs.
UNICEF	Government capacity building for child protection and services to minor VOTs.
UNODC	Cross-border crime prevention, including elimination of trafficking. Law enforcement and justice systems to prosecute crimes.
Winrock International	Preparing to start anti-trafficking activities, likely around vocational training, in the south of Laos.
World Vision	Previously provided vocational training to VOTs in Savannakhet and referred cases to VFI and Sengsavang. Currently works in village-level child protection.
Village Focus International (VFI)	Service provider operating two shelters for VOTs in Champasak province and Vientiane capital. Also works on policy development.

Annex 3: List of Government interviews

Government agency	Interviewee
<i>National level</i>	
Department of Social Welfare; Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare	Head of Social Welfare Division
Lao Women's Union	Acting Director, LWU Counseling Center
<i>Provincial level</i>	
Department of Labor and Social Welfare - Vientiane Province	Technical Officer
Lao Women's Union - Champasak	Vice President and two Technical Officers
Anti-TIP Division, Department of Public Security - Champasak	Deputy Head of Anti-TIP Division and two Technical Officers
Department of Labor and Social Welfare - Champasak	Director
Department of Labor and Social Welfare - Saravan	Deputy Director for Social Welfare Division
Anti-TIP Division, Department of Public Security - Saravan	Director and Deputy Director
Department of Labor and Social Welfare - Savannakhet	Deputy Director and Technical Officers
Lao Women's Union - Savannakhet	Deputy President and Technical Officers
Anti-TIP Division, Department of Public Security - Savannakhet	Director and Secretary of Anti-TIP office
<i>District level</i>	
Labor and Social Welfare Office; Maed District - Vientiane Province	Head of Social Welfare Division
Labor and Social Welfare Office; Pakngeum District - Vientiane Capital	Technical Officer
Labor and Social Welfare Office; Bacheng District - Champasak	Deputy Director

Labor and Social Welfare Office; Lao Ngam District - Saravan	Deputy Director
Lao Women's Union; Lao Ngam District - Saravan	President and Vice President for Community Campaigns
Labor and Social Welfare Office; Outhomphone District - Savannakhet	Deputy Director and two Technical Officers

Annex 4: Detailed case information from in-depth interviews (IDIs) with VOTs

Annex 4: IDI profiles																			
IDI No	Sex	Ethnicity	Minor or adult case	Type of work in Thailand	Where victim was rescued	Shelter in Thailand	Length of stay in Thailand	Victim status	Current age	Age when migrated	Age when rescued	Mode of travel	Document used for migration	Informed parents when migrating?	Escaped or rescued?	If rescued, happy to be rescued?	Volunteered to seek legal assistance or not	Current job	Type of interview
1-CPS	F	Lao Lum	Minor	N/A	Lao Thui (land border) (Chantarak and Ubon Ratchasima)	N/A	N/A	Unofficial	14	14	15	14 Land border	None	No	N/A - victim was identified as crossing into Thailand	N/A	N/A	Sewing and farmer	In person
2-CPS	F	Lao Lum	Minor	Sexual exploitation	Ubon Ratchasima	Naresawant	2+ years	Official	18	18	14	16 Boat (traditional border)	None	Yes	Escaped	N/A	Yes	Fisher	Phone
3-CPS	M	Lao Lum	Adult	Labor exploitation - Fishery worker	Indonesia	Sent back to Laos directly	N/A	Official	30	20+	27	27 Boat (traditional border)	None	Yes	Rescued	Yes	Yes	Farmer	Phone
1-SRV	F	Lao Theung (Stuy)	Minor	exploitation - Domestic work	Cannot remember	Kratiarak	1 year and two months	Official	20	16	17	17 Cross international border	Temporary border pass	No	Rescued	Yes	Yes	Sewing and farmer	In person
2-SRV	F	Lao Theung (Kuang)	Adult	Labor exploitation - Mobile vendor	Samut Sakhon	Kratiarak	1 year	Official	26	22	24	24 Cross international border	Temporary border pass	No	Rescued	Yes	Yes	Sewing and farmer	In person
3-SRV	F	Lao Theung	Minor	Labor exploitation - Fruit farm	Prachap Khiri Khan	Kratiarak	1+ years	Official	20	17	17	17 Boat (traditional border)	None	No	Rescued	Yes	No	Sewing	In person
4-SRV	F	Lao Theung	Minor	Labor exploitation - Fruit farm	Prachap Khiri Khan	Kratiarak	1+ years	Official	19	16	16	16 Boat (traditional border)	None	No	Rescued	Yes	No	Farmer	In person
5-SRV	F	Lao Theung	Minor	Labor exploitation - Fruit farm	Prachap Khiri Khan	Kratiarak	1+ years	Official	20	17	17	17 Boat (traditional border)	None	No	Rescued	Yes	No	Farmer	In person
6-SRV	F	Lao Theung	Minor	Labor exploitation - Mobile vendor	Samut Sakhon	Kratiarak	1 year	Official	22	17	17	17 Boat (traditional border)	None	No	Escaped	N/A	Yes	Farmer	In person
7-SRV	F	Lao Theung (Stuy)	Adult	Labor exploitation - Mobile vendor	Siem Thani	N/A	N/A	Unofficial	25	17	23	23 Boat (traditional border)	None	No	Escaped	N/A	N/A	Hairstresser and farmer	Phone
8-SRV	F	Lao Theung (Stuy)	Minor	Labor exploitation - Domestic work and domestic worker	Samut Sakhon	Kratiarak	11 months	Official	19	15	16	16 Boat (traditional border)	Temporary border pass	No	Rescued	Yes	No	Farmer	Phone
9-SRV	F	Lao Theung (Stuy)	Minor	Labor exploitation - Vendor	Bangkok	Pakred	1 year and two months	Official	22	16	16	17 Land border	None	No	Escaped	N/A	No	Farmer	Phone
10-SRV	M	Lao Theung	Adult	Labor exploitation - Fishery worker	Indonesia	Sent back to Laos directly	N/A	Official	29	18	18	26 Boat (traditional border)	None	No	Rescued	Yes	Yes	Farmer	Phone
11-SRV	F	Lao Theung	Minor	Labor exploitation - Fruit farm	Bangkok	N/A	N/A	Unofficial	22	15	15	20 Boat (traditional border)	None	No	Rescued	Yes	No	Sewing and farmer	Phone
1-SVK	F	Lao Lum	Minor	Labor exploitation - Domestic work	Chaiyaphum	Naresawant	5 months	Official	18	15	16	16 International border check point	Temporary border pass	Yes	Rescued	Yes	Yes	Factory worker and sewing	In person
2-SVK/KM	F	Lao Lum	Minor	Labor exploitation - Domestic work	Bangkok	Kratiarak	1 year and two months	Official	18	15	15	15 International border check point	Passport	Yes	Rescued	Yes	No	Working at Sengsawang as assistant	In person
3-SVK	F	Lao Lum	Minor	exploitation - Domestic work	Bangkok	Kratiarak	Several months (cannot remember)	Official	22	16	16	16 Boat (traditional border)	None	No	Rescued	Yes	No	Farmer	In person
4-SVK	F	Lao Lum	Minor	Sexual exploitation	Nakhon Ratchasima	Naresawant	4 months	Official	22	14	20	20 International border check point	Passport	Yes	Escaped	N/A	No	Sewing	In person
1-VTC	F	Lao Lum	Minor	Sexual exploitation	Narathiwat	N/A	N/A	Unofficial	20	16	17	17 International border check point	Passport	No	Escaped	N/A	N/A	Sewing and farmer	In person
1-VTP	F	Lao Theung (Kham)	Minor	Sexual exploitation	Udon Thani	Naresawant	5 months	Official	18	15	Unknown	Unknown International border check point	Temporary border pass	No	Rescued	No	No	Farmer and vendor	In person

Annex 5: Data from figures and diagrams

Figure 4: VOTs returned from Thailand to Laos, 2015 – 2017

	Total VOTs	Female VOTs	Male VOTs
2015	103	99	4
2016	97	84	13
2017	29	24	5

Figure 5: Age divisions for VOTs, 2015 – 2017

Total VOTs

	Under 15	15 – 17	18 – 22	23 - 29	30+
Number of VOTs	41	138	32	13	5
Percentage of VOTs	17.9%	60.3%	14%	5.7%	2.1%

Female VOTs

	Under 15	15 – 17	18 – 22	23 - 29	30+
Number of VOTs	36	130	28	12	1
Percentage of VOTs	17.4%	62.8%	13.5%	5.8%	0.5%

Male VOTs

	Under 15	15 – 17	18 – 22	23 - 29	30+
Number of VOTs	5	8	4	1	4
Percentage of VOTs	22.7%	36.4%	18.2%	4.5%	18.2%

Figure 6: Province of origin for VOTs, 2015 – 2017

Province of origin	Number of VOTs	Percentage of VOTs
Vientiane province	50	21.8%

Luang Prabang	35	15.3%
Savannakhet	29	12.7%
Saravan	27	11.8%
Vientiane capital	21	9.2%
Champasak	18	7.9%
Xayabouly	17	7.4%
Bolikhambai	12	5.2%
Houaphan	2	0.9%
Bokeo	2	0.9%
Oudomxay	1	0.2%
Xieng Khouang	1	0.2%
Xaysomboun	1	0.2%

Figure 7: Type of work in Thailand, 2015 – 2017

Type of work	Number of VOTs	Percentage of VOTs
Sex work	152	66.375
Laborer	50	21.834
Housekeeper	11	4.803
Fruit farm	3	1.310
Waiter	3	1.310
Fisheries	2	0.873
Gold processing	2	0.873
Factories	2	0.873
No work	2	0.873
At-risk	1	0.437
Unspecified	1	0.437

Figure 8: Type of vocational training in Thailand, 2015 – 2017

Type of training pursued	Number of VOTs
No training	74
Weaving	51
Handicrafts	44
Salon	22

Woodworking	16
Massage	9
Food processing	6
Two subjects	4
Fabric crafts	1
Metalworking	1
Knitting	1

Figure 9: Length of stay, on average, 2015 – 2017

Year	Average length of stay
2015	294
2016	417
2017	265

Figure 10: Length of stay, by year, 2015 – 2017

Percentages

	Under 6 months	6 months – 1 year	1 – 2 years	2+ years
2015	17.8	58.4	23.8	0
2016	16.3	20.7	59.8	3.2
2017	50	33	17	0

Raw data

	Under 6 months	6 months – 1 year	1 – 2 years	2+ years
2015	18	59	24	0
2016	15	19	55	3
2017	6	4	2	0