



(Re)Integration

Perspectives of Victim Service Agencies on
Successes & Challenges in Trafficking Victim
(Re)Integration in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region

All photographs in this publication are printed in compliance with UNIAP guiding principles on ethics and human rights in counter-trafficking.

(Re)Integration

Perspectives of Victim Service Agencies on Successes &
Challenges in Trafficking Victim (Re)Integration in the
Greater Mekong Sub-Region





Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Existing (Re)Integration Systems & Mechanisms in the Greater Mekong Sub-region	3
Cambodia and China	3
Lao PDR and Myanmar	4
Thailand and Vietnam	5
(Re)Integration Key Issues Identified by Victim Service Providers	7
Issue 1. Victims are not being identified.	7
Issue 2. There is a lack of clarity regarding the definition of ‘successful (re)integration.’	9
Issue 3. Services to male victims of trafficking are lacking.	11
Issue 4. Economic assistance being provided, including vocational training, is often not related to the actual economic environment into which victims are being repatriated.	12
Issue 5. Psychosocial support, especially to address trauma, needs to be strengthened.	14
Issue 6. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) are needed to strengthen practitioner capacity to provide effective (re)integration assistance.	15
Issue 7. Cooperation between government agencies, governments and NGOs, as well as NGOs, needs to be strengthened, especially for (re)integration of cross-border cases.	16



Vocational training in Cambodia, 2011.

Introduction

Human trafficking is a serious crime involving the cheating or deceiving of people into sexual servitude or labour for the purpose of exploitation, or simply the transport of children for exploitative purposes. It is a transnational crime that affects people all over the world. The International Labour Organization estimated in 2005 that 9.49 million people were in forced labour in the Asia-Pacific region, a significant number of whom are in the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

The trafficking experience can be devastating, and difficult to overcome. It can leave long-lasting scars, physically and emotionally, which may not heal even once the victim has reached a safe haven. Often times, victims are identified and returned to their pre-existing environment, and thus into the same conditions that resulted in their being trafficked in the first place.

It is clear that many victims of trafficking require assistance to regain their autonomy, recover from the effects of trafficking and rebuild their lives. Government and non-government organisations play a key role in assisting victims to successfully recover and (re)integrate, and must therefore be responsive to victim's individual and unique needs, including changes over time and in response to on-going life challenges. As a part of the COMMIT Process, the COMMIT Region-wide (Re)Integration Initiative was launched in 2010 to ensure that these needs are identified and appropriately addressed in the short- and long-term, across the GMS.

The COMMIT Region-wide (Re)Integration Initiative was initiated during the final year of the 2nd COMMIT Sub-Regional Plan of Action (COMMIT SPA II, 2008-2010), and continues its progress under the 3rd COMMIT Sub-Regional Plan of Action (COMMIT SPA III, 2011-2013). The main objective of the COMMIT Region-wide (Re)Integration Initiative is to evaluate the effectiveness of existing (re)integration assistance in the GMS and develop a richer understanding of the true needs and concerns of trafficking victims, both assisted and unassisted, in order to generate practical recommendations for improving (re)integration systems and assistance region-wide. The ultimate goal is more effective assistance and sustainable (re)integration for more human trafficking victims in the GMS.

Throughout 2010, victim service practitioners and other anti-trafficking responders providing support to victims of human trafficking gathered in a series of National Practitioner Forums in each of the GMS countries (Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) to discuss existing (re)integration assistance systems, lessons learned, successes, and challenges. The series of forums was organized as a part of the COMMIT Region-wide (Re)Integration Initiative, sponsored by the relevant social welfare ministries of the COMMIT countries, with financial and technical support from World Vision and the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP), as well as Save the Children,

IOM, and UNICEF. This document aims to summarize the key findings of these national practitioner forums, drawing out key themes, lessons learned, and common challenges facing victim service agencies in the process of (re)integrating trafficked persons. The perspectives contained within this publication are the voices, ideas, feedback, lessons, and concerns of the victim service agencies and other anti-trafficking practitioners across the GMS.

In addition to the national practitioner forums, a second key data source of the COMMIT Region-wide (Re)Integration Initiative is the study *After Migration: Experiences and Challenges of (Re)Integration*, a pioneering study involving in-depth interviews with over 300 trafficking victims across the GMS, including victims of labour, marriage, and sex trafficking, both identified and unidentified as well as assisted and unassisted. The study will be completed in 2012, with the support of the COMMIT Governments and a range of national and international stakeholders.

Vocational training in motorcycle repair and assistance in establishing small -business motorcycle repair shops are services offered to male victims of trafficking in Myanmar (above) and Cambodia (below).



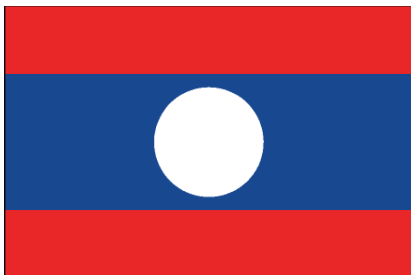
Existing (Re)Integration Systems & Mechanisms in the GMS



Cambodian victims of cross-border trafficking are largely repatriated from Thailand and Viet Nam through systematic procedures based on bilateral MoUs. Cambodia has standard operating procedures (SOPs), policies, and other regulations pertaining to rehabilitation, reintegration, and victim protection. For cooperation with Thailand, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation's (MoSVY) Anti-Human Trafficking and Reintegration Office receives information on identified Cambodian trafficking victims, which it shares with the concerned provincial departments of MoSVY (DoSVY) for family tracing. Following this, repatriation is organized through the Poipet Transit Center (PTC), a temporary shelter run by MoSVY near the Thai-Cambodian border. Victims regardless of age and gender may stay at the PTC for a maximum period of 24 hours, after which they are reintegrated back into their communities with help from NGOs in form of transportation, immediate assistance packages and business start-up support. For Viet Nam, repatriation involves the Cambodian Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City that identifies victims and passes the information on to the concerned DoSVY for family tracing, after which the two sides organize the return. Trafficked women and children repatriated from Thailand and Viet Nam can also opt for a NGO shelter program with psychological, social, educational and skills training services. Stays in shelters vary in duration from three months to sometimes as long as five years. Post-shelter stay, NGOs continue to support trafficking survivors in their (re)integration efforts, through follow-up visits and sometimes additional capital or advanced skills training for around one to two years. Repatriation of Cambodian victims exploited in other countries follows diplomatic channels via Embassies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFA), with help from stakeholders such as UNIAP or IOM, and local NGOs in both Cambodia and the destination country. MoFA subsequently requests MoSVY to take the lead in the (re)integration assistance along above outlined procedures, although many victims repatriated in this manner remain without comprehensive support. For domestic trafficking, most women and children victims, especially in cases of sexual exploitation, may obtain similar services from MoSVY and concerned NGOs as previously outlined; men, however, are left out in this context. It is equally challenging for many self-returned victims from abroad to receive support for their (re)integration into Cambodian society.



In China, efforts to identify and reintegrate trafficking victims focus predominantly on the domestic level, although the government also repatriates and assists Chinese victims abroad, especially from Malaysia and Thailand. Generally, only women and children in exploitative situations, such as forced marriage, illegal adoption, sexual exploitation, the sale of children, and forced labor for minors are identified and assisted as victims of trafficking in China; though men can be recognized as victims of forced labor under the penal code and may also receive assistance in government shelters. Once police have identified victims, Ministry of Public Security (MPS), Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) and All China Women's Federation (ACWF), with the support from other authorities and NGOs, provide temporary relief, return and reintegration assistance. With its vast territory and population, the Chinese government maintains 1,593 relief shelters and child protection centers across the country, which provide a wide range of services to trafficking victims, including accommodation, medical treatment, psychological rehabilitation, legal education and services as well as livelihoods and skills training. Such assistance is aimed at raising victims' awareness of trafficking and improving their self-protection capacities, professional and life skills. All governmental shelters operate according to guidelines developed by MCA, which specify mechanisms for the receipt of trafficking victims as well as services to be supplied during their stays. ACWF's local units as well as iNGOs and grassroots organizations at community level may additionally offer accommodation and food, skills and livelihood trainings, medical and psychological assistance or access to microfinance opportunities to trafficking victims; some also perform six months of follow-up support after beneficiaries have completed shelter programs.



In Laos, mechanisms of repatriation and (re)integration largely focus on cross-border cases with Thailand. For the limited numbers of victims repatriated from elsewhere, processes continue to follow *ad hoc* diplomatic channels, with returnees being sent back to their communities upon arrival. On the basis of a bilateral MoU, returnees from Thailand, however, are received at the Vientiane Transit Centre (VTC), an institution jointly operated by the Lao Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Over a period of one week, police conduct interviews about their trafficking experience; relevant organizations (AFESIP, Village Focus International, and World Vision) introduce potential (re)integration assistance programs; and medical doctors check the health conditions and provide treatment, if necessary. MLSW, IOM and/or WV then facilitate the return of victims to their families, after which a concerned organization conducts a family and needs assessment to jointly work out an adequate (re)integration support program. Depending on the agency, this can involve a stay at one of four shelters in the country, providing a safe environment with vocational training as well as psychological and social support. In other cases, similar forms of assistance are provided to trafficking survivors in their respective communities without involving shelters. Once (re)integration programs are concluded, returnees continue to be monitored for their well-being at their place of residence for one to three years. The above also applies to cases of domestic trafficking, which are dealt with by Lao Women's Union (LWU) and AFESIP. Both run shelters programs for domestic victims with similar services as outlined above. While men can be identified as victims of trafficking under the Penal Code, most services that exist serve women and children only.



In Myanmar, several government-to-government repatriation channels facilitate the return of victims from other countries, especially China and Thailand. All victims regardless of age and gender have rights to protection and services under the anti-trafficking law. In practice, however, services to women and children are more comprehensive than for men. Upon arrival, victims are received at one of five transit/reception shelters located countrywide, managed by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), admitting returnees for a short stay prior to the return to their home communities. Vocational skills training, urgent medical care, and basic counseling are among the services available during this time. In exceptional cases, child victims with negative family assessment results may be permitted to stay for long-term assistance. A return and reintegration operational meeting, chaired by DSW and involving a wide range of government and non-government anti-trafficking actors, is organized soon after the victims' arrival for the coordination of all support actions in preparation for effective (re)integration. Responsibilities are divided among relevant actors and include immediate family tracing/assessment, issuance of national identity documents, law enforcement interviews, participation in legal proceedings, return transportation, and allocation of responsibilities for (re)integration assistance. DSW, World Vision (WV) and Save the Children (SC) are the main longer-term (re)integration service providers in Myanmar. If victims are returning to an area with presence of WV and SC, a full (re)integration package is available, including needs assessment, vocational skills training, material and income generation support, psychological and social assistance, as well as one to two years of follow-up monitoring and support. In remote or hard-to-reach parts of Myanmar, DSW with support of UNICEF jointly offer a partial package of (re)integration support, consisting of a cash grant, material assistance, and a shorter period of follow-up. Additionally, IOM offers cash-in-hand grants on a gap-filling basis to support the (re)integration of male and female victims repatriated from abroad. For domestic trafficking, victims are largely identified by law enforcement units. However, little assistance is available to help them (re)integrate back into society. Likewise, self-returnees receive only minimal support; if they report their experience of exploitation to shelters or law enforcement units, they may obtain small grants in cash or a victim-kit provided by DSW with UNICEF support, but no comprehensive services are accessible for people in such situations.



The Thai Department of Social Development and Welfare (DSDW) coordinates with police, IOM, and local NGOs for the reception of Thai victims at Bangkok airport upon arrival. Following this, an interview is conducted with each returnee about their trafficking experience, also to determine what initial assistance is most appropriate at this stage. Temporary accommodation is provided in governmental relief shelters with protective services until all required coordination at national level is completed and victims are sent back home. The Bureau of Anti-Trafficking in Women and Children (BATWC) then works with provincial governmental agencies, the private sector and NGOs to assist returnees with their social and economic (re)integration into society. This comprises needs assessment procedures with the involvement of the victims and their families, and considers the economic conditions of the wider community. Returnees subsequently undergo one of nine long-term shelter programs in the country (four for women, four for men and one for boys) for around two to three months, which aim at providing psychosocial support and skills training. The latter usually involves cooking and cosmetic courses for women, and mechanics and technician classes for men. Alternatively, they may opt for outpatient support mechanisms, which provide similar training programs, but do not take place in shelter environments. Once such courses have been completed, BATWC and provincial governmental agencies coordinate with counterparts at district and village levels to monitor the success of (re)integration and to provide further guidance and assistance. Such monitoring and follow-up periods generally range from three months to one year. For self-returning victims from Thailand, partner NGOs in destination countries usually inform the DSDW about their return, then, together with the police, DSDW officials conduct victim identification procedures at the immigration office. If self-returnees are identified as trafficked, they are entitled to protective services. Regarding repatriation and reintegration of foreign victims of trafficking, Thailand emphasizes international cooperation for safe repatriation through government-to-government mechanisms with standard operating procedures (SOPs) following a victim-centered approach aiming to maintain the utmost benefits to and rights of victims.



In Vietnam, the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Welfare (MOLISA) is responsible for the overall protection and (re)integration of trafficking victims. The country's new anti-trafficking law recognizes male and female trafficking victims, although men are largely underserved due to a lack of tailored, gender-appropriate programs including shelter. Vietnamese victims identified in neighboring Cambodia, Lao PDR and China are sent back through official channels at joint land borders. For returnees repatriated from further away, most importantly Thailand and Malaysia, the country's diplomatic missions facilitate their homecoming with support from IOM and relevant NGOs. In certain areas, arrivals may request relief support from border guard centers or short-term reception facilities, which are respectively managed by the Border Guard Command and MOLISA. For the latter, there are three such centers in the country, two in the north for returnees from China and one in the south for arrivals from Cambodia, which provide accommodation, basic necessities, health care and initial counseling for up to 15 days. Thereafter, victims can seek further assistance through one of five long-term facilities, which are run by a local Vietnamese government agency with technical and financial support from international NGOs. These institutions have a broader mandate than the above-mentioned reception centers, but tend to attract victims whose relatives live in the proximity. Services cover mainstream education, vocational training, legal assistance, healthcare and counseling, depending on the results of a needs assessment as well as choices by beneficiaries and their families. Residencies do not have predefined durations and victims may stay as long as two years, after which follow-up support is provided on individual basis without standardized procedures. Victims can equally opt for assistance on an outpatient basis through local MOLISA offices for up to six months, such as vocational training, job placement assistance or loans. Moreover, the new anti-trafficking law also allows the many self-returning victims to report their exploitation to a government agency, to receive official status as a trafficked person and be eligible for services. These procedures, however, often fail to produce enough evidence for identification, leaving those unentitled with the only option of seeking support from long-term shelters with broader mandates.



Economic (re)integration assistance
in Myanmar, 2011.

(Re)Integration Key Issues Identified by Victim Service Providers

ISSUE 1. VICTIMS ARE NOT BEING IDENTIFIED

Trafficking victims can fall into one of two categories – identified and unidentified. Identified victims are those who are given status as a trafficking victim by a relevant authority, with all the rights and services associated with trafficking victim protection. Unidentified victims – arguably the vast majority of trafficking victims in the world – may be in harmful circumstances or have exited from the harm environment, but have not been identified as a person with special rights to protection and services as the victim of a crime. Unidentified victims, especially those who have been trafficked to a foreign country, are particularly vulnerable since they may appear to be illegal migrant workers or voluntary sex workers and subject to criminalization. Equally, their assistance needs often remain largely unrecognized and unaddressed. During the (re)integration practitioner forums, predominantly source countries, such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, raised the difficulty of tracing ‘missing persons’ who may be unidentified trafficking victims in a foreign country, as well as the challenge of identifying victims of trafficking from among deportees and self returnees. Practitioners in Viet Nam acknowledged that the majority of trafficking victims in



Cambodian anti-trafficking responders design victim ID quickcards for use by local front-liners who may interface with possible victims.

Viet Nam are likely 'self-returnees' who have little information about how to access the rights and services provided for trafficked persons under the law and may not even know that they are considered trafficking victims.

Practitioners in what are often destination countries, such as Thailand, acknowledged similar challenges in identifying trafficking victims who may be afraid to step forward to ask for assistance from

government authorities, or are not knowledgeable about how to report a case or request assistance. Most countries more generally indicated that there are shortfalls in victim identification systems, which prevent the provision of assistance to more victims who want and need it. Victim identification is often further challenged by the fact that many victims have no idea what trafficking is, or that they fall into this category of 'trafficked person' with rights to protection and services.

CASE STUDY: Unidentified victim of marriage trafficking successfully self-integrates

Ms. T, a 22-year-old Vietnamese mother, was offered a job with high income in another province by a relative. During the journey, she was intoxicated and, after she regained consciousness, found that she had been sold to a man in China. Five years later - now with a second child, a three-year-old boy - she managed to escape with the help of a Vietnamese neighbor, also a former trafficking victim. However, the neighbor deceived her again and sold her son to other Chinese people; she never saw him again. Wandering around in China without home or job, Ms. T met a man who offered her work and accommodation. Later, he also introduced her to a Vietnamese woman, a former trafficking victim herself, who helped her return to Viet Nam. Having come back to her village after more than ten years, everything seemed different; even her husband had left with their child. Ms. T had lots of problems in adjusting to her former home; she lost confidence, felt hopeless, and suffered from mental problems. All she could do was to help her elderly parents on the farm. Staff from a service provider NGO, jointly with local governmental authorities, visited her and provided reintegration assistance, including animals for livestock, health insurance, as well as training on more sophisticated farming techniques. Local authorities supported her to complete procedures for divorce and gave her the opportunity to attend a literacy course. Crucially, participation in a local self-help group for trafficking victims allowed her to regain confidence and self-esteem. Today, she has re-married, has a one-year old child and lives happily with her family in the village.

ISSUE 2. THERE IS A LACK OF CLARITY REGARDING THE DEFINITION OF 'SUCCESSFUL (RE)INTEGRATION'

Practitioners across the GMS expressed concerns that the social, psychological, and medical gains that may be made during the first days or weeks of interim care risk being undone by returning victims back to the same circumstances that may have pushed them to leave in the first place. Practitioners in Lao PDR noted, *“Poverty and lack of income-generating activities in the village may be...driving villagers to migrate. If poverty still exists in the village, should we be sending victims back to these villages?”* Such discussions led practitioners in Lao PDR and Myanmar to debate whether the most effective form of (re)integration was into the home community, or integration to a location where victims would be able to find gainful employment to support themselves and their families (while also acknowledging the many issues raised by this approach).

Unresolved social and familial issues were also cited as challenges to safe and successful reintegration, for example violence, conflict, or substance abuse in the family. In addition to economic and

social/familial factors, security factors also posed a threat to successful reintegration. Since most victims are unidentified, criminals in their cases are typically still free – including brokers or agents with ties to the home community. Practitioners in Thailand cited instances where brokers had influence over the parents of trafficking victims, leading to negative consequences for those victims.

Practitioners in countries such as Cambodia, China, and Viet Nam discussed the general challenge of determining whether (re)integration was “successful” or not due to the relatively short period of time that most (re)integration programmes are funded. This was a common theme across all countries, with a desire to know the outcomes of trafficked persons two or three years after the trafficking episode, but often with funds to cover only three months, six months, or a year of follow-up. Many of the discussions also brought out the challenge of there not being a widely agreed clear definition of what constitutes “successful (re)integration.”

CASE STUDY: Parent-less victim re-enslaved

A young female victim without parental care was returned to her community to live in her aunt's house, though her aunt already had many children. The victim ended up being forced to work in slave-like conditions for the aunt and children because this risk was not detected during family tracing and assessment.

CASE STUDY: Successful reintegration in Myanmar due to addressing the broader family situation

Ms. N was 16 years old when she was persuaded by a friend to go to work in Thailand. In the border area, a broker promised them a good job with high salary, but finally sold the girls to a karaoke in on the other side of the border. While her friend quickly managed to escape, Ms. N did not, and was sexually exploited. Within two months, she was transferred to a different karaoke location, then sold to a pimp who smuggled her to Malaysia to work in a brothel. It was only after three years that she managed to escape, when a client bought her from the brothel owner. However, as she refused to live with that man, he locked her up in a small room for two months. One day, after having made loud noises, occupants in adjacent apartments got suspicious and informed the police who rescued her. With the assistance of the authorities in Myanmar and a UN project, Ms. N was repatriated to her home country. The UN then coordinated with an NGO for family tracing, assessment, and reintegration assistance. NGO staff provided intensive counseling for four months, and continued monitoring her well-being twice a month thereafter. As it was Ms. N's desire to help her parents with their paddy cultivation, the organization provided the family with two buffalos and a hand tractor to support their work on the fields. As a result, the rice cultivation has flourished, allowing the family to generate income and even savings. She has participated in victim gatherings, which helped her realize that many other young people share the same fate. This encouraged Ms. N to play an active role in community awareness campaigns, where she spreads her knowledge on human trafficking to peers and other community members. Ms. N is now 24 and she lives happily with her family. Ms. N's recovery and reintegration were greatly aided by the way the service providers worked with her entire family, addressing their larger economic situation, while building her self-confidence through appropriate individual and group therapy approaches.



Economic assistance provided to victims in Myanmar aims to be responsive to the broader socioeconomic needs of the entire family.

ISSUE 3. SERVICES TO MALE VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ARE LACKING

It was broadly recognized in many countries that a significant number of trafficking victims are male, and that male trafficking victims often have different assistance needs than women and girls. Men also may be more reluctant to identify themselves as ‘victims’ and receive protection and support. Despite recognition of these challenges, gender-appropriate services for male trafficking victims remain scarce, although trafficking and/or forced labour of men is recognized as a crime under the penal codes or anti-trafficking laws of all GMS countries. As discussed above, practitioners debated challenges in the identification of male victims of trafficking, owing to a widespread lack of understanding by frontline authorities of the indicators of labour trafficking, specifically, how to distinguish a foreign male victim of labour trafficking from non-exploited undocumented foreign

migrant workers. Shelters for men are officially established only in Thailand, while Chinese shelters deal with both male and female beneficiaries. The transit centers in Lao PDR and Myanmar register male victims and potentially provide male victims with some preliminary assistance, but no shelter services are available for men. In Cambodia, a drop-in center for male victims of trafficking exists in Koh Kong province. Also, Vietnamese reception centers on the northern border with China have recognized the need to extend assistance to male victims of labour exploitation and trafficking. Legal, psychosocial, and vocational training services are available to men in Cambodia, while Myanmar is undergoing a consultative process to plan expansion of individualized (re)integration assistance to male victims of trafficking.

CASE STUDY: Cambodian man starts a new life with new skills and a small barber shop

LH was 23 years old when he left his village with seven other people to find work in Thailand. He first got a job on a plantation, where he stayed for one month until a co-worker convinced him to search for a better job in Bangkok. He ended up being cheated and sold to a fishing boat. After about three months at sea where he was repeatedly abused, LH managed to escape as the boat anchored in a Malaysian harbor. Unfortunately, after escaping, he fell into the hands of a trafficker who sold him to a rubber plantation. After being forced to work for one month without payment, he ran away and was arrested by police. The Cambodian Embassy, with support from a Cambodian NGO, eventually managed to repatriate him after over six months in detention. Upon arrival in his home country, a government and non-government social worker supported the return to his community, with the latter also assisting him with barber training and start-up capital to build a barber shop in front of his house. This has ensured a regular job with a steady customer base, generating a daily income of US \$2.50 to \$5.00, and allowing him to fund his younger brother's schooling. In the evenings, he teaches mathematics and Khmer language to children in the village. His latest plan is to borrow money from Vision Fund, World Vision's micro-credit program, to further expand the business by opening a grocery shop and selling gasoline. LH today is well integrated into the village community; he has many friends, and neighbors relate to him normally as with other villagers. His parents are proud that he overcame the bad experiences, and are happy about his ability to support his brother. He has now also fallen in love and is planning to get married soon.

ISSUE 4. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE BEING PROVIDED, INCLUDING VOCATIONAL TRAINING, IS OFTEN NOT RELATED TO THE ACTUAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT INTO WHICH VICTIMS ARE BEING REPATRIATED

Skills trainings for trafficking victims in GMS countries commonly take place in shelter environments and often involve a certain standard set of vocational programs, such as sewing, weaving, hairdressing or cooking. With operations often targeted at very specific audiences such as girls and young women, these services tend not to be appropriate for many victims who do not fit this profile. Typical courses take around three to six months, after which beneficiaries are returned to their communities, often with an economic assistance package comprising relevant equipment and funds to start up a business based on the newly obtained skills. For jobs that are not related to starting a small business, apprenticeships and job placement are sometimes offered but oftentimes not.

The practitioner forums across the GMS have shown that few success stories exist, where the economic and vocational assistance has allowed beneficiaries to make a sustainable living as result of such support. Participants in Cambodia explained that training courses often did not respond to the needs of labour markets in those areas that victims were (re)integrated into. They also suggested that trainees sometimes lack the required basic levels of numeracy and literacy to successfully undertake the offered vocational programs, be employed and/or run a small business. Discussions in China revealed that, with personal freedoms of women in remote regions often restricted, the

realities of life did not allow them to make use of newly acquired skills. Lao practitioners discussed that it was often parents who decided what they wanted their children to study, without much consideration for the victims' interests or the market realities in their villages. Myanmar service providers discussed whether shelter-based training should focus on life

skills, the development of life plans, and knowledge of basic health instead of vocational training, since average shelter stays are often too short for victims to gain usable vocational skills.

There was broad consensus across the forums that the types of trainings and assistance provided to trafficking victims need further improvements and adjustments. The widely applied one-fits-all approach, with limited available time for skills development, has proven of limited success in ensuring beneficiaries' successful economic (re)integration into their respective communities.

“Vocational skills provided in shelters must suit the victim and the community context.”

- NGO victim service provider, Lao PDR

CASE STUDY: Integration providing better opportunities than reintegration in Lao PDR

Ms. P was recruited by a broker in her village to work in Thailand. She crossed the border by boat with many other Lao migrants. When the migrants arrived in Bangkok, the group was separated to work in different places. Ms. P was assigned to work for a Thai family as domestic worker. Since the employer was not paying her any salary, she decided to quit her job and engage with another family needing a domestic worker. However, working conditions deteriorated further: she again did not receive any money and, in addition, was mistreated and abused whenever the owners of the house were unhappy with her performance. One day, Ms. P was beaten so harshly that she could not hear properly for a long time. Unable to accept such treatment any longer, she escaped from her work place and informed the police. In a victim screening interview, she was identified as a victim of trafficking and subsequently referred to Kredtakarn shelter. Upon official repatriation to Lao PDR, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW) assigned her to a World Vision-supported (re)integration support program at the community level. NGO staff, in coordination with district departments of MLSW and the Lao Women's Union (LWU), conducted a family and needs assessment. Assessments revealed that Ms. P was interested in sewing, after which the NGO provided her with the opportunity to attend a three-month training course at a company based in the provincial capital, covering accommodation, food and transportation throughout the period. Upon completion, the organization, jointly with MLSW and LWU, assisted Ms. P in negotiating with the factory owner about a work contract. She now works for the company, without requiring additional support and assistance from other stakeholders.



Girls and young women attend sewing classes at a long-term shelter in Lao PDR. Through increasing cooperation with companies, NGOs are trying to help beneficiaries find employment after completing their training.

ISSUE 5. PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT, ESPECIALLY TO ADDRESS TRAUMA, NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED

Trafficking victims rescued from highly exploitative work environments are often in need of comprehensive health care, both physically and psychologically. While physical wounds may be recognized and attended to, it is the impact on their mental health that is especially difficult to identify and cure, with potentially severe repercussions for their well-being. Much of the challenge is the need for strengthened psychological and social support from properly trained staff. Cambodian practitioners pointed to the overall insufficient numbers of institutions with the capacity to provide such services, especially for victims with severe trauma. They also suggested that victims of sexual exploitation often required special forms of support, and that the available range was not suitably diversified to allow for such tailored care. Thai practitioners discussed their difficulties in providing adequate support to people with mental disorders, sometimes developed as a result of their trafficking experiences. China practitioners similarly identified a gap between victims' individual needs on the one hand, and the number of adequately skilled personnel as well as the range of tailored services on

the other. In one forum, participants discussed the lack of specialized shelter programs equipped to deal with severely traumatized victims in the same environment as victims without such problems.

Myanmar service providers had many ideas for how to practically tackle the need for increased capacities in psychological and social support. One idea was to boost on-the-job training for shelter staff, focusing on practical skills such as victim needs assessment, case management, and communication skills. Another idea was to consider ways in which NGOs could offer additional activities as well as psychological and social services to victims staying in transit shelters.

There was wide acknowledgment across the practitioner forums that these are significant gaps in assistance services and an obstacle to victims' successful (re)integration into society. The development of domestic capabilities for the treatment of complex psychological and social needs should thus be a priority, to be fostered by regional cooperation on lessons learned and good practice.

PROMISING PRACTICE: Shelter worker exposure visits to communities in Myanmar

NGOs and shelter staff in Myanmar work together to create opportunities for shelter staff to accompany NGO staff on joint case work visits to the field. The aim is to create mutual understanding between shelter staff and NGOs on the challenges faced by trafficking victims upon (re)integration, and how service providers can work together to help victims with facing these challenges.

PROMISING PRACTICE: National Institute of Social Work, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth (MoSVY), Cambodia

Human resource development was identified as a key requirement for improved psycho-social care for trafficking victims in Cambodia. In response, MoSVY is creating a National Institute of Social Work to train MoSVY officials and other government and non-government service providers in improved quality of care.

ISSUE 6. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPs) ARE NEEDED TO STRENGTHEN PRACTITIONER CAPACITY TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE (RE)INTEGRATION ASSISTANCE

In the GMS, the majority of government and non-government agencies providing services to victims of trafficking have guidelines for victim protection. However, practitioners in many countries highlighted the need for practical operating procedures and tools to clearly outline how to provide standard, quality services within reasonable timeframes, elaborating clear lines of communication and coordination that should exist.

Prior to repatriation of trafficking victims from the destination country back to their home countries, the family of each victim is 'traced' and 'assessed' as to whether the family is willing and capable of receiving back the victim safely. Both Cambodian and Lao practitioners recognized the value of having operational guidelines for family tracing and family assessment. Myanmar practitioners also recommended that guidelines for family assessment should be improved, and to include operational protocols for situations when family assessment is 'negative' (that is, the family has been assessed as being incapable of receiving back the victim), and when victims do not return to their home village.

Both during the victim's time in shelter and upon return to the home country, a needs assessment is carried out to ascertain how best to support the individual in his or her integration back to life in society. Myanmar practitioners noted that they would better able to support victims in their (re)integration if there were improved guidelines for needs assessment of the victim, including medical assessment. In Viet Nam, there are many victims that 'self-return,' returning to Viet Nam on their own without any assistance from government or other victim service agencies. Vietnamese practitioners pointed out the need to have a victim identification form for responders who may interface with self-returns, so that self-returned victims can be recognized and assisted in their (re)integration and adjustment to life in Viet Nam.

Viet Nam practitioners also recommended more broadly that the COMMIT regional guidelines for victim protection be adapted at the country level and further elaborated, to make it more accessible and practically geared for frontline workers.

Cambodian practitioners recommended that guidelines and standard operating procedures for (re)integration assistance should uphold ethical standards, meaning that victim confidentiality is respected, and no harm is inadvertently done.

CASE STUDY: Self-returned victim not offered referral to services due to lack of NGO coordination

A female victim was trafficked abroad for sexual exploitation, making her own way home after escaping. Back in her village, she heard about an organization that assists trafficked persons and contacted them for help. The organization came to her village and interviewed her, offering her reintegration assistance in their programme. Unfortunately, at that time, the organization lacked funding and could not assist her immediately. They asked her to wait in her village for a few months until they secured funding, after which they contacted her and began her reintegration assistance. In the interim, the organization did not refer her to another agency or institution for assistance, either short term or reintegration focused. She stayed in her home village with her family for three months, receiving no assistance and without a clear idea of when she might be able to receive support.

ISSUE 7. COOPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, GOVERNMENTS AND NGOs, AS WELL AS NGOs NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED, ESPECIALLY FOR (RE)INTEGRATION OF CROSS-BORDER CASES

Assisting trafficking victims to integrate back into society is a complex task, requiring concerted action and cooperation from a number of different stakeholders, often both within and across countries. Despite significant improvements in this context, as supported by the COMMIT process and implementing partners, the Practitioner Forums still identified shortcomings in cooperation as one of the key obstacles to successful (re)integration. Discussions in China raised the need for more systematic and standardized procedures for assisting victims, from the moment of rescue to the process of (re)integration. Discussions in Myanmar highlighted similar suggestions, including specific recommendations for closer cooperation between law enforcement and victim support agencies during victims' participation in legal proceedings.

In Lao PDR, participants identified the need for more exchange between service providers on lessons learned and best practices, to ensure that valuable experiences benefit all relevant stakeholders. Vietnamese service providers raised the issue of unequal distribution of services across the country, being concerned about the gaps in coverage of certain areas that make it difficult to provide (re)integration assistance in such underserved communities. In

Cambodia, it was pointed out that high turnover rates of personnel both in relevant governmental departments and the NGO community frequently caused delays in communication and services provided.

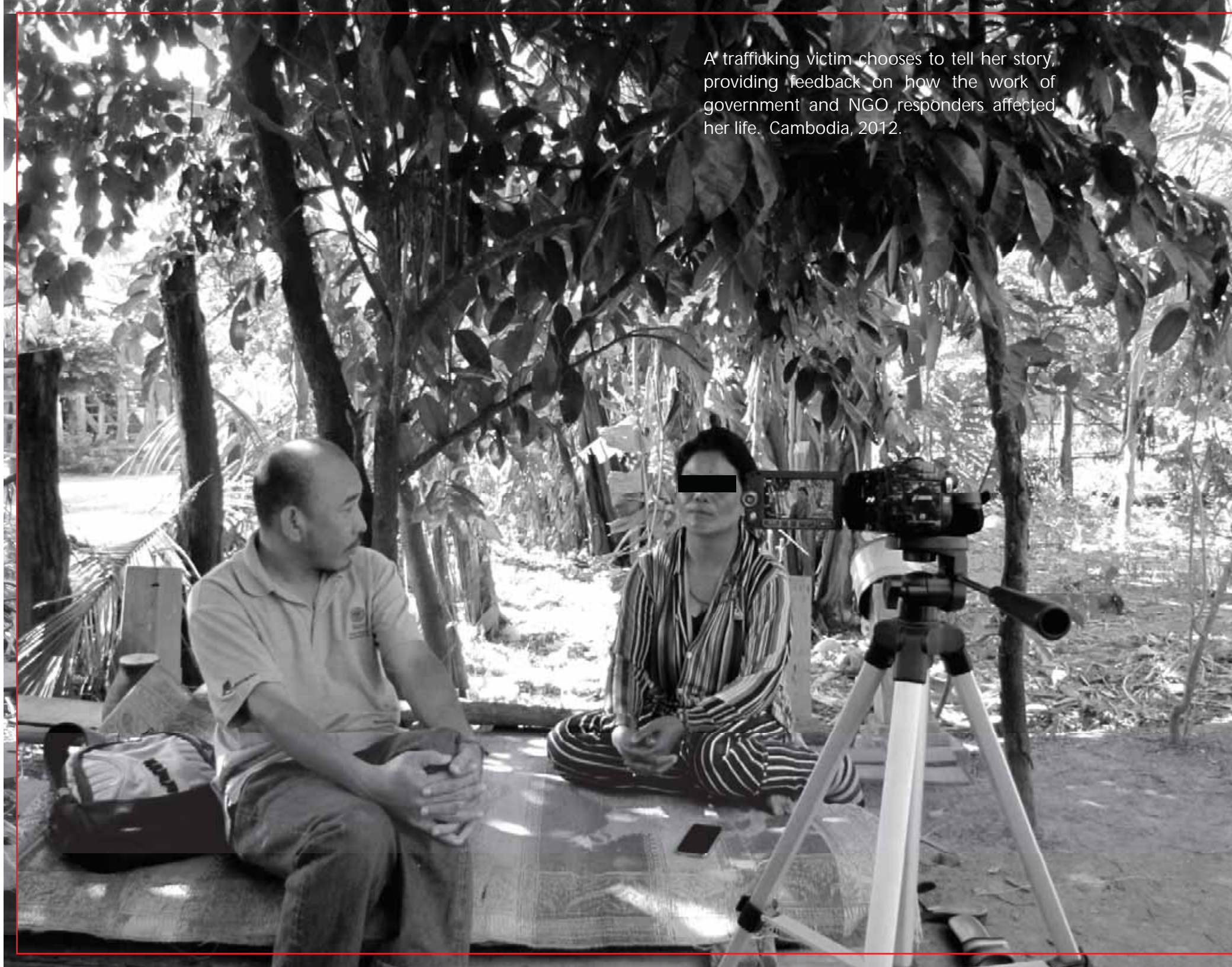
In line with the Chinese discussions, it was suggested that service providers work toward more systematic, standardized procedures to limit dependence on individual people. Thai practitioners highlighted a similar challenge of work not being continued when active policy-level officials were transferred.

There was broad consensus in both source and destination countries that cross-border cooperation at all levels required further improvements, to ensure effective (re)integration assistance to victims of transnational trafficking cases. This includes governmental inter-agency cooperation at the national level, for example in carrying out nationality verification and family tracing and assessment. This is an encouragement for more cooperation at COMMIT level, also with the involvement of relevant civil society stakeholders; it is equally a call for more concerted action domestically between governmental and non-governmental agencies as well as between NGOs themselves.



A project meeting launching the trafficking victim (re)integration protection network in Yunnan province, China was held by the Yunnan relief station management office of Yunnan Civil Affairs, as well as the Yunnan Public Security Bureau Criminal Investigation Department, and NGO Save the Children.

A trafficking victim chooses to tell her story, providing feedback on how the work of government and NGO responders affected her life. Cambodia, 2012.

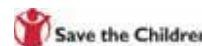


This document was prepared for the COMMIT Governments by UNIAP, World Vision, and NEXUS Institute, with translation into the six Mekong languages by UNIAP and financial support for printing and dissemination in all languages by World Vision.

The six (Re)Integration National Practitioner Forums were organized as a part of the COMMIT Region-wide (Re)Integration Initiative, which includes the National Practitioner Forums gathering the knowledge and perspectives of victim service providers, and the COMMIT regional (re)integration study gathering the perspectives and feedback of over 300 actual trafficking victims.

The National Practitioner Forums were sponsored by the relevant social welfare ministries of the COMMIT countries Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) in Cambodia; the All-China Women's Federation (AWCF) and Inter-Ministerial Office on Anti-Trafficking (IMOAT) within the Ministry of Public Security in China; the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW) and Lao Women's Union (LWU) in Lao PDR; the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and Central Body for Trafficking in Persons (CBTIP) in Myanmar; the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) in Thailand; and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs (MOLISA) in Viet Nam.

Financial and technical support for the forums were provided by World Vision and the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP), as well as Save the Children, IOM, NEXUS Institute, UNICEF, and local NGO partners.







Why are victims declining assistance? How can we identify more victims to assist? Is reintegrating victims back into the same circumstances that drove them to migrate to begin with “successful reintegration”? How can we improve cross-departmental coordination to provide better services to victims? Why are most vocational training programs still not related to the actual job market where the victim will be (re)integrated? What are some successful models aiming to reduce stigma for (re)integrated victims? How can we increase our capacity to provide quality psycho-social care to victims of trafficking? How can we reach and assist more ‘self-returned’ victims?

